

A Sociological Research of Sufi Folklore: A Study of Bhattai's Poetry

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Keywords	Abstract
Sufi Folklore, Bhattai's poetry, Shah-Jo-Risalo, Peace, Tolerance	<i>The present research study was conducted to examine the sociological aspect of Sufi Folklore. Data was collected from 151 respondents in 2024. A questionnaire with five rating scales was developed, including demographic information. The respondents from Pakistan and abroad participated in the research. The study found that Sufi folklore promotes peace, tolerance, and human dignity. It was also discovered that in Sufi folklore, we learn to avoid religious fanaticism, and we begin to learn respect for women. The treasured words of Sufi folklore discourage language differences, people live in harmony. There is a lesson of human brotherhood beyond the national boundary. Secondly, the message is not to show off in worship and rites but to be engaged in prayers before Allah with a sincere heart. The results were also drawn on the relationship between sociology and Sufi folklore about Bhattai's poetry that was originally composed in the Sindhi language. The descriptive responses revealed the sociological aspect of Bhattai's poetry, which is simple and instrumental in promoting women's rights, universal peace, and folk wisdom. This unique poetry is a social need of our young generation to disseminate the message of humankind's love and tolerance.</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

Sufi folklore consists of oral traditions, tales, legendary stories, poetry, and literary tales that have been widely circulated among people since the 12th and 13th centuries. Sufi folklore has been a fascinating, or catchy subject for both highly qualified people, for those who hardly read and write. The oral traditions are largely circulated through un-written chapters of history. Such historical facts denote that women and men in much-flung areas recite poetic verses with an elegant lyrical style. It is revealed that old women narrate folk stories, worthy literary tales, and other oral histories with a dynamic aspect of Sufi themes. Such Sufi folklore has been transformed from generation to generation through oral history – only a few chapters are being recorded in book form while other stuff is still found orally. The poetry of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai is deeply narrated regarding the subject of humanity. It is vibrant and full of liveliness in nature that connects people's hearts beyond religious, linguistic, gender, and other boundaries differences.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai was born in a small village called "Hala Haveli" near Matiari. His birth year is recorded in the history as 1668 A.D, and he died in 1752 A.D. His family is of descent to the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). His grandfather known as Shah Abdul Karim Bulriwaro was also a poet of the Sindhi language. He breathed his last at "Bhit" a mound that is presently called "Bhitshah". He composed his poetry in the Sindhi language. The collection of his poetry is called "Shah-Jo-Risalo". The poetry was composed in a variety of verses, including Sur. Each Sur is a separate chapter of Sindhi words, phrases, melodies, and largely circulated stuff that is more enriched among common people. The seven women were chosen by Bhattai in his poetic verses, whose role was inspirational and

awakened in the patriarchal society. These women were known as “Seven Queens” namely Sassui, Sohni, Sorath, Lilan, Moomal, Marvi, and Noori. Their stories were largely circulated among common folk for many generations. Recently, an artist namely Lubana Jehangir painted the Ocean Art Gallery work about these seven Queens (Salman, 2019). The history of Indigenous geographic places, local people particularly women whose folk wisdom was admired by people for a long time. Sur Yaman Kalyan (Melody of the Pathway to Peace) – means restraining the Soul to enable it to attain peace and serenity. It particularly narrates a kind of Sufi folklore that profoundly sensitizes people to seek human love and tolerance passionately. A prominent author namely Richard Burton wrote in his book that was published in the 1850s that every Sindhi could quote a verse from the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (Ernst and Baqli, 1996). Therefore, the compilation and translation work of Shah-Jo-Risalo has been continued since the 1960s while two versions of Shah-Jo-Risalo were published in Karachi and Bombay. A versatile Scholar, Dr. Boivin in his speech quoted that people in Sindh were interested in Sufi literature but in particular reading and reciting poetic verses from Shah-Jo-Risalo (Salman, 2013). A few verses from Sur Yaman Kalyan (narrate Sufi folklore) are given below:

(1)

As life courses through veins, so does a Sufi pervade the Whole cosmos,
He utters not a word of what he discovers while reciting the names of God,
For such revelation would be a sin.

