DURKHEIMIEN MODEL AND SUFISM IN SOUTH ASIA: A CASE STUDY OF PIR MUZAMIL ALI'S MEDICAL SERVICES FOR HIS COMMUNITY

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Abstract

As Emile Durkheim analyzed religion as a social reflection and not mere the performance of some certain prayers and obligations, likewise Sufism is not just a religious aspect of Islam but also imbibes broader social activities, especially in South Asia. The institution of Sufi khanqah is the foci for the South Asian society that overlaps all the possible aspects of human life, i.e. religion, health, economy, welfare, customs, traditions, etc. This research paper is primarily focused on the medical services provided by Pir Muzamil Ali, a Qadiriyya-Chishtiyya Sufi of Jabbi Sharif, district Khushab, Punjab. The paper argues that Sufism in South Asia is a social reflection as per Emile Durkheim theory of religious sociology and Pir Muzamil Ali's medical services for his community were the best example for this. He not only learnt hikmat, like mostly Sufis learn to cure the physical diseases of their disciples along with the spiritual diseases (that is the main duty of a Sufi) but tried to keep it simple, with regionally available natural herbs and free of cost for the poor and needy. The herbal recipes were chosen randomly for the qualitative analysis of this research.

Key Words: Herbal medicine, Pir Muzamil Ali, Social reflection, Sufism, Qadiriyya-Chishtiyya Sufi

Introduction

Once Voltaire (d. 1778) very wisely said, "if God do not exist, we should invent one." (Kenny, 2010) He might have recognized the psychological necessity of associating oneself with a being greater and more formidable than oneself. Life has meaning and purpose because of the human need for God and society's need for religion, regardless of religious practices and beliefs. In his theory of religious sociology, Emile Durkheim placed special emphasis on the symbolic relationships and purposes that religions fulfill for society. (Durkheim, 2001) The roles that religion plays in society include providing a meaning to life, fostering social welfare, preserving societal harmony and stability, and facilitating constructive social development. However, these roles and symbolic relationships also contribute to the sacralization of some concepts, organizations, and social movements. (Durkheim, 2001) This clarifies how Sufism came to be in South Asian society as a social construction. Sufis and shrines are important because of their symbolic exchanges that support togetherness, stability, a purposeful existence, and constructive social change, in addition to their religious significance.

Sufism is a particularly common kind of Muslim devotion in South Asia because it allows believers to approach some portion of the ideal through living a virtuous life, adhering to the guidance of a personal Shaykh, and taking part in ceremonies at the *khanqah* in towns and villages. This is generally explained by their desire for a more intense experience of the religious truth and the Supreme Being, as well as a direct, personal approach to them. The Sufi's moral authority, which allows him to perform miracles and intercede on behalf of the devout, comes from the spiritual stream that flows from God to him. (Frembgen, 2006) Over the Muslim world, the Sufi fraternity grew progressively more widespread. Soon, there was a more formalized master-disciple relationship present in Sufi relationships. Furthermore, over time, Sufi institutional frameworks stabilized, and by the thirteenth century, many Sufi societies had developed into self-sustaining social groups with the founder and his teacher at their center. They provided for the people's material and spiritual needs and allowed their religious feelings to be fully expressed, although they generally took care to prevent any conflicts with traditional theology.

Idea of Sufi Shrines

Khanqah was initially formed in the Sufi's home quarters when Sufism flourished in the Islamic world, or occasionally a building was built specifically for that purpose. Although the shrine itself is a relatively recent invention, the concept originated with the burial site of the revered Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who passed away in 10 AH/632 AD. (Mann, 1989, 253) The Umayyad caliph al-Walid I built a highly revered tomb at the grave of the holy prophet (PBUH), after seventy years of his death. Quranic passages were later inscribed on the shrines' walls and gravestones to help identify the resting places of notable people. The shrine room's designated area of prayer was

marked with a *mehrab*. The holy Quran was endowed within walls on a regular basis. This made sanctity—which was formerly limited to the mosque, *madrasah*, *ribat*, or other places of worship—more potent. These complexes were initially built during the Seljuq era.

