

SUFISM AND ITS IMPACT ON BIHAR (PART-2)

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SUFISM IN BIHAR

- Bihar is one of the Indian states, which has played a prominent role in the promotion of Persian language and literature in India. The developmental role played in the arena of culture was carried on by Persian poets, writers and Sufis. It is quite remarkable that this particular region gave to world not only noble thinkers, reformers and humanists as Gautam Buddha, Mahavir and Ashoka but also great Sufis like Makhdoom Sharfuddin Maneri, Sultan Ahmad Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi and many others.
- Apart from these brightest stars of Sufi galaxy, there were innumerable other Sufis who contributed to the development of Persian literature in Bihar. All of them

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have left behind a considerable literature in the form of Maktubat, Mulfuzat, Isharat, Aurads and other mystical tracts from which we can form an idea of their beliefs, preachings and outlook along with something that is of cultural and historical value.

- ◉ ***Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri*** is considered one of the most important revered Sufi saints of Bihar. His *Maktubat-e-sadi* and *Maktubat-do-sadi* are considered to be a best collection of letters on mystical doctrines and principles of Islam. Regarding the *Malfuzats*, *Lataif-i-Maani*, is an abridged version of *Madanul-Mani*, which was compiled by Zain Badr-i-Arabi, which contains the discourses delivered by Maneri.

Similarly we find Maulana Muzafar Shams Balkhi's Maktubat which contains 181 letters.

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His *Sharah-i-Mashriq-ul-Anwar*, a standard work on tradition, *Sharh-i-Auida-Hafizia* and a small *Diwan* of poems have been preserved in Khudabaksh library, Patna.

Shaikh Husain's *Malfuz*, entitled *Ganj-i-la-Yakhfa* contains his discourses of 57 *Majlis* and his *Maktubat* consists of letters on mystic subjects including one addressed to Ibrahim Shaqi of Jaunpur, a treatise in Arabic named *Hazarat-i-khams* (5 different planes of existence) on the problem of divine unity and his collection of mystic poems, including a *Mathnavi* entitled *Chahar Darwesh*, are more generally known, but the *Futuha Khanqah* of the Balkhi saints has some other works also such as *Risala-i-Khair-o-Sharr*, *Qaza-o-Qadar*, *Risala-i-Muhammadia*, *Aurad-i-Dah Fasli*, *Risala-i-Tauhid* and *Risala-I Akhasy-ul-Khas*. (*Askari, S.H. Sufism and Sufi orders of Bihar and Bengal*)

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Husain's son Shaikh Hasan Balkhi wrote small tracts such as Risala-i-maani-dhat- wajh-o-Nafs, Risala-i-Hasht, and was the compiler of Lataef-ul-Ma'ni, but his most well known work is Kashif-ul-Asrar, a commentary in Persian of his father's Arabic Risala. Husain's son Ahmad Lngar Dariya is well known because of his valuable Malfuz, Munis-ul-Qulub, which contains a mine of information about the Firdausia order of Sufis of Bihar. This Malfuz supplements the earliest works such as Manaqib-ul-Asfia, Malfuz of Maulana Amun, and Risalai-Bahram Bihari and it amplifies the references in them and gives additional information of historical and cultural value.

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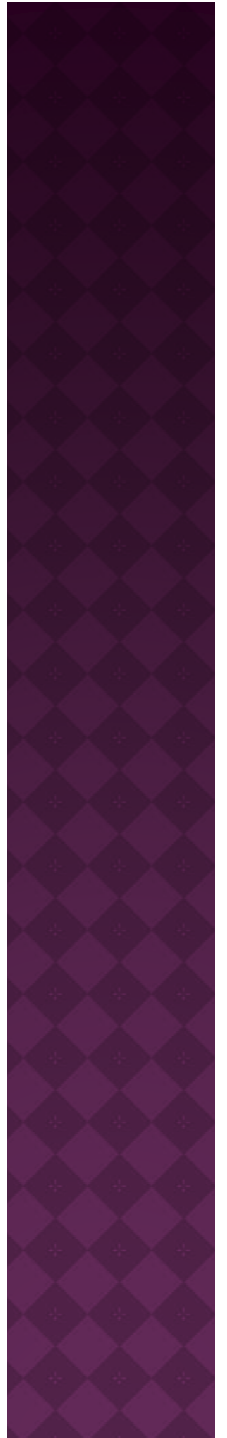
Bihar had such a long series and such a galaxy of Sufi mystics of the various orders that they may claim to be regarded as the home of Indian Sufism. Out of the fourteen orders or Khanwadahs those of the highest repute were represented in Bihar, and each had a share in the general spread and development of Islam in different parts of the province. There was no difference in the cardinal principles and tenets of the various orders and there was no bar to people of one order getting „permission“ (Ijazat) and „initiation“ (Bai‘at) from the saints of the other orders. They differed from one another in name, sometimes in respect of garb or dress and mostly about rules and methods of meditation (Fikr) recitation (Zikr) and their attitude towards Dhikr audition (Sama) and vocal music. The Shuttaria called Madhhab or Mashrab

