CHAPTER IV

SHARED SPIRITUAL SPACES: MYSTICAL PRACTICES ACROSS SUILSILAS
Practice of *sama* among the Suhrawardis

On a hot Sunday morning in 1309 A. D. the *jamaat khana* of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya buzzed with activity as numerous disciples, saints and *alims* gathered to benefit from the Divine words of the master shaykh. As the discussion veered through multifarious topics of spiritual eminence, the issue of *sama* came to the fore. The discussion then turned to the great Suhrawardi saint, Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi and his affinity towards *sama*. Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya remarked that his predecessor and great mystic Shaykh Najmuddin Kubra (d. 1221) used to say often that the Most Merciful has bestowed Shaykh Shihabuddin with all the best possible grace except the taste (*qaww*) for music (*sama*).\(^1\)

The above anecdotal narration would lead many to rush towards a predetermined conclusion concerning the antipathy of Suhrawardi shaykhs towards assemblies of audition (*sama*). To a certain extent such an inference can be considered as trustworthy, especially when we take into account the above narration. Emanating, and in turn attested, by two great medieval Sufi shaykhs. The same source would later elucidate on the statement made by Shaykh Najmuddin Kubra on the issue of Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi’s aversion towards the ritual of *sama*. It then serves as a justification to Shaykh’s Najmuddin’s precise statement examined above. But the question that peeps from behind such seemingly objective statements is to the degree of aversion the Suhrawardi shaykh possessed for the ritual. We try to find an answer to it through another narration.

Narrating on the spiritual devotion of Shaykh Shihabuddin, the master of Delhi Shaykh Nizamuddin said that once Shaykh Awhad Kirmani visited the Suhrawardi master. Shaykh Shihabuddin immediately folded his prayer carpet and placed it under the knees. This was expressive of his extreme reverence shown for the visiting Shaykh. With the night growing

\(^1\) *FF*, p. 84.
darker, Shaykh Awhad Kirmani requested for an assembly of *sama*. Shaykh Shihabuddin being the perfect host called upon some musicians and arranged for such an assembly. He restrained himself from participation, but for the sake of proper etiquette (*adab*) remained within the physical space of the *mehfil*, while retiring to a corner. As the *mehfil i-sama* raged in full emotional fervour, Shaykh Shihabuddin quietly engaged himself in contemplation and remembrance (*zikr*) of the Almighty Creator.  

With the dawn of next morning, one of the attendants of the *khanaqah* enquired with Shaykh Shihabuddin that last night while Shyakh Awhad Kirmani and other saints were completely absorbed in the proceedings of *sama*, they were at the same time quite apprehensive whether their music and emotional outbursts interrupted the spiritual exercise of the Suhrawardi master. On hearing this Shaykh Suhrawardi enquired with much surprise, ‘Was there music?’ When the attendant replied in the affirmative Shaykh Shihabuddin replied, ‘I was not aware of it’.

This is the degree of concentration, as Shaykh Nizamuddin would remark, that the Suhrawardi master would immerse himself, even when the rest of the assembly was emotionally agitated by the overpowering effect of music. It was the strength of his spiritual maturity, that he could engage himself in such an intent remembrance of God, so that he remained oblivious even to the assembly of *sama*. Shaykh Nizamuddin further elaborated that every time a *mehfil i-sama* was held at the *khanaqah* of Shaykh Suhrawardi, the shaykh would only participate till the verses of the Holy Quran were being read before the proceedings of *sama* began. After which during the actual exercise of *sama* with all its poetical verses and musical accompaniments, the shaykh would retire, only to get absorbed in his act of

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
contemplating and remembering (qā'īr) the Divine.⁴ Such was the strength and maturity of his spiritual discipline.

The narration above is reflective of the fact that even the Chishtia saints of north India realised the reservations their Suhrawardi counterparts harboured for the ritual of sama. Yet they were magnanimous enough to acknowledge the spiritual maturity of these shaykhs in their path towards spiritual Truth. Never do we find, during conversations or in genealogical treatises, any expression of sarcasm or disregard by Chishtia mystics towards their Suhrawardi fellow mystics on account of the latter’s lack of adherence towards sama. Rather both the incidents above portray an extreme sense of regard and etiquette (adab) that governed the actions of these mystics while discussing on affairs and practices of a different mystical order.

Alongside the aspect of adab, which will be discussed later, with regard to the spiritual and social understanding of mysticism in south Asia; few more aspects of Sufi principles regarding the adherence to mystical practices comes to light when we closely examine the anecdotes narrated above. Firstly although Suhrawardi saints restrained from participating in sama, they were courteous enough to welcome shaykhs of different orders who shared a taste (‘awq) for the exercise. Moreover the visiting shaykh was provided with the best possible form of hospitality along with immense regard, even if it meant alluding to his wishes which may be contra to the ideals of the order (silṣīla). In the above instance, a supreme instance of Suhrawardi etiquette is displayed when the guest Shaykh Awhad Kirmani is honoured with a full scale mehfil i- sama. Although it meant that the practice would defy the principles which the Suhrawardi shaykhs followed so ardently.

It was an expression of great respect on the part of Shaykh Suhrawardi that inspite of being a non conformist to the ritual of sama, he

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⁴ Ibid.
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chose not to leave the physical space where the assembly was being held. Rather he retired himself to the periphery of the gathering thereby making it easier for him to concentrate on his own spiritual exercises, containing primarily of remembrance (zikr) of God. It can be taken as a subtle expression of spiritual superiority by a shaykh of the stature of Shyakh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, that inspite of being amidst an emphatic gathering of Sufis engaged in evocative exercises, the shaykh was successful in rising above the din and commotion thereby transferring himself to a completely different plane of spiritual realisation where even the loudest of noises, purportedly within a spiritual exercise itself, failed to distract his contemplation.

The above incident, reflecting upon Shaykh Suhrawardi’s indifference to the practice of sama, is also demonstrative of the fact that Suhrawardi shaykhs always preferred the silent remembrance (zikr) of God over an expressive and both spiritually and physically agitating ritual of sama. Remaining in the vicinity of the assembly and yet keeping himself aloof from being sucked into the folds of mystical poetry, was Shaykh Suhrawardi’s own way of stamping his authority and making the Suhrawardi ideological stand very clear, vis-à-vis the Chishtia and other mystical orders. Interestingly the above anecdote also mentions that the Suhrawardi khanqab was familiar to the practice of sama in its premises, may be through the participation of local mystics, who outside the realm of any particular mystical order (silsila) took to sama only as a means of enhancing their spiritual maturity. At the same time holding assemblies of sama in Suhrawardi khanqabs also resulted from visiting shaykhs, as witnessed above, who wished to drown themselves in the most dynamic mystical ritual of the age. It goes without saying that though in theory the Suhrawardi saints, particular Shyakh Shihabuddin, kept themselves away from the practice of

\[5\] Ibid.

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sama, they were not unfamiliar with it, that too within their own premises. But at the same time their spiritual maturity helped them stay firm in their spiritual beliefs, often making them as spiritually productive as the assembly of audition (mehfil i-sama), as seen above.

Moving beyond the practical standpoint of Suhrwardi shaykhs on the issue of sama, it is important to gauge their ideological and mystical position with regards to the ritual, so that it brings out more clearly the dynamics of the ritual as it was represented in medieval India. In this regard no other manual of the Suhrwardi order is more illustrative of their views with regard to sama, than Awarif al-Ma'arif (Knowledge of the Learned). While Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi wrote many treatises on the tradition of tasawwuf, none have reached the heights of popularity as the Awarif. To contemporaries and later generation of Sufis, spanning across orders (silsila) and geographical locations, this manual became the most closely studied texts on tasawwuf. Therefore in order to gather a precise idea as to the Suhrwardi disposition towards sama it is incumbent that views stated in the Awarif be studied with close precision and analysis.

Section 5 of the Awarif ul-Maarif opens with the discussion of sama. Being a leading mystic of his age, Shaykh Suhrwardi was well aware of the controversy that dogged the ritual and its performance. Thus it is of little surprise that the shaykh opens his discussion on the issue of sama by stating that ‘Of the number of most laudable Sufi mysteries, denied by outward ulama, one is the assembly for: (a) the sama (hearing) of the ghina (song) and ilbait (lilt), and (b) the summoning of the qawwal (singer).’\(^6\)

The reason, Shaykh Suhrwardi argues, for abhorring the custom, as done by the ulama and legists of the age lay in its tradition of innovation.\(^7\) Since such a ritual for spiritual advancement has little or no mention during the time of the Prophet of Islam – Muhammad (SAW), his Companions, the

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\(^6\) AM, p. 49.

