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SPIRITUAL AND MORAL EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF SUFISM

(On the Example of the Activities of Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Bahauddin Naqshband)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the spiritual and educational activities of the prominent representatives of the Mawarannahr Sufi tradition — Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Bahauddin Naqshband. Their ideas on moral education, spiritual purification, and the formation of the Perfect Human Being (al-insān al-kāmil) are examined in detail. The article also highlights their place in Sufi philosophy, their traditions of mentoring disciples, and their contribution to social development. In addition, the contemporary relevance of Sufi teachings is emphasized.

Keywords: Mawlana Orif Deggarani, Bahauddin Naqshband, Sufism, spirituality, enlightenment, perfect human being, spiritual education, Naqshbandiyya order

Humanity, up to the present day, has been transforming the products of the imaginary world—once perceived as mere legends—into tangible reality through intellect, knowledge, technology, and innovation. However, at a time when the outcomes of science and technology, as products of human intellect, are increasingly being used against humanity itself, the need to humanize knowledge remains critically urgent. Achieving this goal requires addressing issues related to worldview, spiritual maturity, moral education, and the overall spiritual development of individuals.



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Knowledge devoid of spirituality can turn against humanity. Without spiritual values, hearts become cold realms of ignorance, immorality, obscenity, and moral decay. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, stated at the expanded meeting of the Republican Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment on December 22, 2023:

"Spirituality is an inexhaustible source of inner strength; it lights the lamps of the heart and illuminates the torches of thought. Wherever spirituality exists, the light of humanity shines, and together with our spiritually elevated people, we will lay the foundation of the Third Renaissance."

When discussing sources of spiritual strength, it would not be an exaggeration to include Sufi ideas alongside religious beliefs and values as an integral part of our national spiritual heritage. Indeed, the foundations of the two historical renaissances in Central Asia were shaped by Islamic culture and acquired a distinctly humanistic character. Particularly, Sufi scholars and spiritual leaders who emerged from the land of Mawarannahr, through their works, wisdom, and life practices, called people toward spiritual maturity, inner purity, and the beauty of the soul.

Such spiritual leadership can clearly be observed in the lives of Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Bahauddin Naqshband. In the current era of globalization, Sufism remains highly relevant in overcoming spiritual crises, resisting moral decline, and educating younger generations. The teachings of Bahauddin Naqshband and Mawlana Orif Deggarani represent a comprehensive model that can be integrated into modern educational and academic fields.

Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband were spiritually and morally close to one another. Moreover, many sources note that Bahauddin Naqshband regarded Mawlana Orif Deggarani as his spiritual mentor. The rich legacy left by these two great Sufi masters is not only valuable for understanding



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their historical era but also serves as a potential solution to contemporary challenges.

Most studies focus primarily on their historical significance, chronological life accounts, and socio-political roles. Nevertheless, scholars of Sufism and Islamic studies worldwide continue to conduct in-depth research on these figures. For instance, the German scholar Jürgen Paul, in his major academic work “The Political and Social Significance of the Naqshbandiyya in 15th-Century Central Asia,” published in Berlin in 1991, provides valuable insights into the life and influence of Mawlana Orif Deggarani.

The two renaissances in Central Asian history did not occur spontaneously. It should be emphasized that Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband played an unparalleled role in improving the socio-spiritual environment of Mawarannahr during the 14th–15th centuries and in advancing regional cultural development.

First, during this period, they enriched Islamic thought with innovative Sufi philosophical ideas that challenged religious superstition and deviation. They rejected misconceptions such as withdrawing from society in the pursuit of divine truth and instead promoted an enlightened worldview. This is exemplified in the Naqshbandiyya principle: “Let the heart be with God, and the hands be engaged in work” (dil ba yār, dast ba kār).

Second, although Islam originated in the Arabian deserts, these Sufi thinkers skillfully adapted Islamic teachings to the medieval Central Asian context through Sufi philosophy. They elevated the status of Islam in the region and ushered it into a new era enriched with spiritual insight. Numerous historical sources confirm that the spread of Islam in the region was closely linked to the missionary journeys of Sufi representatives, among whom Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband stand as prominent figures.



