CHAPTER II

ACCOMMODATING AUDITION:

INTRODUCING SAMA IN SOUTH ASIA
Mystical Dimension of Music

The interminable debate on the lawfulness of music and singing has been perpetuated with various degrees of intensity. But perhaps no other group was more concerned with its legal prescriptions than the mystical orders of Islam—the Sufis, for whom listening (sama) to music and poetry was an inseparable part of their spiritual exercises. Audition constituted a vital component of their esoteric rituals which helped stir up in their hearts love for God, often leading to spiritual ecstasies and visions. Through such an exercise their hearts attained a degree of purity which could never be possible by any amount of mere outward austerities.

In this context it goes without saying that the harshest attacks against such practices were directed towards the mystics, who, in their fierce bid to uphold the legality of their exercises got involved and in turn participated ardently in the polemics. Sufis holding an independent bent of mind in many matters relating to religion shared a similar attitude towards exerting their ritualistic practices. Many of these transgressed the limits of religious etiquette. Listening to music (sama) comprised the principle ritual of these mystic cults, since this exercise enabled them to 'experience religious feelings to a higher and more effective degree.'

In the light of the above views it is natural that leading mystics of the Islamic world would make a strong case pertaining to audition of music/poetry (sama), mostly in defense of the act but sometimes against it. An examination of these points of argument would enable us get a clearer notion regarding the lawfulness of the ritual in mystic circles.

Dhun Nun al-Misri (d. 861 A. D.), a mystic of the 9th century, known for his knowledge of the ‘inner science’ of hearts argued that ‘listening (sama) is a power that creates a Divine influence which stirs the heart to seek

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Allah: Those who listen to it spiritually (ba-haq) attain unto God (tahaqqaqd) and those who listen to it sensually (ba-nafs) fall into heresy (tasandaga). Dhun Nun argued that the mystic ought to hear the spiritual reality, and not the mere sound. It was only under such conditions that Divine beneficence sanked into his heart, stirring it up. One who followed the truth experienced ecstasy of the heart, whereas those who followed their lower self were veiled from the mystical experience.

Abu Sulaiman al-Darrani (d. 820) emphasised that ‘music does not produce in the heart what is not in it; hence it should be forbidden for those who are subject to mere intoxication.’ Thus the above statement implies that the heart is the original storehouse of mystical emotions. However a normal heart, hardened by feelings of the material world, was seldom receptive to such spiritual tendencies. Music in this case does not create within the heart what it does not originally contain—mystical values. But for a heart which consists of such emotions, music acts as a catalyst. It helps bring forth the latent feelings of spiritual quest in an individual’s heart, so that it turns towards God. A necessary precondition, therefore, for attending such audition assemblies lies in the ability of the heart to realise the mystical content of music. Otherwise, if applied to an individual with worldly desires and traits it can bring forth disastrous consequences for the listener. Thus it is forbidden for those who are given to desires of the flesh, and to whom music is nothing but a means to induce a sense of intoxication.

One of the earliest mystics Abu Talib al-Makki, of the 10th century, wrote in his treatise Qut ul-Qulub (Food of Hearts), ‘the (singing) voice is an instrument said to carry and communicate meaningful ideas; when the listener perceives the meaning of the message without being distracted by the melody, his sama is lawful; otherwise, and when the content expresses physical love, simple desire and simple futilities, the sama is pure diversion

3 Ibid.
and must be banished. In the above statement, the emphasis of listening rests more on the communication of ideas. Al Makki argued that music was primarily a vehicle for conveying the Divine message to the mystic. Therefore it was incumbent on the Sufi to interpret the subject of audition in terms of mystical parameters, without diverting to any sort of worldly interpretation. This again is possible only if the listener concentrates exclusively on the content of the audition assembly, rather than getting distracted by the melody that accompanied it. It was only under such conditions that sama was deemed lawful, otherwise if the content of the assembly expressed physical love, material desire and intoxication— that sama was purely unlawful and did not aid in the spiritual benefit of the listener.

Thus from the above two statements, from near contemporary mystics, it is quite clear that the ritual of sama is not for all. In most cases the untrained are subject to intoxications of the flesh, which lead to harmful effects on the listener. Rather it should be practiced only by those who have laid their hearts on the path of gnosis and are capable of extracting spiritual benefits from such an audition. Since only the gnostic is trained to listen, and interpret the content, the way that can lead to spiritual enlightening through genuine ecstasy leading to mystical union.

Another famous mystic of the 10th century Abu Nasir al-Sarraj (d. 988) in his treatise Kitab al-Luma fi Tasawwuf— the oldest Arabic text on the principles of Sufism, set forth his defence for sama based on the authority of the Hadith:

ما بعث الله نبيا الا حسن الصوت

Ma ba'ash allahu nabiyyan illa husn alsaut

‘God has not sent any Prophet but with a melodious voice.’

Sayyin ul Quran bi aswatikum

زینوا القرآن باصواتكم

4 Ibid.
' Beautify the Quran with your voices.'

Ma asan Allahu ta'alaa lisbayin, kama asana al-nabi husn al-suut

'God has not given permission so strongly for anything as He has given permission to the Prophets for melody.'

Sarraj's account on sama that distinguished between audition leading to vulgarity and those of the elect (khwass), included various degrees of spiritual achievement. These degrees were dependent on the level of spiritual maturity an individual achieved in the path of tasawwuf. On the spiritual capacity of the audience, Abu Sarraj categorised them into three groups: Beginners (mubtadiyan) and Disciples (muridin); Advanced (mutawassitin) and Purists (siddiqin); and lastly, the Gnostics (arfin).\(^6\)

In his narration Sarraj also listed three types of audition\(^7\)– those that are heard with normal instincts (tab) of an individual. Such an audition is typical of the common folk who participated in such assemblies to invoke some sort of spiritual blessings, but were incapable of doing so due to the hardness of their hearts which refused to dissociate itself from thoughts of the material world. Thus the entire exercise on the part of the individual resulted in nothing but heresy and false intoxication. On the other hand an audition that is carried with some degree of spiritual feelings in the heart resulted in beneficial effects for the listener since his heart realised the essence of God. Though not completely aware of the sciences of the gnostics, such a heart was capable of realising the spiritual wealth that descended upon it from the Unseen. He thus benefitted from the exercise of audition which in turn directly influenced his spiritual state (hal). Thirdly is that type of audition in which the mystic heard through God (haqq). Such a type of audition was the reserve of mystics of the highest order, who had the ability to witness the attributes of God, on hearing of them in an

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 277.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 278.
assembly. They listened through the ear of the heart, so that all beneficence that descended on such an audition gathering penetrated their hearts. The darkness of the material world dissipated from such hearts, to be illumined by the light of Truth (nur ul-haq). It was in such states that mystics heard through God, since they only heard that which God wanted them to hear.

Sarraj further referred to the Prophetic tradition to argue that both Muhammad (SAW) and his companions listened to music for mere delight. This included both festival days like Eid, together with non-occasions. The importance of a melodious voice in the tuneful recitations of verses and couplets has been recognised by the Prophet and also by his Companions.8

Various categories of sama have been dealt in details by another mystical scholar of the 13th century, Al-Maqdisi, who while differentiating among forbidden, permitted, estimable and laudable forms of sama stated that ‘the effect of melodies is comparable to a container, if the drink is pure it confers delicacy and transparency on the container; if muddy, the container will look opaque and ugly.’9 This categorisation not only reflected on the quality of sama itself, but also on the effects it had on the mystic. The content of audition was given the utmost importance in the above argument by Maqdisi, who placed more emphasis on the content of the verses rather on the spiritual condition and mystical maturity of the listener. Degrees of spiritual ecstasy increased while one proceeded from forbidden to laudable forms of sama. Those well-versed in the principles of gnosis were capable of savouring the highest benefits from such audition assemblies, while those yet to attain the degree of spiritual maturity were kept away from such gatherings, lest their souls got distracted by thoughts of lust and sensuousness. They were allowed to attend the ceremonial rites but could not take an active part in them.10

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8 Ibid., p. 275.
10 Ibid.
Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240), an Andalusian and undoubtedly the greatest mystical thinker of the Islamic world, distinguished, in his writings, between those who listened with the mind (aql) and those listening with his flesh (nafs). An individual listening with his mind ‘hears in everything, from everything and through everything.’ He is close to his Beloved and is in control of his emotions. Such an act of audition was manifested through ‘silent amasement and physical motionless.’ This was in stark contrast to those who listened with the ear of the flesh who ‘hear only through melodies and sweet, yearning voices.’ Here the distinction reflects on the state of the listener who while present in an assembly of audition, may or may not be spiritually involved with the exercise. Thus it was the state of mind which determined the benefits he received from the Unseen. If he was deeply involved in the spiritual ambience of the assembly, then his heart was open to the limitless world of Divine beneficence. It was then that he became close to his Beloved, and was awestruck by the grandeur of Divine essence. His witnessing of the same left him in a state of amasement, where all the parts of his body were rendered motionless, through such an act of beholding. But in cases where the participant cannot overcome the bindings of the material world, his heart too remained occupied with such mundane thoughts thereby hindering the receipt of Divine illumination which purged the heart of the mystic from resident impurities. Such an individual listened only through the ear of the flesh and was thus trapped in the sweet melodies of sound, which resulted in nothing but a sense of material intoxication. And such intoxication can never be beneficial for the traveller on the spiritual path.

Ibn al-Arabi also categorised two fundamental types of sama—the mutlaq (soundless), and the muqayyad (accompanied by music). The latter again was divided into three categories— the ilahi (Divine), the ruhani

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(spiritual) and the tabi'i (sensual). For Ibn al-Arabi, spiritually advanced souls that reached the stage of ilahi spoke to God and listened through God because He was active in all that these individuals heard; audition in the rubhani stage consisted of listening to the praises of God, how all things sang the glory of the Creator; sensual listening for Arabi was what Sufis normally practiced as sama, which in other words was audition with music. Very few mystics achieve the stage of soundless sama- an audition through the ear of the heart carried out mainly through intense concentration and contemplation.12

In the footsteps of Ibn al-Arabi, another saint of the 16th century- al-Uskudari categorised sama into natural and spiritual, of which the latter he termed as soundless sama. This again, for him, was achieved only by those who attained the highest degree of mystical perfection.13 Once again we find the distinction of audition (sama) made not on the basis of the mystical adeptness of the listener, but the spiritual content of the assembly. It was natural for individuals listening with a worldly approach, to interpret the verses against such parameters. Those who were aware of its mystical content interpreted it in the light of the attributes of God Almighty. They were more equipped to benefit from such sessions of audition, and were in possession of the knowledge that allowed them to extract maximum benefits from such non-conventional spiritual exercises.

_Ikhwan us Safa_ (Brethren of Purity), an encyclopedic work contains over fifty tractates on important arguments related to audition (sama). This work borrowed its concept from the Greek idea of sound whereby it primarily connected to the soul and not the body. However, when sound was rendered to rhythm it established a connection between soul and body resulting in the creation of music. Then this exercise became sama. Like all

13 Ibid.
other senses, audition too was a gift of God, and the use of such a gift was perfectly justified, by all human beings, in the eyes of God.\textsuperscript{14}

**Locating Sama in Kashf ul-Mahjub**

The popularity of *sama* as a prominent ritual among mystics of Iraq and Iran, as noted above, was gradually disseminated with the spread of Sufism. With the crystallisation of Sufi orders (*silsila*) from eleventh century onwards, one of the most prominent locations of mystical activity came to be centered in the Indian subcontinent. A spillover from its central Asian brothers, the Sufi orders of south Asia followed a more or less similar pattern of mystical practices, with subtle variations. Since most of the first generation Sufi masters who settled in south Asia, had their spiritual training in central Asian and Arab lands, it was little of surprise that they were inclined to carry forward those teachings and practices to their new habitation. Therefore *sama* too made its way into the Indian subcontinent through the Sufi orders trained in Iran, Iraq and Khurasan.

Although there was little abatement in its controversial status, as discussed in the preceding chapter, this did not stop Sufi masters from bringing in this distinctive ritual to a new social and cultural environment. In its Indian career, *sama* was championed by the earliest Sufi order of south Asia, the Chishtia. An ardent proponent of music and poetry, the Chishtis considered *sama* to be an intrinsic part of their spiritual practice, a way of union with God that must be combined with the strictest of self discipline and austerity.\textsuperscript{15}

But before committing ourselves to the task of analysing Chishtia texts and treatises on, or referring, to the subject, it is not totally unjustified to reflect on the thoughts of a great Sufi theorist of south Asia— Abu Usman

\textsuperscript{15} EG, p. 147.
al-Hujwiri, more popularly Data Ganj Baksh—who spent the last days of his life in Lahore, writing the earliest, and one of the most authoritative, Sufi instructional treatises in Persian, titled *Kashf ul-Mahjub* (Unveiling of the Veiled). 16

Al Hujwiri opens his book on *sama* by arguing that of all the senses possessed by a human being, the sense of audition is the most important, and superior to all other senses. 17 He supports it by arguing that our knowledge of God and His attributes are in fact derived primarily from oral traditions, and not sight. Thus hearing is a superior exercise to seeing. Furthermore, Prophets delivered their sermons, to make it acceptable to their listeners. 18 And it is also impossible to proclaim religious ordinances, without making them heard to the people who are supposed to follow. Therefore the entire issue of one’s belief on the religious proclamations and Divine existence is based on the exercise of hearing, without which it is difficult to establish the truth of religious obligations. 19

Al Hujwiri considers listening to the Holy Quran to be the most acceptable form of audition, which all should adhere to. It has the most beneficial effect on the heart and mind of the listener, together with providing delight to the ear. The miraculous quality of the words of God is such that one never grows tired of listening to it, so that it creates a feeling of agitation in the heart of the listener. 20 Any individual who heard the Prophet of God, engaged in reciting the words from the Holy Book, could not resist his emotions, but conformed to the words of the Almighty, 'Verily we heard a marvelous recitation which guides to the right way; and we shall

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16 *Kashf ul-Mahjub* is not simply a literary production but a practical summarisation of a wide tradition of centuries of reflections. An invaluable work treating the lives and doctrines of Sufis, the *Kashf ul-Mahjub* is still recognised as one of the best compilations of the Sufi path.
17 *KM*, p. 393.
18 Ibid., p. 394.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
not associate anyone with our Lord.

Thus the words of the Holy Quran comes as a blessing to all those who wish to engage themselves with the thought of their Lord.

But one cannot deny the fact that any attempt at remembering God truly with all the emotions of the heart, necessitates a simultaneous forgetfulness of the carnal self (nafs), which restrains the heart from His beneficence. Therefore to Hujwiri, the word of God is instrumental in moving the heart away from the ills of the material worlds towards a remembrance of the Divine. Audition is crucial as an exercise of devotion, whose significance precedes the importance of recitation of the Holy Quran. He goes on to substantiate this argument by stating that all Muslims are enjoined upon to listen to the words of the Holy Quran with the utmost sobriety and devotion— ‘When the Koran is recited hearken thereto and be silent that perchance ye may win mercy.’

Hujwiri refers to a Prophetic tradition where the Apostle of God expressed his desire to listen to the Holy Quran from Ibn Masud. On enquiry the Prophet said that he wished to hear it from another voice, so that mercy from the Unseen may fall upon him. Thus Hujwiri infers that audition of Divine words is more beneficial than reciting. Since for him, one who recites those words may not do it with the same sense of devotion and true belief. But the listener is in a more perfect state and feels truly the Divine effects of the Unseen. Man by nature is prone to vacillation from the commandments of the Lord, taking pride in his existence and deeds. The exercise of audition by creating a feeling of humility in the listener directs his heart towards the thought of the Creator, bringing forth the

21 Al Quran 72:1-2
22 Al Quran 7:203
23 Kasbf ulMabjub, p. 396.
24 Ibid
realisation that he, being incapable of doing anything without help from his Lord, should be steadfast in his belief on Him.\textsuperscript{25}

Audition to poetry was considered by the Prophet of Islam to be unlawful under certain circumstances, since the Prophet himself wrote and listened to poetry at times.\textsuperscript{26} A range of views exist on its degree of permissibility. What we will be looking into in this chapter is the specific context of south Asian Sufism with relation to the practice of \textit{sama} as a ritual of Sufi brotherhoods. While many declare it to be completely unlawful and defamatory, others support its lawfulness, and as a result indulge in the audition of love songs and poetical descriptions of the lover-beloved.

