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THE ROLE OF KHANQAH IN THE REFORMATION OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

Khanqah is an inclusive institute of Shariah and Tariqah (a method for spiritual elevation and purification) which provides a platform for the beginners of Sulook. Residence, refectory and sanctuary are main parts of Khanqah which are closely connected to it. Food is served here to the public without discrimination. The facility of residence is also available here. Khanqah is also an educational institute for the thirst of religious knowledge which serves the public with the facility of free education. So, this educational institute is an orbit for divinity. Shrine is such a greatest source of morality where humanity receives the message of sacrifice, tolerance and brotherhood. Khanqah is an Islamic Movement which competes the rebellious waves of materialism with its mystic honor. So, shrine restored community's disconnected relationship. History indicates that successors of these Khanqahs performed strong services in the promotion of Islam. When peace turned into war then these successors came out of their Khanqahs and served their services in the protection and defense of Islam. These successors did not allow the spiritual aspects of Islam to be defeated. The role of Khanqah is prominent in the construction

of modern Muslim society. So, in this article, past and present role of Khanqah is tried to be defined.

Findings:

This paper finds that the khankah play very important role in purifications of self (nafs), moral education, and reformation of society. It has also played an effective role in dispensation of Islamic art and knowledge, resolution and purification of financial problems and in current period of Islamic political bend in international politions Khaqahs have played a great role in spiritual domination of Islam.

INTRODUCTION:

A Khanqah is an inclusive institution of Shariah and Tariqah which provides a platform for the beginners of Sulook, spiritual elevation towards Allah. A Khanqah is an institution which has so far fought against materialism. It has revived humanity's torn bond with ethics and morality. It has relighted the bloom of honesty and accountability regarding deeds. It has nipped and shorn the diseases of heart. It has saved the humanity from getting destroyed at the hands of worldly desires and has also saved Tazkia (spiritual purification) --- one of the most indispensable part of Islam--- from getting diminished.

In origin the word Khanqah is actually derived from a Persian word Khan Gah which means "a place where a tribal chief resides", but was later Arabicized into Khanqah¹. Khanqah is usually built at the shrine of a saint. Here "Khan" means saint and "Qah" a place where he resides. "Qah" is actually a variation of "Gah" from Persian.² A place where a living saint resides or a demised one rests. In Qaid Al Lughat the word "Khan" means "Prince, King or Chief". And "Khana" means "Residence" or "Market". It also sometimes gives meaning of "Master"³. In Egypt the word "Zaviah" is used for "Khanqah".⁴ Kanqah also means: Baqa'h, Kashish Khana, Ma'bad and Zaviah.⁵

In Arabic Khanqah is called "Rabaat". The word "Rabaat" is derived from "Rabita" and "Rabita" is actually a word for the check post built at the boundaries. In Misbah Al Lughat the word "Rabaat" means to tie something, a fort or a place where battalions stay for defense, or a place where poor ones can be fed.⁶

Abdul Qahir bin Abdullah Suherwardi RH. A write in his book "A'warif ul Ma'rif", chapter 13 "Fi Fadhilat ul Sakaan al Ribaat":

"The place, where a person worships Allah, cries when that person leaves this world. Rabaat has been built so that people can reach Allah. Therefore, Dervishes go to Rabaat where they can protect themselves from the collective evils and harms of society. At Rabaat people of various ages gather to get spiritually reformed in a way the Holy Prophet S.A.W. reformed the people."⁷

From the abovementioned definitions it is clear that Khanqah is actually a place where that person resides who heeds more upon spiritual purification than worldly commitments and therefore stays engrossed by the worship of Allah. He also stays in touch with social life but prefers more to be involved in

religious endeavors. Thus, he strives to bring himself on the path of spiritual purification and tries to achieve spiritual prodigies.

It is quite wrong to say that khanqah has nothing to do with social life and that it isolates one from the social life, because if that be the case, Khanqah would never have succeeded in influencing the social lives of others; rather, the influential role played by Sufias in the lives of human beings is a truth sufficient enough to negate such accusations.

