

Sufism and Underprivileged Section of the Society in India

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Abstract

The invaders periodically had a significant impact on Indian religion and culture. When faced with dire circumstances, the religious spirit instills in us a desire to uphold moral and ethical standards. It instills in us the values of altruism and compassion for all. The driving force underlying all moral and ethical standards is true religion. Religious issues are a global and national concern. India is a pluralistic nation. Numerous socially disadvantaged individuals face various forms of oppression, harassment, and limitations and are unable to reach sufficient economic, social, and cultural status. In India, Sufism has a long history dating back more than a thousand years. The 10th or 11th centuries saw a rise in the visibility of the Sufi movement. Although there was little obvious proof of the good effects of Islam on Indian culture, Sufi thinking has had a long-lasting influence on the country's ordinary people in South Asia and India. 1. Defining Sufism has been attempted in this context. 2. Sufism's historical setting 3. The fundamental aims of Sufism 4. A classification of India's disadvantaged sections 5. Why is Sufism gaining popularity among India's underprivileged section? Finally, a few words.

Keywords: Religion, Culture, Ethics, Sufism, Underprivileged Section.

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I. Introduction

Even the most mighty kingdoms on earth cannot stop time from moving forward. But Islam is immortal. It was transmitted from one generation to the next. Mysticism in Islam has taken the form of Sufism. It is more of a way of thinking and feeling in the religious realm than it is a collection of principles. When faced with dire circumstances, the religious spirit instills in us a desire to uphold moral and ethical standards. It instills in us the values of altruism and compassion for all. The driving force underlying all moral and ethical standards is true religion. Religious issues are a global and national concern. India is a pluralistic nation. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism all originated there. Many socially disadvantaged individuals are unable to reach desirable economic, social, and cultural statuses. Although there was no outward proof of Islam's beneficial influence on Indian culture. However, Sufi ideology, which has had a long-lasting influence on ordinary Indians, is very much a part of South Asia and India.

II. Objectives of the Study

- To discuss about the concept - What is Sufism?
- To describe the Historical context of Sufism.
- To throw light of basic objectives of Sufism.
- To discuss about underprivileged section in India and their classification.
- To assess why Sufism does spread among underprivileged section in India.
- To make concluding remarks.

Sufism- What it is

Meaning of the word Sufi

The word "Sufi" derives from the Arabic word "Safa," which means purity. Sufis are mystics who prioritize purity in their thoughts, actions, and hearts.

The phrase "standing in a row" may also be used to describe a Sufi. Sufis are a group of mystic adherents who have a deep relationship with Allah.

The word Sufi's third accepted root comes from the word Suf, which signifies wool. During and immediately after the period of the prophet Muhammad, the mystic Asab Wool Suf, who wore coarse wool clothing, As Sufis, these mystics were well-known.

Meaning of Sufism

Sufism emerged as Islam expanded. Mysticism in Islam has taken the form of Sufism. It is more of a way of thinking and feeling in the religious realm than it is a collection of principles. Sufism is a way of purifying oneself to develop spiritually. It emphasises the value of genuine perception. Our intrinsic spiritual and intuitive talents may be born from this. As a result, light suddenly pours into a dark space, allowing you to see more. It aids in raising awareness of oneself and of the entire cosmos in which we inhabit.

Sufism is a method for bringing divine ethics into reality. It is based on an enlightened inner being rather than academic proof, revelation, or witnessing. When we talk about divine ethics, we mean moral principles that go above societal norms and represent the personification of God's qualities. The Sufi is a person who adores the truth and who pursues it—the perfection that everyone genuinely seeks—through love and devotion.

Sufi philosophy holds that the majority of people are unaware of God's existence and experience life as a dream. According to Sufi's thinking, there are just a few subtle centers of consciousness that are mainly untapped and in need of instruction and serious effort. These innate skills of observation can help us unravel enigmatic riddles once they are aroused. When we use the phrase "My eyes sleep, but my heart does not sleep," we turn away from everything that is illusory and focus on what is genuine.

The Historical Context of Sufism

Up until the ninth century, Sufism was a form of personal spiritual consciousness. The 10th and 11th centuries saw a rise in the popularity of Sufi spiritual traditions. Turkic and Afghani kings presided over the early Delhi Sultanate. The spread of Islam, Sufi thought, synergetic ideals, literature, education, and other social facets throughout South Asia as a result of this Persian influence have had a lasting influence on the existence of Islam in India today.

