

Roots of Sufism from Ancient Greece of Hellenic Era to the Qadria' Silsila in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan with Special Reference to the Impact of Khanqah-I-Sidra Sharif on Socio-Cultural and Literary Spheres of Society: A Critical Appraisal



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Abstract: *This inclusive research paper aims to provide a brief critical appraisal of the philosophical roots and historical development of Sufism (mysticism) from ancient Greece of Hellenic era to Qadria' Silsila of Khanqah-i-Sidra Sharif, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Right from the apparent roots of Sufism in the falling ancient Greece of Hellenic era, this research paper aims to ascertain the growth and evolution of Sufism as an alienated thought that has entranced the hearts and minds of innumerable pursuers of eternal peace for centuries. From side to side, numerous historical epochs, stressing upon the influences of key figures, movements, and metaphysical thoughts, this paper also aims to critically assess the progressive voyage of Sufism by throwing light on the multi-layered nature of Sufism and its hard-wearing worth and significance in contemporary Islamic mysticism at the time of politico-social and economic unrest with special reference to Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif, situating at the district of Dera Ismail Khan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP, hereafter), Pakistan and identify its impacts on socio-cultural and literary spheres of society. The data has been collected through conducting personal in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Materials of the collected data were transcribed as well as authenticated with the secondary sources, published in the relevant books and articles as well as qualitative research method is used to describe, analyze and substantiate the central argument.*

Keywords: *Sufism, Historical development of Sufism, metaphysical roots in Greek thought, impact of spiritual practices of Qadiri Silsila of Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif*

Introduction

Sufism usually leads to abandonment of the personal will, meditation and contemplation, an act of penance as self-purification and devotional contemplation alongside the total submission, acquiescence and assimilation to the divine will. The drive of *Sufism* was originally inspired from the ideals of asceticism and abstinence i.e., worldly indifference from taking interest for the fulfillment of essential needs of life and self-ownership or, in other way, it is starkly in conflict to have reconciled with

emancipation of individuals' thought that help to make them to draw conclusion and make their own judgement on the basis of some evident proof. Conversely, *Sufism* involves in the rigorous process of self-denial, disciplining of inner-self and a selfless choice to lead a simple, ascetic and austere life. Ostensibly, it alienates an individual, from worldly pursuits and material goals, emphasizing on the achievement of deep sense of longing and enrichment of inner consciousness to ultimate mystical phase i.e., *Irfan* (wisdom). This sense of alienation, from the ordinary material traits of life, intensifies as

the transcendental experience progresses until it triumphs the ultimate reality or truth. In other words, *Sufis* believe in discovering the *Irfan* without any observable proof, reasonable and rational thought.

Sufism has a long history, however, some of its traces were also found in the form of theoretical manifestations in the ancient Greece. The foundations of *Sufism* have been built on earning the inner consciousness of the “Reality” i.e., Light, Knowledge or Truth. It is, indeed, a fact that *Sufism* had later been well-known in Baghdad and Basra during first century, though, the traces of the origin of *Sufism* had already been found in Alexandria of Egypt (the great center of Hellenic civilization)¹, before 600 B.C.E (E.M. Foster, 1986, p. 12). The Alexandria perhaps provided the first meeting place to various scholars of the Western Greek and the Eastern world for meeting together and exchanging their ideas with one another on diverse religio-rational and substantial issues. As a result of their meetings and sharing of ideas, the rational and philosophical thought of the Western Greek began to mix with metaphysical thoughts of the East before the transformation of these thoughts into *Sufism* (Ibid, 1986).

This section of the research paper briefly describes meaning of the term and also concisely assesses the origin and development of *Sufism* from the ancient Greece in the Hellenistic age, from Pythagorean thought to Stoicism.

Historical and Philosophical Context of *Sufism*: from Western to Eastern Conceptions

Both the terms of mysticism and *Sufism* are identical, however, origin of the term “mysticism” is derived from ancient Greek word “*MUEO*” (μυέω), meaning to initiate into mysteries or shutting eyes and mouth to specify secrecy and silence to achieve the salvation from

the material world (K, Peter, 1996, p. 112). Whereas, the term “*Sufism*” is, however, derived from an Arabic word meaning “purity” that leads to describe a person who is pure in heart. Moreover, the term can also be assessed as taken from “*Suf*” (wool) that had initially been applied to those Muslim, in the Middle East, who used to wear woolen garment as a symbol of renunciation of the material things and, hence, terms mysticism and *Sufism* are similar and compatible.

According to the Holy scripture,

“a person needs to be saved if he gets fasting, offers prayers, and performs pious deeds”.

