CHAPTER VIII

Distinctive features of Muslim Religious Thought in India between 1200 A.D. to 1325 A.D. and 1326 A.D. to 1450 A.D.

The review of Muslim religious thought in India, from 1200 A.D. to 1325 A.D., unquestionably brings home to us the fact that the Indian Muslim Religious Thought was represented by the Muslim mystics. These mystics were, no doubt, observing the laws of Shariat, but Tariqat instead of Shariat was the dominating feature of the Muslim Religious Thought. They did not bring rigidity in the external laws of Shariat. The two mystic orders, the Chishti and the Suhrawardi were busy in the work of preaching Islam. Chishti order was an autonomous institution. It was completely divorced from political life. Saints such as Shaikh Muin-ud-din Chishti; Shaikh Burhanuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki; Shaikh Hamid-ud-din Sufi; Qadi Hamid-ud-din Nigauri; Shaikh Baha-ud-din Zakriyya; Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya; and hundreds of Khalifas of the above mentioned saints tried their best to propagate Islam. They presented the true concept of Islam not only theoretically but also by living according to its doctrines. Their discourses on conception of God, knowledge of God, love of God, and vision of God were in strict conformity with the doctrines of Islam as interpreted by Al-Ghazzali, and others. They all preached the determined freedom. In connection with the nature of
soul, they confined themselves to the view that soul is the commandment of God'.

Muslim rulers of the slave and the Khilji dynasties (1206 A.D. to 1320 A.D.) never dared to meddle with the affairs of the above mentioned saints. They respected the saints from the core of their heart.

Most of the Muslims were attached either to the chishtī or the suhrwardī order. The overwhelming majority of Muslims consisted of new converts to Islam who embraced Islam due to its doctrines of brotherhood, liberty and equality. They were very much impressed by the spotless character of the saints and their message of love and service to humanity at large. At the time of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya the Chishtī Khānqah was established in every part of the country. These Khānqahs were governed by a central organization. Thus, side by side with political organization there was also a kind of Muslim spiritual organization working through out India.

In the first half of the 13th century there were only a few divines. But hundreds of saints and divines migrated from Central Asia to India in the 'Alai regime due to Mongol invasion. Slowly and gradually madrasas (schools) were started for the education of the masses. Fiqh (jurisprudence) Hadīth (Traditions) and Tafsir were the main subjects which were included in the courses of study at these Madrasas. Thus, at the end of the 13th century, religious
consciousness was highly developed, at least, in the literate Muslim masses.

Fourteenth century dawned with its new phase and grandeur. After the death of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya (1325 A.D.) the atmosphere of the country was changed. The spiritual order of the Chishti silsila was very much weakened. Shari'ah instead of Tariqat became the dominant feature of Muslim Religious Thought. Saints there were but the saints of the 13th century had become legends of the past. The two dynasties, the Tughluq (1320 A.D. to 1413 A.D.) and the Sayyids (1414 A.D. to 1450 A.D.) ruled the country.

The first Tughluq Sultan, Ghiyath-ud-din was a man of character. He punctually performed the congregational prayers, observed fast in the month of Ramadān, and performed the Tarāwīh prayers. He never tasted wine which was strictly prohibited in his regime. ¹ He was greatly interested in Muslim Jurisprudence. For the observance of Shari'ah he appointed Qādis (judges) through out his regime.² Divines were gaining power at his time. Because of the protests of these divines the Sultan called a meeting to discuss the legality of sama' (Music) were Shaikh Nizam-ud-din had to go personally to explain what sama was³. The Sultan was a lover of wisdom. He respected the divines, muftis, teachers and students and granted money to them according to their status. He donated huge amounts of money to the Khānqāh.⁴
But as ill luck would have it Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq succeeded sultan Ghiyath-ud-din Tughluq. Muhammad bin Tughluq was a man of contradictory nature. Barani writes about him: "Sultan Muhammad was one of the wonderful creations of God. He possessed contradictory qualities which were beyond the comprehension of the rationalists and the divines". Though he regularly offered his prayers five time a day and had firm belief in Islam yet unfortunately he came under the influence of Sai'd, the heretic and the logician; 'Ubaid', the unbeliever, Najm-Intishar, and Maulana 'Ali-ud-din, the philosophers, from his early youth.

In the company of the above mentioned personalities the Sultan acquired a firm belief in rationalism and doubted the traditions and the sayings of the religious saints which were not in conformity with reason.

