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Sufi Movement

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ABSTRACT: Sufism (Arabic: الصُّوفِيَّة *aṣ-ṣūfīyya*), also known as Tasawwuf^[1] (التَّصَوُّف *at-taṣawwuf*), is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, asceticism and esotericism.^{[2][3][4][5][6]} It has been variously defined as "Islamic mysticism",^{[7][8][9]} "the mystical expression of Islamic faith",^[10] "the inward dimension of Islam",^{[11][12]} "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam",^{[13][14]} the "main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization" of mystical practice in Islam,^{[15][16]} and "the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice".^[17]

Practitioners of Sufism are referred to as "Sufis" (from صُوفِي *ṣūfī*),^[13] and historically typically belonged to "orders" known as *tariqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*) – congregations formed around a grand wali who would be the last in a chain of successive teachers linking back to Muhammad, with the goal of undergoing *Tazkiah* (self purification) and the hope of reaching *Ihsan*.^{[18][19]} The ultimate aim of Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by endeavoring to return to their original state of purity and natural disposition, known as *fitra*.^[20]

Sufism emerged early on in Islamic history,^[13] partly as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) and mainly under the tutelage of Hasan Al-Basri.^[21] Although Sufis were opposed to dry legalism, they strictly observed Islamic law and belonged to various schools of Islamic jurisprudence and theology.^[22] Although the overwhelming majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, remain adherents of Sunni Islam, certain strands of Sufi thought transferred over to the ambits of Shia Islam during the late medieval period.^[23] This particularly happened after the Safavid conversion of Iran under the concept of *Irfan*.^[23] Important focuses of Sufi worship include *dhikr*, the practice of remembrance of God.^[24] Sufis also played an important role in spreading Islam through their missionary and educational activities.^[22]

Despite a relative decline of Sufi orders in the modern era and attacks from revivalist Islamic movement (such as the Salafis and Wahhabis), Sufism has continued to play an important role in the Islamic world, especially in the neo-traditionalist strand of Sunni Islam.^{[25][26]} It has also influenced various forms of spirituality in the West and generated lots of academic interest.^{[27][28][29]}

KEYWORDS: Sufism, sufi movement, worship, Muhammad, Islam, spirituality, practioners, purification

I. INTRODUCTION

Sufism has a history in India evolving for over 1,000 years.^[1] The presence of Sufism has been a leading entity increasing the reaches of Islam throughout South Asia.^[2] Following the entrance of Islam in the early 8th century, Sufi mystic traditions became more visible during the 10th and 11th centuries of the Delhi Sultanate and after it to the rest of India.^[3] A conglomeration of four chronologically separate dynasties, the early Delhi Sultanate consisted of rulers from Turkic and Afghan lands.^[4] This Persian influence flooded South Asia with Islam, Sufi thought, syncretic values, literature, education, and entertainment that has created an enduring impact on the presence of Islam in India today.^[5] Sufi preachers, merchants and missionaries also settled in coastal Gujarat through maritime voyages and trade.

Various leaders of Sufi orders, *Tariqa*, chartered the first organized activities to introduce localities to Islam through Sufism. Saint figures and mythical stories provided solace and inspiration to Hindu caste communities often in rural villages of India.^[5] The Sufi teachings of divine spirituality, cosmic harmony, love, and humanity resonated with the common people and still does so today.^{[6][7]} The following content will take a thematic approach to discuss a myriad of influences that helped spread Sufism and a mystical understanding of Islam, making India a contemporary epicenter for Sufi culture today.

Islam was not the only religion in India contributing the mystical aspects of Sufism. The Bhakti movement also gained respect due to popularity of mysticism spreading through India. The Bhakti movement was a regional revival of Hinduism linking language, geography, and cultural identities through devotional deity worship.^[64] This concept of "Bhakti" appeared in the Bhagavad Gita and the first sects emerged from south India between the 7th and 10th century.^[64] The practices and theological standpoints were very similar to Sufism, often blurring the distinction between



Hindus and Muslims. Bhakti devotees linked puja (Hinduism) to songs about saints and theories of life; they would meet often to sing and worship. The Brahman Bhaktis developed mystical philosophies similar to those advocated by Sufi saints. For example, the Bhaktis believed that there is a special reality beneath the illusion of life; this reality needs to be recognized to escape the cycle of reincarnation. Moreover, moksha, liberation from Earth is the ultimate goal in Hinduism.^[65] These teachings run nearly parallel to Sufi concepts of dunya, tariqa, and akhira.