\(^7\) Ibid.
Followers, and the first generation of mystics. Such a practice was the innovation of later day mystics who took to the practice and established its veracity according to the traditions of the Prophet (hadith) and sunna.\textsuperscript{8}

However such a non conformist attitude does not lead Shaykh Suhrawardi to overlook the benefits mystics claimed to have derived from \textit{sama}. He lists them as three: Firstly, he considers \textit{sama} to be appropriate only for those who adhere the path of austerity and spiritual rigour, striving against the sins of the material world. For such individuals \textit{sama} is a spiritual composition of sweet and melodious sounds, poetic verses and lilt, aimed at arousing the emotions of the heart towards remembering the Divine, and His attributes. Shyakh Suhrawardi would argue that such a practice basically acts as a forceful medium for stirring up the heart when at times it suffers from spiritual enervation.\textsuperscript{9}

Secondly, on occasions when the lower self (\textit{nafs}) of a mystic gains predominance over his spiritual state, it thwarts the heart from the blessings of the Divine, so that a veil (\textit{hijab}) descends between the Lord and his creation separating the latter from the presence of the Almighty.\textsuperscript{10} This increasing separation from the glory of God has a demoralising effect on the spiritual condition (\textit{hat}) of the mystic who then loses his desire for proximity with his Lord. It is under such conditions that \textit{sama} through an invocation of harmonious sounds and verses of love and union reinvigorates the heart with a desire for the Divine, transporting the spiritual condition of the listener into a realisation of the Beloved. It helps pierce the veils of worldliness that has descended upon the heart of the mystic, separating him from his Lord, thereby opening the way towards spiritual union.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 50.
The third and most significant achievement derived from sama is with regard to the blessing the listener derives from such an exercise. To men of the spiritual path, who travel from one spiritual state to another sama aids in opening up the ear of the heart so that it stirs up to the Divine revelations, reminding him of the secret of creation and the primordial covenant between man and God. This then stirs up the mystic towards the Unseen, shirking off any amount of worldliness that he may have attached himself to. Through this the impurities of the soul and pollution of the heart gets dissipated making individuals free from the lust and attractions of the material world.

The mystic is then ready to take on his journey towards the Truth, where he finds himself close to the beneficence of his Creator and His glory. His laborious journey towards the spiritual goal starts bearing fruit, where he is gripped by an irresistible desire to unite with his Beloved. It is the exercise of sama that makes the mystic realise his aim of spiritual life, that of seeking union with the Almighty. And for Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi the lasting contribution of sama in this regard is that it helps the listener, the mystic, to travel in a moment, through his engagement in sama, that which he could not have travelled in years, without the help of audition.

A hesitant supporter of sama Shaykh Shihabuddin sounds more emphatic while enumerating the dangers that attach to such a practice. Inspite of being the spiritual succour for Sufis and the mystical minded, Shaykh Suhrawardi would argue that sama also contained all the elements of spelling a disaster - both on the assembly and the listener. Since many such audition assemblies are organised with the express intention of fanning ones latent passion for lust and sensuality, which invariably steers a listener away from the path of sincerity in a spiritual discipline. As a result the

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 51.
beneficial results that would have conditioned the state (bat) – spiritual and mental of the listener, turn into harmful deterrents on the path towards spiritual maturity.

While detailing on the ill effects brought about by such an assembly of audition, Shyakh Suhrawardi states that one might visit an assembly of sama with the intention of gaining material provisions, that are at times distributed before or after the assembly. Sama for the immature and the lay individual then turns into a pastime, and an occasion for enjoying oneself, where one delights himself through participation in dancing. Even if one does not voluntarily participate in such acts of dancing, he amuses himself only through beholding such activities, which the common masses are forbidden to indulge in. These individuals then arrive with the sole intention of witnessing the manifestations of ecstasy (wajd) and spiritual state (bat).

Being a popular practice of the mystics belonging to a wide cross section of orders and affiliations, the practice of sama is many a times an attempt by the Shyakh of the khanqah, to attract more and more students under his fold, where sama is less a spiritual practice and more an instrument of false propaganda and vilification.

An assembly of sama is intended with the express purpose of guiding the mystics in the path of the ultimate Truth, his Beloved. Such an exercise acts merely as a facilitator to arouse the dormant emotions of the heart that gives rise, within the heart of the mystic an urge towards spiritual union. Thus in such an assembly if the characteristics, as mentioned above tend to arise then it completely defeats the original purpose of sama. Ultimately it turns itself into an occasion where neither the inward purity nor the tranquility of the heart is to be found. As a result it becomes difficult for the soul to attain the spiritual station that it aims to achieve through traversing

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
the various stages of mystical condition (bah).\textsuperscript{17} Rather for the true of the
heart, sama is an exercise of reaching towards the Beloved, and at the same
time expressing sympathy for the travelers on this path and those of the rest
who follow.

Regarding the basic etiquettes of holding the assembly of sama Shaykh
Shihabuddin refers to the Baghdadi mystic, al- Junayd, who, when asked as
to why he was not in favour of holding sama, replied 'With whom may I
hold sama? And when people further stated to Junayd that in an assembly of
sama one ought to hear with his own heart; Junayd retorted back in a mode
of enquiry, asking 'From whom may I hear?\textsuperscript{18} It is with regard to the above
ideological dispositions of one of the greatest Shyakhs of his age, that
Shaykh Shihabuddin argued that one should participate in an assembly of
sama with individuals who sympathise, both spiritually and morally, with
each other. Only then will be able to rise above their material trappings and
strive towards a common spiritual goal, in the path of the Divine.\textsuperscript{19} In an
assembly of sama the spiritual elevation should be such that the mystic
resides in the glory of the Almighty, and thus hears from His essence. Such
heights of spiritual maturity make the mystic realise his love for his Beloved,
which rises above and goes beyond the bindings of the material world,
towards the next world. Only in such circumstances does the sweetness of
the reciters voice truly touch the realm of divinity.

In the Awarif ul- Maarif, Shyakh Suhrawardi categorises lamentation
(buka) by stating that it is of two kinds: buka of joy; and buka of wajd.\textsuperscript{20} While
the first type is associated with nothing but the worldly traits of joy, fear and
desire; the second type is concerned with ecstasy (wajd).\textsuperscript{21} When the mystic
beholds the ray of splendour, he finds himself in the presence of the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 53. 
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
Almighty, where the truth of certainty (haqq ul-jaqin) increases. The enraptured one (wajid) is then completely under the control from the Unseen, where the state of the mystic is exposed partially through his external demeanor. For the lovers of God, sama increases their tryst with the Beloved, which makes itself little known through external manifestations of the movement the limbs, and shedding of tears. Sama is the medium through which we realise the love of God, and it is only through such a realisation that ones heart and soul is moved further towards the realms of perfection. It in a sense signifies the perfect spiritual state of the mystic enjoying the blessings of the Divine.22

But at the same time it must not let it slip out from our minds that an improper application of the assembly of sama, could lead to disastrous consequences. Mystical practices both within and beyond the realm of religion if not applied properly under the able supervision of the master could lead to complete destruction of the mystic, turning his spiritual faculties to be defunct. Thus sama is to be applied carefully to the concept of adab and humanity, where one who has such resources expanding over the material world, neither became a shaykh nor a mystic. Its only when he has served the greater society of the time, and its inhabitants that he can claim to be spiritually strong enough to benefit from the assembly of sama. Since it is under such spiritual regulations that sama is the road to perfection.

Wajd or achievement of the ecstatic self is the ultimate realisation in the Chishtia spiritual path. However the Suhrawardi mystics differ on the issue of such realisation of the Divine. While agreeing that achieving the feelings of ecstasy (wajd) in an assembly of sama signifies the perfection of the mystics spiritual state (bal); it is at the same time a mark of regression for an adept.23 Since for an adept being in wajd should not be the only means of attaining his spiritual state. When the proficient mystic has acclimatised

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
himself in the spiritual path, he should not depend on special means to reach his spiritual state. Rather his maturity in the mystical path should be sufficient to aid him in the way of witnessing (shahada). Therefore gaining wajd for attaining the station of shahada signifies a break in the spiritual continuity of the adept. His recourse to specific aids to induce a state of ecstasy illustrates his weakness of spirituality. In an assembly of sama, as Shyakh Shihabuddin would argue, an adept loses himself to ecstasy (wajd) and thereby becomes the wajid, at the same time loses out on the continuity of his spiritual state. And the primary reason for the loss of hal lies in the qualities of existence (wujud) gaining prominence in the heart of the mystic.

Following the logic of counter argument it can well be said that the realm of existence is omnipresent. It never escapes the world of the mystic, for the Sufi himself is a reality because of the norm of existence. However hard he may try, and whatever spiritual station he may achieve he cannot possibly free himself from the shackles of his existence. It envelops his material self in the same way that piety does to his spiritual self. But at the same time it is undeniable that a Sufi is a traveller in the spiritual path primarily because of his ability to control his material emotions and worldly desires. Even though the material world exists at par with his spiritual existence, his knowledge in the field of tasaawwuf equips him to limit its influence only to his material existence, rather then allowing it to seep into his heart.

Here Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi spells out in clear terms the characteristics of existence (wujud) and the ways in which it tends to intrude the spiritual world of the mystic. The primary source for worldliness in the heart of an individual in the spiritual path is his deviation from the path of self discipline and piety. A simultaneous effect is the presence of lust and

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 54.
material desires in the heart, which takes it farther away from the Divine.\textsuperscript{27} When such tendencies begin to reside in the heart, then it is natural that the individual will be led astray from the path of spiritual gains. It so happens that when the qualities of worldliness tend to cover the heart, it is impossible for the light of Divine glory and beneficence to penetrate the same. And when such material tendencies fill the heart then it leaves no space for the thought and remembrance of the Lord.\textsuperscript{28} So that the heart over time is completely veiled from the Unseen, and the person strives in vain to attain the benefits of spirituality.