Role Of Khanqah in Purification of Nafs (Self):

Purification and cultivation of heart has remained the chief objective of Prophets A.S. The purification of Nafs is the most essential phase of spiritual rearing so much so that for this purpose Allah S.W.T. sent his Prophets A.S. and called it the greatest favor ever done to human kind. The individual and social life of human beings and their prosperity in this world and the world hereafter has a close relation with it, because without it the reformation and refinement of human character is impossible.

Refinement and civilization of Nafs has two phases:

First Phase:

Eradication of Akhlaq e Siah from the heart and thus making it avoid sins. This phase is called Tasfiah or Takhlia.

Second Phase:

Nurturing the heart through Uloom of Ma'arifat and preparing it for the execution of good deeds. This phase is called Tahlia.

Islam stresses upon the adoption of good morals. The Quranic verses which give instruction regarding good morals are twice as important as the verses about Ehkaam. Likewise, the incidents mentioned in the Holy Quran are to provide lessons regarding good morals. Same is the case with Ahadith mentioned in the chapters of Hadith regarding Akhlaq (Morals).

The Prophets A.S. came to enlighten the hearts of mankind by supplanting the evils, present in them, by good morals. So that this spiritual purification could shield the hearts of mankind from evils and make good deeds easier for them.

Holy Prophet S.A.W. says,

“I am sent to accomplish the good morals.”⁸

Holy Prophet S.A.W. also says,

“A Momin having complete Eman is the one having good morals.”⁹

Holy Prophet S.A.W. says,

“On the Day of Judgment, the heaviest deed on the weighing scale of deeds will be good morals.”¹⁰

Since the chief purpose of Khanqah is the refinement of morals, proper attention is given to the eradication of internal and spiritual evils --- pride, ostentation, hypocrisy and jealousy etc. --- and thus these evils afterwards are supplanted by good spiritual morals --- patience, contentment, fear and hope, and truthfulness and honest etc.¹¹ In a nutshell, the Salikeen (disciples) at Khanqah are always given instructions to stay honest.¹²

Polishing and cultivation of Niyah (intention) has remained to be one of the foremost concerns of Mashaikh (saints).

The primary responsibility of Shaikh (Saint or Master) after completing the spiritual education of his Khalifah (disciple cum deputy) lays in cleaning the heart of his Khalifah from getting fascinated by materialistic world and thus he inculcates his Khalifa's heart with Tawakul and Isteghna.¹³

Various parts of Malfuzaat instruct to avoid criticism and fault-finding. Therefore, in Khanqah the Saliks are instructed to avoid criticism and fault-finding because such indulgences can destroy the productive abilities.¹⁴

Writing about the Khanqah of Nizam ud Din Awlia RH. A professor Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami says that this Khanqah was like a resting abode for the tired and exhausted hearts of the world. Further he writes that the purpose of this Khanqah was not to bring about any political revolution but to revive the fundamentals of Islam by serving the servants of Allah and refining their morals.¹⁵

The Islahi (refining and reformative) mission of the saints of Chishti order had been centered on the moral education. They considered it a Prophetic duty. Therefore, they tried their best to replace immoralities of the human character with purified morals.¹⁶

Dr. Naseer Ahmed Nasir says that Khanqahi system is therefore a universal, aesthetic, revolutionary movement whose main purpose is to transform the lives of human beings.¹⁷

Appreciating the endeavors of Sufi Saints Professor Latifullah says that in an era of intellectual, spiritual, and moral crisis among Muslims the Sufi Saints were on the defensive and provided a shield for Muslim identity. One cannot overlook the well composed, pure and sensitive personalities of great Sufi Saints who protected the identity of Islam in times of immense moral crisis.¹⁸

According to Abdullah Ghori, if Sufi Saints had not paid attention to the purification and reformation of Nafs, worships, and spiritual edification, Islam would have transformed merely into a political system.¹⁹

Role of Khanqah in Moral Education:

We cannot disregard the endeavors done by Khanqahs in the Muslim society in various phases of history. The respect and acknowledgement given to Khanqahs by the society is not something achieved without any struggle. In fact, Khanqahs instilled kindness, love, good manners and morality, and justice and respect in

the society without even considering any reward in return. The Islamic legacy retains information regarding the distinguishing role played by the recent Khanqas and those of yore for those who study it with impartiality. And after that it doesn't become difficult to reach at a conclusion. Some of the glimpses and allusions from that legacy are mentioned here.

