CHAPTER—III

Life and Work of Fath Ali Waysi

Hazrat Sufi Fath Ali Waysi, a great Persian poet of 19th Century Bengal, was born at Islamabad (present Chittagong).

Historical Background of Chittagong

Chittagong is one of the most economically vital and industrial centre of Bangladesh today. As a result of being favourably positioned on the coast of Bay of Bengal, it has always proved to be a profiteering destination.

Before the Muslim rule in India, the Arab Muslims during the 8th and 9th century A.D.\textsuperscript{54} arrived at the coastal plains of Chittagong and Arakan, just as they arrived earlier at the coastal plains of Kathiawar, Konkan, Malabar and Koromondal, with the intention of promoting trade and preaching Islam. But they could not penetrate into the country because the entire area was encircled with mountains and full of dense forests, inhabiting barbaric tribes. So their activities were limited only at the coastal areas. In the years to come, some Arab Muslims also settled there.

Bengal was, however, conquered much later, beginning with occupancy of part of the country by the famous Turkish General Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji in the early 13th century\textsuperscript{55}. The small principality which he founded in Lakhnauti near Gaurh in north western Bengal gradually expanded into the Muslim kingdom of Bengal by the second half of the 14th century.

In the next hundred years, the whole of Bengal came under the sway of the Muslim rulers. The military conquests were followed by immigration and settlement which in turn transformed Bengali life and society to an appreciable degree.

\textsuperscript{54} Muslim Bengali Adab, Haque, Dr. Inamul, Urdu Translation, Idarah-i Matbu’at-e-Pakistan, Karachi, 1957. p. 253
\textsuperscript{55} Islam in Bangladesh – Society, Culture & Politics, Ahmed, Rafiuddin, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, 1983, p. II
Following the conquest of Bakhtitar Khilji, Muslim reign in Bengal was not as efficient in terms of consolidation as compared to the administration witnessed in the upper Ganges and Indus Valleys.

In the 13th century A.D., Muslims conquered Bengal. Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah of Sonargaon\(^{56}\) (1338 – 1349 A.D.) was the first free Muslim ruler of Bengal. Syed Murtuza Ali mentioned in his book, ‘History of Chittagong’\(^{57}\) that there is a legend famous in Chittagong that Hazrat Syed Bakhtiyar Mahi Sawar came to Sandwip and Chittagong with an entourage of twelve saints. Among them were Badr-e-Alam, Haji Khalil, Shah Masand Auliya, Shah Qatal, Shah Umar, Shah Badal, Chand Auliya, Sharfuddin and other saints, that is why Eastern Bengal is known as “the land of twelve Auliyas”.

He arrived at Chittagong and began preaching Islam was among the twelve auliyas, The native of the region became his ardent devotees and accepted Islam.

Regarding the famous saint of the Zahidi Order, Hazrat Badruddin Badr-e-Alam (d. 1440 A.D.) of Meerut, Syed Murtaza Ali writes in his book ‘History of Chittagong’, that he was famous with the name of Badruddin Allama, Badr Pir, Badr Shah and Badr Aluiya in Chittagong.

According to the author of Chittagong Gazetteer, the sailors still recite his name during their voyage for their safe travel.\(^{58}\)

During his time in Bengal, other saints like Hazrat Usman Akhi Siraj (d. 1357 A.D.), his disciple Hazrat Makhdum Alauddin Alaul Haque (d. 1398 A.D.), Hazrat Noor Qutub Alam (d. 1415 A.D.) Maulana Shah Ata (d. 1355 A.D.), Hazrat Raja Bayabani (d. 1354 A.D.), Shah Anwar Quli of Phurpura Sharif, Hoogly (d. 1375 A.D.) and Hazrat Jalal Mujarrid Yamani (d. 1347 A.D.), were busy in promoting and preaching Islam among the populace.

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Ikhtiyaruddin Namazi Shah succeeded his father Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in the year 1349 A.D. During Namazi Shah’s reign, Ilyas Shah alias Sultan Shamsuddin of Northern Bengal never mustered up the courage to attack on Eastern Bengal. But after the demise of Ikhtiyaruddin Namazi Shah in the year 1352 A.D., he managed to occupy the whole eastern and southern Bengal in the absence of any powerful ruler in the region. By the end of the 14th century, Ilyas Shah managed to conquer the whole of Bengal. During his rule in Bengal, Ilyas Shah patronized Bengali language and literature and revived Muslim culture in Bengal. He ruled in the region for 16 years and died in 1357 A.D. \(^{59}\)

The Muslim supremacy lasted in this region till 1538 A.D. After that the Magh tribes overpowered the Muslim rulers. These Magh tribes and the Arakanese conquered and deposed the Muslim rulers with the help of Portuguese pirates, and began to oppress the native Muslims. In 1609 A.D., the Portuguese captured the islands of Sandwip.

