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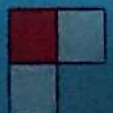
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On

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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Shrine Culture and Sufi Cult- Impact of Sufism on Local Traditions in Vijayapura Region

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of religious and sacred centres of Sufi culture with special reference to Vijayapura region. The Moghul expansion of the Deccan was attached with creation of volumes of Sufi shrine complexes across South India. As majority of the Sufi saints propagated inclusive approach to humanity, their ideology supported the strengthening of India's composite culture. This inclusive approach also supported the spread of Sufi traditions around medieval Deccan. The popularity of the Sufi saints developed immensely as they were propagating universal brotherhood and universality of god. The number of Sufi followers grew both Hindus and Muslims sought the blessings of Sufi saints, this motivated the development of a shrine culture. The assimilation of Sufi with local culture was more noticeable in a variety of rituals which reflected inclusive and liberal nature of saintly integration in region around Vijayapura. Even though with Sufi shrines did not have the clear endorsement of the thoughts and traditional beliefs of the buried Sufis their followers grew in number and shrines were built commemorating them. Besides, there was perceptible change in the Sufi tradition as supported by the local cultural traditions.

Key words: Vijayapura region, Sufi cult, Shrine culture, and impact on local traditions

Introduction

Vijayapura region offers lots of opportunities for tourism and the existence of Hindu Islamic Christian religious sects have laid greater influence on development of tourism. The region is under the influence of Veerashaiva, Islam, Jain, Buddhist and other cults. The influence of these religions have laid firm roots to socio-religious beliefs such as worshipping of trees, worshipping rivers, worshipping stones, annual Utsava for the deity, consecration of the idols, etc. The religious beliefs are linked with the regions and are known through archaeological sources including stone epigraphs, Hero stones, Mahasati stones, copper plate records, coins and contemporary literature.

Islamic art included

The Adilshahi kings who ruled this region contributed to the growth of culture, art, architecture, trade and commerce activities. The Adilshahi period also witnessed Sufi influence in structural construction. As writer **Ainuddin Gahjullim Dehelvi** narrates Sufism gained momentum along with the coming of **Ibrahim Sangane**, who is considered as was one of the early Sufi saints of Vijayapura region. There are nearly 300 **Dargahs** and tombs in Vijayapura belonging to different Sufi saints and holy people which prove the larger Sufi influence in the region. This influence local folk lore and culture and there was assimilation of Regional traditions and practices with Sufi thoughts.

The following Sufi saints held their sway in the region.

1. **Sayyid Chanda Husaini** – He hailed from Arabia and landed in Bidar region during the beginning of 15th century. His historical journey in the regions of present day North Karnataka provides several evidences of socio-cultural and spiritual life of the region. He was welcomed by the people of the region and soon they became his followers. His soft and steady personality attracted people and they sought his blessings. His educated people to live life with love, compassion and humanity.
2. **Shiekh Shamsai Din Zinda Dil** – This Sufi saint came from Persia and he came to present north Karnataka region travelling through the plain regions of Ahmadabad. He came to Vijayapura during ruler Shahi Ali I. He was very much interested in meeting people, hearing to their problems with dexterity and endurance, consoling them, spreading principles of love and universal brotherhood. His warmth and friendliness attracted people and they gathered to hear his lectures and sought his blessings.
3. **Shah Miranji Shamsal** – This Sufi saint came from Mecca. He lived for a short period in Vijayapura region and travelled along Bheema river valley and spread the thoughts of love, compassion, humanity and warmth among people. He was popular among all sections of the society and he preached oneness and omnipresence of god.
4. **Shah Nurul Din Safawi, Shah Abul Hasan Qadri, Shah Sibghat Allah, Shah Alam Sashimalawi, Abul Hasan, Shah Mustafa qadriya, Shad Qadri Qasim** were among other famous Sufi saints. **Ibrahim Zubairi** writes in his book **Rouzatul Auliyee Beejapore** which was compiled around 1695 AD, reports that more than 30 tombs or Dargah (Islamic places of worship) with more than 300

khankahs (Islamic missionary schools) with notable number of disciples of different lineage lived in this Vijayapura region.

Sufism and influence on society in Medieval south India- Vijayapura region became an important centre of the Chisthi Sufi cult from 1300 to 1700 AD. There are also references to Qadiri Sufi cult and the Shattari Sufi cult which exercised their influence in the region. Sufi influence was also seen at Gulbarga region through Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraaz, the famous Sufi saint who migrated from Delhi to Vijayapura region. Bidar region was emerging centre of Qadrisilsila, majority of the Sufi saints who settled here came from Arabia, and were known for mastering theology and philosophy. After Aurangzeb devoured the small Shahi kingdoms of Deccan, these Sufi saints switched their allegiance to Moghul court. The Moghul emperor Aurangzeb continued the tradition of giving out landed properties as Inam to Sufi saints in a bid to take complete control of the regions around Deccan. This shows that the royal polity and Chisthi Sufi links continued in South India after 1700 as well. By donating Inams or land grants Moghul emperors and other Muslim rulers of Deccan created number of religious spaces in the name of Sufi saints which further helped them to gain access to unfamiliar spaces in the Deccan. This helped them to emerge as landed gentry or Inamdar Sufi saints receiving land as Inam from the kingdom of Bijapura region. Other Muslim kings of Deccan made it a point to donate land, money and supportive materials to Sufi saints. Some Sufi saints did not accept the political contributions or presents and delinked themselves from accepting any type of donations from the royal palace, but several Sufi saints were under pressure to accept donation from the royal court in the name of Inam or landed gifts because their very survival was left in the hands of the Ruler. Some rulers were very much attached to Sufi traditions while several others maintained a distance from the Sufis and majority of them were treated very unsympathetically.

