CHAPTER I

SHAikh 'AbdulLah Shattari AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
SILSILAH IN INDIA

The Shaṭṭāri silsilah was introduced in India early in the fifteenth century by Shaikh 'Abdullah Shaṭṭāri. As the pioneer saint of a mystic movement, he ranks among such eminent personalities as Khwājah Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti of Ajmer (ob. 1236) and Shaikh Baha-u'd-din Dhakariyya of Multan (ob. 1262 A.D.), though his silsilah could not attain that widespread popularity and influence which the Chishti or the Suhrawardi silsilahs have enjoyed through the ages.

Shaikh 'Abdullah was a native of Khurasan. He claimed his descent from the great mystic teacher of the 13th century, Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din 'Umar Suhrawardi. Nothing is known about

1. Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi (1145-1234 A.D.) was an eminent saint of the Suhrawardi order which was founded by his uncle Shaikh Najib-u'd-din Abd al-Qahir Suhrawardi (ob. 1169 A.D.). His best known works are the 'Awārif-u'l-Ma'arif and the Kashf-u'l-Nasa'i'ih-u'l-Imaniyah wa-Kashf-u'l-Rada'i'ih-u'l-Yunaniyah. For brief biographical account see Nafahat u'l- Uns p. 420.

Shaikh 'Abdullah was related to him as follows: Shaikh 'Abdullah Shaṭṭāri b. Shaikh Husām-u'd-din b. Hashid-u'd-din b. Dia u'd-din b. Najm u'd-din b. Jamāl u'd-din b. Shihab-u'd-din 'Umar Suhrawardi. This genealogy is given in the following works. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah (MS.) f.7; Ma'adin u'l-Asrār (MS.) f. 8; Gulzar-i-Abrar (RG.) f. 101; Ma'arij-u'l-Wālayat (MS.) Vol. II p. 542.
his early life or his activities before he came to India. We know only this much that he had received spiritual training from Shaikh Muhammad 'Arif, Shaikh Muzaaffar Kitāni of Nishāpur and Sayyid 'Ali Muwāhīd of Azerbaijān, —— all of whom were very well-known figures in their respective regions. Shaikh Kitāni was an erudite scholar and a pious mystic of Nishāpur. He had the reputation of initiating a novice in the intricacies of mystic discipline within a few days. He lived in a mountain-cave completely cut off from society. Undeterred by the hazards of a long mountaneous journey, Shaikh 'Abdullah somehow reached Shaikh Muzaaffar and insisted on receiving spiritual training from him. His stay with him was, however, very short, though his spiritual progress was closely watched by the Shaikh. Somehow Shaikh 'Abdullah could not develop permanent attachment

1. Our information about the early life of the founder of the Chishti order in India, Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Sijzi, is equally scanty and whatever is available in later accounts is mostly based on legends and fictions.

2. Manba'ut-Ansab, (MS.); Majalis-u'l-Ushshāq, (MS.) f.9; Hisalah-i-Halat-i-Qalandariyah, (MS.) f.13; Usul-u'l-Maqṣūd, (MS.) f.27.

3. Shaikh Muzaffar was a spiritual descendant of Shaikh Najm-u'd-din Kubra (ob.1226 A.D.). His spiritual genealogy is as follows: Shaikh Ibrahim 'Ishqabadi, Sayyid Nizām u'd-din Husain, Shaikh Muhammad Khivlati, Shaikh Najm-u'd-din Kubra. Lata'if-u-l-Qa'bīyah (MS.) f.10; Gulzar-i-Abrār (RG.) f.101.

4. Ma'adin-u'l-Asrār (MS.) f. 55.
with Shaikh Kitâni and returned to his old master, Shaikh 'Arif.

Later he visited Shaikh Muwahid who was an eminent khalifah of Shaikh Zain-u'd-din Abu Bakr Khwâfi and was known for his knowledge of the esoteric discipline as well as his mastery over the Ahadith literature (Traditions of the Prophet). He stayed with him for a long time and took lessons from him in mysticism. Subsequently he obtained his permission to return to Shaikh 'Arif and receive his advanced instructions in mysticism from him.

Shaikh 'Arif was lavishly endowed by nature with what the mystics call nafs-i-gîra, intuitive intelligence which could comprehend, control and direct the spiritual talent of the disciples. He discerned in Shaikh 'Abdullah a person who could effectively organise an spiritual order and popularize its teachings within a short time. He conferred upon him the title Shâttâr and asked him to undertake travels in different lands and announce by the beat of drums at every place he happened to visit.

(If there is any seeker of Allah, he may come to me. I will guide him to Allah).

1. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah (MS.) f.14; Gulzar-i-Abrar (RG.) f.101. For short biographical account of Shaikh Zain-u'd-din Khwâfi, see Nafahat-u'l-Uns pp. 441-444.
2. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah (MS.) f.14; Gulzar-i-Abrar (RG.) f.101.
3. Ma'adin-u'l-Asrar (MS.) f.55; Risâlah-i-Ibrahimi (MS.) f.26; Mir'at-u'l-Asrar (MS.) f.72; Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar p. 171

Muhammad Ghauthi writes that Shaikh 'Abdullah used to announce at every place he happened to visit: "If any one knows the meaning of Kalimah-i-Tauhid (Islamic formula of faith) better than myself, he should teach it to me; if not, he should come and learn it from me." Gulzar-i-Abrar (RG.) f.102
Following the instructions of his master, Shaikh 'Abdillah undertook extensive travels in Muslim lands. He roamed all over 'Iraq, Khurasan, Azerbaijan and other important centres of Muslim culture and came into contact with men of different types and temperaments and acquired intimate knowledge of the condition of Muslim society in the fifteenth century.

He differed from the contemporary mystics in many respects. While the Muslim mystics generally believed in living a life of penury and penitence, Shaikh 'Abdullah lived with great pomp and eclat. Shaikh Abdul Haqq 'Uhaddith Dehlawi writes about him:

سُمْتُ شَوْكَةٍ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَ دَائِمَ

(He possessed both external and internal grandeur and majesty).

The sufis of the middle ages looked upon itineracy as an integral part of the spiritual education of the traveller himself. But Shaikh 'Abdullah did not travel for the sake of his own spiritual perfection. His travels were intended to educate others. Another interesting feature which distinguished him from all other mystics was that he donned himself in the royal dress, while his disciples who followed him on his mystic itineraries put on military uniform. This army of murids marched with banners and drums. No other saint of any Muslim mystic order

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2. Hisbah-u'l-Hidayah, p. 204.
3. Risalah-i-Qadin Shattar, (MS.) f. 6; Gulzar-i-Abrar, (MS.) f. 102.
is known to have lived and moved in this manner. Another unusual practice of the saint was that before delivering discourses he ordered all disbelievers to quit his audience. Whenever anybody approached him with the request to admit him into his discipline, he ordered food to be served and then he watched the visitor's actions carefully. Those who finished the bread and the gravy simultaneously were blessed with favours, the rest were treated as unwise and were ignored. It was after a severe test of the mental and moral calibre of a visitor that he initiated him in his mystic discipline.

Shaikh 'Abdullah arrived in India at a time when the Sultanate of Delhi was fast declining and centrifugal tendencies were working not only in the political but in the spiritual sphere also. The mystic orders had ceased to function as all-India institutions and khāngāhs of provincial and often of local importance had taken the place of the khāngāhs of country-wide fame and importance. The Chishti order of mystics which had a highly integrated central structure lost its former position and provincial khāngāhs were set up in provincial towns, independent of all central control. Old ideologies and traditions were found embarrassing in the new circumstances and were thrown overboard.

1. Risālāh-i-Qādīn, Shattār, (MS.) f. 6; Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār, p. 169.
2. Risālāh-i-Qādīn Shattār, (MS.) f. 6; Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār, p. 169; Akhbār-u'l-Asfiyā, (MS.) f. 65.
1. The comfortable theory was expounded that mystics should consort with kings, governors and high officers in order to influence them for good. State endowments were accepted and, in return, spiritual blessings and moral support was given to the founders of the new provincial dynasties.

2. The principle of hereditary succession was introduced in the mystic sphere. It sapped the vitality of the mystic organizations and injected the virus of hereditary conflicts and tensions in spiritual life.

3. Early mystics had enjoined firmness of faith in one spiritual master (yak dar geer wa muhkam gir: Hold one door and hold it fast), but in the 15th century a mystic was never satisfied with one master. He would frequently change his masters and bend his knees at as many doors as possible. This divided spiritual allegiance cramped the growth of integrated spiritual personalities and, as was natural, the mystic organizations came to be controlled by men of smaller stature.

