



**The Sufi *Qadariya Silislah (order) Khanqah's* in Medieval Sub-continent and its  
Contribution to Human Development.**

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**Abstract:**

Sufism is an important segment of our social life. It has played significant role in developing social, cultural and political trends in India during the medieval period. It may confidently be said that the Sufi-literature is of great value as we get lot of information about socio-political life. The current study reflects upon the contribution of Sufis in human development during medieval sub-continent. Such contributions are viewed in terms of basic needs approach towards development and universality of equality to mankind. In sub-continent, though the development of Sufi style of education and training, especially their own invented mechanisms of *tariqa* coupled with development of Sufi order and Sufis' role in cultural transformation played an important role in the development of society on pure humanitarian and spiritual grounds. With this development, the emergence of Sufi places of worship, mechanism of self-development, and training of disciples or devotees resulted into development of specialized form of training centers for the development of society and to articulate and spread the philosophy of Sufism regarding peace, harmony, equality and social justice. Sufis practices especially began to develop in medieval sub-continent when Sufis started practicing in the form of small groupings that then turned into their dwellings later on. These Sufi dwellings in the form of *khanqah* acted as organization determined to improve the lives of the common people through humanitarian, educational, social and human rights, social safety, and for delivery of justices for poor and destitute. Because of the parallel development of Sufis and Sultanate in sub-continent India, there also developed both cordial as well as hostile relations between the two because of earlier more popularity among poor marginalized sections of society.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Society, Human Development, Harmony, Peace, Social Justice.

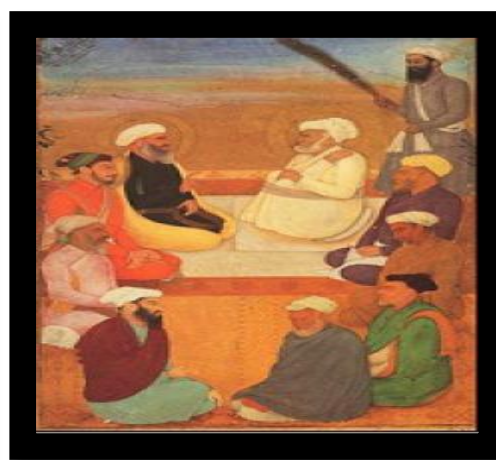
**Introduction:**

Sufism, an important aspect of Muslim spiritual life, holds extraordinary position in medieval Indian history. Since the time of *Hazrath Shaikh Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti* of

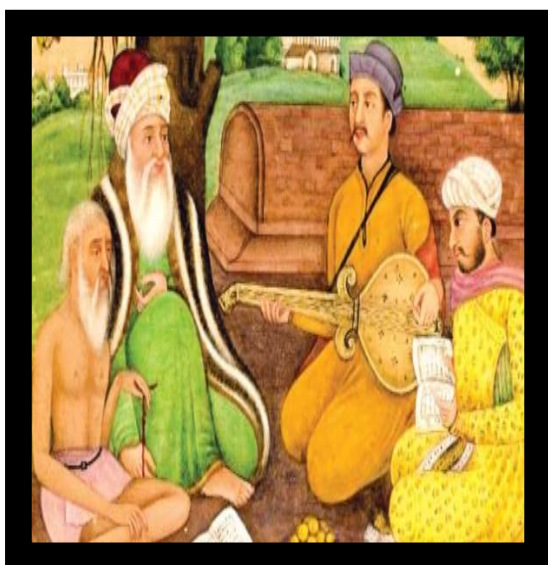
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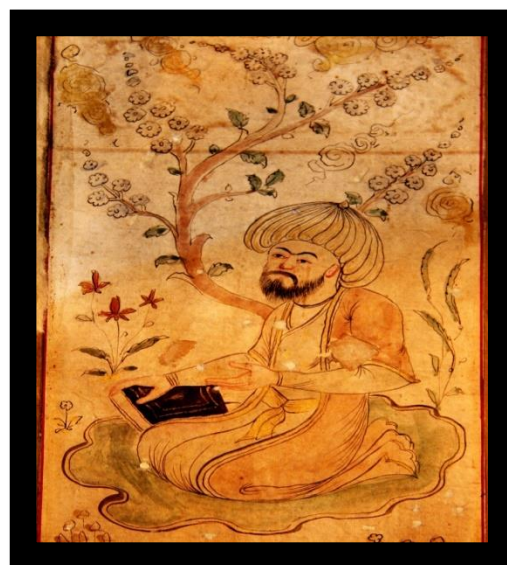
Ajmer, the mystics of Islam, i.e. Sufis, have made great contribution in different fields of medieval life. No doubt the general sources of our medieval history provide all sorts of information about different events, personalities etc. of the medieval period. However, the Sufi literature, produced in medieval India, is also of great historical significance. This literature, whether in the form of *malfuzat*, *tazkiras*, *maqtabat* or brochures and treatises of Sufi thought and practices, is a precious treasure. We come across a lot of information through these work not only of spiritual but social, cultural and even political life during medieval India. Numbers of works dealing with various Sufi aspects were produced up to the fifteenth century in Indian sub-continent.



