



Research Paper

## Impact of Sufism on Gujjar of Jammu & Kashmir: Its Relevance in Present Scenario

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper attempts to find out the impact of Sufism on Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir. Traditionally Gujjars are closely attached to Sufism. 'Sufism' or 'Tasawwuf' is as old as Islam itself. It is known to be an inner doctrine of the Islamic faith. Islam spread very fast from the desert of Africa to the plains of Sindh and in almost the whole Middle East and central Asia. However, along with highly militarized and organized Islamic force, the theologians, historians, Ulema and Sufis also came and propagated Islam's teachings. The people of Kashmir welcomed this new religion and accepted it wholeheartedly. So with the spread of Islam in Kashmir, several communities, including Gujjars impressed by these Muslim theologians and Sufis, become a discipline of these Sufis. So this paper aims to highlight the influence of Sufism on the culture of Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir and its relevance in the present scenario for establishing peace and harmony in the society. This paper is based on secondary data i.e., Books, Journals, Newspapers, reports, census data, etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** Islam, Sufism, Gujjars, Peace and Harmony, Jammu & Kashmir

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of Sufism on Jammu and Kashmir's Gujjars and the relevance of Sufism in the current situation in preserving peace and harmony in the region. This qualitative and descriptive research is based on secondary sources such as books, journals, articles, reports, census data, etc. Gujjars have long been associated with Sufism. Sufism (tasawwuf) is a term that dates back to the beginning of Islam. It is known to be an Islamic faith's inner creed.

Islam is the world's second most popular religion and the third monotheistic religion. This rapidly growing religion has a variety of practitioners who follow different practices. However, all schools of thought on the Islamic faith hold the same fundamental beliefs, and there are many different ways to worship. Islamic mysticism is Sufism or Tasawwuf as it is recognized in the Muslim world.' Sufis are found worldwide, but they are primarily concentrated in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and India due to the historical significance of spiritual practice in these countries. India, for example, is one of the great Sufi centers and is home to two mighty Sufi saints, MoinuddinChishti (1141-1236) and Bakhtyar Kaki (1173-1235).

Sufism has taken from the root word 'suf' in Arabic, which means 'wool.' It is also known astasawwuf (to dress in wool), which is generally regarded as an internal perspective of Islam by academicians and scholars. In Persian, "Darvesh" has been used as the same. The mystic and practice of Islam are based primarily on the Prophet Muhammad's Quran, Hadith, and Sunnah. The characteristics of Islam, on the other hand, are made based on Shariat (theology), tari'qat (methodology), and haqi'qat (truth or reality), most of which lead to Divine guidance, mahri'fat (blessing or gnosis of God) (Khaliq, 2011pp.5). Sufism is the true essence of Islam, bringing

spiritual truth to those who seek it. It is the procedure of purifying one's heart, self, and soul, ultimately leading to God's unity.

Sufism is based on six fundamental beliefs (Iman), which are as follows:

1. The existence of God
2. The unity of God
3. The Angels
4. The Prophets
5. The Day of Judgment
6. Good and evil through God's predestination.

Sufis strive for direct personal experience with God to discover the truth of infinite love and knowledge. They try to achieve "fana" (a momentary ecstatic intoxication of infinite love) and "baqa" (a long-term state of complete "human in-dwelling with God"). Some Sufis referred to the top position of spiritual awareness as the "Light of Lights" and the path to it as "ascending degrees of brightness."

