Sultan Bahu's Mystical Teachings from Ain ul Faqr: Guiding Track for Contemporary Educational Leaders

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Abstract

In Punjab province, scholars like Sultan Bahu illuminated the path of knowledge, guiding people from disbelief to enlightenment. Born into a devout family, Sultan Bahu authored around 140 books, prioritizing the Quran, Sunnah, and Shariat while advocating for a harmony between words and actions. This qualitative study focuses on his Persian work, "Ain-ul-Faqr," analyzing Sultan Bahu's spiritual journey. The findings reveal four stages of spiritual development—Shariat, Tareeqat, Haqeeqat, and Marifat—guided by a Murshid. The study categorizes individuals into three types: ignorant, scholars and Faqeers, based on their spiritual pursuits. The findings from Sultan Bahu's teachings have significant implications for contemporary educational leadership. The integration of spirituality into leadership practices fosters a holistic approach to education by emphasizing the development of the whole person-mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Sultan Bahu's teachings provide invaluable guidance for contemporary educational leaders, encouraging them to move beyond conventional frameworks and embrace spiritual principles that nurture inner growth and ethical conduct. By incorporating these principles, educational leaders become more responsive and supportive, creating inclusive environments that empower both students and educators. This spiritual infusion shifts the educational paradigm toward cultivating not only intellectual abilities but also moral character, emotional well-being, and spiritual awareness. Consequently, leaders who embody Sultan Bahu's vision promote equity, compassion, and social justice, fostering harmony and unlocking the inherent potential within their communities.

Keywords: # Bahu # Spirituality # Murshid # Mystical Teachings # Ain ul Faqr # Contemporary Educational Leadership

Introduction

The universe was created by the Almighty for humans to make a positive impact during their brief existence, with the first Revelation to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ highlighting the importance of education for personal growth and knowledge acquisition. Education, encompassing formal schooling and traditional training, enhances individual capabilities and reveals all aspects of personality. Leadership in education is essential for guiding stakeholders, adapting to changing needs, and incorporating spirituality, which fosters a holistic learning environment. Spiritual intelligence in educational leaders helps shape community values and morals while promoting collaboration and purpose. Sultan Bahu, a prominent Sufi mystic, emphasized spiritual teachings that inspire individuals and communities, making his work relevant to modern educational leadership practices. The study aims to explore his teachings in "Ain ul Faqr" and their integration into transformative educational leadership models that benefit society as a whole.

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The study aims to understand Sultan Bahu's spiritual journey through his writings and their connection to current practices. This qualitative research employs an exploratory approach to analyze Sultan Bahu's spirituality and its relationship with educational leadership, utilizing content analysis based on his work, "Ain-ul-Faqr." Data was gathered from relevant literature, and both manual and computational analyses were conducted using NVIVO software to ensure reliable results. Qualitative research offers a unique perspective on understanding reality through naturalistic methods, allowing researchers to explore complexities from multiple angles, ultimately benefiting educational practices.

Stages of Divinity	Murshid's Responsibilities	Stages of Self (Hedonism and Self Restrainment)
Shariat Like a Stream	Explaining the core pillars of Islam, Zikr/Invocation practicing	Ammara The instigator of the Sin, the Spiritual Exercises and Striving.
Tareeqat Like Cloud	The one who puts the veil of worship of Allah around the neck of Seeker	Lawwama A blasphemer of sin, a light in the heart.
Haqeeqat Like Rain	The one who makes seeker, Brave	Mulhima Desire for goodness and piety
Marifat Like a Deep River	The One who makes seeker, the keeper of the secrets of Allah and grants them the status of a possessor of knowledge."	Mutmainna In every situation, the state of tranquillity, the station of Wilayah

Table 1 The Concept of Spirituality/Mysticism by Sultan Bahu

Table 1 shows the journey of the human soul through distinct stages, each representing a different state of the self (Nafs) and corresponding to specific responsibilities for the Murshid, or spiritual guide, as well as stages of spiritual realization.

The journey begins with the **Ammara**, the commanding or instinctual self, which is prone to base desires and sin. At this initial stage, the Murshid's role is to introduce the core pillars of Islam, guiding the seeker in foundational practices such as Zikr (remembrance of Allah) and spiritual exercises. This phase is associated with **Shariat**, the Islamic law and outward practice, and is likened to a stream-suggesting movement and the beginning of purification.

Progressing to the **Lawwama**, the self-reproaching soul, the seeker becomes aware of their faults and begins to feel remorse for their misdeeds. The Murshid helps by enveloping the seeker in worship and devotion, encouraging them to persist in their spiritual discipline. This stage aligns with **Tareeqat**, the mystical path of Sufism, and is compared to a cloud, symbolizing the presence of spiritual awareness and the potential for transformation.

At the stage of **Mulhima**, the inspired self, the seeker develops a genuine desire for goodness and piety. Here, the Murshid's responsibility is to inspire bravery and moral courage in the seeker,

helping them act upon their spiritual insights. This stage corresponds to **Haqeeqat**, the realization of spiritual truths, and is likened to rain, which brings growth and nourishment to the soul.

Finally, the **Mutmainna** is the tranquil or contented soul, which has achieved a state of peace and spiritual fulfillment in all circumstances. At this advanced stage, the Murshid entrusts the seeker with the secrets of divine knowledge, elevating them to the status of a possessor of deep spiritual insight. This is the stage of **Marifat**, or gnosis, representing intimate knowledge of Allah, and is compared to a deep river, signifying depth, stability, and profound understanding.

