CHAPTER II

SUFIS AS SOCIAL REFORMERS

The work of *Sufis* is to carry the faith of Islam to the masses but the local environment forced them to behave as reformers in society where they do the spread of religious philosophy. A Sufi who is called in different terms like *wali, shaikh, darwish, pir* and *murshid* is called as auliya in plural category since he has closeness to God or to indicate many Sufis. The term *wali*, which means "friend of God" is religiously expected to carry out his faith in God and socially obliged to attach moral, social and cultural situations. He acts as a *shafi*\(^{70}\) between God and man in his religious obligations but as a reformer between man and man in his social set up. The Sufis spiritually called *auliya* are favoured by God if they live with spiritual purity without unIslamic acts and they can be purged of natural corruption and delivered from subjection to their lower soul and passions for the reason that their teaching reaches the masses with the spirit of religion to create a moral and disciplined society.\(^{71}\) The term "saint" denotes a holy person whose duty is primarily religious but social duties are bound on him when his daily works and transactions are taking place in and with the society. The Islamic saints in the subcontinent of India inclusive of Tamil Nadu had a diversity of social roles and they did it as social reformers while transacting with the locals and eventually their abodes or bombs rightly called *dargahs* have become the centres of social and religious gatherings. Their efforts to remove the social disparities and segregations are admirable and their *dargahs* now serve the purpose of social unity.

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\(^{70}\) *Shafi* is an intermediary.

The saints from Tamil Nadu realized that no spiritual exercise, penitence, prayer or vigil had greater value in the eyes of God than bringing consolation to distressed hearts and helping the needy and the downtrodden. All their efforts were, therefore, directed towards the alleviation of human misery. It was beyond the power of any human being to solve every problem brought to him, but what was more important was to create in the sufferer a sense of security which reduced tensions and gave inner peace and equanimity. With change in a man's outlook his hopes and fears, his ambitions and aspirations underwent a complete change. The Sufis of this region strove to achieve this objective throughout their life. Service to mankind can be done through the mutaaddi\textsuperscript{72} devotion which brings advantage and comfort to others. It is performed by spending money on others, showing affection to people and by other means through which a man strive to help his fellow human beings. This radical attitude to religion provided motive power to the spiritual discipline of the Sufis and made the mystic movement a humanitarian activity to remove sin and suffering from society. Apart from the ethical and social experience, they lived for God's faith too. Mystics were expected to transcend all barriers of cult, race, language and geography in dealing with human beings, who are all God's creatures with a natural phenomenon that when it rained, the poor and rich alike benefited from it. When the Sufis considered the human beings "like children of God on earth" they said that one who seeks His pleasure must strive for the welfare of the people, regardless of any consideration.\textsuperscript{73} The Sufis here were firm believers in pacifism and non-violence. Violence, they believed, created more problems than it solved. In forgiveness and large-hearted tolerance lay the supreme signs of

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Mutaaddi} is a transitive devotion.

\textsuperscript{73} Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, \textit{The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizam ud din Auliya}, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007, p.99.
human happiness. They advised their disciples to be good to their enemies also. They preached an approach of large-hearted forgiveness and only in patience and tolerance a man could see the secret of social well-being. They stressed that every human action covers the stages of knowing, feeling and willing as all programmes of reform and it should be initiated at the stage of knowing and true knowledge would lead to right action. They asked their disciples to forgive the person who had committed a wrong and thus eliminate their own anger. This would be a reliable route to peace and happiness in the society. Round these ideals of tolerance, forbearance, patience and sympathy was built the entire structure of the spiritual discipline of the Sufis. They influenced the behaviour of their disciples through their own examples by saying that one who repents sincerely after committing a sin and one who has committed no sin hold an equal position in mystic discipline, bread earned through permitted means provides greater spiritual enlightenment than livelihood obtained through doubtful means, real pleasure lies not in the accumulation but in the distribution of wealth, seclusion from human society is not desirable and one should mix with people and face their blows and buffeting, dishonest dealings lead to destruction of cities and honest dealings alone lead to lasting fame.

The Sufis, when conversed with the locals, insisted to show piety to God and love to their parents and children. The advice of the saints was that one should not confuse love with concern for each other's welfare. As human beings we have found a need to form group and societies, to protect ourselves from the predating animals and calamities arising from natural forces and to work for each other's needs. Delicate rules were framed by them for smooth functioning of the group and

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74 Ibid., p.104.
75 Ibid., pp.106 & 108.
societies for our each other's amelioration, safety, welfare and protection. For the safety of the society, they insisted to learn to govern ourselves by a system of a social law with well laid down principles of justice, equality, brotherhood and other well tested principles which are being applied for common good and well being of all. They said that love and affection are the most beautiful flowers in the garden of life. Love does not cause destruction, but it propels a person towards a 'life force' or 'magnetic force' which is everlasting.\textsuperscript{76}

The Sufis in Tamil Nadu as in other parts of Indian subcontinent behaved like models of some social customs and ways of life that Prophet followed. The ethics and manners in social behaviour as said in \textit{Quran} and \textit{Hadith}, the teaching of the Prophet were approved by these \textit{pirs}. Their advice to their followers and people was to adopt and reflect the real and disciplined sources of social attitudes in all fields. Even in the way of eating they asked others to give the poor to eat from what he is eating. Eating should begin with the name of God and should be with a group of relatives or companions. Wasting food was hated by the Sufis and it is known that all of them being \textit{Kasa lais}\textsuperscript{77} to lick their own plates of meal or others. They believed that it is unsocial to return any of the food presented to him to the same person who serves him. They preferred the only food the source of which they knew. They also refused to accept the gifts of women and to eat at their meals.

The God fearing persons forbade from letting the parts of human body for sinful acts. They asked to keep the eye from looking at women other than lawful spouse or from looking at any human being with a contemptuous eye from perceiving the disgrace or vice of a Muslim or

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\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Kasa lais} is a licker of plate
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other than Muslim. The ear is to keep from listening to heresy, slander, obscenity, vain conversation or accounts of men's wickedness. The ear was created to hear the words of God and His Messenger, the wisdom of his saints and the knowledgeable truths. The tongue was created to recite the names of sacred relics, monuments, etc and the secular needs of which the man is conscious. If men use these and other organs for some purpose other than that for which it was created, they will be denied the mercy of God. There are some acts which should be ignored or not practised by the human beings in the society. Man should restrict himself from telling lies since lying is one of the sources of the greater sins and if he comes to be known as a liar, his uprightness becomes worthless, his word is not accepted and people's eyes scorn and despise him.\textsuperscript{78} Breaking promises is one of the uncultured attitudes of man. If he is forced to make a promise, he should take care not to break it, except from inability to fulfill it or from compulsion. Backbiting within Islam is more serious than any wrongful acts. Humans should be careful to avoid the backbiting of devout but hypocritical persons.\textsuperscript{79} Wrangling, arguing and disputing with people about matters of theology cause hatred with God and even man. Self-justification is one of the ugliest attitudes of man. Man should not justify himself. A man's praise of himself lowers him in people's estimation and leads to hatred of him in God. Cursing is another unsocial action of a man. If he curses anyone whom God created, he will have to give an account. Jesting, scoffing and ridiculing at people destroy respect, induces isolation and harms the heart. It is the source of contumacy, anger and estrangement and implants rancour in men's hearts.\textsuperscript{80} The Sufis even asked the people to eat limited food since satiety would create idleness and weaken the memory and make the limbs


\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid.}, p.33.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}, p.37.
too heavy for piety and knowledge. The utilization of property and fund was defined by the Sufis. The property of a man of whom other man knows that the major part of his wealth is quite unlawful and if the second man gets a property of the first man knowingly, it would be unlawful. It is absolutely unlawful to consume any trust fund where that is done otherwise than in accordance with the provision of the testator.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.39.}