In this discipline of moral and spiritual education, it is evident that the Sheikhs of these Khanqas were not of Sufis but also scholars of great repute and stratum. Abu Al Qasim Ibrahim bin Nasar Abadi was a great scholar of Hadith and had narrated many Hadiths. Abu Hamza Baghdadi was a Qari of such repute that even eminent scholars like Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal used to ask him questions regarding Masail (Problems). Amar bin Usman Makki was also the scholar of Hadith and an Usuli. Hamdoon Bin Ahmad Alqasaar was scholar and Faqih of Umloom e Zahiri (External Knowledge). Hazrat Junaid was the Faqih of the school of thought of Abu Soor. Abdul Qadir Jillani was the Faqih of Hanbali school of thought. If a seeker of the truth read Ibn Al Arabi's "Tabqaat un Nisaak", Salmi's "Tabqaat us Sufia", Abu Naeem's "Huliat ul Awlia", Abn Hajar's "Al Darar ul Kamina", Sakhaawi's "Alzu Alil Ma'", Ghari's "Alkawakib al Sairah", Muradi's "Salak ud Darar" and Baitar's "Hulia tul Bashar" he would discover that most of the prominent scholars of their time were also Sufis.

Likewise, if we look at the Subcontinent, we see that Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhadis Dehlvi, Hazrat Mujadid Alaf As Sani, Shah Waliullah Muhadis Dehlvi, Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi, Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohvi, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Haji Imdadullah Mahajar Makki were not only the ones residing in Khanqahs but Faqihs and Muhadiths of great repute. Moreover, Subcontinent's literary, intellectual and spiritual history reveals that there were numerous scholars who also at the same time were great Sufis.

So far as the moral rearing and education of the people is concerned the legacy left by Khanqas is not inferior to any educationists. The distinction of Muhasbi's "Risalat ul Mustarshdini", Abu Talib Makki's "Quwat ul Quloob", and Imam Ghazali's "Ahya al Uloom" needs no reiteration.

In Naqshbandi and Sunusi Khanqas there used to be a setup of Madrassah where essential knowledge was taught free of cost and so much as the poor students were provided with financial aids. The Khanqahi tradition of Subcontinent and Central Asia has its own glorious aspect. Even the contemporary Khanqas retain the same traditions with much liveliness and animation. The initiatives taken in Turkey by founding Madarish and Makatib for the memorization of Holy Quran in a fight against secularism and the role played by Naqshabandi Khanqas in Central Asia against Soviet invasions are one of the most glorious chapters of history.

From centuries Sufis are endeavoring to discuss almost every subject in a much expounding way through their poetic as well as prose literary works. Through their literary works and Malfuzaat (speeches) Sufis have been trying to turn the hearts of people from Razail (evilness) towards Fazail (piety). Their main focus

has been to produce *Khashiyat e Elahi* (fear of Allah) so that the hearts of people stay inclined towards Allah.²⁰

Literature in the form of sayings of *Awlia* has been the most precious asset of the civilization of Subcontinent and this literature not only sheds light upon the principles and ideologies of the Sufis, but also tells us about the psychological environment, economic affairs, literary movements and social proclivities of that time.²¹

The Sufis of subcontinent have sponsored and supervised scholarship and learning. Most of them had literary and scholarly tastes; thus, their appreciation has deep effect on the educational movement of Subcontinent.²²