(Translation in native language)

صُوفِيءَ سَيْرُ سَيِّنِ ۾، جيئن رَڳُن ۾ ساهُ،
سا نہ ڪري ڳالهڙي، جيئن پُريُون پُروڙي پساهُ،
آهيس ايءُ ڳناهه، جي ڪا ڪري پڌري

Explanation: Sufi recites the sacred names as Zikir. His every breath is spiritually linked with performing Zikir. The Sufi message circulates in his veins as the fragrance spreads in the air. He follows the lines of simple guidelines that discover peace and tolerance for his personality and for the entire world as well. His core ability is to shadow and cover the faults of others aiming that they will correct their errors. His best practice is cherishing the silence and discovering the wisdom for the well-being of humankind.

(2)

Giving hurts them; not giving pleases them,
True Sufis take nullity with them.

(Translation in native language)

ڏني ڏکوياءَ، اَن ڏني راضي ٿيا،
صُوفِيءَ تي ٿيا، جيئن ڪين ڪنڀائون پاڻ سين

Explanation: The above-cited poetic verses from chapter Yaman Kalyan disseminate the true-life lesson of being a good human being. It reflects that a true Sufi never complains in his life about what is being given to him. He remains pleased and satisfied with a minute's things in his life. This is a deep spirituality in an exercise – contrary to that people always complain from Allah the creator of this entire universe that they are being given not much. It is an indicator of an unsatisfied life experience. The poetic verses are supposed to convey that a true Sufi leads a satisfied life despite the limited resources. He remains happy with the circumstances in a real-life voyage.

(3)

Sufi has no sect, and no one knows his creed,

Inside he is at war with himself, but never lets on,
He is a pathfinder even for those who bear him malice.

(Translation in native language)

صُوفِي لَاصُوفِي، كُونَه. پَانٺِيَسَ كِيرُ،
مَنْجِهَانِ بِي مَنْجِهَه وَڙهي، پَدَر نَه آهِيَسَ پِيرُ،
جَنِينِ سَاتِيَسَ وِيزُ، ٿِي تَنِينِ جُو وَاھَرُو.

Explanation: The above poetic three lines as supposed to convey that Sufi is not a Kufi. The term Kufi gives a meaning of unfriend with others. It reflects a deep sense that a Sufi is a friend to the entire creation and remains positive and supportive of people beyond the boundaries and religious differences. He has a sect as a human being- he is not confined to a single religion or sect in the sense that he creates bottlenecks for people whose religion or sect is not similar to him. He does not believe in taking revenge. He is always polite to those whose language and words dishearten him in different situations and circumstances. He is friendly with his enemies.

(4)

Claiming to be a Sufi and nourishing ambitions isn't the Sufi way,
Take off your turban and throw it in the fire.

(Translation in native language)

صُوفِي چَانِينِ، سَدَّ كَرِينِ، صُوفِينِ اِي نَه صِلَاحِ،
ڪَاتِي رُڪُ ڪُلاھه، وَجُهَه اُچَلِي اَگِ ۾

Explanation: The claiming of Sufi way is a practice of sensitizing people to be aware all-around the circumstances. Create a hope for hopelessness. He does not believe in worldly things. He always drops outward looks and luxuries. He loves to experience natural things and realizes the nearness of Allah. He says Allah has created man to ponder upon creation and meditate to explore the vision. Always ponder upon the earth along with whatever is in it and also upon creation that every created thing is truth but will end at a certain time. Every “Nafs” has to be perished in the soil. Therefore, showing off is meaningless but simplicity and generosity are the values that need to be promoted among the society.

(5)

If you put on Sufi-turban, be a perfect Sufi,
Procure a cupful of venom and gulp it,
This is their place, who acquire divine ecstasy

(Translation in native language)

جي ڪُلاھه رُڪِينِ ڪَنَدَ تِي، تَه صُوفِي سَالِمُ ٿِيءُ،
وَهه وَڙهي هَنٽَ ڪَري، پُر پِيَالو پِيءُ،
هَنَدُ تَنِينِ جُو هيءُ، جِنِ حَاصِلُ ڪِيُو حَالِ ڪِي.

