CHAPTER - VIII

SUFI SAINTS AND THEIR REFORM MOVEMENTS IN BENGAL

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
The Muslim Conquest in Bengal penetrated to the very core of its society and culture and succeeded in exercising a great influence on the life and thought of non-Muslim population. Islam's message of social equality appealed to the natural emotionalism of the Bengalis who welcomed it as a deliverance from social oppression. Through centuries of intermixing with the local populace various cults, customs and ceremonies crept into the Muslim way of life and gradually acquired an Islamic orientation. The local influences, ranging from idolatrous propitiation of the goddess of small pox and hegiolatory down to some amount of caste prejudice, which thus infiltrated into the Muslim Society, hedged round the pure doctrines and institutions of Islam. The original form of Islam survived only in the fundamental of beliefs and
practices. Much of this fusion and beliefs and rites was, of course, due to eclectic character of Hinduism which readily accepted the worship of any Saint or even of a martyr. Consequently, the religious reform movements from the fifteenth century onward, both Hindu and Muslim, were bound to regard such cults and rites as a debasement of the pristine purity of their respective faiths. While Islam's challenge provoked the Bhakti reaction and resistance to the proselytizing pull of humanism as early as the seventeenth century. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi was 'the first to raise the banner of Reformation and Revivalism in India: Sirhindi and his followers laid emphasis on Sunni separatism and opposed all attempts to evolve a composite culture. This orthodox reaction was carried on by Aurangzeb, whose administrative measures forecast the intellectual scheme of advocates. Led by Shah Wali-Allah (1703 - 62) a generation later. A definite reformist trend began with Wali-Allah, like Ghazali, he interpreted Islam
in terms of philosophy" and advocated that intrinsic
value of the Islamic creed was far too great to be
assailed by reasoning." The doctrines and tenets of
the two nineteenth century reform movements which go
by the name of the Faraidi and the Wahhabi movements,
appear to be analogous to those of a puritanic
movement in Arabia, started considerably earlier by
one Muhammad ibn Abd'Abdal Wahab. 2

In India Shah Wali Allah 3 (1703-62) of Delhi was
the first to raise the alarm of "Islam in danger" and
he made a strong plea to the Muslims to help regain
political power and avoid the extinction of Islamic
values in India. He was one of the greatest Sufi
Philosophers of Islam in India, an encyclopaedic scholar
of tradition, theology and jurisprudence and a moderate
reformer, who taught devotion to the sunna of the Prophet
and the value of tolerance and compromise in interpreting
the Holy Quran. Ascribing the moral decline of the
Muslims to their ignorance of Islam, he tried to popularize
the Quran and translated it into Persian. He tried to

1. Sufi, G.M., M. Minhaj, P. 68.
2. The founder of the movement has been erroneously stated
to be 'Abd al Wahhab, the father of the actual founder,
by T.E. ravenshaw in his memorandum" on the sect of
the Wahhabis." S.R.B.C., X 411 'Trial of Mr. Ahmedoolah
of Patna, P. 116.
3. For Shah Wali Allah, K.A. Nizami, Shah Waliullah: Dihlavi
and Indian Politics in the 18th century. Islamic Culture,
effect a reconciliation among the conflicting stand points—
"the Sufi and the Ulama, the Hanafis and the Ahle-Hadith the
Mujadis and the Shuhudis, the Shias and the Sunnis, the
Mutazali and the Ashari." He emphasized that the door of
interpretation (ijtihad) was not closed, though he did
not support the licence in religious thought. According
to him strict application of Islamic ordinances would
check the moral decay of the Muslims. Knowledge of theology
must be combined with sufism. While counselling avoidance
of rigidity in interpretation of religious injunctions,
Waliullah endeavoured to establish pure monotheism and
purge the Muslim Society of all polytheistic and un-Islamic
social practices, beliefs, customs, etc., which had grown
up in Hindu environment, because the purity of Islam, its
doctrines and values, must be maintained. Thus did Shah
Waliullah seek to effect the moral and political regeneration
of the 'decadent, demoralized, bewildered and disorganised'
Muslim Society in India. Waliullah's ideas were transmitted
to his son, Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz (1746-1834)¹ and his grandson,
Ismail (1781-1831).²

1 section 11; I.H. Qureshi, The Muslim Community of the
Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (1910-1947) ch. 9; J.D. Sarkar,
Shah Waliullah and Ijtihad, The Muslim World 1955; M. Naveeb
The Indian Muslim, 277-82.

1. Rafiuddin Ahmed, The Bengal Muslims, p.42
2. J.D. Sarkar, Islam in Bengal, p.46; Jayanti Maitra,
Muslim Politics in Bengal, p.11.
Shah Abdul Aziz, who went a step further than his father and declared India was no longer dar-ul-Islam, but dar-ul-harb, or zone of war, thus recognizing the legality of jihad, or holy war, to defend the cause of Islam.

The militant movement for the rehabilitation of Islam in India in the early years of the 18th and 19th centuries was categorized as Wahhabi by the British, on the basis of the Arabian parallel of that name. This was done by the Britishers by taking advantage of the atmosphere of bitterness against the Wahhabis among the Muslim masses of India. This name was given to the reforms of Shah Wali Allah's school by the Britishers firstly by W. W. Hunter in his Indian Musalman which aimed of creating a division among Muslims of India following the British policy of divide and rule. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first to write an answer to this misleading book in his famous treatise entitled "Hunter Par Hunter."

Before long the opposition against British rule developed into armed resistance. This struggle was waged under the banner of Islam and the doctrine of jihad played a significant part in it. The most

important of these movements which aimed at political change along with social, moral and spiritual revivalism was the Tariqah-i-Muhammad, led by the great sufī disciple of Shah Abd al Aziz named as Sayyid Ahmad of Nai Bareli (1796-1831) which was actively supported by two learned scions of the Shah Jali Allah's family, viz. Shah Ismail (1779-1831) and Shah Abdul Hayy (d.1828), the former one a nephew and the latter son in law of Shah Abd Al'Aziz.¹ The movement of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid which started from Delhi soon became an All India movement and its impact was deeply felt in the length and breadth of Bengal also and which had a far reaching influence on the spiritual moral and religious life of Muslims in Bengal. As the religious and spiritual life of early 19th century Bengal was very much inspired by the ideas and

practical endeavours of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and almost all the leading theologians and sufi reformers were somehow or other under his influence it will not be out of place to give a short account of life and achievements inorder to understand properly the trend and nature of his influence on the life of Muslims on Bengal.

Sayyid Ahmad was born in 1201 A.H. (24 Oct. 1786) in the district of Rai Bareli. He traced his descent from the family of the Prophet Muhammad. His father was Sayyid Muhammad Irfan. In 1222 A.D. at the age of 22, Sayyid Mushid became a spiritual disciple of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz and received mystical training under him. In 1810, he left Delhi and joined the free booters under Amir Khan Pindari, who subsequently became the Nawab of Tonk, and fought against the English and Hindu chieftains in the vicinity of Malwa. In 1816, when talks on peace between Amir Jahan and the English were in progress, he left the former's service, At Delhi, he took his residence at the Akbari mosque and returned to seek instruction under Shah Abdul'Aziz. From Shah Abdul Aziz, Sayyid Ahmad derived the peculiar opinions which he subsequently promulgated and the design which he adopted of preaching a religious crusade.