There are four fundamental pillars of Sufism upon which the foundation of Sufism rests. These four pillars are as follows:

1. **Shar'iat (theology):** Shar'iat is the first step of Islam, during which a person must acquire external or exoteric understanding (Ilm) and ensure adherence to Islamic rules. Here, man must use mediation to combat evil thought and spirit.
2. **Tari'qat (methodology):** Tari'qat is the second stage, in which the follower (Murid) is required to obey the instructions of his mentor (Murshad) exclusively. By following Murshad's order and duty, the disciple (Murid) achieves the inner strength of the soul.
3. **Haqi'qat (truth):** God has honored the Murid for his actions and genuine faith in this stage. Murid accomplished the true self (God), knew what was happening, and brought to light his mysteries at this stage. That's the stage of God's actualization.
4. **Mari'fat (gnosis of God):** The mari'fat, or esoteric understanding, is the fourth stage in which he recognizes his divine personality. Here, the Sufi requires adherence to the Prophet Muhammad to the letter and acquires mystical abilities comparable to that of an Angel. He was led to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) by the sheikh, who showed him everything. That is a breach of trust in Islam's Prophet. (Khaliq, 2011, pp.5-7)

Sha'riah is my message (aqwali), Tari'qah is my actions (affali), haqi'qah is my divine state (ahwali), and mari'fat is my secret (asrari), according to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The outward practices of religion are referred to as sha'riah, whereas the inside vision of supernatural presence is called haqi'qah.

### **SUFISM: THE PATH OF TRUTH AND LOVE**

The doctrine of Sufism is exclusively based upon truth and love. Sufism is generally thought to have emerged after three centuries of Islam. However, it is essential to remember that Prophet Muhammad, Hazrat Khadija, and Imam Ali (The fourth Khalifa of Islam) were the first three great mystics. Further debate among various schools of Islamic thought is too ambiguous. Sufism is widely recognized as an essential component of Islamic life, despite all schools of thought agreeing that the divine or internal (batin) doctrine is the very foundation of the Islamic belief. Hazrat Junaid Bagdadi (909 A.D.), a notable Sufi, was the first to discuss how internal and external routes are two sides of the same coin and are intertwined. The Sufi moves through various beliefs and mysticism concepts, for instance, Salat (prayer), Zikr (remembrance of God), Fana (annihilation), and Safa (purity of body and soul). Sufism was a path that led to the inner purity of body and soul. Sufism served as a bridge between sha'riah and haqi'qah, linked to the belief in God's unity (oneness). Sufis adhere to the basic principle of Islam, which is "submission to God's will." Sufis have a strong belief (iman) in God's unity, Prophets, and the Quran. Last but not least, there is Ihsan, who has aided Sufi spiritual development through his actions and behavior (Khaliq, 2011, pp.10-11).

Sufi teachings are entirely based on unity, love, and brotherhood. Sufi teaching began among the ordinary people, away from that stuff and the elite group from the early stages. People of various religions, cultures, and identities swelled to them, and the Sufis had previously ignored no one and treated everybody else equally. The early spread of Islam was solely due to the Sufis' respectful and benevolent nature, which was quickly assimilated into their local culture, and people were easily strained to Sufis. Sufis don't try to convert people's religions, cultures, or identities. However, they simply used Islam's spiritual and mystic power to make everyone a part of it. For the most part, Sufis tried to avoid crowds and settled in remote and isolated locations where they found spiritual peace by offering prayers to their God.

### **HISTORY OF GUJJARS**

Gujjar's origins are unknown. There are two points of view on this: one that claims they are foreigners, and the other that does not. Other nationalist scholars have argued they were India's first inhabitants. W. Crooke,

in his book "Caste and Tribal groups of North-Western India," stated that Gujjar came from Georgia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. He also claimed that the Gujjar people are of Central Asian descent. Thus many scholars, on the other hand, agreed with Crook that they came from Georgia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., somewhere between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. This claim may be valid because Georgia was known as Gurjistan by several medieval Persians. Guzar, Gurjar, Gujjar, Khizar, and other names for Caspian Sea communities have been suggested.

