Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Sufism is an important segment of our social life. It has played significant role in developing social, cultural and political trends in India during the medieval period. The Chishtiya and Suhrwardiya silsilas exerted great influence on the social, cultural and political trends of the Indian subcontinent, during the Sultanate period. In closing years of the fourteenth century the Qadiriya silsilah also appeared in the spiritual scenario of the country. Similarly, at the end of the sixteenth century the Naqshbandi Silsilah too entered into India and dominated its religious atmosphere during the whole seventeenth century. When we make a survey of the sufis’ activities since the beginning of the sixteenth century, we find Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, an eminent saint of the Sabiriya branch of the Chishti order, as a pioneering personality. Though the early Chishtis of the Sultanate period always avoided the company of rich people and ruling class, Shaikh Abdul Quddus maintained cordial relations with the contemporary rulers. The collection of his letters contains epistles addressed to Sikandar Lodi, Ibrahim Lodi, Babur and Humayun and also to several contemporary nobles and officials. The other important saint of the sixteenth century was Saiyid Mohammad Ghauth of Gwalior who belonged to the Shattari Silsilah. He too maintained friendly relations with Humayun and Akbar. Humayun is said to have become his murid. Among the Sufis of the Qadiri silsilah in the sixteenth century, Shaikh Amanullah of Panipat deserves special mentions. Akbar was so deeply influenced by his spiritual excellence that he used to consult the saint in important official matters. As mentioned above, the Naqshbandi Silsilah was introduced in India during the closing years of the sixteenth century. Its
founder in our country was Khwaja Baqi Billah. Like his spiritual predecessor in Central Asia, Khwaja Baqi Billah considered it appropriate to maintain relations with the rulers and ruling class. His Chief Khalifa and the most famous Naqshbandi sufi of the early seventeenth century Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was of the view that the ruler’s position in relations to his subjects is like the position of heart in relation to body. If heart is defective, whole body will suffer. Similarly, if the ruler is not just, people will have to face difficulties. Therefore, to reform the society, it is essential to reform the ruler first of all. Sirhindi openly criticized Akbar’s religious experiments and tried to win over Jahangir to rule in accordance with the laws of Islam. His son Khwaja Mohammed Ma’sum and other descendents were in close relations with Aurangzeb. Among the Sufis of other Silsilahs in those days, Miyan Mir Qadiri of Lahore also occupies significant place.

Accordingly, the whole period of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries was under the deep impact of Sufis and Sufism. Throughout the period they worked on the principles of ‘love for humanity’, ‘service to mankind’ and ‘feeling of communal harmony’. Taking abode in different cities and towns of the country they attracted people of various sections to their mystic fold. They also deeply influenced the contemporary political life. Rulers and nobles also felt inclined to these spiritual personalities. Most of the saints of our period of study, i.e. 16\textsuperscript{th}-17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, maintained cordial relations with them. However, their activities were not confined to such an extent. They also made great contributions in academic and literary fields. Several biographical accounts, \textit{Malfuzat} of the saints, works on philosophical aspects of Sufism, brochures and treatises on litanies and practices, and the collections of letters of the Sufis
were produced during the 16th-17th centuries. This sufi-litterature is valuable source of our information for understanding the history of the period. The impact of the Sufis on Indian society and culture in those days can be clearly studied in this literature. The influence of their teachings on common man and also the problem of people belonging to the lower strata of society may be evaluated through these works. The sufi literature throws light on almost all aspects of medieval life - social, cultural and political.

This literature discusses not only the Sufi ideas and thought but also provides valuable information about the social trends of the period. This also throws light on different aspects of social life of the period such as preaching of religion, social relation and communal harmony. This literature also tells us about the aristocratic trends and working of the ruling class. It helps us, to great extent, in understanding the contemporary political environment as well. As most of the Sufis of the 16th-17th centuries maintained cordial relations with the contemporary rulers and nobles, this literature provides different types of information about the religious inclination and method of working of the rulers and also reveals their attitude towards people. We also come to know about personal affairs of the ruling class through this literature. As for example the most eminent Sufi of the early 16th century Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi was in closed touch with his contemporary Sultans and Emperors. We find lot of information about Ibrahim Lodi, Babar and Humayun in his biographical account, *Anwar-ul Ayun*, compiled by his son, and successor Shaikh Ruknuddin. Similarly the collection of his latters entitled *Maktubat-i Shaikh Abdul Quddus* contains several latters to these rulers. We get information through these works that the Shaikh himself participated in the first battle of
Panipat from the side of Ibrahim Lodi. He never hesitated in pointing out to these rulers any mistake committed by them. His letters are great evidence of this fact. We also come to known through his works about Babar’s early difficulties in India.