2. Sawanih Ahmadi, p.8
3. Ibid. p.13
4. Ibid. P.15
The doctrine of Tasawwur-i-Shaikh is commonly practised by the followers of all the important Sufi orders of India up to the days of Shah Abdul Aziz. It is related that when Syed Ahmad Shahid became accept bayat at the hands of Shah Abdul Aziz, the later taught him the principles of Tasawwur-i-Shaikh or Rabita to Syed Sahib. The biographers record that Syed Sahib raised objection to it and said that it is not corroborated by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. Shah Abdul Aziz was astonished at this and went into meditation and after some time he got up and said that due to special spiritual relation and Misbat with the Holy Prophet you need not have to follow the principle of Rabita. It is from this time onwards that the doctrine of Tasawwur is not practised by the followers of Syed Ahmad Shahid, a large number of them have worked in the region of Bengal. The opponents of Sufism generally object to this practice among the Sufis but the Sufis after Syed Ahmad Shahid are the only group of Sufis in India who do not believe in Tasawwur Shaikh. Influenced by the spiritual religious and reformist ideas of Shah Abdul Aziz Sayyid Ahmad had started a movement of religious reform in India. He was soon joined by
Shah Ismail and Hāwand Abdul Hayy who became his most important disciples and supporters. Their inclusion with Sayyid Ahmad Shahid had instrumental in getting a far reaching stimulus to his reformatory ideas.

Sayyid Ahmad now called his order "Tariqa-i-Muḥarramadiyah - the order of Muḥammad- and claimed for himself the right and power of recruiting disciples according to all four principal Sufi orders in India—Chishtiyah, Ḫadīrīyah, Naqšbandiyah, Ḥujjaddidiyah— as according to 'in these were only four stages leading to his own. Such worldly actions as marriage, educating one's children, commerce, trade, even clothing oneself was considered by as being done in pursuit of the ideal of elevating one's soul. The making of a pilgrimage and fighting a jihad were to the same end.¹

Sayyid Ahmad's teachings have been recorded by Shah Ismail in the Sirat-i-Mustaqa'im. This work was written before he set out to fight the unbelievers.

¹ Mallick, A.K., op.cit., p.110
Most important of his reform ideas as is evident from Sirat/Mustaqeem and the Taqwiyatul Imam were:

(i) emphasis on the unity of Allah (Tauhid) and restoration of the simplicity of classical Islam and

(ii) rejection of shirk (idolatory), which presupposes rejection of all innovations, superstitions and abuses pervading Indian Islam whatever their source may be. The Sirat bewailed the darkness overspreading the land:

"Compare the State of Hindustan with that of Rum and Turan. Compare it even with its own condition two or three hundred years ago. Alas! where are now the Aulia and Ula ma of those times?" The innovations were classified into three classes: (a) first, those arising from association with sceptics or heretics, sinners against the unity of God. The excessive respect to murshid (spiritual preceptors), and saint worship, constituted the whole religion of the common Muslims in India. The appeal to the saints in every case of difficulty, circuits (twwaf meant for the Kaaba) round their tombs, and burning of lamps thereon (prohibited in tradition), long arduous and expensive pilgrimages to their shrines (rather than to Makka), endless vows and offerings made to propitiate them so as to fulfil
every conceivable blessing or object of human desire (e.g., children, honour, health, fortune etc.) the custom of naming children after the saint, allowing hair to grow untouched, -all these popular, heretical and superstitious practices, due to Hindu and not Sufi influence, became a sin against God's unity. Belief in the power of saints was open blasphemy. The saint was worshipped but God was neglected or forgotten. Of little benefit to the devotee, it exposed him to God's wrath and injured the Muslims in general and hence must be avoided. "If the Hindus have their Gaya, their Mathura and their Kashi the Mahomedans have their Makwanpur, their Bahraich, and their Ajmer. The one set builds maths over their idols, the other, not to be behind hand raise domes over their Saints' tombs. In the maths you will find mahants and Goswains at Mahomedan shrines, Khadims, Mujawirs and Pirzadas." Hence the Taqwiatul Iman exhorts: "Follow no one, be he mujtahid, Imam, Chaus, Kutb, Moulavi, Mashaikh, King, Minister, Padri or Pandit, against the authority of the Quran and the Traditions."
(b) The second class of innovations were those arising from association with Shias. Ali was given a dignity and honour higher than the earlier Caliphs. Muharram ceremonies were also found upon. To a true believer the breaking of taziahs should be as virtuous an action a breaking of idols. If this was not possible, these should be detested and abhorred.

(c) The third class of innovations originated from imitation of bad and corrupt customs. Hence pompous or expensive ceremonies on occasions of festivals, mourning, marriage or death must be avoided. "Follow the example of Muhammad (PBUH) of Arabia and relinquish all the usages of Hind and Sind, of fars or of Rum."
The prohibition of widow remarriage among the Indian Muslims, due to intercourse with the Hindus, must be given up. Similarly astrology or sooth-saying, the practice of worshipping, like the Hindus, the goddess of small-pox, or of keeping pictures of the Prophet and the Pir, must also be discarded.

Sayyid Ahmad organised the Tariqa-i-Muhammadia as a religious movement and termed his doctrine Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah (The way of Muhammad (PBUH)). The movement
helped to create a spirit of reform, better understand­
ing of unity of God and the Sunnas by the average
Muslim than before and expose several religious irreg­
ularities. Issuing out of Delhi, he went to Lucknow,
made a numerous converts and achieved considerable
success as preacher on his way to Rai Bareli. At Rai Bareli,
he married the widow of his elder brother and thus set
an example of widow re-marriage, which had become
obsolete among Indian Muslims as being a shameful act.¹
Subsequently, he made a tour of Allahabad and Benaras
preaching his doctrines and gaining converts and returning
to Rai Bareli, took the decisions of making the pilgrimage
to Makka for Haj which was considered a dangerous journey
due to the capturing the sea routes to Saudi Arabia by the
Britishers. This idea had so much overwhelmed the minds
of Indian theologians that they had been proclaimed fatwas
against the permissibility of going for Haj in these
circumstances. To dispel this wrongful apprehension he
decided to go for Haj himself along with followers.

In Shawwal, 1236 A.H., (July 1821) he set out for
Hajj, from Bareli with 400 men and women including his
close associates Shah Ismail and 'Abdul Hai.

¹ Mallick, A.R., op.cit., p.110.
After a stay of three months in Calcutta Sayyid Ahmad went on a pilgrimage to Makkah and Medina (June 1822) with the whole body of his followers.

After his return to India from pilgrimage in Makkah (1823), he halted at Bombay for a few days, and enrolled many disciples. Now his movement had acquired a large following, mainly from Bengal and Northern India. Besides the preaching work undertaken by his lieutenants in all the important cities of India, emissaries were sent to the interior to incite the ignorant Muslims to a Jihad.

A.R. Mallick writes, 'nevertheless, preparations were made with remarkable rapidity; such weapons as swords, guns and spears took the place of paraphernalia of religious rites; riding and drilling of the recruits was regularly practised; military uniforms were substituted for the loose dress of the converts and nazars to the Sayyid consisted now of either horses or weapons of war. Some 2,000 were thus armed and trained, were divided into three companies and were led towards Tonk. Initiation of any new convert was made conditional on his joining the Jihad or making Hijrat (emigration). The declared object of all these preparations was the prosecution of a holy war against the Sikhs. The army of Mujahids (crusaders) received the enthusiastic support from the ruler of Tonk and his son Wazir al-dawlah accompanied the party to Ajmer and from there Sayyid Ahmad entered the territory of Mir Rustam Khan of Khairpur. In Khairpur he was well received and joined by many Mujahids. He then entered the hills of the North-West and began to establish his position.

1. Mallick, A.R., op.cit., p.114
2. Cunningham, J.D., History of the Sikhs, p.191
among the Afghans of Kandahar and Kabul by inciting their hatred against the oppressive Sikhs. A contemporary Journal giving the causes of Ranjit Singh's popularity among the Hindus speaks of the reverence which he showed for cows, the slaughter of which was punishable with death and also 'his dreadful ill-treatment of the Musalmans in his territories' who besides suffering from various other disabilities, were not allowed to make their Azan-call to prayer or publicly say their prayers. 'This exclusion of the Musalmans from their religious ceremonies', continues the Journal, 'is considered by every Hindu as an act of great piety.'

