

Sufi Women of South Asia

Women and Gender

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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Sufi Women of South Asia

Veiled Friends of God

By

Tahera Aftab



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Preface

Academic studies of Sufis and Sufism, since the beginning of the twentieth century, have acquired a growing popularity among scholars and readers. Most of these studies have been limited to the accounts of male Sufis. Such studies, in some instances, even view moral and ethical virtues—which are integral in such narratives—in two separate blocks: as male and female virtues. Trapped by this distorting notion, studies of Islam in general, and Sufism in particular, remain routinely limited to the accounts and attainments of male Sufis; women remain, at best, an addendum. Women, whenever they appear in the pages of such writings, are portrayed as appendages of the male Sufis, mostly exemplifying male piety or projecting female wickedness; depictions of women's characteristics of caring and nurturing are rare. In both these instances, women, as a class, are annihilated. This book brings Sufi women of South Asia to the centre of historical knowledge and restores their rightful status in the growing and expanding literature on Sufism worldwide.

One of the major hurdles in the development of Muslim societies is under recognition of women's potential which results in underutilisation of women's agency, and often exploitation of their labour. The root cause of this underutilisation is the propagation of misogynist thoughts emerging from patriarchal readings of the sacred texts of Islam, giving currency to myths about women being troublemakers and deficient in intelligence. These misogynist interventions in the realm of faith and tradition do not remain limited to sermons delivered from the pulpits or religious discourses; they cross the borders of social perceptions and behaviour. Thus, the dichotomic debate over women's assumed innate disability and deficiency persists, often slowing down women's fair and just participation in community development.

The book that I present to my readers moves away from the traditional craft of writing half-histories of Sufism in South Asia. Discarding this suppressive methodology of writing history, *Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God* presents Sufi women in their full human glory. The present work, thus, is inspired by three goals: first, to search out and collate relevant references found in the South Asian Sufi texts, including hagiographical accounts, about Sufi women; second, to present specific narratives or references about mystic women, and thus to salvage and secure these narratives with the purpose of restoring women's histories; and third, to explore women's understanding of *taṣawwuf* and the way they followed it. The last of these goals is the focal point or the real inspiration of this book, and it runs through the entire text. This

book, therefore, is not just an outcome of spending torturous hours mining and extracting hidden treasures of Sufi women's history, though that is much warranted and even commendable; the book also argues that these salvaged and retrieved narratives of pious women rightfully are part of mainstream Sufi canon. The number of accounts of Sufi women that have been discovered abundantly shows that the narratives of South Asian Sufis that do not include women—or that include them merely as an addendum or as a ploy to glorify Sufi men—merely presents half of history.

My conviction that righteous and virtuous women have existed always and everywhere because all women, like all men, are the progeny of the first human couple appointed by Allah as His *khalīfa* on Earth, led me to begin research for this book with two hypotheses. The first is that women were and are central in the history of the spread of *taṣawwuf* and also in Sufi praxis and discourses. My second hypothesis is that, for some reason, this presence of women is either purposely and consciously concealed or omitted. At the outset, I assured myself that women's stories should not be obliterated. I also believed that the male-authored chronicles have kept such women veiled. I was also convinced that exemplary women, like exemplary men, who are *awliyā' Allah* have always existed and will continue to exist to guide fellow human beings in seeking the Truth. My conviction emerges from my trust in the Word of Allah and my belief that these friends of Allah, by virtue of their friendship with the Divine, the only Reality without shape and form, are humans first and last.

These convictions worked as motivation through the past several years. In searching for, selecting, and studying source material, both textual and oral, I remained careful; as a student of history, the lesson I have learned is that while some texts are written to project and preserve the truth, others are created to erase the truth. Wilful omission, suppression of facts, and a selection of what suits the scribe is similar to withholding testimony and consequently turns history into nothing less than perjury. I must admit that I am cognisant of the inherent challenges that confront the writers of history, as all available sources owe their existence first to selective writing, next to archiving, and then to random indexing.

The present study, *Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God*, takes the form of a historical overview and presents biographical notices of pious and virtuous women from the early tenth century to contemporary times. Biographical notices are analytically integrated and synthesised with the major and foundational Sufi texts, the *maḥfūzāt* and the *tazkirāt*. Recent works are also included to examine the continuity of the earlier traditions that encouraged harbouring gender biases. This book is thus a rereading of the past. This

process of rereading gives new meanings to the older texts and suggests new patterns of social behaviour and fresh modes of thinking.

This book, thus, entails the production of a new understanding of the prevalent gendered nature of religious behaviour and practices by reconstructing the lives of pious women. This work primarily is a biographical compendium of women who believed in and practiced asceticism and avoided its public display. To prepare this book, I have drawn on multiple types of source material, written as well as oral, including fieldwork observation which was done primarily in Pakistan—Karachi, Thatta, Makli, Lahore, Multan, and Uchh. Information was also collected with the help of email and WhatsApp. Interviews with shrine managers, staff of the Auqaf Department (the Department that looks after charitable endowments and bequests), religious scholars, and even shopkeepers, taxi drivers, and passers-by in the vicinity of the shrines yielded invaluable knowledge. Finally, this volume is not about women alone, to the exclusion of men; indeed, it seeks to place women in a wider, more inclusive social framework.

My focus throughout this study is not the *ṭarīqa*-based Sufism which increasingly got trapped in highly ritualised performances in the garb of right conduct (*ādāb*). A critical review of how Sufi theses of the different Sufi *silsilas* swayed and guided the course of the cultural ethos of the South Asian Muslim community, however, has remained a quintessential aspect of this study. Thus, this book explores relationships between South Asian Sufism and the Muslim community through the kaleidoscope of women's lives. This volume, I hope, would set in motion a fresh process of scrutinizing the texts and other records in order to understand women's experiences at all levels—mundane as well as spiritual. This scrutinizing process anticipates raising specific questions. Several epistemological questions that might not be considered directly connected with the lives of Sufi women are legitimate questions of crucial significance for a holistic understanding of women's experiences. I expect that these questions would lead to more questions, if not instant answers. One basic question, which is of crucial significance, is regarding the false and erroneous concept of women as the cause of the so-called fall of Adam from Heaven and of the misconstrued deception by Eve of Adam. The second question is why the interpretation of surah 4:34 of the Qur'ān as a verse about women's subordination is not re-examined as a distortion of the message of the Qur'ān and how do these exegeses continue to relegate women into the private spaces? Sadly, and shockingly, male Sufis not only approved these mistaken and misleading interpretations but professed and propagated these fallacies. The third question is regarding women's mobility. Are restrictions on women's mobility

legitimate? The texts, under review in this book, promoted a restricted view of women by professing that virtuous women are women who remain concealed and hidden. Is this view in accordance with the Qurʾān and the Traditions of the Prophet?

I find myself compelled to add a personal note here concerning the popular usage of the word *Sufi*. The traditional *adāb* of South Asian Muslims, which nurtured my being and is reflected in all forms of conduct of the community, expounds two distinctly opposite types of human temperaments (*mizāj*): *Sufiāna*, simple, soft, humble, and subdued; and *saūqiāna*, commonplace or loud, almost vulgar. Thus, a *Sufiāna mizāj* person would eat moderately, converse softly, and avoid flamboyant behaviour. On the contrary, a *saūqiāna mizāj* person would devour food noisily, with ostentatious manners. In short, the Sufi way is embedded in the cultural ethos. This cultural ethos is created, nurtured, and transmitted to generations after generations by women in their families. Curiously, despite their negative views of women, male Sufis have also paid homage to this role of women. To illustrate, let me share my personal experience of the Sufi *baraka* in my life. The story goes back to before I was born. The loss of her seven-day-old daughter, her first child, devastated and traumatised my nineteen-year-old mother beyond any imagination. Emotionally wrecked, she would sit cross-legged for months, between the *ʿaṣr* and the *maghrib* prayers, hoping that the spirit of her daughter would visit her. As the child had died without sucking a drop of breast milk, a rumour grew that it was no ordinary being. A spell had overpowered the baby, it was said. Later, to protect my mother, my paternal grandfather brought her a *tʿāwīz* (protection amulet) from the shrine of his *pīr*, Ḥaṣrat Miān Mastān Shāh.¹ Two years later, when my mother was pregnant with me, she wished to have a daughter. To protect her pregnancy, my grandfather again sought the help from the *dargah*. This time, a holy person arrived and literally punched four iron nails into the four corners of our sprawled house, thus drawing a protective boundary for the safe delivery. The nails were to be taken off on the fortieth day following the birth. All through the period of her pregnancy, my mother was not to cross the sacred line of protection. On my fortieth day, I was taken to the shrine of Bī Mayya, a mystic who is believed to have arrived in Rampur along with the earliest migrants from Buner, Swat.² For the next fourteen years of my

1 The shrine is in Kemri, Rampur (State), UP.

2 The shrine, or *ziyārat*, of Bī Mayya, is within the compound of a small but beautifully sublime mosque in Mohalla Bazar Mullā Zarīf, my ancestral home in Rampur. Bī Mayya was a male Sufi who always dressed as women do and wore glass bangles of the *dhānī* colour (green shade of paddy or rice plants) and a headscarf of the same shade. As my grandfather used to spend his nights praying in this mosque and used to serve the shrine (voluntarily) and

life, on my birthday, a set of the finest green glass bangles and a headscarf of green-coloured muslin, kept in a basket full of scented flowers, was offered in thanksgiving as a *nazrāna* at the *ziyarat*. Women of the family were strongly discouraged from visiting the shrine, though it was just across the road. The feminine of the Divine, thus, through the intercession of Bī Mayya, remains part of my existence, though *Allah hath power over all things* (surah 2:109).

In conclusion, I would like to share with my readers the history of the making of this book. My interest in the study of women Sufis began a long time ago when the late Professor Muhammad Mujeeb, whom sadly I could not meet personally, suggested in his foreword to my book *Women Mentors of Men* that to the list of women enjoying earthly power, I should also add women from other classes as well. His observation that “Shaikh Nizamuddin’s mother, for instance, would be a very instructive subject to discuss as she is one of many whose lives are memorable”³ remained etched on my mind all through the last several decades. I explored libraries and archives for books in South Asia and elsewhere to identify works related to the lives of South Asian Muslim women. I did find some, but if any reference to Sufi women was found, it was more as a gesture of offering respect, praise, and adulation.⁴ Their histories, and their contributions to the development and growth of discourse on spirituality, were missing. Since then, several studies dealing with women and spirituality have been published. While I offered several courses and seminars on Women in Islam and Women and Religion and remained mentally engaged with Sufism and the Sufis, I kept postponing my study of Sufi women. Once the weight became almost unbearable, I began to shape my thoughts into words. The present work, thus, while it lessens my burden, accumulated by neglecting and postponing research that is close to my heart, attempts to erase or at least minimise the neglect of the illustrious pious women. It also finally gives me the opportunity to thank the late Professor Mujeeb.

The book aims to attract readers from varied backgrounds and affiliations—scholars of Islam in all geographies, students of comparative religions, feminist scholars, scholars of women’s history, and of course all those who are travelers on the path of knowledge. At the risk of sounding vain, this biographical compendium of South Asian pious women is unique in its contents and

recited the Qur’an by its side, therefore when he passed away at the age of one hundred and four years, he was rewarded an exceptional honour. Though his last resting place was already there in the ancestral burial ground, at the insistence of those who offered prayers at this mosque he is laid to rest next to Bī Mayya.

3 Tahera Azmat. 1970. *Women Mentors of Men*. Ujjain: Siddhartha Prakashan.

4 See Introduction in my book, *Inscribing South Asian Muslim Women: An Annotated Bibliography & Research Guide*. (Leiden: Brill, 2008.) where I have highlighted these issues.

presentation. This book, in essence and in form, is the long-awaited, modern-day *tazkira* of *awliyāʾ Allah*. I feel honoured to present stories of women *awliyāʾ* from South Asia for the first time for wider global readership.

The Structure of the Book

This preface introduces the book *Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God*, which indeed is unique and the first of its kind in terms of the number of biographies of Sufi women and their shrines. The book covers the vast geographical expanse of South Asia from the eleventh century to the early twentieth century.

The introduction sets the scene with a brief overview of the recurrent theme of the book, unveiling the presence of Sufi women. It identifies the key factors that shaped women's lives at the nascent stage of the growth of the Muslim community in Hindustan and continued to play the most significant role in gender equation within the society. Review of selected recent scholarly works and modern research studies relevant to my work is offered. Next, I have added a note on research methods and process adopted for the completion of this book.

The main body of my study is divided into two parts; each set offers a narrative which, though different in themes examined and discussed, is threaded with the other. Part 1 consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1, which sets the scene, has four subheads. The first part of this chapter presents an assessment of the evolution of the Muslim society in South Asia, with a brief but critical assessment of women's presence in the emerging Muslim community of South Asia. Allied to this theme, the book looks next at the arrival of the Sufis, both male and female, under separate subheads. This overview is followed by a brief study of Sufism, its meanings and concepts, as explained and taught by the early Sufi Shaikhs in South Asia. With an analytical approach, this chapter examines two terms: Sufism and *taṣawwuf*, which are the two most familiar terms in studies on Islamic mysticism. With reference to the expositions of the two terms by celebrated Sufi Shaikhs, this chapter shows that while Sufism puts emphasis on the Sufi *ṭarīqas* with their Shaikh-created rules, *taṣawwuf* exists without any hierarchical control over other human beings. It is simply obedience to the Divine. These three themes set the scene for the development, growth, and maturation of ideas and concepts, and for the interplay of power and authority within the spiritual and profane spaces.

Chapter 2, which is divided into nine subheads, presents an assessment of Sufi sources. This chapter examines, with reference to selected texts and their

authors, how the concept of men in authority and women in obedience was codified in the Sufi canons. The first category of these texts emerged from the spoken word of a Sufi Shaikh. The spoken words were recorded on paper by a scribe, recalling what was said earlier. These spoken words soon transformed themselves into solid works of manuals on ethics, morality, and spirituality. This chapter examines how and under what forces the direction of gender dynamics of the emerging South Asian Muslim society were shaped and formed. These gender dynamics have not changed much over the centuries and continue to remain in effect even today. An appraisal of major trendsetters in establishing conservative gender norms is also included here and linked with the absence or scarcity of women's visibility in the Sufi canon. Finally, a brief appraisal of shrines as sources for the identification of Sufi women who are omitted or not found in the texts is added. The importance of shrines, both as a source for compiling Sufi women's biographies and as sacred spaces for the expression of their spirituality, is highlighted.

Next, I present an assessment of how all women are viewed through the male Sufi's gaze—as inherently feeble in intellect and innately trouble-causing, and who can only be tolerated at the lower levels of social, political, and religious hierarchies. Women as the cause of Adam's Fall from Heaven, women as *fitna*, as an embodiment of evil and as devoid of reasoning, intellect, and proper understanding of faith is critically evaluated in this chapter.

Next is an analysis of male Sufis' perception of their family responsibilities, the women of their families, their attitude towards married life and sex, and care of their children. Chapter 5 is an appraisal of a much-neglected issue related to fallen women and women-slaves and maidservants. Women's initiation, or taking an oath of allegiance into the Sufi order, is examined in chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents a brief overview of Sufi abodes, lodges, and *khānqāhs* which emerged as icons of spiritual authority, separating the sacred from the profane, and raising structures that stood next to mosques but often attracted larger attendees. This chapter concludes by looking at women's lodges or *khānqāhs* and their presence at the male Sufi *khānqāhs*. Chapter 8 examines controversies about shrine visitation. This chapter symptomizes the everlasting glory of Sufi *darbārs* and *ziyārats* which sanctify the landscape of South Asian Islam, and it examines women's presence at shrines and studies the continuous debate over shrine visitation, particularly by women as an irreligious act. Throughout my analysis of the primary sources, I have been watchful in reading the texts by visualising the producers of these discourses, the scribe of the texts and their first audiences, in the context of gender dynamics and the cultural-social ethos of the period of their production.

Part 2 of the work, the essence of this research, shows how women, overriding male power structures of authority created and sustained by rituals, negotiated with the male paradigms of spirituality and connected with the Divine. Thus, applying their self-agency, these women silently created a space for themselves where they sought the Divine, away from public gaze and male scrutiny. Here, divided into several chapters, I have presented 134 biographical notices of Sufi women. Chapter 9 consists of 83 notices, 63 of which are from the tenth century to the early twentieth century and an additional 20 for which the dates are not known or confirmed. Chapter 10 includes notices of 83 Sufi women according to their specific status: nine Sufi women Khalifas; one Sufi woman who held spiritual sessions for women; five Sufi women who performed *bai'at* at the hands of their Sufi fathers/husbands/sons/brothers; nine notices of Sufi women who are mothers of Sufi men and women; one Sufi woman who was recognised as *Murshid* by her husband; narratives of three Sufi women who did not marry; exceptional case studies of two Sufi women who performed duties as managers of male Sufis' shrines; nine stories of intoxicated Sufi women; three young girls who were endowed with the charismatic powers of an excellent Sufi; one Sufi woman who is known to have a *khānqah*; stories of two women who preferred death to a life of dishonour; a Pashtun Sufi woman who wrote a book of instructions for Sufi men; the narrative of a Sufi woman who wrote the only Sufi *tazkira* and her autobiographical experiences of becoming a devout Sufi; and finally the amazing story of a sixteenth-century Sufi woman who revoked her pledge, led an agitation movement amongst the male Sufis, and finally earned success in her mission.

Chapter 11 presents biographical narratives of seventeen Sufi women based on oral traditions and through the studies of their shrines. This study draws upon my several visits to women's shrines in Karachi, Multan, and Lahore. The most fascinating aspect of this chapter is the real presence of women within the spiritual environs of today.

Lastly, in chapter 12 a list of names of thirty-two Sufi women from different regions of South Asia is added, with no major details. These names are extracted from texts, including one manuscript. Also included, extracted from *Tawārikh ā'ina-yi taṣawwuf*, an 1893 hagiography of the Šābirī *silsila*, is a list of 107 Sufi women, along with their dates of birth and death, places of their birth and death, and location of their shrines, along with their hierarchical/spiritual status. I must point out that in addition to the biographical notices this book presents, there are many more scattered and hidden in vernacular texts and in local legends, waiting to be redeemed from obscurity. I must also say that this last subchapter, though it offers sparse information and consists mostly of names only, still carries great significance. I interpret this scanty information

as historic evidence of the presence of more Sufi women in more areas of South Asia. The usual practice is to present such information in the form of an appendix. I have opted not to relegate these entries to an appendix. I believe that sketchy narratives and accounts of life stories of Sufi women are not a criterion for their allocation to an appendix; indeed, they reflect more on the nature and method of historiography in general, and the writing of women's history in particular, and far less on the merit of these women of piety.

All entries are in alphabetical order by giving the name of the Sufi woman as it appears in the primary texts, inscriptions, oral traditions, and other sources that I have accessed. I have given dates of birth, death, and *ʿurs* (celebration of death anniversary at the shrines), if available. Biographical notices vary in length, depending on the availability of information.

A brief conclusion brings the book to its end. To help the readers have a smooth and comfortable reading of the book, I have also added a glossary of words and terms in Persian, Urdu, and other local languages.

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I would not have thought of writing this book had the late Professor Muhammad Mujeeb not suggested to me to study the life of Bībī Zulaikha, the mother of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. Though I began reading about this pious woman, I kept postponing my writing. Finally, I decided that it was time to finish writing this book and thereby honour the memory of Professor Muhammad Mujeeb.

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Abbreviations

AA	<i>Akhhāru'l Akhyār</i> by Shaikh 'Abu'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawi
FF	<i>Fawa'idu'l fu'ād</i> of Hasan Sijzi
Hujwīrī	<i>Kashf u'l Mahjūb</i> (nuskhā-ye Samarqand)
Jamālī	<i>Siyaru'l 'Arifīn</i> of Jamālī Kambo Dihlawi
KM	<i>Khairu'l Majālis</i> of Ḥamīd Qalandar
Nicholson	English translation of the <i>Kashf al-Mahjūb</i> by R.A. Nicholson
NU	<i>Kitāb Nafahātu'l Uns</i> of 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Jāmī
SA	<i>Siyaru'l Awliyā'</i>

Note on Transliterations

All translations in the book are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Dates in the text are given according to the Common Era date. Hijri dates followed by a slash precede the Common Era dates.

All titles of works cited, non-English words and phrases, and transcribed words in the text appear in *italics*. In my transliteration, I have adhered to the South Asian usage of the spoken and written Persian and Urdu words. I have not italicised or transliterated words, such as Sufi. For example, I use *Ḥaẓrat* and not *Ḥaḍrat*, *zīkr* and not *Dhikr*; similarly, in this text it is *bid'at* and not *bid'a*, and *bai'at* and not *bai'ah*. However, I have retained the spelling of Ḥadīth. Brackets [] are used to indicate this author's additions not found in the original text.

Note: Passages from the Qur'ān are identified by chapter and verse in the brackets within the text. Translations of the Qur'ānic verses are cited from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation, unless otherwise specified.

ب	b	ظ	z	Urdu Vowels	
ت	t	ع	‘	چ	ch
ث	s	غ	gh	ٹ	ṭ
ج	j	ف	f	ڈ	ḍ
ح	ḥ	ق	q	ڑ	ṛ
خ	kh	ك	k	ں	ñ
د	d	ل	l		
ذ	z	م	m		
ر	r	ن	n		
ز	z	ه	h		
س	s	و	w		
ش	sh	ء	‘		
ص	ṣ	ي	y		
ض	ẓ				
ط	ṭ				

For diacritical marks and Romanized versions, I have used the following dictionaries:

A Dictionary of Urdū Classical Hindī and English, by John Platts. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal (1993).

A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, by F. Steingass. Lahore: Sange-e-Meel Publications (2000).

Introduction

Sulṭān Raḡiya was a great sovereign (*bādashāh-i buzurg*), sagacious (*‘āqil*), just (*‘ādil*), benevolent (*karīm*), patron of the learned (*‘ālim nawāz*), dispenser of justice (*‘adl gustār*), the cherisher of her subjects (*r‘āīyat parwar*) and commander of the armies (*lashkar kash*). Thus, she was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for a king. But from the point of her birth, she was not counted among men.¹

...

Had it been permitted to give the authorization for succession [of the Sufi shaiḡh] and the permission to sit on the rug of prayer [seat of the Shaikh] to a woman, I would have given it to Bibī Sharīfa.²

• •

Raḡiya Sulṭān, the subject of the first extract above, was the first woman to rule over the nascent Delhi Sultanate from 1236 to 1240 while the Muslim community of South Asia was passing through its formative stage of evolution. This is a powerful testimony of a woman ruler's capacity to lead and rule a state that emerged through the celebrated enterprise of male empire builders. It also reflects how deeply gender conflicts were set in the male psyche of the elite and educated segment of society. The quote is from the contemporary Farsi text on the history of the Sultanate by a male historian, Minhāj Sirāj Juzjāni. Raḡiya's rule came to an abrupt end with her murder preceded by insurgency among her male courtiers.

- 1 *The Tabāqaāt-i Nāsiri of Aboo ‘Omar Mināj al-dīn ‘Othman Ibn Sirāj al-dīn -al-Jawzjāni*. Edited by Captain W. Nassau Lees and Mawlawis Khadim Hosain and ‘Abd-al Ha‘i. Calcutta: College Press (1864). Minhāj Sirāj Juzjāni, William Nassau Lees, Khādīm Ḥosain, and Abd al-Hai. 1864. p. 185. (Translated by the author from the Persian text); For Urdu translation, see Minhāj Sirāj Juzjāni, and Ghulām Rasūl Mahr. 1985. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣiri. Jild awwal*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 806–7.
- 2 Bābā Farīd's saying about her daughter, Bibī Sharīfa, vide Amīr Khwurd, Sayyid Muḡammad Mubārak al-‘Alawī al-Kirmānī. 1302/1885. *Siyaru’l Awliyā’ dar aḡwāl wa ma’fūzāt-i mashā’ikh-i Chisht*. Dihlī: Maṭba‘ Muḡibb-i-Hind, p. 191. (Hence forward, referred to as SA).

The second quotation above is a saying attributed to Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār (1175–1265), one of the most revered Sufis of the Chishtī order of South Asia. Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, also known as Bābā Farīd, knew that his daughter, Bibī Sharīfa, possessed all the virtues of a Sufi and was superbly qualified to succeed him as the head of his Sufi order at Ajodhan, Punjab. However, under the weight of misogyny, the revered Sufi—the fountainhead of the Chishtī order of India and well versed in the canons of Islam—chose against conferring spiritual succession to his daughter. Her gender, as in the case of Rāziya, deprived her of what she deserved. The elite men in positions of authority, power, and influence—irrespective of the nature of the power they commanded, ranging from pen and sword to crown and cloak—put their massive weight against women of substance with leadership potential. Thus, scholars, Sufis, and the political elite, setting aside their dislike for each other, were unified in their tactics of keeping women under subjugation. Rejection of women as independent and autonomous beings in roles of leadership, both in the worldly as well as the spiritual realms, gained acceptance with this group.

Another example of this rejection comes from the pen of Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), a poet, mystic, and courtier—a middleman between the two centres of power—the court of the Sultan and the hospice of the Sufi. Amīr Khusraw's long and affectionate association with Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' Chishtī (d. 1325) gives his words more significance in the context of this study. Khusraw viewed virtuous women as those women who remain within their houses, concealed behind several curtains, to the extent of not even peeping out to look at the world outside. These hidden women, in Khusraw's view, thus had few and scarce opportunities to enter the mainstream of the Sufi institutions. This theme is further explored in the next sections of this work.

The notion of virtuous women being always veiled and confined to household chores became over time an essential and well-protected central element of Muslim society. Almost a century later, following the tragic murder of Rāziya Sulṭān in 1240, 'Iṣāmī (1311?), in his versified history, *Futūḥ-us Salaṭīn* (Victories of the Sultans), which he also named as *Shāh nāma-ye Hind* (completed in 1350), denounces Rāziya Sulṭān for discarding the veil, saying that with the removal of the veil her shame (*ḥayā'*) was gone and was replaced by *shokhī* (impudence). He further argues that *jahān-dārī* (ruling over a state) is not a woman's work. As a woman inherently lacks intelligence (*kih dar aṣl nāqīṣ shud ast 'aql-i o*), therefore the best task for a good woman, 'Iṣāmī declares, is to work constantly with a spinning wheel (*charghā sāzād mudām*).³ Historical facts, however, prove that he and the others who concurred with this misogynistic view were blatantly wrong.

3 'Iṣāmī, Abdul Malik. 1948. *Futūḥ-us-Salaṭīn*. Ed. by A.S. Usha. Madras: Madras University, pp. 133–34.

Contrary to the rigid perception of women by the elite, the attitudes of the common people, the populace, were more fair and accommodative. Raziya was the first ruler to ascend with a public mandate. Discarding Sulṭān Iltutmish's will declaring Raziya as his successor, the elite instead replaced her with the Sulṭān's son, Ruknu'd-Dīn, who immediately made plans to kill her. Raziya, however, in order to reverse the tide of events in her favour, dressed in red—the garment of the oppressed—and successfully appealed to the *annās* (the common people, including the soldiers), to the chagrin of the court elite. The whole pageantry of this public display of her power to win the hearts of the common men is produced below in the words of ibn Baṭṭa:

One Friday, after Rukn-ud-dīn had gone to attend the prayer, Raḏiyā ascended the roof of the daulat khāna, the old palace, which lay in the vicinity of the great congregational mosque; and she had then put on the garment of the oppressed. She presented herself to the army (*an-nās*) and addressed them from the roof saying,

“My brother killed his brother and he now wants to kill me.” Saying this she reminded them of her father's time and of his good deeds and benevolence to the people. This led to a revolt and they proceeded against Sulṭān Rukn-ud-din at the time when he was in the mosque. He was arrested and taken to her. She said that the murderer should be killed; and he was killed in retaliation for his brother's death. Their brother Nāṣir-ud-dīn was a stripling. The army [*an-nās*] agreed to appoint Raḏiyā as ruler.⁴

Eventually, the Turkish court nobles rebelled against Raziya Sulṭān, deposed and imprisoned her. Her final bid to fight the male hegemony failed and while fleeing from the battlefield, she along with her husband was later killed in 1240. Thus, Raziya Sulṭān's short-lived rise to power and her final and tragic rejection by the crafty males in authority, and Bibī Sharīfa's total rejection by her pious father who rules the realm of heart even today, are two episodes that serve as a prelude to the rest of the saga of South Asian Muslim women. The reasons for women's deprivation, as given in these two episodes, expose and confirm male perception that women's position and status in society depends upon male approval, patronage, and authorisation. These two narratives indeed illustrate that power and authority are viewed as male prerogatives; men, depending upon their choices, can either delegate power to women or withhold it from them. Within this gendered view of the endorsement of sociopolitical and

4 Agha Mahdi Husain (Ed. and trans.) 1976. *The Rehla of ibn Baṭṭa* (India, Maldives Islands and Ceylon). Baroda: Oriental Institute, p. 34.

religious authority, the newly arrived Muslim community in South Asia struggled to build its identity wearing the label of Islam.

As an end result, at each stage of its growth and expansion, the dichotomy between the tenets of the Islamic faith and the community's professed pattern of behaviour continued to expand and get deeper. These dichotomies are reflected by Abul 'Alā Maudūdī (1903–1979), the founder of the widespread political-religious party *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* (with its headquarters in Pakistan and local chapters in India, Bangladesh, and England and supporters spread over even vast and expanding geographies), in his comment proclaiming veiling as a virtue to be strictly implemented in Muslim societies. In his widely read 1940 book *Parda: shara'ī aur ijtimā'ī nuqta ye nigāh se* (Parda: From the Religious and Social Perspectives), he pronounced, "Though the veil has not been specified in the *Qur'ān*, it is *Qur'ānic* in spirit."⁵ The translator of this book from Urdu into English, which was avowedly done to attract a larger readership, observed that "this book, more than any other has in recent years helped people to understand clearly the nature of the correct relationship between man and woman in the social life, and appreciate the great design that Nature wills to fulfil through them on the earth." His comment moved the debate beyond veiling to larger issues of the whole world.⁶ Strict enforcement of veiling, though admittedly not approved by the *Qur'ān*, moved further ahead, to the extent of equating it with unpardonable sin to be penalised by punishment of death. Thus, a scholar from Karachi, Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad, in a small Urdu tract, equates women's unveiling or improper veiling with an open act of sin (*'ilāniyā gunāh*) and a declared rebellion (*khulī baghawāt*). He then proclaims that death is the punishment for all acts of rebellion.⁷

The second accusation against women that we referred to at the beginning of this introduction was related to women's lack of intelligence and wisdom, consequently restricting and preventing their leadership role in matters of faith, religion, and the state. The idea that women are deprived of intelligence, too, remains lodged in the psyche of male members of the Muslim community. Thus, when Farhat Naseem Hashmi, a PhD and an academic, began lecturing to women on religious themes, first in Pakistan and later in other countries

5 Abul 'Alā Maudūdī. 1972. *Parda: Shara'ī aur ijtimā'ī nuqta ye nigāh se* [Pardah: From the Religious and Social Perspective] Pathankot: Maktabā jamā'at Islāmī. Also, *Pardah and the Status of Women in Islam*. Translated and edited by al-Ash'arī (1972). Lahore: Islamic Publications, p. 127.

6 Ibid, p. 2.

7 Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad. 2000. *Shara'ī parde par Qur'ānī aḥkām ki mudallal aur sairr ḥāṣil tafṣīl* [Well-reasoned discussion of Qur'ānic injunctions on the legal status of Islamic veiling] Karachi: al-Rashid, p. 53.

through her organisation called al-Huda International (founded in 1994), attempts were made to silence her by accusing her of lack of knowledge about Islam and for spreading “westernisation.”⁸

1 Recent Scholarly Works on Sufi Women, Spirituality, and Shrine Visitation

The heading alone sounds far too ambitious and broad for a brief appraisal. Indeed, the list of books that informed my understanding and enriched my knowledge of the above three themes is huge; I have a never-ending gratitude for them. A majority of these texts focus on Sufi women of regions beyond South Asia.

Though I could not find any one single volume offering life stories of Sufi women of South Asia, along with an appraisal of male Sufis’ attitude toward women and gender, the books that helped me in directing my search to the right channel are numerous. With my sincere apologies to authors not included in the following survey (but some do appear, at relevant places, in the text), a brief survey of some selected works is presented below.

Although research and production of books on the lives and contribution of Sufi women of South Asia remained neglected, women researchers were not oblivious to this sad void. Schimmel in 1975, more than forty years back, pointed to an omission of Sufi women of South Asia in research and writing. She observed, “Names of women saints are found throughout the world of Islam, though only few of them have been entered into the official annals ... but the area in which women saints flourished most is probably Muslim India.”⁹ After a gap of two decades, Netty Bonuvrié in 1995, probably inspired by Schimmel’s above-cited observation, begins her article by placing Schimmel’s quote at the very beginning. Drawing scholars’ attention to the continuous lack of research, Bonuvrié states, “Although the last decades have witnessed an increase of studies about Sufism on the Indian subcontinent,

8 Maulānā Muftī Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Ṭūr. 2001. *al-Hudā internashnūl ki yā Hai?* [What is al-Huda International?] Karachi: al-maktaba al-Binnoriya; Maulānā Muftī Muṭ‘ī‘ur Raḥmān. 2002. *Hidāyat yā gumrahī? Al-Hudā internashnūl Qur’an wo Ḥadīth kī roshnī main* [Guidance or Misguidance: al-Huda International in the Light of the Qur’an and Ḥadīth] Karachi: al-maktaba al-Binnoriya; Khanum Shaikh. 2010. ‘New expressions of religiosity; Al-Huda International and the Expansion of Islamic Education for Pakistani Muslim Women’ (pp. 163–184), in Zayn R. Kassam (Ed.) *Women and Islam*. Santa Barbara: Calif.: Praeger.

9 Annemarie Schimmel. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, p. 433.

there is hardly any study about *female* Sufi saints of this area.”¹⁰ This neglect or omission led Laury Silvers to make another observation, though not in the context of South Asian Sufi women but aptly and equally applicable to the case of South Asia. She writes that “the sheer number of extant reports of men compared to women in the formative literature means that women are read as marginal to the development, transmission, and preservation of Sufi practices, knowledge, and teaching.”¹¹

Much did not occur to fill this gap. However, the emerging emphasis on “the virtuous and the good Muslim woman” produced a plethora of writings in Urdu, few original, most plagiarised, and some translations from Persian or Arabic, while some are more like sermons by male religious authorities on good women’s *ādāb* (etiquette), and not as texts on matters pertaining to religion and faith. Narratives about Sufi women that have begun to come out recently appear as popular reads.¹²

To understand women’s position in the Sufi texts, familiarity with the status of women and gender as given in the Qur’ān is quintessential. I found two books of significant relevance to this subject. The first is Amīna Wadud’s study *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective*,¹³ the second is Asma Barlas’s *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’ān*.¹⁴ Both these scholarly works focus on the egalitarian aspects of the Qur’ān. Wadud and Barlas, both convincingly, and on the authority of the Qur’ān, argue that the Divine message does not justify any subjugation or repression of women. Further, it does not distinguish between man and woman because they both are created from the single *nafs* (self). My reading and analysis of all Sufi sources is in light of the gender exposition of these two excellent studies.

Recent academic interest in Sufism and the growing number of studies on a variety of aspects of Sufism, including translations of the older and “forgotten” texts, is increasingly enriching scholarship. Studies on Sufism and Sufi women,

10 Netty Bonuvrié. 1995. ‘Female Sufi Saints on the Indian Subcontinent,’ in R. Kloppenborg and W.J. Hanegraff (Edited). *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, (pp. 109–122). Leiden: Brill, p. 109.

11 Laury Silvers. 2015. ‘Early pious, mystic Sufi women.’ *Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, pp. 24–52.

12 I have purposely avoided listing such works out of my sheer respect for such efforts; at least these books draw public attention to the presence of Sufi women and encourage the culture of book-reading.

13 Amina Wadud. 1999. *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

14 Asma Barlas. 2019. *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an*. [University of Texas Press (First published in 2002)].

written particularly for English-speaking audiences, have gained an unprecedented interest in readership worldwide. Of these seminal studies, some are specific to certain locations of increasing geopolitical interest, some focus on certain aspects and themes of Sufism, while few but significant ones, focus on gender and women in Sufi discourses. There is a growing branch of anthropological studies of themes linked with mystics that, spurred by the quest to explore the exotic and charismatic universe of religious-affiliated cultures, often choose to document the lived experiences of Sufi *ṭarīqas* and shrines. Such studies take the reader on a walk-along exposure of ritualistic performances, often with the observable presence of women both as participants and as leaders. Overall, narrowing down the number of works used in this book was important in keeping my focus on a singular track.

A well-established practice in modern scholarship is the production of monographs. Most monographs are on individual male Sufis, with a focus on the development of the mystical aura hallowing their personalities. Through these studies, the individual, usually a male, looms larger than life and overpowers the whole canvas. In addition to an indirect negation of self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and the dissolution of the self (*naḥs*), these works leave no room for the other, mainly women. These personality-based studies have enriched and expanded familiarity with the mystics and their ways, but the sheer number of them compared to very few monographs on pious women transmits a message that Sufi women are fewer in number. One reason for lack of monographs on Sufi women is, of course, lack of source material. Despite this inadequacy of sources, three women scholars, Margaret Smith, Valerie Hoffman, and, more recently, Rkia Cornell, have presented mystic women's biographies.

Among those who have refuted the conservative assumption that there were few Sufi women, Margaret Smith made an admirable effort in the early twentieth century by writing a biography of Rābiʿa al-Adawiyya after collating and critically examining the most relevant primary sources, all authored by male Sufis. Smith's brief comment, in the conclusion of her work, that in addition to Rābiʿa there were "many after her" indeed proved magnetic, attracting more scholars to rescue and restore Sufi women to the main canon of history.¹⁵ More studies followed this one, further and strongly stressing Muslim women's presence in spirituality. Haifa Jawad's basic argument is that Islam is not a monolithic religion. It is prone to different and variant interpretations and readings. She refutes that "Muslim women were and still are unable to gain religious

15 Margaret Smith. 1984. *Rabiʿa the Mystic and her fellow-saints in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 137.

positions; some even go further by asserting that Islam does not permit women to have a spiritual life.”¹⁶

Valerie Hoffman's study (2004) is of Sayyida Nafisa (762–824), the great-granddaughter of the Prophet's grandson, Imām Ḥusain. Sayyida Nafisa's shrine is the most sacred space in Cairo. Sayyida Nafisa is venerated by men and women and is regarded as a guardian saint of Cairo. Though Hoffman has not produced a monograph on Sayyida Nafisa, however, she has highlighted the role of this pious woman, through several academic papers.¹⁷ In her study, included in the edited volume *Women Saints in World Religions*, Hoffman not only presents the story of Sayyida Nafisa in much detail, but also examines the reasons behind the general apathy towards women and a noticeable element of deep ambiguity regarding the recognition of women's spiritual experiences in male-created literary canon.¹⁸ Hoffman begins by recognising that as the “Sufi literature is directed towards a male audience” and assumes “the superiority of men over women [to be] the natural order.” Sayyida Nafisa is considered as a model of Islamic sainthood for two reasons. First, by virtue of being a direct descendant of the Prophet's family, she has unquestioned veneration and regard of the Muslim community. Second, because of her love for Allah, she is counted among His friends. Though she lived a married life, Divine love remained supreme in her life. Nothing deterred her from her path of devotion, not even desertion by her husband.¹⁹

In the context of monographs, Cornell's more recent work, a monograph on Rāḥīya (2019), moves a step ahead of Smith's earlier work in presenting a fresh version and interpretation of the mystic by identifying the real female voice missed in early male myths. With a skilled use of her source material, Cornell's work makes a distinction between oral traditions and later textual references that she finds reflect bias.²⁰ The work also builds our hope to look for and welcome more monographs on Sufi women.

16 Haifa Jawad. 2009. ‘Islamic Spirituality and the Feminine Dimension.’ In *Women and the Divine*. Edied by G. Howie J. Jobling. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 188.

17 Hoffman first began sharing her scholarship by presenting her paper ‘Sayyida Zaynab and Sayyida Nafisa: The Contraction of Female Sainthood in Egypt,’ in 1995 at the Annual Meeting of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) at the University of Arizona; also, see Phyllis G. Jestice. 2004. *Holy People of the World: a cross-cultural encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara (Calif.): ABC-CLIO, p. 119.

18 Valerie J. Hoffman. 2004. ‘Muslim Sainthood, women, and the Legend of Sayyida Nafisa,’ In *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*. Edited by A. Sonbol. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse Press, pp. 107–144.

19 In 1994, while attending a conference in Cairo, I had an opportunity of visiting the shrines of Bibi Sayyida Nafisa and Bibi Sayyida Zainab and offering prayers there.

20 Rkia Elaroui Cornell. 2019. *Rāḥī'a from Narrative to Myth: The Many Faces of Islam's Most Famous Woman Saint, Rāḥī'a al-Adawīyya*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

My first selection of texts comes from studies that focus on the presence of gender in Sufism. Production of these texts broke ground for a new conceptual framework, creating a fresh epistemology of gender. Before proceeding further, it is significant to note that, like the Muslims who often tend to think in terms of different versions of Islam according to their sect affiliations, Western scholarship often tends to divide Islam into orthodox Islam and “other” Islam, a category for which one single descriptive title to match the effectiveness of “orthodox,” except popular Islam, has not yet gained currency. Some, too, have used the term “vernacular” Islam. It is significant also to mention here that spirituality-based thinkers and academics, such as Annemarie Schimmel, were also trapped by the image of an “orthodox Islam.” Schimmel, for instance, said that “Sufism, more than stern orthodoxy, offered women a certain amount of possibilities to participate actively in the religious and social life.”²¹ She also viewed the “other branches of Islam” when she commented that “the attitude of Sufism toward the fair sex was ambivalent, and it can even be said that Sufism was more favourable to the development of feminine activities than were other branches of Islam.”²² Contradicting her appraisal of the Sufis’ ambivalence toward the “fair sex,” Schimmel states that “the Sufis were well aware of the positive aspects of womanhood.”²³ The constant presence of strong misogynistic trends in Sufi thought, associating women with *naḥs*, the lower soul, in the form of a chaos-creating woman, “tries to ensnare the pure spirit and thus bring him down into the trap of worldly life.”²⁴ Schimmel’s work, though produced more than four decades back, is still studied and cited in research studies.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an accomplished scholar with a holistic understanding of the social/political pressures of the Islamic community, acknowledged the binary creation of humankind as revealed in the Qur’ān (49:13; 51:49; 53:45) and revoked the erroneous concept of a male-only face of spirituality. Nasr, invoking Ibn ‘Arabī’s views on the concept of a Perfect Person (*insān-i kāmīl*), discussed the feminine dimension within Sufism.²⁵ The presence of a feminine dimension of Islam is traced to the ninety-nine Divine attributes (*Asmā’u’l*

21 *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 426.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 426.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 429.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

25 Seyyed Hossein Nasr. 1994. “The male and the female in the Islamic perspective.” *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, 14 (1&2):47–58. Nasr, however, kept the translation of the Qur’ān word *insān* as man, which should be a person or human being.

Husna).²⁶ Nasr's scholarship expanded further through his students and his vast readership.

To give one example of how this aspect of the feminine in Islam was further and more lucidly expanded, and how it reflected how women scholars understand gender relationship and its impact on Sufi perceptions of women, we may look at Sachiko Murata's *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (1992). Murata carries the dichotomic discourse on male-female aspects to new epistemological excellence. She examines in greater detail the feminine elements of the Islamic mystical traditions which she analyses with the Taoist mystical symbolism. Indeed, the title of the book is the perfect key to open a reader's understanding of this mingling of two traditions. The book's inclusion in the reading lists of academic courses at various universities around the world created a group of scholars who, inspired by *The Tao of Islam*, generated a fresh understanding of female spirituality and spurred more academic research of women who have dared to breathe spirituality. Murata's treatment of the feminine element is influenced by the works of Ibn 'Arabī who believed that women are the locus within which the form of perfection is engendered. Murata wrote this unique book with a "feminist agenda" with the aim "to re-establish the vision of the Divine Feminine," which she believes is the Essence of God, and that God's ultimate and absolute Reality (*alḥaqīqat al-muṭlaqa*) is "more deeply 'feminine' than 'masculine'."²⁷

Closer to my own study is Sa'diyya Shaikh's study. She argues that "misogyny is mirrored in Sufi literature which associates women 'with the destructive attractions of the commending soul,'" however, "within the Sufi paradigm, real 'maleness' symbolized more than gender."²⁸ Much earlier, Jamal Elias made a distinction between the human female and the feminine by examining it through women's participation in Islamic traditions. A *muslima*, whom he places at level one, is a human female. In social participation, the level of this *muslima*, compared to her male counterpart, goes down. This he ascribes to verse 2:288 of the Qur'ān. Unfortunately, Elias's reading of the verse is quite a confusing one as he selects only the last sentence of the Divine word of this *sura* which has guidelines for women in a specific situation, i.e., divorced women, and not all women in general. This verse, indeed, says that men have more responsibilities than women in case of divorce. The second level, Elias

26 M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen. 2015. *Al-Asmā'ul-Ḥusnā: the duties and qualities of Allah*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, Fellowship Press.

27 Sachiko Murata. 1992. *The Tao of Islam. A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. Albany: SUNY, p. 324.

28 Sa'diyya Shaikh. 2015. *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn Arabi, Gender, and Sexuality*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 39–53.

says, is “the feminine or the ideal woman who exists in the Muslim imagination, symbolizing virtue and divine compassion, an ideal to which all women should aspire.”²⁹

In the next category of studies that I found inspirational and useful for my work are studies specific to one region. In modern times, these are easily identifiable by their individual country titles, but earlier these areas were parts of larger clusters and identified either by the dominant ruling power or by ethnic and religious labels of their people. One such study which comes closer in terms of theme and chronology is Hülya Küçük’s study of female Sufis of the Mawlawiyya Sufi Order in Turkey.³⁰ Hülya Küçük shows that the earlier tradition of Rūmī’s Order, the Mawlawiyya, officially appointing women Shaikhs as heads of Mawlawi dargahs, later succumbed to the rise of what she defines as “official” Islam. As Hülya Küçük notes, one reason why fewer women Sufis are visible in records and texts is not because of their absence, but because “fewer female saints [are] mentioned in Islamic biographies than male saints.” Küçük, however, comments that “women were generally found not at the centre but the periphery of Sufi activities during this period.”³¹ This further led to the belief that women cannot be spiritual directors. This observation of Küçük comes close to my findings in this book. Küçük’s comment that even Rūmī, despite his milder views about women, could not distance himself from misogyny echoes to me the early Chishtī views on women, particularly Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār’s rejection of his daughter’s succession to the throne. Linking the decline of women’s lead roles in Sufism to the weakening of their social position, Küçük argues that some women are seen in the role of spiritual guide in the Mawlawi order. Küçük is convinced of the presence of leading female Sufis and Shaikhs during the early years of Sufism. These mystic women lived in a relatively free social-religious environment and had male masters and male disciples, but also enjoyed the occasional facility of having special rooms for themselves at their homes. However, subsequent to the deterioration of social position in societies, Muslim women lost their status as Sufi Shaikhs. In several ways, Küçük’s study resonates some aspects of my book.

29 Jamal Elias. 1988. “Female and Feminine in Islamic Mysticism.” *The Muslim World*, 78(34): 209–224.

30 Hülya Küçük. 2013. “Female Substitutes and Shaykhs in the History of Sufism: The Case of the Mawlawiyya Sufi Order from its Early Phase to the Eighteenth Century.” *Mawlana Rumi Review*. 4: 106–131.

31 Ibid, p. 115.

A recent excellent study is by Aziza Ouguir titled *Moroccan Female Religious Agents: Old Practices and New Perspectives*.³² A well-researched work, the book begins by introducing the spiritual connotations and the implications for understanding the presence of women in religious practices. Ouguir emphasizes that women have been present all through the history of Islamic communities. In the context of the Muslims of Morocco, Ouguir makes a significant point that Moroccan Muslims follow the Maliki school (*mazhab*) of jurisprudence which, instead of focusing on religious philosophy, focuses on social reality. Thus, Moroccan Sufism, Ouguir says, is a product of society in crisis. With the help of the life stories of a few women Sufis of the past and by meeting women Sufis at shrines—who not only answered her queries but inspired her to create more questions for her research—Ouguir’s work presents a comprehensive image of the current spiritual pursuits of Moroccan women. Thus, in addition to archival material, fieldwork helped the author in producing this work. This connection with the past is reflected in today’s Moroccan women’s religious behaviour. These women define living women saints as their role models and seek their guidance to become “active religious agents” in their society.

Historical studies, in addition to identifying the original works and mining their contents, often translate these texts from their original texts into various languages familiar to their audiences. A great step forward in this direction and indeed a pioneering work in this category, one which has opened new avenues for assessing women Sufis, is by Rkia Elaroui Cornell. Cornell edited and translated from Arabic in English Abū ‘Abdur-Raḥmān as-Sulamī’s (d. 412/1021) *Dhikr an-Niswa al-Muta‘abidāt as-Šūfiyyāt* (1999) which is an exclusive volume of Sufi women’s biographies. The reincarnation of the long-forgotten work of as-Sulamī, the *Dhikr an-Niswa* through Rkia Cornell not only reintroduced to the modern-day reader the lost voices of women Sufis but, as Cornell observes, demonstrates that in “Sufism’s formative period, women were not so often excluded from the public aspects of spiritual life. As-Sulamī portrays Sufi women as full equals of their male counterparts in religion and intellect, as well as in their knowledge of Sufi doctrines and practices.”³³ The text gives biographical notices of eighty Sufi women, from the eighth and eleventh centuries, selected from the region outside South Asia and mainly from what is known as the central Islamic lands. The unmatched significance of this book, in addition to the rediscovery of the lost knowledge about Sufi women, lies

32 Aziza Ouguir. 2020. *Moroccan Female Religious Agents: Old Practices and New Perspectives*. Leiden: Brill.

33 Elaroui Rkia Cornell. 2005. *Early Sufi women: Dhikr an-niswa al-Muta‘abidāt as-Šūfiyyāt*. Lahore: Suhail Academy, p. 20.

in Cornell's scholarly introduction which presents an analytical and critical study of the nature of women's spirituality, the persistent male devaluation of women, done foremost by the "veiling of women's voices" and thereby hiding "the teaching and even the existence of Sufi women behind a veil of obscurity."³⁴

Cornell's edited text is more than a translation. Her critical reading of the original texts has enhanced the quality of her translation. This quality is reflected in her sharp selection of key terms to define Sulamī's understanding of women and their spirituality. Cornell notes that for women, the Sufi way is in servitude to Allah, which she explains as "the essence of women's Sufism" because it not only "freed women from the constraints imposed on them by their physical natures," but also invalidated the male assertion of women's intellectual deficiency.³⁵ As-Sulamī testifies, as Cornell's study shows, that Sufi women's level of intellect and wisdom is on par with that of men.³⁶ Cornell's argument, here, directs women activists' priorities into directions that hitherto have not been fully explored.

In addition to her excellent exposition of her conceptualisation of women and Sufism, the worth of this book is established by Cornell's astute observation that "the continued mistrust of women and their spirituality among many Sufis is a major reason why as-Sulamī's work is so important to the study of both Sufism and Islam today."³⁷ This observation of Cornell widens the horizon of *Dhikr an-Niswa*, from categorising it as a time-bound biographical compendium to the limitless zone of Islam, which to a believing Muslim is unbounded by time and space. For researchers in the field of Sufi studies, Islamic mysticism, and, most importantly, Sufi women, the resurfacing of *Dhikr an-Niswa*—along with its English-language translation—is a positive bellwether for the discovery of similar treasure-troves.

Another work falling within the category of biographies of pious women, which primarily is not about Sufi women, is *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who*, by Ruth Roded. In this work, covering a period from the early ninth century to the end of the twentieth century, mystic women form only a part of the text; the others included are learned and powerful women.³⁸ Although Roded refers to some devout women who had their separate lodges where they recited the Qur'ān, led prayers for women, and held spiritual discourse sessions for them, she comments that "it is difficult to

34 *Early Sufi women*, p. 17.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 56–58.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

38 Ruth Roded. 1994. *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who*. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers.

relate to the Sufi women as concrete historical personalities because of the paucity of information about their identities.”³⁹ More recently, and more closely tied to this text, is the production of another ground-breaking study in the category of biographies of Muslim women. Despite the overwhelming contributory presence of women in the early stages of Islam and later in the transmission of the authentic Traditions of the Prophet, the Muslim community sadly has remained tenaciously tied to a chauvinistic understanding of gender roles. Muḥammad Akram Nadwī has taken the scholarly investigative traditions which Saiyyid Sulaiman Nadwī introduced at the Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, to new heights, and has produced accounts of more than eight thousand women scholars of the Traditions, offers convincing information on this theme.⁴⁰ Earlier, Saiyyid Sulaiman Nadwī, in several of his other scholarly works, wrote on the activism of early Muslim women.⁴¹

At this stage, a question emerges. Have studies like the ones cited above really make Sufi women more visible? Is the gap still there? Scholars and researchers, indeed, are not satisfied in the least as more research leads to more queries, mainly about countries where Sufism flourished and still does, but where women mystics remain hidden. Maria M. Dakake addresses this issue in her essay “Guest of the Inmost Heart: Conceptions of the Divine Beloved among Early Sufi Women.”⁴² She observes that “when our research regards the lives of early Sufi women, our problems are further compounded by the fact that at least until the later Middle Ages and early modern periods, we are entirely dependent on the hagiographical record of male compilers.”⁴³ One reason for this missing information, she identifies, is that “women did not author their own texts in the earliest periods of Islam, when female Sufi appear to have been particularly abundant and active, and thus we have no fragments of their own writing to serve as a basis from which to discern more effectively the effect of varying hagiographical agendas on their historical legacy.”⁴⁴ This is true in the case of South Asia as well.

39 *Women in Islamic biographical collections*, p. 93, 106.

40 Muḥammad Akram Nadwī. 2016. *Al-Muḥaddithāt: The Women Scholars in Islam*. Oxford: Interface Publications.

41 Saiyyid Sulaiman Nadwī. 1986. *Hadhrat Ayesha Siddiqā: Her Life and Works* (Safat, Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers. (Also, his earlier book, *Musalmān ‘aurtoṅ kī bahādurī: y’ānī Islāmī tamaddun ke mubarak ‘ahd meṅ jīn nāmwar Musalmān ‘aurtoṅ ne pālītiks meṅ ḥiṣṣa liyā hai ... un ke muḥaṣṣal wāqī‘āt aur sawānih*). (Amritsar: Roz Bazar Steam Press, 1910).

42 Maria M. Dakake. 2007. “Guest of the Inmost Heart: Conceptions of the Divine Beloved among Early Sufi Women.” *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 3, (1): pp. 72–97.

43 *Ibid*, p. 73.

44 *Ibid*, p. 73.

In another interesting exposition, Dakake engages the reader in a discussion of the male Sufis' envisioning of a pious woman in the form of a man. Often some tend to look at this as mere linguistic lacuna, or at best as a Sufi trope. Dakake's study is woven around her query that there is perhaps a feminine strain of Islamic mysticism. This brings her to her next query about whether women who follow the mystical path do it because they have acquired male attributes. Here she mainly looks at Farīdu'd-Dīn 'Attār's famously quoted phrase that a woman who journeys like a man on the spiritual path cannot be called a woman. She is a man. In Dakake's view, this was "one way in which the presence of these women in the public sphere—their attachment to male Sufi shaykhs and their social interaction with their male counterparts—could be legitimized in the face of strict Islamic insistence upon the necessary separation of unrelated men and women."⁴⁵

Some other recent studies, though few in number, are theme specific and in the selection of these themes come closer to several aspects of the Sufi ways that have not been judiciously explored and analysed. Ashk P. Dahlén's study "Female Sufi Saints and Disciples: Women in the Life of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī" focuses on Rūmī's connections with women which include his mother and wives. Rūmī, as Dahlén's study shows, had a liberal view of gender relationships which resulted in letting women "play a distinguished role as transmitters of hagiographic material in the early Maulawī tradition." However, Dahlén also acknowledges that "fragmentary presence of women in the hagiographical literature hinders to construct their biographies."⁴⁶ Of course, each scholar and researcher is free to arrive at a conclusion that he or she finds to be the best.

Some other studies which I find relevant to my work are theme specific. Among these is Salamah-Qudsi's study of mother images and roles in classical Sufism. As the genesis of my book lies in Professor Muhammad Mujeeb's recommendation to me to study the memorable life of the mother of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', Salamah-Qudsi's study attracted me further. This study, despite inadequacy of available data, is rightly viewed by Salamah-Qudsi as a nucleus for future research.⁴⁷ Salamah-Qudsi brings out another point which further increased my interest in her work. She correctly points out that reference to the Sufis "as family members were not part of the general biographical

45 Maria Massi Dakake. 2006. "Walking upon the path of God like men"? Women and the Feminine in the Islamic Mystical Tradition.' In *Sufism, Love & Wisdom*. Edited by Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani. Indian: World Wisdom, pp. 131–151.

46 A. Dahlén. 2008. "Female Sufi Saints and Disciples: Women in the life of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī." *Orientalia Suecana*, 57: 46–62.

47 Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi. 2011. "A Lightning Trigger or a Stumbling Block: Mother Images and Roles in Classical Sufism". *Oriens*. 39 (2): 199–226.

tradition of medieval Islam. If we seek to put the focus on the roles of early Sufis as family members, spouses and providers, while seeking to re-examine questions of celibacy, marriage and familial commitments among them, we need to retrieve data from the existing biographical material which has come to us mainly in the form of structured units of sayings and episodes with very few references to personal backgrounds and family ties.”⁴⁸ Salamah-Qudsi’s observation about male Sufis that “complaints and utterances against one’s familial ties and duties that prevent the sincere ascetic or mystic from practising a perfect devotional life with God are not indicative of the actual lives of those who said them,” resonate Kalīmu’llah Jahanābādī (1650–1729), who condemns wives to the extent of equating them with highway robbers.⁴⁹

Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, in 1977 opened a new vista for understanding women’s spirituality by writing a short essay, *Women, Saints and Sanctuaries*. The subheadings of this essay have later emerged in the form of full theses by scholars. An ardent and passionate scholar determined to make Muslim women visible in history,⁵⁰ Mernissi introduced an unusual argument in academic discourse, emphasising that women’s mystic shrine visitation, in North Africa, is not merely a religious ritual; it is a sign of their active involvement with their existing society and marks an expression of their dissatisfaction with it. To pay homage and to thank Mernissi for her bold assessment of women’s shrine visitation, which generally earns male religious scholars’ condemnation, I must quote her. She writes that the shrines that are the “locus of anti-establishment, anti-patriarchal mythical figures, provide women with a space where complaint and verbal vituperations against the system’s injustices are allowed and encouraged.”⁵¹

I now move to a brief overview of shrine-based studies about South Asia as the number of shrine-related studies about other regions is too large. Sufi-based studies mostly tend to be ethnographic in nature and document women’s presence and participation in Sufi rituals, such as devotional poetry recitation, dance, and healing rituals. These shrine-based studies offer rich information on how ordinary women negotiate with their spiritual yearnings in their everyday lives. A distinguishing feature of most ethnographies on

48 Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi. 2019. *Sufism and early Islamic piety: personal and communal dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 25–26.

49 Letter no. 30, Shāh Kalīmu’llah Jahanābādī. 1315/1897. *Maktūbāt-i Kalīmī*. Delhi: Maktabā-i Muḥṭabā’i. P. 30.

50 Fatima Mernissi. 1977. “Women Saints, and Sanctuaries.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 3 (1): 101–12.

51 Ibid, p. 111, quoted in Susan S. Morrison. 2000. *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance*. London: Routledge, p. 34.

South Asian Muslim women's traditional religious and spiritual ritual performances is that these works portray female religiosity not within women-only spheres, but in male shrines as well.

One unique feature of these studies is their documentation of women visitors at the shrines of male Sufis. One such study by Pnina Werbner (2003) of the most influential shrines of Pakistan suggests the importance of the Naqshbandi Sufi shrine of Ghamkol Sharif in Kohat of Ḥaẓrat Zinda Pīr (1912–1999). This one is of great interest because of women's visible presence at the shrine and their active participation as facilitators during the highly crowded *ʿurs* celebrations, which lasts for several days, thus warranting women's prolonged stay. Ordinarily these details would be of no significance. In the context of most of these women being members of the Pashtun community who are mostly presented as staunch upholders of women's subordinated position and strict enforcement of veiling, the study becomes more than the study of a shrine and its *baraka*. Werbner met, interviewed, and photographed these women devotees who come from all over Pakistan to seek the blessings. They also participate as volunteers in communal activities at the shrine, mainly preparing meals for the large number of devotees, including the male visitors. Another such work that women do out of love for Allah is to prepare mud ovens for cooking and baking meals. Werbner describes women's gesture of exposing their faces in front of the Shaikh by drawing their veils above their heads as an expression of their "belief that the saint transcends sexuality. His persona combines male and female qualities—the gentleness, love and tenderness of a woman, the power, authority and honour of a man."⁵²

Werbner's study makes several connections with my book. Her observation that "the vigour of Sufism in South Asia remains quite remarkable,"⁵³ indirectly also warrants more studies on Sufism, and on themes that show continuity of spiritual traditions. One such continuity is the belief that saints are not to be considered dead in the ordinary sense of one being dead. She argues, in light of what she learned during her prolonged stay at the shrine and her scholarship, that "the persona of a saint, alive or dead, his very body, is believed by Sufi followers to irradiate divine sanctity."⁵⁴ This belief, making the saint transcendental, is not in conflict with the followers' belief in God. Indeed, as she further explains, when a physically dead saint becomes "a conduit of God's grace in the world," mystics, supplicants, followers, and disciples "do not confuse

52 Pnina Werbner. 2003. *Pilgrims of Love. The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 122.

53 Ibid, p. 11.

54 Ibid, p. 11.

the saint with God himself. It is God's intimacy which is venerated."⁵⁵ Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', as cited in this book, repeatedly emphasised this belief that the holy persons do not die; their *baraka* remains active.

Kelly Pemberton's academic interest in Sufi shrines of India dates back to 1994. Later, she conducted an ethnographic field-based research at three Sufi shrines: the Chishti shrine of Gudri Shah in Ajmer (Rajasthan) and the Firdausi shrines at Patna and Maner, in Bihar, India. Her study, based upon women's lived experiences at these three locations, shows how women can function as spiritual guides even though they do not have sanction for this by the established Sufi *silsilas*. Interviews with several women spiritual guides included in her work testify that, despite lack of authorisation, women *pīrs* feel free to work as spiritual guides.⁵⁶ Thus, the sheer presence of women in their two roles, as disciples and followers and as vehicles of spiritual blessings in their role as spiritual guides, women make their presence visible in spaces that are marked as male domain. The issue of women's succession as heads of the Sufi *silsilas*, as my study also shows, is a historic issue.

Women have found successful solutions for this issue. One such solution, Kelly notes, is of women exercising their spiritual authority as de facto *pīrs* (ritual specialists) in smaller shrines.⁵⁷ Women's spiritual authority, similar to their social authority, is influenced and shaped by several factors, such as their ancestry, family background, marital status, and prevailing discourses on gender identity in their society. Performance of this spiritual authority, Kelly argues, can also provide women an opportunity to "become the catalysts for change"; however, all women are mandated to act within the boundaries of "feminine modesty and subordination to male authority" set by the dominant hegemonic culture.⁵⁸

Flueckiger's ethnographic study completed in 2006 in Hyderabad, India, presents some aspects of ritual healing practices which, though they do not relate directly to the focus of this book, throw light on women's behaviour in seeking spiritual healing. Interestingly, the main woman healer, Amma, in Flueckiger's narrative, does not belong to traditional healers or to a family of Sufi descendants. The environment where this healing room is situated, is a university complex. What brings women to Amma, as told by women visitors of Amma, is her patient and attentive listening to their tales of woe and misery. The crowd that assembled in her courtyard was a mix of all religions. In Amma's own words, according to Flueckiger, "There are only two castes: men

55 Ibid, p. 12.

56 Kelly Pemberton. 2010. *Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, p. xvii.

57 Ibid, p. 2.

58 Ibid, p. 11, 24.

and women. Hindus, Muslims, Christians—they're all the same." This is startling because what this semi-educated woman says is the sum of age-long findings of feminist research. Flueckiger, however, identifies the work of Amma and of her husband, Abba (both these words are not the names of the couple, they stand for mother and father) as a manifestation of what she labels as vernacular Islam. Finally, a word about how research often impacts the researcher. Living miles away from Hyderabad, she was told in her dream of the passing away of Abba.⁵⁹

Shemeem Burney Abbas conducted research from 1992 to 1999 in several shrines in Pakistan, studying women's voices in Sufi music and songs, which indeed is a unique tradition at shrines in Pakistan, mainly in the Panjab and more prominently in Sindh.⁶⁰ This magnificent ethnographic work's focus, as reflected so well in the title, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India*, transports these voices to the reader. Abbas's work is strong evidence of women's presence in Sufi traditions in Pakistan. Abbas boldly asserts in her opening statement that "although there is a long history of women's participation in the many dimensions of Sufi life, that is, in the traditions of Islamic mysticism, there has been no adequate documentation of it in literature."⁶¹ A startling observation of Abbas, which she records with the help of her interviews of the female and male singers at shrines, is about a different impact of Sufi rituals on the lives of those who usually are neither Pirs nor Murīds, in the traditional sense of these two terms, though they have deep devotional links which are inspirational. These people are singers of devotional songs, which in the South Asian devotional psyche are the most effective expression of spirituality. Tracing the roots of the presence of female voice in Sufism, Abbas moves to the representation of the female in Shah Abdul Latif's poetry. Shah Latif Bhitai, or Bhit Shah, the most dearly loved saint-poet in Pakistan, in his *Shah Jo Risālo*, a collection of his devotional poetry, has created female characters that are now symbols of womanhood in Sindh.⁶² Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689–1752) composed poems in honour of the Prophet of Islam from a feminine point of view. An earlier study by Ali S. Asani argued that this voice of the woman is usually that of a bride or a bride-to-be, who

59 Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. 2006. *In Amma's Healing Room. Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

60 Shemeem Burney Abbas. 2002. *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

61 Ibid, p. 1.

62 For a more nuanced imagery of women in Bhitai's work, see Fahmida Husain. 2001. *Image of 'woman' in the poetry Shah Abdul Latif*. Karachi: Shah Abdul Latif Chair: University of Karachi Press.

is tormented by the absence of her husband. The singing platform of these devotional poems, Asani says, is spread all through the villages and towns of Sindh and includes religious assemblies, wedding celebrations, and sometimes mourning assemblies.⁶³

Most studies related to Sufism in Pakistan and women's presence in Sufi traditions are shrine-focused, with emphasis on their shrine visitation and performance of shrine-related rituals including singing and *dhammal* dancing (a dance performance in devotional trance or an ecstatic dancing). Scholars like Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, Michel Boivin and Omar Kasmani have analysed women's roles and status within shrines and rituals of Sufism in Pakistan. From a different perspective, Frembgen, in his book *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi: Five Days and Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan*, looks at the women dancers of *dhammal* and notes that women's performances break the traditional concept of gender boundaries. Indeed, one female dancer described her dance not as dance, but as an "offering to the Qalandar." Frembgen not only interprets this dance offering as "an outlet for pain and suffering" of the woman dancer, but says that the Shahbaz Qalandar shrine at Sehwan Sharif provides a space, which is not available anywhere else, for women to express the vitality of their bodies. A shrine, in Frembgen's estimation, is a place void of all sorts of social rifts, discords, and hierarchies.⁶⁴

Michel Boivin and Remy Delage's edited ethnographic work on Sufis shrines of South Asia, *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys and Wanderers*, explores various aspects and dimensions of Sufism in contemporary South Asia.⁶⁵ The papers included in this volume indeed take the sojourner on a journey from the shrine of Hinglāj Devī/Bibī Nānī in Baluchistan, through Ghāzī Miyān's resting place in Makanpur in northern India, and traversing Pakpattan and Sehwan.⁶⁶ Boivin's paper argues that religious devotion of the Muslims is rooted in devotion for the Prophet. It looks at the various other aspects of devotion, links it to sacred space, and studies it as a "practiced space." Boivin looks at this space "where many things are possible,

63 Ali S. Asani. 1988. "Sufi Poetry in the Folk Tradition of Indo-Pakistan," *Religion and Literature*, 20 (1): 81–94.

64 Jürgen Wasim Frembgen. 2012. *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi: Five Days and Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.

65 Michel Boivin. 2016. 'Authority, Shrines, and Spaces. Scrutinizing Devotional Islam from South Asia.' In *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys, and Wanderers*. Edited by Michel Boivin and Remy Delage. London: Routledge, pp. 1–11.

66 Michel Boivin and Remy Delage. 2016. *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys, and Wanderers*. London: Routledge.

despite the control taken by powerful lobbies.”⁶⁷ Thus, Boivin views the shrine space beyond its physical aspect as the last resting place of a venerated person. In Boivin’s estimation, the shrine’s sacred place and space is open to new social negotiations and is to some extent “like a distorted mirror of the interwoven strata of local, regional, and national society.”⁶⁸ Regarding the position of women in Sufi and particularly shrine culture, Boivin also reiterates the shared concern of researchers regarding scant studies in this field. To address this inadequacy, he recommends more research investigating the place of women’s authority further and with a more holistic approach. This new approach, he suggests, should avoid the traditional depiction of women as “clients” of the shrines. Women’s spiritual authority and their agency should be examined.⁶⁹

Kasmani, whose paper is also included in this edited volume, explores women visitors to shrines not as passive numbers present there; he searches for their agency as part of the shrines’ agency. This revealing study was conducted at Sehwan Sharif, which Kasmani calls “a place of confluence” as all categories of men, women, and transgender find equal space at the shrine and so also followers of all faiths. Kasmani’s association with shrines is spread over years. In 2012, he interviewed several women *fakirs* (religious mendicants) at the shrine of Usman Marwandi—known as Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (d. 1274)—in Sehwan Sharif.⁷⁰ Despite their visible presence, Kasmani in 2016 wrote: “Seldom do women of these accounts enjoy an influence over a male in public, and neither do they, unlike the fakirs, take up roles of spiritual authority that are customarily reserved for men.”⁷¹

Taken together, these studies document women’s shrine visitation and examine women’s spirituality through this prism, indeed recognising the significance of oral traditions. Valerie Hoffman traces the presence of the authority of women’s voice of foundational significance in the collection of Ḥadīth. In this context, she emphasises the central role of the voice of Ḥaẓrat ‘A’isha, the Prophet’s addressed as *Ummu’l mu’minīn* (the Mother of the faithful). She

67 Michel Boivin. 2016. ‘Authority, Shrines, and Spaces. Scrutinizing Devotional Islam from South Asia.’ p. 4.

68 Ibid, p. 4.

69 Ibid, p. 7.

70 Omar Kasmani. 2012. “Of Discontinuity and Difference: Gender and Embodiment Among Fakirs of Sehwan Sharif”. *Oriente Moderno*. 92 (2): 439–457.

71 Omar Kasmani. 2016. ‘Women[un-]like Women. The question of spiritual authority among female fakirs of Sehwan Sharif.’ In *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys and Wanderers*. Edited by Michel Boivin and Remy Delage. London: Routledge, pp. 47–62, here p. 57.

rightly argues that the sources of Sufi biographical studies, for the most part, “are simply collections of orally transmitted materials.”⁷²

It is true that in order to know the veiled lives of Sufi women, it is important that oral traditions are valued, respected, audited, and recorded.

2 Research Methods and Process

This book evolved in its present form through several years of research. During this time, my approach to the understanding of Sufi women underwent considerable changes. The more I read and interacted with people, the more I realised that the real understanding of Sufi women's piety and of their mystical experience lies in exploring the cultural context of these experiences. The many conversations I had with both men and women helped in identifying the major themes for my research. One theme that kept reoccurring was the persistent image of a Sufi as a man. Women, I was told, with huge emphasis, are pious women (*nek bībīān*). The *khādims* of the *dargahs* have the same understanding. Most women I met concurred with this perception. Among the men and women, I spoke with were religious academics as well. Some shied away from answering me directly, respecting my known stand on women's issues. Their written answers, too, were evasive lest the signed paper could be used in defaming them. This evasion led me to a vigorous search for Sufi women.

As the canvas of my study expanded, my research questions also kept changing, eventually adjusting my research methods to my new goals. The major thrust, however, remained unchanged. The goal of all my academic pursuits, in conducting my research, in sharing my research with students on school campuses, and even in random conversations, is recognising and making known women's presence.

To be more specific, this book, as the title declares, is to make South Asian Sufi women's presence visible. Long before I decided to begin my academic study of Sufi women, I was totally convinced that Sufi women have always existed. There are hosts of other academics who have confirmed this before my conviction. Dakake's words that “women are also among the well-known practitioners of the mystical path in Islam” make me feel that I am not the only

72 Valarie J. Hoffman, 2005. ‘Oral Traditions as a Source for the Study of Muslim Women: Women in the Sufi Orders.’ In *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*. Edited by A. Sonbol. Syracuse University Press, pp. 365–380.

one to realise this.⁷³ In reality, however, little is known about these women. I am convinced beyond a doubt that male authoritarian versions of the past have made women invisible in historical records or minimised their roles. Salvaging these hidden stories before they disappear completely was of paramount importance. The strategy I adopted for knowing the forgotten tales of these women included tapping into all kinds of sources and resources, ranging from libraries and archives to human memory and human experience. Tracing backwards the roots of present-day social issues, in my experience, helps one in identifying their roots. Thus, I always begin learning the past through the present.⁷⁴ Further, this book is not merely an exercise in collating scattered and sparse fragments from remote writings; the book's purpose is to explore how women understood and engaged with authority and leadership. Was it diagonally based? Was it horizontally structured? Was it implanted in a vertical fashion?

One difference I noticed early on is that, unlike the accounts of mystic women from other Muslim societies, accounts of the pious women of South Asia do not convey the spoken words of Sufi women, even briefly,⁷⁵ though some valuable exceptions exist. One such example, which is authentic because of the credibility of both the narrators, i.e., Ḥaḥṣrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and his reporter, Ḥasan Sijzi, is the unique conversation between Ḥaḥṣrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and Bibī Fāṭima Sām, at the latter's house, on his marriage prospects. The topic was broached by Bibī Fāṭima Sām who suggested to Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' that he consider getting married. The theme was rather an unusual one, though not an impolite one. The Shaikh, though young in age, with a fascinating appearance, excused himself from considering the marriage proposal, because marriage had never been in his cards. The element of surprise in this brief episode, however, lies in Ḥaḥṣrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recounting an earlier episode that happened when he was a novice at Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār's *Jamā'at khāna*. A visiting Jogi explained to Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn, while the young Nizāmu'd-Dīn was listening attentively, that cohabiting on certain days ensures begetting a son or results in some

73 Maria M. Dakake. 2007. "Guest of the Inmost Heart': Conceptions of the Divine Beloved among Early Sufi Women." *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 3 (1): pp. 72–97.

74 This strategy, earlier helped me in locating the lost manuscript of the autobiography of Shahr Bano Begam. See Tahera Aftab. 2012. *A story of Days Gone By: A Translation of Bīṭi kahānī: An Autobiography of Princess Shahr Bano Begam of Pataudi*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

75 One such example is Abū'Abdar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī's *Dhikr an-Niswa al-Muta'abidāt as-Ṣūfiyyāt*. In this compendium, notices, though short, but almost all these narratives reflect a first-person point of view.

other benefits. Observing the young Nizāmu'd-Dīn's interest, Khwāja Farīdu'd remarked that the information was of no use for him, because he was not going to marry.⁷⁶ Hearing this story, Bibī Fāṭima Sām said that now she understands the nature of his refusal. This episode is the only direct reference to a conversation between a Sufi woman and a Sufi man in the early history of Sufis in South Asia. The nature of the dialogue, the theme of the conversation, and the tone of its frankness are significant. The conversation is free of the shackles of gender norms that normally proscribe any reference to sexual intimacy when men and women talk. Further, here in this episode, Bibī Fāṭima Sām, a Sufi woman of great virtue, displays caring traits that are the hallmark of a woman's psyche. A celibate herself, she neither promoted nor extolled celibacy as the Sufi way. Instead, she acted, here in this episode, as a matchmaker—an almost universally favoured hobby of women. The story enamoured me. It became my key to open the doors to the hidden world of women Sufis. The story guided me to conversations with people. More on the importance of conversations, as one of my research methods, is discussed latter.

Another story from Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' further chiselled my search tools. Explaining the complex concept of *wilāyat* and *walāyat*, in simplest words, he said *walāyat* is the relationship between people and a Shaikh (*miyān-i khalq*). It can be passed on from a Master to his disciple. *Wilāyat* is based on a special kind of love (*khās muḥabbat*) between God and a Sufi (*miyān-i ḥaqq*).⁷⁷ Because women Sufis, as a norm, are not known to be a part of the Sufi hierarchical power structure, I begin to explore the locus of their spirituality in their connections with the people around them. This love for the Divine results in obedience (*ta'abbud*) to Allah. *Taṣawwuf*, the generic term for the anglicised term *Sufism*, in essence is *ta'abbud*. For as-Sulamī, who had been in the company of the Sufis and had read about all Sufis, both men and women, "*ta'abbud* is the essence of women's Sufism," notes Rkia Cornell.⁷⁸

This anecdote also helped to answer for me, though subtly and in an indirect fashion, some of the questions I had created for myself. For instance: What is the make of a woman Sufi? Is she different from Sufi men? If so, in what ways, and how? Are these differences, differences of the interior (*bāṭin*) or of the exterior (*zāhir*)? Did they love Him, or were they afraid of Him? Did they also go through *ṣalāt-i mā'kūs*, as did Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn to *Ganj-i Shakkar*? If

76 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zil Ḥajj*, 720/1321.

