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Lokāyata: Journal of Positive Philosophy is an online bi-annual interdisciplinary journal of *the Center for Positive Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies (CPPIS)*. The name Lokāyata can be traced to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which refers to three *ānvīkṣikīs* (logical philosophies), Yoga, Samkhya and Lokāyata. Lokāyata here still refers to logical debate (*disputatio*, "criticism") in general and not to a materialist doctrine in particular. The objectives of the journal are to encourage new thinking on concepts and theoretical frameworks in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences to disseminate such new ideas and research papers (with strong emphasis on modern implications of philosophy) which have broad relevance in society in general and man's life in particular. The Centre publishes two issues of the journal every year. Each regular issue of the journal contains full-length papers, discussions and comments, book reviews, information on new books and other relevant academic information. Each issue contains about 100 Pages.

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In this issue.....

Title of the Paper & Author	Page No.
Discourse on <i>Yogaja Pratyakṣa</i> in Vaiśeṣika Philosophy: Soma Chakraborty	04-11
The Relationship between The Triguna and Five Factor Model of Personality: Lakhwinder Singh	12-25
The Beginning of the Politics of Human Rights: Pundrik Ojha	26-33
Philosophy of Sufism and Islam: Desh Raj Sirswal	34-38
जनजातियों में नैतिक शिक्षा एवं व्यक्तित्व निर्माण की प्रासंगिकता. देवदास साकेत	39-53
Role of Youth Vis-a-Vis Value System: Some Suggestive Measures: Priyanka Sharma, Ms Poonam Pant	54-65
REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME	66-76
PUBLICATIONS	77-78
PHILOSOPHY NEWS IN INDIA	79-82
CONTRIBUTORS OF THIS ISSUE	83

4.

Philosophy of Sufism and Islam**Desh Raj Sirswal**

Many different meanings are attributed to the term Sufi. From the philosophical standpoint the sufi sect leans towards the mystic tradition, while taken etymologically the word implies anything which is extracted from wool. Sufi was the term applied to those individuals who went through life wearing a woolen gown, spending their life in meditation and prayer. Other scholars are of the opinion that the terms sufi is derived from the root "Suffa" which is applicable to the platform built by Mohammad in the mosque at Madina. Hence the term sufi applied to those benevolent and pure but homeless people who spent their time sitting on this platform and meditating upon this life and the hereafter. According to Gazzzali , the term sufi implies a man's remaining at peace with the world, in meditation upon God.

Steps of Moral Transformation

We live in a world of fear, anxiety, stress and strain but these are all self-created the delusion and ignorance that are created. The delusion and ignorance that are created by not realising the true nature of the self is the main cause of all miseries. When one learns not to identify oneself with the objects of the world and constantly becomes aware of the reality or center of consciousness within, one considers birth and death voluntary actions.¹

In some ways the Sufi conception of the passing away (fana) of individual self in Universal Being is almost Upanishadic. But fana is not the same as nirvana, though both terms imply the passing away of individuality. Fana us accompanied by baqa-everlasting life in God. Fana involves the extinction of all passions and desires-the holding back of the senses, as it were, advocated by the Upanishads. Indeed, Sufism has been described in such terms as, it is wholly self-discipline, it is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing, it is the control of the faculties and observation of the breaths.²

Sufism, like the Upanishads, calls for the giving up of desire as means to attain God. This calls for the eradications of self-will. To attain fana, certain steps are prescribed, even as they are in Raja Yoga.

- The first step is a moral transformation of the soul through the extinction of all its passions and desires.
- The second step is a mental abstraction or passing away of the mind from all objects of perception, thoughts, actions and feelings through its concentration upon the thoughts of God.(Here, the thought of God signifies contemplation of the divine attributes).
- The third step is the cessation of all conscious thought. The highest stage of fana is reached when even the conscious of having attained fana disappears. This is what the Sufis call “the passing away of the passing away”(fana al-fana). The mystic, who like the hindu in samadhi, is now rapt in contemplation of the divine essence.
- The final stage of fana, , the complete passing away from self, forms the prelude to baqa which is continuance of “abiding” in God. The Sufi who seeks the goal of union with Ultimate Reality (fana'l-Haqq) calls himself a traveler (salik) and advances by slow “stages” (maqamat) along a path (tariqat) to his final goal. The stages bear a resemblance to those prescribed in Raja Yoga.³