The cases of the forcible conversion of Muslim women and their marriage with Sikhs were not uncommon. By 1826, Sayyid Ahmad called for hijrah and jihad against the Sikhs, by the circulation of a pamphlet, Targhib-al-jihad (incitement to Religious War), throughout Northern India. Sayyid Ahmad patched up an alliance with Sardar

---

Sayyid Khan, brother of Dost Muhammad Khan and Amir Khan, chief of Khatak and with several minor chiefs of Panjtar. The disquieting news from the frontier having reached Lahore, Bud Singh, with 10,000 troops, was sent by the Darbar Singh against the Sayyid. An attack led by the advanced guards of Sayyid Ahmad was repulsed by the Sikhs but the loss was so heavy that Budh Singh was forced to withdraw a few miles. The two engagements though indecisive and marked by the indisciplined conduct of his restless Pathans, nevertheless, encouraged Sayyid Ahmad to form a sort of government in the frontier. The Ulama (learned men) from Hindustan in conjunction with some leading Pathan chiefs decided to establish a Khilafat and Imamat and on Jumada 11, 1242 A.H. (February 1827) all took allegiance to the Sayyid as their Khalifah. Obedience to the Sayyid was declared obligatory on the part of all Muslims and people opposed to him were branded as rebels.

The Khutbah, Friday Sermon, too, was read in his name.  

Meanwhile the chiefs of Peshawar and Summa with their armies had joined the Sayyid who now with about a lac of people under his able command appeared formidable. But his position, quite naturally, soon aroused the jealousy of Yar Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Peshawar. When a major battle with the Sikhs was imminent, he attempted to poison the Sayyid and in the actual clash with the Sikhs the next day, he played a treacherous game, his army using blank cartridges and making only a show of fight. This resulted in Sayyid Ahmad's defeat and loss of many of his trusted followers.

---

1. S.A., p.101; A.R. Mallick is of the opinion, the reading of Khutba in the name of a person has great political significance. The sovereignty of the place where it is done is supposed to be vested in the person so honoured. op.cit., p.118 (F.No.2)
traitor and bribed Yar Muhammad Khan, ruler of Peshawar, with 12,000 rupees, to come to his rescue. Leaving the fort under Mazhar 'Ali of Patna, Shah Ismail and the Sayyid moved out to meet the two enemies at Zaida.¹ Yar Muhammad suffered defeat and died in action. The battle of Zaida was followed by small engagements with the Sikhs under Hari Singh. The Sayyid captured and then immediately lost the fortress of Tarbella and the Sikhs also snatched from him the fort of Hund. Shah Ismail attacked and captured Amb. Sayyid Ahmad now succeeded in re-occupying the fortress of Hund and depriving the Sikhs of their possession of Garhi Singli.

He organised also some sort of government within the territories. The secretariat was transferred to Amb and a seal bearing the inscription, "Ismuahu Ahmad", was made for Sayyid Ahmad. Attempts were made to do away with the corruptions and

¹ S.A., pp.110-113.
abuses among the Pathans. The power of the Sayyid was now at its zenith. His elation kept pace with his success, and he formally assumed, now, the title of Khalifah and struck coins in his name bearing the inscription 'Ahmad the Just, Defender of the Faith, the glitter of whose sword scattered destruction among infidels.'

A.R. Mallick writes, "Immediately after, Sultan Muhammad became a traitor, and incited to rebellion the people of Summah who were already disgusted with the strict rules of Islam applied. Mazhar 'Ali, Sayyid Ahmad's agent at Peshawar, was cruelly murdered along with the whole body of Hindustani tax collectors. The people of Summah, almost simultaneously massacred all Ghazis, while at evening prayers, "Like cattle and sheep." At this critical moment, he was again invited by some chiefs of Pakhli, Kagan and Kashmir to join them in their fight against the Sikhs. Sayyid Ahmad and

Shah Ismail with 400 trusted followers reached Kachan, and there joined the refractory chiefs of Muzaffarabad. Sayyid Ahmad suffered a defeat at Muzaffarabad, but soon after seized Balakot and made it his headquarters. Sher Singh led a surprise attack on Sayyid Ahmad and his followers. In this battle of Balakot which took place in May 1831, Sayyid Ahmad, Shah Ismail and all the leading members of this movement fell in action. In the army of Syed Ahmad Shahid which fought battles against the sikhs various Sufis from Bengal took part. Among them the prominent figures were: Maulana Imamuddin Bengali, Maulana Sufi Noor Mohammad, Maulana Waris Ali, Maulana Zahoorullah, Talibullah, Qazi Madani, Abdul Qadir, Haji Chand, and Maulana Abdul Hakim. Among the Bengali Sufis who lost their lives in the battle field were Faizuddin Aleemuddin, Lutfullah, Sharfuddin, Sy. Muzaffar Husain and Munshi Mohammad Ansari, Shaikh Barkatullah and Fazlur Rahman Burdwani. At the time of bayat of Maulana Imamuddin Bengali with Syed Ahmad Shahid at Lucknow in 1820, another Sufi from Bengal,

namely Sufi Najibullah Bengali also took bayat at the hands of Syed Ahmad Shahid. Among the other Sufi Mujahids of Bengal were Shaikh Faizuddin and Shaikh Barkatullah who fought in a battle near Hund with Sikhs in which the latter was killed and the former was injured.  

Sufi Nur Muhammad of Mir Sarai (Chittagong) who was badly injured in the battle of Balakot came back to Mir Sarai and established his Khanqah to give spiritual training to the Muslims of Bengal.

The battle of Balakot left the Wahhabis' leaderless and threw the entire organisation out of gear. The impact of Syed Ahmad's efforts are many fold. But the most important to me appears his effort to organise a group of Muslim Sufis to fight for the freedom of the Country who were asked to keep sword in place of rosary and to go to the battle field in place of leading a life of seclusion in the Khanqahs. This aspect has also encouraged the Muslim/reformers of Bengal who did not confine their activities to the Mosques or Khanqahs,

but came out in public and tried to solve their religious, social & economic as well as moral problems.

The ultimate aim of Sayyid Ahmad is assumed to have been the formation of an Islamic State to pull the Muslims out of their degenerate condition and to bring about a religious and spiritual reformation in the line of Shah Wali Allah and Shaiykh Ahmad Sirhindhi's thought. His mission had a far reaching effect in the history of Islam in India. We are only concerned here, with the impact of his missionary work on the religious and spiritual life of Bengal. A large number of socio-economic, and religious-political reformers of Bengal who were themselves Sufis were under the influence of Sayyid Ahmad and led the Muslim community of Bengal to the faith of religious and spiritual reform in the 19th century. In fact almost all the reform movements of Bengal during this century were inspired by the practical life and ideas of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and his impact is still being felt in Bengal.

