

Prelims Master Program (2023-24) – Ancient, Medieval, Art and Culture

Handout 24 / 6 : Sufism

Sufism is about relatively more liberal interpretation of Islam and Islamic texts. Sufism is a heart of Islam. At its core, there is love and it preaches the oneness of humanity and oneness of the world.

Sufi Concepts and Terminology

- Sufism, Tasawwuf, Saffa, Suf
- Three schools: **Sharia**, **Mutazila**, **Tariqat** (Sufism)
- Development of Idea:
 - **Rabia** (8th c): Element of love. Ascetism → mysticism
 - **Al-Bistami** (d. 874): **Fana** (annihilation of self)
 - **Masur al-Hallaj** (d. 922): **Ana'l Haq** (I am the truth)
 - **Al-Ghazzali** (d. 1111): reconciliation of Sharia with Tariqa.
 - Title: **Hujjat-ul-Islam** (proof of Islam)
 - **Ibn al-Arabi** (d. 1240): created comprehensive philosophical system.
 - **Al-insan al-kamil** (perfect man)
 - **Wahadat al-Wajud** (unity of being)
 - **Jalaluddin Rumi** (d. 1273): Mystical poet, whirling dervishes during sama
- Basic ideas
 - Focus more on **batin** (internal), rather than **zahir** (external). The external world is nothing but **tajalli** (shadow of god)
 - Relationship with God is like **Ashiq-Mashuqa**. But the god is separated from us due to **khudi** (ego). Thus, we experience pangs of separation (**Wisal-e-yaar**).
 - To overcome that, we should move from **ishq-e-mazazi** to **ishq-e-haqiqi**. That is the way to overcoming the separation and realize **haqiqat**.
 - The process for that is to cross seven valleys (**dayara**), along the spiritual journey which has its own stages (**maqamat-e-haal**). To traverse that, we need to get **barakat**. And for that, there are sufi practices, like **zikr** (name), **sama** (music), **raqs** (dance), yogic practices, **Karamat** of sufi saints, donations (**futuh**), reading **malfuzat** etc.
 - Finally, one attains the highest knowledge (**marifa**) and thus realize **haqiqat**. It is when we experience **fana**. Afterwards, one should try to even **attain fana'an al-fana**. That is the more sublime state of **baqa**.
- Institutionalization of different Tariqas
 - **Silsilah** (order) of the chain of **pir-murshid**
 - **Pir** establishes **Khanqah**. **Wali** is his spiritual successor.
 - Each wali has his own **waliyat**.
 - When a pir dies, his **dargah** (**mazaar** in Arabic) is created and annual **urs** is celebrated.
 - Two types of Silsilahs

- **Ba-Shara** (follow al-Ghazzali) – **Wajudiya** and **Shadudiya**
- **Be-Shara** (known as majjub) were generally hounded by the state.

Four Major Sufi Silsilahs

The first saint to come to India was **al-Hujwiri (Data Ganj Baksh)** who arrived *during the time when the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni were going on*. He wrote a book **Kashf-ul Mahjub**. His dargah is in **Lahore**, called Data Darbar.

Branches of Sufism-Sect According to Aine-Akbari

1. Chisti	2. Suharavardi	3. Habi bi
4. Tafuri	5. Karvi	6. Shakti
7. Junaidi	8. Tusi	9. Firdausi
10. Iyadi	11. Sadahami	12. Kajruni
13. Huberi		

(1) Chishtiyas

Most important silsilah in medieval India with huge popular following.

- **Moinuddin Chishti**

- He was the founder of this lineage in India. He first came to Lahore along with Muhammad of Ghor. He initially stayed at Lahore and prayed at the mazar of al-Hujwiri, then moved to Delhi and finally settled in Ajmer in 1191/92 CE, the same year in which the battles of Tarai took place.
- Khwaja Chishti propagated sufism among all the people regardless of any religion. He died in 1236 CE. His shrine was built in Ajmer which was visited by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and Akbar.

- **Hamiduddin Nagauri** (d. 1274)

- Estb. Silsila in Nagaur.
- Lived like an ordinary Rajasthani peasant.
- Strict vegetarian
- Translated Sufi verses in Hindavi.

