

Sheik Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani – The Guiding Star: An Analytical Study on the Guidance of Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani from a Psychological perspective

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Abstract:

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani is a familiar name that drives the mind towards Sufism on hearing it. His nobility and morality have attracted millions of hearts to his path. Sufism is generally defined as the purification of heart from the diseases like jealousy, anger, lust and worldly desires focusing on developing closeness with the divine who had created the soul. Unlike the secular psychology Islamic psychology is a soul centric subject where constant spiritual exercise is given to discipline the self like restraining from the worldly whims and still living in the world attached to the society. In Sufi terms, it is called as *خلوة در انجمن* which means “seclusion within gathering” The explanation of this terminology reports that one will go through all the spiritual exercises to discipline his self, restraining it from materialistic matters of the world, making his soul closer to Allah still living in this world in a society not taking it into his heart.

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani was one such Sufi master who was capable to restrain his self from the worldly matters and keep himself redundant of gaining the closeness of Allah in his heart. A familiar incident associated to his life can serve as an example to his spiritual state where once Sheik was teaching his students and a messenger arrived to the Sheik informing him that the ship which carried his valuable goods have sunk in the sea believing it would cause a

significant financial loss, the Sheik looked down to his heart and praised Allah saying “Alhamdulillah” soon after that the same messenger reported that the message given before was by mistake. Looking down to his heart the Sheikh praised Allah saying “Alhamdulillah,” His students were stunned to see their Sheikh’s praise for Allah irrespective of the incident and inquired about the same with him. He explained that the first time the news came, he looked down to his heart searching for sadness or worries and what he found was nothing thus he was satisfied with whatever Allah has decreed and so he praised Allah when the same messenger returned with the message that the former was a message delivered by mistake, he looked down again to his heart searching for overwhelmed joy or excitement having a hope for worldly gain and he found nothing. Therefore, his heart remained content with Allah’s Will, so he praised Allah and thanked Him, This incident attests the spiritual state of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. He was a teacher, a preacher, a mentor and a guide to number of people who followed.

This Article tends to analyze the way and style of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in guiding the followers to the closeness of Allah by his speech in his book (Fathur Rabbani) specifically focusing on how to upgrade one’s self from (Nafs al Ammara) the soul that commands and abides by evil to (Nafs al Muthmainna) the soul which is content and at peace.

Key Words:

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani, Behavioral Psychology, Soul Centric, Nurturing the Self, Guidance.

Introduction:

Islamic Psychology is believed to be a sub category of Sufism which emphasizes the Soul-Centric perspective within Psychology, Sufism has already laid this emphasis at its base, as the fundamental ideology of Sufism lies on purification of the self, one would wonder if it is the soul which is to be purified or is it the heart or is it the self. Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani is a prominent Sufi master in Bagdad who is claimed to be the founder of the Qadiriya Sufi order had classified the (Rooh) soul and placed it in different parts of the body, in his work named as "The secret of the Secrets". "when Allah created the Rooh al Qudsi (The Holy Spirit) in the best state in the realm of divinity (Aalam al lahoot) and then he willed to turn it back to the lowest (realm) to increase the intimacy and closeness. So he sent it firstly to the realm of power or Divine Majesty(Aalam al jabaroot) (the intermediate realm which is in between the realm of angels and the realm of divinity) with the seeds of oneness(Tawheed), so it planted through its spiritual light of purity in that realm of power and the Holy spirit was dressed with the clothes of that realm, and it was sent further to the realm of angels or the spiritual world then to the realm of dominion or the material world and to habituate to this realm Allah created an adaptable clothing(this body) in that realm so the Spirit may not burn the realm to ashes. It is named in accordance with the cloth of the realm of power as the soul of sovereignty and in accordance with the cloth of the realm of divinity as the travelling soul or the luminous spirit and in accordance with the cloth of the realm of dominion or the material world as the bodily or physical soul.

Hence, the major reason for the soul's travel from the realm of divine majesty or power to the material world is to earn the increase in the closeness and the status through the heart planting the seeds of oneness in the heart by

which the tree of oneness grows in the land of heart and its roots are fertile in the soil of secrecy and bears the fruits of oneness for the pleasure of Allah.

