

Significant Contribution of *Khānqāh* Organization for Shaping Islamic Society in Sub-Continent: An Analytical Study

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This study discusses the relationship between *ṣūfī* and local population in the subcontinent. No doubt, that *ṣūfīsm* played an important role with their teachings and good morals, for bringing peace, harmony and Islamic culture in society. The topic of *ṣūfīsm* lends itself to a comparative world approach because the ideas of *ṣūfīsm* were not limited to a particular region or nation. This was due to the vast territory incorporated into Islamic society. To determine the impact of *ṣūfīsm*, it is necessary to evaluate how *ṣūfīsm* was able to interact with other segments of society. It is necessary to delineate the structure that *ṣūfī* practice developed in each region, how that structure was conducive to the social framework, and what effects developed as the *ṣūfīs* disseminated the real Islamic culture among the general population. The article particularly sheds light on the role of *Khānqāh* organization for establishing peace, harmony, equality, and justice for a successful society and also delineates the distinctive features of *Khānqāh* in detail.

Key Words: *ṣūfīsm*, *Khānqāh*, Islam, Islamic culture, society, monastery

Introduction

Islam is a complete code of life and in its ideology of life all the systems are interconnected. There is an inter relation between social, economic, political and judicial system of Islam. Only that society is able to be called Islamic society in which all the systems are according to Islamic jurisprudence. It is said in Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ

“Oh, you who believe! Enter into Islam wholly and do not follow the fool step of Satan.”¹

Prophet hood is Allah's blessing and according to Islam, prophet hood is a true and accurate source of divine guidance. In the light of human history, Allah has selected the specific personalities to convey His message to mankind, so that all human beings might be given an opportunity to follow the right path. These specific personalities were called prophets, or messengers. What the Prophet does is to enlighten people so that they may overcome this human inadequacy. He tells of the reality of things here and now, and also gives information of the next world. He thereby enables the individual to formulate a plan for his entire

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existence in the full light of knowledge and awareness so that he may carve out a successful life for himself. As *Qur'ān* mentions,

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

Indeed, God bestowed a favor upon the believers when he raised up in their midst an apostle from among themselves, to convey His messages unto them, and to cause them to grow in purity, and to impart unto them the divine writ as well as wisdom²

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

He it is who has sent unto the unlettered people an apostle from among themselves, to convey unto them His messages, and to cause them to grow in purity, and to impart unto them the divine writ as well as wisdom³

Three qualities of the Holy Prophet (saw) have been discussed in above mentioned verse. One, to recite the verses of the *Qur'ān* to his Ummah. Two, to purify them of all the outer and inner defilements. This includes outer purification that relates to one's body and dress, and also the inner purification that relates to one's faith, actions and moral attitude. The second objective of the Holy Prophet is to: (make them pure) which is derived from *tazkiyah* and it means 'to make pure'. Often it is used exclusively for inner cleanliness, that is, to be free from such inner adulterating matter as *shirk* and free from inner moral defilement.⁴ Because the actual successful individual is, who purify himself from worldly greeds. *Qur'ān* states in this reference

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا

To a happy state shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity,⁵

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّى

To happiness [in the life to come] will indeed attain he who attains to purity [in this world],⁶

This concept of purification of soul and intuition is basic goal and purpose of *ṣūfism*. Because terms *ṣūfī*, is used for Muslim saints who attempted to achieve development of their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial. A famous *ṣūfī* of Baghdad, JunaidBagdadi had described, that *ṣūfism* had been originated from the Holy *Qur'ān*. One who does not read the Holy *Qur'ān* and does not write the Hadiths, does not have permission to talk about *ṣūfism*.⁷

Etymology of ṣūfism

ṣūfism is an English word translated from the Arabic term (*Tasawuf*), which literally denotes “becoming a ṣūfī,”⁸ and which has been commonly equated with “Islamic mysticism” or “Islamic esotericism” in western scholarship.⁹ Those who practice ṣūfism (*Tasawuf*) called ṣūfīs (صُوفِيّ: *ṣūfī*) which belong to different silsalaor “orders”.¹⁰

The word “ṣūfī” is first recorded as being used by the great ṣūfī Hasan al-Basra (d.110 A.H), who is reported to have said “I saw a ṣūfī circumambulating the Kaaba, and offered him a dirham, but he would not accept it.”¹¹ There is a group of people called the ṣūfīs. Four interpretations are given for this name. Some see, looking at their exterior, that they wear rough woolen garb. In Arabic the word for wool is “suf”, and they call them ṣūfīs from this. And they explain the following hadiths as an example of “ṣūf”.