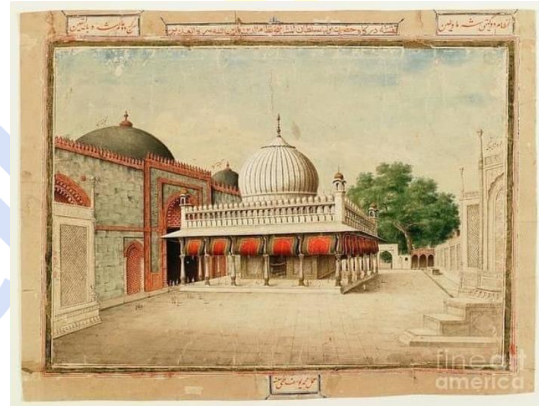
- **Qutubiddin Bakhtiyar Kaki** established in **Delhi**.

- It is said that **Qutb Minar** is given his name by Qutbuddin Aibak.
- Did not formulate any formal doctrine. Used to hold **majlis** and gave discourses emphasizing renunciation, developed ideas of brotherhood and charity within Chisti order.
- His dargah is in Mehrauli, the oldest dargah in Delhi.



Akbar visiting the tomb
of Khwajah Mu'in ad-Din
Chishti at Ajmer

- **Baba Fariduddin Masud (Baba Farid Ganj-e-Shakar)**
 - Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar was another prominent sufi saint of Chisti Silsila. He was the student of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. He kept a distance with the rulers and the aristocrats. Sikh Guru Gurunanak also followed the philosophies of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar and Guru Arjun Dev compiled his philosophies in Guru Grantha sahib.
 - **Despised association with ruling class** and rich people.
 - **Nathpanthi** yogis visited his khanqah and discussed mysticism. He used to do **Hath Yoga** (Chilla-Makoos).
 - He preached in **Punjabi language** and some of his songs are included in **Guru Granth Sahib**.
 - Established his khanqa in Punjab at Ajodhan (**Pakpattan**).
 - His shrine played a central role in **conversion of local tribes to Islam** over the course of several centuries.
- **Nizamuddin Auliya**, based out of Delhi.
 - Most celebrated
 - For him, love of God implied a love of humanity. He was known as **Mahbood-e-Ilahi**. He freely interacted with Nathpanthi yogis and introduced yogic practices into Sufism. He was given the title of **Siddha** by Nathpanthis for his perfection in such techniques.
 - Created a band of followers: **Amir Khusro** (Tuti-e-Hind) and **Barani** were his disciples.
 - **Avoided relations with sultans.**
 - Never visited the court of Alauddin Khilji.
 - Disagreement with Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq
 - His teachings and conversations (malfuzat) are recorded in **Fawa'id-ul Fuwad** written by **Amir Hasan Sijzi**.
- **Sheikh Buhrauddin Gharib:**
 - He was forced to travel to Daulatabad by MBT. He made Daulatabad centre of his activities and introduced the Chishti order there. When he and other Sufi saints arrived in Daulatabad they decided to settle in the adjacent valley, now known as **Khuldabad**.
- **Nasiruddin Chiragh-e-Delhi**
 - **Last of the great Chishti sheikhs**
 - He **stayed back in Delhi**: Clash with MBT
 - Significant changes in Sufi attitude: discontinued sama/qawwali to **compromise with orthodoxy**.
 - He **didn't nominate any spiritual successor**.



- **Gesu Daraz Bande Nawaz**

- He shifted his base to Deccan – first to **Daulatabad** and then to **Gulbarga**, the early capital of **Bahmani sultanate**.
- He composed in **Dakhani** language, and his book is known as **Miraz-ul-Ashiqin**.

Some more Chishti saints:

Bibi Fatima: The first woman Sufi saint of India

A simple woman who didn't show off her saintliness, Bibi Fatima was dear to many including Nizamuddin Aulia, who thought of her as an older sister

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Bibi Fatima Sam was a contemporary of Baba Farid Ganjshakar and Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. She belonged to Sam, a place on the Iraq-Iran border, but came to India in response to an inner urge. She eventually settled down in Delhi, where she later died in 1246.

Nizamuddin Aulia called her 'Appa', a term endearingly used for an elder sister. She did not ever marry but passed her life in the love of Allah through meditation and mystic experience. To those who came to her, she was guide, philosopher and friend. Her 'mureeds' were both men and women.

Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi (1456-1537).