Explanation: The above poetic verses disseminate the true lesson of the characteristics of a Sufi. If you wish to acquire the blessing of the divine that is a true stage of a Sufi voyage. Then put off your cup-shaped traditional turban which can cause a proud or worldly display. A Sufi remains calm, courageous, and peaceful in his behavior. He never penetrates and hurts people which are a characteristic of a perfect Sufi. The practice of Sufism is a path that is too well-acquainted with a deeper identity. The goal is the commitment to truth and loyalty. Admit that pride, enmity, cruelty, lust, and stinginess are the social evils that hurdle to being a good human being. Sufi purifies himself by practicing endurance, tolerance, and loyalty. It is the true stage that can be achieved through seeking guidance from the spiritual guide.

The legendary tales, native historical events, and brave stories of order in all chapters give good lessons for people. It is a common folk that preserves musical notations and such folklore that is meaningful content for social life in society. The remembrance of the poetic verses has been outstandingly noted for many years. Sociological research is widely needed to explore the treasured message of folklore along with modern research techniques. Young people and senior citizens are required to comprehend the social aspect of Shah-Jo-Risalo. Thus, sociological research and folk content serve as guiding principles for serving humanity beyond social differences. This is an instrumental attempt for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sufi literature is the poetic narratives on peace, tolerance, and human love. Folk means people while folklore is a total of poetic, prose oral, and written traditions largely circulated among people. Folklore comprises intangible cultural heritage and material cultures, such as artifacts and art forms (Rauf, 2022). Two remarkably emancipated souls were in the views of Sheikh Saleem Ahmed Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya of the Chishtia Sufi order. He was the spiritual mentor and guide of Amir Khusro whose outstanding contribution to framing the music as a form of the hymn and ecstatic love for Allah remains an integral part of the Chishtia creed. The popular Sufi Saints Ali-Hijarvi popularly known as Data Ganj Bux, Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakr of Pakpattan, and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai of Sindh and other Sufi Saints have disseminated the true message of Sufism in both poetic or oral form among the disciples (Sheeraz, 2021). The legend of “Leela Chanesar” is a metaphor that indicates the fall of the soul from Divine grace for having exchanged faith and loyalty for mundane extravagance. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai therefore exhorts an ordinary seeker to keep the moral fiber intact and resist mundane lures. Thereby, he also seeks to underline that God Almighty could exact a very heavy price for slipping up souls, even in the mortal world. He therefore advises the seeker to give up pride and conceit and observe modesty and humility (Ali, 2012). Zikir, Sama, and Sufi music are considered integral spiritual practices for Suharwardi, Chishti, and other Sufi orders. The sacred rhyme words are performed rhythmically. It is an in-depth humankind literature that provides healing to people who face anxiety and depression (Ghani, 2023). Poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia is a social document known as “diwan” that is divided into different aspects and diversities, both expression (al-tabir) and content (al-muhtawa). Sufism is a path that leads to a high degree of humanity, and Sufi literature is the voice of oppressed people. Such knowledge is thought to be in some sense self-certifying and self-authenticating—there is truth certainty, Haqq-al-yaqin (Nasr, 2007). Oliver Leaman viewed the Sufi verses as genuinely successful in Islamic culture, and people do read the poetic verses with interest and devotion (Leaman, 2004). The above-organized and synthesized content about sociological research enriches the mind and standard values for readers. It is an ideological and emotional stem of motivational reasons for Sufi studies in both poetry and prose forms. The literature review attempt is a reflective product of reconnecting people's thoughts at a particular point in time to enlighten the social situations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