This brought about a great change in his religious outlook. He never cared for Shari'at and always followed his own conscience. He believed that state and religion are twins. Hence he forced the saints and divines to join the state service and to work according to his instructions. This resulted in a great resentment among saints, divines and the devout Muslims. The result was that there was hardly a single day, in the regime of this unique Sultan, when innocent saints, divines and the devout Muslims were not tortured, punished or massacred mercilessly.

Shifting of the capital from Delhi to Deogir gave a death blow to the central organization of the Chishti
order. The Khalifas and the sincere disciples of Shaikh-Mizam-door-din were scattered and thus the living traditions of the order came to an end. The Sultan came in open conflict with the elder chishti saints. Hence the Khanqahs which were the main source of guidance and education of the populace came to an end. But this attitude of the Sultan brought about a great reaction among the literate masses. People felt a vacuum in their religious life, and a desire for preserving the past heritage prompted them to compile the malfuzat. Amir Khurd compiled the Siyar-ul-Auliya, Shaikh Farid-ud-din compiled his Surur-us-Sudur, Hamid Qalandar compiled his Khair-ul-Majalis and Maulana Hamad-bin 'Imad compiled his Ahsan-ul-Aqwal. This resulted in producing a rigid attitude about the Shariat. Though the right of ijtihad had been withdrawn by the 'ulama' long before, yet it was at this time that clear and definite declarations to that effect were made. Muslim jurists and divines emphasized only the four established schools of jurisprudence. They never bothered to go to the original sources of Islam.

Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughluq was replaced by Sultan Firus-Shah-Tughluq. He was a God-fearing man. He strictly followed Shariat. Barani writes about him, "I have not seen a sultan like Firus-Shah who has protected the rights of the muslims and strictly observed the laws of Shariat." Soon after his coronation, he visited the tombs of Baba Farid,
Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya, Shaikh Jamal-ud-din and the saints of Bahkaur and donated a handsome amount of money for the maintenance of the Khānqāhes. He awarded villages, lands and gardens to the descendants of Baba Farid, Shaikh Bahā-ud-din, Shaikh Nizam-ud-din, Shaikh Rukun-ud-din and Shaikh Jamal-ud-din. He removed all heretics from the government services and appointed religious and God-fearing judges and governors.

He constructed a madrasa, named 'Piruzi Madrasa'. Maulana Jalal-ud-din was the principal of that institution. It was one of the great centres of learning in the East. Tafsīr, Fiqh and Hadith were the main subjects which were taught there. This period is noted for the profuse literature on Fiqh and Tasawwuf.

Sultan Pirop Shah died in 1388 A.D. After his death a civil war broke out between his sons and the grandsons. His grandson Sultan Tughluq Shah ascended the throne, but he was assassinated by Malik Rukun-ud-din in 1388-89 A.D. After his assassination Abu Bakar, another grandson of Pirop Shah came to throne but he could stay only for a year and a half. He was replaced by Sultan Muhammad who reigned for six years and six months. Sultan 'Ala-ud-din succeeded Sultan Muhammad but died only after a month and sixteen days. Then he was followed by the last king of the dynasty Sultan Mahmood Shah. Though he reigned for twenty years and two months but his reign was a nominal one. He was weak and
incompetent in administration. Taimur, the Amir of central Asia invaded India during his reign and threw the country into complete anarchy. With his death in 1413 A.D. the rule of the Turkish Sultans of Delhi came to an end.23

The unity of the Delhi was disrupted with the decline of the Tugluqs. Kingdoms in the different provinces of India were established which became the centres of enlightenment and culture later on. On the end of the Tugluq dynasty, Khizr Khan, the son of Mulk Sultiman and the governor of Multan at the time of Taimur's invasion, occupied Delhi and founded the Sayyid dynasty.24 He was a pious, truthful, virtuous, well bred and a man of character. He spent a lot of money in charity. People sunk in languor became prosperous and happy. Though he reigned for seven and two months, but his authority did not extend much beyond the environs of Delhi.25 Mubarak Khan succeeded Khizr Khan. He followed the path of his ancestor but was assassinated in 1433-34 A.D. at the instigation of his Wasir. Prince Muhammad, a grandson of Khizr Khan, was then raised to the throne. After ten years he was replaced by his son Sultan Alla-ud-din who died in 1451 A.D.26 After his death Bahlol Lodi, the governor of Lahore, seized Delhi and thus the reign of Sayyid dynasty in Delhi came to an end.27

Thus, from the death of Sultan Firus Shah Tugluq to Sultan Alla-ud-din, the last ruler of the Sayyid dynasty,
there remained a dead and dormant period in the history of Muslim Religious Thought. The rulers, in this period, engaged themselves in civil wars, and anarchy and unrest were the order of the day.

