

# Contribution of Sufi saints to Indian Culture

Dr. Chandrakant Koligudde

Assistant Professor

Dept of Studies & Research in History and Archaeology

Rani Channamma University Belagavi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13735959>

Published Date: 09-September-2024

---

**Abstract:** Bijapur is one of the most important City in the southern India It has gained prominence politically, socio-economically, philosophically and in many other ways. It is a meeting place of many religious philosophies and a melting point helping to achieve the synthesis of the teaching of many religious reforms. Sufism is a mystic religion. It is an offshoot of Islam. Sufi saints are the followers of ALLAH and the practice of peace, benevolence and tolerance. They promulgated a religion based on the concept of oneness, brotherhood and love, the love with the fellow being and the love with the ultimate or the creator. Sufi saints and Sufism are an existing reality in Indian socio-religious fold and it has contributed for a healthy and amicable social order.

**Keywords:** socio-economically, philosophically, religious philosophies, Sufi saints, Sufism, Indian socio-religious.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most interesting aspect of Islam in the medieval Indian is Sufism. The medieval period witnessed the rise and development of a large number of Muslim religious movements, mystic organization. The Islamic mysticism was known as Sufism. As a matter of fact, both Hindus and Muslims had mutual admiration for each other's culture, since the early days of the advent of Islam into India. Famous Muslim scholars and saints lived and laboured in India during the medieval period. They helped the spreading of the ideas of Islamic philosophy and mysticism in India. The early Sufis traced their ideas to some verses of the Quran. They gave a mystic interpretation that they differed from the orthodox Muslims who insisted upon a literal interpretation.

### Origin of Sufism

Sufism is typical mysticism. According to Tarachand, 'sufism is a complex phenomenon, it is like a stream which gather volume by the joining of tributaries from many lands. It was born in the bosom of Islam. It is said that during the very lifetime of Prophet Hazarat Muhammad there were some men of virtue and of retiring nature who embraced Islam with pleasure but showed laity in the observation of its ritualistic or dogmatic aspects. Such liberal minded men of God drew their inspiration from the Quran and the life of the Prophet.

It is said that it assumed the form of a regular movement in Persia in the ninth century as a reaction against the rigid formalism of Islam. It received a theosophical basis during the age of Abbasid caliphs of Bagdad and the sufi saints drew freely from the mystic concepts of other peoples and religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The credit for bringing about reconciliation between orthodox Islam and sufism goes to Al Ghazali (1057-1112 A) an Arab Philosopher. He provided a metaphysical basis to mysticism as a part and parcel of the Islamic theology. The Sufi orders and the saints from various cults came to India with these merchants. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Lahor and Multan attracted many well know sufis from countries outside India by land route. The greatest figure in the history of sufism in India, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti, arrived at Lahor from Ghazni in 1161 and settled at Ajmer during the reign of Prithviraj. There he died in 1235, his tomb continues to attract many pilgrims even now. After the establishment

of the Muslim rule in northern India, the Sufis from the Muslim countries of Central Asia, began to migrate to India in large numbers

### **Nature of Sufism-**

The Sufis were the deep religious feelings. They led ascetic lives and laid emphasis on the practices of self-discipline. They sought personal communion with God through self-surrender, meditation and total dedication to the service of mankind. The sufis did not form an organized sect. They neither had a Prophet, nor a sacred book, nor a uniform code of religious doctrines. They accepted Muhammad as their prophet and the Quran as their sacred book According to an observation; the orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct while the sufis seek inner purity. The orthodox believe in blind obedience to, or observance of religious rituals while the Sufis consider love to be the only means of reaching God. The sufis used singing and dancing,

The term sufi was derived from 'safa' (pure) because of the purity of their thoughts and the nobility of their action. The sufi has been derived from the word suffa (a bench) as the virtuous character and qualities of these saints were similar to those of 'Ashab al suff- or 'People of the Bench' who were attached to the prophet. They were called his companions (sahaba).. The term sufi also bears resemblance with the word suf or coarse wool, suggesting thereby that the sufis might have been so called because of their habit of wearing a woolen blanket purpose sheet of cloth. The Sufis were the peaceful scholars, missionaries and preachers of Islam. They used local languages to explain the Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad

