

Sufism and Vedantism: A Search for Commonalties

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ABSTRACT

The over-emphasizing on ritualism in Hinduism and Islam raises the differences of exclusive religious identity among people that cause hatred and bigotry in the society. However, people neglect similar esoteric aspect the religion. The Sufism and Vedanta have all-encompassing approach to reveal similar reality of mystical observations and experiences in the society; both rich mystical traditions pursue people to achieve higher goals of life. The Sufism and Vedantism share a lot of commonalties to gain spiritualization among people. The antagonistic attitude between Hinduism and Islam would be decreased to study the common view about Vedanta and Sufism; therefore, it promotes the human values of love, peace, and tolerance among various religious identities of all over the world. The present study is attempted to evaluate the common mystical aspects of Vedanta and Sufism that had developed over the centuries in South Asia.

Keywords: Sufism, Vedanta, Mysticism in South Asia, Pluralism, Islam, Hinduism, Wahdat-ul-Wajud, Study of Comparative Religions

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INTRODUCTION

The term Vedanta, encompasses two words; *Veda* meaning 'knowledge' whereas *anta* means 'end.' In this sense, Vedanta is par excellence knowledge and wisdom of India. These revealed scriptures of Hindu traditions are considered impersonal (*Apaurusaya*) and eternal (*nitya*). Vedanta is comprised of four Vedas: *Rig Veda*, *Yagur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Athur Veda*. Four Vedas are divided into *Mantra*, *Brāhmana*, *Āranka* and *Upanshads*. According to Hindu traditions, four Vedas are referred to the four ends of life; i.e. four elements of life water, air, fire and earth. The Vedas symbolise the manifestation of whole world. The words 'OM' is essence of four Vedas and it refers to eternal and perfect. The knowledge of Vedanta is divided into two categories: a) physical knowledge based on sense organ's empirical experiences and b) metaphysical knowledge or transcendent knowledge which relies on mental and spiritual exercises through meditations. The central question of Vedanta revolves around the nature of God.

In Islam, Sufism is the mystical tradition and focuses on the inner aspect of life to search Union of God. A German professor, F.A.G. Tholuck coined the term of 'Sufism' in 1821. To him, this term was derived from the *Arabic* word of *tasawwuf* and the lateris used for Sufism. Various viewpoints exist regarding the etymological derivation of *tasawwuf* and *Sufi*[1]. A majority of scholars hold the view that the word Sufi has been derived from the *Arabic* word *suf* which means 'wool.' Thus, *tasawwuf* literally means 'wearing wool' and Sufi is the 'one who wears wool.' Moreover, there are diverse opinions about the origin of Sufism. Nicholson highlights the external or non-Islamic influences on Sufism, which include Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Buddhism, and Vedantism[2]. In this regard, Sufism cannot be separated from the external factors.

According to William Stoddart, the *Arabic* word *sufi* and the Sanskrit word *yogi* have similar appeal for their contextual meaning to gain the goal of life. Sufism and Vedanta, both represent the esoteric dimension of two respective religions. Sufism is associated with Islamic theology and Vedanta corresponds to Vedic religions. Sufism and Vedanta deal with timeless truth and ultimate reality. The fundamental teachings of Vedanta and Sufism cover the topic of Supreme Truth, the divinity of soul, the unity of existence.

The present study aims at exploring the similar aspects between Sufism and Vedanta. Both mystical traditions have different methodology to find the God. It tries to see how different aspects of Sufism and Vedanta are closely related. It investigates the similar aspects of the life of Sufi and Yogi. Moreover, it also explains the doctrines of Sufism and Vedanta. In addition, the study explores the notion of God, self, prophet, meditation, miracle and *nirvana*. The

¹ For details see, TanvirAnjum, *Chuisti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400*(Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35-41.

² Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*(London: Routledge Publishers, 1963), 8-23.

antagonistic attitude between Hinduism and Islam would be decreased by the comparative study of Sufism and Vedanta. It will be helpful to discern the close relation between Vedanta and Sufism.

The study on Sufism and Vedanta employs the analytical approach within the discipline of history. It tries to analyse and evaluate the common philosophical and mystical concepts between Sufism and Vedanta.

Understanding Vedantism and Sufism:

Vedanta and its teaching express the transcendent knowledge in the form of Philosophy; it contains wisdom of ancient India and revealed scripture of the Hindus. The auxiliary teachings and scriptures are propagating the truth of Vedas. In another sense, Vedanta has metaphorical meaning of goals or purpose; for literally it means “the end of the Vedas”[3] or the highest goal of wisdom, which is the recognition of one’s identity with *Brahman* or God. The universal wisdom of Vedanta surrounds the whole world; it is a manifestation of power and glory of ancient India. The notion of rejection to the world as evil and oneself as sinner is considered the repudiation of God. Three propositions elaborate the core teaching of Vedanta[4]: true nature or Self of man, to know the purpose of life and to realize one’s identity with transcendent Godhood.