4. In the earlier period no spiritual teacher owned allegiance to more than one spiritual order and he trained and tutored his disciples according to the ideology of that particular school, but in the 15th and the 16th centuries the same Shaikh used to train disciples according to different ideologies and claimed to possess authority to admit disciples into different silsilahs. This was an impossible task as
the ideologies of the various silsilahs were different and the same Shaikh could not demonstrate to his followers the working of contradictory principles in his life. This innovation reduced mystic discipline to a dead formality — nay, apart from integrating one's thought, it disintegrated it all the more. When Shaikh 'Abdullah introduced the Shaṭṭārī order in India there was widespread religious anarchy in the country. Viewed from one angle it was an age of "intellectual anarchy" and looked at from another it was an age of "intellectual freedom." There was a mushroom growth of new sects, new philosophies and new schools, of thought. The old moorings were discarded and adventures were made in new realms of thought. This was the age of the Raushānyāhs, the Mehdāvis and the Shattāris.

No detailed account of Shaikh 'Abdullah's travel in India is available. He is first introduced to us at Jaunpur. How he was received at Multan, Lahore, Delhi or other important mystic centres of northern India — which he must have visited on his way to Jaunpur — is not stated in contemporary or even later accounts. However, he was cordially received at Jaunpur and large number of people joined his order. Gradually his reputation reached the ears of Sultan Ibrāhim Sharqi (1401-1440).

1. Risālah-i-Qadīn Shāṭṭār (MS.) f. 7; Risālah-i-Ibrāhīmī (MS.) f. 177.
But his military outfit created suspicion in the mind of the Sultan who had to defend his throne against many enemies open and secret. To permit a semi-military group of religious men to settle permanently in Jaunpur was to court a danger for which he was not prepared. Once the Sultan met Shaikh 'Abdullah and insisted that he should give evidence of his spiritual powers by performing some miracles.  

Shaikh 'Abdullah felt insulted at this request and decided to leave Jaunpur. He migrated to Surhūpūr where a local qalandar of great influence, Shaikh Da'ud, joined the circle of his disciples. From there he proceeded to Manikpur, but could not achieve any appreciable success there. Shaikh Husam-u'd-din, Rāji Hamid Shāh and Shāh Sayyid — three influential saints of Manikpur — were

2. Surhūpūr is a parganah in the Akbarpur Tahsil of the Fyzabad district. The place which gives its name to the parganah is a village of no great size, lying in latitude 26° 15' north and longitude 80° 40' east on the southern boundary of the district. The place is built on the banks of the Majhoi river and through it runs the road from Fyzabad to Jaunpur. *District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Fyzabad) Vol. XLIII pp. 272, 273.
4. Shaikh Husam-u'd-din was an eminent disciple and khalifah of Shaikh Nur Qutb-i-Alam, a distinguished Chishti saint of Pandua in Bengal. For biographical account, see Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār, pp. 169, 170, 171; Gulzār-i-Abrār, (RG.) ff. 53, 54.
5. He was a disciple and khalifah of Shaikh Husam-u'd-din Manikpuri. See Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār, pp. 186, 187.
6. His original name was Shāh Saidu but he became known as Sayyid Wālihā. He was a disciple of Shaikh Husam-u'd-din Manikpuri. See Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār p. 186.
particularly invited by him to meet him but they received the invitation when they were busy in an audition party (Sama'). They were so deeply overpowered by emotions at that moment that they had even given their clothes to the musicians.\(^1\) When they received the invitation of a traveller-saint they discussed the desirability of accepting it. After some deliberation and hesitation they decided to pay a visit to Shaikh 'Abdullah. A disciple brought a bed-cover for Shaikh Husam-u'd-din who cut it into three pieces and gave one piece each to his two disciples who covered their bodies with it. While on his way to the house of Shaikh 'Abdullah a disciple presented a basket of betel leaves to Shaikh Husam-u'd-din who put it on his head in order to present it to Shaikh 'Abdullah. When Shaikh 'Abdullah heard about the arrival of these distinguished saints, he came out to receive them. They sat under a cluster of trees and discussed various religious problems. Shaikh 'Abdullah, however, failed to impress Shaikh Husam-u'd-din.\(^2\)

Failing to achieve any great success at Manikpur, Shaikh 'Abdullah proceeded towards Bengal. One of the prominent figures of that region at that time was Muhammad 'Ala Qadîm. Shaikh 'Abdullah, as was his practice, invited him to join his order. Muhammad 'Ala declined the invitation with the contemptuous remark: "Cheats come from Khurasan very often." Shaikh 'Abdullah

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1. Risâlah-i-Qâdîn Shattâr, (MS.) f. 7; Mirat-u'l-Asrâr, (MS.) f. 354; Risâlah-i-Ibrâhîmî, (MS.) ff. 177, 178.
2. Rîsâlah-i-Qâdîn Shattâr, (MS.) f. 8; Mir'at-u'l-Asrâr, (MS.) f. 354; Risâlah-i-Ibrâhîmî, (MS.) f. 178.
naturally felt insulted and humiliated at this arrogant remark. "Search for a mystic-guide would one day bring him to my door," he remarked with great confidence.