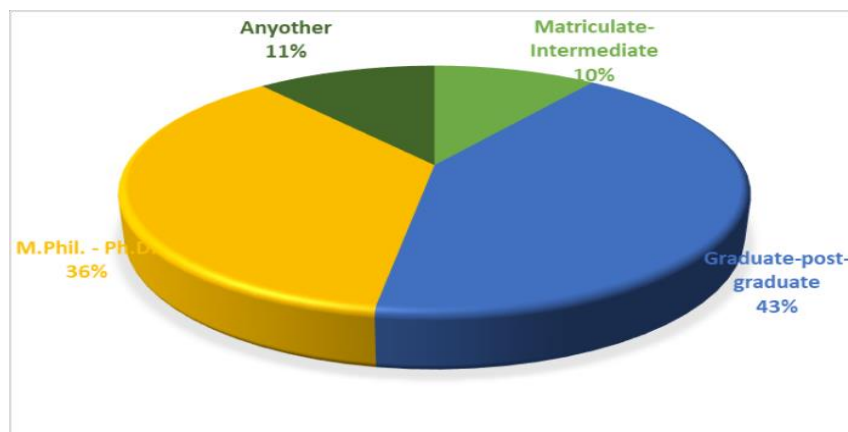
The research study is comprised of mixed methods, focusing on qualitative and quantitative approaches in this respect. It covered both aspects of research with figurative and descriptive information. Initially, a Google survey form was created with specific sub-questions. The same circulated through email, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and other social networks. By employing the developed questionnaire, the primary data was collected. It was an encouraging response from respondents. Noticeably, respondents from local, regional,

national, and international levels participated. They rendered their views in such a study to finish within the due course of time. The questionnaire was developed with a greater focus on collecting facts about Sufi literature and social indicators employed in the societies. The respondent's qualification was placed primarily at the post-graduation and doctorate levels. The indicator of religion was not confined to people from the different faiths as included in the research process. The survey is widely used at national and international levels so that the response could be broader and more meaningful for research results. A Likert rating scale was used for quantitative information using (1–4) rating scales. (1) disagree, (2) neither agree nor disagree, (3) agree, (4) strongly agree. The demographic information was based on facts: the name of the respondent, qualification, age in years, religion, nationality, and residential location (urban or rural). The questionnaire contained descriptive statements, i.e., (1) the poetry is a very interesting subject for people all over the world, (2) the poetry produces mental well-being and calmness in people, (3) reading or reciting poetic verses of Bhattai causes reducing mental stress and anxiety, (4) understanding the poetic verses helps people to overcome the factors of intolerance and rigidity, (5) in perspective social and economic differences, people were asked to share their views on poetry as a tool to advocate for the rights of disadvantaged people across the country and beyond it. (6) In the context of gender awareness and their basic rights in society, the respondents were left open to share whether poetic verses are narrative, chapter-wise, or legendary tales of women in Sindh. (7) The concept of a course of study was also included that genuinely supports humankind's love among people across borders. The acquired data was analyzed and arranged in tabular and diagrammatic forms. The research information was interpreted accordingly.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a serious technique to derive meaningful information and deep insight from the collected data. It is a systematic statistical approach to logically describe, evaluate, and illustrate the information that is required as a solution to the stated problems. The present research has the Sufi folklore-related indicators in non-numerical and descriptive or in a textual form while the numerical information was statistical indicators, counts, and facts. The numerical and descriptive information was analyzed. The numerical analysis is given below:

Diagram 1.1: Qualification-wise Distribution of Respondents

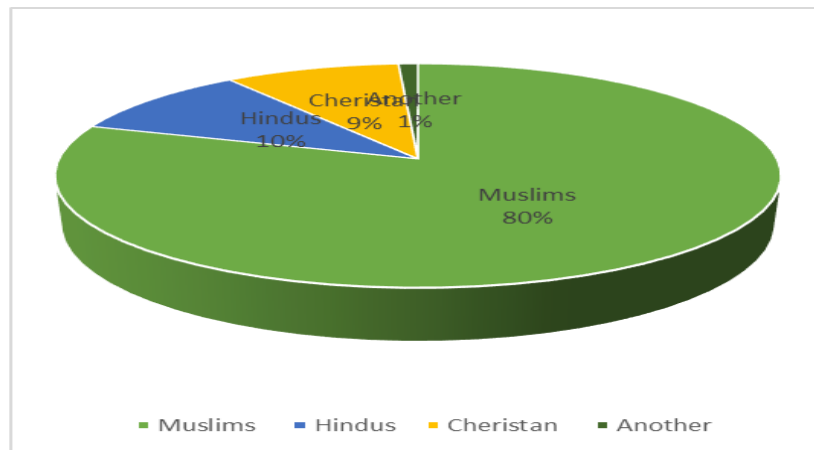


Source: Google-survey form (primary data collection 2024)

