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Sufism and Human Well-being: An Analytical Study of the Thoughts and Role of Chishti Sufis of 13th Century

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Abstract:

This research examines the philosophical outlook and humanitarian contributions of the 13th-century Chishti Sufis in South Asia, with a focus on their distinctive approach to promoting human well-being. Prominent Chishti masters, including Khawaja Mo'een-ul-Din Chishti, Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, and Nizam al-Din Awliya, advanced a spiritual tradition rooted in compassion, inclusivity, and selfless service. Through institutions such as the Masjid, *khanqah* and *langar*, they established some of the earliest community-based welfare systems, providing food, shelter, and emotional support to people across religious, social, and economic divides. Their teachings emphasized ethical cultivation, spiritual discipline, interreligious harmony, and social equity, thereby shaping a pluralistic and morally conscious society. By merging spiritual ideals with practical service, the Chishti Sufis provided a holistic paradigm of human well-being that resonates with modern concepts of social welfare, peacebuilding, and communal coexistence. This study underscores their lasting impact on the cultural, ethical, and humanitarian development of medieval South Asia.

Keywords: Sufism, Human well-being, Thoughts, Role, Chishti Sufis, 13th century

Introduction

Sufism has long been one of the most transformational spiritual forces in the Islamic world, offering a path centred on moral refinement, universal compassion, and self-purification. The Chishti order gained particular notoriety among the numerous Sufi orders that emerged in medieval South Asia due to its strong social ties and commitment to the well-being of its followers. Through their teachings and practices, Chishti leaders such as *Khawaja* Mo'een-ul-Din Chishti, Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, and Nizam al-Din Awliya transformed the religious and sociocultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent during the pivotal 13th century.

During a time of significant socioeconomic inequality, political instability, and theological fragmentation, the Chishti Sufis developed a spiritual and ethical philosophy centred on love, service, and inclusivity.

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In addition to being places of meditation, their khanqahs (spiritual lodges) served as vibrant hubs for social welfare, providing food, shelter, emotional support, and a feeling of community to individuals from a variety of backgrounds. They promoted communal harmony and offered a haven for the downtrodden and marginalized through customs like the langar (community kitchen) and sama' (spiritual music).

The affirmation of human dignity, the growth of ethical consciousness, and the promotion of interreligious understanding were all aspects of the Chishti approach to human well-being that went beyond charity. A pluralistic and socially cohesive society was formed as a result of their emphasis on selflessness, humility, and compassion, which established a moral framework that cut across religious and cultural divides.

Their efforts created a social idea in which all people were seen as equal in dignity, rights, and respect. Because of this, many historians and social researchers believe that the Chishti Sufis were not only spiritual leaders but also some of the earliest social reformers of this region. They spread the message of equality and kindness, and their teachings still influence the thinking and social life of the Indian subcontinent today.

Chishti Sufi Order

The Chishti Sufi Order is one of the most influential and widely respected spiritual traditions in the Islamic world, particularly in South Asia. Originating in Chisht, a small town near Herat in present-day Afghanistan, the order emphasizes love, compassion, tolerance, and service to humanity as central paths to spiritual growth. Throughout history, the message of Islam has been spread in various forms, and among these efforts, the role of different Sufi groups is especially significant. Among these groups, the *Chishti Sufi Order* also holds an important place. The spiritual lineage of this order is traced back to *Hazrat Ali (RA)* (661 CE), who conferred the *khirqa* (cloak of spiritual succession) upon *Hasan al-Basri* (728 CE). Hasan al-Basri was a renowned scholar of hadith, to the extent that both Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik held him in great esteem. Hasan al-Basri then entrusted the *khirqa* to *Shaykh Abdul Wahid ibn Zaid* (793 CE). He passed this trust on to *Fudayl ibn 'Iyad* (803 CE), who in turn conferred it upon *Ibrahim ibn Adham* (782 CE). Shortly before his death, Ibrahim ibn Adham presented the *khirqa* to *Hazrat Huzaifa Mar'ashi* (840 CE). Huzaifa Mar'ashi then passed it to *Habirah Basri* (870 CE), who later entrusted this spiritual trust to *Shaykh Mumshad 'Alu Dinwari* (911 CE)¹. A few days before his passing, Mumshad Dinwari conferred the *khirqa* upon *Abu Ishaq Shami* (940 CE), from whom the Chishti order formally takes root². After him, the succession continued through: Khwaja Abu Ahmad ibn Abu Faris Chishti (966 CE), Khwaja Abu Muhammad ibn Abu Ahmad Chishti (1005 CE), Khwaja Abu Yusuf Chishti (1045 CE), Khwaja Qutb al-Din Maudud Chishti (1133 CE), Khwaja Sharif al-Din Zandani Chishti (1215 CE), and Khwaja Uthman Haruni Chishti (1220 CE), all of whom strengthened and expanded the order.