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(mode of conduct) rather than order (Khanwadah) were closely connected with the Firdausia and Suharwardia, but unlike them and the Chistia, and like the Naqshbandia, and even the Qadria, they rejected Sama, music or singing. The Shutaria and also the Madaria and Qalandaria which at one time occupied an important position in Bihar have now sunk into the background. The Naqshbandiya did not attain any vogue in early times in Bihar. the oldest and the most widely –dispersed where the orders of the Shaharwardia and Chistiya, and though they still hold the field like the Qadriya in many parts, they were all eclipsed by the Firdausia order.

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In fact, owing to the towering personalities of Hazrat Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri and of his immediate successors, the Balkhi saints, the Firdausia order has always held a position of special prominence in Bihar. The saints of this „Silsila“ which was an offshoot of the great Suharwardia order constantly added to its strength and what is more important, fortunately for us they have left behind a considerable literature in the form of Makhtubat, Malfuzat, Isharat. Aurads and other mystical tracts from which we can form some idea of their beliefs, preaching and outlook and also get something that is of cultural and historical value.



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The Sufis of Bihar were different from the Mullah and unlike the dry theologians or the clergy; they clung not to the letter but went to the spirit of the faith. They preferred a mystic and spiritual interpretation of the Quranic law to its mere literal sense. They considered service to God's creatures and fulfillment of their duties and responsibilities towards their fellow beings as essential for their discipline. They put aside their own desires to render themselves agreeable to all, irrespective of caste or creed and they were free from all complexes and shackles of colour and race (*Rizvi, S.A. Muslim revivalists Movements in India, 1965*)
They believed in gentle persuasion and infectious

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example of their character and devotion rather than in dialectics and argumentation to win others over to their side. It is the Sufis, not the mullahs who proved to be the best and most successful missionaries of Islam. They believed that a „Kafir“, unlike a „Mushrik“, could be a „Muwahhid“ (unitarian) and they quoted Ain-ul-Quzzat who said that all religions or at least a majority of them, were in essence the same. The lives of the early Sufis of Bihar and their writings clearly show that whether they belonged to one or the other of chief orders, Chistia, Suhrawardis, Qadiria, Firdausia, Shuttaria, etc they were strictly orthodox, Bashara (with law) and not „be shara“ (without law) they followed the Quran and the Sunnat (traditions) accepted all the cardinal principles of Islam, denounced all innovations in the sphere of dogmas as Bid‘at (heresy),

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insisted upon strict adherence to, or observance of, the obligatory duties of their faith, even attempted to reconcile religion with philosophy and tried to explain or discard all that was obviously antagonistic to the fundamental teachings of Islam. (*Askari, S.H. Islam and Muslims in Bihar, 1998*) They did not stand alone in all this, for, those who had flourished before them also did the same. Sufism came to Bihar long after it had passed through its earliest phases of development such as the ascetic and ecstatic stage followed by speculative, pantheistic and theosophical stages. Foundations had already been laid of the great Sufi orders with their hospices and monastic establishments variously called Zawiyah, Takya, Daira, Jama'atkhana and Khanqah and the great theorists and founder saints had already produced their standard works, laying down the pattern of thought which was followed by others.

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The writings of Sufi saints of Bihar show that they were thoroughly acquainted with the works of master thinkers and theorists, not only of Sufism but those of other sections of the Muslims. Sufistic theosophy had already reached its highest point before its introduction in Bihar in the 13th century. (*Friedmann, Y (Ed) Islam in Asia, Vol.1,*) Maneri made use, in his own way, of what his great predecessors had written and said on the subject of Islamic mysticism and quoted from them in support of his own contention, arguments of his own. He has frequently made mention of, and given extracts from the works of such celebrated mystic writers such as Khwaja Ziauddin Abun Najib (Adabul-Mudidin),