Sufism is the broad phenomenon of life, and it cannot be comprehended fully. The outward expression of Sufism has posed many questions for scholars on Sufism. The spiritual realisation by an individual towards the God might be called the centre of consciousness, and it varies person to person. Annemarie Schimmel explains this intricate concept to take example of Rumi’s famous story of the blind men. Four blind men experienced an elephant in different manners when they touched the elephant. Each illustrated it according to the part of the body his hands had touched: to one the elephant appeared like a throne, to another like a fan, or like a water pipe, or like a pillar. All of them were not able to conceive what the whole animal would look like[5]. In this sense, Sufism is the usually accepted name for Islamic mysticism. To draw its partial meaning, one has to ask oneself first, what mysticism means. By ordinary means or intellectual effort cannot be applied to understand from the root common to the word mystic and mystery. This word is derived from the Greek word *myein*, and its means “to close the eyes.”

AliHujwiri emphasized the concept of Sufism and coded the Quran’s verse in this context. God has said: *And those who meekly on the earth, and when the ignorant speak to them answer ‘peace’*” (shall be rewarded with the highest place in Paradise)[6], Sufi is generally perceived to be one who is adept in spiritual experiences. The actual path of Sufism leads to a process of inner transformation whereby the powers of the soul are turned toward God[7]. Sufis propagate the core philosophical thoughts about the unity of existences, the nature of God, time and space. The great Andalusian Sufi, Muhyi 'd-Din Abnul al- Arabi, said in his prayer: “*Enter me, O Lord, into the deep of the Ocean of Thine Infinite Oneness.*”[8]. 'Ocean' is figurative indication to the End towards which their path is directed. Sufism is a tidal wave that flows from time to time in the form of revelation from the Ocean of infinitude to the shore of finite world. The philosophical contents of Sufism are attributed to the Neo-Platonism, and it addresses the questions of unity, corporeal and incorporeal reality. Sufism provides comprehensive cosmic view about life. The whole wisdom of Sufism is based on man, cosmos and God. As Holy Prophet said, “*there is God and nothing with Him.*”

Similarities between Sufism and Vedantism

Sufism and Vedanta deal with the mystical aspect of life and aim at the spiritual development to reach goal of ‘One Reality’. Mysticism has become the fundamental part of all the great religions. Annemarie Schimmel calls mysticism “the great spiritual current which goes through all religions[9].” To her, it is the consciousness of the One Reality that is experienced in all great religions. Moreover, she believes that this reality is called the Wisdom, Light, and Love. Sufism and Vedantism have same paradigm to define and access the One Reality.

Concept of Brahman and Allah

The Vedanta philosophy frequently states *Brahman* by the term *Sachchidananda*, a combination of three words: *Sat* (Existence, Reality, or Being), *Chit*, (Consciousness, or Knowledge and *Anandam* (Bliss)[10]. However, this term

³ Clive Johnson, ed., *Vedanta: An Anthology of Hindu Scripture, Commentary, and Poetry* (London: Bantam Books publishers, 1971), 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 3. As cited in M 3:1259-68.

⁶ Reynold A. Nicholson, trans., *The Kashf Al-Mahjub* (Lahore: Darul- Ishaat Urdu Bazar Publisher, 2004), 30.

⁷ William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner’s Guide*. (Banbury Road: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 20.

⁸ Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (Lahore: Suhail Academy Publisher, 1983), 11.

⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 20.

¹⁰ Swami Nikhilanada, ed., *The Upanishads: Katha, Isa, Kena, Mundaka, Svetasvatara, Prasna, Mandukya, Aitareya, Brihadaranyaka, Taittiriya and Chandogya* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 36.

does not appear in any principle of Upanishads but commonly it is referred in separate manners as Reality, Consciousness and Bliss. According to *The Ten Principal Upanishads*:

“The Self (*Brahman*) is everywhere, without a body, without shape, whole, pure, wise, all knowing, far reaching, for shining, self-depending, all transcendence; in internal procession assigning to every period its proper duty”[11].

He is perfect, protector, seer, controller of all, upholder and the Lord of all.

Adi Shankara explains the attributes of the *Brahman* in his poetry:

I am He, I am He, Blessed Spirit, and I am He!
No birth, No death, no caste have I;
Father, mother, have I none [12].