Sufis however steer clear from such indecisions, arguing that it is the content of the verse together with the intention of the listener that determines the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the verse listened to. Hujwiri goes on to elaborate this point by stating that if the subject concerns unlawful things related to abuse, foul play, castigations, infidelity—then it is to be unlawful irrespective of the medium it is expressed in—prose or poetry. However if the subject of audition concerns lawful topics like morality, divinity, devotion, signs of God and contemplation among others then it is lawful.\textsuperscript{27} The medium of expression, for Hujwiri, is irrelevant in such a discussion. Since lawful things do not require a particular medium to express themselves. Their character and essence remain unaltered whether they are conveyed in prose or poetry.\textsuperscript{28} Therefore audition to poetry is completely lawful depending on the message the verse sends across to its listeners.

Together with the content one more important aspect regulating and determining the degree of lawfulness is the source of the subject. If a beautiful verse is derived from an unlawful source then it should be

\textsuperscript{25} Al Quran 11:114
\textsuperscript{26} KM, p. 397.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 398.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
considered as unlawful as a verse describing adultery. Thus if a verse leads to germination of evil ideas in the mind of the listener then it should be completely forbidden from hearing, since it upholds itself as no good, but a source of evil. For individuals who attribute such hearing to be lawful and associate the attributes of God with such form of immoral audition indulge in nothing more than infidelity and heresy. Since attributing the Divine characteristics of God with an account portraying unethical subject is similar to committing oneself to the folds of blasphemy. Therefore such an act is completely despicable in the eyes of the Sufi and the legist, who seek nothing but the ultimate truth leading to God.

Traditions attest that a beautiful voice has a soothing effect on the soul. This is the attribute of melodious sounds, that when they are mixed together produces an experience of great delight. Such an audition effects all living creatures, whose spirits are by nature subtle. So that when they come across sounds of melodious temperament, they are inclined to, and moved by it. This is the effect of musical harmony that they are used, rather misused, to arouse sense of passion and pleasure in an individual. But here we are concerned more with the beneficial effects of sound and audition, which moves the heart and guides it on the path to realisation of the Divine, and its attributes, through remembering and contemplation.

Sounds and melodies have their own effect on the human heart—beneficial or otherwise. It is a travesty to truth to argue that sounds have no effect on the human heart. One can rather argue on the nature of the effect, whether it gives rise to emotions of sensuality and immoral pleasure or moves the heart towards the remembrance of God. But there can be little doubt as to the ability of sound to stir an individual’s heart to action. Hujwiri argues that one, whose heart is not moved by the audition of

29 Ibid.
sounds, should be placed 'outside of the category of men and beasts.' In the same breath he endorses the opinion of theologians that listening to music, with or without instrumental accompaniment, should be considered lawful only if it does not lead to diversion of the mind, leading it towards senses of material pleasure and immoral acts. It is here that Sufis provide the major intervention to the act of audition by arguing that in mystical circles, the purpose of audition is exclusively oriented towards spiritual advancement. Men who function within the regulations of religion should justify their acts solely on grounds that benefit their spiritual goals. Their actions should aid their advancement towards the Divine, rather than hinder it.

The nature of the audition assembly is to a large extent determined by the spiritual maturity of the participants, together with their temperament to absorb the emotions that ones heart is exposed to during such an exercise. Hujwiri argues that it is unjustified on the part of a legist to equate all listeners with the same degree of spiritual strength. So that he divides them into two categories: First are those who hear the spiritual meaning of the verse. They are the ones who are on the path of Truth (baqq), and remember, and visualise, none other than the Lord Himself, in their contemplations. This is the lawful of all auditions, and those who participate in such an exercise are the lawful ones, in the direction of God. The essence of right audition, for Hujwiri, lies in the hearing of everything in 'quality and predicament', rather than going simply by the superficial meaning of the verse. They are the ones who are saved from the folds of the evil, who are cursed and as a result destined to face doom in the hands of the rightful. The true believer stands firmly on the ground of Unity, and in sessions of audition equates the attributes of the Lord with what he hears to from the

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30 Ibid. p. 401.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid. p. 402.
mouth of the qawwāl. It is his contemplation of the virtues of his Lord, through the imagery of the poem that secures his belief in the Almighty, witnessing nothing else but His Divine evidence.\textsuperscript{33}

Second, are those who interest themselves more with material meaning of sound, rather than its inner qualities. They consequently find themselves lost in the blind alleys of evil, where listening to the sweetness of sound produces nothing but a sense of falseness in the heart of the listener. Thus when the individual's entire exercise bears nothing but evil results, what he hears will be evil too. They are destined to abandon all things that are good and on the contrary find themselves surrounded by all wrong, so that hearing is unlawful to him. This is precisely the reason why some men are seduced by the sound, which arouse their passions and desires of the flesh. They dwell in a realm of false excitement where they hear unreal things, contrary to the audition of the faithful, and as a result face evil consequences. Even though they hear the words of God, their hearts are led astray by false understandings of the same, and in their error they misinterpret the words of God. This adds to their misfortune, and in the words of Hujwiri, even though they participate in listening to the words of the Lord, they are led to the path of falsehood even in the midst of Truth.\textsuperscript{34}

The venerable mystic is he who takes part in the exercise of audition in the right spirit, so that the benefits accrued from the assembly percolates into his heart. It is only when the heart is filled with the benefits of such a spiritual listening that the individual is closer to the blessings of God. So that his heart is in the presence of the spiritual reality he seeks through the exercise of sama. Only when the heart experiences the benefices of Divine that it is agitated, in the quest of Truth and search for beloved. Such conditions are most appropriate for the experience of revelation whereby the mystic beholds the essence of his Lord Almighty. Mystics, therefore,

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
participate in the ritual of sama with the intention of experiencing the Reality, which descends in a heart stirred by audition, and attain unto God.\textsuperscript{35}

Both mystics and legists would agree that outward audition is nothing but a lure towards sensuality, which if not carefully restrained can lead to heresy (\textit{tasandaga}) on the part of the listener. Heresy is essentially an evil that is accrued from an incorrect interpretation of the words and attributes of God. So that if a novice and worldly person attends an assembly of sama, he lacks the ability to interpret the poetic verses in the correct spirit of the assembly, engaged in remembering the attributes and essences of the Almighty. Thus it is his incapability to interpret those verses correctly, together with a far-fetched interpretation in the parameters of worldliness that exposes him to calamity and evil influences. The fact that his heart is not occupied in the thought of God, invites temptations and worldly desires, which makes him incapable to see the Truth and tread on the ‘Straight Path.’

The Sufi, essentially a lover yearning for his Beloved, can never let his heart remain free from the thoughts of his Lord. True love for God is expressed through a constant remembrance of His essence and attributes, so that the Beloved is never absent (\textit{ghaybat}) from the heart (\textit{qalb}) of His lover. Here, the role of sama, is to essentially make the heart remember the benevolence of God, so that it can hope to receive Divine rewards. Sama removes the blameworthy qualities of absence from the heart so that it remains aware of the Beloved’s presence. Since, if the Beloved is absent from the heart then the feeling of love and the desire for union is lost for ever, leading the mystic off course from his desired Path.\textsuperscript{36} Thus it can be conclusively argued that the necessity of sama remains as long as the mystic is not united with his Beloved. The effect of sama leads the heart to give itself up (\textit{fana}) to the existence of his Beloved, so that no distinguishable difference remains between the two. Hence the mystic finds his permanence

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. p. 403.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
in the essence of his Lord (baqa), thereby reaching the end of his mystical journey.\textsuperscript{37} Thus sama is of little use at a stage when both the lover and the Beloved behold each other directly. It can be argued therefore that the exercise of sama is merely the facilitator, and has little applicability once union is achieved and the soul rests in the existence of the Divine.

Mystics and adepts in the spiritual path are correct in opining that audition (sama) ceases to have any tangible effect on the matured souls and is mostly responsible for distraction rather than contemplation.\textsuperscript{38} Since the mystic who is in love of God, does not require to medium to devotion. Rather it is the novice, yet to free himself completely from the trappings of the material world, who is in need of a tool to help him concentrate on the thought of the Lord. A mystic who is deep in contemplation about God, does not require the faculty of audition to help him in that Path. It is his ability to witness the essence of his Lover that takes him ahead in the spiritual path, towards union.\textsuperscript{39} The beginner on the other hand, as mentioned above, is pulled by the affairs of the material world, and hence finds it difficult to concentrate completely on the thoughts of his Lord. It is for such individuals that audition is permitted as a means to concentrate on the remembrance of God. Audition assists in closeness to God. However it is absolutely imperative on the part of the listener that he believes in the exercise, as a worthy medium to guide him in the presence of God. If the listener participates in the exercise without believing in its merits, then he is placing himself as a disbeliever in the eyes of the Lord. And those who disbelieve in the path towards the Creator are not worthy of enjoying any benefits, here sama, concerned with contemplating the Almighty. And for those who believe in the spiritual truth of sama, the exercise should be continuous and uninterrupted. For his concentration is actually a vindication

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. p. 404.
of his love for God, which ultimately leads him to such heights where he hears only spiritual truths, from the Lord Himself and all His creations.40

The journey of a novice in the path of mysticism is a search for the Beloved, striving on the principles of austerity and self discipline. The stages to be covered are rigid and many, before he can expect to reach his desired goal. Each stage in the mystical path has its own attributes and lessons proportionate to his spiritual maturity. Therefore it is natural that the exercise of sama would have varied effects on them. For the novice it brings forth remembrance and at times awe at the majesty of the Lord. Similarly for the intermediate it arouses a sense of longing for union with the Beloved. The penitents have their remorseness augmented by such an exercise, while at the same time a spiritually immature feels a sense of hopelessness in such an assembly. Hujwiri thus argues that sama effects different people differently in consonance with their spiritual development. He thus creates three categories of Beginners (mubtadiyan), Intermediate (mutawassitan) and Adepts (kamilan), while elaborating the effect sama has on each of these sections of mystics.41

Hujwiri states that sama can be dangerous for the uninitiated. Since it is an act of contemplation in God, together with remembering His Divine attributes, it results in the descent of revelation from the Unseen, whereby the heart and eventually the entire body of the mystic is stirred into agitation (wajd). Since this beneficence is derived from God, the body of the mystic should be strong enough to endure such a powerful force. However hard one concentrates and tries to strengthen himself in the Path to God, it is not always that his limbs are capable of absorbing such a feeling of ecstasy.42 So that the Divine revelation places the mystic under tremendous physical and emotional stress, whereby at times his body fails to sustain the same. At

41 Ibid. p. 407.
42 Ibid.
those moments the mystic either loses his senses in the assembly of sama, or, if the turmoil is greater, gives up the ghost. Seldom is there any one whose senses while experiencing the Divine beneficence retains its normalcy of equilibrium.

Thus for the mystic sama is a dangerous exercise, when their body and soul are not equipped enough to sustain such a Divine influence. So that, as a natural consequence, the amount of ecstasy faced by the novice in an assembly of sama is much greater than a seasoned mystic in the Path of God. For the former, every experience is a new experience which stirs his body towards the remembrance of God. But, over time when they are used to attending such an emotionally exhausting ritual like sama, their body and soul become used to it, so that they can remain tranquil and calm even in the face of an eloquent love poetry. Their ability to retain their sobriety, in the face of an overpowering ecstasy aroused in the novice’s heart by the assembly of sama is ample proof of their strength of heart, which hears nothing but from the Lord Himself.

Many a times the assembly of sama is devoid of men with such un faltering belief and purity of the heart, so that the entire intention of the exercise is destroyed. Unworthy individuals steeped in the thoughts of the material world, listen to music in the name of God. On such occasions many other, with similar material dispositions of the heart, join them in the assembly with lip service to the cause of Almighty God. Their sensual tendencies and weakness of the heart lure them towards such immoral actions, where ultimately their souls are polluted and they are thrown into the path of heresy and destruction.

Following up on the view presented above many Sufi shaykhs have argued that listening to odes and poems do nothing better than to stray away

43 Ibid p. 408.
44 Ibid
46 Ibid.
the pious from their paths. Imposition is placed on the composition and recital of odes together with poetical verses to the extent that the reading of the Holy Quran is also regulated. No reciter should recite the verses of the Quran in manner that employs special intonations and voice modulations, so that such a voice should produce agitations in the heart. Along with prohibiting their disciples from indulging in poetry writing and audition, the critics of sama also impose regulations on any special method of reciting the Quran, lest such a practice leads to undesirable emotions in the heart of the listener. One of the chief arguments forwarded in favour of condemning music is based on the traditions where it has been repeatedly emphasised that Muslims are from the very beginning opposed to audition. Audition of music, with or without partaking in any sort of assembly, was considered to be one of the most reprehensible acts is the eyes of religion, along with intoxication and adultery.

A different group of shaykhs would argue that any sort of inclination towards practicing audition or taking part in it could set precedence among their disciples. And following their master if the disciples engage in the practice of sama they run a severe risk of falling into the trap of worldly desires. Since such a practice can do nothing better than create mischief. Novices in the spiritual path run the risk of ruining their spiritual hard work, by giving away to arousal of passions and violent forms of lust. Hujwiri here quotes Junayd, to drive home the point that audition should never be a recommended practice for the novices, and ‘if you wish to keep your religion safe and maintain your penitence, do not indulge... in the audition which the Sufis practice.’

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid. p. 412.
51 Ibid.
Thus, for Hujwiri, there are two categories of people who partake in \textit{sama}. Firstly, are those who are frivolous (\textit{labi}), while next comes those who are Divine (\textit{ilahi}). In the first group belong those who are misled in the path of spirituality, and are bound by mischievousness even when they tend to participate in a sacred ritual like \textit{sama}. Second are those who, through such rituals, are steadfast on their path towards the Divine. They immerse themselves in rituals of severe austerity and self mortification, which help them keep their hearts completely divorced from the lures of the material world.\footnote{Ibid.} 

Others who take the golden mean, while still limiting the credibility of \textit{sama} as a ritual meant for the elevation of the heart towards the Beloved, state that in the affairs of the lover and the Beloved, such frivolous practices like that of audition have little role to play. It incurs guilt in the heart of the practitioner, along with placing perilously close to the upper limits of vulgarity. The gratification from such a practice comes purely from the element of pleasure ones feels when part of this assembly.\footnote{Ibid.} Then, for a true mystic who beholds his Lover, such actions are a waste of time and effort, since they turn to be nothing more than ‘child’s play’ in the path to Divine union. Therefore there remains little application for the ritual of \textit{sama} in the spiritual domain of the mystic, who ought to busy himself more with the real act of contemplating the Divine and the Beloved, rather than waste ones spiritual energy in such irrelevant exercises.\footnote{Ibid. p. 413.}
Patrons of Sama: Khwajagan i-Chisht

The Chishtis, originating in a small village of Chisht near Heart, in modern day Afghanistan, were not only the earliest Sufi order to strike roots in the subcontinent, but were the most emphatic champions of *sama*. For them it represented both the ontological and epistemological *sine qua non* of Islamic mysticism. Participation in such an intense spiritual exercise not only helped in gaining a state of ecstasy but also facilitated the mystic’s journey towards his Beloved, which itself was a part of the ecstatic moment. Thus Chishtis viewed *sama* as an exercise limitless in scope, which if applied in the right spirit of the mystical assembly could transfer the entire proceedings of the same into a realm of Divine experience. Hence the accrued from the practice of *sama*, were unique and irreplaceable by any other form of spiritual exercise.

It was this realisation among the Chishtis that led them to vigorously defend the cause of *sama*, irrespective of the socio-cultural ambience they preached in. Therefore it is of little surprise that Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, the progenitor of the order (*silsila*) in the Indian subcontinent, revelled in such an exercise. Sources attest that Moinuddin frequently used to participate in *sama*, and do it with much passion. So that everyone who attended the *sama* assembly (*mehfil*) of Moinuddin— including the ulama and other saints in and around Ajmer, became of the part of the ecstatic spirit that prevailed in the assembly. The impact left by the founder of the Chishtia order was such that even today, during the *urs* of the great saint at Ajmer, the most important official function is the performance of *sama*, held after the evening prayers at the *samakhana* of the Ajmer shrine.

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
59 Ibid., p. 126.
However the tradition of losing oneself in ecstasy in such audition assemblies (mehfil-i-sama) has a lineage that traces itself back to the progenitors of the Chishtia order itself, long before Moinuddin initiated himself into the silsila; to the extent that they were nor hesitant to confront the ulama and the Caliph in order to defend the spiritual incumbency of the ritual on the Sufis. One such incident narrates that the Caliph, who ruled at the time of Usman al-Haruni, the master (pir) of Moinuddin Chishti, sent his messenger to the saint asking him to give up on his practice of participating in the assembly of sama. The Caliph professing his allegiance to the Suhrwadi school of mysticism, cited the example of Al-Junayd, who advised one of his disciples saying ‘If you wish to keep your religion safe and maintain your penitence, so not indulge in the audition which the Sufis practice; and when you grow old do not let yourself be the cause of guilt in others.’ This advice on abstention from sama was taken as a pretext by the Caliph, to press Usman al-Haruni from restraining himself in such frivolous occasions. The Caliph went so far as to issue a order in the sense that any individual participating in sama should be hanged and all qawwals be killed, lest people get depraved by this heinous practice.