In the seventh and eighth centuries AD, gravestones with information such as the deceased's name and date of death were not placed on the remains. According to the holy prophet's (PBUH) tradition, a few Abbasid caliphs (139 AH/758 AD–639 AH/1258 AD) were buried in their own homes in the ninth century. Richly embroidered silk shrouds and intricately carved coffins made of pricey, exotic wood were employed throughout these times. (Hillenbrand, 1999) Throughout the past, mausoleums were revered as sacred sites throughout Syria and the provinces that bordered it, which were teeming with classical cultures. These were called martyria, and they contained the remains or relics of saints or biblical figures. Martyrologies came in a wide variety of shapes, including square, round, cruciform, polygonal, star, lobed, and multi-foil. (Hillenbrand, 1999) These buildings were primarily built to honor a person or an occasion rather than to host a congregation. When Muslims constructed their own tombs or memorials like the Dome of the Rock, they took essential inspiration from the martyrium. (Hillenbrand, 1999)

There was no active tomb building history in Central Asia when Islam arrived, thus the shrines were not influenced by it. The concept was appropriated by Iranian Muslims from their fellow Muslims in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. According to J. A. Subhan, the oldest Muslim shrine in the Indian Subcontinent is that of Hazrat Bibi Pak Damana (d. 61 AH/680 AD), while the second-oldest shrine is that of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh (d. 453 AH/1072 AD). (Subhan, 1938) This is how the Muslim shrine culture and tradition was brought to Asia.

Sufism in South Asia

Due to the long history of religious diversity in South Asia, religious heterodoxy has become a prevalent aspect of Indian society. In South Asia, the two most popular religions are Islam and Hinduism. The spread of Islam in South Asia occurred through a variety of channels, including migration, Turko-Afghan invasion, Arab trading, and conversions. As a result, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of Islamic tradition in the Indian subcontinent. Islam was introduced to India far earlier than the Turko-Afghan invaders, thanks to Arab traders. For this reason, Islam's spread throughout South Asia has been examined in the framework of Arab culture, and Islamic traditions have been given legitimacy derived from Arab customs. The "Brahmanization" of Islamic customs by ulama who were fluent in Arabic was a result of Arab rule. (Anjum, 2019) Furthermore, Sufis had challenged the ulama's power by translating Islam as a religion to local comprehension in addition to denouncing and criticizing it. Thus, it took a long time for Islamic customs to develop in India. It is impossible to disagree with Lamin Sanneh's claim that Islam has always disregarded the local culture and created its own customs. (Sanneh, 1989)

Furthermore, Islamic customs have always grown out of the Qur'an because it has served as their primary source of inspiration. However, when it comes to the situation of Islam in India, it is also possible to see the vernacularization of these traditions. In South Asia, Sufism has been practiced for more than 1200 years. Sufism's influence has been a major factor in expanding Islam's

influence throughout South Asia. Sufi mystic traditions gained prominence during the tenth and eleventh centuries of the Delhi Sultanate and later spread over the rest of India when Islam entered India in the early eighth century. The early Delhi Sultanate was composed of a group of four historically distinct dynasties that ruled over Turkic and Afghan territories. Persian culture had a lasting impact on the growth of Islam in contemporary India by introducing Islam, Sufi philosophy, syncretic values, literature, education, and entertainment to South Asia. Sufi preachers, traders, and missionaries also reached coastal Gujarat and Bengal through commerce and naval voyages. When Arab Muslims came in India in 92/711, led by the Arab commander Muhammad bin Qasim, they also made progress along Indian seaports for commerce and economic operations. The Muslim caliphate culture peacefully expanded over India until 287/900. The birthplace of Sufism is Baghdad, the city of the Abbasid caliphate (132/750–656-756/1258), which gave rise to notable individuals like Hasan al-Basri, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyyah al-Basri, and Ali ibn e abi Talib. (Walsh, 2006, 59)