- He wrote many books on sufi thought and practice and also on metaphysical subjects. He also **translated Chandayan**, a romantic poem in Hindawi written by Maulana Daud in Persian.
- He was a royal peer of Lodhis, and special relations with Sikandar Lodhi. But when Ibrahim Lodhi becomes the next Sultan, Gangohi didn't like him but his hatred for Mughals was even more.

Sheik Salim Chisti (Sheikh-ul-Hind)

- He lived and died in Fatehpur Sikri.
- He was the contemporary saint of Akbar. It is believed that due to the blessing of Sheikh Salim Chisti the son of Akbar, Salim was born who ascended the throne in the name of Jahangir.

Reasons for Chishti Popularity

- Doctrines resemble Nirguni saints, **already familiar to Indians**.
 - Concept of wahdat al-wujud
 - Great emphasis on obedience and self-discipline (paid respect to their leaders by completely prostrating themselves before them).
 - Drugs such as hashish, tobacco and alcohol are strictly prohibited.
 - No need to renounce the world and the family.
 - Path to serving God is serving humanity. Humanity is the reflection of God. So, stay in the world.
 - Exceptions: Nizamuddin Auliya and Bulle Shah.
- **Liberal Attitude**
 - Tolerance **towards non-Muslims**.
 - Interaction with **lower strata of the society**
 - Members of the order were also **pacifists**.
 - Saints led a very **simple and austere life**. There was negation of accumulation of wealth and property. **Bayt-ul-maal distributed among poor/need**y.
 - Maintained **distance from the state** (e.g. Nizamuddin Auliya denied meeting Alauddin Khilji). Viewed government and authority with deep mistrust, and **refused to accept offers of patronage**.
- **Adopted local language and popular stories** from Hindu population to express their spiritual experience.
 - Baba Farid in Punjabi.
 - Abdul Quddus Gangohi translated Mulla Daud's Chandayan, a romantic poem from Persian to Hindawi.
 - Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavat in Awadhi.
 - Fakhruddin Nizami's masnavi Kadam Rao Padam Rao in Dakhani.
- Inspired and **charismatic leadership**
- **Created a folk culture** – dargahs, miracles and legends
 - The popularity of the early Chishtis rose after their lifetime as the **cult of saints began to develop in the later centuries** around their shrines (dargahs).
 - Later, legend-makers and writers of hagiographic literature sometimes attributed the popularity of the early Chishti Sufis to their **ability to perform miracles**.

(2) Suhrawardiyas

- It was originally founded in Baghdad where it was developed by Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardy.
- It was later was brought to India by **Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya**.

Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya (1182-1262)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Multan, he established his first khanqah. • He maintained close relations with the Sultans. Not only that, but he also even participated in political affairs. • Ilutmish awarded the title of 'Sheikh-ul-Islam'.
Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After his initial stay in Delhi, where he failed to establish his supremacy, he went to Bengal. He established his khanqah there and made many disciples. He attached a langar to his khanqah and played an important role in the process of Islamization in Bengal.
Sheikh Ruknuddin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandson of Bahauddin • The Delhi Sultans, from Alauddin Khalji to Muhammad Ibn Tughlaq, admired him. • His tomb was built by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq during his governorship at Multan.

Chishti vs Suhrawardy

- During the Sultanate period, Punjab, Sind and Bengal became three important centres of the Suhrawardi activity.
- They **maintained close relation with the state**. They justified by saying that they don't have power to discriminate between powerful and weak, all are created by God, and they will serve all.
 - Suhrawardi Sufis **converted Hindus to Islam** and in this task, they were helped by their affluence and connections with the ruling class. In this connection, a sharp contrast is drawn between their attitude and that of the Chishti Sufis whose teachings did not aim at conversion.
 - Unlike Chishtiyas, Suhrawardiyas lived **a lavish and palatial lifestyle**. They also justified their luxurious lifestyle by saying that to serve the poor they must have wealth.

(3) Qadiriya

- Founded in **Baghdad** in 1100s by **Abdul Qadir Gilani**, it is one of the oldest tariqhas.
- Introduced in India in the late 14th c, it spread quickly in the Punjab, Sind, and the Deccan.
- The Qadiri orientation was **like those of the orthodox ulema**.
 - They did not develop any distinctive doctrines outside of mainstream Islam.
 - They believe in the fundamental principles of Islam but interpreted through mystical experience.
 - They attempted to reform the religious life of Indian Muslims of what it considered un-Islamic influences.
- The Qadiri Sufis had **close relations with the ruling classes** of various provincial Sultanate and accepted state charity. The order was urban based.