The Sufis have made \textit{rukhsa} which means dispensation or exception to certain actions of man and also for Sufis in times of urgent necessity. There is a dispensation to speak publicly about aspects of the religious sciences and this purpose of such speaking should be to give counsel and guidance. They allowed the friends to embrace and kiss each other upon meeting and this rule is that it should be only among \textit{pirs} and people who are on intimate terms on special occasions. It is allowed to anyone to associate with kings and to visit them. the Sufis admitted that they should not be deluded by the praise lavished on them and if they are praised contrary to what they know of themselves, they should shun the praise. Dispensation is given to one to go out of society in order to remove oneself from the evils.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, Vol.13, pp.109-111.} If one chooses to withdraw from society one should repair to a solitary place in a cave or some other place which is free from anything evil. There is an exception according to which one may attend sessions in which people are engaged in worthless talk, but he should avoid listening to calumny and objectionable things. One is allowed to escape abasement and the suffering of offence. This should be done in order to keep one's mind free from evil thoughts and to avoid enmity. One may visit friends without having been invited. He should choose for such informal visits those who are delighted by this informality and recognise the honour of it. The Sufis said that one may
reprimand one's brethren, but this should be done for the purpose of eliminating malice from the heart and not by way of revenge. One may behave with affected politeness with rich and powerful persons. However, the purpose of this should not be to gain any material benefit or honour from them. In view of Sufis, one may show a smiling face to a person whom he dislikes in his heart and the purpose of such an affected manner should be the quest of peace rather than ostentation or hypocrisy. One may obtain the assistance of rude and insolent persons in times of disaster and in order to ward off harm. The purpose of such association should be to protect oneself and one's dignity from confronting persons who are not of his kind. One may plunder food which is scattered at banquets, but he should however do so without gluttony and with the intention of delighting the host. The Sufis had the principles to perform the religious and social duties to avoid that which is forbidden and to relinquish worldly possessions, except what is absolutely necessary. The suggestion of the Sufis to the society is that there are four things which are of this world and yet are not of it - a piece of bread to satisfy man's hunger, a piece of cloth to cover his nakedness, a house to shelter him from the cold and the heat and a virtuous wife whom he can trust.

A saint usually acquired fame when a political ruler of the time accepted him and supported his teachings or when for some reason the ruler became hostile to the saint and persecuted him. The fragrance of a saintly life is exuded from the inner or spiritual state of the saint and is manifested in his writings. The followers of the saint laid interest in his teachings. No saint suffixed the word *wali* or *auliya* after his name. It was his personality for which his disciples and the people observed his *malfuzat* which is the saint's discourses and through it he became

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83 Ibid., p.115.
84 Ibid., p.120.
socially accredited. The love and devotion they had in the society rather than rituals and external observances earned the titles of *ghaus* or *qutb*\(^\text{85}\) for them. They treated all Muslims and all people - rich or poor as equals. A Sufi should be of such a nature that when men are around him, they forget their troubles because the saint himself is at peace. The Sufi way to help another is not to fuss or draw attention to his assistance but to simply help. A Sufi is guided by his emotions but he never lets his emotions control him. Sufis did not care about material things or possessions, the principle of which they expected from others too. They could live with or without them. Whenever a Sufi lost a valued possession, he would say "Lucky ones - it happened to their possession, unlucky one - it happened to their life" If the humans are able to master the Sufi philosophy, they themselves would stay happy.

**Establishment of Sufi Powers in Society**

The Personality of the *pirs*, the very pattern of their lives, was at the centre of the formal institutions of Sufism and of the individual experience of each disciple. The *pirs* were held to have a special intimacy with God, earned with God's grace through discipline and obedience. They had gained that intimacy by training their moral capacity, counted as a sixth sense, through exercising it continuously in just the same way as all people train their five physical senses. The detachment from all selfish interests characterized the Sufis' relations to others, just as intense devotion characterized his relation to God.\(^\text{86}\) The Sufism centred upon the submission to a single discipline and perceived society, the universe and the divine principle in terms of unity, the Sufis

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\(^{85}\) A *Ghaus* is one who redresses the grievances of others. *Qutb* is a spiritual guide.

and the traditions related to Sufism had begun their long process of fusing into what later was to become "Indian Islam" which along with Sufi masters characterized the socially disciplined society. Socially, it meant that the Muslims in Tamil Nadu region of Indian subcontinent with their greater capacity to assimilate indigenous culture than the foreigners were able to swell in numbers such that by 1570 they could dislodge the foreigners from their position of political and social pre-eminence. And religiously, it meant that Sufis would appear having an altogether different nature than the warlike leaders of political vision and the Sufis of Tamil Nadu were able to wield considerable influence in some areas where no cult of others' religions was altogether dominant.87

Though the role of Sufis and dargahs in Tamil Nadu emerged from eleventh century after the advent of Nathar Wali, it was sixteenth century which underwent the profound organisational and institutional changes that passing from tariqa phase to taifa88 phase. The physical structure that had served as the centre for Sufis and other first generation migrants was the khanqah. This was a humble hospice in which the pir instructed a fraternity of Khalifas or deputies and murids in the way of the order in which he himself had been taught. Although no physical description of Tamil Nadu's khanqahs has survived, it can be surmised that they were simple dwellings reflecting the values of asceticism and poverty. In the course of period, the khanqahs of many Sufis were replaced by another structure that carried with it a completely new set of institutions which came to be called dargah. The dargah became the central unit of taifa Sufism since the tomb was the physical heir to the spiritual power possessed by the Sufi buried there. It is sometimes referred to the whole courtyard including most importantly the tomb, a small mosque and a

88 Taifa is saint cult.
graveyard of the *pir*'s descendants and it plays the main role of social and cult events nowadays. If the *dargah* was the physical heir to the *Sufi’s barakat*, the human heirs to his spiritual power were his family descendants or *pirzadas*. After the death, the charismatic authority of the Sufis had disappeared from the scene and the problem of succession had to be faced and it was being routinised or channelled on a regular basis to the leader's closest kin on the basis of heredity. This process of hereditary charisma had the effect of legitimizing the authority of the *pirzadas* and of enduring them with tremendous social prestige on the basis of their blood ties with an illustrious forefather now popularly accepted as a saint. It was also at this time that miracles crept into the popular devotionalism associated with the *dargahs*. While there may have been many *pirzadas* of a given saint, there is only one manager of the *dargahs* who resides there and who presides over its various devotional and social activities. He is the *sajjada nishin* who sits at the main prayer carpet for leading the community prayers held within the *dargah*'s compound. *Sajjada nishin* occupies just as central a position in the *dargah* as the *pir* had in the *khanqah*.

**Sufis as Landed Elites**

Some Sufis had functioned as spiritual preceptors of local leaders and wealthy people and cured the diseases of the kings. Sufis either by going to their royal palace or by receiving them in their *khanqahs* consulted or advised to the heads of state or kingdom. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned the *pirzade* but not the Sufis as in the north and the Deccan began entering into formal relations with the government. But some Sufis had to become kings after they overcame their enemies who opposed their spiritual work. Some of the kings had to realize the spirit

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of the saints and extended support to them. One of the most significant developments in the social history of the kingdoms in the medieval period was the intrusion of state authority in Sufi institutions by the conferral of permanent grants in land on selected Sufis or pirzade. These inamdars, the holders of land, developed a new social relationship with each other as well as with the State and the population. The antagonisms regarding the ownership of inam properties between the landed elite Sufis or dargahs and the local groups or chieftains on a doubtful condition was settled by the Hindu kings in favour of Sufi dargahs. For the great tombs of Sufi saints had taken root in Indian and Tamil Nadu soil as sacred places immune from communal strife and remained vitally important in the lives of common folk, particularly village women. Further, the votive devotionalism associated with the dargahs of both the city and the countryside continued to work their effect of absorbing the downtrodden sects of other faiths into the folk of Islam of popular Sufism.90

