Chapter – 4

SUFI AND BHAKTI WOMEN

The beginning of the thirteenth century or probably, a century earlier, saw the establishment of Sufi orders in India. The Sufi saints participated in the overall development of the society. They played important part in molding the attitude and activities of the people and their khanqah was the place where people of all sorts assembled. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya open heartedly admitted all sorts of people in his discipleship.\(^1\) Sufis were not gender biased; women were given equal importance as their male counterparts.\(^2\) Sufism is fundamentally a religion of love.\(^3\) The aim of the Sufis was to throw open the path of salvation to everyone irrespective of his status. It was a secular movement which intended to secure the privileges and right for the lower sections of society. The various Sufi silsilas were initiated by the learned Sufis and were aimed at spiritual as well as socio religious uplift of the society.\(^4\)

Almost all the Sufis won the heart of the people by their love and liberal attitude and social service. The Sufis considered them as an important section of the society \(^5\) and paid respect to them. The main concern of the chapter is to explore the attitude of the Sufis towards women and the institution of marriage. The Sufis of the Sultanate appear to have adopted a genuine attitude towards women which was in consonance with the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) and Quranic spirit.

Fortunately, in the lives of the Sufis their mothers played an important role in developing mystic cult, some references are also found where the wife played an important role in developing and maintaining the spiritual tendencies of her husband. In case of some Sufis the mother \(^6\) identified the mystic aptitude in their son and played important role in transforming them into eminent Sufis of the age. Baba

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\(^6\) *Khair-ul-Majalis*, op. cit., p.76.
Farid’s first instructor was his mother; he had deep influence of his mother’s teaching on him. Her name was Qarasum Bibi. She in order to inculcate the habit of offering regular prayers used to place sugar candies under his prayer carpet. Baba Farid was very fond of sugar in childhood, once his mother told him *God sends sugar to that boy who punctually offers his morning prayers*, and began to keep small packet of sugar under his pillow every night. When Baba Farid offered his prayers in the morning he found that packet under his pillow. Baba Farid, when reached his twelfth years his mother stopped putting the packet, but the packet continued to reach him from the divine source. His mother did not know about this. Once, she asked him whether he was receiving that sugar. She was taken by surprise when she received the reply in affirmative. She made a careful inquiry and was convinced that the gift came from the divine source.⁷ Mother of famous Chisti saint Nizamuddin Auliya was Bibi Zulaikha, he had great impact of the teachings of his mother. Most of the Sufi literature of the Sultanate period has abundant references of how the mother and son were spiritually related with each other.

The Sufi saints imparted respect to the women in their family as well as the women in the society. They came across number of women in their *Khanqahs* and in the society too. Their perception, views and attitude towards different kind of females as a part of society is an important matter to deal with. The chapter is divided into two parts; the first part will deal with eminent Sufis of the Sultanate period and their views, attitude towards the women folk and their views regarding marriage and celibacy. The second part of the chapter is a collection of biographies of the women Sufi saints of the Sultanate period.

The sources consulted are *Fawaid-ul-Fuad* of Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Khair-ul-Majalis* of Hamid Qalandar, *Siyar-ul-Auliya* of Sayyid Mohammad Mubarak Kirmani known as Mir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Arifin* of Shaikh Jamali and *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* of Abdul Haqq Muhaddis. None of these Sufi literatures is devoid of the sayings of the Sufi saints for women. By the means of *Khair-ul-Majalis* we come to know the method of initiation of female as disciple in Sufi order by the famous saint Nasiruddin Chirag Dehalvi. The saint would first dip his index finger in a bowl fill with water and

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recited prayers. After that the woman who had to be taken into discipleship immersed her index finger in the same bowl and completed her initiation. This indicates that he did not consider women inferior than men and did not practice discrimination on the basis of sex. Similar restriction was placed on both men and women.\(^8\)

A woman approached to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and she was initiated among his *murids* by the way of *baiat*.\(^9\) Initially, there were two disciples in the service of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.\(^10\) Both men and women could perform *chillah* in the *khanqah* of Sufi saints. Once a man wished to perform *chillah* in the guidance of khwaja Zikrullah, the saint explains him the difference of method of performing *chillah* by male and female. The process was easy for females and more rigorous for males. Like Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, his chief successor Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag Dehlvi treated men and women on equal plane. It is said that the Shaikh used to give his prayer carpet to the person whom he found sincere in matters of religion. Both men and women received this favour from him. Before his death, he is reported to have distributed the relics that he possessed among his four disciples, one of whom was a woman.\(^11\) Shaikh Farid allowed the Hindus to become his *murids* or spiritual disciples. In *Jamatkhana* of Baba Farid no distinction was made between man and woman on any ground as in his eyes all human being were equal.\(^12\)

Some of the females of the Sultanate period are well-known for their piety and religious minded attitude. Among the saintly women in Islam the most prominent one was Rabia Basri. Later on, in the sources of the Sultanate period, references are found of many other Sufi women such as mother of Shaikh Farid, Bibi Qarasum, mother of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, Bibi Zulaikha, Bibi Auliya, Bibi Sharifa, Bibi Fatima Sam, Bibi Khadija etc.

As the mother of the Sufi saints helped them achieve the mystic aptitude the wives of some of the renowned Sufis helped them to maintain their spiritual values.

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\(^8\) *The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar*, op. cit., p. 134.


\(^12\) ‘Baba Shaikh Farid: A Harbinger of Hindu-Muslim unity’, op. cit., p. 76.
This can be better analyzed by mentioning the anecdote from the life of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagori.

Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagori along with his wife lived a peaceful and self-sufficient life in a small village of Nagaur. His daily need was a few mounds of grain and sometimes he needed a few yards of rough hand woven cloth. He produced these things for himself and his wife. He lived in a mud house and cultivated a single bighah (unit to measure land) of land, used only two sheets of cloth to cover him. He kept a cow and milked it. This was how he spent his life peacefully. His wife was a lady of fervent piety and strong mystic temperament too lived a mystic life, she cooked and led a simple life like a peasant woman.\(^\text{13}\)

Touched by his penitence and poor living conditions the muqta of Lahore offered a plot of land and some cash to him. The Shaikh apologized saying that, \textit{As none of his elder saints had not accepted a government gift how can he accept it?}\(^\text{14}\) Later on, the muqta of Nagaur informed the Sultan about the matter and the Sultan sent five hundred silver tankas with a farman conferring a village on him. When the muqta presented the royal gift to him he informed about it to his wife, who asked her husband to refuse the offer thus considering the life of material prosperity and comfort unavailing for them. They were in such a state of poverty that the lady herself had a tattered dupatta on her head and the saint with a grimy loin cloth on his body. In such a state of utter poverty the wife was filled with the mystic powers, she spoke to her husband, \textit{Oh, Khwaja do you want to disgrace years of spiritual devotion and penitence by accepting this gift?}\(^\text{14}\) She then consoled her husband by saying that, \textit{Need not to worry, I have won two seers of yarn that will be sufficient for preparing a loin cloth for you and a dupatta for me.}\(^\text{14}\)

Such was the mystic values of the women of that age. She in order to maintain the mystic values of her husband and of herself asked her husband to refuse the wealth offered by the Sultan. The Sufis of the Sultanate period considered that the sainthood could not be reconciled with the possession of material wealth.


Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagori heard his wife patiently and was successful in preserving his spiritualism. The Sufi saint had a liberal attitude towards women whether she would be a mother, a wife or even a slave girl. The Sufis had a humble attitude towards their female slaves sometimes they felt better to emancipate the female slave. Once Maulana Alauddin Usuli had a newly purchased slave girl who belonged to the *mewas* village near Badaun named Kahtehar. She had a son whom she left and came to the service of Maulana, once all of a sudden remembering her son she started crying. Maulana Alauddin enquired the reason behind her weeping and she told the reason of her despair. The Maulana asked her as to whether she would be able to reach her place if he took her to the water tank which was at a distance of one mile from the city of Badaun. She replied positively and agreed that she will be able to reach her house if she was left at the water tank. The next morning the Maulana took her to the tank and left her there and gave a few loaves of bread for her rest of the journey\(^\text{15}\). In this way he helped the woman to reconcile with her separated son.\(^\text{16}\) Thus, the Sufis paid due regard to women and tried to help them in every possible way. Maulana Alauddin Usuli considered it his moral duty to help the woman reunite with her son and bring happiness to her.

The Sufis continued to inspire humanism in their followers with regard to the treatment of slaves. Shaikh Jalaluddin Bukhari, popularly known as Makhdum Jahanian-i-Jahangasht was critical of people who sold slave girls after they had given birth to their children. He describes how a female slave was purchased by a young man for domestic work and when she was brought home, the young man’s father recognized her and told him that she was his mother whom he had sold after his birth. Such sale was declared by the Shaikh as undesirable.\(^\text{17}\) The slave girls were also paid as the *futuh* to the Sufis, once the Shaikh himself was presented as *futuh*, two charming young slave girls with 500 *tankas* in cash. The Shaikh accepted the *futuh* saying that proper care would be taken of the girls as his son was untrustworthy.\(^\text{18}\) He accepted these two slave girls in order to provide them protection from the evil eyes of his son rather than using them as a means for repress household chores. This also

\(^{15}\) *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, Urdu Academy, op. cit., p. 863.
\(^{17}\) ‘Sufi Perspectives on Women and Marriage’, op. cit., p. 172.

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indicates that how much selfless and humble were the Sufi saints when they dealt with their female slaves.

Sufi text describes one more such example where Sufi is found kind and humble towards their female slave. Qazi Hamiduddin’s grandson Sharafuddin lived in Nagaur. Once, he thought of visiting Shaikh-ul-Islam Fariduddin in order to express his sentiments and devotion towards him. Qazi Sharafuddin had a slave girl, she asked her master to convey her sentiments of servitude to Shaikh-ul-Islam Fariduddin and present to him on her behalf, an embroidered kerchief which she made herself.\textsuperscript{19} Maulana Sharafuddin reached there and presented himself to Shaikh-ul-Islam in all devotion. After inquiring about his welfare, he told to Shaikh-ul-Islam about the slave girl’s devotion towards him and placed the embroidered kerchief before the Shaikh. On receiving the kerchief the Shaikh spoke these benedictory words \textit{May God grants her freedom}.\textsuperscript{20}

For a slave whether female or male emancipation was the most valuable thing and Shaikh Fariduddin prayed for her freedom which was the most important for her. When Maulana Sharafuddin left back for his house at Nagaur he thought that whatever the Shaikh has said will certainly take place and the slave girl will be free. Therefore, he thought of setting free the slave girl by himself. Thus, the man preferred to get the reward of emancipating her female slave rather than selling her to anyone else for a handsome amount of hundred tankas.\textsuperscript{21}

The grandson of Skaikh Hamiduddin earned the reward of emancipating the slave. It was better to free his female slave rather than to sell her and earn a profitable amount. Service of humanity was the primary concern of the Sufis, they believed in service of mankind rather than attainment of material wealth.

Eminent Sufi of the chisti silsilah, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya freed a minor slave girl. He had a male slave Malih, who was freed by him. Once, Malih bought a minor slave girl at a price of five tankas. After some time the parents of that slave girl came crying and requested to Malih to return their daughter offering him to take back

\textsuperscript{19} Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Urdu Academy, op. cit., p. 819.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
ten tankas instead of his five tankas. Nizamuddin Auliya was moved at the sight of their sad plight.\footnote{Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Urdu Academy, op. cit., p. 863.}

Shaikh was a kind hearted man who could not surpass the grief of the parents who sold their child. He felt disturbed at the sight of weeping parents and paid twice the amount to Malih so that he could return the minor slave girl to her parents. The child slave girl was freed by the generosity of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.\footnote{Ibid.}

Though, keeping female slaves for the purpose of household chores was a part of domestic life of the Sultanate period. The Sufis found it their privilege to emancipate the slaves. They considered it their duty to help the women in distress.

Another anecdote which throws light upon the kind treatment meted out to women by Sufis happened at Gujarat where a darvesh (mendicant) met a man who seemed to be divinely inspired and lived a life of heavenly ecstasy.\footnote{Ibid., p. 775.} These two shared a small room in a house together. One morning the darvesh visited a reservoir for ablution which was under strict vigilance by the guards and no one was allowed to enter into it. The guard and the darvesh were familiar with each other and thus he allowed the darvesh to use the reservoir water for performing ablution. The darvesh noticed that few women were standing with pitchers in their hand to fill water but were not allowed to enter the hauz.

The darvesh noticed an old woman among them; he helped the old woman by filling her pitcher. The other women standing there also requested the darvesh to fill their pitchers. He helped them all by filling their pitchers with water from the reservoir. Now, he returned to the room where he found the other person still asleep. The darvesh started offering the fajr prayer loudly as the result of which the other man was awake. The man commented that the service to the mankind is more important than simply offering the prayers. Helping to those in need must be a religious man’s primary concern and the real good work you did was filling the pitchers of those women who needed water.\footnote{Ibid.}
The Islam lays emphasis on the service of mankind. The Sufis along with the obligatory prayers performed a lot of social service for the betterment of mankind. One of the primary concerns of the Sufis was to help mankind especially the women folk. They extended their services to downtrodden and persons in need. Sufis were moved by the pain, suffering and miserable condition of the mankind and they considered service to mankind more meaningful than simply offering prayers. He was reported to have said that there were two types of divine worship, \textit{t \textasciitilde at-i-lazmi} (compulsory) and \textit{tat-i-mut \textasciitilde adi} (voluntary). The former involves praying five times, fasting, etc. The latter was done for the good of others, and included the distribution of food or other types of assistance to people. For him, \textit{t \textasciitilde at-i-muta \textasciitilde adi} was more important and had more religious merits. He repeatedly lays stress on the importance of \textit{t \textasciitilde at-i-mut \textasciitilde adi} and places it far above all meritorious deeds as viewed by religion.

Once, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya while walking on the banks of the Jamuna noticed a woman drawing water from the well nearby. Due to inquisitiveness he asked the woman the reason behind fetching water from the well when the Jamuna was flowing nearby. That woman replied that, she and her husband were poor people and the water of Jamuna has the characteristic of increasing the appetite and creating the hunger. So, to avoid this condition they drink the water after fetching it from the well. The Shaikh felt sad by the reply of the poor woman and tears appeared in his eyes. He told Iqbal, \textit{In our Ghiyaspur there is a woman who due to fear of increased appetite does not drink the water of Jamuna}, he asked Iqbal to enquire from her about her daily expenses and accordingly fix the maintenance allowance for her family.

Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya has advised the rulers of the kingdom by the means of quoting a tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) Mohammad. He says that the \textit{Prophet (PBUH) has said that if an old woman goes to bed hungry in any town of a kingdom, she would hold the collar of the ruler on the Day of Judgment which is sure to come.}

\begin{footnotes}
26 Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Urdu Academy, op. cit., p. 775.
29 Society and Culture in Medieval India, op. cit., p. 182.
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This narration of the tradition by the Shaikh depicts that how much special regards Sufis paid to the woes of women. They considered their prime duty to end the distress of women, be it of any kind. Most of the times Sufis of the chisti silsilah believed in providing financial help to people in distress from the money they received in *futuh*.