Sufism acquired considerable traction when it expanded from Baghdad into what are now known as Iran and Afghanistan in Persia. A Turkic military commander named Sabuktigin founded an Afghan monarchy in the city of Ghaznah at 288/901. In 417/1027, his son Mahmud extended their lands into the Indian Punjab region. The wealth and resources taken from Punjab were deposited in Ghazni's coffers, allowing the region to spread farther into northwest India. The Ghaznavids introduced a multitude of intellectuals to India in the eleventh century, ushering in the first Muslim civilization to be influenced by Persian, superseding earlier Arab influence. (Schimmel, 1975) Northern India evolved under the Ghaurids, a different Central Asian clan, from 545 to 1151. It combined the cosmopolitan culture of Baghdad with the Persian-Turkic customs of the Ghaznah court and was further enhanced by Sufi intellectualism. (Alvi, 2012) India absorbed intellectuals, poets, and mystics from Iran and Central Asia. Islamization in India gained impetus from a focus on translating Arabic and Persian texts—such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sufi literature—into local languages.

This is not to say that Sufism only became popular in South Asia as a result of Muslim control and Sufi migrations to India; rather, it had its own origins in the region, especially in Sindh. Leading writers from Sind throughout the eight century were the poet Abu'l-'Ata (who passed away after 157/774) and the Hadith scholar Abu Ma'shar Najih (d. 170/787). (*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1960) The absence of knowledge regarding the early local Sufis in Sindh from recorded history is likely due to poor land communication between Sindh and Khurasan, as well as the province's dependence on the Isma'ili Fatimids. Since Sufism is associated with Sunni Islam and Isma'ilis were a sect of Shi'is, it was only natural for them to be cut off from tight ties with other parts of Central Asia that were also part of the Sunni fold. (Rizvi, 1978) Thus, the primary Sufi influence in South Asia comes from the early Sufis who moved into the Multan region by the middle of the eleventh century, primarily from Baghdad in central Asia. Shaykh Safiu'd-Din Kaziruni was the first Sufi to settle in the area. The Shaykh originated in Kazirun, an Iranian village close to Shiraz. (Dehlawi, 1914) All that is known about him is that he was sent to Uch after becoming the *khalifa* of his uncle and teacher, Shaykh Abu Ishaq Kaziruni (d. 426/1035). (Rizvi, 1978) A different Sufi, Shaykh Hussain Zinjani, was transferred to Punjab by his Junaidi instructor, Shaykh Abul Fazl

Muhammad bin al Hasan Khattali. Subsequently, Shaykh Khattali sent Abul Hasan bin Ali bin Usman bin Ali al Ghaznawi al Jullabi al Hujwiri, another disciple, to Punjab. (Sijzi, 1855-6) It appears that Hujwiri most likely arrived in Lahore around 426/1035. (Rizvi, 1978) Around 399/1009, Hazrat Hujwiri was born in the suburbs of Ghaznah. He kept in touch with the Sufis from Transoxiana, Khurasan, and Syria even after moving to Lahore. Hazrat Hujwiri, who penned *Kashf al Mahjub*, the first Sufi text known to exist in Persian, passed away around 468/1076-469/1077. (Hujwiri, 1074)

In 587/1191, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, a renowned Sufi from South Asia, traveled to India. He was the *khalifa* and pupil of the renowned Chishti Sufi from Nishapur, Khwaja Usman Harwani. Khwaja Moinuddin was raised in Khurasan and was born in Sijistan. He made a lot of travels during his lifetime and passed away in Ajmer in 633/1236 at the age of 97. Khwaja Qutbudin Bakhtiyar Kaki (568/1173-632/1235), Baba Farid (570/1175-664/1266), Shaykh Nizamuddin Auliya (635/1238-765/1325), Hazrat Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariya Multani (565/1170-660/1262), and Shaykh Hamiduddin Nagauri (416/1026-546/1152) are a few other well-known early Sufis from South Asia. Sufis, especially in rural areas, greatly contributed to the propagation of Islam amongst previously polytheistic populations. Because of this, there are no records of forced mass conversions in the early history of Islam in India, and Sufi brotherhood solidified in northern India between the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. (Schimmel, 1975)