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Third, the teachings of Mawlana Orif Deggarani played a significant role in inspiring resistance against Mongol invasions in medieval Mawarannahr, serving as spiritual guidance for the people in their struggle for independence and homeland preservation.

Moreover, both Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband emphasized that attaining true reality begins with self-examination, self-discipline, and the purification of personal desires. Sufis also practice zuhd, which entails detachment from excessive worldly concerns and a focus on spiritual life. In Sufism, virtues such as patience (sabr), gratitude (shukr), and piety (taqwa) are regarded as essential moral qualities.

Sufis, despite belonging to different social strata and groups, were united by a single force — the path toward Divine Truth. While some Sufis attained divine essence through knowledge, others followed the path of seeking God through God Himself. Among them were those who chose the path of divine love (‘ushshāq) and those who preferred ascetic withdrawal (zuhhād). Sufism possessed broad social activity, and the majority of Sufis favored an active social lifestyle. They organized spiritual and mystical gatherings, reconciled individuals with themselves, their families, society, and even rulers. Based on divine guidance, they demonstrated ways to transform moral deficiencies in human character into virtues. Rather than punishing individuals with immoral behavior, they preferred to guide them toward spiritual enlightenment.

Understanding Sufism and applying it in practice requires considerable time and patience, as this path demands deep engagement with one’s inner world. Through studying and practicing Sufism, an individual enriches their spiritual and moral life and strengthens their relationship with God.

Mawlana Orif Deggarani, one of the early founders of the Naqshbandiyya order, regarded Sufi concepts such as silence (sukūt), tranquility, and spiritual



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contemplation (murāqaba) as essential elements in human moral education. He promoted ideas of purifying the heart, restraining the ego (nafs), sincerely loving God, and striving for closeness to Him. Orif Deggarani was widely known among the people as a humble, modest, and hardworking individual. His life philosophy was encapsulated in the principle: “If the heart is pure, actions will be pure as well.”

Sufism emphasizes approaching God through spiritual development and self-awareness of the inner world. The primary goal of Sufism is the purification of the ego and the attainment of spiritual perfection.

Sufism embodies the core moral principles of Islam. Sufis place great emphasis on cultivating virtues such as honesty, patience, gratitude, humility, and other noble moral qualities. This constitutes an integral part of Islamic moral education. As a component of traditional Islamic scholarship and spirituality, Sufism occupies an important place in the moral education of youth.

This spiritual tradition contributes to the intellectual and moral development of the younger generation by emphasizing ethical values and spiritual maturity.

The teachings of Sufism instill the importance of self-awareness and self-improvement, which play a crucial role in shaping responsible members of society.

In Uzbekistan, the role of Sufism in educating the younger generation is significant for the spiritual and cultural development of society.

Cooperation between schools and community institutions, through the application of Sufi teachings, supports the upbringing of morally mature individuals by enhancing spiritual thinking.

In nurturing a harmoniously developed generation, the role of Sufism in spiritual education becomes increasingly important through collaboration among family, neighborhood communities, and educational institutions.



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Conclusion

Sufism, more precisely its educational and moral dimensions, is deeply rooted in Uzbek culture and constitutes an essential component of spiritual upbringing. This teaching plays a vital role in fostering patriotism, respect for parents, and social responsibility among youth. When harmonized with innovation, these aspects of Sufi teachings can be integrated into modern educational processes, thereby enabling the moral and ethical development of younger generations at a higher level.

Today, there is a growing need to study the legacy left by such representatives of Sufism and to present it in an impactful form as a source of spiritual strength for future generations. Undoubtedly, any scientific and technological knowledge held by a generation nurtured with such spiritual and moral education will serve the interests of humanity.

The spiritual and educational heritage of Mawlana Orif Deggarani and Bahauddin Naqshband remains highly relevant for contemporary society. Their ideas on moral upbringing, guiding individuals toward ethical perfection, and calling for spiritual elevation are particularly significant in the current era of globalization. Their lives and activities serve as a profound school of guidance and inspiration for every individual.

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