

WOMEN SUFI SAINTS OF BIDAR DISTRICT

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Local History: The appeal of a local history is universal and local historians can be found worldwide. In some places they practice independently while in others a district or the state takes an active role in supporting local history activities.¹ Local history is extremely important to local people since it preserves their cultural and social information for future generations.²

Bidar: Bidar was ruled by many dynasties. The treasure of culture, fine arts and architecture nurtured by successive rulers has contributed to its richness. The great revolution by Shivasharanas in the 12th century, encompassing social, literacy and religious fields emerged on this land. The district was a renowned place of education. Mohammad Gawan Madrasa is an evidence of it. The social structure in the district is shaped by various cultures and races. The district was a part of the Hyderabad princely state before it was liberated in 1948. It was merged with Karnataka State in 1956.³

Sufism: The emergence of Sufism in Arab and Persia led to the creation of a unique consciousness in medieval world. Though Sufism emerged as a social protest against the emergence of the Kingship in the Islamic world, it spread as an important social movement as well. Sufism as a social movement entered India during the last decade of the 12th century. Mysticism is an indispensable part of every religion in the world. The Islamic mysticism known as Tasawwuf or Sufism, was as old as Islam itself; it was, no doubt, born in the bosom of Islam’.

Meaning of Sufism: All these derivatives have been beautifully summed up in a following manner: “Sufism teaches how to purify one’s self, improve one’s morals and build up one’s inner and outer life in order to attain perpetual bliss. Its subject matter is the purification of the soul and its end or aim is the attainment of eternal felicity and blessedness.” Sufism is a code of conduct based on the knowledge of Divine Laws and certainly not any form of ‘Illm’ (knowledge), or ‘Rasm’ (customs, traditions). The four outstanding characteristics which are marks of Sufi are: 1) a life that is genuine and straight forward and a life which holds in respect the Divine Laws. 2) Respects for elders and affection towards all alike. 3) Total renunciation of any desire for fame and glory. 4) Face the challenge of ‘Nafs’ (the lower self, the animal spirit soul). Sufism indeed was a religion of intense devotion, love was its passion; poetry, song and dance was its method of worship; and worshipping God until one’s last breath is its ideal.⁴

Women Sufi Saints: In India, women Sufi saints played an important role alongside male Sufi saints. The Holy Quran (Al-Ahzaab, Chapter 35) states that Allah’s grace is bestowed equally on men and women. This is why, along with men, women Sufi saints in India held significant and respected positions, particularly in Delhi, for their contributions to spirituality. Several women Sufi saints are known across India, such as: Begum Hafiz Jamal: Daughter of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, whose majhar is near Khwajadurga, Ajmer. Hazrat Amina Bibi and Mandas Sayyeda Amajan Bibi Fatima of Delhi. Sayyedani Bibi of Mangalore, Hazrat Bibi Bandagi Hussaini and Hazrat Mukkabi Sharambibi of Bidar. The women Sufi saints of Bidar are noteworthy and have reached the spirituality.⁵

¹ Tej Ram Sharma, *Historiography – A History of Historical Writings*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2005, pp.169-171.

² Nalini Waghmare, *Historiography*, Roshni Publications, Kanpur, 2021, pp.215-218.

³ See for detail Dr. Indumati Patil, *Cultural History of Chalukyan’s Basavakalyan*, ABD Publishers, New Delhi, 2012, pp.16-21.

⁴ Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, The Indian Press, Pvt. Ltd, Allahabad, 1922, p.83.

⁵ <https://www.thealephreview.com/post/forgotten-sufi-women-of-south-asia> dated 23-10-2024.

These women entered the Sufi sect to pursue their own spiritual practices, supported by family members like their husbands, brothers, and fathers. Although they did not typically join male Sufis in establishing Khanquas (spiritual centers), they played a vital role in building social and communal harmony. They promoted the concept of a universal religion, and their tombs (durgas or majhars) became centers of devotion for people of all communities, free from discrimination.

In Bidar, many women Sufi saints dedicated their lives to spirituality. While only their names and durgas are widely known today, their life stories and contributions remain largely unexplored, leaving ample scope for research on their influence.

Bidar Sufi Saints: The Sufis preached the Universal religion and sects are different the Philosophy and God is one and various his names. So everyone respect and love each other and not restrict others and live happily on this earth shows the direction to the people Sufis. In this way the Bidar Sufi Saints thought the human unity, unity among Hindus and Muslims, Social and Religious Equality, Trust in God, sacrifices, selflessness Love, Kindness, Compassions and Co- operation etc taught and for Unity of the Hindus and Muslims these Sufis gave up their life. These Sufis also till today influence the people built Unity among the people.⁶

Hazarat Bibi Bandagi Hussain: She belongs to the Nawaz Gesudaj (Gulbarga) lineage (family). There is no document available about her birth and death. They came to Bidar when the Bahamani ruler of Ahmadshah wali Bahamni shifted his Capital Kalburgi to Bidar⁷ as at that time Hazrat Gesu Daraj's death made her family came to Bidar. These members respected every people and built harmony in the society. Her tomb is next to Hazrat Waliullah Hussaini's Tomb.

Hazarat Bibi Ghatifa : She was the first wife of Hazrat Abul Faiz. She had 9 children, among those 6 are boys and 3 are girls. She helped her husband while spreading the Sufi thoughts to women who visited the Masjid. She preach with the consider women's to get Spiritual Knowledge. She built social harmony in the society and spread Love, Peace among the people. Her Tomb is in the Abul Fiz Durga in Bidar.