Sufism helped the assimilation of the Afghani Delhi Sultanate rulers within mainstream society. By building a syncretic medieval culture tolerant and appreciative of non-Muslims, Sufi saints contributed to a growth of stability, vernacular literature, and devotional music in India.^[66] During the seventeenth century a Sufi mystic, Saiyid Muhammad Ghaus Gwaliori popularized yogic practices among Sufi circles.^[67] Literature related to monotheism and the Bhakti movement also formed syncretic influences in history during the Sultanate period.^[68] Despite the camaraderie between Sufi saints, yogis, and Bhakti Brahmans, medieval religious traditions existed and continue to splinter peaceful living in parts of India today.^[66]

The massive geographic presence of Islam in India can be explained by the tireless activity of Sufi preachers.^[73] Sufism had left a prevailing impact on religious, cultural, and social life in South Asia. The mystical form of Islam was introduced by Sufi saints.^[74] Sufi scholars traveling from all over continental Asia were instrumental and influential in the social, economic, and philosophic development of India.^{[75][76]} Besides preaching in major cities and centers of intellectual thought, Sufis reached out to poor and marginalized rural communities and preached in local dialects such as Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi versus Persian, Turkish, and Arabic.^[73] Sufism emerged as a "moral and comprehensive socio-religious force" that was influenced from other religious traditions such as Hinduism.^{[77][78]} Their traditions of devotional practices and modest living attracted all people. Their teachings of humanity, love for God and Prophet continue to be surrounded by mystical tales and folk songs today.^[73] Sufis were firm in abstaining from religious and communal conflict and strived to be peaceful elements of civil society.^[76] Furthermore, it is the attitude of accommodation, adaptation, piety, and charisma that continues to help Sufism remain as a pillar of mystical Islam in India.

II.DISCUSSION

Muslims of South Asia prominently follow the Chishtiyya, Naqshbandiyyah, Qadiriyyah and Suhrawardiyyah orders. Of them the Chishti order is the most visible. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, a disciple of Khwaja Usman Harooni, the propounder of this order, introduced it in India. He came to India from Afghanistan with the army of Shihab-ud-Din Ghuri in 1192 AD and started living permanently in Ajmer from 1195. Centuries later, with the support of Mughal rulers, his shrine became a place of pilgrimage. Akbar used to visit the shrine every year.^[2]

Turkic conquests in South Asia were accompanied by four Sufi mystics of the Chishtiyya order from Afghanistan: Moinuddin (d. 1233 in Ajmer), Qutbuddin (d. 1236 in Delhi), Nizamuddin (d.1335 in Delhi) and Fariduddin (d.1265 in Pakpattan now in Pakistan)^[3]. During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq, who spread the Delhi sultanate towards the south, the Chistiyya spread its roots all across India.^[4] The Sufi shine at Ajmer in Rajasthan and Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, Ashraf Jahangir Semnani in Kichaucha Shariff belong to this order.

The Suhrawardi order was started by Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi, a Persian Sufi born in Sohrevard near Zanzan in Iran, and brought to India by Baha-ud-din Zakariya of Multan. The Suhrawardiyyah order of Sufism gained popularity in Bengal.^[5] In addition, the Suhrawardiyyah order, under the leadership of Abu Hafs Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234), also bequeathed a number of teachings and institutions that were influential in shaping other order that emerged during later periods.

