INTRODUCTION
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Islam is not just a religion, it is also a civilization. In the areas of its greatest concentration in Asia and Africa it produced a shared cultural heritage, which is often far more important than regional or ethnic elements. It has given rise to societies having distinct political institutions and military and legal traditions peculiar to the Muslim world. Sufism is a main mystical tradition of Islam. However, mystical traditions are found in most of the religions of the world. Its adherents in India are known as Bhaktas, Sadakas, Faqirs and derwishes, who all form a true mystic brotherhood.

The English word Sufism is used to designate a set of practices, an ideal, and one of the Islamic religious sciences. It is employed to translate the term Tasawwuf, which means literally 'wearing wool' (wool, Suf, being the dress of eastern Christian and Muslim world renouncers). But also and far more commonly, means 'belonging to the faith and doctrine of the people called the Sufis' or trying to become a 'Sufi'. As for the name Sufi itself, its derivation from the word for wool does not exclude the possibility of the reference to Greek term Sophos, meaning wise.

Medieval India, including Bihar was dominated by theistic religions 'Bhakti in Hinduism and Sufism in Islam'. They were both overwhelmed by a sense of love of God and the quest of soul for the one ultimate reality. Sufism does not, as the suffix 'ism' would suggest, imply a body of uniform religious doctrines, dogmatic and systematized, nor is it an organized sect of Islam. Mystical principles prevailed as much among the Shia'hs as among the Sunnis. This research study envisages the role and contribution of the Sufis in the development of Persian language and literature in Bihar.

The aim of the Sufi is to realize the one reality diffused over the whole universe. He considers human life as a journey and himself as a traveler, a seeker of God. He sets out in the quest of God by slow stages (Manazil or Maqamat), the first of which is humanity (Nasut) in which he must live by action conforming to the canon law (Shariat) and percepts and practices of Islam. The second stage is considered to be angelic in nature (Malakut) which he reaches by keen perception and meditation and through the pathway of purity (Tariqat) passing through the
third stage of power (Jabarut) by requisitioning the aid of knowledge or gnosis (Marifat), he attains the truth or reality (Haqiqat) which is the stage of Lahut (absorption of divinity).

Love, liberalism, latitudinarianism and eclecticism have been the distinctive features of Sufism. The sufi represents himself as entirely devoted to the search for truth and thinks that there may be partial truth in all different religions of the world. He holds that the foundation of all the religious beliefs must be essentially true. The different forms of worship result from a variety of names and attributes by which God reveals himself in the creation.

Bihar is one of the Indian States, which has played a prominent role in the promotion of Persian language and literature in India. The developmental role played in the arena of culture was carried on by Persian poets, writers and more importantly, Sufis. It is quite remarkable that this particular region gave to the world not only such noble thinkers, reformers and humanists as Gautam Buddha, Mahavir and Ashoka but also great Sufis like Makhdoom-e-Jahan-Shah Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, Sultan Ahmad Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi and many others. The Buddhist temples at Bodhgaya, Rajgir, the splendid tombs of Makhdoom-Bihar and Daulat Shah, the Mausoleum of Sher Shah, the architect of modern Patna at Sasaram and the birth place of Guru Govind Singh speak of their glorious past.

The rich tradition of culture and spiritualism took a new and even more impressive turn with the advent of the Muslims in the region. According to traditional accounts, Momin Arif and Imam Taj Faquih were the first Muslim Sufis in Maner- a place of considerable antiquity and one of the earliest centres of Muslim habitation and activities in Bihar. According to folklore the Raja fled from Maner, afraid of their influence on people. In those days many places of Bihar, had become abode of Sufis. They constructed Khanqahs and from there on carried on literary activities. Among such places Maner, in present Biharsarif district and Phulwarisharif near Patna are very prominent and have left a deep mark in the field of Persian language.

Need of the Study

There has been no serious effort in the field of Sufi writers for the development of Persian literature in Bihar. There is a lack of concerted literature in compiling the works of all prominent Sufis of Bihar in a standard form. We find information related to this topic in bits and
pieces. The late Prof. S.H. Askari's pioneering effort on the study of Sufis of medieval Bihar is a true inspiration for the researcher to choose this topic. His contribution in this field is unparalleled.

Another main reason for choosing this topic for the study is that the Sufi mystics of Bihar played a voluminous role in the socio-religious affairs of the community. They had an immense role on people of all kinds be it masses, nobles, kings or princes. They gave a tremendous impetus to the linguistic assimilation and to cultural synthesis. It was their effort that Islam obtained a lasting hold in Bihar. The glimpses that we get in their writing of their lives and activities, piety and learning, and the information we gather about the religious, moral, and social percepts they preached can hardly be ignored.

