



## **Role of Sufism in the Community Formation of Mappilas in Malabar**

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“Sufism (from Arabic, Suf meaning "wool") is a mystical tradition of Islam dedicated to experiencing Allah/God as the epitome of divine Love” 1 . Sufis can be associated with Shi'a Islam, Sunni Islam, other currents of Islam, or a combination of multiple traditions. Emerging during the eighth century C.E. in the Middle East, though having earlier precedents, Sufism subsequently developed into several different orders known as Tariqas. The most famous of these orders is the Mevlevi tradition associated with the poet and mystic, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi.

The word 'Sufism' is defined by scholars in different ways. Some scholars describe it as a lifestyle of a saintly person whereas others define it as the life of common people following a pir 2 . Martin Lings 3 writes that, "Sufism is an ocean of Sufis, silsilas are waves and their aim is same" He means that Sufism is an Ocean and the silsilas 4 ' are waves of an Ocean, on this ground, there would be a silsilah for all Sufis and all Sufis would be followers of a silsila. R.M. Eaton defines the word Sufi to denote "any person integrated into the organizational structure of Islamic mystical tradition. This involved a persons' taking a vow of spiritual lineage extending from the Prophet himself". 5 On the other hand, Spencer Trimigham writes. "I define the word Sufi in wide terms by applying it to anyone who believes that it is possible to have direct experience of God and who is prepared to go out of his way to put himself in a state whereby he may be enabled to do this' '. He further explains, a Tariqa is a practical method to guide a seeker by tracing a way of thought, feeling and action leading through a succession of stages to experience divine reality". Sufis are different from orthodox Muslims. The union of the human

soul with God through love and devotion was the essence of the teaching of Sufi saints. The method of their realizing God was the renunciation of the world and worldly pleasures. They lived a secluded life. The term Sufi is derived from Suf which means 'wool' as these mystics wore woolen garments as their budget of poverty. The Sufis consider love to be the only means of reaching God. According to the Historian Tara Chand "Sufism indeed was its passion; poetry, song and dance. Its worship and passing away in God it's Ideal." The Sufis did not attach importance to namaz half and celibacy. That is why they regarded singing and dancing as the method of inducing a state of ecstasy which brought one nearer to realization of God. There were some leading Sufi saints like khawja moinuiddin shistic farihaddin gang-i-shankar. Nizam-uddin- auliya contribute their life to the sufi way of life.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Islamic mysticism is called *taşawwuf* (literally, "to dress in wool") in Arabic, but it has been called Sufism in Western languages since the early 19th century. An abstract word, Sufism derives from the Arabic term for a mystic, *şufi*, which is in turn derived from *şuf*, "wool," plausibly a reference to the woolen garment of early Islamic ascetics. The Sufis are also generally known as "the poor," *fuqara'*, plural of the Arabic *faqir*, in Persian *darvish*, whence the English words *fakir* and *dervish*. Sufism, mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of humanity and of God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To find out the major Sufi settlements in Malabar

2. To find out their main supporters and helpers
3. Trace the main activities of sufis in earlier years of their settlement

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are some books on Sufism. Some of the major books are mentioned below R.S Lakshmi in her book "Muslims of Malabar : A Different perspective" mention on the Sufi roots of Malabar as it's beginning chapter.in this chapter author tried to convey the message that the Sufi took a major role in forming a society imparted with Islamic knowledge and she explains very briefly, the position of sufis in the politics of Malabar later year.

Sufism in Kerala by Kunhali who discuss the emergence of sufism in malabar and spread of different Sufi order in malabar as well as their contribution in the life of Mappilas .He argue that sufis took vital role in forming Mappila community. Understanding Sufism by Aftab shahryar It gives an introduction of some of the major ideas of some of the great masters who have illuminated the Sufi path by outlining some of the basic concepts as well as the life and work of some of the most famous Sufism. The Sufis by Idries shah the book follows the Sufi principle of 'scatter' in answering the unanswerable question: what is Sufism? It deliberately shies away from offering an ordered definition. Instead, it throws out ideas. Like fragments of light on dust particles, they reveal the shape of something intangible. Neither emotionalist nor academic, this book offers the closest thing a written work can to an experience of Sufism. Sufism the heart of Islam by Sadia DehlviIt elaborates on how Sufism is the preserved spiritual path that forms the heart of Islam. It covers the remarkable lives of the early Sufis, their literature, and philosophies that stress on the purification of the 11 heart. It highlights the major Sufi orders, their popularity in the subcontinent and how the teachings of Sufi Masters impacted the devotional aspect of Muslims forever.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

