



Research Paper

## A Semiotical and Analytical Study on the Origin and Development of Sufism

Mr. Chitrameghan C

Master of Arts in History

,Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala, India.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper portrays and carries out a vivid analysis of the mystic nature of Sufi thought, its origin and development, which is carried out through a schematic process of study and observation. The various aspects of Sufi transitions, its journey through the time period of metamorphosis and the bipolar striking aspect of neosufism are emphasised. This paper deals with the origin and graphical transformation of the sects of Sufi ideologies and its course of development.

**KEYWORDS:** Sufis, Turq, Wali, Majlis, Prophethood, Mysticism, Pir, Silsila.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of history India has been the cradle of the religious movements. The sultanate period witnessed the development of two religious streams of thought – the Bhakti movement and Sufism (Sen, 2013, p.131). Sufism emerged and it reached the fullest development in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries. Sufi teachers disseminated the doctrines of Islam and helped to make the religious climate of northern India favorable (Basham, 1975, p.3). The greatest merit of both these parallel religious movements is that they freed the Indian society from the dogmatic beliefs, ritualism, caste and communal hatred and so on. Both these religious developments have hardly anything to do with the coming of Islam or with the so called “Muslim rule in India”. In the medieval Indian environment Sufism was the most interesting aspect of Islam. It came to India before the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, but after the foundation of the Turkish rule, a large group of Sufis’ from different Islamic countries migrated to India and established themselves in many parts of India. The early Sufis traced their ideas to some verses of the Quran and traditions (Hadith) of the Prophet. To these, however they gave a mystic interpretation.

### II. DEFINITIONS OF SUFISM

Whatever its origin the term Sufism has come to mean those who are interested in inner knowledge, those who are interested in finding a way or practice toward inner awakening and enlightenment. Sufism, or *Tasawwuf* variously defined as "Islamic mysticism", "the inward dimension of Islam" or "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam", is a mysticism in Islam, "characterized by values, ritual practices, doctrines and institutions" which began very early in Islamic history and represents "the main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization of " mystical practice in Islam.

Imam Junayd of Baghdad (d.910) defines Sufism as “adopting every higher quality and leaving every low quality”.

Shaykh Abu’l Hasan Ash – Shadhili (d.1258), the great North African spiritual master defines Sufism as “the practice and training of the self, through adoration and worship to return the self to the path of lordship”.

According to Shaykh Ibn Ajiba (d.1809) “Sufism is a science by means of which you learn how to behave in order to be in the presence of the ever-present lord through purifying your inner being and sweetening it with god actions. The path of Sufism begins as a science, its middle is actions and its end is divine gifts.”

Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as "Sufis". In the formative period; Sufis generally led a retired ascetic life. But gradually they worked out their own systems and philosophical ideas which they borrowed from the Christian and Buddhist monasticism and philosophy (Sen, 2013, p.135). Historically, Sufis have often belonged to different *turuq* or "orders" – congregations formed around a grand master referred to as a *wali* who traces a direct chain of successive teachers back to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. These orders

meet for spiritual sessions (*majalis*) in meeting places known as *zawiyas*, *khanqahs* or *tekke*. They strive for *ihsan* (perfection of worship), as detailed in a Hadith: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can't see Him, surely He sees you". Sufis regard Muhammad as *Al-Insan- al-Kamil*, the primary perfect man who exemplifies the morality of God, and see him as their leader and prime spiritual guide.

### **Origin**

The term Sufism which has become over the ages very popularly used and often with a wide range of meanings originates from three Arabic letters Sa, Wa and Fa (Haeri, 2006, p.11). According to some the word is derived from the Arabic word *Safwe*, which means those who were selected. This meaning is frequently quoted in the Sufi literature.