The *Brahman* is free from all bondages of time, space and identity like birth, death, caste, father and mother. *Brahman* is (independently) real, world is dependently real, *Jiva*(individual soul) and *Brahman* are non-different. The conclusion can be drawn from the whole Shankara’s philosophy as follows[13]:*Brahman* of the Upanishads is only One Reality and the manifestation of all other thing of this world is unreal. Sankara emphasised on One Reality and believes that the other things apart from *Brahman* are illusion. *Jiva*(individual soul)is identical with *Brahman*. The One is without second. The holy scriptures identify the attributes of *Brahman* as Knowledge, Existence, Absolute and Blessed. “*Brahman is existence Knowledge, Infinity*” (Tait. 2.1) the identity of *Brahman* and *Jiva* would be traced from the scripture in text like “*Thou art That, O Svetaketu*” (Chh. 6.8.7),“*I am Brahman*” (Brih. 1-4-10). “*The Self alone is to be meditated upon*” (Brih. 1.4.7)

The divine attributes of *Allah* and *Brahman* are same and there is no difference between *Allah* and *Brahman*. In order to emphasize the individuality of the Ultimate Ego the Quran gives Him proper name of *Allah* and further define as follows:

‘Say, He is God the One:

God, the Absolute.

He begets not, nor was He begotten.

And there is nothing comparable to Him’ (112:1-4) [14].

Hazrat Data Ali Hujwiri explains three attributes of *Allah*: His beauty (*Jamal*), His majesty (*Jalal*) and His perfection (*Kamal*), and these attributes are incomparable[15]. He is omnipotent and omnipresent everywhere [16]. He is absolute and infinite in His attributes. He is beyond our imagination and He cannot be perceived by limited consciousness of mind. The reflective empirical realities are silent to know One Reality (Allah)[17]. Everything is fixed and determined by the will of God. The Quran speaks of these fixed forms: “*We have created everything according to a fixed portion*” (54:49) “*God has fixed a quantity and proportion for things*”[18]. The great scholars of mysticism like Sri Ramana Maharshi and Ibnul al-Arabi were the proponents of determinism.

The study of Vedanta and Sufism verify the divine attributes and characteristics in similar manners. There is One Reality but it is experienced with different names Vedanta and Sufism respectively.

Concept of the *Atman* and *Nafs*

The term of *Atman* in Vedanta and *Nafs* in Sufism are used to refer individual self. Both these terms stand for renewal of the self to reach One Supreme Reality. The central theme of Vedanta and Sufism is to explore the individual self, because to be acquainted with the self is considered to be familiar with God. Ramanuja states that the individual self (*Jiva*) is mainly an unchallengeable entity[19]. The self is a subject of knowledge and conscious of pleasure and sorrow during the state of sleep. Moreover, he has illustrated the individual soul’s experiences with *Karman* in the form of good and evil actions. The self is helpful to reach the Supreme *Brahman* when it tries to strive after the goal. A person who endeavours to discover the *Brahman* then the individual self should be free from all shackles of evils. Each person has

¹¹ Shree Purohit Swami and W.B. Yeats, trans., *The Ten Principal Upanishads* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937), 15-17.

¹² Adi Shankara, *Classic Poetry Series* (The World’s Poetry Archive, 2012), 10. For details visit. www. poemhunter.com

¹³ Swami Vireswaranadanda, trans., *Brahma-Sutras: With Text, Word for Word Translation, English Rendering Comments and Index* (Himalayas: Advaita Ashrama, 1936), 3.

¹⁴ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstrution of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Peace Publication, 2014), 60-85.

¹⁵ Nicholson, trans., *The Kashf Al-Mahjub*, 287-290.

¹⁶ Iqbal, *The Reconstrution of Religious Thought in Islam*, 63-85.

¹⁷ Hamid Algar, trans., *God and His Attributes: Lesson on Islamic Doctrine* (Qom: Foundation of Islamic C.P.W, 2005), 29-36.

¹⁸ For details see, *Ibid.*, 183-87.

¹⁹ Cyril Vellath S. J, “Ramanuja’s Concept of the Individual Soul and Human Freedom” *Institute of Asian Culture*, 11. (Sep.2012): 8-18.

true self and it is similar to entire reality. The self is the potent source to know all creation[20] and its journey towards the self means to reveal the secrets of God on oneself. This is considered the final teaching of Upanishads which refers to be the "truth of truth"[21]. The truth of the all things can be identified from the self.

