CHAPTER-3

REFLECTION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CONDITION IN THE SUFI'S PERSIAN LITERATURE OF BIHAR
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Sufism was mainly built upon the tentacles of Islam; it is a religion of love and brotherhood, as it stands for unity of mind and soul and works towards realization of self. It is not surprising therefore, that Sufism became a religion of teeming millions and had special appeal to both Muslims as well as the Hindus, in South Asia. Sufism found an amicable geographical and cultural abode throughout the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. Sufism and Sufi saints are an existing reality in socio-religious fold and have undoubtedly contributed immensely towards a healthy and amicable social order in India. Though its base was Islam, it followed the practice of humanism and therefore, became the religion of common people, because it appealed to their soul. Even for non-Muslims it presented a life of eternal freedom from the bondages of materialism to that of eternality and bliss.

This chapter will deal with the social and cultural scenario of Bihar as reflected in the writings of Sufis of Bihar.

With the establishment of the Muslim rule in India after the Ghorian conquest, we find many people migrating to India from the middle-east, central Asia and Khurasan. Those included variety of people- Sufi saints, scholars, artists and scores of others who in search of better prospect of life came to India and settled here finding it a very suitable place for their livelihood and also extremely suitable for their spiritual quest. The huge Muslim migration or company by Muslim ulemas as well as Muslim mystics of varied silsilas impacted Islam in India. Mysticism had already become part of Islamic spirituality and great number of followers had become associated with the mystic brand of Islamic spirituality. Sufism as it was known was very popular not only with the masses but Muslim elite (Umra-Susfa) and sometimes with the royalty.
Though not verified but it is claimed that the first Muslim saint was Khwaja Gharibnawaz who had already settled in India before the Ghorian conquest of Delhi and Ajmer. Along with him we find Sufi saints of repute one after another finding permanent home in India and having tremendous influence of Indian socio cultural aspects of society, some prominent Sufis being Baba Farid Gang-e- Shakar, Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, Khwaja Naseeruddin Chiragdelhi, Alishah Qalandera, Bakhtiyar Kaki and scores of others.

As for the contribution of the Sufi movements of India, the concern it is almost and the established fact is that the Sufi saints of various shades had greatly contributed in the evolution of medieval composite society.

Islam was extremely new to the Indian masses and Islam was not easily finding the assimilation and some extra effort needed by the Sufi saints to work as a bridge between the faithful of great religions, Hindus and Muslims. The Sufi saints of medieval period had universal appeal for all the Sects, castes creed and people of different spirituality and doors were open for everyone. The chief message involved was humanity, brotherhood and service to humanity. So much so that the Sufi Khanqahs became centre of great attraction for all. The Khanqahs were flocked by poor, destitute, widows and orphans along with the nobles, elites and royalty alike. Thus we find that the message reached to the common message of love without any discrimination. We find great many references of Hindus becoming disciples of Muslim Sufi saints and also spreading harmony of living together.

The Sufis contribution in regard to the socio-cultural aspects is also to be explored in terms of the development of literature during the early medieval period. Sufis not only were spiritual men but also were great literary figures. They produced marvelous literature during medieval period and enriched the Persian, Arabic and Hindi literature during the whole of medieval period. As for the contribution in the development of Hindi literature is concerned we find that with the efforts of the Sufis almost new style of literature developed which had emerged with the mixture of Persian with local Indian dialects. The Khanqahs became a centre of such spoken language which was understood
by all and the Sufi saints like Baba Farid, Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, Amir Khusrau, Abdul Quddus Grgohi and others greatly contributed in the development of such literature both in prose and poetry using hindvi as dialect. We find a number of Dohas, Sakhois and other kinds of love poems which came to be known as Prem Akhyan literature being developed by the Sufi saints.

The literature which is a result of Sufi discourses also played a vital role in the development of literature of the medieval period. The literature in the form of Malfuzat, Maktubat and live biographies of Sufis apart from their poetics, provide us with a plethora of literatures. The famous Malfuzat of Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia and others. Such literature is treasure of socio-cultural study of medieval period. The same literature is a reflection of social, political, economic and cultural aspect of 13th to 14th century of north Indian society. The Sufis had become very prominent during those days that they had to be taken seriously by the royalty also and sometimes the medieval rulers found it very difficult to tolerate the rising popularity of Sufi saints. Here we find the example of tussle between the Tughlaq sultans and the great Sufi saint Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia. Most of the Sufi saints felt it to be below their dignity to have any connection with royalty and also seek the auspices of them.1

Thus we find that from the literature there is information about the existing political condition and the activities of the royalty from the literatures. The other aspects of lie can also be found from the Sufi literature and we can reconstruct the history of past society taking help from the Sufi Malfuzat.

The contribution also can be enumerated from the fact that the Sufis are also lovers of music (Sama) the Sama became part of Sufi gathering at a time of the anniversary of the deadly saints. That let to the development to the musical styles and vocal traditions in which the writings of Sufi saints were sung and orally presented to the audience, Amir khusrau, the great disciple of Nizamuddin Aulia inventing various ragas, khyals, and Shailies. He also wrote a number of Qawwalis and Ghazliat which consisted of love themes and transcending spirituality.

1 Pandey, Sufism in East India, Pathway Publications, Lucknow, P.12.
Keeping in mind the above scenario of North India during 13th to 14th century, we can also study the same aspect in context of Bihar which during the time was under the control of Sultans of Bengal and sultans of Bengal used to desire the fate of Bihar. Same is the ease with the Sufis of Bihar who had become very popular among the masses during 14th century not through there writings there discourses. Their mystical gathering but also through their teachings of universal brotherhood, love and service to humanity. They had become very popular among the masses in Bihar also. The literature which they produced reflects all the above features and provides us with all kinds of information which deals with the social harmony, amalgamation of various castes and creeds along with helping the poor. Khanqahs were an excellent example of this intermixing of people who belonged to different faiths.

The contribution of prominent Sufis of Bihar, particularly the Firdausi Sufi saint Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri is unparallel and he is greatly admired, loved and revered by the people of Bihar and Bengal during Sultanate period and continued to be respected and followed for centuries and even at present.

