

Socio-Spiritual Characteristics of Futuwwat Ideas

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Abstract: This article analyzes the socio-spiritual characteristics of the ideas of futuwwa, which is one of the important directions of the spiritual heritage of Islam. The doctrine of futuwwa occupies a special place in ensuring human perfection, in the formation of a spiritually mature, morally perfect person. The article highlights the historical sources of futuwwa, its close connection with Sufi traditions, and its role in establishing values such as humanity, generosity, honesty, and justice in society. At the same time, opinions are expressed about the role and importance of the ideas of futuwwa in the process of modern spiritual and moral education.

Keywords: Futuwwa, Sufism, the perfect person, spiritual perfection, morality, humanity, generosity, social values, spiritual education.

Introduction

The process of unification of the Sufi orders came to an end by the 13th century, and both Futuwwat and Tasavvuf became Islamic orders, calling towards purification of the human being and the acquisition of the virtues of compassion, generosity, and bravery. In this regard, after turning away from the world in the love of Allah, the goal of the dervish who devoted his body to the path of spiritual perfection was the same as that of the *juvān-mard* (noble youth) who remained faithful to the feeling of brotherhood and self-sacrifice [1]. This shared moral and spiritual mission laid the foundation for a unified ethical system that transcended individual orders and traditions. The synthesis of Futuwwat and Sufism not only strengthened communal values but also established a model for personal spiritual development rooted in action, discipline, and devotion [2]. As such, these orders played a crucial role in shaping the ethical and spiritual landscape of the medieval Islamic world, where the ideals of inner purification and social responsibility were seen as mutually reinforcing.

Methodology

This study used qualitative research methods to study the socio-spiritual characteristics of futuwwat ideas.

The main role in the study was played by the analysis of sources and textual studies. Futuwwat ideas were studied in close connection with Islamic spirituality and Sufi teachings, and their socio-moral essence was interpreted using the hermeneutic method. At the same time, using the method of comparative analysis, futuwwat ideas were compared with modern concepts of spiritual and moral education.

Result

The study of historical sources shows that people of futuwwah were referred to by names such as *javānmards*, *akhīs*, or *fatīs*, based on their unique character traits.

The *javānmards* were noble and pure individuals, visible and hidden, who thought only of doing good, never tired of helping the needy, and extended their hands of support at all times. They were spiritual

elders, masters, and loyal companions who protected the honor and dignity of their friends and brothers.

Interestingly, javānmardlik began to spread widely as a movement in the cities of Khurasan and Transoxiana (Mawaraunnahr) starting from the 10th century.

The javānmards, or followers of futuwwah, adhered to specific rules and requirements in their pursuit of spiritual and physical maturity [8]. In their view, since man was created by Allah as a divine being, his worth stands above all else.

Therefore, the javānmards did not place any value on material wealth — rather, they saw it only as a means toward human perfection.

The futuwwat movement in the East is a bright example of humanism. Futuwwat transformed Khatamitoi into the generalized image of a humane person.

Professor Najmiddin Komilov, the translator of Khusain Voiz Koshifiy's work "Futuwwatnoma-i Sultaniy," in the introduction of the work, cited the opinion of the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta (14th century) from his book "Safarnama" about the javonmards. It is emphasized there: "I traveled the world and did not see people with more noble intentions and noble character than such people (i.e., javonmards). Although the people of Shiraz and Isfahan resemble javonmards themselves, the javonmards of Khwarezm and Transoxiana surpass them in hospitality and generosity to strangers and travelers [9]. They (javnomards) are called shotir in Iraq, sarbador in Khorasan, and sukra in Maghreb (Andalusia). In the lands subject to them, the symbol of justice is so developed that gold and silver coins scatter on the ground in their camps and houses, and no one touches this money until the owner is found."

Javnomards were artisans, soldiers, representatives of popular street theaters, wrestlers, entertainers, and other groups who came from common people. Each had its own community, spiritual leader (pir), teachers, and meeting places [10]. A javnomard who shook hands with the pir and took an oath before the teacher, tying the belt of bravery around his waist, strove to remain faithful to his oath for life. He devoted his personal life for the community life and for his brothers. A young man accepted into the javnomard community was considered a son, and the teacher who tied the oath belt on his waist was regarded as a father.

The javonmards protected the oppressed from cruel kings and local rulers, provided them with material help, and united to fight external enemies [11]. Heroes like Abu Muslim, Muqanna, Yaqub ibn Layth, and Mahmud Tarobi emerged from among them.