Sufis as Darwishes

A darwish, the ordinary mendicant wandering over the streets becomes a Sufi, the highest rank in Sufi status and then he consciously opts for a social role in explicit reaction. Just as a number of Sufis were absorbed into the urban establishment of the existing or new comers to Islam, some remained darwishes till the last without attaining Sufi status and they adopted life styles in apparent defiance of that establishment and they were literally called "majzub". The Sufis of Darwish variety were found in many times and many places throughout Islamic history. Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveller, while travelling along the coastal Tamil Nadu around 1342-44 met some shaikhs whom he described as darwishes and who had a different life style with hairs hanging loose over

90 Ibid., p.239.
their shoulders. Other travellers did not mention them because the behaviour and dress of the *darwishes* could not conspicuously show their life styles.\(^91\) The social functions of Tamil Nadu Sufis were, to an appreciable extent, shaped by the society in which they lived. And since Tamil Nadu society changed over time, some Sufi types were generally more characteristic of certain historical periods than others. Thus the Sufis who fought their enemies in Tamil Nadu during the propaganda work of Islam appeared predominantly in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, a period when Muslim armies attempted to penetrate the Deccan region and the establishment of a Muslim dynasty with Madurai as its capital was made. There being no established tradition of urban Islamic culture in Tamil Nadu at that time, such Sufis could not relate to any court or *ulama*. In one sense they themselves functioned as the *ulama*. In the absence of a Muslim court in Tamil Nadu for a long period, Sufis, being in some instances behaved like the only representatives of Islamic organisation accompanying theologically and socially.\(^92\) As members of urban orders having close ties with the Arab Middle East, the Reformist Sufis easily accommodated themselves to the religious and even political world of this region's *ulama*. The orthodox reaction that characterized the Tamil Nadu society seems to have been influenced in part by these Arab oriented Sufis. Both the landed and *Darwish Sufis* were the products of their social environment and both appeared most typically in different periods when Tamil Nadu as a whole was undergoing social and political changes and the kings had begun to adopt a pro-Muslim communal policy and extend the help to the Sufis reformist activities.

Many Sufis who inhabited Tamil Nadu may be divided into two broad categories. One consisted of Tamil Nadu born Sufis of the *Qadiri* order who were affiliated with the *khanqah* of the migrant Sufis. These Sufis, representing a relatively established tradition that had persisted through different period, focused their energies on writing literature both for their fellow mystics and for non-elite elements of the population. Living beyond the town walls, they exhibited a distinct preference for withdrawal from urban society and urban institutions. Another category of Sufis for the most part, *Qadiris* and *Suhrawardis* who had migrated to Tamil Nadu from outside produced almost no literature at all, directing their energies mainly towards reforming the local traditions of what they considered its un-Islamic tendencies. As city-dwellers, these Sufis were usually well integrated with the institutions of urban Islam. As rustic literati and the urban reformists thus represented two Sufi responses to the Muslim population in its Hindu environment. The one reached directly toward the lower class population, both Muslim and non-Muslims and the other employed his prestige and influence for reforming local as well as royal cultures. The two types also formed Sufi counterparts to the old social dichotomy among Tamil Nadu Muslims. The literati were the Tamil Nadu group and the reformists were the foreigners with more of an Arab orientation.\(^3\)

**Reformist Sufis in relation to the Local Traditions**

When the Sufi presence is remarkable, it is not surprising that some kind of reactionary reform movement might appear at this time. But there are no more records indicating their activities that such a movement emerged within the ranks of the *ulama*, the class of Muslim clerics that collectively upheld Islamic law in the state since the Sufis themselves

acted as *ulama* in their absence in Tamil Nadu unlike in Bahmani Kingdom or north India where the clerics held sway. The initiative for reform seems to have come from a number of *Sufis*, most of them newly arrived in Tamil Nadu of the *Qadiri* and *Suhrawardi* orders. The religious reaction led by Sufis, took three distinct forms - one was by the Sufis thrusting themselves on the local society in the role of puritanical traditionalists, another was by their passively allowing the society to seek their council and influence and the third was by affecting a posture of ostentatious disdain for the society, a maneuver that genuinely attracted more than a king to a Sufi. The Sufis were attached with great fondness in the society. Every day a great number of men would come to get guidance from the Sufis declaring that their poverty and unfortunate state had caused them to come to their service in want of relief. They said that they would work for any leader with religious thought in Sufi movement who would look after their welfare. They perhaps did the possible way to employ their good favour with the society for truly constructive social ends. Since, sometimes, the royal personnel solicited the patronage of well-known Sufis, it would have been difficult for reclusive Sufis to resist the intervention when their *khanqahs* were situated within only a minimum distance from the royal palace.

Unlike those Sufis of Tamil Nadu who had been born and raised in India, the Sufis arriving directly from Arabia tended to retain Arab habits and customs while in Tamil Nadu. Writing in Arabic, conducting initiation ceremonies in Arabic, making frequent pilgrimages to Mecca and the holy shrines of Arabia were all widely practised by the reformist Sufis. The Arab influence of some of these Sufis was exerted in other ways too. Some migrants even brought their Arab *murids* with them to Tamil Nadu. Some came accompanied by a great number of Arabs who
attended their *Khanqahs* and who had attained the utmost degree of devoutness, virtue and piety.

Nathar Wali, one of the outstanding representatives to enter Indian *Sufism* was a reformist of the first place. As was typical among Sufis of a more legalist and conformist type, his spiritual and familial ancestry was closely linked with Middle East. Originally named Muthaharudin, he was born in 959 in Turkey to the parents who had migrated from Arabia. Being imbued in Islamic knowledge from his childhood, he abdicated his choice of kingship of Bahinsa in favour of his younger brother at the age of twenty one and went in search of a perfect religious guide.\(^94\) He finally found his religious preceptor in the person of Shaikh Ali. When this guide ordered him to undergo a severe ordeal which made others shudder and shiver with fear, Muthaharudin withstood the ordeal and came out successful. Pleased by his victory and amazed by his spiritual power, his preceptor initiated him into the Suhrawardi Sufi order and blessed him to gain extraordinary spiritual powers and began to call him "*Nathar*" meaning a person sacrificed to God.\(^{95}\) His journey to carry Islamic faith, reform the society on the Islamic ideals, revive the Islamic society from social violations and his preference to holiness rather than kinship necessarily proved that he was a reformist. The continuation of his spiritual journey with nine hundred followers aimed at proceeding towards eastern country and he reached at the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu. Wandering over the countryside of this region, he settled at Tiruchirappalli. He spent the remaining years of his life in spreading the need of social unity, charity, helping one and all and prayer. He was the embodiment of compassion and service to mankind. His services to Islam and the society earned for him a lot of disciples who accepted


Islam. He was indeed a great saint, a social reformer, a rationalist, a true guide and a real helper of bleeding hearts and crying minds. Nathar Wali, like other saints, was armed only with deep devotion and faith in God and depended only on His help. He, along with his followers, came to conquer the hearts of the people in a peaceful and social way. The records on him confirm that he believed in peace and social integration. He was fondly called "Thable Alam" meaning the drum beater of the world by the people of Tiruchirappalli when he beat a drum in happiness as the flooded Cauvery river receded without causing great damage to the people. His social service was shared by one Shams Mansur, his disciple who relinquished his ministerial job along with Nathar Wali and who has been interred in Tanjore.