Though, *Sufism*, usually referred as mysticism, however, it has not been confined to Islam alone as it is still in vogue with different *silsilas* (chain)² in almost all religions of the world. For instance, the roots of *Sufism* have been traced back in the origin of Greek *Shamanism*, meaning an ancient practice of ecstasy,³ after *Shaman*, for entering into a non-physical world through beating drums and performing sacramental practices (J, Siegel, 2001, p. 1). Accordingly, human soul is independent of the body i.e., it moves apart from the body when the body is in complete trance but it happens only through active imaginations. The Greek *Shamanism* was later on transformed into Greek Orphism that advocated (E, R, Dodds, 1962):

“the human soul is immortal and part of the divine unity but it is captive inside of the body, that can be freed through individual intuition and sacred rituals”

The notion of non-physical world through soul-voyage can also be seen in the works of pre-Socratic mystical thinkers, such as Pythagoras (570-490 BCE), Heraclitus (535-475 BCE), Parmenides (515-450 BCE) and Empedocles-an extrovert mystic⁴ (492-432 BCE), and their works became very famous in influencing later

¹ Alexandria was a major city in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period. Alexandria was a center of commerce and intellectual learning.

² The spiritual chain or lineage after a known spiritual leader, followed by the seekers of ultimate truth.

³ It is an experience of an inner vision of God or of one's communion with the divine that is a primary goal in most forms of religious mysticism.

⁴ An extrovert mysticism is an experience of unity within the world through using rituals and symbols to do the work.

Greek mystical thought of introvert⁵ Platonic mysticism (427-347 BCE), and Stoicism⁶, founded by Zeno of Citium (300 BCE). The term *Logos* was also coined by Pythagoras that was meant for reason or order and the ultimate source of knowledge (W, K, C., Guthrie, 1993). At time of Greek politico-economic and social discontent, the philosophical thoughts of Greece began to transform into *Sufism* or mysticism through the dissemination of Stoicism by overriding human rational thoughts (Janice Siegel, 2001, p. 5). To Stoicism,

“human intellect is inferior to universal intellect and, to them, universe has a teleological system having certain objectives and mission to complete”.

During the expansionist or imperialist campaign, Alexander-the Macedonian (356-323 BCE) conquered the Eastern Mediterranean lands including Persia with the establishment of new city of Alexandria as capital of Hellenistic era (330 BCE to 100 CE). Subsequently, after the death of Alexander-the Macedonian, Greeks found an opportunity to associate with the people of diverse religions at Alexandria, such as Egyptians, Iranians and Jews. This was the place, wherein, Greek rational thoughts began to merge with the esoteric thoughts of the Eastern religions (Ibid), and the staunch advocate of this merger was Philo.

Philo (30 B.C) was a hard-core Jew, however, he was also well-versed in the Greek philosophy. History unfolds that he was the first person who re-conciliated and thus merged the religion or Jewish *Sharia* of Moses with the Greek philosophical thought (T, Seland, 2014, p. 30). To him, Plato and Aristotle were the followers of Prophet Moses and, consequently, Philo became the pioneer of combining Eastern *Sufism* with Greek rational thought. Shortly afterward, the same was followed by the Christian and Muslim thinkers to corroborate their religious

beliefs of their respective societies. Philo also re-interpreted the Pythagorean *Logos* (Ibid.) for the creation of universe, therein, he considered that *Logos* was the intermediate, transitional as well as fundamental medium of connecting God with the Universe and, without which, the Universe could have never been created. Similarly, one of the Greek Sophists, Anaxagoras (P, Curd, 2007, p. 3), devised the term *Nous* (Ibid.) and used it as an intermediary between God and the Universe. He also considered *Nous* as Universal Intellect that aimed to maintain balance in the Universe. The idea of Philo was subsequently speared and penetrated into neo-Platonic thoughts of Plotinus (C, Wildberg, 2016, p. 5).

Plotinus (204 B.C) was an Egyptian-born Roman who was sent to Alexandria at early age to receive education (L, Gerson, 2003, p. 2), wherein, he found an opportunity to seek knowledge from Ammonias Saccas (Ibid.), who was also known as the founder of neo-Platonism (Ibid., p. 2). However, his mentor, Ammonias Saccas, was soon deviated from Christianity and, as a result, Plotinus and his apprentice also began to oppose the Christian religion. The concept of neo-Platonism of Plotinus assumed that human perfection, accomplishment and happiness were achievable in this world, without awaiting, for life hereafter, however, these could only be achieved through metaphysical introspection, meditation and contemplation. He further argued that all humans will return to the One, the source and origin of their emanation (L, Gerson, 2003, p. 3). The fundamental feature of Plotinus thought (L, Gerson, 2003, p. 3) was emanation (*Tajjali*). It was his belief that:

“The One (the Creator) of the universe is beyond (detach) from its creation and, subsequently, the first Intellect or Reason, Soul of the universe, human souls and the material world were systematically emanated from the One”

OR

implies an acknowledgment of a universal order or cosmic consciousness, love of fate (*Amor fati*), transcendence of material concerns and human flourishing (*eudaimonia*). This approach leads the seekers to feel a sense of unity with the cosmos, fostering a mystical association with the world around them.

