CHAPTER 4

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Bihar as a state has contributed immensely to the development of Persian language and literature. These contributions are available in both forms of literature—prose and poetry. In the seventh century when Muslims established the rule over Bihar, the effects of Persian language and literature started to grow and get prominence in his region. The first traces of Persian poetry also date back to the same period.

This chapter focuses on the Sufis mystic literature, the distinctive characteristics of Sufism and works and teachings of the Bihar Sufi saints. The chapter had been divided into two sections, Poetry and prose. A small section of bilingual poets has also been included in poetry section.

A critical review of Persian literature of Bihar reflects that there was a continued growth and development of Persian prose and poetry in Bihar starting from the time of Hazrat Sheik Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri (782H|1380 A.D.) till the period of Shaad Azim Abadi (1927). Apart from poetry we also come across contributions in the area of Tajkare Nigari, muslim rulers not only conquered various parts in India with the help of sword and might, but also brought with them a number of learned men and a caravan of religious scholars. These scholars and religious preachers propagated Islam and its humanitarian values among the indigenous people of India. Among these men we find a number of Sufis who also put in a lot of contribution for Persian literature especially in the area of poetry. The origin and development of Sufi poetry in Bihar can well be understood through the readings of vast contribution by Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri (RA) which continues till the time of Sufi Maneri. Most of the Persian poets in between the period of these two Sufis had great inclination towards mysticism which also reflects through these writings.

There were a number of centres of Persian learning and propagation of Sufi thought. Maner Sharif, Bihar Sharif, Bhagalpur, Hajipur, Saran, Baitho Sharif (Gaya),
Purnia, and Darbhanga were some of the major centres. Various Khanqahs at these centres have been a great source of Persian learning which contribute to function till date.

Persian poets of Bihar were influenced by Sufi school of thought. Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri, Ahmed Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, Abul Hassan Fard, Md. Ali Habib Nasr, Sufi Maneri and a number of other Sufi poets of Bihar expressed their mystic experiences through Persian poetry. They have left behind valuable records of their precious thoughts and attitudes towards life. Mysticism has been the dominant note in the Persian poetry of Bihar in general and Sufistic poetry in particular. In the writings of each of them we find great mystical thoughts which were restored and propagated through their respective Khanqahs by adopting a systematic pattern which can surprise any reader and research scholar.

A short account of the Sufi poets of Bihar will substantiate the fact that they left far reaching effect on the Persian poetry of Bihar. Azimabad, Phulwarisharif and Maner were some of the important places of Persian learning in Bihar.

Besides Azimabad, Phulwarisharif has been an important seat of Persian learning. Shah Abul Hasan Fard and Md. Habib Nasr hailed from this place. They belonged to the lineage of Hadrat Tajul Arfin Peer Mojibullah. They have left behind their Persian Diwan and a number of treaties dealing with different theological problems. In poetry they have expressed their Sufistic experiences and mystic thoughts through their works.


Maner has been the next centre of Persian learning since decades. Shah Farzand Ali Sufi Maneri, Shah Abu Nasar Khaleeluddin Ahmad, Josh Maneri and Shah Ehteshmuddin Haider Mashrafi Maeri are eminent Persian poets of Maner. They have left behind their Persian work in poetry. Sufism has been the main theme of their writings. Their craving for
the attainment of spiritual elevation, find prominent place in their mystic poems. Shah Bekan Maneri, Shah Abua Mozaffar, Md. Amjad Hussain Maneri, Shah Mahdi Hassan Akhtar Maneri, Shah Faseehuddin Hussain Shuttari Maneri, Shah Lutf Ali Kursi Maneri, shah qayam ali shuttari, qayem maneri and sheikh gholam qadir maneri are a few other notable poets of maner who have contributed to the sufistic Persian poetry of Bihar.

Biharsharif has been the third seat of Persian learning in Bihar. It has been for long centre of attraction but for Hadrat Makhdoom-u-l-Mulk Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri where the seekers of spiritual knowledge locked from the nook and corner of the Islamic world to satiate their thirst of knowledge. Hadrat Burhanuddin, Muzaffar shams Balkhi, Makhdoom Ahmad Chirmposh, Shah Amin Ahmed Firdausi, Zulam-an Mohd. Shafi are a few among a galaxy o Persian poets of Biharsharif who expressed their mystic thoughts in Persian poetry and left behind records of their sufistic experiences and achievements in the field of their endeavour for realization of the ultimate truth.

A study of this literature and contribution of Sufis reflect that in every century starting from the 8th century till the early century such contribution work relevant. However we do not find any major contribution during the tenth century. There is a possibility that literary pieces and contributions might have been present but could not be preserved. In the 11th century a number of Iranian laureates and poets gathered in Patna. Mirza Sadique Asfahai, the author of Sub-he-Sadique has named Kaleen Arif, Nadim Geelani, Mohammad Hussain Qajweri, Mohammad Moijuddin Jezdi and Mirza Qasim Imani etc. as some of the prominent contributors of this period Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil also belonged to the same period. His name does not require any introduction as he was not only famous in India but also in the whole Persianworld. In Afghanistan, he is considered to be the greatest poet of all times. Collection of his poetry has been published from Kabul in four volumes. Mirza Moiz Maulvi Fitrat who also belongs to the same century was also a great poet. Besides, the above mentioned names there are many others who contributed as Persian poets. Their contribution and work will be discussed in detail. before, discussing prominent sufí poets works in Bihar that I would like to give a brief introduction of Persian sufí poetry.
Persian Sufi poetry

The earlier mystics of Islam had made extensive use of Arabic poetry, whether by seeking inspiration in the recitation of love poetry which could be taken as directed to either a human or a divine beloved, or by composing verses of their own. It was in Persian poetry; however that Sufism was now to find its greatest and most widespread expression, producing what the eastern Islamic world from Turkey to India regards as the highest peaks of its cultural heritage.

From the early 12th century we find expressions of Sufism in other forms of Persian verse; the ode and the long didactic composition in rhyming couplets. The first master of both was Sana'i, a court poet of Ghazna in Afghanistan, who died in 1131. Like Hujwiri, he attacks the local fake dervishes there, and in particular the sexual misconduct of the women mystics. His odes contain not only the praise of wealthy patrons and straightforward exhortations to piety, but also the language of libertinism: he extols wine-drinking, handsome cupbearers and also, in contrast to his attack on their terrestrial self-manifestation in Ghazna, the dervishes who go against the religious law, the Qalandars. The Qalandars are used to represent the higher flights of ecstasy and truth, as opposed to ordinary religiosity:

“Cupbearer give wine since wine alone shatters abstaining
So that I may lose a while this specious world renouncing......
For a time the religion of Zarathushtra and the custom of the Qalandar
Must be made the Provisions for the spirit which takes the road”....

Sana’i also composed an extended narrative and didactic poem called The Journey of God Servants (Sayr al-‘ibad), which has often been compared to Dante’s divine comedy. In it the narrator acquires a guide an old man who is evidently the active intelligence of the Greek philosophical tradition, that is to say the tenth and the lowest of the immaterial manifestation of reason which, the philosophers believe, emanate from God. Together the poet and the guide journey through the material world and then the heavens, before reaching the universal soul of the neo-Platonists. The highest emanation, the first or

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universal intelligence or reason, is hidden by veils, which cover different classes of dervishes. Eventually the poet finds a superior rank of these and in it a dominating light, which represents his patron, a local judge, whom Sana’i asks for money at the end.²

Another prominent Persian poet was Attar. His long didactic and narrative poems are usually dominated by the figure of the spirit, which is seen as God’s caliph, his deputy on earth. The most famous work of Attar however, The Language of the Birds (Mantiq al-tayr) was, concerns a search for the king, made by a number of birds. The book has an elaborate structure. Eleven species of birds are presented as discussing the journey ahead. They keep reappearing in the debate as symbols of types of men: the nightingale is the passionate lover, the duck the pious ascetic and so on. The eleventh, the sparrow, represents Jacob, blinded with grief for his lost son Joseph. When the thirty birds who survive the journey come for the great contribution with their king, the fabulous bird called the Simurgh, they are unable to distinguish themselves from him. They are also compared to the ten guilty brothers of Joseph. In an epilogue Attar tells a story about the king who condemns his boyfriend to death, the ten slaves who are ordered to execute him are persuaded not to, and tell the king that he is dead. In the end the king and the boy are reunited.

Attar was also an important lyric poet, who in one of his shorter compositions expressed the current tendency in the direction of monism, the doctrine that there is only one entity in the whole of existence. It is important to realize that hardly any Sufi writer actually professed this doctrine itself. But in the 13th century Sufism moved to a position which was perilously close to monism, so that we can legitimately call it ‘monistic’. So Attar writes:

Whatever is other than you is mirage and appearance
Since there neither a little nor a lot has come
Here incarnation is unbelief and so is unitive fusion (ittihad)
Since this is a unity but come in repetition........
How should otherness show itself when everything which exists
Is identical with another one come into appearance?³

² Baldick, Julian, Mystical Islam, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London. Pg.69.
The most highly regarded of all Sufi poets is Rumi. The name means that he lived in Turkey, where his family (originally from Northern Afghanistan) had taken refuge from Mongols. In Rumi's correspondence there are numerous letters of introduction in which he asks influential personages to help his disciples. His role is presumably that of 'God's friend' which he puts forward in his discourses: if men befriend him, they befriend God too. The world has been created for God's friend, and other mortals have the functions of carpenters and weavers, who make a tent in which he contemplates God.

Rumi's lyric poetry is also permeated by his love for leading fellow Sufi's, notably the wild and ecstatic Shams al-din of Tabriz in north-western Iran. Thus Rumi often puts Shams al-din's name at the end of his poems, indicating that one can reach God only by rising to the level of an ideal Sufi master, who is identified with the universal intelligence: reason itself.

At daybreak a moon appeared in the sky
Came down front how sky and gazed at me
As the falcon that snatches a bird when hunting
That moon snatched me and started running over the sky
When I looked into myself I did not see myself
Because in that moon my body through grace became as spirit
When I traveled in spirit I saw nothing but the moon
So that the secret of the pre-eternal theophany was all revealed
The nine spheres of heaven all went down into that moon
The ship of my being was all hidden in that ocean
That ocean surged in a wave and reason rose again
And cast out a cry so it happened and so it became
That ocean foamed and in every fleck of that foam
A picture of someone came and a body of someone was made
Every foam-fleck of body that received a sign from that ocean
At once melted and in that ocean became spirit
Without the ruling power of shams al-din of Tabriz
One cannot see the moon or become the ocean. 4

Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh

Ahmed Charamposh of Ambair was the first cousin of the saint of Maner. He was a mystic, philosopher and poet. His dress consisted of a cap of hide and garments made of sackcloth and he was therefore called as Charamposh. He belonged to the Suharwardi School of mystics.

A contemporary of Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri, Hazrat Sultan Ahmed Charamposh was born in Hamadan. His father was a king; however Charamposh denounced Kingship and adopted the Sufi life. Since he belonged to Kings Family, ‘Sultan’ title was attached to him.