77 FF, *Majlis* 14, 7th *Muharram*, 708/1308.

78 Elaroui Rkia Cornell. 2005. *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-Muta'abbidāt aṣ-Ṣūfiyyāt*. Lahore: Suhail Academy, p. 54.

they did not, was their quest for the Divine lacking in devotion, or was it simply because they could not, because of their “innate deficiency”?

This conceptual understanding generated more questions. Searching for the answers to these questions became synonymous with my journey to discover the lives of Sufi women. I realised, early in my research, that I was not a lonely sojourner. There were, indeed, many; and so were their pathways, varied and different. Destinations they wanted to see, though, varied according to their charted route.

I chose an amalgamation of various research strategies and methods, to understand the past and to connect it with the present. A research with a canvas as vast as this book, in terms of space and time and personalities, has taken a multipronged approach. Indeed, for all historical research, multipronged research is quintessential. Written words and texts are one of the various channels of communication, documentation, and preservation of human thoughts and action. Memory, both individual and public, is the best repository of oral traditions. In this book, I present the lives of Sufi women found in both hagiographical accounts and biographical compendiums, supported by conversations with women devotees. These women devotees are conservators, narrators, and creators of the sacred traditions. Applying a multifaceted research methodology, this research, thus, investigates historical writings, hagiographical literature, biographical compendiums, oral sources, ethnographic studies, travelogues, and internet sources, combined with interviews and in-depth discussions to find answers to some significant questions with the purpose of writing biographical sketches of Sufi women and producing a new understanding of gender roles and the gendered nature of religious behaviour and practices. Some of these questions are: (a) what caused negligence, omission, or suppression of women's life-stories in the Sufi canon? (b) does sparse information about Sufi women reflect hesitation to accept women as Sufis, or is it symptomatic of the flaws of writing craft? (c) how does women's experience of religious and social traditions differ from those of men, if at all? (d) to what extent are religious and cultural traditions used to create, strengthen, and sustain gender inequalities in South Asian societies? (e) do women find their religious practices liberating or exploitative and oppressive? and finally, (f) what is the male perception of women Sufis today?

Because the early Sufi *malfūzāt* were basically a one-man story, recorded by one man, I read these works with much caution. This became my basic methodology for handling contemporary foundational sources. The recollections of two different individuals will result in vast differences in the two versions of the story. Also, the presence or absence of a scribe plays a significant role in documenting the conversations. As memories are always shifting, changing,

and sifting, *malfūzāt*—which basically are oral data and memory generated—need to be validated by other relevant sources. The medieval authors of South Asia did not attempt this; they simply replicated the stories of the *malfūzāt*, often word for word, with no validation process involved. Later writers, including modern ones, picked these stories and included them in their works.

To illustrate my argument, I refer to the story of Bibī Sāra (d. 1240), the mother of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad. Her name is mentioned first in *Fawa'id ul-fu'ād* when Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recalled people's misery caused by an acute draught in Delhi. To redress this calamity, on people's insistence, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad, holding the scarf of her mother, prayed for rainfall. (This story is given in more detail in the biographical section, so I avoid further details here.) Here, my argument is that Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' is not narrating the life story of the mother or the son. He was teaching his audience the effectiveness of beseeching God by afflicted people in time of distress. Connecting with God, through remembering Him, is the spirit of the Sufi way. Indeed, nothing substantial is found about Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad in other accounts. The apathy of the medieval scribe towards details and accuracy of facts is frustrating. Thus, some of these compilations are more a result of the hard labour of an excellent copyist, and less than the work of a rationalist author.

In view of this void in the Sufi cannon, I made a concentrated effort to explore other sources. I am sure that there are many such texts present somewhere that I could not access. Huge sources in South Asia are still lying unnoticed, undocumented, and in a neglected state in remote shrines and *khānqāhs*. I am hugely frustrated when my efforts to get access to family documents in the possession of the descendants of Miān Muḥammad Kāmil (d. 1239/1823), in reconstructing the narrative of his daughter, Mā'ī Khadija (notice included in this book) failed.

My other research method, which is parallel in its significance and richness of results, is visits to the shrines and dialogues with women devotees at the shrines. I must hastily point out here that the importance I assign to shrines led me to identify an aged and ailing woman in Karachi, almost nearing her end, who recalled for me her childhood visit to the shrine of Bibī Kamāl or Bibī Kamālo, the twelfth-century pious woman buried in Kāko, Bihar, India. Because of her advanced age and a speech-related ailment, the conversation was fractured and often hard to understand. (Her children, too, were unable to understand her, as in her old age she had dramatically reversed to her original childhood dialect of a remote rural area of Bihar.) What is important in this conversation, however, is that the woman still cherished memories of her visit to Bibī Kamāl. Her narration, though mostly inaudible, not only confirmed the

accounts that I read in the Archaeological Survey Reports, but it also confirmed that Bibī Kamālo was venerated for curing the possessed and the mentally ill. I could pick up from her words that probably one of her paternal unmarried aunts was taken to the shrine for treatment.

Thus, unlike most research studies, which focus on women's biographies and begin by surveying published scholarly works, my search began, first, with my visits to the shrines, including the shrines of Sufi men. In 1986, I visited the shrines of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and of Jahān Ārā' Begam. Though the two shrines were in close proximity, the visible ambience of the two spaces was in sharp contrast: the highly engaging eloquence of the *khādims* at the shrine of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', compared with the serenity and a sort of deserted appearance of the grave of Jahān Ārā' Begam. This contrast left me wondering about our gendered perceptions and behaviours. The presence of women, more in number at the shrine of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and their total absence around that of Jahān Ārā' Begam, was yet another point of concern for me. As a note of clarification, I am not comparing the two personalities or their shrines. Though I do not intend to record my personal appreciation and devotion for Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', however, I must say that his role as a leader who energized the people and the state towards peace-building and people's welfare remains unmatched.

At all the shrines that I visited, I met with countless women devotees and conducted 125 documented interviews, some of which were audio-recorded. I also took photographs and made short video-recordings. The oral data was then painstakingly turned into the written word and was later translated from the local spoken idiom to the English language. This process, familiar to all those who work in the field of ethnography, is both joyful and painful. The readers of the translated word in print enjoy it as it transports them into regions they may have never thought to visit. The researcher, who has been through this whole process, experiences a pain caused by the loss of significant data which probably only an audiovisual film can portray. The transcribed text loses the speakers' cultural expressions, body language, facial gestures, linguistic nuances, and even the pauses. Shrines, where I met and interviewed women, were places where both worlds, the here and the Hereafter (*dīn wa dunyā*), meet in a natural way as two water currents coming from opposite directions meet and merge with each other.

Contrary to the norms of women's segregation from male gatherings, which is now gaining more acceptance, women remain visible at the shrines of male Sufis. Although some shrines debar women from certain premarked spaces, most shrines follow relaxed rules. I have noticed and even photographed women standing alongside male shrine visitors, though not blood-related to

them. For example, at the shrine of Ḥaẓrat ‘Abdu’llah Shah Ghāzi in Karachi, a woman devotee told me that the *darbār* of the Bābā (father) gives them much-needed tranquillity (*sakūn*) and their contractual vows (*mannat*) are answered and fulfilled.

My third research methodology was to offer teaching courses and seminars on Sufi women, either as a separate course or as a unit within a teaching course, on women’s spirituality, women and religion, and women’s history, in Pakistan and in the USA. This served various academic purposes, in addition to fulfilling my responsibilities as course instructor. Foremost, it made spiritual women visible in the learning process. It placed spiritual women of all beliefs and faiths in the role of leaders. More importantly, it contributed actively to the enrichment of my research methodology. Discussions with students always add new and fresh dimensions to an instructor’s perception. In my case, this even resulted in new stories and identification of new shrines in Karachi. For instance, Mā’ī Gārhī was identified for me by a student who had often commuted through the Northern Bypass in Karachi.

Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God, thus, makes new connections between the pious women of the past and those who trust in women’s potentials by enlivening the forgotten icons of piety and devoutness.

PART 1

Sufis, Sufism, and Transformations



Setting the Scene

1.1 Evolution of the Muslim Community in South Asia

An overall assessment of the vast topic of the arrival, evolution, and growth of the Muslim community in South Asia requires a separate monograph. Indeed, even a brief appraisal of this multifaceted phenomenon and a survey of the relevant literature would distract the readers from the focus of the present work. The vast geographic region of South Asia, from prerecorded history to the present times, has welcomed hordes of people of different descents and ethnicities, speaking different languages and dialects and professing variant beliefs, coming there and making it their permanent abode. Frontiers of states and the boundaries of principalities have always posed a challenge to historians and mapmakers. With the coming of the British colonialists, this huge land area was minutely surveyed, communities were labeled and counted according to their religion, and lines were drawn on paper to create maps and in social life to create new identities.

With formal colonial control gone, the region today consisting of seven independent states is referred to collectively as South Asia.¹ This nomenclature, which owes its origin to international politics, does not find any reference in historical texts. In the context of this book, my focus is on the region, identified earlier as the subcontinent of India. This region, known vaguely as Hindustan in medieval history and in early Sufi traditions, occupies a special place in the history of Islam and of the Muslim communities for whom it is their land.

Muslim society in South Asia grew and spread with a variegated pattern of development. The expansion of the new community, both in number and influence, similar to the other incoming groups all through history, is a subject of intense research with a potential of turning into politically motivated debate among historians and policy-makers and has resulted in a large number of treatises and monographs.² A critical exposition of several aspects of the

1 In alphabetical order, these states are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

2 From among the long list of distinguished and significant works on this theme, I cite only a few studies here, two studies by Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (1964) and *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857–1964*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1967); M. Mujeeb. *The Indian Muslims*. London:

phenomenal growth of Muslims and their effective presence as a dynamic factor in the social and cultural milieu of South Asia is an ongoing process.

An evaluation of this process, historically as well as in the context of the present, is crucial to comprehend the salient characteristics of South Asia. The arrival of the Turko-Afghans in South Asia, within the social context of the non-Islamic communities who formed the majority of the region's populace, is a theme whose several dimensions still await critical analysis. New entrants and old dwellers met involuntarily, and these unscheduled connections created new patterns of living. This pattern of growth is not something peculiar to South Asia; elsewhere, too, diametrically opposite communities grow, develop, and flourish and in turn create a mosaic of peoples and cultures. Several studies, foremost being that which began with Tara Chand, continue to expand, assess, and examine points of compatibility within the orbit of faith and belief and daily living, a process which is often defined as syncretization of cultures.³

Military conquests and the arrival of a new cultural or ethnic group, though two different historical phenomena, have often been used interchangeably and, in turn, have adversely and negatively influenced the assessment of the past and the present. Some Muslims scholars of India and Pakistan, for example, Saiyyid Sulaiman Nadwī, on the authority of the Traditions of the Prophet, maintains that Hind and its people were known to the Prophet and the Early Caliphs.⁴ Some scholars also argue that the Arab traders and voyagers, because of their monopoly over the waters of the Indian Ocean, were the first to introduce Islam to the western coastal areas of South India, chiefly Malabar (or Ma'bār) and Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon). In some instances, these encounters resulted in the conversion of the locals to Islam.⁵ An opposite view, however,

Allen & Unwin, (1967); Muhammad Umar. 2001. *Urban Culture in Northern India During the Eighteenth Century*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal; Murray T. Titus. *Islam in India and Pakistan: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan*. Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Pub. House, (1959) and Ja'far Sharif and G.A. Herklots & W. Crooke. *Islam in India, or the Qānūn-i Islām: The Customs of the Musalmāns of India, Comprising a full and exact account of their various rites and Ceremonies from the moment of birth to the hour of death*. London: OUP (1921); Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi. *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, 610–1947: A Brief Historical Analysis*. The Hague: Mouton, (1962); Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1980; Barbara D. Metcalf (Edited). *Islam in South Asia in Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, (2009).

3 Tara Chand. 1954. *Influence of Islam on Indian culture*. Allahabad: Indian Press.

4 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, on the authority of Nadwī, presents this thesis in his paper, "Early Arab contact with South Asia." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5 (1): 52–69, (1994).

5 *Tuhfatu'l mujāhidīn*, originally written in Arabic by Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn M'ābārī, probably in 922/1516, refers to a group of mystics (*fuqarā'*) who on their way to visit Adam's footprint in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), arrived in Cranganore (Kodungallur) on the Malabar coast during the period of the legendary ruler, Cheraman Perumal. See *Tuhfatu'l mujāhidīn* by Shaikh

does exist. Thus, for instance, Nainar refers to a comment of Sulayman al Tajjār, an Arab maritime trader who in the first half of the ninth century reached the Gulf of Cambay, that he had never known anyone, either in Hind or China, who had embraced Islam or anyone who could speak Arabic.⁶ In 710, the coastal areas of Makran, Balochistan, and Sindh came under military attacks led by Muḥammad bin Qāsim. The conquest of this area by 712 resulted in the introduction of some form of administrative setup under the victorious army which upheld the local power groups and the prevalent social hierarchy, thus leaving the system intact.⁷

Occupation of the Punjab by the Ghaznavids (1001–1186) is marked as the second arrival of the Muslims. Lahore now emerged as the capital of Muslims who had entered al-Hind. Muslim scholars and persons of saintly virtues, known as travellers in search of the Divine, came next. The biggest impetus to the arrival of the Muslims, however, occurred after a gap of several decades when the next band of military and political power of the Muslims arrived from across the mountainous passes of the North. One major push factor for the coming of Muslims, this time in unprecedented numbers from across the northern borders into Hindustan, was Mongol brutality in Asia. The newly formed Delhi Sultanate, in the words of Minhāj Sirāj Juzjāni—who himself arrived from Ghaur sometime around 1226—offered a safe haven to the émigré and fleeing hordes and attracted Muslims of all stations of life which soon turned the Sultanate into the orbit of the followers of the faith and the fortress of Islam.⁸ Even a quick perusal of history, however, shows a contradictory scenario. Armed conflicts, political tensions, and internal rivalries and feuds, in addition to the constant fear of inroads by enemy hoards from Central Asia, seriously jeopardised life. Real and imagined dangers and fears, instead of decreasing, kept multiplying. Military accomplishments and victories always posed the problem of consolidation of the conquered land. But land conquest did not mean the submission of the people.

Zainu'd-Dīn M'abāri and translated in Urdu from the original Arabic (992/1584) by Saiyyid Shamsu'llah Qadiri. Aligarh: Sharwani Printing Press (1942), pp. 13–14.

6 Syed Muhammad Husayn Nainar. 1942. *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*. Kerala: Other Books, p. 94.

7 Cultural and social issues that emerged consequent to the conquest of Sindh and the adjoining areas are assessed by Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui in his *Indo-Persian Historiography up to the Thirteenth Century*. (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), pp. 29–39.

8 The *Tabaqaāt-i Nāsiri* of Aboo 'Omar Mināj al-dīn 'Othman Ibn Sirāj-al-dīn -al-Jawzjāni. Edited by Captain W. Nassau Lees and Mawlawis Khadim Hosain and 'Abd-al Ha'i. Calcutta: College Press (1864), p. 186.

There are no statistical records to show the number either of incoming Muslims or of those who chose to stay for good in the new country. However, court histories, records of military expeditions, revenue deeds, and, more importantly, birth of new urban centres along with the construction of palaces, mosques, and mausoleums, indicate the presence of a permanent Muslim community with increasing statistics and growing needs. During this process of settlement, indigenous people, as individuals and as groups, either accepted Islam as a personal choice or submitted to temptations and coercion to convert. This new community of Muslims, identified as Indian Muslims, despite remaining not on par with the incoming Muslims, finally emerged as the base of the Muslim society of South Asia and enriched it in a variety of ways.

Within this emerging Muslim community of South Asia, women's presence remains critically veiled and subordinated to the male presence and male authority. There is little information about Muslim women who travelled from outside the geographic confines of Hindustan and came to the new land along with the male members of their families. While women's experiences of travel, settling down in new environs, and their interaction with Hindustan remains little explored and documented, more is written about their role in adapting and popularising non-Islamic traditions, and accusing them of promoting heretical ways. Sporadic references, and not coherent accounts, however, can be gleaned by scanning the contemporary texts, including travelogues. Built on these sources, narratives about women's dress, ornaments they have worn, and the cosmetics they applied, as seen by men and as inscribed by male writers, exist. The omission of women's direct voices has raised little critical scholarly inquiry. Similar to the other baggage accompanying the incoming male, women were also counted, protected, and safeguarded. They were honoured and respected too. Their identity as an individual person, however, was not viewed as of any consequence; the family connection was their main identifier. It is expected and hoped that as more studies are undertaken, some of the hidden or omitted aspects of women's history would be critically evaluated and recorded. Of these hidden and omitted areas of research and investigation, I need not emphasise, is the role of women as constructors of a society and not as a passive entity. Suppressed and omitted histories are more harmful, often fatal, for nations. Until women's written words are discovered, history would offer only a male vision through male eyes. The following account, thus, is based on male authorship only.

Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325) enjoyed multiple identities, each of which was lauded, admired, and loved. This admiration has grown tremendously over the huge span of centuries. On one hand, he had an insider's familiarity with court life and the field experience of a soldier; on the other hand, he was a regular

visitor of the *khānqāh* and was the beloved disciple of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. He travelled widely in India. He is the first Sufi court poet to write in his lengthy poem *Nuh siphir* (the nine heavens, composed in 718/1318)⁹ that the land of Hindustan is *bihisht-i zamīn* (heaven on earth). Discarding the most cherished connections of a Muslim with lands of their past habitat, he declared his pride that Hindustan was his homeland because he was born and lived there. To convince his audience that his motherland was better than Rome, Iraq, Khurasan, and Qandahar, regions embedded in Muslim émigré groups' memory as the sacred lands of their glorious past, Khusraw's foremost reason was that Hindustan was the sign of heaven (*khuld nishān*) on earth. Adam was sent down from heaven to Hind. The peacock, India's beloved bird, is a bird of the garden of heaven (*bāgh-i falakī*).¹⁰ 'Abdu's Šamad bin Afzal Aḥmad, a resident of Agra and a nephew and son-in-law of Abu'l Faḥl (assassinated in 1602), Emperor Akbar's court chronicler, made a fresh argument in favour of India. Explaining the reasons for compiling the lives of mystics and Sufis of India in *Akhbāru'l Aṣṭiyā'* (which was compiled sometime in the early years of Emperor Jahangir's era), he argued that the Muslims loved Hindustan because a large number of friends of God and God-fearing devout persons were reposing in their graves in India. To add weight to his argument, 'Abdu's Šamad pleaded that the number of such persons in Hind is larger as compared to any other country.¹¹

Appreciation of the local culture even emerged in the spiritual sessions of the Sufis. Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (721/1321–825/1422), *khalīfa* of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī (1276–1356), in his discourse session held on 19 Ramaḥān 802/1400, expressed his appreciation for the spoken dialects of the people. Khwāja Gīsū Darāz explained that this language, a mix of Arabic-Persian with local languages, had softer expressions that touched the heart and the listener was moved to cry. The Sufis like this quality of the language, he emphasised.¹² Appreciation and adaptation of Hindawi—as this Indian language was called to distinguish it from Farsi—led to the mingling of the Indian

9 The time of composition coincides with Khusraw's period of connections with Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' Chishtī.

10 Wahid Mirza. 1949. *The Nuh Siphir of Amir Khusrau*. London: Oxford University Press, especially, pp. 147–211.

11 Shadma Shahzad. 2013. 'A Critical Edition of Akhbar-ul-Asfiya with Introduction and Notes.' A thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Persian. Department of Persian, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, p. 84.

12 Muḥammad Akbar Ḥussainī. 2010. *Sharaḥ Jawāmi'u'l-kilām (maḥfūzāt of Saḥyid Gīsū Darāz, compiled by Akbar Ḥusainī. Translated by Wāhid Bakhsh Siyāl Chishtī Šābirī)*. Lahore: al-Faisal, p. 300.

spiritual idioms at the intellectual level of the South Asian Sufis. Perhaps the first attempt to bring the two languages closer in order to facilitate communication and understanding of each other was the composition of *Khāliq bārī*. *Khāliq bārī*, a versified composition, long assumed to be a work of Amīr Khusraw,¹³ begins by paying tribute to Allah by saying *khāliq bārī sarjan hār, wāhid ek badā kartār* (there is only God who has created all). In essence, it is a versified dictionary of words of Farsi and Awadhi for everyday use.¹⁴ One of the earliest examples is *Chandāyān*, a longer verse on the theme of love and separation in Awadhi dialect by Maulānā Da'ūd Awadhi (b. 722/1322), a disciple of Shaikh Naṣīrū'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī, composed around 1379.¹⁵ Later, similar efforts were made by Shaikh 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī (d. 456/1537) of the Ṣabīrī-Chishtī Sufi *silsila* in his *Rushd Nāmā* (The Book of Correct Conduct) on the theme of *habs-i dam*, the practice of breath control in the Sufi and Yogic philosophies.¹⁶ A good example of appreciation of local Indian socioreligious milieu comes from 'Abdul Wahid Bilgrāmī (1509–1608)¹⁷ who in his *Ḥaqa'iq-i Hindi*, a dictionary of Hindi words, expresses his devotion to the Vedic deity Krishna. Most of the devotional songs that women sang while grinding, known as *chakki-namas*, were in this mixed language, using metaphors that were familiar to women only.¹⁸

Similarly, 'Abdu'llah Khesghī, an employee of the Mughal nobles, with a long family history of devotion for the Chishtī *silsila*, in his late seventeenth-century (1683) Sufi biographical compendium *Ma'ārijū'l Wilāyat*, wrote that the Divine decree which has appointed human beings as God's viceregent (*khalifa*) on earth also turned Hindustan into *rashk-i gulistān* (the envy of rose garden) by placing the blessings of the footsteps of the Sufis of Chisht.¹⁹

13 Recent research shows that it was composed by one Ziauddin Khusraw in 1031/1622 during Jahangir's era. See Ḥāfiz Maḥmūd Shirīnī. 1944. *Ḥifzu'l lisān m'arūf ba khāliq bārī*. Delhi: Anjuman Tarqqī-yi Urdu.

14 Amīr Khusraw. 1287/1870. *Khāliq Bārī Sarjan Hār*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Nawal Kishore.

15 Maulānā Da'ūd. 1996. *Chandāyān*. Edited by Muḥammad Anṣarullāh. Patna Tahqīqāt-i Urdu.

16 S.C.R. Weightman. 1992. 'The text of Alakh Bānī or Rushd Nama of Abdul Quddus Gangohi.' In *Devotional Literature in South Asia. Current Research, 1985–1988*. Edited by R.S. McGregor. New York: SUNY, pp. 171–78.

17 For his short biography, see 'Abdu'l Qādir Badaoni. 1284/1867. *Muntakhabu't tawārikh*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Khāṣ Munshi Nawal Kishore; Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1328/1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma'āsiru'l kirām*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufid-i 'Ām, pp. 26–33.

18 For further details, see the scholarly exposition of this theme by Richard Eaton in his *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufi in Medieval India*. (Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 155–165 and "Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam." *History of Religions*, 14 (2): 117–127.

19 'Abdu'llah Khesghī. *Ma'ārijū'l Wilāyat* (MS no. R344) in the Panjab University (Lahore) Library, in the collection of Iqbal Mujaddidi, folio 1a.

Almost a century later, another scholar and Sufi, Āzād Bilgrāmī (1704–1786), referring to the significance of this region in Muslim memory and citing several commentators (*mufasssīrīn*) and reporters of the Prophet's Traditions (*muhaddisīn*), writes that this region is sacred because Adam, the first Prophet, was sent down to Sarandeeep,²⁰ thus making the region of Hind the place where the sun of Prophethood dawned first (*ṭulū' shams al-nabuwwat awwalan*).²¹ Āzād even declared that "since Adam first landed in India, therefore all his descendants are Indian."²² After another hundred years, Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwī (1884–1953), in 1930, a period marked with intense political activity heightened by nationalism and Indian Muslims' quest for their identity, endorsed the above-cited views of Āzād. He further declared that the commonly held view that Muslim connection with India began following the conquest of Maḥmūd of Ghazni was erroneous. To support his argument, Nadwī adds a reference to the Prophets' Traditions of four rivers that flow out of heaven and comments that, according to some, the river Ganges or Indus probably is the fourth one of these.²³ Thus, India's sanctity in Muslim memory is vouched for by their religious traditions. In the same vein, Muḥammad Ṣādiq Dihlawi Kashmiri Hamadani, a seventeenth-century Sufi scholar, in his *kalimātu's-ṣādiqīn*, which is an account of the Sufis buried in Delhi up to 1614, writes that to the common people of Delhi, Delhi was little Makkah, while the elite do not doubt its greatness.²⁴

20 Sarandeeep refers to Sri Lanka.

21 Āzād al-Bilgrāmī. 1884. *Subḥat al-marjān fī aṭḥar Hindūstān*. Bombay: M.S. Maḥmūd, p. 10. Also see, his *Ghazalān-i al-Hind: Muṭāla'-yi Hind wa Farsi*. Edited by Sirus Shamisa. Tehran: Sada-yi Ma'āshir, 1382/1962, p. 25. Also, Lee, Samuel. 1829, *Travels of Ibn Batūta*. London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Committee, pp. 183–191. Ibn Batūta describes in detail his pilgrimage of the footprint of Adam, whom the local people called Adam Baba and Eve as Mama. See for more details, H.A.R. Gibb (Edited) 1953. *Ibn Batuta. Travels in Asia and Africa 1325–54*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., pp. 255–59.

22 Cited by Carl Ernst. 2011. "Reconfiguring South Asian Islam: From the 18th to the 19th Century", *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 5 (2): 247–272.

23 Saiyyid Sulaiman Nadwī. *Arab wa Hind kai Ta'alluqāt* [Relations between Arabia and Hind]. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy (1930), pp. 1–5. Nadwī, an eminent researcher-scholar, was a prolific writer in Urdu and Arabic. His biography of the Prophet, *Sīrat-un Nabī* is considered a masterpiece on the Prophet's life produced in India. Much influenced by his mentor, Shibli Nu'māni (1857–1914), he later founded the Shibli Academy which spearheaded a new wave of research and publications, particularly in Urdu. Although Sulaiman Nadwi supported Hindu-Muslim unity in times of deep communal divide, later in 1950, however, he migrated to Pakistan where he died in 1953 in Karachi.

24 Muḥammad Ṣādiq Dihlawi Kashmiri Hamadani. *kalimātu's-ṣādiqīn*. Ed. by Muhammad Saleem Akhtar. Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Research Centre, 1988, p. 4.

1.2 Arrival of Sufi Men in South Asia

Information about the chronological order of the arrival of the Sufis is not definitively known. Similarly, knowledge about the first Sufis to arrive in India remains incomplete, sparse, and doubtful. There is also still speculation regarding where in India the first Sufis settled. Mufti Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, however, says that Shaikh Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Bukhārī (d. 448/1056) was perhaps one of the earliest to settle in Lahore during the era of Sultan Masʿūd Ghaznawī (1031–1041).²⁵ Rizvi places Shaikh Ṣafīuʿd-Dīn Kazārūnī as the first Sufi to settle in Uchch, a city in southern Punjab. According to a hagiographical anecdote, his uncle, Shaikh Abu Ishāq Kazārūnī (352/963–426/1033 or 1035)—celebrated as the guardian saint of sea travellers and voyagers²⁶—ordered him to mount a camel and travel in whatever direction the animal drove him. He was to remain where the camel stopped. The camel chose to halt at Uchch.²⁷ Ḥazrat Nizāmuʿd-Dīn Awliyāʾ, in discussing the Sufis of the past in one of his discourse sessions, mentioned that some of the early Sufis were like birds and could fly. In this connection, recalling the great miraculous powers of Shaikh Ṣafīuʿd-Dīn Kazārūnī, he narrated that once a yogi, a Hindu mystic expert in yoga, visited Shaikh Ṣafīuʿd-Dīn Kazārūnī at Uchch and started arguing with him, challenging the Shaikh to compete with him in performing miracles. The Shaikh told him that he should first display his miraculous powers as he had come to challenge him [the Shaikh]. The yogi flew from the ground upward till his head touched the ceiling and then landed again. The Shaikh then looked towards the heavens and beseeched, “O Lord, you have given this superiority to this stranger. Grant me some similar miracles (*karāmāt*).” The Shaikh then stepped out of his cell, flew to the west [the direction of Makkah], then to the north and the south, and returned safely to his cell. Watching this, the yogi

25 Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī. 1976. *Ḥadīqatʿul Awliyāʾ: Punjāb ke Akābīr Sufiyāʾ kā Mustanad Tazkira*. Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation. (First published in 1875 at Kanpur: Munshi Nawal Kishore. Henceforth, referred to as *Ḥadīqatʿul Awliyāʾ*), p. 179.

26 For a short note on Kazārūnī, B. Lawrence, 1983. “ABŪ ESHĀQ KĀZARŪNĪ,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1/3, pp. 274–275; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 115–16; Ibn Baṭūṭa writes that Shaikh Abū Ishāq Kazārūnī was a highly venerated saint in India and China because of the protection he offered to the sea-farers. Baṭūṭa describes an intricate, but a well-managed system of the collection of cash offerings vowed by the sea-traders to the Shaikh Abū Ishāq’s shrine managers. *Ibn Batuta. Travels in Asia and Africa 1325–54*, p. 97.

27 Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. 2004. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 1. Lahore: Suhail Academy, p. 111.

admitted that the Shaikh's powers were true and were from the Divine and that his own powers were false (*bāṭil ast*).²⁸

A similar account, though in greater detail, is about Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer (d. 633/1236) in *Sīyaru'l Aqṭāb* of Ilah Diya Chishtī, which was compiled in 1056/1646–1647. The incredible hagiographical tale of the spiritual feats of the Khwāja, in the words of Ilah Diya Chishtī, reads like magical stories in which the right is always the winner at the end.²⁹

This contestation between a Sufi and a *yogi*, both males, is noticeable in other spheres where the incoming Muslims and the earlier inhabitants of the land encountered each other. These encounters appeared in the form of physical conflicts, resulting in battles, armed clashes, and insurrections. They also took the form of verbal discords and, much later, sectarian pamphleteering and tract writings against each other. On the other side, syncretic encounters and assimilative efforts were also noticeable.³⁰

A large corpus of Sufi treatises and manuals, produced by the most venerated and idolised Sufis, offers lengthy and convincing expositions on Sufis and Sufism. I begin with Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī al-Hujwīrī's (d. between 465–469/1037–1077) exposition of the two chief terms: *taṣawwuf* and Sufis. I selected Hujwīrī for three reasons: (1) Hujwīrī's *magnum opus* treatise, *Kashfū'l Maḥjūb* (Uncovering the Veiled), is the first and oldest known work on Sufism in the Persian (Dari)³¹ language and it was composed on the soil of the region under review, i.e., in South Asia in the city of Lahore; (2) the text carries references, though sparse and brief but significant in terms of implications, to the state of *taṣawwuf* and the ways of the Sufis as witnessed by Hujwīrī in eleventh-century Hind (the term Hujwīrī uses to describe India at that time); and (3) because of his reflections on women, which are assessed and examined in more detail elsewhere in this book.

Not much is known about the personal life of the Ghazni-born Hujwīrī beyond what he occasionally chose to say about himself. We know that Hujwīrī traversed vast geographies of the Muslim lands, interacted with some of the most respected centres of the spiritual realm of his day, and studied *taṣawwuf*

28 FF, *Majlis* 7, Wednesday, 5 *Safar*, 710/July 4, 1310. In *Fawa'id al-fu'ād*. Compiled by Amīr Ḥasan 'Alā Sijzi Dihlawī. Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore (1302/1885). (Henceforth, referred to as FF).

29 Ilah Diya Chishtī. *Risālā Sīyaru'l Aqṭāb* (translated in Urdu by Muḥammad 'Alī Joyā). Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1906, pp. 123–125.

30 On this theme, see Veronique Bouillier, 'Nāth Yogīs Encounter with Islam.' *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online].

31 Hamid Wahed Alikuzai. 2013. *A Concise History of Afghanistan*. Vol. 1. [United States], Trafford Publishing, p. 136.

under scholars such as Abu'l Fazl Muḥammad bin al Ḥasan al-Khuttalī,³² Abu'l 'Abbās al-Ashqānī,³³ and Abu'l Qāsim Gurgānī.³⁴ Hujwīrī eventually arrived in Lahore and made the city his abode. In Lahore, he wrote *Kashfu'l Mahjūb*, the first and oldest known treatise on Sufism in the Persian language. We have no documented evidence to know the duration of time spent by Hujwīrī in Lahore, but it appears he spent enough time there to learn about Lahore and its people. He also had time to write *Kashfu'l Mahjūb* and some other texts, one of which, a book of poetry, was plagiarised by someone. To protect his authorship, as copyright laws did not exist then, the only thing that Hujwīrī could do was to insert his name in several places in the text.³⁵

The arrival of Hujwīrī in Lahore, the reasons for his arrival and stay, and his reflections on Lahore's contemporary Muslim society are very relevant to our discussion here. Hujwīrī was commanded by his Shaikh, Abu'l Fazl Muḥammad al-Khuttalī, to settle down in Lahore. Because another disciple of Khuttalī, Shaikh Ḥasan Zanjānī, was already there on the orders of Khuttalī, Hujwīrī showed his reluctance to travel to Lahore. However, Hujwīrī had to obey his Shaikh. According to Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', when Hujwīrī arrived at the gates of Lahore, it was dark and he had to wait until morning to enter the city. At dawn, when he was about to enter, the bier of Shaikh Ḥasan Zanjānī was brought out from the same gate.³⁶ Though we do not know when Hujwīrī commenced writing *Kashfu'l Mahjūb*, the contents tell us that he had already spent a fair amount of time getting to know the people of Lahore and

32 Abu'l Fazl al-Khuttalī, a scholar of exegesis and traditions and followed Junaid in Sufi thoughts, was a student of Abu'l Ḥasan al Ḥusri (d. 371/981–2). He was Hujwīrī's mentor from whom he learned the Sufi path (*ṭarīqat*). Hujwīrī comments that he had never seen a man of truth revered so much as Khuttalī was. Hujwīrī was so close to Khuttalī that he would help him in performing ablutions for prayers (*waḥṣū*). When Khuttalī passed away, he rested his head on the bosom of his devoted student, Hujwīrī. The last words that Khuttalī spoke, while breathing his last, to Hujwīrī and which he remembered while composing *Kashfu'l Mahjūb*, were 'do not quarrel (*khusūmat*) with God's doings nor be saddened in your heart at whatever He does to you.' See Hujwīrī, pp. 208–9.

33 al-Ashqānī, an exponent of the philosophy of annihilation (*fanā'*) and an eminent and illustrious Sufi, was also Hujwīrī's teacher. Hujwīrī was not happy to see the ignorant (*juhalā'*) imitating Ashqānī ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥ*). See Hujwīrī, pp. 208–9.

34 Abu'l Qāsim Gurgānī (d. 450 or 469) with whom Hujwīrī had several discourses on a variety of aspects of Sufi *ṭarīqa*, and whom he describes as *Qutb-i zamānā* (the pole of the age) and one who was unparalleled and matchless, was a much-respected Sufi of Iranian. See Hujwīrī, pp. 211–12.

35 Hujwīrī, p. 1. More than four hundred and fifty years later, this incident of theft of Hujwīrī's work, appeared in the discourse of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' in the session held on *Muḥarram* 15, 710, FF.

36 FF, *Majlis* 31, 29 *Ziq'ad*, 711.

assessing their ways of life and behaviour. He found the people ill-mannered and was not happy about his stay there. Indeed, he compared his stay to being in chains (*giriftār*).³⁷

Hujwīrī did not leave behind a legacy in terms of disciples or successors. Perhaps because of this reason, Hujwīrī remains a detached single example of Sufis who arrived in India and lived or died there. Although no Sufi *silsila* carrying the name of Hujwīrī is known to exist, the number of devotees who seek his blessings at his sprawled shrine in Lahore is massive.

1.3 Arrival of Sufi Women in South Asia

Stories of the arrival of the Sufis are mainly the stories of the arrival of male Sufis. Women who travelled with the male Sufis are not identified. We do not know whether any woman Sufi ever travelled alone. Sufi women's travel experiences, even in the caravans led and organised by men, are not available. As a rule, women's names as individuals are withheld or kept hidden. Amongst some rare examples is the case of Bībī Sāra, mother of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad (d. 725/1325). Her brother-in-law, Saiyyid Nūru'd-Dīn Mubārak Ghaznawī (d. 632/1234), a *khalīfā* of Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn Suhrawardī, also travelled with her to Delhi from Ghazna during the time of Sultan Shamsu'd-Dīn Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236). While the family of Bībī Sāra was still in Ghazna, Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn, who later settled in Ajmer, visited her father-in-law, Shamsu'l-ʿĀrifin ʿAbdu'l Wahīd.³⁸ The family of Bībī Sāra probably moved to Delhi at the suggestion of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn. No contemporary sources record dates of her arrival or death; however, Ghulam Sarwar Lahori, a late-nineteenth-century compiler of Sufi biographies, without citing any references, gives the year 638/1240 as her date of demise. Early Sufi *malʿūzāt*, for example, *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*, refers to her in the story of her son's charismatic powers, and that without giving her name.³⁹

Beemā Bīwī, who is lying buried along with her son, Māhīn (or Māhim) Abu'l Bakr Awliyā' Allāh, is regarded as one of the earliest Muslims to arrive in Kerala, in South India. Although no contemporary record has yet been accessed, she is commemorated with great devotion by local legends that narrate that this pious woman was a member of the Prophet's family and that she, along with

37 Hujwīrī, p. 115.

38 Saiyyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 1. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, p. 121.

39 FF, *Majlis* 25, 15th *Jamādiu'l awwal*, 711/1311.

her son, travelled from Arabia across the Indian Ocean and disembarked on the shores of Kerala to bless it with her spiritual powers.⁴⁰ A similar story, steeped in legends and dearly preserved by oral traditions, is about Mā'ī Mirān, in the coastal city of Karachi. According to these legends, Mā'ī Mirān and her sister Mā'ī Lānjī arrived together by a boat from across the seas at some unidentified time. The two sisters are said to be the virgin granddaughters of Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Gīlānī. In some other stories, Mā'ī Mirān was accompanied by her seven virgin playmates. Sea voyages of pious women, unaccompanied by males, from the blessed soils of Arabia and Iraq, their family lineage with the Prophet's family, or with the families of venerated persons such as Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Gīlānī (d. 1166 in Baghdad), add charisma to the persona of a woman Sufi. It magnifies her agency beyond a devotee's imagination. These anecdotes are centuries old and far more powerful than any other scholarship.

Bībī Rāstī (the righteous one), or Bībī Pākdāman (the chaste lady), the mother of Shaikh Ruknu'd-Dīn Abu'l Faṭḥ, known as Shaikh Rukn-i- 'Ālam (support of the world) (d. 1335),⁴¹ was the daughter of Sulṭān Jamālu'd-Dīn of Farghana, a state in Central Asia, and came to Hindustan along with her family. She was married to Makhdūm Shaikh Ṣadru'd-Dīn 'Arif Qattāl (d. 1286),⁴² son of Shaikhul' Islam Bahā'ud-Dīn Zakarīyya (d. 1267).⁴³

Although details are lacking, it is known that Ḥaẓrat Bībī Raushan Ārā' (1279–1342), a daughter born to an Indian immigrant family settled in Makka, travelled in 1321 along with her elder brother, Pīr Saiyyid 'Abbās 'Alī, and his wife to Delhi. Shaikh Ḥasan Shāh, a Qādirī Sufi of Delhi, sent Raushan Ārā' and his brother to Bengal. Bībī Raushan Ārā' was a forty-two-year-old, highly educated woman when she arrived in Delhi. She remained celibate and died in 1342 at the age of sixty-four and lies buried in her shrine in the village of Kathulia in Bashirhat at the banks of river Ichhamati.⁴⁴

According to one popular legend, Ḥaẓrat Mā Ṣāḥiba Ashraf-i do-jahān (d. 1369) came from Bukhara, now in Central Asia, to Kořchi, a town on the banks of river Krishna and known as the land of the Sufis. Local legends say that subsequent to the death of her husband, Muḥammad Shāh, Ḥaẓrat Mā

40 V.A. Ahmed Kabeer. 1987. *Muslim Monuments in Kerala*. (Part 1) Trivandrum: Velavoor Publishing House, p. 198.

41 *Jamālī*, pp. 140–47; AA gives an account of the excellence of this saint. For details, see, pp. 65–68.

42 For his biographical notices, see AA, pp. 63–65.

43 For an account of his life, see AA, pp. 30–31.

44 Muhammad Abdur Rahim. 1963. *Social and Cultural History of Bengal (1201–1576)*, Vol. 1, Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, p. 126; Muhammad Ismail. 2010. *Hagiology of Sufi Saints and the Spread of Islam in South Asia*. New Delhi: Jananada Prakashan, p. 174.

Ṣāḥiba, along with her brother Hazbaru'd-Dīn Zafar Khan and two young sons, 'Alī Shāh and Ḥasan Shāh, came to Multan, which almost ranked as the first stop for the incoming travellers from across the borders. Karnataka State Gazette, however, says that she came from Arabia or Baghdad.⁴⁵ She was the mother of 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Ḥasan Gangū, the founding Sulṭān of the Bahmani kingdom of the Deccan (1347–1358).

Centuries later, we have on record information about the arrival of the mother of Khwāja Bāqī Billah (d. 1012/1603) of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila* in Hindustan. Though not much has been written about this pious God-fearing Sufi woman, fragmented sources show that she belonged to the family of Sufis and scholars. Her father, Shaikh 'Umar Yaghestani, was the maternal grandfather of Khwāja Ubaidullah Aḥrār (d. 855/1490) of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila*. Travelling with her son, Khwāja Bāqī Billah, she left Kabul for Lahore and finally in 1599 made Delhi her final home.

The above accounts are mostly incidental references about women and are part of the main accounts of the male Sufis. Of those whose narratives are included in this book, most were born and raised in this region. There are several instances when women travelled from northern parts of Hindustan, Delhi, Lahore, and Multan to South India, known as the Deccan. In terms of mileage, travel hazards, and encounters with a different cultural and physical environment was more vivid, and challenging as well, compared to the travel routes between Afghanistan and the Central Asian regions, from where early Sufis arrived in India. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, travel along these routes was hazardous because of the general prevalent chaos. In the wake of the transfer of the capital from Delhi to Deogir (Dewgiri) in the Deccan, migration from Delhi to the Deccan and later to Gujarat began. Women also travelled to the Deccan, some alone, others with their families. An earlier example of this inland travel (inland in the sense of these areas falling within the subcontinent's territory) is the arrival of Bibī 'Ā'isha, assumed to be a widowed daughter of Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar, along with her unmarried, early teenaged daughter. What led her to undertake this journey? Was she, like her contemporary male Sufis, inspired to introduce the Sufi message in the Deccan? How did she support herself and her daughter there? We have a whole set of questions that remain unanswered. Indeed, one unanswered question in turn creates more complex questions. Similarly, Bibī Ḥājara, the mother of the Chishtī saints Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1337) and Muntajibu'd-Dīn (d. 1309), travelled from Delhi to Khuldābād along with her family of five daughters—Bibī

45 Suryanath U. Kamath. *Karnataka State Gazetteer*: Belgaum. (Bangalore: Government Press, 1987). p. 912.

Khadīja, Bibī ‘A’isha, Bibī Maryam, Bibī Āmna, and Bibī Ḥamīda, as well as a grandson and her brother.⁴⁶ We assume that Bibī Ḥājara was advanced in her age at this time. However, old age did not dampen her spirits and she steadily managed the long travel between Delhi and Khuldabad. Her tomb, next to the shrine of her son Muntajibu’l-Dīn Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh in Khuldabad, is visited by women.

Travel stories of Sufi women are hard to locate. When they do someday emerge, they would certainly add a fascinating chapter to travel literature, unveiling several aspects of women and gender history.

1.4 What Is Sufism?

Behold! Verily on the friends (*Awliyā’*) of Allāh there is no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Qur’ān (10:62)

Hadith-i qudsi: “Verily my saints are under my domes, and only I know them.”⁴⁷

The question “what is Sufism?” sounds like a unit of a teaching course on Islam or Islamic mysticism. However, in view of the ongoing debate on the origin and genesis of the term *Sufi* and its Western derivative, *Sufism*, I find myself compelled to answer the question briefly. In recapping this debate, my purpose here is not merely to follow the norm of most of the academic theses produced on the topics of Sufism; I seek to investigate the presence of women, as individuals and as a community, in this never-ending repetitive discourse. Within this context, all the questions that stimulated this work emerged from one single query: what does Sufism stand for? Embedded in this basic query are questions such as, how does one define and recognise a Sufi? Are there or should there be visible signs and markers of knowing or identifying a Sufi? Are Sufis males only? Can women be Sufis as well? I would address these issues briefly here; more reflections and relevant details on this theme emerge as the present work develops in the pages that follow.

46 Rawnaq ‘Alī, 1326/1908. *Rawzatul-aqtāb al-m’arūf ba Mazhar-i Āṣāfi*. Aurangābād: Maṭba‘ Mu‘īn-i Deccan, p. 43; Muḥammad Wāḥid Khān. 1913. *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharīfma’ naqshājāt*. Maṭba‘ Abū’alālī Hyderabad, Deccan, p. 3.

47 Cited in Annemarie Schimmel. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, p. 203. *Hadith-i qudsi* are the sayings of the Prophet revealed by God but phrased by the Prophet.

In this chapter, a brief conceptualisation of the two core words, i.e., Sufis and Sufism, is presented. Both words are derived from the concept of *taṣawwuf*, an Arabic word of much wider and deeper meaning. The terms Sufi and *taṣawwuf* are rooted in the Arabic language in which the word *ṣūf* means wool, fleece, or goat's hair. As some early mystics and renunciants (*zāhid*), wandering and cave-dwelling pietists (*ʿābid*, *nāsik*), wore garments made of wool and, therefore, according to the rules of Arabic lexicography, they came to be called wearers of wool. Among women, fewer are reported to have worn this dress. It also could also be that fewer women wandered around or lived in caves. They did so, not because of any lack of piety (*zuhd*) or the fear of God (*taqwā*); they preferred not to reveal and parade their love (*ḥub*) because of their trust in Him ("For Allāh loves those who put their trust [in Him]" Qur'ān, *sura: āl 'imrān* 3:159).

For Muslim scholars, jurists, and reformers, *taṣawwuf*, an Arabic term which could be considered closest to the Western term *mysticism*, in its essence is the way to live in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet. Thus, *taṣawwuf* is not a movement that began at some point in time and rallied around adherents and supporters. Also, the much-discussed debate over donning of woollen garments or of sitting on a raised platform or even becoming a disciple by taking the oath of initiation at the hands of Shaikh, is a product of discourse that prefers outer symbols to intrinsic values. An emphasis on wearing of a particular dress or other accessories is regimentalising friends of God into some sort of brigades. Further, this could be interpreted as changing the meanings of *taṣawwuf* from its esoteric/inward (*bāṭin*) dimensions to external forms (*zāhir*) which are ever-changing and are distant from the Truth (*ḥaqīqat*), which is eternally formless and hence genderless.⁴⁸ Some confusion regarding Sufis and Sufism began to grow when Islam and Muslims were increasingly viewed as adversaries of the Western world. Orientalism, a by-product of colonialism, though not the creator of the term *Sufism*, however, heavily propagated Sufism as an offshoot doctrine of Islam which then was accused of promoting war and not peace. William Nassau Lees (1825–1889) was a British Orientalist who worked for some years as Principal of the Calcutta Madrasa in Bengal, the English-occupied region in India, and edited and published several medieval Persian texts. He believed that "all *mysticism* appears absurd, but the *mysticism* of the *Ṣoofis* [Sufis] is absurd, is peculiarly a disease, and, apparently, an infectious and very dangerous one, for it attacks the noblest

48 Titus Burckhardt's *Introduction to the Sufi Doctrine* (Bloomington, Ind: World Wisdom, 2008) provides a good understanding of Islam and the Sufi doctrines. For sources in Urdu, *Qur'ān aur taṣawwuf* by Mir Valiuddin (Delhi: Nadwatul Musannifin, 1979) offers a logical and lucid discussion on the theme.

part of man's nature and frequently destroys it." About the mysticism of the East, which he found "filled with useless visions," he felt that it "destroyed the vitality of the Muhammedan race and was most mischievous in its results."⁴⁹

Thus, Sufis and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) are words that carry several connotations, religious, social, and even political. The meanings and precepts of the two terms, however, become simpler when used in everyday conversations in South Asia, by nonacademics and those with little formal schooling. For an ordinary Muslim, irrespective of the gendered nature of the society, a Sufi is a person least disturbed by worldly attractions and who has more fear of Allāh than of anyone holding power and authority in this world. Thus, often in everyday conversation, these individuals, with few or no pretensions, are referred to as *Allāh waley* or *Allāh ke bandey* (men/women of Allāh or the followers of Allāh). These two popular terms in the vernacular are close to the Qur'ānic concept of *Awliyā' Allāh* (friends of Allāh). The educated and the scholarly, both among religionists and secularists, enter into debates and arguments which have more to do with gaining worldly power and prestige; the love of Allāh and for His creations has little place in such debates. These debates are more tuned to the outward symbols, forms, dress, and occupations and less to matters of the heart.

Leaving this debate aside, I would now look at the definition and concept of mysticism and *taṣawwuf* of the Sufis as given by some of the most eminent and distinguished Sufi Shaikhs and religious scholars (*'ulamā'*). As a first note of clarification, before this discussion begins, Islamic mysticism/Sufism is a way of life rooted in Islam, and is the way of the Prophet and of his Blessed Companions.⁵⁰ As the text of this volume progresses further, and as we read the biographies of women in Part 2 of this book, we would consider the key question that runs through the entire book: do we find the Sufi practices and beliefs in line with the precepts of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's Traditions, or is there an incongruence between the two? This assessment is of critical relevance not only to our understanding of the life and experiences of pious women but also to our understanding of the concept of gender equity. *Taṣawwuf*, literally—grammatically as well as conceptually—is a gender-free word referring to a gender-free way of devotional contemplation. However, the term *Sufi*, meaning a follower or a practitioner of *taṣawwuf*, traditionally connotes a male image first. This male image of a Sufi with emphasis on outer symbols such as donning

49 W. Nassu Lees. 1859. *The Lives of the Mystics of the East. Biographical Sketch of the Mystic Philosopher Poet Jami*. Calcutta, pp. 17–18.

50 William Chittick. 1992. "The Way of the Sufi." *Sufi*, 14: pp. 5–10.

of a particular dress or shaving of the head (*maḥlūq*) is not in consonance with the Qurʾān.

It is interesting to note that a similar query, but in greater details and at the same time reflecting the questioners' comprehension of Sufism, was raised in the eleventh century in Lahore when the Muslim community was in its initial stages of germination. The question was superbly answered by none other than Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Usmān al-Ghaznawī Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465–469/1037–1077),⁵¹ a newcomer to the city of Lahore who later died there and now rules the hearts of the people as *Dātā Ganjīkahsh* (one who bestows treasures). Because this question and the response to it could stand as a prologue to any thesis on *taṣawwuf* (which it did in the case of *Kashfū'l-Mahjūb*),⁵² I would quote the whole question here. A person named Abu Sa'īd al-Hujwīrī, whose background is not told by Hujwīrī, asked him the following question, which on closer study consists of at least eleven in-depth queries. He asked,

Explain to me the reality of the spiritual Path (*ṭarīqat*) and of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*); details of its Stations (*maqāmāt*); elucidate its doctrines (*mazāhib*) and discourses (*maqalāt*); illuminate the mystical allegories and their symbols; what is the nature of Divine Love (*muḥabbat-i khudāwand*); how is it manifested in [human] hearts; what causes veiling of the intellects (*sabab ḥijāb-i 'aql*) to understand its Essence and why the soul recoils from it; why the Spirit is lulled in its purity and choices; and finally, what is the connection between these and the above matters (*mu'malāt*) [the above asked questions].⁵³

Hujwīrī's answer to these questions is spread over the whole of his treatise; however, here I would select only those responses that are relevant to the situation of South Asia. His first response was that during this time (the time of the composition of *Kashfū'l Mahjūb*), the science of Sufism was obsolete (*īn*

51 For Hujwīrī's biography, Muhammad Dārā Shikūh. 1269/1853. *Safīnatu'l-awliyā'* (Lithograph text). Agra: Matba'-yi Madrasa Agra, pp. 281–83. Dārā Shikūh introduces him as Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Pīr 'Alī Hujwīrī; 'Abdur Raḥman Jāmī in *Nafahāt al-uns* has a brief notice on Hujwīrī but does not give any dates, either about Hujwīrī's birth or demise. See 'Abdur Raḥman Jāmī (Edited and translated by W. Nassau Lees). 1858. *Nafahāt al-uns*. Calcutta: Maṭba Lissī, pp. 358–59. For a more comprehensive biography, see Reynold Alleyne Nicholson's Preface in his *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism by Alī B. Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī* (London: Luzac, 1911), pp. xvi–xxiv. (Henceforth, referred to as Nicholson).

52 Abu'l Ḥasan Sayyid Ali b. Usman Hujwīrī Ghaznawī. 2007. *Kashfū'l-Mahjūb (nuskhā-yi Samarqand)*. Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publications. (Henceforth, referred to as Hujwīrī).

53 Hujwīrī, pp. 10–11.

zamānā in *‘ilm bā-ḥaqīqat maundaris gasht*), particularly in Hindustan (*khāṣa in dayār*). Ordinary people as well as the scholars have lost their understanding of the true essence of *taṣawwuf*, he lamented.

Serving as both a manual on *taṣawwuf* and a biographical compendium of Sufi masters, the whole text of *Kashfu’l Mahjūb* was explicitly composed, Hujwīrī explains, for the polishers of hearts (*siqāl-i dīlha*), which he thought were clouded by lack of knowledge (*ḥijāb-i ghain giriftār bashand*) but still had the Light of Truth (*nūr-i ḥaqq*). He hoped that the blessings caused by reading this book would lift the veil and the readers might “find their way to spirituality (*ni‘mat-i ‘irfān*).” These readers, which he did not specify, were definitely male readers as Hujwīrī entertained a low opinion about women and was convinced that women are chaos creators.

However, it is in chapter three of his book that Hujwīrī explicates the true meanings and concepts of *taṣawwuf*. At the very beginning of this chapter, Hujwīrī refers to various prevalent reasons for the usage of the term *Sufi*, and admits that though “the true meaning of this term [*taṣawwuf*] has been much discussed and several books have been composed on the subject,” he was constrained to comment that in his time, “God has veiled most people from Sufism and from its votaries, and has concealed its mysteries from their hearts.”⁵⁴ This has led many to believe erroneously, as he further argued, that it “consists merely in outward piety without inward contemplation, and others suppose that it is a form and a system without essence and root, to such an extent that they have adopted the view of scoffers (*ahl-i hazl*) and theologians (*‘ulamā*) who regard only the external, and have condemned Sufism altogether, making no attempt to discover what it really is.”⁵⁵ Such misunderstanding of *taṣawwuf* led to the creation of false Sufis whom Hujwīrī refers to as babblers (*arbābu’l lisān*).⁵⁶

To supplement and strengthen his argument, Hujwīrī cites Abu’l Ḥasan Nūrī (d. 295/907–908),⁵⁷ who categorically declared that *taṣawwuf* does not consist of practices and sciences (*rusūm wa ‘ulūm nīst*), but morals (*akhlāq*). To

54 It is important to note here that Hujwīrī has not used the term Sufism. Instead of what Nicholson has translated as ‘Sufism’, Hujwīrī refers to it by using a pronoun, i.e., *ahl-i īn* (people of this [group, i.e., *taṣawwuf*]). Nicholson, pp. 30–3.

55 Here, in these lines, Hujwīrī’s Farsi text has not used the word Sufism. Further, in the original text, Hujwīrī uses the term *‘ulamā’-yi zāhir* to make a distinction from scholars who have a holistic understanding.

56 Hujwīrī, p. 21.

57 Baghdad born Abu’l Ḥasan Nūrī was one of the most known Sufis of the ‘Abbāsīd era. He went through several oppositions at the hands of the traditionalists. For his brief biography, Nicholson, pp. 130–32; also, Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism. The Formative Period*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 11–15.

clarify his concept, Nūrī said, “practices are rituals created by certain motives and intents and have no reality. On the contrary, morals are praiseworthy actions.” Hujwīrī also quotes Murtaʿīsh (d. 328/939–940),⁵⁸ who emphasised that *taṣawwuf* indeed is *ḥusnu'l khulq* (good disposition). Good disposition, Murtaʿīsh said, is acquired by doing three things: first, submitting to Allāh's commandments (*amr-i ḥaqq*) without any hypocrisy; second, doing good things for the people (*khalq*); and third, doing good towards oneself, by not following desires and Satan.⁵⁹

A Ḥadīth, believed to be a *Ḥadīth-i Qudsi*, describes a Sufi in the following words:

[God said] “The most blessed of My Friends (*aghbaṭ awliya'-i 'ind-i*) is a man of faith who has but few possessions [*khafīf al-ḥādh*] and delights in prayer, who performs the service of his Lord, and obeys Him in secret. He is concealed (*ghāmiḍ*) among men; they do not point to him with their fingers. His sustenance is (just) sufficient, and he is content with that.” Then he [Muḥammad] shook his finger and said: “His death is hastened, he is not wept over much, and the legacy (*turāth*) is small.”⁶⁰

These saints (*awliyā'*), explains Hujwīrī, function as governors of God's kingdom; they have ceased their sensual affections. Through the blessing of their arrival (*ba barkat-i iqdām*) the rain falls from heaven, and through the purity of their lives the vegetation springs up from the earth, and through their spiritual influence the Muslims gain victories over the unbelievers (*kāfirān*).⁶¹

In contrast to the above definition of the Sufis, abundant examples exist of those who, led by human weaknesses, pretended to be Sufis. Presence of fake Sufis as compared to the real ones has remained a major social and religious challenge for the Muslim society all through its existence. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, a Khurasānī of Ṭūs (d. 378/988)⁶² attempted to distinguish between the two in his Arabic-language treatise *Kitāb-al-luma' fi'l-taṣawwuf* (The Book of Light

58 Abu Muḥammad 'Abdu'llah ibn Muḥammad Murtaʿīsh was from Nishapur and died in Baghdad. For more on Murtaʿīsh, see Hujwīrī, pp. 33–34.

59 Hujwīrī, p. 8; Nicholson, p. 42.

60 *Masnad* v, 252 and 255. Tirmidhi, 34:351, quoted in William A. Graham.1977. *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*. The Hague: Mouton, p. 121; Gerlad T. Elmore.1999. *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time-Ibn al-'Arabī's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon*. Leiden: Brill, p. 128.

61 Hujwīrī, p. 262; Nicholson, p. 213.

62 For a short notice on al-Sarrāj, Hujwīrī, p. 262.

Flashes on Sufism), in which he lists about two hundred names of Sufis.⁶³ Al-Sarrāj explains the basic tenets and various stages of *taṣawwuf* a follower goes through in search of the ultimate Reality (*ḥaqīqā*). Addressing the sensible (*ʿāqil*), al-Sarrāj explains the nature of the Sufi maxims with reference to their unique linguistic expressions, mystical terminologies, and codes of behaviour and living. One can only surmise from al Sarrāj's warning that the insensible ones were easily trapped by fake Sufis, even as early as the tenth century. He warned, "Some knowledge of the principles, aims, and method of genuine Sūfis is necessary in this age, in order that they may be distinguished from the impostors who appropriate their name and dress."⁶⁴ The real Sufis, he says, are those who "agree with the Traditionalists and jurists in their beliefs and accept their sciences and consult them in difficult matters of religious law. Should there be differences of opinion, the Şūfis always adopt the principle of following the strictest and most perfect course; they venerate the commandments of God and do not seek to evade them." In their everyday life, "the Şūfis renounce what does not concern them, i.e., everything that hinders them from attaining the object of their quest, which is God only."⁶⁵ Simplifying Sarrāj's commentary on Sufism, Nicholson observes that Sarrāj shows his acceptance for the derivation of Sufism from *şūf* but "differs from the ordinary Moslems only in laying greater stress upon the inward religious life of which the formal acts of worship are an outward expression."⁶⁶ It is significant to note here that persons who strive to live with love, patience, trust, and abstinence are found in all faiths. The Yogis of India, the Bhikshus of the Buddhist community, and the Christian monks are people who individually and collectively have left behind a legacy that is now a source of inspiration as well as a theme of research.

The Sufi perception of the physical and the spiritual world rests in the essence of Islam. Since the growth of Islam, the large presence of Sufis in varying environs and societies and their devotion for Allāh and love for the Prophet has led some to an erroneous understanding of mixing *taṣawwuf* with the veneration of the Sufis. Goldziher rightly defines this veneration as a "cult," which is "essentially non-Arab and extra Islamic" and "not truly Qur'ānic."⁶⁷ Goldziher simplifies Sufi traits by saying that "saintly men and women, who,

63 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj and Reynold A. Nicholson. *The Kitāb al-Luma' Fi 'l-Taṣawwuf of Abū Naṣr Abdallah B. 'Alī Al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭūsī*. London: Luzac, 1963 (first published in Leyden, London E.J. Brill/ Luzac & Co. 1914).

64 Ibid, p. 2.

65 Ibid, p. 4.

66 Ibid, p. ix, x.

67 Ignaz Goldziher, C. Renate Barber, and Samuel Miklos Stern. 1971. *Muslim Studies* (Muhammedanische Studien) Vol. 2. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 258.

by their endeavour to renounce worldly goods, to live for God's sake and give willingly their lives as martyrs for Him and rise above the masses" are "objects of admiration" and that "the Qur'ān itself mentions them and prefers them to all others."⁶⁸

In the first Assembly of *Fawa'id al-fu'ād*, Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' (d. 725/1325), opens his discourse with a discussion on the traits of men of Allāh (*mardān-i khudā*) who keep themselves concealed (*poshīdā dāshtand*); God reveals them. He further elucidates that perfection of men (*kamāl-i mard*) is achieved by eating, talking, sleeping, and socialising little. Rejection of worldliness (*tark-i dunyā*) and voluntarily giving up all worldly possessions for an unconditional love of the Divine is the core of the mystics' way of life. Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', affectionately and reverently addressed as *Sulṭānu'l Mashā'ikh* (the Sultan of all the Shaikhs), explains that rejection of worldly attractions and possessions does not entail that "one should give up clothing, tie a loincloth, and retire to a corner. Renunciation means that one should dress, eat, and whatever comes as an earning, is not hoarded; one has neither an attachment for it nor the heart is not inclined towards anything."⁶⁹

At the same time, reading the Sufi texts, one begins to form a picture of the Sufis which contradicts the above definition of a Sufi by Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', managing and guarding their territorial jurisdictions, similar to a well-administered state, with a band of loyal, trained, and skilled lieutenants, the *khalīfas*, who worked under a code of conduct or *ādāb*, similar in essence to the laws of ruling (*ā'in jahāndārī*). I refrain from further discussion on this, as it would make my text voluminous and shift the focus of my study from the lives of Sufi women. Therefore, in the following chapter I look at the Sufi texts to explore the perception of women.

68 Ibid, p. 259.

69 FF, *Majlis* 1, *Sh'abān* 707/1308.

The Sufi Texts: From Imagination to the Inscribed Word

2.1 The Genre of Hagiography

Hagiography is as old as religion is. Often the task of segregating the fundamentals of a religion from its hagiography becomes a challenging undertaking. Complex in its making and doubtful in its contents, however, it is arduous and problematical to discard hagiographical narratives completely. Hagiography indeed has added colour, vibrancy, and fairy tale-like imagery to the completely sober-looking landscape of the universe of the mystics, ascetics, and Sufis. Even cursory glances over the hagiographical texts show that they do not always represent what the historic facts or the personages were; they depict what the scribe imagined them to be and what the audiences relished, and of course, in some cases, what the central character wished to be known about him. Indeed, even the court histories and panegyric portrayals of the rulers are no less than the hagiographies in their contents, intents, and effects. Thus, hagiographical sketches of heroes and leaders do not depict what the person was in real life; these are imagined histories and are a subtle combination of the cumulative memory of the people and the craft of penmanship.

Most historical research includes hagiographical accounts and thus is inspired and guided by imagination, desire, dreams, and aspirations. The charm of listening to or reading hagiographies often transports audiences to a magical world, away from the demands of routine life. Another significant role that hagiography continues to play is that through it the voices of the Sufis, though dead centuries back, remain in communication with their followers and devotees, thus lending strong support to debates between traditions and facts and between pristine religion and popular religion. The hagiography of the eleventh-century martyred holy warrior Saiyyid Salār Mas'ūd Ghāzī of Makanpur near Bahraich (UP, India) best illustrates how hagiographies are created, maintained, and endorsed. When 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī, a Sufi scholar of the seventeenth century, wove the legend of Saiyyid Salār Mas'ūd Ghāzī (d. 1034) in his Sufi biography *Mirāt-i Mas'ūdī* (the mirror of Mas'ūd), he would often seek explanations in his dreams from personalities deceased centuries back whenever he experienced difficulty either interpreting events

as he perceived them or discerning the sequence of events.¹ This peculiar methodology uplifted *Mirāt-i Mas'ūdī* in his readers' estimation to sublime heights. The legendary tales of the exploits and particularly the marriage of Saiyyid Salār Mas'ūd Ghāzī—affectionately embedded in public memory, irrespective of class, ethnicity, or religious divides as Ghāzī Miyān (the winning warrior) and Ganjan Dulha (the warrior bridegroom)—however, are preserved more by oral traditions than by the text and are enacted at annual public fairs held on the *urs* (death anniversary) of Ghāzī Miyān. On the occasion of his *urs*, the annual fair held in Makanpur and elsewhere, local singers recreate hagiography through bardic tales.² Interestingly, this sacred hagiography, memorialised by oral traditions, was outright rejected and denounced by a late-nineteenth-century American Presbyterian missionary, Mrs. John Forman, as a “lie,” the fair as a “piteous sight,” and the participant’s behaviour as “monstrosity.”³ Hagiographies, thus, are part of community identity, often contested by the “other.”

Hundreds of printed versions of these hagiographies, costing little, and now downloadable online for free, cater to the needs of a growing audience. Interestingly, these Sufi hagiographies have gained recognition as primary sources as more and more academic researchers have begun to study them and cite these works in their texts. Some of the sources examined in this work—written mostly in Persian, barring a few in Arabic—were all penned within the cultural landscape of Hindustan by male writers, some of whom were recent arrivals in India, and thus these writings reflect a synthesis of the local with the world outside through the male gaze. Hagiographic literature is centred less on Sufi women, as compared to the voluminous ones about male Sufis. One reason for this disparity is the traditional evasion of public discourse on and about women. Any public discourse related to women is a breach of good

1 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī, 2011. *Mirāt-i Madārī*. Sidharathnagar: al-majmā' (Urdu translation); Maulawī Saiyyid Muḥammad. Amīr Ḥasan Madārī, 1315/1898. *Tazkiratu'l Muttāqīn fī aḥwāl khulafā' Saiyyid Badī'u'd-Dīn*. Kanpur: Maṭba' 'Azīzī. For Saiyyid Salār Mas'ūd Ghāzī's hagiography, see Shahid Amin. 2015. *Conquest and community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2 Richard Carnac Temple. 1988. 'The Marriage of Ghāzī Salār,' in his *The Legends of the Panjab*. Patiala: Language Department. (pp. 98–120). (First published in 1884); Ute Falasch. 2016. 'Negotiating Religious Authority at a Shrine Inhabited by a Living Saint. The dargāh of "Zinda" Shāh Madār.' In *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys and Wanderers*. Ed. by Michel Boivin and Remy Delage. London: Routledge 2016, pp. 63–78.

3 Mrs. John Forman of Futtehgurh. 1899. 'A Saint's Tomb'. In *Woman's Work for Woman*, July 1899, p. 195. She was the wife of Revd. Dr. Henry Forman, the in charge of the Futtehgurh Station of the American Presbyterian Mission.

manners (*ādāb*); however, there exists a flow of literary compositions describing women's physicality in the basest graphic lexis.

Another classic example is the production of *Ḥaḳīqat-i Gulzār-i Šābirī* (1856)⁴ and *Tawārīkh ā'ina-yi taṣawwuf* (1896),⁵ two hagiographic Sufi texts in Urdu by Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Šābirī Chishtī Rampurī. In each of his introductions to his books, Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan explains that the genre of Sufi writing is of two kinds, based on its sources. One source is exoteric (*zāhirī*), and the other is esoteric (*bāṭinī*). Thus, the two works draw inspiration and facts from the manifest and hidden knowledge which the author claims are accessible and known to a gnostic (*ʿarīf*). One such esoteric source, the main source referred to in the two hagiographies, is *Zihrat nama* (annals of the families), which Muḥammad Ḥasan Šābirī ascribes to Muḥammad Abu'l Qāsim Gurgānī, born in Madina in the third year of Hijrī and died in 1165/1751–1752 at the age of 1,162 years. The *Zihrat nama*, Šābirī claims, was authored by Gurgānī sitting atop the mountain of Tibet. This esoteric knowledge, Šābirī explains, is preserved by the families of the gnostic absolved of any authorization (*khāndān-i ʿirfān-i marfūʿ-l-ijāzat*).⁶ Despite the obvious incredible treatment of history, both the works have retained fairly good readership, a fact supported by the appearance of the 1986 edition of *Ḥaḳīqat-i Gulzār-i Šābirī*. As most hagiographies are purposed to sanctify and consecrate a Sufi, and subsequently to expand the number of his devotees and followers, no such texts glorifying a female Sufi were produced. In the hagiographical accounts of the male Sufis, some sparse references do, however, exist commemorating charismatic feats of mystic women.

2.2 From the Spoken to the Written Word

The Sufi textual sources, other than the pure hagiographies, fall into four major categories: (1) *maḳfūz* (pl. *maḳfūzāt*), the discourses of the pious and holy persons; (2) *sira* (pl. *siyar*), biographies of pious persons; (3) *tazkira* (pl. *tazkirāt*), *ṭabaqāt*, and *manāqib*, which are records and accounts of the marvellous deeds of the Sufis; and (4) letters of the Sufis *maktūb* (pl. *maktūbāt*). Hagiographic elements, however, are interspersed in all these works as well.

4 Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Šābirī Chishtī Rampurī. 1304/1856. *Ḥaḳīqat-i Gulzār-i Šābirī*. Rampur: Ḥasani Press (I have used its 6th edition (1983), Maktabā-yi Šābriyā, Qasur).

5 Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Šābirī Chishtī Rampurī. 1311/ 1893. *Tawārīkh ā'ina-yi taṣawwuf*. Rampur: Ḥasani Press.

6 Ibid, pp. 11–12.

Before we look further into these categories, I must reiterate that all these hitherto known works carried the male voices, were authored by male scribes about male Sufis, and primarily were for a male audience. The language, idioms, and expressions—indeed the whole literary setting of these texts—not only bespeak male supremacy but count women as lower and defective creatures. The physical space where the words of these texts originated were male spaces, in terms of their occupancy, control, and management. Any argument pleading that one cannot or should not look at the past through a modernist lens with a humanist angle, particularly a feminist lens (or, to use a milder term, gender equity lens), or apply the principle of fair play and balance (*‘adl wa tawāzun*), does not make a convincing argument. Contrary to the basics of the concept of *taṣawwuf*—which is the spirit of the Sufi message and which is manifested by a loving God via loving His creation, which includes women—most of these texts reflect a derogatory estimation of women. Indeed, these texts profess that God sent down, along with the perfect man, a deficient object in the person of a woman. The contents of these texts, in most instances, are marked with instructions to pious and virtuous men to guide and teach women to follow their path of spirituality within the confines of their social order which, by all definitions, were prone to male egotism. As the volume of this category of Sufi literature is vast, this section looks only at the nature of these sources and does not present an assessment of all the texts. Works with relevance to Sufi women, however, are selected for analysis with references to other texts whenever required and appropriate.⁷

2.3 The Sufi *Malfūzāt*

Of these Sufi texts, *malfūzāt* form the most important and engaging source of information about an individual Sufi, his followers, and his surroundings. Being predominantly a discourse led by a saintly male and held within the precincts marked as sanctified thresholds—the *jamā‘at-khānās* or the *khānqāhs*—and in the presence of a male audience with variant levels of intellect, perceptions, and mental training, *malfūzāt* technically fall in the category of oral history, because these are not first-person accounts but instead were first auditioned, remembered, and later transcribed by a male scribe, and later became part of written history. Those familiar with fieldwork data collection

⁷ For an exhaustive and comprehensive survey, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi's *A History of Sufism in India* (two volumes-. vol. 1. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978 and vol. 2. Lahore Suhail Academy, 2004).

and note-taking research method or of applying storytelling research method, know that in addition to notetaking, most of the data is first stored in memory by audition, particularly in the absence of audiotaping. As the spoken word of the most sanctified individuals who, in public perception, were held as sacred institutions of society, these discourses were heard to be memorised and practicalised, and not to be questioned or doubted. As such, these discourses move beyond the textual boundaries and enter everyday life. Ḥasan Sijzi (652/1254–738/1337), the compiler of the most popular and most widely read *maḥfūz*, i.e., the *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*,⁸ in his brief foreword refers to the spoken words of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', describing them in his flowery Persian as *jawāhir-i ghaibī* (gems of mystery) and *zawāhir-i lāraibī* (beautiful flowers that cannot be distrusted). He also admits that whatever he audited, either the exact blessed word (*'ain lafz-mubārak*) or its meaning, he inscribed according to his limited understanding (*baqadr-i fahm-i mukhtaṣar*).⁹ Ḥasan Sijzi rightly anticipated that as these discourses of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' would benefit the hearts of many an afflicted reader (*dilhā-yi dard-mandān*), and therefore he gave it the name *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* (Benefits for the heart).¹⁰ The contents of these discourses, at least in the case of *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*, we know well, courtesy of Ḥasan Sijzi, covered vast themes of great interest. Thus, for instance, in *Majlis* 28 of 708/1309, Sijzi, in a private audience (*dar khilwat*) with the Shaikh, categorises these as sermons and homilies (*w'āz-i naṣīḥat*), stimulation for submission [to Allāh] (*targhib dar ṭā'at*), narratives of the Sufi Masters (*ḥikāyāt-i mashā'ikh*), and stories about his own life (*aḥwāl-i ishān*).

The *maḥfūzāt* also describe how the audience used to take their seats, after prostrating before the Shaikh or kissing his hands, with hands folded, heads bowed down in reverence, listening silently with rapt attention, without interrupting or questioning either the source or the content of the spoken word. The Shaikh also spoke from his memory. In almost all these sessions, moral tales, didactic stories, even fables, were narrated by the Shaikh as an effective method of spiritual instruction. On some occasions, the Sufi master introduced a topic of the session's (*majlis*) discussion, while in most other cases, he spoke in response to a question asked by one of the audiences or disciples. Rules and etiquettes (*ādāb*), however, were specified even for such random

8 *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* is read not only with great devotion by ordinary persons but even the Sufis continued to have the deepest reverence for it. For instance, Shah Fahkhru'd-Dīn (d. 1784) always kept a copy of *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* close to his body. See Nawwāb Ghāziu'd-Dīn Khān 'Nizām'. 1315/1897. *Manāqib-i Fakharīyā*. Delhi: Maṭba' Muṭtabā'ī, pp. 16–17.

9 *FF*, p. 2.

10 *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* is the most popular book in the reading list of those interested in Sufi literature. Online booksellers deliver it at affordable prices.

discussions. For instance, Abū Najīb Suhrawardī's (490–563/1096–1168) *kitāb ādābu'l-murīdīn* (book on the etiquettes of the disciples), a popular reading among the Indian Chishtī Sufis, laid out rules for Sufi masters' discourses. For example, it says that a Sufi should not speak out and should remain silent until a question is asked. Whenever he decides to speak, the Sufi should speak with the intention (*niyyat*) of guiding his audience to the right path (*rāh-i ḥaqq*) to kindle in their hearts quest for the redemption of their soul (*ṭalab-i nijāt*).¹¹ There were etiquettes for attending the discourse assemblies of the saints as well. In one of the assemblies of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', the theme of which Ḥasan Sijzi describes as *sukhun dar ādāb-i majlis wa dar āmdan bā khidmat-i pīr wa ādāb nishastan wa maqām giriftan* (discourse on proper conduct in the assemblies and [about] presenting oneself before the saint, and proper conduct of taking a seat and getting a place to sit), the Khwāja first narrated a Tradition of the Prophet concerning Gabriel, who conveyed Allāh's command about proper conduct for entering and taking a seat at a circle. He then said that the proper conduct is that whoever enters the assembly should sit down wherever a place is available; whoever tries to get a seat in the centre is cursed (*mal'ūn ast*).¹²

Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, who translated 'Abu'l-Najīb Suhrawardī's (d. 563/1168) *kitāb ādābu'l-murīdīn* into Persian, while talking about the ways and manners of Sufi Masters in his discussion Assembly of 7 Shawwāl 802/1400, narrated that once as he entered the assembly of his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī, one of the Shaikh's disciples from Khurāsān got up to welcome him and saluted him. At this, the Shaikh told him that this practise of rising up to greet a person while present in your Shaikh's assembly is not an approved practise. He then cited the example of kingly courts and said that because of the awe and power of a king, no one would dare to greet and pay respect to anyone while present in the court. Similarly, anyone who pays respect to any person other than the *pīr* is guilty of disrespecting the Shaikh and commits a serious offence.¹³ The spiritual sessions, thus, centred around the Shaikh.