The Sufi influence on local traditions- The Sufi saint's ritual dynamics because they imbibed traditional touch of the locality of regional influence was more evident. Ritual dynamics of Sufi and Hindu followers were so common that almost they existed side by side. The Sufi influence on local traditions can be seen in.

1. **The tradition of Conceptualising of universality-** Majority of the Sufi saints in South India can be linked to local traditions and local beliefs. Sufi saints propagated the universality of the god the concept was known as "wahadat al wujud". Sufi saints always propagated god's universal presence and spreading the principles of humanity and sympathy.
2. **The tradition of Inclusive approach-** The Sufi saints propagated inclusive approach which supported the strengthening of India's composite culture and supported the Sufi traditions as the popularity of the Sufi saints grew because they were propagating universal brotherhood and universality of god. These tenets matched the Hindu philosophy of Vasudaiva kutumbakam, meaning world is one and all creatures are equal.
3. **The tradition of Vernacular Literature-** The growth of Urdu and Hindi languages was more evident as Sufi saints supported the vernacular literature. The Sufi saints also contributed to the growth of poetry and religious music. Their spiritual sessions were conducted with local lingual support.
4. **The tradition of Song and dance -** The Chisthi saints used songs and dance techniques for creating spiritual ecstasy. The preaching sessions of the Sufi saints was called as Samah and followers indulged in spiritual euphoria
5. **The tradition of offering -** The tradition of visiting the dargah, offering at dargah (the burial place of the Sufi saints), burning incense sticks, tying thread on trees at holy places, tying or donating bricks at holy places, this gave popularity of offerings at dargah.
6. **The tradition of rituality-** The local traditions of singing, dancing, feeling, meditating, silently praying, folding hands, sitting in vajrasana posture, deep breathing, leaving foot wear outside holy shrine, washing hands before touching holy shrine, etc were inserted through Hindu-Sufi co-ordination. The convergence of Sufi traditional elements in local traditions was felt including visiting Sufi Shrine, hearing to lectures, reading from the holy book, considering Sufi saint as Guru, conducting annual festival called Urs (death anniversary), using flowers to decorate holy mausoleums, covering sacred shrines with floral sheets, etc became a customary inclusion.
7. **The tradition of urs celebration-** The Urs celebration became a grand commemoration and religious function, as thousands of devotees across the region visited the dargah and offered prayers. These pilgrims were also afforded free boarding and lodging facilities in the vicinity of the mausoleum. Majority of the devotees were on fast during these sanctified days and after the main function, a special dish called as shahipulaav was served. Several shrines also offered fruits and dry fruits among the pilgrims.
8. **The tradition of Fatiha ceremony-** The ceremony of Fatiha included distributions of sweets and eatables among all devotees irrespective of their status. In the month of Ramadaan a special dish

- popularly known as **halim** was prepared and served to all fasting devotees who stayed long and were busy with night prayers called as **tarawih**.
9. **The tradition of education-** Sometimes Sufi centres were educational centres also such as Hindu **paathashaala** attached to temples. Some Sufi saints were well read and scholarly persons. They maintained a small library inside the shrine precincts. Majority of the Sufi followers went to visit Sufi saints in order to share information and know about additional references.
 10. **The tradition of liberal thoughts-** Sufi saints did not follow stereo type notions and did have liberal views. They did not follow **Shariya-** the law canon of Islam religion. This was very rigid and strict canon and common people found it difficult to follow. The Sufi saints acted as a bridge between the rigid **Shariya** and liberal Sufi philosophy.
 11. **The tradition of shrine cult-** Building miniature monuments or constructing a small shrine became an accepted culture in medieval south India. This is viewed by several historians as a part of political association. In the name of Sufi influence construction of Shrine became more of a customary activity. Commemorative rituals extolling the miraculous powers of the buried Sufi saints were attached to the regular ceremonies. The spiritual superiority and extraordinary powers were bestowed upon each Sufi saint and their qualities were eulogized through song and dance assemblage. The extolling of miracles was necessary to maintain the purity and holiness of the place.

Conclusion-

Thus, Sufi influence in the Deccan was more politically linked and deviated from the original Sufi spiritual thoughts. The assimilation of local culture was more noticeable in a variety of rituals which reflected inclusive and liberal nature of saintly integration in region around Vijayapura. It is also a noticeable fact that the rituals linked with Sufi shrines did not have the clear endorsement of the thoughts and traditional beliefs of the buried Sufis. Hence, there was a distraction from the original conviction and beliefs. The local culture did have an upper hand in making these rituals more liberal, moderate and regionally customized.

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