

SUFI TRADITION AND AMIR KHUSRAU – ART AND CULTURE

NEWS: Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 25th edition of Jahan-e-Khusrau in Delhi, praising the Sufi tradition and Amir Khusrau.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

PM Modi's Tribute to Sufism and Amir Khusrau

- **Event and Context:**
 - PM Narendra Modi addressed the **25th edition of Jahan-e-Khusrau**, a Sufi music festival in **Delhi**.
 - He **praised Sufism** as an integral part of India's **pluralistic heritage**.
- **Recognition of Sufi Traditions:**
 - PM Modi highlighted how **Sufi saints blended Islamic and Indian traditions**, contributing to India's **spiritual and cultural richness**.
 - He noted that Sufi saints **recited verses from the Quran** while also **listening to the Vedas**, signifying religious harmony.
- **Amir Khusrau's Contribution:**
 - PM Modi called **Amir Khusrau (1253–1325)** one of the **greatest contributors to India's cultural synthesis**.
 - He emphasized Khusrau's **role in developing Hindavi**, a precursor to modern **Hindi and Urdu**, and his **impact on Indian music and literature**.

Amir Khusrau – A Key Figure in Indian Cultural Synthesis

a) Titles and Cultural Contributions

- **Known as 'Tuti-yi-Hind' (Parrot of India)** for his eloquence and literary brilliance.
- Considered a **founding figure of the Ganga-Jamuni culture**, which blended Hindu and Muslim traditions.
- **Major contributions:**
 - **Indian classical music** (creation of new ragas, refinement of khayal singing).
 - **Sufi qawwali** (development of devotional Sufi music).
 - **Persian literature** (prolific poetry and historical writings).

- **Hindavi language** (a precursor to Hindi and Urdu).

b) Early Life and Family Background

- **Birth and Ancestry:**
 - Born as **Abu'l Hasan Yamin ud-Din Khusrau** in **1253 CE**.
 - His **father was a Turkic noble** from Central Asia who migrated to India.
 - His **mother was an Indian Muslim** from a well-established family.
- **Historical Context:**
 - His father arrived in India during the **Mongol invasions**, which devastated **Transoxiana** (modern Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and parts of Central Asia).
 - The family settled in **Delhi**, where his father served **Sultan Iltutmish (1211–1236)**.

c) Role as a Court Poet and Patronage

- Became a **professional poet at the age of 20**.
- Initially served **princes and nobles** before becoming a **permanent fixture at the Delhi Sultanate's court**.
- He enjoyed patronage under **five Delhi Sultans**:
 1. **Muiz ud din Qaiqabad**
 2. **Jalaluddin Khalji** (who conferred the title 'Amir' upon him)
 3. **Alauddin Khalji** (his most powerful patron)
 4. **Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah**
 5. **Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq**
- His ability to **navigate changing political landscapes** and remain in royal favor for **over five decades** reflects his poetic brilliance.
- Historian **Ziauddin Barani**, in *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, wrote that **Khusrau was deeply respected by Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji**, who made him **keeper of the Quran** at his court.

d) Literary and Musical Contributions

- **Language and Poetry:**

- Wrote mainly in **Persian**, the language of the royal court.
- Also wrote in **Hindavi**, helping develop it into a literary language.
- His poetry combined **Persian and Turkic influences** with **Indian cultural elements**.
- Created a unique poetic style that later shaped **Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb (Hindu-Muslim cultural fusion)**.
- **Musical Contributions:**
 - Credited with **innovating and refining khayal music**, a form of **Indian classical singing**.
 - Claimed to have **invented the sitar and tabla**, though historical evidence is limited.
 - Composed **qawwalis**, merging Persian, Arabic, and Indian musical traditions into devotional songs.

e) Relationship with Sufism and Nizamuddin Auliya

- **Deep association with Sufism**, particularly with the **Chishti order**.
- Most beloved disciple of **Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya**, a leading Sufi saint of Delhi.
- His poetry reflects **spiritual devotion, mysticism, and love for the divine**.
- He passed away in **1325**, shortly after the death of Nizamuddin Auliya, and was buried near his master's shrine.

f) Legacy in Modern Times

- His **ghazals and qawwalis** remain popular in both **religious and cultural settings**.
- His most famous compositions include:
 - **Chhaap Tilak Sab Chheeni**
 - **Zehal-e-Maskeen**
 - **Sakal Ban Phool Rahi Sarson**
- His work continues to **enrich Bollywood, Sufi music, and Indian classical traditions**.