**Hazrath Shaikh Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti (RA) popularly known as Hazrath Khawaja Ghareebun Nawaz (The messiah of the poor) and his disciples at Ajmer**

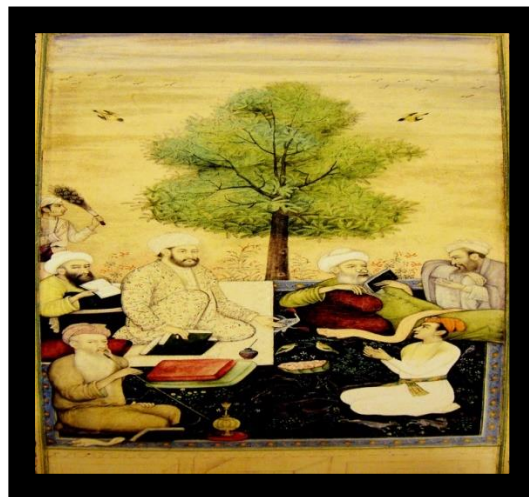
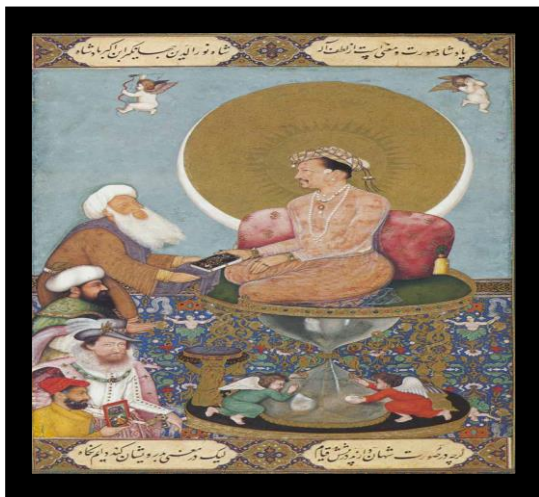


**Hazrath Sheikh Salim Chisti sitting under a tree in a cemetery with attendants.**



**A Sufi Sheikh while finishing his reading to the Mystical glory “Mesnavi” manuscript**





Emperor Jahangir preferring a Sufi sheikh to kings 1660. A meeting of group of Sufis and dervishes, 1650.