In Sufism, one comes across the recurrent mentioning of the hadith, "He who knows himself knows his Lord"[22]. In this sense, the God emphasised to explore yourself in different places: "God warn you about Himself" (3:28 and 3:30), "God has made mercy a duty for Himself". (6:12 and 6:54) and in one place Jesus addressed God: "Though knowest what is in myself and I know not what is in The self" (5:112)[23]. The *nafs* (self) is divided in two categories carnal self and divine self[24]. The *nafs* of an individual is segregated between divine and mundane. The carnal self has characteristics of evil deeds and actions. The evil self is referred to the seat of passion and lust, and its allies are considered the world and devil[25]. The self faced the obstacle from the shackles of worldly desires and evil to achieve the union of God. The Prophet said: "The worst enemy is the *nafs* (self) which is between thy two sides"[26]. The mortification of *nafs* is the chief work to explore the reality of divine of oneself. Everyone should control the self and one should abstain from lust and worldly desires. The Sufis understand the self-mortification and they call it a moral transmutation of the inner man. They say, "Die before ye die"[27]. It does not mean that to destroy the self but to separate the wholly evil. The dying to self is referred to live in Godhood.

Concept of *Dēvapūjā* and *Wahdat-ul-Wajud*

The term of *Devapujam* in Vedanta and *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* in Sufism are used to represent the doctrine of pantheism. The doctrine of Unity Being approaches the philosophy of non-dualism and this is found in all great religions of the world. Vedanta supports the non-dualistic philosophy while Sufism encourages *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* (Unity of Existence).

Apart from some minute differences, Sufism and Vedanta, to a greater extent, have several common features in the belief of Unity Being.

In Vedas, many different names are associated with one pantheistic power such as *hiranya-garbha* (the "golden germ"), *narayana* (the primordial man) and the phrase *tattvamasi*, which translates to "that thou art." This notion of "that" is attributed to oneness in the cosmos and it subsumes all persons and objects. Later works on Vedas introduced the concept of *Brahman*; all things originated from Him and He is the manifestation for all. The individual self (Atman) is similar to the Supreme Self (Brahman) and they cannot be differentiated[28]. The *Brahman* is the transcendent, immanent, the absolute infinite existence and He is the sum total of all that ever is, was, or ever will be. The same doctrine of pantheism is described in the *Bhagavad Gītā*[29]: Krishna incarnates for the nonce as Arjuna's charioteer and discloses for a special purpose his identity with *Brahmān*. When He sufficiently teaches Arjuna and declares Himself the Eternal All.

"O infinite Lord of Gods! the world's abode,
Thou undivided art, o'er all supreme.
Thou art the first of Gods, the ancient Sire,
The treasure-house supreme of all the worlds.
The Knowing and the Known, the highest seat.
From Thee the All has sprung, O boundless Form!
Varuna, Vayu, Agni, Yama thou,
The Moon; the Sire and Grandsire too of men.
The Infinite in power, of boundless force,
The All thou dost embrace; the Thou art All"[30].

²⁰Anand Wood, *Interpreting the Upanishads* (Pune: Ananda Wood 1A Ashoka, 2000), 33. As cited in the translation of *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (2.1.20).

²¹Ibid.;

²²William C. Chittack, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi's Cosmology* (Lahore: The Carvan Press, 2000), 269.

²³Ibid.

²⁴S.A.Q.Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn Al- Arabi* (Lahore: Ashraf Publications, 1970), 100.

²⁵Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 39-40.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.,40.

²⁸Johnson, ed., *Vedanta: An Anthology of Hindu Scripture, Commentary, and Poetry*, 18.

²⁹J. Allanson Picton, *Pantheism, Its Story and Significance Religions Ancient and Modern* (Gutenberg: Garrett Alley and PG Distributed Proofreaders, 2000) Net Library e-book. As cited in "Bhagavad Gītā," translated by the Rev. J. Davies.

³⁰Ibid.

Swami Vivekananda states the pantheistic view in Vedanta in composite manners: when a man has achieved that perfect state, he is of the identical nature as the personal God. "I and My Father (creator) are One" [31]. He knows that he is one with *Brahman*, the Absolute, and projects himself as the personal God does.

A famous Sufi, Abu Talib al-Makhi (d. A.H. 386) deals the questions on *Tawhid* in Sufi sense. He discusses the principle and condition of *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* (Unity of Being) in which God alone is absolute Being. All is illusion apart from His existence. To him, the greatest of all pantheists is al-Hallaj, Abu Abdullah al Husain bin Manusur, a disciple of al-Junad. His pantheistic utterance, 'I am the Truth (God)' caused to his crucifixion (d. A.H.300)[32]. Ibnul al-Arabi got popularity from the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wajud*, (unity of being)[33]. The unity of existence is that One is the All; and it is the One God Who appears in all these forms. According to him, there is nothing in the Universe which is non-God. He exists all alone and has sign in everything to show that He is its basis or essence[34]. God has absolute capacity in His existence. "*God is powerful over everything.*" (Quran 2:20) The possible thing is reality whose relationship to existence and non-existence is equal. The sum of possible things is cosmos[35]. There is nothing in existence except God. Holy Prophet said, "*There is God and nothing with Him.*" He remains as He is and nothing remains with Him. He knows us, so He is with us. But we do not know Him, so we are not with Him.