Sufism and Indian Society

Sufism's mystical elements were not only contributed by Islam to India. With mysticism becoming more and more popular throughout India, the Bhakti movement also garnered respect. The Bhakti movement was a localized rebirth of Hinduism that used devotional god worship to connect language, location, and cultural identities. The Bhagavad Gita introduced the idea of Bhakti, and between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, the first sect formed in South India. (Schimmel, 1975) The differences between Hindus and Muslims were frequently muddled by the behaviors and theological stances, which were strikingly similar to Sufism. Devotees of Bhakti often gathered to worship and sing, connecting *puja* to songs about saints and life philosophy. The mystical theories that the Brahman Bhaktis established were comparable to those that the Sufi saints promoted.

For instance, the Bhaktis held that in order to break free from the cycle of rebirth, one must acknowledge a unique reality that lies beneath the illusion of life. Furthermore, Hinduism views moksha—liberation from the earth—as the ultimate goal. The Sufi concepts of the *dunia* (world), *tariqah* (school of mystical teachings), and *aakhirah* (Day of Judgment) are almost exactly comparable to these teachings. The sultanate rulers of Delhi were assimilated into the mainstream thanks in part to Sufism. Sufi saints helped to establish a syncretic medieval society in India that was tolerant of and grateful for non-Muslims. This culture also gave rise to devotional music, vernacular literature, and stability. (Aquil, 2006) These gifts, customs, and celebrations developed into a complex network of widely recognized standards over time. Around set dates, various Sufi practices gave rise to a spiritual and religious community. (Jafri & Husain, 2006)

The conversation above clarifies how the Durkheimian notion of religion as a social construction might be specifically linked to Sufism in South Asia. The three functionalities—disciplinary ideal, coherent outlook, and vitality aspect—proposed by Durkheim served as the foundation for the growth of Islam in South Asia through syncretism and vernacularism, the rituals connected to Sufi shrines, and the development and dispersal of Sufis and shrines throughout the area. Sufis' teachings and deeds give their adherents disciplined principles that foster certain group rituals and practices (cohesive outlook) and set them apart from others, making them exclusive (vitality aspect).

Sufis as Folk Medics

Every renowned world civilization has practiced its own version of folk medicine, using the natural herbs and plants available in their particular region. (Isik, 2022) Later, with the introduction of certain religions the folk medicine was associated to spiritual and mystical healings; Islam was also not an exception and Sufism was more associated to spiritual and physical healing. Gradually, a general opinion emerged among Sufis and societies around them that Sufis have spiritual powers to cure and heal diseases. Sufis employed a variety of techniques to treat illnesses, including *ruqya* and prayer. Weber asserts that when Sufis were active, the two primary components of worship—prayer and sacrifice—were regarded as therapeutic techniques. (Weber, 1920) *Ruqya* is a phrase that literally means "to recite verses from the Qur'an, divine names and titles, or prayer for healing purposes." This was a frequent tactic utilized by the Sufis. People wore these amulets—made by Sufis—around their necks or inside their hats because they thought they had curative properties. (Garnett, 1979) They are so powerful that their healing powers have become customary, and sheikhs have granted permission to those who own them.

