PREFACE

I had, in the course of my work for the M.Phil. degree of JNU some seven years ago, explored some aspects of the history of Sufism in medieval India and was keen to pursue the theme for my doctoral research as well. To allow myself wide space for further exploration, I chose the topic “Chishtis during the Delhi Sultanate: A Balance between Ideal and Practice.” However as I proceeded with the work, it came to acquire a more defined focus, i.e., the Sufis’, especially the Chishtis’ relationship with the state during the period of the Delhi Sultanate. I wished to alter the title of the thesis accordingly to bring it in tune with the main contents of the text, when JNU’s administrative regulations stopped me in my tracks. I was given the option of making the alteration but waiting for a whole year before it could be submitted or submitting it under the title I had chosen earlier and explaining my dilemma to my examiners. I have taken the second option in hope and faith in the examiners’ generosity.

Sufi ideals, especially those of Chishti, prohibited the Sufis from engaging in any measure of proximity with the Sultanate, but in practice, it was difficult to keep away from the Sultanate altogether. There had been an inherent linkage between the two institutions, which I have tried to analyse, generating my data from various anecdotes from the primary sources. The drift of argument in this work is that the Sufis’ relationship with the Sultanate
cannot be defined in linear terms either of distance, or cooperation or conflict, as has been done by a number of very eminent practitioners of the discipline of history earlier. The relationship indeed was one that was complex, with space for distance, cooperation and incompatibility - all the three aspects existing independently as well as inter-dependently, at times in tension with one another, at others in perfect harmony. The complementarity of the relationship between the two is as well marked as their exclusiveness.

My supervisor, Prof. Harbans Mukhia’s suggestion to deal with the relationship between the Sufis and the Sultanate as complex rather than linear set me out on this path. I am at a loss of words to express my gratitude to him for chanelising the flow of this work in this direction, and also for his encouragement, affection and for fulfilling the demands that I made on his time despite his busy schedule as Rector. It was a great priviledge working with him, as I have been enriched in more ways than one due to my association with him. My special thanks to Mrs. Banani Mukhia for her patience and warmth of her hospitality and Neelanjana for sharing her knowledge of Sociology and lending me her copy of Fawa'id al-Fu'ad.

The research work is based mainly on number of primary sources, specially contemporary Persian works including Tarikh-iFiruzShahi of Barani, Fawa'id al-Fu'ad, Siyar al-Auliya, Akhbar al-Akhyar etc. Dr. Sadiq Hussain, Lecturer of Persian, School of Foreign Languages in the
Ministry of Defence and Dr. Mazhar ul-Haq of Hamdard University helped me in translating the Persian works. My father Dr. Farid Ali Shamsi gifted me a copy of the Quran with English translation, while my mother Naseem Farid gave me a copy of Khair al-Majalis. Dr. Abdul Qayyum helped in works relating to Urdu and arranged a typist for Persian work. Major C.M.S. Babu and Mr. Mansoor Alam helped me in editing the photographs of the Dargahs. Mrs Kapur of C.H. S./J.N.U. was extremely encouraging and helpful. Dr. Sunil Kumar of Delhi University, where I was a student until the Master's degree, had stimulated my interest in Sufism and Dr. M.L. Bhatia also of the same University lent me his copy of Comprehensive Persian and English Dictionary of F. Steingas, respectively. I discussed the subject with Dr. Muzaffar Alam, JNU (now in Chicago) who made some spirited comments. I extend my gratitude to all of them.

I am thankful to the khadims, Kabir Nizami of Dargah Sharif of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya, Shams al-Haq of Dargah Sharif of Shaikh Qutub al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and Fazlul Matin and Syed Sarwar Chishti, Gen Secy., Anjuman Syedzadgan, Dargah Sharif of Shaikh Muin-al Din Chishti for their oral anecdotes and lending rare books from their personal collections. I thank Kusum Sharma and all my students in Maitreiyi College and Miranda House and specially my friends Dr. Lata Singh, Dr. Ranjana Bhattacharya and Dr. Shama Mitra Chenoy for being beacons in my moments.
of need. Their emotional support was soothing in times of distress. I also thank my friends Shefalika Dalmia, Humra Quraishi and Simi Qasim and Dr. Amita Chauhan, Chairperson, Amity International for spurring me on.

I began my journey with History in L.S.R. from where I graduated. I extend my gratitude to all my teachers and Dr. M. Gopinathan, Principal of the College for their positive influence on me in shaping my career.

I also remember with gratitude my friends and colleagues Shashi Munjal, Dr. Saroj Gandhi, Anita Sud, Dr. Sudha Tyagi, Dr. Gargi Chakrabarty, Dr. Premlata, Ritu Kumar, Yogam Datta, and Dr. Vishnu Priya of Maitreïyi College for their affection and enlightening me on issues which had eluded me earlier. I am grateful to my colleagues at Miranda House - Nonica Dutta, Jhunu Deb, Snighdha Singh, Madhu, Shrimanjari, specially Prabha Dikhshit for filling my professional life with strength and support. I am also touched by the kindness and encouragement of Dr. S. Suneja, Principal of Miranda House.

Bilal and Dr. Khusro, my unfailingly supportive brothers also helped me, the former by getting important materials from AMU and the latter by sharing his knowledge and books on Islam. My sister Asra, a student of journalism in London encouraged me throughout.

Most of all, my 12 years old son, Asad, helped me in corrections on the computer, transferring the typed Persian material from Inpage to the
Corel draw and then shifting those to the Adobe Page maker. The formatting, scanning and printing the photographs was also done by him with the help of Mr. Mansoor Alam, son of Prof. Mahmood Alam, Professor of Persian at JNU. I am completing this work on 15 Nov 2002 i.e. on the birthday of my son and am dedicating this to him as a token of my affection. My little daughter Sarah often dozed off to sleep at the foot of the table without complaining, still hoping that I would tell her a bed time story after I wound off my work. I remember my husband who has been with me to the libraries, dargahs including that of Ajmer and to the museums. I am touched by their help and do not intend to belittle their contributions and relationship with me by thanking them. I treasure their contributions in my heart.

I thank the librarians of J.N.U., I.C.H.R., Jamia Hamdard, Delhi University, Jamia Milia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University, Osmania University, National Archives and Nehru Memorial Libraries and all the khadims of Dargah Sharifs and staff members of Salar Jang Museum, Hyderabad and Iran Culture House for their help and encouragement.

Finally, I thank I.C.H.R. and its officials for evaluating and finding my research work of worth and sanctioning a generous grant for it.

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