

The Migrant Sufis from ‘Persianate World’ to the Indian Sub-continent: Dissemination of knowledge and the formation of ‘Indo-Islamic Culture’

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Abstract

[The making of the intellectual tradition of the Indian sub-continent owes much to the migration and settlement of the people from outside during the medieval times. Initially, the Arab traders, merchants, theologians, scholars and Sufis came to settle in the coastal regions of M’abar, Sindh, and Multan. Following the havoc caused by the Mongol conquest of Central Asia and Iran, the city of Delhi became a place of asylum for the refugees fleeing from the cities devastated by the Mongols during the reign of Delhi Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish (1210-36).

These people arriving from the various Central Asian and Iranian cities and towns brought the elements of high ‘Islamic Culture’ with them. Due to their presence in the city of Delhi and various parts of the Indian sub-continent, a number of *maktab*, *madrasa* and *Khanqah* were established in these towns and other centers to cater the need of the increasing Muslim population. Towns like Nagore, Samana, Badaun, Makanpur, Kalpi and numerous other towns soon emerged as important *Sufi* centers representing various *Silsilahs*. Almost invariably these *Sufi* centers, representing various *Sufi silsilas* had facilities for the dissemination of knowledge as well. In the eastern parts of the newly established Sultanate, small towns of Dalmau, Kara-Manikpur, Sandila, Bilgram, Zafarabad, Sahali, Salon, Nasirabad, Khairabad, Laharpur, and Jais emerged as the major centers of Islamic intellectual life and *Sufi* tradition.

The strong intellectual tradition of the region became quite proverbial and people nostalgically recalled it even after its heydays were over. Ghulam ‘Ali Azad Bilgrami (d. 1761), while paying glowing tribute to the cultural life of the region, has said that “this eastern region since the olden days (*qadim-ul ayyam*) has been the cradle of knowledge and center for the scholars (*Ma‘adine ‘Ilm wa maskan-e ‘Ulema*)”. According to him the

regions, which were incorporated later on by Mughal *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad enjoyed special status as compared to other provinces of the empire in the sphere of intellectual activities. These two *suba* had ‘a major settlement of Muslim intellectual elite (*shurufa wa najaba*). They had been well-provided by the earlier *salatin* with cash and *madad e maash* grants. Such policies facilitated the ‘establishment of mosques, *madrasas* and *khanqahs* all over the province, where the teachers of all disciplines were busy in the dissemination of knowledge’. It is important to note that Azad Bilgrami specifically says that the ‘well- provided section of the society took extra care of the requirements of these scholars and considered serving them an act of great benefit (*sa ‘adat-e ‘uzma*) for themselves’.

Thus, it becomes crystal clear that the making of the ‘high elite’ Muslim Culture, based on the Arabic-Persian tradition, owes much to the migration in the Upper Gangetic Valley mainly after the Mongol devastation of Central Asia and Khurasan. The paper seeks to examine the profile of some of the migrant *Sufi* families, the ‘saga’ their migration in Upper Gangetic valley, and the ways in which they have contributed into the making of the ‘elite Indo-Islamic Culture’, which was in a way an extension of Arabic-Persian traditions, embedded with the local Indian ethos.]

The Context

‘Migration’ of the individuals or the group/s of people from their places of origin to the newer regions pre-supposes extreme social constraints, political instability or the economic deprivations. It can be quite painful as well as traumatic experience for the migrants when it is undertaken as a result of mass massacres, totally putting the life and the honor of the people upside down. Such a ‘saga’ of migration always remains as a ‘permanent scar’ in the memory of the migrants, as quite nostalgically they would remember their horrifying experiences, their legacies of the ‘bygone era’ in their homes of origin. Preserving ‘their past’ through memories and documents was the need of the hour for them as, their familial background or scholarly pursuits of their ancestors, would ensure some respectability for them and for their descendants in their new found homes/settlements. For the migrants, it was the question of honorable survival to remember their past affiliations. In whatever fashion they could preserve, remember and perpetuate this ‘memory’.

However, one should not forget that the time is a ‘great healer of wounds’, hence people tend to forget their miseries in the wake of ‘new found opportunities’. However, what they never forgot was their *nisbah* (familial/geographical affiliation) with the place/s of their ancestral origin. Therefore, we see that the migrants at every stage had a memory of their familial past as a part of their larger world view. Even in cases of not so prominent familial past, they often invoked the geographical nomenclatural suffices derived from their hometowns such as Nishapuri, Isfahani, Kashani, Sabzawari, Yemeni, Hamadani, Herati, Safavi, Kirmani, Khwafi and Chishti etc. It is interesting to point out that later on, these groups were accommodated within the Mughal nobility under the broader category of Iranis and Turanis, but in reality, they represented the family groups from the places of their origin, falling within the broad geographical units of Khurasan and Central Asia. The famous river Oxus (*Amu Darya*), being a rough dividing line between these two regions. However, the region east of *Amu Darya* was mainly inhabited by the Turkish and Afghan tribes and was described as Transoxiana.¹

***Tasawwuf* and the Indian subcontinent**

Among the important intellectual and imaginative contributions of the Muslims, *tasawwuf*, as a philosophy and a practicing creed occupies seminal place. For, besides considering the State as a sinful entity, the early sufis (‘quietists’ of Reynald Nicholson) maintained a distance from the Umayyad as well as the Abbasid regimes. They considered, ‘Ali, as the repository and fountain of all knowledge and acknowledged him to be the inheritor of all ‘secrets’, which the Prophet has received from the God during the night of ascension (*Shab-e M’iraj*), hence they always traced their ‘spiritual genealogy’ from him only. Yet, they never identified themselves with the *shi’as* politically or theoretically. They were deadly opposed to the extreme sect of the *kharijites* and *murjiets*, (the pro establishments). Still they maintained a distinct identity. Ultimately, the creed of *tasawwuf* emerged as the ‘post-graduate creed of Islam’ (Mohammad Habib), as it has attracted some of the noblest and pious souls, which provided them a sort of public legitimacy.

¹ . Perhaps it is relevant to point out that this divide was not merely a geographical one, but it also represented some sort of cultural and sectarian divide also. As late as in the mid- nineteenth century, the famous Urdu/ Persian poet Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib (d. 1869) boosts his Sunni affiliations by asserting this identity. For he says:

Shi’i kyun kar Howun; Jabki hun maen Mawra-un Nahari

(How can I be a *Shi’a*, when I hail from the region of Mawra-un Nahar?)

