



Rethinking Sufi Praxis: A Postcolonial Exhumation for Inter-religious Dialogue

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Abstract

Sufism, while not a novel religion, is a mystical movement that emerged in revolt against the institutional and ritualistic practices within Islam. It has continued to be the ideal means for spreading the message of peace since the culmination of the prophetic succession. As a way of living, Sufism believes that humans have the potential to unite with the ultimate reality. Love, peace, and tolerance are the three watchwords for Sufism. They give more stress on the doctrine of Sulh-i-Kul (love with all); therefore, it seems that we may consider Sufism as a pluralist tradition. Particularly in India, they played the role of "Bridge-Builder" between Hinduism and Islam.

Historically, interreligious dialogue has played a crucial role in mitigating conflicts and animosities between diverse faiths. By fostering constant dialogue and mutual transformation, we can redirect our collective thoughts and energies from religious disputes to global issues and achieve a cooperative transformation of both global and local cultures. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore the efficacy of Sufism in promoting universal love, indulging in inter-religious dialogue and communal harmony. It also examines to what extent it can be considered an alternative to the present-day division-ridden society.

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1. Introduction

Religion has historically served as both a unifying and a separative force in human society. Mystical traditions within major world religions have often emerged as alternative ways of living or as counterforces to the rigidity of institutionalized religion. Among these mystical traditions, Sufism as a way of living stands for a transformative movement within Islam that advocates an inclusive spiritual path rooted in concrete love, self-purification, and unity with the ultimate reality. Unlike orthodox institutional religious structures that often implicitly emphasize exclusivity and boundaries, Sufism promotes an inclusive tendency of spirituality that goes beyond stratifications, hierarchies, and divisions of the human being based on birth. It is deeply rooted in fundamental principles such as divine love, peace, tolerance, unity, and universal brotherhood, which have historically made it a bridge-builder among different religions. Historically, the arrival and establishment of Sufi Silsilas in the Indian subcontinent coincided with a spatiotemporal context of rigid socio-religious stratification within *Varṇāśramadharmā*. The Sufi saints, through their inclusive institutions like *Dargah*, *Khanqah*, *Langar Khana*, and *Jam-at-Khana*, provide equal space to people of all faiths, classes, castes, and social backgrounds. Their practices, such as *Sama*, *Raqs*, and *Qawwali*, create a common spiritual ground that facilitates inter-religious dialogue and mutual transformation between different religious traditions, particularly between Islam and Hinduism, resonating deeply with the Bhakti and Baul-Fakir Movements of India.

1.1. Aims and Objectives

This present paper is an honest attempt to explore the efficacy of Sufism in promoting universal love, indulging in inter-religious dialogue and communal harmony as demonstrated in its lived practices and institutions, such as Dargah, Khanqah, Langar Khana, Jam'at Khana, and to spread the message of peace and universal brotherhood, particularly in the contemporary Indian context. It also examines to what extent it can be considered an alternative to the present-day division-ridden society.

1.2. Methodology

This study employs an existential-phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experiences of Sufis and their impact on interreligious dialogue. Existential phenomenology, as a methodological framework, emphasises the subjective experiences of individuals and communities, focusing on how they perceive and interpret their spiritual and socio-religious realities. Furthermore, Hermeneutic and Historical contextual methods are also used.

1.3. Sources of the Study

The present paper is based on both primary and secondary materials to analyse the issues comprehensively. *Sufism and Bhakti* by M.D. Sirajul Islam, the *Holy Quran*, and *Philosophy of Religion* by John H. Hick, *the Mysticism of Sound and Music* by Inayat Khan, *Castes in India and Riddles in Hinduism* by Ambedkar, and *The Philosophy of Religion* of D. Miall, Edwards are the primary resources. Secondary resources include peer-reviewed journal articles and ethnographic and phenomenological studies on Sufi practices in modern India, particularly the role of *Dargah* and *Khanqah* as places for Inter-religious Understanding.