The above diagram 1.1 shows the distribution of respondent's information regarding their qualifications. The indicators were spread to discover the qualification levels of the respondents. The matriculate–intermediate 10.7%, graduate-post-graduate 43%, M.Phil.,

Ph.D. 36% and others who are folk poets generally have only basic literacy skills 11.3%. It was revealed that post-graduate and Ph.D. level scholars were more serious about contributing their knowledge for the research purpose. The well-qualified persons have in-depth knowledge of the poetic verses as a universal message for the welfare of humankind. It was also discovered that folk poets whose interest is high in memorizing the poetic verses from different chapters were interested in sharing the desired information but highly qualified respondents were more responsive over the research subject.

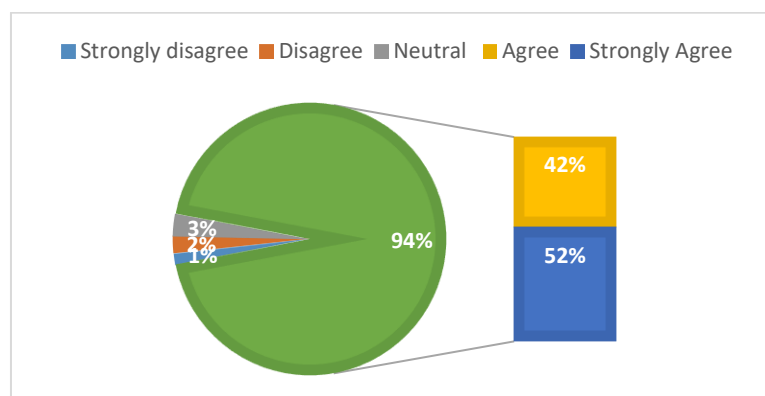
Diagram 1.2: Religion-wise Distribution of Respondents



Source: Google-survey form (primary data collection 2024)

The above-cited diagram 1.2 shows the religion-wise distribution of respondents. 80% of respondents were from the Muslim community, while 10% were Hindus, 9% were Christians, and 1% was from other religions. The religion-wise information was gathered because people from every religion refer to the subject of Sufi poetry. This is not confined to one religion. There is an 80% highest figure of Muslim respondents because the researcher was collecting facts and figures from respondents in Pakistan. There is a majority Muslim population in Pakistan but respondents from other religions were contacted for the data collection purpose.

Diagram 1.3: Bhattai’s poetry reduces intolerance and rigidity in people.

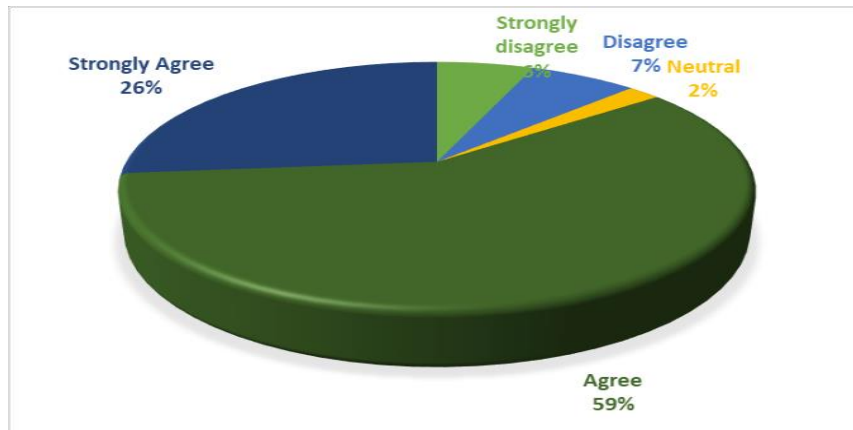


Source: Google-survey form (primary data collection 2024)

The above diagram 1.3 shows the distribution of responses regarding the descriptive statement as stated “Bhattai’s poetry reduces intolerance and rigidity in people” 52% were strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 4% neutral, 3% disagreed and 2% were strongly disagreed. The

respondents shared their views on Sufi verses, spiritual tunes, and a magical catchy voice of recitation of poetic verses and Sufi Music “Shah-Jo-Raag”. The data revealed there both the scientific as well as social effects of poetry because the women and men who were reciting poetic verses or listening to the chanting voice of Shah-Jo-Raag were more tolerated over the religious themes. They were more serious about avoiding form rigidity and accepting others and accepting the different opinions of people during the social discussions in society.