The creed of *tasawwuf* kept on incorporating the newer ideas from the time of Bayazid Bustami's (d.AD 822) *Subhani ma azam us shani* (praise be to me as I am Thay); to Mansur Hallaj's (d. AD 922) *Anal Haq* (I am Thay) and finally, to Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn Al Arabi's (d.AD 1240) *Wahdat ul Wujud* (Unity of existentialisms). Such philosophies tend to allow diversity and plurality in society. Hence, the creed of *tasawwuf* (*irfan, m'arifat, tazkiya-e nafs*) emerged as extremely relevant for the regions with vast non-Muslim population. Therefore the Indian sub-continent was an ideal place for the acceptance, development and the growth of this phenomenon. Such a creed found ready acceptance in the Indian sub-continent, as here also the creed of *bhakti* (devotion) as against / along with *gyan* (knowledge) was recognized as another way to find the Ultimate/Truth. The Jain monks and *Siddhas* along with the strong Buddhist monastic tradition carried forward the powerful tradition of spirituality. The initial similarities, at least in matters of externalism, proved to be quite beneficial for the sufis to carry forward their tradition to the newer heights. One notice that soon after the arrival of Arabs, Turks and other migrant's from Khurasan and Central Asia, various Sufi orders were also introduced in a big way in the Indian sub-continent. They had an audience which required the knowledge of its principles, its theory and the practice in the best manner. Hence, we encounter the first ever treatises were written in Persian and that too at the Indian city of Lahore, then a part of the Ghaznvide Sultanate during the early eleventh century.

The political renaissance in Persia during the tenth century led to the revival of the Persian language. Shaikh Usman B. Ali Hujwiri's (d. AD 1072) *Kashf ul Mahjub* was the first treatise on the doctrine of Sufism. The orthodox reaction against the highly individualistic approach of some mystics is well reflected in the book when the author writing about the organization of the mystic orders says, 'the whole body of aspirants of Sufism composed of twelve sects or schools (*garoh/mazhab*), two of which are condemned (*mardud*), while the rest ten are approved (*maqbul*).'² Among the former, the author has listed, the *hululis* or trans-migrations, who believed in the notion of the spirit

² Ali b. Uthman Al Hujwiri, *The Kashf ul-Mahjub*, tr. Reynold A. Nicholson, Delhi (reprint), Taj Company, 1991, rpt, pp- 176. (Hereafter, as Al- Hujwiri). The author soon became a house hold name in the region and became popular with his Indian title *as Data Gunj Baksh* and his tomb was invariably referred to as *Data ka Darbar/Data Saheb*. The treatise he authored similarly acquired a celebrity status among the contemporaries as well as for the latter generations. It was said about the book:

*Faiz Bakhsh-e Ganj 'Alam ;Mazhar-e Nur- e Khuda
Naqisan ra Pir-e Kamil; Kamilan ra Peshwa*

of one preceptor passing into the body of his successor. Probably, they were influenced by the doctrines of the Ismailis who held similar beliefs about their *Imams*. The other condemned sect was the *hallajis*, who probably believed either in the extreme individualistic version of the self or in the validity of Mansur's proclamation of *anal haq*.

Among the sects approved by Hujwiri was that of the *Junaidis*, the followers of Shaikh Junaid Baghdadi (AD 910). They preferred the path of *sahw* (*sobriety*) over that of *sukr* (*intoxication*) and avoided externalism (*zahiriat*). His influence on his contemporaries as well as on the succeeding generations was immense.³ The credit of consolidating the philosophy of Shaikh Junaid goes to Shaikh Shihabuddin Suharawardi (d.1234) in his famous '*Awarif ul Ma'arif*', which is a measured, balanced and scholarly text. It was accepted by a majority of the mystics all over the world of Islam. Within a decade or two of its author's death, it was being taught at Delhi.⁴

The *Kashf ul Mahjub* had a readership in the city of Lahore itself, where there were enough people to understand the issues rose in the book. The city was a part of the Ghaznavid dynasty, but in creating such an intellectual milieu, the efforts of one Saiyid Ismail of Bukhara are evident, he settled in Lahore in AD 1005. It is said that he was one of the most powerful preachers and his sermons were attended by a large number of people, and many of them were swayed by the power of his argument so much that they embraced Islam.⁵

With the expansion of Ghaznavid power in Panjab during the 11th century, Lahore became an important center of intellectual pursuit. In fact, Abdul Karim Samani described Lahore as 'the blessed one' (*ba barkat*) and a place 'giving much benefit' (*khair-i kathir*), because it boasted of having a large number of mystics and scholars.⁶

This tradition of acquiring excellence in the theological sciences and other branches of Islamic knowledge remained a hallmark of the province throughout the medieval times. Knowledge continued to be transmitted from other towns as well. We specifically told about the town of Sialkot, which emerged as one of the major centers during the

³ Op. cit., Al Hujwiri, see especially chap. XII, pp. 176-266; see also K.A.Nizami, ed., *Collected Works of Muhammad Habib*, titled as *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, vol. I, Delhi, 1974, pp. 52-3, 283-7.

⁴ Ibid, p- 288.

⁵ Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *op. cit.*, pp 74-5.

⁶ Ibid, pp- 75-6.

seventeenth century. Sujan Rai Bhandari specifically mentions that it has become such a center which attracts the scholars and the learned (*m'adan-i Fazal wa maskan-i Fuzla*), ever since Maulana Kamaluddin Husain Khan, one of the chief scholars from Kashmir had migrated to the town during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Similarly, during the reign of Emperor Shahjahan, Maulvi Abdul Hakim wrote a number of commentaries on the important texts, his fame had reached far and wide and students keep on coming to him from far off places. Similarly after his death, his son Maulvi Abdullah was the chief scholar of town and his *madrassa* had become a center for learning and scholarship.⁷

Apart from Ghaznavid Punjab, Multan and Lahore emerged as important centers of intellectual and cultural pursuits of scholars and mystics, some Muslim settlements had already been established at places like Badaun, Bahraich, Banaras, and Kannauj in the present day Uttar Pradesh and Nagaur, an important medieval town in Rajasthan. There are references in the later sources and when they are taken together, they give an idea of activities of Muslim cultural groups in the transmission of knowledge before the establishment of Ghurid power. The evidence for the other places is meager but for places like Badaun, Bahraich and Nagaur it is possible to surmise the extent of intellectual life prior to the establishment of Turkish rule in north India.