2. Origin, Development, and Genesis of Sufism

Mysticism is common to almost all conventional religions, whose summum bonum is the unity between the finite self and ultimate reality. The origins of mysticism in Islam date back to the earliest human existence, yet it took on a systematized, organized form known as Sufism. Throughout history, there have been groups that believe in transcendental feelings and unite with God through self-annihilation. In Islamic mysticism, Allah is One Supreme Being, and every human being is His creation and servant. Sufis, in particular, emphasise the importance of love in their spiritual journey. For them, love is the core of their mystical path, leading to a sense of unity with the Divine. While some may see Sufism as a separate religion, it is a movement rooted within Islam itself, embracing the teachings of Islam while exploring deeper spiritual dimensions. As an organization, the term “Sufi” is highly controversial and not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. According to A.M Zarruk’s accounts, “there are more than two thousand definitions of the term” (Zarruq, 2024, p.7). However, despite various interpretations, two etymological roots are widely acknowledged by most scholars and critics, as they align closely with Sufi practices and ideologies. Firstly, the term Sufi (صُوفِيّ) is derived from the Arabic root Suf (فِصْو), meaning “wool”. Secondly, the term Sufi derives from the Arabic word Safa (صَفَا), which signifies the purification of the individual self. The origin of Mysticism in Islam can be traced back to the creation of Adam (A), the primordial human being. Quran says - “Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, 'Be,' and he was.” (The Quran, 3:59). Adam’s creation was not merely physical but is a metaphysical and mystical revelation. According to the accounts of Sirajul Islam, Shahabuddin Suhrawardi provides a nuanced exposition of the origin and development of Sufism in his *Awarif-al-Ma-Arif*. He states that: The seed of Sufism sown in the time of Adam, germinated in the time of Nuh, budded in the time of Ibrahim, began to

develop in the time of Musa, reached maturity in the time of Christ, produced pure wine in the time of Muhammad (Sirajul, 2004, p. 4).

Sufism began around the 10th century AD and was systematized into regular orders by Abd-al-Qadir-Gilani in the 12th century. These Silsilas were primarily divided into Silsilah-al-Baraqa and Silsilah-al-Wird, operating under the guidance of Shaykhs, Murshids, or Pirs.

Ba-yazid-al-Bistami (874 AD) is regarded as the first foreign Sufi in India, while Abu-Ali-Sindi is considered to be the first Indian Sufi. Based on this evidence, it is suggested that the first Sufi order in India was the Tygury, followed by the Junaidi order. The Chishtiyah order, however, holds the most popularity, prominence, and systematic organization in India. In continuation of a long-standing tradition, this Silsila attracts a large number of devotees to its shrines (*Dargahs*) spread across the Indian subcontinent. The embodied practices of going beyond the rigid boundaries of institutionalized religions have transformed the tombs of some early Chishti saints into major pilgrimage sites. Even though there were vigorous campaigns by reformists of different hues, the *Gaddi/Sajjada* and *Khanqah* of the living shaykh continue to attract and draw a steady stream of followers/ seeker/devotee

3. Role of Sufism in Interreligious Dialogue

The core research issues of this paper lie in understanding “to what extent can interreligious understanding of Sufism serve as a transformative tool to minimize hatred, promote socio-cultural equality, bridge divides, and cultivate a peaceful society, particularly in the Indian context where inter-religious animosities and intra-religious hierarchy based on birth is a severe problem in the 21st century.” To start with, if we trace the historical arrival of Sufi saints in the Indian subcontinent, it becomes evident that their migration coincided with a period when India, a multicultural, multilingual country, was suffering from the planned economic and social order of *Varṇāśramadharmā*. At that juncture, the oppressive socio-religious order subjugates and marginalizes a numerical majority of citizens to inhuman treatment and exclusion. As an alternative way of living, the Sufi saints challenged social divisions in practice and propagated the message of peace, equality, and spiritual inclusivity.

