

# The Sufi and Mystic Movements in Kashmir: Influences and Impacts

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## ABSTRACT

Sufism is that mode of life in Islam in which the emphasis is laid on the purification of one's inner self in order to attain lasting spiritual bliss. In other words, it may be termed as 'Islamic Mysticism', a term which is popularised by western writers. In Arabic it is called 'tasawwuf' while its cognate, 'Sufi' is used for the mystic. The period between 1200 to 1500 A.D. is regarded as an important landmark in the history of medieval India. It was during this period that a number of new religious sects and movements were started which created great impact on Indian culture. Similarly, Ancient Kashmir has been a protected place of stay and meditation for the saints, Sufis, Rishis and other devoted worshippers of God. History suggests that these saints belonged to different religions that include Shaivism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Sufism evolved and developed a credo among Muslims which emphasised bonds of love with and surrender to the Almighty. The philosophy spread along the valley after the arrival of Sufis from Central Asia. There is a strong belief that eclectic practices came to define a Sufi and the growth of Sufism in Kashmir. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the historical background of Sufism in India in general and Sufism in Kashmir in particular and how it (Sufism) has influenced and impacted the lives of the people of Kashmir.

**Key words:** Central Asia, , Ancient Kashmir, Rishis, Mystic.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Sufism is that mode of life in Islam in which the emphasis is laid on the purification of one's inner self in order to attain lasting spiritual bliss. In other words, it may be termed as 'Islamic Mysticism' a term which is popularised by western writers. In Arabic it is called 'tasawwuf' while its cognate, 'Sufi' is used for the mystic. Sufism or Tasawwuf has been defined by various Sufis and scholars. Abu'l Qasim al-Qushayri, the author of the great Sufi compendium, 'Ras'a'il' considers Sufism in the sense of purity of inner and outer life

and says that "purity is something praiseworthy in whichever language it may be expressed and its opposite 2 impurity is to be eschewed". He prefers to derive this term Tasawwuf (purity) from the root 'Sfw' (to be pure) rather than 'Suf (wool). Shaykh al-Islam Zakaria al-Ansari defined Sufism as follows: Sufism teaches how to purify one's self, improve one's morals and build up one's inner and outer life in order to attain perpetual bliss. Its subject matter is the purification of the soul and its end or aim is the 3 attainment of eternal felicity and blessedness". Whereas "Sufism", says the great Sufi Saint, Shaykh Shihab al-din Suhrawardi "is neither austerity (faqr) nor asceticism (zuhd), but a term which comprehends the ideas of both together with something besides". Al-Junaid of Baghdad describes Sufism as meaning that "God should cause thee to die from thyself and to live in Him". This dying to self is called by al-Junaid as 'Fana', the life in Him is named "baqa". Ma'ruf al-Karkhi defined Sufism as "the apprehension of Divine realities and renunciation of human possessions". Sufism in another words can mean sacrifice, an empty hand, self discipline, loss of the greed of self and of self will, and finally attaining Divine love, the love of God and love for one's fellow-beings. Prof. Gibb observed, "Sufism is the result of consummation of Tasawwuf - certain practices under partial circumstances, whereby a man attunes himself and his whole personality, to what he believes to be Reality or Truth". As for the origin of the term "Sufi" a great number of Sufis themselves have explained it in many different ways. Some have argued that the term is derived from 'Safa' - referring to the Sufi's purity of heart. Others claim that 'Saff means the first rank of Vanguard; and still others insist that the term 'Suf' refers to the woolen robes frequently worn by men of ascetic life in early times of Islam. The Sufi doctrines are mainly based on the Qur'anic teachings and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. As such there is no 'Sufism' without Islam. The metaphysical terminology of the Sufis is also deduced from the Qur'an. And as al-Junaid has said

"Sufism is firmly bounded up with the doctrinal faith of the Qur'an and the Traditions and that which is rejected by the Qur'an and the Traditions, is nothing but heresy".