Regarding the origin of the word "Sufi", numerous explanations have been offered. Abu Nasral Sarraj, the author of an Arabic treatise on Sufism, declares that in his opinion, the Sufi is derived from *Suf* (wool). The Sufi saints wore garments of coarse wool (*suf*) as a badge of poverty and from the word "suf", the name or term Sufi has been derived. This implies that the people who were interested in inner knowledge cared less about their outer appearance and often took to wear simple garments. They say that those who were pious people were called Sufis. Some scholars have traced its origin to the Greek word *Sophia* (Knowledge). Yet others believed that it is derived from *Suffa*, which was a low verandah made of clay and slightly elevated off the ground outside the prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina, where the poor and good hearted people who followed him often sat (Haeri, 2006, p.11).

It appears that the first writer to use the term Sufi is Jahiz of Basra (AD 869). According to Jami, the use of word Sufi was first applied to Abu Hashim of Kufa before AD 800.

### **Sufi Thought**

Sufism is a common term given to Islamic mysticism. But it was not organised in a single sect and its religious doctrines were also not common; instead they were organised to various *silsilas* or religious doctrines or orders. They accepted the prophethood of Mohammed and the authority of the Quran, but in course of time they absorbed a variety of ideas and practices from different sources such as Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hindu philosophical systems (*Vedanta* and *Yoga*). Sufism in its advanced stage was like a "stream which gathers volumes by joining the tributaries from many lands". For instance the concept of a relationship between god and the soul as one between the beloved and the lover was adopted by the Sufis in India. Pacifism and non violence, which were imbibed by the Indian Sufi saints, are also peculiar to Christianity and Hinduism. Some of the aesthetic practices, involving the starving and torturing of the body, and ceremonies were also of Indian origin.

The Muslim mystics or the Sufis of the first two centuries of the Hejira era were ascetics, men of deep religious feelings, who laid great stress on the principles of *tauba* (repentance) and *tawakkul* (trust in God). These early mystics of Islam were fundamentally inspired by the Quranic conception of a transcendent God. Their contemplation remained confined within the limits of the Quran and the practice of the prophet.

Eighteenth century Indian scholar Shah Wahu'llah who combined in himself both the Sufi and Kalam traditions, contends, when outlining the history of Sufism, that Islam is endowed with two aspects: the exoteric and the endoteric (Rizwi, 1983, p.235).

Sufi Mysticism sprang from the doctrine of *Wahadatul Wujud* or the unity of Being, which identified the *Haq* (the creator) and *khalq* (the creating). This doctrine means that God is the unity behind all plurality and the Reality behind all phenomenal appearances. The Sufis were so absorbed in this idea that a moment's diversion from the thought of the absolute was unbearable to them. In their journey to achieve union with the Absolute, they had to pass through ten stages which were as follows:

*Taubah* (repentance), *Wara* (abstinence), *zuhd* (peity), *fagr* (poverty), *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *khauf* (fear), *raja* (hope), *tawakkul* (contentment) and *riza* (submission to the divine will).

In passing through these stages of spiritual development, the Sufi felt excessive love and yearning for God. This Sufis had a twofold object in a view, namely, their own spiritual development and the service of humanity. Union of the human soul with God, through loving devotion was the essence of the Sufi faith.

Among the leading Sufis of the first epoch was one of the greatest Sufi women of all times. She was *Rabi'a* (d.752) of Basra. Many famous Sufis called on her in her lonely hermitage and even visited her when she had withdrawn into the wilderness (Rizwi, 1983, p.237).

The Sufis, by their examples, by words and conduct, set an ethical standard. They attempted to bridge the gulf between orthodoxy and religion of faith and devotions. They spoke the language of the masses and gave impetus to linguistic assimilation and to a cultural synthesis. They played a silent but important part in the propagation of their faith more by their example and service, than through any efforts at importunate persuasion. They imparted education and emphasised the need of acquiring it. Some of the Sufis were scholars and men of vast erudition and acted as teachers. They won the heart of the people by their love and liberalism, sincerity of

purpose, charity, piety and social service. They exercised considerable influence on the kings, officials and the nobles for the good of the people. They shunned wealth and power and kept themselves aloof from the din and bustle of worldly life. Though generally liberal and broad-minded in outlook, some of the Sufi saints, who were noted for their piety and learning, were puritanical in attitude uncompromising on questions of strict adherence to the *shariyat*.