The Sufi *Khanqah* (hospice) in central Asia played one of the most crucial roles in interreligious dialogue and nurturing communal harmony. These Sufi places date back to the ninth century and have become ideal settings for spiritual growth and social unity. In the course of time, particularly during the Timurid and Sheybanid era, Khanqahs evolved into prominent centres of learning, attracting scholars, poets, and mystics who championed ideals of peace and

solidarity (Makhmatkulov et al., 2020). These are the places where both its inhabitants and the pilgrims enjoyed equality without any division among human beings. These were open to all without any kind of religious, socio-political, or cultural boundaries. The commoners or nobles, pious or immoral, lower or higher, men or women, believers or non-believers are one and all treated equally, and they have no restrictions to participate. Asgar Ali notes that “Khanqahs have historically been spaces where communal divisions dissolved, replaced by shared acts of devotion and service” (Engineer, 2008, p. 67). The tradition of *Langar* within *Khanqah* mirrors similar practices in Sikhism and other mystical traditions that reinforce a culture of shared humanity. The notion of *Sulh-i-Kul*, deeply influenced by Sufi ideals, illustrates how these institutions shaped policies that embraced diversity and pluralism (Kinra, 2018). In contemporary discussions on untouchability and marginalization, the model of Khanqah offers a concrete, practical alternative perspective on community integration.

3.1. Religious Pluralism and Sufism

Sufism is neither a syncretism nor a new religion. In the practices and writings of Sufi saints, we find the most important feature of religious pluralism, i.e., interfaith understanding. Religious pluralism is not synonymous with religious plurality. Plurality signifies the existence and persistence of diverse facts, while Pluralism refers to the active understanding of those facts. This interpretation of plurality is not about passive understanding; it maintains two-way traffic constantly. Thus, it is an active engagement through dialogue. Unlike religious exclusivism, Sufism follows multiple ways to experience the ultimate reality as reflected in the poetry of Rumi: the lamps are different, but the light is the same; it comes from beyond. Again, Rumi writes, “I go into the Muslim Mosque and the Jewish synagogue and Christian church, and I see one altar.” (Rumi, qtd. in Valiuddin, 1954, p. 78). Such inclusive worldviews are found in Sufi Shrines like Ajmer Sharif, where Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs pray together. This symbolizes a lived experience of religious pluralism and an implicit inter-faith dialogue that is needed in the present society. As Mir Valiuddin states, the Sufi ideals dissolve barriers, creating shared spiritual language (Valiuddin, 1954, p. 78). Therefore, if we aim to promote these practices of Sufism, which are common to the practices of other faiths on a large scale, it might be possible to live *with* all the humans filled with concrete love, rather than living as a member of a particular community.

3.2. The Role of Sama and Raqs in Interreligious Dialogue

For the first time in history, we encounter the practice of *Sama* in the Shahnameh, performed by Khosrow Kiani. It is one of the important sacred practices of Sufi dervishes to attain spiritual

ecstasy. It should not be understood solely as a ritual or aesthetic performance; it has served as an embodied, lived exploration of how the finite human body can bridge the gap between material reality and spiritual transcendence. It is one of the utmost means of union with the divine. The process involved in such practice is a form of art that transcends the consciousness of atomic individuality (aham) and physical movement, and the participants and spectators experience a spiritual experience. From a phenomenological perspective, the practice of Sama *Epoché* (bracketing/setting aside) ordinary perception and reorients intentionality toward the vision of divine presence.