When theretofore underground movement of *Tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism) was brought to the fore, it quite rapidly helped evolve aesthetically creative abilities of individuals and thus the orchard of Islamic Civilization got embellished with the colors of art and literature. Since the passion and love concealed in *Tasawuf* became a reason to the channelization of aesthetic and creative abilities of the individuals, its effect can be observed in great literary and artistic master pieces.²³

Sufis sowed the seeds of their search of Allah in plains of poetry and took *sher* and *ghazal* to such zenith that the uncertainty of *Shakhs* (person) and *Aks* (reflection) vanished. Therefore, the poetry of *Sinai*, *Rumi*, *Attar*, *Iraqi*, *Saadi*, *Ameer Khusro* and *Khwaja Hafiz* is widely read in the gatherings of *Haal o Qaal* (ecstasy).²⁴

Ibn al Arabi and *Aasiri*, and *Farid ud Din*, *Sinai*, *Maulana Rumi*, *Saadi*, *Iraqi*, *Beedal* and *Hafiz* made *Tasawuf* their subject of poetry in Arabic and Persian respectively. Similarly, *Allama Iqbal*, *Zauq*, *Mirza Ghalib*, *Mir Dard* brought *Tasawuf* in Urdu poetry. Also, *Rehman Baba* and *Khushal Khan Khatak*, and *Shah Abdul Latif* and *Sachal Sarmast*, and *Shah Hussain*, *Bhullay Shah* and *Sultan Bahu*, and *Baba Farid*, *Hafiz Jamal*, *Khawaja Farid*, and *Ghulam Hussain Shaheed* are the renowned Sufi Poets of *Pashto*, *Sindhi*, *Punjabi* and *Saraiki* respectively.²⁵

Moral Education of Ordinaries and the Notables, and the Role Played by Khanqas:

In the Islamic society whenever the elites of the political system had exploited the poor ones or confiscated their properties, it was Sufis of these *Khanqahs* who undeterred by the influence of those elites faced them and told them their flaws on their faces.

It was *Hassan Al Basari* who commenced it and speaking about his contemporaries he says:

“By God, I have attended the companies many whose company was a coolness of eyes and brightness of faces. I have seen many who feared their own

virtuousness and thought lest their virtues might lead to their punishment a turn into sins.²⁶

Such lamentations regarding the social crisis can also be seen among Muhasbi, Siri Saqti, Sahal bin Abdullah Tustari and Junaid Baghdadi. Besides, mentioning the social crisis in their time these Mashaikh also feared the attitude of the scholars who used to visit rulers.

Fudhail bin Abbas used to advise Haroon ur Rashid and warn him against cruelty. After some time, Zunun Al Misari was imprisoned by Mutawakil Abbas. In that prison when some people brought a meal for him, he rejected to eat it by saying, "I won't eat a meal that comes from the table of a cruel being."²⁷ Sahal Bin Abdullah Abdullah used to reject presents offered by the king, because he was that the king was cruel.

In history we see that whether it is Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani, Sufis of Egypt or Sufis of Subcontinent, all of them have always remained straightforward and never been deterred by any anyone. They even used to speak the truth before cruel kings. Similarly, it was the endeavors of Mujadid Alf Al Sani which brought about Islamic Renaissance. He not only reformed the hearts of his disciples, but also played a vital role in reforming the ordinaries and notables, as well as the methodologies of contemporary scholars and sufis; thus, he brought the boat of Islam safely to the shore of its destination.²⁸

Hazrat Mujadid Alaf Al Sani did Jihad with the help of his pen and tongue, and as a result abolished anti-Islamic Laws and the custom of reverential prostration in Jahangir's court. He made the king allow the declarative sacrifice of cows. He made the king charge Jizia from Non-Muslims. He also renovated hitherto demolished mosques and implemented Sharia Laws in the country.²⁹

Allama Iqbal praised Hazrat Mujadid Alaf Alsani in one of his poems as follows:

(Paraphrase)