During the 13th century, under the reign of Prithvi Raj in India, the Chishti order reached new heights through the efforts of *Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer* (1236 CE), who firmly established it in the region. The author of *Siyar al-Awliyā* even called him "the representative of the Prophet in India³." From there, the lineage and teachings of the Chishti order continued to flourish and spread across the subcontinent. After Hazrat Moinuddin Ajmeri, the leadership of the Chishti Order passed to *Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki* (1235 CE), who settled in Delhi.

Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami writes that Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki made a concerted effort to spread the Chishti Order in northern India. Throughout his life, he strictly adhered to the teachings of his spiritual guides. After him, *Baba Farid Ganj Shakar (1266 CE)* became the spiritual head of the Chishti Order. Baba Farid left Delhi, which he called the city of kings, and moved to Ajodhan (today's Pakpattan) in Punjab. From there, he spread the Chishti teachings throughout Punjab and northern India. After Baba Farid, *Hazrat Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1325 CE)* took the Chishti Order in the Indian subcontinent to the highest level of perfection. For more than half a century, his khanqah (spiritual centre) in Delhi remained a place of guidance and teaching.

Role of Chishti Sufis of the 13th Century for Human Well-being:

In South Asia, many Sufi orders gained fame, but in India, the Chishti Order received special recognition. The main reason for their popularity was that they always taught their followers to treat people of every religion and every community with tolerance and moderation. They rejected discrimination, inequality, and hatred, and instead promoted interfaith harmony, tolerance, and national unity. Sheikh Muhammad Akram writes: "The Chishti Order had many qualities that suited the conditions of India—for example, the use of music and *samā'*, a love for literature and poetry, gentleness, and an extraordinary tolerance toward non-Muslims—all of which helped its popularity and spread⁴."

The universal principles of human well-being adopted by the 13th-century Chishti Sufis were not merely theoretical but deeply embedded in their daily lives. Below, we highlight their achievements, insights, and character.

1. Serving Humanity without Distinction

The first principle of the Chishti Sufis was that faith is not a prerequisite for service. The doors of the Khanqah were open to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jogis. The hallmark of the Chishti order is that these saints prioritized social well-being. According to the Chishti saints, true purification of the soul and heart is unattainable without social well-being. Professor Khaliq Nizami, discussing this aspect of the Chishti order, has written: "The spirit of serving humanity should become an integral part of the thought and action of a moral teacher. There should be no mixture of showmanship or pretense in any of his actions. He should seek divine pleasure through serving the creation of Allah, because the highest goal of religion is to serve the creation and console the broken-hearted⁵." Dr Uzair Abbas has quoted Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya's saying: "You have called the rights of Allah obligatory worship and the rights of the servants as optional worship. For a person to treat God's creation with kindness and to serve creation should be the worship. Tariqat or Sufism is not the name of sitting on a prayer mat, reciting the Tasbeeh, or wearing thick shoes; rather, Tariqat or Sufism is the name of serving humanity⁶."

In Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya used to spread a large dastarkhwan every day in the Khanqah (Ghiyaspur) of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Once, while the langar was being distributed in the Khanqah, some travellers and Hindu jogis arrived there who were apparently very worn out and hungry. A servant of the Khanqah, who was probably not yet fully acquainted with Sufi etiquette, hesitated a little on seeing these non-Muslim travellers or tried to turn them away. When Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya came to know, he became very angry and told his disciples the historical phrase that is still considered the foundation of Sufism: "Do not ask the person sitting at the dastarkhwan about his religion or belief, because everyone who has a soul has the

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right to eat food; if Allah has created him, then He has also taken responsibility for his sustenance⁷."

After that, he ordered that all these travellers be seated in the front row and served the same food that was given to the special disciples and guests of the Khanqah.

2. Eradication of Hunger

The Khanqahs of the Chishti Sufis were actually public dastarkhwan. Where there was no distinction between the rich and the poor, Muslims and non-Muslims. The Sufis considered feeding the people to be the greatest service.

It is mentioned about Nizamuddin Auliya that during the days of severe famine in Delhi, he ordered his disciples to distribute whatever was in the Khanqah among the people. He would not eat until he was satisfied that no one in the city slept hungry⁸.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti describes the method for becoming a saint of Allah:

"Perform such worship of Allah that is better and more virtuous in His sight than all other acts of obedience. When asked what that act of obedience was, he said: "Listen to the cries of the oppressed and the helpless, attend to the needs of the weak and the sick, and feed the hungry⁹."

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti had dedicated his life to serving humanity. He was even known as "Khwaja Gharib Nawaz". He gave priority to serving the poor during his stay in Ajmer. A large quantity of food was served at his dastarkhwan every day, which was distributed among travellers and the needy.

Baba Fariduddin used to have a regular langar in the Khanqah of Ganj Shakar (Pakpattan). He himself lived in poverty and hunger, subsisting on millet bread and pilu (a wild fruit), but never sent a beggar empty-handed. But he considered it his responsibility to feed everyone who came to the Khanqah. He used to say that "worship cannot be done on an empty stomach". Sometimes there was a situation in his langar that even firewood was not available, but as soon as a traveller came, arrangements would be made from the unseen¹⁰. His teachings gave the Sufi langar the form of a regular social institution.

The Chishti sages preferred to distribute it among the poor instead of accepting offerings from the kings. Once, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq sent some money to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, who immediately distributed it among the deserving¹¹. He used to say: "How can I be asked about the taste of this food when my neighbours are sleeping hungry?" Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to say that "On the Day of Judgment, Allah Almighty will say to some people, 'I was sick, and you did not visit me, I was hungry, and you did not feed me.' The servant will ask, 'Isn't my Lord free from all of these?' Allah will say, 'My so-and-so servant was sick/hungry, his service was my service.'" The sultans of Delhi (Al-Tamash, Balban, etc.) were so impressed by the social influence of Sufism that they often wanted to endow their estates for their Khanqahs, but the Chishti Sufis rejected them so that they could remain free in public service.

3. Forgiveness and Non-Violence

In the turbulent times of the 13th century, when the subcontinent was plagued by political strife and social unrest, the Chishti Sufis made forgiveness and non-violence the main pillars of their monastic training. These saints promoted the philosophy of reformation instead of revenge and love instead of hatred, aiming to create a society where the sanctity of human life and respect for humanity took precedence. For the

Chishti saints, true heroism lay not in conquering the enemy but in winning his heart by forgiving him; their teachings were not merely ideological, but there are numerous incidents related to their lives that prove that they always adopted the path of patience and moral superiority in the face of oppression and violence.

When Khwaja Garib Nawaz came to Ajmer, he faced severe opposition from the local rulers and Pandits. His companions were prevented from drinking water, and stones were thrown at them, but he strictly forbade his disciples from taking revenge. A man came with a hidden dagger with the intention of killing him, but seeing his radiant personality, he trembled and dropped the dagger. Instead of punishing him, he forgave him and said, "What's done is done, don't be ashamed now¹²." This was such an example of forgiveness that the man became his disciple on the spot.

