



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies**

## **Sufism: The Road to Blot out Hatred**

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“The greatest jihad is to battle your soul, to fight with evil within your soul.”

- Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)



Sufism is basically a concept for finding the inner mental peace by following the path defined by Allah. Without purifying one's inner-self, one cannot reach GOD. These were the teachings taught by the Sufi saints to their students. This theory surfaced long after the advent of Islam. It is a mystical belief in which these Sufi's purify themselves, hunt for truth and attain the level of ones' spiritual self.

Sufism is construed as “cabalistic Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims conspire to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through a direct personal experience of GOD.”

Moreover, the people who belong to this particular school of thought are categorized as ‘Sufis.’ The word Sufi has been derived from the Arabic term ‘suf’ which means ‘wool.’ Islamic Sufism is also known as ‘tasawwuf’ (which in the literal meaning of the word means ‘to dress in wool’ in the Arabic language. Sufi’s are also attributed as ‘fuqara’ (meaning ‘poor’ ) driven from the Arabic word ‘fakir.’ In Persian, they are called Darvish. Throughout the Islamic history, Sufism remained as the most prominent theory, since it had many followers all over the world. This concept emerged in the ancient Arabian Peninsula under the rule of Umayyad Dynasty (661-749), which was introduced less than a hundred years ago after the dawn of Islam. Sufi practices of this era included brooding over the Doomsday passages in Qur’an, strictly following the Islamic teachings, and praying in the third half of the night. The Sufis back in that time were also known as ‘the weeping ones.’ Many amongst them entirely focused upon ‘tawakkul’ which means placing blind trust upon God. Hence, this became the original concept of Sufism.

With the passage of time, several developments followed within the concept of Sufism which encompasses meticulous self-control, wisdom, knowledge of one’s inner self, the decimation of the self, mystical understanding of the human nature and the Prophet, hymns and poetry.

800-1100 AD is known as the era of Classical Sufism, while 13<sup>th</sup> century is labeled as the golden period of Sufism where it reached its' heights. This era produced some of the most notable Sufi saints such as Ibn al' Arabi from Spain, Ibn al-Farid from Egypt, Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi from Persia and Najmuddin Kubra from Central Asia.

Before Islam approached sub-continent, it was home to Hindus. The person who introduced Islam in sub-continent was none other than the greatest Sufi saint Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti (RA) of Ajmer Sharif, who is known as the founding father of Islam all over the sub-continent. He was born in the year 1139, in Sajistan, Central Asia. He had learned Qur'an by heart and also mastered in multiple languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Turkic, Sanskrit, and Hindi. Ajmer was a town in the Rajasthan desert, from where he started preaching the fundamentals of Islam. And thus became the nucleus of Islam and Sufism whose tentacles extended all over India and Pakistan. It was due to his ceaseless endeavors that thousands of Hindus embraced Islam.

Moreover, millions converted to Islam with the diligence of his apostles.

Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki, Sheikh Hameeduddin Naguri, and Baba Fareed Ganj were three of his devotees, who made a place of their own in the Sufi ranking and owned respect and honor. The Muslims of the subcontinent have forever remained obliged to the Sufi saints because it was due to their efforts that an environment feasible for them was created, especially in a place where Muslims were deprived of their rights and were considered a minority.

Pakistan is the land of many Sufi saints. Its relation with Sufism is interconnected and inseparable. One important aspect which played a vital role in the emergence of Pakistan was the presence and stronghold of Sufism in these areas. As already mentioned many converted to Islam due to the ministrations of these famous Sufi saints such as Hazrat Bahauddin Zakariya, Baba Fareed Shakar Ganj, Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and many others.

Sufi music has also played an indispensable role in spreading Islam. Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti and Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki used to listen to the music considering it as a divine stimulus. However, this was not the kind of music people hear today. It was the hymns and poetry written by these saints such as ghazals of Amir Khusro were heard along with a light musical note. This music was taken as a way to reach ecstasy and to get spiritual healing. This Sufi practice of listening to music started from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, and from there onwards moved to the rest of the world.

Some of the renowned Sufi poets were Baba Farid, Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Shah Latif Bhitai, Bulleh Shah, Sachal Sarmast, Khwaja Ghulam Farid, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh and Maulvi Ghulam Rasul. Additionally, their poetry was that of the finest in nature which continued the rich tradition of music and poetry.

Every year many Sufi festivals are held at the shrines of these Sufi saints across Pakistan. At every Urs, the followers of these saints gather to pay tribute to their memory and honor. Many of these believers start swirling

around at the beat of dhol. The beauty of these Urs/festivals is that people from all castes, creed, sects and even religions assemble and carry out all the rituals proving as one entity. This was the message conveyed by these great men; to live in peace and harmony and spread the love.

Apart from these Sufi festivals, many events are organized by various organizations, and particularly the celebrities and artists from the showbiz industry for the revival of Sufism and Sufi music. The purpose of these events is to highlight the teachings of these Sufi saints and to convey the message of love, peace, and harmony to the society. Islam did not spread by the use of force in the subcontinent; it was this message of love and peace which had inspired millions and attracted them towards Islam. In truth, Islam itself is a religion of peace, and the prime reason behind its divine teachings is to serve the humanity, spread the message of love to all corners of the world, and this is what these great Sufi saints did.

In April 2016, second International Sufi Conference was held at the National Museum of Pakistan, in Karachi. Before that, the first International Sufi Conference was organized in 2014. The purpose of these conferences was to promote peace and harmony in an environment which is turning radicalized day by day, where patience and tolerance towards each other are reaching to a zero level. In these times, such events are the need of an hour.

Moreover, apart from spreading peace and love, Sufism has focused upon equality, tolerance, patience, co-existence and respect towards each other.

This message can only be conveyed when events like these are encouraged by government as well as private sector.

Many multinational corporations are now diverting their CSR strategies towards highlighting the original spirit of Sufism through various projects which have proved to be yet another cultural milestone in the current times. Under the banner of reviving culture and traditions with a contemporary approach, many long lost Sufi tunes have been revived which were once heard only at the Urs of Sufi saints. The way with which these ancient scripts of Sufi poetry are composed of the finest blend of modern and traditional musical instruments is highly appreciated and liked, especially by the young generation. Apart from known corporations of Pakistan, the national television is also putting in efforts for the revival of Sufi music through highlighting the multicultural segments. This kind of activities and events must be encouraged at government level for they are the driving forces in spreading the message of peace and love among this intolerant and radicalized society.