THE IMPACT OF SUFISM IN BENGAL
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The biographical sketches of the Sufis reveal that they were the real torch-bearers of Islamic faith in Bengal. Even if one is hesitant to accept the statement of Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jehangir Simnani that 'there is no town and no village where the holy Saints did not come and settle down', the names of Sufis and their account that have come down to us, either through tradition or literary and epigraphic sources establish the fact that their number was too small to be by-passed. The earliest Sufi attempts of proselytism began under very unfavourable circumstances: the country was under the rule of Hindu potentates who were with one or two exceptions, generally very conservative, orthodox and above all antagonistic to the faith of Islam. Hence their early attempts were bound to fail; but their subsequent attempts

1. Quoted in Bengal: Past and Present, 1948, p.36
were quite successful; because of the activities of the Sufis had been working under favourable circumstances. They came, established khanqahs, gathered disciples around them, imparted instructions, while some of them settled and died in this country. Thus they added another factor in the Muslim Society with those of the ruling class and 'Alims'. They influenced deeply the minds of the people in their lifetime.

The impact of the Sufism on the growth of the Muslim Society in Bengal may be grouped under the following heads:

1) The influence of the Sufis over the Society and missionary activities.
2) Sufi Saints and their relation with the State
3) Contributions of Sufi-Saints towards educating the people.

1) The Influence of the Sufis Over the Society and Missionary Activities

It is generally said that establishment of Muslim rule was instrumental in bringing the faith of Islam and its civilisation in this country. This statement is only partially true. No doubt, consolidation of the Muslim power in the country greatly
enhanced diffusion of Islamic faith and culture. But it were the Sufis who were the real torch-bearers of Islam in Bengal. The earliest Sufi attempts of proselytism began under very unfavourable circumstances but their subsequent attempts were quite successful. The causes of the success of the Sufi mission are as follows: i) Indomitable zeal, uncommon piety and widely believed miracles possessed by the Sufis of the thirteenth up to the sixteenth century A.D., were the main causes of success of Sufi mission in Bengal.¹ ii) Permanent establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal, and the liberal and munificent patronage to the darwishes by the Sultans, their grandees, nobles and officers, were the other causes that contributed to the success of the Sufi proselytising propaganda in Bengal.² iii) Existing religious and social condition of the country was an excellent helping factor to the Sufi propaganda in Bengal.³

At the time when the Sufis came over this country, Budhism and Hinduism were two prominent religions. But the moral and ethical degradation of Budhism was at this time at its height. During the time of Palas,

¹ H.S.B., p.261
² Ibid., p. 262
³ Ibid., p. 264
Buddhism was the State religion of Bengal. But with the fall of the Palas and the rise of the Senas, Buddhism was fast waning, so much so that it had to take shelter in the border districts of Bengal. On its ruins there gradually sprang up many sects and sub-sects such as Natha, Sahajiya, Tantrika and others, which practically followed no strict code of any religion or morality. With regard to Hinduism, it too was not in its pristine glory. Of course the Senas tried to revive it. But they miserably failed, as it was thoroughly steeped in superstitious beliefs and practices. Astrology of absurd nature occupied the place of true religion and a powerful influence of the Tantras and many other indigenous cults and creeds sapfed the pristine strength of Hindu religion. Sastras began to be created by the Brahmins whose orthodox, narrow and conservative views hampered the progress of the whole society at every step making it hopelessly stagnant. This state of affairs in the Hindu Society contributed much to the caste hatred and racial tyranny of the Hindus.

While the religious and social conditions of the people of this country was such, the sufis came here
carrying the message of Islam. Islam is ever famous for its strong monotheistic belief in Allah and for its teachings of universal brotherhood in theory and practice. A simple faith in One God, the Loving and the merciful, combined with only a few easy practices and moral principles, is another marked feature of Islam, which required no mortification of flesh and intricate philosophy. Islam sufficiently possesses those qualities which easily satisfy spiritual cravings of the masses.

'When by the continuous activities of the Sufis, these inherent qualities of Islam were once made familiar with the masses, who were already groaning under social tyranny, and suffering from the agony of spiritual yearnings of soul, they gathered round the saintly preachers known as the Sufis and readily changed their old faith to the new one'.¹ The dargahs of the Sufis were considered to be, 'rest giving building on earth' 'where people attain their wishes.'² The way in which the inscriptions refer to some of the Sufis is note-worthy.

