Preface

I have tried in the following pages to examine the problem of sovereignty and governance under the Afghan rulers in North India in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century. In doing so, I took note of the significant linkages between religion and politics in the period. For this purpose, I have focussed on the valuable role played by the sufis in shaping the politics and culture of the age. The contributions of the Mahdawi and Raushaniyya movements to this process have also been noted, but not analysed in detail. The study is divided into three sections of two chapters each. The first section deals with the Afghan attempt at empire-building under the leadership of Sher Shāh Sūr. The second refers to the incorporation of the Rajputs in the Afghan imperial project and more generally to the ideals and institutions of governance. The third section points to the social and political role of the sufis.

In transliterating the Persian terms, Perso-Arabic names and titles of books I have followed, with some modifications, F. Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary. For calendrical equivalents, I have consulted Abdul Quddus Hashimi’s Taqwīm-i-Tārīkhī. When taken from primary sources, the Hijrī date is given first, followed by a slash and the Christian era date; dates taken from secondary literature are given only in the Christian era.

I am aware of the limitations of my research at this stage. I would be encouraged to work further, if this attempt, despite all its shortcomings, is considered to be of some value. I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to ustād-i-muḥtaram Professor Muzaffār Alam for his guidance and advice. His constant encouragement and support has sustained my interest in research. The thesis has immensely benefited from his learned comments during the course of our discussions over an extended period. I am also grateful to Professor Kunal Chakrabarti, Professor Narayani Gupta, Professor S.M. Azizuddin Husain,
Professor Harbans Mukhia, Dr. Yogesh Sharma, Professor Dilbagh Singh, and Dr. K.K. Trivedi. They have helped me in more ways than they are aware of.

Acknowledgement is also due to the librarians and staff of JNU Library, NMML (Teen Murti), Dr. Zakir Husain Library (Jamia Millia) and Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna, for their help in collection of material. I must also thank Mr. P.N. Sahay, Mr. M.A. Farooqi, Mr. Nardev Sharma, Mr. M.D. Joshi, and Mrs. Krishna Devi of the ICHR Library, and Mr. Shanti Sarkar of the National Archives Library, New Delhi, for their kind cooperation.

I am grateful to the Jamila Brijbhusan Memorial Trust, New Delhi, for a studentship in 1996-97. For the major part of my research, however, I depended on a regular wazifa from my brothers, Mr. Jamil Akhtar and Mr. Shakeel Ahmad, for which I remain indebted. Words are not enough to express my deepest feelings for my mother whose unconditional love and care has been a constant source of inspiration and sustenance.

Finally, I thank my friends Deeksha Bhardwaj, Mazhar Husain, Bharati Jagannathan, Lima Jamir, L.R.S. Lakshmi, Tilottama Mukherjee, Arupjyoti Saikia, Dhruba P. Sharma, and Aseem Tripathi for providing moral support and encouragement. They have also helped me in typing and correcting the various drafts of the thesis. Their useful little inputs together proved to be of great value. The usual disclaimers apply.

Raziuddin Aquil

Raziuddin Aquil