CONCLUSION

The Sultanate, generally, was viewed as an Islamic state and the Sufis’ support towards the Sultanate seemed plausible and logical. The Sufis, however, did not view the Sultanate as purely Islamic, as it deviated from the principles of Islamic statehood to a great extent. A true Islamic state would be a reflection of the system of the early Caliphate. Hence, their support towards the Sultanate was not unconditional, but issue based.

Muslim statehood initially was formed with the assumption that sovereignty belongs to God\(^1\) and the Sultans or the Kings were representatives of God\(^1\), who were supposed to rule on the basis of Shari’at, rule of law and equity. The head of the state was not a hereditary one, but was selected or elected on the basis of consensus.\(^2\) In this, the wisest, the pious and the popular people played a vital role. The law making process was not arbitrary, but based on consensus or consultations. In the light of this, the early Caliphs refused to nominate their successors and left the choice to the people.

The “right going” Caliphs (the first four) did not regard themselves above law; instead they declared themselves at par with other people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.\(^3\) They also appointed judges, who, they declared, had the powers to give verdict against the Caliph\(^4\) and uphold justice at any cost. Thus, in a court of Zaid when Umar, the second Caliph was given
respect as due to a Caliph when he came there as a party to a case, Umar declared that Zaid was unfit to be a judge so long as Umar and an ordinary man did not stand equal in his eyes.  

Another feature of an ideal Islamic state, as prescribed by the early Caliphs, was to treat the treasury or Bait al-Mal as the trust from God and the people. The Sultans were forbidden to use the money for the fulfillment of their personal needs and the wars which were uncalled for.

Thus, the concept of kingship or statehood in Islam was democratic and welfare oriented. The selection of Iltutmish as the ruler and his and Sultan Nasir al-Din’s rule, broadly followed the above said principles of Islamic state, to a reasonable extent. They did not indulge in luxury, administered justice scrupulously and led simple and pious lives. However, successive rulers specially Balban and thereafter indulged in court grandies and etiquette and the projection of a higher self image, mainly to put the amirs on hold, denying them the right to choose the successor to the throne. The theory of the Divine origin of kingship was brought into the picture by projecting themselves, as the representatives of God and disobedience to them would be disobedience to God. This theory was in sharp contrast to rule of law and equality before law practiced by the early Caliphs that was symbolic of ideal Islamic state. Earlier, the Caliphs were mere trustees of God and now the shift was to project the rulers as inviolable embodiment of
Divinity, whom every one should be subjected to without question.

The public treasury was also not used hitherto for the purpose expressed by the early Caliphs. There was lip service paid to the Islamic principles, which were used selectively to pursue personal agenda or interest. The Ulama with no hold on the social fabric, as it was predominantly non-Muslim, had negligible impact on the Sultanate. Thus, the Sultanate could not be termed as Islamic in true sense of the term.

The Sufis sourced their inspiration from two of the early Caliphs – Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Ali and linked their descendancy to either of them. Thus, their conception of ideal Islamic state was different from the Sultanate on Indian soil. So they commented though rarely upon administration of justice concept of equality, use of treasury for welfare activities, selection of wazir with sense of justice and equity etc. Thus, in the same vein Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (1314 -1384 A.D.), a famous Sufi of Kubraviya silsilah of Kashmir, had observed that a ruler who transgresses the limits of the Shari'ah is really an enemy of God and the Prophet. However, such utterances could be termed as luke-warm and vain attempts of Sufis to reform the state apparatus. Probably, their acute awareness of their limitation in this regard could be a factor for their attempt of distancing from the Sultanate.

The Sufis were well wishes of the Sultanate for the reasons that the Sultanate was in a formative stage, the Sultans respected the Sufis, other
alternatives were unlikely to be favourably disposed towards them and the Sultanate was instrumental in consolidation of Islam and Islamic principles.