A man brought a pair of shining scissors to Baba Farid as a gift. Seeing it, he uttered a sentence that became a manifesto of non-violence for the rest of the world: He said, "Don't give me scissors, but bring me a needle, because the function of scissors is to cut and separate, while the function of a needle is to sew up the wounded and mend broken things. I have come to mend people, not to break them¹³."

A man from Delhi, "Chhaju", teased Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya a lot; he used to throw dirt at his door and place thorns on the path. When that man died, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya not only attended his funeral but also stood at his grave and prayed for his forgiveness and provided financial assistance to his family. His philosophy was that If someone places thorns on your path, you should place flowers, because if you also place thorns, the whole world will be filled with thorns¹⁴. Good behaviour, even towards enemies, was a distinctive feature of the Chishtia tradition.

4. Equality and the End of Casteism

Indian society was caught in the vicious cycle of casteism, where humanity was divided into classes. In such a situation, Chishti Sufism presented the revolutionary concept of "unity of humanity" and equality, which shattered the centuries-old idols of class. These great men proved not only through their teachings but also through their actions that the standard of excellence is not determined by birth or caste, but rather by piety and the well-being of humanity.

The Khanqahs of Chishti Sufis were the only places where kings and priests, Brahmins and Shudras sat in the same row. When the table was laid in the Khanqah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (RA), the nobles of Delhi, as well as those who were considered "Dalit" in society, would sit there. His principle was that whoever entered the Khanqah lost his previous social status. He used to say that making distinctions between people is an insult to the Creator¹⁵.

The Labour class was looked down upon, but Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar made them a respected part of society. Farmers and artisans who came to Baba Farid's Khanqah (Pakpattan) were given the same protocol as a great scholar. Once, a poor farmer came to him and sat near him. When his disciples tried to push him away, he strictly forbade them and placed him near his prayer hall. His egalitarian approach influenced thousands of lower caste Hindus, and they became converts to Islam¹⁶.

In Ajmer, Khwaja Garib Nawaz was the first to challenge the "religious aristocracy" that kept common people away from places of worship and wells. According to tradition, when Khwaja Sahib settled near the Anna Sagar Lake, the local priests there prevented the lower caste people from drawing water. He removed this restriction by his action and declared that water, air and land are the blessings of

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Allah to which every human being has an equal right¹⁷. This simple equality ended a major human crisis. In the class society of that century, the Chishti Sufis introduced the respect for "human beings". Whether a sultan or ascetic, everyone would sit in the same row in the Khanqah. There was no distinction between the nobles and the poor. This was the ethos that brought the "downtrodden classes" of India closer to the Sufis.

5. Social Justice and Reformation of Rulers

The Chishti Sufis adopted a unique approach of "truthfulness" and "political detachment" to provide social justice and reform the rulers. They kept away from the courts of kings so that they could raise their voice for the rights of the people without fear and make the rulers realize their responsibilities. The principle of the Chishti Sufis was that instead of becoming a royal courtier, they should become a companion of the people's sorrows. When Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud offered some land and cash to Baba Farid (RA), he distributed the cash among the poor and returned the land certificate, saying, Our elders did not accept such things¹⁸. His aim was that the rulers could not suppress the voice of the people by buying the sufis.

Sufia always supported the oppressed and exhorted the rulers to justice and fairness. When tension arose between Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (because the Sultan considered Sufya's influence a threat to his power), he stood his ground instead of succumbing to any pressure. He made it clear that the ruler's job was to serve the subjects, not to oppress them¹⁹.