Concerned about the oppressions and tyranny of the tribes, the Mughal governor Islam Khan (d. 1613 A.D.) \(^{60}\), grandson of the famous Sufi saint Hazrat Sheikh Salim Chishti (d. 1572 A.D.), saw fit to transfer the capital of the Mughal empire from Rajmahal to Dhaka, so as to provide military assistance as and when required. Governor Islam Khan successfully contained the power of the Arakanese. After him, the three succeeding governors Qasim Khan (1613 - 1617), Ibrahim Khan (1617 - 1624) and Khanazad Khan (1625 - 1626) faced continual struggle to protect the region from Arakanese. \(^{61}\)

In 1628 A.D., during the reign of Shah Jahah, Qasim Khan Jubaini (d. 1631 A.D.) became the governor of Eastern Bengal. He successfully managed to bring this region under Mughal supremacy. \(^{62}\)

\(^{59}\) Hindustan par Islami Hukumat, Fahmi, Mufti Shaukat Ali, Din Duniya Publishing Co., Jama Masjid, Delhi. p.482


Chittagong remained under the Mughal rule almost for the next hundred years. After the Battle of Plassey, in the year 1760 A.D., the then Nawab of Bengal, Mir Qasim gave Chittagong to the British along with Midnapore, Burdwan.

According to the census report of 1901, the population of the district of Chittagong was 13,53,250. Among these, the Muslim comprised of 72% of the population. Most of the populace was the descendants of the saints who had come to Chittagong for preaching Islam.

Hazrat Sufi Fath Ali Waysi was born in Chittagong in first quarter of the 19th century. There is not an accurate account about when his forefathers settled in Chittagong. It may be assumed that this Sayyid family came to Chittagong along with the royal army of the Emperor of Gaurh, Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah (1518 – 1532 A.D.).

Religious service of the Muslims of the Chittagong

During 16th century, a number of religious and pious minded people wrote many books on Islam in Bengali language, in order to restore religious belief in Bengali Muslims and to enhance their knowledge of Islam. Among them, a poet of the era, Syed Sultan (1550 – 1648 A.D.) draws our attention. He wrote *Nabi Bangsha (Qasas-ul Ambia)*, *Auft-e-Rasul (Wafat-e-Rasul)*, *Shab-e-Meraj*, *Rasul-e-Bijoy*, *Jeevan Pradeep* and *Muarefati Gaan*. These books contain ample knowledge of Islam.

Muhammad Khan (1580 – 1650 A.D.) was the disciple and khalifa of Syed Sultan. He wrote *Sahabar Katha* (Stories of the Sahabas), *Maqtul Hussain*, *Qayamat Namah* and *Dajjal Namah*. His book *Maqtul Hussain* became very famous among Muslims.

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64 Rud-e-Kausar, Ekram, Sheikh Muhammad,
65 Advanced History of India, Volume-II, Dutt, Kali Kankar, p. 407.
Syed Nuruddin holds an eminent position among the religious poets of Bengal. He was well versed in Arabic and Persian literature. He wrote *Haqaiq, Musaar Sawal* (The questions of Moses), *Rahat-ul Qulub* and *Hith Updesh* (Beneficial Advice).

Khan Bahadur Hamidullah Khan, the last Muslim writer and poet of Chittagong. He was well versed in Arabic and Persian literature. He was attached to the Naqshbandiya Mujaddiya Order. He was initiated to Hazrat Sufi Nur Muhammad of Nizampur (d. 1858 A.D.). Khan Bahadur (1808 – 1870 A.D.) was the revenue officer of Chittagong in the middle of the 19th century. He has written books in both Persian and Bengali languages. He is the author of *Ahadis-ul- Khwanin, Gulzar-e-Shahadat, and Taran Path* (Rah-e-Nejat). The other name of *Ahadis-ul- Khwanin* is *Tarik-e-Hamid*. These books are well-known in Bengali literature.

The Muslims of Syed and Pathan sects were well aware of their religious responsibilities. They had unrelenting love for Islam and the Prophet, the praised one. They with the help of their writings saved Muslims from going astray. Their services are praiseworthy.