For hundreds of years before the British rule, there had seldom been major social disturbances and communal conflicts in Bihar, involving the two important religious groups, namely Hindus and Muslims. The reason was simple: a strong socio-economic interdependence. Production was organized primarily to meet the local needs. The role of market and money was limited mainly to facilitating the exchange of goods and services. There were very few needs for which people were dependent on the outside world. One of the goods brought from outside was salt. Even land rent was paid in produce, i.e., Bhowlee system of rent was in vogue. All members of the society, irrespective of their castes and religions, were dependent on one another. If there was any disturbance, the interests of all including the rulers were to be adversely affected.

Another fact to be noted is that the proportion of the descendents of the immigrants constituted a very tiny proportion of the total Muslim population in Bihar. The local converts were in overwhelming numbers. The conversion to Islam was due to a number of factors in which the role of force was seldom significant. In conversions, Sufi
saints played a major role. The influence of Sufism cut across the barriers of religions and castes. To cite just one example, in Mehsi town of East Champaran district, the Dargah of Halim Shah is revered by both Hindus and Muslims. This shrine predates the establishment of Muslim rule over the district. At the entrance is the Samadhi of Mahesh, the chief disciple of Halim Shah, who did not convert to Islam and, according to popular belief, as per the mandate of Halim Shah, people entering the Dargah have to offer floral tributes first to Mahesh. The town is named after him. Such shrines are scattered throughout Bihar in dozens. As is common knowledge, both the communities took part in each other's religious festivals with great devotion and enthusiasm.²

The social fabric of the state started weakening after the establishment of the British rule, which, in turn, began destroying the existing structure and organization of production. Market gradually became disembedded from the society and the production for market took strong roots after the introduction of commercial crops like poppy, indigo, sugarcane, jute, tobacco etc. and the mode of rent payment changed from Bhowlee to Nakadi. Handicrafts decayed or were destroyed. The introduction of the Permanent Settlement weakened the traditional socio-economic interdependence and the British government, after the revolt of 1857, which demonstrated the unity of both the communities against the foreign rule, began a conscious policy of sowing the seeds of discord between the two. Even then it took a long time for the British to achieve its goal. As late as 1917, during the Champaran Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi, it could not succeed in breaking the unity of the two communities. Among the prominent lieutenants of Gandhi were Pir Muhammad Moonis and Sheikh Gulab who refused to succumb to the pressures from the British.

There has been a problem of paucity of concrete data and documentary material with regard to socio-cultural condition of Bihar since time immemorial. The Persian chronicles of Muslim writers are also too scanty and insufficient to be helpful for reconstructing the picture of the past. The Persian chronicles were mainly concerned with matters of war and politics, interminable struggles, conquests and expanding power of the

world of Islam and not with peaceful penetration in India. After a brief discussion on the socio-cultural status of Bihar, let us now discuss the role of Islam in the context of Bihar.

Islam emerged as a religious and political phenomenon and had a tremendous success in the known world. However, not long after the death of Prophet Mohammad, it was torn into many sects and schisms, divisions and sub-divisions, which very soon exceeded the well-known and oft-repeated number 72-73, of the two major groups.⁢

The official Islam in India and Bihar has always been Sunnite Islam and of its four juristic schools, Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliji and Shafi’i, the first has always been recognized and acted upon. None of the chief Shiite sections, the Imamis or the twelvers, the Isma’ilis or the seveners, the Zaidia, who are nearest akin to the Sunnite, has been known to exist in Bihar in pre-mughul period. Bihari Muslims have a rich culture representing a syncretisation between Arab, Afghan and local Hindu Bihari traditions. Shab-e-Baraat and Mawlid-un-Nabi is widely celebrated by Bihari Muslims, and Ashura is mourned by all Bihari Muslims, especially Shias. The majority of Bihari Muslims follow the Barelwi movement of Sunni Islam. Shi’a follow the Akhbari school of Twelver Shi’ism.

Islam is a historic religion and also a social creed. It has had its own concept of society, particular type of social order, a certain outlook in life, and a religious ideology and above all its strong and rigid monotheistic belief in the unity of God, constitutes its philosophy. Then there was the egalitarian basis of social order, equality and brotherhood, and its teaching that every individual is born with a spiritual status and can claim social freedom as its birth right. we can get some idea about these matters expressive of kind feelings of humanity in Islam, such as love, charity, liberalism, disposition to think favorably of others, and to do them good, and some other socio-religious aspects and ideals, religious teachings, ways of living, thoughts and movements and cultured side of things, from the Mystic literature of the firdausia and Shattaria orders of Bihar in the Sultanat period. A critical study of such genre of Sufi literature as Tadhkira, smaller tracts and treatises dealing with principles and doctrines of the faith

and ritualistic practices, and above all Maktubat and Mulfuzat which mean letters addressed to distantly placed disciples and followers, and discourses delivered in the assembly of Majlis or Khanqah, will yield valuable source materials. One, however, should not expect to have a connected, well integrated systematic account.

The lives and writings of the early Sufis of Bihar show that whether they belonged to one or other of the chief orders, Chistiya, Suhrwardia, Qadriya, Firdausia, Shuttaria, orthodox, Ba-Shara’ (with law) and Beshara’ (without law), they followed the Quran and the Sunnat (tradition), accepted all the cardinal principles of Islam, denounced all innovations and devotions in the sphere of dogma and practices and Bid’at (heresy), insisted upon the strict observance of obligatory duties of their faith, and discarded all that was obviously antagonistic to the fundamental teachings of Islam.\(^4\)

The Bihar Sufis antagonized theologians and Mullahs who just followed just the to the spirit of faith and not the spirit of faith. They made a spiritual and mystic interpretation of the Quranic law and reconciled religion with philosophy, like Junaid Baghdadi, Ghazzali and others. They also made Islamic theology mystical and for them ‘Everything is Him’ (Hame Ust) was not far different from ‘Everything is from him’ (Hame az Ust). they put aside their own desires, the render themselves agreeable to all, irrespective of caste, creed status and position. It is the Sufis, not the Mullahs who proved to be the best missionaries of Islam. It is a fact that there were a large number of conversions under the spell of Sufism in Bihar and elsewhere, although it is seldom that one comes across some references in the mystic literature produced in Bihar to the role they strictly played in the process of Islamization.\(^5\)