The revelation of ecstasy (\textit{wajd}) is a preserve of the pure heart, and can never descend in a heart that is polluted with traits of the material realm. Shaykh Suhrawardi argues that \textit{wajd} can be achieved in \textit{sama} either through the pure sweetness of melodies, or through the audition of poetic verses that stir the heart towards the realisation of God.\textsuperscript{29} A proper interpretation (\textit{tabmil}) of the verses of poetry can be understood only by a heart that is blessed with the Divine.\textsuperscript{30} Since the benefaction of the Lord eludes the hearts of those who lean more towards material truth rather than the spiritual. In the same way as bees are attracted more towards the rose garden (\textit{gulistan}) rather than a waste field. It is only when the heart is freed from the veils of existence that it is able to receive Divine illumination which in turn leads to the ultimate experience of witnessing (\textit{shabada}); for witnessing the Lord is perpetual and should not be limited to the participation in \textit{sama}. For adepts the constant experience of witnessing remains at the root of all spiritual gains and achievements.\textsuperscript{31}

The audition of melodious sounds leads the heart towards agitation only when it is blessed by the Divine. Shaykh Suhrawardi believed that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p. 55.
\end{itemize}
hearing of sweet sounds stirred the soul rather than the heart, which gets agitated only when it experiences the presence of Truth in it.\textsuperscript{32} So that \textit{sama} is beneficial for the pure heart, whereas the heart which is predominated by the lower self is veiled from experiencing such Divine beneficence and hence is subjected to vain pursuits.\textsuperscript{33} For an individual of spiritual maturity, freed from the shackles of material existence, the spiritual state (\textit{iba}\textit{l}) of witnessing holds no great achievement, for he is blessed with a perpetual state of \textit{shabada}. Such an individual therefore has little to benefit from an assembly of \textit{sama} and the resultant effects. To him the assembly of \textit{sama} is no more a medium for achieving higher spiritual stations, rather it turns out to be a spiritual burden, and as a result the verses of the \textit{gawwal} sound nothing more than 'croaking of the ravens'.\textsuperscript{34}

Sufi theorists, on the basis of the above conditions, would argue that a mystic who is in a state of perpetual witnessing (\textit{shabada}) of the Divine, needs no \textit{sama} to induce his state of ecstatic self exploration. He remains as much blessed by the Divine during the course of the assembly as he was before it. Thus his spiritual elevation is no longer dependent on the occasion of \textit{sama}, and what he hears is not limited to the material sounds and poetic verses.\textsuperscript{35} Rather he hears directly through the ear of his heart, while his external ear is rendered useless. Whatever he hears is constant with the attributes of the Divine, for the Divine revelation is ever present in his heart, which then is bereft of any ills of material pleasure and worldly desires. The heart that is ever present with God, hears directly from Him, so that irrespective of whether he is in \textit{sama}, every sound and word reaches his

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} I borrow this phrase from the famous mystical treatise of Uthman al-Hujwiri, \textit{Kitab ul-Mahjub}, where the author states that once when he was deeply agitated by the spiritual affects of music, a famous mystic Abu Ahmad al-Muzaffar remarked quite prophetically 'A day will come when the music will be no more to you than the croaking of a raven. The influence of music only lasts so long as there is no contemplation.' For a complete account of the story see \textit{Kitab ul-Mahjub}, pp. 170-71.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{AM}, p. 55.
ears, sometimes from the inward and sometimes from the outward, as the voice of God and His creations.36

Subject to such levels of spiritual maturity, both within and beyond the realms of sama, Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi divides the men of sama (ahl i- sama) into three categories: In the descending order of adeptness first comes those who are the men of Truth, for they are blessed with the ability to hear directly from the words of God, His voice and His creations. Second, are those who are the devout attendants of sama. They take the proceedings of the assembly to their hearts and interpret every verse that they hear from the mouth of the qawwal to the attributes of the Almighty. They are the most sincere of the assembly and thus whatever they ascribe to God is in the true spirit of the mystical exercise, rather than in pursuit of worldly thoughts. Lastly, are the lone ascetics who have rejected the bindings of the material world in every possible sense. They chose to recoil themselves from the luring of material existence turning their hearts and minds perpetually towards the service of God.37 For them sama is nothing but the purity of their mind and soul, which elevate them closer to the Lord, so that they are nearest and safest in the presence of the Creator.38

A cursory reading, if not a careful analysis, of the above discussion is enough to drive home the point that sama had little spiritual and emotional effect on the largest Sufi order after the Chishtia, the Suhrwardi. Inheritor of the Baghdad school of Sufism, lead by the great mystic al- Junayd, Shaykh Suhrwardi’s treatise Awarif ul- Maarif, is replete with instances from al-Junayd’s life and teachings, not to mention his ideological point of view concerning mysticism. Thus it is of little surprise that Shyakh Suhrwardi’s disposition towards the exercise of mystical audition would follow the path laid so astutely by his great predecessor al Junayd — that of indifference and

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 56.
38 Ibid.

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aloofness if not an outright dismissal and nullification of the ritual. While one cannot possibly overlook that the most crucial aspect of south Asian Sufism lies in its element of continuity at the substratum, with its central Asian masters; it also remains undeniable that south Asia at the same time provided the most diverse socio-cultural milieu which these masters of mysticism had little experience about. Together with this with the coming of multiple mystical orders (silsilas) and their settlement in the subcontinent, the issue of influences and counter influences came to constitute an important parameter in the functioning of these orders — particularly the Chishtia and the Suhrawardia.

A devoted and brilliant disciple of Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, with an intense taste (qaww) for spiritual scholarship, Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya, represented the Suhrawardi order (silsila) in Multan with all its majesty and spiritual rigour. His khanqah in Multan became the most authoritative institution, which all the inhabitants of the city looked up to for inspiration and religious guidance. Such was his spiritual authority that even the Delhi sultans honoured his decisions and chose not to enter into any sort of direct confrontation with the shaykh.39 Being the leading disciple of Shaykh Shihabuddin it was expected that Shaykh Zakariyya would leave no stone unturned to uphold the ideals of the Suhrawardi order in its newly established environment. Thus it was expected that the Multan shaykh would conform even to the principles which Shaykh Shihabuddin preached with regard to the practice of sama.

However Chishtia sources, more particularly Fawaid ul-Fuad, records two incidents where it is made evident that Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya, took part in sama practices. The first incident narrates that once in his assembly of disciples Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya recalled that Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya was once visited by a certain individual who

39 Huda, Spiritual Exercises, pp. 138-146.
introduced himself as Abdullah Rumi, and said that he had the good fortune to perform sama in the august presence of the great Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi. On hearing this Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya thought it incumbent that since his master had participated in sama, he should also do the same. With this the shaykh instructed one of his aides to take Abdullah Rumi and one of his friends to a cell and keep them there till he arrived. As the evening advanced and the late night prayers were over, the shaykh finished his invocatory (amad) prayers and proceeded towards the cell where the qawwal was kept with his friend. The qawwal narrates hence, "The shaykh sat down and immersed himself with invocations. He also recited half a section of the Quran. Then he rose and closed the door of the cell and asked ‘Say something’, to which I started doing sama. After some time an agitation and movement appeared in the shaykh who went up and extinguished the lamp. The cell became dark and I kept performing sama in the dark. I only knew what I could feel and every time the shaykh came near only his skirt would just become visible, so that I knew that it was he who had become agitated and was moving. But since the cell was dark I did not know whether the shaykh was moving to the beat of the music or not. In short when the same was over the shaykh opened the door and returned to his own place." 40

Shaykh Nizamuddin further narrated that when he was a disciple under the tutelage of Shyakh Fariduddin Ganj i-Shakr at Ajodhan, he heard the above incident from Abdullah himself when he came to pay his visit to the Ajodhan pir. 41 This is reflective of the congenial ambience in which the mystical orders flourished, in south Asia where a sense of intense professional rivalry had not marred the purity of their intentions. So that even when a common individual narrated events related to a spiritual master of a different order, in this case the Suhrwardia, he could witness the

40 PF, pp. 135-36.
41 Ibid, p. 142.
enormous degree of respect medieval masters of mysticism possessed towards one another.

Along with such high standards of etiquette few other things can be gleaned from the incident narrated above. The fact that Abdullah Rumi had performed sama in Baghdad in the auspicious gathering of Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi and then came down to Multan to the khanqah of his disciple Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya, ably illustrates the fact that contemporary scholars enjoyed much freedom of mobility from one place to another, and were well aware of the mystical networks that operated in that age. The fact that Baghdad at that time was facing a tumult, both politically and militarily, may have induced these scholars to move east towards a safer haven in the Delhi Sultanate. But at the same time it also illustrates the easy flow of scholars and knowledge through a more predominant network of the age, that of mystical settlements. The visit of Abdullah Rumi to the jamaat khanah of the leading Chishtia saint of the age, Baba Fariduddin establishes the truth, about the close interaction of scholars and men of arts with major Sufi networks, even further.

The second important fact that comes out from the narration is with regards to the master-disciple relation. Considered to be the central of all relations, in a khanqah, the pir-muridi relation is crucial towards a proper realisation of the knowledge of tasawwuf, and a realisation of the Divine. In all the major Sufi orders of the world one finds an unequivocal vindication of the predominance of the master with relation to affairs of the disciple, or the novice. Such a relation remains unaltered even after the disciple has been granted the permission to admit disciples of his own and spread the ambit of the silsilah. In the above instance, although Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya was trained in the Suhrwardi ideals of the time, advocating a strict non-conformity to the practice of sama, he insisted that he indulge in the same, just because his master the great Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi practiced...
the same. Thus it becomes amply evident that the etiquette (adab) of pir-muridi relationship reigned supreme in mystical circles of the age, which could well remind one of the famous saying by Jalaluddin Rumi that the murid should place himself at the feet of this pir just as a corpse is in the hands of the washer. The crux of the saying implies that the murid should have no wish of his own, and should be completely dependent on his pir for guiding him in the path of spiritual knowledge. Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya precisely adhered to this principle of the mystical adab when he engaged himself in the exercise of sama going against the dictum set out by his master himself.