The pantheism in Hinduism and Unity of God in Islam cannot be considered same doctrine to achieve realisation of God. In pantheism, universe is originated from God and there is no difference between Universe and God. In Unity of God, God reveals His signs in the cosmos and God is creator of universe and universe is His creature.

Concept of Avatara and Nabi

The concept of *Avatara* and *Nabi* highlight the similar functions and capacity of prophets and supreme spiritual guides in Vedanta and Sufism.

Shankara expressed the role of *Avatara* as a teacher and revealer to guide and enlighten the followers of his religion[36]. He stated that the Lord created the world and imparted into twofold paths of Works (*privarti dharma*) and Renunciation (*nivartti dharma*). Whenever, unrestrained desires, human discrimination, and unrighteousness prevail over righteousness then Lord came out of His mercy and sent *Avatara* in the world. The *Avatara* appeared to redeem mankind and re-establish spiritual order in the world. Religion declined and the Lord incarnated Himself as *Krishna* for the purposes of reintroducing and strengthening the Vedic religions [37]. The concept of *Avatara* is described in *Bhagavadgita*:

"Whenever there is decay of *Dharma*, *OBharata*, and an ascendance of *Adharma* then I manifest Myself. For the protection the good for destruction of evildoers the firm establishment of *Dharma* I am born in every age"[38].

In *Bhagavadgita*, the power of *Avatara* was not limited as *Arjuna* was restricted in knowledge. The *Krishna* had conscious from all earlier births and He had crossed over past, present and future in His conscious. The actions of *Avatara* represent the welfare of common people rather than any personal motives.

Swami Vivekananda says: "The great Prophets were giants—they bore a gigantic world on their shoulders"[39]. The lives of the prophets confirm to the Divine love and truth that transforms people when they go astray. The prophets appeared on the earth when moral and social degeneration started. Al-Farabi giftedly, interprets Aristotelian cosmology with Islamic theology; he explains Plato's concept of the philosopher-king[40]. According to Farabi, a prophet is like a philosopher, who achieves the higher level of consciousness through union of God and he drives the society according to

³¹Swami Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy* (New York: The Vedanta Society, 1901), 40.

³²For details see, Muhammad Muslehuddin, *Islam: Its Theology and the Greek Philosophy* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, 2000), 57-61.

³³Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam*, p. 263.

³⁴Angela Culme-Seymour trans., *Fusus al-Hakim: The Wisdom of the Prophets* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981), 66.

³⁵William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path Of Knowledge: Ibnu al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000), 82.

¹Anantanand Rambachan, *Accomplishing the accomplished: the Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Śaṅkara* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 31.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹SwamaiTathagatanda, *Glimpse of Swami Vivekananda's Heroic Struggle* (New York: The Vedanta Society, 2012), 2.

⁴⁰Carl W. Ernst, *Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 82.

general awareness of people. Prophet reveals the religious laws to run the moral and social fabric of the society. Ibnul al-Arabi explained in his famous book *Fusus al-Hakim* that all prophets had higher level of wisdom[41].

Concept of Guru-Chela and Pir-o-Murshid

The term of *Guru-Chela* is coined in Vedas that regards the relationship of mentor (teacher) and disciple (student). Guru cannot be considered as an ordinary human being and his physical body is the temple in which the Lord lives[42]. *Guru* is considered to be a fountainhead for the *Chela* who gains spiritual insight from former. *Chela* comes to *Guru* for acquiring the love and devotion of the Lord and he directs the *Chela* towards the Lord. The MandukaSukta of the *Rig Veda* (7:103:5) used the word of *Sakta* and which means teacher. The Brahmachari (disciple) expresses his views about his *Guru* in *Arthar Veda* as follows; “when the teacher accepts disciple as Brahmachari he treats him as embryo within his own body (*Arthar Veda* 11:5:4)”[43]. It expresses the strong relationship between teacher and student in which only knowledge is transmitted. In this sense, the *Brahmachari* got cosmic awareness on the behalf of his teacher and studies. He becomes the *Indra* that was chief of gods[44].

In the teaching of Sufism, *Pir-o-Mushad*, perform same features of *Guru-Chela*. *Pir* is considered the holy man with ripe experience and profound knowledge. Teacher has absolute law to his disciple. The ‘path’ without the guidance of *pir* is assumed the path of *Satan* (Devil). The disciple accepts and follows the teachings of teacher with heart and soul. The disciple explores his self with higher level of wisdom and knowledge after testing the trail of his teacher. Shibli was a student of the famous theosophist Junayd of Baghdad. He said to Junayd: “They tell me that you possess the pearl of divine knowledge: either give it me or sellit.” Junayd replied: “I cannot sell it, for you have not the price thereof”[45]. Shibli had to pass trial of beggary to gain the knowledge from his teacher.