فَغَسَلَ وَجْهَهُ وَيَدَيْهِ، وَعَلَيْهِ جُبَّةٌ مِنْ صُوفٍ،

He washed his face and hands while he was wearing a woollen cloak (the sleeves of which were narrow).¹²

عَنْ أَنَسٍ، قَالَ لَبِسَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - الصُّوفَ

It was narrated that Anas said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) wore wool.”¹³

SO according to some interperators, the origin of ṣūfī is taken from “suf” which Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) wore.

While Others, looking at their way of life free from the anxieties of this world, and their ease and at peace, which in Arabic is ṣafa, call them ṣūfīs on that account. Yet others, seeing deeper, look at their hearts, which are purified of everything other than the essence of Allah.¹⁴

Eminent mystic Philosopher Imam Ghazali describes about ṣūfism that, According to my perception that those who practice ṣūfism called ṣūfī. Because ṣūfī follows the path of Allah. Their nature is the best of all nature, Their nature is the moral values are purer then all, in fact you collect all intelligences together, all wisdom together, all knowledge of the scholars together, so you could find the alternate method of the ṣūfī, which is better then theirs, because there are taken from the source and light of prophet hood, and there is no substitute guidance in this universe the guidance of prophet hood.¹⁵

Doctrine of ṣūfism

According to FethullahGülen, ṣūfism is a way to acquire angelic qualities to please the God, which is followed by an individual who, having been able to escape himself or herself from human vices and weaknesses, lives in accordance with the requirements of God's knowledge and love, and in the resulting spiritual delight eventually. ṣūfism is based on observing even the most 'trivial' rules of the *Shariah* in order to penetrate their inner meaning.¹⁶ The way and the style of ṣūfī of practicing the religion is very easy, simple, convenient and moderate, ṣūfī strongly avoid to overburden the individual, and believe that maximum ease should provide to the believers, which will according to the intent of Islam. As Qur'ān states

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

and has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to religion],¹⁷

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ، وَلَنْ يُثْقَلَ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ، فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا، وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالْعَدْوَةِ وَالرُّوْحَةِ وَشَيْءٍ مِنَ الدَّلْجَةِ "

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the afternoons, and during the last hours of the nights."¹⁸

عَنْ أَنَسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَبَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُثَقِّرُوا "

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam)."¹⁹

Abu Bakr al Kattani as saying "ṣūfism is purity and witnessing. And ṣūfism began immediately with Islam. This is because Islam consists of noble behavior as well as attunement to God in both simple affairs and those of great magnitude".²⁰ So due to these characteristics, By the 12th century A.D., ṣūfism had become a universal aspect of Islamic social life as its influence extended over almost the entire Muslim community.

Prominent ṣūfī Orders in Sub-Continent

The ṣūfīs were a class of philosophers remarkable for their religious catholicity. ṣūfīs regarded God as the supreme beauty and believed that one must admire it, take delight in His thought and

concentrate his attention on Him only. Many *ṣūfī*silsilas are established in the sub-continent but the most prominent are these four:

1. **Chishti Order**, founded by Khwaja Abdul Chishti however Kwaja Moin Ud Din Chishti implanted this chain in India.
2. **Suharwardi Order**, founded by Sheikh Shahb-udin Umar Suharwardi at Bghdad
3. **Naqshbandi chain**, popularized in India by efforts of Khwaja Baqi Bilah.
4. **Qadiriya Order**, established by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in Baghdad.

