



Sufism

For Prelims: Islamic mysticism, Asceticism, Chisti, Suhrawardi Order.

For Mains: Sufism.

Why in News?

Recently, a book 'In Search of the Divine: Living Histories of Sufism in India' has been published.

What is Sufism?

▪ About:

- Sufism is a **mystical form of Islam**, a school of practice that focuses on the spiritual search for God and shuns materialism.
- It is a form of **Islamic mysticism which stresses on asceticism**. There is a lot of emphasis on devotion towards God.
- In Sufism, self-discipline is considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God by sense of perception.
- In the beginning of 12 AD, some religious people in **Persia turned to asceticism due to the increasing materialism of the Caliphate**. They came to be called the 'Sufis'.
- In India, Sufi movement **began in 1300 A.D** & came to South India in the 15th century.
- In Sufism, self-discipline was considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God. While orthodox Muslims emphasize external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity.
- Multan and Punjab were the early centers and later on, it spread to Kashmir, **Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan**.

▪ Etymology:

- The term 'Sufi' is probably derived from the Arabic 'suf' word which means 'one who wears wool'. This is because woolen clothes were generally associated with ascetics. Another possible origin of the word is 'safa' which means purity in Arabic.

▪ Stages of Sufism:

- **1st Stage (Khanqah):** Started in 10th century, also called the age of Golden Mysticism
- **2nd Stage (Tariqa):** 11-14th century, when Sufism was being institutionalized and traditions and symbols started being attached to it.
- **3rd Stage (Tarifa):** Started in the 15th century, at this the stage when Sufism became a popular movement.

▪ Major Sufi Orders:

◦ Chisti:

- Chishtiya Order was founded in India by Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti.
- It emphasised the doctrine of the unity of being with God (waḥdat al-wujūd) and members of the order were also pacifists.
- They rejected all material goods as distractions from the contemplation of God.
- They abstained from connection with the secular state.
- Recitation of the names of God, both aloud and silently (dhikr jahrī, dhikr khafī), formed the cornerstone of Chishtī practice.

- The Chishti teachings were carried forward and popularized by disciples of Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti like Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Fareeduddin Ganj-e-Shakar, Nizam uddin Auliya and Naseeruddin Charagh.
- **Suhrawardi Order:**
 - It was founded by Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi Maqtul.
 - The Suhrawardis, unlike the Chishtis, accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans.
- **Naqshbandi Order:**
 - It was founded by the Khwaja Baha-ul-din Naqsh band.
 - In India, this order was established by Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi.
 - From the beginning, the mystics of this Order stressed on the observance of the Shariat.
- **Qadiriyya Order:**
 - It was popular in Punjab.
 - Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Badaun founded it in the 14th century.
 - They were supporters of the Mughals under Akbar.

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