**Some notable Sufis:**

Many Sufi orders of good repute, the Chistiya, Suhrwardia, Firdausia, Qadriya and Madariya, were represented in Bihar, and each one had contributed in the spread and development of Islam. Among the earliest to come were the Sufis of Chistiya order. some of the renowned name of this order being Shah Mahmud Bihari and Saiyad Taju-ddin of

\(^4\) Askari, Op.Cit, Pg.93.  
\(^5\) Ibid, Pg.94.
Danapur, the disciples of Qutbudin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Maulana’Ali Bihari, a disciple of Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, Makhdum Adam Sufi, son of Saiyid Ibrahim Chisti of what later became Hajipur, and his son Makhdum Hamidu’d Din and the latters son Taimullah Sufaid Baz, the spiritual guide of Shaikh Faidullah of Kurgi near Patna, Shamsud’ Din of Chanda’s (Biharsharif). Taimullah Sufaid Baz had settled down in mahalla Christiana of Biharsharif which was adjacent to mahalla Bhaisasur where lie buried a large number of Chisti saints, including Ahmad ‘Isa Taj, the younger brother of the celebrated Chisti saint, Muhammad ‘Isa Taj, a son-in-law of Saiyid Jalal Bukhari Makhdum Jahaniyan of Suharwardi order.

Some prominent Sufis of Suharwardi order were Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi, one of the chief disciples of the celebrated author of ‘Awarifu’l-Ma’arif, Shihabu’d Din Suharwardi, came to Bihar via Delhi and Badaun and from there he went to Bengal and Sylhet where his Chilla Khana is still found. He has been mentioned by Makhdum Sharafu’d Din and his discourses. Maulana Ahmad Damishq, one of the Khalifas of the celebrated Bahaud’ Din Zakariya Multani was the spiritual guide of Maulana Taqlu’d Din Suharwardi of Mahsun (Dinajpur, Bengal) the author of Multaqit which is an abridged version of Ghazza’s Ihyau’l ‘ULum, Taqlu’d Din was the inspirer of many Suharwardi saints of Bihar, including Makhdum Yahya Maneri, the father of the celebrated Firdausi saint, Makhdum Sharfuddin Maneri.

There had been many versions of Maneri’s traditional chronology of his birth, death of his father and his visit to Delhi in search of a spiritual guide. According to Askari, it was certain that at Delhi, he met the great Chisti saint Nizamu’d Din Auliya and Sharfuddin of Panipat before their death in A.H. 724 OR 725, but finding no spiritual guide solace from them he betook himself to the eminent Sufi Shaikh Najibu’d Din Firdausi, who invested him with discipline ship and spiritual successorship shortly before his death in 1332. the duration of his stay in Delhi, his wanderings in the jungles of Behea (Shahabad area) and the hills of Rajgir, his ascetic practices in the cave of Kund, the period of his movement to and from Bihar town, as also the time of the issuance of the Farman of Muhammad Biun Tughlaq, offering him a Bulgarian praying carpet and a

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6 Ibid.Pg.98.
land grant, for the upkeep of the newly built Khanqah for him and its return are also disputed points.

Sheikh Sharfuddin was liberal and broad-minded in his approach towards the non-muslims. In his discourses and letters he quotes with approval from the great mystic 'Ainu'l Quddat Hamasdani who had profound admiration for the founders of all religions who formed their views on the basis of religious experiences. There followers failed to grasp the real significance of the original teachings and turned their meanings. When asked about the yogi who said that one who wished to live should know how to die, the Shaikh said that they did say so but did not believe in true significance. Ignorant transmitters missed the deep religious spirit behind such statements. Referring to Islam, the Shaikh said that it came in all perfection, but its commands were not observed and there had been deviation from its original ideology. People blindly followed the faith of their ancestors and had become conventional in their belief and practices. Practical religion is different from its metaphysical and doctrinal aspects. He also had unstinted admiration for the supreme expression of love for Hindus, convinced through self-immolation which he had witnessed on several occasions in Raigir. He tells us of a man who had killed himself when a stone image he had in his left hand fell down. He had been standing on one leg, and his nails had grown so long as to be entwined around his hand. It is love which inspired his action. There are references to widowed women who had abandoned the world and took recourse to self-immolation by setting fire to their clothes soaked in naphtha oil. Such emotional ascetic practices evoked keen appreciation but not commendation from the saint of Maner. Genuine asceticism, according to the saint, results in great liberty and the purification of the soul, and this liberty can be acquired either by a believer or an infidel.

Sufis relationship with the Kings and Nobles:

The Firdausi saints were indifferent towards politics and shunned all connections with royalty and men of noble rank and position. However the Suharwardia and Shuttaria Sufis did not abstain from all kinds of associations with Kings and Nobles and felt no scruples in accepting not only such ecclesiastical jobs as those of the almoner but even
Jagirs and favours which they used for the benefit of the people. They held that high position does not do harm to those who know its antidote. The well-known Suharwardia saint, Saiyid Jalal Bukhari was held in high esteem not only by the greatest saint of Bihar but also by emperor Firuz Tughlaq, and his capable wazir, Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul. Powerful governors like Ainul Mulk and displaced rulers of Sindh, like Jam Khairruddin Jam and Jan Babinia sought his intercession. He used to come very often to Delhi and his recommendations for favours for the poor and the needy was always accepted by the king.