Among the important personalities who were inspired by the ideas of Sayyid Ahmad's movement were: Nasir Ali Wajahat Ali and Ehsan Ali, Alias Tito Mir, Maulana Karamat Ali Jaunpuri, Haji Shariatullah, Sufi Nur Muhammad, Maulana Imamuddin Bengali and Maulana Syed Waris Ali Bengali.
About 1827 A.D., a disciple of Saiyyid Ahmad, Nasir Ali alias Titu Mir, led a mass movement of reformers, peasants and artisans in West Bengal. Titu Mir, an inhabitant of Chandpur, a few miles to the South-West of Narkulbaria in the district of Baraset, was of no family though above the class or ordinary villagers. He was, however, connected by marriage with one Munshi Amir, a respectable landed proprietor of the locality. He became a professional wrestler in Calcutta and was employed as lathial by Hindu zamindars of Nadia, while

1. Board's Collection, 54222, p.401, Colvin to Barewell, 8 March 1832, para 6; Mullick, A.R., op.cit. p.88
accompanying some members of the royal family of Delhi during pilgrimage to Mecca he met Sayyid Ahmad and became his disciple (1822). On return from pilgrimage, some in the year 1827, he settled down at Haidarpur near Narkulbaria and began to preach his doctrines as religious reformer, in which capacity he is reported to have regularly received stipends from Delhi. ¹

The reformation which Titu Mir desired in existing faith was almost similar to that which Shariat-Ullah had earlier started or which Sayyid Ahmad was successfully introducing at the time almost all over India. The first implied that the attributes of God must not be applied to a human being; and that the worship of angels, spirits, demons, pirs, teachers, saints or prophets constituted polytheism and was to be disallowed. The second necessitated the purging of Islam of all these superstitious, un-Islamic and idolatrous practices, ceremonies and rites growing out of

contact with Hindism. There were certain doctrinal and basic differences between Titu Mir and the Paraizis, as pointed out by Dr. M.A. Khan. While Shariat Allah held that the Friday and Idd prayers were not obligatory in India, Titu and his followers (also Karamat Ali) said these prayers. Dudu Miyan met Titu, the latter had no contact with Shariat Allah. Haji Shariat Allah got his inspiration from Arabia, whereas Titu's reform programme was an extension of Shah Waliullah and Sayyid Ahmad's programme for West Bengal. The conformity of both Shariat Allah and Titu to the Hanafi School proved nothing. Even Sayyid Ahmad's had some leanings towards it and his disciples like Karamat Ali were Hanafis. Though avoiding Hindu custom, Titu's followers imitated it by forming an exclusive caste, interdining only among themselves, perhaps out of attachment to lawful food and earnings (halal ruzi).

Titu Mir was not merely a religious reformer. He soon became the leader of an infuriated peasant

rising. His followers were recruited from the poor and illiterate Muslims, and were more numerous and powerful in the three districts of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. The sect was 'much disliked and feared, chiefly owing to the strong clanship which led them to combine and resist the extortionate demands by zamindars.' The extensive powers which the zamindars enjoyed made it easy for them in co-operation with non-Paraizi Muslim tenants (especially the Hanafis) to harass the followers of the sect. The Hanafis were shocked at the denunciation of their rites and customs. Ram Narayan of Taragoonia, Gour Prasad Chowdhury of Nagpur, agent of the zamindar of Koorgatchy and Kishan Deve Roy of Purwa were alarmed at the potential threat to their interests, and on getting complaints, used their powers and influence to interfere and discourage the sect by imposing fines (e.g. illegal beard tax)


or by inflicting petty kinds of maltreatment on peasants and weavers of the new sect. Eventually a mosque was burnt. Failing to get justice from the normal judicial machinery of the locality, the exasperated Muslims, led by their lieutenant, Ghulam Masum, carried the case of the peasants to Calcutta. These series of disappointments in procuring redress of their grievances by legal means must have told upon the patience of the sect and goaded them to take the law in their own hands and seek revenge by force of arms. Although the actual reason for going to extremities, which they did soon after, were difficult to find out, yet Colvin was of opinion that "they saw reason from whatever cause to be disappointed in their object of appealing the case and to this disappointment acting on irritated and fanatical feelings." must be attributed "the design suddenly formed and carried into execution of proceeding to extremities by retaliating not only on one Hindoo zemindar with whom there was the immediate quarrel but by acts of outrage towards the Hindoo community generally."1 But O'Kinealy sharply commented

on the inexplicable apathy of the Government.¹

The resolution to take revenge was acted upon as soon as entertained. Titu and his followers proclaimed the extinction of English rule and re-establishment of Muhammadan power. The village of Narkulbaria became the head-quarters of the insurgents. About 1829-30 Titu Mir was joined by Miskin Shah, a faqir hailing from the Punjab who, it was said, was the instigator of the rising.² Soon after several districts of West Bengal had become virtually a battle ground between zamindars and the followers of the Titu, 'the British authorities were obliged to despatch a regiment of native infantry to deal with what had become a jacquerie.'³ Finally Titu Mir along with fifty of his followers was killed (1831) during military intervention and some three hundred fifty arrested.⁴ The

---

¹ Sarkar, J.N., Islam in Bengal, p.63.
³ Peter Hardy, The Muslims of British India (Cambridge, 1972), p.58.
dead bodies of those who fell in action, including the loader's were burnt.\(^1\) J.N. Sarkar observed, "Starting a religious movement it developed into a Socio-economic struggle of the Muslim peasantry against the Hindu-zamindars. Provoking passive non-co-operation amongst the masses by refusing to take service under the English and refusing to go to the English courts, it became a religious, economic and political movement.\(^2\) A.R. Mallick observed, "the Muslim mass of Bengal were uneducated and illiterate, poor and hardpressed, and these are circumstances in which puritanic virtues flourish most."\(^3\)

\(^1\) Mallick, A.R., *op.cit.* p.99
\(^2\) Sarkar, J.N., *op.cit.* p.64.
\(^3\) Mallick, A.R., *op.cit.* p.105
WILAYAT ALI AND ENAYAT ALI

At the death of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1831) differences of opinion arose among his three principal disciples over the relative emphasis on these two principles (e.g. the central feature of the tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah of Sayyid Ahmad was the emphasis on the Prophetic tradition (ittibah-i-Sunnah) and the rejection of the prescriptions of the schools of Law (ittibah-i-fiqh). Maulavi Wilayat Ali of Patna re-affirmed the principle of the tariqah, i.e., Prophetic tradition (in his book Amal bi'l Hadis, probably written before 1837). Maulana Karamat Ali of Jaunpur refuted Wilayat Ali (in his book Quwwat al Iman, 1837); remained firm on taqlid and followed the Hanafi School of Law. Maulana Abdul Jabbar of Calcutta, though a Hanafite, reasserted emphasis on Prophetic tradition, refuting Karamat Ali and supporting Wilayat Ali (in his book Taqiyat ul Muslimin fittiba-i-Sunnat Sayyidal Mursalin, 1840). Thus arose a split in Sayyid Ahmad's sect between the Patna School of Wilayat Ali and his brother Enayat Ali and the Taaiyuni School of Karamat Ali. In course of time a third group arose by leaving the Patna School, the Ahle-hadis.

Maulana Wilayat Ali and Enayat Ali of Sadiarpur family played a very important part in the Sayyid's movement. Touring throughout Bengal and Bihar the two brothers raised the zeal of their adherents to fever heat, and collected men and money for the front. Central Bengal and especially the districts of Faridpur, Pabna, Rajshahi, Maldah, Bogra, Nadia and even Baraset became the chief ground of Enayat Ali

1. Hunter, 28-78; Q. Ahmad, Ch.4; M.A. Khan; A.R. Mallick, 81-92, 115-139; Calcutta Review, No.C.95-104; Itikaf, 400 - 405.
2. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p. 64.
of Patna for more than ten years. During 1840-44 he made Hakimpur village in Jessore district his head-quarters. He built mosques and appointed teachers to spread the creed and preached jihad. For a time he was assisted in Bengal by his brother Wilayat Ali, but the later mainly worked among the people of Central India, Hyderabad and Bombay. The jihad fund at Patna was replenished by proceeds of sale of the Deccani Women's jewels.