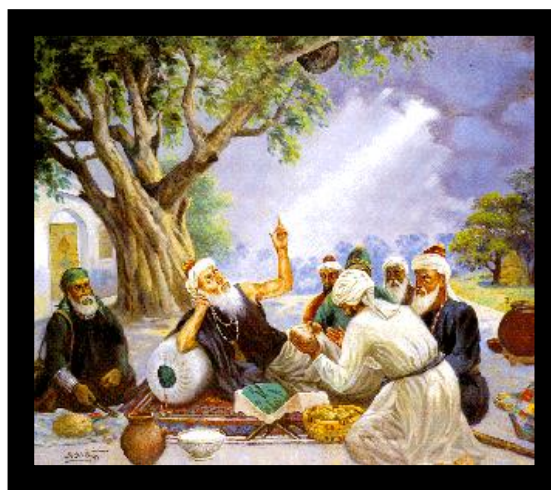


Guler painting showing an imaginary meeting of Sufi saints

(Order from bottom left clock-wise: Hazrath Baba Farid, Hazrath Khawaja Qutub-ud-din, Hazrat Muin-ud-Din, Hazrat Dastgir, Abn Ali Kalandar, and Hazrath Khawaja Nizamuddin Auliya)



Hazrath Mulla Shah of Qadariya Silsilah 1639.



Founder of Chistiya Silsilah in Sub-Continent.

Muslim saints, popularly known as Sufis and *Mashaikhs*, *Mursheeds*, *Pir's-o-murshid's*, also zealously worked to promote harmony amongst the followers of various communities particularly Hindus and Muslims. Practically they believed in the Hadith of the Prophet of Islam: "Whole mankind is the family of God". '*Al-khalq Ayalullah*'; and followed his famous saying: "O' Servants of God, become brothers amongst yourselves". This is why they did not keep themselves aloof from the main stream of the society. They looked upon social service as the supreme object of all their exercises. They considered a life of solitary, self-sufficient contemplation to be incompatible with the highest mystic ideals. They used to say if a man became egocentric, limited his sympathies and cut himself off completely from the energizing currents of social life, he failed to fulfill the mission of Islamic spirituality *Tasawwuf* or Sufism.

Almost all the Sufi teachers always advised their disciples to live in society and bear the blows and buffets of the people. According to them, "Nothing would bring greater reward on the 'Day of Judgment' than bringing happiness to the hearts of men" and this could be done by attending to the problems of the misery-stricken people, assuaging their wounds, pulling up their hearts and by infusing new life and confidence in their broken nerves. These Muslim saints believed in pacific and non-violent approach towards all problems of human society. Force, they said, created more problems than it solved, and it set in motion a vicious circle of wrong and retribution which disturbed the very basis of human relationship.' They attracted the devotion of as many Hindus as of the Muslims. It may, therefore, be said that Sufis gave new dimensions to the life and thought of the people and an impetus to the process of harmonizing the multi-racial and multi-lingual society of our great country. Both contemporary and later sources as well as modern works provide lot of information in regard to their contribution in the field of social integration and communal harmony. Accordingly, it is highly appropriate to understand the role of Sufi saints in bringing the followers of different religions near and closer to each other. Before shading light on the contribution of the Sufis of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in this regard, it seems appropriate to say something about the role of the early Sufis of the medieval period. As we know the actual development of Sufism began after the different Sufi *Silsilahs*, Muslim mystical orders were introduced in the Sub-Continent.

**The Contribution of *Qādīrīyāh* Order:** It was in the fifteenth century that the *Qadiriya silsilah*, 'the *Qadiri* order', reached India and on account of the universal popularity of its

founder *Hazrath Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani* of *Baghdad* the centre of Sufis and capital of *Iraq*, its saints soon received respectable attention from Muslims and other people, and attracted thousands and thousands of them to their spiritual disciple. At the same century, another spiritual order, the *Shattariya silsilah*, 'the *Shattari order*', also got introduced itself in the Indian Sub-Continent. Another important Sufi order in sub-continent was *Qādirīyyāh* which is viewed as the first Sufi order to appear in the form *tarīqa*, which took its name from its well-known founder, the *Hazrath Shaykh „Abd āl-Qādirāl-Jilānī* (1078-1166 C.E.) and is regarded as an off-shoot of the older *Junaidī tarīqa* which started from the *Hazrath Abū ‘l-Qāsim al-Junaid* of Baghdad. His contribution in the sciences of Sufism and *sharia* was so immense that he attained the highest position in spiritual hierarchy of Sufi positions attaining the rank of *āl-Gāuthāl-Azām* (the Supreme Helper). His spiritual jurisdiction is said to have spread from Istanbul to Delhi. In the Punjab, celebrations are held in honor of him every month. This is in contrast to rituals at the shrines of other saints, who are honored once a year.