Sufism was not to be made a means of livelihood. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manism and neoPlatonism swelled it by a large contribution (Luniya, 2003, p.341). They stressed the importance of earning. Religious literature tells us about many saintly people who earned their livelihood by their professional pursuits and recognised the dignity of labour. Shaik Ainuddin Qassab (Butcher, a disciple of Hazrat Hamiduddin Nagori, was a saintly man. He sold meat in Delhi. Shaikh Abdul Ishaq Gazroni was a weaver. We are told that mainly saintly personages were farmers and cultivated on the fields. Shaikh Qasim Juzri was an agriculturist. Some saints choose to beg in order to crush their ego. It gave them peace of mind, which helped them to concentrate on God. It also made them realize that everything belonged to God and people were the custodians. The Sufis did not encourage celibacy and complete renunciation of the world for attainment of spiritual personality. Their moral precepts and ideal love of God did not mean complete abandonment of family life. Excepting a few outstanding saints, the Sufis were all married and did not shun the life of a householder. The typical materialistic approach was discouraged, but the necessities of the life had to be worked for. One was not to sit idle after putting on a loin cloth; but at the same time one should not devote all the time for earning one's bread. The Sufis were broad minded people who recognised their truths in their faiths. In extending their helps they made no distinction on the basis of caste or creed. The Sufi saints showed great interest in learning yoga: and the Hindu Yogis and Siddhas frequently visited the hermitages of the Sufi saints.

Sufis in India, particularly the Chisti and of the *Shrawardi* orders, adopted *Sama* and *Raqs* (audition and dancing) as a mode of invocation to God. They did not sanction any kind of music. *Majlis-i-Sama*, which they sanctioned, was totally different from *Majlis-i-Tarab* or musical entertainment. To the Sufis music was a means to an end. Some exhilarated their spiritual spirit and lifted the veil between them and God, and helped them in attaining the supreme stage of ecstatic swoon.

The practice of spiritual preceptorship known as the *piri muridi* was also prevalent in Sufism. Those who entered into a particular fraternity of Sufi saints were called *Murids* (disciple). The murid had to pledge absolute submission and devotion to his spiritual guide called *pir* (Mehta, 1984, p145).

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Lahore and Multan attracted many well known Sufis from other countries. The greatest figure in the history of Sufism in India was *Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti* who arrived at Lahore from Ghazni in 1161 and settled down at Ajmer where he died in 1235 – 36. He was the founder of the Chisti order of the Sufis in India. To this order belonged Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar (1175-1265) who is known in the Sikh tradition as Baba Farid. His mantle fell upon Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325). In the thirteenth century the Suhrawardi order was established in India by Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya. The Suhrawardis thought that living in luxury and active participation in political affairs were not hindrances to spiritual progress. During the fifteenth century two new Sufi orders – the *Shuttaris* and the *Qadiris* were founded in India by *Shaikh Abdulla Shattri* and *Sayyid Ghau Wala Pir*, respectively (Nanda, 1999, p.217). Thus the Sufis were divided in *silsilahs* or orders named after the founder of each sect and they lived in and maintained the *khanqahs* or hermitages which were vast complexes.

### **Sufism in India**

The period from 1200 to 1500 AD is considered as the period of permeation of Sufi thought in India. During this period a number of new sects and movements were started which formed a midway between Hinduism and Islam (Hasan, 2012, p.132). The Sufis were devout Muslims who moved within the limits of the *Shara* (Law of Islam) and believed it as the true way to salvation (Raychoudhary, 2002, p.107). They however attached an esoteric significance to the teachings of Quaran and regarded the inward light or intuitive experience as of far more important than dogmatic formation of the orthodox type. In the words of Yusuf Hussain “The orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct, while the Sufis seek inner purity. The orthodox believe in blind obedience to, or observation to or observation of religious rituals, while the Sufis think love to be the only means of reaching God” (Raychoudhary, 2002, p.107).