1. H.S.B., p. 266
2. Memoirs, p. 104
For example Shaykh 'Ala' al-Haqq has been referred to as:-

'the benevolent and revered Saint whose actions of virtue are attractive and sublime inspired by Allah, may be illuminate his heart with the light of divine perceptions and faith, he is the guide to the religion of the glorious'. According to another inscription, 'Jalal al-Din Shah (Tabrizi) was the accepted of Allah, Angelic in disposition and King of religion and of the world'. Shaykh Nur Qutb-i-Ala has been referred to as

(a) 'Hazrat Shaykh Al Islam, crown of nation, full moon among the saints, who have been united with Allah'.
(b) 'Hazrat Sultan al-'Arefin (Sultan of Saints) Qutub al-Aqtab (pole of poles)' (c) 'Our revered master, the teacher of Imama, the proof of the congregation, the sun of the faith, the testimony of Islam and the Muslims, who bestowed advantages upon the poor and the indigent, the guide of saints and of such as wish to be guided'.
(d) 'the sun of the Sky of religion and the moon of the mine of truth, a guide to the way of spirituality.'

1. Memoirs, pp. 109, 115, 123
The people really believed that they were endowed with tremendous spiritual and super-human powers, they were inspired by Allah, their hearts were illuminated by the divine perception and they were the mine of truth. And all these were despite the fact that they led the life of simplicity and austerity. They did not hesitate to perform humble work as sweeper at the bidding of their teacher. Makhdum Shaykh Jalal Tabrizi used to follow his teacher with a heated stove on his head and a cooking pot thereon, so that he could immediately provide his master with hot food on demand, and when he came to Bengal he had only a bowl and an 'asa (stick) in hand. Shah Jalal of Sylhet observed fast for forty years which he used to break only after ten consecutive days. As for his possession, he had only a cow. Shyakh 'Ala al Haqq used to accompany his teacher Shaykh Akhi-Siraj al-Din 'Uthman with a hot stove on his head, the cooking pot thereon, due to which his hairs of the head were mostly burnt. Shaykh NurQutub-i-Alam used to perform all sorts of menial works including the carrying of wood and cleaning of lavatory. They were renowned for their

1. Akbar al-Akhyar, p.44
2. Sekh Subhodaya (Shaykh Subhodaya) edited by Sukumar
3. Ibn Battutah, Vol. IV, p.218
4. Akhbar al-Akhyar, p.143
simple life, strength of character, devotion to faith and peaceful pursuits; their Khanqahs were rest-giving refuge, their doors were open to all, poor, destitutes, wanderers and mendicants. Naturally people were attracted and enchanted towards them and it is this aspect of their life which impressed the Bengali masses and succeeded in converting them to Islam. These saints were also famous for many miracles and it was generally believed that their prayers were mostly accepted by Allah. For example we know from Sekh Subhodaya that thousands of people attached themselves to Shaykh Jalal Tabrizi. It is said that four servants of certain minister of King Lakshman Sena were jealous of the growing popularity of the Shaykh. They conspired together to test the super-human power of the Shaykh. They feigned to be blind, went to the Shaykh and asked him to cure them. The Shaykh listened to them carefully and asked them to see him other day. While coming out, the servants found to their horror that they became actually blind. They immediately surrendered to the Shaykh and implored for pardon. The Shaykh became pleased and by the mercy of Allah they were cured. Since then, they with their wives became servants of the Saint.¹ The king (Lakshmana Sena) does not remember

¹ Sekh Subhodaya, Chapter - IV
anybody else except the Shaykh.\textsuperscript{1} The Shaykh by his prayers succeeding in restoring to life a dying man whose wife was named Madhavi. Both husband and wife became his slave.\textsuperscript{2} The people of hilly region of Sylhet accepted Islam in the hands of Shah Jalal.\textsuperscript{3}

According to Ibn Battutah both Hindus and Muslims of the hilly region of Sylhet used to bring gifts for the Shaykh and his followers lived mainly on those gifts.\textsuperscript{4}

The early Sufis has exerted great influence on Bengal. There life was truly according to Sharia and they had by their living examples of simplicity, piety and devotion influenced millions of peoples who came close to them and being influenced by their life, a large number of them had accepted Islam as their religion, while the Ulama were important in upholding the laws of Shariah but were more or less influenced or allied to the political authority, the Sufis in Bengal, in the quiet atmosphere of their Khanqahs in places accessible to all people catered to their spiritual and mundane needs and were in general responsible for the spread