His service to society was extended to king's family too. It is believed in local legends that a daughter was born to a king of Tanjore with the blessings of Nathar Wali and his child being disabled was brought up by him. Nathar Wali's love towards animals is proved by allowing his foster daughter to take care of a bird and fireflies. The spirit of his religious work and social reforms was lauded by one Khaja Ahmathullah, the grandson of Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer who visited the grave of Nathar Wali during thirteenth century and observed penance for twelve years near his grave and while spreading the Sufi principles and the social ideals of Nathar Wali he died and was buried at a place in Tiruchirappalli which was later called Khajamalai after his name. After the Nawabs of Carnatic established their rule in Tamil Nadu, Muhammad Anwaruddin, one of the Nawabs, in appreciation of the religious and social service of saint Nathar Wali renamed Tiruchirappalli as Nathar

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96 Ibid., p.507.
97 Ibid., p.512.
Nagar. It is said that it was the desire of Muhammad Ali Wallajah who had longstanding rule over Carnatic from 1749 to 1795 to bury him at the courtyard of the dargah since he had a deep belief in spiritual greatness and social contributions of Nathar Wali. Even today, the Muslim marriages are celebrated with the blessings of the saint Nathar Wali with a tradition that the bridegrooms offer prayers in front gate of the dargah before marital celebrations. The service to social harmony done by this bachelor saint all the way from his life is remembered in the minds of the local people of all faiths.

Ervadi, a small village situated at a distance of one kilometre from seashore in Ramanathapuram district was a dry coastal area which was later transformed into a place of pilgrimage with the martyrdom of one Syed Ibrahim who breathed his last for the cause of Islam. Syed Ibrahim supposed to have been born in 1133 in Saudi Arabia led a simple life as a religious teacher during his early life. Though being the son of a provincial governor, he was associated deeply with Islamic studies and having in mind to enlighten the message of Islam and make people socially united, he set on foot towards Sindh and through his benign, subtle, sober and noble behaviour he captivated the hearts of the people and won them to the faith of Islam. Deciding to move further into India, he followed by his own disciples and a contingent of one thousand horses sent by the king of Turkey for his spiritual journey reached the south of Tamil Nadu through Cannanore on the Malabar coast. When he arrived at Vaippar in Tamil Nadu, his missionary work was wished by the locals and many of them came forward to embrace Islam. His mission towards Madurai was prevented by the men of Tiru Pandian, the

King of Madurai region and Ibrahim was forced to fight against the Pandian King. In the ensuring battle he came out successful though having lost the lives of Abbas, the wazir of Turkey, Abu Tahir, the elder son of Ibrahim and Shams ud din the doctor who came with him but he established a principality in 1188. The governance of this saint and social reformist is known with the coins he issued during the eleven years of his rule. Having been defeated at the hands of Ibrahim, Tiru Pandian decided to avenge and marched against him and in the year 1199 he killed Ibrahim in a battle of Ervadi and Ibrahim became shahid, a martyr, in Muslim history. Being married, he lived a saintly life with no harm done by him in the society and led a role of reformer in the twelfth century in an economically and socially downtrodden area and his spiritual mission to bring social changes is still remembered at Ervadi where number of devotees throng to visit his dargah.

The aim behind his journey was spiritual and even during his mission he did not engage in jihad, the holy war, but it happened due to circumstantial environment. When he had to face obstacles to his social peace which he tried to maintain on Islamic doctrines, he took them out and founded a social harmony by accepting new comers into Islam. It is wrong to call the saints, who fought minor battles as warrior Sufis or warrior saints, because they did not start with the motive of invasion on enemies, conquering the territories or establishing kingdoms. Even if some saints became heads of the states they had ruled for social integration and there is no record that they wantonly trespassed upon neighbour principalities. The holy war, too, was waged by the saints only when there was a disturbed social and political context against Islamic way of life but more often they were themselves slain and martyred in the process. It was a spiritual struggle against social disturbances to safeguard the people to lead a peaceful life. When they felt that there
came a stabilization of the Islamic way, the Sufis gradually or totally withdrew from the fights. No doubt they are the ones who are remembered as having carried Islamic culture to a greater extent into the interior areas of Tamil Nadu. Yet some individual Sufis are generally pictured as militant champions of Islam but for a good social cause.\textsuperscript{100} It was an open period of transition in Tamil Nadu from Dar al Harb, the abode of war, often engaged by the non believers in Islam to Dar al Islam, the abode of peace, creation of the Sufis.

Sufis' service to humanity was touched with another milestone by the saint, Ala ud din, whose tomb is located at Goripalayam in Madurai. Ala ud din who is supposed to have been born in Afghanistan had a strong desire to spread the spiritual ideals of Islam in neighbouring places. He had Syed Bahauddin as his spiritual mentor and his guidance enthusiasmed Ala ud din to start his journey towards a religious and integrated social path. His mission took sea route to touch the western coast in Kerala from where he could reach some places near Madurai which he had as final abode. The charismatic religious activities of Ala ud din attracted large number of people around him and the king of Madurai, Sundarapandian advised his men in royal court to bring him. The humanistic and social service was done by Ala ud din by curing the severe ache in stomach of the king who could convalesce for a long period and in return for which the king presented the site at Goripalayam where Ala ud din was observing "Chilla", the penance for forty days and six other villages but as a sale for 14000 gold coins.\textsuperscript{101}

As there was a political change in Madurai with the establishment of a Sultanate with Madurai as its capital, its first ruler Jalal ud din came

\textsuperscript{101} Inscription in the Dargah at Goripalayam.
into contact with Ala ud din and asked him to accept the appointment as commander in his royal service as a honour to his religious and social service. When Jalal ud din died in 1338, his nobles elected Ala ud din as the second sultan of Madurai kingdom. The short period of his rule from 1338 to 1339 is confirmed by Ibn Battutah, the Moorish traveller who came to Madurai three years after the end of Ala ud din's rule. His kingship did not stop him from spreading Islamic faith. His one year rule is significant because he did not provoke and invade other territory for political gains. He led an expedition to an unknown territory which challenged the spread of Islam. In his second battle against Vir Ballala III, the Hoysala King, though successful, was killed by an arrow which struck his head when he removed helmet to drink water and his dead body was brought to Madurai, his last religious settlement and his tomb at Goripalayam is an object of local Muslim pilgrims. He is even now venerated as shahid who laid down his life for the cause of Islam.\footnote{S.A.Q. Husaini, The History of the Pandya Country, Selvi Padippakam, Karaikudi, 1962, p.85.} The grave of this saint turned king is flanked by Shams ud din Adil Shah, the sixth king of Madurai, but the entire mausoleum is significant after the name of Ala ud din for he began as a religious propagandist and then became the king of Madurai. Shams ud din did not begin his career as a Sufi, but as a king he was called by his subjects as a God fearing man and unprotesting personality.\footnote{Persian Inscription in the dargah at Goripalayam.} He was killed by Saluva Mangu, a general of Kumara Kampanna of Vijayanagar in 1360 but his death occurred not for religious cause and therefore he cannot be called as shahid.

The hill top at Tirupparankunram remembers the socio-political service of one and last king of Madurai Sultanate namely Ala ud din Sikandar Shah. Though not being a saint, his fight for six years of his
rule from 1372 to 1378 to protect and safeguard the Sultanate from the hands of frequent onslaughts of Vijayanagar kings cannot be forgotten in the Muslim history of Madurai. The courage and resistance he showed against the destroyers of Madurai is the finest example he rendered to the Muslim society which had just established social, political, and religious identity cordially with the people of other faiths. His beheading in 1378 when he took refuge in a cave on the top of the Tirupparankundram hill by Kumara Kampanna, the son of general of Bukka, the king of Vijayanagar evoked widespread sympathy to the Sultan. As he was buried at the same place on the hill top along with his wazir and his generals lying buried on the way to the top, he became a martyr and the local Muslims regard his mausoleum as a dargah and as centuries passed, this became an object of veneration.