Common view about the Life of Yogi and Sufi

Vedanta and Sufism have close resemblance on the basis of mystical practices of Sufis and yogis. According to Swami Vivekananda, “every man is a slave except the Yogi. He is a slave of food, to air, to his wife, to his children, to a dollar, slave to a nation, slave to name and fame, and to a thousand things in this world. The man who is not controlled by any one of these bandages is alone areal man, a real Yogi”[46]. He used the reference of *Bhagvadgita* to explain the key feature of a *yogi*: “They have conquered relative existence in this life who are firm-fixed in sameness. God is pure and the same to all. Therefore such are said to be living in God”[47].

The Sufi saints showed the interest in the teaching of yogis and they did not feel scruples in appreciating in good things in others[48]. The certain Sufi saints’ practices were associated from the *Nathyogis* and their teachings. These practices included divination with controlling the breath, summoning the female spirit and performing of meditation[49]. Commonly, the Hindu yogis and *siddhas* visited the shrines of the Sufi saints. Shaikh Nizamud-din Aulyia met a yogi at Jamat Khana of Baba Farid and he asked him the secret of discipline. The yogi answered: Our science says that there are two words *alam-i-ulvi* and *alamisifli*. From head to navel is *alam-i-ulvi* and from navel to feet it is *alamisifli*. In *alam-i-ulvi*, there is all sincerity, purity, good disposition and good dealing. In *alamisifli* there is purity and chastity”[50]. Shaikh Nizamud-din Aulyia liked the yogi’s pearl of wisdom. The Sufis and yogis devote their lives for the search for love of ‘One Supreme Reality.’ Love and liberalism were the keynotes of Sufis and Yogis. The mystic saints demand the moral advancement of individuals and society and they try to root out the barrier of colour, cast, creed, wealth, power and position of the people. The Sufis and Yogis are latitudinarian, broad minded, liberal and tolerant. They play a vital role in moulding the attitude and activities of people towards God. They put the people on the road of rightness and rectitude. They are free from power and lust. They engross the people in religious talks and works and convince the people to devotional prayers. The love and greed of world was challenged by the Sufis and Yogis.

Concept of Yoga and Muraqaba

Yoga is complicated term and it cannot be defined easily. Georg Feurestein states that “Yoga is like ancient river with countless rapid, eddies, loops, tributaries, and backwater extending over the vast, colour terrain of many different

⁴¹ R.W. J. Austin, trans., *The Bezel of Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 16-27.

⁴² Swami Brahmananda, *Spiritual Teaching of Swami Brahmananda* (Madras: Publishing House Ltd, 1933), 19.

⁴³ Mohinder Singh, *History and Culture of Punjab* (Punjab: Atlantic Publishers & Distri, 1988), 33.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 34.

⁴⁶ Swami Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy*, 22-23.

⁴⁷ Ibid., As cited in (Gita, V. 19).

⁴⁸ Malik Mohamed, *The Foundation of the Composite Culture in India* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2007), 132-35.

⁴⁹ Carl W. Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (Apr.2005): 20-22.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

habitats”[51]. Yoga is the philosophy that linked to Sanskrit texts like Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. Moreover, it signifies the ascetic practices frequently associated with meditations in Vedic religions. The Upanishads approaches question of *Yoga* (meditation) comprehensively: “The Self is the Witness of the mind. ...It is not the thought, but the Thinker one must know. It is not what is seen that should be known, but it is the Seer which must be known”[52]. The Vedantists coin the term of “*Sat-chit-ananda*” for meditation which means the Existence (*Sat*), Consciousness (*Chit*) and Bliss (*Ananda*). It is Existence (*Sat*) that you do not know; Conscious (*Chit*) is unstained, unwavering, eternal and Bliss (*Ananda*) is perfect, unchallenged freedom.

In Sufism, the term of *Muraqaba* serves the meaning of mediation; it is a form of self-concentration and it is similar to the Buddhistic dhyana and samadhi[53]. The meditation gained currency when the Holy Prophet said, “Worship God as though thou sawest Him, for if thou seest him no, yet He sees thee.” DārāShikūh coded the Holy verse to elaborate this devotional exercise: “*And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification (Quran: 6:104)*”[54]. The process in inhalation and exhalation is explained in two words: the breath that comes out is called ‘*Ū*’ (He) and the breath that comes in is referred to ‘*Man*’ (I). The combination of these two words means “He is I” and Sufis believe that these words are the occupation of ‘*HūAllāh.*’ These two words are being verbalised by every living being without of his being conscious of the fact[55]. In brief, meditation is the knowledge of ‘the Knowledge beyond knowledge’[56] and it can be got through wings of love and beyond the knowing mind. One must set out blindly without intellect, words, image, seeing, and knowing. One must be guided by faith in Truth and the longing the pure heart then one will be able to enter the silence of that all-knowing Light. The difference between the knower and the known will be sweep out and one will be in the peak of the ‘Knowledge beyond knowledge.’