**Waysi: A Sufi poet of Naqshbandiya Order.**

Amongst the above mentioned poets of Chittagong, Hazrat Sufi Fath Ali Waysi (1825 – 1886 A.D.) holds a prominent position. Chittagong became reputed as the land of Sufis and Hazrat Waysi was a product of it. He belongs to the Naqshbandiya Order of Sufism in Bengal.

The Naqshbandiya Order is a sober Order which abstains from artistic indulgence mainly music and *sama*. It differs in many respects from most of the medieval mystical orders in the central Islamic countries.  

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67 Ibid., pp.302, 306-329
Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband, born in 718 A.H. \(^{69}/1318\) A.D.\(^{70}\) in Qasr-i-Arifi, two miles from Bukhara, is generally credited for the origin of the Naqshbandiya Order. The Order was formerly known as ‘the Silsila-e-Khwajgan’ in Central Asia, but was later coined after his name ‘Naqshband’ which literally means an embroiderer or painter on fabric and is relevant to Bahauddin, probably because of his ancestral profession. He died and was buried in his birthplace in 791 A.H. \(^{71}/1389\) A.D.\(^{72}\)

The most influential figure after Bahauddin was Khwaja Ahrar, popularly known as Hadrat Ishan, from whom the three regional lines are derived, namely Central Asia, Turkish and Indian.\(^ {73}\)

The Naqshbandiya Order was first introduced in India during the reign of Emperor Babar (d. 1530), the first Mughal emperor, knew the Order quite well, for one of its centres was located in his home province Farghana. The conquest of India by Babur in 1526 A.D. gave considerable impetus to the development of Naqshbandiya Order. Both the new emperor and a large number of his Central Asian legion were the spiritual followers of Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar. Some eminent Naqshbandiya sufis also migrated from Central Asia to India. Among the most prominent were Kwaja Abdul Shahid and Khwaja Kalan, a descendant of Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar, whom Babur deeply respected.\(^ {74}\)

The activities of the Naqshbandis in the sub-continent were limited during the first century of the Mughal rule. Only towards the end of Akbar’s Days, Khwaja Baqi Billah Berang (1563 – 1603 A.D.), one of the leading masters of the Order, came to India and finally resided in Delhi.\(^ {75}\) He gained a number of disciples very soon. He is believed to have simply introduced the Order in

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\(^{71}\) Tazkira-e-Mashaikh-e-Naqshbandiya, op. cit. p. 85.

\(^{72}\) Sufism, Its Saints and Shrines, op. cit. p. 190.

\(^{73}\) The Sufi Orders in Islam, Trimingham, John Spencer, Oxford University Press, 1971. pp. 94


India; however it was his disciple and vicegerent, Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi born in 971 A.H. 76/1563 A.D.77 in Sirhind, who actually established it here.

Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi has been titled by the great philosopher Abdul Hakim Sialkoti, ‘the Mujaddid-Alf-i Thani’ – The Renovator of the Second Millennium, since he appeared at the beginning of the 2nd Millennium of the Islamic era, in order to restore traditional Islam and consequentially, the Order came to be known as “Naqshbandia Mujaddadiyya”. He has been praised by his admirers as “Imam-e-Rabbani” – the divinely bestowed leader of the community.

Ahmad Sirhindi’s endeavors to retread to the pure teachings of Islam, which exempts the ‘Unity of Being’ (وحدة الوجدود) but acknowledges the possibility of ‘Unity of Vision’ (وحدة الشهود), i.e. in the moments of highest bliss the mystic bears witness to absolute Unity but understands that no essential union between creation and Creator is possible for ‘the Lord is Lord and the servant is servant’. The central thesis is: not ‘Everything is He’ (همه اوست) but ‘Everything is from Him’ (همه ازاوست), a formulation which is indeed much relevant not only to orthodox Islam but to the theories of Unity, as professed by the early mystics.78 He eradicated the heresies introduced by Emperor Akbar and purged Sufism of many of those irrelevant elements which had become appended to it through its long history. He died in his birthplace Sirhind in the year 1034 A.H.79 / 1624 A.D.80

The Naqshbandiya Order gathered greater momentum in the 18th Century by the reformative movements of Shah Wali’ullah of Delhi (1703 – 1762 A.D.) and his son Shah ‘Abdu’l- ‘Aziz (1746 – 1824 A.D.). In the 19th century, the latter’s disciple Sayyid Ahmad born in Bareli in 1201 A.H.81 / 1776 A.D. brought

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77 The Sufi Orders in Islam, Trimmingham, John Spencer, Oxford University Press, 1971. p. 95
80 The Sufi Orders in Islam, Trimmingham, John Spencer, Oxford University Press, 1971. p. 95
further development within the Order by merging it with the Quaderiyah and Chishtiya Orders in India and fusing these three disciplines with a fourth element of religious experience, the exoteric discipline, which he called “Tariqa-i-Muhammadiya” (the way of Muhammad). He propagated his system in Bengal when he visited Calcutta in 1821 – 22 A.D. and resided here for about three months, during which people from various parts of the state gathered around him to enter into his discipleship. He attained martyrdom in the Battle of Balakot in 1246 A.H. / 1831 A.D.