*ṣūfī*s were the true representatives of Islam. Buhler writes that “*ṣūfī*s and *ṣūfī*sm are attached with Islam. They play fundamental role in the configuration of Islamic societies. They are being respected by the people because people have great love for them and *ṣūfī* has a personal influence in the society”.²¹ They preached Islam here with the love and sacred influence and they were the true embodiment of the holy proportions of Islam. *ṣūfī*sm took roots in both rural and urban areas and exercised a deep social, political and cultural influence on the masses. According to the *ṣūfī*'s point of view the spiritual bliss was the ultimate goal of a Muslim. The most important contribution of *ṣūfī*sm is that it helped to dull the edge of Hindu-Muslim prejudices by forging the feelings of solidarity, harmony and brotherhood between these two contrast religious communities.

Annemarie states that “The messages of the *ṣūfī*s are universal and they illumine the mind and soul. Their messages touch the soul and mind because message based upon love and truth. They love every one without any discrimination. People faith on them because they are the part of Islam and they have great contribution in preaching the teachings of Islam. *ṣūfī* philosophy is based upon universal love and brotherhood”.²²

The impact of *ṣūfī*sm in subcontinent was not based on the development of new mystical principles or concepts, but instead was directly related to the development of structure and organization which facilitated practical application of mystic ideology to the conditions of subcontinent society.²³

*ṣūfī*sm became a popular movement in which anyone could freely participate as opposed to a tiny spiritual elite practicing spiritual exclusivity. The main *ṣūfī* goal of reaching spiritual unity

with God was broadened to include simple social actions aimed at helping the common individuals attain relief from worldly anxieties.²⁴

Description of Khānqāh

Basically Khānqāh is a Persian word which means “the centre of moral training”, its meaning in English is Monastery, and its definition is given in new oxford encyclopedia dictionary as "Monastery mean the residence of Community of monks". Because the religious figures in Hinduism, Buddhism and in Christianity, selected some specific place for their meditation was called monastery. Some religious traditions mandate isolation for purposes of contemplation removed from the everyday world, in which case members of the monastic community may spend most of their time isolated even from each other. Encyclopedia Americana declares it a complex for meditation.²⁵

Difference between Monastery and Khānqāh

The Qur’ān teaches acceptance of life, not rejection or withdrawal. Monasticism and asceticism are not permitted in Islam. Leading a righteous life, and making proper and balanced use of one’s faculties and the bounties provided by God, is the rule of life. Within this general concept the Qur’ān lays down detailed instructions for the fostering of moral and spiritual values. The object is the beneficent and co-ordinate development of all faculties.

Fundamentally, man is an entity that has been created for a life within a society, and his material and spiritual development can only be achieved within a social life, and it is for this reason that none of the Divine religions have rejected this concept (of social life). On the contrary, they have endeavored to strengthen its foundation.

The Islamic abstemiousness (zuhd), which means leading a simple life, eliminating luxuries and not becoming a captive of wealth and rank, is in no way related to the issue of monasticism. This is so since monasticism means segregation and alienation from the society whereas abstemiousness means liberation for a more social living. In a well-known tradition we read that one day the son of 'Uthman ibne Maz'un died which so aggrieved him that he declared his house to be a mosque and (abandoning all other work) engaged himself in worship. When the Noble Prophet (S) came to know of this, he summoned him and said:

يَا عُثْمَانَ بْنَ مَطْعُونٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكْتُبْ عَلَيْنَا الرَّهْبَانِيَّةَ إِنَّمَا رَهْبَانِيَّةُ أُمَّتِي الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

“O' 'Uthman! Surely, Allah, the Blessed and the Exalted has not ordained monasticism for us; monasticism of my ummah is only jihad in the way of Allah.”

قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَلَمْ أُخْبِرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ ". فَقُلْتُ بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ " فَلَا تَفْعَلْ، صُمْ وَأَفْطِرْ، وَقُمْ وَنَمْ، فَإِنَّ لِحَسَبِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرَوْحِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرُؤُوكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا،

In a message to some companions who wanted to put an end to their sexual life, pray all night long or fast continuously, Muhammad said: “Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you.”²⁶

Allah (s.w.t.) has placed 'sexual desire' within man to preserve lineage, and everything that attempts to reject it totally is absolutely incorrect. Shaikh Farid had appointed Isa to look after his private affairs. Isa, also used to send the Shaikh's wives to him according to their turn, so that no injustice occurs in marital relationship.²⁷

" يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي آتِيكُمْ وَالْغُلُوُّ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوُّ فِي الدِّينِ "