The efforts of Enayat Ali and his agents (1830-70) succeeded in rousing a strong religio-political consciousness among the Bengal Muslims, and encouraging the growth of a civic and corporate spirit, a policy of civil disobedience to government and boycott of Government organs, especially the courts. Thus the masses came to be united in a well-knit organisation. The remotest villages in Bengal came to be electrified by the Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah. In 1850 Enayat Ali was found preaching jihad in Rajshahi in North Bengal with the assistance of the headmen of many villages, especially one Muniruddin. In the controversy between the two brothers, Enayat Ali's programme for immediate action against the British was supported by the "ignorant and desperate" Bengalis but when it was not accepted by Wilayat Ali, supported by the Hindusthanis, Enayat Ali deserted him. After his death in 1852 Enayat Ali became the leader till his own death in 1857.

The influence of the Patna School extended mainly in northern and western districts of Bengal- Dinajpur, Hallah, Rajshahi, Murshidabad, Nadia, Burdwan, West Jessore and Twenty-four Parganahs. The School was strongest in those areas traversed by the Ganges and the Bhagirathi.
MAULANA KARAMAT ALI (1800-1873)¹
(Taaiyuni Movement)

Maulana Karamat Ali belonged to a Shaikh family which held the office of Khatib during Muhammadan rule. His father was a Sarishtadar in Jaunpur collectorate. Born at Jaunpur (c-1800), he studied theology and other Muslim sciences under various celebrated teachers, especially Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddis of Delhi, the teacher and afterwards follower of Sayyid Ahmad Breilavi. Karamat Ali became a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad (then touring in Bengal and Northern India, 1820-24). But, according to Yusuf Ali, he did not join the Sayyid's Jihad against the Sikhs or go to the Afghan border. He was not a true follower of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid as he was in favour of Fatiha and Qiyam, where as Sayyid Ahmad was against these practices. About 1835 the Muslims of Bengal became so much plunged in superstitious beliefs and practices that he apprehended divine retribution. Choosing Bengal as the field of his mission he came there in 1835. The influence of Tariqaha-i-Muharram Movement which had reached Bengal in 1820

¹. For Karamat Ali, Ency.Islam, ii. 752 -3 (by Yusuf Hussain); JASE, Vol. 63 (Pt.iii 54 -6); Census of India (1901), Vol. 6, Pt. I (Bengal), P. 174; Hunter, I.K. 97; Titus, 194; M.A. Khan; Ikran 406-7; I.H. Qureshi; Q. Ahmad ,107 -8.

Karamat Ali wrote chiefly in Urdu. Rahman Ali's list of 46 of his works is not exhaustive. One of his works is regarded in India as a correct statement of Islamic principles. His writings may be divided into four classes, (1) General works, (2) Works on the reading and verbal interpretation of the Quran and formal prayers and ablutions (3) Works on the doctrine of spiritual preceptorship (Pir-i-Muridi), in accepting this doctrine, Karamat Ali stands in sharp opposition to the Wahhabi Sect and merges insensibly in the Tassawwuf schools he brings into relation with the traditional religious orders. (4) Polemics against Shariat-Allah, Dudu Miyan, the Wahhabis etc.
with Sayyid Ahmad's visit to Calcutta, continued to be felt down to the sixties of the nineteenth century.

Karamat Ali, who was basically a Sufi and theologian of sufism and Islam on orthodox lines, and peaceful reform of Muslims in Bihar and Bengal, especially in Eastern Bengal. In the field of doctrine, his principal ideas were as follows:

1) \textit{Taqlid}: Karamat Ali insisted on the principle of taqlid or imitation of the school of law (mazhab), also accepted by the Faraizis but not by the Patna school or Wilayat Ali's group. He identified himself with the orthodox Sunni Hanafi School. Hence his group was called Ta'aiyun (Arabic ta'aiyun). He accepted the six orthodox books of tradition, the commentaries (tafsir), the principles of ceremonial law as interpreted by the masters (usul-i-fiqh).

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Sarkar, J.H., Islam in Bengal}, p.69.
\end{itemize}
ii) **Prayers**: Karamat Ali held that the congregational prayers (Juma' and 'Idd) were not only lawful but obligatory. In this he differed from the Faraizis who held that as India had become darul harb because of British Conquest, these prayers could not be held. Karamat Ali, who introduced an era of religious debate in Bengal counter-argued that India had not become darul harb and even in that case the Muslims could follow all observances practised in darul Islam. The Patna School agreed with Karamat Ali in this respect.

iii) **Pir-i-Muridi**: Karamat Ali accepted the doctrines of Tasawwuf and Pir-i-Muridi and himself practised and followed the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Wali Allah Sufi Order.

iv) **Mujaddid**: He accepted the tradition of the emergence of a Mujaddid (renewal of faith) in every century and regarded Sayyid Ahmad to be a Mujaddid of 13th century A.H. to be followed till the 14th A.H.

v) He differentiated between shirk (negotiation of Islam and bida (an error in doctrine) and between a fasik (sinner) and a Kafir (infidel). He denounced music,
dance, tazias, and Urs. But he approved in a modified form some of the traditional ceremonies like fatihah (rite for the dead) and Qiyam or standing during Milad Un-nabi (birthday celebration of the Prophet). He criticised those who "denied funeral prayers to those who did not pray but repeated the Kalima". He also endeavoured (successfully) to bring back to orthodoxy the new heterodox schools growing out of the work of Shariat Allah and Dhu Nuwayr.

Karamat Ali showed great power throughout his life for regenerating Islam and revitalizing Islamic life in East Bengal. Sailing on the rivers for period of nearly forty years on his flotilla constituting a travelling (residential) college, he conveyed the message of Islamic reform and regeneration to the Nagaus of Assam and the people of the Bay of Bengal islands. J.N. Sarkar says, "His following was so large that when he died (30th May, 1873), there was scarcely a village in Bengal that did not contain some of his disciples." He was buried in Rangpur. He has written more than fifty books which deals with his religious and spiritual reformist ideas and they had indeed played a very significant role in reforming the life of the Muslims of Bengal which was very much under the influence of Hindu customs and traditions. Along with his books he practically trained a very large number of his followers in the path of Sufism especially of the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Wali Allahi Sufi order. His silsilah and spiritual followers and descendants are still well-known in Bangladesh under the title of Jaunpuri silsilah and Jaunpuri pirs.

1. Sarkar, J.N., Islam in Bengal, p. 70
Haji Shariat Allah (A.D. 1781-1840) was a Bengali Muslim belonging to a petty taluqdar family of Shamail village in Madaripur subdivision. He was the founder of the Faidi movement of Bengal. He started this religious reform movement at the age of 38. He was born in A.D. 1781. His father 'Abd al-


Jalil Taluqdar, a man of not very large means, died when he was hardly eight years old. Thereafter, he was brought up in the family of his paternal uncle 'Azim al-Din. On a certain occasion, being reprimanded by his uncle, Shariat Alla left home and ran away to Calcutta when he was about twelve years old. There he got an opportunity to present himself to a teacher of the Holy Quran namely Mawlana Basharat 'Ali, who, taking pity on the boy, enrolled him in his Quran Classes. Then he proceeded to Phurphura, in the district of Hughly, to take lessons in Arabic and Persian languages on the advice of his teacher. After two years he proceeded to Murshidabad to meet his uncle, 'Ashiq Mi.

1. According to tradition current in the family of the Haji, his father died when he was about 8 years old and his mother died earlier. This is supported by Munshi 'Abd al Halim and Wazir Ali, Talukdar, the Bengali biographers of the Haji, who maintain that he lost his parents, in his childhood (cf. Munshi 'Abd al-Halim: M.S. Haji Shariat Allah, fol.1; and Wazir Ali: Muslim Ratnahar, p.2); cf. M.A. Khan, op.cit. p.2, Foot Note No.7.