Concept of *Adbhuta* and *Keramat*

The Sanskrit term *Adbhuta* borrow the meaning of miracles. Miracle stories are the sign of transcendence wisdom in Vedic traditions[57]. The miracles demonstrate transience and importance of material world. Furthermore, they express the mutability of moral judgement, social order and political authority of a society. The stories shores up the hope that human are not fully constrained necessary law of nature and inflexible demands of *Karma*. Miracles by *avatara*, saint, *yogi*, and *Guru* shatter the illusion of world. The miracle stories explain the movements of cosmic disruptions that identify the liberation of self which is associated with world. The path of liberation pursues the goal of spirituality. The miracles stories justify the dramatic proof of the spiritual power of *avatara*, saint, *yogi*, and *Guru* to convince the people towards the Vedic teachings.

In Sufi teachings, miracle is attributed to *Karamat* and the plethora of literature is available on the performance of miracles by prophets and saints. The miracles identify the capacity of Sufi saints to spread the true Islamic doctrine[58]. During the month of Rumzan, a baby will not drink milk his mother the day time but after sun set. God ennoble the wisdom to holy men as honour on the account of their faith and sincerity. God blessed the supernatural power to the Prophets and saints. They try to perform miracles in the front of common people to direct towards God. There are different opinions on the performance of miracles but the main goal of a miracle is to spread the teachings of God in true essence.

Concept of *Nirvana* and *Fana*

In Sanskrit, *Nirvana* is the first experience transcendental existence. *Van* “one who possess or own” and near mean “nothing”[59]. According to Swami Vivekananda, the *Nirvana* can be attained in this world; and it is the realization of the Self. It is the screen of someone that hides the Self, which is unchanging. When the screen opens, one will discover the Self behind it. The screen of saint will be thin, while the sinner possesses the thick screen. When the screen is fully removed, the Atman will exist in state of nothingness[60]. The individuals who possess the material property with temporary passion with money and sex have nothing to do with transcendentalist reality. *Nirvana* unfolds the reverse and destructive material manifestation of the world. The *yogi* knows the ultimate pleasure cannot be attained from matter.

⁵¹ Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga,” As Cited in, Feuerstein, *Yoga: The Technology of Ecstasy* (Los Angeles, 1989).

⁵²Swami Abhayananda, *The Wisdom of Vedanta: An Introduction To The Philosophy of Nondualism* (New York: Swami Abhayananda, 1997), 170.

⁵³ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁴M.Mahfuzul-ulHaq, trans., *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1990), 43.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶Abhayananda, *The Wisdom of Vedanta: An Introduction To The Philosophy of Nondualism*, 172-73.

⁵⁷David Weddle, *Miracles: Wonder and Meaning in World Religions* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 69.

⁵⁸Schimmel, *My Mystical Dimension of Islam*, 200.

⁵⁹Jeffrey Armstrong, *Teachings of the Avatar: Ancient Wisdom for a New World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 109-13.

⁶⁰ Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy*, 41.

The inimitable and great Buddha gave up the material desire and devoted his life for liberation of *Atman*. The concept of Nirvana does occur in Vedas and it intermediate the step liberation of soul. *Nirvana* claim in Sanskrit:

“*gate gatepârâgatepârasama gate bodhisâvâ*: gone, gone, gone beyond, gone beyond and given to the pure knowledge”[61].

In Sufism term *fana* takes same currency of *Nirvana*. The *fana* can be summarised in three ways owing to different stages, aspects and meanings. The first stage leads the moral transformation of soul through the extinction of all its passions and desires. The second stage emphasized the contemplation of divine attributes through thought of God and it disassociates the mind from all other thoughts apart from God. The final stage *fana* is the cessation of conscious thought. The Sufis call this stage the ‘passing away of passing’ (*fana al-fana*) and mystic is now rapt in contemplation of the divine essence. The first stage closely bears a resemblance to the Buddhist *Nirvâna*[62]. Al-Hallaj deliberately chooses the path of mystical union with God and embraced the state of *fana*[63]. It is a ‘passing- away’ of evil qualities of state of mind and enhances the good quality of state of mind. Morally, no one make perfect and selfless without the divine beauty of heart.