The main reason why the researcher wrote the study in English because there is a need for people who are not related to Islam to read and understand the contribution of Persian as a medium of language in Bihar's Sufis' writings which spearheaded in spreading the message of love, humility and universal brotherhood. Whereas the manuscripts are available only in Persian language, most of the secondary sources on this topic are available only in Urdu. Moreover many Indians who are not Muslims too visit Khanqahs and Sufi shrines. There was a need to reach out to such an audience.

Methodology of the Study

The study is qualitative and descriptive. Biographies, Hagiography and historical works have been used in this study. Biographical sketches (Tadhkiras), letters (Maktubat) and Utterances and Discourses (Malfuzat) of the Sufi saints have been used. Sufi Khanqahs were a main source of gathering information not only in written form but also in stories of legends. The folklore of Bihar also is used in this study. The Khanqahs of Bihar sharif and Phulwarisharif were visited by the researcher. The researcher cannot explain in words the amazing feeling, when he visited the tombs of the distinguished Sufis.

Limitations of the Study

My knowledge of Sufism may not be obsolete. The knowledge of religious and social conditions may be inadequate. Though the researcher referred to Maktubat and Mulfuzat's of
Sufi’s, there may be other sources too which were not referred. There was a paucity of concrete data and documentary material. Lastly, I am responsible for any errors committed in this study.

**Features of the study**

The study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter gives an overall account of Sufism and Sufi literature. Various definitions, concepts and orders of Sufism have been discussed in this chapter along with the lives and works of prominent Sufis of the world.

The second chapter will focus on introducing the prominent Sufis of Bihar and their overall contribution to literature and other subjects. Sufis of Bihar belonged to chief orders of Chistia, Shharwardia, Qadiria, Firdausia, Madariya and Shuttaria. All these orders have been thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

The third chapter will deal with the social and cultural scenario of Bihar as reflected in the writings of Sufis of Bihar. Various aspects of social, religious and education are being analyzed in this chapter. Indian cultural influences have also been described in this chapter.

The last and forth chapter will be a critical study of Sufi Persian literature of Bihar. This chapter had been subdivided into two sections-Prose and Poetry. The lives and works of all prominent Sufis of Bihar are analyzed in this chapter. The researcher considers this chapter as the most important chapter of the work.
CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION TO SUFISM AND SUFISTIC LITERATURE

The mystic saints and Sufis played a very important part in shaping the character of Islamic thought in Bihar and elsewhere. Before proceeding to understand the role of Sufis of Bihar in the development of Persian Language in Bihar, the researcher views that it is necessary to first discuss the main tenets and various aspects of Sufism and Sufi literature. We will start with understanding the concept of Sufism and proceed further to analyze the various debates on the origin of Sufism.

Sufism was a common appellation of all Muslims who wanted to attain knowledge of, get nearer to, and find union with God, through certain spiritual experiences and devotional exercises and not by mere observance of empty rituals and outward formalities. As a Muslim, a Sufi believes in the Unitarian God of the Quran, saying there is no God but God or but one God, the lord of the world and not a God of any particular nation, but he also attempts to reconcile it with pantheistic unification which implies that there is nothing but God.

The distinctive characteristics of Sufis have been love, liberalism, latitudirianism and eclectism. The main aim of a Sufi is to attain the one reality diffused over the universe. A Sufi considers human life as a journey and himself as a traveler (Salik), a seeker of God. He sets out in the quest of God by slow stages (Manzil or Maqamat), the first of which is humanity (Nasut) in which he must live by action confirming to the cannon law (Shariat) and percepts and practices of Islam. The second stage is considered to be angelic in nature (Malakut) which he reaches by keen perception and meditation and through the pathway of purity (Tariqat). The third stage is passing through power by requisitioning the aid of knowledge or Gnosis (Marifat), he attains the truth of reality (Haqiqat) which is the stage of Lahut (absorption in divinity). Hafiz says “Miyan-i-ashiq-o-mashuq hech ha’il neest: tu khud hijab-i-khudi hafiz az meyan barkhez” (Nothing stands between the lover and the beloved. You are your own curtain, oh hafiz! remove that). Annihilation or self effacement (Fana) does not imply the end of the Sufi ‘ways’ for it leads to eternal abiding in God (Baqat badal-fana).

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A review of Sufism would disclose that it does not have a compact definite definition. The main reason for the lack of a compact definition lies in fact that since inception till date it seems to be experimental, individual, pertaining to different perceptions and emotions which makes it further difficult to bind the term into a specific definition. Another reason why scholars could not agree on a specific definition for Sufism lies in the fact that there was no specific ingredients and consistent shape attached to it during a particular period of history. During early Islam Sufism was confined primarily in the periphery of Zuhd (Renunciation) and Taqwa whereas a number of other elements kept attaching to it as time passed by, making it further difficult to find a specific and compact definition to it. However it would be pertinent to mention some of the definitions put forward by various scholars and great Sufi saints themselves. It would help in developing an understanding of Sufism and various aspects attached to it.