**Waysi’s Spiritual Guide**

Hazrat Sufi Fath Ali Waysi was initiated by Hazrat Sufi Nur Muhammad of Nizampur in the Naqshbandiya Order. Hazrat Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri was the native of a village Maleyash in the district of Nizampur, Chittagong. His father’s name was Muhammad Panah.

During Sayyid Ahmad Shahid Barelvi’s three months stay in Calcutta, zealots from various parts of Sylhat and Chittagong approached him to enter his tutelage. During that time, he received divine inspiration in his dream from the Holy Prophet, the praised one, to approach Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi in Calcutta and enter his discipleship. He at once responded to the divine calling and came to Calcutta. He was under Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi’s tutelage for several years and learnt the intimate and esoteric knowledge of mysticism. Over the years, he ascended as one of the prime Khulfa of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi.

In 1826 A.D., when Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi migrated to Subah Sarhad from India for Jihad, Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri along with other disciples accompanied him and fought in various battles. During the Battle of

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Mayar in 1830 A.D., Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri got injured. Most probably after the Battle of Balakot fought on 6th May 1831 A.D., he returned to Bengal and settled in village Maleyash, Nizampur, Chittagong, where he spent the rest of his life in teaching, preaching and reforming the society. The names of co-disciples (disciples under the same master) of Hazrat Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri are Moulana Imamuddin Bangali (d. 1274 A.H. / 1857 A.D.)

Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shahid had given to his disciples ‘Shajaras’ of three disciplines namely, the Naqshbandiya, the Quaderiyah and the Chishtiya Orders. Hazrat Waysi was also given all three of the above mentioned ‘Shajaras Namas’ by his spiritual guide Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri.

He breathed his last in 24th Rabi‘ul Awwal 1275 A.H. / 1st November 1858 A.D.


Ibid., p. 131

Ibid., p. 136

Ibid., p. 141

Muslim Bengali Adab, Haque, Dr. Inamul, Urdu Translation, Idarah-i Matbu'at-e-Pakistan, Karachi, 1957. p. 302
Khawanin (احادید الخوائنین) chronicled the lives and works of his spiritual guide and Moulana Imamuddin Bangali. He writes:

"ففضل الپی آن همه رسول از دیار به پرکت وبدایت ذوات خیر وحسنات حاجی وغازی و زاد وعالم وفاضل وعابد ومجادد مولانا امام الدین مرحم وخلاصه اتیقا وزبده اصفیا غازی حاجی وفاضل وعامل وارع وازیدحضرت پیر ومرشد صوفي نور محمد رحمت

الله الاحد واتباع شان برجاsted. آن اقوام بلحیب علم وعمل آراسته شدند وچند جانبکه کسی دران نواحی بی نماز باشد، بلکه قضا کردن نماز اجبل ایشان بم روا نمی دارند وچون وقت نماز رسد، ببر کاریک باشد فی الفوران را گزاشته طبارت کرده بنماز مشغول می شوند.

حتی که در عین وقت بزاراسباب بیع وشرا نباده بجز خداوند تعالی در نماز استاده..." 91

Waysi’s Biography

Hazrat Sayyid Fath Ali Waysi, an ardent lover of the Holy Prophet, the praised one, a celebrated poet of Persian language, a Sufi, a great spiritual teacher and a noble son of undivided Bengal; who dedicated his whole life in preaching the tenets of Islam, spreading the teachings of the Holy Prophet, the praised one, moulding and shaping the character of the people and purifying their hearts with the effulgence of Islam. He kindled the blaze of love for the Holy prophet, the praised one, in the hearts of the people through his writings.

