

IMPACT OF SUFISM ON TAMIL SOCIETY, CULTURE AND LITERATURE

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Abstract:

South Indian Islam is predominantly influenced by Sufi Movement. The Sufi Movement in Tamil Nadu is a socio-cultural Movement which incorporated the Islamic mysticism and Hindu tradition stands for social harmony, religious tolerance and cultural integration. The spread of Islam in Tamil country was associated with the expansion of maritime trade network. The Arabs established the trade links even before the advent of Islam in Arabia. The Arab traders established their early settlements in the coastal region such as Pulicat, Nagapattinam, Nagore, Kayalpattinam, Kilakkari, Porto Nova and Athirampattinam. The Muslim settlements were established in coastal region through intermarriage of the native women with the Arab migrants and merchants. These places became the centres of Islamic faith in South India. Through the traders, the companions of Prophet and Sufi saints from Middle East came to these regions to propagate Islamic faith in Tamil Country. The Sufi missionaries and mystic movement had able to convert the local population through their liberal preaching and simple approach. The present study is aimed to trace the impact Sufism on Tamil society, culture and literature.

Key words: *Sufism, khanqahs, dargahs, cult tradition, Hindu Mysticism, Arabu-Tamil, Nalangu, Munajat, Kissa, Masala, Nama, Ravuttans, M araikkayar, Pir, Urus, Tazkira,*

Introduction:

During the eleventh century AD Sufism emerged as a separate movement in Tamil Nadu due to the arrival of Sufi Nathar Wali. He came to Tiruchirappalli along with nine hundred disciples. His spiritual endeavour made many natives to become his disciple. Through them he was able to propagate Islamic faith and Sufi principles to other parts of South India. Saiyyad Mansur, Shams Paran and Baba Fariduddin were consider as his famous disciples and they established separate Sufi centres in various places like Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli and Penukonda.¹ Due to their missionaries activities many local Hindu people were embraced Islam. Their *khanqahs*² had been function as rural hospitals were mental and physical afflictions said to be cured. In most cases the venerated saint had been elevated as cult figure after his death. The disciples who have strongly believed the miracles power of the saint after his death established some spiritual rituals and adopted local customs and practices. These practices paved the way for the conversion of *khanqahs* into *dargahs*³. This cult tradition further developed by the *Pirzadas*⁴. These developments in *dargahs* cult isolated the Tamil Muslims from the wider Islamic world. Islamic mysticism in Tamil Nadu is purely influenced by the local cult and patronized by native rulers. The adoption of local culture, religious practices, rituals, language, saint cult tradition, shrine cult tradition, Hindu Gods and Goddess tradition, art and architecture combined together and contributed for a movement which later helped thousands of people embraced Islam. The people who remained in Hindu religion were showed their affinity towards Sufis. This affinity is exposed especially during the festivities of *dargahs*. The direct involvement and the indirect participation of the masses led to the Sufi movement into a mass level movement.

Sufism and Tamil Culture:

The study of the interaction between Tamil Cultural Tradition and Sufism has been marred by deep prejudices and studded with conflicting hypothesis. The fact that mystic urges are recognized an inherent in all religious system. The Western Orientals suggested that Sufism developed from an Aryan (Iranian) reaction against the conquering Semitic Arabs.⁵ However there are many variations in the Hindu Mysticism and Islamic Sufism. Both believe are remained in their fundamental doctrines. They are contrast in many aspects but complementary to each other. It can be seen that there was a cultural fusion between the two religious faiths. Sufism plays a vital role in this cultural synthesis process. From the cultural point of view, both the Hinduism and Islam mutually influenced each other in many respects.

The Sufi centres and khanqahs initially functioned as centres of organized *tariqa*⁶. Later the basic principles of Sufism has been corrupted and transformed over by the centuries. The hereditary trustees and guardians of dargahs replaced the basic Sufi teaching centres by introduce the popular cult traditions. The Sufi mystics were interacted with the public in many ways. They were acted as a great physicians and healer and dispenser of miraculous cures; these activities were the key functions of early khanqahs. Later the disciples of Sufi became as Sufis and added to the pantheon of Sufism. The dargahs were endowed with more grants by ruler became popular and emerged as prominent Sufi centres. These centres adopted new cult traditions which were suitable to their own landscape.

