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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING SCIENCES & RESEARCH
TECHNOLOGY****EXPLORING SPIRITUAL KINSHIP: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUFISM
AND ORTHODOXY IN INDIAN AND RUSSIAN TEXTS****Irfan Fazili**

Assistant Professor, Institute of Foreign Languages, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the spiritual connection that exists between Sufism and Orthodoxy, as depicted in religious scriptures from India and Russia. It does this by conducting a comparative examination, which, in addition to providing light on their philosophical, theological, and mystical dimensions, explores the shared principles and distinctive characteristics that they both possess. Through the analysis of significant texts, rituals, and historical contexts, the purpose of this article is to enhance comprehension of the spiritual connection that exists between these traditions, while also drawing attention to the cultural and geographical influences that have played a role in shaping their evolution. This investigation makes a contribution to the discourse between different faiths and deepens our understanding of the various methods in which one can achieve spiritual enlightenment

1. INTRODUCTION

Sufism and Orthodoxy are two old traditions that have grown over the vast geographies of India and Russia. Each of these traditions offers its own distinctive solution to the problem of attaining spiritual enlightenment. There are fundamental connections between these traditions in terms of their concept of the divine, the human situation, and the pursuit of transcendence, despite the fact that they appear to be geographically and culturally distinct entities. This introduction marks the beginning of a journey of discovery, during which we will endeavour to discover the spiritual connection that exists between Orthodoxy and Sufism, as described in the respective religious writings of each of these faiths. Both Sufism, which is the mystical aspect of Islam, and Orthodoxy, which is the predominant form of Christianity in Russia, have attracted the hearts and minds of people who are looking for the truth for a very long time. In the hearts of mystics all throughout the Indian subcontinent, the Sufi religion, which places a strong emphasis on love, devotion, and the purification of the individual, resonates highly. In the meantime, Orthodoxy, with its extensive theological heritage, liturgical liturgy, and love for the saints, has been responsible for shaping the spiritual landscape of Russia for centuries.

As we go more into the spiritual doctrines of Sufism and Orthodox Christianity, it becomes clear that, underneath the superficial distinctions, there are fundamental parallels between the two. Both traditions provide ways to transform one's spirituality via devotion, prayer, and contemplation as the foundations of their practices. In both cases, the significance of letting go of one's ego and bringing oneself into alignment with the will of God is emphasised. In addition, both have a profound respect for the spiritual leaders and saints who exemplify the highest goals of their own traditions. Using a wide variety of scholarly publications, primary sources, and historical background, the purpose of this research study is to investigate the spiritual similarities that exist between Orthodoxy and Sufism.

We will investigate their philosophical underpinnings, mystical practices, important texts, and cultural influences in an effort to provide light on the common spiritual legacy that transcends both geographical and cultural barriers. We hope that by conducting this investigation, we will be able to cultivate a more profound appreciation for the wealth and variety of the spiritual traditions that exist around the world. Discovering the spiritual connection that exists between Orthodoxy and Sufism not only deepens our understanding of these two



traditions, but it also paves the road for discussion, collaboration, and mutual enrichment in a world that is becoming more interconnected.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Anon, 2018) studied “*shifting boundaries: rethinking the nature of religion and religious change among minority peoples in late imperial Russia*” Indigenous, Islamic, and Christian tribes lived in the Volga-Kama area of nineteenth-century Russia. Many groups reoriented their identities in the 19th century by strengthening their ties to Christianity or Islam or by revamping their old traditions and portraying them. Many researchers, citing Russian sources, portray minority religious practices as confusing or syncretic.

(Malikov 2012) studied “*Russian Policy toward Islamic “Sacred Lineages” of Samarkand Province of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship in 1868–1917*” Historians have debated how to incorporate a territory with different social systems into the Russian Empire. Studying the Russian Empire's approach towards Central Asian Muslim religious elites is particularly interesting. Muslim religious elites once dominated Central Asian public life. The ulama, whose highest stratum was represented by “holy groups” or sacred lineages³ as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad or the first four Caliphs, dominated the region's economic and religious life.

(KNYSH 2002) studied “*The biographical tradition in Su?sm: the tabaqat genre from al-Sulami to Jami.*” This book collects five Oriental micro-macrocosm theory contributions. Gignoux's edition of Guiwarguis Warda's previously unedited poem on man's microcosm is the book's longest contribution. French is used in all papers. It is notable that Indian sources, generally overlooked in such collaborations, are considered. The analysis is good.

(Moin 2010) studied “*Islam and The Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran*” A simpler transliteration system sans diacritical marks has translated Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, and Hindi words. This method mostly follows the International Journal of Middle East Studies' norms for the first three languages. Arabic words are rendered in their source language. Unless they appear first in the text, common names and idioms like Zulfiqar (Dhu al-Fiqar) are not transliterated.