The concept of the selection of the executive head, though an ideal principle, proved to be dangerous for the institution of Caliphs at later stage. This led to successive wars of succession and bloodshed. The Sultanate being “Islamic Sultanate” could not be away from the impact of this. In the absence of principles of primogeniture in succession, then amirs interpreted the principle or use of it in their favour. Politics of succession accompanied by bloodshed became a distinct feature during the period of the Sultanate. Here, the Sufis support for succession was vital, as there were folklores of bestowal of kingship by the Sufi. The Princes vied with each other in seeking such support or blessings.

During the Sultanate period the institutions of the Sultanate, the khanqah, the mosque, the Ulama, the amirs or nobles were construed as the main pillars of Islam. In case of the ‘mosque’ and the ‘Ulama’, the element of flexibility in their operation, appeared negligible. Their area of operation was limited to matters pertaining to religion only. The Sultanate as an institution, at initial stages gave credence to Islamic principles to a greater extent, which slowly and steadily got diluted. It became more and more secular. But at the same time, it being dictatorial lacked firm grounding with the populace. Amirs’ were basically concerned with the power politics. Thus, it
was the Sufis and their *khanqahs* who played a very important role in getting Islam acceptable to the majority section of the society. Once, the existence of Islam was accepted, the Sultanate also gained acceptability.

The Sultanate at initial stages had little knowledge of the Indian socio-political ethos and institutions. They were also engaged in continuous wars with local rulers. The Muslim nobles had made their life difficult, while Hindu Chiefs withheld taxes. Thus, they needed diplomacy, superior military forces and check on their nobles. They had superior military forces, but they lacked diplomacy and check on the nobles (except Balban and Ala al-Din Khalji). In addition, the Mongol conquest Western Asia exercised a decisive influence on the ‘infant’ Delhi Sultanate. The ‘Mangol’ threat was looming large on them.

To face such a situation, they expanded their army and invaded Hindu territory to loot and plunder, so that they have the wealth to sustain the army. Attack on new territories also served twin purposes of training and engaging the army. With the Mangol threat and hostility of Rajputs looming large, the infant Delhi Sultanate felt the need for symbolic legitimization or sanctification of the Muslim presence in the alien land, which would ultimately sanctify their position. They constructed mosques to expand Islam and gave stipend to those who led the prayers officiated in the mosques, but there was a limit to such an expansion, as India was a vast country with its enormous
population and number of small kingdoms. Under these complex and unfavorable circumstances, it was impossible to run the government without some outside help. Thus, the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate made desperate attempts to find a source from which they could draw their authority.

A potent source of authority was the Caliphate, of which the Sultanate theoretically was a part, as the prestige of the Caliphate as an office traced back to the authority of Prophet Muhammad. Rulers continued to pay lip service to the Caliphs and went through the ritual of asking the Caliphs for investiture with the positions they had already gained by the force of arms. This procedure gave the fiction of legitimacy to the rulers whose only claim to authority was the sword. The name of the Caliph was inscribed on coins and the *khutba* was read in his name. However, the conduct of various rulers of Delhi Sultanate indicates that the association of their names with the Caliphate was more of an act of perpetuating memory rather than a formal recognition of an authority beyond the bounds of their kingdom. With the Mongol conquest of western Asia, the Indo-Muslims were isolated from the rest of the Islamic world. Thus, not only it gave the rulers of the Sultanate independence, but also forced them to struggle to maintain the nascent state without outside help. However, the pretence of Caliphal supremacy was upheld, even in the absence of a meaningful Caliphate.

But the idea of the Caliphate as a meaningful source of legal authority
for the Delhi Sultanate did not work in a land where majority of the population were Hindus, who did not recognise the authority of the Caliphate. In fact, the Caliphate held no popular appeal even from a wide section of the Muslim population. The existence and activities of the Shiite Arabs and the Arab oriented Ismaili sects in India seem to be among the important factors that led the Turkish rulers of Delhi, to proclaim time and again, their association with the Abbasid Caliphate representing the orthodox Sunni community and the glorious days of the Turks. Therefore, despite its effective importance in the Delhi Sultanate, it was not so much an appeal for recognition either for the Muslims or for the Hindus.