Maneri’s Makhtubat contains letters written in reply to emperors such as Muhammad Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq, princes such as Dawar Malik, governors such as Mufarrihul Mulk and Hesamud Din and officials and nobles too numerous to mention. The learned Maulana Muzafar Shams Balkhi who had given up his job in Firuz Sha’s Arabic college, situated in Kushak-i-Lal at Delhi to become the disciple of the great saint of Bihar, was as puritanical in his outlook as to shun all worldly things and give away in charity even his books. He tied his Izar or close fitted trouser with a ‘munj’ string and gave up even his wife, divorcing her and himself arranging her marriage with another, lest his growing affection towards her should affect his devotion to God. Yet, he was also on terms of correspondence with Sultan Ghyasuddin of Bengal. Ten of his letters, addressed to Sultan, relating mostly on religious matters are found in a voluminous work left by him. Thus, these saints had no aversion towards rulers and men in power and recognized the utility of their high offices and position. Yet, they would never bow before them, nor would accept anything from their hands. According to the letters of Maneri written to Muhammad Dawar Malik( son-in-law) of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, he would recommend genuine cases of poverty and piety for favour and help. But he would have nothing for himself and in his admonitions to kings and officials he was quite frank and did not mince matters.7

According to Munisu’l Qulab, when emperor Muhammad Bin Tughlaq learnt that on the entreaties of his followers the great saint of Bihar had condescended to descend from the Raigir hills and traveled on foot every week to Biharsharif, he sent a Bulgarian

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7 Muhammad, Y. T. Sufi movement in Eastern India, Anmol publication, Delhi, Pg.68.
prayer carpet as a present and ordered Zainu’d Din Majdu’l Mulk, the governor of Bihar to bestow something from Rajgir as a jagir for the upkeep of the Khanqah which had to be built for the saint of Bihar Sharif. The saint would not accept jagir and he preferred to deliver his sermons by sitting under the “Do Chapra” Nizamu’d Din Maula had set up for his weekly sermons out of his legitimately earned money or Mal-i-muzakka. He had however to relent on the personal entreaties of the governor who told him what he was likely to expect from the despotic Sultan if his orders were not carried out. It is not a fact, as stated in Munisul Qulub, that he had to undertake the strenuous journey to Delhi, where he arrived after the death of the Sultan and the deed of the jagir was returned to his successor, Firuz Shah Tughlaq. It was only once that he went to Delhi, and the jagir was returned fifteen years later to Firuz Shah when he, on his way to Bengal in A.H.754, stopped in Bihar and paid a visit to the great saint. This valuable information is found in The Maktubat of Hasan Mu’iz Balkhi, and we can infer the date of establishment of the Khanqah (754) from it.

Social life in Sufi literature:

The Sufi literature available throws some light on the relations between the Sufis, on the one hand, and the court, the different Muslim social groups, ascetics and non-muslims and also lower classes of people that surrounded them. The social constitution of the Muslims recognized two broad divisions, Ahl-i-Saif (men of the sword) and Ahl-i-Qalam (men of pen). Besides the rulers and members of the military aristocracy, such as amirs, maliks, sipahsalar, maqta, imams, qadi, khatibs, muhtasib, ulama and masaikh, who were in charge of the ecclesiastical and judicial functions and looked after the moral and religious as well as educational needs of the people. The oft-quoted Arabic expression, La Rahbaniata fi’l Islam means that there is no priesthood in Islam and the Muslim society was theoretically casteless, but the democratic fraternity could not escape the contagion of social distinctions in its Indian environment.

The Saiyyids who claimed descent from the Prophet of Islam, and the saints called Shaikh, Pir, Makhdum etc. were so highly esteemed and even venerated that a

\[\text{Askari, S.H. Islam and Bihar, Op.Cit. Pg.114.}\]
critical muslim writer had described them as ‘the Brahmins of Islam’. The respect paid to
them is evident from the way in which they have been frequently referred to in the
Malfuzat.

There was another element, the commonality of Muslim society, consisting of
various classes of people such as artisans, craftsmen, petty-traders, clerks, domestic
servants and slaves and a large section of the converted Muslims.

In Sufistic literature it is rare that we come across people such as chakars, nafar
(servants, attendants), parah doz (tailors) and na’lain doz (shoemakers,etc). In his
commentary on Abab, Makhdum Sirajuddin refers, besides Kushawaran,(agriculturist)
and Ahl-i-Hirfa (artisans) to many type of workers such as carpenters, workers in leather,
carriers of burden, tailors, sack makers, fullers, bootmakers, spindle makers, blacksmiths,
barbers etc. These earned bread by lawful means and had catered to the needs of mankind
since olden times. The saint condemned beggary and advocated kasb(earning), or the
conception of vocation or calling, that is doing manfully the work to earn bread for
himself and his family and not to accumulate wealth. Kasb or labour for earning bare
necessities of life was substituted for the old ascetic ideal of renunciation of the world.
Kasb was an indispensable precept (fardiat), but with conditional conjunction of
necessity. There should be no hoarding and the means must be lawful.

As practical people, the Sufis dealt realistically and sensible with every-day works
and activities of the labourers, poor women and pious persons earning their bread by hard
work, and also honest men urged by the prompting of sex. The Kanizgan (slave-girls)
who had to soil their hands and feet with dirt and mud when they thronged round the
wells to draw water could not be expected to complete purificatory wash before sitting
down to cook and eat their food. Workers in the field and labourers who came barefooted
were allowed by the Prophet to enter and offer their prayers in the mosque. Impurity did
not lie in the dust trodden by the feet, or fatwa or religious decree about such dirt and
nastiness would be oppressive to many people. Maulana Muzzaffar was very glad to
know that his disciple in Bengal, Khwaja Hamia\(^9\) had at least performed Nikah which

\(^9\) Maktubat-i-Muzafar Shams Balkhi.,Khudabaksh Library,Patna.
was a divine command. He had advised a disciple to purchase a slave-girl (jaria) as to avoid sins.

The Sufis often quoted the two dicta of the Prophet; “Give to men what were rights”, and “place men in their proper ranks”, and Makhdum Sharfuddin cited an instance of different ways in which Ayesha, the Prophet’s wife, received a simple believer and a muhtasham\(^\text{10}\) (grandee) and he said that, “some rose to be rulers, some wazirs and high official, khan, Maliks, “Alim, yet the people of lower orders had also their role to play what would happen if this city becomes denuded of naddafs (cotton dressers). This shows unawareness about the importance of the artisan class. The Sufis thought that the relation between members and society was with reference to the sphere of action and it was one of social existence.