It can be readily deduced from the above narration that the vision of the Caliph as a just arbiter of issues was clouded under the impact of his propensity to the Suhrwadi order, who restrained themselves from participating in sama, and in turn influenced the Caliph to follow their path. The second proposition could involve an issue of power and hierarchy. The affinity of the Suhrwadi’s to the ruling house of their resident land is quite well known to require any further elaboration. Thus in this context the order banning the practice of sama could bring forth dual benefits: Firstly, by

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60 Chishtia malfusat and taskirah literature account a number of such arbitrations (mahaz) called on to decide on the issue of legality concerning sama. See, Fawaid ul-Fuad, Siyar al-Ashbya, Khatimah.
61 KM, p. 412.
62 Gesudaraz, Khatimah, Hyderabad, 1941, pp. 140-41.
influencing the Caliph the Suhrawardis ensured that they remained close to the corridors of power, never quite losing control over the ruling house. And secondly, this influence over the Caliph, and in turn the regulation on the practice of *sama*, could well mean a severe blow to the traditional and institutional beliefs of the Chishtia— the most important mystical order of central Asia, and a strong “professional” rival of the Suhrawardis. Successfully banning the practice of *sama* would mean spiritual death for the Chishtis. Since this ritual provided the most important modus operandi of the Chishtia *silsila*,63 Thus both power relations and professional politics operated in the background of such a regulation by the highest authority of the State. What followed subsequently became immortal in the pages of Chishtia literature, providing a perennial source of inspiration for future Sufis of the order in their defense of *sama* with the south Asian Sultanates.

For Usman al- Haruni *sama* represented a secret covenant that existed between God and His seeker. It cannot be apprehended by minds regulated by reason and material thoughts.64 He further stressed that being a Chishtia it was impossible for him to go against the tradition of his masters who for years kept themselves engaged in this ritual deriving spiritual benefits from it. Hence he decided to visit the royal court and settle the issue with the *ulama*. The Caliph allowed the *ulama* to held court in arbitration of the matter concerning the legality of *sama*. Usman al-Haruni arrived at the court after the completion of his spiritual meditations.

On seeing Usman al- Haruni and witnessing his spiritual glory, the *ulama* lost their senses. They were struck with such awe that all their charges against the shaykh and arguments condemning the practice of *sama*, never saw the light of the day. Instead they fell at the feet of the shaykh and begged for mercy, repeatedly conforming to his saintly status, and stating

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63 Bruce Lawrence, Early Chishti Approach to Sama, p. 73.
64 *Khatmah*, pp. 141.
that for a Sufi of his stature sama is completely allowable.\textsuperscript{65} Usman al-Haruni in his defense further elaborated that at a time when Junayd abstained himself from the practice of sama, it was his own decision. He never intended to impose such a regulation for the adepts in sama. It was meant only for the novices who ran the risk of losing their way early in their mystical life, while pursuing the ritual of sama.\textsuperscript{66} Thus it was not incumbent upon the Chishtia to follow the regulation of Junayd on the issue of sama. Moreover he also emphasised that had Junayd come in contact with the saints of the Chishtia order, he would have certainly changed his stance on the practice of sama, because of the emphatic enthusiasm this order showed for sama.

When the news of this assembly reached the Caliph he immediately permitted Shaykh Usman al-Haruni to continue his practice of sama. Ignoring the discontent of his courtiers the Caliph ordered that sama be declared legal only for Shaykh al-Haruni, and likewise ordered the qawwals to perform only in the audition assemblies of the latter. Else they would be at the risk of their own lives. He also arranged for their emoluments from the royal treasury.\textsuperscript{67} Henceforth Usman al-Haruni continued to indulge in the practice of sama, immune from the attacks of the orthodox clergy.

The usefulness of sama in the development of the mystical senses of a mystic is well illustrated in an incident involving a famous Chishtia mystic Khwaja Maudud Chishti. Once while the Khwaja was lost in the proceedings of a sama assembly he was no longer visible to his compatriots. On enquiry, the Khwaja later replied that the assembly of sama is an exercise where the ones who are truly lost in the act of spiritual contemplation find themselves elevated to the realm of Divine glory.\textsuperscript{68} Under such circumstances they no longer remain visible to those who are yet to gain

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 142.
knowledge in the inner (batin) senses of spirituality. It is never possible for the human eye to perceive such truths unless the inner vision of the mystic is fully enlightened. In such stations of mystical realisation Sufis experience the ecstatic, which agitates their heart while placing them to face the Divine Truth.

Another very famous shaykh of the Chishtia order, Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti, was also very fond of sama. Such was the strength of his personality that even the greatest scholars, legists and ulama of his age did could not gather enough courage to voice their protest against the shaykhs’ practice of indulging in sama. Rather many were attracted to the exercise of audition (sama). Every individual who had the good fortune to attend the sama of the shaykh got enraptured in its proceedings. The entire gathering got drowned in the spirit of the assembly, in prostration to the Divine reality. Sama being a professional gathering, mystics avoided listening to the verses alone. They were more inclined to assemble in groups so that the blessings revealed on one may benefit others in the assembly. Therefore whenever Khwaja Abu Ishaq was in a mood to engage in sama, he would gather his compatriots and the qawwal was informed well before hand so that he could get himself ready in the spirit of the assembly, rather than be unprepared and incur the displeasure of the shaykhs present.

The above narration of events is quite illustrative of the influence Indian Chishtis received on the issue of sama from their ajami antecedents. Therefore the propensity of Moinuddin and his successors to uphold the virtue of sama as a spiritual exercise par excellence cannot be inferred as an isolated intervention. Neither does the oft mentioned historical premise hold ground that the Chishtis adoption of the questionable exercise of sama was only to appeal the music loving, essentially non-Muslim, Indian

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., p. 143.
71 Ibid., p. 143.
population with the intention of easing the position of the Sufi shaykhs vis-à-vis a unknown socio-cultural environment. This was meant to further the cause of conversion.\textsuperscript{72}

But such a historical hypothesis holds little ground when we look back, not only at the Chishti lineage of practicing sama, as elaborated above, but more importantly on the vast corpus of Sufi manuals in the tenth and eleventh century which deals, among other important spiritual matters, expressly with the issue of sama. Almost all the leading Sufi theorists of the age, starting from Abu Hamid al- Ghassali (in his Ihyā Ulum al-Dīn), Ahmed Ghassali (in his Bawariq al-Ilm), and Al Kalabadhi (in his Kitāb al- Ta'arruf) – have included a chapter, if not a whole book, on the issue of sama, debating on its issues of legality and heresy. For Chishtis of the subcontinent, as mentioned above, sama remained an essential form of spiritual contemplation generating a similar form of literary testament from its saints, defending the practice for fellow mystics of the order.\textsuperscript{73}

However sama remained an essentially elite practice restricted to the initiates of the Chishtia order, strictly distancing it from the common masses. Since for the Chishtia, such a highly organised mystical practice if left opened to all can lead to inevitable vulgarisation, which should be firmly resisted.\textsuperscript{74} Thus while we find a limited scope of expression on the part of the popular masses on the ritual of sama, Chishtia treatises on sama describe it as a highest form of religious activity, to be organised and participated in the strictest of conditions. This demanded both psychological and intellectual guidelines on the part of the Sufis who participated in it, together with elaborate rules of etiquette regulating the practice.\textsuperscript{75} Therefore an analysis of the views forwarded by Chishtia shaykhs on the subject, vis-à-vis

\textsuperscript{73} Lawrence, "Early Chishti Approach to Sama", p. 74.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
the treatises written by some of the leading theorists of the order would throw much light on the unique profile of sama as it first functioned in a predominantly non-Muslim environment.

**Sama among the Chishtis of North India**

In south Asia too, as in the Islamic lands, sama came to uphold the internal reality of union with God, through the efforts of the lover-saint. Its permissibility posed a problem of hierarchy in the realm of religious rituals attached to the pursuit of spiritual aims. Whether Sufis of the subcontinent considered sama as superior to other religious practices, most importantly prayer (salāt), as a means of nearness to God, is something which is open to debates and discussions.76

The fact remains undeniable that music was considered an inseparable part of spiritual practices, particularly among the Chishtia. The Suhrawardis, with the exception of few, remained largely indifferent to it, while prescribing a more devoted reading of the Holy Quran.77 The Qadiris were opposed to music, in general. But they were particularly critical of instrumental music (sama bi‘l masāmir), recommending silent contemplation (zikr) as a more permissible way of devotion.78 The Naqshbandis, were even more rigid with regard to inclusion of music and poetry in their spiritual exercises. They too were supportive of zikr as a means of spiritual contemplation and remembering God, thereby seeking union.79

With the institutionalisation of Sufism in south Asia, which in turn is directly related to the crystallisation of the Chishtia as a primary mystical order flourishing in the subcontinent, sama came to be an exclusive domain

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76 Ibid. While the Chishtia Sufis considered sama as a mystical exercise whose benefits surpassed any known religious exercise of the Book, Suhrawardi masters like Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya considered prayer to be the most important spiritual exercise, though emanating from the folds of religious tenets. See, Qamar ul Huda, *Spiritual Exercises for Suhrawardi Sufis*, pp. 56-58.

77 Omar Khalidi, “Qawwali and Mehfil i-Sama”, in Christian Troll (ed.) *Muslim Shrines in India*, p. 258.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.
of the Chishtia Sufis and their many disciples spread over the subcontinent, who many a times posed a passionate defence for the ritual as an inseparable component of their spiritual discipline incumbent upon all the Sufis of that order.  

Such an attempt at legitimising a ritual—which, since its inception, has been a favourite among legists and theorists alike, providing a continued supply of fodder for their tomes, in defence or censure of the practice—required a serious engagement with the subject, on multiple levels of intellectual thought, and many a times literary output. The result we witness is a forceful resistance towards any attempt at vulgarising the ritual, while at the same time upholding its significance as an eminent symbol of Chishtia ritual both to its opponents and also to other Sufi authors and orders, together with fellow mystics of the Chishtia branch.

Moinuddin Chishti, the founder of the order in the Indian subcontinent, had a great taste for sama which he inherited from his masters in Chisht. In Ajmer where he established his jamaat khana, the first among the Chishtis in the subcontinent, Moinuddin practiced sama, although it is debatable whether he allowed the use of musical instruments in the assembly.  

At a time when Moinuddin indulged in the practice of sama he faced little opposition from ulama and legists. Rather it is known from sources, whatever meager we have on him, that the leading ulama and Sufis of his age like, Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, Shaykh Muhammad Kirmani, Shaykh Muhammad Isfahani, Shaykh Burhan al-din Chishti, Maulana Baha al-din Bukhari, Maulana Muhammad Baghdadi, the great Khwaja of Sijs, Shaykh Saifuddin Majusi, Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrez, Shaykh Ahmed Wahid, Shaykh Burhan al-din Ghaznavi, Khwaja Sulaiman and Abdur Rahman among others often used to attend the sama of Khwaja Moinuddin. They used to come and kiss the feet of the Shaykh while

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80 Lawrence, “Early Chishti Approach to Sama”, pp. 73-74.
deriving spiritual benefits.\textsuperscript{82} Therefore it is undeniable that the practice of sama constituted one of the primary principles governing the lives of Chishti saints in the Indian subcontinent.

Contrary to what is mentioned above with regard to Khwaja Moinuddin's practice of sama, we will witness, as the discussion progresses over the next few pages, that relations between Sufis and ulama deteriorated on the issue of sama. But before coming to that we can spent some thoughts on the historical roots of the amicable ambience built up by Khwaja Moinuddin in his khanqah at Ajmer, where both mystics and theologians participated in the exercise of sama. It goes without saying that at a time when Moinuddin sowed the seeds of Chishtia mysticism in south Asia, his Central Asian counterparts were out to secure their political and military position in north India. As it is always the case with immigrant power centres, the tension between mulki (resident) and non-mulki (immigrant) status was yet to be dissipated. The Delhi Sultans were involved in some severe faction fighting, to pay attention towards any form of socio-cultural bridging with the resident culture and civilisation. The onus was taken up by the Chishtia mystics whose simple lifestyle and uncomplicated mode of devotion appealed to the religious minded population of the subcontinent.

Sufis of the Chishtia order not only attracted the resident community through a creative social and cultural cohabitation, but at the same time took great care to imbibe certain elements from within the Hindu community. The primary among which was the inclination towards music – an issue currently under discussion. As Asis Ahmad has thoughtfully observed 'Music is perhaps the only art in which something like a synthesis between the Muslim and Hindu artistic traditions was achieved.'\textsuperscript{83} We have argued above that music constituted a chief element in the spiritual practices of the mystics from Chisht, but this feature worked wonders in their attempt

\textsuperscript{82} Currie, \textit{The Shrine and Cult}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{83} Asis Ahmad, \textit{An Intellectual History of Islam in India}, Edinburgh, 1969, p. 143.
towards bridging the cultural and civilisational gap between the two communities. Both the sultans and the ulama realised the necessity to strengthen this cultural bond and secure Islam within the new socio-political and religious surrounding. Hence they were supportive of the actions of early Chishtia mystics to secure spiritual elevation through indulging in music.

A disciple of Shaykh Moinuddin, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was a patron of sama. But, to his surprise, he found an unnatural companion in the person of Shaykh Muhammad Ata, more popularly known as Qasi Hamiduddin Nagauri. Hamiduddin who settled in Delhi during the time of Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, inspite of being a Suhrawardi Sufi, had a great taste for sama. Such was his liking for the practice that Hamiduddin used to pay regular visits to the khanqah of his Chishti fellow saint. An incident recorded in the Chishtia sources reveals their dedication towards the practice. Once when Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki was engrossed in the mehfil i-sama, Hamiduddin Nagauri arrived at the khanqah. On seeing the sanctity of the assembly together with hearing the poetry of the qawwal, he was overcome with emotional overbearing and placed his head at the feet of Bakhtiyar Kaki. The latter who too was enraptured in the spirit of the assembly did not raise the head with his own hands. Rather he signaled one of his attendants to lift the head of Hamiduddin.

When someone enquired as to what was the significance of this action, Shaykh Nasiruddin Chirag i-Delhi remarked that at that moment Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki had reached the station of khibrayyi. In such a situation it was disgraceful for a Sufi to engage in any sort of actions. Whenever a saint entered such stations of mystical trance it is mandatory for him to hold on to that feeling as long as he can, so that the blessings of the

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84 Gesudaraz, Khaiima A-dab ul-Muridin, pp. 139.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
Divine may fall upon him. He, at that moment, should only act in contemplation of God, rather than get distracted by any earthly actions. That would mean belittling the emotions his heart is experiencing on the way to God’s grace. The trance which the mystic places himself should be respected as a Divine blessing, which falls only on the most fortunate individuals. Thus in such a station a Sufi like Bakhtiyar Kaki, should never allow his concentration to falter in the face of certain petty actions.

Thus the above incident is significant in the sense that it brings forward few realities with regard to the spread of mysticism in south Asia. Firstly, in spite of being spiritual rivals sharing the same geographical space, early Chishti and Suhrawardi saints upheld a sense of cordiality in their behaviour towards each other. It is reflective that for them spiritual enrichment and service to Islam remained the ultimate goal of their life, rather than engaging in petty power struggles. Secondly, the ritual of sama, as a means for spiritual advancement although cautioned of and avoided by the Suhrawardis, was not a universal phenomenon. Hamiduddin Nagauri being one of the leading Sufis of the Suhrawardi order was also, at the same time, one of the most emphatic supporters of sama, standing out as a glorious exception among the Chishtia elite of Delhi.