To explore the role of Sufism in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar, one might consider several research questions that delve into both historical and social dimensions. Firstly, how did Sufi missionaries and their teachings influence the development of the Mappila community's religious practices and identity in Malabar? This question seeks to understand the extent to which Sufi doctrines and practices were adopted and adapted by the Mappilas, shaping their unique religious and social structures. Additionally, how did the interactions between Sufi orders and local leaders impact the political and social organization of the Mappila community? This would involve examining the relationships between Sufi shaykhs and Mappila chieftains, and how these dynamics influenced the community's cohesion and resistance to colonial and external pressures. Furthermore, what role did Sufism play in the cultural and educational aspects of Mappila life, including the preservation and transmission of language, literature, and social norms? Investigating these aspects would provide insights into how Sufi practices contributed to the formation of a distinct Mappila cultural identity. Lastly, how have historical narratives and scholarly interpretations of Sufism's role in Mappila community formation evolved over time, and what does this reveal about changing perceptions of Sufism's impact on South Asian Muslim communities? This question aims to analyze how historical and contemporary perspectives have shaped the understanding of Sufism's influence on Mappila identity and community dynamics.

## METHODOLOGY

To investigate the role of Sufism in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar, a comprehensive methodology can be employed, integrating both

qualitative and quantitative approaches. Here's a structured methodology for such research:

1. Historical Analysis: - Archival Research: Examine historical documents, manuscripts, and records from local archives, libraries, and historical societies. Look for primary sources such as letters, treaties, and reports that detail the interactions between Sufi missionaries and the Mappila community.

1 - Historical Narratives: Analyze historical accounts and chronicles that discuss the arrival and influence of Sufism in Malabar. This includes studying the biographies of key Sufi figures and their contributions to the Mappila community.

2. Fieldwork:

Interviews: Conduct interviews with local historians, religious leaders, and members of the Mappila community to gather oral histories and personal accounts of Sufi influence. This can provide nuanced insights into the community's perceptions and practices related to Sufism - Participant Observation: Engage in community activities, religious practices, and festivals to observe the integration of Sufi traditions within Mappila cultural and social life.

3. Literature Review:

- Secondary Sources: Review academic literature, including books, journal articles, and theses on Sufism, the Mappilas, and South Indian Islam. This helps to contextualize your findings within existing scholarship and identify gaps in the literature.

- Comparative Studies: Compare the role of Sufism in Mappila community formation with similar phenomena in other regions to understand broader patterns and unique aspects of the Malabar context.

4. Sociological Analysis: - Community Surveys: Conduct surveys to assess the extent of Sufi influence on various aspects of Mappila life, including religious practices, social organization, and cultural identity.

- Social Networks Analysis: Map out the relationships between Sufi leaders, local leaders, and community members to understand the dynamics of influence and power within the Mappila community.

5. Cultural Analysis:

- Literary and Artistic Studies: Examine Mappila literature, poetry, and art that may reflect Sufi influences. Analyze how these cultural forms contribute to the community's identity and cohesion.

- Ritual and Practice Analysis: Study the rituals, ceremonies, and daily practices of the Mappila community to identify elements derived from Sufi teachings and traditions.

## **SOURCES OF DATA**

This research is solely based on primary data collected through interview method. As an exploratory research primary sources are taken for fetching a fresh perspective directly from the subjects. Ten participants provided the data required to conduct this study. To investigate the role of Sufism in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar, researchers should draw on a diverse range of data sources. Historical documents from colonial archives and local records provide foundational insights into the interactions between Sufi missionaries and the Mappila community. Religious texts authored by Sufi saints, as well as Mappila literature, offer perspectives on the doctrinal and cultural exchanges that influenced community practices. \*Oral histories, gathered through interviews with community elders and religious leaders, reveal personal and traditional narratives about Sufi impact. \*\*Cultural artifacts\* such as religious objects and architectural sites, including mosques

and shrines associated with Sufi figures, reflect the integration of Sufi practices into Mappila religious life. Additionally, fieldwork involving participant observation and community surveys helps capture contemporary practices and beliefs linked to Sufism. Secondary sources, including academic articles and historical analyses, provide contextual and comparative perspectives on Sufi influence within the broader scope of South Asian Islam. Together, these sources offer a comprehensive view of how Sufism contributed to the formation and evolution of the Mappila community in Malabar.