Throughout these stages, the Murshid plays a vital role in nurturing the seeker's spiritual growth, guiding them from the turbulence of base desires to the serenity of divine realization. Each stage not only represents a transformation of the self but also a deeper immersion into the mysteries of the Divine. Divinity/Spirituality is categorized under the manifestation of the spiritual journey, incorporating main subjects such as Erudition (Knowledge), Divine Odyssey (Spiritual Journey), Invocation (Zikr), Ascetics (Murshid, Arif, Spiritual Leaders), Indigence (Faqr), Hedonism (Nafs), and Self Restrainment.

Divinity/ Spirituality

Sultan Bahu has defined and described it explicitly, emerging from a thorough study of "Ain ul Faqr," where he underscores the crucial role of Divinity/Spirituality in the life of a leader and follower. The findings reveal four stages of spiritual development—Shariat, Tareeqat, Haqeeqat, and Marifat—guided by a Murshid. There are two types of divine love i.e. Haqeeqi (is the love of Divine Reality) and Majazi that is the metaphorical love for the manifestation of Divine Reality i.e. Murshid Kamil. The study categorizes individuals into three types based on their spiritual pursuits and highlights essential qualities of effective educational leaders.

First of all a leader must acquire education as it illuminates oneself. There are two kinds of knowledge: worldly and divine and three types of pursuers: ignorant, scholars and Faqeers.

Ignorant just eat, sleep, and reproduce as animals, not more than that; ignorance leads to disbelief, idolatry, and corrupt interpretations of religious doctrines.

Scholars renounce the world, sacrifice possessions, shun covetousness and hypocrisy, become obedient, merciful, pure, truthful, provide guidance, and are righteous; they are men of wisdom engrossed in reading and writing, advising the acquisition of knowledge, appreciating learning in all branches, wise and aware yet deprived of spiritual deeds like Zikr and inward knowledge, serving as counsellors and men of letters with high ranks, aware of spirituality while recognizing that attention is a blessing and pleasure of the world and that paradise is beautiful.

A person who is at the last level of Faqr is called **Faqeer**; the initial stage of Faqr is "Death before dying," meaning the demise of hedonism, achieved through the invocation and contemplation of Ism-e-Allah Zaat, leading to the supreme level where a seeker annihilates in Allah becoming light, thus becoming the secret of the Prophet and finding the blessing of presence in Allah's court; Faqeers are deeply connected to Allah, real Saints who follow the path of Faqr, having no hedonism but self-restraint, focusing solely on understanding Allah's Divinity through His Names, Knowledge, and Beauty, blessed with the Noor of Marifat that reveals Allah's secrets, while adhering to four important principles: (a) avoid offending Allah, (b) show enthusiasm for spiritual activities, (c) remain vigilant of His presence, and (d) refrain from earthly temptations.

A seeker of Allah must avoid the four behaviors associated with worldly people: (a) the devil's wickedness, (b) lack of modesty, which is omnipresent in worldly people, (c) haste, which mimics Satan's attributes, and (d) the craving for material wealth that is as strong as fire; levels are of three types, and the seeker should rise from Ilm-ul-Yaqeen to Ain-ul-Yaqeen and then Haq-ul-Yaqeen by the blessing of true love of Allah.

Conclusion

The journey of the human soul is a transformative progression through distinct spiritual stages-Ammara, Lawwama, Mulhima, and Mutmainna-each requiring guidance from a Murshid and corresponding to deeper levels of spiritual realization: Shariat, Tareeqat, Haqeeqat, and Marifat. This path, rooted in the teachings of Sufi masters like Sultan Bahu, emphasizes the necessity of both outward practice and inward purification, with the Murshid playing a pivotal role in nurturing the seeker's growth from base desires to divine knowledge. True leadership, according to this spiritual framework, is built upon erudition, self-restraint, and a commitment to the divine journey. Individuals are categorized by their spiritual pursuits-ignorant, scholars, and Faqeers-each with distinct characteristics and destinies. The highest level, Faqr, is marked by complete self-annihilation in the love and knowledge of Allah, achieved through rigorous self-discipline, invocation, and adherence to spiritual principles. Ultimately, the essence of spirituality lies in transcending hedonism, cultivating divine love (both Haqeeqi and Majazi), and embodying the qualities of effective leadership: knowledge, self-restraint, vigilance, and unwavering devotion. The seeker's ascent through the stages of certainty-Ilm-ul-Yaqeen, Ain-ul-Yaqeen, and Haq-ul-Yaqeen-culminates in the realization of Allah's presence and secrets, fulfilling the true purpose of the spiritual journey.

In conclusion, Sultan Bahu's timeless teachings illuminate a transformative path for contemporary educational leadership-one that transcends traditional boundaries and embraces the profound power of spirituality. By integrating spiritual principles into leadership practices, educational leaders are called to nurture the whole person-mind, body, emotions, and spirit-creating vibrant, inclusive environments where both students and educators can truly flourish. This holistic approach not only enriches intellectual growth but also cultivates moral integrity, emotional resilience, and deep spiritual awareness. Leaders inspired by Sultan Bahu's vision become beacons of equity, compassion, and social justice, fostering communities grounded in harmony and mutual respect. Embracing this spiritual dimension in education is not merely an enhancement; it is a vital catalyst for unlocking the fullest potential within every individual and building a brighter, more compassionate future for all.

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