Charamposh in Persian means ‘one who wears leather’. As to the reason for calling him Charamposh there are two diverse arguments. According to the first argument the word Charamposh was attached to his name because of the fact that he always used to hang leather around his neck. This reference if found in a book titled, تحالوبنگل, written by Prof. Mujeebur Rahman, Kolkatta. The second argument views as follows: Hazrat Ahmad Langar Dariya Balkhi in his book “Munasul Qulub” writes that Shaikh Hussain and Makhdum Ahmad both went to Hazrat Suleman Mehsawai, who was a disciple of Maulana Taqi Mehsavi Saharwardi. Both Shaikh Hussain and Makhdoom Ahmad did not have enough cloths to wear. Maulana Taqi gave them 8 Jitals from which Shah Hussain brought ‘Dhakkar’ and became famous as ‘Dhakkarposh’, whereas Makhdoom Ahmad brought leather and became famous as Charamposh. We come across quite a number of couplets written by him wherein he feels proud for his leather clothing. Here is one such example:

شثار احمد ديوانه بست چرم و پلاس
لباس بانشبانیست جز کلاه قبا

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5 Diwakar, Bihar through ages. Pg.453.
Another such example can be found in the couplet given below:

"شیخ احمد چرمبوش و شیخ مبسوت بخدمت شیخ سلیمان رفتند. بیج جام. ن. دانشند،
شیخ سلیمان ایشان را بست چیت دادند که بر دو نفران برای خود ستر کنید. جون بر دو
بزرگان از پیش خدمت شیخ سلیمان برخاستند، بیرون آمدن میان خود اندیش می‌کردند که
بدين مقدر جام گو دو نفر نشدند. پس خدمت شیخ دهکر خردند و خدمت شیخ احمد چرم
ستندند. جون بر دو بزرگان پوشیده پیش خدمت سلیمان رفتند. خدمت شیخ فرمودند،
شمارا بمين کافی بست مبارک."

Besides Charamposh he was also known as Tegh-e-Barhana. He received this name in Tibet, where a number of his opponents are said to have been killed by his miraculous sword.

As for the literary contribution of Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh, there is a ‘Diwan’ and a ‘Malfuz’ titled ‘Zia-ul-Qulub’, which was published by Mahmudul Motabe, Kanpur in 1320 A.H. this Malfuz was compiled by one of his disciple’s name Alaudin Ali Bin Ibrahim Sufi. The Malfuz consists of 58 pages. It contains nine chapters as given below:

6 Diwan-e- Ahmad Jaam, Page 93
7 Munasul Qulub, Page 166
Besides this Malfuz, a Diwan also is written by him. Manuscripts of this Diwan are available at many places including the renowned Khudabaksh Library, Patna. However the author of this manuscript had been mentioned as Ahmad Jaan Zinda Pir. Pages from 1 to 114 contain verses of Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh whereas pages from 115 to 167 contain the verses of Ahmad Jaan Zinda Pir.

Khuda Bakhsh library has a Deewan of Ahmad Jaan Zinda Pir which was published by Naval Kishore Press. Most of the verses in this Deewan belong to Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh; however this press mistook it for Ahmad Jaan. The pen-name used in this Deewan and other internal details suggest that the whole Deewan does not belong to Ahmad Jaan and only a limited portion belongs to him.

Two couplets mentioned earlier in the same chapter while discussing the nomenclature of Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh also belong to the same Deewan. This substantiates the fact that the Deewan does not belong to Ahmad Jaan.

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8 As quoted by Firdausi, Dr. Imamuddin, Bihar Ke Farsi Go Sufi Shaoara Pages 80,81
Charamposh’s writings also include many Ghazals and some Qasidas (eulogies). There is also a Masnavi with the title of Monajat. We also come across some Qitaat

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9 Diwan-e- Ahmad Jaam, Page 24

10 As quoted by Firdausi, Dr. Imamuddin, Bihar Ke Farsi Go Sufi Shaoara Pages 84,85
Charamposh’s writings also include many Ghazals and some Qasidas (eulogies). There is also a Masnavi with the title of Monajat. We also come across some Qitaat containing two couplets. We cannot call these couplets as Rubaihs because they do not follow the rhythm and matter of a Rubai.

Since he was renowned Sufi and lead an esoteric and mystic way of life, his poetry is full of spiritual feelings and thoughts. Hence his poetry gives a deep insight to his own spiritual self. And his religious commitment

Like all Sufis of Bihar, he recognized truth in every faith and emphasized the need of love. To him, ‘Islam’ and ‘Kufr’ all became one through love. He never gave too much importance to the material world. For him materialistic developments were of total non-significance. He was a true lover of God and hence he visualized God in every particle of the universe. The only truth before him was God and the rest was mortal. He was a true believer of Wahdatul Wajood.

His writings give a total reflection of his spiritual experiences and feelings. There are a number of verses which can be the examples of his mystical, spiritual and philosophical thoughts.

**Verse 1:**

اَسْرَارُ غَيْبٍ دُوُشُ نَمُودُ شُدُ مْرَا

**Verse 2:**

آَنْئِيْمُ جَمَالُ رَخُ يَارُ شُدُ مْرَا

**Verse 3:**

آَكْنُوْنَ زِفْضُ أوُ خُرُ يَارُ شُدُ مْرَا

**Verse 4:**

دِرُ بِرْ طَلْسُمُ غَنْجُ نَمُودُ شُدُ مْرَا

**Verse 5:**

حُسْنُ خُدَّاِيْ أَنْكُ نِبْانُ بِرْ دَرُ عَشْقُ

**Verse 6:**

لِيْكَنُ عِيَانُ بَحْلَقُ زِنَارُ شُدُ مْرَا

**Verse 7:**

أَنْوَارُ حُسْنُ دَوُسْتُ بِرْ ذَرُ ذَوِإَرُ اسْتَ
Once Irfan is attained, it wipes out all the distance between an individual and the creator paving way for condition where the individual get a sense of انا الحق. Sometimes extremist and men with orthodox thinking start comparing this situation with Kufr and Ilhaad. We also find spiritual thoughts close to انا الحق in the writings of Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh.

Ibid page 86
Ibid page 87

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11 Irfan
12 Middle
Since he was a believer of ‘Wahdatul-Wajood’ there are many examples of such feelings in his poetry

آن خداوندی که پیدا گردید و نیست، اوست
بر لباس ما بودا جمله اوست

One can know God by knowing himself first. This idea of self-realization has also been touched upon by Hazrat Charmposh. A number of his Ghazals are the best examples to show his views on knowing God through self-realization.

خود را شناسید شما جمله خداانید
در راه طلب طلبه مطلوب شماانید
از راه یقین جانب توفیق گرائید
و این می‌گذر نیست به بیند باختر
ای زمره طلاب شما جمله کجایید
کس نیست بخزن یقین خداوند تعالی
کر دست یقین راه بیابید بارین یا
مقصود و طلب جمله شماانید به بیند
انکا مغلوب شما جمله بیانانید
دین از این صورت احمد بن منانید

To understand the style of his ghazal writings let us take an example of one of his ghazals

ز خاکپای تو کچل بشیر باد
جمالت ابل نظر ابل نظر باد
پر آنکس کو بنا دیز بزلفت
بر آنکس کو بنا دیز بزلفت
لگارا بر زمانی به سپر باد
به زیرپای تو سربان عاشق

13 Diwan-e-Ahmadi, patna University Library, Patna
The mood is consistent despite being a ghazal there is an inherent continuity. Dr. Syed Shah Imam Firdausi, in his book, “Bihar ke Farsi go Sufi Shoara”, goes to an extent of comparing his ghazals with the likes of Hafiz and Rumi.\textsuperscript{14}

He died most probably in 1364. he was a gifted poet and a divinely attracted mystic. Askari\textsuperscript{15} describes him as an inspired Sufi transported on the wings of mystical fervour, which became at times immoderate in his pantheistic utterances, so as to expose himself to the charge of Blasphemy. The Wujudt (Unitarian) were orthodox Muslims alive to the needs of restraint. Hazrat Sultan Ahmad Charamposh wrote, “At times Ahmad felt inclined to disclose the secrets, but Shara became the arguer and preserver; it behoves you, O’Ahmad not to reveal the secrets of truth”. He was a clear headed poet and ascetic, a latitudinarian, even patriotic in his views. He viewed “Islam and Kufr (infidelity) become one and are of the same hue through love to those who are swimmers in the divine ocean. Regard all religions as one and look on them all as one, for divinity is one and unit less. There is no duality in my religion. I regard the whole world as one”\textsuperscript{16}.

He says that like Rumi and Hafiz, the ghazals of Hazrat Charamposh show a great deal of continuity, with its couplets reflective of the true divine self. He has explained the beautiness of the beloved, the dependence of the lover, his purity and surrender in a beautiful manner. There are times when besides the joyous and pleasant mood he expresses his desertion and restlessness. For example

\begin{align*}
\text{بگرد عارض تو سبز تربتاد} & \quad \text{زیاران دو چشم بر زمانی}
\text{دلم مشتاق بر دم بیخبر باد} & \quad \text{ز جام عشق تو محدود و سرمست}
\text{دبانم زان حلاوت پر شکر باد} & \quad \text{بیاد آرم حديث لعل شیرینیت}
\end{align*}

\begin{flushright}
\text{دوستان یک نفس جان مرا یاد آوید مخطط اشک در افشاان مرا یاد آوید}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{14} Firdausi, I.S.S., Bihar ke Farsi go Sufi Shoara, Page No.10.
\textsuperscript{15} Askari, S.H., Islam and Muslims in Medieval Bihar, Khuda Baksh Oriental Library, Pg.101.
\textsuperscript{16} Quoted by Askari in an article, “Hazrat Ahmad Chirmposh, a 14th century Sufi Saint of Bihar, Patna University Journal, VIII, 1954.
The Ghazals of Hazrat Charamposh have purity, simplicity and exemplar style of writing. He makes use of simple and soft words to express his feelings. While writing ghazals he focused on sweetness of terms. A look at the Qasida writings of Hazrat Charamposh, which is rare, we find that there is an immense flow of emotions in them, though this Qasidas are meager. The standard, ethics and quality of Qasida writings is excellent. Given below is a good example of Sabk-e-Khrasari style of writings.

17 As quoted by Firdausi, Dr. Imamuddin, Bihar Ke Farsi Go Sufi Shaoara Pages 90,91
He traveled widely through Central Asia and came to India during the time of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1388 A.D.). The Sultan was impressed by his personality and paid a visit to his Khanqah. Contrary of lofty principles of tolerance and compassion so much emphasized and cherished by the Sufis, he unblushingly exhibited the inhuman passions of a fanatic. He preached violence and persecution saying:

'The dwellings of the Rafizis should be burnt down and that they deserved fire and sword'.