And to plant the seeds of Sharia (Islamic law) in the land of the realm of dominion (that is the physical soul) to grow from it the tree of Sharia and bear the fruits of Daraja (Spiritual Status) so, Allah commanded all the souls to enter the physical body and every soul was given a place in it. The station of the physical soul was between blood and flesh, and the station of the travelling or the luminous soul was the heart and the station of the soul of sovereignty was (FUAD) which is the ground of enlightenment in human being placed inside the heart and the heart acts as the gate of it. And the station of The Holy Spirit is secrecy”

Thereby, we understand from the above quoted information that the role of Sheik Abdul Qadir was to guide the physical soul of a person which has sake abode in the station between blood and flesh in the body to undergo a spiritual ascension attaining the characteristics and attributes of the holy spirit which bore the seed of oneness in the realm of power and return it back to the realm of divinity which has took refuge in the secrecy, it is with the longing of the physical soul to travel and reach out to the pleasure of Allah it attains adaptability as the luminous soul and sovereign soul and abodes at the fixed stations ultimately aiming to acquire the properties of The Holy Spirit which has its dwelling in secrecy, through this we understand that the perspectives on the reality of Human being in the Islamic frame differs from the modern psychological concept. In this research work I focus only on the emphasis of Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani on the development of the soul from its lower stage to reaching the perfect self with a small glance about how the self is to be developed, believing it to be a spiritual

¹ Sir ul asrar \ Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani \ Pg- 55

psychotherapy in the path of Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani by quoting the introductory discourse from the compilation Al Fath ar Rabbani.

Al-Fath ar- Rabbani – The Sublime Revelation

This book is a compilation of the speeches delivered by Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani to his followers and they are sixty two in number, Sheik Abdul Qadir in his first speech emphasizes on defeating the self which is filled with whims he says “The self at its first stage is at the state of violation and dispute so, whoever wants to make it in a good state and have control over it, let him battle and struggle with it until he is secure from its evils because it is on a whole evil within evil and if it is defeated it becomes in every aspect good in goodness as it will turn suitable to every obedience and it will avoid every disobedience and sin and at that time it will be called upon by Allah (O’ thou soul at peace! Return unto thy lord, content in his good pleasure!)”²

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani about the Self (Nafs)

In his first discourse Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani introduces the self as an entity which does not abide by the command of Allah and it feeds on the whims of the materialistic world, it may seem that the Sheik has vilified the natural properties of the self to someone who has not entered the frame of Islamic psychology as the reality of the self in its natural form is left in such a stage to test the human beings that who amongst them would battle it and strive to control it according to the laws posed by Allah. Whereas this responsibility is not bore by any other creation except human being as he has put a covenant to return back with the self in its

² Al- Fat har Rabbani \ Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani \ Al Majlis al Awwal \ Pg-6

perfect or at least the purest form to Allah and the development of the self from its first (raw) stage to its purest or perfect stage is to strive to control it by eradicating the whims of the materialistic world from it and to have control over it by indulging it in good deeds which gives the soul the upper hand over the self.

The Concept of Zuhd

Sheik again emphasizes on (zuhd) which is a total form of detachment from the creation by heart and only relying for everything on the creator which psychologically gives the mind a motivation and a boost by relieving the stress in any form by transferring it from one's self to a larger entity which is believed to be capable of baring it and dissolving it. He also portrays Ibrahim peace be upon him as an exemplar suggesting that we can act as his descendants in this process to gain progress in mental health and wellbeing. Why Ibrahim peace be upon him as an example? is a question to be answered from his speech where he says that "The self has to undergo a yearning for its purification by which its evil character will get discarded and it will not long for anything from the creation as prophet Ibrahim peace be upon him was in this stage where he perfected his self as it lasted without fanciful desires and his heart was at peace. Different types of creation came to him and offered themselves to help him out in any situation he was in but he replied that I do not require your help His knowledge about my condition will suffice me from seeking help from you as his trust and reliance on this larger entity Allah was very firm and for real. Hence Allah helped him from the fire commanding it to be cool and good for Ibrahim peace be upon him"³. The belief that Allah is the lord who has the control and dominion over every creation gives a mental makeup of reliance and trust in Him which eventually encourages