Delhi Sultanate

We place special emphasis on the Delhi Sultanate period of 1206–1526 A.D. Because Sufi thought gained momentum in India during this period, chronologically, five separate dynasties ruled India: the Mamluk (or Slave), Khaljis, Tughlq, Sayyid, and Lodi dynasties. At its peak, the Delhi Sultanate controlled all of North India, Afghanistan, Bengal, Bihar, Kanhawake, and Rajasthan. The land of India was protected by the Himalayan range, which attracted the Sultanate as a safe destination. The sultanate was afraid of the Mongol invasion. This historical move can be deemed a significant catalyst for Sufi thought in India.

Sufi Followers in India

After the departure of the prophet Muhammad (632 A.D.), every authentic Sufi guide has a chain of teachers that leads directly back to the prophet Muhammad. Such a chain of teachers is known in Sufism as a silsilah. Nearly 175 silsilah were present in the Sufi community. According to Abul Faisal, the 14th-century silsilah was entirely in India. Two famous silsilah in India were Chishtiyyah and Suhrwardiyyah. Other important Silsilah were Shadhiliyya, Kubrawiyyah, Naqsbandiyyah, Qudiriyyah, and Sarwari Qudir.

Chishtiyyah Silsilah

Though the first saint in the Chishti order was Abu Ishaq Shami, who emerged from Central Asia and Persia, In India, Chishti Silsilah was introduced by Khwajia Moinuddin Chishti (1141–1235 A.D.), making it one of the largest orders in India today. Moinuddin Chishti's social welfare activities dubbed Ajmer the nucleus for the Islamization of central and southern India. Chishti was famous for establishing the Khanquhs and their simple teaching of humanity, peace, and generosity. The Chishti include eight additional saints; together, these names are considered the big eight of the mediaeval Chishti order. These were Moinuddin Chishti: Ajmir Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (Delhi), Fariduddin Ganjshakar (Pakpattan, Pakistan), Nizamuddin Auliya (Delhi), Nasiruddin Chiragh (Gulbarga), Akhi Siraj Ainae Hind (Bengal), Alaul Haq Pandavi, and Ashraf Jahangir Semnani (Kichaucha).

Suhrwardiyyah Silsilah

The first saint in the Suhrwardi order was considering Abdul Wahir Abu Najib as Suharwardi in Iran. In India, Bahauddin Jakaria introduced this silsilah. Abu Hafs was one of the most famous saints in this order. They were maintaining cordial relations with the Islamic Empire. Other important saints in this silsilah were Sadaruddin Arif, Sayad Jalaluddin Bukhari, etc.

The basic difference between the two Silsilah

There was a basic difference between Chishti and Suhrawardi Silsilah. The saints of Chishti Silsilah want to live in a quiet place. Khanquahs were always open to all types of people in society, primarily the poor, oppressed, and untouchable. Their pattern of livelihood was very simple. They spread their religious thought through music, dance, and yoga. They also lived a life of voluntary poverty, shunning all types of worldly pleasure.

But the Suhrawardi group of saints wants to live in close contact with the material world. They were keeping cordial relations with the upper classes of society. They approve of the political participation of the Sufi saints. Lower-class and poorer people could not complete their Khanquahs.

Sufism- Basic Objectives

- Selfless experience and actualization of the truth
- Actualization of divine ethics
- Spiritual advancement through a process of purification
- Give importance to legal perception and intuitive abilities.
- Give importance to increasing self-awareness and awareness of the whole universe in which we live.
- Self-transformation—a transformation in the way we conduct our peace and contentment and a growing awareness of a higher plan.
- Four basics of Sufism are cleanliness, purity, truth, and poverty.
- Hostility and Peace
- Give importance to social equality, tolerance, and universal brotherhood.
- Properly integrate Hindu and Muslim cultures, as well as the Indianization of Islam.
- Sufism developed the broadmindedness and catholicity of the sociocultural leadership of both communities, strengthened the feelings of religious tolerance, and hastened the process of synthesis between their sociocultural traits.
- The ultimate Sufi path is God.

Underprivileged Section in India

Many socially disadvantaged people are not able to achieve satisfactory economic, social, and cultural status and are subject to all sorts of oppression, harassment, and constraints are defined as underprivileged sections in India. Generally, it is observed that people of underprivileged sections belong to the weaker sections or backward classes, which are used for those groups of miscellaneous castes that are economically poor and culturally backward.

Classification of Underprivileged Section in India

The under-privileged section of the society includes -

Scheduled castes:

Also refers to Dalits or Panchama. These classes of people were formerly considered untouchable according to the Hindu Varna System. Dalits were excluded from the four-fold Varna System of Hinduism and formed the unmentioned fifth Varna, and so were also called Panchama.

