

## **Mental Well-being of the True Practitioners of Usul-e-Sab'a in Light of Carol Ryff's Psychological Model: A Case Study on Maizbhandari Community**

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### **Abstract**

*The prime focus of this paper is to understand the importance of practicing Usul-e-Sa'bafor gaining mental well-being. The true followers of the Maizbhandari Sufi Order have been practicing Usul-e-Sa'bato eradicate anxiety, stress, depression and mental distress. To get effective results from the study; the qualitative and quantitative research methods have been applied. For collecting data, a set of questionnaires of 21 items were asked to 30 true practitioners of the seven principles. The study shows that the respondents truly believe Usul-e-Sa'baguided them to inner peace and mental well-being. Usul-e-Sa'ba (the seven principles), an effective method of self-purification, is a comprehensive training program for the aspirants trying to break the shackles of mental discontent. It is an integral part of Maizbhandari Sufi Order originated by "Khatam ul Awliya" Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah (Q.). Maizbhandari Sufi Order is a melting pot of Sufism where Usul-e-Sa'bacombines Sufi psychology and spirituality to eradicate the internal and external complexities of human beings. Carol Ryff's model of psychological well-being consists of positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, self-acceptance, meaning in life, and personal growth. The seven steps of Usul-e-Sa'ba have theoretical similarities with the six psychological factors of Carol Ryff that are considered standard scales of measuring mental well-being. This study aims to measure the mental well-being of the true practitioners using Carol Ryff's model of psychological well-being.*

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## **Introduction**

Mental well-being refers to the sound state of our mind. A sound mind helps you to be positive, confident, agile and determined at hard times. The harmonious interaction of emotional, psychological, and social components that fosters resilience and internal equilibrium is known as mental well-being. Mental and psychological wellness includes how you feel about yourself as well as how you react to the world and the quality of your relationships. It's critical to keep in mind that having a great mental health is not just about being free of disorders like sadness or anxiety. Positive qualities including a sense of purpose, contentment, sustaining good relationships, and fully engaging in life are key indicators of mental health. Individuals can construct a robust mental well-being via self-care and progress, much as a metal acquires strength through refining processes. World Health Organizations provides a statement about mental health in their *World Health Report 2001. Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*, (2001),

The importance of mental health has been recognized since its origin, and is reflected by the definition of mental health in the WHO Constitution as “not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”, but rather, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (3).

Sufism has been described in a variety of ways. Some see this as God destroying the person's ego, will, and self-centeredness before resurrecting him or her spiritually with the lights of His Essence. God then uses this alteration to guide the person's will in conformity with His Will. Islamic mysticism is known as *ta'awwuf* (literally, "to dress in wool") in Arabic, but from the early 19th century, it has been regarded as Sufism in Western languages. Sufism is an ambiguous name that originates from the Arabic word for a mystic,

"Sufi," Sufism considered by Al-Kaisi (2021) in his article "Rethinking Conceptual Sufism: A Synthesis of Islamic Spirituality, Asceticism, and Mysticism."

Sufism is commonly defined as the mystical dimension of Islam. Although it is generally a fair—though ultimately basic—description, Sufism is, in fact, a synthesis of three principles. These are Islamic spirituality, *zuhd* (asceticism) and mysticism. The concept of Sufism is part of the Qur'ānic message and its fundamental principles are no other than following the Sunnah and the Sharia. Sufism found its inspiration in the Qur'ānic verses that speak of (1) the creation of the spirit and its potentialities, (2) the necessity for self-discipline and self-purification, (3) the requirement to adopt *zuhd* to attain righteousness, (4) the existence of realities beyond human physical perception, and (5) divine love and of God's enduring presence in the hearts of the faithful (191).

Sufism and spirituality can be combined and used to profuse mental well-being among adherents. "Spiritual and religious beliefs form an important means of coping with stress for a large number of people but unfortunately this has received little attention by the mental health professionals." (Nizamie et al. S221). "Spirituality in Islam is the devotion to an identifiable, recognizable God who has His descriptions in the holy Koran and the Prophet's teachings (Sunnah). This means living according to the five pillars of Islam: first, to expressly repeat and deeply internalize that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger; second, to perform the duly prescribed prayers; third, to give Alms as charity; fourth, to fast the month of Ramadan; and fifth, if affordable, the Muslim should go to the Mecca Pilgrimage once in one's life time." (Tiliouine et al. 60) As Sufism is a combination of *Zuhd* (asceticism), mysticism, and Islamic spirituality, its essentiality to promote mental peace is evident. Maizbhandari Tariqa has incorporated Sufi teachings in

order to provide the followers a way of attaining humanity and divine revelation. Muhammad Muhiuddin in his says,

Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari was the initiator of Maizbhandari Tariqa. He originally took initiation with Syed Abu Shahama in Qaderiya Tariqa and later, in the course of his spiritual venture, he received *Khilafat* (deputyship) from his master. After returning to his home village ‘Maizbhandar’, he continued his spiritual rigor and charismatic mentorship, which, gradually, gave birth to a new Tariqa. Soon after, his spirituality attracted myriad of followers and disciples some of whom were also endowed with his deputyship (46).

The seven principles are a spiritual part of Sufism. It also has an inward connection to *Ihsan*, one of the basic principles of Islam. The precise definition of *Ihsan* given by Prophet when he said “*al-Ihsan* is to worship Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa’la</sup>) as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa’la</sup>) sees you” (Al-Bukhari, 1997). Regarding *Ihsan*, the Almighty said in Surah Yunus of the Holy Qur’an:

To those who do right is a goodly [reward]- Yea, more [than in measure]! No darkness nor shame shall cover their faces! they are companions of the garden; they will abide therein [for aye]! (10: 26).

Unlike manmade theories, which are frequently ideological, biased, and rational, man-made ethics are not necessarily true. The seven principles are addressed as Quranic principles because the core points have been taken from the Quran. According to (Hossain 127), “These Quranic Sevenfold principles are easy, simple and natural methods of human life that makes an individual’s daily routine easier.” On the other hand, Islamic ethics are derived from the Divine revelations- the Quran and hadith, and are believed to be free from mistakes and errors. (Hoque et. al, 21). Also, Muhuddin (2021) says,

These principles and practices derived from the Holy Quran and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him.), are designed to guide a seeker accumulate sublime characters of Islam as well as spiritual wisdom and moral perfection (62).