In this context it can be said that although Qadi Hamiduddin argued in favour of the Chishtia shaykh, it would be too simplistic to justify the decree of the Sultan only on the verbal defence of the Suhrawardi saint. Iltutmish very well realised the spiritual stature of Shaikh Qutubuddin, the principal khaalifah of the Chishtia legend Khwaja Moinuddin, so that when the former arrived in Delhi the Sultan extended him a hearty welcome, offered him the post of Shaykh-ul-Islam and requested him to stay near his palace. The shaykh refused him in both counts and being a true Chishtia distanced himself from the bureaucracy, but not from the people at large. He voluntarily extended his moral support to the Sultan in the fulfillment of
public works and centres of cultural activity, the most prominent of which was the construction of the water reservoir, the *Haus-i-Shamsi*. Thus the social and cultural involvement of the Chishtia mystic was too great for the sultan to overlook his unmatched popularity in Delhi. He could never have run the State as smoothly as he did without the active support of the mystics, who in turn provided a silent legitimacy to the ruling house. A handful of hostile and conservative theologians could never have ensured a whole-hearted support and enthusiastic participation of the common masses in the affairs of the State. It was this realisation that led Iltutmish to override the allegations of *Shaykh-ul-Islam* Shaykh Najmuddin Sughra against Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki, and submit himself at the feet of the Chishtia master and beg upon him to stay back in Delhi. Being a pragmatic ruler Sultan Iltutmish realised the efforts of the Chishtia saint(s) to remove all apprehensions and build up an image of a benevolent sultanate in the minds of a large Hindu population, through a pursuance of common ritualistic beliefs and practices.

However the greatest exponent of *sama* in the annals of the Chishti order in the Indian subcontinent, remained none other than its most illustrious and influential saint – Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya, fondly addressed as *Mahbub i-Ilahi* (Beloved of God). His *maljusat,* entitled ‘Fawaid ul Fuad’ is the first of its kind in the genre of such writings in the Indian subcontinent. It not only inaugurated a new form of mystical literature, rising above metaphysical content and hagiographical lubrications, but successful portrayed a more lively and realistic picture of medieval Indian society and culture, together with providing a mine of information on the spread of mysticism in the subcontinent. Before we delve into the details of *sama* as laid down by Nizamuddin Awliya himself, it is desirable to trace

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87 Nizami, *Some Aspects,* p. 203
88 SA, pp. 54-55.
89 FF, Introduction.
the lineage back to the great master of Pakpattan-Ajodhan, Baba Fariduddin Masud Shakrganj, who was equally enthusiastic about the practice of sama, as evident from the pages of his disciples malfusat.

It is narrated that once Baba Farid wished to participate in sama, but unfortunately no qawwal could be found who could facilitate the Shaykh on his spiritual journey. Seeing no way out to fulfill his desire the Shaykh ordered Khwaja Badruddin Ishaq, the chief steward of his khangah, to bring him the letter that Qasi Hamiduddin Nagauri had written to him some days back. When the satchel containing the letters was brought to the Shaykh he placed his hand inside it and fortunately the first letter he took out was that of Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri. Badruddin Ishaq was instructed to stand up and read out the letter to Fariduddin. The former stood up and started reading the letter which opened with the following lines, 'This humble, weak and worthless beggar Muhammad Ata, who is the servant of the dervishes from head to toe is as lowly as dust under their feet.' Hearing this Shaykh Fariduddin achieved a spiritual state, where the love of God became manifest in him. He was visibly moved by the sense of humility expressed by Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri in that letter, which represented the obedience of the disciple towards his master, and the community of the dervishes.

Overcome by this ecstasy Shaykh Fariduddin himself recited a verse which was there in the letter

Where is the mind to grasp Your sovereignty?
Where is the soul to mirror Your majesty?
Beauty's face, I know, You could unveil
But where are eyes to behold Your beauty?

This verse cited by Baba Farid from the letter of Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri, expressed the latter's love for God and the attributes we associate with Him.

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90 FF, p. 143.
But at the same time the verse above is reflective of the limitations of the mystic of realise the Divine in its full glory. It is only by the mercy of the Lord that a Sufi can achieve that station where he is fully equipped to behold the beauty of the Creator.

In this context Nizamuddin Awliya remarked that once Badruddin Ghaznawi too wrote a letter to Baba Farid, where he included a poem, which he had composed, for the Shaykh. It read as follows

Farid has been, for the faith and the faithful, a mighty friend.
That he spent his life bestowing wonders has been my prayer.
But how I wish that my own heart could have been more composed,
For I would have laid before him pearls of praise, layer upon layer.  

This verse extols the contribution of Baba Farid in the path of mysticism and faith. It describes the Shaykh as a true friend of the faithful, and for those who have been courageous enough to tread the ‘Straight Path’, towards true knowledge and Truth. The entire life of Baba Farid was spent serving the needy and the common man, bestowing them with his blessings.

The above incident justifies with much exactness the opinion of Hazrat Nizamuddin that the ritual of sama was a touchstone of piety and a proving ground for men of spiritual prowess. It is suitable for those who have gained enormous knowledge on the spiritual path, so that nothing is too great a distraction for their devotion. Under such circumstances poetry and verses hold little importance for them as intrinsic to the assembly. For those who are continuously in the presence of God, do not need a medium to make them realise the majesty of the Creator.

Shaykh Nizamuddin categorised sama into two types: Invasive (bajim) and non-invasive (ghair bajim). Firstly invasive sama is that which invades the body quite easily stirring it towards agitation. This is likened to the reaction a

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p. 20.
93 Ibid.
heart may have on hearing an accidental verse of poetry. While non-invasive *sama* is the one which the intellect of the listener comes to play. In such an audition whenever one hears something that agitates him, he is drawn into a particular fold of contemplation where he equates the verses of poetry to a different non-material realm. This can be the attributes of God, or the thought of his spiritual master. It is this feeling that then rules his heart. But the Shaykh also made it clear that the first form of *sama* is more impulsive and hence cannot be explained by logical faculties.

Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz narrates that Nizamuddin Awliya used to listen to a variety of verses in Arabic, Persian and Urdu in an assembly of *sama*. Invariably he used to get overcome, in his heart, by the feelings of agitation that emanated from the interpretation of such verses. He was equipped with that degree of spiritual understanding whereby he could interpret those verses in the light of the lover-Beloved (*ashiq-mashuq*) parameters. He was bestowed with the ability to enjoy the flavour (*gauq*) of *sama*, which became rare after his time. Thus as a master of the ritual of *sama*, Nizamuddin categorised the qualities of the ritual as *Halal*, *Haram*, *Makruh* and *Jayes*. While elaborating on these categories Nizamuddin stated that if the heart of the listener while in the assembly of *sama* is more towards the truth of God, then the *sama* is *jayes*. If greater attention is devoted to the emotional content of the assembly, or the individual himself, then the *sama* is termed *makruh*. If the heart and spirit is inclined towards the affairs of the material world then that practice of *sama* is termed *haram*. If the heart of the mystic is entirely towards the proceedings of the assembly of *sama*, together with contemplating God and the kind of poetry read out, then the participation in *sama* is *halal*.

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94 Ibid., pp. 121-22.
95 Khatimah, pp. 130.
96 SA, p. 511.
In the above description, Nizamuddin Awliya, clears enumerated out the finer qualities of the ritual, while emphasising on the fact that the participant in such an assembly should know the differences between *Halal*, *Haram*, *Makrūh* and *Jayes*, so that he does not lose himself in such an assembly which does not conform to the ethics of the ritual. The shaykh further states that for an assembly of *sama* to be *jayes*, certain rules must be adhered to. Primary among those are that the *qawwal* or the reciter of poetry should be a matured individual, and should never be a young boy nor should he be a woman. It is incumbent on the part of the audience to fill their hearts with the thought of God, and keep away from any sort of distraction that might hinder the effects derived from such a practice. The content of the ritual, precisely the verses that were read out in such an assembly should not be of frivolous or puerile character, nor incur banter and lightheartedness in the mind of the listener. The ambience of *sama* should be strictly maintained as in the case of any other spiritual exercise, thereby musical instruments (*masamir*) should be kept away from such an assembly. Nizamuddin Awliya censured the use of instruments like *chang* and *rabab*, in particular, and any musical instruments in general. Such were the parameters laid down by the great shaykh within which the exercise was to be performed, for it to be a *halal* one. Else it should be termed as questionable. It is after such elaborate regulations that the shaykh questions the permissibility of *sama*, stating that it is a sacred rendition of the voice, then why should it be termed as unlawful in the eyes of religion. 

However inspite of adhering to all the regulations in an assembly of *sama*, the taste of ecstasy may elude the participants. Such was once an occasion when Qasi Hamiduddin Nagauri engaged himself in an audition assembly (*mehfil i-sama*). A renowned *qawwal* was conducting the affairs of

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
the gathering. But unfortunately none of the participants felt the desired effect; the feel of spiritual arousal was missing. The head of the assembly while taking a serious note of this enquired whether any individual/individuals harboured any feelings of animosity for his fellow participant. Then he should sort things out immediately through the medium of dialogue. When none of the participants responded the shaykh further enquired whether any vagabond or people with worldly preoccupations have entered the assembly. That could have been the cause behind the ineffectiveness of the exercise. But after a thorough search none of that sort was found. Hence the assembly was dissolved.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 520-21.}

The above instance is reflective of some intrinsic truths with regard to the practice of sama. Firstly, as put forward by Nizamuddin Awliya, sama is essentially an engagement with the feelings of compassion, which comes to play only when there is a bestowal of Divine mercy and beneficence on the assembly. No amount of poetical verses and musical instruments are capable of making the 'heart stir in the love for God.' Only when it is Divinely ordained that an assembly of sama reaches the heights of success. The arousal of the heart therefore depends entirely on the will of the Lord. Secondly, sama is an exercise which should be carried in the most noble of intentions. Any individual participating in this ritual should make it sure that his heart is pure of all worldly and evil thoughts, feelings of hatred and desires of the flesh. It is only under such circumstances that sama has beneficial effects on the heart of the listener, stirring it to spiritual realisations. Else, not only does he involve himself in an act of heresy, but at the same time spells ill for the entire assembly by polluting the sacred ambience and depriving his fellow mystics of the benefits from such a saintly exercise. Thirdly, the most important lesson imparted is the eligibility for participation. Sama being a highly structured ritual intended for
experiencing the Divine, cannot be opened to all and sundry. Only individuals who are trained in the mystical path can be allowed to participate in it, thereby enhancing its effects on the individual and the gathering at large. But if a lay individual or a novice chances upon to attend such an assembly he not only places himself at risk, but also the spiritual gains of the entire gathering. Since the lay individual has little acquaintance with the art of interpreting mystical verses he might attribute them to worldly things/matters, thereby incurring blasphemy. At the same time he is also unaware of the methods to control his emotions, should they rise in him on listening to such verses. On occasions of intense spiritual turmoil he may lose control over his self, and thereby risk his own life. Lastly, one should never strive to derive forced emotions from such an assembly. *Sama* is meant to be a natural way of deriving spiritual benefices by listening to poetry and verses. Therefore if the conditions of ecstasy do not come naturally the participant of the guardian of the assembly should never try to hang on with it, hoping for its arrival. Rather the assembly should be dissolved with the belief that such is the will from the Unseen.

Sources attest the fact that assemblies of *sama* do get benefitted from the Unseen. This happens particularly when the proceedings in the same fail to arouse the emotional content in the heart of the individual listener, moving him towards God. It is narrated that once Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya was sitting in the courtyard of his residence listening to the *qawwal* as he recited verses for the shaykh. Hearing the words of the *qawwal* the shaykh was gripped by a sense of ecstasy, while his heart moved towards a realisation of the Divine. But among his friends and other listeners none was there who were ready to do some dance (*raqs*). The shaykh was greatly saddened by the passiveness of the assembly, since he was feeling the urge to free his limbs. In such a moment a man entered the assembly and after doing prostration in front of the shaykh, started doing *raqs*. The shaykh
immediately rose up and joined him in the exercise. For some time both continued with the exercise of raqs and sama, till they were completely lost in the exercise. When the assembly ended the person left immediately. Shaykh Nizamuddin ordered his disciples to bring him back. People went out searching for the person but he could be found nowhere. Those present in the assembly remarked that the individual must be from the Unseen.  

Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya said that when a person while listening to the verses of the qawwal gets overwhelmed in the feeling of love for his Beloved and is agitated by the remembrance of God in his heart, then he is the recipient of the Divine enlightenment (anwar) which descends upon him from the other realm. In such a situation it is obligatory that somebody from the Unseen is sent to participate in such an assembly of sama, and heighten its spiritual content. Thus sama being an exercise meant for the realisation of Divine blessings by the individual worshipper, it is of little surprise that beneficence from the Unseen be showered on the assembly thereby transforming a passive gathering into a spiritually stimulating one.

The blessings of the Divine, together with maintaining the sanctity and hierarchy in such devotional assemblies, are absolutely crucial if one desires to conduct a successful assembly of sama.  But sama does not have equal effect on all the participants of an assembly. Rather the spiritual maturity of the mystic becomes the precondition for the benefits he desires to acquire from such an exercise of audition. Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya when asked about the reason for his success in sama, replied that each time he participated in sama he attributed whatever he heard from the qawwal to the virtues and dispositions of his shaykh, Fariduddin Masud Ganj i-Shakr. So that once when he was attending sama, he heard the following verse from the qawwal,

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102 Ibid., p. 532
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., p. 514.
105 Ibid.
Do not walk like this
Lest you be hurt
By an evil eye

Nizamuddin said that when he heard these lines he was at once reminded of the virtues of his shaykh Baba Farid, which included piety and righteousness, excellence in learning and captivating grace of the shaykh. Whenever he recalled these attributes of his master, Shaykh Nizamuddin was moved to tears with such emotional intensity that it remained elusive to dry words. He requested the recitor to repeat those two lines again and again, till he was completely exhausted with emotional overbearing.106

Thus as Shaykh Nizamuddin would argue that whenever one heard something in \textit{sama} he must attribute it to his \textit{pir}, or to the Lord. For it only through the blessings of the \textit{pir} and his Lord that an individual receives benefices in such an assembly. Also it is the love for his \textit{pir} or his Lord, that helps the listener fix his heart to the mystical content of the gathering rather than let it go astray. So that when on the Day of Judgement, the listener will be questioned whether he listened to \textit{sama} or not he will say yes. And when asked as to how he could attribute the transient (\textit{hadith}) qualities he heard in \textit{sama} to the permanence (\textit{qadim}) of Divine essence he will answer that, he did it out of nothing but the extremity of his love for the Creator. The verses of \textit{sama} made him so charged with emotions of love that he could attribute its essence to none else than the Lord. On this the Divine command would proclaim ‘As you did that out of sheer love for Me, I shower My mercy upon you.’107 Shaykh Nizamuddin, with moistened eyes remarked that, if such was the chastisement with one immersed in the love of God, then it was quite understandable as to the fate of others.108

106 \textit{FF}, p. 110.
107 \textit{CA}, p. 515.
108 Ibid.
But at the same time if such a degree of love does not arise in an individual then it is impossible for him to offer himself in the way of God. It is incumbent on an individual to forget his ‘self’ so that he can lose himself in the essence of God, and attain the station of *baqa*. For this it is necessary that the mystic be completely immersed in the fire of love for God, so that whatever he does is out of love for Him. Such is then the state of the mystic that he hesitates little before giving up his life in the path of his Lord. Otherwise he is left with nothing but the affairs of the material world, which in turn takes him further away from his goal of Divine union.

*Sama* is essentially an exercise for individuals who cherish a taste for it. Chishti Sufi manuals containing accounts of their north Indian seers recognise the sceptical attitude shown by the *ulama* towards such a practice. But at the same time they also argue that an exercise which is conducted at the residence of a dervish cannot possibly cross the limits of religious and ethical sanctity.\(^{109}\) Therefore even if the *ulama* condemn such a practice as beyond the parameters of religious ethics, they, under no circumstances can impose a ban upon its practice; or stop people from participating in *sama*. Sufis and dervishes being blessed from the Unseen, it is not always judicious to engage in a forced confrontation with them. Nizamuddin Awliya argued that the *ulama* are not always opposed to the practice of audition. While some are accommodating towards such an exercise, many tend to act brashly without taking into consideration the logic operative behind such an exercise.\(^{110}\)

Such a situation arose during the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, when some among the *ulama* turned hostile against the shaykh. Led by Shaikhsada Husamuddin Farjam and Qasi Jalaluddin Saqanji, they spoke ill of him, ridiculed his *khangab* life and criticised his practice of *sama*. Matters came to a head with the last issue, that of audition. The *ulama*

\(^{109}\) *FF*, p. 190.
\(^{110}\) Ibid.
resisting such a practice passed a decree declaring sama to be unlawful in the eyes of religion. They even went to the extent of persuading the sultan to convene a mabsar on the issue and take necessary action. The shaykh attended this meeting and was greatly annoyed by the insolent attitude of the ulama who refused to recognise the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith), and instead kept on insisting that the shaykh produce a verdict of Imam Hanifa in favour of his practice. After all the unpleasant exchanges at the assembly the sultan refused to pass any order against the mystic, which left the ulama quite disheartened.111

Such an overtly orthodox attitude of the ulama together with an uninhibited reliance on the schools of Islamic jurisprudence (majhdbab), namely the Hanafi School, is eminently reflective of the contemporary religious mentality of the Delhi sultans and the ulama. Till the thirteenth century the works and teachings of the great Islamic philosopher Muhiyuddin Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240 A.D.) held sway in the entire Islamic world, not to speak of the Indian subcontinent.112 The Chishtia mystics of south Asia too were trained in this school of Islamic thought. But from fourteenth century onwards the concept of Wahadat ul-Wujud (Unity of all Beings) was being debated at various levels, accentuated by the intensely polemical writings of Imam Ibn Taimiyya (1263-1328 A.D.) whose bitter orthodoxy was levelled against pantheism and superstitious practices.113 Quite naturally it began to have a universal effect on Islamic societies, not to leave south Asia. With this the religious atmosphere of the subcontinent was shifting more and more towards the Shariah, reflected in the juristic works of the period. The ulama as a result armed themselves with the doctrines of Islamic jurisprudence and even refused to recognise the words of the Prophet (Hadith) as mentioned above.