The important feature of Sama is the mesmerizing spinning or whirling of the dervishes, which signifies the paving way towards a realm of spiritual ecstasy, guided by the teachings of Sufi Philosophy. When they whirl, practitioner fix their concentration on a fixed point, known as the *Meydan* or “centre of the heart”. Throughout the rotation, the dervishes maintain their gaze on this point, which helps them attain a state of spiritual concentration and prevent physical dizziness. The fixed gaze emblemizes the seeker's steadfast focus on the divine, despite the distraction and fluidity of the material world. This particular footwork technique, to control their balance during the dance, is equally important. Generally, they pivot on the balls of their feet while turning and allows body to rotate smoothly without tripping or stumbling. This skilled technique gives the harmony, stability, and consciousness of a spiritual journey at the same time, where the practitioner aims to remain steadfast on the path toward divine union. The dervishes spin in a counter-clockwise direction, the same as the planets and celestial bodies rotate in the universe, conveying the perpetual dance of the cosmos. According to this interpretation, each dervish can be understood as representing a celestial body, while their synchronized movements show the harmony and interconnectedness of the celestial spheres. From this practice, we get the insights of the Sufi belief in the unity and interdependence of all creation through harmonious conciliation. Sama is presented through four steps: the *Naat*, the *Taksim*, the *Devr-i Veled*, and the *Peshrev*.

Throughout history, Sufism has served as a ‘bridge builder’ between different faiths. They welcome people of all backgrounds into their gathering of *Sama*, *Raqs*, poetry, and movements. The whirling dervishes of the Mevlevi order in Turkey, the Chistiya Silsila in India, and the Persian Sufi saints all accepted Sama and Raqs as a means to realize the divine unity. The spiritual centers of practicing these have historically been places of acceptance and inclusion, where Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians come together in devotion. For example, the account of Sirajul Islam shows that during Mughal rule in India, the Chishtiyah Sufis opened

their doors to people from different institutional religions by welcoming them to Sama and Kawali practices, creating a spiritual space beyond religious dogma (Sirajul, 2004). This reflects the Bhakti tradition in India. In this regard, if we conduct a comparative analysis of religious traditions, it is essential to approach the subject with an inter-religious understanding, recognizing the shared spiritual aspiration and diverse practices across faiths. Sufism never imposed its practices on others, while orthodox Muslim's interpretation may conditionally prohibit dance and music as a form of worship. Considering Hinduism (its definition is ambiguous), we may say that music, rhythm, and dance are considered one of the major ways to worship God in ancient texts. According to the interpretation advanced by several Muslim jurists and theologians, these two mystical practices of Sufism have often been considered with suspicion or as impermissible. Despite such reservations, Sufi practitioners have continued practicing these embodied forms of devotion as an alternative spiritual expression that explicitly challenges orthodoxies. In this context, Sufi practices such as Raqs, Sama, and Qawwali occupy a vital role in attaining divine unity. At the same time, music and dance have long been an integral part of the Hindu life-world as a significant means of cultural continuity and religious expression. The convergence of these performative and devotional practices creates a shared experiential space. Therefore, it renders the possibility of inter-religious and communal dialogue between them.

Bhakti Tradition, and Baul-Fakir tradition can be taken into account to discuss how the central thoughts of Sufi poets share more or less the same domain with them (Samā and Raqs are the unique and distinctive features of Sufism. In these practices, Bhakti and Baul are generally interpreted as Hinduistic, while Fakir is practiced by Muslims. However, this distinction is very vague. The Bhakti movement emerged in the 6th-10th centuries, mainly within the Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions, and also among worshippers from philosophical viewpoints, e.g., Vedic, Ajivaka, Jain, Samkhya, Vaisesika, and Lokayata, in Tamil Nadu (Sirajul Islam, 2004). Therefore, with the flow of time, it spreads beyond any definite religious tradition. Mirabai, Tukaram, Muktabai, and Kabir are some of the most famous poets of the Bhakti tradition. In their songs, we find very strong opposition to the distinction between human beings by virtue of the levels of class, caste, and creed. As an anti-institutional tradition, they revolted against society's prejudices and superstitions. The Bhakti or Prema towards one's personal God is the way to touch the universal soul pervading all strata of life. Sometimes, the Bhakti movement opposed the institutional God, rendering it unnecessary. It was like a ray of light and hope for the emancipation of the untouchables and women. However, in Sufism regarding the *Sama* and

Raqs, we do not find the inclusion of women, although there are so many women Sufi poets (e.g. Rabeya, Jebunissa) we have. Except for it, the central claim of the Bhakti and Sufi movements was the same. They both tried to free us from the bondage of selfishness and to create a humane world, considering everybody and everything equal.