The 'Intra-regional' transmission of 'Islamic Sciences'

Between the various settlements of the 'migrant elite' there was considerable mobility of the ideas, books, scholars and the people at large. This connectivity made the exchange of knowledge quite easy. The scholars spent their time at the distance places to teach them theological and other texts of philosophy and religion. Hence, it is important to recollect the emerging tradition of Islamic learning at the various settlements in the Upper Gangetic valley and north-western parts of the sub-continent. One such example relates Badaun and Kol (Aligarh), the place associated with some of the top important scholar like Allama Zia Uddin Nakshbi and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d.AD 1325) and the well known scholar Maulana Razi al-Din Hasan al-Saghani, the compiler of important collections of *hadith*, who was born in AD 1181 at Badaun. He received his initial education and training here. By this time arrangements existed for the pursuit of higher branches of Islamic studies. An early incident in his life is a pointer in this direction, once

⁷Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut Twarikh*, ed. Zafar Hasan Dehalvi, 1918, p.73.

he wanted to borrow a copy of the *Mulakhkhas* (a textbook of *hadith*) from his teacher, who refused to give it to him. Saghani rose to be an eminent scholar of *hadith* in the entire Islamic east. His compilations of the collections of *hadith*, namely *Mashariq ul Anwar* and the *Misbah ul-Duja* were used as standard texts throughout the region. He used to describe his compilation of *Mashariq ul Anwar* as the ultimate proof (*hujjat*) between him and God. He was appointed to teach the son of the ruler of Kol (Aligarh) and used to get a remuneration of 100 *tankas*. When he reached Baghdad and attended the *dars* (lectures) of the renowned scholar of *hadith*, ‘Allama Ibn Zuhri. He impressed the audience so much with his erudite scholarship and when his fame reached the Caliph, he was invited by him and was shown great respect. It is quite likely that the region around Badaon and Kol (Aligarh) has developed the tradition of higher learning much prior to the establishment of Turkish rule. Hence, we find scholars of such stature who could invite the attention of the great scholars in the Islamic East as well as the Abbasid Caliph.⁸

A similar intellectual milieu existed at Nagaur. Here, Sufi Hamiduddin Sihalwi, (d.1240’s) the famous disciple of Shaikh Muin Uddin Chishti had established his *khanqah*, and because of his austerities and his preference for a life of poverty (*faqr*), he came to be known as *Sultan ut-tarikin* (prince of recluses).⁹ The family of Qazi Hamiduddin had also migrated from Central Asia and settled here. When Maulana Raziuddin Saghani reached Nagaur, Qazi Hamiduddin and Qazi Kamaluddin requested him to teach *hadith*. He taught the *Misbah al-Duja* to scholars of Nagaur and also issued certificates.¹⁰ One of his pupils requested Maulana to teach him ‘*ilm-i tasawwuf*, Maulana told that he accompany him during the journey to the countryside which he was going to undertake shortly, it is reported that during this journey when Maulana reached the countryside, he removed the dress of the scholars and put on the dress of the *dervish* (*peerahni*) and *n’alain-i-chubi* (wooden sleepers) and also had a *kuza* (hanging jug) filled with water in his hand. With such ‘disguise’ he continued his onward journey throughout concentrating on prayers and meditations, when the person accompanying Maulana,

⁸ *Fawaid ul Fuad*, vol.3, *majlis no.* 9, pp. 178-181, see also, Muhammad Habib, *Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya: Hayat aur Ta’alimat*, Nizam Urdu Lecture Series, Department of Urdu, University of Delhi, 1970, pp- 24-8 . (hereafter *Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya*)

⁹ Maksud Ahmad Khan, ‘Surur-us Sudur wa Nur ul-Budur’, *PIHC*, 54th Session, 1993, Mysore, pp. 231-40.

¹⁰ Muhammad Habib and K.A. Nizami, (ed.) *A Comprehensive History of Indian*, V, 1970, pp-140-1; Mumtaz Ali Khan, *op. cit.*

reminded him of his promise of lecture on the theme of *tasawwuf*, his response was quite instructive as he told him, '*tasawwuf* cannot be taught by words (*baqal nist*); it is learned in action (*bahal ast*)', you must imitate me in my actions'.¹¹

The intellectual and philosophical basis of all religious studies in Islam is undoubtedly *Quran*. For this purpose, the textual study of the book was very crucial. This branch attained a high degree of sophistication following the compilation of the basic text on classical Arabic grammar, *Al-Mufasssal* by Imam Jarullah Zamikhshari (d. AD 1144). He wrote the Quranic commentary from an allegedly *mu'tazalite* point of view, the famous *Tafsir-e Kashshaf*. Theologians severely criticized him for his heretical views. In India, these works of Zamikhshari became immensely popular among scholars of higher learning. But the orthodox *ash'arite* sentiments always led to his being denounced for his beliefs. Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya expressed his reservations about him in the following words, 'despite the fact that he was extremely knowledgeable, he held false belief (*'aqida-e batila*)' and added, 'there is unbelief (*kufr*), there is innovation (*bid'at*), there is sin (*m'asiyat*). Innovation is worse than sin, and unbelief is still worse, innovation and unbelief are closer to each other'.¹² In addition to these harsh comments, he has cited two anecdotes quite approvingly which describe the hostility and extreme hatred of the Indian Sufis towards Zamikhshari for his 'heretical' views.¹³ Even *al Mufasssal* invited such harsh censors. It might look ironical that in spite of such hostility towards the works of Zamikhshari, both his works, namely *Tafsir-i Kashshaf* and the classical Arabic grammar, *al Mufasssal* continued to be taught throughout the Islamic World as the most standard and authentic text in a discipline.¹⁴

The works of Zamakhshari continued to be the part of theological curriculum throughout the subcontinent in the subsequent centuries, and it was believed that nobody can master the Arabic grammar (*nahw wa sarf*) without acquiring an expertise of his work, *al Mufasssal*. Ali Mohammad Khan writing for the *suba* of Gujrat tells about the Imperial order that all the teachers who teaches the students, the books beginning from '*al Mizan* to *Kashshaf* was entitled for *wajh-e' ulufa* grants from the state treasury.'

¹¹ *Suru s Sudur wa Nur al Budur*, ff. 61-62, c.f. Maksud Ahmad Khan, *op. cit.* p. 235.

¹² *Fawa'id ul Fuwad*, vol. 3, *majlis no.* 11, pp- 186-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ali Mohammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, vol.1, Nawab Ali & Charles N. Seldon (eds.), Baroda Oriental Institute, p. 258.