His original name is Sayyid Fath Ali, pen name: Waysi. He is popularly known as Sufi Sayyid Fath Ali Waysi. He was the youngest son of his parents, Sayyid Warith Ali and Sayyida Saeeda Khatoon, who were the natives of Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). No credible source is available regarding his father Sayyid Warith Ali’s life. Maulana Zainul Abedin Akhtari

has mentioned in his book ‘Hayat-e-Waysi’ that Hazrat Waysi was the son of Hazrat Maulana Sufi Sayyid Warith Ali.\(^{92}\)

According to Dr. Sk. Ahmad Ali (General Secretary, Waisi Memorial Association, Kolkata), the ancestors of Sayyid Warith Ali hailed from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. They were the descendants of Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani. When the companions of the Holy Prophet, the praised one, spread in different parts of the worlds, among them a branch migrated to Delhi through Iraq, Iran and Ghazni and settled there for some time. Then from Delhi they came to Chittagong. Sayyid Ibrahim Ali Madani is the pioneer of that branch.\(^{93}\)

According to Md. Motiur Rahman, Maulavi Sayyid Warith Ali Bangali was a great scholar and a pious person of Chittagong, who accompanied his spiritual guide Ahmad Shaheed of Bareli, to the battles fought at Subah Sarhad.\(^{94}\)

At places Hazrat Waysi himself remembers his father with much respect as the late, learned and the pious Maulana Sk. Warith Ali but is taciturn about divulging intricate details of his father’s life.

It is unanimously accepted by the disciples of Hazrat Waisi that his father along with Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi went to fight the Battle of Balakot and attained martyrdom in the year 1246 A.H. / 1831 A.D. But since Hazrat Waysi never used the title of ‘Shaheed’ for his father, it can be assumed that his father died a natural death during the service to his spiritual guide.

\(^{93}\) Indo-Iranica, Iran Society, Kolkata – 16, Volume 58, March - June, 2005. pp. 46 - 47
**Date of Birth**


The following statements of Nawab Siddique Hassan Khan along with some verses of Waysi quoted, evinces the same. It is however notable that, the author has written Waysi’s pen name as Sufi.

The contemporary sources fail to have consensus about the exact date of birth of Fath Ali Waysi. Md. Motiur Rahman, the author of *Aaina-e-Waysi*, opines that Waysi was born before 17th January 1826, as because his father Maulana Warith Ali went for Jihad in and around January 1826. The confusion about the date of birth has become more complicated as because it is mentioned by the author N. Hanif that Waysi was born in Chittagong in 1825.⁹⁶

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⁹⁵ *Sham’-e-Anjuman*, Khan, Syed Mohammad Siddique Hassan, Shahjahanī Press, 1292 A.H. p. 268

Recent research done by Sajjada Nasheen of Sufi Fath Ali Waysi, Allahar Shah Sufi Syed Jan-e Alam states that Waysi was born at Amira Bazaar in Chittagong in 1820 – 23 A.D.\(^97\)

The great scholar Maulana A. M. K. Masumi has calculated the date of birth of Sufi Fath Ali Waysi by quoting an obituary published in Noorul Anwar, a weekly newspaper in Urdu on 11\(^{th}\) of December, 1886, on the eve of the sad demise of Hazrat Waysi, where his age at the time of death is mentioned as 70 years. If he expired on 1886 at the age of 70, then his date of birth must be 1860.\(^98\)

Other learned scholars and writers like Hafiz Tahir Ali\(^99\), M. Firoze\(^100\) and Dr. Yahya Tamizi\(^101\) have also mentioned 1825 as his date of birth in their writings. As no authentic and reliable proof regarding the exact date of birth of Waysi is available, so in my opinion the date of birth mentioned in Md. Motiur Rahman in his extensive work \textit{Aaina-e-Waisy}, is most viable.

\textbf{Education}

According to Maulana Zainul Abedin Akhtari, Fath Ali Waysi since his childhood was a prodigious person. At an early age, he studied the Holy Quran and other important religious books. He acquired knowledge in Quranic exegesis, tradition, religious jurisprudence, logic, philosophy including Arabic and Persian literature. In fact his mastery could be claimed in Arabic and Persian literature. He took his early education in the madrasah of Dahsa, situated near Munshirhat, closely adjacent to Ballabhpur Police Station of

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\(^{100}\)Obaidi: A Persian Poet of Nineteenth-Century Bengal, M. Firoze, Iran Society, Kolkata, 2005. p. 7

\(^{101}\) Sufi Movements in Eastern India, Tamizi, Dr. Yahya, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, Delhi, 1992. p. 54
Howrah. It could not be traced when and in what age Hazrat Waysi came to Dahsa for acquiring knowledge. Now the madrasah at Dahsa has perished.\textsuperscript{102}

There is no doubt that Hazrat Waysi was well acquainted in Persian language and literature. On Account of his innate intellect, religious bent of mind and the company of the literary and spiritual teachers that he kept, he had made a strong position in the domain of Persian literature and especially because of his extreme love for the Holy Prophet, the praised one. He could present an immortal monument of love and a memorable work in Persian literature, i.e. Diwan-e-Waisi. It is really a valuable gift from a true lover of the Holy Prophet, the praised one, to the people of Bengal.