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\item[1.] Sekh Subhodava Chapter IV, p.24
\item[2.] Ibid, Chapter-III
\item[3.] Ibn Buttutah, Vol.IV p. 127
\item[4.] Ibid., p.218
\end{itemize}
This view is supported by the fact that after the first Census of India in 1872 it was revealed that Bengal was inhabited by a large number of Muslims who constituted 48% of total population of Bengal. This census report led to a great controversy regarding the question of the origin of this large number of Muslims in Bengal. Beverly was of the opinion that the reason of the presence of so many Muslims in the remote corners of Bengal was 'not due to so much to the introduction of Mughal blood into the Country as to the conversion of the former inhabitants.' Mr. Abdul Karim in his Social History of Muslims in Bengal Chapter III also recognised conversions as an important factor in the spread of Islam in Bengal, and in which process the role of Sufis was more important and leading than the Muslim rulers and scholars. The untiring zeal and selfless devotion of the early sufis of Bengal was to a very large extent instrumental in the spread of Islam in Bengal especially in the outlying areas which were away from the centres of political activities. But it seemed difficult to give a generalised opinion about the role of sufis of various orders in

1. Muftizul Kabir - Aspects of Sufism in Bengal
2. Census of Bengal 1872 p. 132
Bengal and one cannot fully agree with the general opinion of Mohammad Enamul Haq that 'It is a fact that Islam spread in this Country in the garb of Sufism'. On the extreme is the opinion of Mr. M.R. Tarafdar who believes that 'Sufism with its highly esoteric principles and practices, appears to have influenced only a section of Muslim population.

Thus the average Muslim probably adhered to what may be called Folk Islam'. Dr. Abdul Karim has very rightly remarked that 'In Bengal not to speak of the big cities but even not a small city or a hamlet will be found where Darwishes have not come and settled' and as a selfless missionary force they have played a pioneering role in familiarising the local population within the Islamic way of life and ultimately converting them to Islam.

Sufis went on migrating to and settling down in Bengal from the second half of 13th century till about the end of 16th century. They resided in their Khanqahs which served as centres of meditation and spiritual training for the new comers, solace and consolation for

1. Enamul Haq, A History of Sufism in Bengal p. 144
2. Husain Shahi Bengal p. 169
3. Banglar Itihas: Sultani Amol p. 258
those who came to them for blessings and reformation. conversion to those who were charmed by their healing and spiritual power. But when the first generation of Sufis died and this differed from place to place and region to region and mausoleums were constructed over their tombs, people started going to visit their shrines and their descendants started venerating and admiring their spiritual barakah, that gradually a degeneration started. This veneration of Dargahs was followed by a regular holding of Urs, milad, fairs and congregations, Jhar Phoonk and Tabiz etc. in those dargahs and slowly rites and ceremonies not strictly Islamic started to be associated with these Khanqahs. These Khanqahs played a very important role and the descendants of the founder Sufis represented the barakah of their founder Sufis.

Dr. Mufizullah Kabir is of the opinion that 'from the period of Husain Shahi rule (1494 - 1538) the veneration of the dargahs and regular visits holding of Urs, Milad and Congregation came to be organised'.

In course of time these centres of spiritualism became degenerated with the association of several local un-Islamic religious elements in them and the grant of various deeds and waqfs of immovable property
and flow of income from different sources which prompted these sufis to turn these centres into a hereditary one and thus in majority of cases the dargahs slowly lost their original spiritual grandeur and attraction.

The teaching of Sufis created diverse reaction among the people. Many people were brought to true light, yet many other were led astray. People thought that the sufis were endowed with super-human powers like giving relief to the poor, sick and destitutes, being present in several places at a time, giving life to the dead, killing anybody at will and telling the future. These and many other Bid'at or innovations soon entered into the culture of Bengal in the garb of Sufi traditions. In this connection Hamid Allah writes, during those days some vagabond Faqirs and beggars came to Chittagong and in contrast to the temples of the Hindus and synagogos of the Maghs they made some false graves and Khanqahs in the names of Sultan al-Arefin Bayazid Bistani (R) and Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (R). In fact these saints never came to India. They made these graves a great source of income.  

1. A. Karim, Social History of the Muslims of Bengal, p.134
Akram Khan writes, after the end of the period of the early Sufis, if the manners and customs of the Muslims of those periods are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that superstitious and dangerous evils had crept into Muslim Society in the name of Islam for which the so called sufis of that preceding period were also responsible.