As far as Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d.AD.1325) is concern, we have detailed information about his early education the academic milieu at Badaon, which he recalls quite nostalgically after he has settled at Ghayaspur in Delhi and the way he acquired knowledge and the way knowledge was transmitted during his lifetime. He has provided detailed information about three scholars of Badaon namely Maulana Raziuddin Hasan Saghani, Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, both of them have predeceased him, and Maulana Alauddin Usuli, who was his own teacher. The way he describes these three persons and takes notice of few others, help us to understand the then system of education and the manner in which it was transmitted. When Shaikh completed his early education with Maulana Alauddin Usuli, and finished with a text *Quduri*, he was asked by his teacher for the ceremony of *dastaarbandi*. Graphic details are provided by the author of *Siyar ul Auliya* about the manner in which the preparation of the ceremony by the mother of the Shaikh. The final ceremony of *dastaarbandi* was performed by the special invitee one ‘Ali Maula Buzurg, who was not his teacher.¹⁵ When he arrived at Delhi he had already become a sort of celebrity and was nick named as Nizamuddin *bahath* and *mahfil shikan* and his friends considered him intellectually and academically superior. He was taught the famous collection of *hadith*, namely *Mashariq ul Anwar* of Raziuddin Hasan Saghani by Maulana Kamaluddin Zahid, who issued him certificate for the same on 23rd July 1280. He was also permitted to carry on the teaching of this book.¹⁶

However, when he reached at the *jam’at khana* of Baba Farid at Pakpatan, he was taught by his *pir* few more texts especially *Tamhid-ul Muhtadi* of Abu Shakur Salemi. The important thing to notice here, he was also taught ‘five parts of Quran again’. Perhaps, one can argue that, it was meant to give particular insight into the different interpretation, which was not a part of the regular curricula in the orthodox system of the transmission. Baba Farid also issued him a certificate and permitted him to continue giving instruction of this book to his students. The relevant portion of the said certificate reads:

I now permit him to teach this book to students, provided he avoids mistake in teaching, writing and explaining it and utilizes his energy and knowledge in discussion, correcting the manuscripts and

¹⁵ Amir Khurd Kirman, *Siyar ul Auliya*, Delhi, 1885, pp. 95-96, see also, *Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya*, pp. 47-8.

¹⁶ The text of this certificate is preserved by Amir Khurd in *Siyar ul Auliya*, pp 104-5; also compare K.A. Nizami, *Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya*, Delhi, 1991, pp 189-90.

purification of the language.....I also permit Nizam- ul Millat wad Din to narrate things which he has learnt from me and has collected and preserved.....May God be kind to them who show respect and honor to Nizam-ud din, whom I honor and for whom I have great regard.¹⁷

The *jam'at khana* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya became a center for the transmission of advance knowledge in the fields of theology, ethics, and *tasawwuf*. Ziauddin Barani, the historian pays glowing tribute to the efforts of the Shaikh in furtherance of these studies and says:

Most of the scholars and learned men, who frequented the Shaikh's company, applied themselves to books on devotion and mysticism. The books like *Qut ul Qulub*, *Ihya ul Ulum* and its translation, '*Awarif ul M'aarif*, *Kashf ul Mahjub*; *Sharh-i Ta'arruf*, *Risala-i Qoshairi*, *Mirshad ul 'Ibad*, *Maktub 'Ain ul Quzzat* and the *Lawaih* and *Lawama* of Qazi Hamiduddin Naguri found many purchasers, as also did the *Fawaid ul Fuad* of Amir Hasan owing to the sayings of the Shaikh which it contains. People asked the book sellers about books of devotion...'¹⁸

In the *jam'at khana* of the Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya there was great insistence on acquiring knowledge as a prerequisite for being initiated into the higher stages of mystic life. Therefore, when it was suggested to Shaikh that a senior disciple Shaikh Sirajuddin Usman (known as *Akhi Siraj*) be given *khilafat nama* by the Shaikh, he observed '*education is the first stage in the field of Sufism, and he has not received any education*' thereupon, Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi, another senior inmate in the *jam'at khana* of the Shaikh, offered him to educate him within six months in the required fields. Only after this formal session of education was complete, he was bestowed with the *khilafat Nama* of the Shaikh.¹⁹ Amir Khurd mentions that Maulana Sirajuddin was able to acquire the required knowledge within six months in spite of his advanced age, his teacher Fakhruddin Zarradi specially prepared a text for him and named it as '*Usmani*. After the conferment of the *khilafat nama*, while going back to Lukhnauti, Maulana Siraj took

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 187-88.

¹⁸ Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh -I Firuz shahi*, (ed.) Shaikh Abdul Rashid, Aligarh, Vol. II pp. 346-347.

¹⁹ *Siyar ul Auliya*, pp.288-9;

some books from the *kutub khana* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya for study and teaching.²⁰ Hence, it is perhaps most appropriate to describe *tasawwuf* as the ‘post graduate’ creed of Islam.

Muslim tradition of acquiring expertise in the Semitic religions is quite old. The study of Old and New Testament as well the Talmudic literature was an established tradition. During the early Abbasid times, the tradition of religious debates (*munazira*) was a recognized field of study. This tradition was carried forward by Muslim sectarian debates, among the religious and philosophical sect. In the Indian sub-continent this tradition continued, with the further addition of acquiring expertise in the non-Semitic religions as well. Hence, it was expected that the inmates of the *khanqah/sufi jama'at khana*, in addition to their acquiring knowledge in the tenets of theology and higher discipline of ‘Islamic Sciences’, also acquired the knowledge of other religions/scriptures of the other religions and had some interest in the natural sciences as well. It is said that the founder of *Madariya* order Shaikh Badruddin Madar has memorized *Taurah* and *Ingil* (Old and New Testament) and has also learned *kimiya*, *simiya*, *himiya* and *rimiya* (chemistry and other natural science?). In fact, it was said of him that he was the only person expert in so many branches of knowledge in his times.²¹

This tradition of acquiring expertise in the religious scripture of other Semitic religion survived in the Mughal times later on. Khafi Khan tells same thing about Saiyid Sa'adullah (d. A.H. 1138/A.D.1725) of Salon, the grandson of Shaikh Pir Muhammad (d.1687), the founder of a Khanqah belonging to the Chishti –Nizami order of the Sufi at Salon(Rae Bareli, UP), was his earliest teacher as Azad Bilgrami (d.1761) says that: He acquired knowledge, while he was very young and in a very short time became an expert in the various disciplines, in his youth he started teaching and he could compare very well with the senior scholars who have spent years in teaching and worthy authors of scholarly works” Azad further adds that, he acquired expertise in the orthodox and spiritual sciences, Logic, Philosophy, *simiya*, *himiya wa kimiya* were the sciences in which nobody could match him. He also acquired expertise in matters related to *Ingil* and *Taurah* as much that even [Christian] monks took lectures from him. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab ut Twarikh*, vol. 2, p. 559; see also, Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami, *Mathir ul*

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ . Maksud Ahmad Khan, ‘Chronicling The Miraculous: Hagiology in the *Mirat-i Madari*’ in *PIHC*, (55th, *Session*), Aligarh, 1994,p 304.