Shaikh 'Abdullah later on reached Ekdalah and started his mission there. Here too he did not achieve any success. He now decided to go to Malwah. When he reached Chittor in circa 846 A.H./1442 A.D., he found Sultan Mahmud Khalji and his son, Ghiyath-u'd-din, besieging the fortress of Chittor. Interpreting the arrival of a saint as a happy omen, the Sultan extended a warm welcome to him. Fortunately the Sultan succeeded in his campaign. He attributed this to the presence of the Shaikh and developed great faith in him.

Shaikh 'Abdullah who had not been able to attract the attention of the Sharqi Sultans succeeded in establishing intimate relations with the rulers of Malwah and set up the first Shattari khangah in Mandu. Like most of the provincial kingdoms of the fifteenth century, each of which had a patron-saint, the rulers of Malwah also attached themselves with the Shattari silsilah. Muhammad Ghauthi informs us that the saint had developed so great regard for Sultan Ghiyath-u'd-din Khalji that he

1. Risalah-i-Qadin Shattar, (MS.) f.8; Mir'at-u'l-Asrar, (MS.) f.354; Risalah-i-Ibrahimi, (MS.) f. 178.
The author of Risalah-i-Gulzar-i-Ibrahimi makes an incorrect statement when he says that Shaikh 'Abdullah met Shaikh Qadin at Jaunpur. Ma'adin-u'l-Asrar, (MS.) f. 37.

2. Mu'in-u'd-din 'Abdullah says that Shaikh 'Abdullah had proceeded to Malwah from Jaunpur (Ma'arij-u'l-Wilayat, MS.Vol. II p. 546). But this is not correct. From Jaunpur Shaikh 'Abdullah went to Manikpur and from there to Ekdalah as the Ma'adin-u'l-Asrar, (MS. f. 37) says.
even dedicated him *risālah*, *Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah*, to him. This was of mutual benefit. The saint gave moral support and blessings to the ruler who, in return, relieved the saint of all material worries and provided such conditions that he passed the closing years of his life in affluent circumstances.

Shaikh 'Abdūllah died in Mandu in 890 AH./1485 A.D.¹ and was buried near the tombs of the Khalji rulers of Malwah. Early in the 17th century a dome was constructed over his grave at the order of Jahāngir who had visited it along with Shāh Pir² of Meerut.³

The Ilm-i-Shattār:

A detailed account of the teachings of the Shattāri silsilah is given in a separate chapter. Here a brief reference may be made to some of the mystic principles and ideas of Shaikh 'Abdullah as the whole ideological structure of the Shattāri silsilah was built on these principles.

Shaikh 'Abdullah has explained his mystic thought in his book, *Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah*, a small tract comprising seventeen chapters⁴ dealing with such topics as *nafs*, *suluk*, *tauba*, *Dhikr fana fil Shaikh* etc.

² For his biographical account see Chapter IV.
⁴ *Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah*, (MS.) f. 2a.
Shaikh 'Abdūllah believed that the goal of all mystics, whatever their spiritual affiliation was the same, i.e. to attain gnosis (ma'rifat), but their methods to achieve it were different. There were, according to him, three principal seekers after Truth - the Akhyār, the Abrār and the Shāttārs. They had their own mashrabs (ways of attaining the objective). The path adopted by the Shāttārs was the shortest and the quickest because it made a man's soul responsive to divine messages. As he intended to write a small brochure, he did not deal with the disciplines and methods of the Akhyār and the Abrār and confined his discussion to the 'ilm-i-Shāttāra alone. According to him the special features of the mashrab-i-Shāttār were the following:

(1) The Shāttāri mashrab made the attainment of spiritual objective easier by simplifying the course of mystic discipline. It did not recommend penitences or mujahidāt. He, therefore, calls it (easiest of tariqāns).

(2) The Shāttāri discipline emphasized, the cultivation of cosmic emotion ('ishq) which made mushāhidah (vision of God) possible within a short span of time.

(3) It attached greater importance to esoteric conditions (ahwāl) than to external practices (a'mal).

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1. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah, (MS.) f. 2a.
2. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah, (MS.) f. 2b.
3. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah, (MS.) f. 4a.
4. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyah, (MS.) f. 6b.
(4) No spiritual progress was possible without the active help and intercession of the pir. Hence a seeker had to merge his individuality into the personality of the Shaikh (fana fil Shaikh). Implicit faith in the Shaikh and complete obedience to his orders was, therefore, the first condition of the mystic discipline.  