His contribution to Persian consists in his mystic utterances as compiled by his disciples, and in his Diwan (poetical works). Besides his diwan consisting of 1280 poems, of which five are interpolated, reminding us of the thoughts of Rumi, Iraqi, Ahmad Jam, Nizami, Maghrabi, Anwari etc, there is a small book in verse containing his sayings. The booklet comprising nine chapters styled Diyaul Qulaub, and it was composed by ‘Alau’din Ibrahim sufi. The saint of Ambair was a disciple of Alau’din Chirmposh of Puraini (Bhagalpur). Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi and Rafiqul ‘Arifin of Hesamud Din Manikpuri tells us in detail about the interview between Tuqluq emperor and the saint of Ambair.

Abdul-Qâder Bedil

Abul Ma'âni Mirzâ Abdul-Qâder Bedil or Mawlânâ Abul Ma'âni Abdul Qader Bedil also Bidel Dehlavi (1642-1720) was a famous Persian poet and Sufi born in Azimabad (present day Patna, India); his family was from Badakhshan (present day Afghanistan). According to some other sources, he was born in Khwaja Rawash, an area of Kabul province in today's Afghanistan.

He mostly wrote Ghazal and Rubayee (quatrain) in Persian. He is considered as one of the prominent poets of "Indian School of Poetry" in Persian literature, and owns his unique Style in it. Both Mirza Ghalib and Iqbal-e Lahori were influenced by him. His books include "Telesm-e Hairat", "Toor e Ma'refat", "Chahâr Unsur" and "Ruqa'ât".

Possibly as a result of being brought up in a mixed religious environment, Bedil had considerably more tolerant views than his poetic contemporaries. He preferred free thought

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19 Ibid, Page12.
to accepting the established beliefs of his time, siding with the common people and rejecting the clergy who he often saw as corrupt.

Bedil was also attached to the court of Mohhamad Azam, son of Aurangazeb who was the governor of Bengal. He went to Deccan and then returned to Delhi where he has spent the rest of his life. He died in 1133 A.H. and was buried there. He got inspiration and guidance from Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Ijjat. He was a voluminous writer. He left behind a number of his works including a voluminous Kulliyat. Upon his emergence as a poet, Bedil gained recognition throughout the Iranian cultural continent. Since late 18th century his poetry gradually lost its position among Iranians while it has been much welcomed in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. Bedil came back to prominence in Iran in 1980s. Literary critics Mohammad-Reza Shafiei-Kadkani and Shams Langrudi were instrumental in Bedil's re-emergence in Iran. Iran also sponsored two international conferences on Bedil. ("International Seminar on Mirza Bedil", March 2003, Tehran, [http://www.iranhouseindia.com/year03/bedil.htm Link]

Indian school of Persian poetry and especially Bedil's poetry is criticized for its complex and implicit meanings, however, it is much welcomed in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and India than in Iran. The main reason could be his style which is kept a bit "Indian". In Afghanistan, a unique school in poetry studying is dedicated to Bedil's poetry called "Bedil Shināšt" (Bedil studies) and those who have studied his poetry are called "Bedil Shinās" (Bedil expert). His poetry plays a major role in Indo-Persian classical music of central Asia as well. Many Persian (Tajik) classical musicians, i.e. Mohammad Hussain Sarahang, have sung plenty of Bedil's ghazals.

His grave, called Bagh-e-Bedil (Garden of Bedil) is situated at Mathura Road in Delhi. Ustaad Sayed Mohammad Daoud Al'Hossaini, an Afghan Bedil expert, arguably showed those seven months after his funeral, Bedil's body was brought back by friends and relatives from Delhi to Khwaja Rawash in Kabul, where the relatives of Barlas-e Tshaghatai lived. The grave is also called Bagh-e-Bedil (Garden of Bedil). Sallahouddin-e Saljouqi proves this thesis on p.87 of his book "Naqd-e Bedil" that Bedil's grave does not exist in Delhi, but in Khwaja Rawash.
Bedil in his poetry celebrated the enigmatic and silence, let's now look at one such couplet:
The nature of madness is not a static reality,
The apparent may fly ever so high, but it can never be
The Unapparent. Even if the two worlds talked away
Until they turned to blood, the speech that attains
The level of silence would be impossible.\footnote{Quoted in Hasan, Hussaini, Bedil, Siphiri Va Sabk-i-Hindi, Sarosh, Teheran, Pg.86.}

There can be little doubt that Bedil's glorification of the enigmatic, his valorization of silence over speech, and his demand that his meanings be heard to the exclusion of all others; all of these have some Sufistic, or even general, non-Islamic mystical dimension. But here we are concerned with the literary statement that such pronouncements make. Communication and comprehension are not the same; silence has a speech of its own, purer and closer to truth, language often lets down the poet down; poets hardly use the common everyday speech and a poet's speech has to be interpreted. These propositions are an important part of the poetics of Bedil and are some of the chief reasons why this poetry sounds so unfamiliar to an ordinary reader of Persian poetry.

Bedil writes,
The eternal mysteries
following wisdoms lead,
brought forth
the human form
as their living proof
as long as the drop hasn't emerged from the sea
the ocean didn't notice
the depths of its splendour.\footnote{Abdur Qadir Bedil-His living Proof, English translation of Bedil's Poems (Translated by David and Sabrineh Friedler), Polity Press, London, Pg15.}
The "human form" in this poem is not so much a reference to human physical body as to human consciousness. Abu Al-ma'ani Bedil is saying that humanity was created by God to be a living witness to Divinity. This is the "living proof." He is not stating that the human body itself somehow proves the existence of the "eternal mysteries;" rather, it is through the witnessing consciousness of humanity that the Divine knows itself in fullness. Abu Al-Ma'ani Bedil makes this clearer with the metaphor of the second verse: It is only when the "drop" emerges from the "sea" that the "ocean" can envision "the depths of its own splendor."

In other words, Abu Al-ma'ani Bedil is giving us an answer to that fundamental spiritual question: Why does separation exist within the universe? If all is One, if everything fundamentally exists in God, why is there this devastating sense of separation and duality? The answer many mystical traditions give is that Eternal Unity divides mundane perception into the duality of seer and seen as a way to deepen the full knowledge of Being. Humanity, in this sense, has as its most important role that of witnessing Divinity. From this viewpoint, you could say that humanity becomes the eye of God. Human consciousness becomes a reflection of the Divine consciousness, a mirror in which the Eternal Unity can view itself.

But there is an added twist to the common perception of duality. When one fulfills the role of witnessing God beyond the dizzying and sometimes heartbreaking multiplicities of the dualistic universe... the dualism fades away, revealing itself as having been an elaborate illusion. In truth, everything has always been one from start to finish. So we have a circular game of awareness: unity seeks self-knowledge through duality, but self-knowledge returns us to unity. The drop no matter how high it is flung into the air, eventually falls back into the embrace of the ocean and merges once more. Even high above the waves, the drop is water. And once returned to the ocean, it is still water (but no longer imagines it to be a separate drop.)
Shah Nurul Haque Tapan

Shah Nurul Haque Tapan was born in Phulwari Sharif in 1156 AH/ 1743-44 AD. He received his basic education under the guidance of his father Shah Abdul Haque and his grand father Shah Mujibullah. He died on 9th June 1818 at Patna, however he was buried near the grave of Hazrat Lal Mian in Phulwari Shrif.

Shah Tapan compiled all the thoughts and activities of Mujibia Family and wrote a Tazkira entitled Anwar-e-Tariquat. This piece contains the translations of the Sufis of Mujibiya Family. His second book Tablighul Haajaat deals with religious discourses and thoughts on how to lead life. Both these books are very good examples of Persian prose writings of his period. The manuscripts of both these books are available at Kahnkah-e-Imadiya, mangal Talab, Patna City. Besides these two prose pieces, he has two Persian Diwans in his name Anwarut Tariqat Fi Izharul Haquiqat, deals with the thoughts and beliefs of various Sufis. It also describes the life history of some of the Sufi saints. A study of the book reveals that among the predecessors of Shah Mujibullah Qadri, he was the first one to have got hands on Tazkira Nigari.

Besides these there are two more prose pieces of Nurul Haque Tapan. Ijazat Name-e-Maulana Zahurul Haque, which contains an ijazatnama and also describes the minute details of mysticism. The book contains valuable information on mysticism.

Another literary piece, a bilingual magazine (Resalah) named Majmua-e-Auradwa Wazaif was written by him which also covers the topics on mysticism.

As far as poetry goes, he has two diwans in his name. Both of these start with Qasidah in the name of Allah.

Besides Qasidahs, Tapan’s diwan also contain Marsiya consisting of 12 paras. Each para of this marsiya contains 10 couplets. Nurul Haque Tapan has also written a Mathnavi entitled “Mathnavi Dar Shrah-e-haal wa Tamheed-e-Qasa’ed-e Matlaul Anwar. He has written some ghazals as well. The number of his ghazals has been quoted as 4-8 in various sources.
His Qasidas are influenced by the great Persian classical poets as he used to study them quite a lot. He since his childhood was inclined towards going through the poetry of these great poets and hence his writing too has similarity with and is under the influence of classical Persian poetry. In one of his Qasidas, he describes his personality as

県ه تقد آید و خون از دل حاسد بچکانده
جدد خاک در جد کریم به جهان نیست
نامز به نسب نامه که این سلسله آخر
بر یاد پیمبر بر سانید سرم را

This Qasida has clear influences of the poetry writing by Urfi Shirazi. Here is what Urfi writes:

بمیت نخورد نبشتر لا و نعم را

In one of his other Qasidas he draws the picture of Majlis of Shah Mujibullah in following lines:

سیب به چشم و رفتح به محفظی که دران
نبوه جای مان و مانه بهره پندار
زنور مهر بدایت چراغ بر دیوار
پسی صحن قدس صریر خلد برین
کشتی اصل دلان سر نباده بر در دل
ب چار سوی بساطش بسان موج چادار
خوش به بسین چنگ از فغان و ناله تار
تربان سنه نقی به لحاق داو دی
بیهکه آمد ناگه ز شوق زبانانی
که در ز بر تفاو گست مشترق الانوار
چه گویم از روش او که دل بدست نماند
چه گویم از اثر او که بر سر و قرار
گبی پیکی و گبی صد و گبی بزار بزار
As mentioned earlier, there are also examples of Marthiya Nigari in his Diwan. In one of his Marthiyas, he describes the Shahadat of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) as follows:  

Since Nurul Haque Tapan was a Sufi himself, his general poetry writing is influenced by Sufi thoughts and carries religious discourses, teachings on moral values and

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As quoted by Firdausi, Dr. Imamuddin, Bihar Ke Farsi Go Sufi Shaoara Pages 177
other religious preaching. We also find some Rubaiyat written by him carrying romantic
thoughts and philosophy. For example:

ای یار چرا به خون کشیدی مارا
وز تن جنا گلو بریدی مارا
بودیم بخاک تو طلبان بی تو تو
زرین راه کششی و نه دیدی مارا

Hence we find that the poetry writing of Nurul Haque Tapan was influenced by
the writings of great classical Persian poets such as Hafiz, Rumi, Naziri, Bedil, Urfi and
others. His basic thoughts included sufi thoughts and preaching on religious way of life as
and other moral values.

