

UPSC PRELIMS

Art & Culture



Sample topic · Sufism

Sufism

Introduction

- The word 'Sufi' derives its name from another Arabic word 'Suf' which means wool. The Muslim saints who wore garments of coarse wool began to be called Sufi saints.
- Sufism entered India in the 12th century with Muslim invaders and became popular in the 13th century.
- The Sufi's main theme was Wahadut-ul-Wajud (Unity of God).
- It developed first in Iraq. The first Sufi saint was Begum Rabia of Bashera in Iraq.
- Sufi orders were called as Silsilas
- Maximum number of orders were found in Afghanistan

Salient features related to Sufism

- Sufis were a group of religious-minded people who turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution.
- Sufism derives its inspiration from Islam.
- These Sufis had a deep study of vedantic philosophy and had come in contact with great sages and seers of India.

Sufism

- Sufism emphasized upon leading a simple life. Sufi saints preached in Arabic, Persian and Urdu etc.
- The Sufis were divided into 12 orders each under a mystic Sufi saint like Khwaja Moinuddin Chisthi, Fariuddin Ganj-i-Shakar, Nizam-ud-din Auliya etc.
- While the orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct and blind observance of religious rituals, the Sufi saints seek inner purity.
- They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.
- Instead, they laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being.
- The Sufis thus sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience
- Devotion is more important than fast (Roza) or prayer (Namaz).
- Sufis bridged the communal divide as is evidenced by the reverence the Subcontinent's non-Muslim population exhibited for Sufi saints. Sufism around the world and in the Subcontinent had the depth to connect beyond caste, creed and gender

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Liberal outlook associated with Sufism

- It does not believe narrow societal classification such as caste
- They awakened a new sense of confidence and attempted to redefine social and religious values.
- Their stress on social welfare led to the establishment of works of charitable nature, opening of orphanages and women service centres.
- A notable contribution of the Sufis was their service to the poorer and downtrodden sections of society. Nizamuddin Auliya was famous for distributing gifts amongst the needy irrespective of religion or caste.
- At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing madness, the Sufi saints reminded men of their moral obligations. To a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony.
- Other ideas emphasized by Sufism are meditation, good actions, repentance for sins, performance of prayers and pilgrimages, fasting, charity and suppression of passions by ascetic practices.

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Some of the important Sufi orders are:

Chisti

- It was founded by Sheikh Abdul Chisti
- It was introduced in India by Sheikh Moinuddin Chisti. His Dargah is at Ajmer
- Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki was the chief disciple of Moinuddin.
- Iltutmush dedicated Qutub Minar to Bakhtiar Kaki
- Sheikh Nizamuddin was the most popular Sufi saint in India. Amir Khusro, the greatest musician and literary giant was also the disciple of Sheikh Nizamuddin.
- A system called Nadasampradaya was followed which meant burying disciples near as one family
- Sheikh Salim Chisti was the last great saint of this order. He was held in great respect by Akbar.
- Qamkhana were hermitages of Chisti saints outside the city

Suhrawardi

- It was founded by Shihabuddin Shuhrawardi
- It was introduced in India by Bhauddin
- It was the richest order and very soon became unpopular

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Firadausia

- It was the only Sufi order which was founded and developed within India
- It was founded by Sharafuddin, it was confined to Bihar
- He composed Maqtubat and Mulfazat literature
- The above dealt with the lives and teachings of Sufi saints

Qadri

- It was the most secular Sufi silsila
- It was founded by Sheikh Jilani Qadri
- Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan followed this order
- Naqshbandi
- It was founded by Sheikh Biqabullah
- It was introduced into India by Sheikh Pirsai
- Sheikh Niyamtulla was the greatest scholar of this school
- It was the most conservative of the orders.
Aurangzeb followed this order
- By educating the masses and deepening the spiritual concerns of the Muslims, Sufism has played an important role in the formation of Indian society