Kiram, pp. 217-18. The Saiyid Sa’adullah also established his *madrasa* at Surat in a *haveli* assigned to him by Emperor Aurangzeb and maintained the *madrasa* with the *madad-i ma’ash* with rupees nine thousand per annum. He was held in the high esteem by the emperor, but after some times he migrated to the holy city of Madina and established his seminary there as well. By the latter contemporaries he is described as one of the most ‘erudite scholars from the East’.²²

Migration, Settlement and the Dissemination of Knowledge

The magnitude of the devastation and havoc caused by the Mongol conquest can be understood better by highlighting some data of the contemporary accounts of important towns of Khurasan region. For example, the famous city of Nishapur, which was one of the most important cities of the area, was thoroughly and systematically destroyed by the Mongols during their second campaign. It is vividly described by Minhaj us Siraj Juzjani in the following manner:

“Nishapur, which after much fighting, he {Tuli, the youngest son of Changez Khan} captured and in order to take vengeance because the son-in-law of the Changez Khan have been slain at that place, he martyred every person in Nishapur, desolated it, raised the walls of the city and

having a pair of oxen, yoked (to a plough), he had them driven over {the area on which} the city {stood} in such wise that not a wastage of buildings of remain having finished with them {the inhabitants} and the city and territory, Tuli advanced towards Herat, and pitched his camp before the gate of that city, and the attack began and catapults were placed in position in every direction’²³

²² . Shaikh Bahadur, *Haqiqat e Surat/Guldasta Sulha e Surat*, transl. in Urdu by Mahbub Husain Ahmad Husain Abbasi, Gandhinagar, 2005, pp.83-86.

²³ . Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, vol.II, (Eng.trans. by H.G. Raverty) pp. 1028-1037. A contemporary couplet captures the event in the following manner:

“In three months, the world-seizing Tuli
Captured these all to the gate of Sistan
He razed and he slew, and he swept, and he clutched;
Not a person remained, neither great nor small.”

It is necessary to remember that the second attack on Nishapur was led by the daughter of Chengiz Khan, who was the wife of the deceased general killed during the first attack, a year earlier. This

Similar was the fate of other famous towns of Khurasan and Central Asia under the command of the Mongol generals. The city of Delhi became a natural place of asylum for the refugees, fleeing from the cities devastated by the Mongols, during the reign of Sultan Shams ud-din Iltutamish (1210-36). The same historian, Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani, who also served as the chief Qazi during the reign of Iltutmish's son Muizuddin Bahram Shah (1240-42), very specifically says:

‘The kingdom of Hindustan, by the grace of Almighty God, and the favor of fortune under the shadow of the guardianship of the Shamsi race, and the shade of the protection of Iltutmish's dynasty became the focus of the people of Islam, and the orbit of the possessors of religion.’²⁴

While Isami, writing in the mid 14th century, in his *Futuh us Salatin* says, that the Delhi Sultanate has become a ‘miniature’ of the Islamic east, a place of refuge for the scholars, theologians, craft persons and everybody who was anybody in the region, prior to the Mongol devastation. He says:

‘Many genuine Saiyids have arrived from Arabia, the traders of Khurasan, many learned men from Bukhara and numbers of Sufis and ascetics from every town and every race have gathered here. Scholars well versed in the Unani system (of medicine) have also arrived from Rum. These people have gathered in the city of Delhi like the moths gather around the candle.’²⁵

These people arriving from the various Central Asian cities and towns have brought the elements of ‘Islamic Culture’ with them. Due to their presence in the city of Delhi and various parts of the Indian sub-continent, a number of *maktab* and *madrasa* were established in these towns and other centers to cater the need of emerging Muslim

attack was to take the revenge of the first attack, when the Mongol forces under the command of Chengiz's own son-in-law, Nuh-yan/ Nurka were killed as a result of the massive resistance offered by the people of Nishapur under the leadership of Majir-ul Mulk, the Kafi, ‘Umr-i-Raji, and Ziya-ul-Mulk, and the Zauzani. Therefore, one can very well imagine the ferocity and savagery which was now unleashed on the people and city of Nishapur. In this context, the traditional accounts say that ‘no living being including cats and dogs were left alive in the city’. Therefore, whoever could flee from the site of massacre, tried to find asylum, wherever they could reach with safety.

²⁴ Minhaj-us Siraj Juzjani *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, ed. Abdul Haiy Habibi, Lahore, 1954, vol. II, p.642

²⁵ Isami, *Futuh us Salatin*, ed. M. Usha, Madras, 1948, pp.114-115

population. Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, while writing about the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, very specifically says that:

“In each town and region, where the forces of Islam have gained an upper hand and have become popular, *masajid*, *jam’at khana* and *khanqah* were established and the capable people were appointed in the *maktabs* and the *madrasa* as the *mu’allim* and *muddarris*. In these institutions, the *umra’* and their sons and the sons of the soldiers acquired knowledge and busied themselves in the prayer and meditations. Those who could afford discharged their duties in the way of God. The institution so established trained the inmates for the emerging needs of the administration and the bureaucracy, the *Qazis* (judicial officers), the expert accountants, scribes and other state functionaries were the products of these institutions”.²⁶

The strong intellectual and academic tradition of the region became quite proverbial and people nostalgically recalled it even after its heydays were over. Ghulam ‘Ali Azad Bilgrami (d. 1761), while paying glowing tribute to the cultural life in the Upper Gangetic Valley, has said that “this region since the olden days (*qadim-ul ayyam*) has been the cradle of knowledge and center for the scholars (*ma’adan-e ‘Ilm wa maskan-e ‘Ulema*)”. According to him the Mughal *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad enjoyed special status as compared to other provinces of the empire in the sphere of intellectual activities. There were innumerable intellectual centers and numerous scholars, that these two *suba* had ‘a major settlement of Muslim intellectual elite (*shurufa wa najaba*) at every 5 to 10 *kroh*’. They had been well-provided by the earlier *salatin* with cash and *madad e maash* grants.