111 K. A. Nisami, The Life and Times of Shaikh Nimamuddin Auliyya, pp. 80, 82, 129.
113 Ibid.
The Chishtia mystics too began to feel the heat of the situation, and the numerous injunctions and regulations of Shaykh Nizamuddin with regard to the proper observance of and participation in the exercise of *sama* can be located in the context of such a changing ambience of religious belief in north India. Being the head of the Chishtia order in the subcontinent, Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya realised the necessity of countering this developing trend from within the mystical order itself and took various steps towards the same. Firstly, he laid down a detailed order of regulation and instruction on the spiritual practice of *sama*, so that his successors did not face further troubles in defending the same in the teeth of religious orthodoxy; Secondly, he diligently trained his disciples like Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud in the ways of *Shari'ah*, *Fiqh*, Jurisprudence and the leading schools of religious thought. This was done with the possible intention to equip the later mystics of the Chishtia order to fight back the *ulama* and their conservative attacks. The most prominent example being that of Khwaja Husayni Gesudaraz — ably trained in the orthodox approach and anti-*Wujudi* tendencies of Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud. Thirdly, by decentralising the Chishtia order, Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya ensured that his successors and their progeny reached the farthest corners of the subcontinent and carried on with the theorisation and philosophisation of Chishtia mysticism — along both orthodox and non-orthodox lines.

Shaykh Nizamuddin, who possessed an uncontrollable taste for *sama*, once remarked that in assemblies of *sama* he used to get so moved into the realms of ecstasy that he felt like being in a state of bewilderment. He completely lost himself in the emotions of the heart. In such circumstances he used to present himself at the feet of his mentor Shaykh Fariduddin. Many around him used to remark that it was rather improper for
Nizamuddin to aspire for the position of a Qadi, and rather he was more suited in the path of spirituality, and deserved to be the Shaykh-ul-Islam.\textsuperscript{114}

Evidence for such an emotional overbearing on the part of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya is present in the sources where it is narrated that once the shaykh on listening to a Hindawi verse from the mouth of the qawwal, became so engrossed that he lost himself to the state of ecstasy resulting from the feelings that enveloped his heart. He started dancing (raqs), while listening to the verse. After some hours when the assembly of sama ended Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya still could not overcome the effect of the verse. The qawwal on seeing this state of the listener, decided to start the assembly afresh.\textsuperscript{115} He argued that if the effect of sama does not get dissipated from the heart of an individual immediately, the it is incumbent for the qawwal to continue with the assembly as it was at that time.\textsuperscript{116} Thus it is well evident that Shaykh Nizamuddin was a patron of sama, and that he took avid interest in it is evident from the narration above.

Such was his spiritual perfection that he would savour all the emotions that resulted from participation in such an assembly of sama. His actions resulting from the audition of mystical verses, corresponded to these various forms of emotions that were stirred in his heart while he remain engaged in the contemplation of the Divine. But many who keep themselves aloof from such an exercise do so, on the pretext that it is a forbidden/blasphemous practice, and therefore should not be engaged in.\textsuperscript{117}

However Sufis of the Chishtia silsila would argue that even if sama was a permitted exercise in the eyes of law and religion, skeptics would never have engaged in it; for participation in sama required a certain conditioning of the heart, which only the mystics attain through prolonged austerity in the path

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 205.
\textsuperscript{115} SA, p. 532.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 533.
\textsuperscript{117} FF, p. 190.
of God. 118 Men of the material world find little success in it, and thus remain deprived of the taste of sama.

Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya while enumerating the effects of sama on the listener, wrote that for an individual who maintains a taste (qawwāl) for such a ritual the effect from the Unseen was such that he could not help but lose control over his senses. However there are some who may experience the same degree of ecstasy but never lose control over their faculty of senses. In the opinion of the shaykh true believers are those who, inspite of a severe turmoil of emotions, never lose control over his actions in an assembly of sama. 119 Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya states that in an assembly of sama some individuals get into such intense feelings of ecstasy and remembrance that he forgets the world around him, engaging in a movement of his limbs. During this time even if he is stung by a thorn under his feet he would never realise the pain caused by the same. Rather he would continue with his actions in the same way. However some even while remaining deeply engrossed in the contemplation of their Lord, never happen to lose their senses even for a moment. So that even if a rose petal comes under their feet, the senses are fully aware of its feelings. This in the words of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya should be the demeanor of a true mystic. 120 Even if he is lost in the world of God, he remains in complete control of his senses and faculties.

Badruddin Ishaq recalled that once when Baba Fariduddin Ganj i-Shakr was asked as to why individuals harbouring a taste for sama lose control over their senses, the shaykh replied that such individuals heard the Divine covenant (alastu bi rabbikum) and lost control of their senses. Since then whenever they are in an assembly of sama and are exposed to the sounds of the qawwāl and his poetic verses that sense of senselessness comes

118 Ibid.
119 SA, p. 535.
120 Ibid.
forth from the depths of their hearts, and they cannot help but act otherwise. They are then struck by the awe of the Divine which propels their limbs into action, so that they fail to retain control over their senses and in turn over the movements that result from such failure of faculties.\footnote{Ibid., p. 540.}

**Sama among the Chishtis of Deccan**

With the demise of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya one witnessed a major operational change in the Chishtia order. It was from his period that the order spreads its wings more widely all over the subcontinent, especially to the south of the Vindhyas. He was instrumental in the dissemination of Chishtia principles, through the positioning of his disciples both in the Deccan and other parts of the subcontinent. Thus with personalities like Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib migrating south, the order flourished in the Deccan, carried forward by able progenies like the great Hussayni Gesudaraz, popularly known as Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz. These two great Chishtia mystics were instrumental in disseminating the message of their order deep into the south. At the same time we also witness a proliferation of Chishtia mystical practices, foremost being *sama* in their areas of settlement. Thus a study of *sama* away from the Chishtia heartland in the north of Vindhya is made possible through an analysis of the actions and words of these two great Chishtia mystics.

The ideals of the Chishtia order spread in the Deccan primarily through the efforts of one of Nizamuddin’s most dynamic disciples, Burhanuddin Gharib. More than any of the disciples of the great north Indian shaykh, Burhanuddin was a strict follower of the Chishtia disciplines of mystical devotion—*sama* being the primary among them. Sources attest that he invented “a distinctive style” of dancing (*raqi*) at the height of
ecstasy, which the sources term as “Burhani” after the great shaykh.\textsuperscript{122} Opinions differ as to what was precisely meant by the term “Burhani” – whether it signified the style of dancing or the epithet given to the disciples of Burhanuddin who participated in such a style of dancing. Such was the intensity of Burhanuddin’s participation in the practice of sama, together with his passion while engaged in the exercise of dancing (raqis), that he often used to lose control over his conscious self. Some of Nizamuddin’s disciples, who were also mystics of the same order, passed terse remarks on Burhanuddin’s demeanor after his participation in sama and raqs. To this Burhanuddin would retort back that such was the practice of his great masters of the Chishtia lineage and that it was incumbent upon him to adhere to that hallowed tradition even if it did not find conformation in the great Sufi manual, Awarif ul-Maarif.\textsuperscript{123}

Thus the above incident is illustrative of the Chishti attitude towards sama, as the intrinsic mystical experience leading the mystic towards the perception of God, through emotions of the heart. Mystics of this tradition have time and gain, over tomes and manuals, argued for the essentiality of sama as the ecstatic core of their mystical order, emphasising on it as an indispensable path towards union with God. In the light of such a discourse it is unrealistic to assume that a mystic of the stature of Burhanuddin would be deterred from participating in the sine qua non practice of the Chishtia mystical path, over some reservations by few of his fellow mystics, that too from the same order. Sources therefore enumerate quite vividly the popularity of sama in the mystical circle of Burhanuddin in Khuldabad, especially is disciple Zayn al-din Shirazi. In order to limit the growing amount of reservations against this practice together with upholding its sanctity in the eyes of fellow mystics, both within and beyond the order, and most importantly to ward off any sort of legal interferences from the ruling

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{123} Ruknuddin Kashani, Nafais al-Anfas, p. 49, in, EG, p. 149.
authorities – Burhanuddin and his disciples took the path of laying down a strict framework within which the ritual should be situated, quelling any amount of doubts regarding its sacredness.124

Depending on the psychological and intellectual frame of mind of the seekers of God in such a spiritual assembly, Burhanuddin divided the participants in sama into four groups: Firstly, lawful (jāí) sama is that in which the mystic directs his heart completely towards God, longing only for Him, without leaving any room for distraction in his devotion towards the Beloved. Secondly, sama is permitted (halal) under such conditions in which the listener, the mystic, orients himself mostly towards God, longing mostly for Him and little for His creation. Thirdly, such an exercise of sama is disapproved (makruh) where the listener yearns mostly for the creations of the Almighty, rather than longing for the Creator Himself. But lastly, the most heinous and forbidden (haram) is that type of sama where the listener does not care to pay any heed to the Beloved and his Lord, but rather focuses all his attention on matters of the material world.125 In such circumstances, the participant is engrossed in thoughts of flesh and blood, of deceit and debauchery. Such actions bear little relevance to his spiritual pursuits, and hence place him in the folds of heresy.

It is important to take note of the fact that following his spiritual mentor in north India – Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya – Burhanuddin Gharib too laid down elaborate norms and regulations for pursuing the exercise of sama. The ethical standard set by the Khuldabad saint, incorporated copious elements from Islamic law and theology, in an attempt to regulate the motivation and psychological attitude of the listener.126 But nonetheless Burhanuddin Gharib was a mystic at heart, rather than being a scholar. Once in the khanqah of his mentor Shaykh Nizamuddin, Gharib expressed

126 EG, p. 149.
his inner desire to live life more as a dervish, rather than as a preacher (khatib). The Khuldabad saint found little interest in the sterile debates of scholars on issues of washing hands during ablutions, proper way of reading suras (chapters) from the Quran. All Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib wanted was sacrifice to oneself for the benefit of others, through love and compassion, and at the same time find the path of union to God.127

Such an attitude of Burhanuddin Gharib was also reflected in his approach to sama as elaborated above. But it was the genius of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, who inspite of foretelling that Burhanuddin would remain a dervish, saw the imminent. The rising fervour of orthodoxy pervading the religious ambience of the Delhi Sultanate did not escape the seasoned eyes of the greatest Chishtia mystic, who had spent many a spring under seven consecutive sultans of Delhi. He taught Burhanuddin Gharib the value of accommodating Islamic theological doctrines, within his spiritual ambience, so that Chishtia mysticism in the Deccan did not face an uncertain future. Thus, inspite of being an ecstatic dancer in sama, Burhanuddin Gharib took great care to value Islamic learning in his mystical circle. So that works produced in the khangah of the Khuldabad saint included references from classical Quranic commentaries, hadith, law, treatises on Sufism. Burhanuddin Gharib along with instructing his disciples like Zayn al-din Shirazi, on the essentials of Chishtia mysticism, like sama, took care to train him in the religious sciences, ritual and legal subjects. Thus while Burhanuddin Gharib took much pain to implant the ideals of the Chishtia order in a little known socio-political atmosphere of the Deccan; he was equally alert not to allow sultans and mystics take the upper hand in criticising the spiritual practices of the order in the name of shariah and religion.

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Like his illustrious predecessors Burhanuddin Gharib found little harm in the feelings of "empathetic ecstasy." The Chishtis while regarding sama as the most essential experience of the mystic in his path towards the spiritual truth, allowed novices to participate in such a highly spiritually mature assembly with the express intention of familiarising them with the primary ritual of Chishtia ideology.\textsuperscript{128} This at a certain level meant allowing the novices to exhibit ecstatic feelings imitated from a more mature and spiritually experienced Sufi. Thus the act of empathetic ecstasy (tawajud), became permissible among the Chishti hierarchy, where from the days of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, manuals harped on the necessity of grading ecstasy commensurate to the levels of listeners in such an assembly. Hence, tawajud, rather than being a pollutant to the pure and undiluted feeling of ecstasy (wajd), came to signify a legal method of inducing ecstasy.\textsuperscript{129}

However in the spiritual regime of Burhanuddin, rules were seldom bent. Therefore he regarded it to be a practice followed with the purity of the heart, and hence the resultant effects it ensued on the hearts of the individual should also be pure in origin.\textsuperscript{130} Thus empathetic ecstasy, for Burhanuddin was a defect in sama that should never be indulged into thereby diluting the spiritual content of the assembly. Then what does the poor novice do? Burhanuddin, here, seeks an answer in the words and tradition of his great master, Shaykh Nizamuddin who had little disagreement with his disciples like Fakhruddin Sarradi while they voiced their support for empathetic ecstasy (tawajud) as a proper response to sama.\textsuperscript{131} Thus it came to be recognised in the Chishtia circles as a legitimate form of expression alongside the ecstasy of Divine love. Inspite of his strong reservations against allowing such superficial emotions to rule an assembly of sama, Burhanuddin Gharib had to recognise his master

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{EG}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 150.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 149.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
Nizamuddin's doctrine that if a participant in sama does not experience the beneficence of ecstasy he should nonetheless remember God as al Wajid, or the giver of ecstasy. Since as mystics believe that true ecstasy emanates only from the beneficence of God, and individuals cannot force it in their hearts.

While approving the exhibition of empathetic ecstasy, Burhanuddin advocated that it should be recognised primarily as a form of behaviour in the assembly of sama. In such an ambience the novice who is yet to live the feeling of ecstasy as his more spiritually mature counterpart, ought to conform to the feelings of the latter. Thus when an adept in such an assembly is moved by the feelings of ecstasy it is incumbent on the part of the novice to act in a similar way, thereby providing companionship. Mystics of the Chishtia order emphatically supported this tradition while arguing that in an assembly whenever a mystic rises up in the height of his spiritual state and ecstatic feelings, all his companions should conform to his feelings and rise up in a similar manner. Even if the novice does not completely enter the realms of spiritual ecstasy, but remains limited to the intermediate experiences of “rapture” (jaâb) and “taste” (zawq), he should still stand up in conforming to the rest in the assembly, and remain seated if the rest of the assembly does so. This in turn helps in enhancing the spirit of companionship in such an assembly. Sama being an exercise of a highly receptive character, if one is overcome by the highly ecstatic feelings of spirituality, then the Divine benefits derived from such a feeling benefits all the participants of that assembly. Therefore empathetic ecstasy is essentially a mode of capturing the Divine benefices, for the novice, descending from the Unseen on such a spiritual exercise.

132 Hammad uddin Kashani, Ahsan ul-Aqwal, p. 132, in EG, p. 150.  
133 EG, p. 150.  
134 Ruknuddin Kashani, Shamail al-Aiaqiya, p. 360, in EG, p. 150.  
135 EG, p. 150.
Attempting to quell the controversy concerning the inclusion of music in assemblies of audition (sama), earlier mystics of the tenth-eleventh century harped time and again on the essence of poetry and verse as the central foci of sama. The issue being discussed at length in the earlier chapter, we need not repeat the same. But what is striking is the appropriation of a similar stance by mystics of the Chishtia order when the issue of intellectual participation in such an assembly came to the fore. Such an exercise becomes crucial for the novice when participating in the assembly of sama. Mystics of the Chishtia order repeatedly emphasised on the necessity on the part of the novice to interpret the mystical verses read out in an audition assembly in the true spirit of the Path, concentrating on the attributes of God. It is crucial that the allegorical interpretation (tahmil) of the verses be done in terms of God, as said above, and also on the spiritual master. Only through such a mode of interpretation can the inner (batin) meaning of the verses be unearthed, to aid ones spiritual disposition. But most importantly this interpretation is not to be done except in a theologically correct manner. For it is important to be able to equate the negative and positive features of the verse with similar attributes of the Lord or the master of the order. So that a description of facial beauty of the Beloved, enumerated in the poetical verses, should be attributed to Divine beauty and glory. Likewise the darkness of the curls should mean the awesome qualities of Divine wrath. This is a process intended to aid the novice in developing a feeling of ecstasy, either naturally or through an imitation of that which rose in the heart of the adept.

