Role of Sufi Saints of Rajasthan in Development of Composite Culture

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Abstract:

Rajasthan is an important province of India. Rajasthan has a very wide and colorful canvas of culture and traditions. This canvas was in the making for a long time, and Sufis and mystics have an important role in it. Rajasthan became a center of prominent Sufi saints during the medieval period in India; very soon it grabbed the title of the land of Sufis and Sufi folklore. This paper seeks to explore the linkage between Sufi ideology and the growth of composite culture in the context of Rajasthan. The objective of this article is to study the composite culture of India as a direct bearing of the Sufi establishment in different parts of the region. The second purpose of this article is to investigate the role of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and other Sufi saints and their teachings in the development of composite culture in India.

Introduction:

The word 'Sufism' is used to describe the mystical dimension of Islam. The Arabic word for Sufism is 'Tasawwuf.' Tasawwuf is the process of being a Sufi. Sufism can be defined as the inner dimensions of Islam in which mystics or Sufis tried to develop a bond with God following different ways such as unconditional devotion to God, asceticism, love, purity, self-mortification, renunciation, etc. A practitioner of this tradition is for the most part known as a Sufi. Several origins of the word "Sufi" has been recommended. It might get from the word for "wool" and the woolen articles of clothing worn by early Sufis. It might likewise have an association with the word for "purity," and another proposal is that it is derived from 'Ashab e Sufah'. However all through history a Sufi was frequently comprehended to be a man of religious realizing who tries to be near Allah. Abul Hasan Nuri says "Sufism is liberty so that a man is freed from the bonds of desire and generosity"

Origin of Sufism can be traced in the tendencies manifested in early Islam. "Sufism was a natural development within Islam, owing little to non-Muslim sources.ⁱⁱ Dr. S.H. Nasr says that origin of Sufism is the Quran and Sunnah.ⁱⁱⁱ Some scholars argue that Sufism cannot be confined only upon teachings of Islam because it has borrowed many traditions from different mystic tendencies. But these scholars have misinterpreted the liberal view of Sufis as Martin Lings says that being entirely dependent upon one particular Revelation, Sufism is totally independent of everything else. But while being self-sufficient it can, if time and place concur, pluck flowers from gardens other than its own. The Prophet of Islam said: 'Seek knowledge even if it be in China.^{iv} This is not to propose that Sufism is totally free of any outsider impact. As it formed into an international movement and spread to different parts of the world, it naturally soaked up various nearby, heterogeneous components. But Sufism had officially accomplished an incredible level of development before the effect was felt and this impact touched just the outskirts of Sufi thought and practices.^v

The advent of Sufism in India:

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The development of Sufism can be divided into three phases. In the first phase, Sufism was an individual practice, and the Sufis were not satisfied with the materialism and worldliness that intruded the Muslim world and they started to live alone and devoted themselves to God. These people were called Dervish. In the second phase of Tasawwuf Sufis tried to introduce some practices and teachings for people. In this period all the Sufis were the great scholar and adequate literature was written about Tasawwuf and its practices. From the beginning of the 11th century begins the third phase of development of Sufism. In this period, Sufism became an international movement, and different orders (Tariaqah) came into existence. Every order was established by a great Sufi. In this time *Khanqahs* were also set up by prominent Sufis which later evolved as a Centre of great learning and Sufism of the particular order. VIn the third phase of Tasawwuf, many great Sufis came to India. Early Sufis are believed to reach in India at the southern coast, but there are very few sources about them. VII in the 11th century, many Sufis came to India.

Many Sufi orders were established with the development of Sufism. Ali Hujwiri, the writer of *Kasf-al-Mahjub*, has given a detailed account of 12 orders^{viii}. Abul Fazal has also given a list of fourteen Sufi sects in his work 'Ain-i-Akbari'^{ix}. From many Sufi orders, four achieved significant influence in India and became most popular namely Chishtiya, Qadiriya, Suhrawardiya, and Naqshbandiya.

Rajasthan became the center of Sufis with the establishment of Chishti saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer. Some sources say that Moinuddin Chishti came before the second battle of Tarain^x while according to some other scholars he came to Ajmer after the Turkish conquest^{xi}.