Therefore, these principles being derived from the holy book which is out of human vices and ideologies and it doesn't make it vulnerable and alterable. *Usul-e-Sa'ba* (the seven principles) is a spiritual and psychological unit that has some similarities with the six factors of psychological well-being derived by (Ryff 1071) which include self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth. Carol Diane Ryff is an American academic and psychologist who developed a world recognized scale for measuring mental well-being by six factors. According to Bertocci (2001),

The founders of the Maizbhandari tariqa developed a fairly elaborate "Seven Step" (*sapta paddati*) methodology for the attainment of their view of spiritual perfection, and any basic written description of it that I have seen always alludes to this doctrine reverently as the "Maizbhandari School of Thought," alleging it to be a unique contribution to the world's body of spiritual knowledge (60-61).

These seven steps have been practiced by thousands of Maizbhandari devotees for mental peace since its introduction. The devotees are of different religions and cultures that have practiced it for a long period of time. But only the true practitioners of *Usul-e-Sab'a* have been able to achieve mental tranquility and divine communion. The true practitioners are those who are practicing *Usul-e-Sab'a* in their life subconsciously or unconsciously. This study targets the true practitioners belonging to the Maizbhandari community which is mainly devoted to Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari and His descendants. Hans Harder also talks about the Maizbhandari community in his epic work named *Sufism and Saint*

*Veneration in Contemporary Bangladesh. The Maizbhandaris of Chittagong (2011),*

The Maizbhandaris, a Sufi movement that has, since the nineteenth century, emerged from the village of Maizbhandar, situated some 40 Km north of Chittagong city in Fatikchari thana, in the plain between the mountains of Sitakunda and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Maizbhandaris, in some contexts, as we shall see, address not only Muslims but all local religious communities (7).

The study depicts the actual psychological state of the true practitioners of *Usul-e-Sa'ba*. The study shows only by practicing the seven steps diligently and truthfully the true practitioners have gained mental well-being with an increased amount of willingness, confidence, positivity and psychological tranquility.

## **Literature Review**

### **Mental well-being**

Good mental health helps us to cope with normal stresses of life, to be productive both at work and in our private life, to relate well with other people and to contribute to our community. According to (Conrad et al 7), "positive mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Socio-economic conditions, social network, religiosity and social support are prime influences of psychological well-being. The inner satisfaction where one is free to make positive decisions about life and is completely out of mental complexities can be wholly defined as mental well-being. The elements that contribute to achieving mental calm can vary from person to person, but the most crucial ones are universal. Building relationships, coping up with difficulties, taking positive decisions and finding a meaning to life

are the other ways of being in harmony or mental peace. Another way of attaining mental peace is by empowerment and self-efficacy which is attached with coping skills and thriving abilities. From (M. A. Zimmerman 583), empowering processes are those where people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives. On the other hand, Sufism and Spiritual psychology have a different yet similar way of giving mental peace to humans. Being an essential part of Islam, it provides guidance to those with depression and mental complexities.

### **Sufism and Sufi psychology**

Sufism works as a standard in individuals' lives serving as a moral and ethical source of guidance and method of spiritual and psychological mental healing. If we view deep, Sufism comes from *Ihsan* which is a series of physical and mental action of every Muslim. Sufism also describes ways of living that combine religious ideals, such as living merely to embody the concepts of *Zuhud* and *qana'ah*. Sufism deals first and foremost with the inward aspects of that which is expressed outwardly or exoterically in the *Shariah*, the Islamic religious law. (Chittick 12) Sufism is regarded as a melting mold of every belief and values. Contemporary Sufism addresses modern problems of mental illness and depression through Islamic ethics and teachings. Sufism is a guidance through which one is brought near God with a clean heart and soul. Sufi teachings can be used as a technique to cleanse the soul of a variety of harmful emotions and energies since someone with a damaged spirituality is more prone to have psychological issues. It provides within the forms of the Islamic revelation the means for an intense spiritual life directed towards the transformation of man's being and the attainment of the spiritual virtues; ultimately it leads to the vision of God. (Chittick 9) Sufi psychology is the inner dimension of Sufism. In the Islamic tradition, the soul is considered the most significant

aspect of a human being, cleansing the soul with the intrinsic teachings of Sufism can help an individual get rid of harmful pleasures and eventually relieve him from pain. For example, the emphasis on the training of *nafs* (ego, self, soul) in Sufi psychology and its approaches to emotional and spiritual diseases have proved helpful in reducing stress and treating depression and anxiety. (Isgandarova 1147) Sufi teachings like *zuhud*, patience, honesty; submission, fasting, and resignation have a major impact on the true practitioner's psychological well-being. When someone has control over his desires and his surrounding environments, he has control over his life. Western psychologists regard self-actualization for building a peaceful and meaningful life. Psychologists even recommend Sufi meditation (*Muraqaba*) for enhancing good health. In order to maintain a broad perspective on the subject and give students guidance through spirituality, physicians and medical educators, recognizing that spirituality is a core patient need, have begun to address spirituality and health in the medical education curriculum. (M. Puchalski et al. 132).