The next most tangible influence of the ritual of sama on the spiritual state of Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya was manifested in his action of dancing (raqs). It is mentioned in the narration that music was a component in that assembly of audition, which in a short span of time had a serious effect on the emotional state of the Suhrawardi master, who could not restrain himself from rags. Firstly, questions may be asked as to the applicability of music in sama, that too in a Suhrawardi khanqab. While Suhrawardi Sufis strictly stayed away from the practice of sama, Shaykh Zakariyya’s participation in such a ritual that too in the accompaniment of music (ghina) is no less a startling revelation. One explanation that can be put forward goes back to the master-disciple relationship. As we have discussed above it was on the precedence of his master Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi that Shaykh Zakariyya allowed the assembly of sama, but limited the exercise only to himself rather than extending it to other inmates of the khanqab, which would have largely included his murids.

Thus while permitting the performance of sama, Shaykh Zakariyya could not have possibly overlooked the essentialities that accompanied the exercise, music and verses being an integral element. Next on the issue of

raqs, the argument can be stretched to justify that to the men of spirituality (ahl i-tasawwuf) sama has the most lasting effect. When Shaykh Zakariyya began his exercise in sama, it is natural that the ambience had the desired effect on the mystic. So that he could not restrain himself from rising up to the call of the Divine, which agitated his heart and simultaneously stirred his limbs towards movement. So that Abdullah Rumi on seeing his skirt became convinced that it was the shaykh who was doing theraqs. It was the beneficial effect of sama on the mystic that induced him towards rising above his self and losing his consciousness to the dance for the Beloved.

Related to the context of dancing in sama it may be justified to elaborate a bit on the Suhrawardi ethics of 'limb movements' in such occasions of spiritual ecstasy. An equally famed Suhrawardi manual of etiquette (adab) is Kitab i-Adab al-Muridin, or the Book of Manners for the Disciple, written by none other than Shaykh Abu Najib al-Suhrawardi, founder of the Suhrawardia order and uncle of the great Shyakh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi and himself a mystic of much repute. In his Kitab, Abu Najib among the many dispensations (rukhsa) regulating the quest for spirituality (tasawwuf) includes a section on the manners of Sufi dancing. Here commenting on the subject Abu Najib at the very preset rejects the application of the word rags to Sufi dance on the premise that it signifies more to the form of dance we usually categorise as secular and gaudy, and thereby more reprehensible type of experience for the mystic in such a pious assembly. Therefore Abu Najib argues that while one may surely rise up and move his limbs in an assembly of sama, it is prescribed that the matter be conducted in accordance to the spirit of the assembly. On such occasions it is advised that one should avoid dancing if it is meant to be a participation by his own effort, even if it is intended to be done completely out of

sympathy.\textsuperscript{44} Only the ones who are in the folds of ecstasy should be allowed to dance. However it may sometimes happen that in an assembly of 'sama' it is allowed to rise up in dance as a sign of encouragement to the participants in the assembly. On such occasions it is permissible that a non intoxicated individual may take part in dancing but under no circumstances should he feign intoxication or ecstasy.\textsuperscript{45}

Thus from the above discussion it becomes evident that the Suhrawadi etiquette did not, under any circumstance, allow the concept of tawajjud or empathetic ecstasy to regulate the movements of their disciples, which on the other hand marked a significant theoretical intervention of the Chishtia shyaks, as discussed elaborately in the above pages. It essentially marks out the operational differences, in the realm of spirituality which rather than situating the two mystical orders in the 'inferior-superior' binary, brings out more clearly their dynamicity of functioning and the diversity of their approaches.

Another incident which too is narrated by Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, dwells on the issue of Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya's participation in sama. He said that when he was twelve years old one day he was engaged in the recitation of the Quran when a person called Abu Bakr Kharrat, also known as Abu Bakr Qawwal came to the presence of his master, Shaykh Fariduddin. Abu Bakr said that he had just returned from Multan and had the good fortune to perform sama in the assembly of the renowned master Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya.\textsuperscript{46} Abu Bakr also recited the verses he had read in the assembly of the great mystic,

\begin{quote}
Each morning, and again, each evening
My eyes, due to love of you, keep weeping
My liver, bitten by the snake of desire
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} FF, pp. 142.
No doctor nor charmer has the means of curing
The qawwal failed to remember the rest of the verse to which Baba Farid added that,

For none but he who inflames me with desire
Can, if he chooses, quench that raging fire
Thus the verse when composed in its entirety came to represent a quartet,
My liver is pinched by a serpent’s deadly bite
Which no spell, however potent, can hope to right
Only that one whose love distracts and destroys me
Can cast a healing spell; who but he knows my plight?47

The verses above portray the intense emotions of love and pangs of separation so common a theme in sama assemblies, intended to be a facilitator towards a mystics union with his Beloved. The fact that Shaykh Fariduddin could complete the verse from his memory, illustrates the extent to which the Chishtia mystics had interiorised the practice of sama as an exercise par excellence for the spiritual benefit of oneself in the path towards union with the Lord, the Almighty Creator. But at the same time the sources narrate that Shyakh Bahauddin Zakariyya showed little interest in such ritual practices as having a lasting impact in the search for spiritual knowledge. He rather considered invocations and remembrance of God, to be the primary way towards spiritual perfection, so that even the common masses of Multan became used to the practice of zikr and supererogatory prayers.48

It is quite interesting to note that Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya’s tryst with sama, though not a stray incident in the annals of Suhrawardi mysticism, at the same time does not remain the lone instance of a Suhrawardi mystic in south Asia indulging in a predominantly Chishtia practice. A contemporary of Shyakh Bahauddin Zakariyya and an equally

47 Ibid., p. 143.
48 Huda, Spiritual Exercises, p.147.
eminent disciple of the Baghdad master Shyakh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi, Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri, is made immortal in the Chishtia accounts, and court chronicles as an emphatic supporter of *sama*. A close confidant of the Chishtia master Shaykh Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaykh Nagauri spent most of his time in the Chishtia *jamaat khanah*, participating with rapt attention in the exercise of *sama*. So close was he to his Chishtia contemporary that he chose to remain buried in the same premises that house the tomb of the Chishtia mystic.49

What is more striking to the reader is that in spite of being a Suhrwardi and at the same time a qadi Shaykh Hamiduddin Nagauri whole heartedly supported the exercise of *sama*. So much so that it irked the ire of the ulama, who, led by the notorious Qadi Sad and Qadi Imad approached the then Sultan of Delhi, Iltutmish to arbitrate on the issue, and deliver justice. They raised the issue of religious mockery and brought to the notice of the Sultan that as a result of Qadi Hamiduddin’s support of *sama*, together with his elaborate *sama* parties, the ‘entire city has fallen victim to this mischief.’ The Sultan while keeping with the arguments forwarded by his qadis, called on an arbitration assembly (mahzar) to decide on the issue. When Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri entered the assembly the Sultan received with utmost respect and seated the mystic by his side. While arguing in favour of *sama* Shaykh Nagauri stated that *sama* is for the spiritually adept, who find themselves closer to the realm of the Divine. In the same breath it is prohibited for the worldly individual who seeks nothing but material pleasures from such an assembly. It ought to be noted that although he did not clarify the category of ‘worldly individuals’, he was nonetheless referring

49 The dargah of Qazi Hamiduddin Nagauri, in the interior of the Mehrauli area in modern day New Delhi, overlooks the spacious open courtyard containing the tomb of Shaykh Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. It is perhaps the only instance where two leading Sufi masters of different orders (silsiya) share their last resting place in the same dargah complex. The marble epitaph of the Suhrwardi master reads: Mazār Mubarak Hazrat Qazi Bandagi Shaykh Hamiduddin Bukhari Nagauri. İn Shıkh Muhammed Ata. Khalıfa e-qıjali Hazrat Shıkh Shıhabuddın Suhrwardııı. Wafat 9 Ramdan ul-Mubarak 644 A. H. Wafat 9 Ramdan ul-Mubarak 644 A. H.
only to the ulama. Going further he stated that it was Iltutmish’s participation in the sama assemblies of Baghdad that earned him the blessings of the leading mystics of that age, which in turn proved instrumental in his ascent as the Sultan of Hindustan.⁵⁰

Though the veracity of the incident together with Iltutmish’s mystical mentality needs to be investigated further, it goes without saying that Shyakh Nagauri was able, through one master stroke, to take control over all the voices that sounded against him. By invoking the spiritual lineage of Sultan Iltutmish, the shaykh at once made the ruler his subvert thereby ruling out any chances of royal antipathy towards his actions. It therefore ably demonstrated the supreme authority of the shaykh to not only control the affairs of the age, and the Sultanate, but overcome any sort of adverse influence that might seek to mar his spiritual lineage. His excellent communicative skill was the main weapon which made the most powerful political authority of the day to prostrate in front of the spiritual master.⁵¹ This is ably significant and illustrative of the position and authority the Suhrawardi shaykhs wielded in contemporary Hindustan. Inspite of the ambiguity over the validity of the action, that matters could be resolved so swiftly and with such dignity showed the distinct spiritual authority of the Suhrawardi silsila to mould royal opinion in their favour, together with a profound influence over the political forces of the day.

**Suhrawardi Rules of Etiquette (ad’ab) in Sama**

The scope of our present discussion does not allow us the liberty to divert our attention into the intriguing chapters of state relations with the major shaykhs of the day, exclusively in the context of the sama dispute. We can allow a marginal diversion as long as it aids us in understanding the ritual parameters of the practice with relation to the patronising order together

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⁵¹ Huda, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 121.
with the contemporary debates it churned up, in support or against the performance of sama, as a ritual guiding the spiritual knowledge seekers of the day. It may be inferred from the above discussion that although some of the leading Suhrawardi shaykhs of the day participated in the ritual of sama, they did so primarily as a mode of emulation rather than conceiving it originally. It was only an exception in the case of Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri, whose elaborate sama parties made it a cardinal principle of his khanqah, in those times, parallel with the Chishtia Sufis. However it is interesting to note that Suhrawardi manuals do contain sections dedicated to the proper conduct of sama, together with the ways in which the assembly can be organised in accordance to the correct etiquette (adab). A closer analysis of the same can throw much light on the Suhrawardi approach to sama.

