

INAYATIAN MYSTICAL MOVEMENT AS A DEVIANT SECT IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM WORLD

Mohamed Mihlar Abdul Muthaliff
Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Leadership and Management,
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM).
mihlar@usim.edu.my
Mob.no: +60192394102

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the Mystical Ontology of Inayat Khan (1882-1927), the Indian Sufi master who presented Universal Sufism to the Western Culture, and established the Sufi Order International in 1920 as an international organization which has more than 100 Centres in the contemporary World. The Purpose of this study is to analyse Inayat Khan's mystical thoughts that include Non-dualistic concepts such as Manifestation of God, Divine Being and divinity of human soul. The Sufi message presented by Inayat Khan creates contradictions and confusions in the basics and principles of Islam as they are presented in the name of Islam and Sufism. It is primarily based on qualitative and textual research in which an analysis of Inayat Khan's works is employed as the founding method. It shows further how Inayat Khan systematized Non dualistic ideas and his own in a complex colour symbolism and expounded the monistic concept of God. The paper concludes that Inayat Khan introduced a Philosophy of Non dualism and Religious Pluralism in Muslim dress.

Keywords: Non dualism, Religious Pluralism, Sufi Order International, and Western Sufism.

Introduction

Inayat Khan (1882-1927) was an Indian mystic who left for Europe in 1910 in order to bring a universal spiritual message to the Western world. The Sufi Order International he established in 1920 is an international organization of people following the mystical message. It functions as a framework for people searching an embodied spirituality that transcends the varieties of religious beliefs and to show how mysticism can harmonize eastern and western culture (Bennet & Ramsey, 2012, p.251).

It is important to note that Inayat Khan's Sufi teachings as well as his International Spiritual Movements (The Sufi order and the International Sufi Movement) have attracted considerable scholarly interest in the west. A number of studies have focused on the role of his Mystical thoughts and their place in the development of Western Sufism. It is featured as a new religious movement (NRM) in many encyclopaedias of religious and Spiritual groups in the west, and has been analysed in relation to the growing modern thoughts, philosophies, practices and groups. There has also been recognition of the importance of Inayat Khan's spiritual and Indian cultural heritage for the shape, appeal and challenges of this transnational spiritual movement.

The Purpose of this study is to analyse Inayat Khan's mystical, religious and philosophical thoughts which include non-dualistic concepts such as Manifestation of God, Spirit of Guidance and All is God and God is All that satisfy the descriptions of Hindu Advaita philosophy. It creates contradictions and confusions in the basics and principles of Islam as they are presented in Western world in the name of Islam and Sufism.

The rapid growth and expansion of Inayatian Sufi Movement and activities of its centres all over the globe have drawn academic attention and formed a trend of researches and studies. A close examination of the trend proposes significant problems that obscure the clarity of Inayat Khan's ideas of non-dualism and mystical ontology and their influence on his Sufi thoughts and teachings.

Inayat khan's life and work

Inayat Khan was born in Baroda (now Vadodara), Gujarat, India, on July 5, 1882. Jironet (2002, p174) states that Inayat Khan's family was Muslim in its origins. Inayat Khan's father was Mashaikh Rahmat Khan, descended from Pir Jammashah. His mother Begum Khadija, came from a royal family of Mysore and the second daughter of Maula Bakhsh, still remembered as one of the greatest musicians of the period as well as an accomplished Sufi. Born 1833, died 1896. His wife Qasim Bi was the granddaughter of Tipu Sultan, "The tiger of Mysore". Maula Bakhsh was the principal influence on Inayat Khan who was fourteen years old when he died.

