

Şufī Saint 'Khāwaja Gharīb Nawāz' and His Impact on Indo-Pak Subcontinent: An Analysis in the light of His Intuitive Role

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Abstract

Şufī saints have the basic belief of 'Oneness of Allāh' and thus they have a lot of significance in the history of mankind. The 'Sufi orders' refer to the school of thought that refers to spiritual teachings and practices to seek the ultimate truth and purpose of life. This research paper revolves around Moinuddin Chishti (1143-1236 C.E.) also known as 'Khawaja Gharib Nawaz' who is the Şufī saint of Ajmer, India. He is considered one of the great saints of the Chishtī order. The methodology of this research paper covers the narrative and intuitive method which will focus on the important narrated history events and concepts related to mysticism. In this research paper, we will also focus on his histories such as his socio-legal services for the Muslims and their implications on the subcontinent. In light of the Şufism history of centuries, it is very important to study the philosophy of his teachings and his impact on the Muslim people of Indo-Pak Subcontinent. This will also aim to understand the reformation done by Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti and how he evoked divine love in the hearts of people, which is not dealt in an academic manner as per the humble knowledge of the researchers.

Keywords: Chishtī Order, Moinuddin, Subcontinent, Mysticism, Intuition, Impact



Introduction

Sufism is the mystical stream that is related to Islam and is emerged in the very early time of the religion. It fascinates both the insiders and outsiders as its roots have an evident impact on the socio-legal systems of Asia. Sufism is considered the well-organized subset of the Muslim world. The start of Sufism was from somewhere in Volga Bulgaria and came to India with the first of Sultans. The spread of Islam in the subcontinent was the main reason for the spread of Sufism in this area, it helped the poorest of residents as most of them were illiterate to read Quran properly.¹

Sufism and spirituality go hand in hand as it is the link between the seeker and giver. It is a framework of beliefs that help in finding the ultimate truth and purpose of life. The preachers are the Sufi saints as they explain the meaning of life and human existence.² In short, it can be said that it is the movement that leads us to become better Muslims that do-good deeds. Sufism showcases the essence of Islam and never leaves its values, morals, and ethos. During the time of early 13th century, with the arrival of Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti in India, the most glorious time started for Sufism. He was given this title as it means the saviour of the poor, he became the guiding light for the Mughal empire as they ruled for more than two centuries.

Spiritual Transcendence and Its importance in life (psychological evidence)

Many researchers and psychologists study the impact of spirituality on the well-being of human beings and how it helps them stay motivated in this life. This aspect also talks about the motivation that spirituality brings in an individual to suppress their personal needs to ensure the well-being of his community and society. This concept also helps in the awareness of the meaning of life and how death and life work.³ Thus, all these concepts are preached and practiced by Sufi saints to help Muslims get a better understanding of life which helps creates an emotional understanding that leads to a set of good behavioural changes.

This also includes the spiritual practices that are aligned with the religious practices in which an individual exercises the spiritual traditions with their consent to achieve the spiritual truth. It helps in establishing a deep link with

the Ultimate Being that is Allah. Sufism that helps initiate spirituality works for the common good for whole mankind starting from individual to immediate society.⁴ It is very pleasing for people as it appeals to the common principles of universality and tolerance, this was the reason of its widespread in the subcontinent and the world.

There is vast evidence that shows a close link between engaging in spiritual practices and happiness as it gives clear answers to all confusing thoughts and questions. It makes sense of the life, existence, and future that no one has seen. Any person that struggles to find the meaning of life and his existence will look for answers that have value. Discontent is an essential trait in human personality and questioning the meaning of life leads to awareness of morals, values, and significance of human life. People who went to extreme lengths of hate for religion, found ease when they engaged in spiritual practices. It is believed that to find spiritual truth it is necessary to develop a peaceful and comfortable relationship with this universe and its beings.⁵

The Time of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz

The arrival of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz in Ajmer, India was around the 13th century and around about 6th and 7th Hijri year. His time and events are narrated by many thus tracing the role played by this Sufi saint it is necessary to look at the era he lived in. During his time the subcontinent was devastated socially, religiously, and politically so we will see his responsibilities in these three systems.