Scheduled Tribe:

Scheduled Tribe refers to the aboriginal and hill tribes of India. Indian S.T. is mostly occupied by areas of isolation and relative isolation in the hilly, forested, and mountainous areas of the country. They often have been termed the people of the fourth world.

De-notified Tribes:

The tribes designated as 'criminal tribes' before independence are defined as DE notified Tribes.

Nomadic Tribe;

The tribes are defined as those who have no permanent home and move from one area to another in search of food.

Sufism Spread among Underprivileged Section in India –Why

Economic Context

Most of the underprivileged people in India were economically poor. These people's livelihood patterns were very simple. They have no position in society. Upper-class people in India always hate them.

Sufism became a vehicle for economic and cultural upliftment of the rural agricultural and nomadic backgrounds of common people.

Social Context

Deeply entrenched in Indian society is a complex social stratification of individuals known as the caste system. It is a division of society traditionally based on occupation and family lineage. In India, the caste system is divided into four separate classes. The highest class in Indian society is that of the priests and teachers, or Brahmins, followed by the warrior class, the Kshatriyas. The third group was the merchants. Fourth group was the Shudras. The fifth group that was seen as being so low as to not deserve being placed in a caste was the Panchama or Dalit, those who belong to an underprivileged section of Indian society. These people have oppressive, harsh, and unjust restrictions imposed upon them.

The organisation of the caste system and its entrenchment in Indian history has resulted in centuries of hostile interaction between classes. In rural India, these people were excluded from temples. Village wells. In some areas of the country, these people were not permitted to walk in the daylight because their shadows were considered pollution (Nambission 1011 A.D.). In addition to the cruel and humiliating circumstances, these people's efforts to improve their situation have often been squashed by assault, rape, and murder by upper-class members of society.

In these circumstances, the underprivileged section of Indian society was very much attracted to Sufi thought and the simple lifestyle of the Sufi saints. Their humanism and unique nature pleased them. These sections of people were drawn towards them.

Religious Context

The restriction imposed upon the underprivileged section of India for any type of religious activities this restriction is imposed by the highest class in Indian society, that of the priests or Brahmins.

Sufi thought advocates against a type of religious restriction. They emphasize religious tolerance and spiritual advancement through a process of purification.

Geographical Context

India is the seventh-largest country in area and the second-largest in population. India stretches from the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to sun-drenched coastal villages in the south. India also covered the mountainous and hilly regions of the east and the sandy deserts of the west. Physical as well as climatic constraints create different economic classes all over India. This also leads to inequity in Indian society and a disadvantaged section of the population.

Sufi thought to spread from Arab countries, which act as the cultural heartland of Sufism. Through cultural diffusion, it first spread to the North West and Western parts of India among the underprivileged section, mostly nomadic tribal in nature.

Cultural Context

Culture is a complex and very sensitive phenomenon. A specified geographical area is shared by people of different cultures, and there is more than a likelihood of ideas, beliefs, and practices mixing. Early Sufis in India were focused on service work and helping the underprivileged. The spiritual orientation of Sufism only sought to refine the consciousness of the divine, intensify piety, and inculcate a humanistic attitude.

Sufi Khanqah is commonly defined as a hospice, lodge, community center, or dormitory run by Sufis. It also acts as a center of moral life. Many other facilities were built for the underprivileged sections of Indian society. Keeping the visitor welcome policy Khanqahs in India offer spiritual guidance, psychological support, moral and ethical support, and counseling that is free and open to all people.

The spiritually hungry and underprivileged sections of the population were both fed with a free kitchen service, which also provided basic education. It helps create egalitarian communities within stratified caste systems. The Sufis successfully spread their teachings of love, divinity, and harmony.

Devotional Sufi music and dance were also attracting underprivileged sections in India. Also, political and administrative influence helps Sufi saints spread Sufi thought among underprivileged sections of India.

III. Concluding Remarks

Sufism had a massive impact on religious, cultural, and social life in India. Sufi saints travelling from all over India were instrumental in the social, economic, philosophical, and spiritual development of India. Sufism emerged as an amoral and comprehensive socio-religious force that influenced underprivileged sections of Hinduism. Sufism develops the broad mind and catholicity of the socio-cultural leadership of both communities, strengthens the feelings of religious tolerance, and hastens the process of synthesis between their socio-cultural traits. Today, intolerance and violence prevail all over the world. Sufism can provide a true path

to prevent these. Sufis were firm in abstaining from religious and communal conflict and strived to be peaceful elements of civil society. Through the proper practice of Sufi thought, we can include the underprivileged sections of India in our so-called modern society, including those who are traditionally excluded from it. Even after thousands of years, Sufism is still relevant in India's socioeconomic context.

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