The two Sufi orders which took roots in the Indian soil were the Chisti and the Suhrawardy. Soon certain other orders like Qadri, Naqshbandi, Shuttari and the Madari also started working in Northern India.

### **The Sufi orders (The Silsilas)**

All Sufi orders trace most of their original precepts from Muhammad through his cousin and son-in-law Ali. Although the overwhelming majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, were and are adherents of Sunni Islam, there also developed certain strands of Sufi practice within the ambit of Shia Islam during the late medieval period, particularly after the forced conversion of Iran from majority Sunni to Shia. The Sufis

were divided into different silsilahs each with its Pir (preceptor) (Sen, 2013, p.135). The orders were named after the name or the surname of the founder of the particular order such as the *Chisti*, *Suhrawardi*, *Naqshbandi* etc. Each Sufi order had a *Khangah* or a hermitage, where people thronged for spiritual solace and guidance from the Sufi saints. Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, we find various Sufi orders which included adepts from all the strata of the society (Haeri, 2006, p.29). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were as many as fourteen Sufi orders in India as mentioned by Abul Fazl. The two famous Sufi orders or the silsilahs in India during the sultanate period were the Chistis and the Suhrawadis (Sen, 2013, p.135). The following are a few of the Sufi orders which are still established today, each with its own predominating characters

### 1) **Chisti Order:**

This is the most influential Sufi order in the subcontinent of India and Pakistan. The Chisti order was founded by Khawaja Abdul Chisti. In India this Chistiyya Silsila was founded by Khawaja Muin-ud-Din Chisti, popularly known as Khawaja (Rizwi, 1983, p.242). This Chistiyya silsila is essentially an Indian one. Khawaja was born in Sijistan (Persia) in 1141AD . He lost his father at an early age. Due to unsettled conditions in his country he even lost his property and became a recluse. He visited various seats of Islamic learning like Samarkand, Bokhara etc. During the course of his journey he met Khawaja Usam at Naishapur and became his disciple. In the prime of his life he came to India and settled down at Lahore, where from he moved on to Ajmer. Prof. Yusuf Hussain Says “One cannot think without admiration of this man, almost alone, living among the people who considered the least contact with a Muslim as defilement. Sometimes he was refused water to drink. In the torrid climate of Rajputana this was the hardest punishment one can imagine” (Raychoudhary, 2002, p.107). Khawaja Muin-ud-din Chisti worked amongst the low caste people and spend his life in the service of the helpless and the down trodden. Khawaja advocated the concept of non-Duality. He said “when we transcended the external and looked around, we found the lover, the beloved and the love itself to be one, ie, the sphere of oneness all is one”. He held that the greatest form of devotion to god consisted in service to humanity. His attitude to god and people won him wide popularity. Khawaja died in the year 1236 AD.

The Chisti Mystics believed in the spiritual value of Music and patronized professional singers without any distinction of caste, religion etc. Khawaja was succeeded by Qutabuddin Bakhtiar Kaki. Kaki Saheb was greatly respected by Iltutmish, who even offered him the high office of Shaikh-ul-Islam. Kaki Saheb was succeeded by Farid-ud-Din Masud or Baba Farid. He is called Farid Shakar Ganj as per a legend when he asked a merchant for some sugar which he was carrying on the camel back and the merchant who refused to give found the sugar bags converted to salt when he arrived home. Farid hailed from a royal family of Afghanistan. His grandfather settled down in Multan and ever since he was in India. Farid under the influence of the Sufis gave up his estates and took up to travelling. He became a disciple of Khawaja Qutabuddin Chisti. He disliked popularity and preferred solitude. He laid emphasis of concentration of heart and absestention from the prohibited means of livelihood. Balban had great devotion for Baba Farid. Sheikh Nizam-ud-Din Aulia was the chief disciple of Baba Farid. He was born in 1336 AD. He lost his father at a very young age and was brought up by his mother. At the age of 20 he became a disciple of the Baba Farid. In 1258 AD he came to Delhi and carried out his spiritual activities nearly 60 years. Though he saw the reigns of the seven sultans he never visited any of their durbars as he considered it below the dignity of a Sufi to pay visit to a Sultan. His view was to avoid the company of the sultans with a view to avoid any clash or conflict with orthodox Ulemas, at the courts of the Sultans (Karashima, 2014, p.155). He was completely disliked by the orthodox ulemas, though he did not bother them and continued to care more about the common people. Love and humanity was his common principle. Dr. R C Majumdar writes “He laid stress on the element of love as a means of realization of god. The love of god implied in his view, the love of humanity and this ethical idea was strongly inculcated by him on the hearts of his disciples”. He was generally called as Mahbub-i-Illahi (The beloved of God)