Once a poor man named Shams, who belonged to Sunnam was in great financial crisis and found difficult to meet the daily expenses of his mother and himself. In desperate circumstances he visited to Baba Farid and pleaded to him to pray for his welfare. The Shaikh prayed for his prosperity and Shams got an appointment as *dabir* in the service of Bughra Khan. The Sufis transferred their message of love and service to humanity from themselves to their disciples and they adopted these principles very effectively in their lives. Once, it happened that like Baba Farid, his disciple Shaikh Jamaluddin Hansvi was also kind and humble towards his slaves. He had a maid servant who took care of his son, Burhanuddin. When Shaikh Jamaluddin Hansvi died, his son Burhanuddin was a minor. She took care of the son with great love and affection. She was known by the title of *Umm-u’l-Muminin*. (The mother of Muslims)

The Sufi *khanqahs* were like a blessing of God for the needy, poverty stricken and hungry people. The service of mankind was one of their preferred principles. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to consume very little food. Once, Abdur Rahim who prepared *Sahri* for him protested by saying that eating less at *sahri* will be injurious for his health. The Shaikh replied with tears in his eyes that so many poverty-stricken people are sleeping without dinner in the corner of the mosque and before the shops. *How can this food go down my throat?* As too significant feature of Sufism which cannot be ignored is the quintessence of the mystics feeling of unity of God and brotherhood of man. The lower strata of Hindu society got impressed by this mystic feelings and this was the beginning of the Bhakti cult which arose from the lower

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30 *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p. 229.
31 Mir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, MS, Sulaiman Collection, 609/6, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Folio. 95(a); see also *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p. 207.
32 *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p. 216.
strata of Hindu society. Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Dhana, Dadu are various examples who belonged to this class. There was hardly a saint of the Bhakti school who had not passed some of his time in a Khanqah.

Once a danishmand from Meerut reaches to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and speaks about his problem caused due to poverty. He told the Shaikh that he has a daughter but do not possess means to arrange her marriage. The Shaikh gave him a tanka as a token of blessing. Miraculously, his need somehow came to the notice of the ladies of the harem of Alauddin Khilji resulting which his needs were fulfilled.

A thirteenth century Sufi saint, Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri of Bihar, used to supply grains on credit. When the amount swelled to one thousand tankas the whole of it was paid off from the income of the futuhat.

Whenever it came of helping the poor or the person in need no discrimination was made between different classes of people. For example, the financial needs of the prostitutes were also considered by the Sufis. The urs (anniversary celebration) of Shaikh Farid was celebrated on a grand scale in the Khanqah of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. A special preparation was made to cook variety of food and at the same time care was taken in the distribution of cooked food. The Shaikh was inquisitive about the participation of his friends and his disciples in the urs. Food was sent to the houses of those who could not attend the celebration. May be the Shaikh did not want the presence of prostitutes in the celebration, so the Shaikh sent food and money to them. On an urs day, Iqbal through Abu sent a tray of food and a tanka to a woman who was a prostitute. The woman earlier used to get two trays of food and two tankas. When she received one tray and one tanka she thought that Abu has kept one tray and a tanka with him. She came to Khanqah and started making fuss for it. The Shaikh overheard and instructed Iqbal to give one more tanka and a tray of food to her. The Shaikh with his generosity managed to calm down the woman. None of the people in the city were deprived of the generosity of the Shaikh.

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33 Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 280.
34 Ibid.
35 The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, op. cit., p.72.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
Widows also got an allowance from Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya if they were left without any financial support. We will further see in this chapter how the widow and the two sons of Maulana Badruddin Ishaq were invited to Delhi by Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, after the demise of Maulana Badruddin Ishaq.

The Sufi saints helped the poor by the material means and also prayed to God for their betterment. Sometimes Sufis used their miraculous powers for helping the person in need. An anecdote from *Khair-ul-Majalis* will asserts the view that Sufis sometimes used their miraculous powers for the well-being of the person in trouble. Shaikh-ul-Islam Fariduddin used his miraculous power to reconcile an oil seller to his separated wife. In a village of Ajodhan lived an oil-seller with his beautiful wife whom he loved the most. The *muqti* of village sacked the village and the inhabitants were taken as captives. Someone caught his wife and disappeared from there. The oil seller cried a lot, he reached to the Shaikh and narrated the whole incident of plunder and loss of his wife. The Shaikh listened and asked him to stay with him for three days. The oil seller was so restless that he could not stay for a moment but respecting the Shaikh’s advice he stayed there for two days. The third day a man was brought to the Shaikh. That person was being summoned by the *muqti* of the village. Shaikh said to that person not to be worried, he said him to go to the *muqti* and you will be given few things from the *muqti*. He also told him, that you will be given a slave girl which I want you to give to this oil seller. To the surprise of the oil seller the person got a slave girl from the *muqti* of the village who was his separated wife. The oil seller became extremely happy after obtaining his lost wife.38

This was the miraculous power used by Shaikh Farid to reconcile a lost wife to his woeful husband, thus making them happy.

As mentioned earlier the Sufis always had a milder attitude towards every section of society. They took care of women without discrimination on the basis of their profession. Special care was taken to fulfill the financial needs of any prostitute, if it comes to the notice of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The saint had a routine of visiting the graves of his mother and khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. While he

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came out of the *khanqah* to visit the graveyard the prostitutes used to come out on the street. He did not like to be surrounded by them, hence he sent some people to distribute money to them and ask them to leave the road and sit in the shade.\(^{39}\)

Such was the attitude of the Sufi saint for the prostitutes also; he never admonished them because of their profession and always had a considerable attitude towards women in matters of poverty.

According to Nizamuddin Auliya human beings are like children of God on earth and one who is a truly devoted towards god must strive for the welfare of all the people regardless of any consideration. Shaikh had special respect for women; he considered women as important as men and gave them equal status with them. According to his one saying women are known for their virtue and chastity. He praised the religious devotions of the females. It was the piety rather than the gender which mattered. The intensity of worship of Almighty matters rather than the personality of the worshipper. There is no difference among the worshippers on the basis of sex, it may be a man or a woman all that matters is the extent of piety in one.

He also said that virtuous qualities are always appreciated in a person. By the example of lion he said *if a lion comes out of the jungle, nobody bothers about its being male or female*. This means human being whether male or female were to be known because of their being righteous and devoted towards God. He also recited the following couplet on the subject of virtue and excellence of the devout and abstinence in a person.

The Malfuz literature is a treasure house of the anecdotes of the Sufi saints who had immense polite and kind attitude towards the women. They won the hearts of the people by their enormous love, liberalism and deep charitable attitude towards the poor and the downtrodden. Their social service at the *khanqah* made these *khanqahs* an important place in the history of Sufism. These were a special place where Sufis worshipped and performed various social work like giving spiritual soothing to the persons disgusted, frustrated and hearts bleeding with the atrocities of the external world.

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\(^{39}\) *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya*, op. cit., p. 85.
An open kitchen (*langar*) was the regular feature of the *khanqah* life in medieval India.\(^{40}\) And it was a part of the disciplined life of the Sufis to provide service to the needy and the oppressed.