11 Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Chishtī, and Saiyyid 'Aṭā Ḥusain. *Tarjumā-yi ādābu'l-murīdīn* (Persian translation of Suhrawardī's Arabic work *ādābu'l-murīdīn*) (Hyderabad: Maṭbū'a-yi Intizāmī, 1939), pp. 112–13; also see this work's Urdu translation, Abdu'l-Qādir ibn 'Abdullah Suhrawardī and Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Bāsiṭ. *Ādābu'l-murīdīn- āthwān sadi kā dastūru'l-'amal* (Lahore: Tassawuf Foundation, 1998), p. 41.

12 FF, *Majlis* 32, 11 *Zilhajj*, 709.

13 Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz (Compiled by Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī. *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilām (maḥfūzāt of Sayyid Gīsū Darāz*, compiled by Akbar Ḥusainī. Translated

From the perspective of social history, the *malḥūzāt* reflect the trajectory of their era and, at the same time, become markers and pathsetters for generations to come. In light of this, the *malḥūzāt* remain a major significant source showing how the Sufi-Khānqāh discourses generated and shaped social codes of behaviour or, to use the words of Nizami, helped one to “feel the pulse of the medieval India.”¹⁴ Thus, the basic aim of this section is to convey the multifaceted aspects and impact of these discourses, in their original form as spoken words, and later, as textual guidebooks for generations that followed. This investigation, I expect, would create a source material for further investigation of factors that lead to a cognitive understanding of women’s representation as unequal to men in their physical, social, economic, political, and religious standings.

Malḥūzāt, thus, are not the creation of one individual; these were produced by a duo: the scribe and the Master or Shaikh. Precautions were indeed taken regarding the transference of the spoken to the scribed word. *Fawā'idul-fu'ūd* illustrates this best in *Majlis* 28 held on 18 Shawwāl 708/30 March 1309. By this time, one year had passed since Ḥasan Sijzi had recorded the discourses of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' on six folios of paper. The Shaikh read all and, in between his reading of the text, kept appreciating Ḥasan Sijzi's writing skills by commenting, “You have written it excellently” (*nekū niwishta*). He read the text so carefully that he could notice blank spaces at one or two spots and enquired of Ḥasan Sijzi, “Why have you left blank spaces in the text” (*in bayaz chirā guzashtā*)? Ḥasan Sijzi admitted that he had left out those words that he could not fully remember or understand (*nekū m'alūm na kard būdam*). Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', with kindness, re-explained all the missing words (*baqia har kalimāt*). This episode indeed is less about the excellence of Ḥasan Sijzi's penmanship; rather, it reflects Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā's concern for accurate transmission to the audience. At the same time, being well aware of the power that words wield, he encouraged Ḥasan Sijzi by telling him, albeit indirectly, that recording discourses of a mystic is not merely a skilled feat of a good scribe; spiritual charisma (*karāmat*) becomes part of it. In this connection, he recalled that on the very first day when he was blessed with the fortune of presenting himself before Shaikhul Islam Farīdu'd-Dīn, he was led by the desire to record every single blessed word uttered by the Shaikh. The Shaikh also approved of it to such an extent that whenever he would narrate a story (*ḥikāyat*) or make a

by Wāhid Bakhsh Siyāl Chishtī Ṣābirī). (Lahore: al-Faisal, 2010), (henceforth, referred to as *haraḥ Jawāmiu'l-kilām*), p. 368.

14 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century*. (Delhi: Idarah Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1978), p. 374.

point (*ishārat*), to make sure that his scribe, in this case Nizāmu'd-Dīn, was present, he would say [to Nizāmu'd-Dīn] “Are you there (*ḥāẓir hast*)?” If he was not there, the Shaikh would repeat the moral (*fa'idā*) that he had narrated during Nizāmu'd-Dīn's absence (*ghībat*). This exercise of inscribing his Shaikh's discourses resulted in a miracle when a man all of a sudden brought for him several sheets of white paper, bound together (*yakjā jild kardā*) to write the discourses. Nizāmu'd-Dīn accepted these sheets of paper and on the top page, in thanksgiving, first wrote down *Subhān Allāh*, *alḥamdulillah*, and *la hawlā walā quwwatā illā billāh* 'alīyill 'azīm, and next his mentor's discourses. He, then told Ḥasan Sijzi that the collection of those discourses (*majmū'a*) was still with him.

Similarly, to check the accuracy of what Ḥamīd Qalandar, his *malfūz* scribe, wrote, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, on several occasions asked him to read out what he had written. At times, he would read the text himself. Thus, when, after a year of his attendance at the Shaikh's spiritual assemblies and compiling his sayings, Ḥamīd Qalandar presented it to him, the Shaikh read it (*muṭāla'farmūdand*) and greatly appreciated it.¹⁵ Thus, we see that the texts of these first two foundational *malfūzāt* accurately present the views of the Sufi Shaikhs and therefore the words carry weight even today.

2.4 The Sufi *Ṭabaqāt*

The next source for the study of Sufism is the *ṭabaqāt* literature. Written about male Sufis and compiled chronologically, the *ṭabaqāt*, in essence, are much like biographical collections or compendiums.¹⁶ There are several *ṭabaqāt* texts about the Sufis who lived outside the geographic landscape of South Asia, starting from the earliest known work, *Ṭabaqāt al-Sufiyya* of Abū 'Abd'ur Raḥmān as-Sulamī of Nishapur (365/976–412/1021). These writings served as models for the *ṭabaqāt* produced in South Asia. I give a list of these without going into much detail about their contents.

15 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1959. *Khairu'l-majālis: conversations of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chirāgh of Delhi [ob. 1356] compiled by Hamid Qalandar*. Aligarh: Muslim University, *Majlis* 1 and *Majlis* 6. (Henceforth, referred to as *KM*; also, Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chirāgh-i Dihlī, and Ḥamīd Qalandar. (n. d.). *Kitāb-i mustaṭāb-i Sirāju'l majālis, Urdū tarjuma-i Khairu'l majālis, ya'nī Malfūzāt-i Nasiruddīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī*. Karachi: Wāhid Book Depot, 4–5, 23.

16 Among several studies on the *ṭabaqāt*, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al Sulamī to Jāmī* of Javid A. Mojaddedi (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001) gives a concise perspective.

1. *Ṭabaqāt al-Sufiyya* of Abū ‘Abd’ur Raḥmān as-Sulamī of Nishapur (365/976–412/1021).
2. *Ḥilyātu’l-awliyā* of Abu Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038)
3. *Ṭabaqāt al-Sufiyya* of ‘Abdullāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089)
4. The *Ṭabaqāt* section of Abu’l Qāsim al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (d. 465/1072)
5. The *Ṭabaqāt* section of ‘Ali Hujwīrī’s *Kashfū’l-Maḥjūb* (d. 467/1974)
6. ‘Abdu’l Raḥmān Jāmī’s *Nafaḥatu’l-uns* (d. 898/1492)

One of the early examples of Sufi biographies in South Asia is the work of Amīr Khwurd or Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Mubārak al-‘Alawī al-Kirmānī’s *Siyaru’l awliyā’ dar aḥwāl wa malfūzāt-i mashā’ikh-i Chisht*. Based upon the author’s personal experiences, his eyewitnessed life of the Sufi ways at Ajodhan and Delhi, the two early centres of South Asian Sufism, Amīr Khwurd’s text moves the reader back into the time when the book was produced. The *Siyaru’l awliyā’* is also the most authentic and valuable source about the pious women as some were personally known to him. Indeed, very little has been added to the lives of Bibī Qarsum, Bibī Zubaida, and Bibī Rānī except what has been penned by Amīr Khwurd.

The next work, in chronological sequence, is the *Siyaru’l ‘Arifīn* of Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu’llah, also known as Darwish Jamālī Kambo, compiled between 937/1530 and 942/1536. The work includes Sufi biographies, in addition to the Chishtīs, of the Suhrawardīs.

2.5 The Spurious *Malfūzāt*

In addition to the genuine *malfūzāt*, several spurious or fabricated *malfūzāt* also exist. Fake *malfūzāt* have a long history. In his discourse session held on 2 Ramaḥān 802/1400, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz narrated how Khwāja Naṣīru’d-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī destroyed these fake *malfūzāt* by tearing the pages and throwing them into water. Khwāja Naṣīru’d-Dīn also commented that the *malfūzāt* of Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār, attributed to Maulānā Badru’d-Dīn Ishāq, were bogus.¹⁷ Scholars such as Habib had listed these and rejected them as spurious writings.¹⁸ But because these were ascribed to revered Sufis, these unauthenticated texts not only were carefully preserved as sacred relics (*tabarruk kai*

¹⁷ *Sharah Jawāmiu’l-kilam*, p. 232.

¹⁸ M. Habib, 1950. “Chishti mystic records of the Sultanate period.” *Medieval Indian Quarterly*, 1 (2): pp. 1–42, reprinted in K.A. Nizami, (Edited). *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period, Collected Works of Mohammad Habib*, Vol. 1 (Delhi, P.P.H., 1974), pp. 385–433.

khayāl sai), but their copies were prepared, and some even printed, which bears weight because of the religious-cultural psyche of South Asian Muslims.¹⁹ Rizvi comments that these forged discourses were prepared “to cater for the spiritual curiosity of gullible admirers ... by anonymous authors who were bereft of either a feeling for history or a first-hand knowledge of their heroes” and were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Persian.²⁰ Siddiqi argued that one reason for the popularity of a fake collection of *malfūzāt* was economic as they fetched a handsome price to booksellers.²¹ Most scholars recognise the following seven works as forged and apocryphal *malfūzāt* :

1. The *Anīsūl' arwāḥ*: the forged discourses of Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī (d. 1220) said to be authored by Khwajā Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer (d. 1235).²²
2. The *Dalīlu'l-ʿarīfīn*: the alleged discourses of Khwajā Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer and said to be authored by his disciple, Khwajā Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1235).²³
3. The *Fawā'idu's-sālikīn*: the alleged discourses of Khwajā Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, said to be composed by Khwajā Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar.²⁴
4. The *Asrāru'l awliyā'*: the alleged conversations of Khwajā Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar (d. 1265), attributed to his disciple and son-in-law, Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq.²⁵
5. The *Rāḥatu'l-qulūb*: the alleged discourses of Khwajā Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar, said to be authored by Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'.²⁶
6. The *Afzalu'l-fawā'id*: the alleged discourses of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', said to be the work of Amīr Khusraw.²⁷
7. The *Miftāḥu'l-ʿāshiqīn*: the spurious discourse of Khwāja Nasīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, said to be authored by Muḥibu'llah.²⁸

19 Muhammad Ḥabīb. 1972. *Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' Ḥayāt wa t'ālīmāt*. Delhi: Delhi University, p. 2.

20 Saiyid Athar Abbas. Rizvi. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India*. Vol.1. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, p. 4.

21 Siddiqi, Iqtidar Husain. 2010. *Indo-Persian Historiography up to the Thirteenth Century*. Delhi: Primus Books, p. 59.

22 Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī. *Anīsūl' arwāḥ*. Lucknow: Maṭbā' Ḥusainī, 1872.

23 Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī. *Dalīlu'l-ʿarīfīn*. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1889.

24 Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar. 1311/1893. *Fawā'idu's-sālikīn*. Delhi: Maṭbā' Muḥtabā'ī.

25 Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq. *Asrāru'l awliyā'*. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1890.

26 Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. *Rāḥatu'l-qulūb*. Delhi: Maṭbā' Muḥtabā'ī, 1309/1891.

27 Amīr Khusraw. 1305/1887. *Afzalu'l-fawā'id* (part 1 & 2) Delhi: Maṭbā' Rizwi.

28 Muḥibu'llah. 1309/1891. *Miftāḥu'l-ʿāshiqīn*. Delhi: Maṭbā' Muḥtabā'ī.

Surprisingly, the first recognition of some of the above listed “fake” treatises comes from an undisputed scholar, Ruknu’-d-Dīn Dabīr Imād Kāshānī (d. after 1337), a disciple of Shaikh Burhānu’-d-Dīn Gharīb (d. 738/1337), who was a Khalifa of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu’-d-Dīn Awliyā’. Ruknu’-d-Dīn showed the first few pages of *Shamā’ilu’l atqiyā’* (Virtues of the devout) to his Shaikh for his approval. Ruknu’-d-Dīn was a careful scholar and spent much time collecting his sources and establishing their authenticity. Acknowledging his hard research methodology, he tells his readers that after devoting a considerably long time (*muddat-i madīd*) to studying the books and treatises, he made his selections from the trustworthy (*mu’tabar*) and the authentic (*mu’tamad*) works.²⁹ Thus, in *Shamā’ilu’l atqiyā’*, repeated references from *Fawā’idu’s-sālikīn*, *Rāḥatu’l-qulūb*, and *Rāḥatu’l muḥibbīn* are included, thereby discrediting that these were spurious texts.

Interestingly, ‘Abdu’l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis (d. 1025/1643), a meticulous scholar,³⁰ in *Akhhbāru’l Akhyār*, one of the most authentic compendiums on the lives of the Sufis, draws upon several of the above-listed sources.³¹ More significant than the spurious nature of the above-mentioned and several other similar Sufi sources are critical questions, such as those raised by Muzaffār Alam, about the nature, purpose, and readership of these works.³² It is significant to note that none of the great Chishtī Sufis authored any Sufi treatise or text. Khwāja Nizāmu’-d-Dīn Awliyā’ strongly refuted that the Chishtī Shaikhs ever wrote any book. In response to a person saying that a man in Awadh showed him a book that was written by the Khwāja, the Shaikh at once said, “He spoke a lie (*tafāwut gufta*). No, I have not written any book (*man hech kitāb na niwishta*).”³³

2.6 Writing Biographies of Sufi Women

In this section, my purpose is to identify and review sources of information for learning about the lives of Sufi women. Since hardly any work has come to

29 Ruknu’-d-Dīn Imād Kāshānī. 1347/1929. *Shamā’il u’l atqiyā’* [The virtues of the devout], ed. by Saiyyid ‘Atā’ Ḥusain. Hyderabad: Ashraf Press, p. 3, 4.

30 For his life and writings, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1964. *Ḥayāt Shaikh ‘Abdul Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī*. Delhi: Nadwatu’l Muḥannifin.

31 ‘Abdu’l-Ḥaqq ibn Saifu’-d-Dīn Muḥaddis Dihlawī. 1280/1864. *Akhhbāru’l-akhyār fī asrāru’l-abrār*. Dihli: Maṭba‘ Hāshimī: Maktaba Muḥtabāī. The book was probably compiled between 993–999. Over the centuries several Persian editions and Urdu translations have appeared.

32 Muzaffār Alam. 2003. ‘The culture and politics of Persian in precolonial Hindustan.’ In *Literary Cultures in History. Reconstructions from South Asia*. Edited by Sheldon I. Pollock. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 131–19.

33 FF, *Majlis* 5th, 15 *Muḥarram*, 710/1310.

light that deals exclusively with Sufi women of the region of South Asia, I was left with no other option than to sift through the pages of the existing works. However, regardless of the fact that medieval hagiographical texts and *tazkirās* do not specifically present the lives of women *awliyā'* and rarely include a separate account of their lives, these works nonetheless reflect attitudes and views of male mystics and their disciples about women. Reading between the lines of these texts, much which at first looks hidden and omitted gradually unveils itself. Similar to putting a jigsaw puzzle together, this exercise is not without success because gradually the whole picture begins to emerge.

The sources that I explore include texts, both manuscripts and printed works, inscriptions on archaeological finds, existing shrines, and nonwritten sources, such as oral traditions. There are at least two critical things that one should note before proceeding further. First, written Sufi texts, particularly of the genre of *malfūz* of any woman Sufi, not only from South Asia but also from other Muslim lands, are not known to exist. Second, women authors of *malfūzāt*, *tazkirāt*, and *ṭabaqāt* also are not yet discovered and identified. The only exception is *Mūnisi'l-arwāḥ* (Companion of the souls), completed in 1049/1639, a biographical compendium of Chishtī saints of India, by Jahān Ārā' Begum (1614–1681), the eldest child of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658) and Mumtāz Mahal (d. 1040/1631).³⁴ Her other work, a Sufi treatise titled *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibiyya*, which she completed in 1641, is an autobiographical account of her worldly sojourns in search of the Divine.³⁵ In another category of Sufi texts, which consists of advice and guidance for Sufi novices, another Sufi woman surpassed even men. Bebe Nekbakhta of the Mumuza'ī tribe of the Pashtūns in 1562 wrote *Irshādu'l Fuqarā'* (directions for the right way for the ascetics), mainly addressing male Sufis. Almost all the other existing Sufi texts are distinctly written and produced by men for only a male audience.³⁶

The following paragraphs present a brief appraisal of texts that are relevant to our theme of pious women's life stories. Biographies of women are rare; autobiographies by women are rarer still. Together this absence creates a void in our understanding of women's lives and poses a challenge in compiling and writing women's history. The challenge gets enormous when other historical texts avoid, omit, or suppress any acknowledgement of women's presence and relegate them to an addendum. More complex difficulties arise when brief

34 Jahān Ārā' Begum, *Mūnisi'l-arwāḥ*. 1638. Translated in Urdu as *Mu'īnu'l-arwāḥ* by Maulawī Muḥammad 'Abduṣ-Ṣamad Kalīm Qādirī. Dihli: Matbā' Rizwi, (1891).

35 Jahān Ārā' Begam *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibiyya* with Persian text and Urdu and English translation by Muhammad Aslam and Sardar Ali Ahmad Khan. Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1993.

36 Muḥammad Hotak, 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, and Khushal Ḥabībī. 1997. *The Hidden treasure: a biography of Pashtoon poets = Pata khazana*. Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 138–39.

or sparse references are made about women, keeping them anonymous, as these sparse accounts could be erroneously interpreted as the real picture of women, playing a minimal role only. In the second half of the last century, some commendable efforts were made to recover the lost lives of women through academic research and sociopolitical activism. Such efforts did not meet with high success but did lead to newer searches into areas that still are male-hegemonized zones of knowledge and action. Among such areas are the stories of Sufi women of South Asia.

Primary sources examined to construct women's biographical notices in this work are written mostly in Persian, barring a few in Arabic. All these works are penned by male authors within the cultural landscape of Hindustan. Thus, these texts reflect the predominant local colour of male supremacy. A deeper analytical study of these texts reveals that the authors envisioned a male readership for their writings. References to women in these texts are sparse, mostly incidental and anecdotal, and are used either to eulogise men who successfully shielded themselves from the so-called maximised and amplified *fitna* of women or succumbed to their assumed and alleged base influence. These narratives, in most instances, are hagiographical in nature and are readapted by those texts that were composed later. The vocabulary used, both in the original Persian texts and in their Urdu translations, is often derogatory. Indeed, the language of these texts reflects the historic "lived" reality of dehumanisation of women in South Asia. Thus, by the mechanism of repetition, falsified and erroneous views get established as verified and authentic documents of information. This mutates history and historical writings and transforms them into patriarchal manifestos.

Further, and more importantly, biographical notices of women are added, if at all, either in the form of an appendix at the end of the work or a separate section provided for women at the end of the text. Probably this was done in compliance with the tradition that women must remain physically separated from unrelated (*nā-maḥram*) men. Sufi women, thus, are not the central subject of these works. Within the category of pious women (*ṣāliḥāt wā 'ābidāt*) referred to in the primary sources, the most oft-mentioned ones are mothers, daughters, sisters, and, to a lesser extent, wives of the celebrated Shaikhs. These women are eulogised as models of chastity (*'iffat*), obedience (*tā'at*), and patience (*ṣabr*). Unrelated women are a rarity. The present study examines Sufi women as individuals and not as appendages of their males. This, however, does not mean negation or rejection of their family ties.

Another methodological challenge arises from the fragmentary and scattered references about women under the honorific title of '*aurat ṣāliḥāt* (pious women) in Sufi texts. Only a close reading of the texts, comparing one

reference with another, and then checking it with the period in which the text was inscribed, yields some results. Some later historians, writing the history of Sufism in South Asia, tend to gloss over such scattered references and hence even these find no place in secondary sources. The misogynistic historiography and hagiography are understandable, as some of the best known early Muslim thinkers, chroniclers, and scribes, steeped in their social conventions and religious dogmatism, could not rise to comprehend and appreciate the egalitarian guidelines of the Qur'an, which resulted in restricting women's agency with such malevolent force that is very difficult to erase. What perplexes a researcher and confuses an inquisitive reader of such texts is the contradictory nature of some of the narratives ascribed to Sufi Masters. Nonetheless, these fragmentary references, biased in their intent and misleading in their diction, allow us to practice a jigsaw type of exercise and elevate women to their proper place in the historical context.

2.7 Women in the Biographical Compendiums Written outside South Asia

Contrary to such general neglect and omission, Abu Nu'aym Aḥmad ibn 'Abdu'llah al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 430/1038) monumental work, *Ḥilyātu'l awliyā' wa ṭabaqātu'l aṣfiyā'* (completed in the 5th H/11th CE), made a significant contribution in recording women's biographies. This huge collection consisting of 649 biographies, contains 28 biographies of women, all belonging to the days of the Prophet.³⁷ Abu'l Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), while he did not include women among the biographical notices of 83 men, had several negative references to women in his widely read treatise on Sufism, the *Risāla*, written in 1064.³⁸ Thus, for instance, Qushayrī quotes Abū Yazīd b. Ṭayfūr b. 'Isā al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 848 or 875), saying that "Once I intended to ask God to save me the trouble of caring about food and women. Then I said [to myself] how

37 Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh, and Muhammad M. Al-Akili. 1995. *The beauty of the righteous & ranks of the elite: a collection of 1000 rare accounts of the blessed companions of God's messenger Muhammad based on the classic 10th century work of Imam al-Hafiz Abu Na'im al-Asfahani (948-1038 CE) Hilyat-ul Awliya wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya*. Philadelphia, PA: Pearl Pub. House; for Urdu translation, see Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh, and Muḥammad Aṣghar Muḡhal. 2006. *Ḥilyātu'l awliyā' wa ṭabaqātu'l aṣfiyā'*. Karachi: Dāru'l Ishā'at.

38 The *Risāla* remains a popular reading in contemporary Pakistan as several Urdu translations are easily available at a moderate price, in addition to online downloadable versions of the text.

can I ask God what the Messenger of God—May God bless and greet him—never [dared] to ask? So, I did not ask God [for that]. Then God—May He be blessed and exalted—protected me from the desire of women in such way that I no longer cared whether there was before me a woman or a wall.”³⁹ al-Qirmisini Muzaffar, a Sufi from Damascus or Azerbaijan, is reported to have said: “The worst kind of attachment is attachment to women in whatever form!”⁴⁰ In his advice to the Sufi aspirants, al-Qushayrī said, “It is the aspirant’s duty—which applies to all those who travel along this [Sufi] path—not to accept any favors from women, not to mention actively seeking them. This is the way of the masters of the Sufi community and what they have advised others to do.”⁴¹ Contrary to Qushayrī’s texts, ‘Alī ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) in his *Ṣifāt al-Ṣifwā* (Characteristics of a sincere friend)⁴² included narratives of about 240 women.⁴³ It is interesting to note that even al-Jawzī does not recognise all women by their names and simply describes them as “devout women.” Faridu’l-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār of Nishapur (d. 617/1220), the Sufi poet and a prolific writer, in his *Tazkiratu’l-awliyā’* (Memorial of God’s friends), composed in the early thirteenth century, included only one pious woman in his account of more than seventy male Sufis. As he thought that people might question him regarding the inclusion of a woman in the midst of male Sufis, he began Rābi’a al-‘Adawiyya’s account by a supposition that if anyone questions him, saying, “why have you included her in the rank of men (*dar ṣaf-i rijāl*),” he would answer it by offering three reasons. First, because of a Tradition of the Prophet that two-thirds of the faith is narrated by ‘Āi’shā Ṣiddīqa; secondly, it is said by ‘Abbās Tūsī that on the day of Resurrection when men would be called, among men (*rijāl*) Maryam [Mary] would step forward first; and thirdly, if Rābi’a had not attended the assemblies of Ḥasan Baṣari, he would not have included her. In conclusion, ‘Aṭṭār observed that it is of no use to distinguish between male and female when one talks about God.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, during my shrine visits, one in Karachi and the other in Lahore, I heard this gendered comment of

39 ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, Alexander D. Knysh, and Muhammad S Eissa. 2007. *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*. Lebanon: Garnet Publishing, p. 32.

40 Ibid, pp. 65–66.

41 Ibid, p. 415.

42 Saeko Yazaki. 2013. *Islamic Mysticism and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī: The Role of the Heart*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

43 Ruth Roded. 1994. *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa’d to Who’s Who*. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, pp. 92–93.

44 Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (Edited by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, and Muḥammad Qazvīnī). 1903. *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 59–60; Faridu’l-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār. 1997. *Tazkiratu’l-awliyā’* (Urdu translation). Lahore: al-Farūq Book Foundation, p. 41; ‘Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, and

‘Aṭṭār. At both of these places, the male attendants at the shrines had copies of the Urdu translation of *Tazkiratu’l-awliyā*’; one even opened the particular page and read this out to me. His argument was that even women of the stature of Bībī Rābī’a could attain their status only because of the male Sufis. This calls to mind Valerie Hoffman-Ladd’s comment on ‘Aṭṭār that, “although this ‘compliment’ paid to Rābī’a implies the degradation of the female sex as a whole and suggests that true spirituality is normally found only among men, it also indicates that the sex of the body is not a barrier to the inspiration and grace of God.”⁴⁵

Nūru’l-Dīn ‘Abd’ur Raḥmān Jāmī of Herat (d. 898/1492), a Naqshbandī Sufi, in his *Nafahātu’l-uns min ḥazarātu’l-quḍs*, which is a compendium of Sufi biographies completed in 883/1478, in a long list of 587 male Sufis, included 34 Sufi women of which 8 are anonymous.⁴⁶ At the end of his copious work, Jāmī added a section of briefly written notices on Sufi women under the heading *fi zikru’nisa’ al-‘arīfāt al-wāṣilāt ilā marātib al-rijāl* (An account of those pious women who rose to the status of men).⁴⁷ The linguistic composition and the setting of this heading not only “demarcated [this section] from the main sequence,” as Mojaddedi comments,⁴⁸ but it also served as a prologue to his crisp comments about women’s saintly merits that follow as an introduction to this section. He prefaced his short narrative of Sufi women by referring to an apologia to chapter 73 of *Fatūḥāt al-makkiyyā* of Ibn al-‘Arabi in which he says that there are more men than women when one writes about the Sufis. Jāmī’s dislike for women in general is well reflected in his other works. For instance, in *Salāmān wa Absāl* he describes them as devoid of intelligence and lacking in faith, and accuses them as being dishonest, unfaithful, cunning, and distrustful.⁴⁹ Although these 34 women are not of South Asian background, I have included Jāmī’s work here because of its reception at the popular level.

A.J. Arberry. 1966. *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya*. [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, p. 40.

45 Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd. 1992. “Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life,” *Mystics Quarterly* 18 (3): 83–93.

46 ‘Abdur Raḥmān Jāmī (Edited and translated by W. Nassau Lees). 1858. *Nafahāt al-uns*. Calcutta: Maṭb’a Lissī; also, its Urdu translation, Jāmī, ‘Abdur Raḥman. 2002. *Nafahāt al-uns* (Urdu translation by Aḥmad ‘Alī Shāh Chishtī Nizāmī, Lahore: Shabbir Brothers).

47 ‘Abdur Raḥmān Jāmī. 1858, *Ibid.* pp. 718–39.

48 Javid A. Mojaddedi. 2001. *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism*, p. 152.

49 Farah Fatima Golparvaran Shadchehr. 2008. ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami: Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian poet. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osui217869380, particularly pages 66–68 and 141; Chad G. Lingwood. 2014. *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran: New Perspectives on Jāmī’s Salāmān wa Absāl*. Leiden: Brill.

Thus, his views and the subtlety of his expressions are part of the classroom teachings of his works; there has been prolific production of translations of his books into various South Asian languages, in addition to other languages of the world, and these are referenced as primary sources in academic writings. *Nafahātu'l-uns*, despite the above-mentioned limitations of its author, remains a model *tazkira* and its author one of the most respected and loved ones since the days of Babur, the sixteenth-century founder of Mughal empire in India.

A great forward step in presenting Sufi women's biographies has been taken by Rkia Elaroui Cornell by translating from the Arabic into English Abū'Abdar-Rahmān as-Sulamī's (d. 412/1021) *Dhikr an-Niswa al-Muta'abidāt as-Šūfiyyāt*, which is an independent compendium of Sufi women. The text gives biographical notices of eighty Sufi women, from the eighth and eleventh centuries, selected from the region outside South Asia and mainly from what is known as the central Islamic lands.⁵⁰ The second work is *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* by Ruth Roded.⁵¹ In this work, covering a period from the early ninth century to the end of the last century, mystic women form only a part of the text; the others included are learned and powerful women.

It comes as a pleasant surprise that Saiyyid Muḥammad Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī (d. 1437), a Chishtī Sufi immigrant from the Central Asian princely state of Simnān (Khurāsān) to Padua, Bengal, who later settled in Kachawcha in Eastern UP India, is the only one from among the Sufis who refers to as-Sulamī's *Dhikr an-Niswa al-Muta'abidāt as-Šūfiyyā* as a separate and well-written book with great details about Sufi women ('*alāhida kitāb jam'karda ast wa sharḥ bisyār az o īshān dar bayān āward*').⁵² He must have read and probably had his own copy of the book which later became lost to scholars and readers. It seems that the contents of the book did not cause much change in Simnānī's perception of women and their status as spiritual persons.

2.8 Women in the Sufi Sources and Biographical Compendiums of South Asia

2.8.1 Kashfu'l Mahjūb and the Portrayal of Women

Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn 'Usmān al-Jullābi al-Hujwīrī al-Ghaznawī, popularly known as *Dāta Ganj Bakhsh*, died at Lahore in 1071. It was there that he wrote

50 Rkia Elaroui Cornell. 2005. *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-Niswa al-Muta'abidāt as-Šūfiyyāt*. Lahore: Suhail Academy.

51 Ruth Roded. 1994. *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections*. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers.

52 Ibid, p. 330.

the first known treatise on Sufism in Persian, the *Kashfu'l Mahjūb*. He had met al-Qushayri and had attended his assemblies, but he failed to include women, except Rābi'a, in his more than one hundred biographical accounts of male Sufis.⁵³ The *Kashfu'l Mahjūb* of 'Alī-Hujwīrī, the first Sufi text written on the soil of Hindustan, is both a manual on the Sufi way of life and a compendium of short biographical notices of male Sufis.

The absence of any accounts of female Sufis, except a separate one of Rābi'a of Basra, makes this text incomplete in its contents, despite its author's claim to provide sound information on Sufis and Sufism. This omission is alarming for two main reasons: first, Hujwīrī was well aware of the fact that gnosis (*ma'rifa*) has no gender, as gnosis in its essence comes from the Divine; and second, this treatise, being the first Sufi text written in India, continues to be considered a foundational thesis of Sufism. Indeed, off-guard phrases in Hujwīrī's text reflect that even a person of his stature had deeply buried biases against women. For example, in his narrative of Abu'l Ḥasan Samnūn b. 'Abdullah al-Khawwās (d. 289/910), while relating the incident of a woman who desired to marry Abu'l Ḥasan Samnūn but was rejected and rebuffed by him, falsely accused (*tuhmat*) him of "having attempted her virtue." Hujwīrī in between his narration adds that she did this as women mostly do accuse [men].⁵⁴

In another episode, the story of Abu'l Faiḡ Zu'l-nūn b. Ibrahīm al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860–861), he describes how Zu'l-nūn al-Miṣrī mistook an unnamed old woman wearing a coarse woollen cloak (*jubbā-yi pishmīn*) with a staff holding a water carrier (*ukkāza*) in her hand on the coast of Syria. When asked where she was coming from, she said, "From God" (*az nazd-i khudā*), and when asked where she was going to, she answered, "To God" (*ba-sau-yi khuda*). Despite these obvious signs of Sufis travelling from God to God, Zu'l-nūn al-Miṣrī, mistook her to be a poor destitute woman in need of help and offered her a piece of gold (*dīnār*) in alms. Perhaps to Zu'l-nūn, a woman Sufi was not an expected sight. More revealing is the response of this unnamed old woman who appears in Zu'l-nūn's story as a subtheme, a prop, and not as the main story. The woman, however, instead of describing Zu'l-nūn as *safīnā-yi taḥqīq wa karāmāt* (a ship of truth and charisma) as does Hujwīrī, tells him that he was offering her money because of his *rakīk'aql* (shallow intellect) while she accepts nothing from anyone but only from Him.⁵⁵ Hujwīrī, however, concludes that this woman's conversation was a proof of her sincere love for God (*dalīl šidq-i muḥabbat*). This same story was earlier narrated by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhi

53 *Kashfu'l Mahjūb* (*nuskhā Samarqand*). Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications. (Henceforth, referred to as Hujwīrī).

54 Hujwīrī, p. 175.

55 Ibid, pp. 131–132.

of Bukhara (d. 380/990).⁵⁶ In both narratives, by Kalābādhi and Hujwīrī, the common thread is their attitude towards women. “In citing only Zūn an-Nūn al-Miṣrī by name, al-Kalābādhi causes the Egyptian master to appropriate the Sufi woman’s wisdom as his own,”⁵⁷ remarks Cornell about Kalābādhi. The same is equally applicable to Hujwīrī.

Similarly, Hujwīrī, by submerging the story of Faṭīma, the daughter of the ruler of Balkh and wife of Ahmad b. Khizrūya al-Balkhi (d. 240/854), in the narrative of her husband, displays a biased projection of Sufi women in their social roles, in this case, as a wife. Thus, Hujwīrī, diametrically in opposition to the title of his treatise *Kashfū’l Mahjūb*, hides the story of Faṭīma by not placing her separately. This comes as a surprise because Hujwīrī quotes a saying of Abū Yazīd Baṣṭāmī (d. 261/874)⁵⁸ that “whoever wishes to see a man disguised in women’s clothes, let him look at Fāṭima!”⁵⁹ Despite his obvious aversion to include Sufi women in their individual capacity in his work, Hujwīrī found himself compelled to note the high and dignified spiritual merits of Faṭīma (*andar ṭarīqat sha’n-i ‘aẓīm dāsh*t) who, like a true Sufi, had the courage to reprimand Ahmad b. Khizrūya by telling him to be a guide (*rāhbar*) and not a brigand (*rāh-bur*) for those who walk on the Righteous Path (*rāh-i ḥaqq*).⁶⁰

2.8.2 South Asian Malfūzāt and Tazkirāt and Sufi Women

As individual male Sufis grew in stature, the focal point of writing Sufi narratives increasingly became more deferential, often flattering towards these figures. Along with these accounts of the individual Sufis, detailed accounts of the male members of the Sufi *sisilas* that emerged commemorating the names of the Sufis also gained popularity. Both these writing trends had hardly any space to fit pious women into these narratives.

Malfūz, or the inscribed discourses of an individual, in this case of a Sufi, has a unique place in the history of the development of Sufism in South Asia. Devotion and respect in handling these texts is incredible.⁶¹ The first authentic and reliable *malfūz*, the *Fawā’idu’l-fu’ād*, reported the daily discourses of

56 Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Kalābādhi (Edited and translated by A.J. Arberry). *The Doctrine of the Sufis* (*Kitāb al-ta’arruf li-madhab-ahl al-taṣawwuf*). Lahore: Suhail Academy (2001), p. 11. The only difference in the two narratives, i.e. of Hujwīrī and Kalābādhi, is that Kalābādhi also says that the woman ended up reciting *Surah xxiv: 37* [*sura Nūr*].

57 Rkia Elaroui Cornell. 2005. *Early Sufi women*, p. 17.

58 Hellmut Ritter. “Abu Yazid (Bāyazd) Ṭayfūr b. ‘Isā b. Surūshān al-Biṣṭāmī” *ET* 2, pp. 162–3.

59 Ibid, p. 155; the quote is from Nicholson, p. 120; for a biographical notice on Fāṭima, see Cornell. 2005. *Early Sufi women*, p. 142.

60 Hujwīrī, p. 154.

61 I have seen people who, out of reverence, would not touch *Fawa’id al-fu’ād* without performing ablution.

Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' starting early in 707/1308 in the city of Delhi.⁶² The writing came to an end after fifteen years in 722/1322–1323. Amīr Ḥasan Sijzi, the scribe, combined his devotion and piety as a disciple of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' with his refined scholarship and polished writing skills and poetical sensibilities, offering a storehouse of information about the growth and development of Sufis and Sufism which grew under the patronage and blessings of one single person, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*, being a daily diary of the spiritual sessions of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', is not a record of preset thematic discussions. Consisting of lessons and counsels for the moral and spiritual benefits of those who assembled in his gatherings, this *malfūz* is the best example of applying the storytelling method adopted by Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. Although women were not consciously selected or omitted by design in the discourses, *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* remains the first Sufi text directly conveying significant information about them which helps in reconstructing early Sufi women's stories.

Ḥāmid Qalandar's *Khairu'l-majālis*, which is a compilation of the conversations of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 1356), is another reliable source of the history of the Chishtī Sufis. As compared to other contemporary sources, *Khairu'l-majālis* offers more detailed information about Sufi perception of women, women's enrollment in the Sufi *silsilas*, and a general overview of women's status as viewed by men in power.⁶³

Contemporary to *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* is *Siyaru'l Awliyā' fi muḥabbatu'l Ḥaqq jalla wa'ala'*, known by its shorter title as *Siyaru'l Awliyā'*. Authored by Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Mubarak 'Alawī Kirmānī, who had close devotional ties with Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', *Siyaru'l Awliyā'* is the first classic and authentic example of a biographical dictionary. The author, known as Amir or Mir Khwurd, reports the firsthand information about pious women related to the most venerated early Chishtī masters. Similar to most medieval scribes, Mir Khwurd's neglect of chronology and inclusion of hagiographical tales often emerge as a challenge in sifting facts from myths.⁶⁴

Among all these categories of Sufi literature, the Sufi *tazkirāt*, in their contents, themes, and selection of personalities discussed, cover a huge panorama, from the profane to the sacred. In addition to the study of a particular Sufi

62 FF.

63 Ḥāmid Qalandar and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1959. *Khairu'l-majālis: Conversations of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chirāgh of Dihli* compiled by Hamid Qalandar. Aligarh: Muslim University. (Henceforth, referred to as KM).

64 Amīr Khwurd, Sayyid Muḥammad bin Mubārak al-Alawī al-Kirmānī. 1302/1885. *Siyaru'l-awliyā' dar aḥwāl wa malfūzāt-i mashā'ikh-i Chisht*. Dihlī: Maṭba' Muḥibb-i-Hind. (Henceforth, referred to as SA).

Shaikh or of his *silsila* (Sufi order), some such compendiums present a survey of almost all the *silsilas* and their subbranches, thus covering a vast variety of themes. In addition to the rules of the Sufi path (*ṭarīqa*), these texts provide ample information about issues such as marriage, family relations, children, and vocations. One major challenge or obstacle in reading some of these texts is the comprehension of the complexity of the language of the “primary” texts, i.e., the usage of Sufi metaphors and idioms in the medieval Persian texts, transporting a person through a mundane experience to an esoteric experience by visualising bride-bridegroom relations in esoteric ways on one hand, and on the other condemning bride-bridegroom relations in this world as a Satanic trap.

Among the Sufi biographical accounts, *Siyaru'l 'Ārifīn* (Biographies of the gnostic), by Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu'llah, also known as Darwish Jamālī Kambo Dihlawī (d. 942/1536), is an important *tazkira* of thirteen male Sufis.⁶⁵ Composed between 937/1530 and 942/1536, *Siyaru'l 'Ārifīn* is the first work which, along with the Chishtī Sufis, also includes accounts of the Suhrawardīs. Jamālī Kambo dedicated his work to his royal patron, Emperor Humāyūn (d. 1556).⁶⁶

The Age of Akbar, which in terms of thoughts and movements includes the periods of Akbar and Jahangir, was an era of intense religious and social activity. Two major prolific writers, both recognized for their Sufi affiliations and acclaimed for their impact that continues to grow even today, were Shaikh 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī (958/1551–1052/1642–1643),⁶⁷ a traditionalist of the Qadiriyyā Sufi *silsila*, and Muḥammad Ghausī bin Ḥasan bin Mūsā Shattāri Māndawī (b. 962/1554–1555). Muḥaddis Dihlawī's copious compendium, *Akhhāru'l-Akhyār fī Asrāru'l-Abrār* (Narratives about the chosen ones), consists of biographical sketches of 225 South Asian Sufis. Written before 996/1588 and later revised in 999/1590–1591, it is considered one of the best *ṭabaqāt* produced in India.⁶⁸ An appendix at the end of the book, under a

65 Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu'llah Jamālī Kambo. 1310/1892. *Siyaru'l 'Ārifīn*. Dihli: Maṭba'-yi Rizvi. (Henceforth referred to as Jamālī).

66 For a comprehensive biographical notice on Jamālī Kambo, see Husamuddin Rashdi's introduction (pp. 25–138) in Ayyūb Qadiri's Urdu translation of *Siyaru'l 'Ārifīn*. See Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu'llah Jamālī Kamboh. 1310/1892. *Siyaru'l 'Ārifīn* (Translated by Muḥammad Ayyūb Qadiri). Lahore: Markazī Urdu Board (1976).

67 For his life account, see Badā'ūnī, 'Abdul Qādir bin Mulūk Shāh, (translated by Wolseley Haig). 1976. *Muntakhab ut-tawārikh*, Vol. III. Karachi: Karimsons, pp. 167–72; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1964. *Ḥayāt Shaikh 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī*. Dehli: Nadwatu'l-Muḥannifin. Nizami gives a list of sixty books authored by Muḥaddis Dihlawī, see pp. 211–14.

68 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq ibn Saifu'd-Dīn Dihlawī. 1280/1863. *Akhhāru'l-akhyār fī asrāru'l-abrār*. Dehli: Maṭba'-yi Hāshimī (several editions of the work in Farsi are available, paginations differ in all). References in this text are translations from this text. (Henceforth, referred to as AA).

separate section consisting of four pages under the heading *zīkr bā'z nisā-yi ṣāliḥāt* (An account of few righteous women), gives short biographical notices of five women: Bibī Sāra (d. 638/1240), Bibī Fāṭima (d. 643/1245), Bibī Qarsum Khātūn, Bibī Zulaikha (d. 648/1250) and Bibī Awliyā' (d. 655/1257).⁶⁹ Muḥaddis Dihlawī uses superlative terms in glorifying the attributes of these five women, such as a highly revered (*bis̄yār buzurg*) person, from among the righteous, devout, and godly of the age (*az ṣāliḥāt, qānītāt wa 'abidāt zamāna*), and as one whose prayers are answered (*mustajāb-ud da'wat*). As all five pious women in Muḥaddis Dihlawī's work belong to the thirteenth century, a legitimate query here seems justified. Were there no pious and virtuous women in the long span of four hundred years, the time between the thirteenth century and the period of the composition of *Akḥbārū'l-Akhyār*? Was the author, despite his research orientation and depth of knowledge, writing in a sort of social vacuum and remaining capsuled in a single time frame when writing about virtuous and God-fearing women? Did he refrain from fresh investigation similar to most second-rate scholars who are best at only replicating what is known already? Was the purpose of compiling this text only to seek royal recognition and gifts? By omitting narratives of pious women other than the selected five, Muḥaddis Dihlawī negates his self-claimed purpose explained in the introduction (*muqaddima*) of *Akḥbārū'l-Akhyār*. He says that he attempts to present the narratives of the pious persons of Hindustan as this country is a special place of the travellers, devotees, and friends [of God] (*maqām-i khāṣṣ ghurabā' wa muḥibbān wa dostān*). To do this, Muḥaddis Dihlawī, explains further that he collected all possible information about all such persons, beginning from the time of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Ajmerī to the time of the writing of his book (*tā tārīkh kitābat īn kalīmāt*) with the help of books, treatises, and trustworthy narrators (*siqāt riwāt*).⁷⁰ It is strange, too, that none of these sources could yield any information more than the accounts of five mystic women; it is also disappointing that Muḥaddis Dihlawī shows no concern about this missing information. As answers to these queries are not easy to come by, we are left with a sad conclusion that Muḥaddis Dihlawī's only worthwhile contribution is the placing of Sufi women in an appendix to a compendium.

The tradition of Muḥaddis Dihlawī set the tone for all Sufi histories produced later in South Asia. Even Schimmel, a modern-day woman scholar of Sufism, in her *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975), despite her claim that

Urdu translation by Maulawī Subhān Maḥmūd and Maulawī Faḥl Akbar (Lahore: Akbar Books, 2004) is easily available and the file can be downloaded.

69 AA, pp. 280–83.

70 AA, pp. 11–12.

“names of women saints are found throughout the world of Islam, though only few of them have been entered into official annals” dared not break the age-old taboo of placing Sufi women in her main text. Emulating the decadent male trend of transporting gendered secluded space to the world of scholarship, she also could only add an appendix titled “The Feminine Element in Sufism.”⁷¹

It comes as a surprise that a person of the stature of Muḥammad Ṣādiq Dihlawī Kashmirī Hamadānī in his *kalimātu's-ṣādiqīn*, a hagiographical account of 125 Sufis buried in Delhi up to the year 1023/1614, the year of the completion of his work, omits to mention any woman Sufi.⁷² Considering Muḥammad Ṣādiq's own statement that in compiling his work, which he describes as “an account of the excellent and pious Sufis and friends [of Allāh]” (*aḥwāl akhyār wa abrār wa asfīyā' wa awliyā'*) that were buried in Delhi, he borrowed (*iqtibās namūd*) from earlier Sufi treatises, such as *Akḥbārū'l Akhyār*, *Fawā'idū'l fu'ād*, *Sīyaru'l awliyā'*, and *Sīyaru'l-Ārifīn*, all of whom mention Sufi women buried in Delhi, this omission comes as a surprise.⁷³ The omission appears more flagrant as Muḥammad Ṣādiq was the favourite disciple of Muḥaddis Dihlawī, who in his *Akḥbārū'l Akhyār* included Sufi women, some of whom were buried in Delhi and who, as Rizvī comments, trained Muḥammad Ṣādiq “to write biographical dictionaries.”⁷⁴

Muḥammad Ghausī bin Ḥasan bin Mūsā Shaṭṭārī Māndawī's completed his *Gulzār-i Abrār* between 1014–1022/1605–1613, during the era of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. The book was dedicated to the emperor and is considered a major source for Sufis of the Shaṭṭārī *silsila*.⁷⁵ Among 612 Sufis whose lives are recorded in this work, his treatment of the Sufi women is slightly better as he includes accounts of near-contemporary women whose narratives were not found in earlier sources.

Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659), the Mughal prince and a disciple of the Qādirī Sufi, Miān Mīr or Miyān Jīv (d. 1045/1635), wrote a *tazkira* of the Sufis,

71 Annamari Schimmel. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 426–435.

72 Muḥammad Ṣādiq Dihlawī Kashmirī Hamadānī. *Kalimātu's-ṣādiqīn*. Edited by Muhammad Saleem Akhtar. Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Research Centre, 1988.

73 Ibid, p. 2.

74 Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvī. 2004. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2. Lahore Suhail Academy, p. 23.

75 Muḥammad Ghausī Shaṭṭārī Māndawī, *Gulzār-i Abrār* (Urdu trans. Fazl Aḥmad Jūrī, *Azkār-i Abrār*. 1975). *Azkār-i abrār: Urdū tarjuma Gulzār-i abrār: Jahāngīr 'ahd kā ek ghair maṭbū'ā tazkire ka nāyāb tarjuma*. Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation. (The ms of *Gulzār-i Abrār* has been edited by Yūsuf Bayg Bābāpūr, see *Gulzār-i abrār fī shīyārāl-akhyār: darsharḥ-i-iaḥwāl-i'urafā va-mashāyikh-i Hind*. Tihrān: Kitābkhānah, Mūzih va Markaz-i Asnād-i Majlis-i Shūrā-i Islāmī, 2012). All references and translations in my work are from its Urdu translation, *Azkār-i Abrār*.

Safīnatu'l-Awliyā' in 1640.⁷⁶ Bibī Jamāl Khātūn (d. 1057/1647), also known as Bibī Jīv, the sister of Miyān Jīv or Miyān Mīr, is the only South Asian Sufi woman mentioned in text. At the end of the text, Dārā has added a section under the heading of *zīkr nisā'-yi ṭāhīrāt* (An account of chaste/holy women) in which he gives brief accounts of thirty-three women, divided in three sections under separate headings. The first group, *zīkr azwāj-i Muṭharat* (an account of the holy wives of the Prophet), consists of an account of the wives of the Prophet; the second section, *banāt-i an ḥaẓrat* (daughters of the Prophet), is about the four daughters of the Prophet; and the last one, *zīkr nisā'-yi al-ārīfāt*, presents the life sketches of eighteen Sufi women. Bibī Jamāl Khātūn comes as the last entry of this section.⁷⁷ Dārā Shikūh wrote another Sufi biographical compendium, *Sakīnatu'l-Awliyā'*, completed in 1052/1642, which is mainly a biography of his Sufi mentor Miyān Mīr and his disciples.⁷⁸ Contrary to the traditional way of placing women's narratives at the end of a book, as in *Safīnatu'l-Awliyā'*, in this book Dārā Shikūh adds Bibī Jamāl Khātūn's notice right at the end of Miyān Mīr's biographical sketch and before the beginning of the narratives of his other disciples.⁷⁹ An important feature of Dārā Shikūh's work is the inclusion of reliable chronology.

In 1049/1639 Jahān Ārā' Begum (1614–1681), the eldest and favourite child of Shah Jahan, the Mughal emperor, and the elder sister of Dārā Shikūh, after carefully consulting reliable works and treatises on *taṣawwuf* wrote *Mūnīsu'l-arwaḥ*, a biographical compendium of Chishtī Sufis.⁸⁰ The writing of *Mūnīsu'l-arwaḥ* makes Jahān Ārā' Begum the first woman, and perhaps the only woman, to compile Chishtī biographies. A little more than a year later, on 27 Ramaẓān 1051/1641, Jahān Ārā' completed another Sufi treatise, *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibīyya*. In this tract, Jahān Ārā' narrates her association with the Qādirī *sil-sila* and her devotion to her Shaikh, Mullā Shah Badakhshī (1585–1661).⁸¹ This significant work, despite its brevity, is the first autobiographical account of any Sufi, whether male or female, to recount and narrate lived experiences. An added value of this emotion-laden and passionately composed treatise is the princely status of the author. No other woman member of a ruling family

76 Dārā Shikūh, Muḥammad. 1853. *Safīnatu'l-awliyā'*. Agra: Maṭba' Madrasa Agra.

77 Ibid, pp. 371–372.

78 Dārā Shikūh, Muḥammad. *Sakīnat'l-awliyā'* (Urdu tarjuma). Lahore: Nawal Kishore Steam Press, (n. d.).

79 Ibid, pp. 101–102.

80 Jahān Ārā' Begum. *Mūnīsu'l-arwaḥ*. Translated in Urdu by Maulawī Muḥammad 'Abduṣ-Ṣamad Kalīm Qādirī. Dehli: Matbā' Rizvi, 1891.

81 Jahān Ārā' Begum. *Risāla-i ṣāḥibīyā with Persian text and Urdu and English translation by Muhammad Aslam and Sardar Ali Ahmad Khan*. Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1993.

of Hindustan except Jahān Ārā' has written an account of her enrollment in a Sufi *silsila*.

Another compendium of the South Asian Sufis, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* appeared in 1623 while Jahangir still had a good hold over his empire. Authored by 'Alī Asghar Chishtī to commemorate the glories of Shaikh Faridu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār and his descendants, the book refers to the three daughters of the Shaikh which he writes with reference to the earlier narrative of Amīr Khwurd.⁸² Biographical notices for other Sufi women are missing in this work. *Mirāt-ul Asrār* of 'Abdu'l-Rahmān Chishtī (d. 1683), completed sometime after 1045/1635, in its twenty-three sections gives notices of Indian Sufis as well as of Sufis from regions outside India. Sufi women do not get any reference in the book.⁸³

A biographical compendium, *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l asfīyā'* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the holy persons), was probably completed in 1077/1666–1667 in Aurangabad, Deccan by Shaikh Ghulām Mu'īnu'd-Dīn 'Abdu'llah (known as al-Khalīfa al-Kheshgī al-Chishtī). Kheshgī had served in various capacities under Mughal nobles, and his book significantly covers the life accounts of Pashtun women.⁸⁴ Kheshgī was a devout Chishtī and had inherited an excellent library from his father which helped him pursue his literary career, in addition to his employment under various Mughal nobles.⁸⁵ Tracing his community's devotional connection with the Chishtīs, Kheshgī writes that his community of Afghan Pashtūn descent arrived in Qaşūr, Punjab (Pakistan), along with their spiritual leader, Shaikh Watto Shoryānī, reverently addressed as *Pīr Kabār* (the great teacher) (d. 550/1155), who was a Khalīfa of Ḥaẓrat Maudūd Chishtī (d. 1181–1182).⁸⁶ Out of 162 mystics in the manuscript

82 'Alī Asghar Chishtī. *Fihrist Kiath Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. Lahore: Victoria Press, 1301/1884. pp. 352, 354–358. Henceforth, referred to as *Fihrist Kiath Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. (For Urdu translation by Fazlu'd-Dīn Naqshbandi Mujaddid, see *Jawāhir-i Farīdī yā'nī Tazkirā-i Farīdī*. Pakpattan: Maktabā Bābā Farīd (n. d.))

83 Chishtī, 'Abdu'l-Rahmān, and Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl. 1982. *Mir'ātu'l asrār: qadīm o ghair maṭbū'a tazkira-i Ṣūfiyya kā awwālīn Urdū tarjuma*. Lahore: Sufi Foundation.

84 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī. 1077/1666–6. *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l asfīyā'* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the pure ones), ms. no. R343, Iqbal Mujaddidī Collection, Punjab University, Lahore. Fols. 123b, 124a. (Henceforth, referred to as *Akbāru'l awliyā'*).

85 See Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidī's biography of Kheshgī, *Aḥwāl wa asār 'Abdullah Kheshgī Qasūrī* (Lahore: Dāru'l Muarrikhīn, 1972).

86 For a short biographical note on *Pīr Kabār* Shaikh Watto Shoryānī, see Kheshgī's *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat* (ms. No. 314 Panjab University (Lahore) library, in the collection of Iqbal Mujaddidī, fol. 540 b. Kheshgī addresses Shoryānī as Quṭbu'l Quṭṭāb (Quṭb is the highest rank in the saintly hierarchy, thus the rank of Quṭbu'l Quṭṭāb goes much higher; also, see Mufti Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī. 1290/1873. *Khazīnatu'l Asfīyā'*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Samar-i Hind, pp. 435–454 (henceforth, as *Khazīnatu'l Asfīyā'*).

of *Akbāru'l awliyā'*,⁸⁷ eleven are women from the Khashgī-Afghan community of Qaṣūr. In his introductory comments to chapter three, entitled *dar bayān aḥwāl nisā' ārifāt khashgiān wa sālir-i Afghānān* (An account of pious women of the Khashgīs and travellers [of the Path] from the Afghans), Khashgī notes that as this work, particularly the section on women mystics, was written while Khashgī was away from his books in Qaṣūr, he had to recall his memory. Indeed, he did this job exceedingly well and thus left for us a record which is incomparable and unique. We are indebted to Khashgī for narrating the stories of Afghan/Pashtūn women who otherwise are not assessed for their saintly gains. Khashgī's brief but highly significant statement about the notices of saintly women, though comprising only a few short narratives is worth quoting here. Khashgī says, "Let it be not concealed that among the community (*qaum*) of the Khashgīs, there had been numerous (*bisyār guzashta and*) saintly women. However, while writing in Aurangabad with little facilities and where rich historical narratives are difficult (*qillat-i riwāt*) to get, I had to be contented with this [brief account] to show that the community of the Khashgīs is not void of the blessings and the bounties (*az tayammun wa tabarruk*) of virtuous women."⁸⁸

On 24 Rajab 1094/1683 in Aurangabad, 'Abdu'llah Khashgī, after consulting several sources, including *malfūzāt*, some of which are extinct or lost now, completed *Ma'āriju'l wilāyat*⁸⁹ (Spread of Sufism), another treasure house of hagiographical biographies of the Chishtīs, whom he describes as *khawajgān-i Chisht ahl-i bihisht* (the [Sufi] Masters of Chisht—the people of Heaven).⁹⁰ Khashgī's purpose in compiling the biographies was not merely to write down memoirs of the pious; he compiled these narratives because the tales of the exalted teach morals. Thus, he wrote that the travellers of the Path (*sālik*), by the blessings of reading the accounts of the Sufis (*az barkat-i muṭala' aḥwāl*), would learn to seek *ṭarīq-i waṣūl* (the way of seeking union [with the Divine]).⁹¹

87 For details about the holdings of the MS, see *Aḥwāl wa asār 'Abdullah Khashgī Qasūri*, pp. 77–79.

88 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fol. 127b.

89 At two different places, introduction (fol. b) and later in fol. 655b, Khashgī mentions additional titles of the book, elucidating its contents further—*Ma'āriju'l wilāyat fi madāriju'l hidānā* (spread of Sufism for taking steps towards peace), *Ma'āriju'l wilāyat fi madāriju'l aṣṣfiyā'* (spread of Sufism and the grandeur of the Sufis), and *muabshshirāt aḥwāl-i iltifāt* (exhilarating accounts of the magnanimities [of the Sufis]).

90 *Ma'āriju'l wilāyat* remains in manuscript form with copies held at various universities. I have consulted the MS (no. R344) in the Punjab University (Lahore) library, in the collection of Iqbal Mujaddidi (*zakhirā Iqbal Mujaddidi*). This manuscript, according to a date given on the last page, was copied on 25 Rabi'us Sāni, 1111/ October 20, 1699.

91 *Ma'āriju'l wilāyat*, fol. 1b.

In concluding his work, Kheshgī hoped that his readers would be immensely pleased and delighted (*farhat wa rāhat*) by his work.⁹² In the context of my study, the importance of *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat* is that it documents the lives of nine pious women, from the time of Bībī Sāra⁹³ to the time of the compilation of *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat*. In the last chapter (*rukṇ*), titled *b'āz majāzīb wa nisā'-yi 'ārifāt* (some enraptured Sufis and gnostic women), these stories of Pashtūn women are given.⁹⁴

Narratives of Pashtūn and women of Afghan ancestry reveal that they exercised far more power in their mundane lives and domestic affairs as well as in their religious, spiritual, and scholarly pursuits than is generally believed. Their role as mystics who taught and instructed men as well, indeed reflects their role as agents of social development by diffusing misogynist attitudes held towards women.

Khwāja Ni'matu'llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību'llah al-Harāwī's *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, which he completed in 1612 during the age of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), is another source providing authoritative accounts of Pashtun Sufi women. Some of these women are also included in Kheshgī's works.⁹⁵

At the close of the eighteenth century another valuable biographical compendium, *Bahr-e Zakhkhār* (the rising ocean), including about 2,800 Sufis, mostly from Hindustan, was compiled by Shaikh Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf Awadhi of Lucknow. Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf, a mystic, used to spend hours and days in the company of Sufis and pious persons. *Bahr-e Zakhkhār* is divided into eight parts. The last part, named *dar aḥwāl-i nisā'* (an account of women), out of 69 biographical notices on women, 23 are the accounts of women mystics of India. Of these 23, several are mentioned for the first time in any text.⁹⁶

In *Khazīnatu'l Aṣṭiyyā'*, a biographical compendium of the Sufis, Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī (d. 1307/1890) followed the pattern earlier set by Muḥaddis Dihlawī of placing women Sufis' notices at the end of his work. In chapter 7 of *Khazīnatu'l Aṣṭiyyā'*, Lahorī presents lives of pious Muslim women, from

92 Ibid, fol. 655a.

93 See her biographical notice in Part 2 of this book.

94 *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat*, fols. 651–53.

95 Khwāja Ni'matu'llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību'llah al-Harāwī's *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, vol. 2, (Dhaka: Asiatic society of Pakistan (1962)), (henceforth, referred to as *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*).

96 Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*. (Edited) Azarmi Dukht Safavi. 2012. *Bahr-e Zakhkhar, Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes* (vol. 3). Aligarh: Institute of Persian Research, Aligarh Muslim University (Originally composed in 1788–89) (henceforth, referred to as *Bahr-e Zakhkhar*).

the time of the Prophet to the days of the author.⁹⁷ Lahorī also published another book in 1875, *Ḥadiqatu'l Awliyā'* (Walled Garden of the Saints), a valuable source for introducing the reader to Sufi saints of the Punjab, some of whom are now little known to a modern-day scholar. Under the section titled *'Aurāt ṣālihāt kē zikr meīn jo Punjāb meīn guzar chukī hai* (In praise of righteous women who lived in the Punjab), this book describes the life and deeds of fifteen Sufi women. While some of the stories are based on oral traditions and legends, others are borrowed from earlier sources.⁹⁸ In 1194/1780, Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī wrote *Tuḥfatu'l-ṭāhirīn*, describing scholars and saints of Sindh. This work is a valuable source of information for a few Sufi women of Sindh that are included in this work.⁹⁹

With the conquest of the states in the Deccan peninsula under the Sultanate of Delhi, a new wave of Sufism emerged there which had a unique mix of local norms with the incoming influences of the Muslims of Delhi Sultanate. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, South India saw a proliferation of book writing. Among the large number of texts produced there, some had special references to Sufi women. Muḥammad Ibrahīm Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Bijāpurī, in his *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, written in 1241/1825, following the customary tradition added a section about pious women at the end of the book. However, in a departure from the norm, instead of naming this section "an account of the pious and chaste women" (*'ābidāt wa ṣālihāt*), he titled it "an account of the Sufis of Bijapur who are in the category of women" (*zikr awliyā'-yi zumrayi niswān Bijāpur*). Thus, by naming the section as such, Muḥammad Ibrahīm Qādirī broke the custom of recognising women only as pious women and not specifically naming them as Sufis. Thus, Qādirī recognized these pious women not just as *'ābidāt wa ṣālihāt* or merely as pious women; he categorised these women as *awliyā'*.¹⁰⁰

Mirza Mehdi Shirazi in 1886 published a biographical compendium in Persian of 288 women from around the Muslim cultures since the days of the Prophet. This book spread over just 178 pages, under a highly ornate title, *Kitāb tazkiratu'l-khwātīn dar sharaḥ-i ḥāl-i mashāhīr-i niswān-i 'ālam az 'Arab wa Rūm wa Hind wa 'Ajam az ṣadr-i Islām* (The biographies of women describing

97 *Khazīnātu'l Aṣfiyā'*, jild dom, pp. 397–429.

98 *Ḥadiqatu'l Awliyā': Punjāb ke Akābīr Suṭfiyā' kā Mustanad Tazkir*, pp. 235–243.

99 Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī, 1956. *Tuḥfatu'l ṭāhirīn*. (Edited by Badr-i 'Ālam Durrani). Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board.

100 Muḥammad Ibrahīm Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Bijāpurī. 1241/1825. *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*. (Translated in Urdu by Shah Saifullah Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Sibghat Allāhī in 1314/1896 under the title-*Tarjuma-yi Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*). (Urdu lithograph. Henceforth, referred to *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*). Raichūr: Sibghat Allāhī Press, pp. 222–26.

the virtues and the qualities of famous women from Rome to Persia and from the beginning of Islam to this day found in Farsi and Turki [languages]). In addition to the noble women of the Prophet's family, only two are about women mystics, Rā'bia Baṣari and Haft 'Afifā of Sindh. The book was a translation of an earlier Turkish work by Mehmed Zihni Effendi published in 1877 under the title *kitāb-i Meṣāhirün-nisa* from Istanbul.¹⁰¹ The importance of the book lies in the translator's new introduction in which he commented that women and men have equal rights.¹⁰²

2.8.3 *Ḥaẓrat Amīr Khusraw: Poetic Imagery or a Patriarchal Frame*

Another source, which although it does not fall into the above category of sources is still of prime significance, is the writings of Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325). His poetic compositions, which are neither of the category of *maḥfūzāt* nor *tazkirāt*, portray the generally accepted reality of women's lives of the period of early Chishtī development. Khusraw's writings, which are discussed here, thus help us in understanding why Sufi women remain veiled in Sufi discourses and texts.

Amīr Khusraw, a mystical poet of superb imagination and a Sufi of great merit, spent his days and nights in the company of his spiritual mentor, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'.¹⁰³ There is strong likelihood that his poems must have been read, if not entirely, by Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. Amīr Khwurd in *Siyaru'l-awliyā'* writes that it was a practice of Amīr Khusraw that on completion of each of his books, he would present it to the *Sultānu'l Mashā'ikh*, who would place his hand on it and bless it. Often, he would read a few lines of it and give his comments.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the Khwāja's affection and appreciation for Amīr Khusraw was so intense that twice he told him that he gets disturbed by others (*man az hama tang āyam*), but not by Khusraw.¹⁰⁵ Khusraw had two unique distinctions. First, the Khwāja placed his special *kulāh* (headgear) on the head of Khusraw by his own hands. Second, he was complimented by Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', who composed and recited two couplets, saying

101 Mehmed Zihni Effendi. 1877. *Meṣāhir ün-nisa*. [Istanbul]: Darul Tibaa ul-Amire. (As I have not studied or consulted this book, I have not included it in the bibliography).

102 Mirza Mehdi Shirāzi. 1889. *Kitāb-i tazkirat'al-khawātīn dar shraḥ-i ḥāl mashāḥir-i niswān-i 'alam* (Place of publication not known, probably Bombay), p. 2.

103 For a well-researched biography of Khusraw, see Muhammad Wahid Mirza. 1929. *Amīr Khusraw: Tūḡi-yi Hind Ḥaẓrat Hind Ḥaẓrat Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī ke ḥālāt-i zindagi aur unki taṣnīfāt par ek tanqīdi nazr*. Allahabad: Hindustan Academy.

104 SA, p. 302.

105 Ibid, p. 302.

that there is hardly anyone who is equivalent to Khusraw's excellence in prose and poetry.¹⁰⁶

Khusraw counselled his own daughter twice, in 698/1298 in his longer poem in Farsi, *Maṭla' ul-anwār* (The beginning of new light) and in 701/1301 in *Hasht Bihišt* (The eighth heavens), which is a set of twenty-one longer poems (*masāwī*).¹⁰⁷ In *Maṭla' ul-anwār*, Khusraw gives advice to his veiled daughter¹⁰⁸ and to women of all ages, young and old (*dar naṣīḥat-i farzand-i mastūra wa sā'ir-i mastūrāt jawān wa zāl*), on their moral conduct.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, Khusraw went to the length of telling women in his *Maṭla' ul-anwār* that they should remain confined in their homes to the extent of tying their legs to their skirt (*pā-yi bā zanjīrā -yi dāman-i khwesh*).¹¹⁰ Insisting on women's nonvisibility, Khusraw says that they should not even expose their faces to the sun and the moon.¹¹¹ Khusraw dedicated his second *masāwī*, *Hasht Bihišt*, to the reigning Sultan, 'Alā'ud-Dīn Khilji (r. 1296–1316).¹¹² One of the poems of this collection, *Naṣīḥat farzand-i bihištī samartu'l fu'ād 'affā* (Counsel for the virtuous daughter, fruit of heart, bestowed by the Heaven), is addressed to his own young daughter, his first child whom he loved dearly.¹¹³ In Khusraw's words, this poem is a manifesto (*dastūr*) for the upbringing of little girls into submissive, dutiful wives to please their husbands, even if the husband is erratic (*be parhaiz*). The poet expresses a dichotomy that rules supreme in South Asia regarding women: a father loves his daughter's beautiful face, shining like a full moon (*roshnī chūn māh chahārdah ruz*), but regrets that she is born a girl

106 Ibid, p. 304.

107 Saiyyid Sulaimān Ashraf. 1336/1918. *Masnawī Hasht Bihišt*. Aligarh: Maṭba' Institute Gazette, p. 170.

108 Khusraw had only one daughter, his eldest child, and three sons. The daughter remains anonymous in his poetry. However, Wahid Mirza identifies her as Maimūna, see Mohammad Wahid Mirza. *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1935, p. 195. *Mastūra* (from the word *mastūr*, which means concealed or veiled, hence here it means the veiled daughter). Similarly, *Affā* in *Naṣīḥat farzand-i bihištī* is not the name of his daughter but the quality of his daughter implying the chaste one. For his children, see Muḥammad Sa'īd Aḥmad Marharwī. 1321/1903. *Ḥayāt Khusraw*. Agra: Maṭba' Akbarī, p. 70. Sunil Sharma in his *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005, p. 33.), Sunil Sharma in his *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005, p. 33.), however, writes that he had two daughters, named Mastūra and 'Afifā.

109 Amīr Khusraw. 1334/1926. *Maṭla' ul-anwār*, ed. Muḥammad Muqtadā Khan Sherwānī. Aligarh: Muslim University Press, pp. 222–230.

110 Ibid, p. 224.

111 Ibid, p. 228.

112 Muḥammad Sa'īd Aḥmad Marharwī. 1321/1903. p. 98.

113 Amīr Khusraw. 1290/1873. *Hasht Bihišt*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Nawal Kishore, pp. 21–25.

and wishes her to die instead of remaining alive to suffer the ignominies that women were to suffer.¹¹⁴ Expecting his underage (*gar chih khurd*) daughter, not yet capable of understanding (*be tamīz*) but who would reach adulthood one day (*rūz-i ākhir buzurg*), Khusraw counsels her that to become virtuous (*pārsā bāsh*), she should first submit to God. She must make efforts to suppress all urges of young age (*koshish kazz kushtan-i jawāni*) and should be like a dead person towards all such emotions. If her husband is not a virtuous person, she should take refuge in Allāh. She should remain hidden behind four curtains (*az pas-i chār parda*). Instead of peeping through the holes (*rauзан*), even if the hole is as narrow as the eye of a needle (*chashm-yisozān*), the virtuous woman must sit facing the wall, with her back turned toward the doorway (*rū ba dīwār wa pusht bar dar kun*). If someone knocks at the door, she should not open the door, even if the person at the door is someone like Khizr, the prophet of Allāh. A woman who roams around the alleys (*kūchā*) is a bitch (*māda-i sag*) and not a woman (*zan na bashad*). The best vocation for a virtuous woman is sewing and spinning (*sozan wa dūk neza tīr ast*) which is [equal to men's use of] spear and arrow. Finally, Khusraw, comforting his daughter, prays that her headscarf (*miqna't*) may turn into her crown and hat (*āfīsar wa kulāh*).

Khusraw's *Naṣīhat farzand-i bihishtī* certainly raises some critical questions regarding the image of girls and women. Most male scholars argue that Khusraw's only purpose by giving this advice to his daughter was to shield her and by extension other women of India from a life of abuse and exploitation. Ashraf comments that Khusraw was not lamenting (*andūhgīn*) the birth of a daughter; his purpose was to reform the people.¹¹⁵ Shujā' Mun'mi offers similar arguments.¹¹⁶ Ansari presents another argument projecting Khusraw's sincerity for women's cause and writes that Khusraw's sentiments for women reflect a mother's affection for her children.¹¹⁷ Thus, more than Khusraw, his present-day admirers and biographers ring alarm bells by magnifying Khusraw's views about women being in the interest of women. In view of Amīr Khwurd's testimony that Khusraw's compositions were seen, approved, and appreciated by Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', deeper concerns emerge regarding the Sufi perception of women. It also raises critical questions about Sufi expectations about women's role in the society.

114 Ibid, pp. 21–25. Maulānā Sayyid Sulaiman Ashraf. *Hasht-Bihisht* [*The Eighth Heaven*], ('Aligarh: Maṭbā' Insitute Gazette, 1918).

115 Saiyyid Sulaimān Ashraf. 1975. 'Hasht Bihisht.' In *Amīr Khusraw: Aḥwāl wa Āsār*. Edited by Nurul Hasan Ansari. Delhi: Kohinoor Press, pp. 159–176.

116 F.M. Shujā' Mun'mi. *Ḥaẓrat Amīr Khusraw Dihlawi kī betī ke nām naṣīhat*. Bhawalpur: F.M. Shujā' 1929.

117 Z. Ansari. 1977. *Khusraw kā Zahānī Safar*. Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqi-yi Urdu, pp. 54–55.

2.9 Shrines: A Source for the Study of Sufi Women

As discussed above, the Sufi *malfūzāt* and *tazkirāt* originate from the spoken word and are based on the oral authority of the traditions. Thus, these texts validate and also sanctify the word as an authentic source of knowledge and scholarship. Oral tales that circulate at the shrines, therefore, deserve to be heard, accepted, and assessed within this background of the genesis of Sufi literature. In addition to their significance as a place where oral traditions originate, and are sustained and nurtured through devotees' narratives, Sufi shrines and mausoleums are pieces of funerary architecture. These structures often carry inscriptions and house treasured manuscripts and other relevant texts, in addition to artefacts. As shrine management traditionally runs through the families of the saints, the *gaddī nishīn*, (literally, "one who sits on a seat"), or the successors of the dead saint, often act as custodians of oral traditions.

In the case of Sufi women, their shrines also act as an alternative for the missing or suppressed written evidence. More importantly, a woman Sufi's shrine, particularly if the Sufi woman is not known through historical texts, often symbolises her presence. Biographical notices in this book confirm that some Sufi women were identified on the basis of archaeological evidence and historical inscriptions found on their shrines. In addition, in societies where women of all classes and status are marginalised, an edifice commemorating a woman speaks volumes.

Most shrines of women suffer from neglect. Bashīruddīn Aḥmad in his *Wāq'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dehli* (Information about Delhi, the capital city) lamented the neglect of old graves and burial places in Delhi. Neglect led to vandalism of masonry material, particularly inscription tablets, thus erasing valuable historical evidence.¹¹⁸ The post-1857 acts of vengeance by the colonial administration fell brutally hard on cultural and religious icons of the country. A revealing example is the confiscation by the colonial government of Shah Fahkhru'd-Dīn's land in Delhi, which was a property in the name of his grandson Ḥazrat Ghulām Naṣīru'd-Dīn *alias* Kāley Ṣāhib (d. 1262/1846).¹¹⁹ Similarly, the *khānqah* of Shah Kalīmu'llah was razed to the ground; only the

118 Bashīruddīn Aḥmad. 1337/1918. *Wāq'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dehli* (*hiṣṣā du'm*) (Reprint Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990. Henceforth, referred to as *Wāq'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dehli*.), p. 518.

119 Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī. *Malfūzāt wa ḥālāt Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī* (Urdu translation of *Fakhru'l Tālibīn wa Manāqib-i Fakhariyā* by Mīr Nazar 'Alī Dard Kakorwī) Karachi; Salman Academy, 1961, p. 26; For an account of Ḥazrat Ghulām Naṣīru'd-Dīn *alias* Kāley Ṣāhib', see Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's *Āsāru's Sanādīd*, (Chapter Four). Lucknow: Maṭba' Nawal Kishore, 1293/1876, p. 21. (First published in 1847).

grave remained there.¹²⁰ We can surmise that this must have been the fate of shrines of women as well. Indeed, some women-only shrines, particularly of those pious women who had no known or viable affiliation with a Sufi *silsila*, must have fallen into oblivion by sheer neglect. No such record was maintained.

Examples of such lost treasures due to human neglect, compounded by nature's ravages, continue to abound, astounding in terms of quantity and quality. The graveyard of Makli, which once consisted of thousands of graves with inscriptions, is one such example illustrating human neglect, plunder, and pillage. They commemorate the name of Mā'ī Maklī, a woman saint long since forgotten. Her grave exists today, though in a highly neglectful state, only because the poor and needy people, who are victims of similar neglect, keep visiting her. Like libraries put to ashes by rogues, negligence by the corrupt is physically erasing the shrines. Another eye-opening example is the poor conservation of the tomb-structure of Bibī Jawindī's shrine at Uchch. Although some efforts for the restoration of Bibī Jawindī's shrine at Uchch is reported, major portions are completely lost. During my visit of the shrine, I was numbed to see the poor quality of work that was underway there. Since its reported ruinous condition by Mohan Lal almost two hundred years ago, the condition of the shrine has worsened.¹²¹ It is to be noted that this shrine is the only known historical evidence of Bibī Jawindī. Scholars lament the loss of valuable books, the mishandling of manuscripts by novices in the archives, and wrong cataloguing of archival material by careless librarians. There is always the hope that another copy of a lost or damaged manuscript might appear some other place. A shrine lost once, is lost forever. An inscription erased once, cannot be replaced by another one. An example from which much can be learned is of the damaged shrine of Hasti Bibī, a chance discovery in the late nineteenth century during excavation near the old fort in Ahmadabad.