The sixteenth century was the birth century of a great social and Sufi reformer whose tomb is located at Nagore three km away from Nagapattinam and whose religious prominence, social thoughts and path of living became known to all to be followed by his followers and pilgrims when his dargah reached eminence as a foremost centre of pilgrimage in Tamil Nadu during the eighteenth century. The saint Shahul Hameed born in Uttar Pradesh in 1504 emerged in genealogical line of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani. His religious thoughts in Islam persuaded him to go in search of Islamic knowledge and his beginning at the age of eighteen to seek mystical training and religious perception under the preceptor Muhammad Ghauth of Gwalior led him to be a pure and spiritual Sufi and to lead a bachelor life. His pilgrimage to Makkah and visit to the tomb of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani at Baghdad earned for him a spiritual name among the people. With a group of four hundred

and four disciples he reached the Malabar coast and touched Ponnani which was then the central place of Islamic studies and mysticism in South India. From there he went to Ceylon and returned to Tamil Nadu meeting the great scholars and mystics at Kayalpattinam and Kilakarai. He visited the dargah of Syed Ibrahim at Ervadi and the people of Tenkasi believed that the blessings of this saint, when he visited there, relieved them from the sufferings of famine. He sat for meditation for forty days near the grave of Nathar Wali in Tiruchirappalli. The spot of meditation is even now regarded as religiously significant by the dargah authorities. He found underground graves of two saints in Tanjore which were not known to the local people but later during the nineteenth century they became known that the graves are of the two brothers who are popularly known as "Irattai Masthan" meaning two Masthans and the dargah goers here still remember the finding of these two graves by Shahul Hameed. His visit and homage he paid to the dargah of Hussain Beevi at Vijayapuram shows the approval of Shahul Hameed to the female saints. When he finally settled down at Nagore, his services were recognised by the local kings.

The saint took interest in social activities and he often met the rural populace to render his humanly service to them. He mingled with the villagers and preached the principles of Islamic faith and asked the people to lead a simple and religious way of life. His penance along with his disciples near the seashore of Nagore for forty days shows that the fishermen who were living around the villages were attracted towards him and they approached him for his prayers and spiritual and social help to relieve their mental illness. The spot where he observed "chilla" is now called chilladi as a mark of respect for his Sufism and social studies.

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reforms since he behaved like a model in religion and social path. The bachelor saint did not pass his life without heirs. While he was in Lahore before arriving at Tamil Nadu, he blessed one childless man, Nuruddin, by name that his wife would bear four sons and daughters but asked him that he would adopt his first son. Incidentally when the first son was born, he gave the child to the saint and Shahul Hameed named the boy Yusuf and brought up as his own. Yusuf, in recognition of his foster father's religious attitudes, carried on the tradition which the saint created and he lived according to the saint's wishes in spirituality. The saint's request to his disciples to clean his dead body after his death only at a particular place and with the clothes he had chosen was fulfilled by them. Though they accepted to carry out his request, they questioned the need of selecting the place of washing and the clothes for which the saint did not answer. The selection of spot was a mysterious one but it later became a popular pilgrim centre and the place where his dead body was cleaned in the *dargah* premises is revered by the pilgrims. The great Sufi philosopher and saint who did not indulge in any kind of unIslamic practice breathed his last in 1570. His foster son Yusuf and disciples fulfilled his funeral rites according to his wish and on the day of death they vowed themselves to spread the moral virtues of their spiritual guide. After observing solemn silence for forty days, the four hundred and four personal followers of Shahul Hameed, with the consent of their new Khalifa Yusuf, started journey to different places to teach others the spirituality, good qualities of a moral life and the way the saint lived and their determination to assemble at the mausoleum every year on the day of his death to remember the lifetime spirituality of Shahul Hameed was carried out till the death of all the four hundred and four followers. His blessing to the society even after his death was believed from the fact that the Maratha king of Tanjore, Raja Pratap Singh's wife bore a boy child named Tulsi and as a thanks-giving he built the tallest minaret to fulfill
his vow he made in the dargah before his wife's conception. Two memorials built overseas in the name of this Sufi saint - one is in Chulia street, George Town, Penang in Malaysia which was built by the Muslim migrants of Tamil Nadu in early nineteenth century and the other is in Telok Ayer Street, Singapore built by 1830 speak greatness of the saint. Both the shrines are still the centres of religious observances, feasts and other spiritual events and serve the meeting place of Muslim migrants.\textsuperscript{106}

The erection of several memorials in his name across Tamil Nadu too is the best example for the spiritual fame he earned and how the people feel significant in his spiritual belief and integrated social welfare.

\textit{Pallivasal}, a village in Pudukottai district has the dargah of Kattu Bava meaning "forest father" as he was nicknamed and whose name was originally Baba Bahruddin and the people of the village have the prestige of this mausoleum, the Sufi saint of which was the son of Yusuf who was the foster son of the great saint Shahul Hameed of Nagore. Born in the middle of the sixteenth century he lived through the first quarter of seventeenth century and his services to Islam and the Tamil society are praiseworthy. His eagerness to follow the spiritual path of his grandfather and persuasion towards Sufi movement led him first to pay homage to the mausoleum of Abdul Qadir Jeelani at Baghdad where he offered prayers single legged for hours. When he paid a visit to the dargah of Nathar Wali at Tiruchirappalli, he was spiritually surprised to have a look on the spot where his grandfather observed penance. His journey to seek spiritual knowledge reached almost forests where he taught the Islamic faith to the tribal people to whom no other Sufi taught. He spent his whole life to renovate the tribal community living in the jungles. The local legends around the forests and villages near

Tirumayam tell that the saint wandering through the forests met some thief who attempted to steal the belongings of female wayfarers and on condemnation from the saint, they became hostile and when he was resting on a rock, one thief struck him with an arrow and he fell down to die in the year 1614. The rock considered to be the last resting place is locally called "Shahid paarai" meaning martyr rock. The rock treated as a sacred one is preserved by the local Muslims. It was the enthusiastic religious work of his to transform the tribal society into a Muslim hamlet. The Muslim population of this village and heirs of thief who later became voluntary converts into Islam still remember the services of this Kattu Bava by extending their support during the festival celebrations of the dargah.

Muthupet, a small town in the district of Thiruvarur has the dargah of the Sufi saint Sheikh Dawood whose details of birth are not known. The festival records of the dargah give the period that he demised in the early part of fourteenth century but the local legends which tell us that only in sixteenth century the grave of this Sufi emerged from underground when, one land cultivator, Karuppiah ploughed the paddy field. Surprised on seeing the grave he rushed to the neighbouring village to meet two persons Kabir Khan and Hamid Khan supposed to be the followers of the saint. On the advice of these two, the owner of the land donated his cultivable land to raise a mausoleum to the saint. The local Muslim population must have been the creation of the Sufi who might have taken steps to enroll the socially downtrodden into Islamic fold.