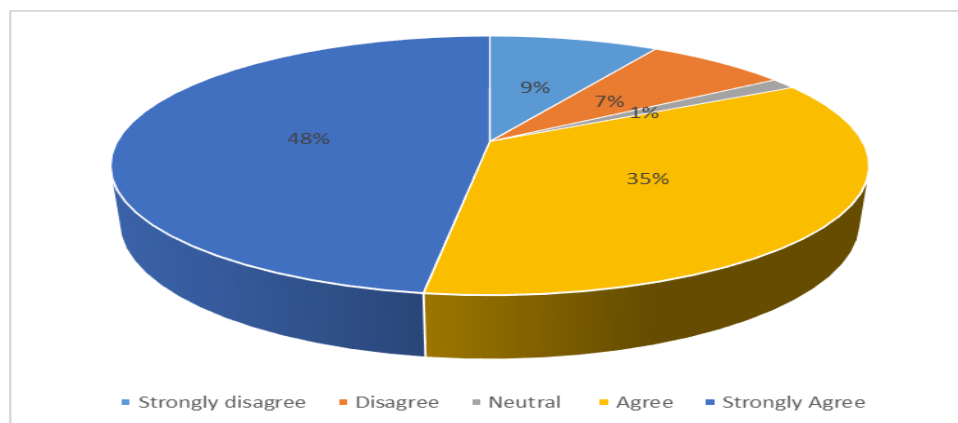
Diagram 1.4: Bhattai’s poetry promotes women’s rights in society.



Source: Google-survey form (primary data collection 2024)

The above diagram 1.4 shows the percentage of respondents’ perspectives on women's rights advocated through the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai. 26% of respondents were strongly agreeing with the stated concept, 59% agreed, 2% were neutral, 7% disagreed and 3% percent were strongly disagreed. Since there were 26% and 59% respectively for the stance on women's rights. It is due to the seven chapters that reflect women's wisdom, abilities, awakened sense, faithfulness, and sacrifice. These were Indigenous women whose stories were largely circulated among the Sindh region women not only demonstrated their wise and bold role but advocated for the rights of women in general.

Diagram1.5: Distribution of Respondents – Bhattai’s Poetry Syllabus of Humanity in Poetic



Source: Google-survey form (primary data collection 2024)

The above diagram 1.5 discussed the distribution of respondents’ basic primary notions regarding the teaching contents of Sufi poetry. The descriptive statement framed as the Bhattai’s Sufi poetry is Syllabus of Humanity—it was used as the theory, practice, and overall

history of Sufi poetry, and Sufism. The mystical dimension is narrated by the poets in different languages. 48% of respondents were strongly agreed, 35% agreed, 1% neutral, 7% disagreed, and 9% were strongly disagreed. There was an encouraging response from the respondents. Sufi poetry is a subject to frame the course contents and implement as a syllabus for understanding the universal message for the welfare of humankind. It sensitizes to create a welcoming environment beyond the language and other differences. Overall, the poetic verses of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai as considered an entirely blessed message for people around the globe.

4.1. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data was gathered in text and descriptive form. A set of collected texts through interviews and online Google forms was examined in this pattern. Some common themes, topics, and patterns were identified. The words, texts, and data in descriptive form were coded. The couplets and poetic verses from Bhittai's poetry pertain to Sufi themes. Through careful coding, reducing the same themes the two major themes were brought to draw the result. (1) Purification of Self, (2) Plurality. Also, poetic verses relevant to each theme were included in the study. Under is narration and interpretation of each theme reference to poetic verses.

Theme (Purification of Self)

(1)

Sufi washed the parchment of my being.
It was only then that my beloved's vision was seen in life.