### **Sufism and Maizbhandari Sufi order**

Maizbhandari Tariqa or *Usul-e-Sab'aw* was created by Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah (R.) He continued his spiritual rigor and charismatic mentorship, which gradually gave birth to a new Tariqa. (Muhiuddin 46) Maizbhandari Tariqa is one of the most popular and influential Sufi order in contemporary Bangladesh. Maizbhandari Tariqa is the only Tariqa originated in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a rich history of Sufi culture. This Sufi order, through its message of universal love, inclusion and morality, added a renewed flavor and force to the contribution of the Ancient Bengali saints, and consequently became the pilgrim center for the people of different religions, races, creeds, ethnicities and professions. (Muhiuddin 46-47). This Tariqa is a symbol of religious equality, inclusivity and social cohesiveness, accumulation of

indigenous religiosity and beliefs promoting integrative and cohesive society. Prophet Muhammad (<sup>Peace Be Upon Him.</sup>) is the first Sufi according to many Sufis' and the Sufism that we see today bears the teachings and ideologies through *Silsila* of many Sufis from the past. Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah in order to mirror his Tariqa with Sufism or the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (<sup>Peace Be Upon Him.</sup>) goes back to the past and describes its formation in an elaborative way. He explains that during the time of the Prophet (<sup>Peace Be Upon Him.</sup>), people used to receive his spiritual effulgence in any of the three ways. (1) *Tariqa-e-Abrar-e-Mujahedin*, (the path of holy fighters) who fought with him (pbuh) for his cause. (2) *Tariqa-e-Akhyar-e-Salihin*, (the path of the most pious) who followed him (pbuh) in his good cause. (3) *Tariqa-e-Shuhada-e-Ashiqin*, (the path of the sacrificed lovers) who sacrificed themselves for his (pbuh) love (Muhiuddin 53).

During the era of *Wilayat-e-Mutlaqa-e-Ahmadi*, these three spiritual streams accumulated in the personality of Syed Ahmad Ullah. This *Wilayat* or the unrestricted spiritual stream became known as Maizbhandari Tariqa (Hossain 192-193). Maizbhandari Sufi order is one of the most popular and influential Sufi order in contemporary Bangladesh. It is the only Sufi order that originated in Bangladesh with the answers and solutions to local problems. The order got its acceptance from its universalism of thoughts and practices. The Maizbhandar-based order is a powerful religious organization that transcends all notions of inclusivity and virtue of influence. It has been able to maintain the diversity of different cultures and religions and has been successful in bringing every class of people under one roof even in extreme restrictions from many reformist circles. (Muhiuddin 79) agrees that it is evident from his study that this Sufi order is a nucleus of universal love and devotion that prefers obedience and submission over exoteric rituals. Human beings are the best of creation and no discrepancies based on someone's faith, race, color or anything else should be allowed to marginalize this honor. The reason behind the vast

development and acceptance of Sufism is for its inclusivity and pluralism. Sufism has acted as a melting pot by accepting the beliefs, norms and ethics of other religious identities which helped it receive universal acceptance. All the norms and practices of Maizbhandari Sufi order have an inward influence and relation to Sufism.

### **Hazrat Maulana Syed Ahmad Ullah and his *Usul-e-Sab'a* (the seven principles)**

The descendant of holy prophet Hazrat Muhammad (<sup>Peace Be Upon Him.</sup>), Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah (R.), was born in the village called Maizbhandar under the Fatikchari police station in Chattogram, Bangladesh on Wednesday, January 15, (1826 1244 AH).

Maizbhandari Tariqa (Maizbhandari Sufi order) has a unique characteristic of secularism, liberalism and also dominated by moral religion. Its distinctiveness and acceptance of people of all backgrounds, regardless of religion, caste, ethnicity, or customs, as well as its quick grasp and adherence to moral values, highlighted its significance in the village and the nation. Moreover, these Quranic Sevenfold principles are easy, simple, and natural methods of human life that make an individual's daily routine easier. (Hossain 127). In comparison with other Islamic Sufi methods of self-purification and permanence with Allah, these principles are easier and simpler to practice. They are not contradictory with other universal methods of self-purification; rather, they are pragmatic, encouraging and a remedy for the world crisis and a symbol of salvation. (Hossain 128). Notably, Muhiuddin (2021) says,

An aspirant's temporal and spiritual life after completing these stages is more active, meaningful and real as he has now managed to subdue his ego. His heart is now ready to reflect the light of Eternal Divine Love (62).

## ***Usul-e-Sa'ba* (the seven principles) and its Importance for Mental Well-being**

*Usul-e-Sab'a* (the seven principles) is instructions for individuals searching for purifying their minds and gaining mental peace. The Maizbhandari Sufi order embraced the seven principles (*Usul-e-Sab'a*) as a comprehensive training program for aspirants to help them gradually escape the traps of the world so that they might start their spiritual journey to the Divine Communion and develop the finest human attributes. The seven principles are described in two parts, *Fana-e-Salasa* (Three Annihilators) and *Mawt-e-Arba'a* (Four deaths) (Hoque et. al, 21).

### ***Fana-e-Salasa*-(the three Annihilators)**

***Fana anil Khalq***: *Fana* literally means annihilation, while *Khalq* literally means creation. It alludes to independence. This means that there should be no expectation of assistance or gain from others. It defines not to expect favor from others rather become self-reliant and be submissive to Allah. This mindset of over-reliance on others slows our mental growth. The practice of *Fana anil khalq* makes us self-reliant and boosts our self-efficacy. Drawing from these discussions, we define efficiency as the belief that one's efforts can make a difference in attaining goals, and empowerment as the utilization of resources to engage in social action to achieve desired goals. (Fisher and Gosselink 3-4). According to the six-factor model of psychological well-being derived by (Ryff 1971) the fully functioning person is also described as having an internal locus of evaluation, whereby one does not look to others for approval, but evaluates oneself by personal standards. Individuation is seen to involve a deliverance from convention, in which the person no longer clings to the collective fears, beliefs, and laws of the masses. Both Ryff and Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari have agreed on the concept of individuation or annihilation of the dependence on

the creation in order to achieve mental freedom from the notions of everyday life.

***Fana anil Hawa:*** In Sufi terminology, "to avoid pointless and vain talks and activities is called *Fana anil Hawa*. This means avoiding pointless things, refraining from superfluous work or discourse, and refraining from pointless activities. A person's livelihood is made simpler and more hassle-free by practicing it. Time management is an issue for all of us. It is pointless to engage in activities like chatting or procrastinating when we have deadlines to meet. These pointless activities later result in poor exam scores, job rejections, and reprimands for being late. Our passions often lead us to immoral behavior. Although happiness can be attained through the acquisition of things, financial security, power, and notoriety, it is also ephemeral. All joys are connected to stimuli that depend on different factors and experiences we have. *Fana anil Hawa* practice allows us to eliminate our weaknesses. (Ryff 1071) says, one who functions positively has goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, all of which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful. Both Ryff and Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari have agreed on the concept of positively dealing with every action of life, refraining from superfluous works.