Peer Muhammad, a seventeenth century Sufi was born in Tenkasi in a weaver's family. Knowing the social sufferings of poor Muslims in that small town, he was very much felt in the environmental
surroundings of Tenkasi.\textsuperscript{107} Being uncared in the spiritual and temporal knowledge he was reminded by his mother of the spiritual and social participation of his father and grandfather. His and his family's closeness with the trustee of a local Hindu temple Thiruvenkatarama Sastri showed how he had behaved for social cordiality and worked for social and religious amity with the populace of other religion. The change in his psychology towards spirituality kept him away from home and he began to go in search of Sufi doctrines. While he was wandering over the western mountains in the Kerala region he was attracted to live in a hillock for twenty five years which was later called "Peermedu" after his name. His intellectual questions and answers on human philosophy and literature surprised the king and courtiers in the palace of Cochin where a Hindu poet enrolled himself into the Islamic faith and became a disciple of Peer Muhammad. Later, when he was invited by the King of Travancore, Muthusamy Thambiran, he taught the Islamic ideals to the king and it is believed that the king's son recovered from illness with the spiritual blessings of this Sufi and the royal surroundings called him "saint" and also "spiritual genius"\textsuperscript{108} He selected Thuckalay, a village in those days within the territorial limits of Travancore king and now in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu where he passed the remaining period of his life composing poems in Tamil language and having discourses with the local people. The poems he wrote in praise of God and for social emancipation are a witness that he behaved like a social Sufi reformer. His poetic work got praise from Sadaqatullah Appa, a contemporary Sufi poet from Kayalpattinam when he visited Thuckalay to meet him. From the local legends it is known that Peer Muhammad was the only Sufi who passed his life more in religious discourses and


\textsuperscript{108} "Meignana Padalhal" (Tamil), (Songs of Truth), Anjuvannam, Peer Muhammediyya Muslim Association, Thuckalay, 1995, p.xii.
poem writing than offering prayers. His migration to Thuckalay did not stop him from his family's silk weaving industry and his interest in it earned for him a social credit "Thurkalaiyar" meaning "self assertive man" after which name, the village came to be later known as Thuckalay. This assertive quality to earn money for his livelihood was a best thing in a social set up that he lived on his own without begging for food before others. This credit went beyond his good name from the event that the king Travancore requested the Sufi to lay the foundation stone of the fort at Padmanabhapuram near Thuckalay to honour his social, economic and religious services.\textsuperscript{109} The Muslims of Thuckalay have entitled him as a great literary scholar with sainthood and his dargah monument is also enshrined with this title unlike other dargahs which do not bear any specific title or name engraved on it. The affectionate Muslims of this modern town call him "Appa" to place him in a status symbol as father.\textsuperscript{110} 

A seventeenth century saint who turned his life from a royal service and settled at Kottaipattinam, a village on the eastern coast of Pudukkottai district was affectionately called Rowther Sahib by the local Muslims. Brought up in Madurai where his grandfather who migrated from Baghdad served as chief qazi for the Muslims under the orders of a Nayak king and his father as a military commander, he too initially entered the military service and received the title of Khiledar Hasin for his honest and meritorious work. But his disgust at the military sufferings of army personnel and bloodshed, he relinquished his service and went on to render religious service becoming a Sufi. Being made Kottaipattinam as his final settlement for the spiritual preaching, he decided to live on his own earnings selling sea products and his travel on horse made the people call him Rowther meaning horse rider with the

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, p.xv.  
\textsuperscript{110} Inscription in the dargah.
respectable title 'sahib' from his original Syed Muhammad Shah by which his parents named him.\textsuperscript{111} His stay at Kottaipattinam attracted a large number of Muslims to attend his spiritual discourses and many newly enrolled themselves into Islam on his spiritual advice. His spirituality even spread to neighbouring places and two Sufi disciples Shaikh Lebbai and Sadaqattulah from Kayalpattinam visited him to receive his blessings. His service to Kottaipattinam and Islamic faith was popularised by these young pirs in other places. His dargah on the coastal side stands as a symbol of his spiritual greatness of Qadiriyya order and the local people did not fail to remember him even after his death in 1672.\textsuperscript{112}

Another coastal village, Pasipattinam in Ramanathapuram district remembers the saint Naina Muhammad who delivered his religious sermon and breathed his last for the cause of Islam. Born in 1658, he was the son of Rowther Wali of Kottaipattinam. His admission in a madrasa to learn Quranic education was not enthusiastically done by him during his school hours but his religious performance on the completion of one year when he delivered a discourse made surprise to all. It could be the brightful beginning for him because he conformed to the model of the early Arab ascetic Sufis, the reclusive Sufi as an ideal type was to be placed highly from his young age. Since he and his father belonged to the ancestral family of Abdul Qadir Jeelani, he was attached to the Qadiriyya order like his father. He developed the thought content within the framework of the traditions of their silsilā. The young Sufi considered the Shariat to be the very starting point of spiritual life and

adhered to its laws throughout his life but turned the mechanics of meditation and contemplation into a more broadly based structure of piety and dutiful conduct towards God. On the advice of his father, he went to forest to do penance for a few years. On his return, he settled at Pasipattinam where his village khanqah howsoever humble it might have been, offered solace to travellers and helped the more religious villagers to sharpen their spiritual awareness through dhikr and meditation. His khanqah provided both Muslim and Hindu villagers with amulets and charms designed to prevent misfortune and sickness. His method was to awaken 'the good' in man and make his soul responsive to moral and spiritual obligations. His belief was that whoever developed love of god in his heart ceased to be vulnerable to sin. He believed in imitating the moral principles of God. He expected himself to transcend all barriers of cult, race, language and geography. He wanted to transform the human discipline for the culture of the individual soul into a social movement for the moral and spiritual uplift of humanity. The Sufi believed that one or even a saint who caused pain to any human heart could not attain spiritual excellence. He had developed his own unique and effective method of instructing people to follow the path towards Islamic ideals. To honour his social ideals and a disciplined life, many parents surrounding his khanqah named their male children after him. His benefaction went beyond the public that the king of Setupati dynasty of Ramanathapuram, being heirless visited the Sufi during his lifetime and sought his blessings for a child. When a boy child was born to his wife, the king asked the Sufi to name it and he did by naming the child Vija ya Ragunatha. The Sufi's magnanimity was shown when he refused to accept the grant of eighteen villages donated by the king for the expansion of his spiritual dwellings. It was only after the death of the Sufi, his dargah accepted grants made by later kings. The tomb of Naina Muhammad was visited

\[113\text{Ibid., p.171.}\]
by Velu Natchiar and Marudhu brothers of Sivaganga kingdom during the last quarter of eighteenth century and they remembered his spiritual and communal unity.

Pottalpudur, a village in Tirunelveli district received significance both spiritual and social during the early half of twelfth century by the saint of Baghdad, Abdul Qadir Jeelani. The saintly son of saintly parents, born in 1078, decided on the advice of his mother, not to speak untruth at any cost whatsoever. When he began his religious exercises, he denied himself all the needs and comforts of life excepting the barest minimum that would sustain life. Even his marriage was a model in the society that he married a woman of poverty and virtues. His selection of journey to spread the path of God was towards Indian subcontinent and it is wholly believed that he visited Tamil Nadu and one among the places he observed penance for forty days is Pottalpudur. The village with the surroundings fertile but the mainland being pottal meaning barren was transformed into a Pudur meaning new place and thus got its name Pottalpudur by the preaching and discourses for a prolonged period. The spot of his spirituality here was marked by the newly converted Muslims and it got its social and saintly significance thereafter. The followers of this locality, even after his departure for Baghdad where he died in 1166 regularly paid visits to the spot as a mark of respect to this world renowned saint. This attained greater prominence during the seventeenth century when a stone building was erected and subsequent structure came into existence with the large number of devotees who thronged to see the place of holy sitting of the saint and the present dilapidated memorial is considered as a pious and a sacred one equal to the Nagore dargah only next to Baghdad by the people of Tamil Nadu. Social gatherings and dargah ceremonies are done here where the saint was not at all buried but his memorial has got the status of dargah of which the Muslims of
The improperly placed Yusuf Khan in the line of Sufis is remembered as if he had been a saint in his tomb located at Sammattipuram in Madurai. He has been given the title 'Wali' by the local Maduraites for his love and faith he showed to Islam. Born as a Hindu of the Vellala caste at Panaiyur in the district of Ramanathapuram his name was Maruthanayagam Pillai. Being disobedient to his parents, he ran away from home and deciding to embraced Islam he voluntarily became a convert to Islamic community with the name Muhammad Yusuf popularly known as Yusuf Khan. He worked under the services of two Europeans, Chavalier Jacques and Brunton and then in the service of Tanjore king and the Nawab of Arcot. Passing through the various posts of tandalgar, toll collector, sepoys, naik and havildar and finally when he reached the status of subedar he entered the British service. His service as a Muslim soldier in the regional British army of Carnatic earned him the appointment of commander and perhaps he was the first Indian to get this high rank in the British regiment. The British administration under Robert Clive conferred on him the governorship of Madurai in 1756 as a thanks giving to his laurels he earned for the British in different times against the French and local chieftains. He was, at one time, awarded a diamond ring, a medal, three lakh rupees and other gifts by the British for his loyalty to them. The popularity of Yusuf Khan