Inayat studied music at the Gayan Shala (The school of Indian Classical Music, Dance and Dramatics established in 1886. Now the faculty of performing Arts, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University of Baroda) musical academy founded by his grandfather, Maula Bhaksh in Baroda. Learned to play the Veena, a traditional string instrument when he was child. In his middle teens he began to

teach at the Academy in which he studied. He started to travel to take part in the musical competitions sponsored by various Maharajas (Used as a name or title for such a king or prince ranking above a Raja) many of which he won, collecting gold medals. He sang in the dhrupad style and accompanied himself on the Vina. In his late teens Inayat became very well known as a court singer and Sarasvati Veena player. His ultimate success came when still in his early twenties. He was named Tansen (Name of the greatest and Court Musician of the famous Mogul Emperor Akbar of 16th Century) of India by the Nizam (governor and composer) of Hyderabad, the highest honour to which a musician could aspire.

Eventually, Inayat felt called to seek a spiritual teacher as his family had a long association with Sufi teachings. After a search of several years, in 1903 he found Syed Mohammed Abu Hashim Madani (d.1907 C.E), the successor to one of the branches of the Chisti Sufi Order Founded by Khawaja Abu Ishaq Shami (d 940 C.E) of Syria who has migrated from western Asia and settled in Chisht (now in Afghanistan). Inayat spent four years as Abu Hashim Madani's disciple during which he began the spiritual practice he continued throughout his life. In 1907, on his death bed, Abu Hashim Madani gave Inayat his final instruction. He told Inayat, "Go to the western world, my son, and unite East and west through the magic of your music. God has given you great capacities, and a great task to fulfil." (Geaves & Gabriel, 2013, pp. 58-65).

Bennet & Ramsey (2012) state that Inayat Khan travelled to London in 1912 and then on to Paris, playing music for the dance performances also giving talks and attracting students. In this year Inayat married Ora Ray Baker (Pirani Ameena Begum), a youthful American lady who had tailed him to Europe, who bore him four children; the oldest, Noor-un-nisa (1913); the second, Vilayat (1916); the third, Hidayat (1917); and the youngest Khair-un-nisa (1919). Inayat Khan and his family spent the years of World War 1 in England. Once the war had ended, Inayat began the last phase of his life during which he devoted most of each year to traveling throughout the nations of Europe, lecturing and establishing Sufi centres. He moved to France in 1920 and then on to Geneva, Switzerland three years later, where he established the headquarters of the Sufi movement. He journeyed repeatedly through Belgium, Holland, Italy and the Scandinavian countries, always giving talks and teaching initiates. In 1923 and again in 1925 he toured the United States. (Bernard, 2006).

Inayat had been a tireless teacher, writer and lecturer traveling and lecturing almost continuously for 16 years. He had established his school in France, and a dedicated group of disciples. But, his difficult schedule had weakened him over the years. He left for India to see his homeland for the first time in seventeen years. He hoped to rest and meditate but was asked to lecture and graciously consented as was common. He passed away in New Delhi in 1927 of Pneumonia. His tomb, known as the Dargah, is in the Nizamuddin West area of Delhi, and has become an object of pilgrimage as well as a centre for social welfare. Inayat Khan is called by his devotees " Pir o Murshid Hazrat" (A title which may be used for any great man out of respect signifying the head of the Inner School of the Sufi Movement).

He brought the teachings and practices of Sufism into the lives of a large number of Westerners. He inspired and directed the organization of an International Sufi Movement and the inception of Sufi communities in many cities in Western Europe and the United States. His teachings are assembled in the volumes of The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan originally published as 14 volumes, the last volume is the index, is the collected lectures he held in Europe. The core of Sufi Message written by his own hand is the 'Gayan, Vadan, Nirtan (The Dance of the Soul) which contains of Inayat's spiritual feelings, thinking, speaking and acting. It was published by Motilal Banarsidas Publishers (pvt) Ltd of New Delhi, India. Taken as a whole, the Message offers a rich and complex, mystically based vision of human nature and human becoming.

International sufi movement

The International Sufi Movement established by Inayat Khan consists of people who believe in the wisdom uniting different forms for religious expression and who are committed to search for a deeper understanding of this wisdom and pass it on to others through different activities within the realm of the Sufi Movement. In other word The Sufi Movement is a Transnational Sufi Movement of members of different nations and races united together in the ideal of wisdom that does not fit in with any specific religion or race (Govins, 2012; Jironet, 2002).