This had facilitated the establishment of mosques, *madrasas*, and *khanqaqs* all over the province, where the teachers of all disciplines were busy in the dissemination of knowledge. The students trained at these institutions went to other parts of the country and established and strengthened this intellectual tradition further. It is important to note that Azad Bilgrami specifically says that the well- provided a section of the society took

²⁶*Waq’iat Mushtaqi*, Add.11633, f.18.

extra care of the requirements of these scholars and considered serving them an act of great benefit (*sa 'adat-e 'uzma*) for themselves.²⁷

Often these grants are described as charitable grants. However, the official documents and the chronicles have never used the words/expressions, especially meant to describe/convey the sense for charity or for the charitable uses, while making these grants. The terms which are used to describe the charity in the Islamic literature, like *sadqah*, *khairat*, *fitrah*, or *zakat* have never been employed either in the Chronicles or in the Archival papers to describe the *madad-i mash* grants. Thus, to place *madad-i mash* under the category of 'charity' is inappropriate. Instead, common neutral terms like *Suyurghal*, *a'imma* and *madad-i mash* or *inam* and in the later period *ma'afi* is invariably used to describe these grants in the official papers of Mughal and Nawabi periods. Such nomenclature is used invariably irrespective of the religious affiliation of the recipient unlike our modern Indian State which makes a distinction not only on the basis religious affiliation but also on the basis of sectarian affiliations.²⁸

It becomes clear that the diffusion of the Medieval Persianate culture owes much to the migration of the numerous families from Central Asia and Khurasan. This is not to say that the region has not witnessed migration prior to the rise of Chengiz Khan, but the fact that the mass migration of the families of the notables and scholars has taken place after this great catastrophe. There are numerous local histories (compiled only in 18th and 19th centuries) and the historical documents available in the Colonial records tracing the 'saga of migration' of the families of the scholars and Sufis in every part of Northwestern India and even in Deccan, that invariably links their arrival in the regions of their settlement from this period only. A deeper understanding of the process/es of migration from the Persianate cultural worked to the Indian subcontinent might open up a window to trace the fortunes of the numerous families from this region. Undoubtedly, they have made use of the local dialects and the pre-existing rituals and traditions of the region in the most imaginative manner, so much so that some of these rituals were incorporated as a part of

²⁷ Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgram, *Mathirul Kiram*, ed. by Shaikh Shams ul Haq, *Maktab' Ihyaul ulum e Sharqiya*, Lahore, 1971, pp. 213-14.

²⁸. See Shireen Moosvi, 'Charity, Objectives and Mechanism in Mughal India (16th and 17th Centuries)', *PIHC* (73rd Session), Mumbai, 2012, Pp. 335-346

the Sufi rituals, especially of the Chishtis, who were considered as one of the ‘most Indianised Sufi orders’.

Linguistic Adaptations and adjustment with pre-existing rituals and practices on part of Sufis of Chishti Order

After the establishment of the Turkish rule in parts of the Indian subcontinent, certain vital changes took place in the cultural life of the people. Some dialects were now spoken from Multan in the north to the Gujarat in the west, down to the Deccan. These dialects were the major vehicle for the transmission of ideas, but they were yet to become full-fledged literary languages, as they had no formal recognized system of script/s. The Sufi intervention contributed in the development of these dialects into literary language, especially during the 13th century, when Baba Farid (d. 1265), the famous Chishti Sufi, started writing poetry in Multani/Saraiki (which was later incorporated in the *Adi Granth* compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru namely Guru Arjan Dev). Similarly, Amir Khusrau (d. 1325) is also said to have written some compositions in the Awadhi dialect. A number of Chishti-Nizami Sufi centers were established in various parts of the Indian Subcontinent; the Sufi masters at these centers were adopting local dialects and using Persian scripts to compile their writings and poetry.

A major exercise was undertaken by the Chishti Sufis in the area where Awadhi dialect was predominant. The *genre* of *premakhyān* in line with the Persian *Mathnavi* tradition was practiced and developed by these Sufi poets in the Awadhi dialect, mainly by those who were associated with the Chishti-Nizami tradition of *Sufis* in Awadh. The characters they have used in their poetic narrations are mainly those who were popular in the countryside and were remembered as the ‘the heroes of certain caste groups’. This new *genre* was used to propagate the Islamic-Sufic ideology in the local dialects. Perhaps, it is too obvious to point out that such tradition became extremely popular in the localities like Dalmau, where Mulla Daud (d.1370?) composed *Chandayan*, using Lorik and Chanda as the main characters of the story, while Malik Mohammad (d.1540) wrote *Padmavat* at Jais using Padmavati and Ratansen as the main protagonists of his narration. This tradition continued through out, with poets like Shah Qasim (d.1731) composed *Hans Jawahir* at Dariyabad, while Hafiz Najaf Ali Shah wrote *Prem Chingari* at Rewa in around 1860 AD.

The use of local dialects for the propagation of the *Sufi* ideas, as well as singing of these compositions at the *sama*' gatherings, were often disapproved by non-Chishti Sufis and the Orthodox. An incident, attributed by Mulla Nizamuddin (d.1748), the founder of the house of Firangi Mahal to Shaikh Muhammadi (d.1696) confirms this opposition and plurality of views existing within the Sufi orders. Shaikh Muhammadi was a well-known *wujudi* scholar of his time and was ideologically associated with the famous Shaikh Muhibullah of Allahabad (d.1648).²⁹ Mulla Nizamuddin reports the matter as it was said to have been reported to Saiyid Abdul Razzaq of Bansa (d. 1724), the famous Qadiri Shaikh:

Once in the *khanqah* of Shaikh Pir Muhammad of Salon (d.1687), *Sama* was in progress and compositions in *Hindvi* [Awadhi?] were being sung. Those present were in the state of ecstasy [*hal*]. Sheikh Muhammadi also reached there. When the *raqs* and the *wajd* of the Sufis was over, he stood up and recited a few *Quranic* verses in the best of accent, but it had no impact on any of those present; neither *raqs* nor *wajd* overcame them. [Observing this] Shaikh Muhammadi said;

'It is strange that on listening to the *Quran* none became excited while the compositions in *Hindvi*, *which contradict Quranic themes* (emphasis mine), get you excited'. Upon hearing this, Saiyid Abdul Razzaq expressed his pleasure and approval of the conduct of Shaikh Muhammadi.³⁰

While the original narrator of the story remains unnamed, it is highly unlikely for Shaikh Muhammadi, who himself was a *wujudi*, to have made such an incomparable comparison between the recitation of *Quranic* verses and Sufi Awadhi poetry when sung with instruments, for both were supposed to have a different impact on the audience. Hence, the reported incident *per se* becomes secondary. However, it is quite clear that a section

²⁹ Shaikh Mohammadi's fame is attributed to his courage in defending, in front of Emperor Aurangzeb, the allegedly controversial points from the famous book *Al-Taswiya*, authored by his Pir Shaikh Muhibullah of Allahabad.

