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## THE 'SPACE' OF WOMAN IN SUFI POETRY

Dr. Kiranjeet Sethi

This paper is an attempt to explore the 'space' women have been accorded in Sufi poetry by tracing it historically, socially and culturally. It is a subject which is vast, much discussed, analyzed and debated, but I will focus myself on medieval Punjabi Sufi poets by taking the historical background into account.

Sufism, broadly speaking, is the accepted name for Islamic mystic traditions. Its impact expanded the horizon of Islam spatially and socially, touching the lives of common masses of people who had remained at a distance from high theology (which was) in possession of the learned. 1 (The Truth About Islam :Lakshmeshwar Dayal, p.75)

There have been varied opinions about the place, time and origin of Sufism in India. What is widely accepted is that following the advent of Islam in India in early 8th century, Sufi mystic traditions became more visible during 10th and 11th centuries. Many scholars feel that Sufism came to India through Punjab, which had a rich cultural heritage and also owing to its frontier location and a long tradition of non-conformism, this region possessed a fertile cultural soil which readily accepted Islamic mysticism, thus allowing it to flourish to an unprecedented extent, before it spread to Delhi and Northern India and later to South and West regions of the country. Gradually the integration of the scholars, mystics and poets from Central Asia took place into Indian traditions and they imbibed the socio-cultural colours of the places to where they migrated.

The basic tenet of Sufism, as we all know, is the relationship of love between man and God. It developed as a mystic union of Being. They also advocated promotion of love between human beings without discrimination and laid emphasis on love of human being for human