On the other hand, the evidence may have conceptual and philosophical differences. Those who believe Gujjars are native Indians claim that the word "Gujjar" is derived from the Sanskrit word Gurjara, "Gur and Jur" (enemy destroyer), which is described in a Hindu literary text, and that the Gujjar language is Indo-Aryan. During the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Gujrata was a powerful Gujjar kingdom in Kathiawar and Gujrat. In Rajasthan, there was a great kingdom known as Gurjara-Desa during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (country of Gujjars). A strong Gujjar Pratihara kingdom existed in north and north-western India in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (JavedRahi, 2012). That is most likely a case where conquerors disintegrated and began migrating in various directions due to their attacks. According to the theory, the Gujjars were Rajput warriors who agreed with Aurangzeb in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to convert to Islam if they lost the war. After losing the battle, they converted to Islam. On the other hand, the modern Muslim Gujjar rejected this view, claiming that they were already Muslims before Aurangzeb. As a result, this theory could be made up.

### **GUJJAR OF JAMMU & KASHMIR**

There is no authentic historical document of the Gujjar settlement in Jammu and Kashmir. In this regard, there are usually two points of view. Gujjars from the Jammu division, particularly Rajouri, Poonch, and Reasi, claimed to have ancestors from Gujarat. During that time in Gujarat, massive droughts and famines, a scarcity of grazing land, and invasions persecuted religious and ethnic minorities. For their safety and security, they migrated to different parts of the country. Most of them decided to move to the forests and mountains of Jammu and Kashmir in the Himalayan foothills and began living nomadic lives with their cattle.

Another theory about the arrival of the Gujjar in Jammu and Kashmir is that they crossed the Khyber Pass from Central Asia, Iran, and Turkistan to enter the valley of Kashmir and its surrounding areas. This perspective is mainly concerned with the Gujjars of Kashmir Valley. While these stories are particularly claimed by ancestors of the Gujjar community and move on verbally from generation to generation, no recorded data of these facts are available. The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir are divided into three categories: settled Gujjars, Bakarwal Gujjars, and Dodhi Gujjars. Rearing the cattle was most popular among the settled Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir in their earliest time. But now, they are engaging in agricultural activities, work as labor and employer, and are attractive in small businesses. We can mostly find them in Rajouri, Poonch, Reasi, Anantnag, Kupwara, and other places. The second category is Bakarwal, who also engaged in rearing cattle such as sheep and goats and can find throughout the state. They are primarily nomadic by nature and do not live in permanent settlements. They move with their sheep and goats to different areas of the state to graze them. The Bodhi Gujjar is the third Gujjar subgroup, usually located in the plains and Kandi areas of Jammu. They have both nomadic and semi-nomadic attributes. They raised rare Buffalo primarily for the milk business and sold them in the market to increase their income.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Rashid Waseem:** In his study "Gujjar and Sufism: A case study of Sufism as an important source of social inclusiveness and constructive activities among Gujjars and Bakerwals Jammu and Kashmir," stated that Sufism arrived in India in the last decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Both external and internal incitement were helpful to fuel its growth. He also mentioned that Sufis came to Punjab from Iran, Iraq, and Central Asia, and Punjab quickly became a hotspot of Sufism. Some Sufis arrived in Kashmir from Punjab and communicated the message of Wahda-tul-Wajood (unity of being). The Sufis attract many lower classes due to their extensive understanding, spiritual attainment, and liberal policies. According to the author, the concept of Sufism is well established among the Gujjars community, those who visit shrines regularly. In this way, there are so many shrines exist in Jammu and Kashmir, namely Baba Nagri at Wangat, Ziarat Shahdra Sharief Rajouri, Pir Miitha, Baba Buddan Shah at Jammu, shrines of Saidnoor at Bafliaz, Sufi Mazar of Sain Illahi Baksh Batalkote Poonch, Ziarat of Shah Asrar- Uddin Bagdadi, and Shah Farid- Uddin Bagdadi. Many Gujjar and Bakarwal visit the Shrine of Baba Wangat because he is the most popular among all Gujjars, and the Sufi Pir Muhammad Ubaidullah also belongs to the Gujjar Bajran clan. The author concluded by stating that Sufism is socially institutionalized by the people of Jammu and Kashmir as an essential source of positive and productive performance and increased social inclusion among different sections of the society. Many Sufi shrines made a necessary part of social life in Jammu and Kashmir (Waseem Rashid).