The Khalwati order was founded by Umar al-Khalwati, an Azerbaijani Sufi known for undertaking long solitary retreats in the wilderness of Azerbaijan and northwestern Iran. While the Indian subcontinent branches of the order did not survive into modern times, the order later spread into the Ottoman Empire and became influential there after it came under persecution by the rise of the Safavid Shahs during the sixteenth century.^[42]

The Qadiriyyah order founded by Abdul Qadir Gilani whose tomb is at Baghdad. It is popular among the Muslims of South India. Baha-ud-Din Naqshband (1318-1389) of Turkestan founded Naqshbandi order of Sufism. Khwaja Razi-ud-Din Muhammad Baqi Billah whose tomb is in Delhi, introduced the Naqshbandi order in India. The essence of this order was insistence on rigid adherence to Sharia¹ and nurturing love for the Prophet. It was patronized by the Mughal rulers, as its founder was their ancestral Pir (Spiritual guide). "The conquest of India by Babur in 1526 gave considerable impetus to the Naqshbandiyya order"^[6]. Its disciples remained loyal to the throne because of the common Turkic origin. With the royal patronage of most of the Mughal rulers, the Naqshbandi order caused the revival of Islam in its pure form. Sufi orders were sometimes close to the ruling powers such as the Ottoman Empire, helping their spread and influence.^[44]



Current Sufi orders include Ba 'Alawiyya, Chishti, Khalwati, Naqshbandi, Nimatullahi, Oveyssi, Qadria Noshahia, Qadiria Boutshishia, Qadiriyyah, Qalandariyya, Sarwari Qadiri, Shadhliyya, Tijaniyyah, and Suhrawardiyya.^[51]

Sufism is popular in such African countries as Morocco and Senegal, where it is seen as a mystical expression of Sunni Islam.^[52] Sufism is traditional in Morocco but has seen a growing revival with the renewal of Sufism around contemporary spiritual teachers such as Sidi Hamza al Qadiri al Boutshishi. Sufism suffered setbacks in North Africa during the colonial period; the life of the Algerian Sufi master Emir Abd al-Qadir is instructive in this regard.^[53] Notable as well are the lives of Amadou Bamba and Hajj Umar Tall in sub-Saharan Africa, and Sheikh Mansur Ushurma and Imam Shamil in the Caucasus region. In the 20th century some more modernist Muslims have called Sufism a superstitious religion that holds back Islamic achievement in the fields of science and technology.^[54] A number of western converts to Islam have also embraced Sufism, sometimes resulting in considerable syncretism or generic spiritualism detached from Islam, as in the case of "Universal Sufism" or the writings of René Guénon or G. I. Gurdjieff.

One of the first to return to Europe as an official representative of a Sufi order, and with the specific purpose to spread Sufism in Western Europe, was the Ivan Aguéli. Other noteworthy Sufi teachers who were active in the West include Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Inayat Khan, Nazim Al-Haqqani, Javad Nurbakhsh, Bulent Rauf, Irina Tweedie, Idries Shah and Muzaffer Ozak. Currently active Sufi academics and publishers include Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Nuh Ha Mim Keller, Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee, Abdal Hakim Murad, Syed Waheed Ashraf and the Franco-Moroccan Faouzi Skali.

Orientalists proposed a variety of origin theories regarding Sufism, such as that it originated as an Indo-European response to Semitic influence, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism, and Christian asceticism or Gnosticism.^{[55][56]} Modern academics and scholars however, have rejected early Orientalist theories asserting a non-Islamic origin of Sufism,^{[57][58][59]} Carl Ernst states that the tendency to try and disassociate Islam from Sufism was an attempt by Orientalists to create a divide between what they found attractive within Islamic civilization (i.e. Islamic spirituality) and the negative stereotypes of Islam that were present in Britain.^{[60][61]} Hosein Nasr states that non-Islamic origin theories are false according to the point of view of Sufism.^[55] Many have asserted Sufism to be unique within the confines of the Islamic religion, and contend that Sufism developed from people like Bayazid Bastami, who, in his utmost reverence to the sunnah, refused to eat a watermelon because he did not find any proof that Muhammad ever ate it.^{[62][63]} According to William Chittick, Sufism can simply be described as "the interiorization, and intensification of Islamic faith and practice."^[62]

III.RESULTS

International Association of Sufism (IAS) is a California nonprofit organization headquartered in Marin County. It is a United Nations' NGO/DPI and the first organization established to organize an inclusive forum that opens a line of communication among Sufis all around the world. IAS launched a global intra-faith movement among Sufis and Sufi Schools reaching from the borders of Indonesia to the Coasts of West Africa.