By the 10th-13th centuries, the javnomard movement, which expressed the dissatisfaction of city artisans with the looting raids of nomadic tribes against local nobility, gradually lost its opposing force by the 15th century, becoming a movement that united all classes instead of opposing the ruling classes. Nevertheless, city artisans still formed the core of futuwwat.

It must be specially emphasized that Koshifiy, in his time, gave many thoughts about Sufism along with the science, program, and rules of javnomardlik, considering futuwwat as a part of the tariqa (spiritual path). The reason for Koshifiy's view is that the foundations of futuwwat largely correspond with the ideas of Sufism. This is the reason why we approach this topic. Indeed, both futuwwat and tasawwuf promote the purification of human morality, advocating kindness, compassion, courage, and bravery. In this regard, their goals aligned perfectly with the dervish who, out of divine love, turned away from the world and sacrificed his body on the path of spiritual perfection a faithful javnomard devoted to brotherhood and self-sacrifice. The requirements of Sufism such as repentance, patience, contentment, abstinence, and inner purification are accepted by the futuwwat followers and transformed into practical life rules. Thus, while Sufism saw the practical-social implementation of high ideals in futuwwat, futuwwat found its theoretical and doctrinal foundation in Sufism. Applying this system of relations helps to illuminate the unexplored aspects of the teachings of Sufism and futuwwat.

Voiz Koshifiy also mentions that the essence and rules of the science of futuwwat have long been a subject of debate. In the second chapter of the work, he writes the following: “Just as in the science of medicine the human body is the subject and the causes of health or illness are studied, it is clear from this introduction that the science of futuwwat has its own subject, which is the human soul. Because through educating and nurturing the human soul, it can be cultivated to be beautiful and also virtuous in behavior and character.”

One of the sheikhs who gave a very concise and clear definition of futuwwat and its followers, the javonmards, is Junayd Baghdadi. According to him, “Futuwwat is such that you do not disdain the poor and do not boast before the rich.” Javonmardlik is such that you do not withhold what you can give. According to Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi, a futuwwat person or javonmard is primarily a free man who has broken his chains and is free. This freedom refers not only to physical freedom but also to spiritual and inner freedom—that is, being free from the bondage of the ego. In this regard, Alisher Navoi writes in his work “Nasoyim ul-Muhabbat”:

“The free man is one who, if someone harms him, does not harbor resentment, and the brave man is one who, when offended, does not cause offense in return.”

Alisher Navoi reflects more deeply on the qualities of javonmardlik and says that if you want to be a javonmard, follow the path of the poor and turn greed into dust. Thus, according to Navoi, javonmardlik means a brave, generous, and open-handed young man. He writes about this:

“If you say you are a javonmard in the end,

Turn your greed into dust on the path of the poor in the end.

The fire of greed should not be a nurturer of pain in the end,

Whoever says greed causes pain to the soul, in the end, is mistaken.”

Looking at history, wealthy and rich people had their own special inns and caravanserais and, with the help of appointed servants, created perfect forms of social service in those times and put them at the service of the people. Additionally, ribats, zawiyas, and khanaqahs were built, which were always open for travelers and dervishes.

According to the historically highly valued source Ibn Battuta’s “Safarnama,” travelers and dervishes stayed freely in khanaqahs as they wished. They were not asked where they came from or for what purpose for up to three days. After three days, the khanaqah sheikh would receive them. Ibn Battuta narrates in his work that he stayed in more than fifty khanaqahs and zawiyas and was honored and respected by representatives of the upper class. He especially wrote emotionally about the generosity and justice of the ruler of Transoxiana, Sultan Tarmashirin.

Ibn Battuta also mentions the khanaqah of the saint Sayfiddin Bokhari in Bukhara:

“We stopped in the area of Bukhara known as Fathobod. Here is the grave of one of the greatest saints, the learned sheikh, the ascetic saint Sayfiddin al-Bokhari. The zawiya named after this sheikh is very large and supported by countless endowments, and the pilgrims are sustained by the income from these endowments. The sheikh of this zawiya is one of the descendants of Sayfiddin, Yahya al-Bokhari, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The sheikh received me in his house, gathered the respected people of the city, hosted a feast, reciters recited the Quran in wonderful voices, and the preacher enjoined good deeds. The hafizes performed marvelous songs in Persian and Turkish languages. It was one of the most amazing nights for us.”