Sufism had provided many opportunities for women to give themselves up to a life of devotion and some had attained a state of conscious spirituality, perhaps far ahead of male members. But it was not permissible for them to assume the position of a religious guide or Pir, and initiate a neophyte by the usual method of giving or placing hand on hand (dast bar dast) in compact, cutting a few hairs of his head with scissors, giving a khirqa, a taquia and a shaira. In this connection, a letter of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century saint Abdul Quddus Gangohi addressed to a pious talented afghan lady, Bubu Khatun\(^\text{11}\) found in his Maktubat forms interesting reading.

One Makhdum Sharfuddin observed that the things which are prescribed in law include what is done as a habit for love of wife and children. But he warns that some women were rahbar (guide) while others were rahbur (highway robber), the former encouraging and helping their husbands to pursue the path of truth, devotion and submission, and the latter intercepting the road to truth and leading the husbands astray from the right way. There might be Khula in the case of the latter, setting them free or resigning the marriage settlement, as was Talaq, permissible for men.

\(^{10}\) Tuhfa-i-Ghaibi, Quoted in Askari, Pg.112.
\(^{11}\) Maktubat-i-Quddusiya, Discourses of Makhdum Maneri, Khudabaksh Library, Patna.
The Sufis were quite conscious of the socio-moral aspects of the situations which without any effort and necessary activities on their part might bring many into the fold of Islam. Sufism which was a Semitic interpretation of mysticism to the Aryan mind found favour with the Indian Aryans. There was no question of any element of compulsion pressure or even of persuasion. Conversion of non-muslims was no part of their mission and they spoke seldom about it, and yet Sufi saints were largely responsible for the peaceful penetration of Islam in India. The desire to escape from the social oppressions or to raise themselves to a higher social, moral or cultural level or conditions had undoubtedly drawn many of the down-trodden Indians to Islam. There were fewer cases of men of higher strata, specially the intellectual classes accepting the simple faith of their alien rulers. We however learn from Mulfuzat that an eighty year old Hindu came to the Khanqah and voluntarily embraced Islam. Another yogi of handsome appearance felt so inspired on seeing the Maneri saint that he called him Rup Kartar, and afterwards he became Muslim. Yet another entered into an argument with the saint and used some harsh words and turned back. The saint gave him a patient hearing and assured the audience that he would come and become a Muslim. The tombs of the two yogis near the saint’s tomb are pointed out to this day.

**Sufis and social service:**

The Sufis especially of the Firdausia order, were large hearted and gentle in their views and very liberal in their attitudes, of sympathy and understanding. There are many references to their written recommendations for help to the poor and deserving people to the kings and nobles. They would not accept jobs and jagirs from the high and the mighty, but would go out of the way to help the poor and never ignored them. It would suffice to refer to the letter which the Makhdum wrote to Firuz shah tughlaq and to Malik Mufarrih and to the many letters of the Makhdum Balkhi successor, Muzzafar Shams Balkhi, calling the attention of the officials and nobles of Bengal to the plight of Darwesh like businessmen fallen on evil days who would never open their lips before others. In the Khwani-i-pur Ni’mat we find the Makhdum saying, “when I was in my old cell (apparently Rajgir) the ruler of the place was a Malik, and the poor and indigent of the

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12 Khwan-i Pur Ni’mat Quoted in Askari, Pg.112
region pestered me so much that I began to feel tired of writing papers of recommendations. He was however reminded by a Shaikhzada of Chisti of his great ancestor, Khwaja Maudud Chisti, who despite repeated repulsions and humiliations continued to approach even personally the ruler of the area for redressal of grievances and rendering help to needy ones. The Ganj-i-la-Yakhfa\textsuperscript{13} of Husain Mui’z Balkhi records that among those who attended the 18\textsuperscript{th} majlis there were Malik Badh Kotwal and Saiyid Saiyidu’s Sadat, the Katib (official, secretary). Addressing them, the Balkhi saint that a hindu had come and complained that the authorities of the Diwani were demanding from him rusum (custom duties or taxes) which he had not been called upon to pay at any time. He asked them to give him relief and protection, and exempt him from new demands. He observed that infidelity and faith, orthodoxy and heresy, were technical terms and should not be stretched to apply to men of religions, sects and schisms and did not come against care and consideration. There is no real enmity in anything and against anybody. Profane or superficial enmity was largely occasioned by selfish desires and interests. He cited the traditions about Prophet Moses who was warned up by God for not responding to the call for help from a repentant Pharaoh when he was in a drowning stage and about Prophet Abraham for denying shelter to a creature of God on the ground of being non-believer.

\textbf{Influence of Indian culture:}

Some practices and customs of life essentially Indian and Hindu had crept into Muslim culture due to long and close proximity and neighborliness of residence with the Hindus. Adverse questions and protests raised by the purists and Zealots it was said that Muslim women were silenced. It was said that Muslim women imitating the Hindu put vermillion on their heads, to which the Makhdum replied that there could be no objection if they did so to beautify their person and please their husbands. There were many things, food and garment, water and oil, etc. which all of us shared.\textsuperscript{14} The question of Tashabbah (similitude) came only when something was done as obligation of faith and was opposed to the fundamentals of Islam. When asked about the great Saturnalia of Holi, the saint

\textsuperscript{13} Ganj-i-La-Yakhfa, Khudabaksh Libarray, Patna.
\textsuperscript{14} Ganj-i La Yajna, Chapter1; 28, Quoted in Askari, Op.Cit, Islam and Muslims, Pg.116.
said that it was treated by the Hindus as a religious obligation and if so avoided by muslims.\textsuperscript{15}

There were a lot of Hindu cultural influences too on the life of the muslims. The Makhduum spoke of his great teacher as Maulana Kaka. Once he ran towards his mother on seeing smoke coming out of his house and reminded her of the established convention of not lighting fire for food but once during night. We find references in the Malfuzat to such sobriquets as Khwaja Gangu, Khwaja Mamman Multani, Shaikh Langoti, also called Fakhru’d Din Diwana Shaikh Laddu, Shaikh ghulati, Malik Nathan, Raja Kalwani, etc. there were also men of lower order such as Chajju Gawa’I and Jojan Khwush Khwan (one who read and sang sweetly)\textsuperscript{16}.