**Sufi views regarding marriage and celibacy**

Almost all Sufis entered into matrimonial alliance excepting a few. There is a tradition of Prophet (PBUH) mentioning that, *A married man perfects half of his religion*. During the pre-Islamic period of the Arabs, there was no limit to the number of wives they could keep, but Islam limited the number to one, with permission to marry, if necessary, two or three or even four, provided one can treat them with justice and equality in his relations with them as a husband. It can be extremely difficult for anyone but not impossible. Thus we can say that Islam permits his followers towards monogamy. It does not definitely bind a man saying he can take only one wife.\(^{41}\) By the means of tradition mentioned above we can say that marriage was encouraged by the Prophet (PBUH) while celibacy was condemned. Sufis followed the tradition of Prophet (PBUH) and lived a married life and have had large families.

Women too emphasized remarriage in the early days of Islam, women married several times after becoming widow or after having been divorced by their husband. For instance, Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet (PBUH) had been twice married before accepting the Prophet (PBUH) as her third husband.\(^{42}\)

Contrary to the idea of marriage the eleventh century Sufi saint Shaikh Ali Hujwiri is a staunch supporter of celibacy. He considered relation with the woman as a diversion from the righteous and religious path. He settled in India in late eleventh century, was a great supporter of celibacy for Sufis, and himself never married. He speaks disparagingly regarding the women. In his words, *A woman was the cause of the calamity that overtook Adam in Paradise, and also of the first quarrel that happened in this world, i.e. the quarrel of Abel and Cain. A woman was the cause of*

\(^{40}\) Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 221.
\(^{42}\) *Ibid.*
the punishment inflicted on two angels (Harrut and Marrut); and down to the present
day all mischief, worldly or religious have been caused by women.⁴³

In spite of this idea most of the Sufi saints embraced married life and rejected
the life of celibacy. With the exception of Nizamuddin Auliya all the early Chisti
mystic saints led a married life. Shaikh Moinuddin Chisti married late in life, around
ninety years of age. Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis of Akhbaar-ul-Akhyar says that
Shaikh Moinuddin Chisti had two wives ⁴⁴ Ummatullaah and Asmatullah. The first
wife was the daughter of Hindu raja; the second was the daughter of Sayyid
Wajihuddin Meshedi.⁴⁵

Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyaar Kaki also married late in life and probably
married twice. He divorced one of his wives, soon after marriage, as according to him,
her presence had disturbed his daily program of prayers.⁴⁶

Shaikh Farid had a number of wives and a big family. Shaikh Nasiruddin
Chiraag is reported to have stated on the authority of his master that Shaikh Farid had
many wives and treated them all justly and equitably so far as the marital relationship
was concerned.⁴⁷ But to provide for this large family was always a problem for him,
particularly in the closing years of his life when no futuh came to him. Very often his
family had to strive. The maid servant would come and report about the starving
conditions of his family but he gave no notice to her talks.⁴⁸ Khair-ul-Majalis and
Akhbar-ul-Akhyaar, mention an anecdote regarding the poverty stricken days of the
Shaikh. One day a wife of Shaikh told him Khwaja! Today my son is about to expire
from starvation The Shaikh rose his head and said what the poor Masud ⁴⁹ had to do

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⁴⁴ Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis, Akhbaar-ul-Akhyar, Matba-i-Mohammadi, Delhi, 1283 A.H., pp. 112-113.
⁴⁵ Ibid.; see also Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 218.
⁴⁷ Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, p. 219.
⁴⁸ Khair-ul-Majalis, op. cit., p. 89; see also Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, p. 219.
⁴⁹ Baba Farid’s full name was Fariduddin Masud.
in this matter? If fate has so decreed and he dies, tie a rope round his feet and throw him out and come back.  

Shaikh Najibuddin younger brother of Shaikh Fariduddin lived in Delhi with his wife and two sons. A famous anecdote from *Khair-ul-Majalis* states that Shaikh Najibuddin lived in days of utter poverty but entertained his guest the best way he could. Once some qalandars came to visit the Shaikh on the *eid* day, he had nothing in his house to entertain the guest. He thought of selling his wife’s *dupatta* but found it torn and patched. Then his prayer carpet caught his attention, it was no better. Lastly he was compelled to offer his guest only cold water. This anecdote does not have any relation with the idea of living a married life it simply represents the benevolent nature of a Sufi who in order to entertain the guest does not hesitate to sell the precious items like *dupatta* of his wife and a prayer carpet. Nizamuddin Auliya had special regards for the guest who visited the *Khanqahs*. He used to say that if someone visits a living man and he is not entertained by some eatable item or at least water it is like that he visited a dead person.

A sixteenth century writer says that Shaikh Sadruddin Arif had married a divorced wife of Price Mohammad, the eldest son of Balban. It happened so that Prince in a rage of anger divorced his wife. Later he regretted of his behavior and wanted to remarry her.

We have examples of Sufis who married their daughters to their disciples. Maulana Badruddin Ishaq a distinguished *khalifa* of Shaikh Farid was an eminent scholar of Delhi Sultanate. Shaikh Farid married his daughter Bibi Fatimah to him. Matrimonial relations were established between Suhrawardi saints and members of ruling dynasty. A famous matrimonial alliance was made between Bibi Rasti, the daughter of Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq and Shaikh Fathullah bin Shaikh Auhaduddin, the grandson of Shaikh Fariduddin. The Sultan himself sent the proposal

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50 *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 52; see also *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, p. 219.
51 *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 214.
52 *Khair-ul-Majalis*, op. cit., p. 75; *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 215.
53 *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p. 221.
54 *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, p. 209.
to the Shaikh. Initially, Shaikh refused the proposal but when the mother of the Sultan, Malika-i-Jahan intervened, the proposal was settled.

One more interesting alliance was made between Syed Mohammad Gawas the founder of Qadiri Silsilah in India and daughter of Sultan Sikandar Lodi. Sultan respected him and became his disciple and also married his daughter to the saint.

Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya did not marry but once with his advice he managed to reconcile the strained relation of a husband and wife. Qazi Muhiuddin Kashani’s relation with his wife was so much unpleasant that he decided to divorce her. He sought the Shaikh’s advice, who did not approve it resulting which the relations between the husband and wife were restored.

Sufis applied innumerable efforts for the marriage of girls whose parents had poor financial conditions and could not afford the expenses of marriage. The sources of medieval period have numerous examples when Sufis arranged for the marriage of the poor girls. Once, a poor man came to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya in connection with the marriage of his two daughters. The Shaikh wrote a letter to Malik Qir Bak, who was an eminent noble of Alauddin Khilji. The Shaikh asked the man to give that letter to him. Qir Bak had made arrangements for the marriage of his own daughter. After reading the letter of the Shaikh he handed over everything to that poor man sent by the Shaikh. Thus, arranging for marriage of such girls was considered a good deed by Sufi saints. Such examples are found in abundance were the marriages were financially arranged by the Sufis.

Sometimes the Sufi saints helped the people in arranging suitable matches for their daughters. A man visited Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, he had daughters to marry but was unable to find the suitable match for his daughters. The man explained the Shaikh about his problem. The Shaikh advised him to be patient, the man became dissatisfied with his advice. He said to him that he would only realized my agony if he would have only a daughter. Listening this, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya enquired the man that what he want him to do? The man asked the Sufi to recommend someone.

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56 Sufism its Saints and Shrines, op. cit., p. 264
57 The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, op. cit., p. 72.
who can act as a suitable match for his daughter. The Shaikh recommended him to a grandson of Zafar Khan. These anecdotes prove that the Sufis imparted their best in arranging the marriages of the girls. The help provided by them was of any kind most of the times they financially helped the poor parents to marry their daughters and sometimes they helped them in finding out suitable matches for their unmarried daughters.

Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari took his journey to Delhi in order to gain favours from the Sultan and other dignified nobles to arrange for the marriage of seven daughters, fathers of whom have died.\(^{58}\) At the same time Sufis like Shaikh Nasiruddin could not tolerate extravagance in marriage whether a girl or a boy. Shaikh Najibuddin protested the extravagance imposed on the marriage of a daughter of a noble named Aitmar. Shaikh Najibuddin when came to know that he has spent lavishly on the marriage of his daughter he remarked that it would be better if you had spent this amount in service of God. Resulting which he lost his job given by him and all the property was confiscated by Aitmar.\(^{59}\)

Sufism has a place for women also. Worship and devotion were not confined up to men. Women also stood for their religious attitude and fervent piety. The history of Islam, first of all introduces Rabia Basri as the first woman who indulged in penance and found a place in mysticism. Likewise, we find many ladies during the Sultanate period that indulged themselves in prayers and are known for their spiritual values, worship, abstinence, piety, religiosity, pleasant nature and overall their kind and humble attitude towards the poor and the helpless. These religious minded ladies find a special place in the sources of the Sultanate period. These ladies were mothers, sisters and sometimes wives of the Sufis. Mothers of the eminent Sufi saints helped their sons to gain spiritualism and inculcated in them the love for the God.

Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya praises the devotion of the Sufi women and remarks that if a lion appears from the jungle no one bother about its sex (being male for female). This means that human being whether male or female, were to be known

\(^{58}\) *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 185; see also *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 263-64.

because of their religious bent of mind and devotion towards God. He also recited the following couplet on the subject of virtue and excellence of the devout and the abstinent.

**Bibi Zulaikha**

The Malfuz literature of the Sultanate period writes a lot about Bibi Zulaikha’s spiritual outlook. She was the mother of renowned Sufi saint, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. It was his mother who gave him under the guidance of Maulana Alauddin Usuli, she must have heard about the piety and erudition of Maulana Alauddin Usuli. The three in the family (mother, daughter and son) lived in Badaun in utter poverty; he lost his father when he was eight years of age.

When Shaikh completed his early education with Maulana Alauddin Usuli, and finished with a text *Quduri*, he was asked by his teacher for the ceremony of *dastaarbandi*. The text *Siyar-ul-Auliya* describes how the mother of the Shaikh spun a *dastaar* (turban) for him from the yarn present at the home. The final ceremony of *dastaarbandi* was performed by the special invitee, Ali Maulana Buzurg, who was not his teacher. We can explore how the mother of the Shaikh in utter poor circumstances arranged a *dastaar* for the son; no doubt she worked hard in order to make the ceremony of *dastaarbandi* a happy moment for her son.

K. A. Nizami writes that his mother was the pillar of strength for him when he was travelling the journey of life with struggle, poverty and hardship as companions. In the days of utter poverty, when there was nothing to eat, his mother would say, *Nizamuddin, today we are the guest of God.* Nizamuddin always derived inexplicable solace from this remark and always longed to hear this from her. If for so many days there was no shortage of food in their house, he would get impatient for the day when his mother would utter these words.

Bibi Zulaikha had great faith in God and when she prayed it seems that she had established a direct communion with Allah. Her prayers were quickly granted by God.

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60 The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, op. cit., p. 23.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
Once happened that the maid servant of her escaped from the house causing difficulty for her. She prayed to God for her return and vowed that she will not place dupatta on her head until the maid returns. Surprisingly, her prayers were granted and the maid was back to her service.⁶⁴

After the death of his mother, whenever Nizamuddin Auliya faced any problem he visited the grave of his mother, offered prayers there and asked her mother to pray to God for the removal of the problem. During lifetime of Bibi Zulaikha, once there was a drought in Delhi. Everyone started praying for rain. The people asked Shaikh to pray for the rain. He took a thread from the garment worn by his mother and prayed to God for rain with the same thread in his hand. Instantly, it began to pour.⁶⁵ When she was alive he used to visit his mother every month on the day of new moon, he offered felicitations to her by placing his head at her feet. Once when he felicitated her mother, she said Nizam as whose feet will you put your head next month? The Shaikh burst into tears and asked, to whose care will you entrust me? Tomorrow I will tell you, replied the mother. She then directed him to go and sleep at the house of Shaikh Najibuddin. Early in the morning the maid servant came hurriedly rushing and said that his mother had called him. Nizamuddin hurried to the house. Where is your right hand? Asked, dying Bibi Zulaikha. He stretched out his hand. She took it in her hand and said: O, God! I entrust him to thee. So saying Bibi Zulaikha breathed his last. This sentence of his mother infused in him a great sense of satisfaction to his bereaved heart. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to say that if my mother would have left a house full of wealth, it would have not given me the same pleasure and consolation which these words gave to my bereaved heart.⁶⁶

The practice of visiting his mother’s grave on the day of every new moon became a regular feature of his life. He visited the grave and recited prayers there. The following anecdote will present the picture of the spiritual powers of Bibi Zulaikha. Once Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Khilji ordered Nizamuddin Auliya and others to come and pay obeisance to him on every first day of the new moon.⁶⁷ This

⁶⁴ Siyar-ul-Auliya, MS, folio. 75(b)-76(a).
⁶⁶ Siyar-ul-Auliya, MS, op. cit., folio. 76(a); see also The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, op. cit., p. 272.
order of Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Khilji enraged Nizamuddin Auliya because it clashed with the regular visits to his mother’s grave. He refused on these occasions to visit the King and offer the customary greeting. This was looked upon as a disobedience to the King, who in consequence threatened to take severe measure against Nizamuddin if he absented himself at the next moon. The Shaikh when got information about this threat, visited his mother’s grave and after offering the usual prayers, pleaded his mother for the solution of this problem. By a strange coincidence, at the time of appearance of the new moon, as a result of a political turmoil the king was put to death by Khusrau Khan. Khusrau Khan inaugurated a reign of terror but Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq got him removed from the political scene and restored order hence founding a new dynasty. Even so the relation between the new king and the saint continued to be strained.

In A.D 1325 when Sultan, was returning from a successful Bengal expedition he ordered the saint to quit Delhi. The saint on receiving the royal command uttered these words *Hanoz Delhi dur ast*. The king however was not destined to enter Delhi, and so could not summon the saint to his court, for he died an unexpected death by the fall of the pavilion which was erected in his honor.

This conspiracy is generally believed to be planned by Mohammad Bin Tughlaq who then ascended the throne. It is however believed that the cause of tragedy is to be sought not in Mohammad bin Tughlaq but in the hostility that existed between the King and Nizamuddin Auliya. And indeed the pavilion was erected by Ahmad son of Malikzada Ayaz, the inspector of buildings, a man who was known to be an overzealous disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

These events demonstrate Bibi Zulaikha’s spiritual powers. Whenever Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya found himself in difficulty he visited the grave of his mother and prayed for recovery and finally he was rescued.