Listening to poetry was therefore a conscious attempt at producing a deliberate thought of the Beloved, only to be aided in the spiritual path through Divine visitations. Therefore in an assembly of audition one initially experienced words and verses of the qanwal, before applying them to Divine

\[136\] Ibid.
It was the importance of words that steered the thought of the mystic towards contemplating the qualities of his Lord, represented as Divine beauty and majesty, or at times through the opposing features of grace and wrath. In an assembly of sama, these attributes when heard through the medium of verses were applied primarily to the Almighty Lord, but many a times to the master of the assembly— the murshid. It was emphasised in many accounts that while listening to the mystical verses the listener ought to focus his thoughts on the attributes of his master, so that his mind is concentrated on the virtues of his pir. The mystic benefitted from such an assembly of audition as long as he continued interpreting the poetic verses in the idiom of the Divine, or many a times on his master (pir), and this “intellectual approach” was one of the ways a Sufi hoped to achieve Divine guidance thereby elevating himself to the realms of spiritual ecstasy.

Burhanuddin’s concept of direct spirituality although originates within the assembly of sama, yet conceives its reality beyond the boundaries of such a regulated discipline. It is when the mystic matures enough to recognise the signs of divinity in all that he sees around him, that he is capable of taking himself beyond the limits of contemplation only through the exercise of audition. The mystic then finds himself in such a spiritual station where he is capable of perceiving the attributes of the Divine quite directly, without the aid of any medium, here poetry. It is the unveiling of the inner eye that helps him visualise, if not materially, the attributes of God, in everything that he sees in the world of creation. All creations therefore make him remember the ultimate Creator. At such a stage the simple words and phrases of the assembly of sama, have little impact upon him, so as to stir in his heart the emotions of Divine love. Thus what they hear at this point are not mere words of the mouth, but those from the Unseen, which

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137 Ibid., p. 151.
138 Ibid.
139 Ruknuddin Kashani, Shamail al-Ataqiya, p. 357, in EG, p. 151.
are not directly related to the perceptions of words and voice, but tend to represent the virtue of internal hearing, through the ear of the heart.

When the listener is capable of deciphering the hidden attributes of God, in the verses of the qawwal, in an assembly of sama, he is then overcome by feelings of "rapture" (jaaz), and is drawn towards God by a sense of irresistible attraction. Burhanuddin Gharib would argue that the expression of the Divine is made evident even in the face of the listener.\textsuperscript{140} Sama, being a revelation of the real has two kinds of manifestations in the face of the listener: Firstly, when misfortune descends on the listener in the form of Divine wrath and separation, the face turns pale from apprehension. The turmoil that his heart goes through, emanating from a sense of losing the favour of his Beloved, is made evident when his face turns pallid. Thus the first colour of sama is yellow. Secondly, when the listener gains from the Divine mercy, his face blushes with happiness expecting nearness to, beneficence from, and union with the Beloved. His exhilaration finds expression in the hue of his face, and hence the colour is red. Thus for Burhanuddin, sama is not only expressive of the feelings of the heart, but is also demonstrative of the same through the changing facial contours of the listener.

Thus Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib was instrumental in establishing the spirit of the Chishtia order in the Deccan, through the institutionalisation of its most important spiritual exercise, sama. It was to the genius of this great saint that at a time when this ritual was mired in legal tussles and royal controversies, he successfully upheld the sanctity of the practice, through a strict conformation to both the classical tradition and the Chishtia lineage, stretching beyond territorial borders. Burhanuddin was instrumental in laying importance on the ethical standard of individual participants of sama, so that his insistence on proper spiritual interpretation

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 358.
of the poetical verses became the thumb rule in the intellectual realm of Chishtia *sama* practices. While determining the psychological basis of *sama* as one of the most profound spiritual exercises in the realm of Islamic mysticism, Burhanuddin laid utmost emphasis on contextualising *sama* through Sufi ethics, which must never be compromised if one was to derive Divine benefits from such an assembly. His details of *adab* concerning this exercise, which will be discussed in a later section on this characteristic of *sama*, laid a strong anti-pollutant platform for a regularisation of the discipline, while eliminating from its path any traces of egotism and self important attitude which tend to infiltrate the heart of the lay individual. Thus one finds the purity with which *sama* was practiced in the Chishtia cradle of north India, being emulated in the south, while maintaining similar standards of discipline and unadulterated intentions, which continued to inspire young mystics in the path of higher spiritual experience.

**Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz and his Practice of *Sama***

One of the most enthusiastic supporters of the doctrine of *Wahadat ul-Shuhud* or 'Unity of Witnessing' was none other than Sayyid Muhammad bin Yusuf al- Hussaini, more popularly known as Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz (1321-1422 A.D), the illustrious disciple of Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud Raushan Chirag i-Delhi. Gesudaraz's unremitting opposition to the *Wujudi* doctrines of Ibn al- Arabi, manifested the strong *Shuhudi* beliefs he followed in his later writings.141 However the scope of this chapter does not provide the liberty to engage in such literary and doctrinal polemics. Rather it is intended that we try and throw some light on the ritualistic dimensions of Gesudaraz's mystical life, more particularly on the practice of *sama*.

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The Chishtia Sufis though as orthodox as their fellow mystical order of the Suhrawardi in their compliance to the tenets of the *shariah*, were the greatest patrons of the practice of *sama*, as elaborated above. Thus with the dissemination of the *silsila* to the farthest corners of the subcontinent, we find a parallel spread of its ideals and institutions, not to mention of its rituals and devotional practices. *Sama* proved to be no exception in this regard. Thus we have seen the spread of the practice from the hallowed Chishtia *jamaat khanas* of north India, to a new socio-political environment in the south. The ritual made immortal through the support of its greatest benefactor- Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, received a new lease of life in the south, courtesy the untiring genius of Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib, the disciple of the legendary north Indian Awliya. As discussed above Burhanuddin was instrumental in making the ritual central to the functioning of the Chishtia order in the south, much in accordance to what his master had successfully done in the neighbourhood of the Delhi Sultans. He not only made it popular but at the same time regularised and protected its existence, amidst a little known socio-cultural terrain.

His efforts bore fruit and reached its apogee under the masterful guidance of the leading and most enigmatic of the Chishtia masters in the south- Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz. Following up on the hard work of Burhanuddin, Gesudaraz, laid down the ideals and principles of the Chishtia order in the south, which in the subsequent years came to constitute the most authoritative manual of the *silsila*, guiding masters towards the tough path of spiritual maturity.\textsuperscript{142} Although Gesudaraz witnessed the popularity of the ritual of *sama*, while making preparations for his new life in the south, his lasting contribution lies in the institutionalisation of *sama*, as a highly cherished ritual of the Chishtia order. With this he also took the initiative to formulate the doctrines and articulate the traditions behind this ritual,

\textsuperscript{142} Khaitmah.
together with allowing it at a hallowed place in the myriad lanes of Chishtia ritualistic practices.\textsuperscript{143} This succeeded in providing shape and a backbone to the numerous writings he undertook in the subject of mysticism, more particularly \textit{sama}.

Gesudaraz being an ardent lover of \textit{sama} considered it by no means an ordinary musical party. Rather for him signified a gathering of men seeking spiritual ascent and close proximity to God. Going beyond the ordinary mode of worship, \textit{sama} constituted the ‘specific path’ leading to God, and should therefore be considered as one of the primary means of seeking the Beloved.\textsuperscript{144} He conformed to the views expressed by Sufis of the early period, that together with prayer (\textit{salaah}), fasting (\textit{saum}) and reciting of the Quran (\textit{telawat}), \textit{sama} too lead an individual closer to God. Thus it constitutes the closest path which Sufis follow in their quest for the Beloved. In the light of such profound qualities attached to a particular ritual, the question which seems to prop up naturally concerns the reason behind its importance. What sort of advantage, spiritual and otherwise, does \textit{sama} have over the mandatory religious disciplines? Why is it considered to be more effective in realising spiritual truths? And lastly, why do mystics seem to prefer it over the mandatory religious tenets of Islam? The answer provided by Gesudaraz in his writings attempts to solve all doubts raised by the questions posed above. He would argue that the primary necessity for mystic travelling on the road of spirituality towards God was to interiorise the qualities of contemplation and thought – centering on the attributes and essence of the Lord. \textit{Sama} being an assembly of audition, is possibly the best way to achieve the unity of thought and contemplation (\textit{tawajjuh}), which in turn were the supreme of all the fortunes (\textit{jami\ i- sa'adatha}) which a mystic can hope to achieve in this path of God. Gesudaraz further asserts that

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} SL, p. 492.
'triumph in my affair' (fath-i kar-i man) was achieved through extensive recitation of the Quran145 and participation in sama.146

Gesudaraz considered the recitation of the Quran together with participation in sama to be the most appropriate combination for a Sufi in his search for the Divine. Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya supported this practice and he argued that multiple benefits befall on the Sufi as he participates in an exercise containing a combination of recitation (tilawai) and sama. Such an exercise bears more fruit than engaging simply in daily prayers and recitation of the Quran. These dry exercises are meant only for those who spend their thoughts between opposing forces of ‘fear’ (khawf) and ‘hope’ (raji).147 Mystics, who engage themselves in nothing but love of God, prefer the earlier exercise. Thus Gesudaraz was emphatic when advocating his support in favor of sama and always begun and ended the practice with a recitation of the Quran.

Being a stickler for rules, Gesudaraz followed the tenets of religion very closely. But at the same time he was not ready to accept any criticism against sama. His unflinching support for this exercise can be discerned from his reference to Shaykh Maudud Chishti’s statement on sama. When enquired on the efficacy of sama over prayers, the latter replied that when a person observes prayers with all the formalities of the practice, he swings between extreme emotions of fear and hope. He remains unsure whether his prayers will be accepted or not. Sama on the other hand is a ritual that is one of the attractions (jadhbah) emanating from the all Merciful (al-rahman).148 Creations and emotions of the world hold little importance in such engagements with the Divine. While prayers are doubtful of being heard and accepted (gabul), engagement with sama is an acceptance within itself (ayn i-

145 The importance of reciting the Quran (tilawat) as a means of spiritual succor for the Sufis has been discussed in Chapter I, which also elaborates on the Chishtia approach to utilising the revealed text for their spiritual benefits.
146 SM, p. 90.
147 Khati'mah, p. 70.
148 AA, pp. 103-04.
qabul). It is probable that Gesudaraz’s thoughts on ‘attraction’ (jadhbah) may have been influenced by his master Shaykh Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Delhi’s emotions on the subject who argued that jadhbah was actually ‘Divine love’ (muhabbat-i-khwasi) bestowed exclusively on those who are brought closer to Almighty through meditation (muraqaba).

Thus for Gesudaraz, ‘remembrance’ (zikr), ‘meditation’ (muraqaba) and ‘prayer’ (salaat) being the essentialities of religious discipline, cannot under any circumstances supercede sama which is an exercise in the presence of the Divine, in the glory of His essences.

Gesudaraz severely criticised those who regarded sama as nothing more than a means of indulging in pleasure and frivolity. The ulama and theologians were foremost in this category of criticising the ritual, had little right to declare such a practice as unlawful, since they were not aware of the means and aims that sama caters to. They were men of the world, and hence their point of view was limited to worldly parameters, incapable to looking beyond it, into the sphere of the Unseen. Thus they were alien to the path of spiritual enlightenment, and hence oblivious to the significance of terms like, pain (dard), seeking (talabi) and burning (su%a) as they bear for the Sufi. The satire of Gesudaraz is revealing in his statement where he says ‘What a strange (ajab) he is! He refers to agitation (idirab), crying (giryah), grief (andih) and sorrow (huz%a) as a sport.’ These emotions, raging in the heart of the mystic, hold the key towards understanding the essence of the ritual from the eyes of a Sufi. Since the theologians are unworthy to fathom out the significance of this ritual, in the spiritual plane of the listener, it is prudent that he observes silence in such Divine matters.

During his stay in Delhi Khwaja Gesudaraz was greeted with such extreme hatred and ire of the ulama whose intolerant attitude rested on the

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149 Hamid Qalandar, Khair ul-Majaks, p. 28.
150 AA, p. 103.
151 Khatimah, pp. 34-35.
152 Ibid.
pretext that *sama* was an innovation by Sufis within the religious profile of Islam, and their indulgence in such a practice with the accompaniment of music was completely illegal in the eyes of the *shariah* and hence blasphemous for any devout Muslim. Time and again the *ulama* approached the Sultans to issue verdicts opposing the practice of *sama* among the Sufis, on the ground that it was in conformity to the musical tradition of the resident Hindu population, and sought to pollute the faith of Islam by attempting 'a synthesis between the Muslim and Hindu artistic traditions.'\(^{153}\)

A more direct allegation was leveled against Gesudaraz by the *ulama* during the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388 A.D.), in the sense that the Chishtia mystic entertained listeners who prostrated before him in the assembly of *sama*. Although they tried their best to impose a ban on the spiritual assembly of the Chishtia master, the Sultan refrained from taking such an extreme step, and requested the saint to participate in *sama* in seclusion, so that the ambience of the assembly does not get polluted through un-Islamic practices. Gesudaraz acceded to the request and henceforth enjoyed *sama* from within a room with a curtain separating him from the rest of the participants.\(^{154}\)

Gesudaraz was quick to learn from the shifting religious character of the Sultanate. So that, from his time we witness a dominance of *Shuhudi* doctrines within the folds of Chishtia mysticism – a departure from their age old *Wujudi* principle. When Gesudaraz moved to the Deccan, he worked earnestly to bridge the gap between *Ahl-i-Sahir* and *Ahl-i-Batin*, which had broadened as a result of *Wujudi* doctrines.\(^{155}\) At the same time Gesudaraz carried on the mantle of spreading Chishtia Sufism in Gulbarga, the capital of the Bahamani sultans, combining it with an erudite scholarship on varying issues of Quranic commentaries, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, and mystical

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\(^{154}\) Samani, *Styar-i-Muhammadi*, pp. 87-88

\(^{155}\) Siddiqui, *The Bahamani Sufi Orders*, p. 49.
thought. Such efforts inspired the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of the Bahamani capital with such vigour, that it soon turned out to be a great center of Chishtia learning. Although Gesudaraz incorporated certain new elements into this teaching he nonetheless retained the core of Chishtia mystical doctrines.

Two things were achieved in this end — firstly, Gesudaraz, by conforming to the dominant religious trends of the era, succeeded in silencing all those critics, both ulama and sultan, who were ever agile to raise a finger towards the Chishtia mystical practice of sama on grounds of religion and sanctity. Secondly, he enlisted the support of the nascent Bahamani kingdom by settling down in Gulbarga. With the support of Sultan Firus Shah Bahamani, Gesudaraz worked for the organisation of the Chishtia order together with the spiritual and moral upliftment of the resident population.

Being a torchbearer of the Chishtia tradition Khwaja Gesudaraz had to ensure the survival and continuation of the core Chishtia practice of sama. In order to counter the orthodoxy of the Tughlaq ruling house against the practice, Gesudaraz successfully enlisted complete support of the Bahamani sultans, which at the same time provided a counter-weight to any opposition from the ulama. Secondly, he fervently patronised local dialects and culture, so that during his time we witness the introduction of Deccani Urdu or Hindavi, as discussed below, as a language for the poetic verses read out in the assemblies of sama. The Bahamani sultans on the other hand, who came to existence in 1347 A.D. through rebellion against the Tughlaqs of Daulatabad, used his services as the premier Sufi saint and scholar of the Chishtia order, to advance the intellectual ambience of Gulbarga. They extended their complete patronage to the Chishtia master, thereby strengthening their rule in the teeth of Tughlaq opposition, and at the same

156 Ibid., p.58.
time legitimising their rule in the eyes of the local population who thronged at the door of Khwaja Gesudaraz for spiritual and academic guidance together with blessings from the saint.