Shah Abul Hasan Fard

He was born on 10th, rajab 1191 A.H. at Phulwari (Patna). He received his
elementary education from his father, Shah Nematullah, Wali. He completed his education
at the age of 20 by Maulana Ahmadi, a reputed scholar. He wanted to finalize his education
by Shah Addul Aziz but he could not. In 1247 A.H. he became the pontiff head of
Khangan-i-Mojibia, Phulwarisharif after the death of his father. He died on 24th
muharram 1255 A.H. by the fatal disease of paralysis and was buried at Phulwarisharif.

Fard was a reputed scholar of Bihar. He wrote a number of Arabic and Persian
booklets. From the very childhood he was prone to poetry. The contributions made by Fard
during the first half of 13th Century AH, is quite significant. His poetry has been published
in two volumes. The first volume contains 659 Ghazals whereas the second volume
contains 926 ghazals.

Fard belonged to a period when almost each learned man and sufi had inclination
towards poetry writing. A number of Mushairas were conducted in those days too. Fard

23 Sher, S.A. Contribution of Bihar to Arabic, Persian and Islamic Learning (ACollection of papers read in a
seminar), Pg. No.44
24 Ibid.
25 Firdausi, Dr. Imamuddin, Bihar Ke Farsi Go Sufi Shaoara Pages 187
was a regular participant in those Mushairas and literary congregations. In such an
environment it was quite obvious that he too would develop an inclination towards poetry
writing and so did happen. His writing too was influenced by the great classical poets like
Hafiz, Sadi, Khusrau, Jami, Anwari, Nizami, Faizi, Urfi, and others.

The first ghazal of fard is on the pattern of Hafiz’s Ghazal starting with

آناکه خاک را منظر کمیا کنند

Fard’s ghazal goes as follows:

آناکه خاک را کو گوشت چشمی می کنند

روزیکه عاصیان ام مرا ندا کنند

گویند آن شبی که تو شبان برا آی فخر

جان را با خاک پای سگان فدا کنند

ای آناکه خاکپای ترا تو پنا کنند

بان وقت عاجز ليست خدارا شفاعتی

رحمی بحال خسته دلان کن که جرمبا

ترسم به پیش حضرت ایزد چپا کنند

آناکه حل عقیده مشکل کنند کاش

آناکه گوشت که چشمی با کنند

پاشند که از عنايت و الطاف فرد را

از دام شرمساری و بجلت ربا کنند

As mentions earlier, there are two diwans belonging to Fard. The first volume
contains the ghazals which he wrote in his initial days of writing. The second volume was
written in the later part of his life. This volume is very much reflective of his maturity and
his grip over ghazal writing is quite apparent. In these gazals he creates a striking balance
between the feelings and emotions. For these ghazals he makes use of very simple words
and terminologies. To get a better practice of poetry writing, fard adopted the pattern of
great Persian poets such as hafiz and others. He tried to carry the same flow, experience,
lyrics and emotion as followed by the great classical poets which made his poetry strong
and effective.
However, by doing so, he lost his individuality in poetry writing and could not maintain a flow and subject which could have been said to be individual in nature. Despite this, there was definitely a sense of sincerity, gravity and grip of thoughts in poetry writing. Maulavi Mohammad Hussain Saba in his Tazkira-e-Roz-e-Roshan describes the poetry writing of Fard in following words:

"سيد شاه محمد ابوالحسن قادری خلف و جانشین سید شاه نعمت الله از مشایخ قصبه پهلواری متصل عظیم آباد بود و در احتیای فضائل صوری و معنوی تجلی و تصویر باطن و ارشاد و تلقین طالبان حق الیقین نظر نداشت..."  

Most of his ghazals contain the thoughts pertaining to Divine Love. For Example:

ترب سرمست ناز من کجایی
نیم بینی نیاز من کجایی
چو ساز شمع خش و نیاشع
ممثب بشاز من کجایی
نمی آنی نیاز من کجایی
دل در رگذاریست ای ترک
خدارا شاه باز من کجایی
فلک در صید گیاه خاک من بیخت
مسیح دل نواز من کجایی
دل از انتظار نست بیجان
اوین سوز و گذار من کجایی
غمت بگذخت چو شمع تم فارغ
تو ای دانای راز من کجایی
محبت سوخت جان فرد خاموش

26 Maulavi Mohammad Hussain Saba, Tazkira-e-Roz-e-Roshan page 615
27 Diwan-e-Fard page 266
Shaikh Husamud-Din Manik Puri

He hailed from Qaza, the district of Purnea. He was Khalifa of Nurud-Din Qutb-i-Alam of Bengal. His preachings have been collected in the Rafique Arafīn. He advocated a strict stoicism and discipline in order to claim the cloak of spiritual Succession (Khīra-i-Khilafat). He observed the vow of fast for seven long years continually. After the completion of this fast, his missionary career began. He was very famous in Bengal and Bihar. The Sufi order established by him is called as Husamiya order. He was active in North Bengal and Bihar. He died at Manikpur (Purnea) in 1477 A.D. among his noted disciples were Raja Hamid Shah and Shah Sidu. He was a wealthy man but he gave away all his fortune for the spread of Islam. Shah Sidu was a poet saint of merit. He died in 526 A.H./1461 A.D.

Shahbazi Bhagalpuri

He was a sufi saint of Shahjahan’s era.(1628-1658) who was very popular and revered by many people. At Purnea, Hazrat Shaikh Mustafa Jamalul Haque was a noted saint in the seventh line of Hazrat Nur Qtb-i-Alam Pindwi. There is a famous place Betu Sharif in Gaya noted for the seventh successor of Makhudm Ashraf Samnani, namely Hazrat Makhdum Darwish. Among the monastries, established during the 11th century Hijri, one of Hazrat Emalud-Din Qalandar is noted at Monghal talab in Patna city. Hazrat Pir Mujibullah took leading part in propagating Islam, in and around, the Khanqah situated at Phulwari Sharif. And its another branch named Sulemaniya is doing valuable work.

Maulana Ahmad Langar Darya Balkhi

Ahmad Langar Darya says he was born on the 27th Ramzan A.H. 826, A.D. 1423. Probably on account of his strength of character and devoutness as a Sufi he was commonly called as ‘Langar-i- Darya’. He belonged to a Sufi family of Bihar and was the grandson of Shaikh Husaini-i-Muiz Balkhi. In his free wanderings, he passed through

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28 Tazkira-i-Auliya Hind, Part 2, Pg.36.
29 Diwakar, Op.Cit, Pg59
30 Md.Tayyab Abdali, Jada—i- Irfan, Khanqah Islampur, Nalanda, 1978, Pg.41.
31 Nabi Hadi, Op Cit. Pg.42.
the entire Arabic peninsula from Syria to South Yemen. Primarily a Suharwardi and Firdausi, he bypassed the convention of his order and was an ardent supporter of Sama; the Sufi music. He was a strong minded, purposeful man, who was gifted with an extraordinary intellect. He died in 1486.

Besides, being a prominent Sufi and Spiritual guide, he was also known for his literary contribution to Persian literature especially in the arena of poetry. Though less in quantity, his works are of great qualitative significance.

The thoughts expressed in his poetry give an insight into the then Sufi tradition of Bihar in particular.

A distinct mark of his writing is the importance given to Khanqahi traditions, which include:

1. The decorum and etiquettes of Convent (Khanqah) life
2. The evolution and development of teacher-disciple relation
3. Arrangement of discourse meetings
4. Interpretation and explanation of essential themes of day-to-day life
5. Etiquettes of Majlis (religious gatherings)
6. Ethical values of life.

Like other Sufis of Bihar, his poetry consists of Ghazals, as well as of some Mathnavis. Purity of thought, divine love and surrendering to God are some of the main themes of his ghazal writings. For example this couplet

\[
\text{بميش رعاق مال مبوش باذا} \quad \text{شراش شووق وصل ناک کوبت}
\]

\[
\text{چو آتش دانمی در جوش باذا} \quad \text{چون مجنون آت بم مبوش باذا}
\]

\[
\text{بماره عقل ای لیلی ز عشقت}
\]
His poetry has an astonishing resemblance to the writing of Maulana Rumi. Though Maulana's work is in Mathnavi form, he discusses divine love in the simplest of expression and poetic forms. Self-realisation is another topic which has been touched upon by him. Dariya in his writings views that self-realisation is an important feature in realizing our weaknesses, which would ultimately help him in getting closer and closer to God, for example he writes:

His philosophy also includes the idea of not giving up, and to always be hopeful of getting “Khair”. He was an optimistic person and wanted all people to believe in God and be hopeful. Though his writings lack literary skills and fervour, we do come across certain examples in his writings which contradicts this view. Though less in quantity, wherever found, is of great significance and reflects the fact that he too, could make use of these literary skills. One such example is use of lyrical writings, coupled with Sanai-e-Takrar. Such writings reflect similarity with 13th century Iranian poets like Qa'ani. Langar Dariya, almost five centuries ahead of Qa'ani wrote some pieces full of Lyrical skills which are worth to be mentioned.

Diwan -e-Ahmad Langar Darya, page 8
In his writings, we do come across certain pieces which give us an idea of geopolitical and cultural conditions of his period in Bihar. In one of his ghazals he gives us an idea of the condition of Biharsharif where he led his life. He also mentions the various aspects of environment, the beauty and calmness of natural resources such as mountains and rivers and other aspects of nature in his ghazals. Here is one such example:

Besides Ghazals, we also come across a few Mathnavis of Maulana Ahmad Langar Dariya Balkhi. Like Rumi, the central theme of Masnavi is 'Ishq' (Love).

The spiritual teachers who guided Ahmad on the mystic path had taught him to hate otentation and to study his own defects. Ahmad says:

"For you it is better to perceive one of your smallest defects

Than to see the invisible in a hundred ways."33

Ahmad is known chiefly for his work Munis-ul-Qulub (a collection of his sayings and utterances). This work is in the same style as the 'maktubat' and 'malfuzat' of other Sufi writers of the period. Incidentally it provides information of some considerable value.

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33 Diwakar, Op.Cit Pg.455.
by giving an account of certain Sufi ideas which were then popular. Interestingly in section 46 of Munis-ul-Qulub titled Panjshukr, he says that a Sufi must thank God on 5 counts

1. He, the almighty and compassionate, brought us from nothingness to existence.
2. He placed us in the animate and not in inanimate category.
3. He created us as human beings and not animals
4. He guided us along the correct path of Islam and
5. He in his profound mercy was pleased to place us among the followers of Muhammad, Peace be on him. Ahmad’s Diwan consists of lyrical poetry of general and mystical types.