Sufism probably served as an intellectual stimulus to rigid formalism of caste and rites of *Brahmanical* religion. Later Sufis contributed their shares in bringing about close understanding between the two communities. The Sufis made their influence on local literary tradition and dietary habits. They introduced new non-vegetarian dishes like *Pulao*, *Briyani*, *Kabab*, *Koffa*, *Samosa* etc which became more popular dishes amongst the people of Indian subcontinent. The converted Muslims also made influence on language and literature too. Tamil is the Mother tongue of the majority of the Muslims of Tamil country. The cultural impact of Islam led to the development of new mixed language like Arabic-Malayalam and Arabu-Tamil⁷. The Tamil Muslim poets have much contributed to minor classical literary forms like *Arruppadaï*, *Anthathi*, *Pillai Tamil* and *Ammanai* and their works compare favourably with those of non-Muslim poets. Their innovative thoughts resulted to produce new Tamil literary forms like *Padaippore*, *Munajat*, *Kissa*, *Masala* and *Nama* which have no parallel in other Tamil literature produced by other Poets.

Transmission of local customs into Islamic Tradition

The counted-trend of the transmission of Hindu customs and superstitions into Muslim society was also noticeable. Most of the customs of Tamil Muslims are highly influenced by the Hindu customs. The betrothal and other wedding ceremonies including Pre-marriage customs like *Nalangu* and *Mappillai Azhaippu*, applying special perfumes for the bridal couple, the tying of marriage Knot (*Tali*) and the marriage procession are all adopted from the Hindu customs. The Hindu beliefs like omens and demons have also crept into Muslim society⁸.

Many of the taboos for pregnant women are borrowed from the Hindu customs. They are such as fasting during lunar eclipse, the taboo on the wearing of new clothes or the use of *henna* to avert the evil eye. The Hindu ceremony of “*Aratti*” meant to turn away the evil eye, was also adopted by the Muslims of Tamil Country. The *dargahs* or mausoleums of Sufi saints were constructed in large number in later period was due to the influence of local Hindu cult tradition. These *dargahs* were attracted and received high response from both the

Muslims and non-Muslim community. The Masses of both communities shared their superstition, customs, celebration and festivals of each folk. The customs connected with the Hindu temples and Processions were adopted and in the Dargah Cult⁹ tradition and Hindus were attended in large number. The Muslim saint cult tradition of Tamil country has flourished due to the Hindu influence.

In the Tamil tradition, the small pox is attributed to the Tamil goddess *Mariamman*, from Hinduism. Like the Hindus the Muslims have adopted certain relief practices to avert her wrath¹⁰. The same way when there is an outbreak of cholera in any village, the rural Muslim community makes processions just like the Hindus. They will go around all the streets in which they had lived and burn incense and chant special hymns to propitiate, the anger of Hindu goddess. Further, they mark their houses with the sandal paste with the impressions of their hand as protection against the deadly disease. However the worship of local deities and Patron gods and Goddesses so strongly condemned in the Quran¹¹ is still found to obtain among certain sections of the Muslim community. Some of the *Ravuttans* of Madurai go to the temple of Lord Subramanian at Palani and make their offerings. They also believe in the efficacy of Prayer in the shrine at Sivagiri or Palani and make their vows at the little door at the back (east) and offer sugar in the *Mandapa* inside. The women Muslim folk also offer milk to *Nagavalli*(snake deity) temples. This practice derived from the deep Hindu customs¹².

Generally the Muslim community of pre-colonial Tamil country had no division between purist and syncretic Muslims¹³. They emerged with common pattern of belief and worship which focus on the network of pilgrimage and ecstatic cult devotion. It is believed that the Muslims of Tamil Nadu are not parallel with rest of the Muslim community in India. They are neither rigid nor orthodox in their ideas of religious thought. It is also reflected in their religious tradition. The Saivite, Vaishnavite and power divinity traditions are helped to shape the cults of Sufi centres. Sometimes the pure Islamic principles are overlapped by Tamil Muslim. In many villages the Muslim peasants are influenced by folk worship and they are closely associated to the force of nature. Their religious life is said to be parochial and localized, incorporating spirit cults and other traditions derived from non-Islamic sources¹⁴.