(Kefeli 2011) studied “*The Tale of Joseph and Zulaykha on The Volga Frontier: The Struggle for Gender, Religious, And National Identity in Imperial and Postrevolutionary Russia*”. The multiconfessional and multiethnic Volga, where multiple versions of Joseph and Zulaykha are copied, printed, sung, and performed, has kept the narrative of Joseph and Zulaykha alive. Due to many religious viewpoints in a Christian state, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century middle Volga audiences naturally identified with the story's characters. Each religion shared its story.

(Keller 2012) studied “*A Critical Assessment of Modern Qazaqs’ Historical Claim That Islam is the Ancestral Faith*” Five newly independent states entered the Muslim world when the Soviet Union collapsed on December 26, 1991. Qazaqstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are Central Asian countries. Restoring cultural and ethnic identities is a major problem as post-Soviet countries re-Islamize. Muslims generally assert that Islam predates Russian colonisation and Soviet domination in all these nations and was reestablished as the national faith in 1991.

(Isnaini 2012) studied “*Post-Soviet Sufism: Texts and the Performance of Tradition in Tajikistan*” Since the Soviet Union collapsed and the Central Asian countries gained freedom, new mosques, Islamic attire, and formerly banned Islamic literature have spread. Sufi adept gatherings (halqa) are significant creators of emerging religious discourse in the Islamic resurgence. Tajikistani Sufis have resumed public ritual and accepted new scriptures. Tajik Muslims now believe in these documents, many of which were kept from Soviet authorities. This study examines the strength of these nascent textualities, their replication and spread, and how historical narrative and ritual performance assist textualizing processes in post-Soviet Tajikistan Sufi organisations.

(Guyer 2016) studied “*The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam (South Asia Across the Disciplines)*” Akbar, the Mughal emperor, considered himself the most sacred being on earth at the end of the sixteenth century and of the first Islamic millennium. He claimed to be the messiah reborn, the holiest saint and above religion. This was not unique to the Mughal monarch. A. Azfar Moin investigates why Muslim sovereigns in this period imitated Sufi saints in this groundbreaking work. He reveals a surprising but

widespread phenomenon: sainthood (wilayat) inspired a new kind of sovereignty in Islam, rather than religious law (sharia) or holy war (jihad).

Historical Context

In order to get a complete understanding of the spiritual connection that exists between Sufism and Orthodoxy in Indian and Russian writings, it is essential to investigate the historical tapestry that has woven these traditions into the fabric of their different societies. The origins of Sufism may be traced back to the spread of Islam over the subcontinent during the mediaeval period. During this time, Sufism came into contact with and assimilated aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous spiritual traditions. This syncretism resulted in the development of a diverse array of Sufi groups and mystical literature, both of which flourished concurrently with the larger umbrella of Islamic tradition.

In a similar manner, Orthodoxy in Russia originated from the Christianization of Eastern Slavs by the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century. This process laid the groundwork for a distinctively Russian expression of Christianity. Orthodoxy became tightly entwined with the political and cultural identity of the Russian people over the course of several centuries, and it had a significant impact on a wide range of artistic and architectural practices, as well as literary and philosophical thought. Over the course of its history, the Russian Orthodox Church has developed into a powerful institution that wields a significant amount of influence over both religious and secular matters.

Throughout the course of history, contacts between Orthodoxy and Sufism have been characterised by periods of engagement, exchange, and occasionally conflict. Through the propagation of Islam in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Sufi mystics were brought into touch with Orthodox Christians who were residing in the regions that were adjacent to them. There were instances in which this engagement resulted in productive exchanges of ideas and spiritual practices, while in other instances, it led to tensions that were driven by disparities in religious beliefs and cultural traditions.

Philosophical Foundations

In both Sufism and Orthodoxy, profound intellectual insights into the nature of reality, the human situation, and the divine are at the core of their respective religious belief systems. The essential principles that support these traditions' spiritual teachings and practices are shared by all of them, despite the fact that their theological understandings are different. Within the framework of Sufism, the idea of "Tawhid," which refers to the unity of God, holds a prominent position. God is both beyond all comprehension and intimately present in every part of creation, according to the teachings of Sufi mystics, who place an emphasis on the transcendence and immanence of the divine. Sufi spirituality is built on the foundation of this concept of the divine unity, which acts as the cornerstone of the religion and guides practitioners on a journey of self-transformation and connection with the Beloved. Despite the fact that it does so within the context of the Holy Trinity, Orthodoxy is still a religion that acknowledges the absolute unity and transcendence of God. Orthodox theologians elaborate on the mystery of the Trinity, which teaches that God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but that God's essence is not divided into any of these three parts.