Chishtiya order was founded by Abu Ishhaq Shami Chishti, a disciple of Mimshad Dinwari^{xii}. Chishti order was brought in India by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and he was the founder of the order in India. S.A.A. Rizvi says this order 'essentially an Indian one.' Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti was a saint of virtues and popular for his spiritual powers. XiV

Composite culture: Composite culture is a result of acquiring, sharing and combining ideas and traditions after some time procedure of collaboration between at least two streams, in the conviction that such social amalgamation has an inclination for more prominent imperativeness through acceptability than monoculture.^{xv}

The role of Sufis of Rajasthan is undeniable in giving a practical framework for composite culture and shared understanding. Early Chishti saints kept them away from state matters, and they rejected gifts from state or any other kind of favor. **vi* Their beliefs of social service, non-violence and humanity became core of their teachings. K.A. Nizami contends that" the early Chishti saints of India did not form a part of Delhi Empire. They shaped their very own universe; the contamination of court life could not touch their spiritual serenity and classless atmosphere."**Teachings of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti sowed a broadly humanistic approach in Chishti saints, and it led them to propagate and practice egalitarianism in their lifestyle. Three main teachings of Khwaja Moinuddin became the base for all Chishti saints which are as follows:

"Pantheistic approach (the concept of oneness), which brought him very close to the treasures of ancient Hindu religious thought, particularly the Upanishads, and created an atmosphere favorable for the exchange of ideas at a higher level." For him, service of humanity was the highest form of devotion, and it was the real essence of religion. According to him, a man must possess some qualities to be near to God; these qualities are "river-like generosity, sun-like affection, and sun-like hospitality." XIX

These teachings of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti laid down the foundation of Chishti hospices which later on became the center of religious gathering and propagating ideas of co-existence. These hospices provided a place of acculturation, where men of the different section of society and followers of many traditions had an opportunity to sit with the enlighten Sufis and exchange their ideas. ** Langar* (Open Kitchen) was an imperative feature of Chishti shrines as described by K. A. Nizami, the Chishti saints, who got a substantial measure of unasked for charity, gave better dinners to the residents and guests of their *khanqahs*. An open kitchen (Langar) turned into a consistent element of khanqah life in medieval India. The Chishti saints cited the following *hadis* for their practice: "if someone visits a living man and gets nothing from him to eat; it is as if he had visited the dead .** This practice became very popular, and langar* (Open Kitchen) became a tool to remove all the differences of caste and artificial social discrimination between them and make them feel that they all are equal and thus rightly Khwaja is known as Gharib Nawaj* (the protector of weak). This promoted brotherhood and welfare of society.

Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri: Shaikh Hamiduddin was a disciple of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. XXIII He lived a life of a farmer, and he kept a cow like ordinary villagers of Suwal. On his ascetic life, Khwaja bestowed the title of *Sultan-ut-Tarikin* (The King of recluses). XXIII One significant contribution of early Sufis was to counterweight the

evils of Urbanization which began with the Turkish establishment. **xiv* As early Sufis had preached against the materialistic approach toward life the moral teachings of these saints were crucial for making a sensitive and peaceful society. Nagauri was one of those saints who resisted against the materialistic lifestyle and questioned the Sufis relations with the state. **xv* Hamiduddin Nagauri gave up eating meat in respect of their fellow villagers, who were vegetarian and he also warned his disciples not to distribute meat preparations for the blessing of his soul. **xv*i* He was true follower of *Ahimsa* cult. He was very much influenced by his surroundings especially Jain community and it is believed that's why he adopted the *Ahimsa* or non-violence. It played a vital role in the composite culture. These measures were taken by many Sufis to show the respect and win the hearts of non-Muslims. Shaikh Hamiduddin always used to say that the motivation behind developing a *khanqah*, a mosque or a *hujrah* was to discipline the inner life of a man. *xv*ii* He used *Hindavi* for conversation in his family *xv*iii*; it also shows that he has adopted the lifestyle and local language of the region to understand the culture and traditions of his surroundings. Shaikh Hamiduddin became very popular due to his personality and wide human sensitivities which again testify the acceptance of his ideas of brotherhood and egalitarianism. According to Nizami "His catholicity of views is best illustrated by the fact that he could discern and appreciate spiritual virtues in non-Muslims also. *xxix*

