CHAPTER XI

TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE SHATTARI SILSILAH

(i) Impact of Indian Thought

In the evolution of their mystic thought and practices, the Shattaris were very deeply influenced by Indian religious traditions and institutions. The first Shattari saint who established contact with the Hindus and studied their religious thought was Muhammad A'la Qadin. During his stay at Vaishali he came into contact with the Yogis and learnt from them the value of penances and physical mortification in the development of spiritual personality. The need of controlling the calls of flesh has, no doubt, been emphasised by all Muslim mystics but the extent to which Hindu mystics have focussed their attention on self mortification and penance as a prerequisite to the attainment of gnosis, has no parallel in Islamic mysticism. It was this aspect of Hindu mysticism which attracted Muhammad A'la Qadin and he performed many rigorous penitences. His example inspired his successors and they turned more and more to Hindu Yogis and mystics for

1. Maadin-ul-Asrar (MS.) f. 36.
guidance and inspiration. Shaikh Hadiatullah and his disciple, Haji Hamid, spent considerable time in the company of Hindu Yogis and often exchanged views on fundamental problems of religion and mysticism, like soul, God and the universe.\(^1\) Shaikh Bahlul and Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth developed this tradition further. They stayed for a long time in the lonely recesses of Vindhyachal and performed many Hindu practices under the supervision of Hindu mystics.\(^2\) The Javāhar-i-Khamsah, which Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth compiled after his spiritual experiences of Vindhyachal, reveals the extent to which Hindu religious thought and practices had influenced him. He was probably the first Indo-Muslim saint who attempted a synthesis of the Hindu and the Muslim mystic thoughts. In fact he occupies an intermediate place between Alberuni and Dārā Shīkoh. His Javāhar-i-Khamsah introduced Hindu mystic practices and litanies into the Muslim mystic discipline, while his translation of Amrit Kund into Persian familiarized the Muslim mystics with some of the important categories of Hindu mystic thought.

Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth recommended the following Hindu mystic practices to his disciples:

2. Javāhar-i-Khamsah (MS.) f. 3.
(i) **Dhikr Hans:** One who desired to practise it was directed to have his head and back on the same level, one shank on the other, the ankle of his left foot in the close of the right thigh and the ankle of the right foot at the end of the left thigh. He had to start contemplation by twisting both the hands with each other. Further he had to utter the word 'Han' while drawing his breath out and to utter the word Soo while taking the breath in.

(ii) **Dhikr Alkahi:** One who desired to practise this, was asked to sit on his hams, close the fist of his left hand, put it on the right thigh, and the elbow of the right hand on the left fist. Then closing the fist of his right hand he had to put it under his chin. He had to contract the muscles of both the buttocks by pressing them together and drawing the breath from the navel.

(iii) **Dhikr Kahaktebi:** One who desired to practise it, was asked to seat himself in Karanba Asán. It could be done by putting head, feet and hands together, and sitting on the left foot keeping the soles of the feet under the buttocks, leaving the right thigh standing, joining the fingers of the left foot with the ankle of the right, and keeping both the

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1. **Bahr-ul-Hayât (MS.)** f. 28.
hands on the left thigh. Then one had to extend the right thigh to the left saying "Hei, Hei,". He was forbidden against bending his head while performing this dhikr. Other instructions were to make the shoulder blades a little curved and then straighten them so hard as to have an effect on the veins of the neck. Both the lips had to be kept separate and the teeth fixed. Breathing had to be regulated.

(iv) Dhikr Naranjani:- One who desired to practise it was advised to sit in "Gurbâ Asân" which was as follows. The left foot was to be put on the right, and the buttocks on the two feet, the head had to be in the level of the legs between the two thighs, and both the elbows were to be fixed on the ends of both the thighs, and the hands were to be put on the ears. Then the breath was revolved in the belly.¹

(v) Dhikr Chagni:- One who desired to practise this had to sit with his thighs joined together, keeping one hand on the other, making the buttocks hard and rotating his eyes in all the six sides.

(vi) Dhikr Niboli:- One who desired to practise this had to sit cross-legged, putting both the hands on both the thighs

and putting the head and back in the same level.