There are seven stages to the ultimate goal: repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God and finally satisfaction. These seven stage constitute the ascetic and ethical discipline of the Sufi and must be carefully distinguished from the so-called “states” (abwal, plural of hal) which form a similar psychological chain. There are ten such “states”: meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquility, contemplation and certainty.⁴

Streams in Sufism

Three independent streams of thoughts fed the river of Sufism and determined its content and character:

- First, Islam brought with it some of the asceticism of the desert, and aversion to the life of urban and settled luxury.⁵
- Second, Pythagorean Hellenism and Alexandrian Gnosticism, which had permanently Judaism and Christianity, had dominated the Near East for a thousand years before the advent of Islam. When the masses of the Near East and North Africa converted to Islam, it was natural that Gnostic ideas and metaphors were brought in with their spiritual baggage.⁶
- Third, being the dominant religion of most of the provinces of Asia acquired by Islam, Buddhism was soon to exercise its influence. Buddhist condemnation of this world, its total abnegation in favor of the contemplative and monkish life, found its mouthpiece in Ibrahim ibn al Adam (159/777). As told by his followers later, his life was not unlike that of Buddha.⁷ Henceforth, the three streams were one and ran like a mighty river.

Sufism and Islam

The term “sufi” was first applied in 816 A.D. to *Abu Hashim*, an individual belonging to Sham. In the ninth century the sufi sect was famous throughout Iraq with Baghdad as its centre. During the tenth century *Abu Yajid Jabaid* and *Mansoor Alhajaaj* propagated monistic ideas.⁸ Sufism originated from Islam but it also gets effects from Platonism, Christianity, Mystic tenancies of Hinduism and Buddhism. That’s why sometimes we find Sufism different from Islam but it never go far away from Islam.

Such famous Persian poets as *Iraqi* and *Kirmani* gave expression to the beliefs of this sect in the eleventh century. *Alagazzali* tried to reconcile Islam and the Sufi philosophy. Sufis believe in a single God who is truth *pr hak*, godness or *khaira* and beauty or *jamal*. The entire universe is believed to be an appearance of the manifestation

of God, and it is only on account of his folly and over-weening arrogance that man considers himself to be distinct from God. Every Sufi aims at the destruction of this blinding arrogance, and the only means to this end is the love of God. Sufis believe that corporeal or physical love is a step in the achievement of a super-natural love for God since physical love acquaints man with the difficulties that beset this path and prepares him for journey along the path of supernatural love. Sufi disciples believed that God was their beloved and spent their entire time and life in waiting for the moment when they would glimpse her.⁹

The Sufis accepted without that Muhammad was the last of the prophets and that no scripture would appear after him. However, they did not accept that the following the prophet meant simply confirming to his Sunna and memorizing the Koran and the Hadith. On the contrary, it was possible for people to be so utterly sincere and devoted in their imitation of the Prophet that God would teach them directly, without the intermediary of rational learning. The Sufis frequently quote the Koranic verse. “Be wary of God, and God will teach you” to prove their point.¹⁰ Many of the greatest priests of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and other Islamic languages were Sufis. They employed their poetry to celebrate the presence of God in all things.

According to Sufi theory, all ancient prophets (including David and Jesus), plasticized poverty and abstinence. Prophet Muhammad’s immediate companions and followers are pictured in pious legend as innocent of exercises and luxury. Despite their position of privilege, they maintained the simple dignity and austerity of habit, which they had learned from the Prophet. The Qu’ran urges upon believers to fight against oppression being perpetrated against men, women, and children, who are weak (Mustad, Ifin).¹¹

Practical spirituality emphasises experience and realisation self, God and world-in and through practice but at the same time nurtures the humility not to reduce these only to practice. In its emphasises upon experience and realisation, practical spirituality has close kinship with the spirit of science which embodied, in the words of Albert Einstein, a holy spirit of inquiry. In its emphasis upon practice, practical spirituality stresses that

without taking part in practice we cannot realise truth, religion or otherwise. Practical spirituality involves manifold experiments with Truth as well as truths where truth is not a thing but a landscape of meaning, experience and co-realisation.¹² Thus, we can say that the Sufis are example of pure spiritual discipline which require a sense of dedication and humanity to get the ultimate goal of life i.e. self-realisation.

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- 13.