As contrast to *Chishtīyyāh* Sufis, the saints of this order were generally inclined towards orthodox and exotic aspects of religion whereas some among them leaned towards its liberal and esoteric aspects. The *Qādirīyyāh* Sufis believed that the spirit of mass reforms requires increased level of improved central organization. One of the prominent Sufi saints of this order in sub- continent include *Mākhdūm Abd‘ār Rāshid Hāqqānī* (1173-1269 C.E.) in Multan. His father *Shāykh Ahmed Ghoūth* was the brother of *Shāykh Muhammad Ghoūth*, who is the father of *Shāykh Baha āl-Dīn Zakariya* (1170-1260.C.E.).

In this connection, both *Mākhdūm Abd‘ār Rāshid Hāqqānī* and *Shāykh Bāhāāl-Dīn Zākārīyā* born to same family and received early education and spiritual training from the same spiritual source. In his *khānqāh* Multan, *Mākhdūm Abd.,ār Rāshid* remained busy with *Ulēmā* and *Shāykh*s in discussions learning and training throughout day and nights. In hagiographic accounts reveal that *Mākhdūm Abd‘ār Rāshid Hāqqānī* dreamed his father and upon instructions travelled to Medina where he served the holy tomb of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for at least three years. One night he received instruction from Prophet to travel to *Hamdan* to receive *Bārākā* from *Shāykh Sāyyid Ali Hāmdānī*. After three years of training and education, the master allowed him to travel back to Multan and advised him not to indulge in worldly affairs, distribute among the destitute, adopt the course of humility, refrain from ornaments and essentially never appoint your *khalifa* from your own descendants and *murids*, and also never allowed to construct your *khanqah*.. Among the saints of the Qadiriya



Silsilah in the sixteenth century *Hazrath Shaikh Amanullah Panipati*, commonly called *Hazrath Shaikh Aman Panipati*, held significant position. His mystic ideas and the interpretation of *Ibn 'Arabi's* thus, thought and brought a number of Hindus close to him. The saint's interpretations of the concept of *Wahdat-ul Wujud* undoubtedly attracted several Hindu saints and created the environment promoting the communal harmony.

The most famous Qadiri saint of the seventeenth century was *Hazrath Miyan Mir* of Lahore. He flourished during the times of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Both these Emperors held him in high esteem and are reported to have visited the saint's *Khanqah* on different occasions. Shahjahan's eldest son Dara Shukoh was his devout follower and had joined the discipline of the saint's famous Khalifa Mulla Shah Badakhshi Kashmiri. Dara wrote *Hazrath Miyan Mir's* biography entitled *Sakinat-ul Auliya* in Persian. *Hazrath Miya Mir's Khanqah* was a centre of Hindu-Muslim joint gatherings. People of both the communities obtained his spiritual blessings. The Sikh sources reveal *Hazrath Miyan Mir* as a great admirer of their path and panth. The saint is also mentioned to have laid the foundation Stone of the Harminder Saheb in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Mulla Shah, who succeeded *Hazrath Miyan Mir* as his chief *khalifa*, was a liberal Sufi thinker. He believed in the fundamental uniformity of all religious beliefs. He would pay respect to both mosque and temple.