Nagauri sowed the seed of poetry in *Hindavi* which was later on expressed on its heights by Amir Khusrau. He translated one of the *ghazals* of Iliyas bin Yusuf Nizami of Ganja, (Azerbejan), who died on 12 March 1209. Nagauri translated his works in *Hindavi* and included in the text both the Persian original and their equivalent *Hindavi Dohas*. **Thus Nagauri emerges not only a Sufi but also as a contributor to the composite culture. Use of *Hindavi* in *sama* (sufi musical gatherings) and explanation of sufi ideas to the masses, were the main factors for incitement of Hindus interest in Sufism. **** These practices of Sufis brought the masses close to each other and created a shared space for the development of composite culture.

Qazi Hamiduddin Nagauri was another famous saint of Nagaur. He was a saint of Suhrawardiya order. He was appointed as *Qazi* (Justice) of Nagaur^{xxxii}. He also propagated the message of love and devotion. Shaikh Sulaiman Suhrawardi, who was a successor of Qazi Hamiduddin, was a very liberal man and paid respect to other religions as well. An inscription found from Nagaur which is bilingual confirms his catholicity of views; a Jain Posal (religious building) was occupied for public or private use, it was redeemed and restored by the intermediation of Shaikh who was the head of Nagaur *khanqah*. The building was handed over to the original owners. xxxiii

A significant development in the mystic history of the Rajasthan includes extension of the brand of Chishti affiliation with Muhammad Sulaiman^{xxxiv} of Tounsa in North-Western Punjab. The movement of Shah Sulaiman was spread to all directions. It established a firm foothold in Rajasthan and Shekhawati was its focal point. xxxv Sheikh was also a descendent of Sufi Hamiduddin Chishti, so he too was highly respected by the masses. xxxviIt is also said that the local authorities (Governors, Rai, Rawats) paid their respects to the Sheikh also. It is said that the Rawat Chhatra Singh of Sardar Shahar assigned of one hundred and the one Bigha of land of JhunJhunu town to Sheikh. He had great faith in Sheikh Najmuddin, and he issued a lease. After the death of Chhatra Singh, his son continued the tradition. It shows that the Hindus of that area had great faith in Sheikh and thousands of them became his disciple and devotees. xxxvii

Maulana Ghulam Ali says that Sheikh Haji Najmuddin was the first man who wrote books in Urdu in Our country and he stood first who compiled Urdu poetry in the 12th century AH. He played a major role in developing the Urdu in Rajasthan. Maulana Ghulam Ali wrote that his literary work had an easy order for those people who were illiterate or low-literate. He opened all things to general which were bounded by Arabic and Persian languages. **xxxix**

Sheikh Sulaiman is reported to have instructed to Sheikh Najmuddin to serve the masses in the right way as he regarded it the supreme devotion to God. Hence from the company of his Master the Sheikh came to know the humanitarian concept of serving the Masses. *I His son Sheikh Nasiruddin succeeded him. Sheikh Nasiruddin Shah captivated the hearts of Hindus and the Muslims by his high moral caliber. Raja Bhopal Singh founded a town after the name of the Sheikh. His Son and Successor, Rao Madho Singh accorded great affection to the Sheikh and assigned him a Jagir of one hundred and one bighas of land. MaulanNasiruddin Shah was a prolific writer. He compiled the sayings of Sheikh Najmuddin entitled the *Nazmul Irshad*. *Ii

The younger son of Sheikh Najmuddin, Shah Abdul Latif Shah was a pious man and extended the area of his influence up to Jodhpur, and later he shifted to that place. He was in service of Maharaja Takht Singh and his sons Jaswant Singh and Pratap Singh. They had a great affection for the Shaikh and never missed any opportunity to be benefited from his spiritual power. xliii