⁵ An introvert mysticism is "an experience of intellectual exercise less depending on practices and rituals i.e., unity devoid of perceptual objects; it is literally an experience of 'no-thing-ness'".

⁶ Stoicism admits the interrelated of all things and takes people as part of a greater whole. The Stoicism

“the flight of the Alone to the Alone”

He further believed that human soul can receive piety if it redeems itself from the material world. It was two-way process of descent or decline and ascent or rise. The way to ascend or rise was known as Universal love i.e. *Afaaqi Tasawar-e-Ishq* by Avicenna (D, Gutas, 2016, p. 8) and the real love i.e., *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* by the *Sufi* scholars. For instance, Plotinus took the example of the sun for illustration and said that:

“The first Intellect or Reason is spread out from the One like the light from the sun and, wherever, the light of sun does not reach, it is the material world” (L, Gerson, 2003, p. 3).

After the death of Plotinus, Porphyry (E, Emilsson, 2005, p. 1), one of his pupils, carried on the process of teaching and learning of his teacher. Porphyry developed neo-Platonic thought of his teacher with the inclusion of logic into metaphysical thought of Plotinus. He combined the logic of Aristotle (C, Shields, 2008, p. 10) by coordinating it with the thought of his teacher. It was considered as the milestone in history of mysticism as these thoughts were received by *Sufi* thinkers in Syrice and, afterward, they translated the thought of Porphyry into Arabic language during Abbasid period (D, Gutas, 2016, p. 2).

The neo-Platonism of Plotinus was significant as it directly influenced the metaphysical ideas of Christians and Muslims in the subsequent period of history. For instance, St. Augustine was the great eulogist of Plotinus and it was his belief that there is a fundamental similarity between Christianity and neo-Platonism (C, Tornau, 2019, p. 4). Similarly, the other Christian saints, from St. Clement to St. Thomas Aquinas, were also influenced from the thought of Plotinus (R, McInerney and J, O, Callaghan, 2014, p. 7).

The traces of *Sufism* were also found during the life of the Prophet Muhammad (570-633 A.D), for instance, *Ahl-Suffa*, (the People of the Bench) of Medina and, later on, Muslims also established contacts as well as acquainted with the concepts of Judaism and Christianity during the conquest of Persia, Egypt and Syria. Consequently, it initially modified their viewpoint with regard to life and religion,

however, the hardcore followers of Islam wholeheartedly accepted the Holy scriptures as the word of God, whereas, some of them showed some flexible outlook towards life and religion. While in later times, different *Sufi Silsilas* were also formed around different spiritual leaders, wherefrom, holy shrines or institutions were built in their names. *Sufism* emerged, as a distinct form, in Baghdad in the second half of the ninth century. One of the prominent *Sufis* of the period was Junayd-al-Baghdadi (830-910) and several others. Subsequently, *Sufism* spread throughout the Muslim world during thirteenth to seventeenth centuries and, similarly, monasteries (*Khanqahs*) were also built to provide shelter to the *Saaliks* (travelers) and seekers of divine knowledge, tranquility, inner satisfaction and the ultimate light, reality or truth.

The central argument of this paper, that how neo-Platonic thought of Plotinus travelled to the Muslim world and shaped different *Silsilas*, needs to be analyzed?

During the period of Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 A.D) They were also influenced from neo-Platonic thoughts of Plotinus. It was because that the Greek philosophy was translated from Syrice to Arabic language and taught at the religious seminaries (*Madaris*). Syrice scholars used to transcribe and interpret the philosophies of Aristotle, Pythagoras (C, Huffman, 2005, p. 8) and Heraclitus (Danial W. Graham, 2019, p. 4) in the light of neo-Platonic thought. Later, Sikandar Afradosi (F, B, Ahmed and R, Pasnau, 2021, p. 2) interpreted the thought of Aristotle from religious point of view and, subsequently, the work of Aristotle “metaphysics” was also translated into Arabic in 840 A.D.

Subsequently, neo-Platonism was proliferated entitling as Aristotelian philosophy, everywhere in Islamic world. This blend of Islamic-neo-Platonism was further developed and re-shaped by Avicenna (Ibn-i-Sina), *Ikhwan-e-Sufa* (Ibid.), and Averroes (Ibn-i-Rushd) (Ibid., p. 4) in the later period of history and, on the other, Muslim *Sufis*, such as Junaid-al-Baghdadi (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 57), Bayzid Bastami (Ibid., p. 42), Sheikh-ul- Ishraq Shahbudin Suhrawardi (Ibid., p. 244), Sheikh-e-Akbar Muhiy-ud-Din

Ibn Arabi (M, A, H, Ansari, 1986, pp. 102-106) and Ghazali (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 91), were also influenced from neo-Platonism. Subsequently, Muslim thinkers followed Sikandar Afradosi, however they renamed First Intellect into Active Intellect and human Intellect into Passive Intellect. They were of the view that:

“Active Intellect is emanated from the Creator and, subsequently, it influences the passive Intellect to process further”.