**Spiritual Education**

After completing his education, he was inclined to mysticism and took mystic initiation direct from Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri (d. 1275 A.H. / 1858 A.D.), who happened to be the companion of his father Sayyid Warith Ali and one of the famous disciples of Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi. Hazrat Waysi acquired mastery in mystic knowledge and attained the stage of an accomplished devout of his time.

It has not traced when and where Hazrat Waysi came in direct contact with his spiritual guide. Some writers on Hazrat Waysi in Urdu and Begali language have discussed the point but they have failed to provide any reliable or conclusive source. Renowned scholar Maulana Masumi is of the opinion that Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri for some time stayed in the mosque of Munshi Ghulam Rahman at Misri Ganj, near the Calcutta Madrasah, Calcutta (present Kolkata). It is also noteworthy that the said mosque, since the arrival of Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi here became a prominent centre where his

ardent followers congregated. Most probably, Hazrat Waysi became acquainted with his spiritual guide at the same place.

Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi had given Shajra-i-Mubarak of three orders namely, the Naqshbandiah Mujaddadiyya, the Quaderiyah and the Chishtiyya, to his disciples. The same Shajra-i-Mubarak was handed down to Hazrat Waysi by his spiritual guide Hazrat Sufi Nur Muhammad Nizampuri. Hence, the relation of Hazrat Waysi with his spiritual teacher stands on a sound basis.\(^\text{103}\)

Hazrat Waysi by virtue of his religious attainments acquired the title of ‘Qutb-ul-Irshad’, ‘Qutb-ul-Ata’ and also ‘Ghaus-e-Zaman’. He ultimately reached the position of ‘Fanah-fir Rasul’.

**Waysi’s Employment History**

Hazrat Waysi after completing his education came to Calcutta from Chittagong and joined as a private secretary to the deposed Nawab of Awadh Wahid Ali Shah (d. 1305 A.H. / 1887 A.D.) at Metiabruj. After years of service, he was promoted to the post of Superintendent in the Political Pension Office of the British Government, whence pension was disbursed among the deposed Nawab and their kith and kin.\(^\text{104}\)

Maulana Zainul Abedin Akhtari has provided in his book Hayat-e-Waisi, Bengali version, a photocopy of Hazrat Waysi’s signature as a superintendent in the salary register of the Political Pension Office on a ticket of one *anna*, dated November 1867, which is a proof that he remained in this post till that time.

At the age of 42 years, Waysi felt that time was upon him to fulfill his true duties for which the God Almighty had created him. He resigned from his lavish

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and comfortable job as Superintendent and dedicated his entire life in preaching the principles of Islam and serving his people.

**Marriage and Children**

During the early days of his stay in Calcutta he married a lady Sayyida Bibi Fatima from a respectable family of Punasi, Murshidabad. After resigning from his post, he settled in Punasi, Murshidabad owing to its civilized populace.

Hazrat Waysi and Bibi Fatima were blessed with a son Sayyid Muhammad Mustafa Ali and a daughter Sayyida Zahra. His son Mustafa Ali was a great scholar of Arabic and Persian. He had a very good command on English literature. He wrote frequently in an English newspaper ‘Muslim Chronicle’ and also worked in the post of Superintendent in the Political Pension Office of the British Government, in place of his father.\(^\text{105}\)

His daughter Sayyida Zahra was a very pious lady and was famous with the title ‘Rabiya-e-Bangal’. She was married to Sayyid Muhammad Hussain, whose ancestors belonged to Balkh, Afganistan.\(^\text{106}\)

**Waysi’s Demise**

In the last years of his life, he again came to Calcutta in the year 1886. Once he went to the house of one of his disciples and suddenly fell indisposed. He asked his disciples to take him back to his house. On the way back of his journey in the train compartment, his soul departed for heavenly abode on 8\(^\text{th}\) Rabi ‘al- Awwal, 1304 A.H. / 6\(^\text{th}\) December 1886 A.D.\(^\text{107}\) His body was buried at Mannicktalla.