“O people, beware of exaggeration in religious matters for those who came before you were doomed because of exaggeration in religious matters.”²⁸

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقَصْدِ " . ثَلَاثًا

And, on another occasion, Muhammad said: “Moderation, moderation! For only with moderation will you succeed.”²⁹

Significance of Khānqāh Organization

The term Khānqāh meaning 'ṣūfī convent' assumes important overtones in more contexts than one. Shaikh Nasir al-Din Chiragh considered it to be a compound of khdnah (house) and qah (prayer).³⁰ The Khānqāh or jama'atkhana³¹ was a special building to meet the requirements of the ṣūfīs, their followers and visitors, which provided accommodation for each visitor and inmate. At that time, Khānqāh were made for feeding the poor and the durveshes.³² The establishment of Khānqāh was based on the conviction that a life of solitary, self-sufficient contemplation was incompatible with the highest mystic ideals because it made man ego-centric, limited his sympathies and cut him off completely from the energizing currents of social life.³³ The Khānqāh saw several stages in evolutionary history. According to Ibn Taimaiyah,

the first house for the mystics was built in Basra, but the popularity of the Khānqāh and rabtra (derived from Arabic root rabata, which means to bind or to attach etc.) started at a later period.³⁴

ShaikhShihab al-Din Suhrawardi found sanction for the establishment of Khānqāh from following Qur'ānic verses

فِي بُيُوتِ الَّذِينَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (36) رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ (37)

IN THE HOUSES [of worship] which God has allowed to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there [are such as] extol His limitless glory at morn and evening- people whom neither [worldly] commerce nor striving after gain can divert from the remembrance of God, and from constancy in prayer, and from charity: [people] who are filled with fear [at the thought] of the Day On which all hearts and eyes will be convulsed.³⁵

Therefore, he laid down the following fundamental principles for the mystics entrusted with the task of organizing Khānqāh:

- The people of the Khānqāh should establish cordial relations with all men (khalq).
- They should concern themselves with God, through prayers, meditation, etc.
- They should abandon all efforts at earning a livelihood and should resign themselves to the will of God.
- They should strive for the purification of their inner life.
- They should abstain from things that produce evil effects.
- They should learn the value of time.
- They should completely shake off indolence and lethargy.³⁶

According to Michael Hamilton Burgoyne, The ṣūfīs, the Shaykhs and the Neophytes lived and assembled for their devotions in foundation variously called Khānqāh.³⁷ Khānqāh were great religious power centres - centres of learning, and spiritual attainment. Through the Khānqāh, the silsilahs were provided with an opportunity to impact numerous communities in India. The social interaction that developed as a result of the Khānqāh interwove the ṣūfīs into the cultural pattern of society and allowed them to connect divergent social and cultural groups.³⁸

The framework was based on the long-established ṣūfī practice of a master and disciple relationship. Each candidate to the ṣūfī path of knowledge was expected to discover the esoteric life under the tutelage of an established shaykh who demanded complete obedience. The master became responsible for the spiritual progress of the disciple and would suggest patterns of contemplation and watch for impediments on the journey to spiritual fulfillment.³⁹ This created a spiritual heredity, the disciple was linked to a prominent shaykh who had in turn been trained by an even more prestigious shaykh, whose knowledge had been passed down through a lineage of shaykhs traceable all the way back to the Prophet Mohammed.⁴⁰ The role of these Khānqāh depended very largely on capability of a Shaikh's to adjust and adapt himself to the mental climate of a particular region.

Distinctive Features of Khānqāh

The Khānqāh was a place of shelter and gathering for members of a particular silsilah, It generally was a building that provided sleeping quarters, a meeting room, and a center for worship for a particular shaykh, his disciples, as well as travelers or visitors. The centerpiece of a Khānqāh was the ṣūfīshaykh who was the spiritual leader. As a ṣūfīshaykh earned a reputation and prestige, students and admirers would flock to the respective Khānqāh to listen to the wisdom of the saint,⁴¹ become a disciple of the shaykh and pledge to the silsilah,⁴² There are several advantages... First it provides shelter for visitors who do not possess any house of their own... Secondly, by gathering at a place and mixing with each other, the shaykh get an opportunity of regulating their life and developing uniform inward and outward ways... Thirdly, in this way they get an opportunity of criticizing and mending each other's ways.⁴³