"I visited the grave of Sheikh Mujadid. Even under the soil he shines like a sunset of lights. Even the stars are timid before the particles of this soil. Under this Soil lies the knower of mysteries. His neck didn't bend before Jahangir. His passion is the passion of freedom fighters. He was the guardian of Muslim nation in Hindustan. Allah Almighty cautioned him in time."³⁰

Role of Khanqas in Preaching and Preserving Islam:

The role played by various orders of Tasawuf in various countries to preserve and preach Islam in something that cannot be ignored and blinked at. About the Silsilah (order) of Sanosi, Syed Abu Al Hassan Ali Nadvi writes:

"Sanosi order took various courses to save, preserve and spread Islam. One of the most important courses that they took was buying young slaves from Sudan and bringing them to Khanqah where they were given moral education; thus, when they excelled and were seen to be capable of giving moral education, they

were freed. After that these students were sent to their own cities, where they would perform the task of Islamic preaching. And hundreds of such students were passed out of these Khanqas every year.”³¹

Dr. Abdullah Kamil writes:

“In Barqah and other regions of Sudan could be found the Khanqahs of Sanosi. Beside Madrassas these Khanqahs are also mosques for worship. These Khanqahs are the forts of peace and safety. These khanqahs play a collective role of resorts where hospitality could be witnessed, markets for the merchants and camps for soldiers. These Khanqahs are a reason for the prosperity, peace and increasing numbers of worshippers in this country. These khanqahs have all the facilities that people are in need of. It was due to the presence of these Khanqahs in Barqah and Tirabulus that Italy had to face such a huge financial and personal loss.”³²

About the Muridia Movement of Daghistan, Muhammad Shafi Butt writes:

“In Central Asia after the fall of Temurid dynasty numerous states came in to being. Unfortunately, these states were mostly in dispute with each other. Thus, imperial Russia victimized these states by taking advantage of the disputes and educational stagnancy. Therefore, after possessing these extensive Muslim states, Russia not only exploited the financial resources but also dealt a hard blow to the religion and civilization of these states. Though no resistance was shown against this imperialist power on governmental level, yet Russia had to face a great deal confrontation in various regions. Accordingly, the mightiest resistance in this regard was in the form of a Sufi movement of Daghistan, which was led by Sufi Saints. This movement not only showed resistance to the Russian imperialism but kept it a bay in different regions for a long time. This movement was led by the Sufis of Naqshbandi order. This movement came to be known as Muridia Movement in these regions. This resisting movement was led by Imam Shamil Naqshbandi (1799-1871) and most of his disciples were also a part of it.”³³

The Need and Significance of Active and Operating Khanqahs:

1. Present era is the period of materialism. Everyone is insanely sunk in materialistic desires and attainments, and is utterly in oblivion about the demolition of morality with the passage of time. In addition, their hearts are getting rotten with greed, jealousy, hatred, enmity, cruelty, and pride. And now even those who used to decline the effective role of Khanqah are now acknowledging its evident significance. It is a magic which can be realized when witnessed.

2. The moral identity and spiritualism are on a decline. Many spheres and fields are bereft of Islamic vision and there are frequent assaults of materialism and material desires. The heart and soul are ailing. Spiritual maladies have surpassed physical diseases. Spiritual diseases are so much greater in number that a few among many are safe. The cure for spiritual diseases is as imperative as for physical diseases. Therefore, in current era the need for active Khanqahs is far greater than past.

3. In a period when people stay fascinated by the world and forgets the hereafter, when they begin to adopt the beliefs of Mushrikeen and start neglecting the Islamic teachings, when humiliation and darkness overcomes and weakness seeps into people and they began to fear death, when the fear of America and Britain is more palpable than fear of Allah The Almighty in hearts, when Ummah cannot see its own glorious past and is enthralled by the captivations of west, when people begin to understand Islam at the hands of so called western researches then it is time for the Khanqahs to play their significant role.