Having made a general survey of the attitude of the Tughluq and the Sayyid sultans towards the Muslim religion, we may now turn to the Muslim society. Muslim society in the 14th century was drifting away from the true ideals and spirit of Islam. It was degenerating day by day. Religion was merely a dead formality. It was full of superstitions and innovations. The worship of the saints' tombs was in full swing. And it was but natural. The Muslim masses as it has already been mentioned, were generally attached either to chiṣṭī or to suhrwārī order. They were more or less the blind followers of their orders. Most of them were converts from the low caste Hindus who embraced Islam but could not imbibe its influence deeply. They were habituated to idol worship from antiquity. Though Islam kept them away from their idols it failed to bring them before the unseen God in the true sense. Moreover, in their former religion they used to depend on the guidance of pandits and mahants. After the renunciation of their ancestral religion, they still clung to their directors. They formed a close relationship with them. Whenever they faced any difficulty they ran to their directors for its solution. And it is a pity that this practice continued even after the death of the spiritual guides. Now their graves served as places of
refuge for the disciples. Thus, slowly and gradually the graves of the saints were converted into places of worship and sanctity. Firdausi writes in his Futūhāt-i-Firūz Shahi, "Again a practice, not permitted by Islam had become common in the city of Muslims. On sacred days large parties of women came out of the city to visit the tombs riding in palanquins, chariots and dolahs, on horses and male buffaloes, often many of them came on foot in large groups".

A group of persons appeared at that time who called themselves the lovers of God, but in reality they were mere pretenders. In the garb of saints, they were heretics. They claimed that they were not bound by the laws of Shari'ah as they had attained the Tariqat. Firdausi in his Futūhāt describes them in the following manner: "Again a sect under the guise of theism, renunciation and celibacy, led the people astray and made disciples, and uttered blasphemous words. For instance, Ahmad Bihari, the religious head of these misguided persons lived in the city and was considered to be God by a body of men from Bihar".

Again, there was a man in Delhi named Rukun who claimed to be the Mehdi. He used to say, "I am the Mehdi-e-Akharuz-Zamân. I am endowed with inspired knowledge and have not been taught or instructed by anybody. I know the names of all created beings, a knowledge enjoyed by none of
the apostles except Adam. The secrets of science of letters, which were not revealed to anybody, have been revealed to me." He wrote books in support of this claim and invited people to accept these false and erroneous beliefs. He declared himself to be Rukun-ud-din, the apostle of God. 30

Again, one of the Mawla Zadahas (freed men) of Ain-Mahru had set himself up as a religious leader in Gujrat. And collecting a number of disciples, he used to declare 'I am God'. " He used to say to his disciples, "I am God; when I say 'I am god', you should repeat 'Thou art' 'Thou art'. "I am the Lord for whom there is no death". 31

This was not the condition in India alone but the entire Muslim world was suffering from this fatal disease. With the advent of time, however, there appeared men like Ibn-Tamiya 32 at Damascus, and Shaikh Nasir-ud-din Chiragh-Delhi and Shaikh Sharf-ud-din Yahya Munairi in India, who tried to reform this state of affairs.

Imam Ibn-Tamiya, a theologian and jurist was born in 1268 A.D. and died in 1328 A.D. A bitter enemy of innovations (bida') he attacked the cult of saints and objected to pilgrimages to tombs. He considered a visit paid to the tomb of a Muslim a forbidden act. Both by words and writings he combated all the Muslim sects, such
as Kharidji, Murdji, Rafidi, Qadari, Mathzili, Ashari and others. He freely criticised and attacked great personalities of Islam whose authority is ordinarily recognized as infallible. 'Umar-bin-Al-Khattab made many mistakes and 'Ali-bin Abi Talib made three hundred mistakes according to his statement. He also vehemently attacked Al-Ghazzali, Ibn-'Arabi, 'Umar-bin-Al-Farid and the sufis in general.

The influence of Ibn-Tamiya also reached the sub-continent of India through his disciple, Maulana 'Abdul-'Aziz Ardabali. 'Abdul 'Aziz Ardabali was held in great esteem by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq and it was he who greatly influenced the religious outlook and policy of Sultan Firuz Shah. In the coming chapter we shall discuss the thought of Shaikh Nasir-ud-din and that of Imam Ibn Tamiya together, so that we may easily find out the points of similarity and difference between the two outstanding reformers. After Shaikh Nasir-ud-din we shall discuss the thought of Shaikh Sharf-ud-din Yahya Munaiiri.