Some other writers who contributed to Persian literature during the medieval period are

1. Shaikh Hasan was a man of learning and a known sufi of his time. He is said to have died in 1451. he wrote a commentary on Hazrat-i-Khams in Persian and named it Kashif-ul-Asrar.
2. Shaikh Abdul Faiz Qazin bin Ola bin Alam. He is the author of Madan-ul-Asrar. This work deals with the principles and practices of a particular sect of Sufis.
3. Shah Shuaib, a grandson of Abdul Aziz, was the author of Madan-ul-Asfia.
4. Ibrahim Qiwam Faruqi, who lived in the city of Bihar, was the author of Sharaf-Namah, a Persian dictionary. There is a manuscript of it in British museum.
5. Shaikh Hasan Tahi was born in Bihar, though his family hailed from Multan. He went to Delhi during the time of Sultan Sikander Lodi. He died in 1503 and had left a work entitled Miftahul-Faiz.

Bilingual poets

This short section will focus on some important bilingual poets of Bihar.

Persian met the same fate in Bihar which has been the seat of Persian learning. Bilingualism passed here also through three stages. In the first stage we find Makhdoom Shah Sharfuddin Yehya Maneri, Shah Muzaffar Shams Balkhi and Syed Ammad Chirmposh. They are attached to the early period of Bilingualism.
During the regime of Aurangzeb, when prince Azim-ush-shan was posted here as the governor of Bihar, he being the patron of men of letters, posts flocked here from Delhi and Lucknow. This records the golden period of bilingualism, when bilingual poets of high repute flourished here. Abdul Qadir Bedil, Rasikh Azimabadi and Joshish Azimabadi are the renowned poets of this age.

Besides Azimabad, Phulwarisharif, Manersharif and Bihar Sharif are the three important centres of sainthood and scholarship in Bihar. They have produced a galaxy of poets of name and fame. They were mainly mystic poets. They have expressed through their Sufistic poetry, their doctrines and theological ideologies. Sufi Maneri, Josh Maneri and Mashraqui Maneri hail from Manersharif, Sajad Tapan, Taraqqi, Jauhari, Fard and Nasr belong to Phulwarisharif, and Mozaffar Balkhi Ahmad Chirmposh and Naushe Tauheed Balkhi belong to Biharsarif.

Besides, a number of important bilingual poets flourished in different parts of Bihar. Safir Bilgirami, Shafaque Imadi, Syed Fazle Haque Azad, Shaad Azimabadi, Shauque Nimvi and Reyad Hassan Khan Kheyal are worth mentioning. They have made their valuable contribution to the realm of bilingualism.

Syed Ali Shuttari belonged to Azimabad. He was a good poet of both Urdu and Persian. Simplicity in language and lucidity of expression are the marked features of his poetry. Love, especially mysticism was the dominant theme of his poetic work.

Nawab Imdad, Imam born on the 17th of August 1849 at Karai Par Sarai, a village of Patna district, but most period of his life had been spent at Meora, an important village of Bihar. The reputed jurists of India, Sir Ali Imam and Hasan Imam were his sons.

Asar was acquainted with four languages, Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English. His important contributions are 'Kashiful Haqaiq', 'Miratul-Hokamah', 'Kitab-ul-Asmar', 'Kimia-i-Ziraat'. He had a refined taste of poetry. He composed poems both in Urdu and Persian. He has written a few poems in English too. His Urdu Dewan has been published.
Shah Attaur Rahman Kakvi is a poet of contemporary times. From the very inception of his career he began composing poems. Lyrical poetry and Quatrains is the arena of his special efforts. He can write in Urdu as well as in Persian with an equal ease and grace. He has published Maikhana-i-Taghazzul, a light collection of the poems of Abdul Qadir Bedil. Besides, he has also edited Safina-i-Hindi and Safina-i-Khusgo, two Tadhkirahs of Bhagwon Das Hindi and Brinda Ban Das Khusgo respectively. He has been always contributing to the standard urdu journals of India.

Fard was the Pontiff head of Khanqah-i-Mojibia, Phulwarisharif after the death of his father. He died on 24th Muharram 1255 A.H. by the fatal disease of paralysis and was buried in Phulwarisharif. Fard was a reputed scholar of Bihar who wrote a number of Arabic and Persian booklets. From the very childhood he was prone to poetry and his poems have been published in two volumes.

Muzaffar Shams Balkhi has left his work both in prose and poetry. The number of his letters are about 200. Maulvi Abdur Kahman Khan Bihari translated a few letters in urdu for publications. His poetic collection has been edited by Prof. Syed Hasan and published by the institute under the title of Majmua-i-Ashar.

Syed Shah Mohammad Shoib Nayyer belonged to Azimabad. He was trained both in Urdu and Arabic. He was prone to poetry from the very beginning. He wrote in urdu and Persian as well. Besides, a mathnavi ‘Nawa-i-Din’ is also remembered after him. He wrote a number of books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Tazkira-i-Ulemai Bihar, Hyat-i-Fard, Jalwa-i-Watan and Tazkira-i-Shora-i-Phulwari are his important contributions.

Thus we can conclude that Bihar cannot be lagged behind in her valuable contribution towards bilingualism. It has enriched this sphere of poetry during all different stages of its development. This definitely shows its talented potentialities to this realm of poetry.
Prose

The religious literature and sacred writings of the medieval Indian Sufis which come frequently under three categories, Maktubat, Malfuzat and Tadhkiras are to be studied not as literary works but primarily as a source of knowledge of our heritage of the past-characteristic culture and traditions, monastic and ethical conceptions. Although the writers lacked scientific outlook and little or no methodology. There is a good deal in them apocryphal Hadith or traditions and legendary stories and anecdotes of Apostolic and saintly patronages of the past. Comparatively speaking, the Maktubat provides us with authentic literature produced by eminent Sufis about the mystic creed, theories, principles, doctrines, practices and discipline of Sufism.

The Malfuzat and Tadhkiras give a catalogue or list of Shaikh and Saints with a collection of their lives and legends, deeds, discourses and spiritual teachings concerning religious duties from Sufism standpoint, and also a set of impressions and views on a variety of subjects expounded impromptu to the audience or visiting devotees, disciples and admirers. But the Malfuz genre is not devoid of something of substantial value, and had a place in pious literature, clarifying some outstanding spiritual and mystical issues concerning Kasb-o-Riyadat (acquisition by labour and austerity) like Adhkar (repeating the names of attributes and praising God). It conveys information of diverse type in simple language without any embellishment or any florid artificial style, and it reflects the ways of thoughts of the Sufi Shaikhs of the age to which it belongs. It gives us of the idea of interaction between alien to which it belongs. It gives us an idea of interaction between alien and indigenous culture and communities, each contributing something to the other, without being influenced so much as to result in loss of individual entity or identity.

Similarly biographies and hagiographies are an important component of prose writing in Persian. To discuss the contribution of Sufi prose writers, I will start with the most revered saint of Bihar, Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri.
Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri

Popularly called as Makhdum-ul-Mulk (The Spiritual master of the whole kingdom). These letters, written throughout the year 1346-47, are addressed to his disciple and the Governor of Chausa (in western Bihar) and were compiled by Zain Badr Arabi. Zain Badr Arabi contributed much to the survival of the genres known as Maktubat and Malfuzat which had been cultivated greatly in 14th century, perhaps much more in Bihar than elsewhere in India.

Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri wrote many letters. In addition to The Hundred Letters, which have been fully and brilliantly translated into English for the first time by Father Paul Jackson. Maneri also wrote a series of two hundred letters many dealing with topics similar to those covered in The Hundred Letters, many dealing with topics similar to those covered in The Hundred Letters, and also a small collection of twenty eight letters addressed to his principal disciple and eventual successor, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi. Preceding The Twenty Eight Letters is an introduction in which it is reported that the Sheikh’s correspondence with Muzaffar was confidential and originally consisted of more than two hundred letters sent from Sharfuddin to his beloved disciple over a twenty-five year old period. Muzaffar, however, directed that they were to be buried with him, and only one bundle was “kept apart in a bag”, it is they that now comprise The Twenty Eight Letters.34

The Hundred letters are not personal. Makhdum-ul-Mulk gives us no insight into his own spiritual formation or privated states nor is he pointedly polemical. The names of adversaries and friends alike are most often disclosed only by indirection. In his preface, Arabi states clearly that Qazi Shamssuddin, the governor of Chausa in western Bihar, had frequently petitioned Sharfuddin to send him written instructions for his spiritual advancement because many responsibilities prevented him from attending the audiences regularly held in Biharsharif. Sharfuddin Maneri compiled with the Qazi’s request, writing him a number of letters on various spiritual topics throughout the year A.H. 747 A.D., Zain Badr and others in attendance on the saint copied out these letters and made a collection of

the, which was arranged in the order now presented to the reader. The Hundred Letters rapidly gained fame beyond as well as within the Sufi circles of Bihar. The above mentioned Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq wrote a letter to Sharuddin, inquiring about some future advice on a point raised in The Hundred Letters. Sharuddin’s reply to the request of the reigning Delhi monarch is still extant, providing dramatic confirmation of the early popularity enjoyed by his correspondence with Qazi Shamssuddin. The Hundred Letters in all parts of the Asian subcontinent ruled and influenced by the Indo-Persian elite through the Mughal period (1526-1857). During the last century, two printed Persian editions were brought out, one in Kanpur, the other in Lahore. In 1908 about 5 percent of the Hundred letters was translated into English at Gaya. In 1973, a complete Urdu rendition appeared in Biharsharif, while in 1976, the first forty letters were published in Bengali from Dacca with the remaining sixty due to be published soon from the same place.

In letter Number 1: Belief in the unity of God, Sharuddin views that that belief in the unity of God can be divided into four stages. In the first of these a person proclaims “there is no God but God” but his heart is devoid of faith. Such belief is hypocrisy and will prove profitless in the next life. In the second stage a person both proclaims “there is no God but GOD”, and believes in his heart that this is so. This type of belief can be either conventional as it is true for ordinary people- or supported by rational proofs as is the case of the learned. This is the way belief normally manifests itself.

The third stage is said to be reached when a person’s soul is illuminated in such a way that he is able to perceive every action flowing from a single source and deriving from a single agent. This firm belief is different from the faith of the common people and the faith of the learned, both of which are constricted. This elevates the heart. There is a similar difference between a person who believes that a certain gentleman is in Inn because somebody told him (just as the person of conventional faith inherits what he believes from his father or mother or someone else) and the person who, upon seeing the gentleman’s horse and servants at the door of the Inn, infers that the owner himself must be inside. This is the view and belief of the learned, but it contains a great amount of imitation. From the vantage point of someone who has actually seen the man, however, both beliefs are on the same footing, that is they are equally defective. A believer who has attained the third stage
is like the man who actually sees the gentleman in the Inn. He is a Sufi, who, in this stage, sees creatures and experiences the creator, in the sense that he perceives that they all come from him. This very discrimination however indicates that the state of complete unification has not yet been attained.

Sufi masters are of opinion that, in the fourth stage, such a surfeit of the dazzling divine light become manifest to the pilgrim that every single existing particle that lies within his vision becomes concealed in the very luster of that light emanating from the sun. This occurs not because the particles have ceased to exist but rather because the intensity of the sunlight makes it impossible that anything other than this concealment should result. In the same way, it is not true that a person becomes God- for God is infinitely greater than man- nor has the person really ceased to exist, for ceasing to exist is one thing, and becoming lost to view quite another. Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri further views

Before your unique Being, there is neither old nor new: Everything is nothing, nothing at all! Yet he is what he is. How then can we remain separate from you?