Then of course, there was the Shari‘at from which the Sultanate could draw its authority. But strict adherence to the principles of the Shari‘at was not possible in a land of varied religious beliefs. In any case the essential concern of the rulers was their survival and consolidation of political gains and not enforcement of the Shari‘at. Their existence at the helm of political supremacy depended on the acceptance of their authority by the bulk of the Indian population, whose total alienation would have been suicidal for them. Consequently, the Shari‘at was seen as an ideal, rather than a necessity and the state used the Shari‘at as a tool whenever it was found suitable. However, no ruler openly rejected the Shari‘at.

In any case, the Shari‘at held no popular appeal either for the Muslim
masses because it represented formal Islam of the ‘book’, or for the Hindus due to its obvious connotations. Thus, the Shari'at too, failed to function as a source of authority for the Delhi Sultanate. Generally, the rulers pretended to pay lip service to the Shari'at in order to ostensibly please the Ulama, who were supposedly ‘the leaders of the Muslim public opinion’. But, the Ulama too were unable to provide the much-desired legitimacy to the Delhi Sultanate. In fact, the Ulama could never provide effective leadership to the Indian Muslims as they represented orthodox Islam. They held no popular appeal for the masses, be it Muslims or Hindus.

While the Turks made desperate attempts at legitimizing their rule, it was, perhaps, understood by them that a state, which rested on military strength could not last for long and that mass support was an essential feature of a successful state. While, Turkish ethnicity and Islamic religious identity was a prominent feature of the Sultanate, in practice the patronage of the regime clearly required the support of Hindus who constituted the bulk of the population. Though the support of the Hindus was a greatly sought after commodity for the Sultanate, it was to be made sure that no such step was taken which was against the ethos of Islam. A very delicate balance had to be struck. Thus in this situation it was best for the Sultanate to derive its legal authority from a source which was indigenous and yet possessed an identity which was Islamic in character.
Finding itself in the midst of a complex socio-political situation, when the Caliph, the Shari'at and the Ulama failed to give it the legitimacy it needed, the Sultanate found an easy solution to its problems; its sought to draw its authority from the Sufis. The “tradition of the Sufis” served a dual purpose. While it provided a local Muslim identity, which bound the newly formed community to the land where they dwelt, it also catered to the mental and emotional needs of the Hindus. There are numerous anecdotes of Yogis visiting the Shaikhs. The Sufis were not only instrumental in playing down the attitude of hostile resistance of the Hindus but also secured their support for the Sultanate along with the support of the Muslim masses.

The Sufis during the Sultanate period were perceived to possess spiritual excellence and noble qualities. The Sultanate’s respect and hostility towards them enhanced their prestige and position. For, when the Sultanate respected the Sufis, they were construed superior in their relative position with the Sultanate and when the Sultanate was antagonistic towards them, the populace felt for the Sufis and admired their magnanimity. When a particular Sultan faced difficulty or death, after being hostile to a Sufi, people attributed if to the ‘power’ of the Sufi. So both ways, it helped enhancement of their position.

On the other hand, the Sufis had their tacit support for the institution of the Sultanate as a whole. They prayed for its existence, expansion and
strength, extended their moral and spiritual support to Sultans, and sent their Khalifas in the military campaign. At certain instances the Sufis helped them overcome a crisis situation, rebellion, attack etc. Though the Chistis, were careful to maintain a respectable distance from the state and its functionaries; nevertheless, they rose to its defence whenever their help was required and help was rendered with a clear conscience, for they looked upon the state unambiguously “Muslim.” When the benevolent Sufi gave legitimacy to the state, it led the people to view the state as a benevolent institution. In fact, the Sufi-Sultanate relations were punctuated by phases, that can be termed as ‘symbiotic’. At this juncture, the relationship can best be described as an interplay between relatively autonomous, yet mutually interacting and interdependent institutions.

