

## SUFISM IN INDIA

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### **Introduction**

Islam entered the Indian subcontinent in the early 8th century when rulers from Turkic and Afghan lands decided to invade India. Sufi mystic traditions became more visible during the 10th and 11th centuries of the Delhi Sultanate and after it to the rest of India. In spite of orthodox Muslim scholars who excluded non- Muslim practices, Sufism was a more inclusive group that was often more tolerant of them. Although the commitment to practice sharia remains a Sufi foundation, early Sufis in India focused on proselytizing through service work and helping the poor. Sufi literature had more academic concerns besides just the jurisprudential and theological works seen in madrasa and between the late 12th century and 13th century, Sufi brotherhoods became firmly consolidated in northern India.

The Sufi mystics, or fakir established khanqahs, commonly defined as a hospice, lodge, community centre, or dormitory run by Sufis mostly without royal grant. Keeping a "visitors welcome" policy, khanqahs in India offered spiritual guidance, psychological support, and counselling that was free and open to all people. The spiritually hungry and depressed caste members were both fed with a free kitchen service and provided basic education. By creating egalitarian communities within stratified caste systems, Sufis successfully spread their teachings of love, spirituality, and harmony. It was this example of Sufi brotherhood and equity that drew people to the religion of Islam

The Sufi teachings of divine spirituality, cosmic harmony, love, and humanity resonated with the common people and still does so today

### **Evaluating the Influence:**

Sufism is considered the Meeting point of Hinduism and Islam. Sufi saints and their Khanqahs (When in Flesh) or Dargah (shrines with his grave , after death of the Sufi saint) were popular among common masses due to their secular and all accepting attitude. People from all religions and all ways of life were equal under that roof. Sufis reached out to poor and marginalized rural communities and preached in local dialects such as Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi versus Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. Sufism emerged as a "moral and comprehensive socio-religious force" that even influenced other religious traditions. Sufi mystics are credited with the Invention of Urdu as a language which was considered an aesthetic/ poetic confluence of Sanskrit and Persian.

Their traditions of devotional practices and modest living attracted all people. Their teachings of humanity, love for God and the Prophet continue to be surrounded by mystical tales and folk songs today. Sufi Saints became accessible unlike the kings and their generals by speaking local language and addressed the problems of local people. Dargah (mentioned above) become the patrons for great writing, music and are credited with the creation of many important music instruments in India. For example, the Sufi poets Mirza Ghalib, Amir Khosrow wrote poetry, sung qawwali. The qawwali tradition of singing in the praise of Allah or the Sufi saint (Peer) was initiated and adopted by the Chishti Sufi tradition in India and was discredited by all other schools of Sufism in India.

The Sufi movement in India declined because they abandoned the principles/ ideals that Sufism stands on. The connection between the descendants of popular and important Sufi saints like Nazamuddin Auliya, Baba Farid, etc with the king, getting patronization from rulers like Akbar led to common

people losing faith in the Sufi mystics in India. After court patronization of Sufi saints, it became an elite affair which was used to carry out political propagandas like religious conversions which was against the commonly accepted idea or motive of the Sufi movement/ saints.

### Rituals:

One of the most popular rituals in Sufism is the visiting of grave tombs of Sufi saints. These have evolved into Sufi shrines and are seen among cultural and religious landscape of India. These forms of Sufi practise created an aura of spiritual and religious traditions around prescribed dates called "Urs" celebration of the death anniversary of a Peer/ Mystic/ Saint. Many orthodox or Islamic purists denounce these visiting grave rituals, especially the expectation of receiving blessings from the venerated saints. Nevertheless, these rituals have survived generations and seem adamant to remain, like Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan, India which was visited by the most famous Mughal emperor Akbar.