(vii) **Dhikr Gorkhis**— One who desired to do this dhikr had
to practise Bram Asán in the following way:— join the soles
of both the feet, put both the heels under the testicles, make
the hands twisted on the back, make the head a little curved
and give the body a little movement. The tongue had to be
joined with the teeth after drawing the breath. The breath
was exhaled forcefully through the nose.

(viii) **Dhikr Acojen**— One who desired to practise it
had to sit in Sidh Asán, making the buttocks meet together.
He had then to draw breath and broaden his lungs.

(ix) **Dhikr Anhad Sabadi**— One who desired to do it was
directed to sit on the hams and keep both the buttocks on
the soles of his feet. Both the hands had to be put on the
ears in a way that both the fore fingers remained in the ears,
the thumbs behind the ears and the three fingers unclosed
near the ear. One who could not keep his hand on the ear was
asked to chew peppers and keep cotton in his ears.

(x) **Dhikr Nasbadi**— One who wanted to practise it was
asked to sit cross legged, with his head and his back in the

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same level, bringing both the hands nearer and joining the thumbs. Both the elbows had to be kept on the belly under the navel.

(xi) Dhikr Sitalyi: One who wished to practise it, was directed to observe Kanwal Asan: putting the buttocks on the earth, the back of the right hand on the left thigh. One hand had to be put on the other, and then placed on the thighs under the navel. Both the lips had to be kept open. The back of the left foot remained on the right thigh. Teeth had to be kept fixed and breath was drawn through the gaps in the teeth. As the practice developed, breath was drawn and released through the nose and the ears and the eyes.

(xii) Dhikr Bhunkan: Who ever desired to practise this had to sit on hams, keeping his mouth closed. He had to draw breath through his nose and carry the breath under the navel. From the navel he had to take it forcefully to his brain and then release it slowly so that it reaches under the navel. Breathing through the mouth or the nose was forbidden.

(xiii) Dhikr Borka: One who wanted to practise this had to sit in the usual way and swing the body a little. He had to breathe through the nose.

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(xiv) **Dhikr Tarawat:** One who wanted to do this had to sit cross-legged, putting the fingers of one hand in his other hand and then putting his hands on the shank. When the breath reached near his throat he had to make his breathing a little hard. The nose had to be tightly held with the thumb and fingers.

(xv) **Dhikr Kanjarit:** One who wanted to practise it was directed to close the hole of his throat in this way: First he had to take some pepper and salt and then chew it for six months. Then catching hold his tongue with the hands he had to draw it out in order to increase its length. No clothes could be used while practising this and chewing betel leaves, cutting the nails of the fore fingers and thumbs was forbidden. Later two veins under the tongue — one black and the other red, had to be gradually injured with the help of these nails. He had to draw back his tongue into the throat so that the whole tongue came into the hole of the throat and stopped the breath from getting in. While drawing the tongue to the throat, one had to bend bones of his jaws. Then he had to sit in **Sidh Asan** in a way that the buttocks be kept on the earth. The back of the right foot was placed on the sole of the left foot, joining the shank with the thigh; the heel of the left foot was put under the testicles, and both the hands up side down on both the thighs.

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(xvi) **Dhikr Malīdāri**— One who desired to busy himself in this act had to get up early in the morning before dawn perform ablution and sit with his face towards the East. Then he had to turn his eyes towards the sky and look on the sky with open eyes. After this he had to rotate his eyes.

(xvii) **Dhikr Kahunbāri**— One who desired to practise it had to open his eyes widely, unite the tongue with the jaws, and let the breath come out gradually through the nose.

(xviii) **Dhikr Bahan Astnī**— One who wanted to practise this had to put the right foot with its shank on the left thigh and the left foot with its shank on the right thigh.

(xix) **Dhikr Gigr Astnī**— One who desired to practise it had to sit cross legged, putting the right hand on the back near the right shoulder blade, and the left arm towards the left shoulder-blade. He had to keep his lips firm and fixed, move the head in four directions.

(xx) **Dhikr Tehnīsa Astnī**— One who desired to practise it had to sit cross-legged and make himself suspended on his hands putting them between the two shanks.