However, at certain instances, there emerged some tensions or incompatibilities in their relationship. However, despite the tension that existed between the two, the Sufis could not be viewed either as conspirators against the state or as ill wishers of the Sultanate. Even when the Sufis, specially Chishtis seemed to have distanced themselves from the state, the link between the khanqah and the Sultanate was too strong to be snapped off by metaphysical distance. In fact, by distancing themselves from the state, the Chishtis were, in a way extending invisible support, a silent approval to the functioning of the Sultanate. Despite all its shortcomings, the Sultanate was
still an Islamic state, or at least it claimed to be so; and the Sufis could not to be its ill wishers. Therefore, the occasional Sufi dissent did not amount to questioning the existence of the state itself. The Sufis, by distancing themselves from the state or by having some incompatibilities in the relationship, were acting as the articulators of public opinion and were able to provide the in-built system of dissent or criticism to the medieval Indian state. This was a sort of “safety valve” in preventing the collapse of the Sultanate.

An important factor, which was responsible for the great popular appeal of the Sufis, was their endless piety. They were perceived as extremely pious endowed with all conceivable virtues. In this piety of the Sufis, the people saw the extrapolation of their own urges to become pious. They tried to identify themselves with the saints and to follow their ideals.

The Sufi attitude towards the people, in contrast to that of the governing class and Ulama, was characterized by greater dynamism and better understanding of the people. They opened their khanqahs to all kinds of people which became centres of cultural synthesis where ideas were freely exchanged and a common medium for this exchange was evolved. The Sufis sympathized with the people in their problems and tried to help them. It was due to the concern which the Sufis showed to the people, the people listened to them and tried to follow what they preached. The Sufis, as such, were able to minimize social tensions and maintain
moral equilibrium in the society, which helped in the smooth functioning of the government.

Apart from market places, there were four other institutions where people could have interface with each other. Those were - the court, the temple, the mosque and the khanqah. While mosques and temples were places accessibility for their own religious groups, the court was a place where either nobles and government officials or people with grievances or alleged for certain crimes or for evasion of taxes generally visited. On the other hand, the khanqah was an open place for all, where the concept of equality was predominant. The government officials, the amirs, the Prssinces, ordinary persons, the merchants, the yogis, the sudras - all of them visited for spiritual attainment and redressal of their grievances or for both. Thus, it was a place, which facilitated social harmony and co-existence. The Sufis were Muslims and so were the Sultans. Therefore, the grievances of the population against the Sultanate was not construed as a grievance against an Islamic system, due to positive role played by the Sufis in the projection of Islam and their identification with the masses.

Most of the Sufi saints were from higher status of societies i.e. either sayyids and descendants of great mystics of Iraq and Persia. Some of them had matrimonial relations with the Sultans. Thus, their social acceptability in a caste dominated Indian society was enormous. This is in contrast to the
Bhakti saints, who were mainly from lower castes. This was one of the reasons for higher class Hindus and Muslims becoming devotees of the Sufi Saints. The Rajput rulers also provided patronage to the shrines of great Sufis. For instance, the Rajputs rulers of Ajmer more often visited the shrines of Shaikh Muin al-Din. Similarly, Baba Farid’s shrine was visited by all cross sections of people from Punjab and elsewhere.