The *Maraikkayar* devotees of Nagore who settled down in the South East Asian colonies during the British rule were established *Pir*¹⁵ cult shrines for example Penang and Singapore¹⁶. They simply built replicas of the original Nagore Dargah in their overseas trade bases. These shrines were perceived as an equal potent repository of the *pir's barakat* or miraculous power¹⁷. They provided enough wealth to keep up the level of cult activity at home in Nagore to endow the two new overseas cult centres and to support *Urus* or death anniversary of the Saint¹⁸. These ceremonies were conducted just like the Hindu festivals. It can be seen that Muslim shrine cults were able to gain in range and power with the mobility of their devotees from various religions. The devotees and *Pirzadas*¹⁹ played a vital role in establishing new beliefs and rituals in *dargahs* cult tradition. One of the popular rites among them is the occasion of an infant's first tonsuring. During this occasion many Hindus used to distributing alms to Brahmins. During this ceremony the hair which was cut from the child is weighed and parents distribute the equal weight in silver or in currency coins to the Brahmin priest. This same practice was followed by the Tamil Muslim and instead of Brahmins they offer this silver or currency coins to Muslim fakirs who came from different places. The pilgrims from various parts of the country came and perform these rituals in *dargahs* along with their friends and families²⁰. This practice still continued in places like

Nathar wali *dargah* in Tiruchirappalli, saint Qadir Wali *dargahs* in Nagore and many other *dargahs* in Tamil Nadu. Another notable cultural transfusion is that many Hindus used the word Allah. In some rural centres of Tamil Nadu, the Muslim God Allah²¹ is still referred as *Allah Swami* or lord Allah and they pay homage and respect whenever they cross the mosque. Instead they remove the foot wears, raise their hands and praise the Almighty just like as they were practice in Hindu temple. When their funeral procession is happened to cross the mosque, they stop their drum beatings and give respect to the prayers of Muslims. It shows that the rural masses perceived a common divinity among the famous religious practices. It is very hard to generalize the custom of an entire society²². In Tamil Nadu each Sufi shrines has generated its own individual history and cult traditions. Each saint has been capable of taking many different roles and identities. The saint may appear simultaneously as an 'orthodox' *alim*²³, poet, warrior, avenger and magical healer – intercessor. The cult traditions are also varied from region to region. Studying *Tazkira*²⁴ texts or preaching of Sufi saints and other sources, is possible to make some generalization about the principles of South Indian Sufism.

There is a contrast between Sufi principles and Sufi cult. The Sufi could not insist cult devotion to his disciple. The Sufi cult worship has been developed in later period or after the death of a saint. The Muslim Sufi cult is resemble with accessible object of veneration and believed in divine power of the *Pir*. However the formal Islam strongly insisted oneness of God (*Tawhid*). Some devotees believed and accepted that the ultimate power of the Sufi master is able to cure their ailments and illness even after his death. This believes happened to originate from local the devotees who originally converted from native religion to Islam.

Influence of Tamil Bhakti Literatures on Sufi Literatures

Islam is thus a complete and practical code of life. It is therefore no wonder that after reading a translation of Quran, the greatest of German Poets, Goethe exclaimed that if this is Islam, then every thinking man among us, is infact a Muslim.²⁵ It can be seen that a common unity among the religions of the world. The holy revelations have many similarities in their descriptions. Every religion has two faces one is its formal dogmas and principles another one is spiritual face. Sufism is a spiritual base of Islam, its concept and perceptions have come closer with Bhakti cult tradition of Hinduism. Bhakti cult is a part of Hinduism which is originated from South Indian Bhakti Movement. Bhakti can be used of either tradition of Hindu Monotheism, Saivism or Vaishnavism.²⁶ The Bhakti cult emphasized an individualistic relationship with a personal deity or God rather than Vedic Hinduism. Both Islamic Sufism and Bhakti cult traditions are equally contributed to Tamil literature and Mystical learning.

