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**Abstract**

Sufism, the spiritual facet of Islam, emerged in the very early days of Islam as a self-awareness practice and to keep distance from kingship. However, this institution prospered in the times of Muslim rulers and Kings and provided a concrete foundation to seekers for spiritual knowledge and intellectual debate. Sufism in South Punjab also has an impressive history of religious, spiritual, social, and political achievements during Muslim dynasties. Though, a shift in the governing system, from kingdom to democracy has altered the functions of spiritual institutions from inner purification to divine plan of salvation around the globe. The dramatic convergence of new lines is obvious in Sufi institutions as well; the amalgamation of spiritual teachings and exercises with the propagation of spiritual doctrine and social development. This paper examined the development of Sufism in South Punjab of Pakistan and found a significant shift in Sufi philosophy and the prioritized functions of Sufi institutions with the change of governing system, from spiritual achievements to social well-being and political authority.

**Keyword:** Sufism, Islamic mysticism, Sufi politics, South Punjab

## Introduction

The southern part of the province Punjab of Pakistan has a long history of Sufism that commenced with the advent of Islam here from the beginning of the eighth century. However, in the thirteenth century, Bahauddin Zakariya (d. 1262) of Multan and Fariduddin Masud (d. 1265) of Pakpattan commenced the immortal history of Sufism in this region of South Punjab. Their *Khanqahs*, Islamic institutions, were parallel to the recognized governmental or Muslim societal educational system (Tareen, 1989), but the additional spiritual opportunities under the umbrella of the great Sufis had made them significant (Trimingham, 1971). Several renowned clans of Punjab embraced Islam and adopted Islamic values to the preaching of Fariduddin Masud and his contemporary Bahauddin Zakaria; and to their descendants (Eaton, 1984). Bahauddin Zakariya sent Islamic missions throughout Asia up to the Philippines and we can also trace Suhrawardi descendants in Sindh and Baluchistan numerous (Sindhi, 2000). Multan and Pakpattan became centres of Sufism whose continuation and veneration could be seen until today due to the fabulous spiritual, social and political work of Sufis (Chishti, 2003).

Chishti and Suhrawardi *Khanqahs* remained famous until the time of Alauddin Mauj Derya of Pakpattan (d. 1334), Shah Rukn-e-Alam of Multan (d. 1334), and Sadaruddin Rajan Qital of Uch (d. 1424), however, for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Qadiri Sufi family of Syed Ghaus Bandagi Gilani (d. 1517), who came to Multan from Halb, and established *Khanqah* of Qadiriyya order in Uch, replaced Sufi predecessors in all spheres, religious, social and political (Gilani, 2006). Eighteenth-century again came with the revival of the Chishtiyya order in Southern Punjab. The religious role of great Chishti Sufi Khwaja Noor Muhammad Maharvi (d. 1791) turned the fame again towards Chishti spiritual masters. His descendants established *Khanqahs* in several cities of Punjab like Taunsa, Ahmad Pur, Chachran, Jalalpur, Golra, etc. for the propagation of Islam (Sindhi, 2000). These Sufi lodges enjoyed the patronage of Muslim rulers of Delhi and Multan and we could see their immense role in religious, social, and political spheres.

However, the ongoing democratic era has changed the patterns of Sufi institutions significantly. Ancient convents of Multan, Pakpattan, and Uch, under the command of inherited custodians, are focused only on the political domain, and their religious and spiritual role is limited to the commemoration of Sufi rituals on shrines. While, recent Sufi institutions, in which institutes of Ahmad Saeed Kazmi (d. 1986) of Chishtiyya order and Maulana Hamid Ali Khan (d. 1980) of Naqshbandiyya order are prominent in Multan, have been become a school of Islamic studies rather than a spiritual convent, and their social and political participation is significant as well.

In this study, we attempt to bring out the social and political significance of Sufis and Sufism to understand their impacts on society. The article shed light that how Sufi saints formed social and political values in the society, and what was the relationship between the Sufi saints and the folks in these spheres.