Men believed that burning of the crust of onions and garlic in the house, and sitting near the doorways caused penury, and use of common and broken combs and common towels led to poverty and separation. The firdausia and he Shuttariya saints gave amulets (Ta’widh) asking protection from deity.

Even in their dress and diet the Sufis of Bihar were very simple and sobre.. the most common clothes wore by them consisted of Rida, (cloak or mantle), Qamis (shirt of cotton), Jubba( a loose, wide-sleeved outer vestment, Qaba (a tight fitted coat with buttons), Pairahan (a loose vest or shirt ) Mirza’s (an under-jacket with big sleeves and open cuff) Tahbund (strip of cloth worn around the waist and passing between the legs), Izar (trousers covering the body to the middle of leg and even below that ) Dotaht (a double folded garment having two thickness of layers), Baraint (a cloak which kept out the rain water), Do-patta, Dastar, ‘Amama (big turban of folded sheets ) and Taqia (fillet, specially worn under head dress) have also been mentioned. The Sufis said that silken clothes were forbidden to men.\textsuperscript{17}

Local languages were assimilated in the writings of these sufi saints. The simple words like bhang, bhat, khatt, khirki, khaddi, dol, badhna, hal, dhakka, etc and more than

\textsuperscript{15} Munisu’l-Muridin. Chp 2:12, Khudabaksh Library, Patna.
\textsuperscript{16} Askari, Op.Cit, Pg.116.
\textsuperscript{17} Tuhfa-i-Ghaibi, Mukhhu’l Maani, Ganj-i- la Takhfa.
half a dozen dohras (couplets) in the Makhtubat of Muzafar Shams Balkhi\(^\text{18}\) of which one, when recited by a wandering faqir, playing on his one stringed ektara,

\begin{quote}
"ekat kandi bedha bahutar bharke ga’in
chinta heen man ichcha maran tetahi nahin"

moved the saint Makhdum almost to tears and the other one ran thus,

"sagar kuwe patal pani lakhan boond Bikaye
bajar paro the mathura nagari kanha piyase jaye"
\end{quote}

There are more intelligible, almost good specimens of Khari boli\(^\text{19}\).

The Malfuzat gives a detailed account of a life of a Muslim from his birth to death. The Sufis attitude in regard to some practices which had arisen without any express sanction appeared to be what might be avoided but should not be interfered with as a large number of people had become customed to the same, and there was no Nass or manifest prohibitory text. Such were the practices of Bang-i-Adhan, delivered to the ear of a new born child, lifting of two fingers, kissing them and placing on the two eyes on hearing the name of Prophet Mohammad in the Adhan: ceremonial naming or clothing of the child on a particular day, using lime to flavour the betel-leaves made out of crushed oyster shells\(^\text{20}\) which had once caused a row at sonargaon, each one present at a burial, throwing a clot of earth inside the grave and rose water on the shroud and flower of the tomb, the siyum ceremony on the third day of death, observing a fast called roza-i-mariam\(^\text{21}\) on the 15\(^{th}\) rajab and on Ashara or 10\(^{th}\) muharram, applying on the latter day collyrium on the eye and cooking haft dana (now called santa-nja) out of seven cereals, in commemoration of what had happened with the survivors of Imam Husain’s family at Karbala, fixing of 20,000\(^\text{22}\) as dower for the bride, assemblage of a large number of men and women and excessive ceremonies ‘carried to a high pitch’ on the occasion of marriage.

\(\text{18}\) Letter No.121,172 and 173 of Muzzaffar Shams Balkhi, Khudabaksh Library, Patna.
\(\text{19}\) Quoted in Askari, Op. Cit. Islam. Pg.15
\(\text{20}\) Khwan-i-pur Ni’mat, Of Makhdum Maneri, Khudabaksh Library, Patna.Pg.13
\(\text{21}\) Khwan-i-Pur Ni’maat, Ibid, Pg16.
\(\text{22}\) Ibid,Pg14.
There are also references showing that the prevailing atmosphere was charged with lying, cheating, deceitful evasion of obligatory duties, and was tinctured with corruption, superstitions and beliefs in charms and omens, witch-craft and trivialities. People took vows to do this or that if they got what they wanted in the shape of relief or aid, but when their purpose was served they backed out from their solemn promises. Some had devised clever methods of escaping from the obligatory payment of Dhakat (portions of Muslim property given in charity). They took recourse to Hila-i-Shara‘t (legal fineness) which became hila-i-Haram (forbidden fraud). They put the amount of Dhakat in a tray and covered the silver with the quantity of grain and offered it to an indigent person. When the latter was about to return the tray for a few dirhums (silver coins) and in this way they got back what they seemed to have given away. Another ingenious way centered in what was technically called Haulan-I Haul (passing away or turning round of one whole year). In the eleventh month, before the needed expiry of full year, they sold their goods and property which was liable to the levy of Dhakat to their wives and this gave them the plea that they had nothing to pay Dhakat for. Sometimes after they made a show of purchasing the same from their wives. The saint condemned such trickeries.

The Makhdum of Bihar was very critical of many Qazi’s and muftis who were charged of dereliction of duty and misuse of power. He and his scholarly Balkhi successor in their letters to intellectuals such as Maulvi Hamid and Sadru’din, expressed their disapproval on accepting such office. They also believed that burning of the crust of onions and garlic in the house, sitting near the doorways caused penury and use of common and broken combs and common towels led to poverty and separation. The Firdausia and Shuttariya saints gave amulets (Taw’idh) asking for protection from the diety.