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1. **Bahr-ul-Hayāt, (MS.) f. 33.**
(xxi) **Dhikr Bajr Asan:** One who wanted to practice it had to sit cross-legged and bow on the ground putting both hands between both the thighs and shanks. Then he had to put the hands on his neck in a way that the fingers of the two hands got united on the neck.

(xxii) **Dhikr San Asan:** One who desired to practice this had, first of all to close the fist of both hands, then put them on earth and became suspended on them. Then putting the fingers of the left foot and that of right foot on the left elbow, he had to busy himself in contemplation.

Another very great influence on Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth was that of Tantrism. He had so deeply imbued its traditions that he may be said to have laid the foundations of what one may call the Shattari Tantrism. Shaikh Burhan once told his audience:

ميخ محمد فیث درظم تنفرده ودرویوشات مهارت علم داشت

1. **Bahr-ul-Hayat** (MS.) f. 34.

Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth compiled the following books on the pattern of Tantrism: **Awrad-i-Ghaouthiyah** (MS.); **Mairaj Namah**, (MS.); **Kalid-i-Makhzan** (MS.); **Bahr-ul-Hayat** (MS.).

3. **Malfuzat-i-Shaikh Burhan**, (MS.).
(Shaikh Muhammad Qaouth was perfect in tantrism and in the science of writing amulets)

Tantra is derived from the root Tan which means to expand. Tantra would, therefore, mean all-comprehensive knowledge or expansion of knowledge, an appreciation of the fact that external objects about us are the outcome of some conscious force within. The material universe is the play of a conscious energy expressing itself in various modes of manifestations.

Tantrism was, however, a kind of degraded Yoga which, with the aid of mental concentration, muttered prayers, spells and other magical expedients, sought to secure all kinds of material advantages and supernatural powers.

In the 15th century Tantrism, though in a degenerated form, was much popular in India and the Muslims too were considerably under its influence. Shaikh Daulat came into the contact of the Tantrics during his visit to north Bihar particularly Saran, Hajipur and Vaishali where there lived many Buddhist Tantrics. Under their influence he adopted many

1. Tantras: Their Philosophy And Occult Secrets p. 22.
of their practices and developed interest in astrology, incantation etc. On his return to Gwalior he taught these Tantric practices to his brother, Shaikh Muhammad Qhauth. His book *Jawahar-i-Khamsah* which occupies a central position in the Shattari mystic ideology is different from all other works produced by the Muslim mystics of India. It does not interpret *Tasawwuf* in terms of higher ethics or social service. It interprets it in terms of miracles, talismans, litanies and supernatural performances. The roots of this attitude cannot be traced to any earlier Muslim mystic of India. It derives its inspiration from the Tantric philosophy. He remarks:

"All those who want to learn strange and rare sciences like *dotomancy, arithmetic, astrology, biology, astronomy, nature of trees, chirping of birds, the art of making amulets, should practice this." ¹

A few practices of this type as prescribed by Shaikh Muhammad Qhauth may be mentioned here by way of illustration:

(1) In order to discover a thief and trace the stolen property one should light a new candle, put some flowers near it and ask some virgin to sit in front of it. After writing

¹. *Jawahar-i-Khamsah* (MS.) f. 81a.
four names —— Biktanus, Padil Shāh, Muhammad Shāh, and Maimun Zangi on a piece of paper some sugar should be put on it and the girl should be asked to swallow them. The thief would present himself with the stolen property as soon as this is done.

(2) Any one who desires to conquer Jupiter should recite the names of Allāh six thousand times for five days. On the fifth day an old man wearing some green or white garment, will appear. The old man will respectfully ask the reason for calling him. The 'āmil should say in reply: "I want you to become my friend and help me to achieve the happiness of both the worlds." Jupiter will then reply: "Only love and affection for you has brought me here. I am at your beck and call." Jupiter will then move ahead and put his hand with great affection on the head of the Āmil and will say: "Whenever you want me, call me. I will come."

(3) By chanting certain names of Allāh, one can control heavenly bodies. Each star and heavenly body has some power to do or undo human work.

Another very notable Shattâri saint who learnt Tantric practices was Muhammad Sarani. Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth writes about him:

"He personally visited Kamrup and spent some years in learning and making investigations about this science".