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115 Ibid., p.3.
made jealous the Nawab of Arcot and some British officials poisoned the ears of the British who determined to take revenge against him. When he and his soldiers along with some French army personnel whom he had believed, had stationed in a locality which was later called Khanpalayam in Madurai after his name was surrounded by the British soldiers. Some of his own soldiers and French who were starving due to the non availability of food possibly caused by the British enemies betrayed him to the British. The sympathetic cry of his supporters around the camp fell deaf and Marchand, the French colonel handed Yusuf Khan over to the combined group of British and the Nawab of Arcot. He was hanged by the order of the Nawab on a tree on the way to Dindigul on October 15, 1764.\textsuperscript{116} It was most probable that the medal given by the British Council to Yusuf Khan with instructions to wear it always, prevented the hanging by the breaking of the rope twice and after the executioners took away the last symbol of the company's favour and protection, their wish to achieve their object was fulfilled.\textsuperscript{117} The thirst for the killing of once praised hero by the British did not end with his hanging but with dismemberment into four parts, the head being sent to Tiruchirappalli, other limbs to Tanjore and Palaymkottai and the trunk was buried at Sammattipuram, Madurai where he is said to have usually lived whilst he ruled over Madurai. The hero of non saint status evoked the sympathy of local Muslims because of his death without trial and mutilation of his dead body at the hands of Muslim enemies who themselves asked the British to hang him. The dare courage of Yusuf Khan not begging for life even before the Muslims and foreign rulers caused widespread pity which made the Muslims in Madurai call him consciously '\textit{wali}' which title may not be of course, most suitable. This non ranking saint's mausoleum is treated as \textit{dargah} and what remains in his name is a street

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, p.228.

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}, p.229.
called Khansamettu where Yusuf Khan took rest on an elevated spot and Khanpalayam where he had stationed his army just before his arrest by his enemies, both now in the heart of Madurai city and named after him.\textsuperscript{118} Beginning his life as a Hindu and ending his life as a Muslim earned popular name for both the communities. He was called as a rebel by the British but his name could be marked as a "social model" for his death was brought by native Muslims and alien British and the French. The life he sacrificed in Madurai for safeguarding Hindu and Muslim soldiers at the end made him to be called "Khan Sahib", a name with fondness, devotion and respect.

Kunangudi Masthan the fondly called name after his native village Kunangudi in Ramanathapuram district belonged originally to Sultan Abdul Qadir who was born in 1792. Well versed in Quranic knowledge, he started his life not even as \textit{faqir} but just like a hermit at the age of eighteen. Having Maulvi Sham Sahib as his spiritual preceptor, he used to observe fasting during most of the day times and offering prayers during nights. He wandered through hill side areas of Tirupparankunram, Saduragiri and Nagamalai and lived in forests for many years. He could be recorded as one of the best and real Sufis for his humble behaviour and simple ways he followed. Disliking tasty and luxurious food, he ate only fruits and roots. He followed some attitudes of \textit{Siddars} of Hindu religion in delivering spiritual, social, moral and even medical advice.\textsuperscript{119} The attainment of his religious study upto Alim rank did not stop him from having discourses with Muslims only but with Hindu disciples also. He was a poet in Tamil and Arabic and some of his poems were recorded

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, p.241.
\textsuperscript{119} Vadivelu Mudliar, \textit{Kunangudi Masthan Sahib Padalgal} (Tamil), (Songs of Kunangudi Masthan), Mullai Nilayam, Chennai, 2004, p.4.
by one of his life time followers, Arunachala Mudali.\textsuperscript{120} His visit to Nagore \textit{dargah} of the saint Shahul Hameed was spiritually significant for the respect he showed in front of the grave singing Tamil poems in praise of him. His journey to spread the Islamic faith through his social voice and poems ended in Chennai. His stay in a locality in Chennai was later called Tondaiyarpet with his popular nickname "Tondaiyar" added after Tondi near Kunangudi where his parents lived till the end. It is said that his daily visit to Angappa Naicken Street with his disciples attracted a large number of Muslims who had already settled there and they attended his preaching. His settlement in Chennai lasted for twelve years during which period, he selected Royapuram for final stay which became later the spot of his death. There he stayed in a place called Bawa Lebbai Sahib estate then surrounded by bushes and bamboo trees. His life in a dwelling place of creatures was a living model to the society that he made people realize the need of austerity, simplicity and dislike to greediness. Such a great saint and poet breathed his last as a real life saint in 1838 at the young age of forty six. His mausoleum can be a real \textit{dargah} since a \textit{dargah} must be the monument of a Sufi saint who should have worked in spreading the cause of Islam for which Kunangudi Masthan wholly deserves but the tomb of this real Sufi has not seen any development except the earlier built structure with unclean surroundings but if the want of fund is fulfilled by any one for a remarkably good structure, it would be a gratitude to the "Sufi on a starvation diet" or to the spirit of his language in Tamil.\textsuperscript{121}

The bachelor saint till his death belonged to \textit{Qadiriyya tariqa} since he followed the footsteps of Abdul Qadir Jeelani of Baghdad and it is a

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{121} Personal visit to the \textit{dargah} at Royapuram, Chennai.
\end{footnotesize}
pitiable condition to know that the birth place of a saint who led an austere life and dedicated the heart and soul for religion and Tamil literature has been neglected even with the number of Muslim population which has left the village uncared.

Kottar, a suburb at Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district reminds the Dakkini Muslim settlement in the early seventeenth century but only a few Urdu speaking persons could not form a bigger society for their welfare. It was only during the middle of eighteenth century, an organised society was created after the visit of a Sufi Fasil Shah, by name. The early Muslim traders from seventh century had scattered throughout the district and the religious missionaries like Kasim, being unpopular, could not spread the Islamic faith to a extent and even some local converts, being small in number, could not make a large scale Muslim society till the middle of seventeenth century. It was Fasil Shah, a member of princely family in Afghanistan with the spirit of spreading religious faith started from there and all along the way he met spiritual leaders and his sea journey reached the coast of Kanyakumari. His stay at Kottar happened to meet two soldiers from Afghanistan, Chav Mian and Nav Mian who were serving under the military leadership of Yusuf Khan and after his death they settled at Kottar. These two, according to local legends helped the Sufi, Fasil Shah in his spiritual work. Many Muslims speaking Urdu language from Deccan called Dakkinis followed the spiritual path of the saint and extended their religious coordination and settled along with him. It can be true that the Sufi and two soldiers learnt this language from the Urdu settlers. The Sufi based his resting place called 'takya" in Arabic, the purchase of which place was made by Chav Mian and Nav Mian for the permanent settlement of the Sufi.

\[122\] Abu Hashima, Pettaham (Tamil), (Treasure), Rahmaniya Sangam, Nagercoil, 2001, p.224.
From this *takya* the saint delivered religious sermons and the followers met him here to get his blessings. His resting place later became his burial place when he died at the end of eighteenth century. As a saint of social thinking and religious propaganda he was responsible for the establishment of a well regularised Muslim society in the southern most tip of India. The work which was not completed by earlier Sufis was done by him and the new converts into Islam with the attraction of his message are now living in neighbouring streets like Idalakudi and Ilankadai. His services to the society are still remembered by the Muslims especially the Dakkini Muslims who lived under his protection and the mosque attached to his *dargah* is called *takya* mosque to have the remembrance of his resting spot.\(^{123}\)

Nor much is known about the female Sufis who flourished in Tamil Nadu. However, the saintly mothers played an important role in making themselves great Sufis. Though their number is small, they are known to have exercised their spiritual influence upon the society. They cooperated with the society in implementing moral values and social ethics, while sharing a passionate love for Sufism. They remained steadfast in religious beliefs and undertook extensive journey to spread Islam. They offered prayers for the peace of family, society, its surroundings and the followers who accompanied them. They frequently referred to their exercises when talking to the disciples. Being married or celibate they led a life given to God, meditation and difficult ascetic exercises. They can be cited for denoting miraculous achievements remaining in their khanqahs or in an open place where the people could meet them to receive the blessings.