## **TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION**

To investigate the role of Sufism in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar, a range of tools and data collection methods is essential. Archival research involves examining historical documents and colonial records to trace the early interactions between Sufi missionaries and the Mappilas, revealing how Sufi practices were integrated into the community. Textual analysis of religious writings by Sufi saints and Mappila scholars provides insights into the doctrinal exchanges and influences shaping the community's religious identity. Oral history interviews with Mappila elders, religious leaders, and local historians gather personal narratives and traditional knowledge about Sufi influence, complementing written records. Fieldwork techniques, including participant observation of community rituals and practices, help document how Sufi traditions are maintained and adapted in contemporary settings. Surveys and questionnaires offer quantitative data on current beliefs and practices related to Sufism among Mappilas. Finally, cultural artifact analysis of religious objects and architectural sites, such as mosques and Sufi shrines, provides material evidence of Sufi integration into Mappila cultural life. This combination of tools and methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of Sufism's role in shaping the Mappila community in Malabar.

## **POPULATION OF STUDY**

The population of the study on the role of Sufism in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar primarily includes the Mappila community residing in the Malabar region of Kerala, India. This population encompasses a diverse group of individuals who practice Islam with significant Sufi influences, including both religious leaders (such as Sufi shaykhs and scholars) and lay community members. It also involves examining historical figures who played a role in the introduction and spread of Sufism among the Mappilas, as well as contemporary Mappila families and local institutions that reflect Sufi traditions. By focusing on this population, researchers can gain insights into how Sufi practices and beliefs have shaped the religious, cultural, and social fabric of the Mappila community over time.

## **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study of Sufism's role in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar faces several limitations. Historical records may be incomplete or biased, particularly colonial documents which might reflect the perspectives of colonial administrators rather than the lived experiences of the Mappilas. Oral histories can be subjective, and the reliability of interviews may vary depending on the memory and perspective of informants. Access to cultural artifacts might be restricted due to preservation issues or the sensitive nature of religious sites, potentially limiting the scope of material evidence available for analysis. Fieldwork can be challenging due to the need to navigate local customs and ensure ethical engagement with the community, which might affect the depth and breadth of observations. Additionally, quantitative surveys may face issues with response bias or incomplete representation of the community. These limitations necessitate a careful and balanced approach to data collection and analysis, acknowledging the potential gaps and biases while striving for a comprehensive understanding of Sufism's impact on the Mappila community.



## ANALYSIS

The origin of Sufism traces back to when the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) of Islam migrated from Mecca to Medina plunged himself into God's will, a source of personal pride. Generally believed that sufism is derived from two arabic words they are saf,suf .The word saf means carpet.sufism which is in turn derived from şuf wool, plausibly a reference to the woolen garment of early Islamic ascetics. The Sufis are also generally known as “the poor,”.the Muslim saints who were garments of coarse wool began to be called Sufi saints.the first epoch of Sufism is said to have begun in seventh century A.D.sufism entered India in the 12th century with Muslim invaders and became popular in the 13th century. Sufism or Tasawwuf is considered an esoteric part of human life.Sufi considered the holy Quran as the foundation of their hope and trust .The mystic exegesis of the holy Quran surely enable them to achieve high ranking from the ignoble and faceableproblems in which a class mullas has entangled Islam. The Quran exegesis presented by sufism based on human understanding as well as on humanism also having a magnanimity in it. its instruction is towards the world.it tone is universal probably this is the appropriate exegesis of the holy Quran.Among muhammed’s (S.A.W)companions at this time were a number of people who of dwelt in the Medina mosque practicing, poverty and self-mortification .they were called Abl al -suffa or Ashah-Isuffa.Islam made prayers five times a day .The Sufis believe that muhammed( S.A.W) has declared that everything verse ofHoly Quran has an outward and inward of trust clearly in line with their quest for theHaqiqa . However, this Holy Quran version is trusted and used by the Sufis in support of their claim can arguably be seen as a reliance on exegesis.The rise of Sufism was also inspired by the feeling that a direct relationship of man to God. Who is not be regarded as unwilling and all powerful Rulers of the destinies of humankind but as a friend and beloved of their spirit as fully as possible. The Sufis or mystic have desired to know God so that they may love him and they have faith that the spirit can receives a success from Allah (God) by direct religious experience not through the senses or intellect. 7 Mecca, Madina, Basara and Kufa were undoubtedly the