(Translation in Sindhi Language)

صُوفِيءَ صَافٌ ڪيو، تُوِي وَرَقُ وُجُودِ جُو،
تَنُهَانِ پوءِ ٿيو، جِيئَرِي پَسَنُ پَرِينِءَ جُو.

Interpretation

Sufi poetry is the voice of the inner self that helps to purify personal feelings thoughts and actions. The vision is to reach the goal by crossing the path of levels of self. At first control over the hidden lust, minimize the desires and worldly wishes. This is known as diminishing the Nafs and reaching to Taqwah through the inspired consciousness. Seeking the practice of commanding the Self (Nafs Al Ammara) is understanding the deeper meaning of Sufi poetry. Next to it is securing the self from evil thoughts and becoming merciful to mankind. The poetic lines narrate that purification of self is a stage where someone recognizes the deeper identity, and becomes the friend of everyone without differences of caste, creed, and social status.

Theme (Plurality)

(2)

The Sufis, who evaded plurality, reached the goal,
Unforgettable is their play of love game,
Their drunkenness brought them near the beloved and made them his confidante

(Translation in Sindhi Language)

صُوفِي سَالِمُ سِي وِيَا، جِي اڪَثر سِينِ اَدْبِيَارِ،
بازِي بَارِزَنَدَنِ ڪِي، اَهي اُويسارَ،
پَرِيانِ سِينِ پَهڪارَ، رِنْدِيءَ رَسَاتِي ڪِيَا.

Interpretation

The above-cited poetic verses create an awakened sense to recognize the concept of plurality. It promotes respect, and love for mankind and offers the practice of cultural transformation. The stated goal is to bring a perception of acceptance and integration. Sufi poetry reflects a deeper meaning to achieve the stage of pluralism avoid demonstrating controversies accept others who are different in gender and abilities. Particularly in a situation of religious differences, a Sufi plays the bridging role for the entire humanity to avoid conflict and promote mankind's love.

4.2. Summary of Descriptive Narrative Responses

In addition, seventy-five descriptive and selective narrations were recorded. The deeper meaning of such narrations reflects that the Sufi poetry of Bhattai is comprehensive and enriches and conveys the message of love, tolerance, and peace for humanity. In light of the Sociological perspective, Bhattai is a poet, a philosopher whose poetic verses narrate the vivid picture of geography, flora, fauna, and socialization as a whole. His poetry is a great lesson for mental well-being and a very effective tool for expressing love for the Lord (Allah) and the entire creation. It reflects nature and love for humankind and helps to reduce discrimination. It is a treasure of folk wisdom and it promotes women's rights. The poetry reflects the art of life to maintain equality, respect for everyone, and empathy for underprivileged people. Bhattai's Poetry has become more relevant from many points of view; it spreads the message of true love, tolerance, love towards nature, firmness in thoughts and behavior, and so on. Bhattai's poetry is a candle in the darkness, his poems are full of rural women and their lifestyle, Bhattai's poetry teaches about humanity and in-depth love with God. Bhattai is a word accepted and acknowledged by poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai is the Poet's Sovereign in my opinion. He should've read daily morning and evening by all.

5. CONCLUSION

The Sufi literature, particularly the poetry of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai is a universal message. This is because all prose and poetic expressions of Sufi literature are genuinely based on mysticism. Sufi literature especially poetry is written in Sindhi, Seraiki, and Persian by Sufi Saints. The concepts of social integration, religious harmony, and tolerance as a comprehensive message and good lessons for life are discussed in the literature. This generation needs harmony, tolerance, and global academic goals to trace the history of the discipline relating it to the modern world. In which peace of mind, positive thinking is effective. It is a fact that readers of Sufi folklore feel peace of mind, and the worries of daily life are reduced. Also, they develop a desire to establish human brotherhood. Moreover, it helps to avoid religious fanaticism, people are proactive in respecting other religions. Bhattai's poetry speaks of women's rights and inspires human understanding. There is also a message of upholding the rights of the poor and disadvantaged people. The lesson of respecting women is learned. Overall, it is a curriculum full of love and affection, which is a special need of today's young generation.

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