When “I” and the “You” have passed away, God alone will remain!

Thus in this first letter Maneri, emphasizes on divine grace. Paul Jackson questions this belief saying that it makes it difficult to imagine how anyone could classify the saint from Maner as a monist or pantheist in Islamic garb. 35

In his letter Number 9 titled Saintliness, he writes,

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Dear Brother Qazi Sadruddin, May you be honoured by God! You should know that commonplace saintliness is rooted in faith. Every person who embraces the Muslim faith becomes a member of the congregation of God’s saints! Often, however, there is more than

a suspicion that, along with this type of saintliness, there is sin and the commission of forbidden things. There are others who fulfill what is commanded and shun what is prohibited. People doing this should be counted among the saints. The various groups are like squadrons of an army - a special one in front, ordinary troops to the side and a very special one in the centre! These hand-picked troopers not only obey commanded and shun what is prohibited things, they also bring to heel their own desires. Their regard is not on what is due them; instead whatever their friend wants is the very thing they themselves desire! Giving priority to what he wants, they disregard their own desire. They understand what is idolatrous, since they know what the basis of all idolatry is connected with yielding to our own selfish desires. The Quran hints at this when it says: "Have you seen him who makes a God of his own desires?" (Q25:43). Here it is necessary to understand exactly what idolatry is in order to avoid falling into some fault this matter.

Elaborating on the kinds of Idolatry Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri says, one kind of idolatry is called "manifest"; it occurs when a person substitutes something else for God. This form of idolatry is forbidden by the very principles of the faith. May God preserve us from it. The second type is called "covert"; it occurs when a person considers something other than God as necessary and seizures upon that thing as desirable. Some say that, for Sufis, idolatry is to take note of existence of anything but God! Others say that covert idolatry is tantamount to relying upon oneself in all circumstances, desiring with one's own power, and accepting advice and stratagems in any undertaking that comes up. Such covert idolatry is prohibited by the perfection of divine unity, if not by the explicit principles of the Law!

When I fell into the abyss of your unity,
The thought of no other came to me,
Neither of men nor angels, in your unity;
I, a slave, gazed on you and became free!

Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri was quite a visionary, proceeding further he continues hat everyone knows that you need friends if you want to become great! It is fitting that there are groups of the elect, of common people and of those who observe
“command and prohibition”. Beyond these, however, there is a special group worthy of becoming boon companions. And beyond these is the class that is fit for divine secrets. And beyond these comes the group of those on terms of intimate friendship with God. Here, if either party wants anything that belongs to the other, his inclination will be simply to give it, for the mutual usage of goods is such that everything is considered common. In this way, any trace of mistrust departs from them. The venerable Sufis have said “there are commands for common people and matters of license for the elect, since the Prophet himself has condoned the latter”. For example, he said to an Arab who had broken his fast in the month of Ramzan: “Eat and also feed your wife and children! It is lawful for you, but not for anyone else”. This was clearly an abrogation. For ordinary people, he paid attention to the actual extent to which things are commanded or prohibited. For ordinary people, he paid attention to the actual extent to which things are commanded or prohibited. But for foreigners he amended the law, giving them permission to keep some of their customs, even in the face of claims of law and thus showing, in a special way, his friendship towards them. “I am one of that elect who can do as he sees fit with respect to their possessions.”

Elaborating on the qualities of saints he further explains that a saint should be protected from self-interest; therefore pride does not enter him. and also the absence of desire is the precondition of saints. He says:

As long as anything remains with you, you are in your own essence;  
The Kaaba, due to your worship, becomes a tavern!  
If anything emanates from your essence, you are still far off:  
You are like a temple facing the Kaaba!

Through this letter Maneri wants to focus on the qualities to be required by any person to become a saint. By this letter he is also targeting human ego and self-centered tendencies. For Maneri we can reach God only by the acts of humility and honesty. Without controlling our human urges we can never reach to any place which is nearer to God.

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Letter 22: The Origin of Sufism

In letter number 22, Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri traces the origin of Sufism.

He writes
In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate!

Brother Shamssuddin, may God bless you! The foundation of Sufism is quite ancient, having been practiced by the Prophets and the righteous. The fact of the matter is that the predominance of evil habits in our times makes the Sufis themselves appear evil in the eyes of people. Those associated with this tradition are divided into three groups: the Sufis, the Seekers and the Dissemblers. A Sufi is a person who is completely lost to himself, exists only in God, is freed from the hold of his lower self, and is conjoined to the truth of all truths. The seeker is one who engages in the struggle with self, undergoes austerities and disciplines himself by means of various practices. The dissembler is one who for the sake of position and success, makes himself out to be one of the above, but is devoid of any of their qualities. He is also ignorant of them! Despite all this, there is some hope that he might become one of them and, in the shadow of their riches, pass beyond both worlds, becoming a combatant in the army of army of God and not merely a camp follower.

For Maneri, Adam was the first Sufi. God Almighty drew him forth from clay and placed him in the stage of choice and purity. He prepared a royal edict of vicegerency for retreat, thus becoming the inspiration for novices to undertake this practice. Quoting from Quran (Q3:32), that is, he thoroughly purified him and made him a Sufi. He greatly esteemed the patched garment that he had made from the leaves begged from the trees. At the end of his life, he clothed the Prophet Shish with it and conferred Viceregency upon him. This became the way of Muhammad and the means for conveying the wealth of Sufism to descendants of the Prophets.

Further Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri views that Sufis should be travelers who belong to some group in this world, which they might be able to assemble
for companionship and relate what has occurred to them. Thus the Kaaba made its appearance. It was the very first religious sanctuary. Before that time, there had been no such thing. It appeared in the time, there had been no such thing. It appeared in the time of Adam. All that the Prophet required of the world was a blanket. The prophet Moses himself always wore the blanket that the Prophet Shuiab had conferred on him the first day that he entered his (Shuiab’s) service. And this is a very important condition in the way, that there should be a spiritual; guide who clothes the novice with the Sufi garb. Jesus always used to wear a woolen garment. Similarly, both Moses and Jesus themselves built Jerusalem as place of spiritual trust. Then, in every country and region Sufis built meeting places for themselves and fixed abodes for periods of solitude where they could practice inner converse with God. Fellow travelers could also come there and recount the traditions of the exalted, divine secrets. When the time for the foremost of the Prophets and the King of the saints, the blessed Muhammad- may the peace of God be upon him and his family- arrived, he himself donned such a blanket. “It was the practice of your father Abraham” (Q22:78). He also yearned for the religious sanctuary of the Kaaba. The pride of the world set aside a special corner in his own mosque and from his companions he selected a group of about seventy people who were travelers on the path. They used to converse together, while the Arab chiefs and ordinary people were not allowed to enter that space. When the pride of the world bestowed great honour and dignity upon any of the companions, he would give him his own cloak or shirt. That person would then become a Sufi.

Thus the beginning of becoming a Sufi began with Adam and its completion was found in Muhammad, the apostle of God. It remains in the midst of believers and their community. It requires strength of heart, above all else. One should not pay too much attention to one’s unworthiness, for this particular work is dependent on the divine favour and grace, not on the actions of any person! It means that much is depended upon God’s will too. He knows how to use his pious disciples for the service of humanity.

Letter Number 97: Death

In letter number 97 Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri talks extensively about the reality and essence of death. He writes ‘Dear Brother Shamshuddin,
men are of three kinds. The first are covetous and greedy, the second have begun to turn to God, and the third have attained the heights of mystical knowledge. Pleasure-prone people simply do not think about death and even if they do, it is in order to pine for this world and to become further engrossed in its good things. The remembrance of death makes such a person move further away from God. A person who has begun to turn towards God thinks about death as a means of producing fear and dread in his heart and thus be enabled to turn completely towards him. It often happens that he has a great aversion to death out of fear that it might come before he has turned fully towards God and prepared the provisions necessary for it. Such a person would be excused for such an aversion, and would not come under this threat: “Anyone who has despised the vision of God Almighty does not rest in his favour”. This is because he does not abhor death and the divine visage, but rather is afraid of losing that very sight on account of some fault of his. It is like a person who delays seeing his beloved and remains engrossed in making preparations to meet her at the time and place that will be most to his liking. He does not bother to make a count of the labour involved in such preparation. The sigh of his friendship is that he is always making some effort on her behalf, and is not preoccupied with anybody else.

The advanced Sufi is forever recalling death, for it is the time appointed for seeing the countenance of the friend, and no lover can ever forget the time fixed for meeting his beloved. he would love to be swallowed up by death so that, being freed from this dwelling place of sinners, he might rise to the abode near his friend, just as Huzaifa relates: “O God, you know that I prefer poverty to riches, sickness to health, and death to life. Make death easy for me, that I might arrive at my reward- You”! Now it will be understood why the novice is excused for shunning death and for desiring it, while, on the other hand, the advanced Sufi is also excused- for loving death and yearning after it! It is said however, that there is an even higher stage than both of these, when a person makes use of nothing at all. But does his work purely for the sake of God. For himself, he chooses neither death nor life. This is a stage of resignation and acceptance, and it is the final point of those who have reached the summit.

This letter emphasizes the inevitability of death in a beautiful manner. Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri says:
O brother, the end of one and all is by this way alone, whether you are a beggar or a king, for here it is all the same with respect to the possessions of kings and the poverty of beggars, as has been said:

If your possessions were to stretch from earth to the moon,
Finally, they would all lead to this door!
When your law suddenly turns rigid,
Then all the world’s wealth is no more than a chin!
If you are a faridun or an Afrasiyab,
In this ocean you are but a drop!

Bringing out equality in terms of death to all humans irrespective of their religion, caste and creed he sums up by saying

All the creatures of this world are submerged in an ocean of blood:
Who knows what their condition is like beneath the dust?

Maktubat-i-Do Sadi

A second collection of 152 letters on similar Sufistic points as the first compiled by the same Zain Badr-i-Arabi, twenty two tears after, in 1328 and addressed to a greater number of people than the first has been sometimes named as Maktubat-i-Do Sadi. The manuscript copy of Khudabaksh Library, Patna, contains the additional 40 letters and the compilers name given in it is ‘Mohammad Bin Isa-al-Balkhi’. There is another copy of this work in the Balkhi Khanqah of Fatuba (Patna district). There is a third collection of letters on Sufi topics, called ‘Maktubat-i-Seh Sadi’ and published in Lahore, but the number of letters in it are less than three hundred, and the first two hundred are the same as in the second collection. The additional letters include one addressed to Sultan Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, sent in reply to one of his own. The fourth collection of twenty eight letters, called Maktubat-i-Bist-o-Hasht has been referred to above. The cataloger of India office library wrongly ascribes two other sets of letters, one to the great saint, and the other to his
father which he names 'Maktubat-i-Hazrat Yahya Maneri'. The names of the addresses given appear to have had little or no connection with the great saint of Bihar.