Concept of Swarg-Narg and Jannah- Jahannam

The concept of *Swarg-Narg* used in Vedic religion to elaborate the notion of Heaven and Hell which have same resemblance from the worthy concept of *Jannah- Jahannam* in Sufism. Apart from a few differences, many similar aspects would be trace from Sufism and Vedanta teachings. Both mystical movements have an agreement on the idea of Heaven and Hell that base on rewards and punishments. The soul finds the Heaven and Hell on the account their karmic actions. The concept of heaven would be justified from the Rig Veda and the Artherveda. The Vedic paradise illustrates the perfect life with full enjoyment and there is fear of death. The heaven the place of pious (*sukrtâmuloka*) “those who reached the sun through mortification”[64]. The numerous references are found in Vedas for Hell place that is marked by dark, misery and chaos, for sinners and demons[65]. In Vedic literature, there are different levels of hell and heaven on the basis of good and bad actions.

On the other hand, Sufism borrowed the same meanings the concept of *Jannah- Jahannam* for Heaven and Hell. The concepts of heaven and hell exist in all religion to control the institution of religion with strong hold on masses[66]. The state of one’s consciousness is associated to heavenly and a purgatorial condition for each person. Ibnul al-Arabi says that the heavens and hells are “allegorical representations of the states and corporatisation of ideas”[67]. To him, heaven represent the Divine essence and hell is symbol farness from God. Hell is the realization of “self” and it is ‘slave’ (abd). It is selfhood. Heaven is the actualization of one’s “lordship” of the divine aspect of being. Thus Vedanta and Sufism have profound philosophical thoughts about Heaven and Hell in similar manners.

Comparison of Sufism and Vedantism: An Analysis

The comparative study of Sufism and Vedantism evaluates the similar aspects of the mystical traditions of the saints in philosophical dimensions. The Sufism and Vedanta have the close resemblance to unfold of ‘One Supreme Reality’[68]. Undoubtedly, it is called in different names in different religions like *Allah* in Sufism and *Brahman* in Vedanta but it is One Reality. The teachings of Sufis and Vedas approach the philosophical concept of non-dualism in same paradigm. The science of Vedas remarkably explains the notion of individual self and Supreme Self but the high provoking thought of Sufism did not lag behind in same meanings. The esoteric dimensions of Sufism and Vedanta equate religion for the same grounds for the spiritual development of people. The spiritual mentors of Sufism and Vedanta have same goal for future in which they preferred metaphysical aspect of life as compared to earthly life. The prophets, *avatars*, Sufi saints, *sanyasis*, *Gurus* and *yogis* adopt same methodology to uproot the moral degeneration from the society[69]. They alike raise the voice for demands of moral and virtuous deeds in society. All these holy men are well-wisher and sympathiser for poor in society. The tradition of master and disciple of Vedanta goes hand in hand with Sufism to explain the love of disciple to his teacher. The Vedanta’s approach towards meditation falls in with Sufi teachings. The Sufi saints and yogis perform the miracles for same purpose to convince the masses. In this regard, they have common aims and objectives to guide the people towards God. The Vedic literature gets along with Sufism to

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 60-63.

⁶³ Herbert I. Wason, *Al-Hallaj*(London: Routledge Publishers, 2013), 104-8.

⁶⁴ Herman Oldenberg and Shridhar, *The Religion of the Veda: Die Religion Des Veda* (Delhi: MotilalBanarsidass, 1993), 312

⁶⁵ MithaAra, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions: The genesis and transformation of a doctrine* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 6.

⁶⁶ Hidayat Khan, *Reflection on Inner Sufi Teachings* (Victoria: Ekstasis Editions. 2005), 106.

⁶⁷ A.E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din IbnulArabi* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1979.), 165.

⁶⁸ Mohamed, *The Foundation of the Composite Culture in India*, 230.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

propound the state of ecstasy for union of God. Furthermore, there is same view about the Heaven and Hell in Vedanta and Sufism. Thus, the knowledge of Sufism and Vedantism provides many similar features about mysticism.

CONCLUSION

The comparative study of Vedanta and Sufism affirms the common philosophical concepts in same manners. Furthermore, it verifies that ancient science of Vedanta and profound wisdom of Sufism serves the human beings in moral, social and spiritual domains in same pursuits. The knowledge of Sufism and Vedanta provides same approach for someone to glorify the Reality. The followers of Sufism and Vedanta have to confront similar hardships and struggles when they travel towards the God. The parallel study of Sufism and Vedanta eradicates different identities of people and include the people to share common beliefs to live the God. Both mystical currents have same appeal to disseminate the religion of love, peace, tolerance and harmony for sake of humanity. In nutshell, Sufism and Vedanta have same similar characteristics and principles for mysticism owing to strong relation of Vedantists and Sufis with God.