Conclusion

- **Amir Khusrau's legacy as a poet, musician, and Sufi disciple** continues to influence Indian culture, art, and music.
- His **literary and musical innovations** played a crucial role in shaping **Persian, Urdu, and Hindustani traditions**.
- **Sufism's impact in India**, particularly through the **Chishti order**, fostered a tradition of **spiritual inclusivity and religious harmony**.
- Even today, Khusrau's **qawwalis, ghazals, and poetry** remain an essential part of **India's cultural and spiritual landscape**.

What is Sufism?

- **About: Sufism** is the **mystical and spiritual dimension of Islam**, focusing on **inner purification, love, and direct connection with God (Allah)**.
 - It emerged in the **7th and 10th centuries CE** against the **rigidity of institutionalised religion** and emphasizes **devotion, self-discipline, and renunciation of materialism** to attain spiritual enlightenment.
 - It ran **parallel** to the **spiritual Bhakti movement in Hindu tradition** emphasizing **devotion (bhakti), love, and inner realization** over ritualistic practices.
- **Core Practices:** Sufis organized themselves into communities centered around **khanqahs (hospices)**, led by a **master (shaikh or pir)**.
 - Sufis established **silsilas (Orders of Sufi)** linking disciples to the **God**, and **Sufi tombs (dargahs)** became pilgrimage sites for spiritual blessings.
 - Sufis practice **self-mortification, zikr (remembrance of God), sama (musical recitals), and Fana-o-Baqa (dissolution of self for union with God)** to induce mystical states of ecstasy.
- **Sufism in India:** **Al-Hujwiri** was the earliest prominent Sufi in India, settled in **Lahore**, and authored **Kashf-ul Mahjub**.
 - The **13th and 14th centuries** marked the growth of Sufism, spreading messages of compassion and love for all, known as **sulh e-kul**.

Similarities Between Bhakti and Sufi Movements

Aspect	Bhakti Movement	Sufi Movement
Core Belief	Devotion to a personal God (Saguna/Nirguna Bhakti)	Love for God (Ishq-e-Haqiqi) and inner purification
Rejection of Rituals	They opposed Brahminical dominance , and elaborated rituals .	Provided alternative to orthodox Islamic legalism.
Emphasis on Love and Devotion	Bhakti as a path to liberation (Moksha)	Love as a way to unite with God (Fana – merging with God)
Simple Language for Masses	Used vernacular languages (Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, etc.)	Composed poetry in Hindavi, Persian, and Urdu
Music and Poetry	Bhajans and Kirtans (Mirabai, Tulsidas)	Qawwalis and Sufi poetry (Amir Khusrau, Rumi)

- **Sufi Orders in India:** By the 12th century, the Sufis were organised in **12 orders or Silsilas**. Major Sufi Orders are:
 - **Chishti Order:** It is the **most influential** Sufi order in India and was founded by **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti** in Ajmer.
 - Key persons associated with it were **Akbar** (follower of Salim Chishti), **Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki**, **Baba Farid**, **Nizamuddin Auliya**, and **Amir Khusrau**.
 - **Suhrawardi Order:** It was founded by **Bahauddin Zakaria** in Multan and embraced **luxury and state support**.
 - It combined **religious knowledge with mysticism**, stressing personal experience and inner purification for **divine knowledge**.
 - **Naqshbandi Order:** It emphasised the **primacy of Shariat** and opposed innovations (**biddat**) and **rejected** Sufi traditions like **musical assemblies (sama)** and **pilgrimages to saints' tombs**.
 - Mughal emperor **Aurangzeb** followed the Naqshbandi Order.
 - **Rishi Order (Kashmir):** It was established by **Shaikh Nuruddin Wali** and flourished in Kashmir during the **15th and 16th centuries..**

- It draws inspiration from the popular **Shaivite bhakti tradition** and being rooted in the **socio-cultural milieu of the region**.
- **Impact:**
 - **Religious:** Emphasized **personal devotion**, *tawhid* (oneness of God), and equality, fostering **Hindu-Muslim coexistence**.
 - The Chishti order welcomed **all faiths**.
 - **Social:** Attracted marginalized groups, **weakened caste hierarchies**, and established *khanqahs and madrasas* as learning centers.
 - **Cultural:** Influenced Indian music, notably *qawwali*, and enriched **vernacular literature** through poets like **Bulleh Shah** and **Sultan Bahu**.
 - **Political:** Inspired *Sulh-i-Kul*, shaping Akbar's **religious tolerance policies**. Rulers patronized Sufis to reinforce authority and manage religious diversity

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