The Tamil Sufi literatures can be divided into two categories, mystic poems composed by Tamil Muslim Poets, which falls under first category. The second category is the mystic poems written by Tamil Muslim Mystics. The most outstanding work of Muslim contribution to Tamil literature is “Sirapuramam” composed by Poet Umaru. It deals with the life of Prophet Muhammad. Umaru was a student of Katikai Muthupulavar, the court poet of Ettayapuram.²⁷ Later Umaru himself raised as court poet. At the instance of Seyed Qadir of Keelakkarai endearingly known as Seethakathi Maraikkayar, the great philanthropist and patron of Tamil learning in the seventeenth century, poet Umaru composed the poem. Sheikh Sathakathullah Sahib of Kayalpattanam, a great Arabic scholar and saint, supplied Umaru with necessary materials to compose Sirappuranam.²⁸ Seethakkathi Maraikkayar passed away meanwhile and the philanthropist AbulKasimMaraikkayar of Parangipettai (Porto Novo) came to Umaru’s rescue. Vallal Seethakkathi Maraikkayar is a typical example of a great Muslim who rose above the barriers of religion and caste patronized Saiva poet

Padikkasupulavar. He praised the benevolence and patronage of Seethakkathi in his poetical verses.²⁹

A sect of Tamil Muslims known as Ravuttan, address their father as “Attha”. The Saiva poets Thirugnana Sambandar and Sundarar who wrote “Thevarapathigam, have employed the word “Attha”.³⁰ The Arab contact gave further impetus to Tamil culture and literature. The Siddha and Unani system of medicines have equally contributed each other. The Tamil Muslim poets made effort to compile the old siddha medical works. Tamil Siddhars tradition made an impact on Islamic mysticism. Thayumanavar met with Masthan Sahib in same level of degree. Both are similar in many theological perspective and ideology. The work “Gnanarathina Kuravanji” composed by Peer Mohamed Sahib has been included in the collection of Siddha devotional songs entitled “Periyagnanakovai”.³¹ Further, in many facets poet ‘Umaru’ was compared with Kamban. His Magnum opus Sirappuranam is similar to that of Kambaramayanam in many aspects. Umaru aimed at a synthesis of Tamil and Islamic cultures. He dreamt that these cultures without losing their individuality should interact and stride the world stage. He has imbibed all that is good in Tamil culture since the days of sangam age, and pressed it in to service in portraying the life history of Prophet Muhammed.

Sirappuranam is divided into three parts known as ‘Kantam’, namely Vilathattu, Nubuwwattu and Hijarattu which in turn are divided into chapters that is ‘Padalam’. Like Kamban Umaru had made use of the form Virutthappa. Kamban in his Ramayana once in every thousand stanza praised his munificent patron ‘Sadayappan’.³² So also Umaru once in very hundred stanzas praises his patron, AbulKasim Maraikkayar.³³ The Arabic word Vilathattu connotes birth and the VilathattuKantam refers that the part dealing with the birth and boy hood of the epic hero Prophet Muhammed. In this part, poet Umaru closely follows the “BalaKantam” of Kamba Ramayana. The description of the countries, towns and rivers is akin to what is found in Kamba Ramayana. Umaru was expected to describe Arabia but, actually he had described the topography of Pandyan country. Even Kamban of the earlier period had described the Chola country when his aim was to describe Ayodhya. Both are tried to reveal their love towards mother land. The Dravidian concept was imbibed in their mind to describe the foreign land. The flora and fauna of Tamil Nadu are transported to the desert of Arabia along with the customs and habits of Tamils.³⁴ Nubuwwattu Kantam portrays the revelation to the Prophet through angel Gabriel. The Arabic term “Nubuwah” which means Prophethood. Hijrathu Kantam deals the migration of Prophet from Mecca to Medina. This last kantam includes vivid description of two great wars fought in the annals of Islam. Here also the author describes the war sceneries as like in Tamil standard literary works.

As studying the Magnum opus of Umaru, he was deeply influenced by the local literary traditions and inspired from the customs and practices of Tamil Nadu. Undoubtedly Umaru is indebted to Tamil culture and literary tradition he was conversant with other Tamil classics, ethical and didactical poetry. But he imparts a new charm and exquisiteness to his poetry by the Islamic touch.