The *Gulzar-i Abrar*, a biographical dictionary of the Sufis, compiled by Mohammad Ghauthi Shattari, also provides interesting information about the socio-political trends of the period. Most of the saints mentioned in this work belong either to Gujrat or Malwa. It is dedicated to Emperor Jahangir. Similarly the works of the famous Shattari saint of 16th centuries Saiyid Mohammad Ghauth of Gwalior, *Bahr-ul Hayat* and *Jawahar-i Khamsa* also help us in collecting material about the contemporary socio-political environment. He was very closed to Emperor Humayun. Akbar also paid great respect to him. He often visited Agra and stayed at the Royal Court. Both Humayun and Akbar are said to have sought his advice in important matters of the Empire. The saint's works provide information in this regard. Likewise, the letters and biographical account of Shaikh Amanullah of Panipat, the most famous Sufi of the Qadiri silsilah during the 16th century, also throw light on religio-political condition of Akbar’s reign. He too was very closed to Emperor Akbar and never hesitated in exhorting him to follow the right path.

As mentioned earlier, it was in the closing years of the sixteenth century that the Naqshbandi silsilah reached Indian sub-continent. Its founder in our country was Khwaja Baqi Billah. Though the total period of his stay at Delhi was four year yet, he left so deep impact upon the society that the Naqshbandi order dominated the spiritual scenario of the country for next two centuries.
The Naqshbandi order originated in central Asia. Its saints particularly Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband, after whom it came to be called the Naqshbandi silsilah, and Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar, maintained cordial relations with their contemporary rulers. Timur is said to have paid great respect to Khwaja Bahauddin. Accordingly, following the path of his central Asian predecessors, Khwaja Baqi Billah also attracted nobles and officials to his Khanqah at Delhi. Nawab Murtuza Khan, Shaikh Farid Bukhari, who was an eminent noble of Emperor Akbar, esteemly regarded the saint. He not only frequently visited the Khwaja but also financially helped him to meet the daily expanses of the khanqah. The kulliyat-i-Khwaja Baqi Billah, i.e. the collection of the poems, malfuzat (table-talks), and letters of the saint, contains several letters addressed to Shaikh Farid Bukhari. The Khwaja on various occasions acknowledged this Mughal noble's support to him. We also find the names of Mahabat Khan and Mirza Aziz Koka to have been mentioned in the Khwaja Baqi Billah’s works in praiseworthy manners. Some other nobles also regarded the saint. We find material about them in the Khwaja’s Kulliyat. The saint, who died in 1603 AD does not seem satisfied with the religio-political atmosphere in India in general and at Akbar’s court in particular. Therefore, his letters and malfuzat provide valuable information in this regard as well.

Khwaja Baqi Billah's Chief Khalifa and spiritual successor Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi holds very special position in the annals of Islam in India. He played important role in disseminating the ideology and practices of the Naqshbandi silsilah in the country. Jahangir has said in his Tuzuk that Shaikh Ahmad's followers and disciples were found in every city and town of the Mughal Empire. Like his mentor he too was deeply perturbed at the religious
experiments of Akbar. It was during the closing years of Akbar that Sirhindi established close contacts with eminent Mughal nobles through correspondence. He also addressed Emperor Jahangir, who, for about a year, got him imprisoned in Gwalior fort. These letters, known as the *Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, hold significant position in Muslim mystical literature and provide lot of information on religio-mystical themes. These also reflect the socio-political environment of Akbar and Jahangir’s reign. We find many things related to social and political development of the saint’s time. It may be said in nutshell that the letter of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi are inseparably related to the circumstances in which these were written. These run into three volumes. Shaikh Ahmad’s other works, particularly *Ithbat-un Nabuwwah*, also help us to some extent in understanding the religio-political condition of Akbar’s reign.