They established orphanage, services for humanity during flood, famine and war time. They dedicated their lives to the service of making and the spread of the Islamic faith. The propagation of Islam was regarded by them to be the greatest and the most meritorious service to be rendered to the people. Many text and written material regarding Sufi cults during medieval period has historical importance. The social and religious sources of medieval history give importance to the Sufic literature in many languages. The Arabic, Persian, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali and other many vernacular languages have Sufi literature or source material in India too. Sufi literature has been classified in various categories by different historians and scholars of Sufism.

### **TEACHING OF THE SUFISM**

Most of the Sufi saints belong to the liberal school of thought. Their popularity in India was due to their understanding of the Indian conditions and the religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people. They adopted many Hindu customs and traditions in the initial stages of the development of their philosophy in India. They laid much emphasis on the service to mankind. The monistic philosophy of Sufism was based on the theory of

The Sufis stood for the establishment of harmonious relationships with God through intense love for and total surrender and dedication to the Supreme Power. The Sufi saints, in their capacity as pirs were the living teachers or spiritual guides. They showed the path and suggested the means to their followers, called (murids) for the attainment of eternal bliss which was called union by them. The Sufi philosophy was based on the principal of 'Love' which was the essence of all the religions.

### **SILSILAS OR ORDERS**

The sufis were divided into number of sects, called silsilahs or orders. According to one estimate, as many as 175 such orders of sufis came into existence in the Muslim world. Abul Fazal lists 14 orders of the sufis which apparently found their way to India. Out of which only two took deep roots in the Indian soil. These were Chisti and the Suhrawardi orders. The Suhrawardi silsilahs made its presence felt in sind and north-western India. Whereas the Chistis silsilah became most prominent throughout the country.

**CHISTI ORDER** The chisti silsilah established itself at Ajmer and gradually spread to other parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Deccan. The chisti order was founded by Khwaja Abdul chisti. It was introduced in India by Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti, a native of Sijistan in Persia. He reached India and settled down at Ajmer which was a place of considerable political and religious importance. He worked amongst the low caste people and spent his life in the service of the helpless and downtrodden. He died in 1236 A.D. Thus, he won over the hearts of the people around him by selfless service to the poor and needy. He made many converts to Islam through peaceful means. Since then Ajmer became an important centre of pilgrimage for Hindus and Muslims alike Sheikh Hamiduddin and Sheikh Farid or Baba

Farid, Shaikh Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki, Shaikh Nizmuddin, Auliya Chishti of Delhi, Shaikh Salim Chisti and many other disciple popularized chisti order throughout the India. The Chishtis favoured asceticism and isolation from public life. Most of the Chisti saints belonged to the liberal school of thought. Their popularity in India was due to their understanding of the Indian conditions and religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people. They laid much emphasis on the service to mankind.

**SUHRAVARDI SILSILAH** It was the second most popular order of the sufis which flourished in north western India. It was founded by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (1234), a teacher in Bagdad. Its foundation on Indian soil were laid by Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya of Multan. He carried on his missionary work at Multan for about twenty-five years and rose to be the most prominent muslim divine of his age in north-western India. The Chishtis and Suhrawardis differed in respect of religious practices as also their attitude towards secular activities. Unlike the Chishti saints, the exponents of the suhravardi order did not believe in excessive austerity or selfmortification. Rather they constituted an influential and affluent priesthood of the muslims. They lived comfortable family live's and felt no scruples in accepting expensive presents and patronage from the muslim aristocracy. They took active part in the state politics. Thus Sufism 55 Surhrawardi silsilah was confined mostly to upper strata of the Mughal society. Many other sufi mystic orders also were introduced in India. But they did not make much impact on the people of India. Some others silsilah were limited to certain regions only some of them were:

**The QadiriSilsilah**-Introduced in India by Iyyid Muhammad Gilani (1517), The Firdausi Silsilah Shaikn Badruddin. The Shattari Silsilah - Shaikh Abdullah Shattari. The Nagshahandi Silsilah - Khwaja Baki Billah. sufis played an important role in spreading the muslim culture among the masses in various parts of the country. Sufism also contributed to a great extent in moulding the character of the medieval Indian society