Social System

The caste system was quite evident in the Indian society and there were major divisions on this basis which led to mental and physical distress. The four casts in Hindus were Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. The Brahmans were at the highest, then came the Kshatriya, and the last two were given no such value as they believed that Brahmans were made from the head of the God, Kshatriya from the hand, Vaishya from the abdomen and Sudra referred as the untouchables from the feet of the God. In every aspect of life, people there were stratified based on their caste as some of them were treated worse than animals. This played a major role in the denial of a human's dignity;

freedom of speech was just a fantasy for them let alone they be given justice and equality. All the classes had their respective duties and responsibilities, the last two castes had a lot of prohibitions which made them victims of this social stratification. Women of these castes were treated the worst, Hindus used to follow the Sati system in which if the husband died, the wives were forced to commit suicide or were burned with them. ⁶

Religious System

The religious understanding of Indian society was all dependent on myths that had no logic at all. As Paganism was very common, the count of Gods and Goddesses became uncountable. Every other thing was worshipped because it was considered better than humans. The Indian society was blindly accepting and following the teachings of their forefathers who showed them fantasy with no logic and reality. They believed in superstitions and associated every good and bad thing in their life with the blessing and curse of their Gods.

Political System

In his time, Rajputs were ruling major parts of India, they were dictatorial which caused decentralization everywhere they ruled. People were fed up with their rule and needed a good reformer. ⁷The powerful ruled the poor and made their life miserable as they had no interest in the welfare of society.

Khawaja Gharib Nawaz's Life

• Lineage

He was named Shaikh Khawaja Moinuddin, his lineage meets with the lineage of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, which is one of the noble lineages as it links with Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H). ⁸

Attribution

Khawaja Gharib Nawaz came to Ajmer in 587 AHS where he lived as a Sufi saint and spiritual leader, he was firm against all the superstitions and played a vital role of mentor for the people who sought the ultimate truth and meaning of life.

Titles

His followers bestowed him many beautiful and lovable titles, they called him Sultan of Arifin, leader of Sharia, leader of Tariqa, heir of the messengers, man of secrets, proof of spiritual leaders, and many more. The titles that are well known are Gharib Nawaz, Lover of Allah, etc. The most famous and known by literally anyone anywhere is 'Gharib Nawaz' which means the helper of the poor.

Alliance with the mentor and brief travel history

He went to Bukhara and Samarqand where he studied Islamic Sciences and did the Hifz of Quran as well. Some say he studied till the age of 24 years and some say 34 years. He met Gauth al-Azam twice in his Life at the age of 20. He went to Baghdad from Jilan with Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and met many noble personalities there. Then he went to India for the first time, there he met many Shaikhs and travelled to different tombs of noble people. He also visited the city of Lahore and Multan. He returned from India and pledged an alliance to his Shaikh Usman Harooni and travelled along with his mentor for about 20 years. Throughout the travel, he was like a servant to his master (the concept of Peerī and Mureedī). ⁹When he turned 52, he was given the Caliphate by his mentor who bid him farewell. He was guided to go to the city of Ajmer, and on the way, he passed Basara, Kerman, Herat, and Lahore. In Lahore he stayed at the infamous 'Data Darbar' for a week and then went to Delhi, and finally to Ajmer.