Shrines, graves, and mausoleums, with or without inscriptions, are important sources leading to further historical investigations. Their architectural remains, similar to manuscript texts, need careful preservation and conservation. Much appreciable work in this regard was undertaken under the aegis of

120 Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghālib. 1895. *Urdu-i Mu'allā*. (Letter to Ḥakīm Saiyyid Ahmad Hasan Maudūdi dated September 1, 1866, pp. 202–203). Dehli: Maṭba' Muḥtabā'ī; Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghālib. 1929; *Ood-i Hindī* [*'ūd-i hindī*] (Letter no. 46 to Nawab Anwāru'd-Daula, pp. 93–95); Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal, Beni Madho; Najmu'd-Dīn Sulaimānī. *Manāqibu'l Maḥbūbin* (Urdu translation by Iftikhar Ahmad Chishtī). Faisalabad: Chistiyya Academy, 1987. (First published in 1278/1861, Maṭba' Muḥammadi Lahore), p. 120.

121 Mohan Lal, Munshi, 1836. 'Description of Uch-Sahrif.' *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 5, (Edited by John Prinsep, Calcutta: Printed at the Baptist Mission Press), pp. 796–99.

the colonial administration of South Asia, once their fury over the 1857 debacle had calmed down. These efforts resulted in large field surveys and rich documentation of old buildings, secular as well as religious. The twelfth-century Sufi, Bībī Kamāl of Kako (in Bihar, India), was the first to be introduced to the modern-day audience by Cunningham's archaeological survey report in the late nineteenth century. Similarly, Mukkā Bī of Bidar emerged as a Sufi of merit not from the pages of a book but from a chance discovery by Ghulam Yazdani when he uncovered an inscription about her which remains our only source of knowledge about her. However, lack of consistency in making such efforts, the absence of skilled and trained conservators, and vandalism and systematic plunder of material at these monuments, has left us bereft of valuable evidence.

Interestingly, the shrines also reflect the gendered nature of our society. All shrines where Sufi women are buried and where women go to make their offerings and pray do not fall into the usual image of a shrine, with a dome, cupola, and a majestic facade. Some shrines dedicated to the memories of women may consist of niches in a wall where a small earthen oil lamp is burnt. Women of the neighbourhood manage this niche-shrine, contribute a little money for its oil and wick (*diyā-battī*), paint, and flower wreaths.

In most towns and cities, one would come across what Bayly describes as "tiny wayside shrines." Curiously, a good number of these commemorate women saints whose history is largely forgotten and only preserved through oral traditions and legends. Little effort is made to explore the history of those reposed in these graves, some of which have humble appearance, similar to those who flock there to seek redress of social wrongs; others have modest to impressive architecture and other paraphernalia. Whether humble or sublime in appearance, all are held in great devotion by hundreds and thousands of women for whom the *ziyarat* is seeing the pious person.

The etiquette of shrine visitation is similar to the *adāb* of a *murīd* in the presence of a living Sufi. Indeed, a Sufi is not a dead person. Similar to the *futūḥ* is the *nazrāna* that each woman devotee offers at the shrine. At the shrines of Makli, I saw live fowl, home-bred eggs, and roasted sweetcorn brought by the poor folk as a version of a modern-day *futūḥ*. Next comes greeting the *pīr* or the Sufi. Each devotee first offers salutation to the buried Sufi, by saying it loudly. As they step in, they touch the wall of the shrine, the doorway or the meshed railing of the grave, with the same respect which is due to a living Sufi. The shrine thus personifies the Sufi. Similar to a living Sufi, the buried Sufi guides and commands the believing devotee. At the shrine of Nūrī Bābā at Tin Hatti, Karachi, a woman devotee related a family history of shrine visitation. She said her father-in-law was a *murīd* of Ḥājī Ghā'ib Shah of Keamari, in

Karachi. When she fell ill, instead of visiting Ḥāji Ghā'ib Shah of Keamari, she went to the Nūrī Bābā because Nūrī Bābā appeared in her dream. She did not know about him before. In her dream, he introduced himself and ordered her (*bishārat hu'ī, Bābā ne ḥukm diyā*) to visit him. As she didn't go to Keamari, Ḥāji Ghā'ib Shah of Keamari got angry with her. Nūrī Bābā told her about this anger and also ordered her to visit Keamari to seek forgiveness. The visit brought her relief from her ailment. Now, for thanksgiving, Nūrī Bābā has ordered her to visit his shrine on foot on seven consecutive Thursdays. When I met her, it was the fourth of these seven Thursdays. All through her conversation with me, the woman was narrating the events in her dreams as if they had happened in reality.

Women devotees believe that the buried Sufi listens to them and communicates with them. I heard women addressing the buried Sufi, with folded hands, saying, "I appeal to you" (*main āp se faryād kartī hūn*). A significant aspect of Sufi women's shrines is that most of these women are addressed as Mother. Instead of awe-inspiring and authoritarian modes of address, as *Yā Shaikh* or *Dātā*, the Sufi women are addressed as Ma, Mā'ī, or Amma, thus the most natural bond, the cordial bond, is established.

Indeed, the devotees and shrine visitors, some regular in their attendance at the shrine, represent another category of *silsila* that as yet remains unidentified. These devotees were not initiated into the *silsila*. Indeed, a *silsila* with which we are familiar and which had distinguishing ways of dress and living, is not the women's way of Sufism. These unnamed *silsilas* witnessed on the premises of the shrines are akin to oceans where all waters come together, and yet have their own identity.

My visits to women's shrines in the major cities of Pakistan show the tenacity of oral traditions that are transferred through the channel of memory from one generation of women to the next. These oral narratives, as Nile Green refers to them, are "living narratives"¹²² and through them the saints—in the context of this study, women saints—interact in the daily lives of the devotees. The story of Mā'ī Mirān or Mirān Pīr of Karachi does not appear in any recorded history, either in the Sufi narratives or in any other text. Even the colonial administrators are silent about her presence. The government of Sindh, however, through its Auqaf Department, manages this shrine and collects cash offerings (*nazrānā*) that are deposited by the devotees in the green-coloured locked cash boxes kept at the shrine. The 'urs celebrations are also attended or at least managed by this governmental agency. Thus, through bureaucratic control,

122 Nile Green. 2004. "Stories of Saints and Sultan: Re-membling History at the Sufi Shrine of Aurangabad." *Modern Asian Studies*, 82 (2): 419–446.

the shrine's presence is legitimised. During my interviews of women visitors and shrine attendants at the shrines of Mā'ī Mirān in Karachi, the shrine of Bibīān Pak Damān in Lahore, and Shah Parion jo Āstānā in Thatta, to cite a few examples from a long list of such shrines of women, I was amazed at the details they narrated about the lives and miraculous powers of these pious women. More fascinating is that at all my visits to these shrines, which are several years apart from each other, the narratives remained the same, though the narrators changed. Thus, these repeated oral narratives add credibility to the accounts and legitimize the saints' authority. At each of my visits, I heard tales of the women saints' powers of healing and curing ailments which the physicians had rejected as cases beyond cure (*daktar ne jawāb dediya tha*).

Thus, one can draw the comparison between the historical evasion of Sufi women and the apathy shown towards the shrines of these women today. There is even now a condemnation of women's shrine visitation as a sacrilegious act, and there continues to be deep-rooted doubt about the religious importance and intellect of these pious women of the past.

The Sufi Gaze: Perception of Women by Male Sufis

The first treatise written in Persian on *taṣawwuf*, the *Kashfū'l Maḥjūb* (Uncovering the Veiled), by Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī bin 'Usmān al-Hujwārī (d. between 456/1063–1064 or 465–469/1037–1077), in addition to its avowed purpose that the readers “may find their way to spiritual reality,” also revealed gendered perceptions of male Sufis about the spiritual merits and worth of women friends of God. Hujwārī's views on women as the source of chaos and disorder remain a popularly approved dogmatic and social perception of women. The historic process of the growth of *taṣawwuf* in South Asia and its transformation from a *ṭarīq/ṭarīqa* (path) seeking Divine proximity (*qurb*) to a chain or order (*silsila*) with genealogies (*shajra*), all displaying male presence, has categorised women as devotees and followers and not as leaders. Consequent to the emergence and consolidation of *khānqāhs* (Sufi lodges), women's presence in Sufism turned into that of mere bystanders, often physically debarred from crossing the sacred thresholds and entering the sanctuaries.

In his introduction to Nizami's *Tārīkh Mashā'ikh-i Chisht*, Mohammad Habib comments that the Chishtī Sufis, contrary to the extreme abhorrence for women found in medieval literature and in public view in general, viewed them with great respect. Elucidating his point further, Mohammad Habib, whose writings of history acquired “a more Marxist colouring,”¹ makes a conflicting observation that “a woman could not attain the rank of a *shaiikh*; however, gender discrimination of any type definitely was not there. Women were respected.”² In support of his argument, Habib cited two observations of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' regarding women of saintly virtues and about the irrelevance of gender distinction. In his discourse held in Ghiyāspur, his *khānqah*, on the 27th of Jamādī'ul ākhir, 708/1308, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' first said that “dervishes who ask saintly women and saintly men to intercede on their behalf, remember saintly women first because they are so rare.” He then commented

1 Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. 2012. *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, p. 15.

2 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 2007. *Tārīkh Mashā'ikh-i Chisht (jild awwal)*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, pp. 20–21.

that “when a lion comes out of jungle, no one asks ‘is it male or female?’ (*sher ki az bīsha birūn āmad kisi na pursad ki īn sher nar ast yā māda ast*).”³

Habib’s comments make one wonder about the reasons that disqualify or restrict women from attaining the position of a Sufi Shaikh. Habib’s sweeping statement that gender discrimination was not there is not qualified by any reasoning or supportive evidence. If barring persons from acquiring any socially prescribed roles or positions or accessing any opportunities is not gender discrimination, then what is gender discrimination? Sufi texts are replete with stories and anecdotes that reflect male Sufis’ fear of being robbed of their spirituality by what they believed to be women’s innate wickedness. This deeply ingrained fear of women’s imagined mischief-causing nature, on one hand, encouraged asceticism and celibacy, and on the other hand, created strong and resilient anti-women traditions, thus weakening family ties and encouraging women’s disparagement. The epitome of Sufi perception of women, even as virtuous as Bibī Sām, is summed up in Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn’s observation that “woman was a man sent in the form of a woman” (*ān zan mard ast ki o rā dar šūrat-i zanān faristādand*).⁴ Thus, in other words, spiritual virtues and assets are male in their essence. One wonders at the real intent of the Shaikh—was he admiring Bibī Sām or was he hinting at women’s proverbial deficiencies?

What we infer from these sources is that Sufi women, like men, have existed all through the history of the Muslim. Unlike the male Sufis, as the nomenclature for Sufi women or public identification of Sufi women was different, because of their nonassociation with leadership roles in the Sufi *ṭarīqa*, they remained without position and titles of authority. Indeed, instead of being extolled by august awe-inspiring temporal titles, such as *Shaikh*, *Shaikhul Shuyūkh*, and *Quṭb-i Ālam*, Sufi women were identified by their spiritual merits, such as *ṣālihāt*, *qānī’tāt*, *‘abidāt*, and more frequently as *mastūra* (the hidden one). Thus, for instance, when Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ recalled Bibi Fāṭima Sām, he identified her as *buzurg* (the excellent one).⁵

The Qur’ān (33:35) has taught this way of identification of pious, devout, humble, patient, fasting, and believing women who remember Him and for whom Allāh promises forgiveness and a great award (*maghfiratan wa-ajran ‘azīman*) along with men with the same virtues. The Qur’ān’s by its wisdom (*ḥikma*) places all these pious and God-fearing persons in one single category, the group of the friends of Allāh—*Behold! verily on the friends of Allah there is*

3 FF, *Majlis* 20, 27th of *Jamādī’ul ākhir*, 708/1308.

4 Ibid.

5 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zillḥajj*, 720/12 January 1321.

no fear, nor shall they grieve (10:62). Thus, the following section examines how men looked at women.

3.1 Women as Chaos (*Fitna*)

Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī bin 'Usmān al-Hujwīrī, one of the earliest known Sufis to settle in South Asia, in the city of Lahore, in his treatise on *taṣawwuf*, the *Kashfu'l Maḥjūb* (Uncovering the Veiled), depicted woman as the main cause of Adam's "fall" from Paradise—a view not found in the Qur'ān. Thus, the very first text on *taṣawwuf* produced in the Persian language and the first one in South Asia, the *Kashfu'l Maḥjūb* declares women as the cause of trouble. In a section entitled "On the Etiquettes of Marriage and Celibacy" in *Kashfu'l Maḥjūb*, after recounting the Qur'ānic dictums on marriage and the Prophet's sayings on marriage as his blessed *sunnā*, Hujwīrī expresses his personal views on women, which are negative and reflect a deep-seated patriarchy in his psyche. Accusing women of the cause of human misery, Hujwīrī lists three types of *fitna* (chaos) that have occurred in human history and are the root cause of all later chaos. The first one, Hujwīrī says, fell upon Adam in Paradise and was caused by a woman (*fitna ki bar sar-i Ādam alaihs-salām paidā āmad sabab-i ān zan būd andar bihišt*); the second one, the first quarrel that happened in this world (*fitna ki andar dunyā padīd*), i.e., the quarrel between Abel and Cain (*fitna Hābīl wā Qābīl*), was also caused by a woman. Third, Hujwīrī asserts that a woman is the cause of the Divine punishment inflicted on the two angels (Hārūt and Mārūt), which continues to the present day, and that all mischief and worldly and religious chaos (*hamā aṣbāb fitna dīnī wa dunyā*) are caused by women.⁶ Hujwīrī then quotes an Ḥadīth of the Prophet without giving any source: "No other chaos causing harm to men is greater than the chaos of women." Concluding his tirade, he finally concludes his argument by questioning what would be the inner self (*bāṭin*) of such a person (i.e., a woman) who causes so much disorder in this world.⁷

Thus, *Kashfu'l Maḥjūb*, in its contents, vocabulary, and idiom, by reiterating paradoxical interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses, particularly regarding human creation and understanding of the Prophet's sayings on marriage and celibacy, and position of women, sanctified the elements of *Isra'īlīyāt*

6 Hujwīrī, pp. 426–27; Nicholson, p. 364.

7 Hujwīrī, p. 427.

discussed in Islamic jurisprudence.⁸ Hujwīrī, thus, despite his vast knowledge of Sufis and Sufism, arrived loaded with misguided notions about women, which he did not hide or kept to himself; he transferred them to the following generations through his written words. In all fairness to Hujwīrī, he was not the creator of these views; he acted as the most trustworthy and powerful conduit of these views.

It is crucial to explain briefly the fallacy of Hujwīrī and others who continue to subscribe to the erroneous understanding of the creation story as given in the Qurʾān. Barbara Stowasser, in her critical study *Women in the Qurʾan, Traditions, and Interpretation*, devotes chapter 2 on Eve to the argument that the Qurʾānic story of Adam and Eve is different from the expulsion narratives of the Bible which hold Eve accountable for the original sin and Adam's exit from heaven.⁹ Similarly, Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas argue that the Qurʾān rejects the notion of woman as temptress of evil and does not blame her for either the so-called original sin or the Fall of Adam.¹⁰ A stronger refutation of the woman's responsibility for expulsion from Heaven comes from William C. Chittick. Drawing upon the Shafīʿite scholar from Marv, Aḥmad Samʿani's (d. 534/1140) commentary on the Qurʾān in which he does not refer to Eve, Chittick argues that Adam's fall is rooted in God's mercy and forgiveness. Chittick also observes that from Samʿani's point of view, the question of Eve is a secondary matter, not because women are unimportant but because the story of Adam and Eve is not about gender roles; it is about God's relationship with all human beings.¹¹

Hujwīrī, however, with his narrow vision, thus when professed that "Sufism was founded on celibacy; the introduction of marriage brought about a change [for the worse],"¹² insinuated at what he believed was the disruptive role of women. Comparing this disparagement of women and of the institution of marriage with the Ḥadīth of the Prophet which guides the Muslim to believe "there is no monkery (*rahbāniyyā*), no celibacy (*tabattul*), and no hermitage

8 *Israʿilyāt*, a term derived from the word *Israʿil* and is applied by exegetes (*mufasssīrīn*) to define Islamic traditions derived from the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish traditions.

9 Barbara F. Stowasser. 1994. *Women in the Qurʾan, Traditions, and Interpretation*. NY: OUP, pp. 25–38.

10 Amina Wadud. 1999. *Qurʾan and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press; Asma Barlas. 2019. *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qurʾan*. [Place of publication not identified]: University of Texas Press.

11 William C. Chittick. 1999. 'The Myth of Adam's Fall in Aḥmad Samʿani's *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ*.' In *The Heritage of Sufism Vol. 1*. Edited by Leonard Lewisohn. Oxford: Oneworld, pp. 337–359.

12 Nicholson, p. 364.

in Islam”¹³ and that “marriage is my *sunna*, and whoever dislikes my *sunna* dislikes me,”¹⁴ one finds a blatant contradiction in Hujwīrī’s arguments, elsewhere in his treatises, on the merits of following the noble Traditions of the Prophet.¹⁵

In closing his treatise, Hujwīrī, in his last and final charge against women, accuses them of reversing his attempt at revealing the hidden aspects of *taṣawwuf*. This he explains is done by women who, from their rooftops or from elsewhere, watch the Sufis busy in the audition of *samāʿ*, and thus distract them and create great obstacles in their spiritual exercises. Playing with the word *ḥijāb*, he says that these women throw veils (*ḥijābhā uftad*) over the meditative Sufis. Thus, he is probably insinuating that his task of unveiling the veiled is ruined by women.¹⁶

Hujwīrī does not identify the location of the above-referenced *samāʿ* party. He might have witnessed it in Lahore, a city which he could not appreciate. His reference here is about trouble-causing women of Lahore. Thousands of women who visit the shrine of Hujwīrī and address him reverently and affectionately as *Dātā Ganjbakhsh* (the giver of treasures), might not be aware of the burdensome legacy of Hujwīrī.

Similar views, but with greater force of conviction and aimed at a far wider and continuous readership, came from Nizāmu’l Mulk Tūsī (1017–1092), the erudite *wazīr* (minister) of the Seljuqs, known best for his *Sīyāsāt-nāma* or *Sīyār al-mulūk* (The Book of Government or Rules for Kings)¹⁷ and the *Madrasa Nizāmīyya*, founded in 1065 in Baghdad and under whose syllabi generations of Muslim males of South Asia learned their lessons. The *Sīyāsāt-nāma*, a favourite reading in South Asia, declares that women, who were created for the purpose of procreation, lack excellence in intelligence (*kamāl-iʿaql nīst*) and are part of all depravity and chaos, mischief and wickedness (*juz fitna o fasād wa shor o sharr*). The book blames Eve for the problems that befell Adam, resulting in his fall from Heaven, and for causing mischief and chaos around (*fitna wa fasād*).¹⁸

13 J. Robinson. “Ḥadīth”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition. Leiden: E.J. Brill, vol. 3, p. 23. First published online: 2012.

14 Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali. 1937. *Ihyaʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*. Vol. 4. Cairo: Matbaʿat lajnat nashr al-thaqafa ʿislamiyya, p. 97.

15 For more discussion on marriage and celibacy in Muslim societies, see Valeri J. Hoffman-Lad. 1992. “Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life.” *Mystics Quarterly*, 8 (3): 82–93.

16 Hujwīrī, p. 488; Nicholson, p. 420.

17 Hubert Drake. 1960. *The Sīyāsāt-nāmāh or Sīyār al-mulūk* (The Book of Government or Rules for Kings). Tr. from the Persian by Hubert Drake London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

18 Nizamu’l Mulk Tūsī. 1931. *Sīyāsāt-nāma maʿ taʿliqāt* (for the examination of Kāmil in Farsi, UP, India). Allahabad: Lālā Ram Narayan, chapter 42, pp. 157–164. *Sīyāsāt-nāma* continues to be part of syllabi in Persian courses taught at various institutions in South Asia.

Hujwīrī was not the only one or the first one to view women and marital relationships as the cause of trouble. Ibrāhīm bin Adham (d. 776 or 790 H), the Central Asian prince-turned-Sufi, best illustrates this thinking. He viewed that family means destruction, because according to him, “when a man marries he embarks on a ship, and when a child is born he suffers shipwreck.”¹⁹ South Asian Sufi ways were also greatly influenced by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who in two sections of his book *Iḥyā’ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the religious sciences)—the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* (book on marriage) and *Kitāb kasr al-Shwatayain* (book on controlling of the two desires)—presented a discourse on the merits of marriage and celibacy, a topic which gradually emerged as a dichotomic debate among the Sufis.²⁰ Ghazālī identified “the desire for sex and voracious appetite for women” as a moral vice.²¹

The negative representation of women in the Sufi canon, thus, turns women into the “other,” supporting Hoffman-Ladd’s view that “the archetypal Sufi was a man.”²² In simpler words, male Sufis viewed Sufism as a male domain which must be protected in order to keep it safe from the entry of trouble-creators, i.e., the women. The ruination caused by a woman was taken so seriously that even a simple meal cooked by a woman of dubious background (*‘aurat-i mushtabiha*) and consumed by a Sufi could defile his purity by causing *iḥtilām* (nocturnal emission of seminal fluid). In *Aḥsanu’l aqwāl*, Ḥammād Kāshānī (d. 761/359–360), a disciple of Buhānu’l-Dīn Gharīb, records an incredible anecdote. During a discourse, while expounding on the six causes of *iḥtilām*, Burhānu’l-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1338), *khalīfa* of Nizāmu’l-Dīn Awliyā’, the great Chishtī Shaikh (d. 1325), related an episode in which one night all the inmates in the hospice of Shaikh Bahā’u’l-Dīn Zakarīyya were awakened by the nocturnal emission (*hamā yarān-i khānqāh muḥtalim bāshad*). The Shaikh got perplexed. When he asked who had cooked the last evening’s meal, he was told that the slave girl (*kanīz*) brought from the market yesterday had prepared it. The saint ordered that this woman, being a doubtful person, should not be permitted to

19 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (Edited and translated by Reynold A. Nicholson). *The Kitāb Al-Luma’ Fi’l-Taṣawwuf of Abū Naṣr ‘Abdallāh B. ‘Alī Al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭūsī*. London: Luzac, 1963, p. 37; for some interesting parallels between monastic Buddhism and ascetic Sufism, see T. Duka. 1904. “The Influence of Buddhism on Islam.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 125–141.

20 See the English translation of the two sections by Madeline Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam; A Translation of al-Ghazali’s Book on the Etiquette of Marriage from the Iḥyā’*. Salt Lake City: Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984.

21 T.J. Winter. *On Disputing the soul and on Breaking the Two Desires, Books 22 and 23 of the Religious Sciences*. Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1995, p. 106.

22 Valeri J. Hoffman-Lad. 1992. “Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life”, p. 83.



FIGURE 1 Women devotees at the Dātā Darbār, Lahore

cook meals from that date onwards.²³ Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb also shared the view of Farīdu'd-Dīn, who stated that, compared to men, good women are few in this world (*nek zanān dar jahān kam and wa nek mardān bisyār*).²⁴

3.2 Women as Deficient in Reasoning

In Sufi discourses and the inscribed Sufi texts, women are portrayed as imperfect beings (*nāqish*), lacking in intellect (*ʿaql*) and in the comprehension of religion (*dīn*), and inadequate in physical prowess. *Khairu'l Majālis*, the *malfūz* of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (the Lamp of Delhi) (1276–1356), compiled

23 Ḥammādu'd-Dīn Kāshānī, *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl*, pp. 124–25 [I have translated these excerpts from a photocopy of the Persian manuscript of *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl* from the version uploaded by Professor Carl Ernst (www.academia.edu/12537498/Ahsan_al-aqwal)]. I have also consulted the published Urdu translation of the ms, *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl al-ma'rūf ba afḥalu'l maqāl* by Muḥammad 'Abu'l Majīd (Bombay: Maṭba'-'i Jahanḡirī, 1342/1923).

24 Ruknu'd-Dīn Kāshānī. *Nafā'isu'l-anfās*. (Compiled ca. 1331–1337), p. 35 (I have translated these excerpts from a photocopy of the Persian manuscript of *Nafā'isu'l-anfās* from the text uploaded copy by Professor Carl Ernst).

by Ḥāmid Qalandar, is replete with anecdotes illustrating women's innate lack of intellect.²⁵ Ḥāmid Qalandar recorded the discourse of the Shaikh during the period of one year, 755–756/1354–1355, when the Shaikh was around eighty years of age. The Shaikh carefully watched how his spoken words were recorded, and therefore he used to inspect the entries by Ḥāmid Qalandar and commended the work by saying, *darwish nekū niwishta* (Darwish you have written well). This makes his *malfūz* “the best example of the art of *malfūzāt* writing.”²⁶ It also shows that the contents of *Khairu'l Majālis* were approved by Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī who was proficient in the knowledge of *fiqh*.²⁷ The Shaikh was so careful in maintaining the accuracy of his discourses that on occasions when Ḥāmid Qalandar arrived late, he would restart his discourse.²⁸ In one of his discourses, explicating the causes of the revelation of *Sura al-aḥzāb* (Qur'ān 33:28–29), he referred to the incident when Archangel Jibrīl appeared with the Divine message before the Prophet at a time when he was hard hit with lack of resources. The Message commanded the Prophet to select “life of this world with its adornment or a life with the adornment of the world of the Last Day.” Explaining this further, the Shaikh said that the revered wives of the Prophet, on hearing that the Prophet had chosen poverty, began to say, “now that the Prophet had preferred poverty we would not easily get good clothes and meals.” They were worried because women are imperfect, and therefore they lack in intellect and in religion (*az ānja ki zanān nāqīṣ bashand han nāqīṣāt 'aql wa dīn*), he added.²⁹ He further explained “that this incident caused the revelation of the two *ayahs* of the Qur'ān (33:28–29).” The Shaikh then discussed how the Prophet, instead of letting his wives know about this revelation, adopted a cautious approach because he knew that women are wanting in intellect. It is worth considering here that Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn was not only expounding on a highly controversial exegesis of verses 33:28–29, but that he also used a language that could be interpreted as not being respectable towards the Mothers of the Believers. The same verse, i.e., *Sura Aḥzāb*,

25 For his life account, see K.A. Nizami, 1991. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nasir'u'd din Chirāgh-i-Delhi*. Delhi: I.A.D.

26 KM, *Majlis* Two; Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*. vol. 1. p. 7.

27 For details of his studies under renowned scholars of *fiqh* and Ḥadīth, see Raḥmān 'Alī, *Tazkirā-yi 'ulamā' yi Hind* by Raḥmān 'Alī (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1914), p. 238.

28 KM, *Majlis* 11.

29 KM, *Majlis* 51. The Shaikh cited the controversial Ḥadīth recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī* that ‘women are deficient in intellect and religion’. For more on this, see Marion Holmes Katz. 2013. *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 177–78.

commands that the Prophet's wives "are not like any [other] women" (33:32).³⁰ Several months later, the Shaikh selected the same topic again for his discourse. Now he said that the Prophet, after receiving the verse (quoted above), "kept it as a secret from his wives because of the fear that women are lacking in intellect" (*chuñ du ayah manzil shud rasul 'alai-hi's-ṣalāt wa's-salām az zanān-i khud mumtani' dāsht az bīm ānki nāqīṣ, 'aql and*).³¹ Unguarded words from the mouth of a Sufi, indeed, sound strange and painful. In addition, it must be noted that Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn's widowed mother had intelligently and dexterously supervised his education since the age of nine and that one of his sisters, Bibī Būbū Abadī, was a person of deep piety and lived with exemplary courage.³²

Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn was so greatly convinced of women's deficiency in intelligence that while narrating the excellence of Maulānā Fahkhru'd-Dīn Rāzī's (1149–1209)³³ scholarship, he commented that once the Maulānā suffered humiliation at the hands of a woman (*'aurat-i bishikasta*).³⁴ Explaining this *shikast* (humiliation/defeat), Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn further said that there was a wise and saintly (*buzurg*) woman named Māmā.³⁵ Maulānā Rāzī went to see her, and during their conversation, Māmā asked the Maulānā, "O' Fahkhru'd-Dīn do ye have the recognition of God (*khudā rā mi shināsī*)?" The Maulānā wondered and thought, "Look! What a woman (*zihe 'aurat*)! She is quizzing me, the one who has authored several books on the cognition of God, the Almighty." Reading the Maulānā's mind by her intuition, she said, "Did you write the books of *'ilm-i kalām* (speculative theology) on the cognition of the essence and attributes of the Divine before or after [attaining] enlightenment (*m'arifat*)?" The Maulānā, who was riding a *maḥfā*,³⁶ turned towards his attendants, saying, "Get ready the bier (*janāzā*) of Fakhr Rāzī as he has suffered defeat at the hands of a woman (*ki az dast-i zanī bashikist*)."³⁷ Here, one can see that for Rāzī, despite his reason-based knowledge, failure to respond to a

30 For more on women's intellect and the biased male views, see Barbara F. Stowasser, 'The Qur'an and History,' in Amira El Azhary Sonbol, 2005. *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*. (pp. 15–36). Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press; Amina Wadud, 1999. *Qur'an and woman: rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

31 *KM, Majlis*, 81.

32 See her biographical notice in Part 2.

33 Maulānā Fahkhru'd-Dīn Rāzī, born in Ray, Iran is one of the most distinguished theologians of Islam, known for his *Tafsīru'l Kabīr*.

34 *KM, Majlis* 91.

35 *Khairu'l Majālis* edited by K.A. Nizami gives the name of this woman as Baba, whereas the Urdu translation (Translator's name not given) gives the name as Mama. I use here Mama.

36 A kind of palanquin.

woman's query was the end of his life; to Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn this was a humiliation for a man at the hands of a woman and not a discourse between two knowledgeable persons. Thus, the Sufi and the philosopher both carried the heavy baggage of misogyny and failed to understand that Allāh in His Mercy has blown His essence into all human beings, irrespective of their physical forms.

In his 27th Assembly, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī responded to a query of a disciple who asked what was that excellence of women that the Prophet had referred to in his saying.³⁷ He explained that women like Maryam bint-i 'Imrān and Āsiyā, wife of the Pharaoh attained excellence because of their patience in face of extreme difficulties.³⁸ The Shaikh, identifying the Ḥadīth from *Mashāriqul Anwār*, added that, compared to women, more men have achieved excellence.

Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz (d. 1824), the eldest son of Shāh Waliu'llah Dihlawī and an acknowledged scholar of Ḥadīth and *tafsīr*, was a Sufi with spiritual affiliation to three major Sufi *silsilas*, i.e., Naqshbandī, Qadiri, and Chishtī.³⁹ He had a wide circle of students and disciples. Unlike other Sufis of Delhi, such as Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (d. 1824),⁴⁰ Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz was liberal enough to have good relations with some English officers, such as Colonel James Skinner (d. 1841), William Fraser (murdered in 1835), and Archibald Seton (d. 1818).⁴¹ His attitude towards women, however, remained conservative. Thus, once referring

37 This disciple quoted only part of the Ḥadīth. The complete authentic Ḥadīth is: Abū Mūsā Al-Ash'ri reported: Allāh's Apostle said, "Many amongst men attained perfection but amongst women, none attained the perfection except Mary, the daughter on Imran and Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh. And the superiority of 'A'isha to other women is like the superiority of Tahrīd (i.e. an Arabic dish) to other meals." Source: *Sahih Bukhari* 057: 112. *Sahih Bukhari, Book 57* (Download Sahih Bukhari-Ḥadīth Collection Ḥadīthcollection.com > downloadsahih-bukhari).

38 KM, *Majlis* 27.

39 Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz. *Malfūzāt Shāh 'Abdul Azīz* (including *Kamālāt-i 'Azīzī*) (Translated by Maulawī 'Azmat Ilāhī). Meerut: Maṭba' Hāshmi, 1897. [First published in 1896]. I have used the translation by Maulawī Muḥammad 'Alī Luṭfī and Mufti Intizām Ullah Shāhābī. Karachi: Pakistan Educational Publishers Ltd., 1960, p. 149. (Henceforth, referred to as *Malfūzāt Shāh 'Abdul Azīz*).

40 For Shāh Kālimu'llah's refusal to let Mercalfe kiss his feet as he (Charles Metcalfe, British Resident of Delhi) smelled of liquor (*bū-i khamr*), see *Malfūzāt-i Sharīfa*. Compiled by Ḥaẓrat Maulānā Ghulām Muḥiyyu'd-Dīn Qaṣūrī and ed. by Muḥammad Iqbāl Mujaddidi. Lahore: Maktaba' Nabawiyya, 1978, pp. 19, 128. [The *Malfūzāt-i Sharīfa* has no date. Probably it was compiled sometime in 1818].

41 *Malfūzāt Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz*, pp. 214–15; also, see Muḥammad Khalid Masud. 2000. "The world of Shāh 'Abd al-'Aziz (1764–1824)" (pp. 298–314), in Jamal Malik (Edited) *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History 1760–1860*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

to a Ḥadīth but without citing the source, he said, “Do not instruct women to learn to write. Instruct them to spin. More worthy among women is the one who spins; among men, one who knows archery is the best.”⁴² Surprisingly, this statement contradicts his admission that a large number of women visit him, seeking information about ways of remembering Allāh (*azkār*) and about *fiqh*.⁴³

3.3 Women as Personifying the Evil World

In Sufi perception, the world which the Qur’ān says is one of the signs of His creation (Qur’ān: 30:22) manifests evil. This evil, personified as a disobedient woman in Sufi imagination, symbolises *nafs al-ammāra*, which the Qur’ān defines as “the soul that is prone to evil” (Qur’ān: 12:53), often appears in the Sufi texts to beguile the innocent God-fearing, God-remembering male into worldly lust and gratification of his lower self. This “lower self,” curiously, remains elusively resilient to all sorts of formulae of self-mortification applied by the Sufis—from continuous fasting, partaking of a nonnourishing diet, and doing harsh spiritual exercises, such as *chilla-yi mā’kūs* (the difficult ascetic exercise of tying himself with a rope and hanging upside down, often in a well, for forty days). The Sufis’ argument against women, thus, is built on their theses that the scheming females are determined to derail the Sufi from his serene path of *ṭarīqat* into the boiling cauldron, overflowing with satanic overtures. Thus, like a woman, who in the Sufi vision is a born seducer of men, the world also entraps and entangles men and misleads them towards the path of destruction and deprivation. ‘Abdur Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492), the author of *Nafahāt-ul-uns*, a biographical compendium of Sufis, viewed the world with the utmost contempt and imagined it as “a dunghill and a gathering place of dogs; and meaner than a dog is that person who does not stay away from it. For the dog takes his own need from it and goes away, but he who loves it is no way separated from it.”⁴⁴

Contempt for women made the Sufis portray a dreadful image of women as aged, old, hideous-looking beings. Ḥasan Sijzi in the 61st Assembly of *Fawa’idu’l-fu’ād*, held on 13 Šafar 719/5 April 1319, in which the theme was *tawba and taqwā* (repentance and abstinence), writes that during the discourse, Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ turned his attention to the issues of this world

42 *Malfūzāt Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, p. 141.

43 *Malfūzāt Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, p. 62.

44 A. Schimmel. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 109.

and of people being arrogant about it. In this context, he narrated a story for which no historical base is cited as perhaps there is none. According to this anecdote, once Ḥaẓrat 'Isā saw an old, hideous woman—dark and ugly faced (*zāl, badhāl, siyāh, karīh liqa'*). When asked who she was, she told him, "I am the World (*man duniyā am*).” To his query, "how many husbands did you have?" she said, "Many, difficult to count. If only I could count, only then I would be able to tell." "Did any of these ever divorce thee?" asked Ḥaẓrat 'Isā. "No. I killed them all (*hamā rā man kushtam*)," she said. The Shaikh, after narrating the story, commented that the life of a *darwish*, therefore, is all full of total bliss (*darwishī rāḥat tamām ast*), thereby meaning living life in celibacy.⁴⁵

It is worth mentioning here that Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' in his early days of studentship in his hometown of Badayun, studied *Mashāriqu'l Anwār* of the Badayun-born Ḥadīth scholar, Maulānā Raẓīu'd-Dīn Ḥasan Ṣaghānī (d. 1252) and memorised it. He was given a certificate to teach this book.⁴⁶ Other Chishtī Masters, such as Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī and Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, acknowledged the authority of *Mashāriqu'l Anwār* in their discourses.⁴⁷ Although *Mashāriqu'l Anwār* is deemed an authentic collection of the Prophet's sayings, and perhaps because of this reason alone, continued to be taught in major Islamic centres of learning in India till the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸ However, it includes the sayings of the Prophet that could be interpreted, if referred to and cited out of their original context, to be against women. According to one such Ḥadīth reporting on the authority of Abū Huraira, "The Prophet said, 'Were it not for Bani Isrā'īl, meat would not decay; and were it not for Eve, no woman would ever betray her husband.'"⁴⁹ Here we are more concerned with Ṣaghānī's comments on the last part of the reported Ḥadīth, which is not supported by the Qur'ān. Explaining the content of this

45 *FF, Majlis* 61, 13th of *Ṣafar*, 719/April 5, 1319. This story, with the same negative description of the old woman, is in the Sixth Assembly of Friday, *Shawwāl*, 584/1188 in *Fawā'idu's-sālikīn* (Morals for the disciples). Ḥaẓrat Bābā Farīdu'd-Dīn. *Fawā'idu's-sālikīn*. Dihli: Maṭba' Muḥtabā'ī, 1311/1893.

46 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1991. *The life and times of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya*. Delhi: Idara-i Adabiyat-i Delli, pp. 189–90.

47 *Sharah Jawāmi'u'l-kilām (maḥfūzāt)*, p. 241.

48 Annemarie Schimmel. 2004. *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*. London: Reaktion Books, p. 108; S.Z.H. Jafri. 'Education and transmission of knowledge in medieval India.' In *Recording the Progress of Indian History—Symposia Papers of the Indian History Congress, 1992–2010*. Edited by S.Z.H. Jafri. Delhi: Primus Books, 2012, pp. 133–160.

49 Maulānā Raẓīu'd-Dīn Ḥasan Ṣaghānī. 1904. *Ṭuḥfatu'l Akhbār tarjumā Urdū Mashāriqu'l Anwār*. Kanpur: Maṭba' Majīdī, p. 196; Muhammad Muhsin Khan. 1997. *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Arabic-English Translation, Vol. 4*. Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, Ḥadīth 3330, p. 329.

reported Ḥadīth, he added that if there had been no Ḥawwā (Eve), no woman would ever have treated her husband with treachery (*khiyānat*) and bad intentions (*badkhwāhī*) because it was Ḥawwā who made Adam eat wheat. Finally, condemning all women, Ṣaghānī declares that “with Ḥawwā, the instinct of treachery in women began.”⁵⁰ The Qur’ān, the only and the last source for a non-gender-biased story of Adam and Eve and the events that took place in the Garden of Eden, instructs Muslim believers in a totally different way, opposite to this misleading explanation.⁵¹ Ṣaghānī refers to another Ḥadīth, reported on the authority of Ḥaṣrat Jābir ibn ‘Abdullah, that “a woman comes in the form of a devil and goes in the form of a devil. Whoever sees a woman should have sex with his wife so that her [woman’s] danger goes away from the heart.” Not only is this Ḥadīth quoted incompletely, the author also adds an explanation commenting that a woman is described in the form of Satan because she misleads man as Satan does.⁵² Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, however, holds Ṣaghānī and his scholarship in such high regard that he commented that whenever the Maulānā experienced any difficulty regarding a Ḥadīth, he would seek the Prophet’s help in his dream.⁵³ *Mashāriqul Anwār* continued to hold its place of importance. Thus, Shāh Walīullah (d. 1762) included it in a list of the top seven readings for spiritual training.

The staunch celibate Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, though, had tender emotions for his female relatives and women connected with his Sufi tradition. He emerges in contemporary Sufi texts as a man who stood in fear of being distracted by women from his path of devotion to Allāh. It is interesting to note that Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’'s spiritual mentor, Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn, had several wives; other male members of Shaikh Farīd’s family and several of his prominent disciples were married persons. Thus, one wonders whether Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’'s fear of being entrapped by women had any connection with Ṣaghānī and his *Mashāriqul Anwār*. This strange fear is best illustrated by two anecdotes in Amīr Khwurd’s *Siyarul Awliyā’*. In the first story, Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, while in conversation with Khwāja Sālār, one of his friends (*yārān*), told him that towards the end of night he envisioned a woman urging him not to recite a couplet divinely created in his heart (*az ‘ālam-i ghaib dar dil-i man*). Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ was sure that he saw this woman not in a dream but while he was awake (*bedārī*). At this, Qāzi Sharfu’d-Dīn quipped,

50 Ṣaghānī, p. 196.

51 al-Qur’ān, 20: 115–21.

52 Ṣaghānī, p. 47. For comments on this Ḥadīth, see Sa’diyya Shaikh. 2004. “Knowledge, Women and Gender in the Ḥadīth: A Feminist Interpretation.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 15 (1), 99–108.

53 FF, Majlis 9 of 29 *Jamādiu’l Ākhir*, 712.

"This [woman] is the World (*in dunyā ast*) which does not fancy leaving you." Affirming Qāzi Sharfu'd-Dīn's wisdom in recognising the truth, the Shaikh admired him.⁵⁴

Amīr Khwurd narrates another anecdote related by Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. Once, towards the latter part of the night, he saw a woman sweeping the courtyard of the *Jamā'at khāna*. On inquiring who she was, she said, "I am the world (*man dunyā am*), and I sweep the house of the Makhdūm." At this, the Shaikh said, "O, ye temptress (*fittāna*) what business do you have to be in my house? Get out of my house. Despite my insistence, she did not leave (*har chand ki me guftam, berūn nāmī raft*). Thereafter, I placed my finger at the nape of her neck and pushed her out of my house. I did not stop short at that and turned her out of the lane. However, as long as my finger remained in touch with the nape of her neck, she kept staring at me."⁵⁵ 'Alī Asghar Chishtī, citing one source, *Gulshan-i Awliyā'*, says that this incident occurred at the *khānqāh* of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, who was not pleased when he came to know of it, and questioned what was the need to apply force (*hāth chalāyā*) to push this woman in servitude (*maqḥūzā*) out, and why was she was not turned out by verbal persuasion.⁵⁶ The Farsi text of *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, however, has more details of this anecdote and says that when this incident occurred, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn was taking rest in his cell and Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' tried to persuade the woman not to create noises as this was the retiring time (*waqt-i khalwat*) of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn. The woman, however, did not stop (*bāz*). At this, the young Nizāmu'd-Dīn raised his voice and pushed her out. Hearing the commotion, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn came out of his chamber and enquired about it. When Nizāmu'd-Dīn said that he did not know who the woman was, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn said she was the world (*in dunyā ast*) and that through thousands of stratagems (*ba hazār ḥīla*) she presented herself to the Shaikh but he did not accept her (*lekin qabūl na-kardam*).⁵⁷ Thus, along the journey of *ṭariqat*, though it is hard to get rid of women and the world, a Sufi has to make concerted efforts, as is reflected by the conduct of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and his mentor, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn.

While some Sufis found women distracting them from the path of piety and righteousness, others went through spiritual experiences of a different kind. One such experience is recorded about Shaikh Aḥmad Khattu (d. 849/1446),

54 SA, pp. 127–28.

55 SA, p. 132.

56 'Alī Asghar Chishtī, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī ya 'nī Tazkirā-yi Farīdī* (Urdu translation by Fazlu'd-Dīn Naqshbandī Mujaddidī). Pakpattan: Maktaba Bābā Farīd (n. d.), p. 274.

57 'Alī Asghar Chishtī. 1301/1884. *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. Lahore: Victoria Press, p. 205.

the patron saint of Ahmedabad.⁵⁸ Brought up and trained in spirituality by Abū Ishāq Maghribī (d. 776/1374–1375), Shaikh Aḥmad Khattu spent his ascetic life in prayer and fasting. He not only remained unmarried but also while travelling from place to place staying for nights in mosques with no friend or a water-pot, remained safe from the evil of nocturnal emission.⁵⁹ According to this incredible anecdote, related by his *murīd* and compiler of his *maḥfūzāt*, once, while in Madina, the Shaikh dreamt that the Prophet offered him a woman, well-dressed, decorated, and crowned with jewels. After some initial hesitation, he finally accepted the woman. Later, upon waking up, the Shaikh thought that the woman was the world personified (*ān aūrat dunyā ast*) and that the dream implied that now with the grace (*ṣadaqa*) of the Prophet the doors of the world were open to him.⁶⁰

Muḥammad Naʿīmuʾllah Bahrāʾichī (1153/1740–1741–1218/1803–1804), a disciple of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Sufi, Mirzā Mazhar, argued that women carry evil habits. Explaining why the Prophet did not touch the hands of women while administering the oath of allegiance, he said that it was because of the generically wicked characteristics of women.⁶¹ The Prophet, he argued, avoided the touch of women's hands as women, compared to men, have more ignoble morals (*akhlāq-i razilā*) and abominable nature (*ʿādāt-i qabīḥa*). Naʿīmuʾllah Bahrāʾichī's reasoning did not take into consideration Surah 4:23 which defines the boundaries of *ḥurma* (literally, the sanctity and protection of all things created). Also, blaming women, Bahrāʾichī inadvertently finds causation of the Prophet's *sunna* (traditions) in "wicked women." Bahrāʾichī believed that wives not only pilfer their husbands' money, but they do it as a way of tradition. Once these women, he argues, earn expertise in perfidy (*khiyānat*) and fraudulence (*bad-diyānati*) by embezzling their husbands' money, the immorality and villainy of misappropriating others' money is erased from their

58 For Shaikh Aḥmad Khattu's life account, see his *maḥfūzāt*, *Tuḥfatu'l-majālis* compiled by his disciple, Maḥmūd bin Sa'd bin Sadr Sufi Irajī, OIOC, DP, MS (An Urdu translation of the work is also available). See Maḥmūd ibn Sa'd Irajī and Saiyyid Abū Zafar Nadwī 1990. *Tuḥfatu'l-majālis*. Aḥmadābād: Ḥaẓrat Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library and Research Centre; AA, pp. 151–56. K.A. Nizami. "Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi as a great historical personality of medieval Gujrat." *Medieval India—A Miscellany* vol. 111, Aligarh, (1975): 234–59; for his role in the foundation of the city of Ahmadabad, see "Eight Arabic and Persian Inscriptions from Ahmadabad," by H. Blochmann in *The Indian Enquiry*, vol. IV (1875): pp. 289–93.

59 AA, p. 154.

60 AA, p. 153.

61 For an autobiographical note on the author under the heading *Zikr aḥwāl-i muṣannif*, see Fozail Ahmad Qadri. 1981. *Edition of Bisharat-i-Mazhariyah*. Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, pp. 644–658.

hearts. They become thieves. He also advocated that adultery occurs mostly in compliance with women as they offer their bodies to men; men act under women's control (*tābī*). Because of women's prime responsibility for adultery, he argued, the Qur'an prescribed punishment for adulterous women first and adulterous men next. Erroneously assuming that poverty afflicts women alone, he also argued that mothers kill their daughters because of the fear of hunger and poverty.⁶²

Thus, giving up worldly connections and adopting asceticism requires distancing from women. Being perceived as personifying the world must have been arduous and burdensome for Sufi women as well as for other women. Indeed, visualisation of women as an enticing world, and equating them with evil, must have worked as a silencing agent for women aspirants to enroll themselves as a *murid* (spiritual disciple). Women would not have dared to approach the male Sufi. For those women who intend to cross these borders, signposts stand, banning women's entry beyond a certain specified sacred space in the shrines.

62 Muḥammad Naʿīmu'llah Bahrā'īchī. 2000. *Mu'āmilāt-i Mazhariyya*. (Translated by Muḥammad Alṭāf Nairawi.) Lahore: Karmanwala Bookshop, pp. 59–65 [First published in 1275 H. in Kanpur].

The Sufi Gaze: Sufi Perception of Family

This chapter reflects on the ongoing discourse on the male Sufis' conduct with their families and their interpersonal ties in connection with their family interest. As said earlier, the primary Sufi texts—the *malfūzāt*, *tazkirāt*, and even the Sufi *maktūbāt*—are voices of the Sufi male in an authoritarian position, thus ordaining each utterance to be listened to without questioning it and to follow it with total obedience. As all human relations entail the presence of the other one, therefore it is natural to assume the other one, in this case, is a family member. This other voice is not on record. Of course, absence on record does not mean that the voice was not there; it does mean, however, that it was not heard.

Before proceeding further and presenting evidential case studies, it would be appropriate here to introduce the basics of a family structure that is often cited as a model for Muslim believers. Family, the foundational block of the community (*ummat*), rests on the trust of a social contract of marriage (*nikāḥ*) between the two and which flourishes on a behaviour fashioned by *iḥsān* (beauty and goodness), equity, and balance and justice between and among all the members of the unit.¹ The basic Sufi virtues of Allāh's wariness (*taqwā*), abstention (*zuhd*), patience (*ṣabr*), and reliance (*tawakkul*) emanate from *iḥsān*. As marriage is not religiously incumbent, celibacy or single-life options are permissible. What is not desirable is to shirk the responsibility while the contract is in place. Unlike some male Sufis' disparagement of married life and aversion for family responsibilities, most of the pious women in this book did not practice celibacy and fulfilled their responsibilities as wives and mothers and thus followed the Tradition of the Prophet.²

Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (1276–1356), disciple and the first *Khalīfa* of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār's successor, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', though he, like his Shaikh, remained celibate, in his discourses he reflects the fear of family and children as a potential cause of spoiling prayers and capable of entrapping a pious person in the bondage of worldly chains.

1 M.A. Muqtedar Khan. 2019. *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of Ihsan*. NY: New York Palgrave Macmillan.

2 Jamal Elias. 1988. "Female and Feminine in Islamic Mysticism." *The Muslim World*, 78(34): 209–224.

A couplet of ‘Aynu’l-Quẓāt Hamadānī (martyred in 1131)³ on the theme of thousands of fetters that increase at each step led Shaikh Naṣīru’d-Dīn to a discourse on bonds that keep human beings chained to this world. He said that there were two kinds of fetters: one, in accordance with the Islamic law (*band-i shara’i*), and the other of the carnal desires (*band-i nafsāni*). The first one consists of wife and children (*zan-wa farzand*) and the second consists of wantonness and sensual pleasures (*shahwāt wa lazzāt*). The Shaikh urged his followers that both of these should be broken because to a heart full of Divine love, wives and children, mothers and sisters have no place.⁴ Children, he argued, detract one from remembering Allāh, and the possession of wealth turns one towards alluring bondmaids.⁵ To strengthen his argument, he quoted Surah 64:15, which translated means that “your possessions and your offspring are nothing but a trial for you.” Surprisingly, contrary to his sermons, Shaikh Naṣīru’d-Dīn Maḥmūd had a deep affection for his mother and sisters whom he used to visit regularly in Awadh and later, following the death of his sisters, brought their sons to Delhi and looked after them tenderly.⁶

The Sufi texts, thus, are replete with narratives reflecting the type of dichotomy that the above passage indicates. It is true that once a person enrolls as a follower (*sālik*) of the path of *ṭarīqa* and becomes a *murīd*, by taking the oath of allegiance (*bai’āt*), spiritual lineage (*shajara-nama*) overcomes the physical or biological lineage and ancestry (*shajra’i ansāb*). The new spiritual lineage, traced directly back to the Prophet, mostly through Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī bin Abu Ṭālib, is transmitted orally and in a written form to the novice.⁷ This new lineage created a new bond which, to use the words of Karamustafa, created community

3 Hamadānī known for his mystical thoughts expressed through poetry on *fanā* (annihilation) and *baqā* (abiding in God) was executed at age thirty-three on charges of heresy. His works, particularly, the *Tamhidat*, were read by the Chishtī Sufis. Gīsū Darāz (d. 1422), the successor of Naṣīru’d-Dīn Maḥmūd, though critical of ‘Aynu’l Quẓāt’s views, wrote a commentary titled as *Sharh-i Tamhidat*. See Firoozeh Papan-Matin 2010. *Beyond Death the Mystical Teachings of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī*. Leiden: Brill; Hamid Dabashi. 1999. *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

4 KM, *Majlis*, 29.

5 KM, *Majlis*, 36.

6 See for more details, *Zamīma* (Supplement) in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. *Khair-u’l-majālis: Conversations of Shaikh Nasir-u’d-din Chirāgh of Delhi [ob. 1356] compiled by Hamid Qalandar*. Aligarh: Muslim University, pp. 282–90. Also, see a notice on his sister, Būbū Abādī/ Bībī Bū Abādī/ Ba’ī Būā, in Part 2 of this book.

7 For a written form of a *shajara-nama*, see Sufi ‘Abdu’l Ḥakīm Shāh. 1404/1983. *Shajara-sharīf khwājān- i Chishtīyya, Ṣābirīyya, Quddūsīyya, Hāshimīyya ma’ wazā’if*. Shaikhupura.

“across time and space [and] all those who shared the same pedigree made up familial community.”⁸

Historically speaking, the spiritual ancestry recorded in the scrolls of *shajara-nama* created a community with stronger bonds of newer relationships, almost replacing the old identities based on blood ties with new ones, often “pan-Islamic lineages,” Buehler says.⁹ One example that best illustrates these new ties comes from *Nafā’isu’l-anfās* of Ruknu’d-Dīn Dabīr Kāshānī (d. after 1337). According to this *malfūz* of Khwāja Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb (d. 738/1337), a Khalifa of Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, when the mother and the brothers of Kāshānī took their oath of allegiance at the hands of the Khwāja, the Khwāja commented, “Today something good has happened; your mother has become the daughter of Shaikhu’l Islam Nizāmu’d-Dīn.”¹⁰ Thus, the celibate and childless Ḥaḍrat Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ gets a daughter and that too after his demise.

The letters of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422) reflect these new relationships of the spiritual community best when he addresses his disciples and *khalīfas* as *farzand-i dīnī* (son in faith) or as *biradar-i dīnī* (brother in faith).¹¹ Despite these newer bonds, the old family ties remained intact and strong, demanding and expecting a responsible pattern of behaviour. In the sections that follow, these behaviours are examined in light of available textual sources.

4.1 Women as Mothers, Sisters, and Daughters

Ḥaḍrat Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1338), *khalīfa* of Ḥaḍrat Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, had an exemplary reverential relationship with his mother and family and presents a classic example of maintaining a balanced relationship between his filial obligations and his Sufi way of life. To him, both were interconnected. Honouring the role of a mother, he once commented upon the central role mothers have in the spiritual development of their sons.¹² Thus, women in

8 Karamustafa, Ahmet T. 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 116.

9 Arthur Buehler. 1998. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Meditating Sufi Shaykh*. University of South Carolina Press, p. 20.

10 *Majlis* on Muḥarrām 8, 733/September 29, 1332, Ruknu’d-Dīn ‘Imād Kāshānī. *Nafā’isu’l-anfās* (ms.) Khuldabad (compiled in 1331–1337), pp. 34–35.

11 Khwāja Ṣadru’d-Dīn Abu’l Fath Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz Chishtī and Saiyyid ‘Ata’ Ḥusain (Edited). 1362/1943. *Maktūbāt Imāmu’l ‘Arifin Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz*. Hyderabad: Barqī Press.

12 Ruknu’d-Dīn Imād Kāshānī. *Nafā’isu’l-anfās*, p. 35. Also, Carl W. Ernst. 1992. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 144.

their relational roles, such as those of a mother, wife, sister, and daughter, were highly adulated by the Sufis, who constantly guided their disciples and other people, through their model behaviour and sermons respecting the women of their families. Although eulogised for their abstinence and patience, most of these women remained anonymous. These stories, in which the females' identity often remains hidden and is classified under familial connections, work as props to highlight the superiority of male spirituality as compared to female spirituality because the virtues of the females in these narratives are depicted as virtues inherited from their male relatives. These virtuous women, thus, are depicted as ancillary to the male Sufi who is the original product or the archetype. In almost all these narratives, it is the woman and not the man whose family connection is identified first. Thus, the opening sentence of Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr's notice in *Azkār-i Abrār*, the Urdu translation of *Gulzār-i Abrār* (the Garden of the Pious), identifies her as the sister of Saiyyid Ḥasan Naharwālā and not by saying that Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwālā was her brother.¹³

In the case of another brother-sister narrative of Bibī Raushan Ārā' (d. 1342) and Saiyyid 'Abbās 'Alī of Basirhāt, West Bengal, the exploits of the brother caught the scribes' attention while most information about the sister is scarcely found. Similarly, the mid-thirteenth-century pious woman, Bibī Khadija, is merely described as the respected wife (*ḥaram muḥtaram*) of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī by the most erudite author Mir Khwurd (d. 1311–1312) in *Sīyaru'l Awliyā'*, the most authentic *tazkira* of the early Sufis of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in South Asia.¹⁴ Similarly, an episode of an elderly pious mother showing no grieving emotions on hearing the news of the death of her eighty-year-old son is recorded by Badaoni (d. 1540) in his third volume of *Muntakhabu't tawārīkh* which contains biographies of religious persons and scholars, mostly of the sixteenth century. As is typical of the texts of that period, Badaoni does not include a single woman in the volume, and in this account reveals the name of the male Sufi but does not bother to name his pious mother. In this narrative, Mīr-i Kalān, the first teacher of Emperor Jahangir and a person of "angelic nature" "endowed with both inward and outward perfection," was on his death bed, and his mother was reading the Qur'ān. When the news of her son's death was conveyed to her and permission for burial was sought, instead of grieving, she recited the verse: *We are God's, and to Him do we return*. We have no further knowledge about this woman and her strong faith in God. Badaoni, though he knew Mīr-i Kalān, left this pious woman unnamed. The episode, however, contradicts the claims of scholars who have falsely propagated women's lack of

13 *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 118.

14 See her biographical notice in Part 2 of this book.

understanding of religion and shows that even an old woman understood her faith well and had complete trust in God.¹⁵

In this regard, an interesting explanation is offered by Wahid Mirza. Writing about the life of Amīr Khusraw, he noticed no references about his sisters. Wahid Mirza observed, "The Eastern biographers generally do not bother themselves about the female relatives of a person: they are considered to be either too insignificant to be mentioned or too sacred and inappropriate to be brought into the glaring and unholy light of publicity."¹⁶ This anonymity of women is a social and cultural marker and should not be overlooked or dismissed as merely circumstantial or as faults of individual scribes. Often, the scribes wanted to protect the sanctity of those who chose to live away from public gaze and in seclusion. Perhaps it is because of this reason that women are identified by their familial ties and not by their given names.

Despite these omissions in Sufi discourses, some valuable references are found in the family narratives of male Sufis in which mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters are included mainly to illustrate the Shaikh's maleness and magnanimity in the context of familial piety. Mothers are often deployed in these narratives to establish the transmission of virtues to the male Sufis while still in the womb of their mothers. Thus, for example, Bibī Rāstī (d. 695/1295), mother of Shaikh Ruknū'd-Dīn Abu'l Faṭḥ, Rukn-i-Ālam (d. 1335), and the daughter-in-law of Shaikhū'l Islam Bahā'ud-Dīn Zakarīyya (d. 1267) is saluted by Bahā'ud-Dīn Zakarīyya When the Bibī asked the reason for this respect for her which was more than what he used to do on other occasions, the Shaikh explained the reasons for it. He told her. "O the respected lady! This honour is for the person who right now is in your womb and is the light and lamp of my family."¹⁷

Also, through mothers, spiritual inheritance is established. Thus, the mother of Khwāja Bāqī Billah (d. 1012/1603), who introduced the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila* in Hindustan, remains anonymous, but her lineage to Khwāja Ubaidullah Aḥrār (d. 855/1490) of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila* is recorded to establish and solidify the Naqshbandī ancestry of her son.¹⁸

The Sufi Shaikhs viewed daughters as emblems of Divine Blessings and guarantors for the safe passage of their parents from this world to Heaven. Some daughters proved to be the carriers of the spiritual virtues of their esteemed

15 'Abdu'l Qādir Badaoni. 1284/1867. *Muntakhabu't tawārikh*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Khās Munshi Nawal Kishore, p. 330.

16 Mohammad Wahid Mirza. *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau* (Calcutta, 1935), p. 17.

17 Jamālī, pp. 140–141.

18 See her biographical notice in Part 2 of this book.

fathers. Despite this, daughters suffered most, as compared to other female relatives, the weight of misogynist traditions. A slight breach by a daughter of the moral code of behaviour, set under the male norms of honour, could jeopardise a father's status. *Naṣīḥat farzand-i bihishtī samaratu'l fu'ād 'afīfā* (Counsel for the virtuous daughter, the fruit of heart, bestowed by Heaven), is a passionate poetical composition of Amīr Khusraw, the most favourite disciple and friend of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', which the poet mandates as a manifesto illustrating this father-daughter relationship.¹⁹ However, the advice of Khusraw to his daughter, in this poem in which he mandates a highly subordinated and male-controlled life for her, sadly reflects that either he cared less for his spiritual mentor's views, or that the Shaikh, for some reason, did not reject or reprimand his favourite disciple and friend. It is to be noted that Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' loved his mother and sister tenderly and always and guided his followers to treat their daughters and mothers with love, affection and respect.

Though Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, the daughter of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmerī (d. 633/1236), according to some sources, was granted *khirqā-i khilāfat* by her father, most others were denied this position merely because of their gender.²⁰ The earliest example of this unjust decision was set by Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar (1175–1265), who denied Bibī Sharīfa, his second daughter, to succeed him by declaring that a woman is not authorised to succeed a Sufi master.²¹

In all Sufi texts, mothers and motherhood are glorified and highly valorised. This pattern of behaviour is modelled on the Traditions of the Prophet. In one of these Traditions, the Prophet was thrice asked whom he should respect, and thrice he replied, "Respect your mother."²² The intense discourse on the oft-repeated theme of female inferiority and lack of intellect takes a positive turn when one reads stories glorifying motherhood and filial bonds with mothers. Among these mother stories, some mothers, in addition to being mothers of Sufis, were Sufis themselves. Other classic examples of such cases are of Bibī Zulaikha (d. 648/1250), mother of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', and of Bibī Fāṭima, the mother of Ḥazrat Miyān Mīr (d. 1635), and Bibī Jamāl Khātūn (d. 1647).²³

19 Amīr Khusraw. 1290/1873. *Hasht Bihisht*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Nawal Kishore, pp. 21–25.

20 See her biographical notice in Part 2 of this book.

21 See her biographical notice in Part 2 of this book.

22 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 8, 2, cited by Avner Giladi in *Muslim Midwives: The Craft of Birthing in the Premodern Middle East*. (Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 44; also see Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi. 2011. "A Lightning Trigger or a Stumbling Block: Mother Images and Roles in Classical Sufism". *Oriens*. 39 (2): 199–226.

23 See biographical notices of all these pious women in Part 2 of this book.

Among the narratives of mothers and motherhood, the charismatic tale of Bibī Zulaikha, mother of the Chishtī Sufi Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', is of utmost significance. Among all the other narratives of caring and affectionate mothers of the Sufis, Bibī Zulaikha was divinely bestowed in a dream with the unique privilege of selecting between her dying husband and her unborn son. She selected the son because the dream foretold her that the son was one of the chosen ones of Allāh. In shaping her fatherless child into a *Shaikhu'l-mashā'ikh* (a master of the masters), Bibī Zulaikha's efforts under extremely trying circumstances, are worth mentioning. Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn's regard for his mother was so great that long after her demise, tears would come to his eyes on remembering her.

According to a testimony recorded by Dārā Shikūh in *Ṣafīnatu'l Awliyā'* on the authority of Miyān Mīr, both Miyān Mīr and his Sufi sister, Bibī Jamāl Khātūn, were born Sufis as a result of the prayer (*manajāt*) of their mother, Bibī Fāṭima, to have a son as a perfect saint (*'arīf-i kāmīl*). The prayer was heard and answered not with one Sufi child but two, a daughter and a son. Both of them learned the secrets of the other world (*kashf 'ālam-i malkūt*) from her.²⁴

There are tales of mothers who, despite their venerated position as mothers, bowed in front of their sons, took the oath of allegiance at their hands, and became their disciples. Thus, Bibī Jīū, the mother of Saiyyid Khwānd Mīr 'Arīzī, a Chishtī Sufi (d. 874/1469) who lies buried in Pattan, Naharwala, became a disciple of her son by taking an oath of allegiance.²⁵ Bibī Na'ima, also known as Ba'ī Ṣāhibā, the mother of Ḥabīb Allāh Ṣibghat Allāhī (d. 1041/1632) and who herself possessed miraculous powers, became a disciple of her son by performing *bai'at* at his hands.²⁶ Phūl Bibī (d. 1172/1758), in Allahabad, not only was a friend of Allāh with miraculous powers but had the unique honour being the wife of a devout Sufi, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar (1140/1728), and the mother of three sons, each of whom reached the highest stations of mystic path and left a trail of excellent (*kāmīl*) Sufis which continues until today. Later in her life, Phūl Bibī became a disciple of her eldest son, Shāh Bāsiṭ 'Alī Qalandar of the Qādirī *silsila* and who was the *khalīfa* of Shāh Illahdiyā Aḥmad Qalandar of Laharpur (d. 1147/1735).²⁷

The primary Sufi texts have several narratives showing how mothers took the utmost care to provide the best possible education and training for their sons who later on, because of this excellent guidance, attained great heights

24 Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh. *Ṣafīnatu'l-awliyā'* (Agra: Maṭba'-'i Madrasa Āgrā, 1853), pp. 116–17.

25 'Alī Muḥammad Khan. 1306/1889. *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī- jild sānī*. Bombay: Maṭba' Fathu'l Karīm, p. 42.

26 *Rawḍatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 224.

27 Shah Turāb 'Alī Qalandar 'Alawī Kākori. 1293/1876. *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'* (no name of the publisher), p. 296.

of scholarship and spirituality. In Sufi hagiographies, some mother narratives report that with their piety and devotion to God, they began training the future Sufi while still in their wombs. One such hagiographical anecdote narrates that Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī's (d. 1235) widowed mother tried her best to provide education for her son.²⁸ Indeed, she began it while he was still in her womb. She is reported to narrate that when she used to get up for her *tahajjud* prayers, she could hear him doing *zikr*. Another miracle story says that the Khwāja, too, along with his mother who was memorising the Qur'ān, memorised the first fifteen chapters of the Qur'ān while still in the womb.²⁹

Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī narrates how the mother of Maulānā Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Ḍarīr of Bukhara, despite his obvious physical handicap of being blind, took him to the best of the scholars of her time and successfully persuaded them to teach her son to become a leading scholar.³⁰ Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422) was guided and advised by his mother Bibī Rānī, widowed in 732/1332, when the Khwāja was eleven years old. Her husband died while the whole family was in Daulatabad, Deccan. Several years later, after some resentment with her brother, Bibī Rānī suddenly moved back to Delhi along with her children. This single woman cared tenderly for her children, even facilitating the spiritual pursuits of her younger son, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz. A hagiographical anecdote records how careful she was in her supervision of her son. Once she reprimanded the twelve-year-old Khwāja whose wrathful gaze dismembered a crow that dared to defecate in his ablution (*waḡū*) ewer. In response to her son's excuse that the crow was punished for his act of disrespect, the watchful mother said, "Oh Saiyyid Muḥammad, is this what you should do if someone is disrespectful towards you?" The Khwāja learned the lesson for the rest of his life and with his cheerful look the crow flew away. Another such incredible story is about the time when the Khwāja was a grown-up Sufi Master and had his disciples. Once one of his disciples broke his *tawba* (repentance) and indulged in drinking and died. The Mother knew the secret of this death and once again she reprimanded the son, saying that "if a disciple breaks his promise, will he be killed?" The Khwāja repented and for the next six months abstained from extending *bai'at* and resumed it only when once when he was lost in meditation, the Prophet came to him in a vision and commanded him to resume *bai'at*.³¹

28 KM, *Majlis* 32.

29 Illah Diyā Joyā. 1906. *Risālā Siyaru'l Aqṭāb* (translated in Urdu by Muḥammad 'Alī Joyā. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore), p. 129.

30 KM, *Majlis* 6.

31 Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān. 1343/1924. *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*. Hyderabad: 'Āzam Steam Press, pp. 66–67.

Thus, although veneration and adoration of mothers is an appreciative and meritorious act, morally as well as socially, it does create an anomaly in male codes of behaviour. Disparagement of women who are not their mothers, by anyone but more particularly by Sufis, is not a commendable behaviour. Indeed, it becomes problematic when women are disparaged and scorned, if not hated. The following section adds further to this behavioural dichotomy.

4.2 Women as Wives

Vilification of wives as the worst agents of polluting sainthood by keeping husbands involved in family affairs is a frequent theme in the Sufi texts. In these tales, disobedient wives and spendthrift wives are fated to be punished in this world and in the world hereafter. Hujwīrī's account of his short-lived disastrous marriage and later his grievances against wives worked as a powerful manifesto against marital life and wives' mischiefs. In a section titled "concerning rules in marriage and celibacy" (*fil tazwīj wa tafīd*) of the *Kashfū'l mahjūb*, Hujwīrī, to set a warning example for other men, adds a note about his own experience of married life. For eleven years, he writes, God kept him guarded from the dangers of married life, but fate (*taqdīr*) cast him into the discords of matrimony. Consequently, his whole being—the inside and the outside of his life (*zāhir wa bāṭin*), became captive (*asīr*) of this woman he married. This state lasted for one whole year. However, before his faith could be ruined, Allāh with all His Excellent Benevolence and Perfect Grace, saved him.³² After citing his own case, he presents his final argument, emphasising that celibacy, and not marriage, is the Sufi way. Thus, the rules of the Sufi path are based on celibacy because as soon as marriage takes place, things go into disorder.³³ In support of his views against women, Hujwīrī argues further that in his time it was not possible to have a suitable wife whose demands were not excessive and absurd. To protect themselves against demanding wives, most persons have adopted celibacy and keeping their life light (*takhfīf*), argued Hujwīrī.³⁴

The unruly, spendthrift wives needed to be disciplined. Thus, manuals, guidebooks, and books on good wives gradually came into vogue. The best illustration in this context comes from *Anīsu'l arwāḥ* (the Companion of the Souls), considered an apocryphal *malfūz* of Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī (d. 1211), and whose authorship is attributed, according to some erroneously, to Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī, his *murīd* and *khalīfa*. In the tenth assembly of *Anīsu'l arwāḥ*, the

32 Hujwīrī, p. 427.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, p. 426.

merits of treating daughters with love and affection, who are a gift (*hadyā*) of God, were discussed. Elucidating the merits of having daughters, the discourse emphasised that on the Last Day, the parents of a girl would be at a distance of five hundred years away from Hell.³⁵ For married women, however, the book prescribes a harsher code of duties and presents a sordid image of conjugal life. In *Majlis* Four, for which women's obedience and freeing a captive was the theme, Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī, narrating a Ḥadīth of the Prophet on the authority of Ḥaẓrat 'Alī, says that a woman who obeys her husband enters Heaven. A woman who does not obey her husband's command to sleep with him (for sex), loses all the rewards for her acts of virtues acquired earlier, and is left with no signs of virtues. She ends up having as many evils as a desert has sand particles. If she dies (while being disobedient in this particular matter), the seven doors of hell (*haftād dar-i dozakh*) are opened for her; if she dies while her husband is pleased with her, seventy stations of Heaven (*haftād darajā az bihisht*) wait for her. Further, citing *Ta'ribih*, he said that it is written that if a woman displays resentment (*tursh*) towards her husband, sins as many as stars in the sky are recorded in her logbook of deeds.³⁶ The discourse did not stop at this, as if it was not sufficient either for the ego of the husband or for the humiliation of a wife. *Anīsu'l arwāḥ* added further that if blood from one nostril and suppuration and pus were to pour from the other nostril of her husband's nose, and the wife licks it clean with her tongue, even then the husband's rights over her would never be fulfilled. Concluding this manual of duties of a subservient wife, it says, "Therefore, O' Derwish! If prostration to anyone, except God, was permissible, says the Prophet, it would have been by the wives to their husbands."³⁷ *Ta'ribihu'l Ghāfilīn* (Admonition to the Neglectful), to which Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī is said to have referred in support of his argument, remains a popular work on jurisprudence in South Asia and is widely read there. Several Urdu translations of the book, at an affordable price, are available. In a section under the heading "Rights of husband over the wife," its author, Abu'l Lais al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983) includes three most popular sayings attributed to the Prophet, which are used in support of subordination and physical chastisement of women. The first one is that the Prophet said that if prostration were permissible to a human being, he would have commanded the wives to do it to their husbands. Second, the first thing for which a woman would be questioned, after the mandatory prayers, on the

35 *Majlis* 10, Khāwja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī. *Anīsu'l arwāḥ*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Ḥusainī, 1289/1872, pp. 22–23.

36 Ibid, *Majlis* 4, pp. 22–23; *Ta'ribih* is a reference to *Ta'ribihu'l Ghāfilīn* authored by the famous jurist, Naṣr bin Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm Abu'l Laith al-Samarqandī, popularly known as *Imāmu'l Hudā* (d. 373/983).

37 *Anīsu'l arwāḥ*, *Majlis* 4, p. 11.

Last Day, would be about the fulfilment of her obligations towards her husband. Third, he mentions the Prophet's approval of beating a wife in such a way as no marks (of beating) remain visible.³⁸

Although *Anīsu'l arwāḥ* is considered spurious and fake by several scholars, it was fairly well known during the time of Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī. Not only had he seen it, but he had read it also. Chirāgh-i Dihlī denied the authenticity of the book for two reasons. First, the text was not in conformity with the stature of Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī's nature and scholarship, as there were several such words in it that could not be considered proper to his status. Second, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', his *pīr* (Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn's), had categorically declared that none of the Sufis of his *silsila* (the Chishtīyya) authored any text.³⁹ Despite the doubts about the authenticity of *Anīsu'l arwāḥ*, its contents about wives remain lodged in public memory, particularly in the male psyche.

Thus, knowing well that the text of *Anīsu'l arwāḥ* is wrongfully associated with Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī, and that it is a spurious work, what then makes me concerned with the contents of this forged text? My concern is that this book had had an audience at the time when it was first written, so much so that not only had Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 1356) read it, but also the person who introduced the topic of this *malfūz* had read it so thoroughly that he was in a position to quote certain sections from it. It must be noted that at the time this discourse took place, books were all in manuscript form and were not easily available. Those who wanted to have their own copies had to pay a high price for it. Interestingly, despite the fact that the *Anīsu'l arwāḥ* was rejected as a fake book, Shaikh Sharfu'd-Dīn Yāhyā Manerī (d. 485/1381) of the Firdawsī *silsila*, as mentioned by Rizvi, not only did not question the *Malfūzāt* of Shaikh 'Usmān Hārwanī but "sought to gloss over the statements which seemed incredible to him."⁴⁰

The theme of a disobedient wife in matters of sex and of disciplining her by beating her remains a recurrent topic of Sufi discourses and religious debates. Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī (885/1480–975/1567) in his *al-'unwān fī sulūk an niswān* (on the theme of the conduct of women) refers to disobedient wives who step out

38 Naṣr bin Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm Abu'l Lais al-Samarqandī. 1288/1872. *Ta'ribihu'l Ghāfilīn*. (Urdu translation by Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Sattār Khan). Lucknow: Maṭba' Asadī, pp. 180–187 under section sixteen, entitled *jurū aur khāwind kai ḥaqq kā bayān* (an account of wife-husband rights). Another Urdu translation is by Muhammad Sharif Naqshbandī, Lahore: Shama Book Agency (1999), pp. 679–681.

39 KM, *Majlis* 11.

40 S.A. Rizvi. 1991. *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Lucknow: Balkrishna Book Company, p. 27.

of their husband's houses without his permission and are punished for it. He also mentioned wives' disobedience to husbands in sexual relationship.⁴¹ The theme resurfaced in a late-nineteenth-century Urdu translation of this work which, in addition to Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī's reprimands for ungrateful wives, added more about disobedient wives. The book advises the husband, when physically chastising her, to be careful not to break her bones or puncture her skin to avoid bleeding.⁴²

The treatment meted out by Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī (d. 1235) of the Chishtī *silsila*, to his new bride is another example of women viewed as obstacles in the path of male spirituality. Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī (about whom an incredible narrative in a hagiography says that he learned by heart fifteen chapters of the Qur'ān and used to recite the names of Allāh at *tahajjud*, the midnight prayer, while still in the womb of his mother)⁴³ divorced his wife three days after their marriage. Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' narrated that once a man named Ra'īs⁴⁴ narrated to Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī that he dreamt that the Prophet was not happy with the Shaikh as he was not sending his usual nightly gift to the Prophet for the past three nights (alluding to the three nights of his conjugal life). To Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī it meant that, as he was busy for the last three nights with his bride, he therefore could not offer his usual nightly three thousand salutations (*darūd*) to the Prophet. To Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī, the wife was the cause of this mischief. He called her, paid her *mahr* (money or its equivalent that is payable to a woman as part of the nuptial agreement), and then divorced her.⁴⁵ Narratives of Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī present this story to show the piety of the saint; almost all these accounts care less about the woman who got divorced for no fault. Surprisingly, the Khwāja later in old age married again and had twin sons from this marriage; the new wife and the children he raised with this wife suffered hunger most of the time.⁴⁶ Though historicity of the anecdote remains unestablished, the story has survived through centuries.

41 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Malik Muṭṭaqī (Edited by Majdi al-Saiyyid Ibrahim). 1992. *al-Unwān fi sulūk an niswān*. Qahirah: Maktabat al-Qur'an.

42 Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad (*marḥūm*). 1881. *Hidāyatu'n niswān*. Munshi Nawal Kishore (place not given), p. 29.