**Sheikh, Basher Ahmed (2012):** In his work "The Impact of Sufism on the Socio-Economic and Cultural

Conditions of Jammu And Kashmir," revealed that Kashmir valley is known as pirvaer (the land of pirs). In ancient times, Kashmir was gradually populated by Hindu Rishi and Munni, who had nothing to do with Islamic mysticism or tasawwuf. However, Sufi SayyedAbdur Rahman and Bulbul Shah, who came from Turkistan, established Sufism in Kashmir in the 14th century. They were instrumental in converting Buddhist ruler Rinchan Shah to Islam; he, also known as Sadar-Ud-Din, accepted Islam. He was Kashmir's first Muslim ruler, and his influence on people's social, cultural, and religious lives was profound (SheikhBasher,2012, p.2)

**K. Warikoo:**In hischapterentitled"tribalGujjarsofJammuandKashmir"TheHimalayanResearchandCultural Foundation (2000)" said thatGujjars are overly attached to their cultural traditions and taboos. The vast majority of them place far too much faith in Pirs. They believe that the Pirs assist the devotee and that they must pay strict loyalty to various pirs in their respective areas. They want to go to Hazrat Nanga Baji Sab Bandipura, Hazrat Sheik Noor-Uddin Noorani Sab, Hazrat Baba Ji Sahib LarviWangat, and other Sufi shrines (K.Warikoo,2000)

**Luv Puri (June 2015):** in his article "Gujjar save the shared tradition in remoteHillsofJ&K,"statedthatpeople visit the Shrine of Saidnoor in Bafliaz, Poonch district, despite threats from area Lashkar commander KamilZaki, who has forbidden people from visiting Sufi shrines. The hilly and open forest Peer Panjal in Jammu & Kashmir's remote areas, especially near the border, has so many Sufi shrines that Gujjar frequently visits. These people, however, suffer the most as a result of bombardments and the period of militancy. Militants recommended this volatile region for their safety, restricting people's access to shrines and even attempting to demolish multiple shrines in that area. Despite these difficulties, the Gujjar of this region strives to protect these shrines and remain committed to Sufis shrines and their teachings. Surankote was the first place where locals rebelled against militant brutality and formed a village defense committee (VDC) to safeguard their cultural identity (LuvPuri, 2015).

#### **PROMINENTSUFISINJAMMU&KASHMIR**

Kashmir has long been known as a place of refuge for Rishis and Sufis. Along with the advent of Islam, many Sufis migrated to Kashmir and made permanent residence there. Bulbul Shah, also recognized as Sayyed Abdul Rahman Sariff-Uddin Suharwardi, was the first Sufi saint to visit Kashmir during Suhadeva's reign (1301-1320). Rinchan Shah, a well-known Buddhist ruler, embraced Islam and was renamed Sadr-Ur-Din (1320-1323).

Saiyyed Ali Hamdani (1314-1384), also known as Shah-E-Hamdani, was the second prominent Sufi who came to Kashmir and converted numerous people to Islam through his commitment, piety, and excellence. He was one of the most successful Sufis who influenced the people of remote areas of Kashmir with their spiritual attainment and teachings. After his death, he was brought back to Tajikistan with his discipline and was buried there.

SaiyyedJammal-Ud-Din Bukhari (1588-1671) was another noteworthy Sufi who came to Kashmir during the early 16th century. But he stayed in Kashmir only for a short time, and he inspired so many people through his spiritual teachings and learnings. Sheik Hamza Makhdum (1494-1576), also known as Mehboob-Ul-Alam (Beloved of the World), would be another prevalent Sufi character who humbly preached Islam. People from all walks of life now come to his shrines to seek blessings.