³⁰ Mulla Nizamuddin Ansari, *Manaqib-i Razzaqia*, Lucknow, 1313 AH, pp. 14-15; see also Muhammad Raza Ansari, *Tazkira Hazrat Saiyid Saheb Banswi*, Lucknow, 1986, pp.70-71.

of the literary elite was definitely against the use of *Hindavi* by the Chishti Sufis even for their own specific rituals.³¹

The adoption of particular customs, rituals and other prevalent practices by the Sufi institutions can be described as an ongoing process, especially at places where large landed properties were attached by the way of *waqf* or *madad-i mash*, more particularly in matters of succession and inheritance³². Moreover, in the adoption of rituals and ceremonies observed during public gatherings and other solemn occasions, an eclectic attitude was generally displayed, for it was ‘this sphere’ that brought about a sense of belonging among the participants of such events. Such ‘innovative flexibilities’ were aimed at capturing the imagination of the masses and ensured sustained participation for a longer duration as well. The elaborate details of these rituals lent a ‘sanctified halo’ to them, while somehow, a punctual religiosity in their observance created an ‘aura’ around these ceremonies. Apart from the ceremony of *gagar*³³, another ‘Indianized’ ceremony which was very popular at the Chishti centers in northern Indian is the practice of *sandal*. It involves the pouring of sandalwood paste over the grave of the Shaikh whose death anniversary was being celebrated. Sandalwood is an important substance used by the Indian *yogis* and *sadhus* in their religious rituals and practices and its paste is believed to be a cooling agent. It is also used to relieve irritations and for other medicinal purposes.

³¹ What is more relevant is the way in which it is used by Mulla Nizamuddin, the biographer of Saiyid Abdul Razzaq, and later commentators on this namely Mulla Qiyamuddin Abdul Bari (d.1926) and Mufti Raza Ansari (d.1990). Irrespective of the fact that they themselves were initiated into the principle of *Qadiri* and *Naqshbandi* orders respectively, they have compared the *wajd* and *raqs* of Sufis to *tazwir* (simple lies) and *makr wa hila* (hypocrisy).

Also See my, ‘Religious Plurality in the Chishti Tradition: A Case Study of the *Khanqahat Salon* in Awadh’ in Jamal Malik and Helmut Reifeld, *Religious Pluralism in South Asia and Europe*, OUP, 2005, pp. 219-244. For the specific reference, see, pp. 233-234.

³² *Rawaj-i a'am* of *pargana* Parshadepur, *Tehsil Salon*, District Pratapgarh, included in the *Jild-i band wa bast-i awwal* (First volume of the Revenue Settlements) of 1860, recording among other things, the *Kayfiyyat-i abadi wa husul-i milkiyyat* (the details of the Settlement and the Acquisition of the Superior Land Rights).

³³ Literary a small earthen pot, but when used technically, it involves going in to a procession from the *Khanqah* of a Sufi Shaikh to some nearby pond/river accompanied by the musicians and disciples. The participants carrying the empty *gagars* on their head and reciting the *fatiah* on water filled their *gagars* with the water. For further discussion on this practice and the way the orthodoxy had dubbed it as a *bid'at* (an innovation in the religion), see my, “Religious Plurality in Chishti Tradition”, pp234-6.

Such a practice was generally adopted by those *khanaqahs* which were situated in the midst of overwhelming Hindu population.³⁴

It should not be assumed that such ‘innovative flexibilities’ met the approval of the *‘ulema*, whose disapproval ranged from mild criticism to an all-out denouncement, often bracketing them with *bid’at* (innovations in religion). But the orthodoxy never or seldom targeted the intrusion of local customs in matters of inheritance or succession of the landed properties, confining their attack to the ‘external displays’ popular among the masses. This was mainly because the class of *‘ulema* too were appealing to popular sentiments in order to win over the same constituency from the hold of the *Sufi* institutions. Their opposition to certain practices and rituals may not have been without some merit, but it is to the credit of the *Sufi* institutions that they could withstand such persistent onslaught from many quarters. The *Sufi* institutions neither thought of abandoning their allegedly ‘un-Islamic’ practices under the pressure of the orthodoxy nor retaining that part of their constituency which was certainly going over to the ‘other side’. Here lies the crux of the matter: the *Sufi* institutions firmly believed that the rituals and rites at the elaborate ceremonial details adopted by them were representatives of their ideological commitment to the philosophy of *Wahdat-ul wujud*, rather than just expediency or catering to popular demand or sentiments.

Sama’ had been one of the major issues of contention between the Sufis and the orthodoxy in India, ever since the days of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d.1325). Neither had the orthodoxy reconciled itself to the very idea of *sama’* nor did the Chishti Sufis ever give up this practice. They have been using the compositions in the local dialects quite freely even *Vishnupads* were recited at the *khanaqah* of Shaikh Noor Qutb e Alam (d.1415), an important Chishti-Nizami *sufi* at Pandua in Bengal. This he carried on in spite of the objections of the orthodoxy, to which the Shaikh reportedly observed that when the ‘*Quran* has verses having a description of Nimrud and Fir’aun (Pharaoh) and they are recited with equal reverence, why anybody should object to the singing of the *Vishnupads* in my *khanaqah*?³⁵

It was in the Pandua tradition of Chishti branch that another notable from Manikpur, Shaikh Husamuddin wal Haq (d.1470), the chief *Khalifa* of Shaikh Nur Qutb-e Alam

³⁴ For a discussion on this ritual see Claudia Lebeskiend, *Piety on its Knees: Three Sufi Traditions in South Asia in Modern Times*, OUP 1998, pp. 152-153

³⁵ See, Shaikh Mohammad Ikram, *Rud-i kauthar*, (1991 reprint, Delhi), p. 498.

emphatically argued that the earliest Sufi was Prophet Shish and Sufism as a creed existed since the time of the creation i.e. from the time of Hazrat Adam.³⁶ This way he has predated the history of Sufism to that of Islam. Hence, by implication, he was trying to incorporate all the pre-existing traditions and idioms of the Indian sub-continent as legitimate expressions and the forms of worship. Therefore, the Sufis whose creed predates the Islamic creed could become the inheritors and upholders of the earlier traditions of the Indian subcontinent as well without any condition. Thus, we find that Chishti Nizami branch in the Upper Gangetic valley, from Pandua (in modern West Bengal) to Awadh, has adopted most of these traditions as a part of the rituals and irrespective of the criticism by their contemporaries, they have carried with these traditions.³⁷