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68 *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, MS, op. cit., folio. 76(b); see also *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 282.
69 *Sufi Saints and Shrines in India*, op. cit., p. 223.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p. 224.
72 Ibid.
Whenever Bibi Zulaikha fell ill, she asked her son to go to the graves of saint and martyrs and pray for her recovery.\cite{73} Her continuous fasting and struggle to keep body and soul together shattered her health and she met her end. She prophesied looking at the feet of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, \textit{Nizamuddin I see signs of bright future in you. You will be a man of destiny someday.} The young Nizamuddin asked, \textit{but when will this happen?} To this Bibi Zulaikha replied, \textit{when I am dead.}

It is said that Bibi Zulaikha had a dream when her husband, Syed Ahmad fell ill. She dreamt that a voice was asking her to choose between her husband and son. With the eternal instinct of the Indian mother, Bibi Zulaikha preferred to save her son and as destiny would have it Syed Ahmad Ali died soon after.\cite{74}

Bibi Zulaikha lies buried a mile away from the Qutb Minar in a small village known as Udhchini. Bibi Zulaikha was born in an affluent family. It was her circumstances which forced her to face hardships of life. She was brave enough to bear the pangs of hardships. Instead of complaining to god about all these she adopted an attitude of patience and involved herself in prayers and recited \textit{durood} whenever found herself in distress. She was one of the pious ladies who resigned to the will of God and so she molded the thoughts and the personality of her son, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

\textbf{Bibi Qarasum Masuma}

Baba Farid’s first teacher whose influence was most lasting on him was his mother Bibi Qarasum Masuma.\cite{75} She was a religious minded lady who kept herself awake at nights and indulged her body and soul in offering prayers.\cite{76} Qarasum Bibi was the daughter of Shaikh Wajihuddin Khojendi and married to Jamaluddin Sulaiman who was the son of Qazi Shuaib of Kahtwal. He was a man of mystic indifference.

Bibi Qarasum got the privilege of being the mother of three sons; among them two were the eminent Sufis of the Sultanate period. Baba Farid and his younger

\begin{itemize}
\item \cite{73} \textit{The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya}, op. cit., p. 46.
\item \cite{75} \textit{The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar}, op. cit., p. 8.
\item \cite{76} \textit{Akbar-ul-Akhyar}, op. cit., p. 298.
\item \cite{77} \textit{The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar}, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
brother Shaikh Najibuddin were the eminent Sufis mentioned in Malfuz literature. In the Sufi literature of the Sultanate we find numerous anecdotes relating to piety and devotion of Bibi Qarasum Masuma. Due to her exceeding pious nature and unending penance she attained the heights of spiritual powers. This can be well justified by below mentioned anecdote which is illustrated in *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*.

Once a thief entered a house where he found a woman deeply immersed in prayers. As soon as the thief glanced at her he lost his eyesight and could not managed to go out. He took no time to understand that it was the spiritual powers of the lady which made him blind. The thief cried for forgiveness and repented for his act. The Shaikh’s mother prayed for him and he regained his eyesight. After this incident the thief along with his family members embraced Islam.78

Pious old mother of Shaikh Najibuddin was anxious to see Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Shaikh Ruknud-din, the well known saint of Delhi invited Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya who had recently arrived at Ghiyaspur, to attend the *majlis*. He was pointed out from behind and the saintly lady predicted the future greatness of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.79

The anecdote related to the death of Bibi Qarasum is very strange and explains the high levels of her spiritual grandeur. When Baba Farid settled at Ajodhan he asked his younger brother to bring their mother to Ajodhan. He went and took her along with him on journey back to Ajodhan. On the way she felt thirsty and asked Shaikh Najibuddin to bring water. They halted under a tree; Shaikh Najibuddin leaving her under that tree went in search of water. On his return he was surprised to see that his mother was missing. He looked for her and made frantic efforts in all directions to find her but his efforts went vain. There was no trace of her. He felt greatly disturbed and in distress he went to Ajodhan and narrated the whole incident to Baba Farid.80 After some time Shaikh Najibuddin again passed from the same route, his inquisitiveness took him under the same tree in order that if he could find something related to his mother. He found some human bones there, assuming those bones of his mother he collected them in bag and went to his brother at Ajodhan. When the bag

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78 *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, Urdu Academy, op. cit., pp. 603-604; see also *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 298.
79 *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p.140.
80 *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, Urdu Academy, p. 604.
was opened by the two brothers they were surprised to see that there was no trace of bones in the bag.\footnote{Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Urdu Academy, p. 604; see also Akhbar-ul-Akhyar, op. cit., pp. 298-299.}

It was the strength of her spiritual powers which made the bones disappear from the bag. These kinds of miracles do not occur to a common man.

**Bibi Auliya**

According to Abdul Haq Muhaddis, the author of *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, Bibi Auliya was among the pious ladies of those days. She lived during the days of Sultan Mohammad Bin Tughlaq. The Sultan was a great devotee of Bibi Auliya.\footnote{Akhbar-ul-Akhyar, p. 298; see also A History of Sufism in India, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 403.} She had a saintly and withdrawn life free from all worldly desires. She kept herself in constant state of near starvation. She had a number of children who were inclined towards Sufism and owed their leaning to mysticism from their mother. Among his many sons, the famous Sufi saint was Shaikh Ahmad.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Bibi Fatima Sam**

Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya spoke a good deal about the reward of the virtue and chastity of women. He further told the audience that in Indrapat there was a pious lady known for her fervent piety, she was Bibi Fatima Sam.\footnote{Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Urdu Academy, op. cit., p. 254.} Due to her generosity, helping nature and religious bent of mind Bibi Fatima Sam occupied a place among the pious ladies of the Sultanate period. Baba Farid and his younger brother had deep respect for Bibi Fatima Sam, both the saints had sisterly love for her.\footnote{Shaikh Jamali, Siyar-ul-Arifin, MS, Habibganj Collection. 22/11, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, folios. 134(b)-135(a).}

Shaikh Najibuddin had deep regards for her. Once, Shaikh Najibuddin and his family had starving circumstances during *eid* festival. Shaikh Najib had nothing to entertain his guest. He thought of selling some household articles in order to arrange for money. Then he considered his wife’s *dupatta*; it was torn and patchy thus was useless to fetch any money. He then considered his prayer carpet, it was no better. Failing to provide anything for the visitor, he offered cold water to them.\footnote{Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 215.}
When Bibi Fatima came to know about the starving conditions of his family she helped the family by sending someone with a bread made of one or a half mound of flour.\textsuperscript{87} Beside a generous and God fearing lady Bibi Fatima was an accomplished poetess.\textsuperscript{88} Bibi Fatima Sam dedicated herself to the service of mankind. She used to say that feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty was meaningful than hundreds and thousands of namaz and many days spent in fasting.\textsuperscript{89}

After the death of Bibi Fatiam Sam, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to go to her tomb and obtained spiritual satisfaction. Bibi Fatima’s tomb is in old Indraprastha. It was a meeting place for the men of fourteenth and fifteenth century, but by the last years of the sixteenth century it was deserted. Gradually, the memory of Bibi Fatima fell into obscurity and she became known to the local people only as Bibi Saima or Bibi Sam.\textsuperscript{90}

**Bibi Fatima**

There was another lady known as Bibi Fatima known for her religious bent of mind. She is well known for her fasting and prayers. She had great love for God and her faith in prayers can be accessed from the anecdote given below.

Once after her evening prayer she was about to have her meal, when it occurred to her that “if it happened to be her last night it would be rather improper to die with full belly” means it would be improper to satisfy one’s material need. She rolled the bread and satisfied her hunger by merely drinking water, and again engaged herself in offering prayers. The next day that bread was given to the beggar. Now, sleep overpowered her and again it occurred to her that if it be the last night of my life I will repent that I wasted it in sleeping, she awoke and passed the night in devotional prayers.\textsuperscript{91} The idea overpowered her for whole forty days and she did not eat or slept for forty days. The fourteenth day was the last day of her life. When \textit{MalkulMaut} (the

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Fawaid-ul-Fuad}, Urdu Academy, p.1017 ; see also \textit{The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar}, op. cit., p. 135 ; \textit{Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century}, op. cit., p. 215.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Akhbar-ul-Akhyar}, op. cit., p. 280.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 295-296; see also \textit{A History of Sufism in India}, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 402.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Akhbar-ul-Akhyar}, p. 295; see also \textit{A History of Sufism in India}, Vol. I, p. 403.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Khair-ul-Majalis}, op. cit., p. 138; see also \textit{Siyar-ul-Arifin}, MS, op. cit., folios. 135(a)-135(b)
angel of death) appeared she asked him to spare her sometime so that she can renew her ablution and place her head in procrastination.92

This was the extent of her piety that she kept herself involved in penance without having food and sleep and every day the food was given to dervishes. Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag Dehlavi calls Bibi Fatima, Ibnul-waqt, that is a Sufi who understood the importance of human life.93

Bibi Fatima had a slave girl who worked hard and from earnings she prepared food for her master. The food was only two cakes of barley each day.94 These two cakes of barley and a glass of water were placed beside Bibi Fatima’s prayer carpet by the maid.