#### **GUJJARS AND SUFISM**

The total population of Gujjars is estimated to be 9.8 lakh in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the census 2011. Gujjars, who were initially nomadic, have settled in a distinct area of the state to a great extent. Gujjars have a specific language, culture, and tradition that they have practiced for hundreds of years. Currently, the entire Gujjar population in Jammu and Kashmir practices Islam and adheres to Islamic practices. Gujjars are closely associated with various Sufi Silsilas and show kindness to them in preaching and propagating Islam's doctrines. Sufis and Gujjars have had a close relationship built on spiritual love and devotion, and Gujjar's social life revolves around Sufism.

#### **IMPACTSOFSUFISMONTHECULTUREOF THE GUJJARCOMMUNITYOFJAMMU&KASHMIR**

Just after the advent of multiple notable Sufis in Kashmir and its nearby region, a correlation among Gujjars and Sufism was established. Sufis' humble manner of teaching affected Gujjars, and so many of them became Sufi faithful followers as soon as they became familiar with them. Gujjars lived in remote hills and mountains, and then when Sufis arrived in Kashmir's mountains, they came into direct contact with the local population. The Gujjars were drawn to the Sufi way of life because it was humble and benevolent. Sufis easily assimilated into local cultures and attempted to speak to other people in their native tongues. Gujjars who had



already been marginalized desired a ray of hope in Sufism for their healing, devotion, and faith and became Sufi faithful followers. Gujjar culture in Jammu and Kashmir has remained traditional and unaffected for centuries, and they are quickly turning to Sufism. The following are some of the important shrines to which Gujjar is firmly attached:

**Shrine Baba Ji Sab Larvi:** This Shrine is located in Ganderbal District's Kangan Valley. This Shrine is known for Pir Muhammad Ubbaidullah (R.A), who was attributed with the Naqshbandiya silsila of the Gujjar tribe's Bajran clan. This Shrine is well-known among Jammu and Kashmir's Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes. Gujjars make up a sizable population in Kangan Valley, and people from all walks of life come here regularly.

This Shrine is significant in Gujjar society because the Sufi who founded it were members of the Gujjar community, giving Gujjars a political position. Gujjars from all over the state come here for the full endorsement and stay for several days. The shrine committee organizes the grand Urs (annual meeting of people on the Shrine of a deceased Sufi saint) every year in June, and people, particularly Gujjar, attend in large numbers. After three days of religious gathering (Urs), a meeting is held for the final prayer, in which the current Sajjada-Nashien prays for the State's and society's peace and prosperity. This Shrine encourages Gujjar unity by bringing people together on the same platform. The Gujjar in this area is spiritually and religiously connected. Abdul Khaliq Tahiri published a book, "Tazkiya-A-Aulia E Kashmir," He said that Baba Larvi was a revered generosity and devoted Sufi with a gift of Blessing and mysticism.

The Shrine of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah (R.A) is located in the high mountains of Rajouri district, which is the second most common form between Gujjar and Bakarwal. People who came here belong to various religions, cultures, and regions. Due to its location between two Gujjar-dominated districts, this Shrine attracts thousands of Gujjars. The shrines committee has offered all devotees basic amenities.

The shrines of Sain-Baba-MiranBaksh, located nearby the line of control (LOC) in the Poonch district of Jammu & Kashmir, are the third most popular among the Gujjars community. People from all walks of life come here regularly. A religious gathering (Urs) is held here every year, in which everyone takes part enthusiastically. The Gujjar of this province highly regards this Shrine because it believes that the Sufi has indeed shielded the people from Pakistani forces shelling on several occasions. Numerous people from the Gujjar community come to this Shrine every day to seek mystical love and a great privilege. All sections of society are also familiar with the Shrine of Farid-Ud-Din Bagdadi and Shah Israr-Uddin Bagdadi in the Kishtwar District. Gujjars come here primarily to seek blessings and spiritual peace. Sufi teachings profoundly impact Gujjar's culture and tradition and promote Gujjar poets and writers to begin writing poetry, stories, and naat in Gojri. Sheikh-Ul-Alam Kashmiri Kalam, Masnavi Maulana Rome, and Rubayat -E-Umar Hayam are just a few of the Sufi-related books that have been translated into Gojri. The Sufis kalam is popular among Gujjars, and it is written in Urdu, Punjabi, Gojri, Pahari, and Kashmiri. Gujjars read Sufi kalam with great interest and enthusiasm at weddings, funerals, festivals, and other special occasions.

