The importance of 13th century in the annals of Islam and particularly in the history of Indian Muslims Religious Thought cannot be over emphasised. This is the century which gave rise to the famous mystic orders (silsilahs) of Chishti and Suhrawardi in India. These mystic orders served as a beacon light for the Indian Muslims. The eminent personalities of these orders presented the ideals of Islam in purified form not only theoretically but also in a living form through their own practices.

The Chishti saints, sitting under thatched roofs, wearing tattered clothes and living away from the life of courts, preached the doctrines of love, universal brotherhood and service to humanity. In the face of anthropomorphic and polytheistic doctrines, these outstanding saints put forward the conception of Personal God Who loves His creatures and with Whom His creatures may form a bond of love. By their virtuous character and high ideals they brought about a revolution in Indian life, and millions of non-Muslims embraced Islam.

During the century, the monasteries (Khānaqah) of these mystic orders were established almost in every part of the country and each monastery became a centre of Islamic preachings and guidance. In course of time, different branches emerged from these mystic orders and even today millions of Muslims are associated with them. The tombs of the eminent saints of these mystic orders have turned into places of pilgrimage. Year after year Muslims and non-Muslims in large numbers visit these places.
It is a pity that no attempt has so far been made to present the thought of these saints in a systematic manner. Numerous books have been written on Indian Philosophy but they are confined to the Hindu saints and scholars. Some historians have in recent years attempted to throw side light in their writings on the medieval Muslim saints and divines but they have been content to limit themselves only to the historical aspects of the subject. Nothing beyond that could obviously be expected from them.

In such a situation the present study, in which an attempt has been made to trace the development of the Muslim Religious Thought in India from 1200 A.D. to 1450 A.D., may claim some significance. The object of this study is, as will appear, to prepare a groundwork for a future history of Indian Muslim Religious Thought.

The study of this period, alluring as it may be, is fraught with great difficulties, one difficulty being that of the source material. With the passage of time numerous legends have grown up around these saints which have obscured the true picture. The present endeavour is, therefore, aimed at making an critical and judicious an exposition of the available authentic material as possible, taking special care to identify and reject all fabricated writings in accordance with the verdict of Shaiikhlisam-ud-din Auliya and Shaiikh Nasir-ud-din Chairagh-i-Dehli.

Another difficulty lies in the nature of the thought itself. Most of the authentic material available is in the form
of a collection of the sayings of these saints. These sayings lack intellectual systematization for in most cases they are the expression of their experiences. In following the utterances of these divines and saints, it is but natural to be impressed more by their personalities than by their intellectual rigour as it would be futile to expect a logical sequence in these experiences. In presenting their ideas attempt has been made, however, to give a logical form to these utterances so that we may view them as a coherent whole.

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