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\(^\text{106}\) Ibid., p.189
Waysi’s Character Sketch

Hazrat Waysi was a true mystic, a pious and learned person having intimate knowledge of reality. He was a great follower of the *sunnah* of the Prophet, the praised one. He was a very generous person by nature. During his job he used to spend a big portion of his salary among the destitute, orphans and widows. He lived a very simple life. He abstained from ostentatiousness. He was capable of performing miracles but was disinclined about publicizing them.

Waysi’s Pen Name

The poetic name Waysi is not so much rare. Mention may be made of Mir Waisi who was one of the grandees of the court of Humayun. Another poet of Turkish origin with the pen name of Waisi (1561 – 1628 A.D.) may also be mentioned. The *Siratun-Nabiand* and *Khawab Naman* was his well known gem. The recent writers on Hazrat Waysi appoint that the term Waisi is linked with the Arabic root of ‘Wais’. Undoubtedly, it is a word of praise and tenderness used in addressing a child in the dialect of Syria.

The term Waisi had been derived from the Arabic word ‘Wais’, which means indigent, desirable or undesirable thing. In another context, it is a word used in place of love and innocence for children.

In my opinion, Hazrat Fath Ali Waysi has adopted his pen name in remembrance and attachment with Hazrat Uwais of Qarn, who was a great devout and an ardent lover of the Holy Prophet, the praised one.

Hazrat Uwais’s love for the Holy Prophet, the praised one is legendary. Once during a war, an infidel had hurled stones at the Holy Prophet, the praised one. One of the stones martyred the tooth of Holy Prophet, the praised one. Such was Uwais’s love for the Holy Prophet, the praised one that upon receiving tidings of the unfortunate event, he decided to sacrifice his tooth as
well. But since he was unaware of which tooth of the Holy Prophet, the praised one had attained martyrdom, he sacrificed all his teeth in His honor.  

Waysi’s Work

Sufi Fath Ali Waysi was a great Persian poet. In spite of his Bengali upbringing, he was a master in Persian language and literature. He has a Diwan to his credit in Persian. After 12 years of his death, his maternal grandson Maulavi Sayyid Muhammad Mir Hassan of Shahpur, in the district of Murshidabad, compiled and edited the aforesaid Diwan.

The Diwan of Waysi was first printed at Ghausia Press, Calcutta in 1898 consists of 208 pages. It contains 175 ghazals and several odes, comprising 3347 couplets. Out of this total, 3214 couplets are exclusively in praise of Allah and the Holy Prophet, the praised one and 133 couplets are based on mystical thoughts and other topics.

The Diwan was reprinted at the Qayyumia Press, Kanpur in 1922 containing 232 pages. There is a short introduction of two to four pages at the beginning of it. The introduction was done by Maulavi Sayyid Muhammad Mir Hassan.

The third print of the Diwan-e-Waysi took place in 1353 A.H. / February 1935 A.D. under the same press. In this collection of poems, there are 175 ghazals, 23 Na‘tia qasidas and 6 miscellaneous couplets.

Waysi’s Contemporaries

Most remarkable feature of the 19th century Bengal was that it had become a centre where literati congregated for literary and religious purposes. We cannot help but notice an influx of intellectuals and scholars coming together to share their ideas and thoughts. They particularly showed great interest in

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109 Rahman, Mohammad Motiur; Aaina-e-Waisi ; Lebul Lithu Press, Patna 1976 p.423
Persian literature and preaching Islam. They were not only spiritual guides and preachers but scholars and poets also. For example, **Hazrat Sayyid Mehr Ali Al-Quadiri of Midnapore**, who was born in 1888 at Midnapore and died in 1868 at Taltala in Calcutta, was a great saint and also a great scholar.

**Hazrat Murshid Ali Al-Quadiri**, son and successor of Hazrat Sayyid Mehr Ali Al-Quadiri, was born on 16th July, 1852 (1268 A.H.) at Midnapore and died on 7th February 1901 (1318 A.H.), has two Diwans each in Urdu and Persian language to his credit. He like his father was the contemporary of Sufi Fath Ali Waysi. Prof. Maulana Abdul Rahman Quadiri (St. Xavier’s College) has written Tazkirat-ul-Maula in two volumes, on the life and work of Hazrat Murshid Ali Al-Quadiri.

**Maulana Obaidullah al-Obaidi al-Suhrawardi**, another contemporary of Waysi, pen name Obaidi, was well versed in different branches of science, philosophy and linguistics and acquired full command over Arabic, Persian and Urdu- composing verses in all the three and developed proficiency in eastern languages like Bengali, Sanskrit and Hebrew as well as European languages like Latin, Greek and English. He was also attached to journalism and edited the Persian newspaper *Durbin*. Through this paper he propagated his views on English news and female literacy. Obaidi has two Diwans each in Urdu and Persian language to his credit. The most remarkable work of Obaidi is his book on Persian grammar entitled *Dastur-e Parsi Amuz*.