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Shaikh-us-Shuyukh Shihab-uddin (Awarif), Abu Talib Makki (Quwwat-ul-Qulub), Hujjatul Islam Imam Ghazzali (Ihya-ul-ulum), wasaya) Abul Qasim-al-Qushairi (Risala), Qazi-ul-Quzzat Hamadani (Tamhidat, Zubda etc). Shaikh Abu Nasar-as-Sarraj (Allama) Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arabi (Fususul-Hikam and Futuh-at-i-Mkkia), Abdullah-al-Harith bin Asad-al-Muhasabi Basari (Muhasiba), Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (Ghuniyat-ul-Tlibin) and Futuhul Ghaib, Ali Bin Uthmani Jullabi Hujwiri (Kashf-ul-Mahjub). He has drawn copiously upon the classical mystic poems of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (Mathnavi), Khwaja Fariduddin Attar (M antiq-ul-Tir, Asrar Nama, etc) Iraqi (Lama`t) Khwaja Abu Sayeed, Abul Khair (Rubayyat), Thanai, (Hadiqat-ul-haqiqa). Amir Khusro, Saadi, Khaqani and Tazkirat-ul-Aulia have been also utilized.

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Persian poets of Bihar were influenced by Sufi school of thought. Sharfuddin Maneri, Ahmed Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi, Abul Hassan Fard, Md. Ali Habib Nasr, Sufi Maneri and a number of other Sufi poets of Bihar expressed their mystic experiences through Persian poetry. They have left behind valuable records of their precious thoughts and attitudes towards life. Mysticism has been the dominant note in the Persian poetry of Bihar in general and Sufistic poetry in particular.

Maner, Phulwarisharif and Azimabad were important locations for Sufis. Phulwarisharif has been an important seat of Persian learning.

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Shah Abdul Hasan Fard and Md. Habib Nasr hailed from this place. They belonged to the lineage of Hazrat Tajul Arfin Peer Mojibullah. They have left behind their Persian diwan and a number of treatises dealing with different theological problems. In poetry they have expressed their Sufistic experiences and mystic thoughts through their works (*Hussaini, S. On Sufism in India*)

Imam Taj Faqih, eleventh in direct descent from Abu Darda bin Abdul Mutallib, an uncle of the prophet of Islam, was a great theologian of Jerusalem and the ancestor and fore-runner of a long line of the

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Suharwardia, Shattaria and Firdausia mystic saints and missionaries of Bihar. He is said to have been induced to come in response to a call for help from an oppressed Muslim missionary. Momin Arif, and he established at Maner in 1180 A.D. as is evident from a Qita-e- Tarikh or chronogram found in some printed books, including Wasilat-us-Shraf Zaria-i-daulat etc. it says “When he became victorious over the Raja of Maner, the Imam created a new world by his justice. It has come down from the ancestors of the past; that year the faith of Mohammed was strengthened”. “Din-i-Muhammad shud Qavi” is the chronogram which yields the year 576. the „kursinama“ or the genealogical table of Maner saints contains

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a list of the companions of the Imam including Tajuddin Khandagah, Ali Turk Larbak and Qutb Salar, the standard bearer and general of the Imam's party who died fighting for the faith. (*Askari., S.H. Islam and Muslims in Medieval Bihar, 1998*)

The imam is reported to have gone back to Jerusalem leaving behind his three sons, Israel Ismail, and Abdul Aziz and the former's son Ismail, and Abdul Aziz, to carry on the work of the faith in both south and north Bihar. They did not bother themselves about the conquered area and its administration which is said to

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have been handed over to the Turks led Muhammad-bin- Bakhtiyar and his followers for, as members of the great Suharwardi order they were the missionaries of the faith and their work lay in spiritual and educational spheres. Excepting Ismail, the second son of Imam Taj Faqih, who was sent across the Ganges to North Bihar, and his son Salahuddin and grandson, Sulaiman who were opposed by, and had to fight against the Hindus, these is nothing on record or even preserved by local traditions that the descendants of the Imam had anything to do with active politics.

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According to the Bayaz of Mulla Taqia of Akbar's time and Fatuhat-i-Asfia, written in 1660 only a few extracts whereof, relating to Tirhut, were copied out by the late Maulvi Ilyas of Darbhanga before the rare manuscript was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1934, Ismail lived upto the time of Alauddin Khalji and fought thrice with the Raja of Tirhut and was eventually victorious. Perhaps Mulla Taqia treally meant Ali Mardan Khalji who is said to have murdered Bakhtiyar after the latter's return from his unsuccessful expedition north of Assam and succeeded him for a time. Seventh in direct descent from Ismail was the celebrated 15th century saint of Bania Basarh near Vaishali, named Shaikh Muhammad Faizullah Qazin Bin Ola Shutari (1495), the greatest disciple of Shaikh Abdullah Shutari order in India. The saint of Mandu was fifth in direct line from Shaikh-us-Shayukh Shihabuddin Suharwardi. (To be continued)