Since my thesis focuses on the contributions of the Sufis of Bihar, let me begin with what Hazrat Makhdoom-e-Jehan Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri writes on this topic in his Maktub No. 25:

"طريقت رابی است که از شریعت خزند و شریعت بیان توحید و طبیعت و نماز و روزه و حج و جهاد و زکوّة و دیگر احکام شرع و معاملات است. امان طریقت طلب کردن بحقیقت این معاملات است و تفحص کردن این مشروطات و ارائی اعمال بصفا ضمانت و تطبیر اختلاف است از کدورات طبیعی جویا و بنا و جفا و شرک مانند این در جمله بچه به تدیجی و تطبیر طبیعی تعلق دارد شریعت است و بر چه بی تفصیل و تزکیه بابت تعلق دارد طریقت است. مثلا جانی نماز را طبیعی کردن از لویت بخاست شریعت است و در بال کردن از کدورات بشریت طریقت است پیش از نماز وضر کردن شریعت است و بمشیم با وضو بودن طریقت است، در نمای روئیقبل اوردان شریعت است در و ید بحق اوردان طریقت است در جمله بر چن دی منزل حواس فرود اید، رعایت آن کردن از شریعت است و برچ یدو نرده قابل است رعایت کردن آن طریقت است و برچ انبیاء علیهم السلام امت خودرا آن فرمانند که خود کنند."

In the abovementioned lines Hazrat Maneri has defined and explained the concept of Shariat and Tariqat in a very beautiful manner.

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2 Maneri, Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya, Maktubat-e-Sadi Maktub No. 25 Dar Arakan-e-Shriyat-o-Tariqat
Kashful Mehjub which is among the oldest and the most authentic writings on mysticism, touches upon this topic in following fashion:

"A murshad under achieves his aim by means of a sincere and consistent practice. Allah makes his way to the murshad through the path of love and self-surrender. When the murshad possesses the condition of love and self-surrender, he becomes a successful seeker of knowledge. The murshad who achieve this goal can be defined as a Sufi." 3

Hazrat Makhdoom-e-Jehan Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya Maneri in his book, Sharh-e-Aadabul Muridian uses the following lines to describe Sufism:

"The duty of the seeker is to achieve the goal of knowledge by sincere and consistent practice. When the seeker possesses the condition of love and self-surrender, he becomes a successful seeker of knowledge." 4

Shaikh Ali Hujwari, the author of Kashful Mahjub has categories Sufis in three broad terms namely: Sufi, Motasawwuf and Mastaswuf. He describes this in following words:

"A seeker who has achieved the goal of knowledge by sincere and consistent practice is a Sufi. A seeker who has achieved the goal of knowledge through passion and self-surrender is a Motasawwuf. A seeker who has achieved the goal of knowledge through passion and self-surrender but has not realized the ultimate goal is a Mastaswuf." 5

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3 Ali Hijwiri, Makhdum, Kashf al Muhjub, page 22
4 Maneri, Sheikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yehya, Sharh-e-Adabul Muridain, Page 93
Sufism went through considerable development and modification as the Muslims came into contact with people of other races and cultures in course of their history. Consequently, what came to be known as Sufism later on must be distinguished from what Sufism was in its early days. When we look at some early writers of the first and second/seventh and eighth centuries for example Quashiri and Hujwiri we find their understanding of Sufism.

One of the first things that Quashiri emphasizes regarding a Sufi is that he is absolutely convinced that of all paths of life open to a man his path is the best. This is how Qushairi expresses it: “And the grounds on which their path was built were stronger than the grounds on which the paths of others were established, be they men of tradition and culture, or men of thought and intellect”.⁶

Shihab al-din Suharwardi the founder of Suharwardi sect, views that the term Sufi is etymologically derived from “Suf”, the coarse woolen cloth which he says, was worn by the holy prophet.⁷ He enumerates several other views which are as follows:

- The Sufis are those who stand in the first rank (Saff) before God.
- The word was originally Safawi and was later changed into Sufi
- It was derived from Suffah, the mound where a group of Muslims used to spend their time in religious training and ascetic way of life.

According to Suharwardi, the derivations are etymologically incorrect, though with regard to the third it may be said that the life led by the people of the Suffah resembled the pattern of life adopted by the Sufis. He also refers to a particular group of people of Khurasan who used to live in caves far off from inhabited plains. They were called Shaguffiyyah, from Shaguft, the name of the cave. The people of Syria used to call them Jau’iiyyah.

⁵ Ali Hijwiri, Makhdum, Kashf al Muhjub, page 25
⁶ Al-Qushairi, al-Risalatal-Qushairiyyah, Daral-Kutub al-’Arabiyah al-Kubra, Misr, 1330 A.H., Pg.2.