They further interpreted that:

“if human beings struggle through spiritual meditation, Passive Intellect could be absorbed into Active Intellect.”

This is known as unity of Passive Intellect into the Originator. The impact of *Sufism* in Muslim world, under the influence of neo-Platonism, was tremendous. For Instance, Bayzid Bistami could be called as first *Sufi* of the Muslim world who presented the theory of *fana-fillah* (M, A, H, Ansari, 1986, pp. 102-106), whereas, Junaid Baghdadi, by following Plotinus, coined the term of Absolute Beauty for the Creator and declared it as *Ishq-e-Haqiqi*, the foundational stone of *Sufism*. Similarly, the belief of Mansoor Al-Hallaj (858-922) was that: *“Absolute soul was passed through into human soul”*, is the extraction from Plotinus Thought (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 62).

Similarly, Sheikh Ibn Arabi (1076-1148) constructed the theory of *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* (M, A, H, Ansari, 1986, pp. 102-106) alongside the concept of Descent and Ascent (*Fas'al-wa-Jazáb*), stemming from Plotinus thought (Ibid.), because, it was Plotinus who provided with two different but subsequent thoughts about the Creator that:

“the Creator is detached from the universe and, at the same time, passed through all parts of the universe”.

Moreover, Ibn-i-Arabi also interpreted by transcribing *“Good of Plato”*; *“One of Plotinus”*; and *“Allah of Islam”* in one and the similar meaning, moreover, he stepped-ahead to interpret the First Intellect of Plotinus as *Haqeqat-e-Muhammadiyah*. Similarly, Ibn-i-

Arabi took great advantages, from the teaching of Spanish *Ikhwan-e-Sufa*, and, subsequently, learnt much from neo-Platonic thoughts. Subsequently, Sadrudin Quonvi (1207–1274) (R, Todd, 2014, p. 1), the pupil of Ibn-i-Arabi and the teacher of Moulana Jalalud-Din Rumi (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 74) united the thought of [Ibn 'Arabi](#), codified and incorporated it into with the metaphysical innovations of [Avicenna](#). Likewise, Moulana Jalalud-Din Rumi (1258-1273 AD) re-interpreted the theory of descent and ascent in his *Masnawi* or *Mathnavi* (Ibid., p. 314), which is the replica of Plotinus thought. According to Rumi's *Mathnavi*:

“Human souls, seem restless for uniting with the Creator and it also seems that human soul is perturbed by being separated from the Creator”.

Though Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not have anything in common, however, the contents, relating to *Sufism*, have highly been appreciated in all three religions. No wonder, if a person be the follower of the Prophet Moses; the Prophet Jesus; or the Prophet Muhammad, he or she turns entirely to God after experiencing the deep sense of the soul. *Sufism* is the concept of religion that aims to apprehend the divine realities. For instance, in Islam Muslim *Sufis* have been found of calling themselves *Ahl-ul-Haqq* (worshippers of the Real) (Ibid.).

Though, the drive of *Sufism* was originally inspired from the ideals of Christianity, however, it was modified into the sights of different sects in Islam. For instance, *Murjities* (J, V, Ess, 2018, p. 20), *Qadarites* (A, Rahman, 2002, pp. 39-41), *Jabarites* (Ibid., pp. 39-41), *Mutizilites* (M, Valiuddin, 1995, p. 33) and *Asharities* (Ibid.). *Murjities* advocated that:

“the faith is related with our beliefs and not actions, hence, faith and love to God have been given priority to human work”.

Abu Shimmer, Unsan and Abu Maaz were the pioneers of *Murjities* sect. On the contrary, *Qadarites* affirmed that:

“human beings are accountable for their deeds and they also advocated that God is just and does not like injustice”.

Mubaad Janhi (Ibid., p. 35), Jielaan Dameshki

(J, V, Ess, 2018, p. 20), and Wasil-Bin-Atta were the founders of *Qadarite* sect, whereas, the *Mutazilities*, on the other, constructed their own viewpoint on the basis of reason. Moreover, they also rejected the qualities of God as inconsistent with His Unity. The first *Mutazilitie* was Wasil-Bin-Atta, who was alienated from Imam Hasan Basri on the question of sin, however, the advocates of *Mutazilities* sect included: Zarar-Bin-Ammar, Muamar-Abu-Al-Hazeel Alaf, Al-Nizam, Hisham-Bin-Al-Hakam, Jafiz, Jiyayi, Bashr-Bin-Al-Mutamir Al-Mazdar, Askani Khayat and Qabai.