earliest center of Islam's contemplative and ascetic life. This does not mean that sufism developed in isolation and other mystic ideas and ascetic practice had no impact at all . The deepCristian influence in the early development of Sufism is undeniable; Jesus was a model of self-denial and of saintly life. That Sufis tended to see Jesus in the light of their own tradition does not lessen the significance of the impact of the Nestorian and Jacobite Churches on the movement The second two important regions where Sufism blossomed were Iran and Khurasan. These countries had been conquered in the first century after the birth Islam And a large number of their inhabitants embraced the new religion for varying reasons.Early Sufi movements often contained converts from Other religions communities such as those of Zoroastrianism, Christian and Judaism and so on. These members often imbued Sufism with their ancestral philosophies. 8 In Order to better understand sufidevelopment from the eighth to the end of the tenth centuries.In its earliest form,sufi teaching stressed that a person should provide much emphasis to the spiritual aspects in Islam,a result of many losing vision of this high aim of Islam .after a period of time.

During the Taifa stage,the main reason for men getting introduced to Tariqah is the desire to get the blessings or karamah of the Saint . The reputation of a saint varied According to their Power to perform karamah.so the murids, devotes and both trustworthy and also unreliable karamah. During the lifetime of Biran Auliya, a Moulud was held in his honor.The mappila concept of Auliya was always as personified in Muhiyuddin mala. All the hagiographic works that followed were composed in similar lines. Rifai mala, second only to Muhiyudheen mala is popular, has the characteristics Ahmed Al Rifai as an Auliya. It should be remembered that Rifai mala was sung in every household in the only house of right and especially or appointed days. They were the people to whom ‘ghayb’ was made known, as the mappila believed.the muhiyudheen mala and Rifai Mala have verses to the effect their eyes were always in lauch( Lauh al mahfuz), the most secret they known only to god. People believed that reacting these malas itself should bring happiness to the one who recited and to the whole household. Illiterate masses

considered it auspicious. to have copies by these malas in their houses. 24 Sea faring people, fisherman and boat men and special devotion to Certain saints. The importance of Saint of Ullal Darga, sayyid Madani is discussed in the last chapter. Hydross kutty of chew has the position of saint of fishermen community of both Muslims and non-muslims. One of the karamah of Mamburam thangal is said to have saved a lost ship. The dualism of Islam and attachment by women Talk to pirs are discussed in 2 Chapter. All the saints could be invoked for smooth delivery

The most important Nercha of mappilas of Malappuram Nercha which commemorates the death of the forty-four mappilas martyred is a battle against the Hindu ruler by the area defending a mosque in the year 1148 AD 1734 AD according to the mala. The Appani Nercha conducted at the shaykh's mosque in Calicut is next in importance. Shaykh Abdul Waja Mohammed al-kaliuit was a man well versed in physical feats and he had led the Muslim army in the battle chaliyam in 1571 AD against the portuguese. He died on 18 the Rajas of the year 980 AD/1579AD. Hyder Kuttymappan was a muslim chieftain at chavakkad In 18th century. when Hyderali, the Mysorean ruler in Malabar, chavakkad, and the nearby villages were entrusted to him. Later on, in the time of Tipu Sultan due to Some misunderstanding they became enemies and, in a battle, Hyderali kutty Mappan was killed. His Barakah is considered helpful from sea perils, especially by fishermen regardless of youth. Social and economic causes keep the Nerchas flourishing 28. People take them as occasions to family get –together. The convenience of these aboard is specially considered in Malik Dinar Nercha of Kasargod and it is held only once in 3 years.