The first and foremost question that Suhrawardi shaykhs pose with regard to sama concerns its necessity as a spiritual exercise, over and above the ritual of remembrance (zikr). Thus to them in any assembly of sama it is incumbent that the sincerity in resolution be accorded foremost importance. If the participants of the assembly claim sincere intentions and intend to seek the Lord, for uplifting their spiritual states (ha) then all lustful desires should be shunned. Since for gaining the blessings of God, and at the same time to obtain Divine beneficence in such an assembly, the men of sama and brothers of the mystical path should be united (jam) in their spiritual quest, towards their Beloved, stepping aside all traits of impurities, that might hinder the sincere seekers from the benefits of such a great gain.

If the assembly of sama is not free from the impurities of lust and worldly desires, then it is completely unworthy of an occasion of sama. Under such circumstances it is necessary to purify the place through

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52 Ibid., p. 120.
53 AM, p. 57.
54 Ibid.
invoking the blessings of the Divine and also through practice of pious actions. In many instances it may be such that individuals participating in sama demonstrate a superficial sense of spirituality, only to gain access to the assembly where they ultimately indulge themselves in imploring their carnal self, immersing themselves in all sorts of lustful thoughts and desires of the flesh. It is then necessary to purify the spiritual ambience of such an assembly through a sincere expression of penitence, in which one seeks the aid of the Divine Almighty in order to overcome the desires of lust. Also supererogatory prayers must be held in those assemblies which draw the blessing of the Divine, in that assembly.\(^{55}\)

\textit{sama} being an exercise of high spiritual content it is possible that an individual who enters such an assembly with impurities in his heart, may well, through the benefaction of Divine grace undergo a change in his self, and as a result may be completely overcome by the spiritual and sacred ambience of the gathering. Under such circumstances what should be the response of the other attendants of the assembly. It is prescribed that even under changed conditions of the heart it is incumbent upon the participants to shun such an assembly at the first instance.\(^{56}\) Since, it is the initial condition of the heart that would matter to the Lord, rather than the transformed state of the individual, and thus the assembly will remain polluted in its essence. Thus it can be deduced that complete purity of the self is a primary pre requisite for participation in sama, and such a state should prevail among all the participants of the assembly right from the beginning till the end of the performance.

Certain things are absolutely prohibited in an assembly of sama, which include elaborate spread of food, especially from non pious sources and if donated by corrupt individuals. Women should be kept away from the

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\(^{55}\) Ibid.
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
vicinity of such an assembly. In Chishtia sources, the details of which will be elaborated later, it is prohibited from holding *sama* in open spaces, lest womenfolk are witness to it from the balconies and windows of surrounding residences. Subrwardis though not explicit to that extent are equally conservative on the issue of women participating in any sort of spiritual exercises, not to mention *sama*. In the same breath the presence of beardless youths is also forbidden in an assembly of *sama*. One can probably find the reason for this prohibition in the traditions of the Prophet of Islam, where keeping a beard is considered to be a *sunnah* of the Prophetic tradition. Thus Sufis being the torchbearers of that great tradition considered it mandatory to include only those individuals in the spiritual assembly of *sama*, who were heedful of the legacy established by Muhammad.

Along with certain things, some individuals are also hated in an assembly of *sama*. They tend to pollute the ambience of the gathering rather than add to its pious sanctity. Thus Sufi masters are extremely mindful of such people attending an assembly of such high spiritual character. First are those, who though apparently religious in their outlook share no belonging to the assembly, and are not emotionally attached to the other participants in the assembly. Such individuals if present in the gathering necessarily do not take delight in the proceedings of the spiritual assembly and as a result hinder the smooth flow of Divine blessings from the Unseen, and therefore harm the spiritual progress of the assembly. So that other participants although concentrated on the remembrance of God, do not feel the taste (ṣawq) of *sama*, and are left bereft of the desired spiritual blessings. Under such circumstances it remains obligatory in the part of the master of the

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57 Ibid.
58 *KM*, p. 420.
59 *AM*, p. 57.
60 Ibid., p. 57.
assembly to throw out the person from the gathering even if it requires the application of force.  

In an assembly of sama the intention is to gain the maximum spiritual benefits from the contemplation of the Divine, where all mystics are engaged in the pursuit of the Divine truth towards a realisation of the ultimate union. Thus in such an assembly, with a unison in focus it is natural that equations of hierarchy are dissolved in the path towards spiritual elevation. Thus all the participants who engage themselves in pursuit of the Divine in the assembly of sama are all His subjects and thus equal in status in the eyes of the Lord. What happens when an individual steeped in the consciousness of a worldly hierarchy enters such an assembly? It is natural that the serenity and calmness of the spiritual gathering is breached by his worldly sense of superiority. Thus the assembly where the respect of the participants gets diverted from the spiritual master of the assembly to individuals of material order gets diverted from its mystical aim of achieving union with the Beloved. Therefore one who demonstrates a sense of superiority in an assembly of sama must not be allowed in such gatherings of audition.

The last regulation concerns the effect of sama as it descends on the participant with a pure heart. As elaborated earlier it is well known that sama effects each individual differently, keeping in tune with his spiritual maturity. However it is possible that individuals who do not experience the benefit of ecstasy (wajd) may be tempted to exhibit a false outburst of emotions. It is warned that such individuals who engage in a false exhibition of ecstasy (wajd) betray the spirit of the assembly. Since Suhrawardi doctrines do not support the condition of empathetic ecstasy (tawajud) it is strictly forbidden in the manuals to take recourse to such emotions, and if any individuals

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61 Ibid., p. 58.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
present in the assembly demonstrate such feelings it is the duty of the master of the gathering to prevent such participation, or else the spiritually minded should leave the performance of such character at the earliest opportunity.  

What then remains the ideal mode of conduct for the mystic in an assembly of sama? Elaborating on this aspect of the ritual Shyakh Suhrawardi states that in an assembly of sama those who are present should situate themselves with proper manners (adab) and dignity. He should not be one of the frivolous self. His intent and manner of participation is crucial to his experiencing the ecstatic (wajd) truth. On such occasions he should not be overcome with feelings of agitation at the slightest witnessing of Divine favour emanating from the Unseen. Rather it is proper for him to remain restrained in the assembly especially in the presence of the master shaykh. His remaining under the control of his emotions is central to the heightening of Divine beneficence that may be bestowed upon him. Under such circumstances he should not voluntarily express either a murmur (shahqat) or any sort of loud calling (qa'iq) so as to shatter the calmness of the assembly.  

Severe admonishment is for the individual who participates in the assembly of sama with false emotions. If an individual who is yet to experience the emotions of ecstasy (wajd) in his spiritual state (bal) exhibits limb movements that conform to the bestowal of such Divine benefices on him, the person is the most despicable in the assembly of sama. Through such false demonstrations they ruin the very essence of the ritual by taking recourse to hypocrisy. Thus at the same time they deceive the other participants in the gathering of sama, through his manifestation of false states (bal). Deceit in matters of spiritual concern is considered to be the
foulest of acts which amounts to treachery, which is the source of repulsion for any state (bahr) in an individual – especially spiritual. When an individual through such disgraceful acts in the name of spirituality, breaks the faith of his fellow mystics he in turn deprives himself of the beneficial effects that descend on these faithful individuals from the realm of the Unseen.\(^69\) Thus through such a loss he places himself in the folds of an irrevocable sin.

Rather it is the characteristic of individuals who face the blessings of real ecstasy (wajd) that they retain their calmness and posture in an assembly of sama until they are completely overtaken by their emotional turmoil so that they are no longer able to control their ecstatic self, just as the person who, how hard he controls his desire, cannot help but sneeze. It is then considered to be the mercy of the Divine, since experiencing true ecstasy in sama is a gift God bestows only on his loved ones.