Last of all, the prominent figure of *Asharities* was Abu Hasan Al-Ashari (A, Rahman, 2002, p. 91), who formulated hardcore and unchanged system of mysticism underlying the creed of orthodox Muslims. Advocate of *Asharities*, such as Imam Baqalani (Ibid., pp. 129-139), Imam Ghazali (Ibid., p. 143-165) and Imam Al-Razi (A, R, Badawi, 1995, p. 40), strongly supported the government of the time and they also began to publish their writings, at the behest of the government, to counter the thoughts of *Mutazilities*. All these were deeply influenced by Plotinus thought, however, merged it with their own theology to serve consolidate the then political realm, nevertheless, they were emerged to powerfully act upon the hardcore principles of *Sufism*. During third century *Hijri*, the *Sufis* of the time began to consider and practice simplicity, austerity and asceticism as the only primary stage of long journey. Their life style could be illustrated as love is not to be learnt from human beings; it is one of the God's gifts that comes from His grace:

"When the Gnostic's spiritual eye is opened, his bodily eye is shut; he sees nothing but God, oh my God I invoke thee in public as lords are invoked, but in private as loved ones are invoked. Publically, I say, 'oh my God!' but privately I say, oh my beloved" (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 99).

Hence, *Sufism* has been manifested in different forms, such as knowledge, love, truth, light and ultimate reality. However, this research study is confined to *Qadria Silsila* alone, emanating from Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, with special reference to identify the impact of *Khanqah-i-*

Sidra Sharif on socio-cultural and literary spheres of society.

This section of the paper briefly describes origin of the *Qadria Silsila* with special reference to identify the impact of *Khanqah-i-Sidra Sharif* on socio-cultural and literary spheres of society.

Origin of Qadria Silsila

Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077-1166 AD) was born in the province of Jīlān (or Gīlān), however, he then moved to Baghdad during his teenage years and was to spend the rest of his life there. This period was one of great change in the Muslim lands, especially for Baghdad and the surrounding country. It saw the rise to power of the Seljuks (1050-1300 AD), with a period of stability and then a return to instability as had been the case during the end of the Buwayhid period (1055). At the age of eighteen years, he visited Baghdad to pursue a legalistic education and training of Hanbalism (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 36), wherein, he received the *khirqā* (M, A, Haq Ansari, 1986, pp. 12, 140) at the hands of Abu Sa'ad Ali Al-Mukharrimi-a Hanbali faqih. Subsequently, he attended spiritual sessions of Abu Al-Khair Hammad Ad-Dabbas (d. 1131) and, thereafter, spent twenty-five years as peripatetic austere and ascetic in Iraqi's deserts and founded *Qadria Silsila*. At the age fifty or more, he became a popular Hanbali preacher in Baghdad as he used to wear cloths like an *Aalim* (religious scholar) and not a *Sufi*. According to Ahmad Al-Ghazali, Abu Yousaf Hamdani (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 66) and Abu Najib Al-Suhrawardi, "Qadir Jilani was renowned during lifetime for his sermons and courses of religious instruction, but he never at any time propagated any *khirqat at-tasawwuf*."

However, after his death, with the passage of time, people of certain kind were given his *khirqā*, then it grew through his *Baraka* and expanded through highland and lowland. The only two of his children who did not pursue a secular career were Abd ar-Razzaq (528-603 A.H) and Abd al-Aziz (d. 602 A.H). These two *shaikhs* set out to work to propagate their father's way in all sincerity, temperance and modesty, and in that movement they were assisted by certain devout and sympathetic

associates of their father.

Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif: Historical Background

The descendants of Abdul Qadir Gillani, Sayyed Badr-ud-Din (d.1873) and his son Sayyed Affif-ud-Din (1844-1916), came from *Hamma* (Syria) through *Khurasan* and entered Quetta, Pakistan. Sayyed Affif-ud-Din later travelled to Peshawar and settled here for rest of his life. He left behind two sons including Sayyed Abdullah Badshah (1888-1971) and Sayyed Gul Badshah. Sayyed Abdullah Badshah died in 1971, leaving behind no off-spring and was buried next to his father Sayyed Afif-ud-Din Hussain at Yakka Toot, Peshawar. Later on his dead body was carried from Peshawar to a village in Dera Ismail Khan known as *Khanqah-i-Sidra Sharif* as per his will. In recognition of his attachment to the village of Sidra, he had been given the title of *Tajdar-e-Sidra* (S, Anwar, personal communication, January 23, 2021).