Sama (mystic songs)

The Suhrwardias, Firdausias and the Chistiyas allowed music under certain conditions of zaman, makan akhwan (time, place and people present), but they were more restrained and did not fall victims to the charms of Indian music as was the case of the
latter. As for the Shattariyas, they had no fondness at all for the sama being immersed as they were in their own peculiar all-absorbing dhikr and ashghal. There were frequent assemblies and ecstatic conditions occasioned by mystic songs sung in the audition parties called sama but never could anyone of the saintly personages in Bihar' rotate on his legs' so as to be dubbed' “Pir-i-Raqqas, like those of the chistiyas. 23

In Ganj-la Yakhfa, we get a description of Sama as it was practiced in Bihat Khanqah. First, there was a recital of the Quran. There were Qaria (readers of the Quran) and Khwshkhwans (sweet-voiced minstrels called Qawwal or Goindagan). First an Ashari (ten verses, of the Quran were read, and then the tutrib (singer) sang some verses of a ghazal in Persian, which were sometimes tuned to an instrument. The Makhdum was often seen moved to tears, absorbed and overwhelmed. When he regained his form he uttered twice Astagh firullah (God, forgive me) and renewed his Wuda (ablution). He did this all for losing control over himself came or was brought by somebody, the audience were permitted to have the sama, for it was forbidden only to men of evil passions and not good men. Once there was a Sama on the conclusion whereof the Makhdum, addressing the audience, quoted some verses “I bring to your ears two things from the tongues of sama. Sama is a matter of moment for you, and you are an instant to it.” Once when the mystic minstrel, in a garden outside the Khanqah switched on from Persian verses to Hindawi, and the audience were carried to the highest pitch of raptures, the Makhdum said that Hindawi jakari or chakri songs are usually sung by women and they were very soft and lust exciting which might have caused mischief for young men had crept in the assembly, and they are incapable of understanding or appreciating the true purpose and spiritual import of mystic songs. 24

Men believed that burning of the crust of onions and garlic in the house, and sitting near the doorways caused penury, and use of common and broken combs and common towels led to poverty and separation. The firdausia and he Shuttariya saints gave amulets (Ta’widh) asking protection from deity.

23 Maktubat-i-Quddusiya., Quoted in Askari, Op Cit, Islam, Pg.120.
24 Makhtubat-i-Quddusiya.
Even in their dress and diet the Sufis of Bihar were very simple and sobre. The most common clothes wore by them consisted of Rida, (cloak or mantle), Qamis (shirt of cotton), Jubba (a loose, wide-sleeved outer vestment), Qaba (a tight fitted coat with buttons), Pairahan (a loose vest or shirt), Mirza’s (an under-jacket with big sleeves and open cuff), Tahbund (strip of cloth worn around the waist and passing between the legs), Izar (trousers covering the body to the middle of leg and even below that), Dottaht (a double folded garment having two thickness of layers), Baraint (a cloak which kept out the rain water), Do-patta, Dastar, ‘Amama (big turban of folded sheets) and Taqia (fillet, specially worn under head dress) have also been mentioned. The Sufis said that silken clothes were forbidden to men.

Education

There are traditions or Ahadith ascribing many things to the Prophet of Islam, both in the form of his sayings and actions, inculcating the need, in fact the obligation, to acquire knowledge even by undertaking long and distant travels for the development of critical spirit and formation of character, and for acting and thinking in upright ways. One of the traditions, whether authentic or apocryphal, says that a father can confer upon his child no more valuable gift than good education. On the other side, much is said about the lofty ideals and higher aims and purposes of the system of educations prevalent in India since the time of the Guptas and even earlier in the Buddhist and the brahmanical periods. The renowned scholars occupied an important position in social life because of their selfless character, deep knowledge, and wonderful feats of memory. The muslims also refer not only to the educational institutions for higher learning that had sprung up in various places of Islamic lands outside India and were source of inspiration and served as models of colleges and schools founded and patronized by muslim sovereigns who ruled over India at various times and were eager to do something for their faith, and for the benefit of their souls rather than for public good. There were rules prescribing duties of and relationship between parents and pupils, teachers and taught. The three R’s, Reading and writing and instruction in simple arithmetic were regarded as the basic elementary studies and the foundations of education. The first task of the conquerors after gaining a

25 Tuhfa-i-Ghaibi, Mukhkhu'l Maani, Ganj-i- la Takhfa.. Khuda Baksh Library, Patna.
strong foothold was to raise masjids at different places, most of which had a maqtab or a madrasas attached to them to provide instruction in the three R's, as well as higher education through their own mother tongue, Arabic, Turki or Persian. It was at these institutions that young Muslims received elementary and higher education as well as military training. Education in higher stages was characterized by grammatical exercises, letter-writing, poetic and rhetorical compositions, oratorical practices, debates, discussions and disputations Baktiyar Khalji is said to have established maqtabs and madrasas in different parts of Bihar and particularly at Biharsarif, his chief center of military operations. Significantly enough, however nobody either amongst the hindus or muslims, realized the need of a handbook and much less of a comprehensive treatise on education in all its aspects, character and tendencies, extent and institutions, subject matters in elementary and higher stages etc.

In course of time, there grew up many educational institutions. Among the renowned madrasas located in Bihar during the Turco-Afghan period mention may be made of the following: the madrasas of Makhdum Sharfudin Maneri, Ahmad Chirmposh, Sheikh Abdur Nabi and Qazi Abdus Shekur at Maner Sherif, Yahiya and Chirmposh were noted for their erudition in poetry and theology and commanded the respect not only of scholars of neighbouring countries but also of Firuz Tughlaq, the Turko Afghan of Delhi, who was a lover of learning. The madrasa of Qazi Ziallah at Mohalla Mirdar, Biharsarif, of Shamssul Huq, alias Buddh Haqqani, at Bazidpur nearBarh in Patna district, those of Mulla Mansoor Danishmand and of Mulla Abdus Sami at Rajgir, that of Amir Ataullah Zainabi at Phulwarisharif and the madrasas of Mulla Shafi and Mulla Afaq at Amuthu have been notably mentioned.

Bihar derived its name from Vihara which was a centre or seat of learning where a number of famous scholars imparted knowledge in various branches to earnest students of Hinayana Buddhism. There were considerable educational activities in the traditional hindu and muslim systems of learning in such centres as Maner, Biharsarif, Gaya, Mithila and Tirhut. The various sufis Khanqahs both in the south and north Bihar fostered the cause of education. A muslim child learned at home and in Maktabs reading, reciting and memorizing the Quran, learning the rules of grammar and speech, some ethical or
moral maxims, a few traditions and lives of saints. Those who entered the madrassa attached to or situated near the mosques, carried on their higher studies. In early times people, hindu or muslims thought it wrong to take pay for teaching.

