B A 2nd Semester (Honors)

Paper-Social Formation and Cultural Patterns of Medieval World

Unit-V : Societies in Central Islamic Land

Topic-Sufism

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 Sufism is a mystic and ascetic Islam practiced  by millions of Muslims. While it is sometimes misunderstood as a sect of Islam, it is actually a broader style of worship that transcends sects, directing followers’ attention inward. Sufi practice focuses on the renunciation of worldly things, purification of souls and the mystical contemplation of God's nature. Followers try to get closer to God by seeking spiritual learning known as tariqa.  
         The philosophy and practice of Sufism may aptly be stated by Dr Tara Chand, "Sufism is a religion of intense devotion; Love is its manifestation, poetry, music and dance are the instruments of its worship and attaining oneness with God is its ideal".  
  
**Origin of Sufism**  
            It is generally believed that Sufism is derived from the Arabic word 'Saf' and 'Suf'. The word Saf means a carpet. Since the Sufis meditate God on a carpet. Sufism took its birth pure people who mediated on a carpet.  
            The Arabic word Suf means wool. The Muslim saints who wore garments of coarse wool began to be called Sufi saints. The first epoch of Sufism is said to have begun in seventh century A D.  
            Some of the scholars argue that  Sufism from an interiorisation of Islam, such as Louis Massignon who states : "It is from the Quran, constantly recited, medited and experienced, that Sufism proceeded, in its origin and development". Sufism may have also emerged from the practice of Muslim asceticism. People of ascetic temperaments were found throughout Muslim communities early in the history of Islam who had maintained a strict control over their life and behaviour. They followed a lifestyle of modesty, temperance, contentment and denial of luxury. Their practic included fasting, wearing light clothing in the depth of winter or withdraw themselves from the world.  
            
**Main Features of Sufism**  
           1. Sufism derives its inspiration from Islam. While the Orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct and blind observance of religious rituals, the Sufi saints seek inner purity.  
           2. According to Sufi saints, God is the beloved of lover (Mashook), the devotee is eager to meet his beloved (God).  
           3. The Sufis think that love and devotion are the only means of reaching God.  
           4. Along with prophet Muhammad, they also attach great importance to their Murshid or Pir (Guru).  
           5. Devotion is more important than fast (Roza) or prayer (Namaz).  
           6. Sufism does not believe in caste system.  
           7. Sufism emphasizes upon leading a simple life.  
           8. Sufi saints preached in Arabic, Persian and Urdu etc.  
           9. The Sufis were divided into 12 orders each under a mystic Sufi saints. Each order believes that Sufi teachings were passed on from teacher to students through the centuries.  
           10. Sufism give importance on some supplementary practices like chanting of God's attributes (zikir) and dancing, such as that performed by the whirling derives in Turkey.  
  
**Orders of Sufism**  
            Sufis donot fefine Sufism as a School or legal jurisprudence (or Madhab) Among the most well known Sufi orders (tariqas) are  the Qadiri, Chisti, Oveyssi, Shadhili, Jerrahi, Nasqshbandi, Nimatullahi, Mevlevi, Ashraff. In the beginning Sufism was a social order of Islamic civilization. When it spread to China, West Africa and United States, it adopted elements of local culture and belief, making it a popular practice.  
  
**Sufism in India**  
            Sufism entered in India in the 12 th century with Muslim invaders and became popular in the 13th century. Some of the Sufi saints of India are

**Khawaja Moin-ud-Din** (1143-1234) He came to India towards the close of 12 th century. He settled at Ajmer. On account of his simple and Pious and simple life people of both Hindu and Muslim looked upon him as their spiritual teacher. On account of his renin, meditation and selfless service people of different parts of India came to his place at Ajmer.  
 **Baba Farid-ud-DIN Ganj-i-Shakar** (13th) century. His outlook was broad and humane. Some of his devotion verses are found in Adi-Granth of the Sikhs. Thousands of his devotees visit his tomb at Faridkot at Punjab.

Nizam-ud-Din Aulia (14th Century) He laid stress on love as a means of the realization of God. During his life time he was held the great esteem by several Sultans of Delhi as well as the general public. He also used Hindi in his teachings.His tomb at Nizam-ud-Din in Delhi has become a place of pilgrimage for both Muslims and Hindus.

**Sufism in Assam** was developed by Ajan Fakir. He came to Assam during 17th century. with some of his followers and stayed at the Dargah of Ghias Auliah at Hajo but ultimately settled at Sivsagar. His original name Shah Miran. His was totally mixed up with the Assamese culture and society. So in his zikir the influence of traditional Assamese folk cultures are being observed  
  
**Impact of Sufism in India**  
Religious Impact-The efforts of Sufism helped to lessened religious fanaticism in India.Hindus in larger numbers became the followers of Sufi saints. The tombs built after their death became places of worship for the Muslims and Hindus. Their belief in unity of God helped to remove mutual differences.  
  
**Social Impact**-Their stress on social welfare led to the establishment of works of charitable nature, opening of orphanage and women service centres. The efforts of Sufi saints helped to promote equality and lessened the evils of casteism.  
  
**Political Impact**-Some of the renowned Sufi saints on account of their virtuous and saintly life motivated some of the Delhi Sultans to follow a liberal policy.  
  
**Cultural Impact**-The sacred places built in the memory of the sufi saints clearly demonstrate the development of new type of architecture. Sufi saints popularised devotional songs and music. Several Sufi saints composed literary works in vernacular language. Amir Khusro, a disciple of Nizam-ud-Din Aulia, was a noted gazzle writer. The poetry of Khusro was so full of sweetness that he was called Tutiy-I-Hind

**Sufi Literature and Poetry**

Sufism has produced a large body of poetry in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Kurdish, Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi, Its poetic gems can be found in every major Islamic culture and literature. Notable Sufi writers were Ibn-al- Farid, Ibn Arabi, Bulleh Shah,Abdul Qader Bedil and Amir Khusro. It was around 1000 C.E. That early Sufi Literature that in the form of manuals, treatises, discourses and poetry, became a source of Sufi thinking and meditation.

Thus Sufism is a mystic form of Islam, a school of practice that emphasizes the inward search of God and shuns materialism. It has produced some of the world’s most beloved literature. Its modern day adherence cherish tolerance and pluralism.

References-

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2.Adhunik Bishwar Samajik-Sanskritik Itihas- Anurag Bora.

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