Moreover, the biographical accounts of Khwaja Baqi Billah, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and their followers also are of great value. The *Zubdat-ul Maqamat* of Khwaja Hashim Kishmi is the earliest available authority for these saints. It contains valuable details. At several places he refers to the information he directly received from Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Similarly the next important contemporary Persian work on the Naqshbandis of the Mughal period is the *Hazarat-ul Quds* of Badruddin Ibrahim Sirhindi. It also provides valuable information of socio-political condition of Akbar and Jahangir’s reign. Likewise, the letters of Shaikh Ahmad’s sons, Khwaja Mohammad Masum and Khwaja Mohammad S’aiid, are also of historical significance. The collections of these letters, entitled the *Maktubat-i M’asumiya*, and the *Maktubat-i S’adiya*, contain many letters addressed to different religious, social and political personalities of the seventeenth century. These letters also reflect the socio-
political environment of the period. The socio-political impact of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Khwaja Baqi Billah on the posterity can also be studied in these letters. Emperor Aurangzeb was greatly inspired by the mystical thought of these sons of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Therefore, the letter of both of them provide information in this context. Besides, the *Rauzat-ul Qaiyyumiya* of Kamaluddin Mohammad Ehsan is also an important source of our study. It provides some valuable pieces of information about the social and political events to have taken place during the seventeenth century.

Among the works of and on the Qadiri saints of the seventeenth century, the *Sakinat-ul Auliya* of Prince Dara Shikoh, holds an extraordinary position in the sufi literature of the time. Mainly providing the biographical details of Shaikh Miyan Mir of Lahore and his *Khalifas*, particularly Mulla Shah of Kashmir. The *Sakinat-ul Auliya*, also informs of the contemporary Mughal ruler's inclination towards Miyan Mir. Dara Shikoh’s other works also are of great significance.

It was during the time of Shahjahan that several other sufi works were produced such as *Mirat-ul Asrar* of Shaikh Abdul Rahman Chishti, *Maarij-ul wilayat* of Abdullah Khweshgi Qusuri, *Majma-ul Auliya* of Mir Ali Akbar Hussaini, *Kalmat-us Sadiqin* of Shadiq Hamdani, *Jawahar-i Faridi* of Ali Asghar bin Shaikh Maudud, *Risalat-ush Shuhada* of Pir Mohammad Shattari, *Manaqib-ul Hazarat* of Mohammad Amin Badakhshi, *Safinat-ul Auliya* of Dara Shikoh, *Sahibiya* of Princes Jahan Ara, etc. If deeply studied all these works supply interesting information about the contemporary socio-political life. In the same manner, the letters and other philosophical works of Shah
Muhibullah Allahabadi also provide significant information about the subject. He maintained close relations with Dara Shikoh. Naturally the Socio-political environment of his time is clearly seen in his works.

We find another sufi who flourished in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and belonged to the Qadiri order. He was Shah Abdul Razzaq of Bansa, a small town in the Barabanki district near Lucknow. He too exhorted influence on the ulama. The founder of the Firangi Mahal School, Mulla Nizamuddin, was spiritually affiliated to Shah Abdul Razzaq and wrote his biography entitled *Manaqib-i Razzaqiya*. This work also reflects, to some extent, the contemporary social and political life.

Accordingly, it may be said that Sufi literature of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries reflect complete socio-political environment of the period. This literature may be held as significant source on the history of the period. As no research work has been done in this regard, this Sufi literature needs to be critically examined so that a clear picture of the socio-political life of the period may be brought to light.

The present research work fulfils this need to great extent. This thesis entitled "Socio-political life in India during 16th-17th centuries as reflected in the Sufi Literature" consists of an Introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter "Eminent Sufis of the 16th-17th centuries" covers a brief history of Sufis and Sufism during the period whereas the chapter second "Sufi Works of the period" provides detailed information about the works produced during our period of study. The third chapter deals with the "Development of spiritual thought". An attempt has been made in
the fourth chapter to bring to light the "social life" with special reference to Sufis attitude towards non-Muslims. The fifth chapter is about the "political life" of the period in which Sufis relations with the state have been discussed. There is a conclusion as well in which the significance of the sufi literature of the 16th-17th centuries as source of our socio-cultural history has been discussed. The thesis also contains a selected bibliography.