Prominent Work

Some of the evident works are discussed in this section where it is seen that Khawaja Gharib Nawaz was a blessed writer and he had a good command of the Persian language. ¹⁰

• Aness-ul-Arwāh

This is a collection of all the statements that Khawaja Gharib Nawaz heard from his mentor Shaikh Usman Harooni. The book is divided into 28 councils and consists of 45 pages. The councils are a statement of faith, statement of communication, statement of the destruction of villages on the

Day of Judgement, statement of women’s affairs and freeing of slaves, statement of charity, statement of drinking wine, statement of harming the believers, statement of swearing of a believer, statement of gaining, statement of calamity, statement of injustice to animals, statement of peace, statements of explanation of questions, statement of paradise and its people, statement of Masjid’s virtue, statement of collection of resources of the world, statement of ethics of sneezing, statement of the call of prayer, statement of conditions of the believers, statement of ethics of going to the toilet, statement of Last time, statement of mentioning death, statement of sending lights to the Masjids, statement of Dervishes, statement of drooping dress, statement of conditions of scholars of the Last time, and lastly the statement of repentance.

▪ **Deewān-i-Mueen**

This collection has poems regarding Sufism consisting of 21 ghazals and 1150 poems, it is written in Persian and has been translated in Urdu as well. It includes poems on the importance of the names of Allah, Fana and Baqa, renunciation and abstinence, the value of human beings, the reality of the oneness of Allah (Tauheed), burning of divine love also known as Ishq, and fear from the Day of Judgement.¹¹

▪ **Maktub-e-Khwaja**

This collection includes the 7 letters of Khawja Gharib Nawaz to his spiritual successor which he wrote in Persian. The 7 letters revolve around the divine mysteries, nearness to Allah Almighty, renouncement, disappointment, how Allah shows the right way, good deeds which is the eternal companions, control of animal desires, contentment, abstinence, jealousy, Satan, Allah Almighty the provider of everyone, Reliance on Allah, negation, and assertion, and the perfect Fakir. He also used quotes from several Sufi saints and gave examples to clarify any confusion his disciple might have; their relationship shows a perfect admirable bond between a teacher and disciple.

The 4 Sufi Orders

The four prominent orders that are and were practiced in the subcontinent are the Chishti order, Qaddriyya Order, Suhrawardiyya Order, and the Naqshbandi order.

▪ Chistiiyya Order

It is one of the 4 orders and the Sufi saints of these orders led a very humble life, it was followed in Afghanistan and came to the subcontinent. The *Chistiiyya* or Chisti order prevailed in India with the help of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz. The order is further divided into 3 fragments, the *Nasiriyya*, *Sirajiyya*, and the *Sābirīyya*.¹²

Social, Religion, and Political Services of Khāwaja Gharīb Nawāz

Khāwaja Gharīb Nawāz was kind from an early age, after his father's death he inherited a garden but he sold that as he wanted to distribute the money among the poor. During his travel history and alliance with his mentor, he was aligned towards educating people as he was highly impressed by the communication style a teacher adopts. He was given the title of Gharīb Nawāz by his mentor and he told him whatever he will pray for any poor person, the prayer will never be denied by the Almighty. After he bid farewell to his mentor he started traveling to villages and educated them towards religion.¹³ His preaching and communication style was so soft and delicate that anyone who he taught became his disciple.

When he reached Ajmer, the life of people was miserable under the rule of the Raj Empire. The people of Ajmer were deeply astonished and impressed by him as they had never seen such an educated person in their life. Prithvi Raj was against his teaching as he was an astrologer, he had already seen the demise of his empire in his future. Because of many miracles seen and narrated, people became more and more impressed with him even the Raj empire was left frightened. Prithvi Raj tried his best to stop the spread of the Chishti order and was extremely cruel to the disciples of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz.¹⁴ At last, Prithvi Raj was killed when Shahabuddin took control as he

reached there on the orders of the Sufi saint, and he also became the disciple of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz.¹⁵

With all these events in history, it is quite evident that Khawaja Gharib Nawaz was the guiding light for people of the subcontinent as they were freed from the cruelty and tyranny of pictorial leaders and became aware of their rights and meaning of life. These events play a vital role in the social, religious, and political aspects of the subcontinent.