Mian Mir (1550-1635)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well known Sufi Muslim saint in Lahore. • Famous for being a spiritual instructor of Dara Shikoh. • In 1588, Guru Arjan Dev invited Mian Mir to lay the foundation stone of the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar.
Mullah Shah Badakhshi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual mentor of Dara Shikoh and his sister Jahanara <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Jahanara wrote Sahibiya poem on his life. • Known for his rather secular and liberal approach: he was considered a heretic by the intelligentsia who urged Shahjahan to execute him, but Dara Shikoh intervened.
Bulle Shah (1680-1757)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important contribution to Punjabi and Sindhi poetry. • Contemporary to Sultan Bahu (1629-91) and Waris Shah (1722-99) (of Heer Ranjha) and Sarmast (1739-1829).



Dara Shikoh with Mian Mir and Mullah Shah Badakhshi.



Sarmad Kashani, a Sufi who impressed Dara Shukoh.

(4) Naqshbandi

- Considered as **the most orthodox** among all Sufi orders. It combined mysticism with aggressive accumulation of wealth and assertion of uncompromising commitment to Sunni Hanafi school.
 - Refused to concede the possibility of union between humanity and God. (wahdat al-wujud monism)
 - They defended the **wahdat al-shuhud** (unity of vision), a subjective experience of unity.
 - They don't believe in sama or raqs. They believe that Zikr should happen in quietness.
- Mughal connection in Central Asia**
 - It was particularly popular amongst Mughal elites due to ancestral links to the founder in Central Asia. **Babur** was already initiated in the Naqshbandi order prior to conquering India. This royal affiliation gave considerable impetus to the order.
 - It declined to some extent during the era of Humayun (who preferred Shattaris) but soon gained currency during and after Akbar.

Baqi Billah Berang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credited for bringing the order to India during the end of the 16th century.
Ahmad Sirhindi (d 1624)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major orthodox protagonist of this movement in India. He spoke out against innovations introduced by Sufis; and worked hard to change the outlook of the ruling class. Idea: Wahadat al Shudud He opposed Akbar's Ibadat Khana debates as un-Islamic. He persuaded Jahangir to disallow drinking alcohol and destruction of pubs and clubs and revert the rule of exemption of sacrificing cows.
Khwaja Masoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained Aurangzeb in Sufi path, and provided spiritual and religious/Shariah guidance in matters of the state (eg banning of Music)
Shah Wali Allah (1702-1762)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founder of modern Islamic thought. In 1732 he made a pilgrimage to Mecca and studied religion. He attempted to reconcile the doctrines of wahdat al-wujud of Ibn al-Arabi and wahdat al-shuhud of Sirhindi. He called these differences 'verbal controversies' due to ambiguous language. A hallmark of Shah Wali Allah was his ability to reconcile opposing points of view to the satisfaction of each side. He played a significant role in the political developments in the 18th century.
Mir Dard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role in development of Urdu language.

Five other Silsilahs

(a) Kubrawiyyas

- It was originally established in Turkmenistan but was established in Kashmir by **Mir Sayyid Hamdani**.
- It was **orthodox** and **regressive** Silsilah. Instead of promoting religious equality and tolerance, they promoted the idea of forcible conversions and iconoclasm.

Mir Sayyid Hamdani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought various Iranian crafts and industries into Kashmir; and 700 followers, including some weavers of carpets and shawls. (Led to growth of textile industry) • He started organized efforts to convert Kashmir to Islam. • His son Sayyid Muhammad Hamdani came to Kashmir in 1393 during the reign of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan. • Khanqah-e-Moula (Shah-e-Hamdan) is the first mosque in Jammu and Kashmir. Built in 1395 by Sultan Sikandar Butshikan
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(b) Rishi Tradition