### The social role of Sufis in South Punjab

Sufi religious authority, as a mediator between God and human beings, established Sufis' close relations to the public as well as with the state administrations and tribal chiefs, which had made *Khanqahs* a bridge between rulers and public. Kings and rulers always remained in touch with the Sufis for the sake of divine blessing for their rule and worldly achievements. Thus, Sufis utilized their obedience and sources for the prosperity of society. In that medieval period, public approach to the court was difficult due to insufficient resources of traveling and lower status as well, but the Sufis and *Khanqahs* due to their expansion throughout the state were easily approachable to the deprived persons (Choudhary, 2010), and saints were not only regarded as the source of spiritual blessing and sacred

knowledge, but they were social workers and philanthropists who contributed for a prosperous society in terms of charity, education, and intervention for pardon.

Suhrawardi *Khanqah* of Multan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the patronage of the honourable Sufis, Bahauddin Zakariya, Sadaruddin Arif, and Shah Rukn-e-Alam, served in social, political, and religious affairs. It is authenticated that the affluence of Suhrawardi *Khanqah* was infinite; thousands of dervishes, poor, guests, and travellers ate splendid food from its *Langar* daily (Faridi, 2010). Impacts of Bahauddin Zakariya's socio-economic achievements could be found in Multan even in recent days (Chishti, 2003). Further, charitable activity, the distribution of wealth among the deprived people, was common among the Sufis. But, for this practice, the ideology of Suhrawardis and Chishtis was different; first helped people according to their desire from their stocks but later always distributed all of their stock before the sunset (Javed, 2010). It is evident that following the mystical and social ideology of Chishti intellectuals, the attitude of Baba Farid of Pakpattan was entirely different from his Suhrawardi contemporary saint. Baba Farid neither accepted any land from the rulers nor stocked any commodity or money in his convent. He returned the order of land to the Balban, second in command of King Nasiruddin but accepted silver money for dervishes (Nizami, 1990). Describing ascetic life in the lodge of Baba Farid, Eaton (1984) wrote:

A tradition of mystical endeavor was practiced by full-time residents at Baba Farid's convent (*Jama'a Khana*), men who had been initiated into the Chishti order, who live a communal life of a strongly ascetic nature, and who, in short, had resolved to tread the arduous Sufi path to God. (p. 335-336)

Similarly, historical scholarships mentioned that the spiritual masters of the southern part of Punjab keenly used their influence and relations to Kings and rulers to resolve the problems of the destitute populace. Shah Rukn-e-Alam, before going to Delhi, had received applications of the public in multitudes and the King considered all of them with humility (Tareen, 1989). Moreover, Sufi saints always played an integral role to prevent the folks from the brutality of Kings. History depicts that they never bothered about their life to stop Kings to commit cruelties. Efforts of Shah Rukn-e-Alam to end the massacre in Multan, commenced by Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq when he crushed the insurgency of Kashlu Khan, the ruler of Multan, is one of the best examples in the history of Sufism (Javed, 2010). Even, having a policy of avoidance to the rulers, Baba Farid wrote once a letter to King Balban on the plea of a common man. In the same way, Makhdum Jahanian Jangasht (1308-1384), Suhrawardi Sufi of Uch, influenced King Feroz of Delhi; King believed in divine blessing through the fulfillment of desires of the public presented by the saint. Makhdum convinced Sultan Feroz of the cancellation of several taxes that was a remarkable social achievement of a Sufi (Nizami, 1990).

While, in the contemporary political scenario of Pakistan, Sufis are playing the same mediated role with the approach of rich to poor. The lodge of the Sufi is now a source of interaction between disciples who belong to different social strata and this system helps people to resolve their social issues. Even, middle-class people demonstrate a high level of caring because of spiritual blessing and in mentor's love and obedience (Werbner, 2003).