***Fana anil Irada:*** *Fana anil Irada* is the Sufi phrase for submitting one's will to Allah's will. It means to prefer Allah's will and to diminish own desires into His wills, as a result, 'submission (*taslim*) and contentment (*rida*) will be achieved. (Hossain 126-127). We hold people accountable for our suffering and our mistakes. Understanding the mystical phenomena of Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> OaTa'la) and submitting all sufferings, pains and mistakes upon Him will make us diminish our tensions and problems. Creating a relationship of love and affection with the almighty diffuses a serene mind. The practice of *Fana anil Hawa* assists an aspirant for a complete submission to Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> OaTa'la) and his desires finds a source of

fulfillment. (Ryff 1072) says, a high scorer of psychological well-being possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life. Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari has also agreed on the principle of accepting the good and bad qualities of self while feeling positive about life. He emphasized on the submission of one's self to Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa'la</sup>) and diminishing one's desire to become optimistic about life.

### ***Mawt-e-Arba'a- (Four types of Death)***

***Al Mawt al Abyad- White Death:*** When we learn to master our urges, feelings, and excessive desires, we achieve white death. It enlightens the human soul. Fasting during the month of Ramadan or voluntary fasting is an example of it (Hossain 126-127). Self-control, self-regulation, and self-restraint are vital components of human nature. The traits control wise and precise decisions and prevent us from being sidetracked. The instruments support us in keeping our hearts morally and ethically upright. This practice keeps an aspirant bound to the Almighty indirectly incorporating submissive tendencies and shaping a behavior of self-control and self-regulation. (Ryff 1072) agrees, he who has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls a complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; is able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values. Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari also agrees on making an effective use of surroundings and having control over a complex array of external activities and desires can be achieved through frugality and fasting.

***Al Mawt al Aswad- Black Death:*** Black Death is the end of the agony we feel after receiving criticism. It draws attention to the unwholesome state of affairs. Criticism motivates us to do better, inspires us to complete our tasks flawlessly, trains us to pay attention

to our work, and develops a habit of tolerance. Criticism makes flaws clear to us so we can fix them and become error-free. In actuality, it is an opportunity for us to assess our actions, learn new things, and become flawless. Further, it pushes us to lead a life with clear objectives making our lives smooth and peaceful. (Ryff 1072) accepts that those with high scores of psychological well-being have warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; are concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; and understands the give and take of human relationships. On the other hand, Black Death emphasizes on the capability of empathy, affection and intimacy towards everybody.

***Al Mawt al Ahmar- Red Death:*** The Red Death is a lesson in killing off avarice and immoral sexual urges. The principle recommends fighting against the fatal and destructive habit of greed that is ingrained in human nature. Greed inspires unethical ideas and evil intentions that lead to illegal money acquisition, inflicting harm on others for personal benefit, and violating legal and humanitarian norms. The Sufi elements imply that a person can only maintain the happiness of their loved ones if they are content with themselves. Satisfaction and self-actualization create a sense of acceptance of every notion of life and strengthens our psychological state. (Ryff 1071-1072) says the high scorers of psychological well-being are self-determining and independent; is able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards and the individuals are self-actualizers. Similarly, practice of red death enables one to control his environment independently and oppress his desires making him autonomous.

***Al Mawt al Akhdar- Green Death:*** It alludes to a lack of desire for a luxury lifestyle and a love and devotion is Allah. However, our desire for money and power leads us down dark, illegal paths that will eventually bring about our demise. Our insensibility has a

negative impact on our life as a result. We get disengaged from life's fundamental goal. The Green Death principle in action makes us think of the lovely, fruitful, and active season of spring. For finding a meaning in life and living a frugal life we should practice green death. The idea is even similar to Maulana Jalal-ad-Din Rumi's major ideas and teachings of acceptance and acknowledgement of both positive and negative experiences; unlearning of old habits and looking at the world with new eyes; decentering, changing one's focus from Self to Other; and attunement of body and mind through meditation, music and dance (Mirdal 6). According to (Ryff 1072), optimal psychological functioning requires not only that one achieves the prior characteristics, but also that one continues to develop one's potential, to grow and expand as a person. The need to actualize oneself and realize one's potential is central to the clinical perspectives on personal growth. Similarly, Green death influences one to lead an optimistic life by developing own potential in leading a frugal life. The practice of self-acceptance agreed by (Ryff 1071) is defined as a central feature of mental health as well as a characteristic of self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity which is similar to green death that emphasizes self-actualization and maturity to take decisions of leading simple life.

## **Research Objectives**

This study wants to find out how doing *Usul-e-Sab'a* can make people feel better mentally. It wants to show that *Usul-e-Sab'a* is good for mental health. The study also wants to learn about the Maizbhandari community, who really practice *Usul-e-Sab'a*, and how it helps them live peaceful lives and feel good overall.

1. To identify how mental well-being is gained by practicing *Usul-e-Sab'a*.
2. To highlight the peaceful lives of the Maizbhandari community who are the true practitioners of *Usul-e-Sab'a*.

3. To correlate the scale of *Usul-e-Sab'a* with psychological well-being scales of Carol Ryff.

### **Research Questions**

The *Usul-e-Sab'a* system is a crucial component of mental wellness, as it provides a systematic approach to emotional development and self-awareness. By engaging in practices such as meditation and positive social interactions, it cultivates a sense of inner tranquility and direction, while simultaneously encouraging harmonious relationships within a supportive communal setting.

