INTRODUCTION
Introduction:

The attempt to transcend material and intellectual consciousness to control or achieve remarkable development of intuitive faculties through ascetic discourses, meditation, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial may be called mysticism. Such discourses leading to the attainment of mystic and spiritual experiences can give feelings of contentment, ecstasy, peace and joy which in majority of the cases are independent of a religious framework. Most of the individual who subscribe to different religious ideologies perform the spiritual and mystic discourses within the tenets of their own creed.

The Muslim mystics and spiritualists are called Sufi or Wali-Allah (protégé of God). They renounce all the worldly pleasure and are saturated with the constant love of Allah (God) and His divine attributes. It is widely believed that love of God absorbs the Sufis so much that neither love nor hatred for any other thing remains in their hearts. Therefore it could be rightly said that Sufism represents the inward and mystical dimensions of Islam. However, famous historian S.A.A. Rizvi’s theory that Sufism or Tasawwuf conjures up images of such institutions and customs as saint cult fascination with occult and orgiastic practices, a mysterious world of visions and miracles, erotic poems and lascivious dancing needs to be systemically examined in its wider connotation. He further argues that

because of these aspects Sufism and Sufi saints faced confrontation from the orthodox clerics who called such practices as syncretism, therefore un-Islamic. Yet the Muslim masses believe that the Sufis are pious refuges for the emotional stabilization. Perhaps it has been this unwavering popular belief that led a significant section of Sufis to help their disciples and followers to stabilize their emotions and to inculcate an understanding among different groups within the Muslim community.

Many Islamic theologians, especially the modern proponents of Sufi ideology trace its origin back to the days of Prophet Muhammad. Whatever be the period of genesis or evolution of Sufism, it had become universal aspects of Islamic social life by the 12th century A.D and its influence had spread to all Muslims and non-Muslims because of their hearty and non-discriminate reception at the Khanqahs of Sufis. By this time the Sufis also got organized into twelve Silsilah (orders), prominent of which were Chishtiya, Suhrawardiya, Naqsbandiya, Qadirya and Shattariya. The introduction of Sufism in India roughly coincides with the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in early 13th century A.D. Of the various spiritual orders that have flourished in India, the Chishti Silsilah is, by far, the most important and account of its long period of spiritual activity in India and the large area that it influenced. It reached India before the Ghaurid conquest and, by its sympatric appreciation of the Indian conditions and achievements, woven itself into the complex pattern of Indian culture. The Ulema (Muslim clergy) or custodian of Islamic laws and the Sufis have throughout the history been critical of each other, but the latter inculcated an understanding among different religious and linguistic groups of
pluralistic Indian society. Interestingly, the interaction of Hindu mystic traditions and Sufism shows a unique polarity between the intolerant rigidity of the orthodox group and the flexibility of Sufis in India.

The leading Sufis used to deliver spiritual and metaphysical discourses of didactic nature to a select gathering of disciples and visitors. The recording of such discourses in written form, soon after they were delivered, gave rise to a distinctive genre of Persian literature called Malfuz literature. Malfuz literally means "word spoken" and is derived from Lafz that means word. In common parlance, the term is used for conversations or table talks of a mystic preacher. Malfuz writing is one of the most important literary achievements of medieval India. Works of similar nature were, no doubt, compiled outside India, like the "Halat-wa-Sukhanan-i-Shaikh Syed Fazlullah bin Abul Khair Al-Maihani"² by Muhammad bin Abu Rauf Lutf-Ullah in about 1145-1146 A.D. However, the credit of giving this art form a definite shape and thereby popularizing it in the religious and intellectual circles of the country goes to Amir Hasan Sijzi who recorded the discourses of his Pir (master or mentor), the famous Chishti Sufi saint, Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and named it Fawaid-ul-Fuad. Soon, the book became a guide book (dastur-ul-amal) for mystics who were anxious to traverse the mystic journey.³ It inspired others to render similar services to their masters. The tradition established by Hasan Sijzi was followed by saints of

² MS, British Museum.