Another prominent social feature of the Sufism was venerated educational system of Sufi saints where accommodation and food were also provided free of cost along with education. Keeping in mind the significance of knowledge and education in Islam, the Sufis always urged for education and spent their life for this purpose. The historian noted that the first Asian Islamic school of Uch, *Gazroni Khanqah* had more than five hundred students (Shahab, 1993). Later, in the thirteenth century, Zakariya laid the foundation of a peerless Islamic school of South Punjab at *Qilla Kohna Qasim Bagh*, Multan Fort, where students apart from Quran, Hadith and Fiqh, learned skills of calligraphy and book-binding to earn

money (Tareen, 1989). Logic and philosophy were also included as subjects in this institution for community building (Dasti, 1998). In the same period, Baba Farid established a great convent of the history of Sufism in Pakpattan for the knowledge of divine truth. Hundreds of the students and dervishes got sacred knowledge (Ishaq, 1978) and became ambassadors of love and humanity.

After the decline of the Suhrawardiyya order in Multan, Uch became the hub of the Suhrawardi Sufis. The spiritual successor of Zakariya, Jalaluddin Bukhari (d. 1291), established Sufi *Khanqah* in Uch after the demise of his mentor. This institution sent Sufi preachers up to Sindh and Kashmir, and at the time of Makhdum Jahanian, it had become one of the most prestigious '*Khanqahs*' of the Muslim world. Makhdum founded the Islamic school '*Madrassa Jalali*' where he taught *Quran*, *Hadith*, and '*Tasawuf*'. He delivered special lectures to his selected disciples and the famous Sufi book '*Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*' was included in the daily lessons. He had a wide knowledge of Islamic theosophy; his descendants compiled his impressive lectures on Islamic teachings and ethics which are still popular (Tareen, 1989). Later, in the fifteenth century, Qadiri Sufi Ghaus Bandagi Gilani founded a new educational and spiritual institution in Uch which filled the gap of the spiritual environment in the region emerged due to the decline of Suhrawardi and the Chishti institutions (Shahab, 1993).

The last remarkable Sufi movement in South Punjab commenced in the eighteenth century whose continuation could be found in recent days in Pakistan. Khwaja Noor Muhammad Maharvi, the notable Chishti Nizami Sufi master, revived Chishtiyya's order here in Punjab after Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar. He founded a peerless Islamic school in Mahar Sharif and later his descendants established '*Khanqahs*' in several cities of Punjab like Taunsa, Ahmad Pur, Chachran, Jalalpur, Golra, etc. Only, Islamic school of Khwaja Suleiman Taunsvi had almost two thousand students. This institution provided and everything to the students like accommodation, food, clothes, and shoes, even there were facilities of doctor and medicine, barber, and shoemaker, etc. (Sindhi, 2000).

In the recent democratic period, several traditional Islamic schools are working under the supervision of Sufi saints and their descendants; '*Jamia Anwar-ul-Uloom*' of Ahmad Saeed Kazmi, Chishti Sufi of Sabiriyya branch, and '*Madrassa Khair-ul-Muad*' of Maulana Hamid Ali Khan, a Naqshbandi Sufi, of Multan are very well-known for spiritual ideology and knowledge in South Punjab. Moreover, ancient convents like Baba Farid of Pakpattan and Khwaja Fareed of Kot Mithan have established welfare trusts with the donations of their devotees which are disseminating Sufi knowledge and ideology through conferences, sharing Sufi books online, by establishing small hospitals for needy patients (Baba Fareed Ganjshakar Educational & Welfare Trust. 2017). On the other side, in this democratic system, descendants of these spiritual masters who are renowned politicians, worked with the government and established colleges and universities for contemporary education to pay homage to venerated saints.

The fame of Sufis among the masses because of their religious and social work made them the influential figure of the society and we found the significant political role of Sufis, their hereditary successors, and custodians of the shrines in the old and contemporary history of South Punjab.