1. Why is *Usul-e-Sab'a* important for mental well-being?
2. How does *Usul-e-Sab'a* bring mental peace?

### **Research Statement**

Gawthul Azam Maizbhandari has been successful in gathering a myriad of help seeking individuals under the practices of *Usul-e-Sab'a*. Spirituality is that part of a person that searches for transcendent meaning and purpose in life. It is that part of a person that allows him or her to transcend his or her suffering. (Wahyudi et. al131). The Seven principles intricately made from the elements of Sufism and spiritual psychology have prevailed mental peace in the lives of the true practitioners of the Maizbhandari community. The exploration of the impact of *Usul-e-Sab'a* on mental well-being holds great significance due to its potential as a comprehensive approach to address psychological challenges. In light of the increasing demand for diverse methods to enhance mental health, it is pertinent to investigate whether *Usul-e-Sab'a*, with its spiritual, emotional, and psychological dimensions, can positively contribute to overall mental well-being. This research endeavors to delve into this question and provide valuable insights into an alternative avenue for fostering mental resilience and balance using Carol Ryff's six-factor model.

## Methodology

**Participants:** Majority of the participants is male who are the true believers and practitioners of *Usul-e-Sab'a* living in Maizbhandar and they are aged from 18 to 60+. Participants between the ages of 18 and 30 are 5(five) in number, those between the ages of 31 and 45 are 15 (fifteen), and those between the ages of 46 and 60+ are 10(ten).

**Data Collection:** Data has been collected after taking concern from the participants. The first questionnaire survey was conducted over them and their opinion has been collected with their permission. The second survey was conducted over phone and all 30 participants have agreed to use their opinion for this research. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) has been used to analyze the data according to participant responses concerning the statements in both questionnaires. By using charts and relevant tables participants' perception has been shown using Microsoft Excel 2019. SPSS has been used to verify the reliability of the statements in the questionnaire, the Cronbach alpha method has been used, where the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.933, which indicates strong reliability of the statements in the questionnaires of *Usul-e-Sab'a*'s mental well-being model. For checking the correlation of Mental Well-being with other variables Spearman rank correlation has been conducted.

**The scale of *Usul-e-Sab'a*'s mental well-being model:** A five-point Likert Scale was designed for the questionnaire of 21 items to know the opinion of the true practitioners of *Usul-e-Sab'a* to achieve mental well-being. The scale ranges from strongly disagreeing with 1 point to strongly agreeing with 5 points.

**The scale of Ryff's psychological well-being model:** A seven-point Likert Scale was designed for the questionnaire of 18 items by

Carol Ryff to measure mental well-being. (Ryff et al.) Her scale ranges from strongly agree of 1 point to strongly disagree of 7 points.

**Research Frameworks**

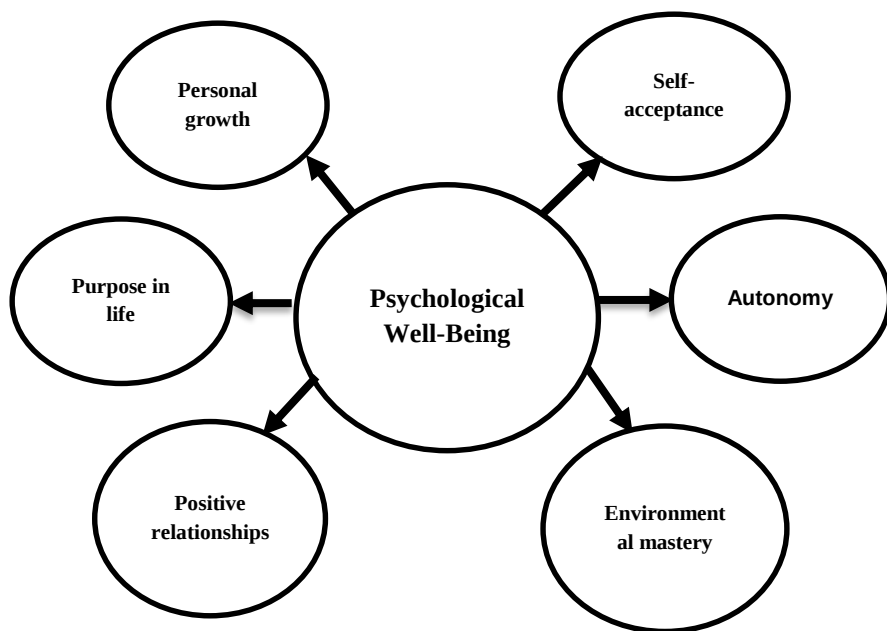


Figure 1: Ryff’s Six-factor model of psychological well-being

Ryff’s model has six independent variables with a single dependent variable. The six factors (IV) consequently impact psychological well-being (DV) of human beings.