The dogma, liturgy, and spiritual life of Orthodox Christianity are all shaped by this trinitarian understanding of God, which serves as the theological foundation of the Catholic religion. Orthodoxy and Sufism both provide profound insights into the nature of the human soul and its connection to the divine. Sufism is far more profound than Orthodoxy. The concept of the "nafs," also known as the ego, is emphasised in Sufi teachings as the major barrier that stands in the way of spiritual realisation. Sufi mystics advocate for the cleansing of the ego through practices such as dhikr (remembrance of God), meditation, and moral discipline. This purification ultimately leads to the realisation of one's true nature as a divine spark within the cosmos. To a similar extent, the Orthodox spiritual tradition emphasises the significance of "theosis," also known as deification, as the ultimate objective of human existence. According to the teachings of Orthodox theology, God took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ in order to bring mankind into connection with the divine.

This provides the opportunity for individuals to have communion with God by taking part in the divine life. In order to transcend the limitations of the ego and experience the transformational power of divine grace, Orthodox Christians seek to establish a closer connection with God via the practices of prayer, sacraments, and ascetic practices. Surrender, humility, and love are the three defining characteristics of the journey to spiritual enlightenment in both of these religions. They teach that the highest form of devotion is to obliterate the self in

the Beloved, and they laud the virtues of selfless love (ishq) and obedience to the will of God (taslim). Sufi poets and mystics emphasise the importance of these two virtues. Saints and theologians of the Orthodox Church, in a similar manner, emphasise the significance of love, obedience, and humility in the spiritual life, pointing to the example of Christ as the ideal manifestation of divine love.

Contemporary Relevance and Future Directions

Individuals who are looking for meaning, purpose, and connection in their life continue to find that the spiritual traditions of Sufism and Orthodoxy continue to maintain a profound relevance in this era, which is characterised by globalisation, rapid social change, and international contact. Although secularism, materialism, and religious fanaticism provide problems, Sufism and Orthodoxy provide timeless ideas and practices that speak to the universal yearning for spiritual fulfilment and inner peace. These practices and insights are offered by both of these religious traditions.

Sufism and Orthodoxy have the potential to engage in interfaith conversation and work together, which is one area that is relevant in the modern world. Sufi and Orthodox leaders, who are representatives of two of the most prominent religious traditions in the world, have a unique opportunity to promote understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation in the context of confronting shared concerns such as poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation. Both Sufism and Orthodoxy have the potential to act as guiding lights of hope and reconciliation in a world that is deeply divided by putting an emphasis on the spiritual qualities of love, compassion, and justice that they share.

Furthermore, the teachings and practices of Orthodoxy and Sufism provide unique insights that can be used to the solution of critical social and environmental problems. The present issues regarding inequality, environmental degradation, and social justice are strongly aligned with the Sufi emphasis on compassion, social justice, and environmental stewardship because of the correlation between the two. In a similar vein, the teachings of the Orthodox Church regarding the sanctity of creation, the dignity of every human being, and the significance of community solidarity provide useful guidance for the construction of a world that is more just, sustainable, and compassionate.

In the future, there is a need for ongoing inquiry and investigation into the spiritual aspects of Orthodoxy and Sufism, particularly in light of the changing roles that both religions play in contemporary society. In light of the fact that Sufism is struggling to overcome obstacles such as religious extremism, cultural integration, and political marginalisation, there is a pressing need for a nuanced understanding and engagement that respects the religion's extensive spiritual past while also taking into account the reality of the present day. As Orthodoxy endeavours to negotiate the challenges of post-Soviet society, globalisation, and religious plurality, there is a chance for scholars and practitioners to explore new channels for discourse, creativity, and renewal within the tradition. This opportunity presents itself as Orthodoxy also seeks to traverse these complications.

3. CONCLUSION

We have begun on a voyage of discovery that has shed light on the common spiritual history and universal truths that bind these traditions beyond geographical and cultural borders. This journey has been facilitated by our exploration of the spiritual kinship that exists between Sufism and Orthodoxy, as described in Indian and Russian writings. We have discovered fundamental connections and resonances that go beyond the superficial differences and theological discrepancies that exist between them by conducting a comparative investigation of their intellectual foundations, mystical practices, cultural influences, and modern relevance. In both Sufism and Orthodoxy, the eternal realities of divine unity, human striving, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment are at the core of their respective beliefs. In spite of the fact that their theological frameworks and historical settings are different, both faiths provide paths of transformation that are founded on love, dedication, and surrender to the will of the almighty. The mystical experiences and teachings of Sufism and Orthodoxy point to a common source of wisdom and inspiration that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers. This is the case whether the mystical experiences and teachings are expressed through the ecstatic poetry of Rumi and Hafiz or the contemplative hymns of St. John of the Cross and St. Symeon the New Theologian.

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