### **The political role of Sufis in South Punjab**

Sufis' influence in the society and their mediatory role between the Kings and the folks formed strong political ties between the courts and the shrines. In the early centuries of South Asian Sufism, the veneration of saints by the local leaders and the tribes was an important factor that encouraged the Kings to make relations with influential Sufi *Khanqahs* for better rule and administration. The political role of the Sufis and their families in South Punjab is noteworthy. Sufi descendants served as rulers and also staged rebellions against

rulers in this region. Influential saints always used their powers to resolve the problems of the common people as well as for peacemaking in the region; they also played an integral role in the reconciliation process between hostile rulers (Shahab, 1993).

Suhrawardi spiritual masters of Multan and Uch, and Chishti mentors of Pakpattan had good relations with Delhi Sultanate. In the early thirteenth century, instead of an independent rule of Nasiruddin Qabacha, pioneer Sufi master of Suhrawardiyya order Bahauddin Zakariya had a political inclination towards the central government of Delhi (Faridi, 2010).

Early masters Bahauddin Zakariya and Shah Rukn-e-Alam managed delicately both political and spiritual life. They enjoyed the portfolio of *Sheikh-ul-Islam* that enhanced their political role in the region. At the time of Shah Rukn-e-Alam (d. 1334), Suhrawardi *Khanqah* was fully involved in the politics, even, during the insurgency of the governor of Multan, Kashlu Khan, against the central government of Delhi, Sheikh sent his brother Ammaduddin Ismail with five hundred cavalries to support Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq in which Ammaduddin was martyred (Javed, 2010).

However, this relationship and involvement of the court in Sufi institutions damaged the mystical abilities of this Sufi lodge. Moreover, their political relationship and lifestyle were criticized by dervish Sufis (Javed, 2010) and Qalandars, and some historical references also illustrated confrontation between Zakariya and Qalandars (Boivin, 2012). But, the conflict between Suhrawardis of Multan and Qalandars was not serious and we could see a history of good friendship between Zakariya and his contemporary, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. No doubt, Shah Rukn-e-Alam adeptly handled Tughlaq's intervention but after his death situation became worse. The King appointed Sheikh Hood custodian of Suhrawardi shrines of Multan but after some years, relations between the two went wrong and the King killed Sheikh Hood in doubt of future foe when he was trying to escape from Multan. That was the first murder of any *Sajjada Nasheen* in Hindustan (Nizami, 1990).

In that particular period, Suhrawardi *Khanqah* of Uch was also under the patronage of the Delhi Sultanate and Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq offered a portfolio of *Sheikh-ul-Islam* to Makhdum Jahanian Jahangasht, the spiritual successor of Shah Rukn-e-Alam. But, Makhdum Jahanian refused the offer because of the critical relations between the courts and the shrines and left Uch for *Hajj* (Shahab, 1993).

On the other side, contrary to Suhrawardis, contemporary Chishti Sufis of Pakpattan, Baba Farid Ganj Shakar, Badaruddin Suleiman, and Alauddin Mauj Darya kept their distance to the political matters. In the 54 years long period of Alauddin Mauj Darya's successorship, the convent of Baba Farid had become so influential that governors and even the King could not intervene in its matters (Nizami, 1990). But, after Alauddin Mauj Darya (d. 1334), his descendants accepted political portfolios and court patronage for the shrine. His son Sheikh Muizuddin was appointed deputy governor of Gujrat and another son Sheikh Ilmuddin became *Sheikh-ul-Islam* under Delhi patronage (Eaton, 1984). Later, in the era of King Feroz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388), all three Suhrawardi and Chishti *Khanqahs* enjoyed the patronage of the Delhi Sultanate. The King granted lands and the robe of honor to the grandsons of Alauddin Mauj Darya (Nizami, 1990).

