

Meta Data

S No	AREA OF META DATA	FILLED BY THE CONTENT GENERATOR
1.	Theme	Sufism-Concept and its main practices and the four main Sufi Silsilahs which gained popularity in the Indian Subcontinent.
2.	Subject	History
3.	Linkage of Theme with Chapter	Theme 6: Bhakti Sufi Traditions
4.	Class/Level	XII (Part II)
5.	Objectives	<p>1. To develop an understanding of Sufism and its practices.</p> <p>2. To understand the uniqueness of the four main schools of Sufism which gained popularity in the Indian Sub continent.</p>
6.	Description	<p>Sufism or Tasawwuf (Hyperlink A) is commonly defined as the inner mystical dimension of Islam which emerged in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution. Practitioners of Sufism, referred to as Sufis, 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. They seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. Initially when Sufism emerged and started gaining popularity as an alternate, personal path to communicate with Allah, many individuals turned to asceticism and mysticism.</p> <p>With time there emerged çhains’s or silsilahs, basically groups based on common masters.</p> <p>This is an attempt to understand the origin, main teachings and unique characteristics of the four main silsilahs which gained popularity in the Indian Subcontinent :</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chishti Silsilah 2. The Suhrawardi Silsilah 3. The Qadriyya Silsilah 4. The Naqshbandiya Silsilah
7.	Key words	Sufism, Tasawwuf, Chishti, Suhrawardi, Naqshabandiya, Qadariyya, Silsilah
8.	Target Group	Students and Teachers
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OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop an understanding of Sufism and its practices.
2. To understand the uniqueness of the four main schools of Sufism which gained popularity in the Indian sub-continent.

Description:

Sufism is a tradition or a way of life which originated centuries ago and continues being a part of our living heritage.

Let us try to understand this tradition by studying its practices and the divisions within this tradition or way of life.

SUFISM- THE CONCEPT/ TRADITION

Sufism or **Tasawwuf (Hyperlink A)** is commonly defined as the inner **mystical** dimension of Islam which emerged in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution. Practitioners of Sufism, referred to as Sufis, 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. They seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. Traditionally Sufis were characterized by their asceticism, their attachment to *dhikr*, the practice of repeating the names of God, often performed after prayers.

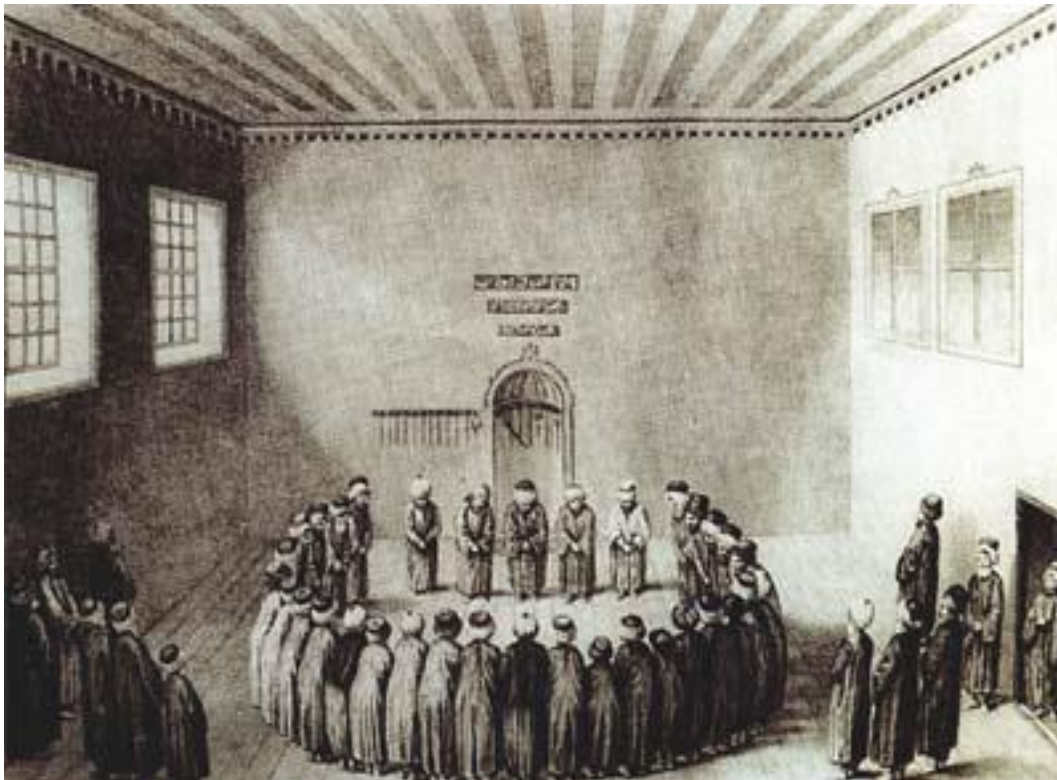
Sufis believe that there is only one God and that all people are the children of God. They also believe that to love one's fellow men is to love God and that different religions are different ways to reach God. Therefore, one should respect all religions. There is no need for conversion. One should be a good Hindu or Muslim.