In 1914 Inayat Khan formed his first organization in London which he called the Sufi Order. When it was possible to travel to the continent after the First World War, Inayat Khan attracted a number of students, particularly in Holland, but also in other countries. From this foundation his Message started to spread. (Genn, 2006).

Later, in 1923, the Sufi Order of the London was dissolved into a new organization formed under Swiss law and called the International Sufi Movement. At the same time, Inayat Khan and his family settled in Suresnes, a suburb of Paris, in a house he called "Fazal Manzil" (Blessed Abode). Here each summer the International Summer Schools were held, attended by students from around the world. Although the International Sufi Movement, which has more than fifty centres and branches throughout the world, remains incorporated in Geneva, the Headquarters are now established in The Hague, Holland.

The International Sufi Movement was founded by Inayat Khan with the following objects (Khan, 1990).

1. To realize and spread the knowledge of Unity of Religious Ideals, love and wisdom.
2. To discover the secret of all Religions, the power of Mysticism, the power latent in Man and the essence of Philosophy without interfering with customs or beliefs.
3. To help to unite the world's two opposite poles, East and West, by the interchange of thought and idea as well as to bring the Universal brotherhood.

Inayat Khan (1990, p.52) has mentioned in his Sufi Message that the purpose of the Sufi Movement is to work towards unity. Its main object is to bring humanity, divided as it is into so many different sections, closer together in the deeper understanding of

life. It is a preparation for a world service, chiefly in three ways. One way is the philosophical understanding of life; another is bringing about brotherhood among races and creeds; and third way is the meeting of the world's greatest need which is the religion of the day. Its work is to bring to the world that natural religion which has always been the religion of humanity.

The Sufi Movement is constituted of those who have the same beliefs or Ideals of service to God and to humanity, and who have the ideal of devoting a part or the whole of their life to the service of humanity in the path of truth. This movement has its groups and the members of which belong to all the different religions, for all are welcome, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. No one's faith or belief is questioned; each can follow his belief, religion and creed; no one needs to believe in any special creed or dogma. There is freedom of thought. At the same time personal guidance is given on the path, in the problems of both outer and inner lives.

Ism and sufism

The word Sufi, according to Inayat Khan (1990, p.253), means 'wisdom' for the one and 'purity' for the other. However both concepts clearly suggest one and the same Truth. Wisdom is only there when the mind is purified of preconceived ideas, the burdens of dogma and an unrestful conscience. As to the origins of Sufism, one could say that it is also just as ancient as the concepts of wisdom and purity, which have always been the inspiration of devotional worship all down the ages. In reality, Sufism is the essence of all religious ideals and has even been appropriated during different periods of history by large cultural and religious streams, without ever losing its own universal identity.

Inayat Khan (1990, p.256) says that Sufism cannot be known as a religion because it is free from principles, distinctions, and differences, the very basis on which religions are founded; neither can it be called a philosophy, because philosophy teaches the study of nature in its qualities and varieties, whereas Sufism teaches unity. Therefore it may best be called simply the training of the view. According to him, Sufism is the ancient school of Wisdom and quietism. It has been the origin of many cults of a Mystical and Philosophical nature.

He states further that Sufi is a true Christian in regard to charity, brotherhood, and the healing of his own soul as well as the soul of another. The Sufi is a Brahmin, for the word Brahmin means 'the knower of Brahma', of God, the only Being. His religion lies in believing in no other existence save that of God, which the Brahmin calls Advaita. Sufi chooses a normal life in preference to that of an ascetic, yet he does not limit himself to either the former or the latter.