(5) Another very important and significant aspect of the mystic thought of Shaikh 'Abdullah was his hatred of exclusiveness. He inculcated liberal thinking in his disciples and advised them to follow the Shāfī’ī path strictly and sincerely but not to develop contemptuous attitude towards other mystic cults and silsilahs. As a Muslim who shows disrespect to any prophet, he used to say, becomes a sinner of shari'at, one who shows disrespect to mystics of other cults becomes a sinner of tariqat. Besides, the Shaikh refrained from making any discriminations between people on the basis of faith. Discarding the prevalent terminology of Muslim and Mushrik, or mumin and kāfir, he divided all men into sālik-i-Hālik and sālik-i-wāsīl. Under the first category he placed all those who worshipped symbols, like stone, water, sun or moon. Those who loved Reality and did not worship the phenomena of nature in any form or shape

1. Lata'if-i-Ghaibiyāh, (MS.) f. 6b.
were designated as salik-i-Wasil. He believed that since both aimed at the same goal, mere difference of ways did not matter. This catholicity in the outlook of the Shaikh influenced the later generations of the silsilah so deeply that they developed cordial relations with all non-Muslims.

Spiritual descendants of Shaikh 'Abdullah.

Shaikh 'Abdullah Shatjari appointed two principal successors to continue the work of propagating the teachings of the Shattari silsilah - Shaikh Hafiz of Jaunpur and Shaikh Muhammad 'Ala' of Bengal. Very little is known about the life or activities of Shaikh Hafiz. His disciple and Khalifah, Shaikh Buddhān Shattāri, was, however, a very popular figure during the reign of Sultān Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). The author of Akhbar-u'l-Akhylr informs us that he was a descendant of Shaikh 'Abdullah Shattāri. No hagiological work supplies any detailed information about him but his eminence may be estimated from the fact that an eminent scholar and historian like Shaikh Rizq Ullah

2. See the next Chapter.
Mushtaqi was one of his devoted disciples.

Shaikh Rizq Ullah was born in 897 A.H./1491 A.D. He was the uncle of the celebrated traditionist of Delhi, Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq (ob. 1051 A.H./1641 A.D.). In his early years he was associated with Shaikh Muhammad Mangan, but later on he joined the circle of Shaikh Buddhan's disciples.

Shaikh Rizq Ullah was known for his vast erudition. He was well-versed in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. The author of Subh-i-Gulshan says that he had even acquired mastery over the sciences of the Hindus. This knowledge of the Hindu Science was in keeping with the traditions of his silsilah. Besides, he was a fulgent poet and composed verses in Hindi under the nom de plume of Ranjan and in Persian under the nom de plume of Mushtaqi. His two Hindi works - Paiman and Jot Niranjan

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1. For his biographical account see the following books:
   Waqi'at-i-Mushtaq, (RG.); Akhbar-u'l-Akhyaar, pp. 167, 168;
   Subh-i-Gulshan, (MS.) p. 413; Zubdat-al-Tawarikh, (MS.);
   Kalimat-u'l-Sadiqin, (MS.) p. 39; Riyad-al-Auliya; Sawati-
   u'l-Anwar; Hayat-i-'Abdul Haqq, pp. 59, 60, 61.


3. He was an eminent Chishti saint and lived at Malwa, near Qannauj. His spiritual mentor Shāh Jalāl Gūjratī was associated with the order of Sayyid Muhammad Gisu Dārāz of Gulbar-
   gah. Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq says that due to his piety he had become known as Mis.bāh-u'l-'Ashiqin (Lamp or guide of the lovers). For brief biographical account see Akhbar-u'l-Akhyaar, pp. 168-169. See also Subh-i-Gulshan, (MS.) p. 413.

4. Akhbar-u'l-Akhyaar, p. 191; Subh-i-Gulshan, (MS.) p. 413;
   Hayat-i-'Abdul Haqq, p. 60.

5. Subh-i-Gulshan, p. 413.

"د رکب علمه هندوان مهارتی کامل داشت"
have been particularly noted by Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq but they are not available now.\(^1\) His collection of historical anecdotes, \textit{Waqi'at-i-Mushtaqi}, is a very informative work on the Afghan and the Mughal rulers of the period. Rizq Ullah died on 20th Rab. I in 989 A.H./1581 A.D.

\(^1\) \textit{Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār}, p. 167.
\(^2\) \textit{Akhbār-u'l-Akhyār}, p. 168.