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\(^{123}\) Personal Visit to the *dargah* at Nagercoil.
Syed Ali Fathima, one of the female Sufis of Tamil Nadu may be the first in the line of saintly mothers who landed this territory. Local traditions confirm that the female Sufi from some Arab country journeyed in spreading the message of Islam along with her spouse and touched the land a few miles away from Kanyakumari. Walking through the barren land surrounded by thorny bushes they reached the bank of the river Nambi where these two were bitten by snake and died. They were buried near the river by their followers which was later called Attankarai located in Tirunelveli district to mean the riverside. The disciples of the female Sufi settled in a nearby village Pulimankulam and made visit to the graves frequently to remember the spiritual fervour of her. The religious and social works of the Sufi, though limited during her lifetime and her spiritual miracles are now believed by the devotees and the site of this Attankarai has been transformed into a place of social gatherings by the Muslims of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.\(^{124}\)

Vellore, a historically important town is proud of having the dargah of a female saint with spiritual, social and medical service but unknown to many outside this historical place. Syedani Beevi whose birth details are scanty must have lived during sixteenth or seventeenth century from the local traditional records. Though being female she got spirited in the Islamic ideals and she used to go around the then small town of Vellore. No authentic records confirm that she came from an Arab nation and therefore it is believed that she must have been a native of Vellore itself. While engaging herself in Islamic Sufism, she used to do social service through her medical knowledge that she had learnt in herbal remedies. The dargah records and traditional ballads are believed that she cured the diseases of kings and soldiers in the Vellore fort not as

a *Sufi* of miracles but as a herbal medicinal person. This service to the society with the supply of medicinal herbs is even today carried on by the *dargah* authorities to remember her service. It is not a common scene that a female saint was engaged in the medical field but Syedani must have been an exception. It can be further believed that she might have not been a spiritual attraction to attract the people of downtrodden society into the Islamic fold, but could have attracted them as a Sufi doctor. When she died she was buried in the same spot where she had preferred for her spiritual and medical work. The spot of burial, though neglected for years, got a small structure in the first quarter of twentieth century. The tomb of this female Sufi known for simple living and social affection stands in front corner of the fort in a simple form. To recognize the humanly services of the saint which she did for the Hindu kings, soldiers and other public she has been fondly called by the Hindu brethren as Syedani Ambal to place her on par with a female God. The historical place, Vellore, has its pride with its fort and this mausoleum of social thinker, both as harmonious monuments to speak the historical values and this causes every visitor not to miss out a look on this *dargah* when he comes around the century old fort.

The Sufis in Tamil Nadu who either came from alien land or emerged in Tamil Nadu itself worked for raising spiritual doctrines among the masses through the social awakening. The Sufis not only preached spiritual purity and integrated social thoughts to the people but they themselves followed what they taught. The work of reformist Sufis had spread over Tamil Nadu with the coastal line which helped enormously them to spread the Islamic faith and attract the downtrodden people to their Sufi movement. They made attempts to develop close

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125 Interview with Kader, a pilgrim, Vellore, on 23.09.2007.
126 Inscription in the *dargah* at Vellore.
127 Personal visit to the *dargah* at Vellore.
contacts with local chieftains and the general population which included various non-elite Muslims and non Muslim groups. The saints of Tamil Nadu had to accommodate themselves moderate principles because of challenges and risk of variety of groups into other religious mystic principles. Even after fixing their attention mainly on the doctrines of the Islamic faith, Reformist Sufis regarded Tamil Nadu's non Muslim population with attitudes ranging from goodwill to social amalgamation. Towards Hindu ascetics and yogis, their attitude was often soft but this softness is often portrayed as a rivalry between a Sufi and a yogi over spiritual superiority, as manifested in the performance of miraculous deeds.\textsuperscript{128} The Sufis may be considered as 'foreigners" and "local born" of spiritual elite in Tamil Nadu. Most of them arrived here either from other Islamic centres within India or directly from the Arab Middle East. Even as most of them were non Tamils, they did participate in the movement towards Hindu-Muslim co-existence. Many of them made use of their native language, Arabic, Persian or Urdu with which they had social contact with the Hindu population, but actively set for themselves the goal of Arabizing the locals. Indeed, the shift toward a strict interpretation of Islam by the movement of Sufism, probably resulted in part from the influence exerted by the urbanized and rural defenders of Sufism. Despite their relatively complete integration with the religious leaders, Reformist Sufis nevertheless maintained their identity as Sufis, at least so far as institutional aspects are concerned.\textsuperscript{129}

Every action of the Sufis in large crowds was to ensure that every person really prayed and obeyed the social order. While discussing the peace and prosperity of the public, they listed a number of values which they and the people should possess. They asked the masses to be brave


\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid.}, p.133.
in the face of opposition from their rivals. Of the public attributes, it was essential they possessed such virtues as maturity, independence and prudence. Moreover they should have a highly developed sense of sight, hearing and speech. Their noble lineage and those of their ancestors should be well-known and of such distinction as to arouse universal respect. The Sufis stressed that kindness increased love for the benefactor; a chain of love was stronger than a weapon. One who held high place in society should be appealing in action, dress and speech. Their obvious sincerity and warmth towards other should inspire their confidence. The peace loving Sufi personalities devoted all their energies towards the promotion of faith and the protection of social order. There were good remarks of the saints about the acceptance of Hindus willingly marrying the Muslims. They further preferred to marry women who entered as new comers into Islamic fold. A virtuous Sufi could reform the entire world to create a common society. Any attempt of his to reform the social order amounted to a generation of all mankind. Therefore all means were to be employed by them to teach social ideals on Islamic ways of life and how to repudiate the false orders in the social set up. Even those Sufis who fought in the battles for a reformed social cause and to remove the obstacles in their spiritual way of life made themselves to dispense justice and they expected the entire community to co-operate with the governance and to carry out the faithful duties. In that sense, the relationship between the Sufis and the pillars of the world is equated with the relationship between body and soul. They said that if the soul is reformed, the body is reformed; if the soul goes wrong, the body goes wrong.\textsuperscript{130}

Most of the Sufis for whom the mausoleums or memorials have been erected in Tamil Nadu were first generation migrants or original

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, p.363.
inhabitants of this region. If at all a second generation Sufi has been highly placed, he should have attained a high social respect and have reached the purity of pir-disciple status. But all the Sufis had passed their spiritual efforts to new followers. They had the *khanqahs* for the purpose of their disciples' learning. Within the walls of their spiritual stay they built their own *khanqahs* which served both as centres for transmitting the *tariqa* or 'way' to their *murids* and places for receiving scholars, nobles and even kings. Their successors, however, generally did not found independent daughter *khanqahs* as they themselves had done, for the distinguishing characteristic of Reformist Sufis was their social patronage. This was to lend to the *khanqahs* a certain illustriousness that after their death they became transferred to their tombs. Institutions of the *khanqah* were thereby swiftly replaced by a completely new set of institutions - those of the *dargah* or the tomb. It is a surprise of the Reformist Sufis that in spite of their efforts to reform Sufism in Tamil Nadu, the great tombs that were constructed over their graves eventually became objects of the very sort of popular and syncretism devotionalism which they themselves would not have desired to some extent.