An uncontrolled expression of ecstasy is basically by those who are novice in the assembly of sama and to the effects it creates in the heart of the listener, who being new to the assembly, must possess a pure heart.\(^70\) When a novice utters a loud cry (q'ā'iq) in the assembly of sama, he actually enjoys a portion of the Divine beneficence that descends on the assembly of which he is a recipient through the situation of his bahr. Such an action is permitted for the novice, keeping in mind his struggle towards spiritual maturity.\(^71\) But for the spiritual adept it is a reprehensible act. Since for them their entire entity is in witness of the Divine truth, and their spiritual state (bahr) is forever in constant condition of purity – both inwardly and outwardly. Thus in such a heart there is no room for material affairs and worldly pastimes.\(^72\)

Thus one can argue in the words of a famous mystic Abu Abdullah al- Rudhabari that sama is realised in its entirety and in turn benefited from

\(^{69}\) Ibid, p. 59.
\(^{70}\) AM, p. 59.
\(^{71}\) Ibid.
\(^{72}\) Kish, p. 33.
by those particular individuals, who are truthful in their intentions and are in possession of three things at the time of participating in the assembly. Firstly, the knowledge of God – which is imperative for any individual who intends to heighten his spiritual gains from the assembly of sama. Secondly, fulfillment of what is required by his spiritual state (khu) – when the heart of the mystic yearning for beneficence of the Divine is blessed by the mercy of the Almighty. And lastly, the concentration of his religious ambition (jam al-himma) – where he completely immerses himself in contemplation of his Beloved so that nothing material stops him from achieving his spiritual goal.73

Chishtia Approach to Zikr

It is interesting to note that while the Suhrawardi approach to sama had its roots in the ecstatic spiritual practices of Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri, the master and fellow mystic of the Chishtia legend Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki, the Chishtia approach to zikr was shaped under the auspices of Shah Burhanuddin Janam (d. 1597) and Shaykh Mahmud Khush Dahan (d. 1617) in the Deccan. The point that needs to be taken note of is that both the developments occurred far from the place of germination and flourish of these two orders – Delhi for the Chishtia and Multan and Ucch for the Suhrawardia. If the period following Gesudaraz witnessed the nadir of Chishtia mysticism in the Deccan, then the credit of reinvigorating it in the fervour of Chishtia ideals rests on Shah Burhanuddin Janam and Shaykh Mahmud Khush Dahan.74

Both these Chishtia masters of the Deccan constructed their spiritual ideal on the belief that there exists a hidden (ghabal) relation between Man and God, a relation which forms the basis of the Path (rung) that leads a

73 Ibid.
mystic close to his worshipped, in his quest for the eternal. The stages of spiritual succour as elaborated by these masters encompassed their mystical outlook, together with their approach towards life, world and religion. Therefore it is essential that we gain an insight into these levels of spiritual ascendancy before analysing the role of zikr within them.

Firstly is the stage of Shariat, or Islamic law which any mystic has to acquire before he can aspire to climb the levels of spirituality. It not only compasses the realm of law, but also that of the Islamic sciences, jurisprudence and the traditions of the Prophet. The second stage composes of the Tariqat or the Way, which the mystic has to follow on his aim of spiritual reality. This stage has its basis in the initial spiritual training imparted by the Sufi master to the disciple on the ideals of mysticism as well as on the principles of that particular mystical order. It is when the traveller has interiorised such knowledge of spirituality that he is led to the stage of Haqiqat, or Truth by which he sees God, as a reward for his spiritual striving. Lastly, comes the stage of Marifat, or esoteric Knowledge, where the mystic reaches the stage of realising the Divine within his inner self. Such a spiritual hierarchy is more or less in terms with the classical Chishtia doctrine expounded by the likes of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki. But the Chishtis of the Deccan have taken their spiritual endeavour a step further by incorporating the stage of Maqam-i-Qurb (Stage of Nearness). Reaching such a spiritual stage is only possible when the mystic is under the complete beneficence of God, so that it is only by Divine consent that he succeeds in realising that ultimate stage - considered by Chishtis of the Deccan to be their eventual goal.

In the Chishtia tradition of the Deccan such training for spiritual ascendancy was advocated and systematised by none other than the likes of

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75 Burhanuddin Janam, Manfa'at al-Iman, line 111, in Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, p. 145.
76 Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, p. 146.
77 Ibid.
Shah Burhanuddin Janam and Shaykh Mahmud Khush Dahan. But the question that naturally comes up concerns the innovativeness of these spiritual exercises. Although the details of the spiritual Path vary from those of the north Indian masters, but what new did the Deccani Chishtis propose? What different ideal did they put forward in their striving towards Divine union? The answer lies in the incorporation of a certain form of spiritual exercise, with each of the five stages, which was unheard of in the Chishtiya mystical both in the subcontinent and beyond – that of the practice of *zikr*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage (<em>nahi</em>)</th>
<th>Exercise (<em>zikr</em>)</th>
<th>Abode (<em>manzil</em>)</th>
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<td>Shariat (Law)</td>
<td>Zikr-i-Jali, with the voice</td>
<td>Nasrut (Humanity)</td>
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<td>Makatut (Dil)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Goal: Tauhid (Divine Unity)</td>
<td>Zikr-i-Khaifi, hidden <em>zikr</em></td>
<td>Magam-i-Qurb (Place of Nearness)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table showing the Chishtia Path according to Mahmud Khush Dahan

The above table is ably reflective of the centrality of *zikr* in the Chishtia spiritual tradition of the Deccan, emphasising the importance of the ritual as a compulsory accompaniment for the mystic in all his spiritual exercises. The practice of *zikr* over course of time came to occupy a central position in the Chishtiya spiritual liturgy in the Deccan, so that Sufi masters considered it to be the best way of engaging their disciples in the path towards spiritual ascendancy. An elaboration of the above *zikr* practices will provide us with a comprehensive idea as to how this ritual came to occupy a place of utmost mystical importance in a mystical order which considered the practice of sama to be their spiritual *sine qua non*.

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78 Ibid, p. 147.
In the first stage of the spiritual journey, the mystic was instructed to follow the practice of *zikr-i-jaali*, or loud *zikr*. This exercise consisted of phrases and verses from the Quran, and at times simply the names of God, as a single word.

Recite God’s name out loud
So that you can reach *manzil-i-nasut*
You should recite *zikr-i-jaali*
Such that each limb participates.\(^79\)

Whether it be verses, phrases or a combination of both, the disciple (*murid*) was instructed to read it out loud. Similar was the instruction with the names of God, which too had to be read out loud by the disciple, so that he could clearly hear one's own voice, and contemplate on the words spoken. This *zikr* was prescribed in the first stage of the spiritual journey, namely the *shariat* stage, since it helped the student adapt to the intricacies of spiritual training through the modes of sense perception – in this case his own voice, so that he remains completely aware of what exercise he is undertaking.

We should move our tongues by saying the name of God
So that each word falls upon our ears.\(^80\)

This form of *zikr*, considered to be the easiest of its kind, was intended to free the mind of the disciple from the complexities of concentrating on abstractions and mental images, and rather work on something perceivable through his own senses.

The graduation from a vocal to a silent form of *zikr* occurs at the second stage of the spiritual journey, which is the stage of *Tariqat* or the Way of the mystic towards his goal. While in the first stage the disciple remains in full control of his senses, in the second stage of his journey he is made to lose his senses even if it may be for a fleeting moment. Although the mode of observance changes but the content of the litany remains


similar to that of the first stage of *zikr*. In this stage the *zikr-i-qalbi*, involves a repetition of the names of God in the form prescribed by the master saint, and it is done in the heart rather than vocally

*Zikr-i-qalbi* is done under the breath, not out loud.

We heard *zikri-jal* with our ears.

Now keep your mind away from the sense organs,

And lose your selfness.

We should keep our hearts on this *zikr* only briefly—

For as long as a diver jumps in water and comes out again.\(^{81}\)

Thus the *zikr-i-qalbi* must be carried out in the depths of the heart, so that the disciple can interiorise the verses and phrases repeated in this exercise. This stage of *zikr* signifies an elevation from the external limbs to the interior senses, so that the mind is detached from the limbs, and moves towards losing its self in the essence of the eternal. However this should be done only briefly so as to acclimatise the disciple with the depths of a spiritual journey.

After familiarising oneself with the intricacies of the spiritual journey, the disciple in the third stage of *Haqiqat*, or Truth, beholds the experience of the Divine. The *zikr-i-ruhi*, which the mystic needs to follow at this stage, is more difficult than the earlier two *zikrs*. It is an exercise which carries the disciple further into the folds of internalisation of the spiritual training received from the master. At the same time it takes the mystic one step further into the realm of meditation and contemplation — punctuated by complete silence and calmness of the heart and the mind, rather than indulging in the use of voice for carrying out the *zikr* exercise.

This meditation should be like the lotus seeing the sun,

Or the Greek partridge seeing the moonlight.

Many *sadhus* meditate in this way,

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\(^{81}\) Ibid.

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As if one is constantly imagining a treasure.

God has hinted that he is near our vein,
And also in our heart, invisibly;
In meditation we see God invisibly;
The eyes of the heart can see Him.
The traveler will see God in this meditation
As if He were in a house surrounding him.\textsuperscript{82}

As evident from the verse above this stage of \textit{zikr}, concerns itself with the exercise of visualising – through the form of specific symbols and mental images that ascertain his proximity to God. In this verse a clear reference is made to the Quranic verse ‘We are nearer to him than his jugular vein’\textsuperscript{83}, which is meant to be a caveat to men indulging in the dark passions of the soul. At the same time it is also a message to travelers in the mystical path, assuring them of the presence of God in their hearts, even if they are unaware of it. So that in the \textit{zikri-ruhi} it is suggested that disciples visualise God not through words or actions, but through a realisation in the inner heart – through intense meditation, as if He is close to the seeker.

The fourth stage of \textit{Marifat}, can be reached through the practice of \textit{zikri-siri}. But this stage of gaining Knowledge of the Divine is completely dependent on the successes of the earlier stage. Here too the disciple beholds the Almighty through images and symbols, but only those which he has experienced in the stage of \textit{zikri-ruhi}. Not only are the limbs and words put to disuse, but also that the mystic moves deeper into his heart contemplating on the visions of love and devotion. He severs all relation with his physical self, so that nothing remains as hindrance between him and God.

This is \textit{zikri-siri},
By which we see that God is without properties.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Al Quran 50:16
It is at this juncture that love of God
Overwhelms our heart, body and spirit.
When the candle burns, the moth comes and gives life.
He does not reflect on whether he will come to harm or not.
He gives his heart to that most beautiful form of light
And forgets his own self completely.\textsuperscript{84}

The allegory of the moth and the candle, succinctly explains the desire of the mystic to unite with his Lord, irrespective of all uncertainties he may face in the Path towards union. Chishtia Sufis are known to annihilate their self in the love for God, as discussed earlier in the context of \textit{sama}. In the practice of \textit{zikr} too this ideal has remained the hallmark of Chishtia spirituality. Thus the disciple in his quest for the eternal does not hesitate to sacrifice his own ‘self’ to attain union with the formless. This selfless sacrifice in the path of Divine union cannot be possible unless the remains mystic completely oblivious to his physical conditions and consciousness. The love of God must overwhelm the body, the mind and the spirit in successive stages, so as to make the mystic lose his self-identity and merge with the light of eternity.