As we have seen earlier, the Sufis were wielders of great power. This power generally complemented the state power and the successive Sultans often tried to obtain the support and blessings of the Sufis not only in times of crises, but also in their important campaigns and welfare measures. The Sufis from their side, not only offered their blessings, but also prayed for them and sent their representatives that were reflections of their moral support. They advised in military campaigns as well. This enhanced the sanctity of the projects, campaigns or measures of the Sultanate. The Sufis of early medieval period were trying to keep away from the Sultanate, while giving their support from the distance. However, should there be a need or their interface was unavoidable, the Sufis and the Sultans did meet. Thus, Shaikh Qutub al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya had to visit the court once each in their lifetime, for different and unavoidable reasons. When the time changed the latter’s Khalifas Nasir al-Din and Shaikh Burhan al-Din, the greatest Chishtis of the north and the Deccan respectively of their
time, had to work in close liaison with the Sultanate. The Suhrawaridis had no inhibitions in meeting the Sultans or visiting the court. However, their visits were also not too frequent. They supported the Sultanate, and occasionally advised suitably. Some of them had incompatible relationship with the Sultanate at certain occasions. For instance, Shaikh Sadr al-Din married the divorced wife of a governor that led to some bickering. Thus, the degrees of incompatibility, cooperation and distance varied from silsilah to silsilah, from time-to-time and from Sufi to Sufi. Moreover, the attitude of the Sultans had also an important role in the variation of this degree. For instance, the Ulamas could not prevail upon Iltutmish against the practice of sama by Shaikh Qutub al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, as Iltutmish considered the Shaikh as his spiritual leader. However, Shaikh Nizam al-Din was constrained to attend a mahzar where he had to explain the sanctity of practicing of sama.¹¹

The Chishti silsilah got a setback with the demise of Shaikh Nizam al-Din. His Khalifas could not withstand the pressures of the Tughaq dynasty and had to tow the directives of Mohammad Tughaq. Shaikh Nasir al-Din was compelled to accompany in the military campaigns,¹² Shaikh Qutub al-Din Munawwar was summoned to the court ¹³ and many others were forced to go to Daulatabad. This was a case of proximity with incompatibility in contrast to Shaikh Nizam al-Din’s relationship of distance and cooperation.
with the Sultanate. Thus, the Sufi-Sultanate relationship had undergone various changes, the degrees in each of the aspect changing from time to time with corresponding reverse change in the degrees of other aspects.

The proximity of relationship between the Sufis and the Sultanate was distinctly marked in case of the local Sultanates. For instance, in the south the Sufis attended coronation of the Sultan, the Sultans visited the Sufis, became their murid and offered enormous ‘futuh’. This was probably due to their inter-dependence for survival, consolidation and expansion. Almost, similar situation existed in Malwa, Gujarat and Bengal, which we have not dealt at length, lest we lose focus on important issues on the subject.

An interesting part of the study and the finding is that certain Sufi practices became subject both of cooperation and incompatibilities in different situations. The concept of wilayat for instance was both supportive and antagonistic to the Sultanate. Futuh from the Sultanate reflected the Sultanate’s support for the institution of khanqah, but it also had become a cause of concern for the Sultanate, when the Sufis refused to accept futuh from them. Sama similarly could be an occasion, when the armirs or Princes marked their presence along with the Sufis, but ‘sama’, on the insistence from the Ulama had become an irritant in their relationship, as well.

The nomenclature of the leading Sufis was an attempt to put the Sufis on higher pedestal. A Sultan reigned within the boundary of his territory.
But a Sufi commanded respects from one and all, as it made all barriers of kingdoms, religions, castes etc redundant. For instance, Shaikh Rukh al-Din called Shaikh Nizam al-Din, the king of religion\textsuperscript{14} or Shah-.i Din, which connotes that he was the spiritual leader of the Islamic world. The confidants of Ala al-Din Khalji briefed him that Shaikh Nizam al-Din had become a world leader. Similarly, certain Sufis were called Qutub-i Alam of their time, which connotes that they were the highest figures on the earth. Even the Sultans also gradually addressed them as such.\textsuperscript{15} Their blessings and spiritual support in their continuation as a Sultan and governance was high in their agenda. But, certain rulers were jealous of their visible independence and superiority. They attempted to subjugate them by their directives, which were more often rebuffed by the Sufis. However, some of the directives were adhere to. An anomalous situation emerged out of this. But in this situation also, it was the Sultans who were the losers. For people thought such actions or directives as tyrannical and oppressive. The Sufis attempted to show that they had little to do with the state system and thus, the directives of Sultans to the Sufis for doing something or refraining from doing something did not go well with the populace. Such directives had also apparently led to disasters for the Sultans.\textsuperscript{16} The wiser ones, thus, made conscious attempts to maintain an amicable relation with the Sufis.