Hazrat Bibi Nemat: She was the second wife of Hazrat Abul Faiz. And she was the daughter of Mahmud Gawan, who was the Prime Minister of Bahamani Dynasty. ⁸ She was fond of Education like her father. She promoted Education for Women Folk all her life. She loves everyone and built social harmony, peace in the society.

Hazrat Bibi Minatullaha Saheb: Her father was Hazrat Sayyed Yadula Gudulala Hussain Nibara, Hazrat Gesudarad and her husband was Sayyed Mohammad Bin Fazulala Hussaini. They belong to Abul Faiz family. She is the sister of Abul faiz, and belongs to Chisitya Silsila of Sufi order. She was born in Shaka 808 and she came to Bidar with her husband Sayyed Mohammad Fazullala, Hussaini on the request of Sultan Ahmad Shah Bahamani.

On her name Khanqua was built on the request of Sultan Allauddin Ahmad Bahamani (1436-1458) it was built it in 15th century. Later on, Hazrat Valliullahas Shah's son Minal Shah in 1108 (1436 – 58) renovated it. She died in Hijari Era 888 in her age was 80. Kitabul Aras – 192 noted it. She respected every religion. Her Tomb is located in Udgir road, on way to Bidar.

Hazrat Mukkabi : She worked as a servant under Hazrat Multani Badshah. Those who came to meet Multani Badshah, she gave guided them. Document which was available in Persian language focuses on her life. This document was found in 1842 – 1843. Apart from this Hazrat Mahmud Multani Quadri's Salve Muktabi's Tomb and Muktabi was wife of Muhamuddin Quadri's Son Shah Jilani's wife mentioned in the document. She taught Peace and Harmony among the people.

Hazrat Sharambibi: Sharambibi was her real name or people call her by this name. She visited Durga daily for prayer, so her husband doubt her and so followed her. As she saw her husband

⁶ See for detail – Shakeel .I.S., Bidar Jilleyya Sufigalu, Osman Education and Charitable Trust , Bidar, 2019, pp.95-208. (Kannada).

⁷ Basavaraj,B. History and Culture of Karnataka, Chalukya Publication, Dharwar, 1984, pp.179-180.

⁸ Hasoon Khan Sherwani, The Bahmanis of the Deccan, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Ltd, New Delhi, 1985, pp.34-52.

spying on her, she got angry. She called for mother earth and wished to die by burying herself alive. Miraculously, the earth kind of swallowed or buried Sharambibi. Her awestruck husband narrated this incident to the villagers. Then the villagers built a Durga in that place. This place is near Ranjola Village Hochakanlli. There is no document proof of the above incident. But it belongs to in the Bahamani period as per the Oral Sources. Every year a Urs is organized by village people.

Apart from above mentioned some more women Sufi saints are found. Today only their name and Durgas exist and more research is required to sketch their lives. Here is a list of Sufi Saints names:

1. Hazrat Bibi Fatima : Sitalgera, Humnabad.
2. Hazrat Bibi Saheb : Otargi, Humnabad.
3. Hazrat Jarahabi, Khodwadi, Humnabad.
4. Hazrat Naur Bibi : Rachanur, Taluka, Bhalki.

Those Sufi who visited Bidar thought about the people and never discriminated on the basis of Caste, Class and gender. They thought of humanity and also practiced it, became as a God to their followers. After Sufi Saint Death Samadhi (Tomb) is built and it's a holy place for both Hindus and Muslims. These places are also considered as Tourist and Pilgrimage place. Many changes are found in the Muslim community because of Sufi Saints.

Contribution to Religion and Culture: The Sufi saints of Bidar, both men and women, fostered unity and brotherhood in society. They used their knowledge, teachings, and practices to guide people on the right path. Even today, durgas in Bidar attract visitors from all castes, communities, and religions. The legacy of Sufi saints includes the establishment of Khanquas where religious and social activities took place. These places became centers for religious preaching, prayer, and community building. The saints' homes often transformed into Khanquas, where teachings and spiritual practices were propagated.

In Bidar, these saints also established samakhana, an open ground where Sufi gatherings (such as qawwali performances) were held to commemorate the saints and remember Allah. These practices, unique to the Sufi tradition, contributed significantly to social change and religious harmony. Socio-economic conditions and ascetic values contributed to the growth of Sufi movement under the Bahmanis.⁹

Findings and Conclusion:

- A local historian researches, collects, preserves and communicates what he or she knows.
- The Sufi saints and Bhakti reformers, in general were revered by the Indian masses, Hindus and Muslims alike; thus Hindu saints respected by the Muslims, and Muslim saints adored by the Hindus, became a popular phenomenon of the medieval Indian social life.
- Sufis encourage the Literature and Music.
- Social Harmony among Hindu and Muslims developed. And till today many religious people visited to these saints' tombs and durgas for blessings. Women tombs also found near the Durga.
- Peace, love, brotherhood and unity found in Bidar. In few festivals both Hindus and Muslims participated equally for example the Ashtoor fair where all participated.
- The women Sufi saints of Bidar are noteworthy and have reached the spirituality.
- Yet more research has to be undertaken to find out women Sufi saints' works, life and contribution to society in detail.
- This paper identifies a missing narrative in the existing literature related to the dominant Sufi historiography and is therefore a relevant and timely commentary on the importance of women's voices within Sufism.

⁹ www. Google. Com. A article by Zakiya Khanum Mk.Ansari, Cultural contributions of Bahamani Sultan's to Indian History, p.1-2.

- To revise the dominant historiography with the aim to explore women's role in Sufism. Both their works are groundbreaking for bringing back the lost and forgotten narratives of women Sufi saints.

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