The influence of Vaishnavas fell on a section of the Muslims who turned vagabond and so-called mystics. In the name of marifati faqirs these people tried to bring down the Muslims to the stage of Vaishnavas. These groups of faqirs divided into many sections and subsections like aul, Baul, Kertobhoja and Shahjia etc. which were nothing but the Muslim edition of Hindu Vaishnavas. These people are said to have been influenced by Sufis. As matter of fact a section of the Muslim sufis were influenced by the ideas of Bhakti cult. They in course of time accepted a few of the principles and practices of this new mysticism of the Hindus. Due to the mutual influence of the yogis and Sufis they gave birth to Dharma cult and Vaishnavism in the Hindu Religion and Qalandaria

1. Akram Khan, Moslem Banger Samajik Itihas (Bengali text), p.104, Dhaka, 1956
2. Akram Khan, op.cit., p.117
and Madaria orders in the Muslim Sufism. These Yogis and Sufis made a strange mixture and combined license to their unbridled life. They did not wear any cloth except a lenguti (a small piece of cloth) which they called burhana. They kept long hairs in the head and put an iron ring on the feet like Hindu ascetics. In their beliefs and practices there were elements which were certainly be-Shara and Un-Islamic.

ii) Sufi Saints and Their Relation with The State

The expansion of the Muslim power in different parts of Bengal and how and when they are subjugated have been discussed in previous chapters. But traditions and later writings record that some of the Sufis fought against the local non-Muslim Kings either on their own account or in collaboration with the Muslim rulers. Generally these accounts are full
of Superhuman colouring thus raising suspicion about their validity. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Sufis required time to pacify or influence the local people by their peaceful pursuits, simplicity of life and devotion to God. Their zeal was so great that it was not curbed or checked by personal losses, regal tyranny and even assassination.  

The collaboration of some of the Sufis with the Sultans in the expansion of the Muslim power can not also be ruled out altogether, because they thought that fighting for the cause of Islam was a jihad, provided by the Islamic law. It is from this standpoint that we should judge the collaboration of the warrior Sufis who helped the ruling Sultans in conquering inaccessible and difficult frontier regions for about a century and a half (1250-1400). The conquest of Sylhet in 1303 by Sikandar Khan Ghazi, the general of Sultan Shams al-Din Firuz Shah in association with Shah Jalal who came to Bengal from Kenya with 313 of his Sufi followers and the collaboration of Shah

Ismail Ghazi with Sultan Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah in his wars against Kamrup or Orissa and also the Conquest of Chittagong during the reign of Fakhr-al-Din Mubarak Shah (1338-1349) by Qadal Khan Ghazi and Badri Alam are examples of Sufi inspired military conquests. On the other hand these are a good many examples from Bengal which supply information of reverse type. Two important examples of this nature are the dargah of Khan Jahan of Bagherhat whom traditions credits with the colonisation of Khulna region in the time of Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah (A.D. 1442-1457) and the other is Zafar Khan Ghazi who conquered Triveni area in the time of Rukh al-Din Kayka'us (A.D. 1291-1301). Both of them were real soldiers and official conquerors but treated as saints probably


after their death and their tombs attaining the rank of shrines or dargahs. The Bagherhat inscription definitely mentions Khan Jahan as enemy of non-believers and the infidels' and does not seem to claim any spiritual powers for him.¹

Sufi Saints of Bengal also interfered in the internal politics of the country and sometimes tried to influence the Sultans in moulding their state-policies. Almost all of the Sultans of Bengal and their nobles and soldiers were devoted to one or other of the darwishes of their time and they thought it to be their proud privilege to become their disciples. The darwishes therefore, exercised a tremendous influence over them through their pontifical power and due to this influence, they could easily get all possible help from their royal followers.

Thus, we meet with such facts in the Muslim history of Bengal, as the foundation monasteries

¹ Social and Cultural History of the Muslims in Bengal, M.A. Rahim, Vol I, p.133.
in Nadiya by Bakhtiyar Khilji and his nobles, immediately after its conquest. Among the successors of Bakhtiyar, many were devoted to Saints and were active patrons of them. While Husamud-Din 'Iwwad (1211-1226) a poor man of Walishtan in Ghor, was one day leading a beast of burden, he met by chance with two unknown Faqirs who being satisfied with the entertainment of Husain ordered him to go to Bengal for the attainment of royal honour and distinction. Inspired by the prophesy of the Saints he came to Bengal, admitted himself to the rank of an ordinary soldier under Bakhtiyar, and ultimately succeeded his master to the throne of Bengal. He granted munificently pensions to Sayyads, Servants and darwishes. Mughithu-'d-Din, Tughral (1278-1282 A.D.), the first rebellious governor of Bengal had a "Pir" or "Murshid" who had a large followers ready to sacrifice their lives for their spiritual leader.