The school system of the muslims prevalent during the period 1206 to 1526 and even later, required that every child after learning his alphabets and vocabulary, should read the Holy Quran under a Muqri- one who knows how to read it. Next, the student had to read literature, romance, history and ethics. He made himself conversant with such works as Pandnamah, Amudnamah, Gulistan, Bostan, Jamiul Qawanin, Ruqqat Amanullah Hussaini, Bahardanesh-Sikandarnamah and so on. Those who stopped at this stage were given the title of munshi. But others who continued at this stage were given the title of munshi. But others who continued further were called as Maulvi, Maulana or Fazil, befitting the standard and nature of learning that they had acquired. Those who studied Arabic to read, in addition, works on the life and teaching of the Prophet Mohammad and commentaries on The Quran, Aqaid, Tasawwuf, Logic, Philosophy and Ilm-e- Kalam. students were given free education and were supplied with food, clothing and books by zealous patrons of learning. Every man of means supported at least one student. The work entitled Sirat-i-Firuzshahi, composed in the 14th century, provides among other things a catalogue of worldly advice supposed to have been given by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq to his officials concerning the line of action that the official should pursue in private life. One piece of advice is, 'all should secure knowledge and learning for themselves and should not neglect to educate their fellow muslims. The knowledge that is acquired must not be forgotten but brushed up by constant discussion. Learning should be imparted to the deserving only'. Thus, guided by the prevailing idea of the time, the lawyers, judges and even administrative officers and physicians welcomed earnest students and gave them instruction suited to their aptitude. Even during the reign of the Turkish slave Balban, high officials like Mustaufiul Mamalik and Shamsul Malik spared no pains to render all help to seekers of knowledge. All those occupying high stations in life spent their spare time in teaching, and when they had finished reading a book, could not rest contended till they had explained the subject matter to others who had not read it. There was besides, no dearth of persons who could collect rare and
valuable manuscripts and give them free to students or would engage calligraphists to transcribe manuscripts and when, the transcription work was completed, to place it at the disposal of scholars. In addition to private accommodation provided for students by the rich, the government ran boarding houses. Here the meals supplied were satisfactory and at times, rather rich.

In the madrasas individual care was taken. Sometimes the boy at the top, known as Moid, explained his own ideas to his classmates, this was followed by further discussion, with the teacher rounding off the debate by making his observations. This method of training was generally called Edu.

The system of examination was simple. At the time of test discussions, candidates who showed their worth were declared successful. The fortunate candidate had then to appear before an assembly of Ulemas and go through a ceremony called 'Rasm-idastarbandi', which was something like convocation. The main item of the function was to fasten at urban on the head of the successful candidate, who was thus raised to the rank of an ulema or a Sheikh.

During the time of Turko-Afghan period, the study of the sciences was not neglected. Learning, in the fourteenth century and later, consisted of acquiring knowledge in theology, politics, astronomy, astrology, physiology, medicine, zoology and veterinary science. The study of different branches of science not only affected the people of Delhi and the neighboring lands but also influenced the people of Bihar, which formed a component part of the Turko-Afghan Empire. There is however no material at our disposal to prove how far Bihar made practical use of science it specialized in.

As education, like practically all other departments of life amongst the Hindus, had been closely associated with religion and muslim education also in early Hindu age had been largely in the hands of theologians, jurists and mystic Sufis of different religious orders, there is no better way of forming a correct picture, and getting an intensive idea of intellectual life and educational system, both in the elementary primary and higher secondary stages of the character and content of curriculum, the factors and
forces at work in the development of education, and the important role played by the existing system in the social set up of the age, than to collect and shift the scanty and scattered materials as are still available in the works of authorities who were only indirectly concerned with education as a separate discipline. Such works are historical, biographical, literary and more specifically religious and hagiological. The facts collected should be placed in due relation to the developments of thought and culture, learning and education. The few literary glimpses of social and religious life and of education in its social bearing that we can catch from the works of mystic Sufis called Malfuzat and Maktubat and of Smriti writers and also the prose works and versified effusions of some contemporary poets show that education was thought then, as in ancient times, as a panacea for all evils and as means of improving the moral and physical conditions for a fairly considerable section of population who formed the basis of the social pyramid. Education must have been widely diffused in the early middle age than is commonly supposed. The sultanate period was neither more nor less provided with elementary schools and institutions for higher instruction than any period.

The contribution of Sufi preachers of Bihar to the evolution of a common mixed language, Khariboli or Hindustani is worth noting. We get genuine specimens and authentic evidences of linguistic assimilation in the writings and utterances of the Sufi saints recorded by their immediate disciples. Not to speak of Hindustani terms such as Khat (bedstead), Bhat (boiled rice), langoti (a narrow slip to cover the private parts), and numerous Indian names such as Chajju Gawai, Bibi Pujari, Bhikan Piyara, Lad Safi, Jojan, Sheikh Chulhai, Maulana Nathan, Shaikh Badh Nur, we get full sentences spontaneously spoken, and Hindi doharas quoted or composed by early muslim saints of Bihar.

In Bihar these Sufi saints set in motion a process of cultural and linguistic fusion who moved from the western parts to these regions where they preached to the people. When they came to Bihar they began mixing the local idiom in their use of Hindi both in speech and writing. The mingling of Turkish, Arabic and Persian words in their vocabulary was a natural phenomenon arising out of their cultural background. This trend in the development of Hindi through linguistic blendings and cohesion is to be seen in the
works of Sufi saints of Bihar, written in Persian in the form of letters (Malfuzat) and discourses and utterances (Maktubat) in which Hindi verses and sayings and illustrative statements in prose have also been quoted.  

Thus, Sufism and Sufistic literature had a lot of positive influence in the Socio-cultural development of Bihar. They preferred a mystic and spiritual interpretation of the Quranic law to its mere literal sense. They considered service to God's creatures and fulfillment of their duties and responsibilities towards their fellow beings as essential for their discipline. They put aside their own desires to render themselves agreeable to all, irrespective of caste and creed and they were free from all complexes and shackles of colour and race. In this context the contribution made by Makhdum Maneri is unparalleled.

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26 Diwakar, R.R. Bihar through Ages, Kashi Prasad Research Institute, Patna, pg.28.