Dara Shikoh, though not a practicing Sufi, had great faith in spiritual path. He had friendly relations with many contemporary saints. He had gone to very deep in studying Hindu and Islamic mysticism. His works on the subject undoubtedly reveal his deep religious as well as scholarly insight. His most significant work, the *Majma-ul Bahrain* (Meeting of Two Oceans), played significant role in Hindu-Muslim unity in the country. He also translated Upanishads into Persian. Dara urged on identity of Sufi and Vedanta philosophy, and propounded, "Life lies concealed in every idol and. Faith lies hidden beneath Infidelity".\*' He asserted the Rig-veda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharveda were the divinely revealed Books. He believed they had been revealed to the ancient Indian prophets, the greatest of whom was Brahma or Adam. A contemporary of Dara Shikoh was the Sufi known as *Hazrath Sufi Sarmad*. He occupies significant place among the spiritual personalities of the seventeenth century. He too spoke in the same strain when he said that there is no difference between a mosque and a temple. According to him, "It is He (God) and he alone who takes the form of the 'blackstone' of Kaba in one place and becomes the idols of the Hindus in the other" At the same time when Dara Shikoh was engaged in writing his works on mysticism, another Sufi of prominence, *Hazrath Shah Muhibul Ahlhabadi*,

emerged as renowned exponent of communal harmony. Hindus frequently obtained his spiritual blessings.

He holds a unique place among the distinguished Sufi intellectuals of the seventeenth century. He deserves special mention in advocating a tolerant attitude; divide of prejudice and discrimination against Hindus. He permitted his disciples to teach *suluk* (the Sufi path) to the Hindus and draw parallels from the *ashloks* of their scriptures to explain the Sufi ideology. 'According to *Hazrath Shah Muhibul Allahabadi* the mission of the Prophet of Islam was an elaboration of epithet or "mercy unto all human beings" and it signified the shedding of all discrimination based on religion. He said the Quran intended to embrace the entire human race within the ambit of its application and the Muslims and non-Muslims were equal partners in the domain of God. He was of the strong opinion that in matters of state policies, programmes and opportunities any discrimination of the one being a Muslim or a non-Muslim is of no consequence since it would nullify the very purpose of the Prophetic Mission of the Prophet of Islam.

During his early studies, Dara could not have ignored the various Persian translations of Sanskrit works in Akbar's *Maktab-Khana* (translation bureau) and other Sanskrit works translated during Jahangir's reign, quite possibly aroused his interest in Hindu philosophy and mysticism. Moreover there were a number of Sanskrit scholars at Shahjahans court whom the Emperor had liberally rewarded and to whom he gave ostentatious Sanskrit titles. Banwali Das Wall, one of Dara's secretaries had been instructed in Sufism by Mulla Shah and was a historian, translator and poet. Another of Dara's Secretaries, Rai Chandrabhan Brahman, can only be described as a genius', Jagannath Misra and Kavindracharya' Sarasvati of Banaras, both eminent Sanskrit experts, were also attached to Dara Shukoh entourage. During the prince's Qandahar campaign in 1653 tantrists (such as Indra Gire), yogis and their disciples, and Muslim Holy men were ordered by Dara Shukoh to use their magical powers against the enemy. An account of their role in the siege, documented in a diary by Rashid Khan Badi al-Zaman, reads like a melodrama. However, one must remember that in those days both the devil and angels were traditionally invoked to achieve worldly success, even the orthodox Aurangzeb was known to have called on the power of talismans during the Satnami Rebellion.

After reaching Multan, *Mākhḍūm Abd'ār Rāshid Hāqqānī* distributed among poor and destitute his complete *jagir* (property) and around ten million coins he received for his share. He also helped people of the area to dug canal for irrigation, so that they could harvest crops