IAS has played an important role in inter-faith dialogue and cooperation, both in California and internationally.^{[1][2]} Through the support and efforts of many Sufis and Sufi Schools, IAS has successfully expanded its founding goals to also include and organize programs and projects with a focus towards global peace and non-violence, education, human rights advocacy, promoting women's rights and leadership, ending world hunger, supporting freedom of religions, among others. IAS has received the status of Non Governmental Organization from the Department of Public Information of the United Nations (DPI/NGO).^[3] The organization has supported and contributed towards the work of Amnesty International, UNICEF, and received recognition from UNESCO for its global peace effort in 2000.^{[4][5]}

IAS and its members have worked globally to successfully accomplish the Association's founding missions and goals to: introduce Sufism in all its varied forms to the public; make known the interrelation between Sufi principles and scientific principles; provide a forum for a continuing dialogue between the different schools of Sufism; preserve and advance the study and goals of Sufism.^[6]

Through its journal: Sufism an Inquiry, the Conferences, Lecture Series, Classes, Educational Programs and Projects, Publication and Productions and Newsletters, the IAS has expanded its founding goals to also include programs focused towards global peace and non-violence, education, human rights, women's rights and leadership, ending world's hunger, supporting freedom of religious beliefs, providing children immunizations and school supplies, and working in partnership with grassroots organizations providing free medical care, portable water, and other critical services where most needed.



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IAS has received many awards and recognition and has also played an important role in global peace, inter-faith dialogue and cooperation both in California and internationally. IAS has partnered with many organizations to represent Sufism and Islam, including the Interfaith Center at the Presidio, National Inter-religious Leadership Delegation to Washington, D.C.,^[8] Assembly Members of the Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions, United Religions Initiative, Assembly Member at UNESCO Culture of Peace, Millennium Peace of Religious Leaders UN, among others.

An important aspect of the International Association of Sufism is the role that women play in the organization. The IAS stresses a gender-equitable approach. With a foundation in Islam, which has a tradition of respect for women and rights for women dating back to the Prophet, the association and its departments stress and practice a gender-equitable approach in their work.^[18]

Arife Ellen Hammerle wrote an article entitled Women and Islam for Human Beams magazine in August 1999. Speaking from her personal experiences as a woman, mother, Sufi and American, she relates:

Sufism has taught me the meaning of freedom and equality amongst humanity. The capacity to surrender, submit and remember God in every breath and in every moment reveals the true quest of the heart.^[19]

IAS is modernist despite its traditional Sufi trappings. In the preface to *The Sufi orders in Islam*, John O.Voll talks of the growing strength of Sufi tariqas amongst modern people who are not trying to escape modernity, that traditionalists would have difficulty conceiving or crediting, citing the International Association of Sufism, whose annual meeting in California was attended by 800 people in 1996.^[20]

In Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam, the authors write: "The [IAS] is very much in the avant-garde of transnational Sufism, hardly resembling traditional orders or spirituality at all. Instead, it represents itself as an 'educational organization' and a UN affiliated NGO that carries out a UN Human Rights project."^[21]

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Sufi philosophy includes the schools of thought unique to Sufism, the mystical tradition within Islam,^[1] also termed as Tasawwuf or Faqr according to its adherents. Sufism and its philosophical tradition may be associated with both Sunni and Shia branches of Islam.^[1] It has been suggested that Sufi thought emerged from the Middle East in the eighth century CE, but adherents are now found around the world.^[2]

According to Sufi Muslims, it is a part of the Islamic teaching that deals with the purification of inner self and is the way which removes all the veils between the divine and humankind. It was around 1000 CE that early Sufi literature, in the form of manuals, treatises, discourses and poetry, became the source of Sufi thinking and meditations. Sufi philosophy, like all other major philosophical traditions, has several sub-branches, including cosmology and metaphysics, as well as several unique concepts.^[1]

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