The Sufi considers the teachings of the Avatars to be true manifestations of the divine wisdom, and has a perfect insight into the subtle knowledge of the Vedanta. The Sufi appreciates the Jain conception of harmlessness, and considers that kindness is the true path of purity and perfection. In the past Sufis have led lives of renunciation, and in the East most of them still lead a very harmless life, just like the Jains. The Sufi is a Buddhist, for he reasons at every step forward on his spiritual journey. The teachings of the Sufi are very similar to the Buddhist teachings; in fact it is the Sufi who unites the believers and the unbelievers in the God-ideal and in the knowledge of unity. The Sufi is a Muslim, not because many Muslims happen to be Sufis, nor because of his use of Muslim phraseology, but because in his life he proves what a true Muslim ought to be. Muslims have such a sense of devotion that no matter how great a sinner or how cruel a man may be, the name of Allah or Mohammed at once reduces him to tears. Similarly, the practices of Sufism first develop the heart qualities which are often overlooked by many other mystics. It is the purification of the heart which makes it receptive to the illumination of the soul. The Sufis are the ones who read the Qur'an from every experience in life, and see and recognize Mohammed face in each atom of the manifestation.

Universal sufism

Inayat Khan founded Universal Sufism as a spiritual and Universalist movement in the early twentieth century. The philosophy of Universal Sufism is based on unity of all people and religions, and the presence of spiritual guidance in all people, places and things. Universal Sufism is one of the forms of Sufism that has its "root" in, but does "not" exist "within" the traditional framework of Islam. Universal Sufism is characterized by its respect for other devotional traditions and for spiritual liberty. Universal Sufis come from all the major religions and often continue to practice their original root religion concurrently with Universal Sufism which is sometimes alternatively named the "Chishtiya Inayati Order" in honour of its origins in the Chishti Sufi Order.

The Universal Sufism was established while Inayat Khan was travelling throughout the West between 1910 and 1926. His eldest son Vilayat Khan, second son Hidayat Khan, and grandsons, Fazal Inayat-Khan, and Zia Khan are commonly regarded as his successors. Inayat Khan was originally a member of the Chishti Sufi order, and some Universal Sufis still trace their Silsila (lineage) to the Chishti order (Dickson, 2015).

Regarding self-realization Inayat Khan (1990) states that "We see that in the words of philosophers, mystics, sages, thinkers, and prophets, great importance is given to self-realization. If I were to explain what self-realization is, I would say that the first step to self-realization is God-realization. The one who realizes God in the end realizes self, but the one who realizes self never realizes God. And that is the difficulty today with those who search after spiritual truth intellectually. They read many books about occultism, esotericism, and mysticism. And what they find most emphasized is self-realization. Then they think that what they have to do is to attain that self-realization and that they can just as well omit God. But in reality God is the key to spiritual perfection. God is the stepping-stone to self-realization; God is the way which extends over the knowledge of the whole of creation. And if God is omitted then nothing can be reached. There is a wrong method in use today in many so-called cults, which often proves to be a failure, and which consists in teaching the beginner on the spiritual path to say, 'I am God': a thoughtless phrase, a word of insolence, a thought which has no foundation. It leads him nowhere except to ignorance. To the

prophets and thinkers, to the sages who taught their followers the ideal of God, it had a meaning, a purpose. But today people do not recognize these, and being anxious to find a shortcut, they omit the principal thing in order to come to the realization of self.” His main idea was that all is united in God and that the essence of all is God. In the Sufi message his universalistic ideas are presented in a number of examples in which the relationship between three factors indicates the essence of God.

The wisdom of the universal worship according to the International Sufi Movement is to spread the unity of religion. It is not a mission to promote a particular creed or any Church or religion; it is a work to unite the followers of different religions and faiths in wisdom, so that without having to give up their own religion they may strengthen their own faith and focus the true light upon it. In this way a greater trust, a greater confidence will be established in mankind.

The structure of the universal worship is as follows (Cusack & Norman, 2012, p.670).