These four stages usually form the crux of the Sufi path towards their goal of Divine union. Leading Chishtia mystics like Khwaja Moinuddin and Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki too emphasised on these stages as being the ultimate path towards spiritual maturity. Deccani Chishtia masters like Shaykh Burhanuddin Janam and Shaykh Mahmud Khush Dahan too followed this norm with slight modifications.

But their contribution towards reinvigorating the tradition of Chishtia Sufism in the Deccan lay not in their appropriation of north Indian mystical schemes, but in their own mystical innovations. The primary among which constitute the incorporation of the stage of \textit{maqam-i-qurb} or ‘place of

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
nearness' at the end of the four stated spiritual stations. Keeping in mind the previous spiritual stations, it is mandatory that the last stage of spiritual journey should also have an accompanying *zikr* practice. The exercise of the *zikr-i-khafi* was considered appropriate for reaching this spiritual station. However unlike the earlier *zikr* liturgies, this particular *zikr* remained beyond the abilities of description due to this highly esoteric nature.

We call *khafi* that place where

Neither man is mortal, nor anything else.

We cannot say a word from our mouth in that place;

He who has reached it sees nothing, though he has eyes.

We cannot say anything about that place,

Yet it is unbearable for us to keep silent.

It seems as if we exist no more, but again shall be alive,

That we see something, but are unable to mention it.85

How great is that ultimate station of spiritual ascendancy that it remains inexpressible even for the most adept mystics? While the normal system of four stages conditioned the journey of a mystic right from the classical times, Chishtia mystics, especially those in the Deccan, strived hard to incorporate another spiritual station that would further lessen the distance between the seeker and his final destination — God. The Koranic injunction of God being to close to man than his jugular vein is used only as a qualifier of the degree of closeness between the Creator and His creation. But the final *zikr* was intended to overcome whatever little distance remained between Man and God. Shaykh Burhanuddin Janam recognises this union when he says

The worshipper and the worshipped are now the same,

And there is no place for dualism.86

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85 Ibid.
If we take into consideration the verses above, and explain in the light of mystical stages then one can say that the worshipper is annihilated in the essence of the Divine, where there remains no amount of tangible difference between the two. In a sense they are one, expressing Divine unity. This is the stage of *fana* or annihilation where the mystic ceases to recognise himself as different from the Creator, and takes recourse to such ecstatic utterances like *Ana al-Haqq* (I am the Truth), in the case of Mansur Hallaj, or *Hama Ust* (Glory be Mine) in the instance of Bayazid Bistami. Chishtia Sufis of the Deccan seem to follow explicitly the mystical traditions of Baghdad and Khurasan while delineating *maqam-i-qurb* as the progressive stage of union of a mystic with the Almighty.

Raising their voice against such a seemingly simplistic deduction, the orthodox Sufis of the Chishtia order pointed out the ambiguity around the identity of the worshipper-worshipped. Do they merge into a single identity, without any tangible difference? Or can the mystic single out his identity from that of his Creator? Here too Shaykh Burhanuddin Janam analyses the issue of distinguishing identities in the following words: ‘If we say that Man is God we are wrong. For God is ancient and without change, while Man has change. God is face-less. If he had any shape He would also be a man and nothing else.’ Here the Chishtia shaykh inspite of recognising the Unity between Man and God, strives hard to maintain some form of difference in the sense of ‘nearness to God’ rather than ‘annihilation in God.’ The first idea conforms to a great extent on the spiritual stage of *baqa* or eternal existence in the essence of God, while the latter term signifies losing completely ones individual self in the essence of God, so that the mystic sees and knows about that stage but cannot express it through his

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material senses. Thus there remains a slight perceivable difference between the two spiritual stages.  

Thus the five variations in zikr formulas correspond to the five stages of spiritual advancement the mystic undertakes in his journey towards the Lord. Shaykh Mahmud Khush Dawan elucidated this arrangement when he stated that in the exercise of zikr-i-jali, God is perceived as the Master (sabib), while in the stage of zikr-i-galbi, God is the Father (pidar). In the third exercise of zikr-i-rubi, God is perceived as the Beloved (mahibb), and in the fourth stage He is the Lover or Friend (muhibb). It is only when the mystic successfully crosses these stages that he can reach the threshold of union with the Creator, through the practice of the zikr-i-khafi.

In the practice of sama we have hypothesised a Hindu influence on the use of music as an integral part of a Sufi spiritual exercise. It has been argued, in the previous chapters, that the inclusion of Hindavi verses in the sama verses of both north Indian and Deccani Chishti mystics throw some reflection on the possibility of a surreptitious Hindu influence on the spiritual exercise. But in the age of Chishtia revival in sixteenth century Deccan do we find any sort of cultural intermingling through the practice of zikr? If we throw a more careful glance on the verses of zikr we will see that Shaykh Burhanuddin Janam considers the zikr-i-rubi, towards a search for the ultimate Truth, similar to the spiritual exercises of Hindu mystics (sadhus). This illustrates a degree of respect Chishtia mystics of the sixteenth century maintained towards their indigenous counterparts. Moving ahead the portrayal of God as a Lover or a Friend, in the fourth stage of the mystical ladder, corresponds to the traditions of bhakti spirituality of a deity bonding in a personal relationship with his worshippers, in consonance to the Lingayat traditions of the Deccan. Thus alongside appealing to mystics within their order, the Chishtis of Deccan, tried their best to incorporate

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88 Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, p. 151.
89 Mahmud Khush Dahan, Ma'rifat al-Suhtk, p. 134, in Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, p. 151.
traditions from their immediate socio-cultural environment, to suit their spiritual doctrines. In this way a sense of cohabitation was inculcated within the two cultures, while at the same time the image of Islam and Hinduism being water tight compartments in the social space of the subcontinent was successfully challenged. Such ṭhikr litanies laced with inter communal imagery also appealed to the non-Muslim population who considered such spiritual exercises to be fully compatible with their religious order.

Shaykh Burhanuddin appealed to the image of Lord Krishna to drive home the subject of asceticism, ‘Although Kanhiya [Krishna] was surrounded by sixteen thousand Gopis, yet he was a celibate from his youth (Bal Brahmachari). That is the way to true wisdom.’ He did not limit himself to this but also used Sanskrit nomenclature such as addressing Allah as Shuddha Brahma (Pure Being), or the material world as Maya. Although it would be a dangerous supposition to equate Islamic theosophy and Hindu spirituality basing on the usage of certain terms and nomenclature alone, yet it can no doubt be argued that Shaykh Burhanuddin did make a concerted effort to ease out the social distance that may have gathered over time between the two religious communities. At a time when he was attempting a reinstatement of the Chishtia order in the Deccan it was imperative for the Chishtia master to recognise the socio-religious realities surrounding him and his order in the Deccan. The change of a political order in Delhi meant that the society would face some amount of tension before settling back to its normal course. Under such a situation it was incumbent on the Chishtia Sufis, being torchbearers of a cohesive social order, both in the north and in the Deccan, to ensure that their tradition did not receive the backlash from the indigenous population. Sufis and Hindu bhaktas and yogis, did share a lukewarm relationship right from the days of the earliest Chishtia masters. But it was to the genius of the latter that though there remained

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fundamental differences between Islamic and Hindu spiritual disciplines, this relation remained within the folds of being cordial, even if it meant buttressing the Chishtia spiritual vocabulary with Hindu influences and philosophical traditions.

The real dynamity of the Chishtia zikr exercises of the Deccan lay in its ability to dilate itself to incorporate even the non-religious literature – more specifically the Dakhni folk literature, both prose and poetry. The use of zikr formula in this form of literature lacked the rigor of its mystical tradition, but became more devotional. While, in its mystical sense, they corresponded to the various stages in the Path of spiritual ascendancy; in its devotional avatar these zikr formulas corresponded to the different functions being performed at the grinding wheel while reciting these. The only similarity if any that remained with the mystical tradition was that in its devotional context, these zikrs only required the names of God to be read out loud – corresponding to the zikr-i-jali of the first stage of the mystical ladder

As you take the cotton, you should do zikr-i-jali.
As you separate the cotton, you should do zikr-i-galbi,
As you spool the thread, you should do zikr-i-aini.

Zikr should be uttered from the stomach through the chest,
And threaded through the throat.
The threads of breath should be counted one by one, oh sister.
Up to twenty-four thousand.
Do this day and night,
And offer it to your pir as a gift.91

Here we witness the most classical illustration of a popular form of zikr, being shorn of its mystical aura but still as useful as a devotional tool even as it was not put to use as a mystical liturgy. With this we also see the

91 Salar, Charkha-nama, in Eaton, Sufis of Bijapur, p. 164.
incorporation of the womenfolk within the active domain of Islamic spiritual rituals, even if partially. While we found a strict imposition on women with regard to participation in sama, the application of zikr as a popular devotional exercise also gave the womenfolk the necessary right to repeat the same litanies as a mystic would do in his first step towards spiritual ascendancy. Thus in course of time popular Islam came to claim its rightful share alongside doctrinal Islam, which has relegated women to the margins, as far as spiritual rituals were concerned. The esoteric practices of a Sufi khangah were successfully juxtaposed to the courtyard of an ordinary Muslim household where women too could involve themselves in a constant repetition of the names of God, with a devotional character attached to it. The result was a definite incorporation of the vernacular as a medium of religious expression, at a time when the Chishtis were reviving themselves as a spiritual order in the Deccan.