2. Ibid., pp. 580-581.
3. Ibid. p.583
This man was so powerful that even the Emperor of Delhi Ghayathu'd-Din-Balban killed this man along with Tughral and many of his prominent followers.\(^1\) Sultan Ilyas Shah (1339-1358 A.D.) readily took the risk of sacrificing his life for the burial of a Saint called Rida-Biyabani, who was most probably his spiritual guide\(^2\) Jalalu'-d-Din (1414-1431), Ruknu'-d-Din -Barbak Shah (1459-1478), Alau'd-Din Husayn Shah (1493-1519), Nusrat Shah (1519-1532) and Sher Shah were all devoted to one or other of the darwishes of their time.\(^3\) During the Mughal Period, grants of land by way of "waqf" for the upkeep of "dargahs" all over Bengal, became very common, and still the descendants of "Mutawallis" (those who take care of "dargahs") of those "dargahs" are enjoying rent-free (lakhiraj) lands on the strength of old documents of this period. In

\(^1\) Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi - Elliot & Dowson, Vol.II, p.1119.
\(^2\) History of Bengal - Charles Stewart (1847); p.54.
\(^3\) H.S.B, p.264
this way, the "Khanqahs" were kept alive by the Muslim Kings and Emperors and their nobles. But it is difficult to explain, why, inspite of generally respectful attitude of the Sultans to the Sufis, Sikandar Shah turned Shaykh 'Ala'ul-Haqq out of Pandwah and banished him to Sonargaon. The reason put forward by the author of Akhbar al Akhyar is far from satisfactory because he says that by a supernatural power, the Shaykh spent so much money in feeding the beggars, pupils and wanderers that even the state treasury could not have borne such a huge expenditure. The Sultan grew jealous and ordered the Shaykh to leave the capital. According to Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, "this temporary banishment was not only the caused by the lavish expenditure incurred at his Khanqah and langar which aroused ire of the Sultan but also because the Shaykh and his relatives were suspected of maintaining connections with Firuz Shah Tughlaq." In our

2. Rizvi, Sayyid Athar Abbas, A. History of Sufism in India, pp.257-258.
opinion the estrangement between Sikandar Shah and Shaykh'Ala' al-Haqq was not due to any personal jealousy rather it was due to their wide difference on matters of state policy. Sikandar Shah, put in an adverse situation as he was, due to a hostile attitude from the Sultan of Delhi, could not but rely upon the non-Muslim local people, thus giving a popular shape to the Muslim Sultanate in Bengal. The political condition and statecraft demanded such an outlook from the Sultan, while the Muslim divines could not approve this attitude of the Sultan.

All the authorities agree\(^1\) that the Muslim Sultanate of Bengal passed through a critical period towards the beginning of the 15th century. Taking advantage of the liberal policy of the Ilyas Shahi Sultans, Ganesa (Kans) gained ascendency\(^2\) and perpetrated oppression on the Muslims including the divines.

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2. Dr. A.H. Dani has tried to prove that Ganesa or Kans did not crown himself King (see *J.A.S.B.* Vol.XVIII, No.2 1952, pp.121-170).
This oppression led Shaikh Nur Qutb-i-Alam to invite Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jawnpur and sought his intervention. He also wrote a letter to Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani requesting him to utilise his good offices to urge upon Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi to come to the aid of the Muslims of Bengal. When Sultan Ibrahim reached Bengal and encamped in Firuzabad, Ganesa was terrified and submitted before the Saint. As regards the conversion of Jalalu’dd-Din the Riyad and Mirat al-Asrar differ; according to the former Ganesa took his twelve year old son Jadu to the Shaykh, got him converted to Islam and renounced his sovereignty in favour of his son, but according to the latter Jadu, finding it difficult to rule over the Muslims embraced Islam, "because of his lust for Kingdom." Whatever might have the case, there is no denying the fact that the conversion of Jalal-al-Din and the restoration of the Muslim Sultanate in his person was due to Shaykh Nur Qutb-i-Alam.