The Sufism scholar Najmiddin Komilov, while studying Ibn Battuta’s “Travelogue,” presents his thoughts about the khanaqah in the city of Major in his monograph titled “Sufism” as follows: In the city of Major, there is the khanaqah of Sheikh Muhammad Batoikhiy [12]. This is one of the greatest and best cities of the Turks, and in the khanaqah reside seventy dervishes from Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Romans. The people of the region, out of utmost devotion to the dervishes, bring horses, cattle, and sheep every night to the khanaqah as offerings, and sultans and their wives come to visit the

sheikh and give gifts. Some of the dervishes are married, some are bachelors, and they live prosperously with the generosity and kindness of the people and engage in agriculture.

In our opinion, the merging of tariqat and futuwwat followers was united by two virtues: benefiting the people and enlightening them [14]. Sheikh Abdurahman Jami, in his work “Nafahatul Uns,” quotes the answers of Abulhasan Kharraqani when asked who is a Sufi: “A Sufi is such a day that where he is, there is no need for the sun; such a night that where he is, there is no need for the moon; such an absence that where he is, there is no need for existence.”

Studying the activities of the Naqshbandi sheikhs shows that all of them were distinguished by generosity and kindness. For example, Khoja Ahrar Wali, who lived with the worries and concerns of the people, paid a yearly tribute for Tashkent and, during military campaigns, paid 250,000 dinars and also gifted 70,000 dinars to help the people survive the harsh winter. Besides that, Khoja Ahrar built more than twenty madrasas and khanaqahs to enlighten the people. According to the waqf deed, he had 254 properties [15]. He wrote, “May our friends protect us while we live and continue to protect us after we die.” Indeed, even a hundred years after Khoja Ahrar’s death, his provisions for the people continued to benefit them.

If we approach this matter more deeply, we see that the activities of Bahawuddin Naqshband, Khoja Ahrar Wali, Navoi, and Jami serve as evidence that the union of tariqat and futuwwat accelerated. Indeed, the merging of these two widely spread fields in the Muslim world became a powerful force in establishing human moral perfection as a great social phenomenon.

When discussing the social nature of futuwwat, it is necessary to emphasize that the perfection of a futuwwat person is not only in the completeness of the spiritual world but also in understanding that this perfection ensures harmony between the material world and the spiritual without abandoning either. Because the basis of the perfection of a futuwwat person is not to oppose materialism and the human soul or its spiritual world to each other.

According to the Sufism scholar M. Imamnazarov, a person who has assimilated the culture of futuwwat is practically a creator and spiritually a dervish. Their moral quality—javnordlik—is the organic unity of qualities such as generosity, high aspirations, humility, honesty, and bravery.

Conclusion

The ideal of the futuwwat community is livelihood earned through honest work. This group considers the bread earned by labor as wealth,” writes Kaykavus. Alisher Navoi also states in his work “Nasoyim al-Muhabbat min Shamoim al-Futuwwat” that the main characteristic of the lifestyle of every spiritual leader and saint is their mastery of a certain craft. For example, Abu Said Harroz was a shoemaker, Muhammad Sakkok a knife maker, Abu Hafz Haddod a blacksmith, Abulabbas Omili a butcher, Ibrahim Ojiri a bricklayer, and others were shepherds, wood gatherers, and so forth.

Another aspect of the social nature of the path of javnordlik (chivalry) is that the foundation of reaching spiritual and moral maturity lies in deeply understanding the principles of Islam, perfect mastery of knowledge, sincerity, and purity. In their view, a person’s intellectual perfection must be united with their spiritual and moral maturity. Goodness is based precisely on these two qualities. Because intellect is a beautiful virtue, a miraculous power, and great ability for humans.

For this reason, the spiritual leaders and revered saints prioritized the spiritual and moral perfection of the person and transformed moral qualities into the principle of javnordlik. Indeed, Husayn Voiz Kosifi, in his work “Akhloqi Muhsiniy,” glorifies the role of intellect in human activity, emphasizing: “The condition of intellect is that, as much as possible, it should be strengthened toward angelic qualities and not incline toward animalistic ones.”

In conclusion, futuwwat is the path of bravery embodying the science of self-sacrifice, mutual help, generosity, and kindness. For example, it is about turning the virtues of the javnord into the foundation of our national morality.

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