³ Ziauddin Barani, Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi,–364
all affiliation viz, Chishtis, Suhrawardis, Firdausi, Shattaris, Qadiris, Naqshbandis and Maghribis. As a result, enormous Malfuz literature appeared in India from Uchch to Maner and from Delhi to Deogir. Khair-ul-Majalis and Ahsan-ul-Aqwal are the two other important Malfuzat of Chishti saints. The former contains the teachings and discourses of Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi and the latter contains the teachings and discourses of Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din Gharib.

The famous Malfuzat Khair-ul- Majalis, by Maulana Hamid Qalandar is a significant work containing discourses by Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi, the spiritual successor of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Incidentally Maulana Hamid Qalandar had also been in the company of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya as a disciple. He came into to contact with Shaikh Nasir in 1353-54 A.D. and "was encouraged by him to write an account of the latter's discourses". The Khair-ul-Majalis, does not of course came up to the stand of the Fawaid-ul-Fuad which combines, in a very rare degree, conciseness of expression with fullness of thought. Unlike the latter it does not give the dates for the recorded discourses. But the Khair-ul-Majalis is certainly superior to all other Malfuz collections of the period both in fork and in its thought content.

It also occupied a very high place in the vast Malfuz literature that was produced in India during the fourteenth century A.D. Its reader meets Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din at different times at different moods and thus gets an opportunity to see the Shaikh himself and study his reactions to different
situations. Other Malfuz collections of the period do not provide this varied, intimate and comprehensive study of the saints.

Besides what had infinitely enhanced the position of Khair-ul-Majalis in the Malfuz literature of the fourteenth century A.D is its clarity of thought and expression. Unlike many other phony Malfuz, which project a distorted image of the Sufis, it does not contain meaningless miracles, vague mystic lucubration's and anything ethereal about it. For this credit must go to Shaikh Naisr-ud-Din and not to Hamid Qalandar who was always anxious to attribute miracles to the Shaikh but was always sternly checked. It is also possible that the Shaikh did not this work to degenerate into a book of miracles or of adulations.

The Khair-ul-Majalis records the discourses of Shaikh Nasir in verbatim, therefore colloquial touch is easily discernible in the text. It is a typical illustration of the Persian language as spoken India in the fourteenth century. It was compiled in a period when Sabk-i-Hindi style of Persian literature writing was in vogue. Bahar Mashhadi has defined Sabk-i-Hindi as using difficult and ambiguous diction, out of fashion allegory and the use of Indian metaphors in Persian.

Though Hindavi words are used in the Khair-ul-Majalis, but on the whole its style is lucid and simple. Shaikh Nasir has explained even the most abstract ideas in the simplest language. The introduction and the supplement of Maulana Hamid own composition and have entirely different literary style, labored, involved and full of puns and attributions. Therefore to highlight the literary and linguistic importance of Khair-ul-Majalis, we have to evaluate two styles. Apart from this, it is also interspersed with
Persian poems and couplets, some of which are Maulana Hamid's own composition, while some others are the compositions of some great poets like Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, which Shaikh Nasir has quoted during his discourses to his disciples. Therefore the linguistic style, influence of Hindawi words couplets of Maulana Hamid and others eminent Persian poets considerably enhance the literary value of the text.

The historical importance of Khair-ul-Majalis lies in the fact that it described the incidents with all sincerity truthfulness. As mentioned above, it is free from exaggeration, undue adulation and description of unnecessary miracles to which most of the medieval Indian historical text, especially the Malfuzat easily succumbed. It does not limit itself to the mere description of the didactic discourses of Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din. An elaboration of the intimate knowledge of the Quran and its exegesis and other aspects of Islamic theology but also gives biographical anecdotes about a number of early Sufi saints of India, like Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, his elder disciples Shaikh Bahauddin Ganj-i-Shakr, Qazi Hamiduddin Naguri and many others.

Through these collections of mystic utterance we get a glimpse of the medieval Indian society in all its fullness not in all its perfection the moods and tensions of the common man, the popular customs and manners and above all, the problems of common populace. It gives naturally information about the market policy of Alauddin Khalji, according to it; the Sultans altruistic motives inspired him to enforce the economic regulations. Similarly it creates different impression about the age of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq also. The Khair-ul-Majalis suggests that economic distress was
very acute during the early years of Firuz Shah reign. The economic condition during the reign of Firuz Shah is compared and contracted with the reign of Alauddin Khalji. It appears that during the latter’s time price of commodity were cheap, while during the former regimes prices were soaring high and the life of common people was tough. Therefore the Khair-ul-Majalis is an important historical source book, which gives totally different picture of some historical developments of those days and its importance from historical perspective. On the other hand Ahsan-ul-Aqwal is also important from historical point of view. Though this book does not have any reference to political personalities of that period, yet it provides valuable information about the spread of Chishti form of Sufism in the Deccan region.