In South Asia, Sufis and their shrines have not only served as hubs for the spiritual healing of the community, but they have also been instrumental in helping the impoverished by feeding (langar), clothing, and housing them; fostering community through the formation of *silsilas*, which not only unite in specific socio-economic activities but also celebrate them together; organizing economic activities for pilgrims in the vicinity of the shrine, particularly on '*urs*; and last but not least, Sufis not only act as intermediaries between their *murids* and Allah, but also resolve the health, emotional, socio-political, and economic problems of their devotees. Other than the spiritual healing the Sufis also learnt herbal medicines to cure the diseases of their disciples or the common people. Pir Muzamil Ali Shah, the Chishti-Qadiri Sufi from Jabbi Sharif was also one of them. The welfare and medical services offered by Jabbi Sharif's Chishti-Qadiri shrine are the main emphasis of this article. The article discusses the medical services offered by the Sufis, since Pir Muzamil Ali Shah was a trained *tabib* (medic) whose *nuskhajat* (remedies) have been passed down from generation to generation to treat the physical ailments of their followers who cannot afford modern medical treatments.

***Nuskhajat* (Herbal Recipes) since Pir Muzamil Ali (d. 1930)**

Pir Muzamil Ali, the Chishtiyya-Qadiriyya Sufi from Jabbi Sharif, district Khushab, Punjab got his medical education from Tibbia College in Delhi. (Interview Syed Riaz ul Hassan Gillani) Some of the *nuskhajat* he authored have been passed down through the ages. Herbal syrups, pastes, and powders for a variety of conditions, such as fever, indigestion, cough, diarrhea, heartburn, TB, piles, constipation, depression, obsessions, headaches, toothaches, flu, pregnancy, and ailments that affect both men and women, are included in this *nuskhajat*. Additionally, there are recipes to improve body, muscle, and mental abilities, among other things. Since these were the most prevalent illnesses, these *nuskhajat* were chosen at random. These recipes called for only locally sourced, natural ingredients. Usually, Pir Muzamil Shah, followed by Pir Abdul Qadir and Pir Mahbub, prepared these medications. Free medicines were given to the impoverished villages and followers. Due to the high cost of some of the ingredients and the difficulty the low-income villagers had paying, it was decided that the patient should not have a set fee but rather be allowed to pay what they can afford. If the patient is unable to pay, no money should be requested. All of this was carried out to help the residents. The few recipes from the handwritten register of Pir Muzamil Ali are listed below.

1. **Powder for Indigestion**

Ingredients: two *tolas* of fennel, two *tolas* of Indian rennet, three *tolas* of carom seeds, three *tolas* of Suleimani rock salt, two *tolas* of black pepper, and two *tolas* of coriander seeds. Pulverize each of these herbs to create a powder. Use six *masha* of this powder with fresh water twice a day, in the morning and the evening.

2. **Cough Syrup**

Ingredients: two *tolas* of *Gulreekh*, ten seeds of Jujube, fifteen seeds of *lasoorian*, Six *mashas* of *mulathi matsar*, two *tolas* of *Bhakra*, six *mashas* of *nilofer*, six *mashas* of *kasni*, six *mashas* of *khati*, six *mashas* of *khabazi*, six *mashas* of *zadkha*, six *mashas* of *gull-e-banafsha*, six *mashas* of *baheedaz*, six *mashas* of *morrion* seeds, three *mashas* of Acacia Arabica, ten *mashas* of *gond katira*, one par of *qand-e-sfaid*. Prepare the syrup and grind all of the herbs. Twice daily, in the morning and evening, take three *tolas*.

3. **Bitter Syrup (for stomach diseases)**

Ingredients: five *tolas* of Indian rennet; two *tolas* of *ushba*; two *tolas* of neem leaves; two *tolas* of *kukra desi*; one *tola* of red sandal herb; one *tola* of white sandal herb; one *tola* of *kasni*; five *tola* of *satyara*; and fifteen seeds of jujube. Soak all the components overnight after crushing them. Make with half a kilogram of sugar in the morning and use twice a day (two spoons in the morning and evening).

4. **Syrup for Fever**

Ingredients: three *tolas* of sweet violet, two *tolas* of oxtongue or *Gaozuban*, two *tolas* of blue lotus, two seeds of jujube, five *tolas* of cucumber seeds, five *tolas* of *razishk*, two *tolas* of *kasni*, two *tolas* of *kasni* seeds, two *tolas* of fennel seeds, two *tolas* of gull-e-surkh, and two *tolas* of sugar

(750 grams). Pulverize these components and leave them in water overnight. After staining, boil it in the early morning. This traditional technique for curing temperature is really effective.