Source for Circulation of Wealth

They considered the accumulation of wealth an impediment to spiritual advancement. One should not hoard or grow attached to worldly objects. According to NizamadinAwliya, “[g]old is there only for giving, my son. For keeping, a stone will do just as good.” The ṣūfī saints taught their disciples that real happiness was found in spending money, not accumulating it, “True comfort comes from expending gold and silver. Hence no one can find comfort unless he expends the silver

in his possession. The real purpose of if amassing gold and silver is to use it for the benefit of others.” Any surplus that was received by a *ṣūfī* or a *Khānqāh* was distributed to visitors and to those in need. “Everything which is given to you unsolicited take and eat of it, then dispose of what is left over as alms.”⁴⁴ This indicate the true Islamic thought of circulation of wealth, As Qur’ān States

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

and [would assign] in all that they possessed a due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation.⁴⁵

تُؤَخِّدُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ فَنُزِّلُ عَلَىٰ فُقَرَائِهِمْ،

which will be taken from the rich among them and given to the poor among them.⁴⁶

وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

And spend in charity for the good of your own selves: for, such as from their own covetousness are saved – it is they, they that shall attain to a happy state!⁴⁷

وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot.⁴⁸

ShaykhNizamad-din demonstrated how dedicated the *ṣūfīs* were to those in need around them, often by refusing to eat. Once, when his disciples insisted on him eating food, he replied, “[S]o many poverty-sticken people are sleeping without dinner in the comers of the mosques and in front of the shops. How can this food go down my throat?”⁴⁹ It shows the same behavior of second caliph of Islam Umer bin al-Khatab, when during his period, a drought had occurred then he started to remain hungry, just to understand the feelings of victims of starvation, and to demonstrate the harmony with them.⁵⁰

"There was provision for all the visitors, murids, travellers, repentants etc. for *wazu*(ablution) and *namaz*(prayer). There were attendants to provide water to them for *wazu*, facilitating *namaz*, under each *chabutra* (shaded platform)."⁵¹

Removed Religious Discrimination

The second principle provided an exhortation to care for those in need. The *ṣūfīs* of India took this instruction very seriously and fed the poor, publicly spoke against slavery, and provided shelter for the needy.⁵² Besides Muslims, Hindus including, untouchables visited the *Khānqāh*. In fact, the untouchables saw there was no discrimination, flocked in groups.

Yogis also came to the Shaikh. Baba Farid appears to have learned and practiced *yoga*.

The monasteries were visited by various kinds of people and every one from king to beggar was welcome and at least notionally treated alike. For instance, Jamal Qiwam reports that Shaikh Nizam al-Din's *Khānqāh* was visited by all kinds of people - ordinary persons, Leaders, princes, officials, traders etc.⁵³ Not only the Muslims, Hindus including, untouchables visited the *Khānqāh*. In fact, the untouchables saw there was no discrimination, flocked in groups, because everyone was treated equally. Hindu society was passing through one of the darkest phases of its history, when the *Khānqāh* were established in northern India.

The classless atmosphere of their attracted these despised sections of Indian society to their fold. Here they found an entirely different social order; all discriminations and distinctions which the Hindu society had imposed upon them were meaningless in the *Khānqāh*. All lived, slept and ate together. The sacred Book was open and accessible to all. They thus became the spearheads of Muslim culture and their atmosphere demonstrated the Islamic idea of oneness of Allah as a working principle in social life. The history of popular religion in Islam, in fact, runs parallel to the growth and expansion of the organization.⁵⁴

Even Couriers from the court were never welcomed and many a time the rulers were refused interviews. "My house has got two doors," Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya told the messenger of a Sultan who insisted on an interview, "if the Sultan enters by one, I shall make my exit by the other".⁵⁵

Symbol of Hospitality

One of the most influential ways *ṣūfīs* connected with the Indian population was through their generosity. The *Khānqāh*s sometimes became so crowded, that the Shaikh asked their disciples to shorten their stay. Many of the senior disciples, as a result, constructed their homes near the *Khānqāh* of Shaikh Nizam al-Din. In the *Khānqāh*, the rule was 'first greet, then eat, then talk.'⁵⁶ at times there would not be food to offer in which case the *ṣūfī* would offer the guest a bowl of water. Feeding a visitor was very important as Nizam ad-din Auliya underscores: "There is a tradition that whoever visits a living person and does not taste something from him it is as if he visited a corpse."⁵⁷ Even a *ṣūfī* would sell his wife's chadar or his own prayer carpet but would

entertain a visitor to his *Khānqāh*.⁵⁸ Huge sums of money were spent by him in entertaining people.