The amicable relationship was also based on the assumptions that both
the institutions were Islamic. However, both in their approaches had also broken the barriers of rigid Islamic boundaries, the Sultanate, due to its political and military compulsions and the Sufis due to their broader vision and adaptability to a complex social fabric. These dynamics in their relation with the local populace had also its ramification in their relationship. Apparently, it would seem that this drifting away from the rigid Islamic principles by both should have brought them closer.

Since, such drifts were neither simultaneous nor inclusive of similar aspects, the space of difference existed. For instance, the Sultans new tax system with no corresponding welfare measures, would not gain the support or approval of the Sufis. Similarly, the grandies of the court structure, suppression of dissent in the system, harsh measures, aristocratic life style of ‘amirs’, ‘maluks’ etc., appropriation of ‘booty’ in public treasury or by amirs were unlikely to be seen by the Sufis with appreciation. On the other hand, the popularity of the Sufis among the Hindus and the Muslims, the practice of ‘sama’, ‘yoga’, ‘chillah makus’, bowing before the Sufis etc., the concept of spiritual territory as against political territory of the state system, high sounding nomenclature of the Sufis were matters of concern for the Sultanate. In all of these, there were apparent deviations from strict Islamic principles.

Further, the system of Sufism was not as rigid and stern, as the percepts of Shari’at. Thus, unlike in the mosques, where worshippers gather to offer
prayers in an orderly and solemn manner, in the *khanqahs* the devotees were free to express their inner feelings the way they like. They were free to choose their method of expressing love and devotion. However, when their interest converged, there were visible support for each other. For instance, the support of the Sufis for Firoz Shah Tughlaq in ascending the throne was to ensure a Sultanate that was favorably disposed towards them. Similarly, the Sufis had their moral and spiritual support for the Sultanate's southern campaign. This not only caused the expansion of the Sultanate, but also that of Islam, which broadened the way for Sufis' area of operation as well. The Sultanate's power in such campaigns increased substantially with the inferred or presumable or direct of support from the Sufis, as it enhanced the 'morale' of the forces.

But when the temporal power was juxta-posed against the Sufi power, one of them had to give way. For instance, Shaikh Nasir al-Din unwillingly had to accept the dictates of the Sultanate, performed services and accompanied in the campaigns. In this, either the Sufi power did not assert itself due to its magnanimous characteristic or it was skeptical of the consequences of defiance. The Sultanate thus had its way. Similar encounter in earlier occasions, had led either to the Sultanate's bending to the wishes of the Sufis or disastrous consequences for the occupants of the throne.

When both the powers merged in a particular situation, each rubbed
off some elements on to the other due to close proximity. In the southern campaign, when the Sufis willingly participated, they apparently imbibed elements of the Sultanate system in their conduct. *Futuh* from Sultanate no more remained a taboo in the south. The Sultans were allowed to visit them and the Sufis attended the coronation of the Sultans. Matrimonial alliances between them were more frequent. Sultans became *murids* of the Sufis. They sent their emissaries to each other i.e. exchange of ambassadors. The Sufis more often guided the Sultans in governance and campaigns. Sometimes they supported the rebels also. Thus, politicking which hitherto was not a subject of their agenda, became a part of their operation. The Sufis, during the close of the Sultanate period and especially in the south, had come much closer to the Sultanate.

The power dynamics between them had also an important dimension to their relationship. The Sultans more often, wanted them to be subjugated to their dictates to show their visible dependence on the Sultanate. They thus issued directives, summoned them, banished them, and showered them with *futuh* and the like.