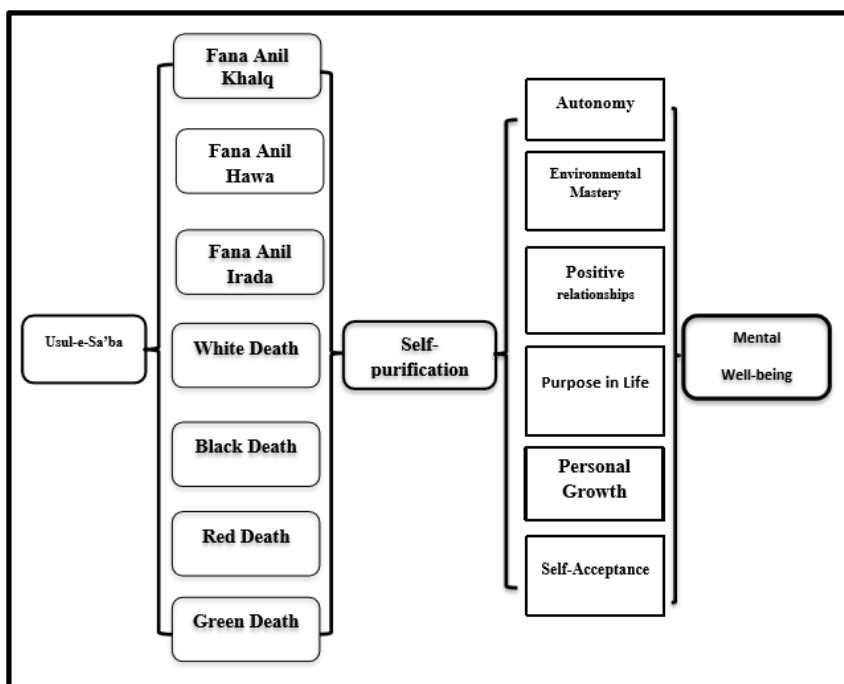


Figure 2: Conceptual diagram of *Usul-e-Sa'ba* fostering mental well-being

The Fana Anil Khalq, Fana Anil Hawa, Fana Anil Irada, White Death, Black Death, Red Death, and Green Death are the seven independent variables (IV) mentioned in the research framework above. The dependent variable (DV) for the seven principles is self-purification and mental well-being. The mental well-being dependent variable is affected by six mediating variables (MV) named as Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in Life, Personal Growth, Positive relationships with others, and Self-acceptance which are subsequently affected by one of the independent variables (IV). The hypothesis suggests that practicing the seven IV's can help individuals achieve self-purification (DV) and which subsequently assists to gain development of mental well-being (DV). Seven IV, six MV, and two DV were used to construct

and analyze the questionnaire. For each independent variable, a minimum of three questions were prepared. So, the total number of questions stands at 21 (twenty-one). Then the respondents' responses were analyzed on a five-point Likert scale. The research framework presented in the study focuses on investigating the relationships among various variables and their impact on self-purification, six factors of psychological well-being and mental well-being.

### Results

**Participants’ Perception of *Usul-e-Sab’a*:** For evaluating the opinion of the practitioners, the responses of the participants were analyzed by the Seven Principles; *Fana Anil Khalq*, *Fana Anil Hawa*, *Fana Anil Irada*, White Death, Black Death, Red Death, and Green Death.

Table 1: Percentage of participants’ response on *Usul-e-Sa’ba*.

| Variables       | Statements                                                     | 5      | 4 | 3       | 2 | 1        |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---|---------|---|----------|
|                 |                                                                | Agree  |   | Neutral |   | Disagree |
| Fana Anil Khalq | I do most of the domestic work on my own.                      | 80%    |   | 20%     |   | 0%       |
|                 | Self-reliance is necessary for a successful and peaceful life. | 100%   |   | 0%      |   | 0%       |
|                 | It is not necessary to being self-reliant                      | 0%     |   | 0%      |   | 100%     |
| Fana Anil Hawa  | I spend most of the time using my Smartphone.                  | 60%    |   | 16.67%  |   | 23.33%   |
|                 | I cannot manage my time.                                       | 43.33% |   | 16.67%  |   | 40%      |
|                 | I like to spend my time gossiping with friends.                | 13.33% |   | 20%     |   | 66.67%   |

|                            |                                                                                     |         |        |        |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
| <b>Fana Anil<br/>Irada</b> | I remain submissive to Allah (Subhanahu <sup>OnaTa'la</sup> ) all the time.         | 93.33 % | 6.67%  | 0%     |
|                            | I am always satisfied with what I have.                                             | 90%     | 10%    | 0%     |
|                            | I do not feel depressed.                                                            | 33.33 % | 36.67% | 30%    |
| <b>White<br/>Death</b>     | I have control over my eating habits.                                               | 60%     | 30%    | 10%    |
|                            | I spend money according to my needs.                                                | 100%    | 0%     | 0%     |
|                            | I can control my anger.                                                             | 63.33 % | 13.33% | 23.37% |
| <b>Black<br/>Death</b>     | We should criticize others.                                                         | 10%     | 10%    | 80%    |
|                            | I hate those who backbite                                                           | 86.67 % | 6.67%  | 6.67%  |
|                            | Self-criticism is important for self-development.                                   | 83.33 % | 6.67%  | 10%    |
| <b>Red Death</b>           | Everyone should try to lead a luxurious life                                        | 3.33 %  | 10%    | 86.67% |
|                            | Smartness in clothes and ornaments should be a priority.                            | 6.67 %  | 16.67% | 76.67% |
|                            | I want to lead a wealthy life.                                                      | 10%     | 60%    | 30%    |
| <b>Green<br/>Death</b>     | I accept every bad or good incident as my destiny.                                  | 73.33 % | 26.67% | 0%     |
|                            | I believe having internal peace is more important than having materialistic wealth. | 86.67 % | 13.33% | 0%     |

|  |                                         |         |        |        |
|--|-----------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
|  | I have no longing for a luxurious life. | 36.67 % | 46.67% | 16.67% |
|--|-----------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|

Table1 shows that the practitioners maintain the seven principles in order to lead a successful and peaceful life. The percentage in most of the questions are positive and aligns with the objective of the questionnaire. According to the data, the participants think everyone should be self-reliant. Most of them are submissive to Allah (Subhanahu OaTa'la) and are satisfied with their conditions. The participants are receptive of the criticisms and backbites. Controlled and noteworthy spending and anger control management for most of the participants are satisfactory. Most of the participants are satisfied with their lives and don't long for luxurious life and materialistic wealth. However, many participants are unable to minimize their mobile phone addiction that consumes a lot of valuable time. To conclude, the responses reveal that most of the participants are mentally sound.

Table 2: Percentage of participants’ response to Carol Ryff’s psychological model

| Variables | Statements                                                                                            | 7     | 6 | 5 | 4           | 3            | 2 | 1 |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|---|-------------|--------------|---|---|
|           |                                                                                                       | Agree |   |   | Neutra<br>l | Disagr<br>ee |   |   |
| Autonomy  | I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions                                                | 36.6% |   |   | 16.7%       | 46.7%        |   |   |
|           | I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from the way most other people think | 50%   |   |   | 6.7%        | 43.3%        |   |   |
|           | I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important      | 36.7% |   |   | 0%          | 63.3%        |   |   |