In the era of Feroz Shah, Makhdum Jahanian Jahangasht, grandson of Jalaluddin Surkh Posh Bukhari had great influence in Uch and Sindh. Even, governor Ain-ul-Mulk sought the help of Makhdum for the collection of taxes (Nizami, 1990). King Feroz Shah also paid respect to Makhdum and he granted a pardon to the rulers of Sindh during the war due to the intercession of the spiritual master. In the mid of fifteenth century, the political strength of Suhrawardi *Khanqah* was at the highest level when the custodian of Bahauddin Zakariya's shrine, Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf, established his independent rule in Multan and Uch, but this reign was replaced within a decade by the Langah family of Sindh through conspiracy.

Later, Sheikh Yusuf with the help of the Delhi Sultanate tried to recapture Multan but all in vain because Sultan Hussain Langah defeated aggressive forces of Barbak Shah (Shahab, 1993) and that was the time when the spiritual authority of Multan and Uch had been transferred to Qadiriyya order.

Qadiri spiritual mentor Syed Ghaus Bandagi Gilani had good relations with Sultan Qutbuddin Langah. At that time, Suhrawardi *Khanqahs* of Multan and Uch had lost their authority. The rulers and the folks gathered around the Qadiri master for divine blessing and the Qadiri family replaced the spiritual and political authority of Suhrawadis in the region. Qadiri descendant Syed Yahya, son of Musa Pak Shaheed, served as the governor of Multan in Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's reigns (Gilani & Gilani, 2011), and Musa Pak Deen (d. 1663) was the last governor of this Qadiri family in Multan during Shah Jahan's reign because King Aurangzeb dismissed him due to his close relations with Dara Shikoh (Dasti, 1998).

In 1752, Multan became part of the Durrani Empire, and Nawab Muzaffar Khan was appointed as a governor. In this period the spiritual authority of Multan had been transferred to the Chishtiyya order and Hafiz Jamal Multani was a famous Chishti master of that time. The role of the spiritual mentor and his disciples against Ranjeet Singh's aggressions was significant. Saint himself took part in the battle; however, after he died in 1818, Ranjeet Singh captured Multan that ended the eleven hundred years long Muslim rule in the region. During the Sikh reign, Sufi shrines and Islamic religious places were ruined. Mosques were converted to Sikh residences and Sufi families migrated to other areas.

After that, in 1849, British occupation again opened the way for *Sajjada Nasheen's* political role in Multan. British established relations to the shrines for better administration and they used the influence of Suhrawardi and Qadiri *Sajjada Nasheens* to control local agitations. During the colonial period, the Qureshi family of Bahauddin Zakariya and Gilani family of Musa Pak Shaheed emerged as the most influential and rival political groups of Multan. They contested for Multan Municipal Committee as well as for Provincial Council and central legislative assembly before the formation of Pakistan. Both were the supporters of Unionist party but later Gilani family joined Muslim League (Gilmartin, 1989). During the Pakistan movement, another Sufi of Multan Ahmad Saeed Kazmi actively participated in politics. He joined Pakistan Muslim League in 1935 and become a very active member of the Provisional Assembly of the Muslim League. He paid visits throughout the sub-continent to highlight the two-nation theory (Muhammad, 2004). But he left Muslim League after Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and established a religious party Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan in 1948 with the collaboration of other religious scholars (Ali, 2010).

Even after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 hitherto, the Sufist dynasties remained much active in the politics of South Punjab. Their role, nevertheless, can be divided into two different aspects; pro-government and anti-government. Largely the genetic descendants of these prominent Sufist orders, *Sajjadah Nasheens*, and their relatives served ruling elites, either there were autocratic or quasi-democratic governments. In return, they received important portfolios like governors or ministers. *Sajjada Nasheen* of Bahauddin Zakariya, Sajjad Hussain Qureshi served as a governor of Punjab from 1985 to 1988 (Punjab Portal. 2016), and Syed Alamdar Hussain Gilani father of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Yousaf Raza Gilani, who was descendant of Qadiri Sufi Musa Pak Shaheed, served as health minister of Punjab since 1955 to 1958 (Provincial Assembly of the Punjab. 2019). The second group of Sufist order largely consisted of the Sufists themselves, who acted as a symbol of resistance against the government policies. Therefore, we could trace the very leading role of these Sufis of South Punjab in different anti-government movements throughout the contemporary history of Pakistan. Ahmed Saeed Kazmi was one of those who actively participated and led the anti-Qadiani movement, Nizam-e-Mustafa movement, and many other anti-government demonstrations (Khalid, 2011).