According to Sufism fasts and rituals are not essential to reach God and people should follow the teachings of a pir for he will show the right path to reach God.

THE MAIN PRACTICES OF SUFISM

ASCETICISM: The main practices of Sufism include **Asceticism or following** a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals. At times they continue to be part of the society, but typically adopt a frugal lifestyle, characterized by the renunciation of material possessions and physical pleasures, and time spent fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion or reflection upon spiritual matters.

ZIKR : An act of devotion in which short phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited silently within the mind or aloud.



A Sufi gathering performing Zikr (repeated recitation of prayers or short phrases, either silently or loudly)

SUFI WHIRLING (SUFI SPINNING): This is a form of *Sama* or physically active meditation which originated among Sufis, and is still practiced by the Sufi Dervishes. It is a step through which dervishes aim to reach the Almighty, the source of all perfection by abandoning one's ego or personal desires, by focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles, which has been seen as a symbolic imitation of planets in the Solar System orbiting the sun.

In the symbolism of the *Sama* ritual, the hat represents the tombstone of the sufi's ego, his wide, white skirt represents the shroud of the ego. By removing his black coat, he is spiritually reborn to the truth. At the beginning of the *Sama*, by holding his arms crosswise, the participant represents the number one, thus testifying to God's unity. While whirling, his arms are open: his right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence; his left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth. The sufi conveys God's spiritual gift to those who are witnessing the *Sama*. Revolving from right to left around the heart, they embrace all humanity with love.

SYMBOLISM IN SUFI WHIRLING DURING

THE SAMA.....

(THE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE MEDITATION.....)

The hat represents the tombstone of the

The left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth, in an attempt to break away



The right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence, an attempt to

The white skirt of the dervishes represents the ego's shroud signifying the end of the ego.

MURAQABA: The practice which can be likened to the practices of meditation.



PILGRIMAGE/ ZIYARAT : Visits to the tombs of sufi saints is prevalent all over the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the sufi's spiritual grace or *barakat*, to receive spiritual knowledge, guidance and blessings from the Saint who rests in the shrine, which helps the Seeker in his or her own path towards enlightenment. Also, the Saint is approached for intercession in prayers, be it in worldly matters or religious.

Inside the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Delhi, India.



The Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Delhi, India.

SUFI SILSILAHS

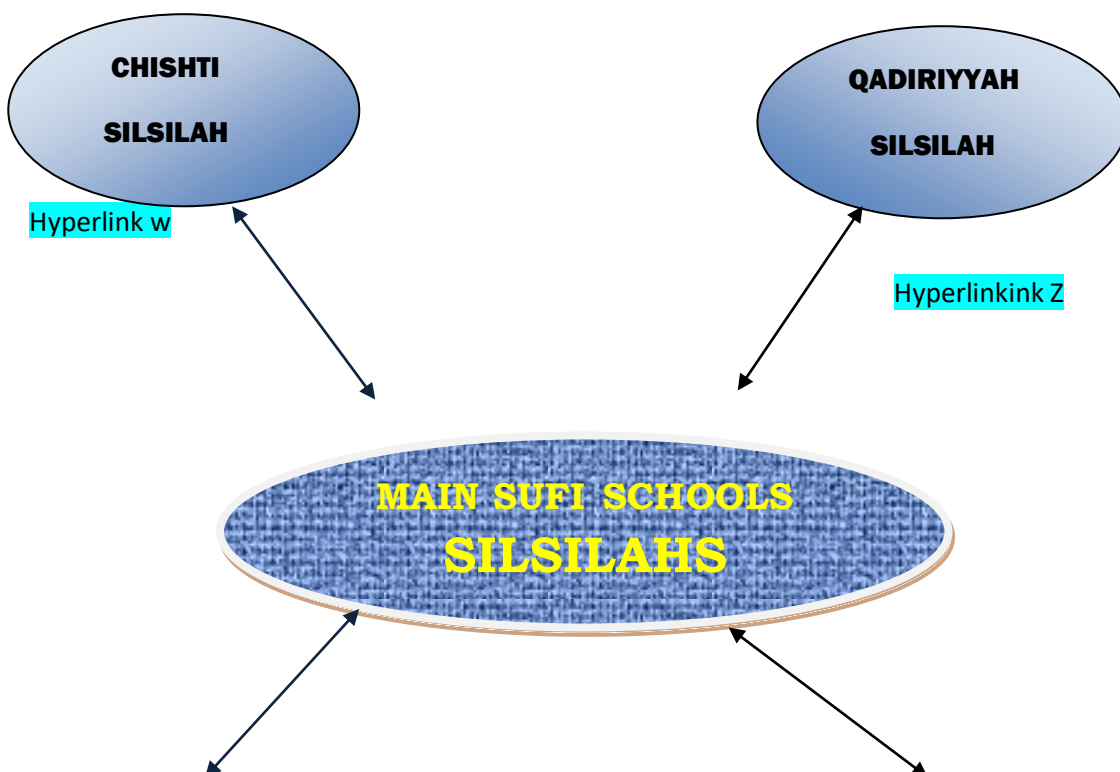
Initially when Sufism emerged and started gaining popularity as an alternate, personal path to communicate with Allah, many individuals turned to asceticism and mysticism.