As for the Malfuzat, Lataif-i-Mani is an abridged version of Madan-ul-Mani. A supplement to the latter Khan-i-Pur-N'mat, compiled by Zain Badr-i-Arabi, contains the discourses delivered between 15 Shaban, 749=November, 9, 1348, and the end of Shawwal, 751 December 1350. Besides mystic matters, it contains some valuable information of cultural interest. Ganj-i-La-Yafna and Tuhfa-i-Ghaini containing the discourses of the years 760=1358 and 770=1368 were compiled by Zain-Badr-i-Arabi. The undated Mukh-ul-Ma’ni which gives us the discourses of 51 majlis was compiled by Syed Shihabuddin Halifi. He was the compiler of Maghzul-Ma’ni also which has been divided into 33 (fasals). The contents of both were checked and verified by the saint at the request of the compiler.

Bahrul-Ma’ni also called Kanz-ul-Ma’ni, which relates to the period between Shaban, 757=July 1356, and Safar, 760=1360-61 were compiled by the same Zain Badr-i-Arabi while Munis-ul-Muridin covering the discourses of 21 majlis from Muharram to Shaban, 775 (June 1372 to January, 1373), was compiled by Salah Makhlis Daud Khani, a devoted disciple of the saint. Among other things these Malfuzat contain some new points of historical interest. Other less known Malfuzat includes Asbab-ul-Najat and Mirat-ul-Muhaqqiqin. The widely used Rahat-ul-Qulub which was the last compilation of Zain is a short tract containing about twenty pages. It gives some account of what the great Saint said and did in his last ten Majlis, shortly before his death, on 6 Shawal 782=January 4, 1381.

The books from the pen of Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri are easily available include such tracts as Irshad-ul-talibin (also called Burhan-ulArifin), Irshad-us-Salikin, Risala-i-Makki, which deal with the seeker of God, unityism and spiritual practices of Dhikr and Muraqaba respectively and three sets of ‘Aurad’, big middling and small, (prayer exercises). Aqaid-i-Sharafi is also a book of prayer and it also deals with mystic beliefs, and Fawaid-ul Muridin contains religious and moral instructions for the followers. The very title of 'Risala-i-Wujudia' is suggestive of its contents. Fawaid-
i-Rukni and Ajwaba-i-Zahidi, though small are important treaties, the first being written in response to a request for mystic instructions of a pilgrim to Mecca, Haji Rukmuddin Zair-ul-Harammain, and the other containing replies in simple and easily intelligible language to a set of 40 or more questions of Sufistic import raised by different devotees.

Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri’s Isharat-i-Sharafia contains 36 short letters of which each letter is concerned with the Sufi idea of ‘Wahdat-ul-Wujud’ or unity of being. Six of the letters were addressed to Mirdad, who has probably given his name to a mohalla which still exists in Biharsharif and four are in the names of “Shabaz alias Gorakh”

Maneri’s numerous works especially his Maktubat and Shar-i-Abad-ul Muridin, has written in great details and in a easy language with convincing arguments.

The standard work on Sufism of Bihar is said to be of a voluminous ‘Sharah’ or commentary, spread over 453 folios, with 19 lines to a page, on a well known Arabic treatise, Adab-ulMuridin, by Shaikh Ziauddin Abun Najib Abdul Azhir Suharwardi, the uncle of the celebrated Shihabuddin Suharwardi, who died in 563=1167 and 532=1234-35 respectively. The commentary was begun at the request of Qazi Ashraf in Rabi, I, 765=December, 1363, and finished in Dhilhijja 766=August, 1364. Some marginal notes (Hashia) on this commentary, largely used in Bihar are from the pen of the 18th century scholar and logician, Qazi Ghulam Yahya of Barh.

Muzzafar Shams Balkhi, who had given up his professional job In Firoz Shah Tughlaq’s Arabic college, situated in Khuski-i-Lal, at Delhi, to become the disciple of Sharfuddin Of Bihar, shunned all worldly things, gave away in charity all that came into his hands, including his valued books, used knots instead of needle and tread to mend his torn clothes, tied his ‘Izar’ or trousers with ‘munj’ string, and divorced his wives and himself married them with others whenever he found that his growing affection for them was likely to affect his love and devotion to God and yet he was on terms of correspondence not only with the Shaikhs and Ulemas and common people but also officials, nobles and a king of Bengal, as we find from his Voluminous Maktubat containing 181 letters. His Sharh-i-
Mashriq-ul-Anwar, a standard work on Tradition, Sharh-i-Aqida-i-Hafizia, and a small 
Diwan of mystic poems, have been preserved for posterity.

Another learned Sufi who contributed to Persian prose was Husain Muiz whose 
Malfuz titled Ganj-i-La Yakhfa contains the discourses of 57 Majlis, his Maktubat 
consisting of 154 letters on mystic subjects including one addressed to Ibrahim Shaqi of 
Jaunpur, a treatise in Arabic named Hazarat-i-Khams (5 different planes of existence) on 
the problem of divine unity, and his collection of mystic poems, including a Mathnavi 
entitled Chahar Darwesh, are more generally known, but the Fatuha Khanqah of the 
Balkhis has some other works also such as Risala-i-Muhammadia, Aurad-i-Dah, Fasli, 
Risala-i-Tauhid, and Risala-i-Akhasy-ul-Khas. His mosque and tomb are located in 
Paharpur in Biharsharif where he died in 844=1440.

Husain’s son Shaikh Hasan Balkhi (dated,1451 A.D.) wrote small tracts such as 
Risala-i-Ma’ni-dhat-Wajh-o-Nafs, Risala-i-Hast, and was the compiler of Lataef-ul-Ma’ni, 
but his most well known work is Kashif-ul-Asrar, a commentary in Persian of his father’s 
Arabic Risala. Hasan’s son and successor, Ahmad langar Dariya was also a eminent saint, a 
good scholar and a poet with a small Diwan to his credit. He is more well known because 
of his valuable Mulfuz, Munis-ul-Qulub which contains a vast information about the saints 
of Firdausia order. This Mulfuz supplements the earliest works such as Manaqib-ul- Asfia, 
Mulfuz of Maulana Amun, and Risalai-Bahram Bihari and it amplifies the references in 
them and gives additional information of historical and cultural value.

Zain Badr Arabi

He was a dear disciple of Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri. He 
contributed much to the survival of the genres known as Maktubat and Malfuzat which had 
been cultivated greatly in the fourteenth century, perhaps much more in Bihar than 
anywhere else. However Zain was a learned scholar of the medieval period. He often 
described himself as ‘Dast Girafta’ (protégé, helper, assistant) of the Makhdum. He also 
called himself as Bicharah-i-miskin (poor helpless one) and Gada-i-Zhandah posh 
(beggarly, clothed in rags).
Zain Badr Arabi was a gifted person and a man of learning and also a poet as is evident from the few verses, couplets and Qita’hs which we find under the poetical pen name of Zain in the prefatory portions or colophons of the Malfuzat like Tuhfa-i-Ghaibi, Bahr-ul-Maan’l, Ganj-i-La-Yafna and Khwan-ipur Nimat.

The poetical compilations of Zain are much too scarce to give him the epithet of a major or a perfect poet. The few verses we have from him do not appear to be of higher order as those in the Diwans, big or small of the first four Balkhi saintly disciples, scholars and poets of Bihar. The full list of the works, rich and unique in mystic literature, produced by the Makhdum and compiled by Zain has not come down to us. The themes and thought contents of the letters which flowed from the pen of the Makhdum with the names of the addresses and with characteristic headings could be easily put together and copied out, of course after getting the permission, so as to be offered to a wider circle of people, present and future.

The first and by far the most detailed Malfuz, compiled by Zain was Mad’in-ul-Maani (mines of meanings) of which the printed text consists of 500 pages, is divided into 65 chapters, called Babs covers the period of the forties upto Shaban, 746 A.H. the copy is marred by certain interpolations. The letters in the collection known as Maktubat-i-Sadi start from 747 A.H. Khwan-i-Pur Ni’mat is divided into 47 Majlises, is the second and supplementary volume. It is of small size and contains the discourses of the Makhdum from 15 Shaban 749 to the end of Shawwal of 751. he has dealt with at greater strength about the format and technique adopted in compiling his malfuzats.

Ganj-i-La Yafna (imperishable treasure) contains the discourses from Rabi 1st Sunday 2 to Safar 1 Wednesday 7, 751 A.H. Mulufuz-us-Safar, probably the 7th compiled by Zain was the collection of Safar and succeeding months upto Jamadi 2 of 762 A.H.

Zain Badr Arabi immensely contributed on setting down on paper the teaching discourses of his spiritual master on a variety of subjects which were not confined to law (Shariat) and the path (Sufi way of Tariqat) but what embraced many mundane matters, considered from Sufis view point. Sometimes the clarity of expression found in the
Makhdum’s own letters (example, Makhtubat-i-Sadi) is lacking in the reports on various questions and answers related in Mulfuzat such as Khwan-i-Pur Ni’mat.

Prof. S.H. Qasmi of Delhi university writes about literary contribution of Sufis in Bihar in an article titled “A short survey of Persian literature in Bihar” in Sayed Athar Sher compiled book on contribution of Bihar to Arabic, Persian and Islamic Learning. According to him, Fariyad was a good poet of Persian who apart from composing Ghazals and Qasidas was more interested in Mathnavi from of Persian poetry. The contemporary and later biographers have recognized the art of versification of Faryad. He was considered to be the most learned and most influential member of the Muslim community.

Saadi occupies a place unsurpassed so far in the history of Persian literature. His ghazals, Bustan and Gulistan have always invited the attention of poets and scholars to imitate them. Very few have dared to imitate Saadi’s style in Gulistan and Bustan. Throughout the 19th century none other than Faryad could think of doing so. His Dabistan-i-Akhlaq on the model of Bustan of Saadi is a successful attempt in this direction.

Apart from these two poets there are a number of other poets who were either born in Bihar or settled down here for some or another reason.

Khwaja Talib Ali Khan pen-named Sultan and better known as Khwaja Sultan Jan, son of Khwaja Husain Ali Khan was among the nobles of Azimabad. He was well conversant with music and composed poetry in Persian and Urdu. He passed away in 1272 A.H.

Like many Indian men of letters settled down in Bihar during this century and served the cause of Persian literature, Iranians also found it congenial to stay at Bihar during this century and served the cause of Persian literature. Such an Iranian is Ahmad.
Bin Muhammad Ali Bin Muhammad Baqar Isfahani better known as Bahbahani. Born at Kirmanshah in 1777 he came to India in 1787-88, and traveled widely throughout India. Like his ancestors as Mir Baqar Majlisi, he was a reputed scholar of Shia theology. He wrote a number of treatises on the subject. After visiting Hyderabad, Calcutta, Azimabad, Faizabad, Lucknow, Murshidabad abd Jahangirnagar (Dhaka), he finally settled down at Azimabad-i-Jahan Numa. Most of them are of religious nature which he wrote at different places in India.