Sheikh Nasir-ud-Din also known as the Chirag of Delhi was the last great Sufi of the Chisti order. He lost his father at the age of 9 and at the age of 25 he decided to become a mystic. He spend his days reading, praying and meditation and at the age of 45 he paid visit to the Sheikh Nizam ud din Aulia and became his disciple. Sheikh Nizam ud din Aulia was succeeded in Delhi by his talented disciple Sheikh Nazir ud Din Mahmud, later known as the Chiragh (the lamp) of Delhi (Rizwi, 1983, p.245).

Another notable Chisti Sufi Saint of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was **Sheikh Salim of Fatehpur Sikri**. Though he could not rise to the Stature of Nizam Ud Din Aulia or Nasir ud Din, he had quite a good gathering. It is said that Akbar the great called on in his grave for a blessing for a son. Prince Jahangir was born as a result of his blessings. Like other Chisti Saints, Sheikh Salim Chisti led a married life. On his death he was buried in the famous Jami mosque of Fatehpur Sikri and a beautiful mausoleum was built by his grave by the emperor Akbar.

**Life of Chisti Sufis:** All these Chisti saints had faith in simple living. They wore simple clothes and lived in a very simple and pure life. They opposed private property ownership and all the Sufi saints except Nizam ud din Aulia had a married life with children. They did not accept charity from the state and usually lived on the charity willingly given by the prosperous people. At times they even had to starve due to food and water

shortage, but they never borrowed or sought assistance. These Sufis were so much absorbed in their mystical contemplation they did not pay sufficient attention in bringing up their children, thus the children failed to attain standard as their fathers.

## 2) **The Suharawardi order:**

The Suharawardi order is one of the oldest Sufi orders which was founded by sheikh Shihab-ud-Din-Suhrawardi (1145 AD – 1234AD) who preached in Baghdad and had close contacts with the caliph (Sen, 2013, p.136). He sent disciples to India and they settled down in North Western India. The prominent Suhrawardi saints of India were Sheikh Hamid-ud-Din Nagauri and Sheikh Baha-ud –din Zakariya of Multan. Sheikh Hamid-ud-din Nagauri was the author of two books, Tawaliush Shams and Lawaih. He was fond of musical parties.

**Sheikh Baha –ud-din Zakariya Suhrawardi :** He was born near Multan in 1182 AD. In his early life he visited Khurasan, Bukhara, Medina and Palestine to gain knowledge in Islamic studies. At Baghdad he met Sheikh Shihab ud din Shhrawardi and accordingly to his direction he set up a Khangah at Multan where he worked almost half a century. His policy differed that of the Chisti Sufis as he led a balanced life and comfortable life and did not believe in poverty and torturing of body. He did not believe in fasting and mortification and faithfully followed the rules of Islam. He wanted the external affairs of the Islam to be faithfully followed and rejected the Hindu practice of bowing before the sheikh, a practice adopted by the Chistis. He took interest in the political affairs of the state and freely mixed with the rulers and the administrators. As a result a large number of well to do men became his followers. He accepted the lands and gifts from the kings and nobles and was probably the richest saint of the medieval India.

**Split in Suharawardi Order:** After the death of Sheikh Baha ud Din Zakariya Suhrawardi, the suhrawardi orders split into two branches, the Multan and Uchch branch. His son Bard-ud-Dinar became the head of the Multan branch and his disciple Jalaluddin Surkh Bukhari to head the Uchch branch.