Gujjars love the Punjabi kalam of famous Sufi saints Mian Muhammad Baksh and Faqar Din, and they belong to the Gujjar community, former also known as Rome-E-hind. Gujjars sing and comprehend this kalam with full fledge of heart and soul. The Siarfi of Baba Nizam-Ud-Din Larvi, Choudhary Hasan Din Hassan, Khuda Baksh Zar, and many others written in Gojri and Pahari impressed the common Gujjar and instilled in them greater love and respect for Sufism. Sufis were unique in their supernatural power even after death, with phenomenal skill, and Sufi shrines were open to all. Some Sufi disciples from the Gujjar community developed strong spiritual qualities and spread to other areas, preaching their lessons to others.

## **RELEVANCE OF SUFISM IN PRESENT SCENARIO IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND HARMONY IN JAMMU & KASHMIR**

After the partition in 1947, the state of Jammu & Kashmir was in chaos and was divided into two parts. The state remained peaceful until the 1987 rigged election; however, after 1989, Kashmir experienced a complete shift in its socio-political climate. Multiple militant groups tried to enter the state of Jammu and Kashmir and began recruiting local youth. People were so unsatisfied with the state and central governments that many Kashmiri children joined the armed struggle. On the other hand, Gujjars were the hardest hit by the armed conflict because they lived in remote and border areas. Many have been used as human shields and have been tortured multiple times by militants and security personnel. Many of these armed militants became increasingly radicalized. They began to criticize shrine culture because they considered shrines illegal in Islam and issued direct threats to those who attempted to visit Sufi shrines. That directly contradicts Sufism's philosophy and teaching methods, so militants imposed restrictions on Gujjars who were deeply devoted to Sufism and properly enforced the spiritual teachings of Sufism. Despite all of these difficulties, Gujjars continue to involve in the same practices and defend Sufi shrines and culture in the state during militancy. People feel more connected and brotherly as a result of this. The ongoing turmoil has significantly impacted Kashmir's Sufi culture and tradition over the last two and a half decades. Deprivation on political and social levels has resulted in a morally deteriorated society that leads to death and destruction.

### III. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the teachings of Islam and Sufism had a strong influence on the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir because of their separation and shortage of need for consciousness. Sufism has had a significant impact on Gujjar's social, cultural, and religious lifestyles. Therefore, Sufism became a cultural part of Gujjar's community. Still, its influence can be seen in Gojri literature, civilization, writing, social life, and the Gujjars community pays respect to Sufism and their spiritual teachings. Gujjars regularly visit the Sufi shrines associated with their mentor (Murshid) and receive Sufi blessings. Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir managed to gain equal status in society due to the efforts of these Sufis. For maintaining peace and harmony within the state, they established strong relations with other communities. However, in recent decades, Kashmir society has undergone a complete transformation due to the conflict, chaos, the emergence of new ideas, and uncertainty. The awakening of Sufi culture in the state is urgently needed so that people must understand the true spirit of Islam and Sufism. Sufism's spiritual teachings and role in maintaining peace and harmony in Kashmir cannot be overshadowed. Sufism's learning in Kashmir has fulfilled the disparity gap between various social groups and united them on a spiritual discipline and truth. In the time of uncertainty and crisis, all segments of society must return to Sufism and follow the spiritual path of love and teaching of Sufism with a positive outlook to develop peace and stability in the Jammu and Kashmir.

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