Langar (free meal) means free public kitchen aiming sharing food with others irrespective of religion, class, color, doctrine, age, gender or social rank. The distribution of Langar (free meal) has been the hallmark of *ṣūfism* since centuries. The servants of the *Khānqāh* were instructed to show extreme hospitality to all guests and were strictly warned against ridiculing those who were ignorant of the mystic customs and conventions.⁵⁹

Moral Training and Religious Studies Centers

According to Dr. Shahzad Qaiser: “Baba Farid wants people to establish a living contact with God. A living contact with God is established by virtue of loving God and humanity. It is a cultural understanding of God which helps in establishing a relationship of friendship with Him.... Baba Farid places the transcendent God amidst the cultural world of man. He inspires man to love Him, who is so near and Him his friend, who is sincere.”⁶⁰

Baba Farid's *Khānqāh* was a great learning centre. He considered dedicated study of the *Qur'ān* was essential for awakening spiritual sensibilities. *His jama'atkhanawas* always filled with the voice of reciting *Qur'ān*. Shaikh Nizami al-Din was asked to do '*hifz*' i.e. memorizing *Qur'ān* by heart by Baba Farid, which he did later. He also learned *Awa'rif-ul-Ma'rif*, the *tamhidat*, *fiqh* (law) and *Shari'at* there. And Strict discipline was maintained in the *Khānqāh* and elaborate rules were laid down for the guidance of the inmates: how to talk to the Shaikh; how to deal with visitors; how to sit in the *Khānqāh*; how to walk; how and when to sleep; what dress to wear and on similar other topics minute instructions were given to the people of *Khānqāh*.⁶¹

There were a large number of visitors at the *Khānqāh*. People frustrated with inner conflicts and their heart aching due to atrocities and self-seeking external world. Government servants who were disturbed with their officers, oppression and increasing demands of the organizations were regular visitors, they developed their kindness and it reflected in their behavior while dealing with the people. Amir Khusrauis one of them, he wanted to give up government service and devote full time to spirituality.

In fact, when men of different temperaments and attitudes assembled in these *Khānqāhs*, all tensions, conflicts and complexes

in their character were resolved and their personalities were moulded in consonance with the spirit of the silsilah. Common penitence and sufferings drew out the noblest qualities of their souls and made them understand what Carlyle calls the 'divine significance of life.'⁶²

Source of Brotherhood and selflessness

The righteous and the virtuous deeds have great contribution for the development of a successful and peaceful society. *Khānqāh* played an important role in this perspective. Because the selflessness is as significant cause to combine and strengthen the Muslim society.

Moen-ud-din Chisti advised his followers that,

You should develop yourself like river in generosity, sun like affection and earth like hospitality. As this phenomenon of nature make no distinction, likewise man should not discriminate between on human being and another.⁶³

However, the *ṣūfī* saints transcending all religious and communal distinctions, worked for promoting the interest of humanity at large. Their compassionate company was easily accessible to every ordinary and trodden individual. To feel the starvation of a hungry one has to be in condition of starvation and to feel one's poverty one has to be in state of impecuniousness. They always found ways to help others more willingly than refusing. Rather helping every single visitor was the main principal of their teachings.⁶⁴

Source of arts and culture

Khānqāh also had a profound unifying impact in the realm of arts and culture. From about 12th century, poetry became a medium for *ṣūfīs* to popularize their views. It was usually composed in the regional dialects, which could be easily comprehended by the common people of the region. Khaliq Ahmad Nizamī finds *ṣūfī* as fertile grounds for the growth of common medium of communication among people of different linguistic background coming into contact with each other mainly because of their mutual economic and political needs. It was here that the dialects intelligible to them were conceived. In this regard, the fact that birth place of Urdu language was the *Khānqāh* of medieval India can be hardly questioned.⁶⁵