3. Ibid., fol. 2f.

4. 'Abd al Halim: M.S.Haji Shariat Allah, fol.4f.
who was attached to the Murshidabad Court. There he continued to read Arabic and Persian under his uncle. Again he proceeded to Calcutta and presented himself before his old teacher Mawlana Basharat 'Ali. The Mawlana at that time got disgusted with the British regime and decided to emigrate to the holy city of Makkah. Shariat Allah also wished to accompany him. They, accordingly, set out for Arabia about A.D. 1799.

Haji Shariat Allah's stay in Arabia ranged from A.D. 1799 to A.D. 1818. In the first phase of his stay in Arabia, he spent the initial two years at the residence of one Mawlana Murad, a Bengali domiciled at Makkah and studied under him. The second phase lasted for 14 years and he received guidance from Tabir Sambali. Haji Shariat Allah studied almost all branches of religious sciences including the mysteries of Sufism under the learned Scholar Tabir Sambali. Haji Shariat Allah was also formally initiated into the Qadiriyah order of Sufism.

2. Abd al-Halim: MS Haji Shariat Allah, fol. 6-7
3. Ibid. foll. 7 - 8
5. Abd al-Halim: MS Haji Shariat Allah, fol. 8:

H. A. Khan, op. cit. p. 4.
to which the Faraidis zealously cling themselves down to the present day. In the third phase Haji Shariat Allah busying himself in the time honoured university of al-Azhar at Cairo. Thereafter, he returned to Makkah, and paying a short visit to Madinah decided to return to Bengal with the intention of propagating pure doctrines of Islam. Haji Shariat Allah returned home in A.D. 1818.

Dr. M.A. Khan writes, "having fortified himself with Islamic learning, the Haji proceeded to his home country for preaching. Here many local socio-religious practices observed by the Muslim masses, which might have been quite normal to him before his pilgrimage to Makkah 20 years back, appeared to him grossly superstitious and un-Islamic." An idea of these practices can be had from the contemporary and near contemporary writings. James Taylor, a contemporary of the Haji, records a list

1. M.A. Khan, *op.cit.*, p.4
of superstitious rites and heretic customs practised by the 'Muslims of Dacca, Faridpur and Bakarganj' such as Chuttee, Puttee and Chilla connected with the birth of a child, and number of other rites and ceremonies connected with circumcision, marriage and funeral, which were opposed by the Haji. According to James Wise, "for three generations or fifty years," from the date of the passing of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa into the hands of the East India Company (A.D. 1765) down to the advent of the Faraidi movement (A.D. 1818), "the Musulmans of Eastern Bengal, being without a shepherd, were led more and more (away) from their national faith, and conformed ... to many superstitious rites of the Hindus."  

"Where had you been when Haji Shariat Allah came thither (to Bengal)?" 

"Who did abolish the custom of Fatihah, the worship of Shrines, and stop the corrupt Mullah." ?

* * *


"When he set his foot in Bengal, all shirk (polytheism) and bid'at (sinful innovations) were trampled down."
"Having arrived there Hajji Shariat Allah propagated (true) religion throughout Bengal."¹

He was under the influence of wahabi thinking and which he expressed in his reformist period in Bengal. James Taylor, categorically says, "Hajji Shariat Allah visited it (Makkah) a second time and took his abode among the Wahabees."² This is also corroborated Wazir 'Ali and Abd al-Halim.³ Dr. N.A. Khan observed the second visit of Hajji Shariat Allah took place in between A.D. 1819 and 1820.⁴ "Since his return," says Taylor, "he has been engaged in promulgating his doctrines."⁵

The term "Faraidi" is derived from the Arabic word "Faraid", plural of "Faridah", which means obligatory

¹ Durr-i-Muhammad: Puthi, pp.26-27
² James Taylor: Topography, p.248.
³ Cf. Wazir Ali, Muslim Ratzahar, p.3; 'Abd al Halim: MS. Hajji Shariat Allah, fol.14-15
⁴ N.A. Khan: op.cit. p.11
⁵ James Taylor: Topography, p.248
⁶ N.A. Khan: op.cit. pp.60-83
religious duties. They, however, interpreted the term "faraid" in a broad sense to include all the religious duties enjoined by God and the Prophet irrespective of their importance, though they laid emphasis on the observance of five fundamental institutions (bina) of Islam, viz, (i) the profession of dogma of faith (Kalimah) (ii) attending daily prayers (Salat or namaz) (iii) fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm or rozah) (iv) Paying poor tax (zakat) and (v) Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj).

The object of this emphasis on the fundamental institutions was to focus the attention of the masses to the importance of their observance, as the Muslims of Bengal in their enthusiasm to celebrate various local cults, rites and ceremonies had become negligent to these fundamental duties. To realise these objectives, Haji Shariat Allah formulated certain main principles:

(a) Repentance (tawbah)
(b) Unity of God (Tawhid)
(c) Prayers
(d) Initiation (Ba'iyat)

(a) (a) Repentance (Tawbah): A would-be disciple had to express repentance (tawbah or tauba) for past
sins and take a vow to lead a more righteous and godly life in future. Hence the members of this creed were also known as Tawbar Muslims. The formula of repentance was couched in Bengali language for the convenience of the ignorant masses and administered by ustad to the Shagird without touching. The process was known as istighfar or iqra' bi'iyat.

(b) Unity of God (Tawhid): This is to be firmly practised. A faraizi must refrain from ascribing God's partnership to any other. Hence any belief or action, having the slightest resemblance with infidelity (kufr), polytheism (shirk), or sinful innovation (bidah), e.g., paying money to or joining Hindu rites and ceremonies, pir-worship, traditional fatihahs and other practices were repugnant and must be discarded.

(c) Prayers: The Faraizi differed from other Muslims on the question of holding congregational prayers of Juma and Idd. According to Hanafi law these are not permitted except in misr-al-jami (i.e. in such a township where the administrator and the judge, appointed by a lawful Muslim Sultan, are present). India, being under British
(i.e. non Muslim) rule, was Dar-ul-harb not Dar-ul-Islam. such township did not exist in Bengal and hence observance of Friday congregational prayers on the two important festivals of Id-ul-fitr and Id-uz-zohra was not lawful. This implied a protest against the administrative changes of the British to the detriment of the Muslim community. In this respect they were vehemently opposed by Maulana Karamat Ali who was in favour of holding these two congregational prayers in all respects.

(d) Initiation (Ba'iyat): The prevalent Sufi initiation procedure of joining hands was discarded. The term Pir-i-muridi implied a complete submission of the disciple to the priest or religious preceptor. So this sinful innovation was replaced by the relationship between Ustad (spiritual guide or teacher) and Shagird (pupil). This term of ustad and shagird is now very popularly used in the sufi circle of Bengal.

The Faraizis denounced and abolished all popular un-Islamic rites and ceremonies—the worship of saints, servile devotion to the Prophet or to the Piras—the holding of urs or death anniversary or Piras (as it was a fatihah), and held that participation in Muharram was a sinful innovation. With his puritanic attitude Haji Shariat Allah ruled that the socio-religious celebrations of the Muslims must be in strict conformity with Islam. The Faraizis were very strict in adhering to the commands of God and were 'stricter in morals' than other Muslims.
On the social plane, the Faraizis denounced caste prejudices as a deadly sin, being contrary to the spirit of the Quran. So they emphasized the equality of all members of the reformed creed.

Thus, from historical point of view, the Faraidi movement was born out of the necessity for "self-correction" of the Muslim Society of Bengal.

Secondly, from doctrinal point of view, the Faraidi movement can be characterised as representing a puritanic revivalism with the object of going back to the pristine Islam on the one hand, and that of purging Muslim society of all un-Islamic innovations on the other.