His Impact on Indo-Pak Subcontinent

▪ Influence on the subcontinent

The fact that throughout the history of Islam much of the movement against religious fundamentalism came from within the Muslim society rather than the outside, went unreported. Sufism being a major contributor to the spread of Islam would be indigestible to many who are accustomed to the one-sided version of the Islamic history.¹⁶ However, the fact is that much of Islamic expansion in the sub-continent has been led as much by the Sufi saints as the Muslim warriors, if not more.

Many Sufi orders emerged in the Muslim world around the 12th Century. During this period, the Sufi saint Khawaja Gharib Nawaz arrived in Ajmer and started the spread of Sufism in India. The Chishti order became the most prominent out of all 4 orders due to his work and gave a path for many schools of thought to rise. Such was the popularity of the Chishti order that it became a guideline for the Mughal empire to follow throughout the 2 centuries they ruled India, with the most prominence in Akbar's reign. His devotion to Khawaja Gharib Nawaz was that strong that he visited his tomb in Ajmer regularly to pay his respects to him.

The *Suhrawardi* order was popularized in the subcontinent due to the works of Baha-ud-din Zakariya and Jalaluddin Surkhposh Bukhari, who made Multan as the hub for these activities. Most of the Muslim authorities at the time supported the Sufi saints.¹⁷ Therefore, Baha-ud-din Zakariya was actually appointed as the *Shaykh al-Islam* by Shamsuddin of the Delhi Sultanate. Many of the likeminded religious groups at the time came together

and joined the ideology due to their common love for spirituality, and with that, culture and arts began to flourish.

While most remember the strict rules and laws that were set by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, many choose to forget the influential work done by his brother Dara Shikoh for Sufism. Being born in Ajmer, he developed an interest in mystics and Sufism from a young age. This interest drove him to write his first detailed book, *Safinat-ul-Awliya*, about the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, the *Khalifas* and the Sufi saints. His *Pir* or 'spiritual guide', Mulla Shah, had introduced him to the Sufi order *Qāddiriya*. After this he wrote and commissioned multiple Sufi works till his death on 9th September, 1659. Some of works include *Risala-i-hak Numa*, *Hasanat-ul-Arifin* and *Iksir-i-Azam*. He may have died but his words continue to live on.¹⁸

Even though the rule of Aurangzeb is known for being intolerant towards people of different faiths, much of the Sufi work brought Muslims and Hindus together. The ideology revolved around the doctrine of inclusivity and the amalgamation of a society in working towards spiritualism.¹⁹ They put aside all differences based on faith, caste or creed and wanted to achieve nothing but divine excellence. Such teachings brought the Bhakthi movement of the Hindus closer to Sufism. This movement aimed to reform how the caste system at the time worked, where the Brahmins were declared as a more exalted caste compared to other casts such as Shudras and Dalits. As Sufism was about loving one another, the Bhakthi movement joined it and, thus, an inclusive society was created.

Speaking of Hindus and Muslims coming together, the emperor Akbar, who was devoted to Khawaja Gharib Nawaz, had the same policies and treatment of Hindus as he had for the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews. He made many Hindu temples as well as many mosques to allow everyone to practice their religions peacefully and he did all this because he believed himself to be a *Pir* who respected human beings regardless of their faith.

The Sufi movement had its share of oppositions and hardships in the sub-continent. As the four main Sufi saints of India came at the same time as the

invaders from Afghanistan, they confused the spread of such ideology with the invasion.²⁰ Therefore, more work was to be done. Nizamuddin Auliya, the founder of *Chishti Nizami* order, advanced it in Delhi from where it spread to South India with the expansion of the Tughluk Dynasty. However, the traditional Ulema did not support the influence the Sufis had and, therefore, voiced their opinion to come back to the ‘pure’ traditions of the Sharia. Another example of the opposition was the movement of Prithvi Raj Chauhan against Khawaja Gharib Nawaz. He was frightened of the influence Chishti order had and tried his best to put a stop to it.

Regardless of the opposition, the Sufism movement persevered. It withstood all the opposition, including the Mughal dread, very successfully. Due to the works of the Sufis, the spiritual dimensions of Islam grew and flourished throughout the sub-continent. They created a society that functioned on the principle of inclusivity and co-existence between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was because of this influence that Guru Nanak founded Sikhism in the 16th Century, which bridged the gap between Hinduism and Islam.