**Badr-ud-Din Arif:** He took care of the Multan branch for around 23 years and fundamentally differed from his father in the matter of religion and politics. He looked upon the accumulation of wealth as a hurdle in the development of spiritual personality. It is said that he gave away in charity 7 lakh tankas which he inherited from his father. Thus he insisted on simple living and did not make much change in the Suharawardi order.

**Sayyid Jalaluddin Surkh Bukhari:** He rendered great service in the spread of the Suharawardi orders in the Uchch. He converted a number of Hindus to Islam. He exercised a tremendous influence in the political and religious life of the saints. He was appointed as the Sheikh ul Islam by Muhammed Bin Tughlaq but he resigned the job.

**Life of the Suharawardi saints:** These Sufis differed from the Chistis in many aspects with regards to policies and organisation. They mixed freely with the sultans and other rich people. Baha-ud-din Zakariya accepted the charity liberally and accumulated them. The khangahs of the Suharawardis were so designed as to provide separate accommodation to all inmates and the visitors. The Suharawards under Baha-ud-Din Zakariya regarded only the rich people and neglected the general public. They had also fixed up certain hours to meet the visitors. These practices of some of the Suharawardis saints created strong condemn y the common people.

## 3. **Firdausia Order:**

The Firdausia order was a branch of the Suhrawardi order and its activities were mainly confined to Bihar and its headquarters were Rajgir. This order was popularised by Sheikh Sharaf-ud-Din Yahya Manairi, a disciple of Khawaja Nizam ud Din Firdausi. He was not only a guide but an excellent exponent of theoretical mysticism. He tried to bring about the moderation in the Islamic law and tried to reconcile the “Unity of Being” with the principles of Islam. His interpretation of the passing away of the self (Fana) is that the devotee in this state of consciousness experiences a vision in which he feels one with God who manifests himself in the form of light or Illumination (Tajalli). The union with God is not like the union with a body, or of a substance with a substance or of an accident with an accident; on the contrary, it is an intuitive contract and a detachment from the world and all that is other than God.

He was a prolific writer and wrote the Maktubat and Malfuzat and also compiled several books for the devotees. Sheikh Sharaf-ud-Din Yahya Manairi laid great stress on the service of the humanity as a part of his mystic discipline. According to him the nearest way for the kings, nobles and the men of means and wealth is to succor the needy and to offer a helping hand to the downtrodden (Raychoudhary, 2002 , p.113).

## 4. **The Qadiri Order:**

The Qadiri Order was founded by Shaykh Abd al Qadir-Al-Gilani (d.1166) from Gilan in Persia, who eventually settled in Baghdad in Iraq. After his death, his Sufi order was propagated by his sons. The Qadiri Order has spread to many places including Syria, Turkey, some parts of Africa such as Cameroon, the Congo, Mauritania and Tanzania and in the Causcaus, Chechen and Ferghana in the Soviet Union as well as elsewhere.

This order reached India in the 15th century and the credit for popularizing it in India goes to Shah Ni'amatullah and Makhdam Muhammad Jilani. The followers of this order opposed to music and singing as well as the recital of the blessings of the prophet. They wore green turbans and one of their garments were ochre coloured. Dara Sukoh, son of emperor Shahajahan was a follower of this order. Some prominent Qadri saints included Sheikh Hamid Ganj Baksh, Abdul Qadir and Shaikh Musa. In the early years the order was confined to Uch and later it spread to Agra and other places.

#### **5. Naqshbandi order:**

This order takes its name from Shaykh Baha ud-Din Naqshband of Bukhara (d.1390). This was founded in India by the followers of Khawaja Pir Mohammed. It is widely spread in central Asia, the Volga, the Caucasus, the northwest and southwest of China, Indonesia, Indian Sub continent, Turkey, Europe and north America. This is the only known Sufi order which traces its genealogy of its lineage of transmission of knowledge back through the first Muslim ruler, Abu Bakr, unlike the rest of the known Sufi orders, therefore through Imam Ali and to the Prophet Mohammed. They challenged the idea of "Unity of Being". They opposed to the system of music but they indulged in the system of meditation. Some important propagators of this order were Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi, a disciple of Khawaja Baqi Billah and popularly known as Mujadid. He tried to harmonize the doctrine of mysticism with the teachings of orthodox Islam. Shaikh Walli-Ullah held that there was no contradiction between the two doctrines of Wuḥdat-ul- Wujud and Wahdat-ush-Shuhud. To him the God is the only self subsisting, eternal and necessary being and all else is created and has a contingent existence (Raychoudhary, 2002, p.114).