Kawali, as a form of inter-religious dialogue, plays an important role in contemporary India. My personal experiences have offered a profound insight into the inclusive nature of Sufi traditions, particularly the role of Qawwali Majlis in fostering communal harmony. I have witnessed firsthand how individuals from the Hindu community, including women, actively participate in these spiritual gatherings. Their presence reflects the deep-rooted syncretism that defines Sufism in South Asia, transcending religious boundaries through the power of music and devotion.

During my visits to revered dargahs such as Data Baba's Shrine at Patharchapuri and the Kermani Baba's Shrine at Khustigiri in Birbhum district, West Bengal, the author witnessed how Qawwali serves as a medium for collective spiritual experience. The rhythmic verses, infused with divine love, create an atmosphere of unity, drawing people beyond sectarian divides. Women, often restricted in certain religious spaces, find the right place for spiritual fulfillment in these assemblies, highlighting the egalitarian spirit of Sufism.

Such tradition plays a crucial role in mitigating local animosities and fostering an environment of mutual respect and coexistence. In a world often fractured by communal tensions, these sacred spaces offer a compelling testament to the power of shared spirituality in cultivating peace and brotherhood, making them invaluable cultural and social assets.

4. Interfaith Dialogue and Communal Harmony

Communal harmony, as conceived and lived in Sufism, is not an abstract theoretical principle but a concrete experience that has historically transcended the rigid barriers of religion, caste hierarchy, and societal stratification. Sufis' motive of fostering inter-religious dialogue has been driven through their ideal of universal divine love (*Ishq*), universal peace (*Sulh-i-Kul*), and the quest for spiritual unity. By challenging strict religious practices and by emphasizing those that actually bring people together, Sufism has continuously served as a bridge between multifaceted communities, binding them in a comradely bond of understanding and coexistence. It is seen most explicitly in the Indian pluralistic context, where Sufi saints and their institutions, such as Dargahs (shrines), Khanqahs, and Langar Khanas, are inclusive centers for individuals of all classes. These are the places where staunchness to religion, caste, creed, and sectarian

differences fades away in the common pursuit of divine reality, which embodies the spirit of communal harmony and lays the groundwork for dialogue with all. As Khaliq Ahmad Nizami points out, Sufi saints such as Khwaja Moin-al-din Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya were influential in establishing a culture of equality, whereby Hindus and Muslims could be friends as equals, bound together in their common spiritual aspirations (Nizami, 2009, p. 112).

The lived experience of communal harmony in Sufism is arguably best described through its spiritual disciplines, for instance, Sama and Qawwali. These traditions, which cross-linguistic and cultural divides, establish a common spiritual vocabulary that speaks to individuals on the other side of religious divides. The poetry of Sufi saints such as Rumi, Bulleh Shah, and Kabir, usually sung in Qawwali sessions, communicates divine love and human oneness in a manner that speaks to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others equally. As Mir Valiuddin notes in *The Quranic Sufism*, “the trance states that Sama creates and the social engagement with the Qawwali concerts help to promote the feeling of community, wherein variations are not dissipated but welcomed as aspects of the limitless expression of divine truth” (Valiuddin, 1954, p. 78). This shared experience of spirituality becomes a dynamic force in developing tolerance and acceptance between heterogeneous societies. The impact of Sufi Dargahs on communal harmony cannot be amplified. These shrines, usually the resting places of Sufi saints, have been centers of inter-religious discourse and collaboration in the past. Even now, prominent Dargahs throughout India remain the symbol of inclusivity and coexistence, drawing millions of followers from various religions who visit to receive blessings, pray, and engage in communal rituals.