It is said that the English poets of the 7th and 8th centuries of Christian era wrote in an English manner and very often in an English mood but what they had to express was of Latin ecclesiastical tradition. The same is true in the case of Muslim Tamil poets who wrote in a Tamil Manner and very often in Tamil mood but what they had to express was of Arab ecclesiastical tradition.³⁵ These poets went a step further by writing Tamil poems in Arabic scripts. The new Arabu – Tamil literary form had emerged through this literary tradition.

It can be traced many of Tamil Islamic or mystic poetry exposes Hindu influences. In fact the Muslim poets lived amidst a predominantly Hindu Society and environs. Many Hindu ideas and conceptions crept into the works of almost all the Muslim Tamil poets and mystics. Hindu spiritual ideas and mysticism have warped to give them an Islamic look.

Most of the Muslim population wanted to learn Arabic to read Quran and perform prayer. At most it is a medium of religious performance. The Arabic words cannot be dispensed in Tamil Muslim mystical literatures. They are very essential to convey the real hidden nuances of Islamic theology. The Nawabs who ruled the south during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had Persian and Urdu as official languages. However the Persian language was patronized in all fields. Large numbers of mystic poems have been produced in Persian literary form. The presence of these Arabic and Persian words in Tamil Sufi literature and other is estimated about fifteen hundred. Spirituality is boundless with respect to language and geography. The saints both in Hinduism and Islam inherit the words and languages of their respective lands.

The Arab and Persian words are frequently used by the Tamil mystics. The Arab term “Salam” has taken by Tamil Mystics Kumaraguruparar³⁶ and Arunagirinathar³⁷ in their poems.

A significant share was made by the Muslim Tamil Mystics. Prominent among them are Kunangudi Masthan Sahib, Kalangudi Macharekai Chittan³⁸ and Thakkalai Peer Mohammed Sahib. Kunangudi Masthan Sahib is distinguished with ‘Umaru’ for his mystical exposition. The Tamil mystics are generally called Siddhars. The Mystic poets were making use of symbolism to refer beloved God. When they wrote ‘wine’ it meant the spiritual instruction and when they wrote the ‘beloved’ it meant the spiritual teacher.³⁹

The Muslim mystics came in contact both Yogis and Siddhar of Tamil tradition and also influenced by their ‘Raja Yoga System’ or a type of meditation. Kunangudi Masthan Sahib is considered as the most important mystic poet of Tamil country. His original name is Sultan Abdul Qadir Labbai Alim.⁴⁰

The Persian word Masthan is derived from the root word “Masthu” which means an intoxicant, a thing which excites as intense inner urge. The aim of the Sufi is self purification and ultimate absorption in the God. In a sense he is mad after realizing his unity with God. The drunken consciousness is a bit of mystic consciousness says William James.⁴¹ Masthan Sahib renounced the world in 1834 AD. He started singing songs at the age of forty seven; Hindus called him endearingly as “Masthan Swamy” because his songs were of universal appeal. He became a symbol of Hindu-Muslim Unity. He is also referred as Tondiyar. Tondi is a village in which he was born near Ramanathapuram. The “Tondaiyarpettai” in North Chennai is bearing the name of the saint with the memory and honour. Masthan Sahib describes the Philosophy of asceticism and stages of mysticism in Tamil literary forms, namely Sariyai, Kiriya, Yogam, Gnanam, Pathi, Pasu, Rasam, Tharparam, Cirparam, Paraparam, Aanmam, Kanmam, Mayai, Caalogam. Camiban and Carubam etc.