## **KEY FINDING**

The study of Sufism's role in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar reveals several key findings. Sufism significantly influenced the religious and social fabric of the Mappila community through the introduction of Sufi practices and doctrines, which were integrated into local Islamic traditions. Sufi missionaries, particularly from the Chishti and Qadiri orders, played a crucial role in shaping the Mappilas' religious practices, promoting a unique synthesis of Islamic mysticism and local customs. This integration fostered a distinct Mappila identity that emphasized spiritual devotion, communal solidarity, and resistance to external pressures. Sufi institutions, such as shrines and educational centers, became central to community life, serving as hubs for religious learning and social cohesion. Additionally, oral traditions and cultural practices reflecting Sufi influences highlight the enduring impact of Sufism on Mappila cultural heritage and identity. These findings underscore the profound and lasting effects of Sufism on the Mappila community's formation and evolution in Malabar.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study of Sufism's role in the community formation of the Mappilas in Malabar has significant educational implications. It underscores the importance of incorporating diverse religious and cultural perspectives into educational curricula to foster a more inclusive understanding of Islamic traditions. By highlighting the contributions of Sufi teachings and practices to the development of the Mappila community, educators can promote a deeper appreciation of how Sufism has shaped regional identities and social structures. This can lead to more nuanced discussions about the role of mysticism in Islam and its impact on various Muslim communities. Additionally, the study encourages the preservation and integration of local histories and cultural practices into educational frameworks, ensuring that students gain a comprehensive view of their heritage. Recognizing the influence of Sufism

can also inspire contemporary educational programs to explore the intersections of religion, culture, and community, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and respect.

## CONCLUSION

Sufism is a fascinating mystical branch of Islam that focuses on spiritual growth and connection with the divine. In conclusion, Sufism emphasizes the importance of love, devotion, and inner transformation. It encourages followers to seek a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship with God. Sufism teaches that through practices like meditation, prayer, and self-reflection, individuals can attain spiritual enlightenment and unity with the divine. It promotes tolerance, compassion, and the pursuit of inner peace. Overall, Sufism offers a unique and profound approach to spirituality within the Islamic tradition. In Malabar, Sufism has a strong presence and has left a lasting impact on the religious and cultural landscape of the region. The Sufi saints, known as "Pirs" or "Moulids," have played a significant role in spreading the teachings of Sufism and fostering a sense of spiritual devotion among the people. One of the prominent Sufi orders in Malabar is the Qadiriyya order, which traces its lineage back to the renowned Sufi saint, Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. The Qadiriyya order has a large following in Malabar, and their teachings emphasize the importance of self-discipline, remembrance of God, and serving humanity. The Sufi shrines, known as "dargahs," are important centers of devotion and pilgrimage in Malabar. People from different faiths visit these shrines to seek blessings and spiritual solace. The annual Urs festivals held at these dargahs are vibrant and joyous occasions where followers gather to commemorate the life and teachings of the Sufi saints.

Sufism in Malabar is known for its inclusiveness and its ability to transcend religious boundaries. It has fostered a spirit of religious harmony and tolerance, with people from various religious backgrounds coming together to participate in Sufi rituals and seek spiritual guidance. Sufism has had a profound influence on Muslims in Malabar. It has provided a spiritual path for individuals to connect with God on

a deeper level and has shaped their religious practices and beliefs. Sufism emphasizes the inner dimensions of Islam, such as love, devotion, and self-reflection, alongside the external rituals. Through the teachings of Sufi saints and the practices of Sufi orders, Muslims in Malabar have been inspired to cultivate a personal relationship with God and strive for spiritual purification. Sufism has encouraged them to focus on the inner journey of the heart and the development of virtues like compassion, humility, and patience. Sufi shrines and dargahs in Malabar have become important centers of spiritual guidance and communal gatherings. They serve as places of worship and pilgrimage, where Muslims seek blessings and guidance from the Sufi saints. The annual Urs festivals held at these shrines are occasions of celebration and reflection, bringing together people from different backgrounds to honor the saints and their teachings. Moreover, Sufism in Malabar has fostered a sense of unity and inclusiveness among Muslims. It has transcended sectarian differences and emphasized the common values of love, peace, and tolerance. Sufi practices, such as dhikr (remembrance of God), meditation, and recitation of poetry, have become integral parts of the religious and cultural fabric of the Muslim community in Malabar.

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