1. Ajmer Sharif Dargah (Rajasthan) – The Dargah of Khwaja Moin-al-din Chishti continues to be one of South Asia's most hallowed Sufi locations, with seekers from all religious backgrounds visiting. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and even Christians leave chadars (holy cloth) and take part in the Langar (group meal), reaffirming the culture of communal devotion (Engineer, 2008, p. 45).
2. Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah (Delhi) – Popular for its evening Qawwali, the shrine is visited by individuals regardless of religious beliefs. The followers are involved in rituals such as lighting candles and the tying of threads with prayers, showing a deeply ingrained syncretic tradition (Eaton, 89).

3. Haji Ali Dargah (Mumbai) – Off the Mumbai coast lies this shrine, a religious and cultural site where believers from all sections of society make a pilgrimage to pray for blessings. The management of the shrine goes out of its way to ensure inclusiveness by receiving visitors from all spheres of life (Haq, 1977, p. 156).
4. Baba Farid Dargah (Punjab) – The shrine of Baba Farid, a Sufi saint highly admired by both Sikhs and Muslims, testifies to the shared spiritual underpinnings of Sufism and Sikhism
5. Nagore Dargah (Tamil Nadu) – Thousands of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims visit this shrine dedicated to Hazrat Shahul Hameed, especially during the Kanduri festival celebrated annually. The universalistic atmosphere of the shrine is evidence of the universal appeal of Sufi principles (Nizami, 2009, p. 128).

A closer engagement with the lived experiences and ground reality of Indian Muslims, especially among *Hanafis*¹ reveals a critical stance toward Dargah-centered practices and consciously distances itself from participation. For them, such practices of Sufism are *Bid'ah*². In contrast, *Sufism* historically emerges as a revolt against the ritualistic practices of Muslims; they continue to preach a vision of universal love and spiritual inclusivity through the *Dargah*. This space transcends religious boundaries and attracts adherents from diverse faiths. Consequently, *Khanqahs* become a lived space of negotiation, an arena of dialogue, and coexistence that acts as an antithesis to the exclusivist tendencies within institutionalized religion.

These Dargahs remain venues where communal anxieties are undone in the wake of spiritual agreement. As Asghar Ali Engineer says, offering prayers and joining communal meals in these shrines is the exemplary manifestation of lived communal harmony practiced by Sufism (Engineer, 2008, p. 47).

Sufism's interaction with native spiritual movements, like the Bhakti tradition in India, also highlights its contribution to communal harmony. The Bhakti saints, similar to the Sufis, focused on individual devotion, love of the Divine, and the negation of social stratification. The exchange between Sufi and Bhakti saints and their common focus on universal love and equality provided rich soil for inter-religious dialogue and reciprocal transformation.

¹ Those who follows the interpretation of Imam Abu Hanifa

² New practices, innovations of such practices that are not present in Islam.

The philosophy of Kabir, a Bhakti saint profoundly affected by Sufism, is an amalgam of Hindu and Islamic spiritual concepts, conveying a non-sectarian spirituality. In the same vein, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was greatly influenced by the teachings of Sufi saints and integrated much of Sufi philosophy into Sikh theology. As R.C. Majumdar writes, this blending not only made both traditions richer but also allowed Hindus and Muslims to find a common ground with which to engage on a more human, more profound level (Majumdar, 1960, p. 237).

The Sufi doctrine of Sulh-i-Kul is the most eloquent of its expressions of commitment to peace in society. This doctrine, with its emphasis on peace and goodwill between all human beings, independent of religious or social status, has been the guiding force behind Sufi saints' dealings with humanity throughout history.