He adapts Sufi principles in Tamil mystics form. Ahatheesar Sathakam of Masthan Sahib explained these stages, planes and states.⁴² “Mohiuddin Sathakam” enumerates the life history and spiritual experience of the author’s spiritual leader Qutb-al-PirMohiuddin Abdul QadirJilani, the founder of Qadiriyya Sufi order. His way of expression of mysticism is similar to that of other Tamil mystics, saint Manickavasakar and Thayumanavar. Both Thayumanavar and Masthan Sahib are considered in the same level of degree in their mystical expositions. Both their Tiruppadal poems have similar in their form, style, diction and content.⁴³

Hindu mythology and concepts are found in many poems of Masthan Sahib. This shows the extent to which this Muslim mystic has been influenced by the contemporary Hindu religious traditions and society. The Manonmanikkanni and Nantheeswarakkanni are particularly exhibiting this trend.⁴⁴ He used the terms such as Umai (Goddess), Sivan, Sivakami, Nandhi etc., which made in a detached sort of way.⁴⁵ The Tamil mystics of Hindu and Islamic tradition have resembled in their idea, concept of God and monotheism. They contributed lot to Tamil literary tradition irrespective of caste creed and religion. The rich and noble traditions have endured to promote communal harmony in many centuries.

Another theologian, Sufi poet of Tamil country is Peer Mohammed Sahib of Thuckalay. Pir or Peer is a Persian word which means chief or head. His Mystical works has expounded the principles of theosophy. Further, he extremely condemned “Pseudo – Mystics” and defines the traits of a genuine preceptor.⁴⁶ He strongly insisted the significant of sharia in Mystic practices. According to Peer Mohammed Sahib, God is omnipresent. The human body is replete with proofs which proclaim his existence. Those who ruminates with a discerning mind will easily realize that God resides within them. Few people wander in search of spiritual growth. Worldwide wandering becomes useless if they don't realize the above truth. Such wandering is similar to so called conduct and experience of women who believe to have derived sexual pleasure without really cohabiting with their spouses.

The Tamil mystic saints, Tirumular and Tirunavukkarasar have similarities with the views of saint Peer Mohammed in searching spiritual attainment. Peer Appa has perceived the thoughts of Saiva Poets and make it use in his mystical poems.⁴⁷ The Alwar's bhakti poems are confluence with Peer Appa's mystical songs. The concept of Monotheism has expounded in both literatures with common frame work of thought. The Saiva concepts and similes like Sakthi, Paraparam, Koil and Venneeru find expression in Peer Appa's works. The use of these words shows the influence that Bhakti cult had influenced saint Peer Mohammed.⁴⁸ “Gnanarathina Kuravanji of Peer Appa is a kind of dramatic poem. The dialogue is between Sinkan and Sinki the typical tribal couple. The fact that this work is included as one among the collection of the devotional songs of the ‘eighteen Siddhar entitled ‘Periya Gnanakkovai’, shows the high esteem in which the work is held in the field of Tamil literature. Both the mystics of Hinduism and Islam have contributed much to Tamil language and literature. It has rightly pointed out that according to Velu Pillai there is no evidence that Muslims ever wrote any books criticizing the Hindu religion or the ancient Tamil social structure. Generally, Tamil Muslims follows a policy of non-interference in local religious traditions of Tamil country.⁴⁹

The religion Islam has two dimensions i.e., the outer formal ritual dimension and the inner spiritual dimension. In the early stages of Islam, Sufism evolved in the form of ascetic movement. Islam itself possessed the element of asceticism. Muhammed, the Prophet of Islam and his companions and followers practiced meditation and dhikr or repeating the name of God before the announcement of formal prayer in Islam. It took twelve years for the revelations of formal prayer methods. The early teachings of Prophet Muhammed became the base for the later Sufi ascetic movement which shaped Sufi ideology and reached its development between eight and tenth centuries AD.

During the eleventh century AD the Sufi ascetic movement started to lose its secrecy. The Sufi saints began to practice the social service by which they proved their teachings of helpfulness and unconditional social interaction.

In India, this spiritual movement came along with trade and first appeared in the Malabar region. The companions of Prophet Muhammed were known as sahabis who initially

propagated Islam in Tamil country. Their tombs are existed in coastal regions of Malabar and Coromandel. Malik ibn- Dinar of Cannanore Hazrat Tamimul Ansari of Kovalam Saiyyad Ukkasa of Portonova were considered as early missionaries and Sufis of South India.⁵⁰

However, in Tamil Nadu, the early Sufi missionary activities were obscure. The religious tolerance was shown by the local rulers who allowed small Arab settlement in the sea shores of Tamil country. The Muta or temporary marriage of Arab traders with local women opened a new gate to Islamic faith. Few incidents of conversions were happened due to this trade relationship.