The administration of the Khanqah is maintained by Pir Anwar Shah Gillani who is the present custodian of the *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif*. He is assisted by several deputies (*murideen*) in the discharge of different administrative activities of the *Khanqah*. The selfless endeavour of Pir Anwar Shah Gillani has increased the fame and reputation of the *Khanqah*. Attempts have been made to estimate the literary impact of this *Khanqah* through published works, such as *Faizan-e-Sidra* and *Ziarat-e-Auliya-e-Pakistan*. The aim of this research paper is to briefly identify the impact of the *Khanqah* on the socio-cultural and literary spheres of society (H, Azad, personal communication, January 26, 2021).

His *Silsila* had produced some of the famous *Sufis*, such as Sheikh Abdur Razzaq, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Sheikh Abdul Wahab, who spread teaching of his *Sufi Silsila* in various parts of the Islamic world including the Subcontinent. The guiding principles of *Qadriya Sufi Silsila* include: *Ittat-e-Allah-wa-Ittat-e-Rasool* (follow instructions of God and His messenger); *Khidmat-e-Makhhluk-e-Allah* (Serve humanity); *Zikr-e-Jahri* (Remembrance overtly); *Zikr-e-Khafi* (Remembrance covertly); *Muraqaba*

(Meditation); *Mujahida* (Self-control); *Tawakal* (Believe in God); *Husan-e-Ikhlaq* (Good demeanor); *Shukar* (Thankfulness); *Sabar* (Patience); *Raza* (Will); *Siddq and Rawadari* (Eternal truth & justice). The followers of Abdur Razzaq came in *Uch Sharif* (Ibid., p. 354), Bahawalpur, the Sub-continent in late fifteenth century and established *Qadria Sufi Silsila*. These included: Sayyed Safi-ud-Din (M, H, A, Qadri, 2003, p. 237) (d. 1191), Sayyed Shams-ud-Din Mohammad (Ibid.) (d. 1431), Makhdoom Sayyed Mohammad Ghaus Gillani (Ibid.) (d. 1517), Sayyed Mohammad Amjhari (Ibid.) (ND), Mir Sayyed Ismail (Ibid.) (d. 1586) and Shah Qamees Qadri (Ibid.) (d. 1587) so on and so forth that had produced numerous *Sufis* in the Indian subcontinent, such as Sayyed Badr-ud-Din (d. 1873) (S, Anwar, personal communication, January 23, 2021).

Followed by pursuing spiritual enlightenment, Sayyed Badr-ud-Din (I, A, Qadri, 2018, p. 15), alongwith his son, Sayyed Afif-ud-Din (Ibid.) (1844-1916), migrated and settled in Yakka Toot, Peshawar in 1849. Sayyed Afif-ud-Din pursued his early spiritual education from his father and got married twice in the renowned families of Peshawar. These families included: Bukhari family, resident of the city, while, his second wife belonged to Mattani, a peripheral village of Peshawar. His offspring from his second wife included: Sayyed Abdullah (popularly known as Sayyed Badshah) (Ibid.), Sayyed Gul Badshah (M, H, A, Qadri, 2003, p. 394) and two daughters. Sayyed Badshah was childless, however, he was known as sage of the age. On the other, Sayyed Gul Badshah was blessed with a son, Sayyed Ahmad Gillani (I, A, Qadri, 2018, p. 22) the father of currently the custodian of *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif*, Pir Anwar Shah Gillani (b.1957).

Khanqah (Monastery) is the place, wherein, the *Sufis* disciples (*murideen*) receive spiritual training, such as observing litanies, meditations, and fasting (M, A, H, Ansari, 1986, p. 18) The structure of the *Khanqah* has not been the same everywhere as these vary in forms and their organizations. These include: tombs of their spiritual leaders, *langar-khana*, living rooms, masjid and madrassa, *aqamat-gah* (hostel for

murideen) and public archives. These *Khanqahs* have the space for accommodating several *murideen*, however, some live on temporary basis while the others reside for a longer period of time. For instance, 120 *murideen* were living in the *Khanqah* of Khurasan (Iran) during eleventh century; almost 300 *Sufis' murideen* in *Khanqah* of *Al-Salahiyya*, Cairo in 1174 AD; and 200 *murideen* in *Khanqah-e-Shah Ghulam Ali*, Dehli during eighteenth century. Similarly, *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif* is a spacious *Khanqah* currently accommodating more than two hundred *murideen* at one and same time. These *murideen* reside at the *Khanqah* while Pir Anwar Shah Gillani has managed to run the administration, their expenses and langar khana (M, Ghulam, personal communication, October 14, 2022).