- It **countered the tradition of Kubrawiyyas in Kashmir**.
- It was the **synthesis** between **Sufism and Shaivite bhakti** movement due to Shaivite yogini Lal Ded.
- Important proponent - Nuruddin Rishi (Nund Rishi, 14th c) and Resh Mir (16th c)
- **Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani (Nund Rishi, 14th c)**
 - Unlike Kabir, whose teachings were a criticism of both Islam and Hinduism, Nund Rishi affirmed both the religions.
 - Poems are known as **Shruks** (6 liners) which evolve around religion and morality.
 - Translated **Quran in Kashmiri**

Lal Ded (Lalleshwari, in 14th c)

- Demystified **Kashmiri Shaivism** for common people.
- Composed poems called as **Lal-Vakhs** in Kashmiri language.
- Significant **historical bridge** between pre-Islamic Sanskrit cultural heritage and with post 12th century developments.
- Not only a **continuation** of the tradition; but also, a **rebellion** against the elite custodians of knowledge and tradition. She critically interrogated practices of inequality and injustice.

(c) Shattari

- Originating in Persia, Established in Bengal, Jaunpur, Malwa and Deccan.
- **Close ties with the court and accepted state patronage.**
- It was also an **orthodox order**.

Shah Muhammad Ghouse/Ghawth (16th c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most distinguished master of the order. • He had guided Humayun and accepted honour from Akbar. • Great contribution of him to Classical Music. • Translated Amritkunda from Sanskrit to Persian Bahr-al-Hayat (ocean of life). Thus, introducing to Sufism a set of yoga practices. • Ghouse's magnificent tomb in Gwalior.
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(d) Firdausi (Bihar Sharif, Maner Sharif)

- Originally from Iran, network of khanqahs from Bihar to Sonargaon in India

Sheikh Maneri (d. 1380s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most imp Firdausi saint. • Today, Maner Sharif • His Persian books: Maktoobate sadi (hundred letters of century) and Maktoobate do sadi (two hundred letters of second century)
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(e) Qalandari

- Founded in Spain in 12th c, popular from Iran to India.
- Covered a wide range of **wandering dervishes** who violated normal social behavior.
- Considered reprehensible and above the Islamic law, had no recognized spiritual master and organization.
- Interaction
 - Many Qalandaris frequently visited **Chishti** khanqahs and became absorbed into the Chishti Order.
 - Qalandars had contact with the **Nathpanthi** yogis, and adopted custom and practices such as ear piercing.
- **Qalandari Dhamaal**: songs honouring famous Qalandar saints.

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (1177-1274)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original family from Baghdad, settled in Sindh during Ghurid era. • Known as Jhulelal, revered by people of Sindh as a holy figure. • Contemporary to Balban but shrine is built by Firoze Shah Tughlaq • Major role in conversion of Sindh to Islam.
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Overall Contribution of Sufism

- **Cultural give-and-take**
 - According to Alberuni the philosophy of Atma was adopted by sufis from Yogasutra of Patanjali.
 - Amritkunda, the book of Hathyoga, had a great influence on Sufism as the practices of yoga and meditation practiced by the saints of Chishti silsila was adopted from this book.
 - The philosophy of Wahdat-ul-wajood was similar to the philosophies of the hindu yogi gurus.
- **Provided a social basis to Islam in India.**
 - Horrific memory for invasions from Muslim army. Sufism gave an ointment to the wound of Indians.
 - Sufi saints tried to mitigate the cruelty of orthodox Islam on Hindus.
 - Thus, in a way because of Sufism, the Muslim rule in India became acceptable.
- **Pressure Group**
 - Sufi saints even worked as a critic of government policy. In this way they worked as a pressure-group.
- **Moral values**
 - Muslim youths attracted to luxury but Sufi saints through criticized luxurious life and infused same moral values in them.
- **Economy**
 - **Khanqahs** built in an interior/forest region → devotees thronging, forest cleared for agriculture, places developed as Kasba/town gradually
 - Encouraged trade and commerce as Khanqah became a meeting place for merchants, started selling amulets and as vast wealth was accumulated, started to invest capital in business.
- **Culture**
 - Promoted Indian **languages** like Awadhi and Panjabi, Deccani language.
 - **Indian stories** were used to tell Sufi experience allegorically. Thus, promoted composite culture of India. (Songs by women were also used by Sufis – folk literature encourage)
 - In **music** (Ghazal and Qawwali) were developed. Md. Gauss was the teacher of Tansen.
 - **Maktubat** (letters), Malfuzat (discourses) literature