4. When the main purpose of education becomes merely a dispensation of western literature and western scientific culture, and governmental revenues are spent on such education and its attainment becomes an essential credential for jobs, when the picture of Islamic truth is made to grow fainter and non-religiousness prevails and its main purpose becomes preparing a generation, for rural population, which rises to be a proponent of anti-Islamic beliefs who seemingly appear to be Muslims but in reality are too much far from the principles of Islam, and when all these preparations are made then Khanqahs should come in the arena and perform their duties.

5. Ruhaniyat (Sufism) is all about Haal not Qaal, which means it does not believe in verbosity. It is not only about acquiring knowledge but bringing it into practical experiences. It is not an outer experience but an utterly inward trial. Roohaniyat cannot be attained through reasoning or observation but through internal emotions, Wijdan, and heart. It flourishes only from inside. It spreads not through words and speeches but through the fiery and purified waves of soul. It abodes not in words but in depths of emotions. Roohaniyat cannot be told about or listened to, rather it is something learned and adopted. It is attained through Sulook and Tasarruf, and protects one from confusions and uncertainties. It is the purification of Nafs (Self), and a veiled way by which Allah can be attained.

6. In societies where a diversity of cultures and religion can be found, Muslims needs a code and a system by which they can make other people acknowledge the extraordinary significance of Islam. Like in past centuries, Khanqahs can still not only relieve Hindu, Sikh, and Christian communities but also help states establish peace, prosperity, kindness, justice and religious tolerance in the society. Islamic spiritual foundations are necessary for social welfare, which can be strengthened only by Khanqahs.

7. The Khanqahs and Sufis have provided an acceptable standard, to differentiate between Halal and Haram and to attain Taqwa (piety), which is quite acceptable. Once the sister of Bishr bin Haris came to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and asked whether it is Jayiz (allowed) to sew under the light coming from the lamps allocated for security guard? Hearing this question Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal asked, "Who is that woman?" When he came to know that she was the sister of Bishr bin Haris, he said, "Real piety aroused from your house. This sewing is prohibited to you."³⁴

8. The chief objective of Khanqah is to establish Ikhlas (sincerity) and Lillahiyyat (that everything is done for the sake of Allah). Khanqah pays major attention on adherence to Sharia based on Husn e Niyyat (pure intention) and Khaloos (sincerity). The effectiveness of Khanqah can only be achieved when human life molds completely according to the pattern of Shariah and when

formality and showiness dies out. The effectiveness of Khanqah in this way can bring about a revolution in adherence to Shariah.

CONCLUSION:

1. Khanqah has played a vital role in purifications of self (nafs), moral education, and reformation of ordinaries as well as notables.
2. Khanqah has played an effective role in dispensation of Islamic art and knowledge, resolution and purification of financial problems and resources, and a concealed service of the creature of Allah.
3. In current period of Islamic political bend in international politions Khaqahs have played a great role in spiritual domination of Islam.
4. When it was necessary, Sufis didn't even fear to come in the battlefield fight for sake of Allah.
5. Morality in everyday life is the result of monasteries and their workers.
6. Many of the khanqah also played their role in politics along with education.
7. khanqah also provided a safe and sound shelter to the segregated people.

Future Directions & Recommendation:

1. Khanqah can play a pivotal role in spreading peaceful teaching and can help bar against extremist teachings and intentions.
2. Spiritual identity and tradition are on a decline in Muslim countries, which call for the attention of Sufis and Scholars.
3. Although it is also necessary to bring reformations in Khanqah but it is only a Khanqah that can fight against materialism.
4. It is the demand of present day that the moral degradation should be uprooted. Despite of the fact that technology has converted the world into a global village, the people are far away from each other because of the lack of love's emotions and feelings. In order to shortened the distance among nations, monasteries must play there role.
5. The persons who teach in such type of institutions should be aware of current changes, threats as well as they must know about future's upheavals so that they may pave the way for bright future.
6. It is also need of the present time to train the young ones with close attention and struggle.
7. Monastery also has to extend it's scope as well as to bring modernity in its rules.

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