▪ **Impact on Pakistan**

Sufism dates back to the time of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, during the earliest era of Islamic history. Its main objective is to purify and spiritually instruct oneself to find the truth of sensational love and knowledge by personally experiencing God yourself. This objective is achieved through organized movements, beliefs, and practices such as praying, meditating, and also abstaining from immoral activities and partaking in ceremonies or rituals. The most famous one is the dancing on ‘*dhamaal*’.²¹

It is a misconception that Sufis wear green robes with uncut hair and beards. Instead, Sufi is the most intelligent, active, and practical member of society. Sufis when first introduced to the Indian subcontinent, they gave an uplifting impression to the poor by introducing them a meaning to their lives, by introducing them to the creator of the universe, Allah. Sufis never discriminate between religions, Hindu, Christian, Jew, or Muslim; for them all human beings are equal. This was the biggest influence on Indian society

as people from all sects and religions were welcomed without any boundaries.

Plus, Sufism produced an immense work of literature and poetry. Dozens of novels were written at the time and Maulana Rumi is the most famous poet. Furthermore, all sects in the Indian subcontinent associated their founding with Prophet Muhammad PBUH, but British Orientalists achieved this by creating a misconception between Sufism and Islam.

Dhamal is the most popular practice among Sufis in Pakistan and India. It is a way of reaching a state of trance by twirling, whirling, pounding feet, and shaking head on the loud sounds of *Dhol* and other instruments. This state of consciousness is achieved when they smoke hash, which has become a legal practice in Pakistan. This is the greatest impact of Sufism on Pakistan because hashish is used to induce a trance-like state of silence, calmness, and acuteness.²²

Qur'an 4:43 says: "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants (*Khamr*), gambling, [sacrificing on] stone affairs [to other than God], and diving arrows are but defilements from the work of Satan; so, avoid it, that you may be successful."²³

Since abstinence is the fundamental practice of Sufism – yet the non-literate class of Pakistan seems to mix up the concept of using intoxicants to reach a state of consciousness. The lower social strata apply the idea that smoking hash and dancing '*dhamal*', will show them a way to approach Allah. This misconception stretches across the country, and it is difficult to minimize their strong belief in this as these are being practiced since the early ages of the spread of Islam in the subcontinent.²⁴

Internationally, Pakistan has been recognized as a terrorist country ever since Osama bin Laden was found in the famous hill station, Abbottabad. A crisis to Pakistan's reputation can be sorted out if Pakistan is branded as a Sufi Country worldwide to gain the confidence of other nations. It seems a tiresome activity because Pakistani political bodies are not in favour of Sufism and consider their ideology 'haram' or forbidden; simultaneously, the Pakistani media doesn't bother to compromise on the publishing news.

Pakistani militants and suicide bombers attacked many Sufi shrines in different parts of Pakistan. The oppression of militants against Sufism has destroyed the image of Pakistan in international media and has spread fear in public. This greatly affected tourism and businesses in the country, and Pakistan is on the FATF Gray List since June 2018.

Conclusion

Summing up Ṣūfism has helped people in their worst of times, take any Muslim region and you will see a legacy of Sufi saints and their services for mankind. Same goes for Khawaja Gharib Nawaz, his impact and influence are so vast that even today all big celebrities, Muslim or Hindu, go to his shrine to pay him respect. No one can deny the history, the legacy, the impact, the reform, and most importantly the fortune it brought to the people of subcontinent and Pakistan as well. Moreover, Sufism is not the name of extremism and people using it for their means are not right image of this subset of Muslim culture. Allah Almighty has blessed all humans with guidance but in the worst of all times Ṣūfī saints like Khawaja Gharib Nawaz has brought Muslims together and changed them to be good human beings and good citizen of society and to spread this stance as well.

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