43 *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 165; Ruknu'd-Dīn Nizāmī Dihlawī. 1355/1934. *Ḥayāt Quṭbu'l Aqṭāb ya'nī ḥālāt-i zindagī aur malfūzāt mubārak Quṭbu'l Quṭṭāb Ḥazrat Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhityār kākī*. Delhi: Kutubkhānā Maḥbūbi, p. 3.

44 His full name was Shaikh Aḥmad Ra'īs. He was a foster brother and disciple of Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī. See Muḥammad 'Alam Shāh Farīdī. 1912. *Mazarāt awliyā'-i Dihlī (ḥiṣṣā awwal)*. Dehli: Jān-i jahān Press, p. 68.

45 SA, p. 50; Jamālī, p. 19; AA, p. 29; *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 166; *Mir'ātu'l asrār*, p. 685.

46 Jamālī, p. 24.

The most incredible treatment of a Sufi's bride, even before the consummation of marriage, comes from the life of Makhdūm 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir (d. 790 or 764), nephew of Bābā Farīd (d. 690/1291), being the son of his sister Bībī Ḥājara. Makhdūm Ṣābir had spent long years supervising the distribution of food at the Bābā's *langar khānā*, a facility for free meals for whomever comes to eat.⁴⁷ Bābā Farīd, because of the pleadings of his sister, finally agreed to marry one of his daughters to his nephew. According to *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*, a hagiographical account of Shaikh 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir, when the bride entered the nuptial chamber, sometime past midnight, the groom, i.e., 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir, enquired who she was. On being told that she was his *zauj* (couple), the saint exclaimed, "God is one. What need is there for a couple?" As soon as he uttered these words, flames erupted, turning the bride into ashes.⁴⁸ None of the contemporary sources refer to this anecdote. The later hagiographies of the saint carry several stories of his wrath (*jalāl*).

Whereas the Delhi-based Chishtī Shaikhs—Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and his *khalīfa* Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī—were rigid celibates, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (721/1321–825/1422), the latter's successor in the Deccan, despite his disparaging observations about women, lived a married life, raised a large family, and took great care of them by providing generously for them. His views that all women talk vain and nonsense and that they are deficient in intelligence (*nuqṣān-i 'aql*), however, remained unchanged.⁴⁹ In his *malfūzāt*, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz argued that a Sufi should not make his wife his disciple because to whatever degree a wife might be subservient and obedient to her husband, she would never be able to develop a relationship expected to exist

47 Contemporary accounts about Makhdūm 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir are almost absent. Amīr Khwurd's brief reference to one Shaikh 'Alī Ṣābir is often considered as a reference about Makhdūm 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir, see SA, p. 185; Ilah Diyā Chishtī, 1906. *Risālā Siyaru'l Aqṭab* (translated in Urdu by Muḥammad 'Alī Joyā. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore), pp. 165–169; Shah Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣābirī. 1856. *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*, Rampur: Ḥasnī Press, pp. 158–62; for more anecdotes about Makhdūm 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir, also see Muḥammad Akram Baraswī. 1993. *Iqtibāsu'l-anwār*. (pp. 497–581). (Translated by Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl. Siyāl gives the name of the author as Muḥammad Akram Quddūsī). Lahore: Ziaul Qur'an Publications; Mushtāq Aḥmad Ambethwī Ṣābirī. 1332/1913, *Anwāru'l 'Ashiqin*. Haiderabad, Deccan: 'Usmān Press, pp. 36–48; 'Abdur Razzāq, 'Aṭā' Ḥusain gives the name of his mother as Bībī Ḥalima, see *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Maṭba' Ṣafdarī, 1302/1884, p. 68.

48 *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*, p. 167; Ḥāji Muḥammad Bashīr Ambālwi. 2005. *Tazkira Anwār-i-Ṣābirī: An account of Sabir's enlightenment*. Faisalabad, Pakistan: Darul-Eshan, pp. 20–22.

49 Letter no. 53 to Qāzī 'Ilmu'd-Dīn and Shaikhzāda and other friends of Gujerat in Khwāja Ṣadru'd-Dīn Abu'l Fath Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz Chishtī and Saiyyid 'Ata' Ḥusain (Edited) *Maktūbāt Imāmu'l 'Arifīn Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz*. Hyderabad: Barqī Press. 1362/1943, p. 100.

between a *pīr* and a *murīd*. Recalling his personal experience (of making his wife his *murīd*), details of which he did not give, he said that he regretted and repented doing that. He added that as the restrictions placed by the earlier Sufis in this regard were not void of wisdom (*ḥikmat*), therefore whosoever disobeys these instructions repents (*peshmān*) later on.⁵⁰ It is significant to note here that at the time of complaining about his wife, whom we assume was a veiled woman, and blaming her for displeasing her husband in public, the Khwāja had spent almost forty-one years of wedded life with this wife. Indeed, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz professed that a husband's permission was a prerequisite for a woman even to repeat Allāh's attributes.⁵¹

The above discussed Sufi perception of wives' lower status has resulted in a lingering and persistent impact on the family life of the Muslims of South Asia. The printed Sufi texts, with their repeated editions, attract large audience. A noteworthy example is the *Pand nāma* (the book of counsel) of Farīdu'd-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 617/1220) of Nishapur. The book has had several Urdu translations; the earliest one that I could find is titled *Chashma'-yi faiz* (the fountainhead of blessings), which was first translated by one Ḥāmid 'Alī Khan of Lucknow.⁵² The versified translation of *Pand nāma*, under the subheading of *ḥikmat-i mahlikāt* (an account of dangerous matters), warns against wives. At another place, *mazammāt-i zanān wa shubhān* (faults keeping company of women and youth), equating association with women with the world (*shuḥbat-i zan, raghubat-i dunyā*), one is warned to avoid women and the world because

50 *Sharah Jawāmi'l kilām*, 12 Sha'bān, 802/ April 18, 1400, p. 139. It is to be noted that Khwāja Gīsū Darāz's wife Bibi Razā Khātūn was the daughter of a renowned Sufi scholar of Delhi, Maulānā Saiyyid Aḥmad bin Jamālū'd-Dīn Ḥusainī. The couple had two sons and three daughters and a large number of grandchildren. See Shāh Muḥammad 'Alī Sāmānī. 831/1427. *Siyar-i Muḥammadī* (along with Urdu translation as *al-ma'rūf, Tuḥfa-yi Aḥmadī* by Shāh Nazīr Aḥmad Qādirī). Allahabad: Yūnānī Dawakhāna Press, 1347/1928), p. 21 (henceforth referred to as *Siyar-i Muḥammadī*); 'Abdu'l 'Azīz b. Sher Malik b. Muḥammad Wā'izī. 1368/1948. *Tarikh-i Ḥabībī wa Tazkirā-ye Murshidī*. (Compiled from a photocopy of the manuscript by Nafees al-Husainī). Lahore: Halqa Ma'rif-i Gīsū Darāz, n. d., p. 18; *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*, p. 39.

51 Letter no. 53 to Qāzi 'Ilmu'd-Dīn and Shaikhzād and other friends of Gujarat in Khwāja Ṣadru'd-Dīn Abu'l Fath Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz Chishtī and Saiyyid 'Ata' Ḥusain (Edited) *Maktūbāt Imāmu'l 'Arifīn Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz*. Hyderabad: Barqī Press. 1362 (1943), p. 102.

52 Ḥāmid 'Alī Khan. 1305/1887 (2nd edition in 1889). *Chashma'-yi faiz*. Kanpur: Munshi Nawal Kishore; Another translation in Urdu by Mufti Kafīlur Raḥmān 'Usmānī of Dāru'l Iftā, Dāru'l Deoband is published by Iqra Center, Lahore (n. d.). A third translation is by Maulānā Bashīr Aḥmad Siālwi and is published by Maktaba Qadiriyyā, Lahore (1978).

the world is like a deceitful bride (*ʿurūs-i bi-wafā*). The best thing, according to the *Pand namā*, therefore is to remain celibate.⁵³

Not all wives were considered a source of misery for their devout, saintly husbands. The anecdote of the younger brother of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, Najību'd-Dīn Mutawakkil (559–671), and of his wife exemplifies how couples stand for each other. Najību'd-Dīn Mutawakkil with his family lived in abject poverty. Once, while returning from Eid prayers, a group of *dervishes*, assuming that he was a high-ranking Shaikh, followed him to his house in the hope of getting some sumptuous meal to eat. As there was not a single morsel in the house, the Shaikh asked his wife to give him her scarf to sell to buy some edibles, which she did with no hesitation. The scarf, however, being threadbare and patched, was not worth a dime and the Shaikh had to offer only water to his visitors.⁵⁴ Bībī Huzaira Khātūn, the wife of Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār, despite her royal background, being the daughter of Sultan Balban, adopted the lifestyle of her ascetic husband within three days of their marriage. She distributed all her riches and beautiful clothes among the poor and dressed herself in the garments of the darwishes.⁵⁵

An episode related by Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī which confirms his conviction that wives and children cause trouble in one's life is about how Abū Saʿīd Aqtā' (the one with an imputed hand) lost his hand. According to this twice-repeated anecdote, Abū Saʿīd Aqtā', after his wife, who could no longer bear hunger after three consecutive days of starvation, taunted him, went out to the market area to beg for food or money. A virtuous man gave him some money, but the city's guards, mistakenly thinking that the money was stolen, imputed his hand. Weeping and crying he brought back his imputed hand and, placing it on his prayer rug, bemoaned saying that he was punished for forgetting Allāh and seeking help from others. The moral of the story is on the virtues of patience (*ṣabr*), but the fact remains that the needs of the spouses and other members of the household, particularly provision of meals, are genuine needs. By describing these unfulfilled needs as taunts, the above narrative characterises the wife as the cause of trouble.⁵⁶

Contrary to the discourse against wives and families of some of the Sufi Shaikhs, there are instances when even a staunch celibate such as Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn, on whom Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliya' conferred the *walāya*

53 *Chashma'-yi faiz*, pp. 8, 23, & 43.

54 *KM, Majlis* 21; *SA*, p. 98; 'Alī Asghar Chishtī. 1933/1884. *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, Lahore: Victoria Press, pp. 357–358.

55 *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, pp. 216–217.

56 *KM, Majlis*, 23 and 49.

of the Deccan,⁵⁷ spoke about the bliss of marital life. Once during his discourse, Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn recalled what his friend Shamsu'd-Dīn, a nephew of Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, said about the bliss of family life. He said that a wife and children are relaxation for a man just like a flower garden. Elucidating further, the Shaikh added that it means that whenever a person is exhausted and depressed by concentration and remembrance, he should spend some time with his wife. In support of his statement, Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn even cited the example of the Prophet who whenever he felt troubled (*malūl*), he would call Ḥaẓrat 'Aishā and converse with her till he recovered from exhaustion.⁵⁸

A more balanced Sufi perception of marriage and wives comes from the eighteenth-century Naqshbandī Sufi, Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān (martyred in 1195/1781). Jān-i-Jānān argued, as recorded by his ardent disciple Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī in *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī* (compiled in 1796, probably sixteen years after Mīrza Mazhar's assassination), that although marriage is the tradition of the prophets (*nikāḥ sunnat-i-aṇbiyā ast*), innovative customs (not supported and approved by the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth) have weakened the very foundations of marriage; therefore, celibacy and singleness is the best way for the travellers of the path of Truth. Giving another reason for abstinence from marriage, he pointed out that because of the depleting means of honest living and the all-pervading environment of ignorance, children often remain deprived of knowledge and good conduct.⁵⁹ In his personal life, despite the mental illness of his wife, which often caused him great stress, Mīrzā Mazhar not only remained patient and peaceful in his relations with her, but he forgave her for all the abusive language she used and even asked his disciples to look after her needs after his death.⁶⁰ His adopted son, Pīr 'Alī, a relative of his wife who lived with him, did nothing to earn a living but instead survived on charity, yet he had at least two wives.⁶¹ Also, his favourite disciple and successor, Ḥaẓrat Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810), had two wives. However, Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī maintained peaceful relations in his family.⁶²

The best example of not merely honouring and respecting but of publicly acknowledging the superiority of a wife comes from the life of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh

57 Āzād Bilgramī refers to Burhānu'd-Dīn as *Ṣāhib walāyat-i-dakkan*. See *Rawḍatu'l Awliyā'*. Maṭba' 'Ijāz Ṣafdarī (No place), (1310/1892). p. 4.

58 *Majlis* on 11 Ṣafar, 735/October 11, 1334, Ruknu'd-Dīn 'Imād Kāshānī. *Nafā'isu'l Anfās* (ms.) Khuldabad (compiled in 1331–1337), p. 85; Āzād Bilgramī. *Rawḍatu'l Awliyā'*, p. 11.

59 Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī. 1309/1892. *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī*. Dihli: Maṭba' 'i Muḥtabā'ī, p. 43.

60 *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī*, p. 59.

61 See several references in 'Abdur Razzāq Quraishi. 1966. *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*. Bombay: 'Alawi Book Depot.

62 *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, p. 142; also, *Maqāmāt-i-Mazhariyya*, p. 402, f. n. 26.

Bandagī Mian Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī (909/1504–979/1571–1572). A Sufi master of gnostic and charismatic qualities, Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Mian had great respect for his wife, Ḥaẓrat Bībī Makhdūma, a Sufi woman of unparalleled virtues and merits. As he learnt several spiritual exercises from her, Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Mian acknowledged her as his *murshid*.⁶³

4.3 Marital Life and Sex

Dichotomic and antithetical views on marital life and sex are the most common theme found in Sufi discourses. While one group of the Shaikhs warned their disciples to keep themselves safe from the lures of women, the others got married, had multiple spouses, and raised several children. A close study of the Sufi texts, mainly *tazkirāt*, *malfūẓāt*, and manuals on Sufi *ādāb* (books on cultural idioms and books of etiquette) illustrate these opposite views. The following section looks at some selective cases that demonstrate these conflicting views. Shaikh Zīāu'd-Dīn Abū Najīb 'Abdu'l Qādir Suhrāwardī's (490/1097–563/1168) work, *kitāb ādābu'l-murīdīn*, a popular text for novices in the Sufi circle of South Asia, has laid down rules for marriage. According to Suhrāwardī's *ādāb-i tazwīj* (rules for marriage), based upon a Tradition of the Prophet narrated by Abū Huraira, says that a Sufi should marry if he has the capacity to provide for a wife; if not, he should fast as fasts are the best way to control one's desires by weakening the sensuality (*shahwat*).⁶⁴

However, some of the Sufis preferred to remain celibate on account of other reasons than the above Blessed Tradition. Perhaps one reason for preferring celibacy could be the Sufis' perception that women were a hurdle in their path and hence women and marriage must be avoided at all costs. To Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', celibacy came as a natural path, and he did not have to struggle to control any of his urges. The story of his most loyal disciple and later his Khalīfa, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī, however, is quite different. To control his sexual urges (*nafs-i muzāḥmat*), he practiced serious exercises and went through miserable times. Drinking large amounts of lemon juice (*āb-i līmū*) almost brought him to the verge of death (*ma'raz-i halākat*).⁶⁵ Ḥāmid

63 Muḥammad Ṭufail Aḥmad Miṣbāhī. 2015. *Mullā Aḥmad Jōwan Amethwī- Ḥayāt aur khidmāt*. Purnea: Maulānā Ghulām Jilānī, p. 186.

64 Bandā Nawāz, and Saiyyid 'Atta' Ḥusain. 1939. *Tarjuma ādābu'l-murīdīn* (Persian translation of Suhrāwardī's Arabic work *Ādābu'l-murīdīn*). Hyderabad: Maṭba-yi Intizāmī, p. 285.

65 SA, p. 241.

Qalandar records that often the Shaikh would break his fasts by chewing the leaves of *saṁbhalu*, a wild plant whose leaves are known to curb sexual urges.⁶⁶

Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1338), a disciple of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' who received *khirqā-i kāmīl*⁶⁷ (the perfect Sufi cloak or robe) from his mentor and was sent to the *wilayā* of the Deccan, also remained celibate like his Shaikh and *pir-bhāi*' (the fellow disciple, that is Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd). Since his early childhood, Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb was so deeply preoccupied with Divine love that he would spend hours in seclusion repeating *kalima ṭayyab* (the creed of Islam). His devotion and piety grew so intense that at the age of thirteen he resolved to spend his life in Allāh's remembrance and declared he would not marry. His determination grew so rigid that if ever he had nocturnal discharge, the following day he would keep a fast. When his mother thought of getting him married, as a dutiful son, instead of stopping his mother, Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb applied a different strategy. On his own admission, to dissuade his mother from her insistence on his marriage, Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn starved himself, which made him so frail and weak that he could hardly lift his neck upwards to look at the sky above. The mother, thus, had to give up her plans to get him married and excused him.⁶⁸

Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb not only lived as a celibate, he also guided others to control and suppress their sexual urges. In section 25 of *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl*, under the heading of *dafa' shahwat* (eliminating carnal desires), he recommended a spiritual formula to those troubled by carnal desires (*nafs zahmat dihad*). Such a person, he said, after reciting thrice Qur'ān's verse 114, should blow it on his index finger and then strike his left thigh with this hand. This would result in decreasing sexual urges (*shahwat kam kard*) and would guard the traveller on the path of spiritual attainments.⁶⁹

The life of Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Ḥusainī, known as Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz (721/1321–825/1422), offers a case of opposing views. A favourite *murīd* and *khalīfā* of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī, Gīsū Darāz, unlike his mentor, went through acute physical pain while

66 Jamālī, p. 282.

67 Imadu'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Iṣāmī. 1948. *Futuḥus-Salāṭīn* (Edited by A.S. Usha). Madras: Madras University, p. 8.

68 Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Ḥusainī Chishtī Bilgrāmī. 1310/1892. *Rawḍatu'l Awliyā'*. Bombay: Maṭba' 'Ijāz Ṣāfdārī, p. 5.

69 Ḥammādu'd-Dīn Kāshānī, *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl*, p. 120 (I have translated these excerpts from a photocopy of the Persian manuscript of *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl* from the uploaded internet version by Professor Carl Ernst www.academia.edu/12537498/Ahsan_al-aqwal). I have also consulted the published Urdu translation of the ms, *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl al-ma'rūf bah afzalu'l maqāl* by Muḥammad 'Abu'l Majīd (Bombay: Maṭba'-i Jahaṅgīrī, 1342/1923).

unsuccessfully suppressing his sexual drives.⁷⁰ The incident of the Khwāja's predicaments in his efforts to suppress or express his sex drive is reported by his biographer, 'Abdul 'Azīz bin Sher Malik, a noble at the court of Ahmad Shāh Bahmani (d. 1457), in his double-titled Persian treatise, *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī wa Tazkira-yi Murshidī/khwariq-i Banda Nawāz*, completed in 849/1446, about twenty-nine years after the passing away of the illustrious Khwāja.⁷¹ Chapter 2 of *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, quoting Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, relates how virginhood and absence of the experience of sexual intercourse with women played havoc with his well-being:

Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm says, "I reached the age of thirty and did not know about intercourse (*suḥbat-i zanān chigūna ast*) with women and how one's mood (*raghbat*) gets motivated towards sexual drive (*shāhwat*). Afterwards, *parmiyo* began to trouble me (*zahmat-i parmiyo ghalbā kard*).⁷² Youth and the pressure of desire (*jawanī wa gharūr-i shahwat*) resulted in several other concerns and anxieties. Subsequently, with the consensus and agreement (*ijmā' wa ittifāq*) of all the wise and eminent persons, including experienced and skilled Muslim physicians and healers, Maulānā 'Alāu'd-Dīn bought a *jāriyā* (a bondmaid) and sent her to my respected mother. My Mother and Maulānā 'Alāu'd-Dīn personally forced me (*bar man taklīf kardand*). Well, what else could I have done as all the time, except while praying or listening to the *samā'*, the sex desire always appeared overpowering (*hamesha ghalbā-yi shāhwat*). Thus, out of compulsion (*zarūrat*) for the purpose of cohabitation (*suḥbat*), I called the *jāriyā*. At that time, this task looked far too difficult. I wanted to cohabit with her but wondered (*mutafakkir būdam*) that how does sexual intercourse (*mubāsharat*) is done. After a while, with a little bit of common

70 Khwāja Gīsū Darāz was born in Delhi, left for the Deccan in 1398 and arrived there during the reign of Sultan Firuz Shāh Bahmani (r.1397–1422). He settled in Gulbarga around 1400 at the invitation of the Sultan.

71 The original manuscript of *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī* was prepared in consultation with the Khwāja's son and successor, Khwāja Asghar Ḥusainī (d. 828/1424) and other family members, descendants and close companions. See Nawwāb Mā'shūq Yār Jang Bahādur, *Tarjama-i Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, Hyderabad Deccan: Ittiḥād Press, 1368/1948; An earlier description of this Persian manuscript was given by Syed Hasan Askari in a paper, 'Tazkira-i-murshidi—a rare *malfūz* of the 15th century Sufi Saint of Gulbarga' published in the *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Commission*, 1952, pp. 179–188.

72 Steingass translates *parmiyo* as an affection of bladder and strangury. See Steingass, F. 2000. *A comprehensive Persian-English dictionary including the Arabic words and phrases to be met within Persian literature: being Johnson and Richardson's Persian, Arabic & English dictionary*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, p. 244.

sense and knack (*bāfahm wa firāsat wā qiyās*), I knew how to do it. In short, once it was over (*b'ad az farāgh*), I felt relaxed and reposed (*āsa'ish darman paidā āmad*). I felt hungry too (*gursangī zor āward*).⁷³

Later, after years of marriage and having several children and grandchildren, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz often commented in his spiritual discourses that if he had experienced sex with women and had had children before traversing the path of spirituality, he would not have acquired perfection (*iktisāb-i kamalāt*).⁷⁴ Past the age of eighty (Gīsū Darāz died at the age of 101 years), the Khwāja used to claim, according to his biographer, that though he gave up (*inqiṭa' kardand*) sexual activity he still claimed to have the potency of *iftitāh-i bīkr* (to deprive of virginity).⁷⁵

Despite being married and having arranged marriages of children and grandchildren, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz continued with his antimarriage rhetoric, arguing that marriage makes a man destitute and impoverished. In addition, marriage drains a man's energy day by day and finally ends in its complete depletion, he argued. Warning his disciples, he instructed them to keep away from marriage as marriage would distant them from their final destination, i.e., nearness to the Divine.⁷⁶ In reality, however, the contempt expressed by the Khwāja against marriage was not shared either by his children or by his disciples. None of his progeny heeded his warnings as all got married. This reminds one of the words of Tor Andrae who classified such antimarriage statements of the mystics as "pious snobbery."⁷⁷

Most Sufis, while expressing their views on a topic related either to this world or the next one, addressed the male audience and had male needs or desires in mind. One such example is of Shaikh Sharfu'd-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Yāhyā Manerī (d. 485/1381), known as Makhdūm-i Jahān (the spiritual teacher of the realm), of the Firdawsī *silṣila* and one of the well-known Sufis of Hindustan

73 'Abdul 'Azīz Sher Malik bin Muḥammad Wā'izī. *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī Tazkira-yi murshidi*. Lahore: Halqa Ma'ārif-i Gīsū Darāz, n. d., pp. 17–18. (Henceforth, referred to as *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*); Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān. 1343/1924. *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*. Hyderabad: 'Azam Steam Press. p. 39. (Henceforth, referred to as *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*).

74 *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, p. 18; *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 39.

75 *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, pp. 99–101.

76 Shabbīr Ḥasan Chishtī Nizami. 2002. *Sīrat-i pāk Ḥazrat Khwāja Saīyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz Bandānawāz (Malfūzāt of Gīsū Darāz Bandā Nawāz translated into Urdu)*. Lahore: 'Azīm Sons. P. 105.

77 Tor Andrae (Translated by Birgitta Sharpe) 1987. *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 49.

whose *manāqib* (virtues) are well accounted.⁷⁸ In addition to his discourses, Manerī extensively used the medium of letter writing for the spiritual direction and correction (*irshād wā tañbih*) of his disciples.⁷⁹ In a letter, titled *dar ghalat gāh-i mardumān* (some frequent misconception of people), addressed to Maulānā Muzaffar Shams Balkhī (d. 1400), one of his disciples and successors,⁸⁰ explaining that sensuality is part of human nature, he wrote that nowhere *Sharīʿat* has ruled to get rid of sensuality (*shahwat*) and characteristics of human nature. He further argued that if sensuality is lost, cure should be sought for it (*‘ilāj bayad kard*). Sensuality, he emphasised, not only lets a person take care of his family, children, and worldly possessions, it also ensures begetting children in abundance, which thus protects a person’s name for generations to come.⁸¹ In another letter addressed to Shamsu’d-Dīn, under the title *‘faḥl-i anbiyā’ bar awliyā’* (excellence of the Prophets over the friends of Allāh), Shaikh Manerī argued that though to get pleasure in eating and in women is in man’s nature, an excellent man strives to control his natural desires and is not tricked by Satan. Thus, such a man has no carnal desires (*shahwat nabūd*) and does not suffer from any anxiety for wife or children (*na andūh zan wa farzand*).⁸² Manerī’s views remind one of al-Ghazali’s exposition on human desires for food and sex when he wrote that there were two types of desires: one, the desire of the stomach (*shahwat al bāṭin*), and second, “the desire for sex and voracious appetite for women (*shahwat al farj*).”⁸³ Interestingly in his personal life, Shaikh Sharfu’d-Dīn Manerī had a different experience. While he

78 AA, pp. 113–118; for a poetical homage, see Shāh Amīn Aḥmad Firdawsī. 1301/1884. *Gul-i Firdaws dar aḥwāl khwajgān-i firdaws*. Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore, pp. 111–125.

79 Letter No. 4 to Brother Shamsu’d-Dīn on the theme of *tajdīd-i tawba*. Shaikh Sharafu’d-Dīn Yahyā Manerī *quds sirāhu*. 1885. *Maktūbāt Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Sharfuddīn Yāhyā Manerī Quds Sirāhu*. Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore, p. 16. Shamsu’d-Dīn, from Chausa, was a Qāẓi by profession. As most of the time he could not attend the spiritual sessions of Shaikh Sharfuddīn Yahyā Manerī, he was instructed through letters. Thus, 98 out of the 100 letters included in *Maktūbāt* are addressed to him.

80 Shāh Shu’aib Firdawsī. 1313/1895. *Manāqibu’l Asfiyyā’*. Calcutta: Maṭba’ Nūru’l Āfāq, pp. 147–52; S.A.A. Rizvi. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India*. Vol. 1, pp. 237–39. For a short biography of Muzaffar Shams Balkhī, see Paul Jackson, ‘Muzaffar Shams Balkhī,’ in N. Hanif. 2002. *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Central Asia and Middle East*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, p. 280.

81 *Maktūbāt Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Sharafuddīn Yāhyā Manerī Quds Sirāhu*. p. 65; also, *Maktūbāt Shāh Sharafuddīn Yahya Manerī: A rare manuscript in Farsi digitalized by the University of Kashmir*. <https://archive.org/details/SadMaktubatOfShaykhYahyaManerīManuscript/downloaded> in July 2013.

82 Letter no. 20 in *Maktūbāt Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Sharfuddīn Yāhyā Manerī Quds Sirāhu*, p. 73.

83 Tim J. Winter. 1995. *On Disputing the Soul and on Breaking the Two Desires, Books 22 and 23 of the Religious Sciences*. Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society.

was busy seeking knowledge in Sonargaon as a young person, he fell ill (*marṣ ḥādīs shudā būd*). On the recommendation of local physicians that sexual intercourse was the only remedy for this ailment (*dawā-yi īn marṣ jamaʿ ast*), he got married.⁸⁴

More than two hundred years later, another Chishtī Sufi, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aurangābādī (d. 1730), following the tradition of Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb and Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, moved from north India to the Deccan and settled in Aurangābād as the *khalifā* of his Shaikh, Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī (d. 1143/1729).⁸⁵ He went through the same physical torment for not marrying early. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aurangābādī, in compliance with the instructions of his *pīr*, so aptly described by Āzād Bilgramī as *mī'mār-i-qulūb* (the designer of the hearts),⁸⁶ remained unmarried until he was struck by gonorrhoea. The *pīr*, on knowing about this ailment, in a letter said that in the opinion of the wise (*ḥukamā'*), marriage is a cure for this ailment; he should, therefore, now get married and even suggested some suitable girls of his own family (*dar qabīlā mā*) for marriage, especially a daughter of his paternal uncle. Until marriage takes place, Shāh Kalīmu'llah also suggested to have a *kanīz* during this interim period according to the need (*baqadr-i ṣarūrat*), until the harmful effects (*muṣarrāt*) of gonorrhoea (*suzāk*) are no more.⁸⁷ Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn, however, married someone from the Deccan, not once, but twice, and raised a large family. Interestingly, one of his wives happened to be from the family of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz who had the same history of recovery from a similar ailment with the help of a slave girl bought expressly for the purpose of curing his physical ailment.⁸⁸

Yūsuf Gadā,⁸⁹ a fourteenth-century Sufi disciple of the famous Chishtī Sufi, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, wrote *Tuḥfā-i-naṣā'ih* (A present

84 Shāh Shu'aib Firdawsī. 1313/1895. *Manāqibu'l Asfīyyā'*. Calcutta: Maṭba' Nūru'l Āfāq, p. 132. Maksud Ahmad Khan in his PhD (1989) dissertation, 'Firdausi silsila during the Sultanate period' quotes from a Ms of *Manāqibu'l Asfīyyā'* (Ms 183, f.83, b) that Manerī established this relationship with his concubine (*kanīz*).

85 For Shāh Kalīmu'llah, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizāmi. 1946. *Ḥaṣrat Shāh Kalīmu'llah Dihlawī*. Dehli: Maktaba Burhān.

86 Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgramī. 1910. *Daftar-i awwal-i Ma'āṣiru'l-kirām*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufid-i 'Ām, p. 42.

87 Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī. 1315/1897. *Maktūbāt-i Kalīmī*. Dehli: Maktabā Mujtabai', Letters no. 27 and 29, pp. 30–31, 32.

88 For a notice on Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn, see *Khazīnatu'l Asfīyā'*, *jild awwal*, pp. 463–66; also, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 2007. *Tārīkh-i mashā'ikh-i Chisht*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, pp. 144–145.

89 For a short biographical notice on Yūsuf Gadā, see Nabi Hadi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian literature*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 629–30.

of counsels or ethical instructions) sometime after 1356 for his young son in verse form and called this *naṣā'ih* or advice. Among several pieces of advice in *Tuḥfā-i-naṣā'ih*, one is on marriage, which “shows an ideal of almost total male dominance and female subservience, limited only by the Islamic prohibitions on extramarital sex.” In this poem, Yūsuf Gadā advises his son that if his wife is not obedient and patient, he should “divorce her quickly.” He then lists good qualities and bad traits that his son should look for in a wife. The next section of the work lays down rules for sexual intercourse. Interestingly, these views of Yūsuf Gadā are quite the opposite of the views held by his Sufi guide and mentor, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī. However, *Tuḥfā-i-naṣā'ih* gained so much popularity that a seventeenth-century Bengali writer and poet, Syed Alaol (d. 1680), who later joined the Qādirī Sufi *silsila*, translated it in 1664 into Bengali.⁹⁰ A majority of the readers, though, were not deterred by Yūsuf Gadā's extremely unfavourable views towards women. As Digby writes, “the number of manuscript copies [*Tuḥfā-i-naṣā'ih*] recorded exceeds that of any *Ṣūfī* devotional work of the Sultanate period; and the number of recorded lithographed editions greatly exceeds even those of Amīr Ḥasan's *Fawā'id al fu'ad*.”⁹¹ The views of Yūsuf Gadā, thus, moving beyond several centuries, reached a wider audience.⁹²

4.4 Perception of Women by Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Sufis

During this period, two personalities are relevant to our study: Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624)⁹³ and Shaikh 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī (d. 1642), a Sufi of the Qādirī *silsila*. Muḥaddis Dihlawī was an erudite scholar of Ḥadīth and a prolific writer.⁹⁴ Muḥaddis Dihlawī's major contribution is his biographical compendium of South Asian Sufis, *Akḥbārū'l Akhyār fī asrārū'l-abrār*, written

90 Muhammad Mojlum Khan. 2013. *The Muslim Heritage of Bengal*. Leicestershire: Kube Publishing, pp. 4652.

91 Simon Digby. 1984. 'The *Tuḥfā-i-naṣā'ih* of Yūsuf Gadā: An Ethical Treatise in Verse from the Late Fourteenth-Century Delhi Sultanate.' In *Moral Conduct and Authority, The Place of ADAB in South Asian Islam*. Edited by Barbara Daly Metcalf. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 91–123, here p. 92.

92 Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. 1978. *A History of Sufism in India*. vol. 1., p. 372.

93 For his biographical note, see Badaoni, 1978. *Muntakhab ut-tawārikh* (Translated by Sir Wolseley Haig). Karachi: Karimsons, pp. 167–72; also, Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī, 1910. *Daftar-i awwal-i Ma'āshir al-kirām*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufid-i 'Ām, pp. 200–201.

94 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1964. *Ḥayāt-i Shaikh 'Abdul-Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī*. Dehli: Nadwatu'l-Muṣannifin, pp. 129–30.

before 996/1588 and revised later in 999/1590–1591. Not only did Muḥaddis Dihlawī include Sufi women, albeit only a few (only five to be exact, and that too at the end of the work), but nowhere in this work did he use any derogatory comments about women. Indeed, on the contrary, he praised the virtues of these friends of Allāh using laudable phraseology.

In sharp contrast to the dignified representation of women by Muḥaddis Dihlawī is his contemporary Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), known as *Mujaddid Alf-i Sānī* (the rejuvenator of the second millennium). Aḥmad Sirhindī's tirade against women, condemning and accusing them of social ills that plagued seventeenth-century Muslim South Asia, not only won many an ardent believer, some being Sufi Shaikhs with huge and increasing following, but its impact continues.

Initiated into the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila* by Khwāja Bāqī Billah (d. 1012/1603), who arrived in India during the end of Emperor Akbar's reign, Aḥmad Sirhindī later came to claim for himself and for his three immediate successors the position of *qayyūm* (the highest pole) in Sufi hierarchy.⁹⁵ In addition to several books and tracts, he was a prolific letter (*maktūbāt*) writer.⁹⁶ These undated letters, almost 534 in number, were originally written in Persian and addressed to more than two hundred followers and friends. Later compiled as *Maktubāt-i Rabbānī*, they are a storehouse of the Naqshbandī discourses on various issues pertaining to *sharīʿa*, faith, belief, and practices. Two of these letters, addressed to women, read like a Naqshbandī manifesto on women. Before studying these two letters in some detail, let us look at Sirhindī's gender perception within his comprehension of the essence of Islam.

Anchored to the view that women are lowly born and men are superior, Aḥmad Sirhindī's remedy for the rejuvenation of the Muslim society was adherence to the orthodox way of life, instead of the synthesised cultural milieu that had come into existence over the centuries and which was actively patronized by the Mughals. An important segment of this revivalist pattern, spearheaded by Aḥmad Sirhindī, was keeping women under male control. Viewing Muslims

95 For Bāqī Billah's life and charismatic powers, see volume two of *Ḥaẓrāt-ul Quds*, a hagiographical account, written by Badru'd-Dīn Sirhindī, the Shaikh's disciple and a long-time companion. See Badru'd-Dīn ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sirhindī. *Ḥaẓrāt al-quds-daftar dom* (Urdu translation by 'Irfān Aḥmad Khan, 1922). Lahore: Mashhur 'Ām Press. For modern works, see Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 369; also, Annemarie Schimmel. 1994. *Deciphering the Signs of God: a phenomenological approach to Islam*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 196; Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Sufism*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, p. 31.

96 Translated into English, Arabic, Turkish, and Urdu these translations are accessible in print form and soft copies on the internet.

of South Asia through male vision, he believed that Muslim women are inciters of heretical and idolatrous behaviour. This perception of women led him to assume that Islamic marriage is polygamous in nature.⁹⁷ In letter number 191 addressed to ‘Abdur Raḥīm Khān Khānān (1556–1627), on the topic of *sharīʿā* and the actions permitted (*mubahāt*)⁹⁸ by it, Sirhindī not only approved marriage to four women at a time but also approved access to as many concubines as a man could afford to buy. He also lauded the Islamic jurisprudence for divorcing one wife to bring in a new wife, thus adjusting the number of women (wives) through divorce (*ṭalāq rā wasīlā-yi tabdīl nisāʿ*). He also held that wearing of gold ornaments was permissible to women as it was beneficial to men. He argued that, after all, gold was male investment. Similarly, he argued that wearing of silk and ornaments by women is in the interest of men as women’s adornments cause pleasure to men. He thus argued that men, as masters of women, would be the ultimate owners of this gold and would seek pleasure by watching their well-decorated and adorned wives (*munāfāʿ ān nīz bā mardān ast*).⁹⁹

Returning to the two letters addressed to women by Sirhindī, letter 34 is addressed to the mother of Mīr Muḥammad Amīn on the subject of *dar naṣīḥat wā targhīb bar zikr-i ilāhī wā ijtināb az muḥabbat-i duniyā* (on advising and encouraging remembrance of Allāh and refraining from the adulation of the world).¹⁰⁰ Sirhindī tells her that the more she practices the path of *sharīʿā*, the more her intensity of Allāh’s remembrance will grow. He counsels her to

97 For a rationalistic approach to the contentious issue of polygamy, see Fazlur Rahman and Ebrahim Moosa. 2009. *Major Themes of the Qurʾān*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, especially, pp. 47–48.

98 Letter No. 191 in Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī Mujaddid Alfsānī. *Maktūbāt Imām-i Rabbānī Ḥaẓrat Mujaddid Alfsānī (ḥissā duyūm)*. Karachi: Educational Press, 1397/1977, pp. 304–306. *Mubāh* (plural *mubāhāt*) is a permissible act with no praise or blame and the commission or the commission of which does not make a person sinner. For more on this, see Muhammad Assad. 1961. *The Principles of the State and Government in Islam*. Berkeley: California State University, pp. 13–15.

99 For comments on Sirhindī’s view, see M. Athar Ali, 2012. ‘Elements of social justice in medieval thought.’ In *Recording the Progress of Indian History: Symposia Papers of the Indian History Congress, 1992–2010*. Edited by Saiyid Zaheer Hussain Jafri. Delhi, Primus Books, pp. 193–207.

100 Letter no. 34, in Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī Mujaddid Alf-i sānī. *Maktūbāt Imām-i Rabbānī Ḥaẓrat mujaddid Alf-i sānī (ḥiṣṣā duyūm)*, pp. 355–56. Referred to as ‘mother of Mīr Muhammad Amin’, she was the wife of Sirhindī’s Khalifa, Mīr Muhammad Nuʿmān. For Mīr Nuʿmān’s biographical notice, see Khwāja Muḥammad Ḥāshim Kishmī. 1890. *Zubdat al-muqāmāt*. Kānpūr: Maṭbaʿ Munshī Nawal Kishore (Urdu translation by Ghulam Mustafa Khan and Maulānā Abul Fath Saghiruʿd-Dīn. Maṭbaʿ Nuʿmānia, Sialkot, 1407/1987), pp. 454–69.

keep herself busy in Allāh's remembrance (*mustaghriq zikr-i Ilāhī*). Closing the letter, he says that these rules were discussed with her when he met with her personally (*bashumā dar ḥuṣūr ham gufta shudā ast*). The letter says nothing about the details of the meeting or whether she was his disciple and had taken an oath of allegiance.

The second letter, letter 41, is addressed to an anonymous pious woman (*yak-i az ṣaliḥāt*) and gives important advice to women (*naṣā'ih ẓarūriya*), particularly in the context of the oath of allegiance (*ba'āt*). Rules of *ba'āt* are discussed later in this book, under the section on the oath of allegiance. Here, we look at Sirhindī's perception of women and the oath of allegiance. He castigates Muslim women because, in his opinion, they are more prone to blameworthy actions than men are. These sinful acts of women, performed because of their utter stupidity and height of ignorance (*kamāl-i jahl*), are in violation of the conditions on which the Prophet accepted the "pledge of women."¹⁰¹ Among these innovations (*bidā't*), which Sirhindī believed to be more common among Indian Muslim women than men, he argued that women acted thus because of their fallacy of following the traditions of the infidels (*marāsim-i ahl-i shirk*). In addition, he insisted that women are prone to use abusive language, behave in heretical ways, and disobey Islamic ways of living. He also condemned women for their abundant (*bisyār*) base traits and malicious nature (*ẓamā'im wa akhlāq-i radiya*). Women, in his estimation, were guilty of spending their husbands' wealth without their permission (*amwāl-i shuuharān be izn*) and thus extremely wasting it. To him these women, by acting as thieves (*sāriqān*), were guilty of the crime of embezzlement (*khiyānat*).¹⁰²

In Sirhindī's estimation, women, in addition to committing *shirk*, were primarily guilty of adulterous acts, because most likely men commit adultery only with women's consent (*ḥuṣūl zinā dar aghlab bā tawassuṭ-i ḥuṣūl raṣā ast az zanān*). Thus absolving men of the moral and civil crime, Sirhindī advocated that men commit adultery under women's influence (*mardān dar īn 'amal tāb' zanān bashand*).¹⁰³

Sadly, Sirhindī did not know that while he was condemning women for ignorance and malicious nature, one woman, Būbū Rāstī, was lecturing men and teaching them the secrets of Divine Love as expounded by Fakhru'd-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 1289) in his *Lama'at* (Divine Flashes). Among those who attended

101 Yohanan Friedmann. 1971. *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity*. Montreal: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies.

102 Letter no. 41 in Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī Mujaddid Alfsāni. *Maktūbāt Imām-i Rabbānī Ḥaẓrat Mujaddid Alfsānī* (*ḥiṣṣā duyum*), pp. 362–366.

103 Ibid, pp. 365–366.

one such lecture were ‘Abdur Raḥīm Khān-khānān, his son Darāb Khan, and Masīhu’l Awliyā’.¹⁰⁴

Shāh Kalīmu’llah Jahanābādī (1650–1729), *khalīfa* of Medina-based Shaikh Yahya Madani (d. 1689) was a Chishtī Sufi-scholar and was known for his tolerant disposition and lived an austere life in Delhi, which in his time was suffering from political, moral, and economic deprivation. Strictly adhering to the Sufi way of *tawakkul* (trust in God) in his personal life, Shāh Kalīmu’llah, through his written and spoken words, intensified a campaign for simplicity and frugality. Though married and with children, he advocated celibacy as a Sufi way and persuaded his disciples to refrain from marriage. Thus, arguing that women rob men of their faith, he warned his favourite disciple and trusted *Khalīfa*, Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Aurangābādī, “Do not marry, if there is no urgency” (*agar ihtiyāj nabāshad hargiz kadkhudā nihā shud*), because “this community [women] is that of the highway robbers of faith (*īn qaum rāhzanān-i dīn ast*).”¹⁰⁵

4.5 Attitude towards Children

In the Sufi texts, a female child is often subsumed under the Persian word *farzand*, which commonly refers to male offspring, but its usage is also permissible for daughters as well as for all human beings.¹⁰⁶ To most Sufis, family, and in particular children, were a hurdle in their pursuit of abstinence (*zuhd*)—the first step to spiritual attainments. For those who remained celibate, the question of taking care of children did not exist. Some Sufis, however, though following the Tradition of the Prophet, married and raised their families but shirked the responsibility of looking after their children. In his chapter on “Concerning the manner of those who are married and those who have children,” addressed to male Sufis in his much-read Sufi treatise (*risāla*), al-Sarrāj’s (d. 988) views are relevant to this section. Citing an episode from the life of Faṭḥ al-Mawṣilī (d. 835) of Baghdad,¹⁰⁷ who had a wife and children, al-Sarrāj narrates that one

104 See Biographical notice of Būbū Rāstī in Part 2 of this book.

105 Letter no. 30, Shāh Kalīmu’llah Jahanābādī. 1315/1897. *Maktūbāt-i Kalīmī*. Delhi: Maktabā-i Muṭtaba’i. P. 33.

106 See, for instance, *FF Majlis* 20, 27th of Jamādiu’l Ākhir, 708/1308 in which this word is used for the children of Adam.

107 al-Mawṣilī, a companion of al-Sarrāj Saqaṭī (d. 227/841) was a minor transmitter of *ḥadīth*. For more on his life, see Farīdu’d-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār. 1997. *Tazkirat al-awliyā’* (Urdu translation). Lahore: al-Farūq Book Foundation, pp. 181–182; Laury Silvers. “al-Faṭḥ al-Mawṣilī, Abu Naṣr Abu Muḥammad b. Sa’īd.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 3. (Ed. by Kate Fleet, et al.), Brill Online, 2016.

day when al-Mawṣilī kissed his son, he heard a heavenly voice saying, “O Faṭḥ, art not thou ashamed to love another besides Me?” His wife, too, was a woman of piety and practiced abstinence from worldly attachments.¹⁰⁸ Al-Sarrāj, however, counselled that “a married Sufi must not commit his wife and children to the care of God, but must provide for their needs unless they are in the same spiritual state as he is.”¹⁰⁹

From the South Asian Sufis, my first selection comes from the life events of Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1235), a father figure for the Sufis of the Chishtī *ṭarīqa*. This Ush-born Sufi, brought up and educated by his widowed mother, travelled to Baghdad where he met Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236) and took *ba'āt* at his hands. He arrived in India during the time of Sultan Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) when the Sultanate of Delhi was striving to emerge as the *Qubbatu'l Islam* (literally meaning dome or arch, here meaning sanctuary of Islam).¹¹⁰ Almost all the primary Sufi texts of South Asia refer to the sayings of Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī with utmost reverence; therefore, the words of the Shaikh carry great weight and influence. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā, describing the highest degree of Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī's constant occupation of remembering Allāh (*mashghūlī*), narrates the incidence of the death of Kākī's youngest son. When the Shaikh heard the laments of the child's mother, the father within the Shaikh was tormented and he began rubbing his hands with pain (*dast bar dast mālidan girift*). At this, seeing the Shaikh grieving (*tā'ssuf kardan*), Badru'd-Dīn Ghaznawī,¹¹¹ who was present there, asked why he was grieving. The Shaikh answered, “Now I remember that had I prayed to Allāh for the life of my son, my supplications would have been answered.” The story, however, does not end here. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā's observation, while narrating this incident, is more revealing. He said that so intense was his (Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn's) absorption in remembering the Friend (*istighrāq-i īshān daryād-i dost*) that he did not know either about the life or death of his son.¹¹²

108 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj and Reynold A. Nicholson. 1914. *The Kitāb Al-Luma' Fi'l-taṣawwuf of Abū Naṣr 'Abdallah B. 'Alī Al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭūsī*. Leyden: E.J. Brill, p. 55; for a reference to his wife, see Hellmut Ritter, John O'Kane, and Bernd Radtke. 2013. *The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World, and God in the Stories of Farīd Al-Dīn 'aṭṭār*. Leiden: Brill, p. 249.

109 *The Kitāb Al-Luma'*, p. 55.

110 Ruknu'd-Dīn Nizāmi Dihlawī. 1355/1934. *Hayāt Quṭbu'l Aqṭāb y'āni ḥālāt-i zindagī aur malfūzāt mubārak Quṭbu'l Quṭṭāb Ḥaṣrat Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhityār Kākī*. Delhi: Kutubkhānā Maḥbūbi, pp. 4–6.

111 Shaikh Badru'd-Dīn Ghaznawī (d. 1258) was a *khalīfā* of Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn. For his short biography, see Nizami, K.A., *Tārīkh-i Mashā'ikh-i Chisht*, pp. 196–97.

112 *FF*, Assembly 18, 7 *Ziq'ad*, 710/1311; also, *SA*, p. 49; Jamali, p. 24.

Of the most celebrated Sufis revered for their austerity (*zuhd*), piety (*taqwā*), and poverty (*faqr*)—the basic merits for seeking *riḍā* (contentment)—Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar lived in Ajodhan, now Pakpattan, for about thirty years, from 1236 until his death in 1265. The Bābā (father), as the Shaikh is known until this day, used to spend his life away from the everyday hustle and bustle of his family, outside the city's environs, in a wooded area where spouses and children could cause no interference. Although the Shaikh was spending most of his time either in the woods or in the mosque lost in the remembrance of Allāh (*mashghūlī*), several sons and daughters were born to him. On the authority of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn, Bābā's spiritual successor, Mīr Khwurd writes that he had several wives (*ḥaram bisyār būd*).¹¹³ Ḥamīd Qalandar in *Khairu'l Majālis*, *malfuẓ* of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn, records that in one session when the discourse turned towards the Bābā, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn said that the Bābā had two or three wives with whom he had several children (*khidmat-i Shaikh rā du ḥaram būd yā sih ḥaram*).¹¹⁴ Whenever a maidservant (*dāyā*) would inform him that his wives and children were famished, the Shaikh, instead of doing anything for their relief, used to comment in his assemblies, "What can I do about it?" He is also reported to have said that such complaints entered into his one ear and exited from the other (*darīn gosh āmadi wa badīn gosh raftī*).¹¹⁵

The Shaikh's intense love for God kept him undisturbed even when he heard about any of his children's demise due to malnutrition and hunger. One time, Mīr Khwurd narrates, one of his wives came and told him that today one of his sons passed away because of hunger (*pisr az sabab gursnagī dar ma'rīz halākat shudā ast*) and the only response of the Shaikh was what could he, a human being, do if that was fated to happen (*Mas'ūd bandā chih kund agar taqdīr ḥaqq dar āyad*).¹¹⁶ These episodes, while they confirm the Shaikh's intense remembrance of Allāh, do raise several queries. Did he not know that one of the requirements of marriage is for husbands and fathers to provide food and shelter to their wives and children? More importantly, children cannot provide for their own needs, particularly their food and shelter. In a patriarchal society, as it was in the time of the Shaikh, women could hardly find means for self-support, and therefore to leave them to a life of privation and loss of children

113 SA, p. 66. Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣābirī in *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī* (1856, Rampur: Ḥasnī Press) says that Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn had three wives, Mujibunnisa' sister of Shaikh Zakariyya Sindhi, Bibi Khātūn, daughter of Sultan Balban, and Umm-i-Kulsūm, and had fourteen sons and five daughters, some of them died in infancy, pp. 161–62, 167. KM, *Majlis* 25 also mentions that one of his daughters was blind (*kor*).

114 KM, *Majlis* 25; *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*, pp. 162, 167.

115 KM, *Majlis* 25.

116 SA, p. 67.

raises critical questions which are hard to adequately answer. To say that his wives and children were or should have been as patient (*ṣābir*) as he was, is not supported by the above reports.

Strangely, another episode about Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār and his sons, narrated by Ḥāmid Qalandar, gives an opposite view of the Shaikh's paternal care for his sons, now grown up and in the manhood phase. Once these grownup agriculturist sons of the Shaikh experienced trouble at the hands of a local *mutaṣarrif* (revenue collector/auditor) of Ajodhan. Maulānā Shihābu'd-Dīn, the eldest son of the Shaikh, complained to the Shaikh who was performing ablution (*waḥū*), saying that what was the benefit of all his spiritual powers (*īn buzurgi wa karāmāt-i tū*) for them if a local administrator could dare harass them. The Shaikh, who earlier was not disturbed by the deaths of his children, now was moved by his sons' complaint of harassment. He instantly took hold of his stick (*'aṣā'bar girift*) and simply moved it (*ishārat kard*) in a way as if he was pushing someone away and told his sons to go home. Meanwhile, the *mutaṣarrif* was suddenly struck by a severe abdominal pain and was brought to the Shaikh to be pardoned. The Shaikh, otherwise known for his piety, commented "*tīr bāhadaf rasīd*" (the arrow has hit its mark). On being taken to his home, the man died.¹¹⁷

A good number of the Sufis did not agree that love for children decreases or hinders their love for God. Foremost among this group is Sharfu'd-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī of the Firdawsī *silsila*. In his *malfūz*, there are several references to his views regarding affectionate behaviour towards children. He endorsed that love for one's parents, children, and wife is not against the laws of Islam nor does it create any difference in one's love for God.¹¹⁸ However, a contradictory image of Sharfu'd-Dīn Manerī emerges in an episode recorded in *Manāqibu'l Aṣfiyya'*, a *tazkira* of the Firdawsī Sufis written by Shāh Shu'aib Firdawsī, a nephew and disciple of Sharafu'd-Dīn Manerī. According to this narrative, when Manerī was a student in Sonargaon, a son was born to him, his first child. He left the son to his (Manerī's) mother Bībī Raḥīya, saying that she should take care of the child and consider as if he was no longer alive. He then left for Delhi in search of the right path.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, Sharfu'd-Dīn Manerī's views regarding the treatment of young virgin girls after their death is rather different, considering it from the perspectives of children's rights. In response to a question

117 KM, *Majlis*, 53; Jamali, p. 37.

118 Sharfu'd-Dīn Ahmad Ibn-Yahya Manerī. 2011. *Madan al- M'āni*. (Urdu Translation by Ḥazrat Saiyyid Shāh Qasimu'd-Dīn Ahmad Sharfi Firdawsī). Nalanda: Maktaba Sharf, Khānqah Mu'azzam, pp. 360–361.

119 Shāh Shu'aib Firdawsī. 1313/1895. *Manāqibu'l Aṣfiyā'*. Calcutta: Maṭba' Nūr-ul Āfāq, p. 132.

by Qāzi Khan that what would happen to young virgin girls (*dukhtarān bīkr*) on the day of resurrection, Sharfu'd-Dīn Manerī said that Allāh would hand them to any of the unmarried men of His choice.¹²⁰

4.6 The Caring Sufis

Although all Sufis were loving and compassionate, Maulānā Naqī'ud-Dīn Awadhī's (d. 835/1431) story is an inspiring one. An extremely pious person (*ba ghāyat muttaqī*), Maulānā Naqī'ud-Dīn Awadhī, despite his preoccupation with saintly pursuits, took his responsibility for his wife and children seriously. Muḥaddis Dihlawī relates an anecdote that once, while the Maulānā was studying a book somewhere at a hidden away place, as was his routine practice, a group of *abdāl* approached him and insisted that he should join their company and live with them (*miyān-e mān bāshū*). To this, the Maulānā's response was that, contrary to them (the *abdāl*) who had no family obligations, he had a wife and children to look after and care for (*man bār-e zan wa farzand dāram*), and therefore it was not possible for him.¹²¹ This two-line anecdote indeed speaks volumes about the marital and family obligations that some of the less-acclaimed Sufis practiced and preached.

Within the plethora of negativity towards women, one also comes across, though rarely, narratives about the Sufis' humane and compassionate attitude towards women. One such account is about Shaikh 'Ala'u'l Ḥaqq bin As'adi Lahori Bangali (d. 800/1398),¹²² a *khalīfa* of the Chishtī Sufi, Shaikh Sirāju'd-Dīn 'Usmān, popularly known as Akhī Sirāj of Pandua, Bengal.¹²³ The story says that once Shaikh 'Ala'u'l Ḥaqq saw his son, Shaikh Nūru'l Ḥaqq, known as Quṭb-i 'Ālam (d. 813/1410),¹²⁴ fetching water and axing wood for fuel for his Khānqāh in Pandua, Bengal. The father, who was also his son's spiritual mentor, told him that instead of doing this labour, he should help women by lifting their heavy water-filled pots at a well where the earth had become too slippery for women to carry the heavy pots. As commanded, Shaikh Quṭb-i 'Ālam continued to perform the task for the next four years twice a day—in the morning and in the afternoon—and helped women, all *nāmḥaram* for him. Similarly, another anecdote relates that Shaikh Quṭb-i 'Ālam once visited an old widow at her

120 Zain Badr 'Arabī Firdawsī (compiler). (*Khawān-i pur nī'mat, malfūz of Sharfu'd-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Yahyā Manerī, Majlis* 34). Patna: Maṭba' Aḥmadī, pp. 80–81.

121 AA, p. 159.

122 For his short biographical sketch, see AA, 139–40.

123 Ibid, pp. 84–85.

124 For his life sketch, see AA, pp. 147–50.

house and discussed with her matters of *dīn*. Coming out of her house with tearful eyes, he is reported to have said that if he would be forgiven, it would be because of this old woman (*baṭufail-i 'ajūza*).¹²⁵ It should be noted here that Shaikh Quṭb-i 'Ālam, a *zāhid* par excellence, was a prolific letter writer, and chose his pen to spread love and devotion for the Divine and rejection of all worldly injustices. In his treatment of women, he taught the essence of *zuhd*.¹²⁶

125 AA, p. 148; also, *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 105.

126 For more on Shaikh Quṭb-i 'Ālam and his treatise on Chishtī mysticism see, S.A. Latif, "Munis-ul Fuqara—A 15th Century Manual on Mysticism" in Davahuti (Edited) *Bias in Indian Historiography*. (pp. 347–351), Delhi: S.K. Publications (1980).

The Sufi Gaze: Interaction with Maidservants and Women of Ill Repute

Women in most societies are constrained to live with little or limited options. These restrictions appear to be harsher as we move backwards in our study of societies structured on male hierarchical authority. Authority and power, though, are concepts prone to fluid perceptions and definitions; however, in essence, they are simply placement of one human being over another in a vertical order. There is very little valid and uncontested historical evidence projecting an egalitarian image that could fit well within the framework of the human rights agenda as it is emerging now. This section, though, is not a critique of the state of human rights in the period under survey here in this book; logically, however, it is within the parameters of this study to look at the interaction that the Sufis had with two other classes of women, the slave girls and maidservants and the prostitutes. The active presence of these two classes of women was a norm of the society as their services brought worldly comfort and ease. Below, under two separate sections, is presented a brief overview of the presence of these two classes of women in the Sufi discourses and their lived experiences.

5.1 *Kanīz/kanīzak*: Slave Girls and Maidservants

Medieval Islamic literature is replete with stories and narratives of maidservants or handmaids bought and sold by persons of means for household jobs as well as for the fulfilment and gratification of sexual needs. Not all bonded or purchased women, though, served their masters' carnal needs. The story of Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya, a slave girl who by virtue of her asceticism and love for Allāh has the most prominent place within the Sufi canon, illustrates it best.¹ As a note of caution, the word *Kanīz/ kanīzak*, a Persian word, carries several meanings which are often used interchangeably. Among these meanings, in addition to its most common usage for a slave girl, are a maidservant, a virgin, and a young girl.

1 Margaret Smith. 1994. *Muslim Women Mystics—The Life and Work of Rābī'a and Other Women Mystics of Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld.

Let me begin this section with a unique story of a different kind of relationship that existed between a Sufi woman and her maidservant. This story is of a maidservant or slave girl who also lived as a companion and as the only other person in the household of Bībī Fāṭima Sām (d. 643/1246), who lived and died in Delhi without a family of her own. A gnostic and renunciate, Bībī Fāṭima Sām earned the deep respect of her contemporary male Sufis who knew her personally, visited her, and spent hours in her company learning from her spiritual discourses. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' once quoted his mentor, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, saying about Bībī Fāṭima Sām that "*mashghūlī ū 'aurat ma dah mard-i kāmīl ast*" (the amount of this one woman's remembrance of Allāh equals that of ten perfect [perfect Sufi] men).² Ḥamid Qalandar, on the authority of Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, narrates that Bībī Fāṭima Sām's maidservant (*kanīzak*) performed a double service. She was a household servant, preparing meals and taking care of Bībī Fāṭima Sām, and also earning money for the Bībī and to support herself. During daytime, she used to earn money by doing some kind of low-paid work (*mazdūrī*) and in the evening would get meals, which according to the narrative appear to have been low-cost meals consisting of barley, home-cooked bread, and some kind of gruel, for Bībī Fāṭima Sām and herself.³ This anonymous *kanīzak* indeed epitomises the best virtues that a friend of Allāh could ever acquire.

References to the use of slave girls and bondmaids for sexual gratification, though rare in the discourses, conversations, and biographies of South Asian Sufi men, do exist. However, the issue of sale, purchase, and having sex and begetting children with them without a marriage contact is discussed in compendiums of religious decrees (*fatāwā*) in response to queries. Thus, for instance, Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz of Delhi (d. 1824) added a separate section named *Risālā bai' kanīzān* (tract on the purchase of slave girls) in his *Fatāwā 'Azīzī*. A scholar of Ḥadīth, *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and a Naqshbandī-Mujaddidiyya Sufi, Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz lists six categories of bondmaids and slaves, their sale, and the permissibility to have sex with them and to have ownership of children born of them. In most cases, the opinions of Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz were in the affirmative.⁴ In response to a disciple's query regarding the permissible number of bondmaids (*mubāḥ bāndiān*) one could possess, his answer was "no limit of the numbers. Whatever might be the number, all are lawful (*jā'iz*)

² *Jamālī*, p. 101.

³ *KM*, *Majlis* 41.

⁴ Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz. 1322/1904. *Fatāwā-yi 'Azīzī* (*ḥiṣṣā awwal*). Dihli: Maṭba' Mujtabā'ī, pp. 67–68, 39, 40; also, Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz Muḥaddis Dihlawī. 1408/1988. *Fatāwā 'Azīzī (Kāmīl)*. Karachi: Sa'īd Company, pp. 557–59.

and allowed (*mubāḥ*).⁵ He also advocated that sexual contact with a bondmaid from lands of war (*dāru'l ḥarb ki launḍī*) was permissible without legal marriage (*ba-dūn nikāḥ ṣuḥbat karna jā'iz hoga*).⁶ The geographical limits of *dāru'l ḥarb*, as visualised by him, spanned from Calcutta to Lahore, excluding areas such as Rampur (state) and Lucknow, places noted for their predominant Muslim social milieu.⁷

References to female slaves of different ages, young and old, emerge as one reads the primary sources of South Asian history, including the Sufi texts. Even when bought explicitly not for the purpose of indulgence in extramarital activities, norms regarding male attitudes towards them remained surprisingly indifferent and lax, even within the environs of a *khānqāh*, a ground specific for training a novice to conquer his *nafs* first before learning other lessons of *taṣawwuf*. Some, however, lost their control by a mere fleeting glimpse of a beautiful *kanīz* even in such places where the very air was filled with *zuhd* and *taqwā*. One such slippage occurred in the serene environment of the *khānqāh* of Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī Qalandarī (d. 639/1249), situated on the banks of the river Yamuna. Pious Sufis, such as Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', had visited this *khānqāh*, one of the earliest ones in Delhi. Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī was known for holding sumptuous feasts (*ziyāfat hā'i shigarf*) and probably had a large kitchen.⁸ In the story narrated by Khwāja Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb in *Aḥsanu'l-aqwāl*, his *malfūzāt* compiled by Ḥammād Kashānī, once when Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī was heading his *langar* (free meal), he saw a *murīd* sitting back and not partaking of the meal. When asked why he was not eating, his answer was, "I would eat only if you give me the *kanīz* of your kitchen (*maṭbakh*) to whom my heart is attracted." To this, the Shaikh said that he would get for him another girl, as this maid was not worthy (*lā'iq*) of him. The man, satisfied with this response, began to gratify his other hunger and began to eat. Later, Abū Bakr Ṭūsī ordered him thrown out for being a liar (*kāzib*) because if he were sincere (*ṣādīq*) in his longing for this slave girl, he would not have been enamoured (*firīfta*) by the offer of another one.⁹ Thus, the fault of the *murīd* was his lack of sincerity and not his impudent demand to have a *kanīz* for himself, even though the *kanīz* was not even aware of this whole transaction. One, however, wonders at the presence of a young *kanīz* in an all-male establishment.

5 Shāh 'Abdu'l 'Azīz, Muḥaddis Dihlawī. 1897. *Malfūzāt Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz*. (Translated by Maulawī 'Azmat Ilāhī). Meerut: Maṭba' Hāshmi, [first published in 1896], p. 53. [Another edition of this book was published in 1960 by Pakistan Educational Publishers Ltd., Karachi].

6 Ibid, p. 53.

7 *Fatāwā 'Azīzī (Kāmil)*. Karachi: Sa'id Company, pp. 122–23.

8 SA, p. 181.

9 *Aḥsanu'l-aqwāl*, p. 73.

The household of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar, though living in acute poverty, had maidservants. An account in *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, although considered not very credible by some, says that one of the wives of the Shaikh, a daughter of Sultan Balban, brought three hundred slave girls with her. The Shaikh told her to return all and chose to retain only two, named Shukro and Shādo, who had royal ancestry (*az nasl-i shahān būd*). According to some sources, considered weak, Shaikh Farīd had children with them also.¹⁰ Another anecdote in *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* relates that once Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn expressed his displeasure when he came to know that the Suhrawardi saint, Shaikh Bahā'ud-Dīn Zakariyya (d. 1262), had beaten his *kanīz* on a mere suspicion of pilfering a small box.¹¹ Shaikh Zakariyya is said to have another *kanīz*, whose ravishing looks and her ways of conversation could make men lose their composure (*hosh*).¹² The story of Bībī Zulaikha, the mother of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and of her *kanīzak* (young slave girl) who ran away and returned due to the former's supplications, is yet another such example.¹³

Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar had amiable relations with one of the slave women of Maulānā Jamālu'd-Dīn Hānswī, a favourite disciple and spiritual deputy of Ganj-i Shakkar. Being a person of great piety (*ba ghāyat ṣāliḥ*), he respectfully used to address her as *mādar-i momīnān* (mother of the Faithful). Often, the Shaikh would communicate with her to enquire about the well-being of Maulānā Jamālu'd-Dīn, conversing in the local dialect. Subsequent to the demise of Maulānā Jamālu'd-Dīn, the Shaikh appointed Jamālu'd-Dīn's young son as his deputy and handed over the *khilāfat nāma*, deputy's regalia, including the *muṣallā* (prayer mat) and *ʿaṣa* (staff) to this slave woman.¹⁴

Some other slave girls were gifted as commodities as part of a bride's trousseau. Thus, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn's mother's slave girl, given to her in her dowry, used to bring food for the young Naṣīru'd-Dīn at his mother's behest.¹⁵ Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz (721/1321–825/1422), compared to the Chishtīs of Delhi, had more resources and perhaps had more maidservants or slave girls in his household. Thus, we are told that he was assisted by a *laundī* (slave girl) in

10 'Alī Asghar Chishtī. *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, pp. 217–218; Najmu'd-Dīn Sulaimānī writes that the saint kept Shādo and Shukro as his *kanīz*. See *Manāqibul Maḥbūbain* (Urdu translation by Iftikhar Ahmad Chishtī). Faisalabad: Chistiyya Academy, 1987. (First published in 1278/1861, Maṭba' Muḥammadi Lahore), p. 93; Ruknu'd-Dīn Nizāmi Dihlawī. 1355/1934. *Ḥayāt Quṭbu'l Aqṭāb y'ānī ḥālāt-i zindagī aur malfūzāt mubārak Quṭbu'l Quṭṭāb Ḥaẓrat Khwājā Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhityār kākī*. Dehli: Kutubkhānā Mahḥbūbī, p. 61.

11 *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 198.

12 *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 266.

13 SA, p. 160.

14 Ibid, pp. 180–183.

15 *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilam*, Majlis Ramazān 10, 802/May 5, 1400, p. 276.

the performance of his *wazū*.¹⁶ Saiyyid Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī, the son and *khalīfā* of Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz, began compiling *Jawāmi'ul'-kilam, malfuẓ* of the Khwāja, in 802/1400 when the Khwāja was nearing the age of eighty years. The *Jawāmi'ul'-kilam* records that on Thursday, 24 Sha'bān 802/19 April 1400, in the session held after the *Chāsht* prayers,¹⁷ “begetting children with the slave girls” was the topic of discussion. The Khwāja, whose first experience of sex was with a slave girl procured specifically for his sexual needs—after great deliberations of the learned and the local physicians and with the approval of his mother—warned his disciples and other devotees not to marry or have children with slave girls (*kanīz*). He argued, in a rather unusually graphic idiom, “To beget children from slave girls is not prudent for a sensible and virtuous man because how could one trust a woman whose trouser-string is not secure for a moment. A child born of such a belly carries thousands of qualms.” Referring to a saying of Caliph ‘Umar in which he is reported to have said that to marry the slave girls because the “Arab’s zeal for honour and the ‘Ajam’s wisdom is present in children born of them,” the Khwāja observed that such women are found nowhere in Hindustan. Compared to the slave girls of Ḥaẓrat ‘Umar’s time, “none is more depraved and lewd than those who come from different small towns and cities of Hindustan; they have neither shame nor honour, nor ability; their proximity ruins sense and nerves. Well, if there is some exigency, it does not matter than as just going to a lavatory is a need. To marry them and have children with them is not what a sensible and a prudent person would do.”¹⁸

Contrary to this disparaging attitude towards young females who have been forced into bondage through adversity and exploitation, a mild apologetic acceptance of slave girls taken as wives comes from the eighteenth-century Chishtī Sufi, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī (d. 1143/1729). Much averse to marriage, Shāh Kalīmu'llah persuaded his disciples to refrain from marriage as he was convinced that marriage causes distraction (*izdiwāj maūjib-i tashwīsh ast*). He himself, on the contrary, got married while still a student (*dar awā'il taḥsīl-i 'ilm azwāj kardā būd*). When the wife passed away and before he could finish his studies, he felt as if a burden was lifted from his heart (*qabl az*

16 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 71; *Wazū* or ablution is a requirement for offering the five daily prayers.

17 *Chāsht*, a supererogatory (*nafl*) prayer is offered between sunrise and meridian.

18 *Majlis* 10, *Shābān* 802, *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilam*, p. 188. It is interesting to note a similar view of Ibn Battuta who also held a low opinion about female slaves found in India and thought that they were low-priced because they were ‘dirty and know nothing of the town manners.’ See *The Rehla of ibn Baṭuṭa* (India, Maldives Islands and Ceylon). Translation and commentary by Mahdi Husain. Baroda: Oriental Institute. 1976, p. 123.

farāgh-i 'ilm az īn bār fāriḡh shud). In a letter to his spiritual deputy in the Deccan, Shāh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aurangābādī (d. 1730) counselled that to have peace and tranquillity (*āsūdagi*) in life, one should marry a woman of reputedly noble lineage (*dar aṣḡalat wa najābat ma'rūf būd*) but from a slightly lower economic class (*dar marṭaba-yi duniyāwī yak darajā kam*). Citing his personal experience, he further wrote that, subsequent to the demise of his wife, who belonged to a respected family, he freed his *kanīz* whom he had bought earlier and married her, lived comfortably (*ārām*) with her, and raised four sons and five daughters. In support of marrying a slave girl after freeing her, he presented an argument that the mothers of Ḥaṣrat Ismā'īl, Ḥaṣrat Zainu'l Ābidīn, Imām Bāqir, and Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq were all bought with money (*hamā diram kharīda būdand*).¹⁹ Thus, by marrying a former slave girl of his household, he claimed that he also earned the merit of following the way of some of the noblest figures of Muslim legacy.

In contrast to the above narratives, few anecdotes also exemplify humane relationship with slaves, particularly with female slaves. Of these, one that best illustrates the God-fearing attribute of the Sufi way is of Ḥasan Sijzi. It is worth noticing that this incident occurred while Ḥasan Sijzi had not yet entered the discipleship of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'.²⁰ The story is about Malīḥ, a slave of Ḥasan Sijzi, whom he freed and brought to the second *Majlis* held on 8 Sh'abān 707/2 February 1308 and who also entered the discipleship of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' in this session.²¹ While in Deogir with Ḥasan Sijzi, this Malīḥ, himself a slave, bought a child bondmaid (*kanīzak bachchā*) for himself for five *tankas*. At the time of the army (*lashkar*) leaving Deogir, the parents of the child weeping and crying, presented ten *tankas* to Malīḥ to buy back their daughter. Ḥasan Sijzi's heart melted at the sight of the parental agony. He bought the little girl by paying ten *tankas* to Malīḥ, and freed and handed the child bondmaid back to her parents. He also gave them ten *tankas* from his own pocket. This story moved Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and his eyes got moistened (*chasm purāb kard*) and he said to Ḥasan Sijzi, "you have done well" (*nekū kardī*).²² Ḥasan Sijzi added that he, while freeing the little slave girl, acted upon the tradition of Maulānā 'Alā'ud-Dīn Uṣūlī. At this, Shaikh

19 Letter no. 107 to Shāh Nizāmu'd-Dīn in Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī. 1315/1897. *Maktūbāt-i Kalīmī*. Dehli: Maktaba-i Muḡtaba'i, pp. 83–84; also, Najmu'd-Dīn Sulaimānī. 1987. *Manāqibu'l Maḡbūbīn* (Urdu translation) p. 121.

20 Ḥasan Sijzi most probably became a disciple of the Shaikh in 706/1306 when he was past fifty years in age. Mas'ūd 'Alī Mahwī. 1352/1933. *Dīwān Ḥasan Sijzi Dihlawī*. Hyderabad, Deccan: Maktaba Ibrāhīmīyā.

21 FF, *Majlis* 2, Sh'abān 8, 707/1308.

22 FF, *Majlis* 52, Ramazān, 11, 718/1318.

Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' narrated the story of Maulānā 'Alā'ud-Dīn Uṣūlī who, moved by the tears of his aged bondmaid whom he had recently purchased in Badayun, freed her and took her to a place from which she could easily find her way to her house.²³

A similar story is repeated in *Akhhāru'l akhyār* under the name of Maulānā Naqī'ud-Dīn Awadhī (d. 835/1431) with little variation. According to this anecdote, once when his female slave whom he had purchased was crying, the Maulānā asked the reason for her grieving. On being told that she was badly missing her children, he took her out of his house in the darkness of midnight and let her go to her home. Next day, finding the slave missing, Maulānā's wife got worried and, hearing the whole episode, got very angry with the Maulānā (*'itāb āghāz kard*). The episode ended on a more celebratory note, when later, the slave woman returned with her children and husband and, bowing down at the feet of the Maulānā, said, "we all are your slaves." The magnanimous Sufi, despite his wife's wrath, in the true spirit of his creed, declared at once, "I set you all free!"²⁴

5.2 Women of Ill Repute

Sufi texts under review have several references to women whom either the Sufi masters and their followers (*murīdīn*) or the scribes of their narratives call *'aurat-i bad karāh* (women with bad deeds). We know well that to oust Sulṭān Raḥīya (1236–1240) from power, and perhaps to erase her name from the public's collective memory, too, the male elites of the court of the Delhi Sultanate took recourse to charge her with moral laxity. Thus, tales of women of bad character require critical evaluation before one accepts the written word. Some anecdotes of women of bad deeds could have been used metaphorically as a parable to highlight their redemption from a life of sin and to demonstrate the perennial strife between good and evil.

In essence, the Sufi message is that the way to return to righteousness and goodness remains open always. The door of repentance and turning towards God (*tawba*) is open for all, including women of ill-repute. Thus, in the Assembly held on 20 Jamādiu'l-awwal 720/1320, the theme of which was *tawba* and the *tā'ib* (repentance and the repentant), Ḥaḥrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' narrated the anecdote of a beautiful public singer (*muṭribā*) who repented (*tā'ib*) before Shaikh Shihābu'd Dīn 'Umar Suhrawardi and afterwards even performed the

23 Ibid *Majlis* 34, *Shawwāl*, 9,714/1315; also, *AA*, p. 76.

24 *AA*, p. 159.

Ḥajj. On her return from the holy K'aba, the governor of Hamadan, despite her resistance, forced her to sing in his court. Finally, when she began to sing and repeated a particular couplet, first the governor and then everyone else present there repented (*tā'ib shud*).²⁵ The moral of the story is that the door of repentance remains open for all and that even a public entertainer who has repented could be the redeemer of men in power who force others to commit acts of sin.

Surprisingly, despite social derogation and religious dictums against women who earned their livelihood through public entertainment, dance performances for male audiences, and sex trade with male clients, we come across incidences of proximity between the Sufis and public entertainers and women considered of bad character. Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb recounts one such tale with some detail in *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl* in section 21, under the heading *dar bayān faẓīlat ittifāq wa iḥsān wa tāṣīr-i ān* (an account of the virtues of harmony and excellence and their effects). As this section is under the heading of *iḥsān*, one of the basic virtues aspired to by a Sufi,²⁶ I would here present the story in some detail, though it would add to the length of the book. A wayfarer arrived at a township where there was no public facility for travellers to stay. People told him of a bad woman (*bad kārāh*) who offered hospitality to whosoever came to the town. The traveller went to her. Serving him food and water, this woman laid out a bed for him to rest and said that if he needed physical comfort, she was available for him (*gar khidmat-i badanī bāshad man hāẓir-am*). The traveller, however, took no advantage of this offer, but at the time of departure he asked her whether she really liked this kind of service. At this, her answer was that as it was her innate intention (*khāṣṣiyat-i niyyat*) to provide comfort (*rāḥat*) to others, therefore, she offers this service (physical comfort). The traveller went away. It so happened that after some time he returned to the same place and, finding this woman nowhere, enquired after her and was told that a rich Saiyyid ('*alawī*) happened to visit the town and stayed at her place. Finding her beautiful, of good actions, and ready to serve (*jamīla wa nikukār wa khidmatgār*), he married her and transferred all his wealth to her, telling her that she could spend as much as she liked in the name of Allāh (*rāh-i ḥaqq*). Concluding this story, the Shaikh sermonised that even a bad woman, through the blessings (*barkat*) of her generosity, munificence (*sakhāwat*), and good intentions (*niyyat-i khūb*), was saved and became the wife of a family member of the Prophet (*farzand-i rasūl*).²⁷ Such an anecdote

25 FF, *Majlis* 11, *Jamādiu'l awwal*, 720/1320.

26 The Qur'an (Sura 7: 56) guides a believer 'For the Mercy of Allāh is (always) near to those who do good' (*iḥsān*).

27 Ḥammādu'd-Dīn Kāshānī, *Aḥsanu'l aqwāl*, pp. 92–93.

could be read as merely symbolic to show the difference between good and bad. A deeper comprehension of such accounts, however, reveals the social ostracisation of women on account of their actual and assumed bad deeds.