The study of the Indian scriptures and the literary works in Sanskrit was also undertaken at the Sufi centers, although we have no direct reference to this. Still, the interaction with the *yogis* and other holy men was a known established fact. We have clear evidence that at the *jam'at khana* of famous *Chishti* Sufis namely Shaikh Baba Farid (d.1265) the *yogis* were very much present and they used to interact with no less a person than Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya himself. It is quite likely that the text on Indian *yogic* tradition were also consulted by the Sufis, especially of the order of the *Shattaris*, established by Shaikh Ghaus of Gwalior, who has appropriated many *yogic* practices in his teachings. As is apparent from his *Jawahir-i Khamsa*, a text which describes the *yogic* practices in Persian and the manner in which the Sufis were supposed to practice them. Similarly, Shaikh Abdul Quddus of Gangoh's (d.1537) *Rushd Nama* and Mir Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's (d.1608) *Hakayat-I Hindi* were the early attempts to present Indian classics in Sanskrit to the Persian knowing audience. Akbar must have laid the foundations of these translations projects by sultans to an example through this translation bureau. For Akbar, *Mahabharata* was quite central;

³⁶ Shaikh Husam-al Haque wa Din, in *Anis-ul'Ashiqin'* has discussed this question in four sections. Section one begins with such diverse issues as the origins of the creed of *tasawwuf*; the earliest Sufi with whom the concept of *khirqa* is associated; on the notion of '*ishq* (love) and the definition of '*ashiq*. Here, while taking a note of the different sayings, he shows a clear preference for the opinion that Prophet Shish happens to be the earliest Sufi. *Anis-ul'Ashiqin'*, Ms. ff 2a-4a, Subhan Ullah Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

³⁷ For an initial understanding of this argument see my 'Sufi Tradition and Popular literature: Chishti ideology, Awadhi dialect and local practices', in '*Popular literature in pre- Modern Societies in South Asia*', ed. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur, Pearson, Delhi 2008 pp.271-280 (for this reference see p.272)

hence it is quite likely that the *Vaishnavite* face of Hinduism was more prominent at Akbar's court than the *Shaivaite*. Similarly, the *Upanishads* and the works of Shankaracharya were not represented at all. It was left to Dara Shikoh to add the *Upanishads* to the translated-Brahminical literature, through his Persian translation, *Sirre Akbar*.³⁸

The inmates of the *khanqah/Sufi jama'at khana*, in addition to their acquiring knowledge in the tenets of theology and higher discipline of 'Islamic Sciences', also acquired the knowledge of other religions/scriptures of the other religions and had some interest in the natural sciences as well. It is said that the founder of *Madariya* order Shaikh Badruddin Madar has memorized *Taurah* and *Ingil* (Old and New Testament) and has also learned *kimiya*, *simiya*, *himiya* and *rimiya* (Chemistry and other Natural Science?). In fact, it was said of him that he was the only person expert in so many branches of knowledge in his times.³⁹

However, it needs to be admitted that often the pre-colonial system of knowledge transmission was not as systematic and institutionalized as the Greco- Arab tradition. It was based more on the individuals than on institutions, yet, it produced over the centuries, intellectuals and ideologues of the caliber of people like, the famous *muhaddis* Raziuddin Hasan Saghani (d. 1252), the celebrated Sufi Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d. A.D. 1325) and his disciples like the multifaceted genius Amir Khusro (d. A.D.1325), the poet Amir Hasan Sijzi (d. 1330s) and Zia ud din Barni (d.1360's).It must be admitted that the *sufi khanqahs* acted as the center's for the transmission of ideas, knowledge and new literary forms, especially Premakhyan tradition and in Deccan the tradition of the *Chakkinamhs*. The study related to the Quranic studies and the teaching of hadith was especially promoted in these *khanqah* throughout.

Conclusion

Then there were those who represented the tradition of rational and natural sciences like Shaikh Fatehullah Shirazi (d. 1589)⁴⁰, who is praised by no less a person than the ruthless critic Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni, for 'his scholarships in the fields of *ilahiyyat*, *riyaziat*,

³⁸ M. Athar Ali, 'Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court', in Iqtidar Alam Khan (ed.) *Akbar and His Age*, ICHR Monograph Series, New Delhi, 1999, p.78

³⁹ Maksud Ahmad Khan, 'Chronicling the Miraculous: Hagiology in the *Mirat-i Madari*' in *PIHC*, (55thSession), Aligarh, 1994, p 304.

⁴⁰ See, vol. 2, p. 315-16.

tabiyat and all other fields of *m'aqulat* and *manqulat*'. He further adds that, 'he was such an erudite scholar that nobody could match him,' and he was even invited by the Emperor Akbar in AD 1582 to the Mughal court from the court of Adil Shah at Deccan. The famous ideologue of the Mughal Empire, Abul Fazl 'Allami (d.1602), the astronomer Mirza Raja Jai Singh (d.1667), the socio-religious reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy (d.1833), the famous poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (d.1869), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, (d.1898), the educationist and reformer, are only some of the names which have left a lasting impact on the socio-cultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent. It is pertinent to point out that they were all trained and taught in a system which owed its origin to India's medieval past. One can very well argue that education was not that neglected a field that the colonial administrators, and even some modern apologists, would have us believe.

It needs to be highlighted further that the migrant elite from the Persian speaking regions in the Indian Subcontinent had been at the forefront of the dissemination of knowledge. They have understood and analyzed the local norms, cultural traditions, linguistic heritage, and religious sensibilities in a better way. They have evolved the new literary genre, cultural practices in such a way as to subsume/ incorporate the local traditions. Thus, the Indo-Islamic culture became a dominant norm in the large geographical area of the Indian subcontinent. Hence, the medieval culture evolved as the composite culture which was invoked quite often by our nationalist leaders during our struggle for the liberation from the clutches of colonial dominance. Needless to say, that it was possible through the efforts of the people coming from outside. These efforts were well appreciated by the people from the Indian subcontinent as well. Thus, the efforts of Bhakti Saints like Kabir, Baba Nanak and other poets writing in the Prem Akhyan tradition has to be located into that broad spectrum. Perhaps, this needs to be appreciated and explored further, for it will be a venture worth exploring