1. The Church of All service honours the spiritual traditions of the world living faiths with readings from their sacred books. Cherags (Light Bearer) take classes in learning about the different religions and the spiritual aspects of these traditions as part of their training for ordination.
2. The Church of All is an umbrella organization of Sufi Orders united in their devotion to the spiritual lineage of Inayat Khan and his Sufi Message. It includes: The Sufi Order international, The International Sufi Movement, The Sufi Ruhaniat International and smaller organizations such as Sufism Reoriented and the Sufi Way.
3. There are some other authorized persons in universal worship service such as Representatives and Guides, Coordinators, Retreat Guide and Healing Conductors to give classes and guide the spiritual practices or initiations.
4. Universal worship service contains Prayers, Meditation, Zikr, Wazifa, Muraqaba, and Spiritual dance, Ryazat, Ziraat, Fasting and Urs.
5. There are several prayers in Universal Worship which are written by Inayat Khan and are recited on specific occasions such as The Confraternity Prayers, Prayer for Peace, The Healing Prayer, Prayer of invocation and Prayer for the New Year.
6. Murshid holds the service. The order of proceedings is this; first the Secretary reads the teachings and objects of the Sufi Order and announces the subjects of all classes that are held at khankah. Then Murshid speaks on some subject for 15 or 20 minutes. Then passages from the Bible, Qur’an, Qabala, Gita, etc. are read by different members of the Order, after which a hymn is sung.
7. There is a flame burning above the altar, before the doors of the Church are opened. Incense is burning on the altar, which is adorned with flowers. Six candles stand on the altar in the form of a crescent, each representing one of the great world religions. Between the third and the fourth candle stands a candle representing the Spirit of Guidance. In front of this taller candle the incense is burning, and before this lies the Gayan, Vadan, or Nirtan. The Scriptures belonging to the six world Religions lie at the foot of the six different candles.

Divinity Of Human Soul And Unity Of Being

Inayat believes that the God of the Sufi is the God of every creed, and the God of all. Names make no difference to him. Allah, God, Gott, Dieu, Khuda, Brahma, or Bhagwan, all these names and more are the names of his God; and yet to him God is beyond the limitation of name. He sees his God in the sun, in the fire, in the idol which diverse sects worship; and he recognizes Him in all the forms of the universe, yet knowing Him to be beyond all form; God in all, and all in God, He being the Seen and the Unseen, the Only Being. God to the Sufi is not only a religious belief, but also the highest ideal the human mind can conceive.

The Sufi, according to Inayat Khan (1990, p.245), forgetting the self and aiming at the attainment of the divine ideal walks constantly all through life in the path of love and light. In God the Sufi sees the perfection of all that is in the reach of man's perception and yet he knows Him to be above human reach. He looks to Him as the lover to his beloved, and takes all things in life as coming from Him, with perfect resignation. The sacred name of God is to him as medicine to the patient. The divine thought is the compass by which he steers the ship to the shores of immortality. The God-ideal is to the Sufi as a lift by which he raises himself to the eternal goal, the attainment of which is the only purpose of his life.

Inayat says that God is the possessor of all the visible and invisible attributes of the Absolute, and has different names in different languages for the understanding of man. It may be said that the personality of a man is quite comprehensible, since his actions exhibit him as a single individual, whereas God's personality has no clear identification of its own. The answer is that variety covers unity. 'Hidden things are manifested by their opposites, but as God has no opposite He remains hidden. God's light has no opposite in the range of creation whereby it may be manifested to view' (Khan, 1990; Miller, Kenedi & Moore, 2000, p. 179).

It was explained by Inayat Khan that God's relation to nature may be understood by analysing the idea expressed in the words, 'I myself'. This affirmation means the one individual; at the same time it identifies the dual aspect of the One. In this phrase 'I' is the possessor, and 'myself' is the possessed. So also God, the unmanifested, is the possessor; and nature, the manifestation, is the possessed, which has its source hidden within itself.

Conclusion

The intention of Inayatian Sufi movement is to formulate a vision of Sufism by developing a new and modern or “Western form of Sufism”. It does not replicate traditional Indian Sufism but drew on strands within the Chishtiyya order and Islam as well as other Indian spiritualities and belief systems. The key aspects of this movement are the unity of religious ideals or to respect for the unity and diversity of the world religions, spiritual liberty and divinity of human soul. It also emphasizes the notion of “Oneness of Being” and “Divine love” which are common themes of this so-called Sufi movement.