A similar anecdote narrated by Khwāja Gīsū Darāz is reported by his son who was present at the session held on 24 Shawwāl 802. The Khwāja, who was highly critical of women of low ancestry, bondmaids, and slave girls as he considered them to be persons of lewd habits, on this occasion told his audience that even a whore (*fāḥisha*) could do deeds that would bestow the Divine Mercy upon her. In this episode, the Khwāja related the actions of a woman of ill-repute in sheltering and feeding a dog, and suffering of the worst kind of scabies. These actions made her and her house immune from fire, while other houses were burnt to ashes.²⁸ (This story could also be read as a much-needed counsel for treating animals with compassion.)

Several centuries later, in the late nineteenth century, Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz of Delhi (1745–1823), when asked to explain a *mas’ala* (legal question) whether offering funeral prayers for the prostitutes or sex workers (*kasbī*)²⁹ was permissible or not, his answer was, “Do you offer funeral prayers for men who are their [prostitutes] clients (*āshnā*)?”³⁰ When the man answered, “yes, we do,” Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz told him, “then, offer the funeral prayers for them [prostitutes] too.”³¹ Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz had rather a soft and humane attitude towards the prostitutes. One incident that illustrates it further concerns a disciple who enquired about the permissibility of accepting food offered by a *dom*³² and a prostitute. Shāh Ṣāhib decreed that anything offered by a *dom* is not permissible (*ḥarām*). However, if an adulteress and lecherous prostitute (*tawā’if*, *zānia*, *fāḥisha*) offers food, purchased by taking a loan, it is permissible (*ḥalāl*).³³ Indeed, Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz was willing to initiate prostitutes as his disciples. For example, in response to a query about initiating prostitutes while engaged in their profession (*kasb*), he referred to one well-known prostitute, Bahjo, who worked in Delhi and, as he said, had great *‘aqīdat* (faith/devotion) and *irādat* (spiritual devotion) for him. Although he was not sure whether she

28 *Sharah Jawāmiu’l-kilam*, Majlis on 24 Shawwāl 802/June 18, 1400, pp. 410–11.

29 The word *Kasbī*, derived from the word *kasb*, which means paid work or profession, is used for artisans, labourers, and also prostitutes, thus listing prostitution in the category of paid work.

30 The word *āshnā* means friends.

31 Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz. *Malfūzāt Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz* (including *Kamālāt-i ‘Azīzī*), 1960, p. 232; Ṣāhiru’d-Dīn Saiyyid Aḥmad. 1872. *Majmuā’ Hālāt-i ‘Azīzī* (*ḥiṣṣā awwal*). Dehli: Maṭba‘ Muḥtabā’ī, p. 8.

32 *Doms* belong to the lowest of the untouchable caste of India.

33 Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz. *Malfūzāt Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz* (including *Kamālāt-i ‘Azīzī*), 1960, p. 125.

was still active in her profession or business (*peshā yā kasb*), her *nauchian* (young harlots) performed their usual work. Explaining further her devotional intensity, he narrated how her eyes would get moistened at the mention of the name of *Sulṭānu'l Mashā'ikh* (Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'), and her condition would undergo a queer change. Narrating another incident, to which he was a witness, he said that while listening to the *qawwāls* reciting some of the couplets of Amīr Khusraw on the death anniversary of Shāh Ghulām Sādāt, Bahjō's condition showed similar changes.³⁴ An anecdote narrated by Shāh Abdul 'Azīz is reported by his grandson, Saiyyid Zahiru'd Dīn, in which a certain man who died in Delhi appeared in the dream of another man and asked him to go to his daughter and tell her to give something in charity for his redemption. This man looked for this daughter and found out that she had become a prostitute. With great difficulty, finally he reached her while she was having fun in a pond with men. When she received her dead father's message, in anger she threw some water at this man. The father appeared in this man's dream again and was told that his daughter had turned into a bad woman. The father said, "Well this is her doing ('*amal*); when she threw water, some drops went into the mouth of a thirsty animal. On account of this, Allāh has bestowed great merits upon me."³⁵ The moral of the story brings out the merits of good.

34 Ibid, p. 122. Shāh Ghulām Sādāt Chishtī was one of the teachers of Ḥazrat Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī, see Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī. *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī*. (Urdu translation by Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi). Lahore: Urdu Science Board (2001) p. 155, 515.

35 Maulawī Zahiru'd Dīn Saiyyid Aḥmad, 1348/1929. *Ḥālāt-i 'Azīzī* (*ḥiṣṣā awwal*) Dehli: Maṭba' Muḥtabā'ī, p. 7.

Women's Presence in Sufi *Silsilas*

This chapter studies three aspects of women's presence within the Sufi hierarchical institutions organized and managed as *silsilas*: at the beginner's level, i.e., their initiation as disciples (*murīda/murīd*); women's presence within the Sufi hierarchy as *khalīfas* with authority to teach, instruct, and enroll disciples; and their presence in the *khānqāhs* and Sufi lodges. Women's initiation in the Sufi *ṭarīqa*, similar to the issue of women's testimony in legal affairs, has caused dichotomy among the Muslim jurists and the scholars. In light of Ibn al-ʿArabi's (d. 638/1240) comment that there were women among the highest rank of the Sufis, i.e., the forty *abdāl*, the general attitude of the Sufis restricting women's initiation appears perplexing and therefore calls for further investigation.¹

The Sufi *silsilas* at their core were male institutions; their intrinsic organisational pattern with the appointment of successors, conferment of *walāya*, and a well-managed system of keeping a close watch on the activities of the *murīdīn*, *khalīfas*, and in some cases on the income through unsolicited donations and grants (*futuḥ*), all bespeak of a well-respected and superbly managed system that can aptly be compared with the administrative systems of kingdoms and sultanates. Similar to the ruling dynasties, each *silsila* followed a *ṭarīqa* (spiritual path) created by a Shaikh and, hence, bore his name. Again, falling within similar power dynamics that are common within these two opposite male power domains, the Sufi *silsila* also go through division and bifurcation; this divisiveness mostly remains couched in the name of spiritual inspiration, though cases of severe conflicts are also known and are on record. Similar to the political-military boundaries of empires, the Sufi's jurisdiction (*wilāyat*) was specific and well-marked. Thus, a man named ʿAbdullah Rūmī, before setting out on a journey from Ajodhan to Multan, requested Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar to pray for his safe journey as the route was dangerous. The Shaikh, as narrated in *Fawa'id al-fuād* of Ḥasan Sijzi, told him that his jurisdiction ends at a certain spot where there was a pond and from there onwards begins the territory of Shaikh Baha'u'd-Dīn Zakariyya (*az ānjah tā ba Multān dar 'uhda-yi Shaikh Baha'u'd-Dīn ast*).² Another example that illustrates

1 Muhiyuddin Ibn al-ʿArabi. *Al-futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, vol. 2, Cairo, 1911, pp. 277–78, cited in Buehler, Arthur E. 1998. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Meditating Sufi Shaykh* University of South Carolina Press, p. xxiv.

2 FF, Majlis 16th, 9, *Jamādiu'l awwal*, 714/ 1314.

the spiritual jurisdictions of the Sufis comes from *Fathu'l-awliya'* and which is discussed by Carl Ernst in the context of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliya' assigning territories to his spiritual disciples.³ Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, upon whom Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliya' conferred the spiritual domain of the Deccan, in turn bestowed the *wilāyat* of Mongipattam and Khandesh upon Ḥaṣrat 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Ziya' (d. 801/1398–1399), the grandson of Bībī 'Āi'shā, supposedly the daughter of Shaikh Faridu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar, at the time of his birth.⁴ The anecdote of Ḥaṣrat 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Ziya' is reminiscent of courtly tales in which the heir apparent was appointed while still in the breast-feeding stage. Thus, even the spiritual charisma, according to these anecdotes, had geographical frontiers, and the Sufi masters wielded the power of appointing their deputies.

Indeed, the terminologies common in describing the power structure of the above two institutions of worldly and spiritual authority—such as *darbār* (court of a king), *shāh* (emperor), *bādshāh* (king), *shāhinshah* (king of kings), *gaddī* (seat/throne), and *gaddī-nishīnī* (occupying the seat/throne), and several other similar ones—are idioms of power and hierarchy and not of *faqr* (poverty) and *zuhd* (renunciation). Both systems were governed by normative texts which codified laws (*ā'm*) and etiquettes and manners (*ādāb*) which closely guarded its members who were primarily males; women's presence was subject to the exigency of and approval by the male authority of the system. Hence, naming of the *silsilas* after the names of their male founders came in vogue. Thus, in the history of Sufism, there exists not one single *silsila* commemorating the name of a woman Sufi.

6.1 Women's Initiation (*Bai'at*)⁵

Taking or administering an oath of allegiance to a leader is an oral tradition in most tribal societies. However, since the beginning of the new community life in Madina, this oath of allegiance to the Prophet not only sanctified oath-taking but also expanded its meanings to include not just allegiance to a leader but to the new social order rooted in the concept of *tawhīd* and *taqwā*. The women's oath of allegiance (*bai'at-i nisā'*) at al-Aqaba, which has emerged as

3 Carl W. Ernst. 1992. *Eternal Garden. Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. New York: SUNY, pp. 235–36.

4 Rawnaq 'Alī. 1326/1908. *Rawḥatu'l-aqṭāb al-m'arūf ba Mazhar-i Āṣafi*. Aurangābād: Maṭba' Mu'in-i Daccan, p. 229.

5 I have opted for the spellings *bai'at* and not *bai'ah*, except in quotes, as *bai'at* is a familiar term in South Asia.

a “recurrent theme in the biographies of female Companions,”⁶ has inspired several shifting explanations, some even commenting that it reflects women’s lower position as compared to that of men. Although different views are given regarding the administering of the oath by the Prophet to women,⁷ the method of administering the oath to women is based on two sources: the Qur’ān (60:12) and the Ḥadīth. The Qur’ān says:

O Prophet! When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allāh, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter,—then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allāh for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.⁸

The above verse (Sura al-Mumtahana, 60:12) refers to women’s oath of allegiance to the Prophet in Madina to become part of the Muslim community.⁹ As related by Ḥaẓrat ‘Ā’isha, the Prophet’s wife, when administering the oath of allegiance, the Prophet did not touch the hands of women. Ibn Ishāq also endorses this when he writes,

The Prophet never used to take the women’s hands [when they gave their oath of allegiance to him]; he did not touch a woman nor did one touch him except one whom God had made lawful to him or was one of his wives.¹⁰

6 Asma Sayeed. 2013. *Women and the transmission of religious knowledge in Islam*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 56–57.

7 For details, see Asma Asfaruddin. 2010. ‘Early women exemplars and the construction of gender space (re) defining feminine moral excellence.’ In *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Space*. Edited by Marilyn Booth. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 23–48; also, Aisha Geissinger. 2015. *Gender and Muslim Constructions of Exegetical Authority: A Rereading of the Classical Genre of Qur’ān Commentary*. Leiden: Brill.

8 *The Holy Qur’an, Text, Translation & Commentary* by Yusuf Ali. Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf.

9 Barbara F Stowasser. 2005. ‘Women and Citizenship in the Qur’an.’ In *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. Edited by Haideh Moghissi. London [u. a.]: Routledge, pp. 180–94.

10 Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo. 2010. *A Sufi Study of Ḥadīth: Haqiqat al-Tariqa min as Sunna al-Aniqa*. London: Turath Publishing, p. 33; also, Quoted by Marion Holmes Katz. 2002. *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity*. Albany:

Women, though viewed as a hurdle in a male Sufi's path, were still enrolled as disciples. Ẓiyā'u'd-Dīn Baranī (1285–1357), whose grave is next to that of Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), describes how people of all descriptions and vocations came to Ghiyaspur, the hospice of the Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' (1238–1325) in the suburbs of Delhi.¹¹ Barani refers to the special arrangements that were made to facilitate the travellers which included construction of raised platforms (*chabūtra*) with straw canopies (*chappar*), water wells for drinking and for ablution purposes, and even beddings for rest. Though Barani does not directly refer to women travellers here, the word *mardumān* (people) in this description indicates the inclusion of women. Women could come to his *khānqāh* even after sunset for taking the oath of allegiance. The discourse of the 20th Assembly held on 27 Jamādiu'l ākhir 708/1308 in *Fawa'idu'l-fu'ād* is a significant one, because on that evening a woman presented herself to seek an oath of allegiance (*bai'at*).¹² At this occasion, the Shaikh's comments on the numerous benefits that accrue from the virtues of women (*dar samara-yi ṣalāḥiyat-i 'aurat bisyār*) show not only that the Shaikh endorsed women's initiation but that he did not object to women taking the oath of allegiance and initiated them. Ḥasan Sijzi, the scribe, does not tell us whether other women were present at this Assembly or whether this woman arrived alone or was accompanied by male members of her family. The Shaikh commented that "dervishes who ask saintly women and saintly men to intercede on their behalf, remember saintly women first because they are so rare (*aṅkih nek zanān gharīb bashand*)"—a recognition that women have and can attain saintly virtues. Then he added, "When a lion comes out [of the jungle], no one asks whether it is male or female. Thus, what matters is that the children of Adam, whether they be men or women, must be known for their devotion [to Allāh] and piety."¹³ One wonders how different would have been my narrative if these words were put into practice and more women were initiated.

The practice of women becoming disciples (*murīd*) of the Chishtī *sil-sila* continued during the time of the second Chishtī Shaikh of Delhi, i.e., Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 1356). Thus, a learned man (*dānish-mand*), who was one of the disciples of the Shaikh (*bandagān-i Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm*) and who taught Qur'ān to children, came from the village of Sahalī¹⁴

State University of New York Press, p. 247; also, see Ruth Roded. 1994. *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections*: pp. 24–25.

11 Ẓiyā Barani 1862. *Tārikh-i Firūz Shāhī*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, p. 344.

12 *FF*, *Majlis* 20, 27 *Jamādiu'l Ākhir*, 708/1308.

13 *FF*, *Ibid*.

14 Later, one of the families of these disciples from Sahalī became the founders of the famous *madrassa* of Farangi Mahall of Lucknow.

to the Thirty-Second Assembly of the Shaikh and informed him that most people of his area, including women, were the Shaikh's *murīd* (*zanān ham-paiwand*). He also said that though men were mostly righteous (*ṣāliḥ*), women were more righteous than men were (*zanān-i ānjā ṣāliḥ tar and az mardān*). Hearing this, Ḥāmid Qalandar, the scribe of *Khairu'l Majālis*, the Shaikh's *malfūz*, submitted that this virtue (of women) as being of high spirituality was due to the blessings of the Shaikh's discipleship.¹⁵ Unfortunately, we have no record to show either when or how many women were enrolled as disciples in the Chishtī *silsila* under Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Din Maḥmūd. What we do know is that a fairly large number of women were enrolled by the Shaikh. More important is that the topic of women's enrolment and their greater steadfastness as virtuous and devout persons was brought up and noticed in an all-male assembly. Neither the Shaikh nor anyone else present at the session objected to women's discipleship. On the contrary, women's virtues of being righteous (*ṣāliḥ*) were interpreted as an outcome of the blessings of their discipleship.

Later, in the narrative of the Fortieth Assembly of *Khairu'l Majālis*, which is devoted to the initiation of an anonymous woman followed by a brief exposition of *ba'at*, Ḥāmid Qalandar records the rules of initiation for women, which is the first detailed account of a woman being initiated as a disciple of the Chishtī *silsila*.¹⁶ In this narrative, a woman could not present herself, but through a man (*ba-jihat-i kas rā*) requested Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Din Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī to include her in his circle of *murīds*. This occasioned the exposition of Sufi perception of administering the oath of allegiance to women, even by proxy. The Shaikh asked someone to fetch a small earthen bowl filled with water (*kūzā-yi āb*). He recited some verse of the Qur'ān over it, which was not audible to those present there. He then dipped his finger of testimony (*angusht-i shāhādat*) into this water and asked the man to take the bowl to the woman who had requested initiation. He directed the man to convey to the woman that "after giving my salutations to her (*salām-i man*), tell her to immerse her index finger into this bowl of water, uttering these words, 'I have now submitted myself to such person (*man mutābi' falan*).'" Then she should say her prayers, fast on the *ayyām-i bīd*, except during the days marked with exemption (*ayyām-i 'uzr*).¹⁷ She should also make a commitment of

15 KM, *Majlis* 32.

16 KM, *Majlis* 40; also, see section titled *ba'at nisā bā mashā'ikh and ṭarīqa ba'at zananān bā mashā'ikh* in Ruknu'd-Dīn Dabīr Kāshānī. *Shamā 'ilu' l atqiyā'* [Virtues of the devout], ed. Saiyyid 'Aṭā' Ḥusain. Hyderabad: Maṭbū' Ashraf Press, 1347/1929, pp. 48–49.

17 *ayyām-i bīd*, which means white days, are days when fasts are kept on the 13th, 14th, and 15th nights of each lunar month; *ayyām-i 'uzr* refers to the days of menstruation when a Muslim woman is exempted from keeping fasts during these days.

being gracious (*niyāz*) to her servants and bondmaids (*ghulām wa kanizak*) and not maltreat or hurt them (*lat na kuni*). She should also be polite to her relatives and all others (*bā ahl wa bā hama*). Adding more to the subject, the Shaikh further elucidated that there were two types of *bai'at*: *bai'at-i Islam* and *bai'at-i irādat*.¹⁸ While in the first case, conditions for women neophytes are more than those for men; in the second one, these are the same for both men and women. The Shaikh, apparently was referring to women's pledge to the Prophet at Madina because next he recited *Sura al-Mumtahana* and narrated the Prophet's Tradition of administering the oath to women and explained that according to some, the Prophet used to cover his noble hand in his mantle from Yemen before shaking hands with women. He then added that some Traditions say that *Amīru'l mu'minīn* Ḥaẓrat 'Alī (ra) used to do the handshake on behalf of the Prophet.¹⁹ The Hadith or the narrator of the Tradition, however, was not identified by Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Din Maḥmūd. The Fortieth Assembly of *Khairu'l Majālis* is the first account of the ceremony of administering an oath of allegiance by a Shaikh to a woman. The ceremony was witnessed by all the male members present, who also assisted in the process by fetching the water bowl or by acting as a transmitter of the Shaikh's message to the woman concerned. This recorded incidence of an anonymous woman's oath of allegiance is a primary signifier in the understanding of the later history of women's initiation in the Sufi *silsilas* of South Asia.

The conditions of initiation by Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Din Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī consist of three sets of behaviour incumbent and mandatory for a woman novice: first, submission to the Shaikh; second, performance of the basic religious obligations; and third, respect for human dignity with no distinctions of cadre and status. Thus, the path that a neophyte had to follow was a path of humility and self-effacement and not of arrogance and snobbery. Next, not only was it necessary for the woman to remain anonymous but it was not considered essential to announce her name or unveil her identity either during the oath-taking ceremony or later on. Similarly, the man who played a key role in this episode of oath of allegiance is not only anonymous but his relationship with the woman concerned is not considered important. Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Din Maḥmūd did not even make it mandatory for the woman novice to present herself before the Shaikh even at a later time. Once the essentials

18 *Irādat*, an Arabic word with the literal meaning of desire or inclination, in Sufi *Adāb* (manuals) is a term for the intention to become a disciple of a Sufi Shaikh, the requirements of which are breaking all relations with other than God. See Nicholson, p. 199; also, *Hujwīrī*, p. 245.

19 *KM, Majlis* 40.

of the ceremony were over, the bond of discipleship was tied and the woman joined the group of his *atbāʿ* through the Blessed connection of following the Prophet. Finally, and most importantly, despite the obviously different method of administering the oath to a woman disciple, Shaikh Naṣīruʿd-Din Maḥmūd categorically declared that conditions for an oath of allegiance for a man and a woman are equal (*dar baiʿt irādat sharāʿit-i mardān wa zanān masāwī ast*).

Contrary to Shaikh Naṣīruʿd-Din Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī's practice of initiating women into his *silsila*, his disciple and *khalīfa*, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422) did not encourage this practice, though he did initiate women as his disciples and followed the same method as his Shaikh did.²⁰ If someone wants to be a soldier, he cannot evade the sword or bow and arrow, he argued, and for one who desires to be a scholar, there is no escape for him from the pen, inkpot, and paper. Thus, he emphasised that, similarly, "If a person wishes to be a Sufi, he then has to hold the skirt of a Sufi (*sufi kā daman pakrñā paṛegā*)."²¹ His *khānqāh* in Gulbarga, Deccan, a well-maintained and well-funded Sufi establishment as compared to the austere *khānqāh*'s of his Chishtī mentor in Delhi, was visited by large number of devotees and supplicants of all faiths and social stature with gifts in cash and kind. The Shaikh was also of the view that, compared to his time, initiation into the Sufi *silsilas* was not frequent in earlier days. Also, if one became a follower of one particular Shaikh, he would be free to receive instructions from the other Sufis as well.²² These rules, however, were mostly for the males. Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, unlike his Chishtī mentors, was opposed to the initiation of women as disciples. Thus, among the various other things that the Khwāja highly disapproved of, one was that of anyone presenting a woman, a child, or a *murīd* of some other Sufi, before him for the purpose of seeking initiation and guidance. As noted by 'Abdu'l 'Azīz b. Sher Malik b. Muḥammad Wā'izī in his *Tarīkh-i Ḥabībī wa Tazkira-yi Murshidī* which he completed in 849/1445,²³ that on such occasions, the Khwāja always used to comment, "I have always regretted (*nadāmat*) instructing these three types of people (*sih ṭāʿifa*). I have enough experience of them all." In the end, he argued, "there is nothing but displeasure (*takaddur*) and annoyance. I know

20 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, pp. 83–84.

21 *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilām*, Majlis held on 28 Rajab, 802/March 25, 1400, p. 92.

22 Ibid, 7 *Shabʿān*, 802/ April 3, 1400, p. 114.

23 'Abdu'l 'Azīz b. Sher Malik b. Muḥammad Wā'izī, a scholar, was a disciple of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz's grandson and successor Yadu'llah Ḥusainī and completed the book while the latter was still alive. For reference to his little-known life and scholarly works, see Nazir Ahmad. 1973. "An old Persian Treatise of the Bahmani Period," in *Journal of the Indo-Iran Society*, 4 (4): pp. 11–34.

it too well that this matter is not free of suffering loss and damage (*khusrān*).²⁴ He did not explain what caused this annoyance and displeasure and what was this loss or damage. Gīsū Darāz's *malḥūz*, which his eldest son and *khalīfa*, Saiyyid Akbar Ḥusainī, began to compile in 802 H, and whose contents were approved by the Khwāja himself, provides further details of the causes of the Khwāja's displeasure and annoyance. Gīsū Darāz narrated an incident which probably happened in Delhi, that once he began giving *talqīn*²⁵ to an elderly, educated woman, a disciple of his Shaikh, Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī. The woman, however, instead of concentrating on the Divine, began enticing (*'ishqbāzī*) the Shaikh. Recalling this incident, the Shaikh said, "The Shaikhs were correct in saying that one should not instruct children and women. Also, one should not accept his own wife as his disciple." Giving reasons for not accepting a wife as *murīd*, the Shaikh's argument sounds more a traditional hard-core misogynic argument than a pedagogical one. The Shaikh said that the mischief (*kharābī*) in making one's wife a *murīd* is that even if she is obedient and subservient (*muṭīʿ wa farmān-bardār*) to her husband, she cannot have the same respect and regard (*nisbat*) for her husband as a *murīd* has with his *pīr*. He admitted that he, however, did initiate his wife, but later felt abashed and regretted it (*pashīmān*). This experience proves (*tajriba*), he argued further, that whatever the great *Shaikhs* (*mashā'ikh-i'uzzām*) have mandated, it is not without wisdom (*khālī az ḥikmat*) and that whoever contradicts (*khilāf-warzī*) these rules is humiliated.²⁶ One is left wondering what his wife did to him to cause him such great repentance and humiliation that he could not forget it even in the closing years of his life, after a marital life of more than forty years which produced a large number of children and grandchildren. Did he not remember the Qur'ān which says that married couples are like garments to each other (Surah 2:187) and they, in addition to sexual relationships, also protect each other as a vestment protects the body? Finding fault with his parda-observing wife's behaviour while depriving the audience of her side of the story sounds like accusation which does not fall in line with the humility and patience expected of a Sufi of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz's stature.

Despite Khwāja Gīsū Darāz's disapproval of initiating women, a large number of devotees, including women, visited his *khānqāh* each day and many of them sought his allegiance. For the initiation of women, he followed strict rules of segregation. If the woman was a veiled one (*'aurat mastūra*), a curtain

24 *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, p. 112.

25 *Talqīn az-zikr*, the teaching of the formula of recollection of Allāh, is a foundational training of a novice Sufi.

26 *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilam*, Sh'abān 12, 802/April 8, 1400, p. 139.

(*chādar*) was drawn between him and the woman. In most such cases, he made sure that a *maḥram* of the woman was also present during the process. All those who came to seek allegiance had to place some offerings before the saint. The followers were instructed to bring dry fuel wood, rice and lentil, curd, salt, and money to cover the cost of free meals (*kandūrī*).²⁷ Probably, women *murīds* were exempted from these offerings and payments, though it is not mentioned. The only difference between the performance of *bai'at* of a man and a woman novice, says the author of *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadi*, was of shaking hands and the use of scissors (*miqrāz*); both were not used for women and thus women's heads were not shaved. In addition, instead of placing a *kulāh* (hat), a scarf or a handkerchief was placed on a woman novice's head.²⁸

Once an initiation has taken place, a life-long bond is established between the Shaikh or *pīr* (meaning an old person and in this context the founder of a Sufi *silsila*) and the *murīd* (disciple) and lasts beyond the physical demise of the Shaikh. Once Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recalled how his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakkar, while forgiving the Khwāja for his involuntary utterances which had displeased the Shaikh, commented that the Shaikh is the (bride) dresser of disciple (*pīr mashshaṭa-yi murīd ast*). In other words, the Shaikh polishes, chisels, and fashions a new person out of the person who originally came to him.²⁹ Thus, initiation in a Sufi *silsila* in simple terms is like enrolment in a learning institution which, in the case of Sufism, is embodied in an individual, i.e., the Sufi. The Master guides the disciple to the Real Path (*rāh-i ḥaqq*) which finally results in his salvation and saves him from the punishment of hell fire (*ʿaẓāb-i dozakh*), as explained by Khwāja Gīsū Darāz.³⁰

Whereas initiation (*bay'a* or *bai'at*) of men in Sufi *silsilas* involved various ceremonies and rituals, performed in the presence of other members of the fraternity in the *khānqāh* of the Shaikh, the same was not practiced for women. How the Prophet's Tradition was practiced by the Sufis in South Asia and perhaps elsewhere is discussed below. The discourses on *bai'at* in the primary texts reflect the rules that were expounded by Shaikh 'Umar Suhrawardī (539/1145–632/1234) in his Arabic treatise on Sufi etiquettes *ʿAwārifu'l-ma'ārif* which continues to be widely read in South Asia. Even a cursory glance at these rules shows that Suhrawardī was setting the manual for men and not for

27 Shāh Muḥammad 'Alī Sāmānī. 1427 H, *Siyar-i Muḥammadi* (*Siyar-i Muḥammadiya tarjama al-ma'rūf, Tuḥfah al-Aḥmadī* by Shāh Nazīr Aḥmad. Allahabad: Yūnāni Dawakhāna Press, 1928), pp. 74–84.

28 Ibid, p. 33.

29 FF, *Majlis* 25, 9 *Ramāzān*, 708 H.

30 *Sharah Jawāmiu'l-kilām, Majlis* 27 *Ziqad*, 802/July 20, 1400, p. 463.

women. The most important *adāb* (etiquette) for the novice is to submit to the authority of the Shaikh, giving up all his choices in matters relating to his life. For most women, this would not have been practical in view of the dynamics of patriarchal society that curtails women's decision-making status. Next, the *murshid* and the *murīd* must hold their right hands. After the completion of the ceremony in which both declare their new teacher-disciple relationship, the disciple must kiss the right hand of the *murshid* and of the other saintly persons present there.³¹ Obviously, this was not meant for women.

As initiation into Sufism was largely viewed as a male prerogative, therefore all the Sufi manuals and discourses have a male audience in mind while explicating the practice of initiation of a novice. Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd, thus, laid down the first three basic rules for someone who seeks entry into the Sufi way, i.e., he should get his sleeves shortened, get the hem of his shirt shortened, and get his head shaved. The Shaikh argued that as under each hair there lives a Satan, therefore, shaving of the head means destroying Satan's house (*sar tarāshīda goyā khānā-yi shaitān kharāb kard*).³² Obviously, these rules were not for women.

There are instances showing male Sufi's preparedness not only to enrol women as their disciples but to adopt practices that were akin to women's ways of living. Shaikh 'Īsā Jundu'llah Sindhi of Burhanpur (962/1555–1031/1622) of the Shatṭārī *silsila* not only initiated a fairly good number of women as his disciples, but he is the only one credited for introducing a novel method of recognising and honouring women.³³ At the time of initiation, he used to give his women disciples, instead of the *kulha* or the hat, a scarf made of four yards of fabric. On this scarf, after *Bismillah* and the *Kalīmā-yi ṭayyaba*, the name of the woman disciple, her father's name, and the date of initiation were inscribed by Bābā Sattār (b. 983/1575), Shaikh 'Īsā's eldest son and successor. Shaikh 'Īsā respected and honoured women's practice of veiling and did not define it as a sign of their subordination or as a pretext for excluding them from the Sufi circles.³⁴

No one comes close to Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī (d. 1142/1729), one of the last doyens of the Chishtī *silsila* in Delhi, in his earnest efforts to enrol

31 Suhrawardī, 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Maḥmūd b. 'Alī al-Kāshānī, and Henry Wilberforce Clarke. 1891. *The 'Awārifū'l-ma'ārif, written in the thirteenth century*. Calcutta: Government of India Central Printing Office, pp. 160–164.

32 KM, *Majlis* 15.

33 For his biography, see Saiyyid Muḥammad Maṭī'u'llah Rāshid Burhanpurī. 1957. *Burhanpur ke Sindhi Awliyā'*. Haidrabad: Sindhi Adabi Board.

34 Ibid, pp. 99–100.

women as disciples.³⁵ Of his 123 letters addressed to his disciples, those written to his *khalīfa* in the Deccan, Shāh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aurangābādī (d. 1142/1730) and which are aptly described by Nizami as the soul of all his letters,³⁶ talk about women's initiation as part of Shāh Kālīmu'llah's call for the Truth (*d'āwat-i ḥaqq*).³⁷ As these letters, in his words, were the rules of conduct (*dastūru'l 'amal*)³⁸ for his disciples, his insistence on initiating women of all ages and appearances—old or young, good looking or ugly—becomes a significant call for women's initiation. Under-age children should not be initiated, he warned, because at times it might be fatal to them in view of certain spiritual meditative exercises. To women the message of Truth (*Ḥaqq*), however, must reach without any delay and they should be instructed (*talqīn*).³⁹ In doing so, he warned Aurangābādī, all precautions must be taken. Women should be treated as *muḥarrimāt* (things prohibited)⁴⁰ and therefore long hours of privacy with young women must be avoided as this causes trouble for men (*kih mūjib-i fitnā mardum*). He also reminded that touching an unrelated woman is unlawful (*mas-i ajnabiya ḥarām ast*)⁴¹ and time spent with a woman in privacy causes ill-fame and brings one close to Satan.⁴² Shāh Kālīmu'llah Jahanābādī's continual emphasis on women's initiation, however, is not reflective of his soft attitude towards women. Women, he said, should be instructed (*'aurat rā talqīn bayad kard*) but at the same time one should seek protection from their deceit and avoid their trickery.⁴³ Ḥaẓrat Mazhar Jān-i Jānān followed almost a unique method of transmitting his spiritual attention (*tawjjuh*) to his female disciples. The wife of Ghulām Muṣṭafa Khan, one of his spiritual deputies who was also a friend of Shāh Walīullah Dihlawī, was also a *murīda* of Ḥaẓrat Mazhar. Instead of visiting him for instructions in his *khānqāh*, she used to sit daily at an appointed time in her own house to seek attention in absentia of the Master. A servant was sent to let the Shaikh know that she was in attendance. One day, a certain man, her employee, arrived and informed the Master that she was in

35 For a biography of Shāh Kālīmu'llah Jahanābādī, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Ḥaẓrat Shāh Kālīmu'llah Dihlawī*. Dehli: Maktaba Burhān (1946), pp. 20–22.

36 Ibid, p. 38.

37 Letter No. 21 in Shāh Kālīmu'llah *Dihlawī*. 1315/1897. *Maktūbāt-i Kālīmī*. Dehli: Maktabā Mujtabai', pp. 24–25.

38 Ibid, Letter No. 96, p. 73.

39 Ibid, Letter No. 35, p. 37; also, Letter No. 42, p. 41.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid, Letter No. 21, p. 25.

42 Ibid, Letter No. 44, p. 43.

43 Ibid, Letter No. 42, p. 41; the story is narrated by Mirzā Aḥmad Akhtar in his *Tazkira Awliyā'-yi hind (jild som)*. Dehli: Muir Press (n. d.), p. 119.

attendance, but Ḥaẓrat Mazhar at once knew that the man was not telling the truth and had come without his mistress's permission.⁴⁴

Shāh Waliullah Dihlawī (d. 1762), the eighteenth-century Sufi reformer of Delhi, in his *al Qawlu'l-jamīl* (written in Arabic in 1733), discussed various Sufi *silsilas* and the practices of initiation, emphasising that initiation was a *sunna* of the Prophet and therefore was not *wājib*.⁴⁵ Regarding women's *ba'at*, he wrote that instead of touching the Shaikh's hand, the woman should hold one end of a piece of cloth and the Shaikh, the other end. Perhaps to ward off several social evils that plagued the eighteenth-century South Asian Muslim community, Shāh Waliullah also suggested that only verbal *ba'at* was permissible for women.⁴⁶ This is not to suggest that he or his Sufi *silsila*, i.e., the *Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī silsila*, discouraged women's initiation. Referring to several disciples of his father, Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm (d. 1719), a Naqshbandī Sufi, Shāh Waliullah, in a section titled *mashā'ikh-i Naqshbandīyya ke ashghāl* (mystical exercises of the Naqshbandī Masters), narrates an incredible story of one of his female disciples.⁴⁷ Sharīfa Khatūn, daughter of one Muḥammad Fāẓil, is recorded by Shāh Waliullah in *Anfāsu'l 'Ārifīn* (Voices of the Gnostics). She excelled even male disciples in holding her breath and repeating *ism-i zāt* (reciting the name of the Essence, or Allāh) at least one thousand times or even more.⁴⁸ According to this anecdote, Sharīfa Khatūn was no ordinary disciple; despite her young age and her gender, she had absorbed the complete reflection of her Shaikh.⁴⁹

The stance of the Deoband School of scholars of Naqshbandī background in the late nineteenth century on *taṣawwuf* and *pīr-murīd* relationship emerged even more constricting in terms of women. The two founders of the Deoband Madrasa (founded in 1866), Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (1829–1905) and Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānotwī (1833–1877), excelled and outnumbered other Muslim scholars in the issuance of *fatāwā* (sing. *fatwa*) and thus reached a wider audience in propagating their interpretation of Islam and its jurisprudence. Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī's *fatāwā* issued in response to questions asked by Muslims about women are few (the book does not recognize the

44 Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī. 1309/ 1892. *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī*. Dihli: Maṭba'-'i Mujtabā'ī, p. 57.

45 Shāh Waliullah Dihlawī, and Khurram 'Alī. 1970. *Shifā'al-'alīl: tarjuma-yi Qawl al-jamīl*. Lahore: Islami Academy, p. 22.

46 Ibid, p. 41.

47 For the life of Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm, see *Anfāsu'l 'Ārifīn* by his son, Shāh Waliullah Dihlawī (Delhi: Maṭba' Aḥmadi, 1315/1897).

48 *Shifā'al-'alīl*, p. 93. This mystical exercise is performed by repeating the name of Allāh while holding your breath.

49 See biographical notice on Sharīfa Khatūn in Part 2 of this book.

gender of the person seeking the *fatwa*, but it is assumed that all were males), but even these express a traditional patriarchal approach. For example, in response to two separate questions on women's *bai'at*, Gangohī declared that "in the opinion of the Sufi's (*ahl-i taṣawwuf*), women's *bai'at* is not permissible, albeit to instruct someone a *shughl* (inward engagement of a Sufi) or *wazifa* (silent recitation of Qur'ānic verses)."⁵⁰ In support of his argument, he then quoted at some length from a letter of his sixteenth-century ancestor and spiritual mentor, 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī (d. 1537).⁵¹ While Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī rigidly rejected women's initiation into the Sufi *silsilas* (though he did initiate women by proxy and after great persuasion), he continued treating women for their various ailments, including gynecological ailments, by giving medicines, particularly for easing labour pains.⁵² Paying tribute to his acumen in providing treatment to female patients with child-birthing difficulties, Gangohī's biographer, Meeruthī, records that in this process, Gangohī was not assisted by a *qāblā* (midwife) nor did he examine the *qārūra* (urine test tube) of the female patient. To avoid even a verbal contact with the female patient, he did not let her speak about her ailment. What he did was to feel the pulse of the patient, which meant touching their wrist with his fingers.⁵³ Meeruthī relates how on two occasions Gangohī, after initial hesitation, agreed to initiate two women, one a commoner and the other royalty. In the first case, while still a young man, a woman persisted in seeking *bai'at* at his hands which he initially refused. Finally, his spiritual mentor, Ḥājī 'Imādadullah Makkī (1817–1899), took him to the woman's house where, with a perspiring and blushing face, he bowed to the request of the woman and granted her *bai'at*.⁵⁴ The second is the case of the *bai'at* of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, the ruler of the Bhopal State. Before going for Ḥājī, Sultan Jahan Begum wanted to perform *bai'at* at the hands of Ḥājī 'Imādadullah Muhājir Makkī. However, before this could be done, he passed away. She then decided to approach his disciple, Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, by sending him at least two letters. Gangohī agreed in

50 Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. *Fatāwā-yi-Rashīdiyya (Kamil) Fiqh Ḥanafī kā Anmol Khazīnāh*. Karachi: Dāru'l Ishā'at, n. d., p. 72, 79.

51 AA, pp. 215–17; Digby, Simon. 1975. 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (1456–1537): The personality and attitude of a medieval Indian Sufi,' in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Edited). *Medieval India: A Miscellany*. (pp. 1–66). London: Asia Publishing House.

52 Muḥammad 'Ashiq Ilāhī Meeruthī. 1344/1925. *Tazkirātūr Rashīd-ḥiṣṣā awwal*. Sadhora: Bilal Steam, p. 65.

53 Ibid, p. 66; Meeruthī, in another book, explains that it is permissible for a male physician to feel the pulse of a female patient according to Sharf'a. See *Tuḥfā-yi khwatīn*. Karachi: Maktaba Ma'ārif al-Qur'ān (2009), p. 800.

54 *Tazkirātūr Rashīd-ḥiṣṣā awwal*, pp. 53–54; the letters were delivered by the Qāzī of the Bhopal State.

1323/1905, a few months before his own demise, to the Begum's written request and performed the *bai'at* by proxy.⁵⁵

Another Deobandi scholar, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanāwī (1864–1943) thought differently. Not only in his magnum opus work, the *Bihishti Zewar* (The Heavenly Ornament),⁵⁶ did he encourage little Muslim girls “to become a *maulawī*—that is, a scholar of Arabic,” but he also enumerated several benefits for women if they chose to become a *murīd*, as it is only through the *baraka* of a *pīr* that one follows the right path. However, an unmarried girl should take the oath with the permission of her parents and a married woman with the permission of her husband. He also warns that at the time of initiation ceremony, she must observe *parda* with the *pīr* and should never put her hand into that of the *pīr*. In case one gets to know that the *pīr* is not the right one, she must break her vow of allegiance immediately.⁵⁷

6.2 Arguments against Women's Presence in the Sufi *Silsilas*

A stronger trend with contradictory arguments, creating an ambivalence about women's position in Sufism, emerged with the spread and wider acceptance of reformist scholars, some of whom were informed by Naqshbandī Sufism. The Naqshbandis in South Asia, as elsewhere, have produced several voluminous works and small tracts on the Way of Sufi Masters. With the beginning of the twentieth century, a more conservative and vigorous public discourse regarding women's status within the context of their initiation into Sufi *silsilas* emerged. Surprisingly, these scholars, fed by Mujaddid Alf-i Sānī's tirade against women, in the heat of their arguments and led by their passion to keep women under restrictions, forgot about the charismatic Sufi woman, Ḥaẓrat Bībī Šāḥiba also known as Bībī Kalān (d. 1803) and a descendant of Mujaddid Alf-i Sānī, being the niece of Ḥaẓrat Šafīu'llah *Qayyūm-i Jahan* (1746–1798). Held along the controversial issue of women's segregation and observance of *parda*, these debates, while dichotomic in nature, open a new window to view male Sufi's perceptions of women. One such example is the *Mi'yār-us sulūk* (the standard of following the mystical path), published in 1927, of Muḥammad Ḥidāyat 'Alī Jaipurī (d. 1951), a Naqshbandī-Mujaddidi reformist-scholar and an educationist. This book, while presenting various aspects of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidi *silsila* of the Sufis, was mainly written in the words of its author, Jaipurī, to dispel

55 *Tazkirātūr Rashīd-ḥiṣṣā dom*, pp. 103–4.

56 Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanāwī. 1905. *Bihishti Zewar*. Lahore: Shaikh Ghulam Ali and Sons.

57 *Ibid.*

the “misleading views” of those Sufis who have not only strayed but led others to fall into the pit of depravity (*chāh-i gumrāhī*). Among such acts of innovation (*bid‘at*) is the initiation of women without honouring *parda* rules. These misguided persons, who claim to be the leaders (*rāhnuma*), do this under the pretext of being the fathers of their women disciples, warns the author. Jaipurī rejects and condemns this misguided behaviour of such fraudulent *pīrs*, commenting that *parda* observance for women is a Divine command (*farz*). To illustrate his statement, Jaipurī cites the example of the Prophet who took women’s oath of allegiance orally at the time of the conquest of Makkah.⁵⁸ *Pīrs* who do not observe *parda* rules in their contacts with their women disciples are in a situation of extreme risk and dread (*nihāyat khatreh aur andeshey*), warns Jaipurī. To strengthen his warning, he quotes a Ḥadīth of the Prophet without identifying its source, in which the Prophet, on seeing the mother of the Believers, Ḥazrat Ā’isha, sitting alone with her father, Ḥazrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq, is said to have commented, “O Abū Bakr! Satan is not far away. Do not sit alone even with a daughter; on the contrary have a third person with you.”⁵⁹

Thus, setting the prelude to his next section, *ba’at karne aur tawajjuh dene ke muta‘alliq* (Concerning taking the oath of allegiance and spiritual attention), Jaipurī explains the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī stance on the question of women’s initiation into the Sufi *silsila* at the hands of male Sufis. Following are some of the major principles that Jaipurī listed for initiating women:⁶⁰

1. At the time of initiation, women should remain hidden away (in *parda*) and not be visible.
2. Women should repeat the same phrases as men do, the only difference being that neither a woman’s hand will be held (by the *pīr*) nor the *ism-i zāt* (the word Allāh) will be inscribed with the index finger (*angusht-i shāhadat*) on their chest (*qalb*). *Ism-i zāt* will be inscribed only with the power of imagination on the heart of a woman.
3. A woman’s verbal pledge will be sufficient.
4. If a woman’s blood relation (*maḥram*) is also a member of the *silsila*, he, then, should be made to sit between the *pīr* and the woman; in case he is not a member, the *pīr* should make the woman sit as far away as possible so that the words of *talqīn* (instructions) are not audible to her.
5. It is not permissible for an unrelated (*nā-maḥram*) woman to look at her *pīr*.

58 Shāh Muḥammad Hidāyat ‘Alī Jaipurī. 1926. *Mi’yārus sulūk wa dāfi’ al-auhām wal-shakūk*. Kanpur: Maṭba‘-yi intizāmī, pp. 3–4.

59 Ibid, p. 164.

60 Ibid, pp. 167–168.

6. It is permissible to initiate a menstruating woman and a woman undergoing postpartum as the intent of initiation is doing repentance (*tawba*) and purification of the soul (*tazkiyā-yi nafs*).
7. Finally, assuming that a disciple is normally a man, Jaipurī instructs a *murid* "to keep his women veiled" from the *pīr*.⁶¹

Under the section *bayān namāz tahajjud* (account of midnight prayers), Jaipurī addresses men only to offer midnight obligatory prayers and makes another fallacious statement that women are weak in physique and intellect (*ẓaʿīf ul-jussa aur ẓaʿīf ul-aql*) but are akin to manual workers, such as sweepers and washer men in doing their household chores, such as cooking and grinding corn. Displaying his contempt for women and their household work, he argues that if lowly persons such as women can get up far before dawn to do household chores for the happiness of their children and husbands, why can men not rise and offer the *tahajjud* prayers. Here, Jaipurī addresses not only men, but the crux of his argument is that obligatory prayers, such as *tahajjud*, are for men only.⁶² This statement, again, is highly erroneous and contradicts the spirit of the Qurʾān which does not classify acts of *ʿibādat* in gendered terms.

It is worth remembering that Jaipurī's book came out at a time when South Asian Muslim male scholars passionately and vigorously advocated issues of women's seclusion, including restrictions on their mobility. Aḥmad Raza Khan Fāzil Barelwī (1856–1921), also addressed as *Aʿlā-ḥaẓrat* (His most exalted majesty) by his followers spread over the whole of South Asia and whose writings are believed to carry charismatic powers, wrote a treatise which was published around 1920. This treatise, *Jumal al-nūr fī nahī al-nisāʾ min ziyārat al-qubūr: al-mʿarūf, Mazārāt par ʿaurtoṅ kī ḥāẓirī* (women's shrine visitation) was written as an answer to a query by one Maulawī Ḥakīm ʿAbdur Raḥīm from Gujarat, India, in 1339/1920 regarding permissibility of women's shrine visitation.⁶³ Advocating strict observance of women's segregation and women's subservience to the authority of their husbands, Aḥmad Raḥa Khan at the end of this forty-eight-page tract rejects the possibility of women holding any position in the hierarchy of Sufi *silsilas*. He strongly argued that "a woman cannot be *dāʿī- ilal-Allāh* (one who calls people towards Allāh), albeit, there is no harm if she conveys the teachings of her *murshid* (spiritual master)." To support his argument, he then quotes a passage in Arabic with translation in Urdu from a sixteenth-century Egyptian scholar, ʿAbd al-Wahāb al-Shaʿranī's work *Al-Mizān*

61 Ibid, p. 171.

62 Ibid, p. 176.

63 Aḥmad Raza Khan Fāzil Barelwī. *Jumal al-nūr fī nahī al-nisāʾ min ziyārat al-qubūr: al-mʿarūf, mazārāt par ʿaurtoṅ kī ḥāẓirī*. Lahore: Shabbir Brothers (n. d.).

al-kubrā al-Shaʿrānīyah,⁶⁴ who said that only a man, and not a woman, can call people towards Allāh. He also said that there is no evidence in history that a woman has ever had the position of training the disciples because women are deficient in status. Indeed, a woman's uttermost quality is only that she should be *ʿābida* (devout and pious) and *zāhida* (abstinent) like Rābiʿa al ʿAdawiyya. Thus, Aḥmad Raḥa Khan Fāzil Barelwī rejects that women can be Sufi Masters (*murshid*).⁶⁵

The message of Aḥmad Raḥa Khan Fāzil Barelwī stands inscribed in the heart of his followers who surge like waves of the ocean around the world, thereby closing the gates to women.

6.3 Women as Sufis (*Awliyāʾ Allāh*)

It is important to note that discipleship of a Sufi is different from holding a position in the hierarchy of a Sufi *silsila*. Discipleship does not entail any public acknowledgement or a public signifier. Rather, it results in the adoption or interiorisation of a mode of pious living which gradually results in renunciation of all worldly attractions, including self-projection. In contradiction to this, holding positions within a Sufi *silsila* or being a member of a Sufi hierarchy and association with a Sufi hospice and *khānqāh* is a public expression of piety and devoutness. Thus, adherence and submission to piety is the essence of the pious way of life which is a definition of *taṣawwuf*, known to us by its more readily understood nomenclature, i.e., Sufism.

Recognition, identification, and acceptance of women as Sufis, however, does not come easily to men in general and to male Sufis in particular, even when they are guided, mentored, and counselled by women Sufis. Stories of Sufis who lived outside India and had several encounters with women were frequently told in India. In these stories, the names of highly revered male Sufis appear. Thus, in the *Tazkiratu'l Awliyāʾ* of Farīdu'd-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 617/1220) of Nishapur, women who counselled wandering or travelling Sufis remain anonymous, and are mostly described as old, ugly, and dishevelled, as it is generally assumed that young and comely looking women excite passions in men of all ages and of all professions as women come from a lower soul.⁶⁶ Similarly,

64 ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Shaʿrānī (1493–1565) an Egyptian Shafīʿī scholar and mystic, founder of an Egyptian *silsila* of Sufism which gradually declined after Shaʿrānī's death, although it remained active until the 19th century.

65 *Jumal al-nūr fi nahī al-nisāʾ* pp. 47–48.

66 Rkia Cornell. 2007. "Soul of a Woman was Created Bow': Woman as the Lower Soul (*Nafs*) in Islam," in Grad D. Gort, Henry Jansen, & Hendrik M. Vroom (Editors). *The World Religions and Evil. Religious and philosophical Perspectives*. NY: Rodopi, pp. 257–280.

Bāyazīd Bastāmī (d. 874),⁶⁷ one of the Sufis who was highly intoxicated with Divine love, and according to some was influenced in his mystical concept of *fanā* of Abū 'Alī Sindi (from lower Sindh),⁶⁸ acknowledged an old woman as his *murshid* who taught him the real lesson of eliminating one's ego but left her anonymous. Neither Bastāmī nor 'Aṭṭār, nor any other source, mentions the name of this mentor of such a great Sufi who after his dialogue with the woman was so ashamed of himself that he felt that he had gone "from the highest high to the lowest low."⁶⁹ In another anecdote, Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), a Sufi-scholar who wrote a commentary of the Qur'ān⁷⁰ and who taught Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), in turn learned the basics of Sufism from an anonymous old, dishevelled-looking woman in two very unusual circumstances. First, he was embarrassed by this woman who rejected some money that he tried to give her in charity, but she in turn lifted her arm up and opened her fist to show what her palm was holding. She told him, "You take out money from your pocket; I get it from the Invisible." Next, arriving at the Ka'ba, he encountered her again. Seeing his surprise at beholding the Ka'ba circumambulating her, instead of her going around the House of Allāh, the old unnamed woman said, "Going around the Ka'ba is required for one who plans his journeys to the Ka'ba; the Ka'ba circumambulates the one who arrives here in a state of agitation."⁷¹

Discourse on male-female dichotomy surprisingly appears as an oft-repeated theme of the mystical sessions of the early Chishtīs. Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī believed that women have the potential to be friends of God, but not in the context of ordinary women. He even declared and followed equal rules for initiating women in his *silsila*. In his Eleventh Assembly, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn began a discourse on, among other matters, the *karāmāt-i Awliyā'* (charisma of the saints). Referring to *Surah al-Imrān* 3:37, the Shaikh narrated the story of Maryam *pārsā* (Maryam the chaste) and commented that she received food from Allāh because she was a friend of God (*Maryam walīyya būd*).⁷² However, public expression of ordinary women's piety was contested. Thus, for quantifying the spirituality of ordinary women, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn

67 For a biographical notice, see Faridu'd-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. 1997. *Tazkirat-ul-awliyā'* (Urdu translation). Lahore: al-Farūq Book Foundation.

68 Reynolds A. Nicholson. 1914. *The Mystics of Islam*. Sacramento Calif: Mautice Press (reprint, 2006), p. 12.

69 Faridu'd-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. 1997. *Tazkiratu'l-awliyā'* (Urdu translation), p. 106; Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and Paul E. Losensky. 2009. *Farid ad-Din 'Attār's Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis*. New York: Paulist Press, p. 208.

70 Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh Tustarī, Annabel Keeler, and Ali Keeler. 2011. *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae.

71 Faridu'd-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. 1997. *Tazkiratu'l-awliyā'* (Urdu translation). Lahore: al-Farūq Book Foundation, p. 170.

72 KM, *Majlis* 11.

applied a different scale. In one of his discourse sessions, he eloquently distinguished between the merits of prayers offered by a widowed woman and those offered by a male seeker for Divine Grace. Addressing Maulānā Hissāmu'd-Dīn Multāni (671/1272–753/1352),⁷³ Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn went to the extent of distinguishing between prayers offered by a woman and by a man to seek Allāh's proximity. He said if a person fasts each day and prays each night (*agar kasi roz ṣā'im bāshad wa shab qā'im*), there is nothing great in it, because any widow (*īn miqdār har bewa zan*) can do this much prayer and fasting. Thus, what makes a person attain proximity to the Divine is not prayer and fasting; the concentration (*mashgūlī*) that the men of Allāh (*bandagān-i khuda*) need to seek Allāh's proximity is of a different order (*juz īn mashghūlī ast*).⁷⁴ The Shaikh, who was a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and had "intimate knowledge of the Qur'ān,"⁷⁵ most probably was not excluding women from *bandagān-i khudā*. Here, thus, the reference is to Sufi men who act as mentors for other men.

Interestingly, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn's successor, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422), propagated a disparaging perception of women. Instead of selecting only a discourse session, he is the first of the Chishtīs to choose the medium of communication through writing letters to friends and disciples. Thus, in one such letter, addressed to Shaikhzāda Khwāja Ṣadru'd-Dīn Khwand Mīr⁷⁶ and his brothers, demeaning women's spirituality and submission to the Divine, he wrote that prayers (*namāz guzārdan*), keeping fasts (*rozā dāshtan*), and doing munificent acts and good deeds (*ḥasanāt wa mabarrāt*) and other similar acts can be performed by a widow; remembrance of the seekers of the Divine is something different (*mashghūlī ṭālibān-i khudā kār-i alā-ḥida bāshad*).⁷⁷ In the closing sentences of the same letter, referring to the mother of Khwand Mīr and sending prayers (*du'ā'*) for her, and perhaps indirectly appreciating her virtuous acts, he further expressed his bias against women. He wrote that "a woman who performs manly deeds (*'aurat kih kār-i mardān*) is indeed a man in the form of a woman (*o mard ast bar ṣūrat-i 'aurat*); if a man acts as a woman

73 Maulānā Hissāmu'd-Dīn Multāni was one of the *khalīfas* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' who deputed him to Gujarat where the Maulānā passed away at Patan. See AA, pp. 87–89.

74 KM, *Majlis* 17.

75 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami in his introduction to *Khair-u'l-majālis: Conversations of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh of Delhi* [ob. 1356] compiled by Hamid Qalandar, p. 9, 10.

76 Shaikh Ṣadru'd-Dīn Khwand Mīr belonged to the family of scholars. His grandfather and father held the office of Shaikhu'l Islam of Irichpur. Ṣadru'd-Dīn became a disciple of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz in 810 and later was appointed as one of his *khalīfas*. See *Siyar-i, Muḥammadī*, pp. 133–34.

77 Letter no. 22 (undated) to Shaikhzāda Khwand Mīr in Khwāja Ṣadru'd-Dīn Abu'l Fath Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz Chishtī and Saiyyid 'Ata' Ḥussain (Edited) *Maktūbāt Imāmu'l 'Arifin Saiyyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz*. Hyderabad: Barqī Press. 1362 (1943), p. 48.

does, that man is sensual (*hawa parast*), he is a woman in the form of a man, indeed worse than her (*balki bad-tar az ān*).⁷⁸ These views were so deeply and strongly embedded in the Shaikh's psyche that once again, in another letter, he repeated the same ideas in the same words.⁷⁹

6.4 Women as *Khalīfas*

The question of women's position as spiritual deputies or successors (*khalīfas*) of male Sufi Shaikhs is highly debated, causing serious rifts among Sufi Shaikhs and religious scholars. This rift is rooted in the concept of authority and power. Historically, the image of a *khalīfa* is of a male Sufi, wielding spiritual authority with a potential to influence the temporal authority of the rulers. A Sufi *khalīfa*, thus, plays a dual role and function. Spiritual succession is an issue of Sufism, with its hierarchical power structure created and nourished by the rules of Sufi *silsilas*. In the early Sufi sources of South Asia, when the issue of the legitimacy of pious women's spiritual succession first surfaced, it was discussed not as an issue of *khilāfat* only.⁸⁰ It was jointly presented as a double issue of *khilāfat wa sajjāda-yi Mashāi'kh*. *Sajjāda* is a place where the forehead touches the ground in offering prayers or in thanksgiving. This place could be a prayer rug, a mosque, a house, or any other appropriate location. In South Asia, *sajjāda*, when used to denote earthly obedience and power, is also called *gaddi* (literally meaning a throne or seat of authority), and thus, *sajjāda-nishīn* are also referred to as *gaddī-nishīn*.⁸¹ The following section analyses this issue in light of Sufi discourses. This significant issue of spiritual succession of women Sufis, however, remains relatively underreported in contemporary hagiographical texts. It is also ignored by modern scholars, who have interpreted it in the context of male contestants only.⁸²

78 Ibid, p. 48.

79 Ibid, letter no. 65 to Amīr Chanda, p. 123.

80 *Khilāfat*, an Arabic word, is used both as a noun and as a verb. It represents the function of the power of the *khalīfa* and is also used for the office of *khalīfa*.

81 Rifts and litigations over *sajjāda* and *gaddī-nishīnī*, mainly among male contestants, has a prolonged history, often ugly. The British colonialists of India codified laws about the handling of the large shrine endowments. Some of these laws are based on oral traditions. See W.H. Macnaghten and William Sloan. 1882. *Principles and precedents of Moohummudan law, relative to the doctrine of inheritance, contracts and miscellaneous subjects*. Madras: Higginbotham. (First published in 1825, Calcutta).

82 See for instance, Simon Digby. 2003. "The Sufi Shaikh as A Source of Authority in Medieval India." In *India's Islamic Traditions* 711–1750. Edited by Richard M. Eaton, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2003, pp. 237–41; Tanvir Anjum, 'Sons of Bread and Sons of Soul'

In general, male opinion remained hostile to the idea of women holding the position of a spiritual successor. However, it did not begin on a note of rejection. Surprisingly, and in contradiction to the later development, the historical growth of the institution of spiritual succession began in a positive light with the example of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, the daughter of Khwāja Mu‘inu’d-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri (d. 633/1236) and his wife, a daughter of a local Hindu chieftain of Rajput ancestry. *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, a hagiographical *tazkira* of Sufi biographies completed in 1623, says that Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl was given the cloak of Sufi Shaikh on 11 Rabi‘u’l ākhir 599, after ‘*isha*’ prayers by her father, Khwāja Mu‘inu’d-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri.⁸³ Later, *Risāla Siyaru’l Aqtāb* (1646), referring to the charisma (*karāmat*) of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, also confirmed that among his at least eighteen spiritual successors, Khwāja Ajmeri also included the name of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl.⁸⁴

The practice of recognising women as spiritual deputies, however, soon lost approval. It has resurfaced, with some limitations, in the recent past. Before the thirteenth century could come to its end, Muslim women of South Asia were disqualified to hold the office of a spiritual deputy because they were women. The first Sufi Master to negate this was none other than one of the disciples of Khwāja Ajmeri, Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār (1175–1265). When the question of naming Bibī Sharīfa, his exceptionally worthy second daughter who had inherent attributes of a friend of Allāh, as his successor was considered, the Shaikh commented,

Had it been permitted to give the authorization for succession [of the Sufi Shaikh] and the permission to sit on the rug of prayer [seat of the Shaikh] to a woman, I would have given it to Bibī Sharīfa (*agar ‘aurat rā khilāfat wa sajjāda-yi Mashā’ikh dādan rawā būd man Bibī Sharīfa rā mī-dādam*).⁸⁵

These words of Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn, though few in number, carried immeasurable weight in tilting the scale in favour of men. Since the thirteenth century, these words have acquired the status of a sacred dictum and have served as a preamble to misogynist rationalisation of depriving women of roles as spiritual deputies (*sajjāda-nishin*). The above brief reference of Kirmānī in *Siyaru’l Awliyā’*, like most other accounts about women Sufis, is abruptly cut short.

Lineal and Spiritual Descendants of Baba Farid and the Issue of Succession.’ In *Sufism in Punjab: mystics, literature and shrines*. Edited by Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. 2009. Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009, pp. 63–79.

83 *Fihrist Kitāb Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 162.

84 *Risāla Siyaru’l Aqtāb*, p. 127.

85 SA p. 191.

We do not know when and by whom this suggestion was first made. Does it reflect a process of inner thoughts of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn expressing his inability, under the weight of antiwomen traditions, to take what he thought was the best course of action? Or was this rejection based on his understanding of the Qur'ān? The use of the word *rawā* could be a significant key for further exploration of the root of his concerns. *Rawā* ordinarily is not a term of reference for the laws derived from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. It is associated more with the practices that get further approval by the process of repetition. Further, the words, as quoted by Kirmānī, do not convey a determined, well-considered stand of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn. The presence of the word *agar* (if) in this reference, indicates further his willingness rather than his rejection. In addition to the above, it appears as if the question of Bibī Sharīfa's succession was already an issue discussed at the Ajodhan *Jamā'at-khāna*. Probably Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn's statement was in response to this discussion. If this were the case, it means that a woman's spiritual succession was discussed among Sufi men with faith in *taṣawwuf*. This possibility encourages me to consider Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn's disapproval as his effort to alleviate a rift among his disciples. The last point carries more weight in view of the activities of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn's son, who was desperate to get hold of the *Jamā'at-khāna* and turn it into a source of income. We can infer from Kirmānī that the statement was most probably made during the closing days of the Shaikh when he was almost in a state of being besieged by his world-wise sons. It is significant to note here that Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn passed away without appointing any of his sons either as his *khalīfa* or *gaddī-nishīn*. His statement about Bibī Sharīfa, however, continues to resonate as a declaration against women's spiritual succession.

As exceptions are part of human experiences, there are occasional and rare incidents of women receiving *khilāfa* recorded in Sufi texts. One such earlier example is the case of the succession of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz in *Siyar-i Muḥammadi*, which was later included in *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*. Khwaja Gīsū Darāz once narrated that at the passing away of his mentor, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, his *wilāyat* was divided among four of his disciples, namely, Khwaja Gīsū Darāz, a potter (*kulāl*), a chest carver (*ṣandūq tarāsh*), and a woman. Subsequent to the demise of each of the last three mentioned, their share was also given from "that side," i.e., '*ālam-i bālā* (the world above—Heaven) to the Khwāja.⁸⁶ The anecdote, not found in any other contemporary Sufi text, is a surprising one in view of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn's estimation of what

86 *Siyar-i Muḥammadi*, p. 21; *Tārīkh-i Ḥabībī*, p. 22; *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*, p. 42.

he argued was women's inherent nature—lack of intelligence and their subsequent deficiency in their understanding of the faith.

Saiyyid Muḥammad Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī (d. 1437),⁸⁷ a well-read and widely travelled Sufi émigré from Central Asia, having links with several Sufi traditions and a firm believer in *hamā ast* (all is He), arrived in India and finally settled in Kichauccha Sharīf (in the District of Amedakar, Uttar Pradesh, India). A contemporary of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, whom he also visited and spent considerable time at his *khānqah* in Gulbarga, Simnānī reflects Gīsū Darāz's stringent disapproval of women's role as Sufi guides. In his *malfūzāt*, compiled by his disciple, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Yamanī, he acknowledges that the amount (*miqdār*) of knowledge and Truths (*ḥaqā'iq wa ma'ārif*) he gained from Khwāja Gīsū Darāz was far greater than one could get from any other Shaikh.⁸⁸ These *malfūzāt*, among various other themes, also discuss *pir-murid* relationship and the status that women should or should not hold within the Sufi hierarchy. Simnānī extolled women such as Rābi'a al-Basri and Fāṭima, wife of Sultan Aḥmad b. Khizrawayah (d. 240/854–855) for their virtues and striving in the path of Allāh (*faẓā'il wa mujāhidāt*). He even acknowledged that some women had also attained the status of *abdāls*. Despite all these acknowledgements and references, Simnānī remained fixed in his argument that whatever high status women might have had and that to some even Allāh bestowed such great spiritual knowledge that even men of the path of Sufism needed their help (*muḥtāj*), and some even excelled men (*manzilat ishān ziyadah az b'āz rijāl ast*), still none of them could train disciples (*tarbiyat-i muridān*) because of the limitations of veiling and concealment. As this veiling and concealment prohibits women from participating in public functions, particularly in their role as leaders, therefore, for the same reason women were not bestowed the status of prophethood (*nabūwat*), argued Simnānī.⁸⁹ Simnānī's arguments against women's status in Sufi hierarchy might appear incredible to a modern audience, but these views represent the most extensively held discourse about women which continues even today.

The most eloquent disavowal of women as Sufis, however, came from 'Alā'u'd-Dīn 'Alī bin 'Abdu'l-Malik Ḥusāmu'd-Dīn al-Muṭṭaqī al-Hindī (885/1480–975/1567) a scholar born in Burhanpur and who migrated to Makkah and died

87 For his life account, see AA, pp. 60–61; also, *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 145; Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, Vol. 1, pp. 259–60, 266–70.

88 Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī. 1499/1999. *Laṭā'if-i Ashrafi fī bayān-i ṭawā'if-i Šūfi*. (vol. 1). Karachi: Ḥalqa-yi Ashrafiya, p. 367.

89 Ibid, pp. 330–31.

there.⁹⁰ Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī was a Sufi and a scholar of Ḥadīth, with disciples in the Arab world and in India. An ascetic in its true sense, Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī earned his living by copying rare manuscripts. He also wrote more than one hundred books. His *Kanzu'l 'Ummāl*, an encyclopaedia of Ḥadīth, is still used as a reference source. Of these hundred books, one is *al-unwān fi sulūku'n-niswān* (a preface to the conduct of women), which is a small tract written in Arabic.⁹¹ Arguing that women were created for the benefit of men and for the purpose of continuity of the process of reproduction,⁹² Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī examines the question whether women have the merit to attain *walāyā*. Reiterating the misogynist viewpoint that women are created as deficient in intellect and in the understanding of faith, Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī argues further that *walāyā* is not decreed for women because all the matters related to women, including their bodies and their voices, have to remain veiled and covered (*satr wa ikhfā*).⁹³ It is worth mentioning here that Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī was not against women; he supported and patronised the widows with generous cash gifts.⁹⁴

This tract, *al-unwān fi sulūku'n-niswān*, at some point was also translated into Persian and was in circulation in India. The Persian tract was translated into Urdu under a new title, *Hidāyatu'n niswān* (Guidance for women), with some additions and corrections, and was published in 1871, with a second printing in 1872.⁹⁵ Before examining the contents of this Urdu translation, it is interesting to recap briefly how and why this book was translated into Urdu. According to the translator, Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad ibn-i Muḥammad Mu'īn, in 1871 a group of Muslim scholars well-versed in *fiqh* and Ḥadīth, including himself, Nawwāb 'Abdu'l Bāsiṭ Khan, and Munshi Zahīru'd-Dīn, assembled in Lucknow at the house of an elite of the city, Nawwāb Fidā Ḥasan Khan. The friendly talks moved to the topic of women's status and whether women could acquire the status of a Sufi. After much discussion, the conclusion was drawn that because of their flawed intelligence (*nuqṣān-i 'aql*) and ignoble ways (*zamā'im 'ādāt*),

90 For a biographical notice of Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī, see Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1328/1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma'āsiru'l kirām*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufid-i 'Ām, pp. 192–94.

91 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Malik Muttaqī. (Edited by Majdi al-Saiyyid Ibrahim). 1992. *al-'unwān fi sulūk an niswān*. Qahirah: Maktabat al-Qur'ān. A micro-filmed copy of the actual manuscript, no. MF33941, which is thirty paged, and was copied by Aḥmad al-Masirī on 23 Muḥarram, 1107/September 3, 1695, is in the Miṣr Library, Cairo, Egypt. In 1992, Majdi al-Saiyyid Ibrahim edited it and published it (Qahirah: Maktabat al-Qur'an). All my references are from Majdi al-Saiyyid Ibrahim's edited work.

92 Ibid, p. 27.

93 Ibid, pp. 24–25.

94 Saiyyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. 2004. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2, pp. 319–27.

95 Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad ibn-i Muḥammad Mu'īn. 1872. *Hidāyatu'n niswān*. Lucknow: Fakhru'l Maṭab'.

women are deprived of these higher stations.⁹⁶ At this, Munshi Zahīrū'd-Dīn suggested that Shaikh 'Alī Muṭṭaqī's book, *al-umwān fi sulūku'n-niswān*, a copy of which was in his library, was the best and the most authoritative source on this subject. It was then decided that to propagate this work, it must be translated into Urdu. The translated version was expanded and more faults of women were added; extracts from other sources were included to show the merits of wives' submission to their husbands in seeking entry into Heaven. The book sold out and a second printing came out the following year.⁹⁷ Perhaps the financial gains of the book encouraged the Munshi Nawal Kishore Press to print it again. In 1881, a third edition was edited by Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad's son, Maulawī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, for the benefit of the Muslims.⁹⁸ The new edition of the book declared that the above details, from the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century, covering vast geographies from India to the Arab world, are presented here to show the persistence of male rejection of women to attain *walāya*.

Contrary to the views of 'Alī Muṭṭaqī, his near contemporary, 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī (d. 944/1537) made significant contributions to the recognition of women's merits as spiritual guides. An accomplished theologian, Gangohī emerged more as a well-recognised Sufi as the number of his disciples grew.⁹⁹ To propagate his views, Gangohī maintained a hot line of correspondence and addressed about two hundred letters to rulers, elite, disciples, and relatives on a variety of themes—themes of Allāh's worship and following the Tradition of the Prophet dominated his letters. Of these letters, one remains unique. Letter number 66 is the only one addressed to a woman, one Bibī Islām Khātūn, daughter of 'Umar Khan Sarwāni, a powerful political-military ally of the Lodi Sultans. The theme of this letter was *dar bayān 'adam jawāz khilāfat bara' ye zanān har chih bākamāl mardān rasad* (an explanation of nonexistence of

96 Ibid, p. 2.

97 Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad ibn-i Muḥammad Mu'īn. 1872. *Hidāyatu'n niswān*. Lucknow: Fakhru'l Maṭab'.

98 Maulawī 'Alī Muḥammad (*marhūm*). 1881. *Hidāyatu'n niswān*. Munshi Nawal Kishore (place not given).

99 For a short biography of Gangohī, see Khwāja Muḥammad Hāshim Kishmī. 1890. *Zubdat al-muqāmāt*. Kānpūr: Maṭba' Munshī Nawal Kishore (Urdu translation by Ghulam Mustafa Khan and Maulānā Abul Fath Saghiruddin. Maṭba' Nu'mānia, Sialkot, 1407/1987), pp. 148–55; 'Ijāzu'l Ḥaqq Quddūsī. 1961. *Ḥaṣrat 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq-Quddūs Gangohī hayat aur unkī t'ālīmāt*. Karachi: Educational Press; Simon Digby. 1975. "Abd al Quddus Gangohi (1456–1537): The personality and attitude of a medieval Indian Sufi," in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Edited). *Medieval India: a miscellany*. (pp. 1–66). (London: Asia Publishing House, 1975).

justification for women's *khilāfat*, albeit they might have reached excellence of men). Gangohī affirmed the spiritual merits of Bibī Islām Khātūn and recognised that she was equal to men in her virtues. He also lauded her courage to step into what he called the men's world. The patched frock of the Sufis (*khirqā-yi mashā'iq*), however, was declined to her by Gangohī because *khilāfat* is not lawful (*majāz nāshud*) for women.¹⁰⁰ Also, the authority to make *bai'āt* was not given to her because of this. Thus, the thirteenth-century argument of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar when he rejected his daughter as his successor remained vibrant and strong. Displaying some softening of the rigidity against women's position, however, Gangohī adopted a rather pliant attitude and permitted Bibī Islām Khātūn to confer the hat (*kulāh*) and the frock (*dāman*) on his behalf (*bā wikālat pīr-i khud*) to men and women who came to her and sought her spiritual blessings. She was allowed to confer the frock to women who could be present or absent, but a hat to men only in absentia. Bibī Islām Khātūn was also permitted to give them the genealogical table (*shajra*) of her *silsila*, i.e., the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī *silsila*, and enrol them as disciples (*murīd*) of her Shaikh, 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī.¹⁰¹ Neither of the two sources, which include the above letter, provide any information about whether Bibī Islām Khātūn put this significant letter into practice or not.

After a lapse of several centuries, in the late eighteenth century, three striking examples of women appointed as *khalīfas* emerge. Interestingly, all three have connections with Delhi and with the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī *silsila* of the Sufis. Several factors can be identified for this positive stand of male Sufi masters who still held the final authority of conferring and granting permission (*ijāzat-nāma*) to these three women to teach. Probably the new awareness for recognising women's worth was related to some extent to the political and economic stress experienced by the Muslim community in the wake of the loss of political authority and to the emerging social chaos that became rampant throughout the subcontinent of India.

Of these three path-breaking examples, two women Sufis, Ḥaẓrat 'Ajība Khānam of Panīpat and Ḥaẓrat Mardum Maḥall (d. 1801), were disciples of Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān (d. 1781) of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī *silsila* of the Sufis. Both were given letters of authorization to teach and enrol women

100 See Part 2 for Bibī Islām Khātūn's biographical notice.

101 Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. *Fatāwa-i-Rashīdiyya (Kamīl) Fiqh Ḥanafī kā Anmol Khazīna*. Karachi: Dāru'l Ishā'at, n. d., p. 72. The same letter, with little variation, is translated in Urdu in *Majmū'a' khuṭūṭ- Maktūbāt Quddūsia Quṭb-i 'Ālam Ḥaẓrat Shaikh 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī*. Compiled and translated by Wāḥid Bakhsh Sayāl, Lahore: al-Faisal (2010), p. 229.

disciples.¹⁰² The third woman Sufi was Ḥaẓrat Bībī Šāḥiba (d. 1803) whose influence spread far and wide.¹⁰³ Ḥaẓrat Šafīu'llah, *Qayyūm-i Jahan* (1746–1798) of the Mujaddidi *silsila* conferred upon her the *irshād nāma* and appointed her as one of his twenty-eight deputies.¹⁰⁴

102 For details, see their biographical notices in Part 2 in this book.

103 For notice on her life, see Part 2 in this book.

104 For the list of deputies, which also included Bībī Šāḥiba's two sons, see Muḥammad Faẓlu'llah. 1355/1936. *Umdat'l Maqāmāt*. Lahore: Litho Expert Press, pp. 490–95.

Sufi Lodges: Fencing the Sacred and the Profane

7.1 The *Khānqāh*

The majesty and grandeur of Islam's religious architecture, with men praying therein, is said to have been inspired by the following Surah of the Qur'an in *An-Nūr* (24: 36–37):

(Lit such a Light) in houses, which Allāh hath permitted to be raised to honour; for celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the morning and in the evenings again and again).

By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allāh nor from regular prayer nor from the practice of regular charity: their (only) fear is for the day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new).

In addition to the growth of Sufi *ṭarīqās*, the development of the Sufi lodges, known as *khānqāhs* or *khānaqāhs*, from small to large splendid establishments, runs parallel to the glorification and splendour of the political and military grandeur of the Islamic states throughout the medieval and early modern age.¹ Concurrently, it also resulted in three significant factors playing a three-way centric role in Muslim society: (a) an on-going power equation between and among the *pīrs* and politico-military power holders; (b) maximising religious tenets in the common interest of the trio mentioned above; and, (c) sermonising and legitimising subservience of women and children to their [male] dictates.

Scholars have studied the emergence, development, and roles and functions of the *khānqāhs* as lodges for the travelling Sufis, *qalandars*, '*ulamā*', and even common wayfarers in need of temporary shelter.² Several queries emerge from these studies asking if these *khānqāhs* were centres of spirituality and knowledge. Were these symbols of tussles and disputes between the supremacy of

¹ For details, see John Renard. 1996. *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*. University of California Press, pp. 168–77.

² In the context of South Asia, Nizami's study of the *Khānqāhs* is one of the best assessments, though any reference to women is completely missing. See Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1978. *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*. Delhi: Idara Adabiyat-i Delhi, pp. 181–229.

the *walāyā* of the Sufi and the *wilāyat* of the Sulṭān?³ Were these, like royal courts, spaces marked more for male performances and less for women's roles? Do these structures stand today as reminiscent symbols and glorious illustrations of Islam's past splendour? This book, however, rereads all these accounts to assess how and in what ways the *khānqāhs* draw lines alienating women further from the sacred and more toward the profane universe.

