

## Comparability of Buddhism and Sufism

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Persian and Indian civilizations for a long time are neighbours in geographic terms, through common Ariyan roots, and their close interactions have led to many cultural similarities. Buddhism originated in ancient India, found its own way to Persia and influenced neighboring cultures. That Buddhist temples and statues appeared in the eastern part of Persia though Zoroastrianism was well established at that time. Sufism could be defined as Persian interpretation of Islam which was empowered by ancient Iranian religions as well as Buddhism and even Hinduism.

Interestingly, Sufism and Buddhism are comparable. Both are practical and they talk about ways of life. The “Path” of Buddhism is same as “Tarighat” in Sufism. Attaining truth in Buddhism is by following the path and practising meditation which is similar to “Moraghebe” in Sufism. Sufi people wear “kherghe” while Buddhist monks has their own simple robes. Sufi shrines resemble Buddhist stupas.

Buddhism in a sense is not a religion and it is possible for people from any different religious background to practise it, and this is the same in Sufism. The fact that Sufis are not that much bonded to religious laws and they are not also involved with pure philosophical speculations is somehow similar to Buddha’s silence before metaphysical questions. Buddhism and Sufism talk about unique personal and spiritual experience: “One asked me what love is. And I said when you fall in love, you will realize!” (Rumi)

In Buddhism, the ultimate goal of life is nirvana which comes as result of practising “Eightfold Path” and in Sufism, “fana” is the result of “Tazkie and Tahzib” and going through “seven valleys”. Fana as nothingness introduced by Bayazid Bastami, the great Persian Sufi, is denial of self, which interestingly becomes similar to the Buddhist theory of nonexistence of self. A drop of water is nothing before the ocean and attains nothingness (fana) when it joins its own origination. Attaining fana gives traveller eternal being as nirvana is eternal peace.

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