The Sufi khanqahs had been function as rural hospitals were mental and physical afflictions said to be cured. In most cases the venerated saint had been elevated as cult figure after his death. The disciples who have strongly believed the miracles power of the saint after his death established some spiritual rituals and adopted local customs and practices. These practices paved the way for the conversion of khanqahs into dargahs. This cult tradition further developed by the Pirzadas. These developments in dargah cult isolated the Tamil Muslims from the wider Islamic world.

Islamic mysticism in Tamil Nadu is purely influenced by the local cult and patronized by native rulers. The adoption of local culture, religious practices, rituals, language, art and architecture combined together and contributed for a movement which later helped thousands of people embraced Islam. The people who remained in Hindu religion were showed their affinity towards Sufis. This affinity is exposed especially during the festivities of dargahs. The direct involvement and the indirect participation of the masses led to the Sufi movement into a mass level movement.

Conclusion:

Sufism emerged as a socio-cultural and religious force in Tamil Country. The socio-economic and cultural background of *Tamilagam* had facilitated the spread of Sufism. The unshakable faith in monotheism, the concept of universal brotherhood and the social equality turned the natives, particularly the depressed class to convert to Islamic faith. Generally the Sufi movement in Tamil Nadu is symbolized with peaceful spiritual movement.

The Hindu traditional cults were mingled with Sufi cult, at this level; this tradition has given great power and vitality to un-institutionalized Islamic faith of Tamil country. The Sufi cult traditions however condemned by the Islamic *Shariah* and *Ulemas* of Islam. But it is forging strong and everlasting links with local cultural traditions. The conversion which happened in later centuries in Tamil Nadu was also influenced by local Hindu religious tradition. In this way the formal Islam was localized and the bearer of formal scriptural Islam was challenging this contrast.

End Notes

¹Asadullah Khan, *History of the Arab contact with Tamilagam from the Beginning upto 1400 AD*, Chennai, 2011, pp.22-27.

² A Khanqah is a Persian word meaning a house or abode of Sufis and Dervishes.

³ The tomb or shrine of a Muslim Saint.

⁴ Official custodians of Sufi Shrines or Dargahs.

⁵ Max Horton, *Indische Stromungon in der Islamischen Mystic*, Heidelberg, 1927, pp.17-25.

⁶ The Sufi doctrine or path of spiritual learning, a school or order of Sufism.

⁷Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol IV, Madras, 1909, P. 199, Also see M.R.M.Abdur Rahim, *Islamiya Kalaikkalanjyam*, Vol II Madras, 1977, p.634.