**Abdul Ghafur Nassakh** (1833 - 1889) was a celebrated Urdu poet and writer of Calcutta. “Rubayat-e-Farsi” and “Shahid-e-Ishrat” are popular books written by Abdul Ghafur Nassakh. In his book “Tazkirat-ul-e-Muasereen”, Nassakh wrote about his meeting with Najaf Ali in Murshidabad, Benaras and Birbhum. He quoted 20 poems of Najaf Ali in it. In his autobiography, ‘Sasanih-e-Umari’, Abdul Ghafur Nassakh tell us that Najaf Ali was a scholar of unparallel quality in his time in India.
Abul Ma‘ali Mohammad Abdur Ra’uf, pen name ‘Wahid’, was born in Calcutta on 10th February 1828 and died sometime after 1891. He was not only a poet but also a prolific writer. Wahid had compiled his Diwan in 1890. Apart from his Diwan, Wahid other twelve literary works are: Tahrirat-r Wahidi, Tarikh-e Bangale, Tarikh-e Kalkatte, Sarf-e Wahidi, Nahv-e Wahidi, Shakh-e Marjan, Tohfatol Hajj, Taj-e Sokhan, Roba ‘iyat-e Wahidi, Monsha ‘at-e Wahidi, Jawaheros-Sanaye and Sokhan-e Mowzun.\textsuperscript{110}

**Waysi’s Disciples**

In the last portion of Diwan-e-Waysi, the compiler Maulavi Sayyid Muhammad Mir Hassan of Shahpur, has given a list of 35 *Khulfa* and disciples of Hazrat Waysi. Maulana Zainul Abedin Akhtari in his book ‘Hayat-e-Waisi’ has given the name of thirty three disciples of Hazrat Waysi, excluding the name of Maulavi Mubinullah of Hoogly District and Maulavi Sayyid Zulfiquar Ali of Titagarh, 24 paraganas.

The names of the *Khulfa* and disciples are as follows:

- Maulana Abdul Haque of Murshidabad
- Maulavi Ayazuddin of Alipore
- Sufi Niyaz Ahmad of Burdwan
- Sufi Ekram-ul Haque of Murshidabad
- Maulavi Motiur Rahman of Chittagong
- Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim of Chittagong
- Maulavi Abdul Aziz of Hoogly
- Maulavi Akbar Ali of Sylhat
- Maulavi Amjad Ali of Sylhat
- Maulavi Ahmad Ali of Faridpur
- Shah Deedar Bakhsh of Howrah
- Shah Baqallah of Hoogly

\textsuperscript{110}Wahid: A Persian Poet of Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century, M. Firoze, Iran Society, Kolkata, 2012. p. 74
Maulavi Md. Abu Bakr of Hoogly
Maulana Ghulam Salmani of Hoogly
Maulavi Ghanimatullah of Hoogly
Munshi Sadaqatullah of Hoogly
Munshi Sharafatullah of Hoogly
Sk. Qurban Sahab of Bania Talab, Calcutta
Shamsul Ulma Maulavi Mirza Ashraf Ali of Calcutta
Sayyid Wajid Ali of Calcutta
Maulavi Gul Hussain of Khurasan
Maulavi Ata-ur Rahman of 24 paraganas
Maulavi Mubinullah of Hoogly
Maulavi Sayyid Zulfiquar Ali of 24 paraganas
Maulavi Ata- e Illahi of Burdwan
Munshi Suleman of 24 paraganas
Maulavi Nasiruddin of Nadia
Maulavi Abdul Quadir of Faridpur
Maulavi Qazi Khuda Nawaz of Hoogly
Maulavi Abdul Quadir of Hoogly
Qazi Fasahatullah of 24 paraganas
Sk. Lal Mohammad of Hoogly
Maulavi Sayyid Azam Hussain of Madina Munawwara
Maulavi Sayyid Ubaidullah of Nadia
Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim of Hoogly.

After a thorough survey of Hazrat Waysi’s life and work, it is known that he led a life of a true Muslim and a real follower of the sunnah. After going through his Diwan, one develops a sense of deep love and grows more grateful for the Holy prophet, the praised one. He is one of those pioneers who tried to
bring home to the people that outward label of a faith is absolutely immaterial. The real fact lies in what a person has practiced.