Mira’t-ul-Ahwal-i-Jahan Numa is the most important and useful work of Bahbahani. In this work he gives an account of his forefathers and his own life and travels. It is divided into five chapters called as matlabs in the work. The chapters dealing with the author's impression of India, history of European nations, especially the British and their conquest of India, Indian customs, way of life and the contemporary political history are interesting and important for a historian and sociologist alike. He writes for Basant, a festival of spring:

قبل آن نورور سلطانیٴ، نیک ماه می شود و بزرگان مجلس خودرا برنگ زرد آرایند و عامّ خلاائق تمام اخوت خودرا زرد کند و بیک دیگر تبریت و مبارکباد گویند. این نیز درمیان مسلمانان اندک رواجی گرفته است.

Holi, ramlila, and Dushera festivals were described. An account of the Wahabis adds to the importance of the work.

Mohammad Reza pen-named Najm, son of Abdul Qasim Tabataba entitled like his father as Najm-ud-Daulah Iftekharaul Mulk Hussain Jung is another prolific writer of this age. His forefathers came to India from Isfahan during the reign of Bahadurshah and followed the fortunes of Safdar Jung and his sucesors, the Nawab of Awadh. From the author's own account in his Naghma-i-Andalib, it is derived that he was born in Patna where his father served as Naibs of Bihar. He was a pupil of Nizamuddin Mamnum and left Diwans in Persian and Urdu which, unfortunately are not traced now. However a number of his prose works are available in different libraries. Elliot and Rice inform us that Reza
composed a voluminous work entitled Bahr-i-Zakhkhar comprising the following volumes on different subjects:

Whom he wrote Tarikh-i-Muzaffari. Apart from this history, he compiled a work on the history of the prophets. Neither the title nor the details of the work could be known from another source. Bahr-i-Mawwaj is another work of Muhammad Ali. It is a comprehensive and useful work on the general history of India.

Farzand Ali of Munger is another historian of the period from Bihar. He wrote Mulakhkhasut Tawarikh, a general history of India, at the instance of some of his friends. It is actually an abridgement of the Siyar-ul-Mataakhkherin of Ghulam Ali Khan. The language of this abridgement is easy and the insertion of verses in the course of narration of the events indicates not only the authors interest in his attempt but also his convergence to poetry. Farzand Ali’s remarks about this his present venture that he had studied Siyar Muta’akhkherin, the unrivalled composition of Ghulam Ali Khan since the work has many merits and advantages, rarely found in any other work in history, it has ever been dear to him. But its extreme prolixity not only demands a long time for its perusal, but exhausts the patience of readers.

Alimirza, son of Mirza Abu Talib belonged to Delhi but he migrated to Azimabad. He composed poetry under the pen name Maftun as this meqta shows

Zubdatul Akhbar Fi Sawanehul Asfar, a rare and valuable account of a journey of the author to Mecca, contains a number of Muftuns, Qasidas and stray verses. This travelogue is dedicated to Wazir Aminuddin Nasir Jung. This is a day to account of the said journey for which Mirza Abu Talib departed from Azimabad on 8 th Rabiuth Thani (1825-6 A.D.). the description of Calcutta, Jeddah, Mecca, Medina and the tombs and other
places of sanctity is indeed important and interesting. It is divided. It is divided into three
muhits, each subdivided into several Anhars. The second Muheit of this work is quite
interesting for a student of Iranian history, culture and archaeology. While returning from
his pilgrimage, the author visited some Iranian cities like Meshhad, Shiraz, and gave an
account of the men of letters of Iran whom the author chanced to meet in the course of his
tavel there. This travelogue of Abu Talib occupies a unique place. Most probably it is the
only account of journey to take by an Indian scholar throwing a flood of light on the then
Iranian life. For the language and the style of its prose, some lines are being quoted here
from the description of Teheran in this travelogue.

Tazkirah writing is an important aspect of Persian literature. During the period in
review, at least three tazkiras of Persian poets, prose writers and Indian saints were written
by scholars from Bihar.

Agha Mohammad Quli Khan Ashiqi of Patna has left Nishtari-Ishq for the posterity
which is an extensive biography of one thousand four hundred and seventy Persian poets
from Rudaki to the author’s time. It is arranged in alphabetical order. Ashiqi spent eight
years in collecting material from numerous historical and political works. After this spade
work, he conceded his Tazkira in 1809 and completed it on Tuesday, the 13th Rajab, 1817-
18. It is important to note that Nishtar-i-Ishq is a useful source for having a detailed account
of some of the contemporary poets. Still it is strange that the author’s native place, like
Ulfati, Ibrati etc have not been mentioned.
Syed Mir Wazir Ibrati is the other Tazkira writer of this period. He compiled two Tazkiras mainly Meraj-ul-Khayal and Riyaz-ul-Afkar. Ibrati was a popular literary figure of his time. Though born at Badhdistrict in Patna, he lived at Patna. He passed his life serving different personalities in different capacities.

Ibrati was a popular literary figure of his time. Though born at Badh district in Patna, he lived in Patna. He passed his life serving different personalities in different capacities. He left a number of works. The available works of him can be classified under the topics like grammar, religion and ethics, Tazkira, stories, letters, and commentaries. Apart from them he is said to have composed two works on history. One of them was an account of the visit of Nepal’s ruler to Patna. Along with a description of the city. Prof. Hasan Askari exhibited it on the occasion of the History conference held at Patna. Its is unfortunately not traced now. The second work of Ibrati on history is Jam-i-Jahan Numa written in 1266|1850 A.D. which is a history of India from the arrival of Europeans in India upto their occupation of the country.

Merajul-khayal is a biography of two hundred and five poets. Mostly those who flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries of the Christian era in India. It is divided into 28 sections and arranged alphabetically. Ibrati completed it in 1841 A.D. but additions were made to upto 1848.

Riyaz-ul-afkar is another Tazkira of Ibrati. It is a biography of one hundred and one Persian prose writers who belonged particularly to seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of Christian era. In the light of the present information, it is, most probably, the only work of its kind composed during this century in India. It was completed in 1851-52 A.D for Ghalib he writes in the Tazkira, that only this much could be obtained of him that he has a style of his own in poetry and prose.

Apart from these Tazkiras of poets and prose writers Mohd. Abdul Hayaz Qadri Jaffery Phulwarvi, compiled a biography of forty five saints of Bihar, mostly belonging to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It was completed in 1833 in one easy language and simple style. The author quotes Abu Turab who narrated to him the account of some of
the Shaiks. A number of Indian tales have been rendered into Persian in India. Among them is Nal daman which is a Persian version of an Indian story made by Faizi. It is important to note that no rendering of the story is, however, traced after Faizi up to the nineteenth century. The credit of its second rendering into Persian prose goes to Ibrati of Azimabad who completed it in 1831-2 A.D. under the title of I'jazul Mohobbat. The importance of Ibrati’s ‘I’jazul Mohabbat lies in the fact that it is the only extended reproduction of the story in Persian.

Hazrat Maulana Hussain Nausha Tauheed Balkhi, popularly known as Nausha Tauheed was born in Zafrabad, Jaunpur in 745 AH. He was brought up under the guidance of Hazrat Makhdum-e-Jahan Sharfuddin Ahmad Yahya Meneri (RA). According to Muannisul Qulub, he was a blue eyed disciple of Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri. Similarly, Maulana Hussain Nausha was also very much attached to his spiritual guide. Nausha died in 844 AH and was buried in Biharsharif.

The author of ‘Bihar through Ages’ in his note on the life and works of Hazrat Nausha gives the following account of the literary contributions made by Hazrat Hussain Nausha:

Hussain has left eight works including letters and poems. Hussain composed a treatise in Arabic on the mystical topic Wahdatut Wajood (the unity of existence). And named it ‘Hazrat Khams’. This treatise was translated into Persian by his son under the title Kashiful Asrar and was lithographed at Patna in 1986.”

The aforementioned description shows that he was acquainted with prose and poetry writing. As far as his writing goes he also used very simple words and terminologies to express his feelings. His main motive was to make a larger audience aware of the principles of Shariat and Tariqat. The author of “Bihar Ke Farasi Suf Go Shoara” in his description on Hazrat Nausha says that Nausha had 132 Maktubat to his credit; however none of them is available in published form. Besides these Maktubat, a resalah (treatise) was also written by him in Arabic which was titled Hazrat-e Khams. The treatise was later

37 Syed Qayamuddin Nizami Qadri, Tazkira-e-Sufiya-e-Bihar page 100
translated by his son under the title Kashiful Asrar. The author of Tazkira e Sufia-e- Bihar gives a list of eleven compilations associated with his name which is as follows:

1. Hazrat e Khams
2. Resalah-e- Qaza-e- Qadar
3. Resala e tauheed e Khas
4. Resala e tauheed e Akhsul Khwas
5. Resala e Zikra e wajud e Awwal headyat aan wa bayan e marefat e Alam wa niyabat e Aan
6. Resala dar bayan Hasht cheez Zat wa jehat wa nafs wa sifat wa Asma wa af'al wa surat e Jaamia wa surate esurate Mutafarriqa bar sabeel e Tauzeeh wa tashreeh bar Istelah e muwahhedan
7. Auraddiddahe Fasli
8. Ganj e Yakhfi
9. Maktubat
10. Ijazat Nama Banam Maulana Hasan Balkhi
11. Diwan e Farasi

Hazrat Makhdooom Shah Shoaib Firdausi: was a cousin of Hazrat Shaikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri (RA) and was born at Kajawan in 688 AH. He spent most of his time in the sheikhpura area of Munger in Bihar. It is said that Islam spread in this area by the efforts of Hazrat Makhdooom Shah Shoaib Firdausi only. He and his disciples (read successors) founded a huge Madarsa in Sheikhpura which became a great seat of learning and preaching Islam. Hazrat Makhdooom Shah Shoaib Firdausi wrote a book entitled ‘Munaqebat ul Asfia’. The book contains the life history and Manaqbaat of various Sufis belonging to the Firdausi Order. It gives a description of the life history starting from Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) and includes the history of all Firdausi saints till the time of Muzaffar Shams Balkhi (RA). ‘Munaqebat Asfia’ is considered to be the oldest source of the history of Firdausi Order.
Syed Shah Farzand Ali Firdausi Maneri (RA)

He was born in 1253 AH/ 1838 AD in Maner Sharif. He received his basic education in Maner Sharif. He had great inclination towards Sufi learning and had read all the Maktubat and Malfuzat of Hazrat Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri (RA). Apart from his interest in Sufi learning he was also very well versed with calligraphy. He was a bilingual writer contributing both in Urdu and Persian languages. His Persian works include Usool e Takbeer and Sirre Dostan which are published whereas Musstalahat ul Mutasawwafeen and KhamKhane have not yet been published.

Through this chapter we can conclude that the Mystic Sufi saints of Bihar had written in great details the methods and practices of Sufism along with spreading the message of Humanity, Universal Brotherhood and Peace to the people.