5. Depression

Ingredients: three *mashas* of white sandal, one *mashas* of long pepper, three *mashas* of fennel seeds, three *mashas* of *asqand-i-nagori*, three *mashas* of *gull-i-gaozuban*, three *mashas* of red flower, four *mashas* of black pepper, three *mashas* of mint juice, eight *rati* of white *bahman*, four *mashas* of edible cardamom, one *tola* of Makran cardamom, four *mashas* of cinnamon, eight *mashas* of *gond kikar* or acacia Arabica gum, two *mashas* of *kushta-i-zamurd*, eight *mashas* of *kushta-i-murwarid*, eleven *mashas* of quince, eleven *mashas* of *muraba-i-amla* or Indian gooseberries, eleven *mashas* of quince, thirteen *mashas* of apple, thirteen *mashas* of *muraba-i-saib* or orange, thirteen *mashas* of *kaseer*. For heartburn, stomach aches, joint discomfort, and powerful digestion, this recipe works wonders. When using cow milk, use three to four *mashas*.

6. Diarrhea

Ingredients: one *tola* of isapghol husk, two *tolas* of misri, six *mashas* of *mankoocha* seeds, six *mashas* of *rehan* seeds, and six *mashas* of *blatang* seeds. Pulse all these components into a powder and take a couple of them with a spoonful of *morroon* syrup each morning and evening.

7. Stomach ache

Ingredients: two *tolas* of sweet violet, two *tolas* of blue violet, two *tolas* of fennel leaves, two *tolas* of *kasani*, six *mashas* of fennel seeds, four *tolas* of *kasani* seeds, two *tolas* of *ain al salb*, one *tola* of *Kashos* seeds, two *tolas* of *gaozuban*, nine *mashas* of *rewan khatai*, and 750 grams of *misri*. Make a syrup in the morning after soaking these ingredients in water for the entire night. Twice day, take two spoonfuls (in the morning and evening).

8. Recipe for Brain Muscles

Ingredients: five *tolas* of almond seeds, one *tola* of pumpkin seeds, one *tola* of cucumber seeds, one *tola* of edible cardamom, one *tola* of poppy seeds, one *tola* of starch, and ten *tola* of sugar. After staining, grind all of the herbs with milk and cook. After every meal, add sugar and eat after two hours. This recipe is really helpful.

Conclusion

Pir Muzamil Ali the Qadiriyya-Chishtiyya Sufi of Jabbi Sharif, district Khushab, Punjab was not only spiritually elevated but was also a very well learnt man. He learnt medicine from the Tibbia College, Delhi for the welfare of his community. He wrote his herbal recipes in his diary and transferred it to the next generations, for their well being. The underprivileged disciples, who cannot afford the expensive modern medical care, these recipes, prepared with natural herbs are incredibly affordable, effective and without any side effects. The rural society that Pir Muzamil Ali was living in the early twentieth century was mostly based on the self sufficient social structure,

usually fulfilling all its needs with in the village. The common villagers had great trust on the *hikmat* that also coming from a renowned Sufi like Pir Muzamil Ali. The use of herbs was very common in day to day Punjabi household; therefore people understood the benefits of these herbal medicines very well.

The medical services through the herbal *nuskhajat* were the basic requirement of the rural Punjab of the early twentieth century. Pir Muzamil Ali, while addressing to this basic need, learnt and practiced *hikmat*, from the possibly best medical institution around him. This shows that Sufis, being the part of their societies try to connect with the people with through basic needs, their happiness and sorrows. This mutual trust enables them lead the common masses towards the path of divine love. A Sufi becomes the bridge between his society and Allah through reflecting his people and divine love, simultaneously. As Durkheim pointed religion as the social reflection, Pir Muzamil Ali's medical services enabled him to reflect back to his society and connect them with eternity.