Thirdly, Haji Shariat Allah found his disciples from the lower classes, such as cultivators, weavers, and oil-grinder. The Haji being primarily a religious reformer, confined himself to a religious programme which had little to do with the political and economic conditions of the people. To the originally religious reform movement of Haji Shariat Allah, Muhsin al Din
Ahmad alias Dudu Miyan¹ (Son and Successor of Haji Shariat Allah) added a strong socio-economic bias; and in this socio-economic field, the Faraidi movement attained the zenith of its popularity by providing a platform for the peasant agitation against the oppressive Hindu zamindars and European indigo planters. This new development of the movement was a natural growth compelled by a combination of circumstances. It may be recalled that the doctrine of tawhid or monotheism, as propounded by Haji Shariat Allah, consisted of two parts, viz.,

(i) acceptance of the doctrine of the unity of God, and
(ii) rejection of all polytheistic accretions and sinful innovations. In accordance with this doctrine, the Haji directed his followers to refrain from any such activity which might directly or indirectly initiates against the ideal of monotheism. In this context, the Faraidis came in conflict with the zamindars, for the following reasons:

In the first place, following the Permanent Settlement of A.D. 1793, the big zamindars of Eastern

¹ For details, see M.A. Khan, op.cit. pp. 23 - 47.
Bengal were mostly owned by the Hindu zamindars. The abwabs or illegal cesses which were levied by them on the peasantry included several items of idolatrous cesses, such as Srudh or Sraddha Kharcha, Paita Kharcha, Rath Kharcha, and Durga Vritti. Haji Shariat Allah being the exponent of pure monotheism, objected to the payment of these illegal cesses on the part of the Faraidis, for he viewed them as encouraging polytheism. Secondly, the powerful Hindu zamindars prohibited the slaughter of cows within their estates. This restriction was also opposed by the Faraidi leader; for he deemed it not only unjust but also encouraging idolatory as it was imposed solely on account of the Hindu conception of the divinity of cows. Thirdly, the coercive measures of the zamindars,

1. M.A. Khan, op.cit., p.127
3. Cf. M.A. Khan, op.cit. p.XCIV. foot note No.1. According to local information gathered by M.A. Khan from the town of Barisal in 1958, cow was publicly slaughtered there for the first time in 1930, when a Muslim Deputy Superintendent of Police was posted there.
did little to check the growth of the Parniidi movement.\(^1\) The championing of the cause of the peasantry by Dudu Miyan made it even more popular than before and helped its rapid spread throughout Eastern Bengal.\(^2\) Backed by popular support, Dudu Miyan felt strong enough on the second year of his leadership (A.D. 1841) to challenge the right of the zamindars to levy illegal cesses and determined to resist the relation of such cesses by force. This new policy of the movement resulted in a series of violent conflicts, large-scale affrays and accusations and counter-accusations in the law courts from A.D. 1841 to 1846. The continuous victory of Dudu Miyan in almost all of these conflicts, gave him an invincible superiority over the zamindars.\(^3\)

---

3. Ibid. p.30 ff.
Thus, the development of the Faraidi Movement from a purely religious programme to an economic struggle was because of its upholding the cause of the peasantry against the oppression of the zamindars and indigo planters. The great popularity of the Faraidi Movement on this account points to Dudu Miyan's successful utilization of the antagonism of the peasantry to the zamindars and planters for the enhancement of the movement. As long as the Faraidi leaders met the socio-economic needs of the people, it flourished extensively and its decline can be traced to the withering away of this socio-economic bias. Today the Faraidis survive mainly as a religious group and its present leader in Bengal whose name is Mohsin Ali is also a Pir and takes Bayat in Sufism. They are popular mainly in east Bengal (i.e. Bangladesh).
Sayyid Nazir Husain of Balthawa in Monghyr district was born in 1805. He was a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid of Rai Bereli. He was a renowned Sufi Saint and a great social reformer. He had visited Bengal for several times for the cause of Islam and had many disciples in Bengal. He wrote many books on Islam. About 1864 he wrote a treatise Thabut-i-Haqq al Haqaiq (establishment of the truth) and founded a new vigorous school known as the Ahl-i-Hadis (people of tradition), it came to absorb most of the reformist tendencies of the nineteenth century Islamic revivalism. The creed of the sect is:² 'Whatever the Prophet Muhammad taught in Quran and authoritative Traditions (Ahadis Sahiha) that alone is the basis of the religion known as the Ahl-i-Hadis. It aims at going back to the first principles, - restoration of the simplicity and sincerity of classical Islam. Emphasis is therefore put on (i) reassertion of Tauhid (unity of God), denial of occultism (ilm-ul-ghaib), rejection of Pirism; ii) rejection of taqlid i.e. blind acceptance of the four schools of law, and of the ijma (agreement)

2. 'Arkar, J.N., op.cit., p,71
of the Islamic community; iii) individual interpretation (ijtahad) of the Quran and Traditions which implies that the person must be sufficiently learned. This is a principle of far-reaching importance; iv) eradication of all polytheistic innovations or un-Islamic customs, is a natural corollary to this doctrine so that the 'inner truth' and meaning of Islam may be understood.
Among the spiritual disciples and admirers of Syed Ahmad Shahid who worked in Bengal Sufi Nur Muhammad was an important person who worked purely for the regeneration of spiritual life of the Muslims in Bengal during the last half of the 19th century. He was a great Sufi Saint of Bangladesh. He was a resident of Malias, Chittagong. His spiritual preceptor was Shaykh Zahid of Noakhali district who was a disciple of Shah Sufi Dayem of Daira Azimpura, Dhaka. Then he became a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid of Rai Brelavi at Calcutta. Sufi Nur-Muhammad during the later's arrival at Calcutta in October 1822, had accompanied Sayyid Ahmad Shahid in his campaign of Jihad and had participated in the battle of Mayar in which he was badly injured. After his return from battle field he settled in Mir Sarai (Chittagong) and started his missionary work as Sufi and popularized Mujaddidi Wali Allah Sufi-Order in Bengal. He died on 1st November 1858 and was buried in Mir Sarai. A large number of spiritual revivalism in Bengal is due to the efforts of Sufi Nur-Muhammad and his disciples who worked according to the Mujaddidi Wali Allah Sufi disciplines which much emphasis on adherence of the laws of Shafia and less on the Sufi rituals.

1. Muhammad Motiur Rahman, Ḥimay-i-Umayyi, P. 118
MAULANA IMAMUDDIN BENGALI

He was a spiritual disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. He was originally belonged to Raushanabad area but later on settled in the village of Saadullahpur in Noakhali district.

He took spiritual discipleship at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid at Lucknow in the year 1820 along with another Bengali Sufi Maulana Najibullah and other important non-Bengali followers of Sayyid Ahmad like Maulana Walayat Ali Azmabadi and Obaidullah Farangi Mahabi and accompanied him for Haj. When this Caravan of Haj pilgrims reached Calcutta in 1822, Imamuddin Bengali went with Sayyid's permission to see his mother and on his return to Calcutta came back with a large number of Muslims of his district who took bayat from Sayyid Ahmad Shahid.¹ He had accompanied Sayyid Ahmad Shahid during the latter's Haj journey in 1823 and was with him in several battles and returned to Bengal after the battle of Balakot in 1831. He again went for Haj in 1857 and when after performing his second Haj in 1857 he was returning back home that he breathed his last in the ship near Aden. His dead body was put in the sea.

Maulana Ubaidul Haq in his book Tazkirah Auliyah-i-Bengal had given a detailed sketch of his life and given his date of death as 1274 A.H.

Khan Bahadur Hamidullah Khan of Chittagong had also written a book regarding the life and works of his Shaykh Sufi Noor Muhammad and Maulana Imamuddin Bengali under the title Anwar al Nayarain Fi Akhbar al Khairam which could not be published. A manuscript copy of this book was in the library of Maulana Imamuddin in Sudharam, Noakhali but was destroyed in a fire which engulfed this library. In Sadullahpur is still preserved the broken sword of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and his gown and turban.

