

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conceptual Foundations of Justice and Spiritual Maturity in Sufi Literature

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the issues of justice and spiritual maturity in Sufi literature. The concept of justice is examined as an essential ethical principle that plays a significant role in both the inner and outer life of a human being. Based on Sufi texts and epic narratives, it is shown that justice manifests in the human heart through purity, sincerity, and social responsibility. Spiritual maturity is interpreted as an individual's ability to make just decisions and to understand responsibility for one's own actions and attitudes toward others.

KEY WORDS

Asceticism, Fariduddin Attar, Uwais al-Qarani, oppression, Anushirvan.

INTRODUCTION

Sufi literature has, for centuries, radiated spiritual light like a mysterious source, illuminating the human soul and guiding it toward purification and perfection. Initially emerging as asceticism that is, the practice of abstaining from worldly pleasures Sufism developed a solid theoretical foundation by the 9th century and gradually evolved into an independent field of knowledge. During this process, its core concepts, directions, and theoretical components were systematized.

METHODS

The theoretical foundations of Sufism are reflected in such works as Abu Nasr al-Sarraj's "Kitab al-Luma'", Abu Ishaq al-Kalabadhi's "At-Ta'arruf li-Madhab al-Tasawwuf", Mustamli Bukhari's "Sharh at-Ta'arruf", Abu Talib al-Makki's "Qut al-Qulub", al-Sulami's "Risalat al-Malamatiyya", al-Qushayri's "Risala fi al-Tasawwuf", al-Hujwiri's "Kashf al-Mahjub", Abdullah Ansari's "Manazil al-Sa'irin", and Fariduddin Attar's "Tazkirat al-Awliya". These works provide the theoretical basis of Sufi knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Sufi teachings, true human perfection is determined not only by a person's external life but also by their inner world, including spiritual and moral states. This perfection is gradually achieved through acquiring knowledge, deep contemplation, self-discipline, and the cultivation of the ego (nafs).

Throughout life, a person should live in harmony with the concept of justice and evaluate their actions according to this principle. Indeed, justice is not only the foundation of social stability but also a key virtue that determines spiritual maturity.

In Fariduddin Attar's "Tazkirat al-Awliya", there is a section dedicated to Uwais al-Qarani. It presents the following narration about justice:

"Farooq saw Uwais. He was wearing a simple cloak, yet the wealth of eighteen thousand worlds was beneath that cloak. Seeing this, Farooq renounced the caliphate and said: 'Is there anyone who would exchange this caliphate for a mere name?'

Uwais replied: Why assign it a price and put it on the market?

Leave it—whoever wants it may take it!’ The companions, hearing this, cried out: ‘O Farooq, the affairs of all Muslims cannot be neglected. One hour of justice is better than seventy years of worship. This is the meaning of the Prophet’s hadith.’”

This passage emphasizes that the justice of rulers can lead to the salvation of many people, increase public trust, reduce social problems, and eliminate injustice. It also highlights the contrast between material wealth and spiritual richness, as well as between power and spirituality.

In the story, Farooq (Umar ibn al-Khattab) encounters Uwais, who appears outwardly poor. However, the phrase “the wealth of eighteen thousand worlds was beneath that cloak” symbolically indicates his immense spiritual richness. True wealth, therefore, lies not in material possessions but in spiritual perfection. Deeply impressed, Umar considers renouncing the caliphate, recognizing the insignificance of worldly authority. However, the companions object, emphasizing the great responsibility he bears. They stress that one hour of just rule is superior to seventy years of worship, illustrating the supreme value of justice in Islam.

Alisher Navoi, in chapters 19–22 of his epic “Saddi Iskandariy”, also discusses justice and presents a similar idea based on hadith: “The Prophet, the ruler of both worlds, proclaimed that one hour spent in justice is better than the worship of humans and jinn.” Navoi elevates justice to a divine attribute, associating it with the name al-Adl (The Just), and presents it as the foundation of order in the universe.

In Eastern intellectual tradition, justice occupies a central place as a philosophical, religious, and socio-political concept. In Islamic political thought, it is not merely a personal virtue but also a fundamental principle of governance that ensures social balance and stability.

In classical literature, the figure of Anushirvan is widely glorified as a symbol of justice. Although a historical ruler of the Sasanian Empire, he is portrayed as an ideal king just, wise, and devoted to his people. In Navoi’s works, Anushirvan serves as a standard of justice, encouraging rulers to avoid oppression and uphold fairness.

Similarly, Saadi Shirazi’s “Gulistan” includes instructive stories about Anushirvan. In one such story, the king refuses to take salt for free during a hunt, stating that even a small injustice can lead to greater ظلم. This emphasizes that justice must be preserved even in minor matters. Another well-known narrative is that of the “Chain of Justice,” which allowed any

oppressed person to directly appeal to the king. This symbolizes transparency and equality in justice.

Khoja Poshshokhja’s “Miftah al-Adl” is considered one of the most significant works on justice in medieval Eastern thought. It goes beyond a simple advisory text and serves as a comprehensive moral and legal guide. Justice is presented not only as a matter of governance but also as a reflection of inner purity and spiritual maturity.

In Sufi teachings, justice is primarily understood as an inner state. It must first be established within the human soul through self-discipline and balance. Such inner justice becomes the foundation of social harmony, as spiritually refined individuals refrain from oppression and wrongdoing.

While social differences are acknowledged, Sufism emphasizes that relationships must be based on compassion, fairness, and honesty. Arrogance and injustice are incompatible with true justice. Sufi thought interprets spiritual maturity (inner perfection) as the highest goal of human existence, representing a complex and profound process that goes far beyond ordinary moral upbringing. This concept is gradually formed through the purification of the inner self, the discipline of the ego (nafs), and the realization of divine truth. According to Sufi teachings, spiritual maturity is прежде all connected with a person’s ability to overcome their own ego (nafs). The ego drives an individual toward material desires, pride, envy, and other negative traits. Therefore, in Sufism, the ego is purified through practices such as ascetic discipline (riyazat), renunciation of worldly pleasures (zuhd), and remembrance of God (dhikr). In Sufi teachings, the process of attaining spiritual maturity is intrinsically linked with the concept of justice, which is interpreted not only as a socio-normative category but also as a profound inner and spiritual criterion. In this context, justice прежде all begins with an individual’s proper relationship toward their own ego (nafs), that is, with maintaining inner balance. In Sufism, the most significant form of justice is “inner justice” (adl al-nafs), which refers to a person’s ability to maintain balance among their desires, emotions, and rational judgments. If an individual does not succumb to the impulses of the ego but is instead able to control them, spiritual harmony emerges. It is precisely this harmony that constitutes one of the fundamental conditions of spiritual maturity.

In the teachings of the renowned thinker Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, justice is likewise explained as a balance among the forces of the soul – desire, anger, and intellect. According to

him, when these forces are in equilibrium, justice is established; however, if one of them dominates, injustice and inner imbalance arise. Thus, justice serves as the principal factor that ensures inner order and harmony.

CONCLUSION

In Sufism, personal responsibility holds a central place. Every individual is accountable for their intentions, actions, and moral conduct. Justice is not merely an external order but an inner commitment to honesty and self-improvement. Adherence to divine laws is regarded as the highest form of justice, as living in accordance with divine truth purifies both the individual and society. In general, Sufi thought interprets justice not as an external mechanism of control, but as an expression of inner perfection, spiritual purity, and harmony with divine truth.

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