1. Riyad, p.113; M.A. Rahim, op.cit.,Vo.I,pp.177-178.
2. Ibid.
Two other saints who seem to have taken part in politics were Shah Shah Ismail Ghazi and Shah Jalal Dakini. Shah Ismail Ghazi was executed at the order of Barbak Shah. According to Risalat al Shuhda the reason of his execution was as follows:— One Raja Bhandari Rai, a Hindu Commander of Ghoraghat sent a false information to the Sultan that Ismail Ghazi had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Raja of Kamrup intended to setup an independent kingdom. The Sultan got alarmed and at once ordered for beheading the Saint. Of Shah Jalal Dakini tradition has it that, he sat on the throne as Kings and exerted great influence upon the people. The Sultan of Gaur became suspicious of his power and beheaded him. It is difficult to identify the Sultan of Gaur who beheaded the Saint, but if the identification of the Saint with Jalal-al-Din of Sharfinamah is correct as has been done by Dr. N.B. Baloch, we

The above discussion leads one to conclude that the Sufis were neither pro-government nor anti-government. They were generally indifferent to Kings and princes, state or politics. The Chishtiya Sufis generally did not visit the rulers, while Sufis of some other tariqa were not so rigid. But whenever the Sufis found that the Kings were transgressing their limits in their irreligious activities, they intervened and thus incurred the displeasure of the Kings.

iii) **Contributions of Sufi-Saints Towards Educating The People**

Beginning from the second half of the thirteenth century till about the end of the sixteenth century Sufis kept on coming and settling in their Khanqahs which became centres for educating the people, and of meditation and training for the initiates, solace and consolation for those who visited them for blessing and food and shelter for those way-farers, mendicants.
and beggars who benefitted from the langarkhanas attached to them. The early Sufis of Bengal who were scholars of Arabic and Persian, were authors of valuable treatises on Sufism. Shaykh Sharf al-Din Abu Tawwrah (d. 1300 A.D.) wrote his book Maqamat on Tasawwuf which gained popularity throughout the sub-continent. His disciple Sharf al-Din Yahya Maneri also wrote a number of books on Sufism. Hadrat Nur-Qutb-i-Alam was a staunch believer in Wahdat al-wajud and his maktubat reflect his knowledge of Tasawwuf. Another Sufi Shaykh Ali Sher (d. 1562), a companion of Shaykh Jalal wrote a book on Sufism which seems to be a commentary of an earlier work. The translation of Amrit Kund by Qadi Rukn al-Din Samarqandi into Arabic and Persian and its repeated translations by the Sufis later kept these Yogic-tantric ideas current. These and other local tantric ideas gradually influenced the Muslims and Muslim Bengali Literature from the fifteenth century onwards shows a blending of Muslim Sufi thought and Yogic and tantric ideas and practices. Shaikh Abdul Quddus Ganghi, grand-father of Shaikh Abdun Nabi
wrote in Awaddih dialect, the dialect of the people to whom he appealed. The late Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah once said that he had discovered some specimens of Bengali verses composed by Shaikh Alaul Haqq. The Bengali literature in the medieval period produced by the Muslim Scholars, have not been properly evaluated. The little we know from the colophon of most of these books, it is certain that they were written at the instance of the pirs. These books, however, reveal very clearly that the Pirs used to take initiative in teaching the people about Muslim traditional tales and principles of Shariat, we have some concrete examples to show that they taught the people and sometimes maintained academies for the purpose. The first important example is that of Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi, who mastered himself in Islamic Sciences under the guidance of Qadi Rukn al-Din Samarqandi. The next Sufi who is given credit to maintain a madrasah was Hazrat Nur Qutb-i- Alam.

The importance of the teaching of the Bengal Sufis is borne out by the fact that a number of Muslim divines received training under them. Thus Shaykh Yahya father of Makhdum al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Din Yahya Maneri studied under his teacher Mawlana Taqi al-Din Mahisun (Mahi-Santosh) now in Rajshahi district. Makhdum al-Mulk himself studied under Mawlana Sharf al-Din Abu-Tawwamah in Sunargaon. Mir Ashraf Jahangir Simnani and Shaykh Husain Dhukkarposh studied under Shaykh 'Ala' al-Haqq in Pandwah. It appears, therefore, that Sufi-Saints of Bengal paid their attention towards educating the people along with the spread of Islam in Bengal.