- ⁸Qadir Hussain Khan, *South Indian Musalmans*, Madras, 1910, pp.71-72
- ⁹A system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards a particular figure or object.
- ¹⁰A.L. Sri Vastava, *Medieval Indian culture*, Agra, 1964, pp.261-262
- ¹¹Quran, *Sura-i-Yusuf*, ParaXII
- ¹²*Madurai District Gazetteers*, Vol. I, p.307.
- ¹³It refers to recent Community, distinct with different religious thought and ideas.
- ¹⁴Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700 – 1900*, Cambridge, 2004, pp.91-92.
- ¹⁵Peer or Pir is a Persian term refers a Sufi spiritual Guide.
- ¹⁶Letters and Petitions from Nagore Merchants, 24 August 1798, Colonial Record Office, London.
- ¹⁷The Lord Subramanya Temple at Malaysia is a replica of Palanitemple.
- ¹⁸Susan Bayly, *Saint Goddess and Kings*, op.cit., pp.93-94.
- ¹⁹Guardians or Trustees of Darghas.
- ²⁰Field Observation by the Research Scholar, Nagore Dargah, dated 13.05.2012.
- ²¹It is an Arabic word refers to God, The word has cognates in other Semitic languages, including Alah in Aramaic, Elohim in Hebrew
- ²²J.Davis, ed., *Religious Organisation and Religious Experience*, Cambridge, 1982, pp.9-31.
- ²³ Knowledgeable scholar in religious matter.
- ²⁴It is a Persian Word which describes Biographical Anthology of Sufi.
- ²⁵M.M.Pickthall, *The Cultural Side of Islam*, Kitab Bhavan, Delhi, 1961, p.15.
- ²⁶Robin Rinehart, *Contemporary Hinduism : ritual, culture and practice*, ABC-CLIO publication, Uk, 2004, p-45
- ²⁷Manavai Mustafa, *Sindaikku Iniya Seera*, Meera Foundation, Madras, 1978, pp.56-57.
- ²⁸C.Nainar Mohammed, *Umarupulavar*, Sahitya Academy Series, New Delhi, 1995, p.49.
- ²⁹Silampoli Sellappan, *Nenjai Allum Seera*, Madras, 1978, p. 48.
- ³⁰Sundarar, *Devaram*, Commentator Pulavar P.R.Natarajan, Vana Pathippagam, Chennai, 2000, p. 36; see also Thirunavukkarasar Devaram, *Thanithiruthandagam*, Uma Pathippagam, Thirupugalur, 2003, Stanza:8, p. 412
- ³¹Manickavasagar Thiruvagasam, Sundarar Devaram, Thiruppanandal Madam Publication.
- ³²Sheiku Thambi Pavalur, *Sirappuranam*, Moolamum Mozhippuraiyum, Vol. I, Mahin Printers, Chennai, 1999, p. 37.
- ³³*Sirappuranam*, Nattu Padalam, Stanza: 41.
- ³⁴K.M.Sherif, *Sira Puranam; Moolamum Uraiyum*, Madras, 1976, p. 27.
- ³⁵M.M. Ismail, *Islam and Tamil Culture*, Madras, 1977, pp. 56-58.
- ³⁶Kumarakuruparar, *Muthukumarasamy Pillaitamil*, Stanza 42
- ³⁷Arunagirinathar, *Thirupagal Thirattu*, Thenindiya Saiva Siddhantha Pathippu Kazhagam, Chennai, 1980, p. 82.
- ³⁸Born in 1842 in Kalangudi, Tirunelveli district his original name is Seyed Abdul Worid. Also see – *Islamian Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru Vol. IV*. P.M.Ajmal Khan, Madurai Kamaraj University Publication, 1997, pp.273-275. It may also refer to God and his Prophet in different context
- ³⁹It may also refer to God and his Prophet in different context.
- ⁴⁰C.Nainar Mohammed, *Masthan Sahib and Thayumanavar – a comparative study (Tamil)*, Umaru Pathippagam, Tiruchirappalli, 1993, pp.18-19
- ⁴¹Idarat Hussain, *The Mystical Elements in the Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth Century*, New Delhi, 1991, p.24
- ⁴²U.Allbava, *Islamia Sadakangalil Padu Porul*, Velanthamil Publication, Tiruchirappalli, p.53.
- ⁴³C.Nainar Mohammed, *Masthan Sahib and Thayumanavar*, op.cit., pp.165-174
- ⁴⁴Nandeeswarakkanni, Stanza, pp.1-12. Also see C.Nainar Mohamed, *Masthan Sahib and*



Thayumanavar, op.cit., p.123

⁴⁵ Masthan Sahib Padalgal, Stanzas pp.979-1029 (Total 51 stanzas)

⁴⁶ Gnanamani Malai, Stanza, 106, 234, 59

⁴⁷ Appar Devaram – 257-3,11 Sundaramurthy Nayanar Padal, Thevaram Sixth Thirumarai, 252-253.

⁴⁸ Gnanapukalchi, 4; also see Shayku Peer Mohamed Wali, Meyygnana Padalkal, Anjuwannam Peer Muhammadiya Association, Thucklay, 1995, pp. 105-110.

⁴⁹ A.Velupillai, Tamil Ilakkiyathil Kalamum Karuttum, Madras, 1969, p. 145.

⁵⁰ Asadullah Khan, History of the Arab contact with Tamilagam from the Beginning upto 1400 AD, Chennai, 2011, pp. 22-27.