However it does not necessarily mean that Gesudaraz was a proponent of sama in whatever means possible. Rather his writings reflect his strict viewpoint on the assembly. While arguing for its legality, Gesudaraz laid down its legal aspects, which categorised sama into four types, depending on the intent and spiritual maturity of the listener.\textsuperscript{157} sama is permitted (halal) when the thoughts of the listener are fixed exclusively on the thoughts of Reality and Truth. It is completely forbidden (haram) when the listener allows his mind to stray towards worldly ideas. When the listener vacillates between thoughts of the Divine and the material world, and is not able to fix on thoughts on either, then sama is desirable (makruh). However sama is permissible (mubah) when the listener tries and focuses his thoughts more towards the Divine than affairs of the world.\textsuperscript{158} Thus it can be argued that Gesudaraz, though an avid defender of the practice, does not consider it suitable for all. Rather keeping in mind the sanctity of the ritual he enumerates the degree of devotion one ought to bear in his heart while participating in such an assembly.

The two very important aspects of sama, where Gesudaraz makes a firm intervention, are those that concern the issue of participation. Firstly, is the problem of the common masses participating in sama. Like his illustrious predecessors in the north, Gesudaraz too did not impose a complete sanction on the participation of the lay in assemblies of sama. However while elucidating on the qualities of listeners in such an assembly the shaykh insisted that the listener (mustami) should be an individual of high intellect (sahib i-firasat) and to be worthy of participating in such a spiritually charged

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p.127.
\textsuperscript{158} This categorisation basically follows the pattern of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya as elaborated above.

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assembly he should have an experience of suffering in love (ba dard) which in the mystical connotation is greatly different from worldly love and attraction, leading to nothing but vain pleasures in the heart of the individual.\(^{159}\) Thus the above preconditions make a clear distinction between lay individuals and those who possess a sharp intellect together with a receptive heart. Gesudaraz draws his conclusion that sama is not for everybody, and a Sufi who holds a taste (dhawiq) for participation in sama should stay away from any such assembly where all sorts of people (bar jins) gather in to listen to words of poetry.

Gesudaraz's reservations for the common masses participating in such a spiritual assembly is made amply clear when he states that sama is 'desireable' to the proficient (muntabiyân), 'allowable' to the beginners (mubtadiyân) and intermediate (mutawassitân), but is completely 'undesirable' for the common masses. This categorisation leads us to the second point in discussion, that of the participation of novices in the assembly of sama. The above statement is also reflective of the fact that Gesudaraz advocated sama for 'beginners'. But at the same time he created an amount of ambiguity by referring to Junayd, founder of the Baghdad school of Sufism, who was skeptic regarding the practice and argued that if a novice participated in sama it signified that there was an element of idleness left in him.\(^{160}\) Thus if Gesudaraz was to follow the ideal of Junayd in this respect, then it was improper on his part to advocate the participation of novices in the ritual of sama.

Yet at the same time the Shaykh argued that participation in an assembly of audition has the power of purifying the soul of the novice from the impurities of the material world.\(^{161}\) Thus sama acted as a cleanser for the heart of a young listener in the path of spirituality. While Suhrawardi mystics

\(^{159}\) Khaiimah, p. 34.
\(^{160}\) Hussaini, Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni i-Gisudaraç, p. 129.
\(^{161}\) Ibid.
voiced against the audition of ghazals and descriptive poetry (al-awsaq) in the assembly of sama, Chishtia mystics like Gesudaraz himself defended the practice of listening to poetical verses as a means of stirring up the emotions of the heart.\textsuperscript{162} But as a mode of precaution against distractions by and misinterpretation of the same, he stated that the young disciple (murid) should focus all his attention on the personality of his master (pir).\textsuperscript{163} Therefore for the novice sama remained an essential spiritual practice guiding him in the realm of the Divine.

\textit{Sama} for Khwaja Bandanawaz was no ordinary musical assembly for the pleasure of the heart. It was a powerful ritual which could elevate the hearts of men seeking spiritual nourishment with the help of poetry and music. Those who favoured sama knew it was no commonplace gathering of men, but a highly structured ritual capable of taking a person away from his self. Following the fabled dictum of the great Egyptian mystic, Dhun Nun al-Misri, Shaykh Gesudaraz qualified sama as an exercise towards the Divine, and those who participated in it, with a pure heart, received ‘visitations’ (\textit{warid}) from the Unseen (\textit{ghayb}), which drew hearts towards a realisation of the Truth (\textit{haqq}).\textsuperscript{164} Hence any individual who listened through this Truth (\textit{ba haqq}) reaches God (\textit{tahaqqaq}), while at the same time anyone who listened through the carnal self fell into heresy (\textit{ta^afidaq}).\textsuperscript{165}

Although Khwaja Gesudaraz wholly conformed to the ideology of the Egyptian mystic in interpreting the essence of sama, his most important contribution was in the realm of elaborating the concept of Truth (\textit{haqq}). Gesudaraz states that there are multiple implications attached to the idea of Truth. In an assembly of audition (\textit{mehjil i-sama}) the listener finds himself attached to the glorious attribute of Truth, so that he naturally becomes an adept (\textit{muhaqqiq} and \textit{mutahaqqiq}) in the path of Truth. Under such

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{162}] Khatimah, p. 158.
\item[\textsuperscript{163}] Ibid., p. 68.
\item[\textsuperscript{164}] Hussaini, Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni i-Gisudaras, p. 135.
\item[\textsuperscript{165}] Ibid., p. 136.
\end{itemize}
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circumstances whatever he listens to in the assembly, is essentially because of this attribute of Truth, which in turn places him closer to God.\textsuperscript{166}

The next level concerns the implied meaning of Truth, which is many a times mistaken by the listener. A participant in the assembly of audition thinks that by virtue of his presence in the physical space, where one attempts to realise the Divine Truth, he is closer to the realm of Truth.\textsuperscript{167} But a mere attachment to the attribute (\textit{sifat}) of Truth is not enough, for the listener must realise the essence of Truth to be benefited by its attributes. Thus although the listener thinks he is listening to the Truth, but in actuality he remains engrossed with his own self (\textit{khudi}) and the carnal self (\textit{nafs i-nafsaniyat}), rather than losing his self (\textit{be khudi}) and destroying his lower soul. All these conditions, when present in an individual taking part in an assembly of \textit{sama} leads him to nowhere but heresy (\textit{taqaddaqah}).\textsuperscript{168}

When a listener gets genuinely involved in the assembly of audition (\textit{mehfil i- sama}) he is likely to receive such ‘visitations’ (\textit{wuri}), as described above, from the Unseen (\textit{ghayb}). This experience equips the hearer with a strange degree of power (\textit{quwwat}) which the individual can never hope to achieve when he is not in \textit{sama}. He no longer remains in possession of his sound senses (\textit{sabib quwa}), and in the process is taken away from his conscious self. It is only when he is away from his self, that he feels the emotional upsurge wrought by Divine beneficence, which then stirs the latent feelings of his heart, and in turn agitates his calm demeanor (\textit{dar tasarruf i- khud awurdah}).\textsuperscript{169}

Khwaja Gesudaraz considered an experience of Divine visitation as crucial towards a complete realisation of the beneficence of \textit{sama}. Based on this theoretical disposition, he categorised \textit{sama} into three kinds: Firstly, aggressive \textit{sama} is one where the listener is effected by the proceedings of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[166] Ibid.
\item[167] Ibid, p. 135.
\item[168] Ibid.
\item[169] Ibid.
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the assembly at the very beginning. Such is the power of recitation and emotional outburst of the qawwal, that the listener is instantly overcome by severe agitation in his heart, which immediately takes control of his senses, and spreads rapidly to his limbs. Under such influences people become uncontrollable, evident through violent movement of their limbs and shaking of the head. In the second category, sama takes control of an individual and does not leave him, until he has achieved perfection through a constant process of contemplation and tahmil. It is only when the individual is benefitted from the Unseen, does the effect of sama completely dissipates. The listener too considers such sama as a Divine blessing and accepts it willingly as a spiritual gain (qanimat i- tasawwuf). The third type of sama is that where the listener achieves his spiritual destination through the process of confrontation and conformation with his colleagues in the assembly of sama. It is highly probable that though Khwaja Gesudaraz does not pronounce explicitly, but he refers to the act of ‘empathetic ecstasy’ (tawajud), discussed above in the spiritual context of Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib, the illustrious Chishtia shaykh. The latter elaborated on this point while stating that the conformity of the individual was attempted towards an inducement of ecstasy (wajd), through tawajud; while at the same time to achieve actual conformity (wafaq) through imitation (tawafiq).

Thus Gesudaraz does not completely undermine the possibility of tawajud in an assembly of audition. Rather he is considerate towards such a possibility and acknowledges it by incorporating the same in his categorisation of sama. In a way it is in accord to the Prophetic lineage that people in proximity to blessed individuals should try and imitate their

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170 Khatimah, p. 37.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
173 Ibid., p. 38.
174 Ibid.
actions, so that an indirect effect of the beneficence falls on those who are unable to arouse the blessings from the Unseen. But, more importantly it upholds the ideological principle of the Chishtia order which recognised the worth of empathetic ecstasy as a viable means of moving closer towards the blessings of the Divine.\textsuperscript{175} It was the uniqueness of the Chishtia order that their spirited defense of \textit{sama}, did not necessarily stand only on the dry pillars of rules and moral conduct. But rather they recognised the variations in spiritual maturity and hence were sympathetic towards those who struggled to reach such heights of mystical attainment. Shaykh Gesudaraz being one of the last great authorities of the mystical order (\textit{silsila}) in the Deccan, could not have necessarily overlooked this crucial ideological disposition of his masters. It is to his credit that the practice of \textit{tawajud} was forever ingrained in the Chishtia doctrinal manuals.

Being liberal at heart and more considerate than mystics of Central Asia, Gesudaraz nonetheless had much to say about the rules and regulations that should guide an assembly of \textit{sama}. A proper compliance with these tenets was mandatory if such a gathering was to be transformed into a unique mode of worship, rather than just being a pleasure meet. I propose to deal with the details of the rules and regulations, in a separate section, later. For the moment the discussion should look deeper into the ideals of Gesudaraz's message, while trying to locate them in the actions of his successors.

The difficulty of conforming to the principles laid down by Khwaja Bandanawaz, together with upholding the ideals he set towards the ritual of \textit{sama}, notwithstanding; attempts are made even to this day to organise the assembly of \textit{sama}, through compliance to all the regulations laid down by this legendary Chishtia mystic. Such a \textit{sama} that is held during the days of his

\textsuperscript{175} Hussaini, \textit{Sayyid Muhammud al-Husayni i-Gisudara}, p. 135.
urs celebration at Gulbarga, is termed as ‘Bund Sama’ or closed assembly.\footnote{Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, “Bund Sama”, Islamic Culture, July 1970, p. 181.} It is titled as such so as to differentiate it from the more popular musical assemblies that became a part of the dargah complex in the days after Bandanawaz. Bund Sama is held strictly under the rules laid down by the Shaykh himself. Being an assembly of much spiritual significance very few individuals are allowed in it, mostly adepts. The small size of the assembly make it easy to regulate, and moreover produces a conducive ambience for intense concentration and meditation. The sacred gaddi (cushion), on which Khwaja Bandanawaz used to sit, is placed in front of the sajjada nashin, who then initiates the assembly. The audition session is accompanied by only a pair of small tambourines (duff), with the strict exclusion of all sorts of musical instruments, the reason for which will be elaborated later. The couplets are read out in the traditional form, both in Hindavi and Persian, as Khwaja Bandanawaz preferred it.\footnote{Ibid.} Some of them being his own creations and some by his devotees.

A prolific author in both Indian and non Indian languages, Khwaja Bandanawaz’s assembly of sama generally constituted of odes, poems and hymns in Persian and Hindavi (Deccani Urdu). As regards the medium of sama Shaykh Bandanawaz preferred Persian because for him ‘Only in the sweet and tender melody of Persian poetry is it possible to do justice to the feelings and emotions surging in the heart of the singer.’\footnote{SM, p. 71.} However Shaykh Bandanawaz realised the demands of the age and the social milieu he had situated himself in. Thus, inspite of characterising sama as a ritual unfit for the uninitiated, Khwaja Gesudaraz took measures to increase its popularity, together with making the verses intelligible to the common masses. Towards this end he encouraged the inclusion of Hindavi verses in assemblies of sama arguing that ‘Hindavi verses are usually soft, sweet and touching. The tunes

\footnote{Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, “Bund Sama”, Islamic Culture, July 1970, p. 181.} \footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{SM, p. 71.}
are also soft and tender like the couplets, which induce humility and submission."\textsuperscript{179} Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz therefore became the first among the Chishtia mystics to use Hindavi as a means of active communication and express his thoughts and ideas through Deccani Urdu poetry.

In the assembly of Bund Sama, these couplets written in Deccani Urdu by Khwaja Sahib himself together with his disciples are recited with the accompaniment of the tambourine, invoking the spiritual blessings of the great south Indian Chishtia Sufi.\textsuperscript{180} An analysis of his verses, read out in an assembly of sama would provide us some idea as to the mystical ideals and attributes he adhered to throughout his lifetime.

\begin{quote}
\begin{align*}
\text{Aj birahi ki aag mujane laage re} \\
\text{Mu ka dikhiye kar radi kursi laageye} \\
\text{Aj birahi ki aag mujane laage re} \\
\text{Ud batti ka shor mor ujala re} \\
\text{Nisdin jalti mor mashakb mor sala re} \\
\text{Aisi sada saujalti mirch ki khala re} \\
\text{Hal hawala re, aj birahi ki aag mujane laage re} \\
\text{Han Mohammad Hussaini tu mera lala re} \\
\text{Nisdin jalti mor mashakb mor sala re} \\
\text{Aisi sada saujalti mirch ki khala re} \\
\text{Hal hawala re, aj birahi ki aag mujane laage re}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Translation:} The fire of separation has kindled

Today in my body and soul

My Beloved is on the throne

Himself and His splendor on display

I am burning in the fire of love today

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{180} Hussaini, "Bund Sama", p. 181.
Incense burns night and day
Likewise I am being burnt always
By my Beloved, who is more pungent than a chilli
This is the state and condition which I am passing through
The fire of separation has kindled
Today in my body and soul
Yes! You are my beloved, O Muhammad Hussaini!
You are the one, who night and day
Is making me suffer and burn always
You my Beloved, who is more pungent than a chili
This is the state and condition which I am passing through
The fire of separation has kindled
Today in my body and soul

This verse above, ably expresses Gesudaraz’s spiritual maturity together with providing an idea of the emotions that surge in his heart, in an assembly of audition. Khwaja said that sama was a blessing from the Unseen, which burned in the heart of the listener feelings of separation and longing for the Beloved.181 It was under the influence of such emotions, as Baba Fariduddin Shakrganj would rightly remark, that a mystic continues to burn in the fire that separates him from his Beloved.182 So that consequently nothing remains of the mystic, for he completely annihilates himself in the essence of the Lord. It is this condition of separation that, in the words of Khwaja Bandanawaz, motivates an individual in an assembly of sama in his journey towards the Beloved. At the end, when he actually beholds his Lord, he is overrun by emotions of ecstasy. The lover, who places himself in the pyre of contemplation, each and everyday, waits for his Beloved to unveil His glory. In this mystical path towards experiencing the Divine, sama provides the most effective way of expressing love for the Almighty Lord, who blesses

\[^{181}\text{Ibid., pp. 178-79.}\]
\[^{182}\text{SA, p. 535.}\]

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his creations through enlightenment of knowledge and Divine beneficence.
Sama is essentially a means of making love to God who makes his devoted
worshipper burn and suffer in the pyre of separation, where only the
mystical adept are allowed to enter and participate.

While all would agree to the fact that sama is a major facilitator in
bringing the Sufi closer to his aim of union with God; the question that
more often than supposed raises its head concerns the modus operandi of the
exercise. How does an assembly of sama function so as to bring a worldly
individual close to a other worldly force? What method does a mystic follow
in the path of spiritual realisation? How does simple love poetry invoke such
strong feelings of spirituality in the heart of a Sufi? Most importantly, what
is the key to separating an apparent worldly approach from taking over the
minds gathered in such an assembly?

The answer to these knotty queries lies in the functioning of sama in
the spiritual plane. As mentioned above, in the words of Shaykh
Nizamuddin himself, that it was his spiritual disposition that enabled him to
extract the maximum available benefit from an assembly of sama. And the
most crucial step towards acquiring this mystical ability lay in the act of
correlation (tabmil). It was through this element of mystical training that the
Shaykh was able to relate an apparently simple verse to the attributes of his
master Baba Fariduddin Ganj i-Shakr, thereby gaining from the assembly.
Thus a Chishtia master like Shaykh Bandanawaz allowed the usage of terms
signifying cheek, mole etc. in an assembly of sama, keeping in mind the
crucial condition that all these descriptions must be spiritually related (tabmil)
to his preceptor, or else to God. It is a proper application of the process
of tabmil that enables the listener to move beyond the apparent literary
meanings of the verses towards a deeper analysis of the poetic verses
thereby giving rise to feelings and emotions arising in the heart of the

183 FF, pp. 109-110.
184 Khaitmah, pp. 26-29.
listener. An analysis of the process of *tahmil* is crucial if one is to fully comprehend the operational dimensions, together with the process of Divine benefaction, underlying an assembly of *sama*.