The Sufis some time rejected such *futuh*, disobeyed the directives, ignored the summons and instead sent their representatives. And even when they went to the court, conducted in such a way as to show their favours towards the Sultanate, instead of their dependence. The dimension took a
different turn when the government employees or nobles showed their allegiance towards the Sufis in preference to the Sultanate.\textsuperscript{18}

Further, in a system where prime genicture in succession of the throne had no solid grounding, rule or custom, the Sufis’ support was extremely important in the backdrop of popular perception and folklores regarding the Sufis’ power of bestowal of kingship. Thus, more often the Sultanate was relegated to an inferior position vis a vis the Sufis. The paintings and miniature of the times, thus, depicted the Sufi sitting on a higher platform, while the Sultan was sitting in a lower platform or in the midst of the people. The Sultans’ desire to visit the Sufis and the latter’s refusal to meet them also pointed at similar direction. Bahlul Lodi had gone all along to attend a lecture of Shaikh Sama al-Din\textsuperscript{19} and similarly Nizam Khan had visited the Shaikhs, when accepted by the \textit{amirs} as their unanimous choice to become Sultan. This brings home the point that the Sufis were placed higher than the Sultans, not merely in popular perception, but also in the perception of the Sultans themselves.

The retrospective probability of existence and survival of the Sultanate without the Sufis could be an important hypothesis to ponder over. The inception of the Sultanate itself is attributed to Shaikh Muin al-Din Chishti’s benediction. Further, the Sultanate was threatened from three sides - the powerful Mongols, the local Hindu kingdoms and unpredictable power hungry
nobles. The moral and spiritual support of the Sufis to the Sultanate was very important at this juncture. This, not only boosted the morale of the Sultanate, but also had bearing on others to support the Sultanate.

Apart from government, there are three other characteristics of the state – territory, population and sovereignty. As regards the territory, the Sultanate in its infant stage was confined to Delhi, Ajmer and some other places and was a little larger than other local kingdoms. The expansion of its territory at initial stages was on the basis of expansion of Islam, which was a notion with limited appeal i.e. on the Muslim forces only. Islam was an alien religion and without the expansion of the religion, it was unlikely to expand the army with followers of Islam. Thus, expansion of Islam was very vital to the survival of the Sultanate. The expansion of Islam through sword was extremely impossible in a country like India, as it was very vast with altogether different and deep-rooted culture and civilization, which could not be assimilated. Rather, it had demonstrated its potency of assimilating cultures and systems brought by invaders in the past. Further, the army had to include non-Islamic forces as well, as it needed a much larger army than Islam could offer.

The appeal of Islam was not going to cut any ice with them. A broader appeal was needed. It is here the Sufis could play an important role, as they brought respectability for Islam on one hand and on the other, were instrumental in large-scale conversion. Their broader vision, concept of
equality, services towards the humanity etc. were akin to today’s Christian missionary, which led to expansion and acceptance of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. This consolidated the position of the Sultanate.

During the time of the Sultanate, the Sufis had become unchallenged spiritual masters, thanks to the caste ridden Indian society and the absence of adequate spiritual leadership of other religions in the land. The resistance they faced was from within i.e. Ulama, the so-called spiritual leaders of Islam itself. The greater the challenge for them, the greater was their popularity. For, the Ulama could not challenge the Sufis on their own without the backing of the temporal power. When the Sultanate opposed the ‘practices’ of the Sufis, the Sufis or ‘khanqah’ became object of admiration by those people, who were opposed to the oppressive and dictatorial system of the Sultanate. It became a force where the people’s frustration, disappointment, poverty and sufferings could find ventilation. The Sufis’ popularity thus did not remain confined to the Islamic boundaries; it went all out to embrace one and all. Thus, Raja Haldar became a murid of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya. This was not detrimental to the system of the Sultanate, as it worked as a dissent or safely valve, so essential for the survival of a system. The institution of the khanqah and the Sultanate, in the process of opposing each other, consolidated their position and expanded further. Thus, the Sufis and the Sultanate gained out of this opposition, relegating other forces to inferior
position. The same holds good in the political processes, especially during elections, when various forces rally behind the major forces opposing each other, it leads to bi-popular politics, even in a multiple party system.