The Sufi Khanqahs were a place where the poorest of the poor received the justice and attention that they did not get in the royal court. Hazrat Bakhtiar Kaki and Baba Farid established a system where the complaints of the oppressed were heard. If a government official had wronged a peasant, the Sufis would write him letters of advice or restrain him with their influence²⁰. The Sufis would remind the rulers that the real kingdom belongs to God and they are only trustees on earth. According to the teachings of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (may Allah have mercy on him), the best worship of a ruler is to listen to the cries of the destitute. This ideology played an important role in turning the style of governance of the Sultans of Delhi (such as Iltimush and Nasiruddin Mahmud) towards humane compassion. Although the Sufis lived away from the court, they did not hesitate to write letters to the Sultan in support of the oppressed.

6. Religious Tolerance and Interfaith Harmony

In the 13th century, the social structure of the subcontinent was suffering from severe religious tension and class division. In such a situation, Chishti Sufism laid the foundation of "Tolerance" and "Interfaith Harmony," which brought people of different faiths together. The message of these saints was based on "peace with all", due to which the Khanqahs became the common abode of Sufis, Pandits, Jogis, and common people. Chishti Sufism made religion a means of love instead of hatred. According to them, the path to reach the Creator was through the service of His creation. Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya was once strolling with his disciples on the banks of the Tigris when he saw some Hindus worshipping. Seeing their worship, he said: "Every nation has its own path, religion and Qiblah²¹." This sentence was the height of religious tolerance, where instead of insulting the faith of another, its existence was acknowledged.

Hazrat Bakhtiar Kaki (who was the caliph of Khwaja Garib Nawaz and the mentor of Baba Farid) set great examples of tolerance in Delhi. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs (in the context of later periods), and local tribes all used to visit his Khanqah. He never asked anyone about his faith²². The local non-Muslim community of Delhi respected him so much that they would request his prayers at their social functions. He always welcomed them as a "human being", due to which the clashes between people of different religions in Delhi decreased, and a common civilization (Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb) began.

In Ajmer, Khwaja Garib Nawaz encountered the great Hindu Jogi of that time, "Jaypal". Jaypal tried to intimidate him with his magical powers, but Khwaja Sahib's morality and spirituality impressed him. When he was defeated, instead of humiliating him, he embraced him and honoured him²³. His tolerance created a place for Islam and Muslims in the hearts of the Hindus of Ajmer, which, even after 800 years, is a source of inspiration for everyone in the form of "Ajmer Sharif". The Chishti Sufis adopted the local culture and language and bridged religious divides. Baba Farid composed poetry in Punjabi so that the common people could understand. He held dialogues with Jogis and Hindu pandits, emphasizing human values.

7. Generosity and Sacrifice

For the Chishti Sufis, "generosity" was not just the name of the distribution of wealth, but it was an integral part of their creed of "faqr". The principle of these saints was that what came in the morning should not be saved for the evening (la adkhaar)²⁴. The Sufis of this period set an example of generosity, prioritizing the needs of others over their own.

Hazrat Bakhtiar Kaki (RA) lived a life of generosity and trust. His langar was not provided by any royal grant but by unseen conquests. His title "Kak" became famous because his wife often borrowed from a local grocer (shopkeeper) to run the household. Once, the grocer's wife taunted him, "If we don't lend, your children will starve." When this news reached him, he told his wife not to borrow in the future, but to recite Bismillah and take out "Kak" (bread) from a corner of the house²⁵. It was a testament to his generosity that not only his family but also countless poor people and travellers of the neighbourhood benefited from this niche, and he never turned anyone away empty-handed. When the princes and sultans of Delhi brought offerings to him, all that wealth would be distributed among the poor before his meeting adjourned. You used to say, "A Sufi is one whose heart is as generous as a river"²⁶.

Baba Farid's (RA) Khanqah was the greatest centre of generosity. Once there was only one dirham left in the Khanqah, he ordered the servant to bring sweets and distribute them among the ascetics. After a while, a beggar came; he gave that sweet to him too, and he and his disciples went hungry. His philosophy was that "Zakat-e-Maal" is given after a year, but "Zakat-e-Qalb" is to be generous at every moment²⁷.