Thus, the subject of women and the *khānqāhs* becomes a legitimate theme for exploration because of the marked male presence within their premises and the total male control over their management. Development of Sufi *khānqāh* coincides with the political-military growth of Muslim power in various geographic settings. Established to serve as a centre for spiritual training and promoting knowledge of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and *fiqh*, these places soon developed into lodgings for travellers and wayfarers, gradually becoming more the embodiment of the mundane authority of the Sufi *silṣilas* and less of the spiritual blessings.⁴ Known to have appeared first in Iran, the *khānqāhs* later came to be known by various other appellations, such as *zāwiya* (retreat, literally corner), *takya* or *tekke* (small resting/prayer chambers of Sufis), *jamā'at khāna*, and *ribāt*.⁵ By the fourteenth century, the number of these hospices reached two thousand in and around the city of Delhi alone.⁶

Sheila Blair's research about the fourteenth-century shrine complexes in Iran, Egypt, and Algeria, including the *khānqāhs*, looks beyond the mortar and bricks of these edifices and captures the intent behind the human effort in constructing and managing such architectural pieces. Blair concludes that "these were not places of retreat like early *ribāts* where poor, needy or mystically minded people sought asylum from the world, but were social establishments in which the place of the dead was commemorated by veneration of the living."⁷ These hospices were Sufi complexes run by male Sufis, some even commemorating dead male Sufis. Indeed, some of these *khānqāhs* together with mausoleums are marvels of the art of Islam.

3 For a discussion on the concept of these two terms, see *Kashf*, pp. 259–260.

4 John Spencer Trimingham. 1971. *The Sufi orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 5–11, 17–23, 168–72.

5 Marcia K. Hermansen. 1995. "Khānqāh," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic world*. Oxford University Press: 2: pp. 415–17; also, Ahmet T. Karamustafa. 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 120–122.

6 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1978. *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*. Delhi: Idara-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, p. 175.

7 Sheila S. Blair. 1990. "Sufi saints and shrine architecture in the early fourteenth century". *Muqarnas*, vol. 7 (1): 35–49.

Because of the growing apprehension that the *khānqāhs* were emerging as promoters of extra-Islamic ways of life, encouraging and practicing adulation, almost idolization of the *murshid* or the *pīr*, condemnation soon surfaced against the *khānqāhs*. This opposition to the *khānqāhs* continues to exist until today. Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), a Ḥanbalī scholar, in his treatise *Talbīs Iblīs* (Devil's Deception), added a section titled "Devil's deception of them [the Sufis] with regard to their place of residence." In it he describes the *khānqāh* life as one that is against Islam's traditions as it encourages celibacy and opulent lifestyle supported by the ill-gotten wealth of tyrant rulers.⁸ Shihābu'd-Dīn Abū Ḥafs 'Umar Suhrawardī (d. 1234), the author of the most read treatise on Sufi etiquettes, the *'Awārifu'l-ma'ārif*, also did not favour the construction of these houses of spiritual assemblies under royal patronage.⁹ In his work *Kitāb fī'l-futuwwat*, Abū Ḥafs criticises and disparages Sufi Shaikhs who build and run their *khānqāhs* with money given by the rulers and moneyed people (*mulūk wa umāra*).¹⁰ Despite Abū Ḥafs's criticism of the *khānqāhs*, splendid lodges emerged all over, including South Asia, some built under royal patronage, and continue to thrive on generous state grants and endowments.

Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1327) expressed similar concerns about the *khānqāhs*. It is relevant here to know a little more about Ibn Taymīyah's views as he looked at the *khānqāhs* as an innovation. This Damascus-born scholar spent his whole life, until his death in prison in 1327, advocating *ijtihād* (reasoning) for comprehending the Qur'ān. Among several other innovative practices that in his view were not in line with the Qur'ān, was the construction of the *khānqāhs*, *zāwīyas*, and the *jamā'at khānās* and the life spent in them.¹¹

Karamustafa refers to two legal opinions or *fatāwā* of Ghazālī (d. 1111), one in Arabic and the other in Persian, regarding the nature, purpose, and etiquettes of *khānqāh* living. In his *fatwā*, Ghazālī explained major and minor sins that disqualify a Sufi from receiving endowment funds. Among the minor sins according to Ghazālī, writes Karamustafa, was included sitting alone with

8 Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī and Haitham Hamdan. 2014. *The Devil's Deceptions: Being a Translation of His Masterpiece 'Talbis iblis*. Birmingham: Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, pp. 289–90.

9 Shaikh Shihābuddin 'Umar Suhrawardī bin Muḥammad-i Suhrawardī, and Henry Wilberforce Clarke. 1891. *The 'Awārifu'l-ma'ārif, written in the thirteenth century*. Calcutta: Government of India Central Printing Office, pp. 23–26.

10 For more on this, see Lloyd Ridgeon. 2011. *Jawanmardi. A Sufi Code of Honour*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

11 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1990. "The Impact of Ibn Taimiyya on South Asia." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1(1):120–149.

women, even if it was done occasionally.¹² Suhrawardī's *ʿAwārifu'l-ma'ārif*, which describes different types of Sufi lodges and the rules to be followed by the Sufis who stay there or serve there, nowhere mentions any role or presence of women in the *khānqāh*. Suhrawardī was convinced that the *khānqāh* was a space marked for men only.¹³

7.2 *Khānqāhs in South Asia*

Although we have no recorded evidence to show the exact chronology of the construction of the *khānqāhs* in South Asia, it is assumed that some form of hospices did begin to grow, primarily to provide shelter and refuge to the wandering mystics and seekers of Truth. Thus, both in Hujwīrī and much later in the *Fawa'idu'l-fu'ād*, there are references to the male Sufis' shared abodes. The number of such facilities grew in proportion to the number of those who sought them. One can safely assume that a fair number of Sufi lodges of variant sizes and resources existed in the formative period of the Muslim community in Lahore, Ajodhan, Uchch, and later in Delhi. It is fascinating to study how in the backdrop of its all-male occupancy with almost zero female visibility, the *khānqāh* transformed Sufism to an all-male institution. The *khānqāhi* Sufism, a product of a powerful political-cultural setting, sustained and nurtured by the state grants or public donations, quintessentially grew into a symbol of male authority. Whereas documents exist for some state grants, textual evidence for public donations is scarce, except a few epigraphic evidences or *waqf* records. Curiously, women who were largely kept at the edge of the *khānqāhs* and whose entry into the precincts of its sacred space was viewed as practically a sacrilegious act, patronised them through generous donations, endowments, and even as their original builders.¹⁴

Nizami says that a *khānqāh* served three purposes: "It offered shelter for the mystics who have no home of their own; it provides the setting for fostering a communitarian discipline, and in that setting the residents can offer both

12 Ahmet T. Karamustafa. 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 126–27.

13 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn 'Abd Allāh Suhrawardī. (Edited by Tawfiq 'Ali Wahbah). 2006. *ʿAwārif-al-ma'ārif*. al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyah, pp. 112–136; *The ʿAwārifu-l-ma'ārif, written in the thirteenth century* (1891), pp. 23–26.

14 D. Fairchild Ruggles (Edited). 2000. *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*. New York: SUNY.

support and mutually constructive criticism.”¹⁵ Khwāja Naṣīru’-d-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, however, defined *khānqāh* as a house of worship where prayers and supplications are heard and answered speedily.¹⁶ What differentiated the *khānqāhs* of South Asia from those of the other Muslim countries, especially of the Arab world, was that these grew up around a holy man and became associated with his *ṭarīqa* and method of discipline and exercises.¹⁷ Thus, the *khānqāh* hallowed the personality of the Shaikh—a male, obviously.

Sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq, much influenced by Ibn Taymīyah’s philosophy, even went to the extent of calling all Sufi beliefs heresy. Thus, for a while, the Sufi lodges in Delhi looked abandoned as the Sufis were dispersed and sent away to take up various administrative assignments in other regions of the Sultanate.¹⁸ In hindsight, Delhi’s ruination proved a boon as it spread the Sufi message to areas where there had been no presence of Muslims before. A greater need was now there for the Sufi lodges to shelter and house the uprooted Sufis in cities elsewhere than Delhi and its environs.

It is important to note that the *khānqāhs* in their early stages in India attracted a great number of visitors, largely males, who came there with a variety of purposes. To an ordinary Indian Muslim male, probably not too familiar with the religious texts in Arabic but who could easily watch and witness life in and around the *khānqāhs*, these edifices were next in sanctity to a mosque and a place where one could learn through audition and by observation.

Probably because of these reasons, the Ghiyāspur *jamā’at-khāna* (the house of congregation), the earliest built *khānqāh* of Khwāja Nizāmu’-d-Dīn Awliyā’, magnetically attracted visitors each day, including some women as well.¹⁹ Built in the serene village of Ghiyāspur on the banks of river Jamuna, in the suburbs of Delhi, the place was hard to reach even by males. Distance, coupled with difficult modes of travelling for women, made the *jamā’at-khāna* more a place of congregation for men rather than for women. The lodge consisted of an open courtyard, a big hall in the centre, flanked by two small chambers, accessed through a walled veranda. All the residents of the *khānqāh* rested, slept, ate, and prayed in the open and were watched by the others. There were no private

15 K.A. Nizami. 1957. ‘Some aspects of Khānqāh life in medieval India.’ *Studia Islamica*, 8: 51–70.

16 *KM*, *Majils* 75.

17 John Spencer Trimingham. 1971. *The Sufi orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 22.

18 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1990. “The Impact of ibn Taimiyya on South Asia.” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1(1):120–149.

19 For a thorough description of the *jamā’at-khāna*, see Nisar Ahmad Faruqi. 1978. *Tazkira Hazrat Khwāja Nizāmu’-d-Dīn Awliyā’-Khānqah-i mubarak ki ek jhalak*. New Delhi: Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmi Memorial Society, pp. 23–46.

quarters or covered areas for women. A small wooden structure accessed by a wooden staircase was the private chamber for the Shaikh. Service quarters consisted of a free kitchen (*langar-khānā*) and storage areas for grains and other edible items. This simple purpose-built structure emerged as an eyesore to the imperial power and a sanctuary of peace for thousands of people who visited it every day, covering long distances on foot; some lodged there for several days while others were permanent residents.²⁰

Undoubtedly, a *khānqāh* was an open house for spiritual discourses, exchange of views, and performance of ritualistic prayers and mystical exercises. Here, books were shared, introduced, and read. Assemblies of meditation and remembrance were held, Qurʾān was recited, sessions of *samāʿ* were held, and meals were eaten and shared with the poor and the wayfarer with no distinction. The sermon and the discourse of the Shaikh, the *samāʿ*, and the free community meals (*langar*), all were enough to transport an ordinary person, albeit for a short period of time, to a new experience, away from the worries of the mundane realities.²¹ The *khānqāh*, however, served another purpose as well. More than its male needs-oriented construction, management, and the daily working of the *khānqāh*, the language and the idiom of the discourses held on its premises turned the *khānqāh* into a bastion of male authority, distancing women further away from it and thereby creating a falsified male-female dichotomic perception of a Sufi. It is important to understand that the primary sources of South Asian Sufi history, the *malfūzāt*, were produced within the premises of the *khānqāhs* with the active participation of three agents: the Shaikh, the audience, and the scribe. The Shaikh held the discourse, often triggered by a query from the audience, who listened with rapt attention and spread it further by word of mouth; and finally, the scribe recorded it and preserved it for the next generations. All through its journey, from the spoken to the audited and written word, the *malfūz* remained male in vision, form, and purpose.

20 Ibid.

21 For contemporary eye-witnessed account of the *khānqāh* and the *langar* which also included vegetarian meals, see the devotional narrative penned in Persian by Rajkumār Har Dev, a Hindu chieftain from Deogir, under the title of *Chehel Roza* (A Discourse of Forty Days). See its Urdu version, Nizāmī Dihlawī, Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī Dihlawī. 1945. *Chishtī Awliyāʾ Nāma: Nizāmī bansrī: tārikh-i Awliyāʾ: tamām nāmwar khwājgān-i Chisht kī zindagī ke ḥālāt aur Sulṭānuʾl Mashāʾikh Ḥazrat Khwāja Sayyid Nizāmuddīn Awliyāʾ maḥbūb Ilāhī kī pūrī zindagī kā tazkira*. Delhi: Ahl-i Bait Press; Rāj Kumār Hardev and Maḥmūd urrah mān. 2000. *Nizāmī Bansrī: Ḥazrat Khwāja Maḥbūb Ilāhī Sulṭān Nizāmuddīn Awliyāʾ kī sawānīḥ ʿumrī*. Islāmabad: Dost Publications.

7.3 Women's *Khānqāhs*

Reading the above description of *khānqāhs* raises a natural query: were there or are there any *khānqāhs* for women? Trimmingham refers to women's hermitages or convents known as *ribāt*.²² Donald Little, with reference to Asyūti (d. 1455), describes separate women's *khānqāhs* under the Māmlūks as "a house (*dār*) of good appearance, solid construction, in good repair, containing living quarters (*masākīn*), assembly rooms (*majālis*), closets (*makhādī*), and duplex (*ṭibāq*)."²³ Female hospices for single, divorced, and widowed women started in Aleppo in the twelfth century; references to women's lodges are also found in the Fatimid period. Female Sufis might have also lived in these hospices. Karammustafa's view that possibly these *ribāts* or *khānqāhs* "were charitable hospices for abandoned women, widows and divorcees, rather than lodges specifically for female Sufis," appears plausible.²⁴ Most of these lodges were built and patronised by elite women.²⁵

Whereas we find a few examples of mosques with women's galleries in South Asia, no evidence has yet come to light about women's separate Sufi lodges or *khānqāhs*. One such example of women-only mosques is of the Lal Darwaza *masjid* built by Bibi Rāji (d. 1477), the Queen of Sultan Maḥmūd Shāh Sahrqi (r. 1440–1457) of the Sharqi Sultanate.²⁶ Afshan Bukhari also refers to *zenana* or women's prayer section in the Jami Masjid, Agra, built by Jahān Ārā' Begum (1614–1681), daughter of the Mughal Emperor Shāh Jahan (r. 1628–1658) and a Sufi. Bukhari describes some "devotional Sufi rituals" that local women perform in this area on Thursday evenings. Bukhari writes, "Women light incense, and make flower and candle effigies while performing the *Sufiāna kalām* or mystical poetry. At the end, the group recites a supplication for Jahān Ārā' or Fāṭima Begum, their patron saint and the patron of the mosque. They dip their

22 Trimmingham, 1971. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 18.

23 Donald P. Little, 1991. 'The nature of *khānqāh*, *Ribāt*, and *Zāwīyas* under the Māmlūks.' In *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*. Edited by Adams, Charles J., Wael B. Hallaq, and Donald P. Little. Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 91–107.

24 Ahmet T. Karamustafa. 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 126.

25 Yasser Tabaa. 'Ḍayfa Khatūn, Regent Queen and Architectural Patron,' in D. Fairchild Ruggles (Edited), *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*. New York: SUNY, 2000. pp. 17–34; Yossef Rapoport. 2005. *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (especially Ch. 2).

26 See Anton Führer. 1889. *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur: With Notes on Zafarabad, Sahet-Mahet and Other Places in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*. Calcutta: Thacker, pp. 29–40; K.B. Mawlwi Muhammad Fasihuddin. 1922. *The Sharqi Monuments of Jaunpur*. Allahabad: Empire Press, p. 34.

palms in henna and leave its 'mark' as a sign of their spiritual devotion on the *qibla* wall. Jahān Ārā's spiritual authority is evoked and memorialized in the performative site of her patronage through ritualized Sufi practice." Bukhari, however, observes that it is unknown whether this practice is an earlier practice or is of recent origin.²⁷

One significant evidence of a *khānqāh*'s name associated with a woman is found in Bidar, Deccan. Named as the *khānqāh* of Ḥaẓrat Minnat-ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba, according to an inscription found on a black stone tablet on one of the walls, it dates back to the mid-fifteenth century. Architectural details and carved embellishments reflect Bahmani style. The *khānqāh* must have been an important place as it was later renovated in 1108/1696. Yazdani, who has described this *khānqāh*, explains that its importance was due to Ḥaẓrat Minnat-ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba who "took an active interest in the propagation of the religious doctrines of the Chishtiyya order of *ṣūfis*."²⁸ Ḥaẓrat Minnat-ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba was Khwāja Bandā Nawāz's great-granddaughter, i.e., the granddaughter of his daughter Bibī Khwānja Batūl Khātūn and her husband Saiyyid Salār Lahori.

It is significant to note here that women's spiritual experience, their search for the Divine, and their longing for the Divine were experiences that most pious women preferred to have in seclusion and privacy rather than in the company of others. This does not mean confinement as confinement usually comes from outside. Furthermore, the living areas are defined as sanctified places where daily prayers are offered by women without any loss of reward or merit (*sawāb*). Consequently, most women felt free in their spiritual journeys.

7.4 Women's Presence in Sufi Lodges

As mosques were already off-limits to women, though women's presence was not prohibited, the *khānqāhs* as the next most profound space of male presence and male authority emerged as the most effective agent in distancing women not only from "sacred" spaces but also from public spaces. As discussed above, Sufi lodges, similar to mosques, were primarily meant for men, both in their intent and in their architectural designs. This comparison creates some further questions. For instance, were women banned from these abodes of

27 Afshan Bokhari. 2008. "The 'Light' of the Timuria: Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage, Piety and Poetry in 17th century Mughal India." *Marg*, 60(1): 53–61.

28 Ghulām Yazdani. *Bidar, its History and Monuments*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 208–11, (henceforth, referred to as *Bidar, its History and Monuments*), p. 113.

spiritual retreat that also served as open assemblies for moral discourses? Were any restrictions imposed on women's entry into these houses that, in the words of Nizami, were built for "inculcating community spirit among the mystics and for the moral and spiritual culture of the people"?²⁹ A closer perusal of the primary South Asian Sufi texts shows several instances where women played both direct and indirect roles in the day-to-day life of the *khānqāhs*. Nizami, who has studied and sifted through almost all the sources on North Indian Sufis, writes that the doors of the *khānqāh* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' were open to women and to his *bait-i 'ām* (a house of the common people) women were admitted.³⁰ Jamālī's story of a poor woman who earned a little by spinning thread (*resmān*) in the neighbourhood of the Ghiyāspur *khānqāh* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' is worth retelling here. The story is from the early days of Ghiyāspur when its resources, both in cash and kind, were scant. Once, in those years, the residents of the *khānqāh* went without food for several days. This pious woman who was also a disciple of the Shaikh (*paiwand dāsht*), sent about a half-seer of uncooked barley flour without salt to the *khānqāh*. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' received it as a welcome gift, as perhaps this alone could satisfy the hunger of the residents. While this flour was mixed with water and boiled, most probably as a flour-gruel, a wandering *qalandar* stopped by and demanded food. On being told that the pot was still getting ready, the *qalandar* in his anger ordered Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' to bring it immediately. The *qalandar* ate by putting his hand in the hot boiling pot while the Shaikh was holding it by his hands. Soon, the *qalandar* smashed the hot boiling vessel, spilling all the flour-broth on to the ground, and went away. This fistful of flour bought by the hard labour of a poor woman opened the floodgates of never-ending *futūh* for the *khānqāh*. In Jamālī's words, such large number of gifts, both in cash and kind, began to arrive that it is not possible to record them all (*fatūh wa shukrāna rasīdan girift kih zabt-i tahrīr na ganjad*). The number of persons seeking discipleship and receiving the cloak of spiritual succession also increased. The fame of the *khānqāh*'s charismatic and miraculous powers spread to such an extent that Jamālī found it hard to document them.³¹ Hagiographical in nature, this anecdote is one of those untold contacts that women had with the *khānqāhs*. Of course, all history—factual, fictional, or hagiographical—depends on how it is recorded, read, and interpreted.

29 K.A. Nizami. 1957. "Some Aspects of Khānqah Life in Medieval India." *Studia Islamica*. 8: 51–69. for more on the *khānqāhs*, see John Renard. 1996. *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*. University of California Press.

30 K.A. Nizami. 2004. *Nizamuddin Auliya*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

31 Jamālī, pp. 69–70.

In the *jamā'at khāna* of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakkar (d. 1265), Bibī Rānī, a *murīd* and the paternal grandmother of Amīr Khwurd, the author of *Siyār ul-awliyā'*, used to serve the residents, even the unrelated ones. The next part of this book, the Biographical Notices, include several references to women who resided within the *khānqāhs*; they had conversations with males who either stayed there or were visiting, and they also offered their regular prayers there. An episode recorded by 'Abdul Jabbār Khan Mulkapuri about Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bihārī Chishtī of Burhanpur (d. 907/1501) further evidences not only the presence of women within the precincts of the *khānqāhs* but also illustrates that they were assigned supervisory and managerial functions of the *khānqāhs*.³² Thus, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bihārī Chishtī, a migrant Sufi from Ajodhan, belonging to the august family of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakkar, assigned the administration and supervision of his *khānqāh* to his elder pious sister.³³ Around the early seventeenth century, another Sufi woman, Khadija Bibī, of the Chishtī *silsila*, according to *Gulzār-i Abrār* looked after the management of the shrines of her male Sufi relatives in Mandu.³⁴

Muḥammad Ghausī Shaṭṭārī narrates another example of a woman manager of a *khānqāh* in Patan, Gujarat. When Shaikh Hānsā Bukhārī, a descendant of the family of Makhdūm Jahānīān Jahāngasht, died in 1005 or 1006/1596–1597, he was buried in the courtyard of his house. He had a sister by the name of Buzurg who became the *mujāwir* (shrine attendant) of her brother's tomb. Known for her meditation and Allāh's remembrance, Ghausī, who knew her personally, writes that signs of *wilāyat* were manifest in her.³⁵

As late as the eighteenth century, Shāh Kalīmu'llah Jahanābādī (d. 1729) used to admit women to his *khānqāh* in Delhi. One such assembly in which women

32 'Abdu'l Jabbār Khan Mulkapuri, *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi-dakan* (*hiṣṣa awwal, jild som*) Hyderabad: Hassan Press, 1331/1912, pp. 213–221. (Henceforth, referred to as *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi-dakan*); Saiyyid Imāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Naqwi Ḥanafī Gulshanābādī. 1322/1904. *Baarkātu'l Awliyā'*. Dihli: Afzalul Maṭāba' (new edition, 2015, Nasik), pp. 129–131 (henceforth, referred to as *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*); Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbas. 2004. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2, pp. 283–4; For a biographical notice, see N. Hanif. 2000. *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, pp. 297–98 (henceforth, referred to as *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*). In public memory, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī is *Sarkar-i Burhanpur* (master of Burhanpur).

33 Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī was the son of Shaikh Yusuf (d. 850/1446), an eighth-generation descendant of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakkar and who was a highly respected Sufi of Burhanpur, See *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi-dakkan* (*hiṣṣa awwal, jild som*), *Ibid.*, p. 214.

34 *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 219.

35 *Azkār-i abrār*, pp. 419–20. Shaikh Hānsā Bukhārī migrated in 1003/ 1594 from Patan to Ahmedabad at the instance of one Sayyid Qāsim son of Sayyid Maḥmūd Barha of the Emperor's Akbar's era.

were present is described by Khwāja Muḥammad Kamgār Khan Ḥusainī, a disciple of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aurangābādi, an eyewitness who stayed in Delhi for two weeks in 1719 and visited the *khānqāh* at least fourteen times.³⁶ Due to poverty and accumulating debt,³⁷ Shāh Kalīmu'llah did not have a separate hospice, but used his own house (*khānā ye khud*) as his *khānqāh*.³⁸

Another category of women, whose presence at the *khānqāhs* is generally overlooked in studies on Sufism, is women employed to perform low-cadre jobs for the male inmates, for instance, sweeping and cleaning the premises, cooking meals, and grinding the floor. Indeed, we know little about the lives of these women as Sufi chronicles have minimal records of their presence. A close study of these texts, however, shows that despite the rigid views regarding women's presence in an assembly of unrelated men, and heated polemics on close male-female proximity, there are several instances where women were employed either to clean the *khānqāhs*' premises or to cook meals for the Sufis and were constantly under the watchful eyes of men. Thus, for example, the very first known *khānqāh*, which Jamālī calls *takiyā*,³⁹ and where assemblies of *samā'* were frequently held and Sufis' visiting Delhi used to stay,⁴⁰ was founded by the Chishtī mystic, Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī Qalandarī (d. 639/1249), on the banks of river Yamuna. This *khānqāh* maintained a large kitchen for preparing meals for feasts and the *langar*. Here, a young woman cook was hired to prepare meals for the male Sufis.⁴¹ Identified anonymously as *kanīz*, this young woman could have been either a slave girl bought for the premises or a maidservant hired to cook. Narrated in *Aḥsanu'l-aqwāl*, the *malfūz* of another Chishtī Sufi, Khwāja Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, by Ḥammād Kashānī, this story gets endorsed, albeit indirectly, by three male Sufis—Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī, Khwāja Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, and Ḥammād Kashānī. In this story, to pacify the passions of a young novice enamoured by the looks of this maid, Abū Bakr Ṭūsī, instead of reprimanding him for breaching the Sufi conduct, offered to give him another suitable girl. Such a transaction, even if it is used as a mere trope, conveys a negative image of the hospice, and raises some serious questions. For instance, why were young female cooks hired for an all-male establishment? Why did Shaikh Abū Bakr Ṭūsī, instead of taking stern action against the young errant novice, merely call him a liar (*kāzīb*) for quickly agreeing

36 Khwāja Muḥammad Kamgār Khan Ḥussaini. *Majālis-i Kalīmī* (Edited by 'Abdu'l 'Azīz Sāḥir). Islamabad: Idara Farogh Ma'ārif Nizāmiyya, 2016.

37 *Maktūbāt Kalīmī*, 1, Letter no. 17, p. 2.

38 Ibid, Letter no. 21, p. 31.

39 Jamālī, p. 67.

40 AA, p. 73.

41 *Aḥsanu'l-aqwāl*, p. 73.

to accept another female in exchange? Were girls easily available to be used in such exchanges and that, too, on the premises of a *khānqāh*? In another instance, the floor of the hospice of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn in Ajodhan was swept by women workers. These and several other such instances of women's presence within the *khānqāh* illustrate that opposition was not to the physical presence of women; it was women's claim to a recognised position or status that was opposed. Thus, roles of subordination were acceptable but positions of parity were not.

'Abdul Jabbār Khan Mulkapūrī's account of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Shāhbāz (d. 934/1527), a Sufi of Burhanpur whose miraculous powers attracted a large number of devotees to his *khānqāh*, narrates a story about a pious old woman. This woman, who had performed *bai'at* at his hand, used to stay in one corner of the *khānqāh*, spending her time in meditation and remembrance (*zikr wa shughul*). One day, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Shāhbāz gave her the glad tidings that he had received in his dream (*bashārat*) that because of her sincere acts of worship, she would soon be honoured by the Manifestation of Allāh (*tajallī-yi khāṣ*). Hearing this, the woman went into *wajd* (ecstasy) and while weeping lost her senses. The episode is significant as it shows that not only women were present in the *khānqāhs* but also that male inmates of the *khānqāhs* interacted with them.⁴²

Although several other such examples could be examined from other less explored sources, it is significant to note that a strong view persists among the Muslims prohibiting women's presence in precincts marked primarily as male domains.

42 *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 449–54.

Sufi Shrines: Manifesting the Deceased Sufi

Although scientifically generated statistics to show the proportion of male-female shrine visitation is not available, generally it is estimated that women, despite restrictions on their mobility and the presence of religious decrees against their grave visitation, come to the shrines in fairly large numbers. Some anthropological and ethnographic studies of shrine visitation which tend to focus more, on the presence of women devotees in shrine complexes, as compared to men visitors, have also projected a female face of a shrine visitor.

In South Asia, shrines, which in popular estimation are next to any other sacred space, are known by several names. A popular word is *dargāh*, a Farsi word which means portal, threshold, a royal court shrine or tomb. Another is *mazār*, an Arabic word which means a place of visitation, a shrine, a sepulchre. Shrines often are also known as *darbār*, a Farsi word which means a place of dwelling, hall of audience, a royal court. Another term used is *ziyārat*, an Arabic word meaning visiting a shrine or making a pilgrimage to a sacred place.

A shrine is essentially a piece of funerary architecture built over the physical remains of a deceased person. Along with citadels, forts, and other masonry icons of royal authority, the *dargāh* emerged signifying the spiritual domain's symbol of power. In most instances, not only were the shrines built with the money coming from the state treasury, but state grants were made for their maintenance as well. Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, and so also Nizāmu'd-Din Awliyā' and his successor, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn, refused to accept state grants.¹ Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, however, took an exceptional step and accepted state grants for his *khānqah* in Gulbarga.² While grants and monetary assistance were refused by the living mystics, grand structures to commemorate the dead Sufis, even the Chishtīs, were constructed by royal patrons.³ Some of these sublime structures have survived ravages, some have been repaired, and a large number have been lost for several reasons. It is significant to note Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Din Awliyā's disapproval of raising permanent structures over graves. In response to a query

1 FF, *Majlis* 7, of 19 *Jamādi'ul awwal*, 712/1312; Nizami, K.A. 1948. "Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and their Attitude towards the State." *Islamic Culture*, 22 (4): 397–98.

2 Fatima Zahra Bilgrami. 2005. *History of the Qadiri Order in India: 16th–18th Century*. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, p. 5.

3 For royal patronage to the Chishtī *dargahs*, see Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui. 1989. 'The Early Chishti Dargahs.' in Christian W. Troll (Edited), *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*. (Delhi: OUP, 1989). (pp. 223).

of Amīr Ḥasan Sijzi on whether repairing dilapidated graves was permissible, the Shaikh categorically said, even if it is in ruins, do not repair it (*har chih kharāb shud pesh ‘imārat nā-bāyad kard*) because the more decrepit a grave is, the greater the hope for Mercy (*har chih indirās beshtar ummīd-i raḥmat beshtar*).⁴

The deceased saint, Sufi anecdotes show, is not a dead person in the ordinary meaning. A story told by Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ to his audience supports this stand. In this story, Aḥmad, one of the Shaikh’s friends from Badayun, though illiterate, was a highly devout person with the virtues of an *abdāl* and often discussed and investigated religious issues. Sometime after his death, he appeared in a dream of Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, and as usual, he questioned certain issues regarding religion and faith. When the Shaikh wondered why all these queries as he was dead, Aḥmad asked the Shaikh, “Do you deem friends of Allāh as dead?”⁵ Following his usual practice of instructing his audience through parables and anecdotes, Ḥazrat Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ was simply explaining that virtuous and pious persons are not dead in the normal sense of being dead.

The above narrative thus is a prologue to the Chishtī Sufis’ devotion for the *dargāh* and their belief that a dead Sufi accepts their salutations, listens to their supplications, and is capable of giving his blessings and benedictions. Another episode from Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’'s discourses illustrates it further. Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ narrated that when Bābā Farīd was seriously ill towards the end of his life, he commanded him and a few other fellow disciples to spend the night at a certain shrine/cave (*ḥazīrā*) praying for his health. As told, they all spent the night there and prayed for his recovery. In the morning, on their return, they could see that their supplications and prayers were not answered.⁶ In another Assembly of 23rd of *Ramaḥzān*, Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ not only repeated the above story but also added Bābā Farīd’s comment that their supplications made no effect. Recalling his mother, Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ said that several times when she fell ill, she asked him to visit the shrines of saints and martyrs and pray for her recovery. On his return, she would say that her health showed signs of improvement.⁷ The moral of these stories is that effectiveness of supplications is neither caused by the power of the dead saint nor by the humility of the supplicant; supplications are answered by Allāh. Indeed, Saiyyid Muḥammad Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī (d. 1437) explained his firm faith that the Chishtī Sufis—Khwāja Muḥīnu’d-Dīn, Khwāja Bakhtiyār Kākī, Khwāja

4 FF, *Majlis* 67 of 23 Rajab, 719 H.

5 FF, *Majlis* 5, 15th of *Muḥarram* of 710/1310.

6 FF, *Majlis* 8, 27th of *Rabi‘ al-awwal*, 710/1310.

7 FF, *Majlis* 17, 23rd of *Ramaḥzān*, 710/1310.

Farīdu'd-Dīn, and Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'—though buried under the dust, are all blessed with virtue of hearing and responding to the supplications as their supernatural powers continue in death (*tassaruf dar maqām-i fānī bāqī ast*).⁸ In the context of this book, these episodes show that shrine visitation was not only approved by the Sufi Shaikhs, but they performed it themselves and commanded their disciples to visit and seek Allāh's blessings with the help of the dead saints' intercession.

To the devotees, the physical space of a *dargāh*, therefore, personifies the physically absent (*ghā'ib*) saint who is capable of bestowing blessings on the devotee. Most of the Sufis were buried within or close to their hospice. The masonry of the tomb structure soon gained religious sanctity and came to be viewed and valorised, in some instances, next to the Ka'ba and the mosque. Once, while discussing the events before the conquest of Makkah and the pledge the Prophet took from his followers, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recounted a story he had heard from the *Shaikhu'l Islām* of Awadh, Shaikh Rafī'u'd-Dīn, about one of his relatives who was a disciple of Khwāja Ajal Shīrāzī. This disciple, when he was about to be beheaded on account of some suspicion, instead of facing the *Qibla* (prayer orientation), turned his face towards the grave of his *pīr*. Reminded by the executioner of the right direction of the *Qibla* (the direction of K'aba), the disciple retorted, "Carry on with your job, I have my face turned towards my *Qibla*."⁹ The grave of a Shaikh and his *dargāh*, therefore, is revered by the disciples not merely as a fountainhead of blessings; the grave takes the place of K'aba, the house of Allāh in Makka. In another discourse, in which Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', with tears in his eyes, equated his visit to the tomb of his *pīr* to a visit to Ka'ba itself, plays a quintessential role in developing the psyche of shrine visitation in the South Asian Sufi milieu. The discourse was incited by an observation made by Ḥasan Sijzi, on an anecdote narrated by his friend Malīḥ that only a person who has no *pīr* should go for Ḥajj. Instead of refuting the statement, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recalled an incident in support of it. He recounted that when after the demise of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, his desire for performing the Ḥajj overpowered him, he thought of visiting his Shaikh at Ajodhan. By visiting the Shaikh (shrine), not only was his purpose achieved, but he gained more (*chūn ba ziyārat-i Shaikhu'l Islam rasīdam ān maqsūd marā ḥāṣil shud ma'shai' zā'id*). That extra gain was that he no longer wished for the Ḥajj pilgrimage.¹⁰ Following the same vein,

8 Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnāni. 1499/1999. *Laṭā'if-i Ashrafi fī bayān-i ṭawā'if-i Sufi*. (vol. 1). Karachi: Ḥalqa-yi Ashrafiya, p. 47.

9 FF, *Majlis* 16, 6th of *Ramāzān*, 710/1310.

10 FF, *Majlis* 28 of *Rabī' u'l ākhir*, 714/1314.

Sayyid Gisū Darāz is quoted to have said that “when, for good reasons, people were unable to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, a visit once in their lives to his mausoleum would convey the same merit.”¹¹

Shaikh Sharafu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Yaḥya Manerī (d. 782/1381) of the Firdawsī order, in a long letter, exhorts his disciples to visit graveyards (*goristān*) and to get into the habit of performing the *ziyārat* of holy persons and believers as it has several benefits (*fawā'id bisyār ast*). One such benefit, according to one *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet, is that it softens the hearts of the visitors and reminds them of their own life's end. While discussing the etiquettes of visiting the graves and shrines, he emphasised that the visitor should be barefoot, stand facing the grave, and should offer greetings (*salām*) to the dead loudly. He illuminates the benefits of shrine visitation, particularly on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays. He then explains how prayers should be recited while visiting the graves.¹² Sharafu'd-Dīn Manerī approved of the practice of kissing the graves of saints and considered it a rewarding act.¹³ Manerī was convinced that offering gifts to the shrine and placing food there for the soul of the dead Sufi is an indicator of the greatness of the saint buried in the shrine.

Shaikh Shahul Hamid of Nagore in Tamil Nadu, three days before his death in 1570, told his son to visit his grave on the third day following his burial and offer greetings to the dead saint. If there is a response from the inside the grave, he (the son) should continue to stay in Nagore, otherwise he could move to a place of his choice. As there was a response from the grave, the son stayed in Nagore as directed by his father.¹⁴ The same Sufi, Shaikh Shahul Hamid is reported to have said that for those who cannot afford to go for Ḥajj, seven visits to his shrine at Nagore would give them the merit of Ḥajj.¹⁵

11 Jā'far Sharīf, Herklots, G.A., & Crooke, W. 1921. *Islam in India, or The Qānūn-i-Islām: The customs of the musalmāns of India comprising a full and exact account of their various rites and ceremonies from the moment of birth to the hour of death*. London: Curzon Press, p. 210.

12 Letter No. 21 in Sharafu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn-Yaḥyā Manerī, Ibn-Abī-Ṣāliḥ 'Abd-al-Qādir al-Gilānī, and Muḥammad Abū-'l-Ḥasan. 1885. *Maktūbāt Ḥaẓrat-i Shaikh Sharaf-ad-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī*. Lucknow: Munshī Nawal Kishore, pp. 75–80.

13 Sharafu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn-Yaḥya Manerī. 2011. *Madanu'l Ma'ānī*. (Urdu Translation). Nalanda: Khanqah Balkhia, p. 578. Zain Badr 'Arabī Firdawsī (compiler). 2014. *Khwān-i pur ni'mat*.

14 S.A.A. Saheb. 1998. "A 'Festival of Flags'. Hindu Muslim devotion and the sacralising of localism at the shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu." In *Embodying charisma: modernity, locality, and performance of emotion in Sufi cults*. Edited by Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu. London: Routledge, pp. 55–76.

15 Jā'far Sharīf. 1921. *Islam in India or the Qānūn-i-Islām*, p. 210.

Similar to shrine visitation being an expression of devotion, another practice that was part of Sufi Shaikhs' behaviour—and which continues today—was tying thread or coloured ribbons to the graves of the Sufis. These threads, shreds of fabric, even locks of hair, are attached to the mesh windows of the shrines or even to branches of the trees standing in the shrine complex. Women are chastised for performing this practice which the reformists list as one of the extra-Islamic rituals. One instance of shrine visitation and the tying of threads for making vows (*mannat*) is described in *Majlis* 77 by Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din. He recalls the virtues and acts of public benevolence of Sultan 'Alāu'd-Dīn Khilji. The Shaikh related that one Friday after the congregational prayers, he visited the grave of the Sultan out of reverence for him and tied a thread of his head scarf (*dastār*) there. That night he dreamt somebody asked him, "Who tied the thread today and what for?" The Shaikh, in his dream, said that it was he, but he needs nothing from the Sultan. He said to himself (in the dream), "for my needs, the *rawzā* of my Shaikh [Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā¹⁶] is enough."¹⁶

'Urs celebrations, festivities connected with the death of a Shaikh, are occasions for the seekers of Divine Blessings to meet with the dead Sufi masters; it is also the time of mingling of the elite with the commoners. 'Urs celebrations, however, remain a great marker creating segregation between the male and female Sufis. As dates of birth and death of most women Sufis remain unknown, technically their 'Urs celebration cannot be held. However, one major reason of disapproval of 'Urs celebrations for women Sufis, as I was told by male attendants of women's shrines, is that all types of publicity and visibility for women are not approved. This approval refers to religious approval as the word used is *ḥukm*, which is mostly used for religious orders. Those who oppose it, however, offer no valid reasons to support their arguments. It is this vague order which results in efforts to deter women devotees from gathering in large numbers at the shrines of Sufi women. However, instead of stopping them, it has resulted in their increased visibility at the shrines.

'Urs celebrations that include prayers, Qur'ān and *darūd* recitation, *sama'*, and free food distribution, lasting for several days and involving large spending, is a tradition whose proponents are the Sufis themselves. Thus, while Khwājā Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihli was making preparations for a six-day-long 'urs of his mentor, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Bākhṛāzī of Bukhara (d. 1260) where the people of the town prepared food in large quantities for free distribution for

16 KM, *Majlis*, 77.

which a large sum of money came from public voluntary donations.¹⁷ Khwājā Naṣīru'd-Dīn kept this tradition by celebrating the 'urs of Maulānā Burhānu'd Dīn Gharīb.¹⁸ Khwājā Bandā Nawāz, his disciple and *khalīfa*, celebrated the 'urs of all the revered personalities, his mentors and other religious persons, including his family members, and spent large amounts of money on providing food.¹⁹ Another practice that he was the first to begin was the distribution of food in honour of the memory of Bībī Fāṭima Sām.²⁰

8.1 Shrine Visitation by Women

This section examines the issue of shrine visitation by women in South Asia. To an ordinary woman devotee, the shrine embodies the Sufi himself. Stepping into the sacred space where the Sufi is resting in his/her grave is like having an audience with a living being, requiring etiquettes that were observed earlier in the august assemblies of the Shaikh. Thus, like the *murīd* of the past, the visitor today, after salutation, in place of kissing and placing his/her forehead at the feet of the Shaikh would kiss the shrine's threshold. Similarly, care is always taken not to turn one's back towards the shrine but always to step backwards.

I begin this section by giving my translation of an extract from Jahān Ārā' Begum's *Mūnisi'u'l arwāh*, a biographical compendium of early Chishtī Sufis, which she completed at the age of forty-seven in 1051/1641, describing her *ziyārat* of the shrine of Khwājā Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī in Ajmer.²¹ The pilgrimage journey, accompanied by her father, Emperor Shāh Jahan (d. 1666), started from Akbarābād (Agra) on 18 Sha'bān 1053/31 October 1643, towards Ajmer, the blessed land (*khiṭṭā-yi pāk*). The pilgrims' caravan arrived in Ajmer on Friday, 7 Ramazān 1643. On her way to the shrine, at each stop (*manzil*) she would offer two *nafls*²² of prayer and recite *Sura Yāsīn*, *Sura Fātiḥā*, and *Sura Ikhlās* for the reward (*sawāb*) of Khwājā Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī's soul. At the shrine, she stayed near Ana Sagar. As a mark of full respect for the saint (*kamāl-i adab*), throughout her stay she neither reposed nor slept in a bed nor spread her feet towards the direction of the holy tomb (*rawzā-yi muqaddas*) and did not turn

17 KM, *Majlis*, 93.

18 KM, *Majlis*, 1.

19 Shāh Muḥammad 'Alī Sāmānī. 831/1427, *Siyar-i Muḥammadi*, pp. 76–79; Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān. 1343/1924. *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*, pp. 84–86.

20 Ibid, p. 82.

21 Jahān Ārā' Begum, *Mūnisi'u'l-arwāh*. Translated in Urdu as *Mu'īnu'l-arwah* by Maulawī Muḥammad 'Abduṣ Ṣamad Kalīm Qādirī. Dehli: Matbā' Rizwī, 1891, pp. 43–44.

22 A *nafl* is a supererogatory prayer and is a type of optional Muslim prayer.

her back from the shrine. She spent the daytime under the trees. All this time, due to the blessings of the *Shāh Dīn-i panāh* (the king of the faith of refuge, i.e., Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī) and the *āʿīn* (rites) of *sar zamīn-i jannat* (the grounds of heaven, i.e., the shrine), she had unique spiritual experiences. In honour of the saint, one evening she organised *milād sharīf*, an assembly to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, and arranged illumination around the area. She left nothing undone (*taqsīr na kī*) in serving the *rawzā*. On the afternoon of 14 Ramaḡan, with countless thanks to God, she had the honour of entering the luminous holy shrine (*rawzā-yi munawwara*). She rubbed her face, which had turned yellow (because of the awe of the saint) with the dust of the shrine (*āsītānā kī khāk*) (performed prostration). From the doorway of the main edifice of the shrine to the threshold of the grave enclosure, she walked barefoot with her head bowed down touching the ground, kissing the ground (*zamīnbos*). Seven times, she walked around the holy grave (*qabr-i aṡhar*), the dust of the shrine becoming the collyrium for her eyes. At this moment, what she experienced was beyond the capacity of words to describe. Intoxicated (*sarāsimā*) by intense yearning, she was confused and did not know what to do and what to say. With her hands, she anointed the fragrant grave (*turbat-i muʿaṡṡar*) perfumed with amber (*muʿaṡbar*) with *ʿīṡr* (perfume of rose essence) and spread on the tomb the sheets of flowers she had carried on her head. Afterwards, she went to the shrine, built in marble by her father, and offered prayers in thanksgiving and recited *Sura Yāsīn* for the soul of the saint. She sat there until the *maghrib* prayers. She then lit the candle at the luminous sepulchre (*marqad-i munawwar*) and broke her fast by sipping water. What an evening, far better than a morning! Devotion, and love compelled her not to depart from such a sacred place; perforce, and grieving a hundred thousand times she, however, sought permission to depart from this court (*bārgāh*) with tearful eyes and a burning heart. Next morning, they left for Akbarābād.²³

8.2 Shrines as Spaces for Women's Expression of Spirituality

Shrine visitation remains a normative practice for most women. Their visits not only keep the visitors' traffic alive but also multiplies a shrine's earnings through gifts and donations in cash and kind. In addition, and more significantly, the shrine provides a space for most women visitors where they can meditate and sit in some peace, away from everyday life demands. For women, the shrine space is a safe place for the expression of their spirituality as well

23 *Mūnisuʿl-arwāh*, pp. 43–44.

as their identity and selfhood. Flagrant gender discrimination is on display at these sacred places, as most shrines carry signposts prohibiting women's entry beyond specified areas. This violation of their rights, however, does not deter women who, in search of the Divine, hang to the mesh doorways of the shrines, rub their hands on its walls, and gather the dust in their hands to seek eternal bliss.

In their everyday idiom, women often change the verb *ziyārat* into a plural noun (to show their respect for the saint). Thus, instead of "I went to visit," she would say "I went for visitations" (*main ziyaraton kē līyē ga'ī*). Devotees assume that the saint is present there, watching them and answering their supplications (*du'a*). On my visits to the shrines, I watched the devotees as they entered the shrine and either said "*assalam-o-alaikum baba*" or would touch their forehead with their right hand for a salutation to the saint. I observed several women directly addressing and conversing with the sepulchre of the saint by holding and kissing the *chadar* covering the tomb. Another common way of making supplications, at almost all the shrines, is to say "*main hāzīr hu'ī hūn*" (I submit myself in your presence) or "*āp merē līyē du'a kijiye*" (please pray for me).

My first exposure to the so-called shrine culture of Pakistan took place in early 1997 when I was collecting oral tales of women's reproductive experiences. Instead of seeking cure and treatment at healthcare facilities, I found, to my dismay, shrines were the places where women converged to seek solace and healing. Four years later, in 2001–2002, these tales led to three-country collaborative research on women's reproductive rights. Findings from my second encounter with shrines in Karachi were amazing. I discovered at least thirty large to tiny shrines dedicated to the memories of women saints, some bearing no name or identity. In 2015–2016, for the third time, my field study expanded. In addition to urban Karachi, suburbs of Karachi, and historic areas—such as the Makli hills and Thatta in Sindh, Lahore, Multan, and Uchh in the Punjab and Islamabad and its peripheries—were added to my study area. I also got in touch with friends and researchers in India who generously assisted in enriching my findings by visiting some shrines and taking photographs, which they later emailed me. These visits show how deep-rooted is the trust of women, as well as men, in the *baraka* emanating not from remembering or seeking help from the dead saints, but from the touch of the minutest objects associated with their shrines. Comparing notes of my encounters with shrine visitors during my three separate visits to the shrines, interviews with the attendants at these shrines, members of the managing committees, and random chit-chats with others, such as cab drivers who drove me to the shrines, flower, sweetmeat, or *chadar* sellers in the nearby shops of the shrines, and even the pedestrians

whom I approached to guide me to the locations of the shrines—I find an astonishing similarity in their responses to my queries and their uninvited comments.

During my fieldwork, women shrine visitors, some of whom spoke at length while others shirked me with a sentence or a mere few words, provided me with great insight into what researchers describe as “*mazar* culture.”²⁴ A middle-aged woman at the shrine of a locally known female Sufi in Karachi, the shrine of Māī Mirān Shāh, when asked what brought her to the shrine, told me, “*apni sunane āī huī*” ([I] have come to tell mine [story]). Surprisingly, although women devotees are convinced that the dead Sufi can see them, hear them, and respond to them, they show no signs of hiding their identity as is customarily done in the presence of unrelated men, though they are modestly covered by large headscarves and *chādars*. Similarly, a young woman at ‘Abdullah Shāh Ghāzī shrine, Karachi, told me, “I present myself in his court; what should I beg for? He knows everything” (*inke darbar main hazir hoti hun, mangun kiya, inko sab khabar hai*).²⁵ It is both amazing and saddening to hear almost every one of them saying, “Where else do we go, who do you think is prepared to hear our grievances (*faryād*)?” The shrine was a refuge for them. What Eickelman said in the Middle Eastern context, that people find “fraternal certitude and security,” applies to the case of women’s shrine visitation in Pakistan.²⁶ The shrine space certainly provides them sisterly certitude and bonding. I found women, total strangers to each other, crossing borders of ethnic and linguistic frontiers, mingling as friends, and sharing stories of their lives. The shrine of Mangho Pīr who is the *pīr* of the crocodiles, and similar to the shrine of Mirān Datār, Karachi, is linked with the shrine of Baba Gor, the Sidi saint.²⁷ The ‘urs celebrations are held on 17 Sh‘abān. Like most other shrines and saints and mystics, the history of Mangho Pīr is known only through local legends and songs of the devotees. Burton, in his *Scinde* or *The Unhappy Valley*, gave a

24 Katherine Ewing. 1998. “A *Majzub* and His Mother: The Place of Sainthood on a Family’s Emotional Memory.” In *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, locality, and performance of emotion in Sufi cults*. Edited by Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu. London: Routledge, pp. 160–83.

25 Desidero Pinto quoted a similar response from a devotee whom he interviewed at the tomb of Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ in Delhi. See Desidero Pinto. 1998. “The Mystery of the Nizamuddin Dargah.” In Christian Troll (Edited) *Muslim Shrines in India: The Character, History and Significance* (pp. 114–20). Oxford University Press, p. 118.

26 D.F. Eickelman. 1981. *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*. NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 228.

27 Bāvā Gor is the Abyssinian (*Habshī*) legendary mystic of the Sidi community in Gujrat in India, where a shrine is dedicated to him, his brother Bābā Habash, and his sister Māī Misrā.

picturesque eyewitness description of a *melo* (fair) held at the “alligator tank” of “Mugur Peer” where sacrificial meat was offered to *mor Sahib*, the biggest crocodile living in the pond’s water. Burton then mentions the presence of women who, along with the men folk, perform a dance, “seedy-nautch” (the dance of the Sidis) to the beat of African drums.²⁸ What Burton observed in the mid-nineteenth century is recorded in a recent study of similar performances at the shrine of Bāwa Gor in Gujrat by Helene Basu in her ethnographic study of the shrine.²⁹ The shrine of Mangho Pir is known for its sulphur water lakes that heal skin diseases. Most of the devotees interviewed at the shrine were members of the local community said to have African ancestry.³⁰ Kulsum, a thirty-five-year-old, never-married woman, relating the legend of the shrine told me that the tank of the alligators was originally filled with milk. As people became corrupt, the milk reservoir turned into a water reservoir. Accounting for her experiences at the shrine, she said, “Here I feel as if the heavy burden of my heart is lifted off and all the tension melts away. My heart’s desires are fulfilled.” Her brother, who earlier resisted getting married, is now happily married due to the blessings of the *pīr*. She and several women were not happy at the males’ attitude towards women visitors of the shrine. “They behave badly,” women complained.

The saint who lies buried under the earth is believed to hear, respond, and help. The saint, thus, is alive and not dead. People often turn a deaf ear to the stories of others, but the saint does not, I was told several times not only in Karachi but in Lahore, Multan, Thatta, and even in Buner, Swat. The large and noticeable presence of the poor and the deprived ones at the shrines has led some researchers to associate the shrines less with Sufism and more with “miracle-based,” “folk,” or “popular” Islam.³¹

28 Richard F. Burton. 1851. *Scinde or the Unhappy Valley*, London: Richard Bentley, pp. 47–54.

29 Helene Basu. 1995. *Habshi-Sklaven, Sidi Fakire: Muslimische Heiligenverehrung im westlichen Indien*. Berlin; Das Arabische buch.

30 John B. Edlessen et al. in their paper, ‘Makranis, the Negroes of West Pakistan’ in *Phylon*, vol. 21, No. 2 (1960): 124–30, say that ‘The largest community of Sidis is found in Sindh. Some years ago, there were 50,000 of them, but that number must have trebled. Although descendants of Africans are commonly referred to by the name ‘Sidi’ (or Habshi in historical publications), their social circumstances and cultural practice, including language, differ greatly in relation to the region of their re-settlement.’

31 David Damrel. 2013. ‘Baraka Besieged: Islamism, Neofundamentalism, and Sacred Space in South Asia.’ In *Muslims and Others in Sacred Space*. Edited by Margaret Cormack. New York: OUP, 2013, pp. 15–39; also, Katherine Pratt Ewing. 1997. *Arguing sainthood: modernity, psychoanalysis, and Islam*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Pnina Werbner. 2003. *Pilgrims of love: the anthropology of a global Sufi cult*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

8.3 Denouncement of Women's Shrine Visitation

Although women's visitation not only adds life and vibrancy to a shrine, it also adds considerably to the shrine's income. However, since Ibn Taymiyyah's (1263–1328) fierce denouncement of shrine visitations as unlawful and, in religious matters, equating it to “pre-Islamic idolatry,” religious decrees pronouncing shrine visitation by women as an irreligious act have been on the rise.³² To a certain extent, Ibn Taymiyyah's influence has led to an anti-shrine stand which has turned into an anti-women shrine visitation discourse.

Before investigating the viewpoint of the Muslim reformists against shrine visitation by women, it is important to know that tombs and graves of the pious and the chaste, despite divisive polemics, have long remained sanctuaries for the seekers of Divine Grace. Once Hujwīrī, caught in some difficulties (*uftād bisyār*), spent three months at the tomb of Abū Yazīd Baṣṭāmī (d. 874), praying all the time for which he had to perform at least three ablutions per day, hoping that the issue would be solved. Sadly, it did not happen and the disappointed Hujwīrī departed towards Khurāsān.³³ Hujwīrī, however, did not favour women's presence at the places of spiritual importance, including shrines and hospices.

Shrines often stand, at least in popular estimation, as a gateway leading to the ablution of sins. As this section moves forward, attestation of this understanding of the shrine's roles by the Sufi Shaikhs emerges. Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān (d. 1195/1781), the Delhi-based Naqshbandī Sufi, told his disciples—and through them the laypersons—that they should “make the *ziyārat* (visitation) of the shrines an instrument for blessings of all.”³⁴ Mirzā Mazhar was so deeply convinced of the benefits of shrine visitation that he continued to visit the grave of his *murshid*, Saiyyid Nūr Muḥammad Badayunī, for the next six years after his demise to seek his dead Shaikh's *tawajjuh* (spiritual attention) and stopped doing so only when Saiyyid Nūr Muḥammad Badayunī, in a dream, guided him to seek training not from the graves but from the living saints.³⁵

32 For a study of Ibn Taymiyyah's views on reforms, see Alexander Knysh. “The Cult of Saints and Islamic Reformism in Early Twentieth Century Ḥaḍramaut. In *New Arabian Studies*,” Vol. 4. In *New Arabian Studies*, Edited by Rex Smith, J.R. Smart and B.R. Pridham. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997, pp. 139–167; For Ibn Taymiyyah's influence on south Asian Islam, see K.A. Nizami. 1990. “The Impact of ibn Taimiyya on South Asia.” *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 1 (1): 120–149.

33 *Kashf*, p. 80.

34 Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī. 1983. *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī: aḥwāl wa malfūzāt wa maktūbāt-i Ḥazrat Mūrzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān Shahīd*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, p. 315.

35 *Ibid*, p. 265.

The ethos of the people of Delhi when he spoke these words was already shrine oriented. Nawāb Zu'l-qadr Dargāh Qulī Khān captured this image of the shrine-going people of Delhi in the years 1739–1741 in his diary, *Muraqqāʿ-yi Dehli* (Portfolio of Delhi). On the 'urs of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and of Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, men, women, and eunuchs from all the communities, decked in their fineries, used to encamp around the shrines for weeks, holding music and dance sessions.³⁶

Similarly, Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar of Kākori (1181/1768–1275/1858)³⁷ advocated shrine visitation by men as shrine visits carry many benefits (*dar ziyārat-i qabūr bisyār fawa'id ast*) and therefore many Sufi Shaikhs, considering it a requirement, have stressed visiting the shrines. Shrine visitation by a woman, he warned, however, should not be done. The moment she steps out of her house for visiting a shrine, all the angels of the seven heavens and seven earths and the souls of the dead curse her until she returns.³⁸

Shrine visitation, particularly by women, gained more popularity during the eighteenth century. Several reasons could be responsible for this increase. General social-political chaos that engulfed the Muslim community could be one of the major factors, followed by slightly relaxed rules for women's movement in public spaces and the rise of some sort of syncretic traditions. Another significant reason for a stronger focus on shrine visitation could be that it was placed on the emerging reformists' agenda. The Islamic reformist and the revivalist movements in South Asia, which gained momentum in the eighteenth century, among various moral and social faults of the community targeted shrine visitation, particularly by women, and censured them for causing the moral decline of the Muslims. Through tracts written on the enforcement of women's segregation under male authority, and by the issuance of religious decrees (*fatāwā*) prohibiting women's presence at the shrines, women's mobility was censured and controlled. Subsequently, women's presence was now increasingly viewed as a significant cause of social morbidity and moral decadence of the community.

36 Dargāh Qulī Khān. 1926. *Muraqqāʿ-yi Dehli, with introduction and Persian text by Hakim Saiyyid Muzaffar Husain*. Hyderabad, Deccan: Taj Press.

37 For the life of Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar, see Ḥāfiz Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥaidar 'Alawī Kākori. 1927. *Tazkirā Mashāhūr-i Kākori*. Lucknow: Aṣḥal maṭāb', pp. 75–81; Mas'ūd Anwar 'Alawī Kākori. 1990. *Tafsilāt Mazarāt Ṣāhibān-i khānqāh Kāzimiya Kākori Sharif*: Kutubkhāna Anwariya.

38 Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar. 1913. *Maṭālib-i Rāshidi*. Munshi Nawal Kishore (place not mentioned), p. 160. [completed in 1257/1841. [A ms of this work is held in the Special Collections—South East (MSS), Islamic Manuscripts, Princeton University Library].

Among several such cases, I would refer to the views of Shāh Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Shahīd (1781–1831) who was on the vanguard of a tirade launched against innovations (*bidʿat*) and in favour of the restoration of Islamic laws (*Sharīʿat*) as was done earlier by his grandfather, Shāh Walīullah (1702–1763) and uncle, Shāh ʿAbduʿl ʿAzīz (1746–1824).³⁹ Ismāʿīl Shahīd used all sorts of methods of communicating with the masses, including public addresses, writing of small tracts and pamphlets, and conducting marches across cities and towns. Surprisingly, his views about women were not in line with Islamic virtues.⁴⁰ In his next work, *Sirāt-i mustaqīm*, he denounced devotion for the saints and their shrines in the strongest terms, equating shrine visitation—by both men and women—with committing *shirk* and idolatry practices. He went to the extent of suggesting the most stringent punishments of various degrees, including death punishment, against such Sufis whom he called pretenders or heretic (*mulḥidīn-i Sufi shaʿār*).⁴¹ He particularly warned that women need to be guarded against the influence of shrines.

One significant move to restrict women from stepping out of their homes and thus putting a stop to their shrine visitation was taken by Maulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī (1864–1943), the author of the celebrated *Bihishti Zewar* for women. He issued a *fatwa* and declared that a person who forces a woman to stay inside the house and does not let her step out without wearing a cover, is observing the teachings of the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, and *fiqh*. Such a person will be awarded for averting evil and chaos.⁴² Thānawī's strictures on women's mobility were not new; numerous small tracts had already begun to appear regimenting women's mobility to the extent of declaring that a woman who happens to cast an eye on an unrelated man is committing adultery through her eyes.⁴³ Thānawī's voice carried weight as it does even today.

39 For a definition of *bidʿat* or *bidʿa* by South Asian Muslim jurists, see Muhammad Khalid Masud. 1993. "The Definition of *Bidʿa* in the South Asian *Fatāwā* Literature," *Annales Islamologiques*, 27: 55–75.

40 Shāh Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Shahīd, 1969. *Taqwīyat-ul-īmān*. Translated from the original text by Mir Shāhamat Ali under the title *Support of the Faith*. Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf.

41 Saiyyid Aḥmad Shahīd, and Muḥammad Ismāʿīl. 1904. *Şirāt-i mustaqīm malfūzāt-i Shāh Saiyyid Aḥmad Barelvī*. Dihlī: Matbaʿ-ī Mujtabā; Translation of the quoted text is based on J.R. Colvin's "Notice of the peculiar texts held by the followers of Syed Ahmad, taken chiefly from the "Sirāt-ul-mustaqīm," a principal Treatise of that Sect, written by Moulvī Mohammed Ismail." *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 1 (January to December, 1832). Calcutta, pp. 479–498.

42 Maulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī. 1977. *Fatāwā Ashrafiyāh (Kāmil)*. Karachi: Said Company.

43 Saiyyid Qāsim Qalandarābādī. 1868. *Risāla-yi gosha* (A tract on veiling). Meerut: Maṭbaʿ-ī-Qādirī, (an earlier edition came out in 1863).

Another significant voice against shrines and their visitation surprisingly came from Şiddīq Ḥasan Khan Qannaujī (1832–1890), husband of Nawāb Shāh Jahan Begam, the ruler of Bhopal (r. 1868–1901). Şiddīq Hasan Khan was a key figure of the late nineteenth-century Ahl-i Ḥadīth movement which aimed at religious reform (*işlah*), criticising many religious practises to be “unlawful innovations” (*bid‘āt*). Amongst these was the raising of superstructures over the tombs. Şiddīq Hasan, arguing against raising structures over the graves, is quoted to have said that, more than the graves, superstructures of the graves tempt the tomb visitors (*zā’ir par fitnē ko khenchtī hai*). These grandiose structures motivate reverence for the buried in the heart of the pilgrims and they develop improper faith (*narawā ‘aqīdat*) for them.⁴⁴ The reformist movements (*işlāhī*) in the subcontinent gained unprecedented support from the Deobandi reformists who fought against non-Islamic traditions.⁴⁵ Women were especially targeted as promoters of non-Islamic ritualistic practices which thereby corrupted pristine Islam. Women, thus, were believed to be the main agents of religious innovations (*bid‘at*). A small tract in Urdu by Ahmad Razā Khān Fāzil Barelwī declared that women who visit shrines deserve a curse as this act is not only *makrūh* (abominable) but *ḥarām* (forbidden) under Islam.⁴⁶

Despite the disapproval and even the large degree of *fatāwa* against shrines as promoters of *bid‘at*, shrine visitation remains popular with women and continues to be a great source of earning huge income by the shrines’ authorities. The federal and provincial religious affairs ministries of the government of Pakistan have a separate section for the accounts of revenue earned by the shrines and for their maintenance and restoration. Thus, while shrine visitation remains a contested issue on several counts, with criticism mostly turned against women, shrines continue to thrive and expand their influence beyond faith and spirituality.

8.4 Barricading Women: Veiling and Segregation

Strict enforcement of veiling and segregation for women that requires restrictions on women’s visual and audio contact with unrelated men (*na mahram*)

44 Shaikh Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm bin Abul Laṭīf. *Qubbe aur Mazarāt ki Tā’mūr*. Lahore: Darus Salam, (n. d.).

45 The Dāru’l ‘Ulūm of Deoband, an all-male-theological school, founded in 1867 in the town of Deoband, ninety miles northeast of Delhi soon emerged as the key institution fighting against innovative rituals and beliefs that had entered Islam.

46 Aḥmad Razā Khan Fāzil Barelwī. *Jumal al-nūr fī nahī al-nisā’ min ziyārat al-qubūr: al-ma’rūf, Mazārāt par ‘aurton kī ḥāziri*. Lahore: Shabbir Brothers (n. d.).

remains a highly dichotomic issue which becomes more heated when politicised. Late nineteenth-century South Asian Muslim reformists made this debate further divisive, causing greater repercussions for the community and for women in particular. The issue of veiling and seclusion, on the one hand, became a major theme of verbal and textual polemics between the avid Christian missionaries and the male Muslim protagonists of veiling and seclusion. On the other hand, this discourse cemented the lines separating women and public spaces. In between the two warring blocks, the women's cause was damaged immensely. Sir William Muir's characterisation of Muslims supported by women missionaries turned the issue of Muslim women into politically charged religious debate by the colonial authors and the Christian missionaries. Muir observed, without citing the source, that though veiling has made the Muslim world rude and barbarous, Muslim women themselves are content with the rules. The Muslim male perception of veiling and seclusion narrowed further and was employed as an offensive and defensive tool against the colonial discourse.⁴⁷ This section, however, briefly presents male Sufis' appraisal of a woman stepping out of her house as a harbinger of chaos in society at large.

In the context of women's initiation in the Sufi *silsilas*, veiling—or *parda*, a more familiar term in South Asia—played a significant role. The Sufi Shaikhs employed several methods, per the cultural norms of South Asian Muslim society, to practice what they viewed as the laws of Islam. One of the basic principles of Sufism taught to a novice is not to make public their identities as Sufis. This emphasis on invisibility takes a new meaning when applied to women. Sufi texts often describe virtuous women as *mastūra*, which, though it means a concealed or covered woman, in the Sufi texts it connotes a pious woman. Concealed women or women who do not show their faces to strangers, or even avoid all public appearances, are regarded as virtuous. Thus, when Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'ıyyad prayed for rainfall for relief from draught while holding the blessed scarf of his pious mother, he supplicated by saying, "My Lord! Send down rain in honour of the respected woman to whose scarf this thread belongs and on whom stranger's gaze never fell upon."⁴⁸ Emphasis on women's concealment goes even beyond bodily concealment—the female voice is also included within the rules of *'aura*. The Chishtī Sufi, Khwāja Gīsū

47 This stand is best reflected in an episode which describes how Sir Syed enraged by the manuscript of Sayyid Mumtāz Ali's *Hūqūqu'n-niswān*, tore it into pieces and threw it in a dustbin. The book could be published only in 1998, after the death of Sir Syed. See, Abul Asr Ḥafız Jalandharī.1935. "Maulawī Saiyyid Mumtāz 'Alī." *Tahzib-i Niswān*, no. 38, pp. 607–17.

48 AA, p. 280.

Darāz, is reported to have commented, “Good women do not let their voice be heard by unrelated men (*nā maḥram*)” when he heard the female voice reciting the Qur’ān coming from inside the grave of Bibī Zulaikha, a Sufi who came from northern India to Gulbarga. As soon as these words were uttered, the voice of Bibī Zulaikha stopped.⁴⁹

One of the contemporaries of Khwāja Gisū Darāz was Saiyyid Muḥammad Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī of Kachawcha, in eastern Uttar Pradesh in North India (d. 1437). Simnānī, who had visited Khwāja Gisū Darāz in Gulbarga and spent considerable time there, held similar views on women’s segregation.⁵⁰

Probably influenced by Khwāja Gisū Darāz’s views on women’s veiling and his overall estimation of their worth, Simnānī’s discourse on women’s initiation in the Sufi *silsilas* and on veiling reflects more rigidity. Simnānī not only discouraged women’s initiation but also considered it contrary to the familiar Chishtī and the Suhrawardī stand on women’s *bai’at*. Instead of *bai’at* what is required for women, in his view, is that they should be advised to remain veiled. If a woman insists on being initiated, she should be told to remain veiled, decrees Simnānī. In support of his views, Simnānī quoted a couplet from Nizami’s (d. 1209) *Sikandar-nāma* which asserts that seclusion in a home or buried in a grave is the rightful place for a woman because a woman with an unveiled face has neither modesty (*sharm*) nor dignity (*shikūh*). Indeed, for Simnānī, a wife’s foremost obligation is to keep her husband pleased and contented. This modesty, in Simnānī’s estimation, is more important than any *wird wa waḥā’if* (liturgy or recitation).

Veiling and segregation of women has caused the Deobandi scholars and Sufis to issue several rulings (*fatāwā*), which declare that uncovered women incite chaos among men. Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (d. 1905) not only declared full veiling of women from men as the best protection against chaos in society, but also decreed veiling in front of non-Muslim women because “the non-believing women (*kāfirāt*) must be viewed as *ḥarbiyāt* (warring women) as Hindustan is *dāru’l ḥarb* (abode of conflicts),” he argued strongly.⁵¹ Indeed Gangohi went to the extent of declaring the presence of unveiled women in front of their Sufi *murshid* as *ḥarām*.⁵² Regarding one Tradition of the Prophet—“Beware! Whenever a man contrives to be alone with a woman, they will inevitably be joined by a third, Satan”—Ashraf ‘Alī Thanawi argued that

49 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 161.

50 Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī. 1499/1999. *Laṭā’if-i Ashrafī fī bayān-i ṭawā’if-i Ṣūfī*. Karachi: Ḥalqa-yi Ashrafiyāh Pakistan, p. 330.

51 Gangohī, Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad. *Fatāwā-i-Rashīdiyya (Kamil) Fiqh Ḥanafī kā Anmol Khazīnāh*. Karachi: Dāru’l Ishā’at, n. d., p. 594.

52 *Ibid*, p. 593.

“under certain circumstances, it is not entirely unlikely that a master could be left alone with a female disciple, or at least be figuratively left alone if the only others present are also women. For this reason, women disciples must always wear veils before their masters. Very little in the way of spiritual progress can be expected in the presence of many of our present-day Sufis are certainly in need of correction.”⁵³

Similar views, but with greater and wider acceptance, on restricting women's voices and mobility are projected by the Tablighī Jamā'āt, founded by Maulānā Muḥammad Ilyās (1885–1944). The Tablighī Jamā'āt, like the other conservatives, see home as the only domain for women. Maulānā Ilyās, who said that “God assigned him the work and revealed to him the methods of tabligh,”⁵⁴ emphasised that the best role of a Muslim woman is to support and facilitate men's work by lessening their burden at home and not to seek roles “independent or equal to men.” If women will not follow these rules, they will become “conduits for Satan.” His followers shared and further projected this interpretation. Thus, Mayan Jī Muḥammad Ismā'īl Firuzpurī, maintained that all through their travels, women must remain under male supervision. Women are not allowed to deliver speeches and sermons as “a woman's voice is also needed to remain concealed like her body.”⁵⁵ Earlier, Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī (1878–1955), a prolific writer associated with the shrine of Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', propagated similar views through his Urdu-language journal for women.⁵⁶

This undue emphasis on the concealment of women, which is not mandated by the Qur'ān or supported by the Traditions of the Prophet, has barred women from all public contacts, appearances, and participation, including in the Sufi institutions.

53 Tirmidhi: 2165, Ibn Majah, 2363, Nasā'i, 10418 vide Thanawi, Ashraf Ali, and Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo. 2010. *A Sufi study of Ḥadīth: Haqiqat al-Tariqa min as-Sunna al-Aniqa*. London: Turath Publishing, p. 133.

54 Muhammad Khalid Masud. 2000. 'Ideology and Legitimacy.' In *Travellers of Faith: Studies in the Tablighī Jamā'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*. Edited by Muhammad Masud Khalid. Leiden: Brill. pp. 78–118. Note that Masud warns that these comments are not to be interpreted literally.

55 Miyān Jī Muḥammad Ismā'īl Firuzpurī. *Tablighī taḥrīk kī aur uske bunyādī uṣūl* (The genesis of the Tablighī Jamaat and its foundational doctrines). Delhi: Rabbāni Book Depot (n. d.).

56 Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī. 'Tabligh kī madadgār 'auraten' [women who assist the tablighī work]. *Tabligh-i Niswān*, April (1926): 83–85. 1927; "Editorial." *Tabligh-i Niswān*, 1 (1927): 6–16.

PART 2

Biographies of Sufi Women



Biographical Notices of Sufi Women by Time Period

9.1 Sufi Women of the Tenth Century

(1)

Rābi'a, the Daughter of K'āb

Period: Tenth Century

Place: Balochistan

Known by various names, such as Rābi'a Balkhi, Rābi'a al-Quzdārī or Khuzdārī, and anonymously as a daughter of K'āb by Farīdu'd-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1221) and 'Abdur Raḥman Jāmī (d. 1492),¹ this tenth-century woman with Sufi yearnings was also a poet of the Persian and Arabic languages.² Muḥammad 'Awfi (d. sometime after 1233)³ identifies her by her name as Rābi'a daughter of K'āb al-Quzdārī. Claimed by several countries and communities as theirs, much about the life of Rābi'a remains elusive to historians.

'Awfi, a writer of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, in his compendium of Persian poets titled *Lubābu'l-Albāb*, writes this about Rābi'a: "The daughter of K'āb, although she was a woman, was superior to men in accomplishments. She was proficient (*qādir*) in both Arabic and Persian poetry. She possessed great intelligence (*zaka'khāṭir*) and sharp temperament (*hiddat-i ṭab*'). She used to continuously play the game of love and admired beautiful youths (*paiwasta 'ishq bākhti wa shāhidbāzi kardi*)."⁴ Ritter's response to 'Awfi's last statement is that Rābi'a was "revered heavenly beauty [as reflected] in earthly beauty."⁵

1 'Abdur Raḥman Jāmī (Edited and trans. by W. Nassau Lees). 1858. *Nafahāt al-uns*. Calcutta: Maṭba' Lissī, p. 732.

2 In'ām ul Ḥaq Kausar.1986. *Tazkira Ṣūfiya'-yi Balochistan*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 102–103; In'ām ul Ḥaq Kausar.1961. "Rabia Khuzdari a prominent literary figure of medieval Baluchistan." *JPHS*, 9 (1): 34–41.

3 Sadīdu'd Din Muḥammad 'Awfi' served the courts of the rulers of Samarqand and Bukhara. He, then, arrived at the court of Nāṣiru'd-Dīn Qabacha of Multan and in 1220 dedicated his book, *Lubābu'l-Albāb* to him. From Multan, he journeyed to the court of Sultan Iltutmish in Delhi and there wrote his well-known work *Jawami'ul-Hikayāt* in 1228.

4 Sadīdu'd Din Muḥammad 'Awfi'. *The Lubābu'l-Albāb* (ḥissa sānī). (Edited by Edward G. Browne and Mirzā Muḥammad Qazwīnī) (London: Luzac & Co. 1903), pp. 61–63.

5 Ritter Hellmut, John O'Kane, and Bernd Radtke. 2013. *The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World, and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār*. Leiden: Brill, p. 372; *Shāhidbāzi* (witness game),

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) is the first and perhaps the only one to include Rābi‘a’s name in the list of thirty-five female Sufis that he added in his eleventh-century Persian work, *Nafahāt al-uns*, containing biographical notices of more than six hundred male Sufis. Although Jāmī in his short notice does not identify Rābi‘a by her name but by the ascription to her father as *bint-i K’āb* (daughter of K’āb), he begins his narrative with this quote from an important Sufi master and mystic poet, Shaikh Abū Sa‘īd Abu’l Khair (d. 440/1049): “The daughter of K’āb was in love with a slave” (*dukhtar-i K’āb āshiq būd barān ghulām*).⁶ Next, Jāmī adds more details of this story as narrated by Shaikh Abū Sa‘īd, saying that one day, unexpectedly, she met with this slave (*naghah daryافت*) who pulled on her sleeve (*sar-i āstīn wai girift*). At this, the daughter of K’āb exclaimed, “I am with the Lord (*man ba khudāwand*); I have given you the outer form (*bar tū bīrūn dadam*) but you now seduce (*ṭam*) me.” Concluding the narrative, Jāmī says that Shaikh Abū Sa‘īd observed that what this daughter of K’āb spoke are words that no other person could have spoken.⁷

Farīdu’d-Din ‘Aṭṭār in his book of mystical stories of Divine love, *Ilāhi nāmā*, in a narrative titled, *Hikāyat Amīr-i Balkh wa ‘āshiq shudan dukhtar-i o* (the story of the chieftain of Balkh and his daughter’s falling in love), gives a romantic account of Rābi‘a’s mystical love affair with Bektash, her brother Ḥaris’s slave, which ended in the tragic death of both Rābi‘a and Bektash. ‘Aṭṭār withholds the name Rābi‘a and says she was called Zainu’l ‘Arab (the ornament of the Arabs). She was so charming that it was next to impossible to describe her beauty.⁸ Blois, however, rejects this story of ‘Aṭṭār as having “no value as a biographical source” for Rābi‘a.⁹

The last part of her name, Quzdārī, has caused some speculation regarding the historicity of Quzdār. Minorsky identifies Quzdār with the city of Khuzdār

as practised by some Sufis, is contemplating Divine beauty in the faces of the youths. see Lloyd Ridgeon. 2012. “The controversy of Shaykh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī and Handsome, Moon-Faced Youths: A Case Study of Shāhid-Bāzi in Medieval Sufism” in *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 1 (1): 3–30.