The Khair-ul-Majalis apart from being a philosophical and didactic text also hives significant information about various historical incidents of the time, which is different from other texts. Its comparison with the contemporaneous Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi by Ziauddin Barani reveals interesting facts.

The Ahsan-ul-Aqwal is a collection of the conversations of Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din Gharib⁴(654-741/1256-1340 AD) made by his disciple Maulana Hammad bin Ammad Kashani in 738/1337 AD, some twenty years before the death of Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli. Chronologically the work comes before Khair-ul-Majalis and is the earliest available Malfuz compiled after Fawaid-ul-Fuad. It forms a very valuable link in that chain of Malfuzat

⁴ Siyar-ul-Auliya, pp. 278-82
of the Chishti saints of India which begins with the Fawaid-ul-Faud of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and comes to an end with the Nafa-us-Salikin of Shah Mohammad Sulaiman of Taunsa.

Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib whose teachings have been collected in Ahsan-ul-Aqwal was an eminent disciple of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. He was a close friend and companion of Shaikh Nasirud-ud-Din Chiragh, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Sijzi. He was especially fond of audition parties (Sama) and his disciples danced in peculiar manner and so they came to be known as Buhanis. Long before Mohammad bin Tughlaq’s so called transfer of the capital, he went to the Deccan and settled at Deogir-a fact which shows that Deogir had come within the orbit of Chishti mystic activity before the Tughlaq Sultan turned his attention towards it. He planted the Chishti Silsilah in the Deccan and popularized it there. The Ahsan-ul-Aqwal shows the eagerness of the saint to disseminate in the Deccan Chishti mystic principles which were tested in the north. The Ahsan-ul-Aqwal also helps us in understanding the principles and practices propagated by Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din Gharib in the distant South.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is divided in two parts with subheadings "Life Sketch and Contribution of Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din Gharib and Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi to the growth of Sufism in India" and "Life and Works of Maulana Hammad bin Ammad Kashani and Maulana Hamid Qalandar." An effort has been

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5 Siyarul Auliya pp 279.
made in this chapter to understand and explain the factors responsible for
the development of the personality and philosophical attainments of Shaikh
Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli and Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din Gharib and the
compilers of their Malfuzat. It strives to explain the historical learning and
attachment to their masters and the discourses by the above mentioned
two saints, who were the spiritual successors of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din
Auliya.

The second chapter titled "Literary and Historical Importance of Ahsan-
ul-Aqwal" helps us in understanding the principles and practices
propagated by Shaikh Burhan-ud-Din in distant south. This Malfuz is very
valuable source of information for the early history of the Chishti Silsilah
and the practices of the Sufis, as well as their principles of organization. Its
historical importance lies in the fact that it carries sufficient information to
study the cultural history and philosophical development in South India.

The third chapter titled "Literary and Historical Importance of Khair-ul-
Majalis" intends to analyze the historical references mentioned in the book.
The historical references are of political as well as socio-cultural
importance. Moreover, one cannot deny its philosophical significance also
as the discourses mentioned in it are guiding light for lay mystics and
common men.

The fourth chapter is titled "Comparative study of Ahsan-ul-Aqwal and
Khair-ul-Majalis." The two contemporaneous Malfuz literatures are very
important Sufi texts that need comparative study encompassing all
subjects and topic dealt with in these two books including the style of narration and compilation and recording of the discourses. An effort has been made to find out the points of agreement as well as difference between the two books and the philosophical and religious ideas and references mentioned therein.

There has been a great contribution of Sufis and Sufi Literature in the growth and development of Persian literature in India. The area of Sufi Literature is quite vast and 'Malfuz' is a very important part of Sufi literature. This thesis is an attempt to highlight the historical and literary contributions of two major Malfuzat namely Khair-ul-Majalis and Ahsan-ul-Aqwal through a comparative study.