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The history of the Sufi movement may be divided into two periods. The first from the earliest times to the beginning of the 9th century A.D and the second from 9th century onwards. The Sufis of the first period were ascetics and quietists. They were in quest of the true qualities of a Muslim as stated in the Qur'an and they identified their aim and objectives with the qualities of the Holy book. During this period, Sufism possessed no system. Their chief headquarters were Basara and Kufa. The ascetic movement then spread to all parts of the Islamic world. During the second half of the second/eighth century A.D. Khorasan became an important centre of religious and political activity. A noted Sufi of this province was Ibrahim bin. Adham, Prince of Balkh. After his death, his pupil Abu 'Ali Shaiq of Bulkh continued the Khorasanian school of asceticism. It is said that he was the first Sufi to define 'tawakkul' trust in God as a mystical state 'hal'. His discourses also reveal the beginning of a formal system of self-discipline which was further developed by Sufis of third and ninth century. Sufis like Hasan al-Basari, Ibrahim bin Adham, Abu 'Ali Shaiq of Bulkh and the renowned woman mystic Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya belong to this period. She was the first Sufi to enunciate in Sufism the doctrine of Divine Love, which later became a dominant feature of the Sufi movement. Also it was the Egyptian Sufi Abu'l-Fayd Thawban bin Ibrahim, who introduced the doctrine of gnosis (ma'rifa) into Sufism. The Holy Qur'an also mentions of Dhu'l Nun (21;87). Dhu'l Nun al-Misri states that Ma'rifa is "God's providential communication of the spiritual light to our innermost hearts. He who belongs to God and to whom God belongs is not concerned with anything in the Universe.

The second period of Sufi movement commenced from about 9th century A.D. onwards. The Sufis of this period were particularly interested in the theory of mystical union (fana wa baqa) and often use expressions which distinctly denote pantheistic tendencies. Abu Yazid (Bayazid of Bistam) carried the experimental doctrine of 'fana' (dying to self) to utmost limit and found God within his own soul and declared "Glory to Me ! How Great is My Majesty " Even more extreme than Abu Yazid of the "intoxicated" Sufis was Mansur al-Hallaj who declared that when a man is completely absorbed in his Divine Beloved, he

abandons self and becomes conscious only of his God. In this state he is one with God. He was executed for claiming identity with God when he said "I am the Truth" (ana'l-haqq) during the caliphate of Muqtadir. Thereafter Sufism came closer to and was expressed in the terms of pantheism and Gnosticism. From 9th to 12th century Sufism was influenced by the ideas of Christianity, Neo-platonism, Gnosticism. It seems to have come into contact with Buddhistic and Hindu mystical ideas about the same time in the central Asian region, although most of its principle features had evolved from the Quranic and prophetic traditions and under the influences of Neo-platonic and Christian elements. Though interesting, the scope of our work does not permit us to estimate their comparative importance.

In India, Sufism made its appearance quite early. One of the earliest Indian mystics was Abu 'Ali al-Sindhi, who was reported to have met Abu Yazid al-Bistami in 54 A.D. He taught Abu Yazid the doctrine of the Divine, Unity (Tawhid) and ultimate truths (haqaiq) while Abu Yazid instructed him in the obligatory duties of Islam according to Hanafi Law. Sufi Shaykh Isma'il of Bukhara arrived in Lahore in 1005 A.D. The Sufi Sayyad Ahmad popularly known as Sultan Sakhi Sarwar is said to have influenced Hindus through his teachings. However, the Sufi movement in India gained momentum from the time of Shaykh 'Ali bin-Uthman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri who came from Gazna and settled down in Lahore. He is popularly known in India as Data Ganj Bakhsh. He is the author of the earliest Persian classic on Sufi doctrines and practices, Kashf al-Mahjub. It has been translated by R.A. Nicholson and published in Gibb Memorial Series, London in 1911.