In the recent scenario of the new millennium, descendants of the second group have also joined the junta; Hamid Saeed Kazmi, son of Ahmad Saeed Kazmi, was religious minister from 2008 to 2010. But, the leading role is still in the hands of ancient convents. The current dominant role of numerous Sufi descendants in this democratic system indicates Sufism as one of the most important sources of political polarization here in South Punjab and the best example of this is *Sajjadah Nasheen* of Bahauddin Zakariya, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, who also served on the same position three years, from 2008 to 2011, with the last government of another political party. However, the highest position in this democratic system was attained by the descendant of Musa Pak Shaheed, Yousaf Raza Gillani, who served as Prime Minister of Pakistan from 2008 to 2012. Moreover, Makhdum Javed Hashmi, a descendant of Makhdum Abd-ur-Rasheed Haqqani, is a veteran politician as well who served in federal cabinets of prime minister Mian Nawaz Sharif in the 1990s (Cabinet Division, 2018).

It is well-attested that rulers of any era always tried to establish good relations to the Sufis and their descendants for their political goals, but at the same time they constantly endeavored to control this authority, and Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq's efforts to curtail the power of the Sufi lodges are the best example to understand this phenomenon (Nizami, 1990). Currently, in the relationship of the Pakistani government and shrines, *Auqaf and the Religious Ministry* of provinces have a prime role. This ministry was established to control the political power of ancient shrines that have a lot of properties and daily income of donations, and it is the continuity of colonial-era policy for endowments. Auqaf department has almost all administrative and financial powers at the shrines but *Sajjada Nasheens* is still considered a symbol of spirituality among the folks that maintain their nominal role at shrines. Despite long governmental control, descendants are still willing to take charge of the shrines and endowments.

### **Conclusion**

The Sufis of South Punjab adopted a loving and caring approach for the propagation of Islam. Their excellent moral conduct and teaching of equality inspired the folks that promoted humanity, simplicity, and harmony in the community. A huge number of *Khanqahs* were established during different periods which served people irrespective of religion and made the great history of religious tolerance. They not only led their life as Islamic preachers and philanthropists, but they were also the source of sacred education and divine blessing. They established a convent for education, nutrition, and shelter where humanity, love, inter and intra-religious harmony, spirituality, and beliefs were basic objectives of their teachings and practices which created a new code of ethics among the masses and society.

They worked hard for the socio-economic improvement of the deprived people. They not only helped the poor themselves but also forced rulers and wealthy people to facilitate their needy citizens and neighbors. Spiritual and social services of Bahauddin Zakariya, Baba Farid, Jalaluddin Surkh Posh, Ghaus Bandagi Gilani, and their descendant's altered religious practices into the mystical culture in South Punjab and this is the outcome of Sufis' endless efforts comprised of centuries. Now Sufi tombs represent the grandeur of the saints, and the Sufi practices are reviving Sufi culture and attitude. The study of the social and religious performance of revered Sufis of South Punjab illustrates that the supremacy of the saint in spirituality is directly related to his social and religious attitude. Saints, who paid more attention to their key objectives rather than petty affairs, led a successful life. History expresses that participation in administrative matters declined the spiritual authority of the Sufi institution and in recent days, we could find political representation from ancient Sufi families but their spiritual role has been stopped which was the real spirit and goal of their forefathers. However, despite severe objections to Sufism, this institution is working yet impressively. No doubt, incapable descendants and illiterate followers spoiled its sanctity, but



courageous Sufis established and revived it in every era. In recent times, we could also find several Sufis and *Khanqahs* in South Punjab which are disseminating Sufi teachings, and intermediating between the servant and his Lord.

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