Chishtia Manners of Zikr

Similar to the spiritual practice of sama, the exercise of zikr too followed a strict code of discipline among the saints of the Chishtia order. Although we see a rise in the popularity of zikr as a spiritual exercise among the Chishtia order, from the time of Shaykh Burhanuddin Janam and Shaikh Mahmud Khush Dawan, it is worth mentioning that the earliest codifications on the spiritual exercise of zikr, was done through the pen of the Chishtia master Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz. He mentions in his spiritual manual, Khatimah, that his inspiration for laying down the manners of the exercise of zikr, was from the text of Minhaj al-Salik Ala Ashraf al-Masalik. Gesudaraz mentions that in this text mention is made of twenty manners of carrying out the exercise of zikr. Among these five should be before beginning the

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92 Khatimah, p. 157.
exercise of **zikr**, twelve during the period of performing **zikr**, and the rest three after the completing the exercise.\(^3\)

The manners that need to be followed prior to beginning the exercise of **zikr** are as follows\(^4\):

1. **Tauba** (Repentance)

   Before embarking on the spiritual path of **zikr** it is mandatory on the part of the mystic to seek repentance for all his evil deeds which he may have committed, knowingly or unknowingly. This is the primary moral quality emphasised by the Holy Quran for all those who wish to tread the Path of the Divine. A mere training on the path of spirituality does not entitle a mystic to the ‘station of nearness’ (**Maqam-i-Qurbat**) to God. But it is imperative that should be able to purify himself from within by surrendering to the will of the Creator, and repenting for his mistakes.

2. **Eitmenan** (Calmness)

   Maintaining calmness in the heart of a mystic is considered one of the most important preconditions for the exercise of **zikr**. If the heart of the mystic is agitated by affairs of the material world and the mind is distracted with thoughts that do not concern the spiritual world, then it is a futile exercise on the part of the mystic to engage in exercises like **zikr**.

3. **Tabarat** (Purity)

   The quality of purity is not something that can be obtained only by conforming to it by words of mouth. Pure are those who do not deter from traveling on the Path of God, irrespective of what the consequences may hold for him. It is important that those who travel on the Path towards spiritual goal purge their hearts of all insidious tendencies so that the pure light of Divinity can penetrate his heart. On the contrary if the heart is occupied with thoughts and qualities of impure nature, then it is impossible for the essence of the Almighty to reside in it; since it is well known that

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.
purity and malaise cannot reside alongside one another in the heart of an individual.

4. Pray for help from the master (shaykh)

Here I am tempted to repeat the words of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, whose advice on the above manner describes best the act of soliciting help from the shaykh, by the disciple, during a spiritual exercise. Although he mentioned the same with regard to the ritual of sama, but it nonetheless holds true for the practice of zikr. When enquired as to the reason for his success in spiritual exercises the Chishtia shaykh replied that whatever he heard from the qawwal he attributed to his master Shaykh Fariduddin Masud Ganj i-Shakr. Here in the exercise of zikr it has been advised to pray for help from ones shaykh when repeating the litanies of zikr, may it be the names of God, or phrases from the Holy Quran.

5. In the ritual of zikr, any help from the spiritual master (shaykh) is to be considered as help from the Prophet himself. It is through the medium of the shaykh that the disciple can hope to gain the blessings of the Prophet. When the mystic gains beneficence from Muhammad, he should imagine as if he has been blessed by the Almighty. It is through the person of Muhammad that the mystic can hope to reach the threshold of the Almighty, where there remains nothing to separate him from Divine union.

The manners that should be maintained during the exercise of zikr are as follows:

1. The mystic at the time of zikr should sit in on his knees, similar to the posture followed during prayers (salaah).
2. Sitting in this position both hands should rest on the knee-caps.
3. The mystic must apply fragrance, or the place of zikr should be fragrant.
4. The clothes worn during the exercise of zikr must be clean and pure.
5. Place yourself outside the meditation cell (bujra)

95 Ibid. 218
6. During zikr both eyes should be closed.
7. During zikr both ear holes should be sealed.
8. Imagine that the shyakh is sitting in front of you during the exercise.
9. Try to realise the truth of inner (batin) and outer (zahir) secrets, and do not sincerely wish for wealth of fortune.
10. Repeat the dictum (kalimah) during the exercise of zikr.

The following manners must be maintained after the exercise of zikr:  

1. After completing the exercise of zikr, remain silent for a long period of time.
2. Try to resist the desires of the carnal self (nafs).
3. Every time whenever zikr is performed try and decipher the meaning of the litany within the heart.
4. After the completion of zikr one should restrain oneself from coming into contact with cold wind or using cold water.
5. It is said that at the time of performing vocal zikr, the heart too becomes pure; so that it is mandatory for mystics engaging in vocal zikr to place their tongue and heart in conformity to each other.

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Ways of Performing Zikr

Khwaja Gesudaraz was of the opinion that the perfect way of performing zikr was that the disciple, on the way of Truth, should sit alone for the exercise before the breaking of dawn or between the evening (maghrib) and night (isha) prayers. He should be seated on his knees, and press the palm of his left foot with that of the fingers of his right foot, while placing both hands on the knees. In this posture he should continue repeating Illa Allah (No God), as a negation. During this exercise of negation the eyes should be kept open, and the disciple should imagine that none except God is present.

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*6 Ibid., p. 158.*
with him at that moment. After ten repetitions the mystic should recite *Muhammad Rasul Allah* (Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah). Following this schedule the mystic should carry on with the exercise of *zikr* as frequently as he can.\(^7\)

**Benefits Accrued from Zikr**

Khwaja Gesudaraz enumerates the benefits of *zikr* from the authority of Ibn Ataullah Shazli, that any mystic who repeats the litany *La Ilaha Illa Allah Muhammad ur-Rasul Allah* (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet), also known as the *Kalima i-Tayyibah*, gains immense benefits from the realm of the Unseen. Anyone who repeats the litany known as the *Kalima i-Tauhid*, will be blessed by God with multiple avenues of sustenance. And the individual, who practices the *Kalima i-Taubid*, one thousand times in the exercise of *zikr*, his soul, during sleep, will rest under the peace of heaven. Any mystic who does *zikr* of the *Kalima i-Taubid*, one thousand times during sunrise will be freed from the ill effects of his carnal self (*nafs*). One who recites the *Kalima i-Tayyibah* on seeing the new moon will be protected by Allah from all forms of malaises. An individual, who enters and leaves a city after reciting the *Kalima i-Tayyibah* one thousand times, will be protected from all dangers by the Unseen. Similarly any individual who faces a tyrant after engaging in the *zikr* of *Kalima i-Taubid* one thousand times will witness the destruction of the tyrant in the hands of the Almighty.\(^8\)

Thus the above discussion is reflective of the fact that in accordance to the Suhrawardi saints of the medieval era; their Chishtia counterparts too did not limit themselves to the practice of a single mystical ritual. Rather they stepped forward and opened their vision towards realising the necessity

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\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 158-59.

\(^8\) "There is none worthy of worship but Allah, He is alone and (He) has no partners, to Him belong the world and for Him is all the praise, He gives life and causes death, in His hand is all good, and He has the power over everything."

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 158.
of incorporating practices across *silsilas*, thereby building up a dynamic spiritual ambience in the cultural canvas of south Asia. At a time when the ruling elite were increasingly turning hostile against the mystics of Islam, both in the name of religion and politics, it became imperative for the two leading mystical orders of the subcontinent, to recognise the spiritual endeavors, along with accommodating certain, if not all, defining elements from each other. It can be hypothesised that such a move served two goals – firstly, it ensured that the population following and disciples entering these spiritual circles did not feel compartmentalised from each others spiritual teachings. A brilliant example of this trend was Shah Mina (d. 1465 A.D.) who traced his ancestry to the Chishtia lineage through Ibrahim ibn Adham and also to the Suhrawardi lineage going back to Junayd.\(^{100}\) Another prominent Chishtia mystic Shaykh Ashraf Jahangir Simnani claimed initiation to fourteen different orders, including the Suhrawardia.\(^{101}\) Thus when these saints went on to pen their experiences on spiritual exercises they found it justified to include both the practices of *sama* and *zikr*.

This notion of a shared spiritual realm found its most perfect example in the enumeration of the variety of spiritual practices considered a preserve of either the Chishtia or the Suhrawardia. Secondly, unlike *sama* which centered itself on a strict spiritual and textual ambience, *zikr* was considered to be a more receptive spiritual exercise which could be spread even among the common masses, as discussed above with regard to the womenfolk of the Deccan. In a sense, mystics of the Chishtia order were posing a direct challenge to the *ulama* and the theologians by forwarding a more pliant litany of exercises, which inspite of being spiritual in nature also based itself on the essential parameters of Islam. Incorporating the traditions of Islam, as the *Kalima*, the names of God, in the practice of *zikr*


\(^{101}\) Ibid., p. 28.
were intended to serve as an easy alternative to the rigid formalisation of religion as propounded by the religious leaders. Thus while the practice of sama among the Suhrawardi saints send across a message of acceptance of the essential Chishtia ideals of spiritual devotion, the incorporation of zikr in the litany of Chishtia spiritual practices, that too in the age of Chishtia reinvigoration, was significant enough to re-strengthen the spiritual terrain of Islam in the subcontinent in the teeth of increasing opposition and intolerance from the ulama.