As Richard M. Eaton points out, the Sufi focus on Sulh-i-Kul confronts the exclusionary dogmas of orthodox religious systems with a vision of unity in diversity that is highly applicable in today's divided world (Eaton, 2019, p. 92).

In modern times, the continued relevance of Sufism in fostering communal harmony is evident in the colorful congregations at Sufi shrines and Khanqahs throughout India. These institutions remain abodes of peace and tolerance, where people from a variety of walks of life gather to find refuge, enjoy a shared religious practice, and construct bridges of understanding. The Sufi shrines' annual *Urs* celebrations, characterized by music, poetry, and shared feasts, bear witness to Sufism's strength in creating a collective identity that transcends religious and social boundaries.

In the present spatiotemporal world, marked by rising religious and cultural tensions, Sufism offers a revolutionary alternative to polarizing ideologies. Its focus on love, peace, and universal brotherhood gives us a model of interfaith encounter and social cohesion that is both timeless and urgently required. In re-examining the Sufi spirit and its historical contribution to community harmony, we can derive deep insights into creating a world in which unity in diversity is not only an aspiration but an actualized fact. As John Hick so aptly states in *Philosophy of Religion*, "The mystical core of all religions points to a reality beyond the confines of dogma, inviting us to recognize the divine in the other" (Hick, 1990, p. 102). This universal truth, embodied in the Sufi tradition, remains as a guiding light for a world in need of harmony between people. The embodied *praxes* of Sufism are the lived and concrete examples of how to live with all in the lap of peace.

5. Conclusion

Religious divisions remain the source of conflict, social disintegration, and political unrest in the contemporary world. Polarisation among religious groups is frequently based on historical misconceptions, competition for power, and dogmatic interpretations. While religion can be a source of moral values and social-cultural unity, it has also been used to justify discrimination and exclusion. This fact highlights the importance of a philosophical and operational stance that transcends tolerance and instead cultivates profound interfaith understanding.

Through this study, Sufism has been examined as an innovative spiritual movement that rejects sectarianism and exclusivism, focusing on love (*Ishq*), peace, and the personal experience of the Divine. Sufism was instrumental in filling religious and social gaps in the Indian subcontinent. Through inclusive institutions such as *Dargahs*, *Khanqahs*, *Langar Khana*, and *Jam'at Khana*, Sufi saints established spaces where people of various faiths and social classes could communicate as equals. The idea of *Sulh-i-Kul* and the focus on *Ishq* served as a contrast to both caste-based discrimination and religious orthodoxy. But attaining real interfaith harmony is no easy moral hope; it needs political stances, intellectual activity, and social action. Real peace is not passive cohabitation but active resistance to the forces of exclusion, discrimination, and communal violence. It demands a change in the way religious diversity is viewed—not as a threat but as an indication of the boundless ways in which truth exists. Sufism is more than a historical precedent for inter-religious coexistence; it is a living philosophy that transcends the dogmatic boundaries of religious institutions and political ideologies. Unlike exclusivist religious structures that emphasize division, Sufism nurtures a spirituality that is open, fluid, and deeply human. It calls for a direct encounter with the Divine, free from dogmatic rigidity. Their central tenet, i.e., love as the highest form of devotion, undermines sectarianism by reminding individuals of their shared humanity. This divine unity and cosmic love vision is not merely an ideal of mysticism but a radical, revolutionary force that subverts social hierarchies and brings an egalitarian vision of society. As contemporary societies struggle with religious intolerance and socio-political conflicts, Sufism is acutely relevant. The journey to religious harmony is not an effortless one—it calls for tolerance, patience, the courage of conviction, and a willingness to deconstruct structures of hatred and prejudice. But if we accept the Sufi vision of peace, love, and spiritual harmony, we can strive towards such a world where religious diversity is not only tolerated but rather cherished as part of the richness of human existence. In doing so, Sufism gives us not merely a lesson from history but also a philosophical basis for a future in which unity in diversity is a lived experience.

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