MAULANA SAYYID WARIS ALI BENGALI

He was also a spiritual disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. He belonged to the Chittagong district and was a member of the Mujahid Army of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and took part in various battles with the latter and was considered a distinguished personality among the disciples of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. He was the father of famous Sufi Sayyid Fateh Ali Uwaysi of Bengal. According to Ghulam Rasool Mehar during the period of stay of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and his followers in Panjtar fort in Sawat, Sayyid Waris Ali Bengali stayed in room No. 1 out of the rooms in that fort. His name is mentioned in the list of 135 followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid.

who accompanied him from Panjtar to Chanai. He is believed to have been killed in the battle which was fought in the district of Sawqat and was buried in Panjtar.

SHAH SufI FATEH ALI UWAYS1

He was a disciple and a Khalifah of Shah Sufi Nur-Muhammad of Nizampur (Chittagong). The dargah of this great divine of Bengal is in 24/1 Munshi Para Lane, Lala Bagan, Maniktala, Calcutta. He was a Sufi reformer of the later part of the 19th Century. Like Shah Wali Allah (1703-62), Shah Sufi Fateh Ali endeavoured to establish pure monotheism and purge the Muslim society of all polytheistic and un-Islamic social practices, beliefs customs etc., which had grown up in Hindu environment and emphasised the need to maintain the purity of Islam, its doctrines and values.

He was a resident of Maliash, Chattagram in Bangladesh. He was the son of a the celebrated Sufi disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, Maulana Shah Sufi Waris Ali and his mother

2. Ainya-i-Uwaysi, by Muhammad Matiur Rahman, p145
3. Muhammad Mabarak Ali Rahman; Hayate Ekram (Bengali Text), pp. 29-47; BSS, p. 235; Mosud-er-Rahman; Muslim Tirtha Furfura Sharif (Bengali Text), pp. 35 - 56.
was Saïda Saeeda Khatun. He had his early education from Furfura and Dasha in the district of Hooghly. After completing his education he entered into service in Gorabazar, near Damdam, Calcutta. He was very good scholar of Arabic and Persian.

He had a very effective spiritual power and impressed deeply all who came in his contact. He was popularly called "Rasool Numa" because almost all those who got spiritual schooling under him were fortunate enough to be blessed with the ziarat of the Holy Prophet in dreams or in meditation. The collection of his poetical works are published under the title Diwan-i-Uwaysi which shows deep devotion for the Holy Prophet of Islam and almost all his poems express his this intense feeling of love for him.

A few lines in this respect are worth quoting.

In another poem he says,

In another poem, he says,

In another poem, he says,
Shah Sufi Fateh Ali popularised the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Sufi Order in Bengal. He had settled in Punashi in the district of Murshidabad. He was married to Muhtarma Fateim Khatun of Kharera, Murshidabad. He had only one son, Maulana Shah Sufi Sayyid Mustafa Ali and a daughter Hazrat Banu Zohra Khatun. She had her spiritual education from her father Shah Sufi Fateh Ali. She is known as Rabea Basri of Bengal. The tomb of bibi Zohra is in Shahpur in the district of Murshidabad.

Maulana Sayyid Mustafa Ali had two sons, Al-Haj Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Masuder-Rahman and Al-Haj Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Jane-Alam, who is an advocate in Dacca High Court at present. The tomb of Sayyid Mustafa Ali is in Punashi near the shrine of Shah Abdul Aziz of Burni. Maulana Masud-er-Rahman had two daughters and two sons, Saiyeda Shaira Khatun, Saiyeda Husnarea Khatun; and Sayyid Mahfuz Ali and Sayyid Mahmud Ali. The dargah of Maulana Masud-er-Rahman is in Punashi.

A list of Khalifas of Shah Sufi Fateh Ali as given by Syed Mohammad Mir Hasan, the compiler of Diwan-i-Uwaysi is as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maulana Abdul Haq</td>
<td>Sijgram, Murshidabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maulana Aiyazu'd-Din</td>
<td>Alipur (Calcutta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sufi Neyaz Ahmad</td>
<td>Katra Pata, Burdwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shah Sufi Ekramul Haq</td>
<td>Punashi, Murshidabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Maulana Matiur Rahman</td>
<td>Chattagram (Bangladesh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim</td>
<td>Chattagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maulana Abdul Aziz</td>
<td>Chandoor Jahanabad, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maulana Akbar Ali</td>
<td>Sylhet (Bangladesh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maulana Amenjed Ali</td>
<td>Dhaka (Bangladesh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maulana Ahmad Ali</td>
<td>Faridpur (Bangladesh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shah Didar Bakhsh</td>
<td>Paddopukur, Howrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shah Baqullah</td>
<td>Khanpur, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maulana Muhammad</td>
<td>Furfura Sharif, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abu-Bakr Siddiqi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Maulana Gulam Salmani</td>
<td>Furfura Sharif, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Maulana Ghanimatullah</td>
<td>Furfura Sharif, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Munshi Sadakatullah</td>
<td>Furfura Sharif, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Munshi Sharafatullah</td>
<td>Khatun, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Shaikh Korban</td>
<td>Banjatalab, Calcutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Shamsul Ulama Maulana</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mirza Ashraf Ali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Syed Wajed Ali</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Maulana Gul Husain</td>
<td>Khorasan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Maulana Ataur Rahman</td>
<td>24 Pargana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Maulana Mabinullah</td>
<td>Rampara, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Maulana Syed Zulfiqar Ali</td>
<td>Titagarh 24 Pargana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Maulana Ataye Elahi</td>
<td>Mangalkot, Burdwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Munshi Sulaiman</td>
<td>Barashat, 24 Pargana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Maulana Nasiruddin</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Maulana Abdul Qadir</td>
<td>Faridpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Qazi Khoda Nawaz</td>
<td>Dabsab, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Maulana Abdul Qadir Qazi</td>
<td>Baidyabati, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Farahatullah</td>
<td>24 Pargana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Shaikh Lal Muhammad</td>
<td>Chuchura, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Maulana Syed Azam Husain</td>
<td>Madina Sharif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Maulana Obaidullah</td>
<td>Santipur, Nadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Muhammad Ibrahim</td>
<td>Furfura Sharif, Hooghly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sufistic mission of Syed Ahmad Shahid and his disciple Sufi Nur Mohammad was carried forward in Bengal by these important disciples of Sufi Fateh Ali especially by Maulana Ghulam Salmani & Syed Wajed Ali and other followers.

**DATA MAHBUB SHAH**

The shrine of this saint is in Patharchapri six miles north-west of Suri. Details of his early life is not known.

---

1. A. Mannaf, 'Patharchapriir Data Saheb' (Bengali Text) 'Bulbul' (12th year, 1979) Calcutta, p.25; M. Abdur Rahman: Data Baba Pir Mahbub Shah (Bengali Book), Published in 1988; BSS, pp. 233-234.
He lived for sometime in a dargah in the forest of Ghatdurlabpur in the district of Birbhum. From there Data Saheb came to Kushmashul. When he returned to Patharchapri from Kushmashul he became famous as an important Sufi Saint.

He was very simple living and a kind hearted person. He used to love people irrespective of cast, creed and colour.

It is said he worked many miracles. He died in 1892.1

1. A. Mannaf, 'Patharchapri Data Saheb' (Bengali Text) 'Bulbul' (12th year, 1979) Calcutta, p.25; M. Abdur Rahman: Data Baba Pir Mahbub Shah (Bengali Book), Published in 1988; BSS, pp.233 - 234.