As regards the characteristic of sovereignty, the Sultanate was externally sovereign, but to be internally sovereign it needed the acceptance and support of the populace. The Sultanate had come into being on the basis of superior army, military strategy and ammunitions. That was not enough for its sustenance. Its actions needed implicit ratification from its subjects. The subjects were mostly Hindus who were unlikely to support an 'Islamic cause'. Thus the Sultanate's projection of Islamic cause had no meaning to the large sections of people. Their acceptability depended upon the development of a system and ideals acceptable to the people. The Ulama's role was not only negligible and limited, but also to a large extent negative. The Sufis, on their part, by way of being accepted by the populace were instrumental in acceptability of the Sultanate; as for the people Islam was what the Sufis practiced. Moreover, the Sufis had earned a position among the lower caste and sudras who hitherto shed their disliking or apathy towards the Sultanate. The people of higher class or caste were worried about their social position and political rehabilitation. The support of the Sufis towards the Sultanate had an impact on their understanding of the irreversibility of the establishment of the Sultanate. With a view to adjusting themselves in
the new scenario, they had to dilute their opposition towards and develop a rapport with the Sultanate. The understanding of Islam was also important to feel the pulse and the methodology of the Sultanate. The Sufis came handy for this, as people broadly knew Islam the way they practiced. The devotion or discipleship of the Sufis also was likely to be viewed by the Sultanate in awe.

Thus, in terms of expansion of its territory, crushing of rebellion within its jurisdiction, expansion and acceptability of Islam and consolidation of sovereign power of the Sultanate, the Sufis had extended their tacit and definite support towards the Sultanate. In the functioning of the government and welfare measures undertaken by the Sultanate, the Sufis had a say; for many Sultanas, Princes, amirs were their admirers or disciples and a few words from them were considered precious and became ‘torch bearer’ for their activities.** The Sultanate, without the existence of the Sufis might not have been able consolidate their position in a short span of time and be able to rule over the country for long three hundred years leaving deep imprint is socio-political sphere of the country. Moreover, it is they who were instrumental in the recognition of the Sultanate, which was so vital for its existence and sustenance. The Sultanate collapsed giving way to the Mughals, another Islamic force, which also revered the Sufis equally or even move, during their reign.
The survival, consolidation and expansion of the Sultanate could have been questionable without the existence and growth of Sufism, which continuously supported it through its tacit, implicit and indirect ways and means. However contrary could be true. Without the existence and expansion of the Sultanate, Sufism could still have thrived in the subcontinent as it imbibed in itself dynamic and flexible characteristics, rejecting the notions of cold formalism, ‘orthodoxy’, ‘exclusivity’ of conservative Islamic scholars. It went beyond, crossed the boundaries of Islam, followed pragmatic principles and practices befitting to the Indian soil and socio-cultural ethos. This was precisely why, their relationship with the Sultanate had space for ‘cooperation’, ‘incompatibility’ and ‘distance’, all the three aspects operating independently, interchangeably or also sometimes simultaneously, reflecting a multi-dimensional and complex relationship.
NOTES

1. *Qu’ran*, IV, 59, 105; V, 44, 45, 47; VII, 3; XII, 40 etc.

2. Alusi, *Ruh al-Madni*, Egypt, 1926, xxv, p. 42; Alusi cites the anecdote concerning Prophet Mohammad while on death bed, telling Ali that the *ummah* i.e. the people should decide his successor after his death.


15. *Futuhat-i Firuz Shahi*, p. 17, tr. 118; Sultan Firuz Shah refers him as Sultan al-Mashaikh and Mahbub-i Ilahi.


18. *Qiwam al-Aqaid*, p.199.ref. to the anecdote regarding Talbegha Bogdha and *Siyar al-Auliya*, p.135.ref.to anecdote regarding Amir Khusrau revealing Sultan’s intention of visiting the Shaikh uninformed.