Khawaja Mir Dard, was the last notable mystic of the Naqshbandi order. Apart from writing a number of books on mysticism, Khawaja Mir Dard was also a notable poet of Persian and Urdu.

Some other notable Sufi orders were Madariya or Tabaqatiya, Garzmar, Jalaliya Musa Sohagiya, Wahabis, The Rifa, Shadilli, Melavi, Bektashi, Ni'amatullah, Tijani and Jarrahi orders.

#### **Overview of the Orders:**

Two sub orders, the Firdausi and the Shuttari offshoots of the Suhrawardi order, were active in Bihar and Bengal. Sindh and Multan had become the centers of the spiritual activities of the saints of the Suhrawardi order. The chief centers of the Chisti silsilahs, the most popular order, were Ajmer, Narnaul, Sarwal, Nagur, hansi, Ayodhya, Badaun and the other towns of Uttar Pradesh. The Chisti order was very popular and it achieved extraordinary success due to the liberal and profound outlook of many of its saints of the outstanding personality and long period of their spiritual activity in India. Many of their practices were akin to those of the Hindus and they, more than the members of other Silsilahs, adapted themselves to the non-muslim environment. It is one of the eternal glories of the Chisti order that it produced great spiritual luminaries like Khawaja Muinuddin Chisti, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki, Khwaja Fariduddin Masud Ganj-i-Shakar, Shaik Nizamuddin Auliya and the Shaik Nasiruddin Chiragh -i-Dehvi, Shaik Alaul Haq, Shaik Adhi Seraj and Nur Qutb Alam of Pandua, Shaik Husamuddin Manikpuri, Burhanuddin Gharib and Hazrat Gesu Daraz of the Deccan.

The Sufis especially of the Chistis and the Firdausi orders, identified themselves with the common masses, their weal and woe, their grinding poverty and distress. It was a part of their discipline to serve the needy and the oppressed. The saints of the Chisti order regarded money as the carrion. They substituted on Futuh and Nazur (unasked for money and presents). Very often they had to starve. Once when the wife of the Baba Farid reported that their son was about to die of starvation, he replied that he was helpless. God has so decreed and he was dying. Baba Farid wore worn out and patched garments. When he died there was nothing in his house for the purchase of his coffin and the door of the house was demolished to provide unbaked bricks for his grave. In the sixteenth century, the most notable Chisti saint was Shaikh Salim Chisti of Fatehpur Sikri who was a contemporary of Akbar, and he emperor greatly venerated him.

### **III. IMPACT OF SUFISM**

There is a controversy among the scholars about the impact of Sufism on Indian culture. On one hand Prof. A L Srivastava holds the opinion that "Though the Sufi movement might have in the long run exerted some influence on the contemporary Hindu religious practices, the Hindus in general had kept themselves aloof from the Muslim Sufis for a pretty long time. Some Hindus of the lower class might have come in contact with the Sufis, but the bulk of them did not associate themselves with them" (Raychoudhary, 2002, p.115).

Dr. R C Majumdar holds the view that Sufism exercised a very limited cultural influence on India and their role has been exaggerated. He says "The role of both Medieval Mysticism and Sufism in the history of Indian culture is often exaggerated beyond all proportions. Whatever might have been the value of either as a distinctive phase of Hinduism and Islam, from moral, spiritual and philosophical points of view."