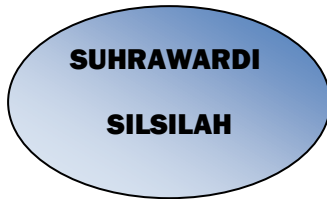
With time there emerged chains's or silsilahs, basically groups based on common masters.



Founders of the four great Sufi orders

The four main groups which gained popularity in the Indian Subcontinent were:





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[Hyperlink y](#)

Sufis have spanned several continents and cultures over a millennium, originally expressing their beliefs in Arabic before spreading into Persian, Turkish, and Urdu among dozens of other languages. All Sufi orders trace their origin to the Prophet Muhammad, through his cousin and son-in-law Ali with the notable exception of the Naqshbandi, who claim to trace their origins through the first Caliph, Abu Bakr. Sufi orders largely follow one of the four schools of thought of Sunni Islam and maintain a Sunni creed.

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THE CHISHTIYYAS: Founders of Indian Sufism

The Chishti Silsilah: The Chishti Order was founded by Khawaja Abu Ishaq Shami of Syria in the 10th century C E who brought Sufism to the town of Chisht, near Herat in the present-day Afghanistan. It is a Sufi order within the mystic Sufi tradition of Islam. It began around 930 CE and is known for its emphasis on love, tolerance, and openness.

Moinuddin Chishti introduced the Chishti Order in Lahore (Punjab) and Ajmer (Rajasthan), sometime in the middle of the 12th century CE.

The Chishti are perhaps best known for the welcome extended to seekers who belong to other religions. Chishti shrines in South Asia are open to all faiths and attract great crowds to their festivals. The Chishti shaikhs have also stressed the importance of keeping a distance from worldly power. A ruler could be a patron or a disciple, but he or she

[Hyperlink x](#)

THE SUHRAWARDIYYAS: Political Diplomats

The sufis of this order were known for their close ties with the rulers and played a key role in making war and peace. They acted as political emissaries and ambassadors and held important posts as advisers in the royal court and excepted jagirs and gifts as royal patronage. The early Suhrawardiyya saints believed that it was their duty to guide the rulers. It was from this *silsila* that Muinuddin Chishti drew his first inspiration. However the Chishtiyya silsila stood in stark contrast to the Surhawaddiyyas in their contempt for rulers and governments. This silsila was founded in north west Iran by **Abdul Qahir Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi** (d. 1168). He was a disciple of Ahmad Ghazzali. In the Indian subcontinent, this silsila was

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NAQSHBANDI SILSILAH

The Naqshbandi is a major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism. It traces its spiritual lineage to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, through Abu Bakr, the first Caliph and Muhammad's companion. Some Naqshbandi masters trace their lineage through Ali, His son-in-law and the fourth Caliph.

It was later associated with Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari in the 14th century, hence the name of the order. The name can be interpreted as ' the engraver of the heart' or ' the pattern maker.'

This silsilah has followers in almost every corner of the

[Hyperlinkink Z](#)

THE QADIRIYYAH SILSILAH

This Silsilah derives its name from Abdul-Qadir Gilani who was from Gilan. The order relies strongly upon adherence to the fundamentals of Islam.

- Qadiri leadership is not centralised. Each centre of Qadiri thought is free to adopt its own interpretations and practices.

(Hyperlink A)

Tasawwuf: The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is *tasawwuf*.
..... The mystical dimension of Islam....

Tasawwuf is the term used for Sufism in Islam. It has been interpreted in several ways:

- it is derived from *suf*, meaning wool, referring to the coarse woollen clothes worn by sufis.
- Others derive it from *safa*, meaning purity.
- It may also have been derived from *suffa*, the platform outside the Prophet's mosque, where a group of close followers assembled to learn

Teachers may initiate discussion on the following:

- 1. Discuss the differences and similarities between these four schools of Sufism.**
- 2. Which values of the sufi silsilahs are relevant for us in today's world?**

Sources: Wikipedia, wiki images.

GLOSSARY of TERMS *Dervishes*: Derived from a word of Turkish, Persian origin, *darvish* or a poor man, a beggar. These are members of the ascetic orders like the Sufis,

some of which carry on ecstatic observances, such as energetic dancing and whirling or chanting.

Asceticism : is a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals. Ascetics may withdraw from the world for their practices or continue to be part of their society, but typically adopt a frugal lifestyle, characterised by the renunciation of material possessions and physical pleasures, and time spent fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion or reflection upon spiritual matters

Zikr : An act of devotion in which short phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited silently within the mind or aloud.

Muraqaba: The practice of *muraqaba* is similar to the practices of meditation.

Ziyarat: Pilgrimage to the grave or the dargah of a sufi saint for spiritual enlightenment, guidance and answering of prayers.

Tasawwuf: Another word used for Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam.

Mysticism: popularly means becoming one with God or the Absolute, could also refer to any kind of ecstasy or altered state of consciousness which is given a religious or spiritual meaning.