In Sufism, the term music is called "sa'ma" or literary audition. This is where poetry would be sung to instrumental music; this ritual would often put Sufis into spiritual ecstasy. Music has always been present as a rich tradition among all Indian religions and Indian scholars consider that Indian folk music, culture and dancing had a substantial impact on the Indian Sufi movement. Sufi gatherings today are known as qawwali. One of the biggest contributors to the musical Sufi tradition was Amir Khosrow (d. 1325). Known as a disciple of Nizamuddin Chishti, Amir was known as the most talented musical poet in the early Muslim period of India. He is considered the founder of Indo-Muslim devotional music traditions. Nicknamed "Parrot of India,"

Most Sufi saints used to dance while singing their poetry on the love of god.

### Sufi Saints of India:

1. **Chishtiyyah-** The Chishtiyya order emerged from Central Asia and Persia. The first saint was Abu Ishaq Shami (d. 940–41) establishing the Chishti order in Chisht-i-Sharif within Afghanistan. Chishtiyya took root with the notable saint Moinuddin Chishti (d. 1236) who championed the order within India, making it one of the largest orders in India today. Khwaja Moiuddin Chishti was originally from Sistan (eastern Iran, southwest Afghanistan) and grew up as a well traveled scholar to Central Asia, Middle East, and South Asia. He reached Delhi in 1193 during the end of Ghurid reign, then shortly settled in Ajmer-Rajasthan when the Delhi Sultanate formed. Sufism was popularised in India by some of the most prominent mystics of the Chishtiyya order like Moinuddin Chishti, Nizamuddin Auliya, Baba Farid, Bulley Shah, Shah Hussain, Warris Shah, Khawaja Ghulam Farid, Bu Ali Shah Qalandar, Khwaja Shaikh Salim Chisti to name few.
2. **Madariyya-** The Madariyya are members of a Sufi order (tariqa) popular in North India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, the Mewat region, Bihar, Gujarat and Bengal, as well as in Nepal and Bangladesh. Known for its syncretic aspects and focus on internal dhikr, it was initiated by the Sufi saint 'Sayed Badiuddin Zinda Shah Madar' (d. 1434 CE), called "Qutb-ul-Madar", and is centered on his shrine (dargah) at Makanpur, Kanpur district, Uttar Pradesh. He came to India in the thirteenth century A.D. along with the saint Ashraf Jahangir Semnani.
3. **Shadhiliyya-** The Shadhili Tariqa is a Sufi order of Sunni Islam founded by Abul Hasan Ali ash-Shadhili of Morocco in the 13th century. Followers of the Shadhiliya are known as Shadhilis. It was brought to India by Sheikh Aboobakkar Miskeen sahib Radiyallah of Kayalpatnam and

Sheikh Mir Ahmad Ibrahim Raziyallah of Madurai. Mir Ahmad Ibrahim is the first of the three Sufi saints revered at the Madurai Maqbara in Tamil Nadu. There are more than 70 branches of Shadhiliyya of these, the Fassiyatash Shadhiliyya is the most widely practised order.

4. Kubrawiyyah - This order was founded by Abu'l Jannab Ahmad, nicknamed Najmuddin Kubra (d. 1221) who was from the border between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This Sufi saint was a widely acclaimed teacher with travels to Turkey, Iran, and Kashmir. His education also fostered generations of students who became saints themselves. This order became important in Kashmir during the late 14th century. Kubra and his students made significant contributions to Sufi literature with mystical treatises, mystical psychology, and instructional literature such as text "al-Usul al-Ashara" and "Mirsad ul Ibad." These popular texts regarding are still mystic favorites in India and in frequent study. The Kubrawiya remains in Kashmir - India and within Huayy populations in China.
5. Naqshbandiyyah- The origin of this order can be traced back to Khwaja Ya'qub Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 1390), who lived in Central Asia. It was later organized by Baha'uddin Naqshband (b. 1318–1389) of Tajik and Turkic background. Khwaja Muhammad al-Baqi Billah Berang (d. 1603) introduced the Naqshbandiyyah to India. This order was particularly popular Mughal elites. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in 1526, was already initiated in the Naqshbandi order prior to conquering India. This order has been considered as most orthodox among all Sufi orders.