ISM systematized Non dualistic concept of Advaita Vedanta and its own in a complex colour symbolism of subtle substances. It expounded the monistic concept of God which is known as "God is All and All is God". It can be regarded as one of those Sufi movements which introduced Sufism in western world as well as one of those sects which departed from the Islamic concept of monotheistic God or the theory of tawhid.

It disregarded the Quranic thought of One God and put forth the metaphysical theory of the existence of God alone or pantheistic monism which is the immediate offspring of Advaita Vedanta displayed by Sankacharya of eighth century. It might be said, Inayatian Sufi movement presented Western and Vedantic ideas in Muslim dress replacing aqidah, shariah and tasawwuf preached by the prophet of Islam. Hence, the Sufi thought took a new turn in the Western mystical concepts of Inayatian Sufi Movement.

On the other hand, Inayat stressed the unity of religious ideals with his Universal and Perennial Sufi message as a response to the problems of civilization that he discovered in the West. And presented the concept of divinity of human soul which describes that each human being can arrive at self-realization or annihilation of the ego. Thereby he went beyond the Sufi tradition of the Chishti order and Advaita Vedantic School in which he was educated and trained. In fulfilling his mission he established an organization, the Sufi order international, as a vehicle and framework for people searching an embodied spirituality that transcends the varieties of religious beliefs. It presents itself as universal and open to all regardless of national, religious or ethnic background. And has more than 100 offshoots throughout the world and thousands of followers not only in USA but also among Euro westerners, South and South-east Asians and others.

In addition, Western Sufism presented by Inayat Khan is closely linked to the Theosophical Society which was founded in New York in 1875 by Helen Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott. The central doctrine of Theosophy is the Philosophia Perennis that articulates the belief that all religions are expressions of a fundamental universal spiritual or Gnostic wisdom and universal brotherhood of humanity.

It is evident that the mystical school of Inayat Khan had a profound impact on Sufism in the West which is presented as a universal form of wisdom and essence of all religions. The Sufism Reoriented created in 1952 by Meher Baba (1894-1969), The Sufi Ruhaniat International founded by Samuel L. Lewis (1896-1971) known as Sufi Ahmad Murad Chishti and Sufi tradition for Western audience presented by Idries Shah (1924-1996) are the offspring of Inayatian Sufism.

References

- Bennet, C., Ramsey, C.M. (2012). *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*. London: A&C Black
- Bernard, P. (2006). *New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World*. London & New York: Routledge
- Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion (vol.4). Boston: BRILL
- Bruinesson, M. V., & Howell, J. (eds.). (2007). *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co.Ltd
- Cusack, C. & Norman, A. (2012). *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*.
- Dickson, W.R. (2015). *Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation*, NY: SUNY Press
- Geaves, R. & Gabriel, T. (2013). *Sufism in Britain*, London: A&C Black
- Genn, C. (2006). *From Chishtiyya Diaspora to Transnational Sufi Movement*. Brisban: Griffith University Press
- Gowins, P. (2012). *Practical Sufism: A Guide to the Spiritual Path Based on the Teachings of Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan*, Chennai: Quest Books
- Jironet, K. (2002). *The Image of Spiritual Liberty in the Western Sufi Movement Following Hazrat Inayat Khan*. Belgium: Peeters Publishers
- Jironet, K. (2009). *Sufi Mysticism into the West: Life and Leadership of Hazrat Inayat Khan's brothers 1927-1967*. Brlgium: Peeters Publishers
- Khan, I. (1990). *The Divinity of the human Soul*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass
- Khan, I. (1990). *Mental Purification and Healing*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass
- Khan, I. (1990). *Spiritual Liberty*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers
- Khan, I. (1990). *The way of Illumination*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers
- Khan, I. (1990). *Sufi Teachings*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers
- Khan, I. (1990). *The Unity of Religious Ideals*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers
- Miller, J., Kenedi, A., Moore, T. (2000). *God's Breath: Sacred Scriptures of the World -- The Essential Texts of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sufism*. NY: Da Capo Press.