³ Al- Fat har Rabbani \ Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani \ Al Majlis al Awwal \ Pg-6

the mind to be at peace in whatsoever the situation one faces. It is through constant patience one receives the help from Allah in this materialistic world as patience is seen as a precious character and one of the attributes of Allah himself. In other words, the process of developing the self from its lower grade to the perfect or purest form can also be called as the inculcation of Allah's Attributes in one's self.

The Heart (Qalb) in Sheik's Discourse

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani continues to define about (Qalb) The heart and how it should be as the heart is believed to be the central focus of Sufism because when asked about the general definition of Sufism it is said to be the purification of heart he says "Mend your hearts and if it gets improved every aspect of your life will be prosperous as said by the Prophet peace be upon him "indeed, in the son of Adam there is a morsel of flesh which, if it is sound, the whole body is sound. And if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart"⁴.

The process of mending the heart includes (Taqwa) piety or God-consciousness with reliance on Allah the most exalted and (Tawheed) oneness and sincerity in deeds and it gets corrupted if the above mentioned are not found or done by a person. The heart is like a bird in the cage of body, like a pearl in a casket, it is like the valuables in the treasury, the priority is given to the bird and not the cage, the pearl and not the casket, the valuables and not the treasury"⁵.

The Significance of Heart in Islamic Psychology

Purifying the heart is to get closer to Allah who knows its stages and status, the heart in the Islamic perspective of psychology gains prominence as it is placed

⁴ Sahih al- Bukhari\ Book-2\ Hadith 48 & Sahih al-Muslim\ Book-10\ Hadith3881

⁵ Al- Fat har Rabbani \ Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani\ Al Majlis al Awwal\ Pg-7

as the center for all the emotions, while the modern psychology mostly negates the base that there is an external entity which has knowledge about the heart and the emotions that pop out from it concerning the situation one puts his self in, Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani advocates purification of the heart by deviating it from the materialistic emotions and sculpting it to become pure by ensuring the intentions and deeds performed goes hand in hand fearing the accountability by Allah. This indeed is a substantial process which makes the mind constantly engaged in deeds which inculcates peacefulness in oneself.

He emphasizes on self-analyzation as a primary step in developing one's self by obeying the commands of Allah and following the Sharia through which the physical soul undergoes perpetual spiritual exercise by adapting and abiding by the laws which promotes the self to indulge only in good intentions and deeds refraining it from all the evil aspects.

The Principles of Qadiriya Sufi Order

It is to be noted that The Qadiriya Sufi Order is a prominent Sufi Order which serves as a significant contribution of Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani to the Islamic society at large, Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani has laid a great emphasis on the steadfastness in the straight path by complying to the Sharia and moral integrity by abiding to a Tariqa to gain spiritual uprightness called as Haqiqah.

Self-Struggle

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani highlights on Self-Struggle by saying that Allah says "As for those who strive in us, we surely guide them to our paths"⁶. The Prophet

⁶Surah Al-Ankaboot\ verse-69

peace be upon him says that “The greatest struggle is a truthful statement before a tyrannical authority”⁷. He continues to say “and those who have not stood steadfast as a striver at the starting point of the path, will not gain from it even its scent. The core of Self-Struggle is resisting the self and its desires. Self-Struggle is incomplete without Self-Monitoring and it is to worship Allah as if you see him or at least to be aware that he is watching over you. Self- Monitoring in turn goes useless and incomplete without knowing four matters they are Knowledge about who is Allah, Knowledge about the enemy of Allah i.e. Iblees and the knowledge about the Self that is prone to evil and the knowledge about the obligatory deeds towards Allah”⁸.