During the reign of Nizamuddin Auliya (RA), such dastarkhwan were laid in Delhi that are rarely seen in history. It is mentioned in 'Sir Auliya' that such a large quantity of food was prepared in his langar khana every day that the poor of the entire Ghiyaspur (Delhi) ate from there. He himself often fasted and ate very little during sehri and iftar, but he took immense pleasure in feeding others²⁸. Spending whatever he had on others was the foundation of Chishtiyya faqr. There were times of starvation in the house of Sufiya (RA), but if any gift (nazrana) came from somewhere, it was distributed immediately. This was called "not storing up tomorrow" (Turk-e-Dunya).

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8. Education and Enlightenment

The Chishti Sufis not only rendered valuable services in the field of spirituality but also in the field of education and intellectual enlightenment in the subcontinent. Their greatest achievement was to take knowledge out of the palaces of the elite and to reach the common man through Khanqahs. The Khanqahs of the Chishti Sufis were the "public universities" of that era, where religious sciences as well as ethics and social consciousness were taught. The Khanqah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya used to hold academic discussions in which literature, philosophy, and social issues were discussed²⁹. The Chishti Sufis adopted Persian as well as local languages (early forms of Hindi/Urdu) for education so that the common man could be intellectually awakened.

Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar made people aware of self-knowledge and human rights through poetry in the local language. His teachings liberated the people from mental slavery³⁰. They believed that real education is that which changes the character of a person. Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki and Baba Farid taught their disciples "faqr" and "istaghna", which gave them the courage to speak the word of truth in front of the rulers³¹. This was the greatest mental awakening of that era. Sofia took people out of the fear of superstition and witchcraft and attracted them to trust in Allah and hard work. Once, a person came to Baba Farid (RA) and requested, "Hazrat! Someone has cast a spell on me, or perhaps all my works are going wrong due to the rotation of the stars. Give me such an amulet that my spell will end and my fate will change." Baba Farid (RA) listened to him, and instead of giving him an amulet, he gave him a profound educational talk. He said, "Your illusion is harming you more than magic. The rotation of the stars is subject to the command of Allah. You should establish your relationship with Allah and work hard." Then he advised him to make the habit of praying the fivefold prayer and seeking forgiveness instead of superstitions, because no imaginary power in the world can prevail against the remembrance of Allah³². Sufism eliminated the mental fear of the people and inclined them towards logical and spiritual trust so that they could avoid the exploitation of superstitious groups.

In the thirteenth century, many Jogis used to amaze people with their magic tricks. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (RA) and Baba Farid (RA) never showed magic in comparison to them, but proved with their moral strength and simplicity that the real strength lies in character³³. When people saw that all the claims of the Jogis were hollow in front of the ethics of Sufism, their superstition would automatically end. Their Khanqahs were not just places of worship but also centres of knowledge. Great intellectuals and poets like Amir Khusro were the result of the training of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (RA).

9. Restoration of Human Dignity

In the 13th century, the "Restoration of Human Dignity" was the great achievement of Chishti Sufism, which revived a society that was fragmented and crushed under class oppression. During this period, there was a fear of Mongol invasions, and on the other hand, the ancient social structure of India humiliated humans based on "caste". Chishti Sufism made "respect for humanity" the centre of its teachings. For Chishti Sufism, the standard of human dignity was not his position or race but his "humanity". When the despised people of society (like a sweeper or a poor farmer) came to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (RA), he would make them sit on his equal footing. Once, his disciples saw that he was listening to a miserable person with such

attention as if he were a great, honourable person. He said: "The heart that is broken, there Allah resides³⁴". You made people realize that any inferior profession or poverty should not diminish one's human dignity.

Slavery was common in that century, but Chishti Sufism not only freed slaves but also gave them the status of "spiritual sons". During the reign of Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (RA) and Baba Farid (RA), it was common practice to buy slaves with the money received in offerings and immediately free them for the sake of Allah. These freed slaves were educated and trained and made respectable members of society³⁵. This was a practical demonstration of the restoration of human dignity where a "sold man" was elevated to the status of a "perfect human being".