**Bibi Sara**

Bibi Sara was the mother of Shaikh Nizamuddin Abdul Muid.95 She is known for observing strict purdah. It is believed that no man had ever seen her in her private life.96 Her devotion towards God followed by devotional prayers and religious pursuits resulted in attainment of mystic powers by her.

Once it happened that it did not rain in Delhi for long period of time and the inhabitants of the city prayed for rain. The Shaikh was asked by the inhabitants of Delhi to pray for the rain, and he holding the daman of his mother prayed to the God for rain and his prayers were answered.97

**Bibi Rasti**

Bibi Rasti was the wife of Shaikh Sadruddin Arif and mother of Ruknuddin Abdul Fath. She was a pious lady with religious bent of mind. It is mentioned in Siyar-ul-Arifin that she used to read whole Quran every day.98 She was a disciple of Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya. Once, when she was pregnant she visited Shaikh

92 Khair-ul-Majalis, op. cit., p. 138.
93 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Siyar-ul-Arifin, MS, folio. 17(a).
Bahauddin Zakariya, the Shaikh treated her in an extra ordinary manner than ever before. Bibi Rasti was quite surprised at this behavior of the Shaikh and asked him the reason of the special respect. In return Shaikh explained to her that it was a humble tribute to her because she was going to be the mother of a great saint too.

**Bibi Rasti** (daughter of Mohammad bin Tughlaq)

Sultan Mohammad Bin Tughalq had a daughter named Bibi Rasti whom he married to a grandson of Baba Farid. The grandson of Baba Farid was Shaikh Fathullah bin Shaikh Auhaduddin.

**Daughters of Baba Farid**

Baba Farid had three daughters, Bibi Masturah, Bibi Sharifa and Bibi Fatima. Bibi Sharifa became a widow when she was young and she did not marry again. She was intensely religious minded that Baba Farid used to say, *if it had been allowed to give the khilafatnama of a Shaikh and his Sajjahah to a woman, I would have given them to Bibi Sharifa.* Such was the extent of her piety and religious mindedness. Further, the Shaikh reported that if other women had been like her, women would have taken precedence over men.

Bibi Masturah was devoted to prayers and penitence. She had two sons, both of them had Sufi bent of mind and passed their lives in the *Jamaikhana* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

Bibi Fatimah was married to a disciple of her father. She had two sons. At the time of death of Maulana Ishaq, the family was passing through poor financial crisis. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya sent Sayyid Mohammad Kirmani to Ajodhan to bring Bibi Fatima to Delhi for the purpose of settling there. It was in order to provide assistance to Bibi Fatima and her sons. It was unfortunate that Bibi Fatima’s arrival to Delhi gave people an opportunity to create rumor that Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya wanted to marry her. Shaikh, when heard this became hurt and left Delhi for Ajodhan and returned back when the lady passed away.

99 *The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar*, op. cit., p.76.
Bibi Jamal

Shaikh Muinuddin Chisti had three sons and a daughter named, Bibi Jamal. Bibi Jamal had strong mystic leanings but her sons were not inclined towards mysticism.

Shaikh Muinuddin Chisti had two wives. His first wife was Ummatullah, who was the daughter of a Hindu raja of Ajmer. The second wife of Shaikh Muinuddin Chisti was Asmatullah, the daughter of Sayyid Wajihuddin Meshedi. His first wife, Ummatullah gave birth to a daughter named Bibi Jamal. Bibi Jamal became renowned for her piety and austerity. She was one of the successors to Muinuddin and was authorized by him to make women as her disciples.

She is one of the very few women saints of Islam to whom this privilege is said to have been granted. She was married to Shaikh Riyazuddin, by whom she had two children both of them died in infancy. Bibi Jamal lies buried near the tomb of Shaikh Muinuddin.

Bibi Rani

When Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya reached Ajodhan, his clothes were so grimy that a woman washed his clothes; she was a pious and devoted lady at the Jamatkhana of Shaikh Farid and was named Bibi Rani. Bibi Rani gave him a chadar (sheet of cloth) with which he covered his body, washed his clothes and patched them. Bibi Rani had a wealthy husband who had a flourishing business at Kirman. Her husband was a rich merchant and was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Bibi Rani was the daughter of his (her husband’s) uncle at Multan whom he often visited. He was also in habit of visiting Ajodhan at the khanqah of Shaikh Farid in order to pay him respect. One day he came to Jamatkhana and found such spiritual solace in that tumbling hut that he decided to take up permanent residence there. He gave up all his property and preferred a life of simplicity and piety. He ignored the appeal of his father- in- law to engage himself in some material pursuit. His heart was now set on things beyond

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102 Sufi Saints and Shrines in India, op. cit., p. 207.
103 Ibid.
104 Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 217.
material world. He drove pleasure in simple things like plucking *pelu* and *delah* with his hands. At the same time his wife Bibi Rani assisted him in these kinds of simple work at *Jamatkhana* and looked after the comforts of the inmates of the *khanqah* as a sister looks after her brother.  

Few women of religious attitude find place in the Sufi literature of the period because they had love and respect towards Sufis and their disciples. These women were religious minded and kind towards Sufis and very often worked in the *khanqahs* in order to provide help to them.

One of these women was grandmother of Amir Khurd, she was known for her kindness and charitable disposition, when Baba Farid died she gave a white sheet to cover his coffin. There was a pious and religious minded woman at Ghiyaspur who earned her living by spinning. Once it happened that Shaikh Nizamuddin along with his disciples had nothing to eat for four days. She came to know about their starvation, immediately she purchased flour by the money she earned after selling the thread she spun. By that flour she baked bread and took to the Shaikh and his disciples.

Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag Delhvi had deep love and affection for his mother. After his death he looked after his two sisters with great love and affection. The two sisters were Bibi Bua Abdi and Bibi Lahiri. Shaikh Nasiruddin not only looked after his sisters but also imparted spiritual guidance to them. After the death of his sisters he looked after his nephew, Zainuddin Ali, son of Bua Abidi and Kamaluddin Hamid, son of Bibi Lahiri.

Offering five times prayers a day, reciting *Kalima*, fasting, offering *zakat*, and *hajj*, i.e., visiting the holy places of Mecca and Medina are the pillars of Islam. Islam asks the followers to perform *hajj*, if their finances allow them. The women of those days were involved in the religious activities such as visiting the holy cities of and Medina for performing *hajj*. Once, a woman came to Khwajah Zikrullah. She was

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105 *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p. 228.
106 *The Life and Times of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar*, op. cit., p. 66.
back from hajj pilgrimage and came to visit the Shaikh with a tray full of vegetables, carried by a maid.\textsuperscript{110} Shaikh was requested to break the fast by those eatables. This indicates that the women often visited to the Sufis and were respected by them.

Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi was a distinguished saint of Gujarat. He lived up to the patriarchal age of 111 years (1336-1447).\textsuperscript{111} Born in a noble family of Delhi he was separated by his parents due to a cyclonic disorder. During the days of his adversity a poor old lady Bibi Bhuri of ghosi family had helped him by offering milk and pudding. The Shaikh never forgot Bibi Bhuri. When he was very popular at Sarkhej, a man came to see him and told him that he is the grandson of Bibi Bhuri and had come from Khattu, a world of memories glowed in his mind, he enquired about each and every member of Bibi Bhuri’s family and entertained him with profound affection.\textsuperscript{112}

Women also offered \textit{namaz} in congregation in the days of Sultanate rule. We have one such reference of a congregation which included women. If Imam leading a prayer makes a mistake the ladies in the congregation were allowed only to make a sound by striking the back of a palm with that of another. This type of clapping was allowed in order to avoid the woman from speaking and secondly the proper clapping sound resembles a sort of play and amusement.\textsuperscript{113} It is important to mention here that the female voice distracts the attention of the people offering prayer.

\textbf{Bhakti Movement}

The Bhakti movement has had a long history in India.\textsuperscript{114} During the Sultanate period there were bhakti saints namely Ramananda, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya, Amardas. Most of them belonged to north India. Like Sufi saints the bhaktas also propagated the existence of one God and feeling of brotherhood. The origin of bhaktism is hidden in mysticism. The time when Sufis emerged in the Sultanate the Hindu society was struggling with the rigid caste system. The \textit{khanqahs} of these Sufis

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\footnote{Khair-ul-Majalis, op. cit., pp. 232-233.}
\footnote{K. A. Nizami, \textit{On History and Historians of Medieval India}, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 196-197.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Fawaid-ul-Fuad, Naval Kishore, op. cit., p. 95.}
\footnote{Society and Culture in Medieval India, op. cit., p. 240.}
\end{footnotes}
sheltered everyone.\footnote{Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*, op. cit, Vol. II, pp. 345- 346.} According to K.A. Nizami almost all these saints passed some time in these *khanqahs*.\footnote{Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, op. cit., p. 280.} It is noteworthy that the *Khanqah* of Baba Farid made no distinction between man and woman on any ground and allowed Hindus to become his *murids* or spiritual disciples.\footnote{‘Baba Shaikh Farid: A Harbinger of Hindu-Muslim Unity’, op. cit., p. 77.}

The mystical philosophy of Baba Farid had conscious or unconscious effect upon the philosophical mind of such eminent mystic and saints as Namdeva, Kabir, Guru Nanak and Ramananda. They exhibited a happy and harmonious blend to Sufism and Bhaktism, insisted on oneness of God and denounced idolatry. Opposed the caste system and laid stress on human brotherhood. Hamid Afaq qureshi writes that “they not only made their worldly and spiritual lives pious and devotional but also dedicated that whole lives for preaching others to do that and it was this systematic and effective attempt on their part to free the masses of India from the clutches of indignity, injustice, inequality, unrighteousness and various other bottlenecks of caste, creed, birth and colour which set others in motion to do the same in a roundabout way in the form of various Bhakti movements.”\footnote{Hamid Afaq Qureshi, ‘Nature and Roots of Islamic Bhakti Movements and Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani’, in N.N. Bhattacharyya ed., *Medieval Bhakti Movements in India*, op. cit., p. 86.} The medieval mystic brought about a remarkable synthesis between some of the basic elements of Bhakti and of the Sufism. The profounder of Bhaktism struggled to bring change through love and devotion to the Almighty.

Like Sufis, *bhaktas* also touched various aspects of life. Women did not escape their attention. The already deteriorated condition of women provoked them to help the women folk in improving their lot.

Ramananda threw open the spiritual teaching for women and entered them into the circle of his disciples. Some of his disciples were Kabir, Pipa, Ravidas, Anantanada, Suka, Sursura, Padmavati, Narahari, Dhana. Among them the female disciples were Padmavati, Sadhana and Surasari the wife of Sursura.\footnote{Society and Culture in Medieval India, op. cit., p. 242.} He also admitted among his disciples a Rajput queen.\footnote{Ibid., p. 243}
Kabir considered motherhood, the most important phase of a woman’s life. Kabir talks about the contribution of the women towards building the good elements in society and regards her as being responsible for molding the character of her children especially son.\textsuperscript{121} It is interesting to know that Kabir had strained relations with his mother due to his involvement in bhakti stream. Kabir write about his mother that she cries and hides her tears; the reason of her sorrow is Kabir himself who has left weaving and become involved in bhakti and she alone could not take care of financial matters.\textsuperscript{122} Kabir’s writings show that he had many expectations from woman and he wants the woman to be a devoted and obedient wife.\textsuperscript{123}

There is similarity of thoughts between Kabir and Nanak when they talk regarding the virtuous wife. Guru Nanak, was of the opinion that it was upon women that the growth and welfare of the society rests.

Women give birth to great men and are responsible for prosperity in society. Keeping these views in mind he took up the task of providing women the rights and privileges they were deprived of. Thus, the bhakti saints tried to upgrade their social and spiritual status.

**Women Saints**

There were various women saints who survived in different parts of India during the Sultanate rule in India. Lal Ded or Lalla of Kashmir, the queen of Pipa, Janabai of Maharashtra, Mira Bai of Rajasthan are shining examples of women saints in medieval India.

In the history, Lal Ded is popularly known as Lal Deo, a Shaivaite yogi.\textsuperscript{124} She roamed about in scantiest dress, dancing and singing rapturous songs. Lal Ded lived during the fourteenth centuries during the reign of Alauddin. Like, bhakti saints of other parts of India, Lal Ded is also critical of rituals, idol worship, false show of religiosity and animal sacrifice. She has a large number of \textit{vakyas} which speak of

\textsuperscript{121} Rekha Pande, \textit{Religious Movements in Medieval India}, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2005, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p. 255.
\textsuperscript{124} Society and Culture in Medieval India, op. cit., p. 256; see also Religious Movements in Medieval India, op. cit., p.195.
tolerance. Her sayings are still looked upon in Kashmir as being the words of holy woman imbued with mixed sentiments and spirits of Hinduism and Islam.

Sita, the youngest queen of Pipa, after putting coarse garment of a mendicant accompanied her husband. Pipa was a Rajput ruler who became a disciple of Ramananda. Kabir’s mother and wife were also saintly ladies of their time. Mirabai is one of the greatest exponents of the bhakti movement of Gujarat. Mira Bai was the daughter of Raja Ratan Singh and daughter-in-law of Maharana Sanga of Mewar. She was devoted to Krishna whom she used to call Giridhar Lalla or Giridhar Gopal. She is said to have been initiated into the doctrine of pure bhakti by saint Ravidas who was one of the twelve principle followers of Ramananda. She began her life as an ordinary housewife and lived in mundane happiness for a period of about ten years. After the death of her husband she suffered by the hands of her in laws. She first took refuge in her father’s home, but finally she denounced worldly life and settled in Dwarka at Gujarat. Numerous devotional songs of Mira are sung all over India even today. The hymns of Mira reveal her deep sincerity, rapturous, devotion and passionate yearning for Krishna.

Thus, we see that the purpose of Sufism and Bhaktism was more or less same. Both the Sufis and the Bhakti saints worked for the betterment of the poor and needy class of the society. In their attempt to improve the social conditions they did not forget to provide assistance to the women too. Sufis as well as Bhakti saints had a very kind attitude towards women. Many of them fought against the inequality given to women in society and tried to bring them on equal footing with the other sections of the society.

125 Religious Movement in Medieval India, pp. 196-197.
126 Society and Culture in Medieval India, p. 256.
127 Ibid.
129 Society and Culture in Medieval India, p. 257.