Psychological Implication on The Concept of Self- Struggle

The concept of Self-Struggle from the lens of Islamic Psychology associated with the Sufi teachings and guidance of Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani derives a nuanced insight on the development of the mental state through constant struggle in adapting to a higher state of pleasure and peacefulness from its lower stage which is inclined to the whims and desires that inculcates imbalance in the moral conduct of a person. It also encourages mindfulness about an external eternal force and ultra-consciousness about its connection with the soul in doing any deed restraining one from perpetrating immoral activities which are prone to be evil and uplifting it from that state to a higher state of good moral conduct which earns peacefulness and pleasure.

⁷ Sunan Al- Tirmidhi\ Kitab al- Fitan

⁸ Futhuhul Ghaib\ The Discourse on Self-Struggle

Reliance on God (Allah)

As for this concept, Reliance in a supreme being for any and every situation a person is put in Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani quotes from the Quran where Allah says “And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him”⁹. The reality of reliance on Allah is entrusting Allah and surrendering every matter to him.

Reliance on Allah – A psychological perspective

The mind of a human being is driven towards confusions that leads to mental unwellness like severe anxiety, depression and stress when he or she is constantly held with taking decisions in all the aspects of life, it makes the person feel burdened at a stage where he or she will be affected with anxiety and will wish to go to a blank state to relieve the self from getting stressed and exhausted.

Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani from the Sufi perspective of looking at this matter provides a solution through his spiritual guidance and emphasizes on the reliance on Allah who is a supreme being with an internal belief system of Islam which promotes the idea that it is Allah the creator who has created you and put you in whatever situation you are facing and He knows what you are going through so it is better to just dodge the situation by relying on Him and deciding what will earn his pleasure, so here we again see an upper hand given to the pleasure of Allah against the pleasure of the Self which is again putting the Self in constant struggle to simply relieve from the mental sickness like anxiety and depression caused by the confusions in deciding matters.

⁹ Surah Talaq\ Verse-3

Noble Character

Noble character otherwise known as good conduct with basic qualities of humanity is significantly promoted in Islam as Allah has mentioned about his beloved Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him as “And thou standest on an exalted standard of character”¹⁰. There is a hadith where the Prophet peace be upon him was once asked who is the greatest among us and he replied those with noble character.

Noble Character and Sound Psyche

To have a sound psyche a person must know the qualities of a human being. Human beings are social animals who have a biological makeup of any other animals but what distinguishes human being and makes him the sole reason for creation is that the human possess the qualities to live as a social being which is by default inbuilt in his soul. so, it is the soul which provides the human mind to have the qualities like empathy and tolerance with the other fellow beings and this soul is a gift from Allah which is considered as the core of any living being and this soul according to the Sufi teachings carry the reflection of the attributes of Allah like mercy, patience, gratitude etc. if a person builds his or her character according to this blueprint he or she may be considered of possessing a noble character and a sound psyche as the mind of a person always feels peaceful if he is attributed with noble character.

¹⁰ Surah Qalam\verse-4

Conclusion

This is the Qadiri method in education, behavior, and Sufism, which has served the Islamic religion and the Muslim community through its principles and foundations. It does not deviate from the Quran and Sunnah, and jurisprudence (Fiqh) is the guide by which Sufism proceeds. It places Sharia as the governing authority over spiritual truth (Haqiqa) and the path (Tariqa). These principles of the method call for noble morals and good conduct among people.

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani clarified the true essence of Sufism. "It is not achieved by wearing wool, lowering one's gaze, or the mere repetition of stories of the righteous, nor by moving fingers in remembrance and glorification of Allah. Rather, it is achieved through struggle, action, and sincerity. It is attained by being truthful in seeking Allah Almighty, renouncing worldly desires, removing attachment to creation from the heart, and purifying oneself from everything other than Allah Almighty"¹¹.

Thus, it is believed that Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani has laid a path to reform the self and rejuvenate the soul to gain its originality and purity by making it viable to spiritual exercises and making the self to abide and act for the goodness and wellbeing of the heart and soul.

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¹¹ Fathur Rabbani\ Sheik Abdul Qadir Jilani\Discourse No.25