In Indian society, untouchables were not allowed to drink water from wells or pass near temples. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (RA) broke all these restrictions in Ajmer. He declared that every human being has an equal right to walk on Allah's land and to its water. When the lower caste people saw that a "God-fearing" person invited them to his table and fed them with his own hands, their lost dignity was restored, and they realized for the first time that they too were the best of creation. Baba Farid used to say, "Do not break the heart of a person because in every heart there is the light of God." According to him, humiliating someone was actually an insult to his Creator. When people brought their complaints to his Khanqah, he would stand up to restore the dignity of the oppressed in front of the oppressor rulers³⁶. Sufis used to advise their disciples to work hard. They took man out of the humiliation of "sawal" (asking) and showed the way to trust in Allah.

10. Psychological Wellbeing

The 13th-century Chishti Sufis provided psychological and spiritual well-being at a time when the people of the subcontinent were suffering from severe mental stress and fear due to Mongol invasions, political uncertainty, and social oppression. These saints transformed Khanqahs into "spiritual sanatoriums" where desperate hearts were treated with love and attention. They used "Sama" (Qawwali) as a means of spiritual solace and relief from mental stress. According to them, a suitable voice and divine words could eliminate the inner turmoil of a person and give him peace. Whenever a troubled person came to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, he would advise him to sit in a gathering of Sama³⁷. The music and Sufi kalam would release the suppressed emotions of a person (catharsis), which would make him feel mentally lighter.

"Listening therapy" holds significant value in contemporary psychology, but the Chishti Sufis had adopted it centuries ago. Baba Farid (may Allah be pleased with him) used to sit for hours, listening to the sufferings of ordinary people. Once a disciple asked him, "Do you not get disturbed by hearing such painful things?" He said, "Listening to the sufferings of creatures and comforting them is what Dervishi is about³⁸." Your attention alone would remove half of the beggar's suffering.

These great men taught people to live in the "present" and freed them from anxiety about the future. Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki (may Allah be pleased with him) taught that worrying about sustenance is doubting God's attribute of providing sustenance. When a person's trust in God is firm, his inner anxiety and financial and social fears disappear, which is the real spiritual satisfaction³⁹. The specific azkars of the Chishtia series (especially the dhikr-e-jahr) proved to be the best means of gathering a person's scattered thoughts and achieving mental peace (meditation)⁴⁰. Providing mental peace to people in times of chaos was a great humanitarian service.

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Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Chishti Sufis of the 13th century played a significant role in promoting human welfare. Their teachings were based on love, tolerance, equality, and service to humanity, which helped in solving the social and moral problems of the time. For the Chishti Sufis, spiritual peace and social welfare were inseparable. The Khanqas were not only spiritual centers but also welfare institutions where there was no distinction between rich and poor or based on caste. These Sufis presented a humanistic approach against social conflict and class differences, which developed harmony and peace of mind among the people of the society. The research further elaborates on how the intellectual and spiritual environment of the Chishti Sufis promoted literature and culture. Overall, the Chishti Sufis' ideology of human well-being presents a comprehensive and balanced model that is still applicable today.

Recommendations

1. Chishti Sufia's teachings of love, tolerance and social well-being should be included in the modern educational curriculum to promote human values.
2. The welfare aspects of the Monastic system should be adopted as a model for modern social welfare institutions.
3. The humanistic ideology of Chishti Sufia should be promoted to resolve current social conflicts and intolerance.
4. Further research studies on Sufi literature, especially the work of Amir Khusrau and other Sufi poets, should be encouraged.
5. Interfaith harmony should be promoted by using the teachings of Chishti Sufi as a basis for religious and cultural debate.
6. Sufi values such as equality, compassion and justice should be incorporated into policy-making related to human welfare.

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