In the verse above Shaykh Gesudaraz begins with a description of his condition, in an assembly of *sama*, realised through the pains and pangs of separation. It must be noted that one of the primary motives of the assembly of *sama* was to relieve the soul from the pain and burning of separation, through union with the Beloved. It is this feeling of separation that rages a fire in the heart of the mystic. And this feeling is released and vividly expressed only when the thoughts of the Beloved stir the heart. Here the Beloved of Shaykh Gesudaraz beholds Himself for His lover, in full splendour and magnificence that greatly agitates the heart of the lover. This fulfills the primary criterion of attending an assembly of *sama* — purity of the heart experiencing untold sufferings in love.

The lover burns, incessantly, day and night, waiting for his Beloved. A sense of hidden pain pierces the heart of the lover, who yearns away in an unquenched quest for the Beloved. The breath of the mystic burns through the heart as the lamenting cry of separation rends his soul of all calmness. *Birahe ki aag* (fire of separation) is in a sense an improvisation of ideas, where the usual imagery of a lover burning himself in the fire of love, is juxtaposed with that of a sense of intense lament that melts the heart as it bears the pains of separation. It is interesting to note here, the inclusion of the idea of body together with that of the soul. The mystic in a *mehfil i-sama* is seldom conscious of his physicality, which is stirred into movement with a simultaneous agitation of the heart. So unconscious of the self comes from *ecstasy* (*wajd*) which always stands outside the physical boundaries of a Sufi. It is only in intense moments of ecstasy and rapture that the physical being of the Sufi is thrown into a bewildering movement.
However in the verse above there is little sense of physical agitation, but more of a painful state of experiencing the Divine, through the pangs of separation. If the latter becomes durable and long lasting then it leads to more painful emotions. As the master of Deccani dialect, Wali Deccani (1667-1707) put so eloquently that ‘the best distraction is pursuit of love.’ And the pursuit of love is never easy, for it burns the lover and matures the heart towards a deeper spiritual meaning. In this path therefore pain is the course towards insight. This is precisely the condition the above verse intends to portray when it harps upon repeatedly hal bawala re. It repeatedly emphasises upon the point that this state of despair is a direct result of the process of burning, in the fire of separation which rages through the heart of the mystic.

Khwaja Gesudaraz states that in an assembly of sama it is not always the case that what the qawwal recites is in accordance with the various stations punctuating the mystical path. It can so happen that the verse recited has no affiliation to the various stages (maqam), of the mystical path or to the variety of states (hal) a mystic experiences while going through the experience of audition. Does it then defy the norms of the assembly? What method should a mystic follow to extract the benefits from the verse? Gesudaraz would argue that the only way a mystic can reach the depths of understanding the poetical verse is through following the principle of correlation (tahmil). The primary form of tahmil is through the process of attaching one universal truth (kulli haqiqat) to another universal truth. In the same way a mystic can attach a mystical state (hal) to another mystical state, an anecdote (hikayat) to another anecdote, and so on. This operates when we consider the universal truth, mystical state and anecdote, heard in the assembly of sama as the metaphor (majaz) and then try and relate it to the

185 Ibid., p. 41.
186 Ibid., p. 31.
187 Ibid., p. 32.
reality (haqiqat). It is through such a process that the intention of the mystic is purified and he is made capable of understanding the significance of the verses listened to in the audition assembly, gaining from the reality of correlation, thereby incorporating himself among the people of reality (mardan i- haqiqat).¹⁸⁸

Before moving on to the second variety of tahmil, as elaborated by Khwaja Bandanawaz, it is prudent to work on the functionality of the above. The basic criterion for the first type of tahmil to work beneficially for the mystic is his ability to relate it to the correct form of realities (haqiqat).¹⁸⁹ In an assembly of sama, whenever a mystic hears the verses of poetry it is incumbent upon him to associate the attributes with his master (pir), like in the instance of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, as discussed above. The master here is the beloved of the listener, and it is only under such circumstances that sama is beneficial for the participant. The image of the pir should always remain in the mind of the mystic so that whenever he chances to hear any verse containing a spiritual message, he should remember his master, and his qualities.¹⁹⁰ This in turn leads to the complete understanding of the verses read out in the assembly, which then aids the mystic in his journey towards the spiritual path.

In the verse above the qawwal places Muhammad Hussaini Gesudaraz in the position of the beloved. He is the master of the assembly and hence all his disciples should focus their attention on him, when they sit to participate in sama. So fascinating is the power of the beloved’s beauty that the lover cannot hold himself back from declaring the yearning of desire and the burning of separation. Such is the lover’s fever of passion that lost in this state of ecstasy he calls out to his beloved day and night. In remembering the beloved such is the emotional overbearing of the lover

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
¹⁹⁰ FF, pp. 109-110.
that he finds no peace and calmness of the heart. Rather he pushes himself through the path of love’s torment suffering in the fire of separation, from his beloved.

In the last couplet of the poetic composition the cycle is repeated where the first couplet resurfaces, only to strengthen the message of the composition. Surely this is a composition where the rhythmical style and pattern has been maintained only to carry forward the centrality of the idea – the complex, yet aesthetic, position of the lover and the beloved. It is the experience of hearing that invokes the spirit of the poem set to music, together with the complexities of the message it attempts to convey, building up the mood in the assembly of sama. Every time the cycle is repeated through the interjection of the couplet, *aj birabe ki aag mujtane laage re* – the central theme of the poetic composition, that of portraying the syncopated punglement of the lover-beloved relationship, is pushed harder into the hearts of those present in the assembly of audition.

The style of repetition, while at times undermining the rhythmical balance of the verses, at the same time upholds the uniqueness of such an assembly. This style of measured repetition is in a sense an attempt at arousing the emotions of the heart, which lay dormant under normal circumstances. It is only when a verse of high emotional content is read out in sama that the heart wakes up to the realisation of its solitude. The verse when sung in the repetitive structure amplifies the meanings of the words, as the dualities in meanings merges into the central theme of the composition, ‘the fire of separation’ that burns the lover, and in turn makes him yearn for that cherished union (*jam*).

Another interesting, but oft overlooked aspect of such verses lies in the context in which they are sung. *Sama* centering on the above verse is performed exclusively on the occasion of the saint’s *urs*; the commemoration of the death anniversary, celebrated as his union or
'wedding' with God. Such an occasion is celebrated with much rapture in the dargah or 'royal court' of the saint. Here a latent paradox seems to be at play. While the verse, set in a devotional setting, expresses the pain of separation, yearning and longing for the beloved; it actually celebrates the 'union' of the saint with the Almighty Beloved. Thus it is not the saint's death that is memorialised; rather it is his union with the Beloved, celebrated over moments of sorrow and pathos, where the assembly is turned towards rapture in the musical performance of these poems. Here one also tries to discern a sense of optimism in the verses, where it states 'the beloved is on a throne, himself and his splendour on display.' Many would improvise on the verse to suggest that God's presence is not lost in this moment. It encourages the lover to look beyond the narrow vision of conventional meaning, of the verses, in an attempt to unravel the further stages of love through beholding of the Beloved.

Moving beyond the multiple layers of meanings the verse mentioned above throws to the listener in an assembly of sama, and closing this discussion on the essence of the purity of sama, it is obligatory to turn back and elaborate on the second method of takmil, as discussed by Gesudaraz. This is possible only when the individual attending the assembly of audition tries and relates the meaning of the verse (hamal) listened, to his own spiritual condition.\textsuperscript{191} If an aggrieved person listens to a verse conveying an emotion of intense sadness, then it is natural that he would relate to his own state of affairs. This then in turn would lead to a sense of agitation in the listener.\textsuperscript{192} In conditions of more intense spiritual turmoil the listener after experiencing the taste of the poetical verse, throws himself into ecstasy. Subsequently this individual then finds himself in the folds of uncontrollable emotions, often resulting in movement of limbs — raqs, if carried out in the pattern of a dance. In the opinion of Gesudaraz, such a process of

\textsuperscript{191} Khatimah, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 23.
application is used by mystics when they listen to verses, composed in Persian, Arabic or local Hindavi dialect, describing such attributes as coquetry (karishmah), pride (naj), cheek (khad), mole (ikhail), separation (fistaq), union (visa), among others.\(^{193}\)

**Tools of Iblis?: Musical Instruments in Sama**

'Instrumental' in providing a new dimension to the Chishtia practice of sama in the Deccan, Khwaja Gesudaraz forwarded some strict views on the inclusion of musical instruments in such a highly spiritual assembly. Being an ardent supporter of sama determined to uphold its sanctity and legitimacy as a ritual of high spiritual pedigree, Khwaja Gesudaraz, was much liberal with regard to the inclusion of musical instruments in an assembly of sama.\(^{194}\) Rather it is reported that in the early days of his life Khwaja Bandanawaz did not differentiate between any sort of musical instruments, that participants in the assembly of sama brought along with themselves. But he himself refrained from using any instruments of music except the tambourine which was played during the assembly.\(^{195}\)

Amidst such liberal regulations, it so happened that once Khawaja Bandanawaz along with Maulana Sadaruddin Tabib and Maulana Alauddin decided to organise an assembly of sama with a large variety of musical instruments. The arrangements being on such a grand scale, Sufis opened their hearts in the thought and contemplation of the Divine. Such were the emotions stirred in their hearts that they refused to be distracted for three days, listening with unflagging attention the verses being read out in the assembly. When Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud Chirag i- Delhi, the spiritual preceptor of Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz, came to know of his disciples over obsession with instruments of music in an assembly of sama he

\(^{193}\) Ibid, pp. 26-29.

\(^{194}\) Hussaini, Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni i-Gisudaraz p. 130.

\(^{195}\) Ibid.
immediately forbade Khwaja Gesudaraz to organise and attend such type of sama, where instruments of music took precedence over feelings and exertions of the heart.196

Henceforth Khwaja Bandanawaz limited the use of any sort of instrument in the assembly of sama though he did not pass any objection to participants in this assembly bringing their own instruments and playing on them during the course of the assembly.197 In subsequent Chishti sama assemblies of the south, the use of musical instruments was limited to minimum, touching the margins of being nil, with the exception of the small tambourine (duff), which came to be generally played.198 Although Khwaja Bandanawaz attributes the invention of musical instruments to the work of Iblis, he at the same time argues strongly that instruments of music are not altogether worthless in an assembly of sama.199 Rather it is only the ‘people of the heart’ (ahl i- dil) who are aware of the true nature of music as a spiritual enhancer in the assembly of sama. Since Khwaja Bandanawaz had little authority to rise roughshod over his great north Indian master, he conceded that it is better for a Sufi Shaykh (ahl i- irshad wa da'wai) in the path of spirituality, to avoid the use of musical instruments while participating in sama.200 One of the more important reasons being that Shaykh being a stricter for Sharia, he argued that the inclusion of instruments in an assembly of sama was forbidden in the legists bible.201 Thus it is unsuitable for the mystic to indulge himself in the sound of musical instruments which would be immediately charged in the eyes of the law.

With regard to the opinion of Mahbub i-Ibahi Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya on the issue of musical instruments it is related in the Fawaid ul Fuad, that once his disciples remarked that some dervishes in the circle of

196 SM, p. 70.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid., p. 72.
199 Khutima, p. 36.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid., p. 33.
the shaykh participated in *sama* where people danced while playing on lutes and other wind instruments. On hearing this Shaykh Nizamuddin retorted that it was completely improper for them to join such an assembly, and they were not acting right. Since it is forbidden by law and the *ulamas* of the land, should never be indulged in.\textsuperscript{202} When the dervishes were asked clarification for their questionable act of participating in an assembly where people danced and rejoiced and listened to wind instruments, they tries to justify their case by arguing that so engrossed were they in the proceedings of *sama*, that they were completely oblivious of the presence of wind instruments there. When Shaykh Nizamuddin was reported of this, he said that the justification forwarded by the dervishes was not satisfactory, and that the act will be included in their record of misdeeds.\textsuperscript{203}

Elaborating on this aspect Shaykh Nizamuddin went on to state that a true participant in an assembly of *sama*, and all who possesses a true taste for spirituality, are moved by a single verse of poetry. A single couplet of love poetry is enough to throw them into a sense of agitation, irrespective of whether they are listening to any instruments or not. But those who are bereft of the taste for *sama*, great is their misfortune. For they are neither able to concentrate completely on the proceedings of the assembly, nor are they capable of raising their spiritual realisations, through proper understanding of the mystical verses read out in the assembly.\textsuperscript{204} An accumulation of various musical instruments does litde to help an individual who does not possess the feeling of pain and longing for the Beloved. They fail to realise that it is the emotions of the heart that elevate a mystic towards the Divine, where instruments of music have no role to play.\textsuperscript{205}

In the light of the discussion, above, it is important to understand the significance of *sama* for Chishtis of south Asia, not only as the most

\textsuperscript{202} *FF*, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., p. 110.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
efficacious path leading to the Truth of God, but more than that as the defining symbol of Chishtia mysticism in the Indian subcontinent. Over the years of the Chishtia settlement in south Asia, sama from the very inception represented an intrinsic component of the spiritual discipline of the Sufis of this order. Initially practiced as a part of their spiritual regime, the Chishtia Sufis began to expand on the ideological basis of this ritual, in order to develop it as a multilayered ritual for the mystics of their order. The subtle changes and mild innovations, that came to characterise this practice over generations, as discussed above, never attempted at challenging the basic character of the ritual as a path to be used by the seekers of Truth and lovers of God.

It is in keeping with the original focus of the ritual, as established by the north Indian masters, the earliest Sufis representing this order in the subcontinent, that the later mystics practiced this exercise in its true spirit. Chishtia literature containing significant amount of information of the practice of sama, captured the voice of all the leading mystics of the order, who spoke or wrote about it in their lifetime. Their achievement lay in the fact that, more than establishing a spiritual exercise in a little known socio-cultural environment, they were successful in upholding its infallible virtue for their fellow saints of the same order. It cannot be argued either that sama as primarily a Chishtia practice did not influence Sufis of other orders – as seen above, and will be discussed later.

Scholars working on the functionality of the Chishtia order in the Indian subcontinent have many a time harped on the capability of the saints of this order to adjust themselves quite comfortably to the new environment. Such a hypothesis needs further investigation, without doubting the veracity of such a statement. But at the same time it also needs to be pointed out, quite clearly, that inspite of a forced attempt at driving home the argument that sama is a direct influence of the music loving Hindu
population of south Asia; there is little doubt in the fact that *sama* as a ritual of the Chishtia order, contains a very clear *ajami* genealogy, which has been elaborated at the beginning. Even though one cannot possibly overlook the Indianisation of the ritual, in form rather than in essence, its centrality in the spiritual disciplines of the saints of Chisht, can hardly be doubted.\textsuperscript{206}

Mentioned above, the subtle innovations carried out by Chishtia Sufis of south Asia, starting from the great north Indian master, Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, were never inconsistent with the inner principle of the spiritual practice. For instance the introduction of the concept of *tawajud*, at the ideological and theoretical level, never attempts to challenge the pivotal experiences of *waq
d* and *wujud* by a Sufi in the assembly of *sama*. In most instances it so happens that such intellectual improvisations, like that of the *tawajud*, is derived from a larger and more authoritative Sufi manual, like in this case the *Risala* of al-Qushayriyah.\textsuperscript{207}

At the spiritual plane the major contribution of *sama* lay in the materialisation of the spirit of unity (*jam*), which remains the ultimate end of the mystic in his journey towards the Beloved.\textsuperscript{208} The real significance of *sama* begins with the states (*ahwal*) of the listeners when the is heart is enraptured in the feeling of ‘togetherness’ (*ma’a*). This is when, neither the verses heard, nor the interpretations derived from them remain in the conscience of the listener, who is elevated towards the experience of union with the Divine. Once again the practice comes full circle, culminating in the ultimate goal (*maqsud*) of the listener, which is the realisation of the state of ‘unity’. Although one might argue that the state of *jam* is actually a rarity in the assembly of *sama*, there remains little doubt that *sama*, while accommodating listeners irrespective of their spiritual states and mystical

\textsuperscript{206} Lawrence, *Early Chishti Approach to Sama*, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{207} Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni i-Gisudarav*, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid, pp. 139-140.
stations provides one of the most genuine paths, which the mystic can follow in his search for the ultimate Truth.