Topography of the Khanqah-e-Sidra

Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif is located towards 10 kilo meters of North from Bannu Road, lying at the foot of *Koh-e-Pezu* (mountains of Pezu) and *Dara-e-Gomal* (Gomal Pass), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The river Zhob flows to its northwest and the Indus River to the southwest. It is situated 40 km away from Dera Ismail Khan. It is considered as the guiding light and a seat of great spiritual learning in the area (M, M, Mian, personal communication, October 14, 2022).

According to Pir Gillani, it is stretched over the area, ranging from 300 to 340 kanals (approximately 42.5 acres), out of which 110 kanals are dedicated to the mausoleums of the elders of the *Silsila* alone (S, Anwar, personal communication, October 14, 2022) The splendid white building of *Khanqah* attracts visitors and common people, mostly illiterate villagers, seeking spiritual healing, self-satisfaction, divine love, peace of mind, relief, guidance and direction. It is a complex of buildings, comprising of shrines of Sayyed Abdullah Badshah and father of Pir Anwar Shah Gillani with a huge and well-decorated marble and mirror work masjid, and a *madrassa*, wherein, both religious and modern education is being provided to the *murideen* under the supervision of Mufti Yaqoob Hashmi, the chief administrator. Moreover, there are more than

300 residential rooms for the pilgrims of *Khanqah* and a free *langar-khana* (M, Ghulam, personal communication, October 14, 2022).

Impact of Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif on Socio-cultural and Literary Spheres of the Society

Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif laid deep imprints on socio-cultural literary spheres of society. It is an extrovert *Sufism*, wherein, Pir Anwar Shah Gillani spread *Qadria Silsila* in local, Saraiki, dialect amongst people of the area. He lives in the vicinity of the *Khanqah* and followers of the *Khanqah* visits to seek the spiritual blessings and guidance to lead a peaceful life. The impact of the *Khanqah* has manifold, for instance, followers visit the *Khanqah* to sight *tabarukaat* (sacred belongings), such as *Moo-e-Mubarak* (hair of the Prophet Muhammad), *Nalayn-e-Mubarak* (sandals of the Prophet Muhammad), a piece of carpet of Masjid of the Prophet Muhammad, *Ghilaf-e-Kaaba (Kiswah)*, *Khaq-e-Mubarak* (clay of the Masjid of the Prophet Muhammad), *Khaq-e-Shifa* (blessed soil) and *Riazul Janna* (a piece of carpet of Masjid of the Prophet Muhammad) and so on (I, A, Qadri, 2018, pp. 70-72). The *Khanqah* also has the remains of the *tabarukat-e-Iraq*, such as *Qita-e-Chadar* and *Pathar* (a piece of garment and stone of Hazrat Salman Farsi's grave), *Jubbae-Mubarak* (shirt of Abdul Qadir Gillani), *Romaal-e-Ghous-e-Azam* (scarf of Abdul Qadir Gillani), *Dastar-e-Mubarak* (turban of Abdul Qadir Gillani), *Nalyn-e-Mubarak* (sandal of Abdul Qadir Gillani), cap of Abdur Razzaq, *Jubba-e-Mubarak* of Hazrat Affifuddin, *Qula-e-Mubarak* (Turban of Syed Abdullah Badshah) and cup of Abdullah Badshah.

All these sacred belongings have deep spiritual impact on the lives of general population and the visitors that helps to promote social solidarity and brotherhood. Some similar socio-religious and cultural impacts could be observed at the *Khanqah*, firstly, *Ba'yat* the spiritual allegiance, is advised the followers to offer prayers by submitting to love of Allah for the purpose to get self-actualized and spiritual realization. It is observed that mostly poor and illiterate people of the area seek spiritual fulfillment through Pir of the *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif* rather than seek guidance directly from Allah (M, H, A, Qadri,

2019, p. 149). Just like health, an essential objective for everybody so that he or she must follow the instructions of physician. Similarly, their psychological, emotional, and spiritual stability and strength is secured through the assistance and guidance of the *murshid*.

The socio-economic disparities that may be natural or unnatural that cause serious harm to the general society, particularly the have-nots or deprived classes due the scarcity of knowledge start focusing in wrong direction to fulfill their material needs and desires. At this crucial moment services of selfless, volunteers (*Pirs*) become indispensable to ensure progressive development of social fabric. The divine message keeps a close watch of both the well-off and deprived-of all cadres like economic, social, intellectual to take care of each other. It enjoins upon his followers to be on guard of other's rights. The local populace has the advantage of *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif* too, for instance, hundreds of thousands followers visit the *Khanqah* during *Urs* celebrations and the local populace run stalls of different items such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, caps, bangles, rings, shawls, and rosary-beads. Besides, the most crowded day of the *Khanqah* is Friday because people come around from various cities for offering Friday prayer and find the opportunity to meet Pir Sahib for receiving blessings.