|                               |                                                                                                        |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Environmental Mastery</b>  | The demands of everyday life often get me down                                                         | 40%   | 10%   | 50%   |
|                               | In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live                                     | 70%   | 6.7%  | 23.4% |
|                               | I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life                                               | 73.3% | 3.3%  | 23.4% |
| <b>Personal Growth</b>        | For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth                           | 70%   | 3.3%  | 26.7% |
|                               | I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world. | 66.7% | 13.3% | 20%   |
|                               | I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago                        | 26.7% | 6.7%  | 66.6% |
| <b>Positive Relationships</b> | Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me                              | 26.7% | 6.7%  | 66.6% |
|                               | People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others                      | 60%   | 13.3% | 26.6% |
|                               | I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others                                | 30%   | 3.3%  | 66.7% |
| <b>Purpose in Life</b>        | Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them                                    | 76.7% | 6.7%  | 16.7% |
|                               | I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future                                  | 46.7% | 6.7%  | 46.7% |
|                               | I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life                                            | 33.3% | 16.7% | 50%   |
|                               | I like most parts of my personality                                                                    | 70%   | 0%    | 30%   |

|                        |                                                                                          |       |       |       |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Self-Acceptance</b> | When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far | 70%   | 0%    | 30%   |
|                        | In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life                           | 23.3% | 23.3% | 53.4% |

Table 2 shows that among 30 respondents, most of them have strongly agreed to the questions. Most of them have agreed they are confident about their decisions and are not influenced by others’ perceptions. Most of them can take charge of their surroundings and maintain the situation according to their benefits. Many respondents believe learning and experiencing is very important for personal growth. Positive relationships with others of most of the respondents is satisfactory. Many respondents have a goal in life and are confident of achieving it. About being satisfied in life, many respondents have been positive. This result indicates that most of the respondents are highly positive about life indicating a positive mental well-being. Moreover, the same aspirants have similarly displayed positive response in the previous result by practicing *Usul-e-Sab’a*.

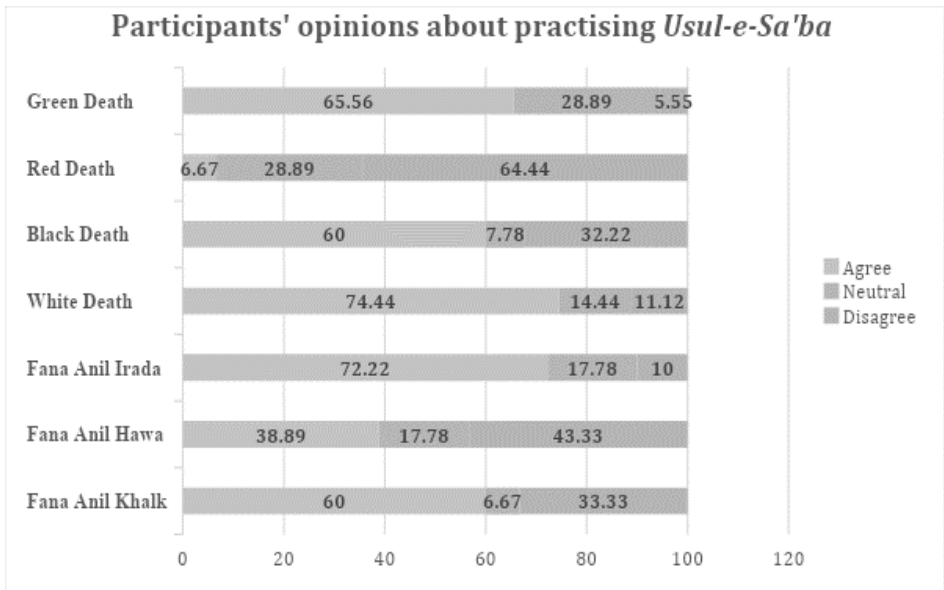


Figure 3: Respondents' overall perception about practicing *Usul-e-Sab'a*

Figure 3 is showing the main variables on overall responses regarding *Usul-e-Sa'ba*, practicing it as a method of achieving mental well-being. About 65.56% participants practice green death, only 6.67% couldn't practice Red Death, 60% of the practitioners maintain Black Death and 74.44% practice White Death significantly. Fana Anil khalq is being practiced by 72.22% respondents, 38.89% participants practice Fana Anil Hawa and 60% practice Fana Anil Irada.

### Spearman Rank Correlation

To justify the correlation of the level of mental well-being with respondents' true practice of *Fana anil Khalq*, *Fana anil Hawa*, *Fana anil Irada*, White death, Black Death, red death and green death, Spearman Rank Correlation has been conducted. For the correlation between six factors of Carol Ryff's psychological well-being and seven principles, spearman correlation model has been used.

Table 3. Correlation between Mental Well-being and *Usul-e-Sab'a*

| <b>Spearman<br/>Correlation</b>                    | <b>Correlation<br/>Coefficient</b> | <b>Correlation<br/>Coefficient</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .828                               |
| Fana Anil Khalq                                    | .828**                             | 1                                  |
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .870**                             |
| <i>White Death (Mawte abyadh)</i>                  | .870**                             | 1                                  |
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .915**                             |
| Fana Anil Hawa &<br><i>Red Death (Mawte Ahmar)</i> | .915**                             | 1                                  |
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .870**                             |
| <i>Black Death (Mawte Aswad)</i>                   | .870**                             | 1                                  |
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .823**                             |
| <i>Green Death (Mawte Akdhar)</i>                  | .823**                             | 1                                  |
| Mental Well-being                                  | 1                                  | .843**                             |
| Fana Anil Irada                                    | .843**                             | 1                                  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From table 4, it has been found that all six principles are positively correlated with mental well-being. The correlation between mental well-being and *Fana Anil Khalq* has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  is 0.828. The correlation between mental well-being and *Fana Anil Hawa* has a strong correlation with the

value  $r$  is 0.925. The correlation between mental well-being and *Fana Anil Irada* has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.843. The correlation between mental well-being and White Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.870. The correlation between mental well-being and Black Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.870. The correlation between mental well-being and Red Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.904. The correlation between mental well-being and Green Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.823. All correlations with mental well-being have been measured by setting the value of  $r$  of 1.000 for mental well-being as a standard value as it has a single variable. Overall, the correlation between Mental Well-being and *Usul-e-Sab'a* shows strong and positive result.