and get benefit out of land .He however set up the seminary ‘*Madarissa Haqania*’ in the village *Rawaha* in the suburbs of Multan that became a center for spreading knowledge and spirituality. After that, he became busy in meditation, training, and in prayers and shunned the worldly affairs. However, for earning livelihood, he started farming to run the expanses of home and *lāngār*. He forbade to all his beneficiaries from depositing one tenth of agriculture produce. From the *madrassa Haqania*, hundreds of spiritualists and *Ulēmā* got training on *shārīa* and *tarīqa*. The *lāngār* provided here served the need of thousands of hungry visitors. Here is also a well of water called as *Chasma ab-iShifa*. This well is opened for one month during *Urs* of *Makhdum Rashid* during June in every year that is believed to provide relief to all who drink water from here and take bath with the water of this well. The seventeenth century also witnessed another Sufi whose affiliation was with the Qadiri order. He was Hazrath Shaikh Mohammed who lived in Maharashtra. He preached Sufi morals in the region through the medium of Marathi. He identified in his famous work *Dochashma* the common ground of philosophical concepts and ideas of Vedanta and Sufism. Maloji Bhosale had sanctioned, 'land-grant' to his *Khanqah*.

#### ***The Emergence of Sufis Tarīqa and Development of Society:***

The virtuous consideration in the development of society owes much significance in Islam. Donaldson argues that when the ethics and conduct in the society are under consideration, the Sufi character of Muslim ethical thinking and practices becomes evident. The conduct and ethical principles of Sufis are contrary to what the orthodox Muslim *Ulēmā* usually projects that are merely concerned with legal and juristic aspects of Islam and society. The emergence of *sīlsīlāhs* or *tārīqā* orders has much significance in development of Sufi Islam, knowledge, belief and practices. In the more traditional sense, the *tarīqa* promoted the Sufi brotherhood which was an important customary milieu of the relationship bond that facilitated the cooperation and a network for its implementation by means of the gaining knowledge, spiritual advancement, and cohesive social bonds.

In sub-continent, the Sufi style of education and training through *tarīqa* and Sufis' role in cultural transformation and islamization along with counterfeiting communities played an important role in the development of society on pure humanitarian and spiritual grounds. Such traditions of *dervish* seriously challenged the paradoxical splits into elite in competition with popular religion. The Sufi material and immaterial culture, the gender dimension of Sufism, and Sufism as a living tradition remained significant in development of society.



Sufis being organized around spiritual lines, connected with some particular school or *tarīqa* often housed in Sufi lodges (*khānqāh*, *rībāt*, *jāmāātkhānāh*) by setting up as charitable endowments for Sufis and associated communities, assumed new coherence, connection, and complexity. These Sufi lodges were the typical Sufi center of authority and the resident seat of a *pīr*, combined the functions of mosque, *madrasa* and recreation center. These Sufi places also served as extraterritorial sites for the negotiations, mediations, and settlements among various conflicting parties. Most of the *pīrs* were *Shārīah*-minded persons of great learning, but they differed from the traditional *Ulēmā* in that they combined traditional theology with mysticism and mystic insights

Sufi used various concepts for the spiritual training of individuals in society. These include *ma‘arīfah* or *hikma* [wisdom seeking truth and understanding God] *fana* [individuals spiritual merger with God diminishing the dichotomy of „I and Thou“] *baqa* [the divine restoration or permanence of seekers access to Real] *khawf* [the fear of God’s wrath due to His strict mechanism of accountability of persons on the day of judgment] *tawakkul* [denoting to only trust or reliance on God] *faqr* (full exaltation of poverty as it was treated as celebrated virtue practiced by Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]) *ghina* [alms to poor] *dhikr* [the practice of collective recalling of the Creator and His names] *ihsan* [doing what is beautiful] *ikhlas* [the sincerity is primarily related with devotees“ only love and obedience with God] ; and *Taubah*[repentance from God from all sin and negligence of forgetting God and concentrated piety.