Pir Anwar Shah Gillani has also published a book entitled: "*Asbaaq Jamee-ul-Salasil*" that includes need of *Murshid-e-Kaamil* (spiritual leader), *Adaab-e-Saalik* (rules for traveler), *Murid-Wa-Murshid Ke Huqooq-wa-Fraiz* (rights and obligations of pir and murid), guide lines for traveler, and lessons of *Sufi Silsila* such as *Qadria*, *Chishtia*, *Naqshbandia*, *Suhrawardia*, and *Qalandria*. the guiding principles for *muredeen*. He has been contributed to build more than thirteen hundred masajid and madaaris. Many of his *naibeen* and *mudideen* have been engaged in propagating *Qadria Silsila* throughout the world. These include: Mr. Abdul Sattar in Brussels, Dr. Zafar Ullah in Chicago, USA, Mufti Akhtar Ali Qasuri in UK, Sheikh Ismail, Chief of Hatim Tai tribe and Sayyed Sabah Ibrahim Al Hussaini, Imam of Roza-e-Imam Abu Yusuf, in Iraq. Pir Anwar

Shah annually tours Punjab and stays for one and half months at Baghdadi House, Multan Road, near Chung, Lahore.

A Critical Appraisal

In times of political instability, military regimes, uncertainty and transformation, people normally enter into a personal quest for meaning and purpose to find inner peace, a sense of perseverance and consolation in their lives. An amalgamation of socio-political changes alongside cultural interactions and discontentment with social norms, it led to the emergence of mystical transformation in the world. The weakening of the politically stable governments gave birth mystical landscape of the region it has touched, wherein, people seek solace and stability in mystical pursuits. The mystification of society thus contributes to the alienation of people through determining their insights and beliefs in ways that assist to serve the interests of the ruling class. These mystical practices are the outcome as part of the existing ideological superstructure that aims to distract individuals' attention from the substantial causes and concrete conditions of their alienated thought.

For instance, at the zenith of Greek civilization, it witnessed noteworthy successes and achievements in various fields such as philosophy, art, science, and governance. However, owing to its socio-political unrest and economic challenges, the decline of Greece gradually gave way to the rise of stoicism in Greece. Similarly, *Sufism* emerged in the Middle East with the decline of Muslim Empires as a spiritual or mystical response as an alternate to the socio-political problems of the time including political fragmentations, economic challenges and religio-cultural transformations. They wanted to seek salvation in the pursuit of divine knowledge by remembering Divine Soul and also seek spiritual guidance through the help of a mystic leader. Thus, people found solace with a meditative and inward-focused transformative approach of spirituality to unworldliness.

Likewise, the Indian subcontinent witnessed political uncertainty during thirteenth century

owing to the attacks of the Delhi Sultanate and the formation of the Khalji and Tughlaq dynasties. Similarly, Indian society confronted numerous issues of social inequality and discrimination during the period of uncertainty and, as a result, it gave way to the inclusion of *Sufism* in India. Though, preliminary influences of *Sufism* could be traced in Indian subcontinent in early ninth century, however, full influence of *Sufism* was laid during late twelfth and thirteenth centuries after the consolidation of *Sufi Silsilas* in the region. There were four major *Sufi Silsilas*, such as *Chishtia* (1143-1236 AD) (A, Schimmel, 2003, p. 112) *Suhrawardia* (1145-1234 AD), *Qadria* (1406-1584 AD) (Ibid.) and *Naqshbandia* (1563-1603 AD) that concurrently spread in every nook and corner of the region. It mixed with local mystical values, such as Hindu monism, Buddhist *Nirvana* and *antajami* (journey of the soul) of Sikhism.

Conclusion

Sufism, specifically through the lens of *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif*, has played a transformative role in the socio-cultural fabric of society. Its emphasis on inclusivity, compassion, and spiritual growth has contributed to fostering a sense of community and shaping ethical norms that reverberate beyond the confines of the *Khanqah*. The critical appraisal of the roots of *Sufism*, spanning from Ancient Greece of the Hellenic era to the current time with a focus on *Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif*, reveals a deep spiritual and cultural legacy. This investigation not only highpoints the permanent nature of *Sufism* but also highlights its self-motivated dimensions to delineate and demarcate through evolving socio-cultural and literary settings and backgrounds of the societies it has touched.

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Personal Interviews

- An interview with Pir Anwar Shah Gillanion January 23rd 2021.
- An interview with Hussain Azad of Multan on January 26th 2021.
- An interview with Pir Anwar Shah Gillani on 14 October 2022.
- An interview with Mian Muhammad Munir (a Naib of Pir Anwar Shah Gillani) on 14 October 2022.
- An interview with Watchman of Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif on 14 October 2022.
- An interview with Cook of Khanqah-e-Sidra Sharif on 14 October 2022.