Prof. J N Sankar holds the view that Sufism gained popularity only in the 17th and 18th centuries. Explaining the reasons for the popularity of Sufism during this period in India was mainly due to two factors:-the political and economic anarchy that came in the wake of the downfall of the Mughal empire and an urge on the part of the two communities to come nearer as in this alone lay their salvation and that of their country. He says that the Bhakti movement and the Sufism intended to bring the ruling sect and the dominated people closer together.

#### IV. NEO SUFISM

The term neo-Sufism was coined by Fazl-ur-Rahman in 1966 to describe reform movements among Sufi orders (Turuq, singular tariqa) of the 18th and 19th centuries. More recently, the term neo-Sufism has been applied to certain 20th-and 21st-century Sufi-inspired groups in the West as well as to movements in Muslim-majority countries among the globally engaged middle and upper classes. Persons and groups in the West describing themselves as “Sufi” may be placed into one of three categories: Islamic Sufism, non-Islamic neo-Sufi. Neo-Sufism is used by scholars to describe a set of Islamic renewal movements in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The activist sense of renewal and reform of Sufism developed over a long period. Fazlur Rahman was the first to label these tendencies “neo-Sufi”

Islamic reform in Sufi orders in the 18th and 19th centuries responded to a mood of religious conservatism widespread across the Muslim world. While the anti-Sufi Wahhabi movement represents one expression of that conservatism, historians have documented parallel expressions in Sufi orders in Africa (initially in orders inspired by the Moroccan Ahmad ibn Idris) and across the Middle East to South . Sufism for centuries, but did not attract much attention in Western Europe until the eighteenth century, or in America until the nineteenth century. At the end of that century, Sufism began to emerge in modified form in the West, as neo-Sufism. The forms that neo-Sufism have since then taken were determined partly by the forms taken by Sufism in the Muslim world, and partly by preceding developments in Western Europe. The term began to mean a cluster of developments and organisations. This led to various interpretations of the concept; no consensus on the use has been reached. Alexander Knysch argues that the concept of neo-Sufism was created by Western colonialists to refer to a reformed Sufism that emphasised political activism and the enforcement of the Sharia. This reformed brand of Islamic mysticism had been relieved of the ecstatic elements of Sufism and was more orientated toward a set of moral and practical practices. Neo-Sufism can be characterised as having a more positive attitude toward direct involvement in world affairs, in contrast to the more traditional Sufism. Neo-Sufis were contrasted with traditional Sufis by their concern for “the socio-moral reconstruction of Muslim society”, their preoccupation with Hadith studies. What seems to be the neo-Sufi consensus is that at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century a new ‘reformist’ Sufi order arose that differed considerably from the pre-existing Sufi brotherhoods (Srivastava, 2009, p.146). The new Sufi orders were regarded as having the pan-Islamic aim of resisting the Christians, with no time left for traditional Sufi practices. Ibn Idris’ ideas were regarded as anti- civilizing and radical.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Sufis have been characterized by their asceticism, especially by their attachment to *dhikr*, the practice of remembrance of God, often performed after prayers. Although Abul Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions 14 Sufi Silsilahs as active in India by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the fact remains that in terms of their following and better organizations; only six silsilas should be recognised as active and influential. Of these the Chisti founded in India by Khawaja Muinuddin Chisti (Popularly known as Khwaja Ajmeri) attracted the largest of the devotees, both Muslims and the Hindus, also made a profound impact on the course of the new Bhakti movement among the Hindus that, gained momentum in the fourteenth century, and spread out to many parts of the country in the next three hundred years. They gained adherents among a number of Muslims as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 AD) and have spanned several continents and cultures over a millennium, initially expressing their beliefs in Arabic and later expanding into Persian, Turkish, and Urdu, among others. Sufis played an important role in the formation of Muslim societies through their

missionary and educational activities. According to William Chittick, "In a broad sense, Sufism can be described as the interiorization, and intensification of Islamic faith and practice.

Despite a relative decline of Sufi orders in the modern era and criticism of some aspects of Sufism by modernist thinkers and conservative Salafists, Sufism has continued to play an important role in the Islamic world, and has also influenced various forms of spirituality in the West.

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