Where it was a common phenomenon to patronize Sufis and mystics of the different order in Muslim ruled state it is notable that Hindu rulers also patronized various places of worship of Muslim mystics and martyrs in Rajasthan. It once again shows the acceptability of ideas and thoughts of the Sufis. This underlines their broad humanistic approach toward other religions and traditions, which led to the foundation of composite culture in the region. Few instances can be mentioned as the shrine of Ghulam Shah Qalandar, located in the former capital of Mandore which is visited by devotees of all communities. He is believed to be a disciple of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. The mosque and shrine were renovated many times by Rathore rulers. xliii

Shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti has an evident role in the development of composite culture from many aspects. S.L.H. Moini writes that many Hindus were appointed to the important posts in the administration of *dargah*. "...their participation in the ceremonies at the shrine in an official capacity, the grant of stipends and daily allowances to Hindus, including *Zunnardars* (Hindu priest), *bairagis*(Hindu faqirs) and the fixation of their shares in the daily *langar*(free-food)- reflected the increasing presence on non-Muslims in the internal management of the *dargah*. But this development did not cause any tension or discord, and the atmosphere remained as serene as it was before this significant development." It is also notable that Hindu celebrated their festivals at the shrine of Ajmer and lit lamps at the shrine. Hindu devotees also used to come to the shrine on the occasion of Holi and rubbed *Gulal* on the stairs of shrine and sing in praise of Khwaja. Indianization of *sama* (audition) specially by the Chishti saints who used local dialects, instruments, and similes in it was very helpful in broadening the cultural acceptance, and it was assumed to have an impact on *Bhajan* (musical singings of Hindu devotees) and other forms. It also embedded some Persian elements in different musical forms yet this development was mutual and bridged the gap of Hindu-Muslim cultural difference. Amir Khusrau, a Sufi and disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya, is notable for his contributions to the *Hindavi* and considered father of different styles of singing like *qawwali*, *khyal* and *tarana*. He also introduced Persian elements in North-Indian classical music.

Teachings and institutions founded by early Sufi saints flourished with the passage of time and successors of these great Sufis also followed the same path of love and devotion to God. For example Successors of Hamiduddin Nagauri were also pious men and dedicated to the service of humanity and this tradition was followed by their successors. XIVI In the course of time, many Sufis emerged in Rajasthan, and they all worked for the welfare and betterment of the humanity. Many Sufi shrines flourished as a center of acculturation and shared space in the history of Rajasthan. There are many instances in which Sufi saints and martyrs became a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity, and it contributed to the making of a composite culture. XIVIII Maulana Ziauddin of Jaipur was one of those Sufis who became famous in 18th century Rajasthan for his broad humanitarian approach and sympathy towards masses. He was a Chishti Sufi and followed the Chishti teachings in his life and practice. His order became famous as Nizamiya-Chishtiya, and he played a major role in teaching the values of humanity to the people of Rajasthan. XIVIII He used to convene Sama assemblies. However, on Tuesday and Saturday, Sama assemblies were compulsory. XIIIX The Mahaharaj Pratap Bahadur Singh too was the devotee of the saint and would visit the Maulana in deep attachment and reverence. It is said that when the saint died, the whole city of Jaipur mourned for three days. Ii There was an open kitchen (Langar) in the khanqah of Maulana Ziauddin. The food was prepared and distributed among the faqirs, visitors and other needy persons who from came from distant places. Iii

A large number of devotees that visited the Sufi saints played a major role in disseminating the teachings of brotherhood, love and sympathy. Sufi saints molded their ideas and lifestyle in a positive direction that led them to understand and practice Sufi virtues of service, devotion to God and egalitarianism which stimulated the process of cultural synthesis. At the initial stage, the saints preferred to stay in remote areas but gradually their popularity reached to all section of people. Gradually their hospices became the focal point of acculturation.

Conclusion:

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यादे न अज मागम्ख्वारह चुनी खुशतर॥

दोहरा

हिरा आध करि छाड़ गो यह बहु भेला (?) होए।

पिउ निस्सार गेवं तिहि अभ निस्सतारै कोय॥

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