The Sufi saints declined not only the company of kings and government officials but they also refused to receive endowments from them. They already understood that rulers had a method of trying to influence religious figures through the allocation of *jagirs* (land, money, and gifts) in exchange for their loyalty and support. However, the acceptance of these gifts would make them obedient to the wishes of kings and nobles, and would impede their independence and pursuit of union with God. *Hazrath Nizamuddīn-al-Auliya* resolutely inculcated his disciples, “Do not accept any village or stipend or favour from kings and officials. It is not permitted to a dervish. Chishti saint used to say, “The king gives a village and holds us under an obligation; our Providence gives us our daily bread without placing any such obligation.” The role of the originators of Hindu–Muslim cultural dialogue became the sole responsibility of Sufi preachers and missionaries of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, who, in order to introduce Islam to the broad masses of the urban population actively made use of the concepts, images and legends of local religions and cultural traditions. Indian Sufis

adopted many customs that were a part of the Indian culture .Sufis from the Chishti *sīlsīlāh* would honor a *Shāykh* by bowing before him and kissing his feet. Despite a decree by the *Ulēmā* that prohibit the practice, the *Chīshī sīlsīlāh* continued to do it.

In this background, the Sufi model and doctrine of social justice and equality was very attractive especially for the down trodden lower sections of society and to those who were deprived of the comforts of civil life. As the Indian society was governed by the caste system this shaped an atmosphere of estrangement and isolation, especially between those in higher and lower castes. The Sufi *Shāykh*s fascinated directly to the Hindu lower class. For them, they presented the true Islamic model that provides an opportunity for release from their own inferior social group. Most members of the lower castes were generally the lower Dalit castes who were not allowed to sleep in cities overnight, and they were barred from access to temples and even sacred texts.

However, Sufis provided openings for social mobility. Hazrath Shaikh Nizamuddin-al-auliya had“opened wide the doors of his discipleship . . . and admitted nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, townsmen and villagers, soldiers and warriors, freemen and slaves, men and women, young and old, shopkeepers and servants. Similarly, the concepts of non-violence and forgiveness already ingrained in Hindu culture and religion were reinforced by these Sufis. The Sufi movement encouraged equality and brotherhood. What was important for the Sufis and their followers was not the external ritual of the mosque or temple, but simply to understand that divinity can best be reached through the gateway of the hear. Such spirit of tolerance and acceptance to diversity adopted by various Sufi *sīlsīlāhs* was very attractive to Hindus. Chishti Sufis welcomed Hindu worshippers to the *khānqāhs*, and hosted visits from *yogis* (Hindu wise men), and participated in *Sāmā* parties that were strictly forbidden but had a rich tradition in Indian culture.

### **Conclusion:**

In the sub-continent the emergence of Sufis and Sufi doctrine contributed in the development of society especially in promoting the spiritual training, peace and harmony, social justice and equality for all regardless of differences based on class, caste, religion and gender. Their contribution was twofold; on the one hand, they were directly involved through their specialized mechanism of *tarīqa* practiced and preached through their dwellings called *khānqāh* for the training and education of devotes, provision of basic food and health relief from their *lāngār* and spiritual healing, and promotion of peace, equality, and love in the society. These Sufi places of worship and trainings called *khānqāh* acted as place of civil

society organizations that were determined to develop the lives of the common people through humanitarian, educational, social and human rights, social safety, and for delivery of justices. On the other side, because of their mediatory role Sufi strived to bridge the gap between common people and ruling elite and for promotion of interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Hindus especially after advent of the Islam in Sub- continent that resulted into inter-communal violence and hatred. Sufi promoted the idea of egalitarianism as a necessary philosophy to bring people together on universal principles of equality and social justice and to reduce the differences in the name of religion, caste and gender. In sub-continent India which was already a socially ranked society, this doctrine of love, peace, social justice and equality was very attractive for downtrodden Hindus who widely acknowledged the message and increased popularity of Sufism in India. This ever increasing following of Sufis gave mandate to Sufis to negotiate with State to provide basic needs of the poor and destitute. It may, therefore, be concluded by saying that Muslim saints known as Sufis and *Mashaikh*, have played significant role in preaching love among the followers of different religions and communities in our great country during the medieval period. Their ideas and action always created communal harmony in India. Accordingly their contribution in this regard is of great value and it cannot be over emphasized.

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