#### **Philosophy of Sufis –**

They remove Sternness and fanaticism of Islam and made Liberal, established Love, Equality and tolerance. They were the True Humanitarian; Conducted work for public Welfare. Sufi organizations and leadership from this period remain significant in setting the discourse and defining the issues of Islamic piety in the modern era. Some modern scholars argue that a number of new initiatives can be seen in the development of the Sufi organizations and thought of the early modern era. Sufi teachers made efforts to remove the more ecstatic and pantheistic elements of the Sufi tradition and to create more reform oriented Sufi organizations and practices.. They provided vehicles for the expression of the faith of urban elites, served as networks for interregional interaction and travel, acted as an effective inclusive structure for the missionary expansion of Islam, and in some ways shaped the context within which movements of puritanical reform or spiritual revival developed.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Contribution of the Sufi Saints**

The Sufi saints who professed mysticism made contribution in their own way to the social, political, religious, and cultural life of the People. Sufi Services to Society - One of the ideals of the Sufi saints was to strive for the abolition of all discriminations, and inequalities from contemporary society. They received all men, rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, free born and slaves in the same way. They served as socio-religious reformers in India. One of their great achievements was that they brought the Muslim aristocracy into touch with the Hindus. The Sufis could attract large masses towards them in India because of their simple life. They served the poor, the distressed and the down-trodden. As Sufism was based on liberal principle it attained fame among the Hindu religionists and Sufi saints became equally respectable to the Hindus and the Muslims. They established khanqhas (monasteries) which played a key role in maintaining the moral balance of the society in Karnataka. Philosophy of Sufis They remove Sternness and fanaticism of Islam and made Liberal, established Love, Equality and tolerance. They were the True Humanitarian; Conducted work for public Welfare.. Sufi organizations and leadership from this period remain significant in setting the discourse and defining the issues of Islamic piety in the modern era. Some modern scholars argue that a number of new initiatives can be seen in the development of the Sufi organizations and thought of the early modern era. Sufi teachers made efforts to remove the more ecstatic and pantheistic elements of the Sufi tradition and to create more reform oriented Sufi organizations and practices.. They provided vehicles for the expression of the faith of urban elites, served as networks for interregional interaction and travel, acted as an effective inclusive structure for the missionary expansion of Islam, and in some ways shaped the context within which movements of puritanical reform or spiritual revival developed.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Sufis established Equality brotherhood Unity among the People. There was no discrimination among high and low. All are worked together, dinned together and slept together. They showed a Spirit of toleration towards all religions and Creeds. They were instrumental in Maintain the Social Equilibrium of the Medieval Society. They imbibed a love for humanity and believed in Poverty, Pacifism and Non-Violence. Sufis believes in theory of Oneness of God. Sufism based on the Liberal Principles .Sufi saints made Islam quite popular in Karnataka. They tried to remove fanaticism between the Hindus and the Muslims and enhanced the feelings of humanity of love, tolerance and equality. They criticized and condemned the evil practices prevalent among the Hindus and Muslims and tried to purify the society and have been a legacy to the rich diverse culture of India

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ahmad Aziz-1969-An Intellectual History of Islam in India-Edinburgh
- [2] Alavi R A-1974-Studies in the History of Medieval Deccan-Delhi
- [3] Arberry A J-1942-An Introduction to the History of Sufism-New York
- [4] A Raziuddin-2010-Sufism and Society in Medieval India-Delhi
- [5] Arnold T W-1990-The Preaching of Islam-Delhi
- [6] Eaton Richard-1978-Sufis of Bijapur-1300-1700-Princeton
- [7] Dr.Chandrakant,Koligudde-Sufi Centres of Karnataka with Special Reference to Kudachi-SIHC-2013
- [8] Dr.Chandrakant Koligudde- Sufi Saints in Adil Shahis of Bijapur-Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary Impact Factor 4.991, ISSN: 2320-5083, Volume 7, Issue 1, February 2019