Now, the shattâri Tantrism was more akin to Buddhist Tantrism than the Hindu Tantrism. (i) The Hindu Tantrics gave great prominence to female energy in their spiritual concepts the Buddhists did not consider it of such importance and so also the shattâris. (ii) The Buddhist Tantrics attach great significance to Sutras the mere reading of which, they say, effaces the effect of sin. The Shattâri Tantrics likewise attached great importance to Qurânic verses and said that mere repetition of its verses could efface the effects of sin. (iii) The Buddhist Tantrics attached great spiritual significance to the sacred names (e.g., the name of Amitabha); likewise the shattâri Tantrics recommended Nawâdh-wa-nuhnan.

(ninety nine names of Allah). (iv) The Buddhist Tantrics sometimes replaced or strengthened the name by ‘prayer wheel’.

Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth too introduced علی (circle) and شی ۳ (figure) to achieve supernatural objects.

The emphasis which Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth laid on the spiritual efficacy and incantational power of reciting the names of God ( دعوت اسمآ ) is nothing but a continuation of Tantric attitude in Islam.

The Awrad-i-Ghaouthiyah reveals Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth more as a Tantric Yogi than as a Muslim mystic. It is difficult to swallow the miracle stories narrated by him. Stories about contact with the dead, visits to the ethereal world and many miracles wrought in space and time, fill this book.

The process of assimilating the Hindu religious thought, particularly Tantric practices, reached its highest water mark

2. Jawâhar-i-Khamsah (MS.) ff.229b, 282a,b, 283a.
3. Jawâhar-i-Khamsah (MS.) ff.27a, 35a, 82a, 121a.
5. Awrad-i-Ghaouthiyah (MS.).
under Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth. Later Shattari saints followed it; they did not add to it.

Considered as a whole the Shattari mystics borrowed the following features of their thought and practices from the Tantrics:

1. An insatiable desire to develop occult powers.
2. Faith in the control of supernatural forces and bringing about changes through them.
3. Mysterious incantational value of divine names.
5. Emphasis on the development of spiritual personality through physical mortification.

Having borrowed so many basic ideas from the Hindu religious thought the Shattaris could not possibly pursue any rigid or fanatic policy towards the Hindus. Their attitude towards conversion comes very near the attitude of the Chishtis. They had no proselytizing ambitions and were always prepared to give lessons in mysticism to Hindus without demanding formal conversion to Islam. Tansen, the famous musician of Akbar’s court, was a disciple of Shaikh Muhammad

1. See the compilations of Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth.
2. Vide Jawāhar-i-Khamsah (MS.); Bahr-al-Hayāt, (MS.).
Ghauth\(^1\) and his conversion to Islam is not reported in any work. Yogis used to visit Shaikh Wajih-u'd-din and learn Shattāri practices from him.\(^2\) Shāh Daulat had cordial relations with the Hindus. Rājā Mān Singh is depicted in a portrait as receiving a pot from Shāh Daulat.\(^3\) Munsingh had respect for another Shattāri saint, Shāh Taj.\(^4\) A Hindu, Tarachand, is mentioned as a frequent visitor to the Khānqah of Shaikh Mohi-ud-din.\(^5\) Jasun Brahmin was a disciple of Shaikh Muhammad Rashid.\(^6\) Rānji Rām Bengali lived in the company of Shaikh Rukn-u'd-din and adopted many Shattāri practices.\(^7\)

The structure of Shattāri thought in this respect was built on the basic idea that the names of God had tremendous effect whether uttered in Arabic or in Hindi. Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth has tried to establish the uniformity of connotation in the various terms uttered by the Yogis and the sufis. He considered Horī to be identical with \(\text{قلب} \text{(Yā rab)}\) or \(\text{نور} \text{.}

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3. Biyād-i-Khas of Muhammad Hussain Kashmiri (MS.).
7. Malfuz-i-Rukn-u'd-din Shattāri (MS.) p. 36.
I- Hafiz) of the Musalmans.¹

Ideology apart, the Šaitāris maintained cordial relations with the Hindus at the social level. Mulla Badāoni, who was fanatic in his religious outlook, was particularly perturbed at the respect shown by Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth to his Hindu visitors.² His interest in bulls and cows was also probably due to his contact with the Hindus.³

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