Making use of folk language to spread the message of truth was a central component of the *ṣūfī* ideology. The role of mother language cannot be undermined in understanding the traditional

truths. Baba Farid used the strong connection of mother language and culture in his poetry by understanding the desires of the lay man in their linguistic, artistic and folk expression. He communicated the locals of the Punjab in their own language hence awakening their consciousness and leaving everlasting impacts on.⁶⁶

The impact of *ṣūfī* practice was significant, not only in reference to Islam as a religion but specifically referring to *ṣūfism* as a method of cultural dispersal. The *ṣūfī* saints were very effective at balancing the cultural tug-of-war, and their ability to easily juxtapose subversion and support for Islamic law and practice had an impact on India.

Source of Solace for Visitors and Supressed

People of all sections like scholars, politicians, soldiers, Hindu jogis, qalandars, merchants, etc, visited to these, for seeking solace, guidance and blessings from the Shaikhs, and returned contented. To attend to these multifarious problems must have put a heavy pressure on the nerves of the Shaikh, but he seldom allowed anybody to leave the *Khānqāh* unsatisfied. In fact, immediate material solution of all these problems was something beyond the means of the mystics, but with their deep insight into human character they assuaged the wounds of their visitors and gave them that unshakable faith in God and moral values which sustained them in the midst of the severest tribulations of life.⁶⁷ Since a Shaikh was expected to heal both mental and bodily diseases by spiritual means, large crowds assembled in the for amulets (*tawiz*). Sometimes the Shaikh would put his hand on the sick, sometimes he would breathe on his body, sometimes he would ask him to recite a particular formula, and sometimes he would write the names of God or verses from the *Qur'ān* on a piece of paper and ask them to carry these amulets on their bodies. People who sought the guidance of a Shaikh in their perilous journey in the realm of spirit were few; most of the visitors thronged round him for the solution few; most of the visitors thronged round him for the solution of their worldly problems, through amulets, blessings or recommendations.⁶⁸

It is evident that *Khānqāh* organization was a cultural arbitrator in India between the Muslim and Indian populations. *ṣūfism* succeeded in blending a spiritual exclusiveness with social populism, and make possible the development of new languages,

and creating a cultural meeting place for various elements of society to interact.

Conclusion

ṣūfī movement played a prominent role in shaping the identity of Islamic culture and civilization, and particularly for the identity of Islamic built environment. The solution of these problems and evils is only in the teachings of ṣūfism which are practiced by ṣūfīs in their *Khānqāh* and territory for the construction of peaceful and successful society. ṣūfism was adaptable in its methodology for that reason people could carry out it along with their social and professional life. Among all the great and venerated ṣūfīs were the most distinguished because of their gentle tolerable and easy approach toward the other religions.

It is intention of west to diminish the religious traditions and Muslims civilization. In the light of ṣūfī infrastructure, it is declared with determination, that in future if any doctrine could properly survive with its all aspects and also beneficial for mankind, is only Islamic mysticism. It has balance between spiritual and material life. In present era, the greatest interest had increased for ṣūfism and ṣūfī doctrine and had often discussed on international level. It is amazing due to some reasons because the causes and the motives of this interest are different. One group have this idea that Islam has spread because of ṣūfī's struggle, and the other have their interest in ṣūfism due to natural love of human being towards religion and their God.

Actually the mankind is doing effort for such kind of peace and tranquility, that is away from the approach of money and power. So it is the need of time that man should do his relation strong with God, and strictly follows his injunctions and moral values of Islam to gain spirituality. If an individual or a nation have desire to sustain dignity, then the obedience of prophet (SAW) is obligatory, it remained the need of predecessors and also the requirement of successors, and it have the secret of peaceful, ideal, prosperous and ideal life according to creator. According to these reasons it has been focused in the world with great interest, to know about the real life of a ṣūfī. So in the result, a society could develop into an ideal society, which wills free form materialism, hate, envy, greed, harm, terrorism, poverty, corruption, religious controversies and religious disharmony.

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