Table 5. Correlation between *Usul-e-Sa'ba* and Carol Ryff's Six-factors.

| <b>Spearman<br/>Correlation</b> | <b>Correlation<br/>Coefficient</b> | <b>Correlation<br/>Coefficient</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Autonomy                        | .703**                             | .618**                             |
| Fana Anil Khalq                 | .619**                             | .813**                             |
| Environmental<br>mastery        | .480*                              | .297                               |
| White Death                     | 0.903**                            | .254                               |
| Personal Growth                 | .543*                              | .439*                              |
| Fana Anil Hawa &<br>Red Death   | .464*                              | .909**                             |

|                                   |       |        |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Positive Relationship with others | .559* | .279   |
| Black Death                       | .363* | .728** |
| Purpose in Life                   | .440* | .174   |
| Green Death                       | .154  | .870** |
| Self-acceptance                   | .517* | .134   |
| Fana Anil Irada                   | .133  | .964** |

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\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In table 5, the results of correlation have been measured equally with both variables. At first, the correlation has been made between Autonomy and *Fana Anil Khalq* and later between *Fana Anil Khalq* and Autonomy. The correlation has taken place between Carol Ryff's six factors and *Usul-e-Sab'a* (seven principles). From the data, it has been found that the correlation between Autonomy and *Fana Anil Khalq* has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  is 0.703, 0.618, 0.619, 0.813 respectively. The correlation between Environmental mastery and White Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.480, 0.297, 0.903, 0.254 respectively. The correlation between Personal Growth and *Fana Anil Hawa* and Red Death have a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.543, 0.439, 0.464, 0.909 respectively. The correlation between Positive Relationship with others and Black Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.559, 0.279, 0.363, 0.728 respectively. The correlation between Purpose in Life and Green Death has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.440, 0.174, 0.154, 0.870 respectively. The correlation between Self-acceptance and *Fana Anil Irada* has a strong correlation with the value  $r$  of 0.517, 0.134,

0.133, 0.964 respectively. Overall, the correlation between the variables shows moderate result.

## **Discussions**

Modern psychotherapies and psychology have used Sufism and Spirituality very little to treat mental health problems. *Usul-e-Sab'a*, bearing the principles of Sufism, purifies the inner part of a human being, the soul. This purification occurs through practices and obedience to *Usul-e-Sab'a* and the creator. Self-purification of the soul and body leads to a decent state where one is able to avoid decisions that are harmful and desires that bring sorrow. Inner satisfaction can create a space where an individual can make decisions independently. This liberty makes one autonomous and profuse a state of self-confidence and drives one to lead a life without dependence. As dependence on others puts a barrier against growth and development, it is wise to be self-reliant. Empowerment has been the renowned term used for making a self-reliant human being. *Usul-e-Sab'a* shows an aspirant to start being self-reliant slowly by doing the usual chores at home. This behavior turns into a habit making an individual self-reliant indirectly. The results therefore show that empowerment is greatly achieved if the seven principles are practiced. This phenomenon is precisely stated in *Fana Anil Khalq*. Sufis led a simple, gentle and normal life. They don't think of or want luxury. Thus, their life is tranquil and harmonious. *Fana Anil Hawa* and Red death bear the principles to lead a simple and harmonious life like the Sufis. The results also show the practitioners are peaceful, their lives aren't chaotic. They are submissive to Allah. The mentality to lead an expensive and luxurious lifestyle is out of their knowledge. This simple and typical Sufi lifestyle has provided them a peaceful life. Meanwhile, to change the mentality of leading a luxurious lifestyle, there should be some practices to overcome the mental and physical desires. *Fana Anil Irada* and White death have taught the aspirants to maintain

their consumption of food, and materials. Weekly fasting and *Zikr* of Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa'la</sup>) has made them have the control over their physical and mental desires. *Zikr* has made them closer to Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa'la</sup>) and control over food and materials have benefitted them to live a simple and meaningful life. The practitioners have made their desires limited by following these principles. Black Death and green death empower the aspirants to be strong and vigilant from outside. Black Death prepares an aspirant to be receptive of praises as well as extreme criticisms. This practice proliferates a buffer state inside the mind and stops the aspirant from indulging in useless gossip, quarrels and debates. Besides ensuring inner peace of the aspirant, this practice ensures social harmony too. Green death not only makes an aspirant submissive and devoted to Allah (<sup>Subhanahu</sup> <sup>OaTa'la</sup>) but also develops the morality of the individual. Moral values and ethics are brushed off and cleaned so that it follows the true teachings of Quran. In every religion, the inner self of a human being is given more priority than the outer self. The purification of the soul yields the moral and ethical development of the body ushering peace and harmony. In fact, the core concept of gaining inner peace and harmony lies in the cleansing of the soul. Therefore, "*Khatam ul Awliya*" Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah (Q.) invented *Usul-e-Sab'a* as a training program for purifying the soul. His soul purification method named as *Usul-e-Sab'a* have significantly assisted the true practitioners to purify their souls in order to gain mental well-being. Moreover, anyone seeking to achieve mental well-being should at first purify their soul. The perception of the practitioners has supported this notion significantly. For understanding the perception of the practitioners better, Carol Ryff's six-factors were taken as a standard to measure the well-being of the participants. Though not completely, the similarities in the results mostly suggest that the practitioners of *Usul-e-Sab'a* also have a positive result in Carol Ryff's psychological model. Therefore, this study encourages future

researchers to use *Usul-e-Sab'a* as a psychometric tool to measure mental well-being and inspires to contribute in this research matter further. This paper tried to mend the research gap over the study relating to the particular use of Maizbhandari Sufi order and its *Usul-e-Sab'a* to gain psychological well-being. Though the paper bears some limitations like lack of large-scale survey and in-depth analysis of the relation between mental well-being and *Usul-e-Sab'a*, it can be concluded that *Usul-e-Sab'a* with the light of Sufism and Sufi psychology can usher mental well-being among the true practitioners. The study prefers *Usul-e-Sab'a* to be used as a method for receiving mental well-being.

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