### The Sufism in Kashmir and its Influences and Impact:

Ancient Kashmir has been a protected place of stay and meditation for the saints, Sufis, Rishis and other devoted worshippers of God. History suggests that these saints belonged to different religions that include Shaivism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Sufism evolved and developed a credo among Muslims which emphasised bonds of love with and surrender to the almighty. The philosophy spread along the valley after the arrival of Sufis from Central Asia. There is a strong belief that eclectic practices came to define a Sufi and the growth of Sufism in Kashmir. For centuries the Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir have lived together peacefully. The Muslims of Kashmir had a strong influence on Hindus, and vice-versa. During the rule of Chaks and Shahmiris there

existed six orders of Sufism which were Qadiria, Sahurwardia, Kibrawiya, Naqashbandia, Noorbakhshia and Rishia. While the first five had arrived from Iran and Turkistan, the sixth one was originally from Kashmir and sought to combine the very best elements of the different religious orders. The beautiful valley of Kashmir exerted a special attraction on the Sufis saint sat whose shrines, people flock in large numbers to pay homage. The most dominant influence on the Kashmiri identity, in terms of Kashmiriyat, is that of the 'Rishi' order of Sufis. According to a scholar: "Where Sufis are Rishis and Rishis are Sufis". The term 'Rishi' itself is clearly a derivation from Sanskrit and Indian traditions, though some Medieval Muslim scholars have tried to show that it is derived from the Persian word raish or rish meaning the "feathers or wings of a bird." Among the Muslim rishis, the most famous rishi is Sheikh Nur-ud-din (RA). Out of a feeling of deep respect and love, both the Hindus and Muslims call him 'Nandrishi'. The shrine of Nandrishi is located in Chrar-e-Sharief, a small village about five miles from Nagam. Both Hindus and Muslims gather at this shrine to make floral offerings.. He was known not only as a Saint, Rishi, and Spiritual head of Kashmir but also as a great writer and poet who, through his verses, taught Kashmiris the importance of Islamic virtues of justice, sincerity, equality, truth, morality and spirituality.

It is also believed that Sheikh nurtured the 'Koshur' language that plays a role in the identity formation of Kashmir.

"We belong to the same parents. Then why this difference?"

Let Hindus and Muslims (together) Worship God alone.

We came to this world like partners. We should have shared our joys and sorrows together."

The Sufi traditions of Jammu and Kashmir still play an important role in the lives of people in the region for whom the traditions connote an understanding of the world in all its spiritual dimensions.

### III. CONCLUSION:

Among the Sufi orders, those which have played an important role in the cultural history of India were the Chishti, the Qadiri, the Suhrawardi and the Naqshbandi. These godly men with their missionary zeal for toleration and universal brotherhood, attracted people to their hospices, which were established in all parts of the country. These hospices were open to all the people - scholars, politicians, soldiers, Hindu yogis and common people irrespective of their caste, creed or

religion. In these hospices, the Hindus, especially from the lower strata of the society found to their amazement an atmosphere full of love and affection and where the basic principles of unity of God and universal brotherhood were easily understood and welcome. To these people, this message had a special appeal. The Sufi Saints produced a corresponding evolution in the domain of language and literature also. They spoke the language of the masses and gave impetus to the linguistic assimilation and thereby laid the foundation of a new vehicle of expression - "the Deccani language". The hospices thus played an important role as the socio-religious centres in the Deccan. The Sufis in India played a silent but significant role as social reformers. They did not hesitate to condemn the court to what they considered as un-Islamic activities. On the other hand the royalty solicited the support and co-operation of these Sufi Saints in consolidating the political stability of their kingdom. They made many contributions in their own way to bring about cultural synthesis and communal harmony during their life time and after their death, people of all faiths, caste and creed continued to flock their tombs and shrines throughout India even to this day thereby contributing to the Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis and unity.

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