6 Jāmī also gives this story on the authority of Shaikh Abū Sa‘īd Abu’l Khair, see *Nafahāt al-uns*, p. 732.

7 Ibid, p. 732.

8 Farīdaddīn ‘Aṭṭār. *Ilāhi- Name*. Istanbul (Bibliotheca Islamica, 1940), pp. 330–352.

9 Francois de Blois. 2004. *Persian Literature—A Bio-Bibliographical Survey. Volume V, Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, p. 190.

in Balochistan.¹⁰ Ritter's rejection that her father was an Arab who ruled over Balkh indirectly supports Rābi'a's association with Khuzdār.¹¹

Sunil Sharma's reading of 'Awfi's *Lobāb al-albāb* is worth mentioning here. Describing the *Lobāb* as the first extant *tazkira*, dating from around 1221, which lists only one woman poet, "Rāb'ea of Qozdār (or Balkh)," Sharma says that 'Awfi portrays her "as a boy chasing intelligent woman." He further comments that later authors such as 'Aṭṭār and Jāmi "were responsible for converting her image into that of a mystic poet." Thus, he concludes that "although the non-mystical Rābe'a was integrated into the mainstream tradition of women poets at an early date, she also occupies a separate place in the canon of Sufi poets, and the two traditions only come together in the nineteenth century."¹²

Today Rābi'a is commemorated in Balochistan and across Pakistan's borders in Afghanistan and Iran by naming several schools, hospitals, and roads after her. Women claim her as representing their lost voice.¹³ A film titled *Rabia of Balkh*, produced in 1974 in Afghanistan, played not only an important role in the history of Afghānī cinema, argues Lynes, "but also in the figuration of a proto-feminist political agency, one that in many respects resembles the ethical call for justice in Sophocles's *Antigone*."¹⁴ Rābi'a's shrine in the compound of the fifteenth-century Naqshbandī Sufi Khwāja Abu Naṣr Pārsa (d. 1240)¹⁵ in Balkh was recently consolidated.¹⁶ Women like Rābi'a al-Quzdārī or Khuzdārī make research an engagement of utter fascination.

10 Vladimir F. Minorsky. 1937. *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam: A Persian Geography*; 372 A.H.—982 A.D.—The regions of the world. London: Luzac; also, Iran Society (Kolkata, India). 1950. *Four Eminent Poetesses of Iran. With a brief survey of Iranian and Indian poetesses of Neo-Persian. (Rābi'ah of Quzdār.—Mahsatī of Ganja.—Qurratu'l-'Ayn.—Parvīn-i l'tisāmī.) [With portraits and facsimiles.]*

11 *The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World, and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār*. p. 372.

12 Sunil Sharma. 2009. "From 'Āesha to Nur Jahān: The Shaping of a Classical Persian Poetic Canon of Women." *Journal of Persianate Studies*, 2 (2): 148–16. For the quotes, see p. 151.

13 See for instance The Story of Rabia Balkhi—Afghānī Women's Writing Project. wwwproject.org/2013/08/the-story-of-rabia-balkhi/.

14 Krista Geneviève Lynes. 2012. *Prismatic Media, Transnational Circuits: Feminism in a Globalized Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

15 For the shrine of Khwāja Abu Naṣr, see R.D. McChesney. 2001. "Architecture and Narrative: The Khwāja Abu Naṣr Parsa Shrine. Part 1: Constructing the complex and its meanings." *Muqarnas*, 18 (1): 109–10.

16 Khwaja Parsa Complex Conservation | The colour tiled decorations of ... archnet.org/sites/8513/media_contents/91137.

9.2 Sufi Women of the Twelfth Century

(1)

Bibī Kamāl

Date: B. 1174

Place of birth: Kashghar, Central Asia

Dargāh: Kako, Bihar, India

A scion of a pious family, Makhdūma¹⁷ Bibī Kamāl is one of the earliest Sufis whose shrine in a remote area of Bihar continues to attract devotees today. Though oral and popular traditions ascribe her birth in Kashghar in about 1174,¹⁸ we have no textual evidence to support that.

Cunningham's archaeological survey report in the late nineteenth century first introduced Bibī Kamāl to the modern-day audience. The shrine of Bibī Kamāl along with a mosque is in a small place lying 10 kilometres from the Jahanabad railway station, between Gaya and Patna, near Phulwari Sharīf on the banks of a pond called Kunara.¹⁹ The place came to be known as Bibīpur, the abode of the Bibī. Bibī Kamāl is also known as Bibī Pāk Dāman (the chaste lady).

A few years after the Cunningham survey, 'Abdu'l Razzāq 'Aṭā' Ḥusain's *Kanzu'l-ansāb* (Treasures of genealogies) included more information about Bibī Kamāl. 'Abdu'l Razzāq 'Aṭā' Ḥusain's valuable work *Kanzu'l-ansāb*, a repository of the genealogies of the pious and virtuous, provides information about persons of excellent faith, considered pillars among the Shaikhs (*nasbnāma buzurgān-i-dīn 'umdatu'l mashā'ikhūn*). Drawing upon an earlier source, authored by one Shāh Muḥammad Makhdūm Bakhsh Firdawsī, and narratives collected from the descendants of Bibī Kamāl who were the inhabitants of Nauābādah Khurd, Azimabad, and Danapur near Patna, 'Aṭā' Ḥusain sketches the family background of Bibī Kamāl.²⁰

Saiyyid Shāh Ghafūru'r Raḥman Kākū, a scion of Bibī Kamāl writing in 1935, added more hagiographical information which is not found in any other source. Kākū writes that Bibī Kamāl, seated in a *miyanā* (a kind of curtained palanquin) carried by four Muslim *kahār* (an Indian caste of palanquin carriers)

17 Literal meaning of Makhdūma is 'one who is served, a master.' In Sufi terminology, *makhdūma* (feminine noun for *makhdūm*) is an honorific title of a Sufi of high rank.

18 Kako 'dargah': beacon of peace and communal harmony ... www.spiritualworld.com/2013/11/kako-dargah-beacon-of-peace-and.html.

19 Alexander Cunningham et al. 1966. *Archaeological Survey of India: [reports covering the years, 1862–84]*. Delhi: Indological Book House, p. 37.

20 'Adu'l Razzāq 'Aṭā' Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu'l-ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭba' Ṣafdarī, p. 5, 186.

and accompanied by her tutor (*ustād*) named Shāh Muḥammad Farīd, riding a horse, a male attendant, Fahīm, and a female attendant, Dā'ī Bigo, arrived in Kāko. All her fellow travellers are buried in her shrine complex. The shrine was first built with unbaked bricks. Sultan Firūz Shāh Tughlaq (r. 1351–1388), during his visit to Bihar in 759/1358, encamped close to Bibī Kamāl's shrine and allotted some funds for a permanent structure for the shrine. Kākwī also says that as the actual date of Bibī Kamāl's demise is not known, her 'urs is celebrated on the last Thursday of Bhadon, the fifth month of the Indian Vikrami calendar, corresponding to August–September.²¹

Bibī Kamāl, or Kamālo, her affectionate name in popular memory, was the granddaughter of Ḥazrat Makhdūm Saiyyid Shihābu'd-Dīn (b. 570/1174), the son of Sulṭān Nāṣiru'd-Dīn of Kashghar, and his wife, Bibī Nūr, daughter of Saiyyid Wajihu'd-Dīn.²² Following the footsteps of Central Asian Sufis, Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn gave up his position as Qāzī and worldly assets and chose the path of *faqr*. Soon, he became a traveller in the path of spirituality and arrived in Lahore. Traversing the terrain of northern India, the migrant Sufi around 600/1203 finally chose to settle in eastern Hindustan in a small rural area called Jethali in Bihar on the banks of the river Ganga near Bakhtiarpur in the Patna District. In Bihar, he immersed with the local milieu, as his popular local epithet *Pīr Jug Jot* shows.²³ A recent book on the Sufis of Bihar says that Qāzī Shihābu'd-Dīn came to Bihar at the invitation of Ikhtiyāru'd-Dīn Khaljī (d. 1206) who, following his conquest of Bengal and Bihar (between 1192 and 1204), needed the services of an accomplished Qāzī.²⁴ *Pīr Jug Jot* obtained *khilāfat-nāma* from Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154–1191) and is said to have introduced the Suhrawardī *silsila* in India.²⁵ *Pīr Jug Jot*, an august

21 Saiyyid Shāh Ghafūru'r Raḥman Kākwī. 1986. *Āsār-i Kākwī*. Patna: Art press, pp. 20–22, 46.

22 *Kanzu'l Ansāb*, p. 68.

23 *Jug jot* is a local version of a combination of two Hindi words *jug*, meaning the world, and *jot*, local slang for the Sanskrit word *jyoti* which means light or light of a lamp. Thus, the title *jug jot* was conferred to say that Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn is the Lamp of the World. See 'Abdul Ha'i ibn Fakhru'ddīn al-Ḥasanī. 1999. *al-I'lām bi-man fi tārikh al-Hind min al-a'lām al-musammā bi- Nuzhat al-khawāṭir wa-bahjat al-masāmi' wa-al-nawāzīr*. Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, vol. 1, p. 63.

24 Saiyyid Shāh Ṭayyab Abdālī. 2003. *Tazkira Mashā'ikh-i Bihar*. Nalanda: Maktaba Sufiya, pp. 148–50.

25 See Maksud Ahmad Khan. "Firdausi silsilah during the Sultanate period." PhD dissertation submitted, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1989, p. 59.

Suhrāwardī Sufi, passed away in 1266 and lies buried in a *dargāh* known as *Kachchi dargāh* (built of unbaked bricks) in Jethali.²⁶

Pir Jug Jot had four daughters of great virtue and piety who were married to saintly persons of great sanctity and who belonged to great Sufi traditions. Of these four, the eldest, Bibī Rāziā, alias Baʿī Būā,²⁷ “a perfect saint,”²⁸ was married to Makhdūm Aḥmad Yāhyā Manerī, father of Makhdūm Sharfuʿd-Dīn Yāhyā Manerī.²⁹ The second daughter, Bibī Ḥabībā, also called Jiyya, was married to another Sufi, Makhdūm Saiyyid Mūsā Hamadānī, and was the mother of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Charmposh.³⁰ The fourth daughter, Bibī Jamāl, was married to Makhdūm Shāh Ḥamīduʿd-Dīn (d. 1369), son of Saiyyid Ādam Sufi (d. 1287). She was the mother of Makhdūm Shāh Taimullah Safedbār (d. 1388).³¹

The third daughter, Bibī Hadyā, was married to Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm Shāh Sulaimān Langar Zamīn, the grandson of Imām Tāj Faqīh. The couple were the parents of Bibī Kamāl. Bibī Kamāl was married to Makhdūm Shāh Ḥassāmuʿd-Dīn,³² and together they had two children—a son, Makhdūm Shāh Ḥusain Gharīb *Dhukarposh* (dust covered) of Tajpur, Purnea, Bihar (d. 1490), and a daughter named Bibī Daulat.³³ Bibī Daulat was also known as Bibī Kamāl Sānī (the second Bibī Kamāl) and was a pious person. She lies buried close to her mother.³⁴

26 Pir Jag Jut's ancestry is traced to Ḥaẓrat Imām Jaʿfar Ṣādiq, the 6th Imām and founder of the Jaʿfarī school of jurisprudence according to Twelver and Ismaʿili Shīʿites. Ibid, p. 68.

27 *Baʿī Būā* is a word from the local lexicon and means the elder sister.

28 *Biographical encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, p. 359.

29 For the spiritual excellence of Bibī Rāziā, see *ManāqibuʿlʿAsfiyā*, pp. 130–31.

30 Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Charmposh and his wife Bibī Nabīyah through their two sons, Makhdūm Saiyyid Tājūʿd-Dīn and Makhdūm Saiyyid Shāh Sirājuʿd-Dīn left a long line of Sufis of great excellence. See *Kanzuʿl-ansāb*, p. 80.

31 Ibid, p. 68, 80. It is to be noted that both Yāhyā Manerī and Sulaimān Langar Zamīn were the paternal grandsons of Imām Tāj Faqīh, who arrived in Bihar from Jerusalem in 1180 and was a direct descendant of the Prophet's uncle ʿAbdul Muṭṭalib.

32 Urdu sources give varying accounts of Bibī Kamāl's parental ancestry and about her husband. Thus, *Āsār-i Kāko* by Saiyyid Shāh Ghafūruʿr Raḥman Kākwī, says that her husband was Makhdūm Shāh Ḥassāmuʿd-Dīn while other sources identify her husband as Langar Zamīn. See *Āsār-i Kāko*, 1986. Patna: Art press, pp. 18–20.

33 *Kanzuʿl-ansāb*, p. 186. Also, see Karim, Abdul. 1959. *Social history of the Muslims in Bengal, down to AD 1538*. Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, p. 11; Muhammad Ismail identifies Bibī Hadyā as Bibī Hadda, see ‘Development of Sufism in Bengal.’ PhD dissertation submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1989, p. 156. ʿIjāzuʿl Ḥaqq Quddūsī. 1965. *Tazkira-yi Ṣūfiyaʿ-ye Bangāl*. Lahore: Markazī Urdū Board, pp. 161–62.

34 *Āsār-i Kāko*, pp. 49, 51.

Bībī Kamāl, as described by Troll, “established reputation of sanctity”³⁵ and was one of the “extraordinary or gifted individuals.”³⁶ So deep was her devotion that even marital life and motherhood of two children—a daughter and a son—did not deter Bībī Kamāl from the path of devotion to Allāh, a life of piety, and strong tolerance and love for human beings. A legend describes that once her husband, Makhdūm Shāh Ḥassāmu’d-Dīn, tried to leave her and walked away at night. Next morning, he found that despite walking the whole night he was still at her doorstep. It is believed that this happened because of the miraculous powers of Bībī Kamāl.³⁷

Bībī Kamāl’s legendary history dates back to mythical accounts of gods, goddesses, and rulers. According to one such legend, described by Beglar, Bībī Kamāl came to Kāko in the time of Raja Kanak (or Raja Ganesh) and his wife Rani Hansa.³⁸ The Raja, though Buddhist by faith, served Bībī Kamāl a dish made of prohibited meat when he invited her to a feast. Knowing by her miraculous powers what it was, she said, “whatever it is should come out” (*Jo hai woh ho jaye*). Soon the food turned into rats, cats, and dogs.³⁹ The city of Kāko, as the legend goes, turned upside down, burying the Raja under its rubble. This incident earned her saintly status.⁴⁰ Bībī Kamāl’s grandson, a son of Makhdūm Shāh Ḥusain Gharīb *Dhukarposh*, was killed by Raja Ganesha (1400–1421).⁴¹

35 Christian W. Troll. 1982. *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*. New Delhi: Vikas, p. 109.

36 O’Malley, L.S.S. 1906. *Bengal District Gazetteer: Gaya*. Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, p. 77.

37 J.D. Beglar. 1878. *Report of a Tour Through the Bengal Provinces of Patna, Gaya, Mongir and Bhagalpur in 1872–73*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, p. 65; also, William Crooke. 1891. *North Indian Notes and Queries*. 1891. Allahabad [etc.]: Pioneer Press [etc.], pp. 19–21; Alexander Cunningham and H.B.W. Garrick. 1883. *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar, in 1880–8*; George Abraham Grierson. 1893. *Notes on the District of Gaya*. Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal secretariat Press p. 39; Cunningham, p. 38; O’Malley, L.S.S. 1906. *Bengal District Gazetteer: Gaya*. p. 79.

38 Alexander Cunningham, et al. *Archaeological Survey of India: [reports covering the years, 1862–84]*. Delhi: Indological Book House.

39 William Crooke. 1896. *The Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India, Vol. 1*. Westminster: Archibald Constable, p. 218; O’Malley, L.S.S. 1919. *Bengal District Gazetteer: Gaya*. Patna: Supr. Gov. Pr. Bihar and Orissa, p. 79; Sushil Kumar and Naresh Kumar. 2003. *Encyclopaedia of folklore and folktales of South Asia*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, pp. 2563–2565; Pranab Chandra Roy Choudhury. 1976. *Folklores of Bihar*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India. p. 98. This legendary story continues till today, see “Dargah Bibi Kamal” |Indian Female Sufi Saint | An Epitome ... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YJ73_RtPRI.

40 O’Malley, 1906, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Gaya*, p. 79.

41 S.H. Askari. 1956. “The correspondence of two fourteenth-century Sufi saints of Bihar with the contemporary sovereign of Delhi and Bengal.” *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, 42 (2): 177–195; also, see Abdul Karim. 1959, pp. 110–111.

During his visit to Bihar, Prince Khurram, who later ruled as the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahan (r. 1628–1658), also visited several shrines to pay his homage and seek the blessings of the Sufis. Munis Faruqui, quoting Shaikh Kafeel Turabi's narrative of Khurram's pilgrimage of the tomb complex of the thirteenth-century mystic Shaikh Yahyā Manerī, writes, "Shaikh Yahya Maneri's tomb stood at the centre of an important familial shrine complex in Bihar, including those of the Shaikh's father-in-law Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn in Jethali and his sister-in-law Bibī Kamalo in Gaya." Khurram also made several donations and endowments for the management of these shrines.⁴²

References to Bibī Kamāl, despite her historicity, are missing in major Sufi texts. Thus, a woman Sufi becomes a subject of legends and is commemorated through public memory. Sadly, narratives drawn upon public memory and oral traditions are considered weak sources in historical research. One such legend describes Bibī Kamāl's prophecies as the talk of an eccentric and not as the conversation of a Sufi who has acquired *ma'rifa* (gnosis). Cunningham, in support of his claim which was based on hearsay that Bibī Kamāl was an eccentric, refers to a legendary saying,

Sārā Kako jalgaya
Bibi Kamāl soi rahin

(When the whole of Kāko was burnt to the ground,
Bibi Kamal slept quite sound).⁴³

Beglar, of the Department of Archaeology, Government of India, on his visit to the brick-built Kāko shrine in 1872–1873, found it in a ruinous state. However, he found an inscription on a broken piece of a slab, which was hard to decipher due to its being coated by grime, dust, and oil.⁴⁴ Beglar does not mention the name of Bibī Kamāl, only that she was a Sufi saint. Later, Cunningham, in his report of the tour of Bihar in 1880–1881, recognises the existence of Bibī Kamāl based on the inscription that was found by Beglar on several brick pieces lying loose in the courtyard of the mosque in the complex of Bibī Kamāl's shrine. Cunningham concludes that her shrine and the adjoining mosque were

42 Munis Daniyal Faruqui. 2012. *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 212.

43 Alexander Cunningham and H.B.W. Garrick. 1883. *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar, in 1880–81*. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, p. 38.

44 J.D. Beglar. 1878. *Report of a Tour Through the Bengal Provinces of Patna, Gaya, Mongir and Bhagalpur in 1872–73*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, p. 64.

constructed sometime between 1414 and 1431.⁴⁵ The inscription also bears the names of the son and the grandson of Sultan Firūz Shāh Tughlaq (r. 1351–1388).⁴⁶ In this report, Cunningham, though he casts doubt about the spiritual powers of Bibī Kamāl by hinting that she was “half-mad” or “eccentric,” also included legends and oral tales that he heard about the spiritual healing powers of Bibī Kamāl. One such incident occurred while he was there. Describing this miraculous event, he wrote:

On the 4th December 1880, there were about 20 men and women there, who had come from different places to seek relief. Amongst them was a girl who was believed to be possessed by an evil spirit. She was the daughter of an educated Muhammadan, who professed his firm belief in Bibī Kamāl's healing powers.⁴⁷

Devotees continue to come to seek the blessings of Bibī Kamāl even today as they used to do when it was visited by Francis Buchanan in the early nineteenth century. Buchanan, who at the orders of the East India Company conducted a survey of the Presidency of Fort William in 1807, reported five thousand people attending the shrine annually.⁴⁸ O'Malley presents the colonial view of indigenous devotees of Bibī Kamāl, writing, “The reverence for Kamāl and Ghazi Miā is akin to the deification of persons who have been approved miracle workers, or who have died in some extraordinary or tragic way. They show clearly the extent to which the religion of the illiterate Musalmān has been permeated by the superstitious beliefs of his Hindu neighbours.”⁴⁹

Today, each Friday crowds of Muslims and Hindus, both men and women, gather here to make their supplications and are blessed by the miraculous powers of Bibī Kamāl whom they lovingly also address as Ammā, the mother. Streams of women devotees come here to supplicate for a child and tie coloured strips of fabric as they did in the past. Others, similar to the devotees of the past who sought her blessings to drive away evil spirits, anoint their bodies with the

45 Cunningham, et al. *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar, in 1880–81*, pp. 37–39.

46 Pranab Chandra Roy Choudhury. 1957. *Bihar District Gazetteers*. Vol. 3. Patna: Printed by the Superintendent, Secretariat Press, Bihar, p. 37; also, Qeyamuddin Ahmad. 1973. *Corpus of Arabic & Persian Inscriptions of Bihar (AH 640–1200)*. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, p. 49.

47 *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar, in 1880–81*, p. 39.

48 Francis Buchanan. *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and the City of Patna in 1811–1812*. Patna: The Bihar & Orissa Research Society, n. d., p. 249. Buchanan's statement, however, is doubtful as he got mixed with the devotees of Bibī Kamāl and those who celebrated the festival of Ghāzī Miyān.

49 O'Malley. 1906. *Bengal District Gazetteer: Gaya*, p. 80.

oil of the lamps of the *dargāh* to get rid of the evil influences.⁵⁰ Devotees recite the Qur'ān each day at her shrine. Thus, her *dargāh* has remained a *ziyārat-gāh* for the past several centuries.

(2)

Mā'ī Mihirbān

Period: Twelfth Century

***Dargāh*: Near Fawarā Chawk, Multan, Pakistan**

The *dargāh* of Mā'ī Mihirbān, which is in a highly ravaged condition from both weather and human abuse, is considered an important architectural piece dating back, according to some archaeologists, to the twelfth century and by others to the thirteenth century.⁵¹ The tomb of Mā'ī Mihirbān (or Meharban) is under the supervision of the Punjab Auqaf Department, which ascribes the date of 535/1140 to its construction. On my visit to Multan in February 2016, I had difficulty in locating the monument. As the taxi drivers were not willing to drive me to the place, I had to travel in a rickshaw. Upon my arrival, I found the premises locked. People around the area told me that the gate is opened only on Thursdays by the officers of the Punjab Archaeology Department at 10 AM and remains open until the *Maghrib* prayers. Contact with any such office was unsuccessful. All my efforts at approaching the right person who could allow me to enter the premises and unlock the door proved futile. The only information I could get came from a worker of the Rashid Welders, a cycle repair workshop in the neighbourhood, who told me that even pregnant women are not allowed to enter the shrine as they might be carrying a male foetus.

This brick-built tomb's crumbling condition attracted the notice of the Punjab government and UNESCO. In 2013, according to a news article, the Punjab government approved a release of funds for the restoration of the tomb. The chief secretary of the Punjab government approved a release of Rs. 69 million for the restoration of historic monuments, including the tomb of Mā'ī Mihirbān.⁵² I could not get any follow-up about the utilisation of these funds or any repair work done at the site. This news story, however, gave some

50 Ibid, p. 79; through the courtesy of one of my students, I met with her aged grandmother in Karachi in 1997, who, though, suffering from a speech impediment, recalled for me her childhood memories of her visit to Bibi Kamāl's shrine. Her maternal aunt was taken there for her mental illness and the family stayed there for about a week.

51 Imtiyāz Husain Shāh. *Tazkira Awliyā'-yi Multān*. Multan: Kutub-Khana Haji Niaz Ahmad. (n. d.), pp. 217–218.

52 Rs5 million for Mai Mehraban's tomb—Newspaper—DAWN.COM_www.dawn.com/news/1047274.

information about Mā'ī Mihirbān, including that she was the wife of one Shaikh Ḥasan who came to Multan after the time of Shāh Yusuf Gardezī (d. 1136).

9.3 Sufi Women of the Thirteenth Century

(1)

Bibī Awliyā'

Date: D. 655/1257

Place: Delhi, India

Little is known about this illustrious Sufi woman, one of the pious women (*ṣāliḥāt*) of the early period of the arrival of Muslims in Delhi. The Sultan of Delhi, Muḥammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1324–1351) is reported to have had extreme faith (*'itiqād-i 'azīm*) in her.⁵³ Our first and only source of information about Bibī Awliyā' is 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī. In the concluding pages of his *Akhbāru'l Akhyār fī Asrār al-Abrār* (Narratives about the chosen ones), written between 1588–1591, Muḥaddis Dihlawī included a section titled *zīkr ba'z nisā-i ṣāliḥāt* (an account of a few righteous women) which consists of short narratives of five Delhi-based saintly women. One of these five pious women is Bibī Awliyā'.

Muḥaddis Dihlawī's four-lined biographical notice of Bibī Awliyā' begins with the statement that she was one of the pious and virtuous women of her time (*az ṣāliḥāt waqt-i-khud būd*). He writes that to perform *chilla arba'īn* (forty-day-long mystic retreat),⁵⁴ she would go into retreat in her *hujra* (cell) and lock herself there for forty days. The only thing she would carry with her inside the cell were forty dried spice cloves (*chihil quranfil*). When she came out of the retreat, people could see that she had eaten only a few of these, while the rest

53 AA, p. 283; *Khazīnatu'l Asfiyya*, jild dom, p. 424. *Ḥadiqat'ul Awliyā'*, p. 240; *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, Vol. 3, p. 365.

54 *Chilla arba'īn* is a mystics' retreat of forty days of complete seclusion for acts of devotion, prayer, and remembrance of Allāh by Sufis, mostly under the guidance of their Shaikh. Hujwī traces the origin of this austere tradition in which the practitioner severs all his/her connections with the profane world to gain nearness to Allāh to the Qur'ān's verse, 7:142–143 in which Moses is described to have kept forty days fast and hoped for a vision of the Divine, Nicholson, p. 324; also see KM, pp. 381–382. Schimmel (1975) has confused verse 7:142–143 for 7:138. See *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 103. For more on the mystical practice of *chillā arba'īn* outside Hindustan, see Lloyd Ridgeon. 2002. *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism: Selected Treatises of 'Aziz Nasafi* (Routledge), p. 210.

were still there. As a *chilla* is practiced with the permission of a Shaikh, we can therefore assume that a Sufi Shaikh must have guided Bibī Awliyāʾ.

Muḥaddis Dihlawī concludes his brief account by saying that she had a large number of children of whom some still exist (during his time). All the daughters were named after her, i.e., Awliyāʾ. Of these descendants, one Shaikh Aḥmad is described by Muḥaddis Dihlawī as *mard-i pukhta* (a man with expertise). Shaikh Aḥmad was also a pious man who spent much time in the company of several masters (*mashāʾikh*).⁵⁵

The above narrative, almost verbatim, is found in ‘Abdullah Kheshgī’s seventeenth-century work, *Maʿārijūʾl-Wilāyat*⁵⁶ and is repeated in *Bahr-e Zakhkhār* written in 1788–1789 by Wajīhuʾd-Dīn Ashraf.⁵⁷ Later, the same narrative was included in the mid-nineteenth-century *Mujāhadātuʾl Awliyāʾ* of Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar⁵⁸ and in *Khazīnatuʾl Aṣfiyya* of Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī with no further details. Lahorī, however, gives the date of her death as 655/1275 but cites no source for it.⁵⁹ Although Muḥaddis Dihlawī says that she was buried outside the *qilaʾ-yi Alāʾī* (the Alai fort of Delhi), her grave is no longer traceable.

(2)

Bibī Duyā

Period: Thirteenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan

Bibī Duyā, born of an Afghān father, Shaikh Sulaimān Dāna, and a mother probably of Rajput origin from Chittor, is one of the most venerated pious women of Afghān-Pashtūn ancestry, who settled in northern India during the early days of the Delhi Sultanate.⁶⁰ Shaikh Sulaiman Dāna was the son of the most respected Sufi of the Pashtūns, Shaikh Aḥmad Kakkūr Sarwānī (son

55 AA, p. 283.

56 *Maʿārijūʾl-Wilāyat*, fol. 652b.

57 *Bahr-e Zakhkhār*, Vol. 3, p. 365.

58 Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar ‘Alawī Kākori. 1293/1876. *Mujāhadātuʾl Awliyāʾ* (no name of the publisher), p. 305.

59 *Khazīnatuʾl Aṣfiyyāʾ*, jild dom. p. 424.

60 For details of this hagiographical anecdote, see Khwāja Niʾmatuʾllah bin Khwāja Ḥabibuʾllah al-Harāwī’s *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, vol. 2, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan. 1962. Hereafter, referred to as *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*), pp. 782–83. According to this narrative, Makhdūm Shaikh Ṣadruʾd-Dīn ‘Ārif (d.1286), the son and successor of Shaikh Bahaʾuʾd-Dīn of Zakariyya (d.1267), commanded his disciple, Shaikh Sulaimān Dāna to proceed to Chittor where in the wake of ‘Alāʾud-Dīn Khilji’s invasion, women and girls will be killed by their men, and to get a young girl of

of Mūsā Sarwānī), who was a disciple and *khalīfa* of Shaikhu'l Islām, Shaikh Baha'u'd-Dīn Zakarīyya of the Suhrawardī *silsila*.⁶¹

Khwāja Ni'matu'llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību'llah al-Harāwī's is the first author known to have included a separate section on Sufi women in his *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī* (History of Khānjahān and a repository of [knowledge about] the Afghānī), which he completed in 1612 during the age of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605–1627). Under the apt title of “an account of gnostic and accomplished women (*zīkr nisā' ʿarīfāt waṣīlāt*) who have attained the status of spiritual friendship (*rutba walāyat*) with God and in revelation, charisma, and miraculous powers (*wa dar kashf o karāmat wa khwariq ʿādāt*) have surpassed men of their time (*sabqat az maidān-i mardān rozgār*),” this section presents an account of some virtuous and pious women.⁶² Ni'matu'llah further observes that although counting the number of such women is not possible as there are too many, to invoke the blessings he has made an effort to include an account of some of them.

Among these virtuous Pashtūn women, the first one selected by Ni'matu'llah is Bibi Duyā. Extolling her as *ʿiṣmat panah* (literally, the asylum of chastity; metaphorically, the most chaste), Ni'matu'llah writes that this daughter of Shaikh Sulaimān Dānā and sister of Shaikh Malhī Qattāl possessed *shān-i ʿaīm* (esteemed rank) in *ʿibādat wa riḡāzat wa mujahidāt* (prayers, and ascetic and spiritual practices). Each day she would fast, and each night she would pray. Her petitions were heard and answered (by Allāh). Whatever she spoke, whether good or bad (*khair wa sharr*), instantly and without any delay (*takhal-luf nabūd*) would come true the moment she uttered the words. Several other strange miracles (*khawāriq-i gharībā*) are said to have been performed by her.⁶³ ʿAbdullah Khesghī also confirms that strange miracles (*khawāriq-i gharībā*) were said to have been performed by her.⁶⁴ He adds that Bibi Duyā was married to Mahmand, son of Daulatyār.⁶⁵ A son was born of this marriage.⁶⁶

extreme beauty from there. He also foretold that this girl would be the mother of his two sons and one daughter whom he identified as ʿĀlaʿī. This ʿĀlaʿī was Bibi Duyā.

61 On the life of Shaikh Aḥmad Kakkūr Sarwānī, see Abbas Khan Sarwānī. 1974. *Tārīkh-i Sher Shāhī* (Translated by Brhamandara Prasad Ambasthya), Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, p. 533; also, *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, pp. 779–83.

62 *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, p. 825; Bernhard Dorn. 1936. *History of the Afghānī: Translated from the Persian of Neamat Ullah* (London: The Oriental Translation Committee, 1936), p. 39.

63 *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, p. 825.

64 Ibid, p. 825.

65 A similar notice on Bibi Duyā is also given by ʿAbdu'llah Khesghī in *Akbāru'l awliyāʾ*. ms. no. R343, fol. 127b.

66 *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, p. 568.

(3)

Bibī Khadīja**Date:** D. 10 Ramaẓān 662/1264**Shrine:** Nagaur, India

Bibī Khadīja, a woman of piety, fortitude, and trust in Allāh, is one of the earliest examples of women who lived an exemplary life of a devout Sufi during the early days of Muslim arrival in Hindustan. Married to Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwālī of Nagaur (570/1174–673/1274),⁶⁷ a *khalīfa* of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri, she lived as a mentor to her husband, a man following extreme *faqr* (voluntary poverty) and *zuhd* (spiritual piety) with an abiding trust in Allāh. This ascetic couple, with their totally vegetarian diet, chose to live a hardworking life, avoiding all fame and worldly attention, in a small rural settlement of Suwāl in Nagaur. Today, thousands of devotees congregate at their graves. Her husband, whose prayers and supplications could bring rainfall to relieve of the draught-suffering populace, remained content with whatever his arid land produced for himself and his family.⁶⁸

The key source for knowing the lives of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwālī and Bibī Khadīja is the *malfūz* of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwālī, *Surru's-Šudūr*,⁶⁹ compiled by their grandson, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn, who gained so much favour of Sultan Muḥammad bin Tughlaq (d. 1351) that the Sultan gave his daughter, Bibī Rāstī, in marriage to him.⁷⁰ Later on, *malfūz* and *tazkira* writers and compilers draw generously but selectively from this manuscript.

It is said that Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn—who traced his ancestry to Sa'īd bin Zaid, one of the ten Blessed Companions of the Prophet—was the first child born to Muslim immigrant families in Delhi and lived a long life, probably even meeting Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliya'.⁷¹ Before becoming a disciple of Khwāja

67 The dates of his birth vary. For his biography, see AA, pp. 33–40; MA, pp. 677–83; also, *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 256; 'Abdul Ha'ī ibn Fakhru'ddīn al-Ḥasanī. 1999. *al-I'lām bi-man fī tārikh al-Hind min al-a'lām al-musammā bi- Nuzhat al-khawāṭir wa-bahjat al-masāmi' wa-al-nawāzīr*. Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, vol. 1, pp. 94–95 (henceforth, referred to as *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir wa-al-nawāzīr*); Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 2007. *Tārikh Mashā'ikh-i Chisht (jild awwal)*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, pp. 190–192; B.A. Dar, 1978. "Shaikh Hamidud-Din of Nagaur—Scholar-Saint of the Thirteenth Century." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, xv (1): 21–50; Ihtishāmu'l Ḥaqq Farūqī. 1963. *Sulṭānu'l-Tārikīn*. Karachi: Daira Mu'īnu'l Ma'rīf.

68 KM, *Majlis* 8.

69 The manuscript is in the Habib Ganj Collection, Aligarh, India.

70 Rizvi, vol. 1, p. 130–131; also, see Maksud Ahmad Khan. 1993. 'Surur-us-Sudur wa Nurul-Badur', PIAHC, 54th Session, 1993, Mysore, pp. 231–40.

71 AA, p. 33.

Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Ajmeri, Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn (d. 1236), a man of extreme physical charm (*jamāl bā kamāl*), led a life of great frivolity, falling in love with any woman who happened to attract him.⁷² Later, following his *bai'at* at the hands of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī, Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn adopted a life of such extreme austerity and abstinence that the Khwāja bestowed on him the title of *Sultānu'l tārīkīn* (the king of anchorites), which soon became his alias.⁷³ Later writers such as 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī, because of Khwāja Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn's austerity and spirituality, referred to him by a more august title: *Sulṭānu'l mujaddid-i dīn* (king of the rejuvenators of faith).⁷⁴ Rizvi's observation that the Shaikh was deeply influenced by two women—his mother and his wife—without giving any supporting evidence leaves the reader to wonder what role they had in his transformation from a lustful youth into a sober Sufi.⁷⁵

Narratives about these two women, i.e., his mother and his wife, are scanty. While his mother remains unknown, we have found a few references to his wife, Bibī Khadīja, a God-fearing person who practiced extreme austerity. Her life before marriage, her family background, even her age, remain unknown. She is described as a deeply religious woman who voluntarily chose poverty (*faqr*) over a life of comfort. She is mentioned by only a few writers, and even then, in few sentences in the longer story of her husband; some have not even referred to her by name. Thus, in his eight-page account of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī, Muḥaddis Dihlawī (d. 1642–1643), an erudite scholar and meticulous researcher, skips telling his readers about the virtues of this Sufi woman. Interestingly, he is the only author who refers to Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī not by one name, but by several appellations that define his spiritual attainments, i.e., *-al-Sufi*, *al-Sa'ī dī*, and *al-Nagauri al-Suwālī*, and also gives his genealogy and place of abode. Avoiding any reference to Bibī Khadīja, not even identifying her as an anonymous wife, what Muḥaddis Dihlawī writes is that Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī provided food to his children from the produce of a small piece of *ihyā'* land, a wasteland, which he tilled with his own hands (*bā dast-i-mubārak*).⁷⁶ Muḥaddis Dihlawī's omission of Bibī Khadīja is hard to explain. He did not appear to harbour gender bias as he had included valuable short biographical

72 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī. *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* (Urdu translation by Fazlu'd-Dīn Naqshbandī). Pakpatan: Maktabā 'Aziz (n. d.), p. 229; for more details, see *FF*, *Majlis* 55, 21st of *Ziq'ad*, 714/1315; *Jamālī*, pp. 24–25; *MA*, p. 678; Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf, *Ibid*, p. 256.

73 *AA*, p. 33. His teachings emphasizing the path of abstinence and austerity are found in *Surru's-Sudur*, compiled by his grandson. See Rizvi, vol. 1, pp. 123–124, 127.

74 *JF*, p. 229.

75 Rizvi, Vol. 1, p. 127.

76 *AA*, p. 33; *MA*, p. 678; *Ihyā'*, from the Arabic word *ahyā'*, which among several other meanings also means dead land.

notices of five virtuous women Sufis in a separate section at the end of his compendium under the heading *zīkr ba'z nisā-i ṣāliḥāt* (An account of a few righteous women).⁷⁷

Amīr Khwurd's (d. 1311–1312) *Siyaru'l Awliya'*, the most authentic account of the lives of the early Sufis of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, provides details about Bibī Khadija but keeps her anonymous, identifying her only as the respected wife (*ḥaram muḥtaram*) of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī. According to this narrative, the couple with their children (whose names are also not given) lived a contented life of extreme austerity, eating sparsely and sustained by the products of their small plot of land, which they managed themselves. On knowing the acute poverty of Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī, a local revenue officer (*muqṭā'*) of Nagaur visited him and offered him some cash and a promise to grant him an extra piece of agricultural land. The Shaikh refused the offer, saying that he was happy with his poverty as it was not the tradition of his *ṭarīqa* (Sufi *silsila*) to accept gifts from rulers. The local ruler, hearing of the Shaikh's refusal, again sent him five hundred silver *tankas*⁷⁸ and a royal order (*farmān*) of land grant in his name. This time, the Shaikh waited for a while and thought of testing the strength of his ascetic wife's resistance to temptation. To describe her excellence but without naming her, Amīr Khwurd defines her in superlative terms as *Shāh-i zanān* (a king among women). Amīr Khwurd pens a picture of Bibī Khadija at the time when her husband approached her with this royal proposal. Her headscarf was so much tattered and threadbare that she could not cover her head with it and instead had to use the skirt of her dress to cover her head. Even the *fūṭā*⁷⁹ of the Shaikh was torn and could hardly cover his lower limbs (*ṣatr-i 'aurat*). Despite such obvious acute poverty, Bibī Khadija was not lured by the comforts the offer promised. Amīr Khwurd writes that this pious lady, *sher-i zan* (a lion in the form of a woman), instead of falling for worldly gains and comforts, questioned her husband's preparedness to waste his *faqr*, lured by the royal offer. She then in one single sentence, as quoted by Amīr Khwurd, summed up her philosophy of life: "Rest assured, I have spun

77 Ibid, pp. 280–83.

78 In the early fourteenth century, a trooper with one horse received 234 silver *tankas* per annum as his salary. Each *tanka* had great purchasing power. For further details, see Simon Digby. 1982. 'The Currency System.' In *The Cambridge Economic History of India, 1200–1750*, vol. 1. Edited by Tapan R. Chaudhri and Irfan Habib. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 93–101.

79 *fūṭā* is somewhat like a *tahband*, a piece of fabric wrapped and tied around the body, from the abdomen down to the legs by men.

yarn enough for making a scarf [for myself] and a wrap for you." These words of his wife, *fakhr-i zanān* (the glory of women), led the Shaikh to reject the offer.⁸⁰

The most revealing information about Bibī Khadija that establishes her credentials as a Sufi par excellence comes almost two and a half centuries after her death when Ḥamid bin Faḍlu'llah, known as Dervish Jamālī Kamboh Dihlawī (d. 1536), wrote between 1530–1536 his *Siyaru'l Ārifīn* (biographies of the gnostics), a highly reliable source on the lives of the South Asian Sufis. Jamālī mentions her by her name, Khadija, and writes that in her *zuhd* (renunciation) and *war'* (abstinence from anything doubtful) she was the Rābi'a of her times. He further writes that once a week she used to break her fast by eating vegetables (*ba'd az haftāh barg-i nam iftar yak bar mi namud*).⁸¹ Bibī Khadija and her husband, Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī, were total vegetarians and survived on vegetables that they grew themselves in Suwāl, Nagaur. The couple lived a life of Sufi anonymity and believed that miraculous powers should not be made public. Bibī Khadija's mystical qualities attracted the attention of Lucknow-based Sufi scribe Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf. Paying tribute to her noble life, he notes in *Bahr-e Zakhkhar* (The rising ocean), a biographical compendium of Sufis composed around 1788–1789, that in poverty, trust, and Divine love, she was the Rāb'iā of her time (*dar faqr wa tawakkul wa 'ishq-i ilāhi Rāb'iā daurān būd*).⁸²

Bibī Khadija and Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī raised their family with honest and hard labour without falling into worldly temptations. Perhaps they had no daughter. Their son 'Azīzu'd-Dīn passed away in 681/1281 while listening to *Sama'* during his father's lifetime.⁸³ The couple's grandson lived a long life and compiled Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī's discourses.

The manner in which Bibī Khadija's life is inscribed by medieval *malfūz* and *tazkira* authors mirrors at best the genre of selective historiography. The male scribe focussed on the male Sufi and kept the Sufi woman veiled. Bibī Khadija's grave, along with that of her son, Shaikh 'Azīzu'd-Dīn (d. 676), flank the tomb of Khwāja Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī. Her tombstone gives the date of her demise as 10th of *Ramaḥan*, 662. Today, the shrines of Khwāja Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī and Bibī Khadija, built in marble and profusely lighted, present a picture far different from the life that these two friends of Allāh spent in Suwāl in total renunciation from worldly attachments. The shrine's popularity reminds one

80 SA, p. 157.

81 Jamālī, p. 25; SA, pp. 156–57. Also see 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī (Edited and translated by Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl). 1982. *Mirātu'l asrār: qadīm wa ghair maṭbū'a tazkira-i Ṣūfiyya kā awwālīn Urdū tarjuma*. Lahore: Sufi Foundation, pp. 677–83. (Henceforth, referred to as *Mirātu'l asrār*). *Mirātu'l asrār* also gives her name as Bibī Khadija, p. 678.

82 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 256.

83 *Khazīnatu'l asfiyyā*, p. 152.

of what Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recalled about Khwāja Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwālī's philosophy: "One who keeps himself veiled while alive, his name, with all his infinite virtues, spreads all through the world after his demise" (*dar ḥālat ḥayāt khud ra poshīda dāshta ast, bā'd az wafāt nām waṣīyat-i o bahmah jahān m-īrasd*).⁸⁴ Surprisingly, Syed Abdul Hayy Nadwi al-Hasani (d. 1999), in his monumental biographical dictionary of five thousand Indian scholars and Sufis, compiled in Arabic language, does not mention Bībī Khadija in his notice on Khwāja Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwālī.⁸⁵

(4)

Bībī Rānī

Period: Thirteenth Century

Place: Ajodhan and Delhi

Bībī Rānī,⁸⁶ the paternal grandmother of Amīr Khwurd,⁸⁷ author of *Siyaru'l Awliyā'*,⁸⁸ composed between 752 and 790 (1351–1382), was witness to some of the most important events of the formative period of the Muslim society of South Asia in the thirteenth century. Amīr Khwurd's few sentences about his grandmother, composed not with the intention of writing about her but being incidental in the context of some other persons and events, reveal a little bit of her life. With the help of these disconnected and sparse statements, we develop a sketch of her life in which significant details, such as the date of her birth and death, remain elusive. These sketchy details, however, are not without significance for the purpose of this work and for the understanding of women's status in the Sufi circles of South Asia.

Bībī Rānī's *sādāt* family (descendants of the Prophet's family through his daughter Bībī Faṭīma) originally hailed from Kirmān where they owned large properties and land. Her father, Saiyyid Aḥmad Kirmānī, came from Kirmān and settled in Multan where he held an important position in the department of mint. Saiyyid Aḥmad Kirmānī's cousin, Saiyyid Muḥammad Maḥmūd Kirmānī (d. 749/1348), used to visit Lahore in connection with his business, and

84 FF, Assembly 1 of Sha'bān 3, 707/January 28, 1308.

85 *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* vol. 1, pp. 94–95.

86 Rānī is a word of Prakrit origin (see Platts, p. 584) which means a queen or the wife of a ruler (*rāja*). It is interesting to note that a thirteenth-century emigrant Muslim family from Kirman chose to have a local name for their daughter.

87 His full name was Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Mubarak al-Alawī Kirmānī, known as Amīr or Amīr Khwurd.

88 *Siyaru'l Awliyā'*, biographies of the Chishtī saints, is the most authentic contemporary account of Delhi, its environs-cultural, political and spiritual.

on his return journey to Kirmān, he would always spend some time in Ajodhan⁸⁹ where he developed strong spiritual respect for Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakkār (d. 1265). On one such visit, Saiyyid Aḥmad Kirmānī gave his daughter Bibī Rānī in marriage to his cousin, Saiyyid Muḥammad Maḥmūd Kirmānī. Saiyyid Muḥammad Maḥmūd Kirmānī along with his wife, Bibī Rānī, and his followers settled in Ajodhan. The couple, forsaking all the luxuries and comforts of the world and their home (*bā ikhtiyār tark asbāb o imlāk o waṭan-i qadīm dād*), settled into a self-chosen life of poverty and indigence (*faqr o fāqā*), became disciples of Shaikh Farīd, and served at his *khānqāh* for almost eighteen years as his humble disciple. Saiyyid Muḥammad Maḥmūd Kirmānī, despite his august lineage as the descendant of the Prophet, collected firewood for the kitchen of Shaikh Farīd's hospice. Amīr Khwurd writes that when Shaikh Shayūkhul-'Ālam (Bābā Farīd) saw his grandfather's soft (*nāzūk*) hands injured (*majrūḥ*) with thorns, he commented that there was no need (*hājīt nīst*) for him to collect wood as he (Bābā Farīd) had already accepted him as his disciple.⁹⁰ Here in Ajodhan, four sons—Saiyyid Muḥammad Nūru'd-Dīn Mubārak (d. 749), Saiyyid Kamālu'd-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 728), Saiyyid Quṭbu'd-Dīn Ḥusain (d. 752), and Saiyyid Khāmosh (d. 732)—were born to the couple.⁹¹

Bibī Rānī, like her husband, served her Shaikh with utmost humility. *Siyaru'l awliyā'* gives a glimpse of how she used to serve even wayfarers in the *jamā'at khāna* of the Shaikh. The circle of the inmates of the *jamā'at khāna* included luminaries of the period, such as Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq, the closest disciple⁹² and *khalīfa* of Bābā Farīd who was also the husband of his daughter, Bibī Fāṭima. Amīr Khwurd narrates what he heard from his father, Saiyyid Mubārak Muḥammad Kirmānī, that remembering Allāh, Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq's eyes always remained filled with tears. He cried so much that his eyes got black circles. Seeing this, Bibī Rānī got concerned that this constant weeping might harm his eyesight. Addressing Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq as *aye birādar* (Oh brother), she said that if he could stop for a moment (*sā'at*), she could attempt to cure his eyes by applying antimony (*surma*) to his eyes. To this, Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq responded by saying, "O my Sister! (*aye khwāhar-i man*) I have no control over my tears."⁹³ In this incident, what is striking is that Bibī Rānī, unrelated to Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq and thus *nā-maḥram* to her, not only closely watched his eyes but was prepared to apply

89 Modern-day Pakpattan, called Pakpattan Sharīf in honour of Bābā Farīd, is located in Punjab, Pakistan.

90 SA, pp. 208–209.

91 SA, p. 210.

92 FF, *Majlis* 25, *Jamādīu'l-awwal*, 709/1309.

93 SA, p. 171.

antimony to his eyes, which required close proximity. Also, it is significant to note that the Maulānā refused her offer not because she was unrelated to him but only because antimony was not the cure for his weeping.

One other incident, which occurred when the young Nizāmu'd-Dīn (the future *Sultānu'l Mashā'ikh*) arrived in Ajodhan, demonstrates the humility of Bibī Rānī and the love and care she had for others. Amīr Khwurd's excellent penmanship almost creates a visual of this event, bringing out the tenderness of Bibī Rānī's heart and the trust in God (*tawakkul*) that the twenty-year-old *sālik* (Sufi neophyte), i.e., Nizāmu'd-Dīn, had. When Nizāmu'd-Dīn presented himself before the ninety-year-old Shaikh in Ajodhan,⁹⁴ his clothes were extremely soiled (*bā ghāyat ringīn shudābūd*) and he could not wash them as he had no detergent. Bibī Rānī seeing this condition, said to him, "My brother! Your clothes are too soiled and are torn as well. If you give them to me, I would wash and mend them for you." Though he was not willing and made excuses (*bā zubān-i karm ma'zirat mikard*), Bibī Rānī insisted, handing him her own sheet (*chādar-i khud*) to wrap around himself as he had had no other clothes to wear. Nizāmu'd-Dīn had no option left and retired to a corner with a book and busied himself in reading it (*bā muṭāla' ān masghūl gasht*). When the clothes were washed (*jamāhā shustā shud*) and were dry, Bibī Rānī asked for the turban (*dastārcha*) of her husband, Saiyyid Muḥammad Kirmānī, tore a piece of fabric from it, washed it, and patched (*paiwandkard*) the shirt near the collar (*giribān*) where it was torn.⁹⁵ The above narrative is significant as it shows that women and men, not related by blood ties, interacted with each other and that women remained unveiled in front of them.

In another incident, on the occasion of the passing away of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn (*Muḥarram* 5, 664/ October 17, 1265) and who in the real sense was what Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn had said about the role of spiritual mentors—bride-dresser of disciples (*pīr mashshāṭa murīd bāshad*)—there was no fabric available for his shroud. Saiyyid Muḥammad Kirmānī hastily went inside his house and asked Bibī Rānī to find a sheet (*chādar*). Bibī Rānī immediately handed over a new white sheet (*chādar-i nau sapaid*) to spread over the coffin of the exalted Shaikh.⁹⁶ Thus, Bibī Rānī was blessed and privileged by the Shaikh to provide a piece of cloth for his coffin.

Later, when Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn settled in Delhi, he lived in a house which was also shared by Bibī Rānī and her family. The house had three stories, the

94 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1985. *Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'*. Delhi: National Book Trust, pp. 41–45.

95 SA, p. 115.

96 SA, p. 89.

middle one being the residence of the Shaikh, while the ground floor housed Bibī Rānī's family. She used to prepare meals for the Shaikh to break his fast.⁹⁷

Thus, Bibī Rānī and her husband, Saiyyid Muḥammad Kirmānī, had chosen the path of service to humankind by giving up all worldly desires. Bibī Rānī, whom Nizami rightfully describes as a "lady with fervent piety,"⁹⁸ is one of the earliest women who formally entered into a Sufi *silsila* and became a disciple of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn by taking an oath of allegiance. In her everyday life she played multiple roles of being a devout wife, a caring mother, and as a woman of piety, virtue, and patience who voluntarily served the male Sufis. The above anecdotes show that she had interactions with men unrelated to her, in full view of each other, without veiling her face.

In summation, the story of Bibī Rānī, despite the fact that the major source of information about her is her grandson, remains incomplete. She appears in the main narrative as a prop for male characters. While Amīr Khwurd has recorded dates of major events, of births and deaths of all his relatives and of the Sufis, surprisingly he skipped this for his own grandmother. Was this decision deliberate or mere forgetfulness? The answers are almost impossible to find now.

(5)

Zachchā Bībī

Period: Thirteenth Century

Shrine: Gulbarga, India

Although we have no details about the life of Zachchā Bībī, we have on record one prominent individual—a Sufi Shaikh—paying tribute to her shrine. This visit took place sometime in 803/1400. An incidental reference to Zachchā Bībī's shrine in *Armughān-i Sultānī* helps us to establish with some certainty her historicity. *Armughān-i Sultānī* mentions that when Khwāja Gīsū Darāz arrived in the Deccan from Delhi, he agreed to settle down in Gulbarga at the invitation of Sultan Tāju'd-Dīn Firūz Shāh Bahmanī (1397–1422), the ruler of Gulbarga. On his way from Daulatabad to Gulbarga, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz stopped to visit several Sufi shrines and to pay homage and make cash offerings. When he arrived near the fortification of the city of Gulbarga, he stopped at the shrine of Zachchā Bībī. After performing the *ziyārat*, the Khwāja placed one *jītal* near the grave as an offering before proceeding to the *rauza* of Shaikh

97 SA, p. 118.

98 Khaliq Aḥmad Nizami. 1973. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Faridud-Din Ganj-i-Shakkar*. Delhi: Idara-i-Adbiyat-i-Delli, p. 47.

Sirāju'd-Dīn Junaidī.⁹⁹ Two facts emerge from this brief note: first, that the shrine already existed before the arrival of Saiyyid Gisū Darāz in the Deccan in 803/1400, and second, that Zachchā Bībī was a Sufi whose virtues merited a visit from a male Sufi of the stature of Khwāja Gisū Darāz.

9.4 Sufi Women of the Fourteenth Century

(1)

Bībī 'Ā'isha

Period: Fourteenth Century

Place: Khuldabad, Maharashtra, India

Shrine: Khuldabad, Maharashtra, India

Urs: 7 Sha'bān

The life account of Bībī 'Ā'isha, assumed to be one of the widowed daughters of Bābā Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār (1175 or 1176–1265), still awaits more research to establish her historicity. Her life history, though brief, has all the elements of a mesmerising tale of Sufi mystical adventures. Briefly, Bībī 'Ā'isha travelled at some unrecorded time from north India, probably from Multan or Delhi, to the far-off Deccan. What we know through several sources, which are almost verbatim copies or paraphrases of the original source, reveals only one episode of her life. Let us first look at what these sources have to say about her and about her unnamed daughter, though it is actually her story.

The narrative under the above heading is actually not about Bībī 'Ā'isha; it is about her anonymous fourteen-year-old daughter, who was so immersed in her devotion to Allāh that getting married—a dream of most girls her age—was not her choice for living a meaningful life. However, she got married under miraculous circumstances to a friend of Allāh, experienced a miraculous pregnancy, gave birth to a friend of Allāh, and retired from marital responsibilities soon after with consultation and approval of her husband. The story, named as the story of Bībī 'Ā'isha, is a prime example of what prompts the process of writing history, how historical narratives are read, and how they are eventually presented in modern works for the current comprehension of history. For the sake of quick recognition of its contents, tallying with its hitherto known versions, I have placed the narrative under Bībī 'Ā'isha's name.

This story, like so many other narratives of Sufi women, has come to us through a chain of male perception of history. The first and primary source about

99 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 47.

Bibī ʿĀisha is *Fathu'l-awliya'* (bulletin of Sufis), a Dakani manuscript composed sometime in 1030/1620 by an anonymous author as a hagiographical account of Sufis of Burhanpur.¹⁰⁰ No other contemporary or near contemporary text says anything about her. The *Fathu'l-awliya'* story is narrated first and primarily to illustrate Ḥaẓrat Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb's (d. 738/1337) devotion towards his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', and not as the life account of pious women.¹⁰¹ According to this narrative, at the time of assigning the spiritual domain of the Deccan to Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' counselled him to follow five instructions. Of these the last one said, "Do not remain neglectful (*ghāfil*) of serving and protecting (*khidmat aur khabargīrī*) the daughter of my Shaikh (*meri pīrzādī*)."¹⁰² Second, this narrative is more an account of the charismatic powers of one male Sufi (Ḥaẓrat Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb) who foretold the birth of another male Sufi (Saiyyid ʿAlā'u'd-Dīn) by arranging the marriage of Bibī ʿĀisha's anonymous daughter in miraculous ways, and less as the story of Bibī ʿĀisha or of her daughter who remains anonymous in the narrative. The reason for the story remaining hidden could be that the narrative was part of a manuscript that remained unknown to readers, or one could also surmise that tales about women mattered less. The anecdote became visible to Urdu readers by *Rawzat'l-aqtāb al-ma'arūf ba mazhar-i Āṣafi*, written in 1326/1908 by Rawnaq ʿAlī, a painstaking researcher of biographies of Sufis of the Deccan. Rawnaq ʿAlī, a schoolteacher by profession and researcher by passion, on his arrival in the Deccan from his ancestral home in north India, scanned all the available printed and manuscript sources for compiling his work *Rawzat'l-aqtāb* (the garden of the *quṭbs*). He says that in no other work, except *Fathu'l-awliya'*, did he find any mention of Bibī ʿĀisha. For the audiences of Sufi texts in the English language, Carl Ernst also included this story,

100 I have not examined *Fathu'l-awliya'* and all my information comes from Rawnaq ʿAlī's *Rawzatul-Aqtāb al-ma'arūf ba mazhar-i Āṣafi*. (Awrangābād: MaṭbaʿMu'in-i Dakan, 1908 (also published by the Dilgudāz Press, Lucknow in 1931 (henceforth, referred to as *Rawzatul-l al-Aqtāb*). Other scholars, such as Bashīruddīn Aḥmad. 1915. *Wāqī'āt-i Dāru'l Hukūmat-i Dihlī (hiṣṣā du'm)* (Reprint Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990). Henceforth, referred to as *Wāqī'āt-i Dāru'l Hukūmat-i Dihlī (hiṣṣā du'm)* has drawn upon *Rawzatul-l-Aqtāb*, and *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* of Carl W. Ernst. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Ernst has based his narrative respectively on *Rawzatul-l-Aqtāb* and the Persian manuscript of *Fathu'l-awliya'* kept in the custody of Khuldabad Shrine Committee.

101 In the list of twenty-six biographies of Sufis, not a single woman's name appears in *Fathu'l-awliya'*. See *Eternal Garden*, p. 209 & f. n. 66 on p. 334.

102 *Rawzatul-l-Aqtāb*, p. 120; Waḥīda Nasīm, however, without citing any evidence, writes that this episode happened in Delhi and not in the Deccan. See, Waḥīda Nasīm. *Shahān-i be tāj*. Karachi: Karachi: Ghazanfar Academy (1988), p. 52.

as the story of Bibī ‘Ā’isha, in his work *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. Following is a translation of the main story from the Urdu passage in *Rawzat’l-aqtāb*, the details of which support my argument that it is the story of the anonymous young *awliyā’ Allāh* whose identity remains hidden in all references. Indeed, friends of Allāh neither seek worldly recognition nor need any certification.

When Ḥaẓrat Burhānu’d-Dīn arrived in Daulatabad, considering it his mandatory duty because of the orders (*ḥukm*) of the Shaikh, he used to present himself in the service of *pīrẓādi ṣāḥiba* (the daughter of the *pir*) [Bibī ‘Ā’isha] after each Friday prayer. Imagining Bibī Ṣāḥiba as Bābā Ṣāḥib [Bābā Farid], he used to serve her as he would serve him, and thus always remained informed of her needs.

Bibī Ṣāḥiba had a fourteen-year-old daughter, adorned with chastity and virtues (*‘iffat aur ʿiṣmat se perāsta*) and with devotion and piety (*ṣalāḥ o taqwā se ārāsta*), fasting continually and offering nightly obligatory prayers (*sā’imu’d-Dahar aur qā’imu’l-lail*) who always kept herself cloaked in black robes.

On one of his usual Friday visits, Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb’s glance fell upon her and he smiled. The mother, i.e., Bibī ‘Ā’isha, watched this with disapproval and at once asked [Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb] in her Multāni dialect why was he gazing at her daughter. At this, Burhānu’d-Dīn was shaken (*badan main larzā par gaya*) and with great humility said, “how could I dare to look at her or smile at her with any other purpose as Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn is a servant (*khādīm*) of your blessed dignified threshold (*janāb ki dargāh falak pā-i-gāh*) and I am his [Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn] lowly servant (*adnā ghulām*). You are also my *makhdūma muḥtarma* (respected Master). I have received the good tidings (*bashārat*) that a *walī* would be born of her. The reason of my smile is that in the blessed belly (*shikm-i mubārak*) of the Bibī Ṣāḥiba there is a *walī* who is saluting me. However, what amazes me is how would this *walī* manifest himself from the belly into this world, as the Bibī has no intention to get married. It might be that he [the baby] possesses the attributes of ‘Īsā (Jesus Christ) and would be born without a father.

At this, the Bibī Ṣāḥib got perplexed more than the Ḥaẓrat Ṣāḥib was. Astonished at this, the Bibī asked Burhānu’d-Dīn to perform *istikhārā*¹⁰³ to find whether her daughter was fated to have a husband or not. The Shaikh

103 To look into the Qur’ān for a good augury.

promised to return next Friday [with news regarding marriage]. The daughter also said that she would also do *istikhārā* that night and would provide an answer. Next day, after the morning prayer, she described to her mother the looks of a certain man of good ancestry who would soon be there to marry her. This is what happened exactly. This man, along with his attendants, arrived and made a proposal for marriage.

The Bibī Ṣāhibā sent a worn-out floor mat (*kuhnā boriyā*) for them to sit on with a message to wait for a while. In the meantime, Bibī ʿĀʾisha sent someone to fetch Burhānuʿd-Dīn Gharīb to whom she explained the whole situation. With his power of intuition (*firāsāt-i-bāṭinī*), the Ḥaẓrat at once recognised the person as the one about whom he had the revelation. After greetings, he made them sit with honour and respect and went inside to ask the Bibī Ṣāhib to fix the time for marriage.

Now, because of Bibī Ṣāhibā's abstinence, caution, and trust in Allāh (*zuhud, ittiqā' aur tawakkul*), there was nothing in the house except the old matting that was sent out and no other clothes than the ones the mother and the daughter were wearing. Therefore, the Bibī Ṣāhibā took off her daughter's dress (*utār kar*) and handed it to Burhānuʿd-Dīn Gharīb to wash it. While he was on his way to wash the dress, several of his disciples arrived. Knowing the situation, they asked Burhānuʿd-Dīn Gharīb to return to the Bibī's house. All of them pooling their resources, arranged for the marriage ceremony and a feast to which they invited learned men of the city. The man with whom this marriage was performed was Saiyyid Ziyāʾuʿd-Dīn.

Three days after the marriage, the daughter said to her husband, "For your contentment and happiness, I have missed my supererogatory (*nawāfil*) prayers for the last three days. Now if agreeable to you, I would look for a well-mannered and beautiful bondmaid and present her to you. I would, then, busy myself in my former *shughul* [prayers and remembering Allāh] and would spend rest of my life in doing that." At this, Saiyyid Ziyāʾuʿd-Dīn said, "I wanted you to let me travel now, to behold the manifestation of God's attributes, and to remain busy in learning and in controlling my ego (*nafs*). The intention of my stay, the good news foretold by Burhānuʿd-Dīn Gharīb, has materialised." Ṣāhibzādī Ṣāhibā said, "I have memorised the Qurʾān and the boy of whose birth you are talking about would not be born, as foretold by Ḥaẓrat Burhānuʿd-Dīn Ṣāhib, until he has memorised the Qurʾān. If by any chance, in preserving (*zabt*) the Qurʾān more than the fixed duration [of pregnancy] is spent, people would start accusing me. Therefore, you should call the neighbours, tell them this secret and then be on your travel route." Saiyyid Ziyāʾuʿd-Dīn

Şāhib called the neighbours, informed them about the secret and named the unborn, before birth, as Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn. He then left.

The town people were much grieved at the departure of Saiyyid Ziyā'u'd-Dīn. At the time of his departure, Saiyyid Şāhib said about his son that this child would be a believer and would always remain lost in remembering God. Nine months later when Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn¹⁰⁴ was born, everyone brought presents for the new-born; Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb bestowed the *walāyat* of Khandesh and Mongipatan to the baby.¹⁰⁵

The narrative, from hence onward, turns to the story of Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn (d. 801/1398–1399).¹⁰⁶ In conclusion, Rawnaq 'Alī says that the tomb of Bibī 'Ā'isha lies to the south of the tomb of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā's close disciple and complier of *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*, Mir Ḥasan 'Alā Sijzi Dihlawī. The 'urs of Bibī 'Ā'isha and of her daughter is celebrated on the seventh of Sha'bān.¹⁰⁷

The author of *Fathu'l-awliyā'*, neither explains the ancestry of Bibī 'Ā'isha nor gives any details about her arrival in the Deccan. As she was already present there, before the arrival of Ḥaẓrat Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, it is assumed that she might have arrived in the company of Ḥaẓrat Muntajibu'd-Dīn (d. 709/1309), brother of Ḥaẓrat Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb and known as *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh* (the giver of gold) who came to Khuldabad and settled on the Hoda Hill. Despite the ambiguity about her, it is generally assumed that she was the daughter of Bābā Faridu'd-Dīn.

The above narrative raises several questions that are significant in the context of the history of Islam and particularly the history of Muslim women in South Asia. The first thing that strikes readers is that a woman was living alone along with her young daughter in a land far away from her native land and people. We do not know how they supported themselves. We do not know why

104 Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn (d. 801/1398–99) came to be known as Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Zīā'u'l Ḥusainī Chishtī. Saiyyid Imāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Naqwī Ḥanafī Gulshanābādī. 1322/1904. *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*. Delhi: Afzalul Maṭāba' (new edition, 2015, Nasik). pp. 87–88 (Henceforth, referred to as *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*); *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 530–38.

105 *Rawzat'l-aqṭāb*, pp. 225–29; the story is repeated by Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Jabbār Khan Mulkapuri in *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 530–34.

106 For details of his shrine, see Roy Burman, J.J. 2002. *Hindu-Muslim Syncretic Shrines and Communities*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 173–74. The shrine of Ḥāfīz Saiyyid 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Zīā'u'l Ḥusainī is located by the riverside in Ravna Parada Maharashtra, India and is visited by a large number of devotees, including women and children. Splendid 'urs celebrations are held.

107 Muḥammad Wāḥid Khān. 1913. *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharīf ma' naqshājāt*. Maṭba 'Abu'l 'Alā' Hyderabad, Dakan, p. 19.

and when they arrived there. More importantly, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' knew about her stay in the Deccan, but she does not appear in his discourses.

Looking at the details of the story, some other queries also arise. For instance, why did Bibī 'Ā'isha ask Ḥaẓrat Burhān'ud-Dīn Gharīb to wash the clothes of her young unmarried daughter? This question becomes more valid as earlier she was uncomfortable wondering why this unrelated person had smiled at her daughter.

Four hundred years later, Bashīruddīn Aḥmad repeated *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'*'s narrative of Bibī 'Ā'isha. In the opening line of his narrative, Bashīruddīn Aḥmad acknowledges that no other text refers to the life of Bibī 'Ā'isha, and whatever is written in *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'* is '*nāqīṣ* (deficient) and does not tell when she [Bibī 'Ā'isha] arrived in the Deccan [from north India].¹⁰⁸ Later, in 1992, Carl Ernst introduced this account of *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'* to the wider Western readers. Ernst, however, casts a shadow of doubt on the historic value of *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'* by commenting that this anonymous author's skills as a chronicler are not remarkable as he "took up entire passages from *Firishta*" and also that *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'* was "an imperial manifesto with a hagiographical extension."¹⁰⁹ Both these arguments, however, are not very relevant in the context of this narrative because most other Sufi texts are hagiographical in content and approach.

Another difficulty arises as all the above three authors identify Bibī 'Ā'isha as the daughter of Bābā Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār. Contrary to this, Amīr Khwurd, based upon his firsthand knowledge of the family life of the Bābā, says that he heard from his grandfather, Saiyyid Mubārak Muḥammad Kirmānī, that Bābā Farīd had three daughters (*Shaikh al-Shaiṭukhu'l-'ālam sih dukhtar būd*). He then identifies these daughters as Bibī Mastūra, Bibī Sharifa, and Bibī Faṭīma; the name of Bibī 'Ā'isha is not included in this list. Similarly, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* of 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī, completed in 1623, some three years after *Faṭḥu'l-awliyā'*, lists the same three daughters as Amīr Khwurd did earlier, and does not mention the name of Bibī 'Ā'isha as one of the daughters. Nizami, who is credited with having conducted an in-depth study of primary Sufi texts, including manuscripts, also gives the names only of the above three daughters of Bābā Farīd.¹¹⁰ Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣābirī, however, does mention a fourth daughter whom Bābā Farīd is said to have given in marriage to his sister's son, Shaikh 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir, and who, according to another

108 *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l-Hukūmat-i Dihlī (hiṣṣā du'm)*, p. 252; Wahida Nasīm writes that this incident occurred in Delhi, See *Shahān-i-be Tāj*. Karachi: Maktabā-i Asafiya, pp. 52–54.

109 Carl W. Ernst. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Center*. New York: SUNY, p. 91.

110 K.A. Nizami. 1955. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Faridud-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār*. Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, p. 341.

hagiographical account of the Šābirī Sufis, was burnt to ashes on her nuptial night by the wrath of her husband.¹¹¹ However, the presence of Bibī ‘Ā’isha’s tomb and that of her daughter, in Khuldabad can be cited as one evidence of the historicity of Bibī ‘Ā’isha. Waḥīda Nasīm, during her 1985 visit to the shrine, saw women devotees tying coloured ribbons or shreds of fabric while making supplications.¹¹²

(2)

Bibī Ashraf Jahān Ḥaẓrat Mā Šāḥiba *ashraf-i do-jahān*

Period: Fourteenth Century

Place: Kōrchi (or Kodachi in taluka Raybag) District Belgaum, Karnataka, India

Urs: 10 Rajab

Despite the imposing title of Ḥaẓrat Mā Šāḥiba *ashraf-i do-jahān* (the respected Mother—distinguished in both the worlds), the history of Ḥaẓrat Mā Šāḥiba remains obscure as scarce references are found in either historical writings or hagiographical texts. The life story of this illustrious woman ascetic is woven with that of her adventurous son—‘Alā’u’d-Dīn Ḥasan Gangū, the founding Sulṭān of the Bahmani kingdom of the Deccan (r. 1347–1358). Ḥasan Gangū developed close ties with the Chishtī emigrant Sufis in the Deccan.¹¹³

‘Abdu’l Jabbār Khan Mulkapurī, an early twentieth-century researcher-author of the history of Deccan, drawing upon several historical sources, writes that the family of ‘Alā’u’d-Dīn Ḥasan’s mother belonged to Ghor. After the death of her husband, Muḥammad Shāh, Ḥaẓrat Mā Šāḥiba, along with her brother Hazbaru’d-Dīn Zafar Khan and two young sons, ‘Alī Shāh and Ḥasan Shāh, came to Multan. Mulkapurī, who otherwise has presented a detailed account of the personal life and the administration of ‘Alā’u’d-Dīn Ḥasan and of his successors in nearly seven hundred pages, says nothing more about Ḥaẓrat Mā Šāḥiba. It is important to note that Mulkapurī has identified her

111 Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Šābirī. 1856. *Ḥaḳīqat-i Gulzār-i Šābirī*, Rampur: Ḥasanī Press, p. 167.

112 Waḥīda Nasīm, *Shāḥān-i-be tāj* p. 55.

113 For a life account of ‘Alā’u’d-dīn Ḥasan Gangū, based upon historical chronicles, see Muḥammad ‘Abdu’l Jabbār Khan Mulkapurī. 1328/1910. *Maḥbūb’l-watan: tazkira-yi saḷātīn-i dakan. Ḥissā awwal, Dar bayān-i saḷātīn-i Bahmaniyyā*. Hyderabad: Maṭba‘-i Raḥmānī. Also, see H.K. Sherwani. 1985. *The Bahmanis of the Deccan: An Objective Study*. Hyderabad: The Manager of Publications Saood Manzil.

only as the mother of ‘Alā’u’d-Dīn Ḥasan, without identifying her by her name or by her title.¹¹⁴

According to one popular legend, Mā Ṣāḥiba came from Bukhara, now in Central Asia, to Kōrchi, a town on the banks of river Krishna and known as the land of the Sufis.¹¹⁵ The *Karnataka State Gazette*, however, says that she came from Arabia or Baghdad.¹¹⁶

Muḥammad Sulṭān, author of *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma’rūf sair-i Gulbarga* (A traveller’s gift, also known as travels through Gulbarga) offers some glimpses of this pious woman’s journey through several vicissitudes—from a life of worldly poverty, through royalty, and to her final destination of chosen poverty (*faqr*) of an ascetic (*zāhid*). Muḥammad Sultan identifies Mā Ṣāḥiba by her name, Ḥaẓrat Ashraf Jahañ.¹¹⁷ He writes that Ḥaẓrat Mā Ṣāḥiba, driven by several misfortunes and the disheartening attitudes of her kinsmen, arrived in the Deccan as a destitute and settled in Sargapur (also known as Sargaur), near Kōrchi. There, she heard about a pious person in Kōrchi, Shaikh Sirāju’d-Dīn Junaidī (670/1278–781/1379), who could miraculously solve people’s problems.¹¹⁸ She then told her sons, “We are destitute. We would go to this Sufi and would serve him. The Almighty might redress our problems as a blessing because of his supplications.” The sons listened to their mother. The family—consisting of her son, daughter-in-law, and two daughters—reached Kōrchi. The devoted family’s visit brought spiritual as well as worldly gains. The spiritual blessings of the saintly person were upon them, as all the members took the oath of allegiance. The visit miraculously changed the course of history as very soon Shaikh Junaidī placed the crown of the state at the head of ‘Alā’ud-Dīn Ḥasan.¹¹⁹

Drawing upon several previously written historical accounts of the Deccan, Muḥammad Sulṭān writes that Ḥaẓrat Ashraf Jahañ never left the residence of her spiritual mentor, Shaikh Sirāju’d-Dīn Junaidī. She died in Kōrchi on

114 *Maḥbūb’l-watan: Tazkira-yi saḷātīn-i dakan*, pp. 47–49.

115 Maruti Kamble. “Sufi saints of Karnataka.” *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, vol. 3 (1): 237–246 (online).

116 Suryanath U. Kamath. 1987. *Karnataka State Gazetteer: Belgaum*. Bangalore: Government Press. p. 912.

117 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 142.

118 Khwāja Sirāju’d-Dīn Junaidī accompanied Sultan Muḥammad Bin Tughluq to the Deccan; settled in Bijapur around 1330; became the spiritual guide to Sulṭān ‘Alau’d-Dīn Ḥasan Bahmani; crowned Ḥasan Bahmani in 1347; received land grant of Korchī from the Sultan, which continues till to-date; mausoleum is located in Shāh Bazar, Korchī, Gulbarga; authored about 132 books and tracts. See *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, pp. 125–56, also *Rawḥatu’lu’l-awliyā’*, pp. 27–32; also, see *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā’-yi dakan*, pp. 391–93.

119 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 142.

10 Rajab 770/17 February 1369 and was buried outside the main entrance of Kořchi.¹²⁰

Muḥammad Sulṭān, describing the numerous virtues of Ḥaẓrat Mā Ṣāḥiba *Ashraf-i do-jahān* and her true traditions of the *ṭariqat*, says that she preferred a life of austerity to the luxury of a palace life. Despite being the mother of a powerful ruler, she never took any money from him and lived until her last day on whatever she earned by her labour.¹²¹

Hundreds of women and men come daily to her *dargāh* and on her *ʿurs*, which is held in the month of *Rajab*, to offer homage to this Sufi who they believe is their intercessor with the Divine and whose blessings they seek through her mediation. Ḥaẓrat Mā Ṣāḥiba's stature was so awe-striking that hundreds of *faqīrs* who assembled at her shrine during her *ʿurs* celebrations had to accept the decisions of the shrine management regarding the selection of one of them as the head (*sardār*) of the group of all the *faqīrs* and *mashāʾikh*, irrespective of their Sufi affiliations. Muḥammad Sulṭān aptly concludes that the son (ʿAlāʿud-Dīn Ḥasan) desired worldly kingdom and he got it; the mother sought the realm of faith (*dīn kī shāhī*) and she was blessed with it.¹²²

Several websites and internet entries, including a Facebook account in her name, have published descriptions of her *ʿurs* celebrations and images of her *dargāh*.

(3)

Būbū Abādī/ Bībī Bū Abadī/ Baṛī Buā

Period: Fourteenth Century

Place: Ayodhya, UP, India

Shrine: Panchakaroshi Road Ayodhya-Faizabad UP, India

The legendary city of Ayodhya in northern India, stands in the memory of the Muslims of the subcontinent as *Khurd Makka* (little Makka). Here, among several monuments of antiquity, stands until today the shrine of Baṛī Buā (literally, the elder sister) or Bībī Bū Abādī at a railway crossing between Ayodhya and Faizabad (also spelt Fyzabad).¹²³

120 Ibid, p. 146, 149.

121 Ibid, p. 149.

122 Ibid, p. 149.

123 Sarvesh Kumar and Rana B.P. Singh. 2017. "Muslim Cultural Landscape of Ayodhya-Faizabad (India): a geographical scenario." *The Geographer*, 64 (2): 81–96; Asim of Noor Images (www.noorimages.com), in an email, dated 7.30.16, described to me Baṛī Buā's tomb, inside a small white-washed locked enclosure. People, however, come to offer

Three Persian Sufi texts offer information, albeit sketchy, about this illustrious and virtuous woman who remains a source of great spiritual comfort to her devoted visitors, most being females. The first of these texts is *Khair'ul-majālis*, the fourteenth-century *malfūz* of Baʿī Buā's brother, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh-i Dihlī (1276–1356), a devoted disciple and *khalīfa* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' of the Chishtī *sisila* by Ḥāmid Qalandar. Ḥāmid Qalandar added a supplement (*ẓamīma*) to his text, providing the most valuable information about the personal life of the Shaikh and about his family, including Baʿī Buā, which is neither found in the actual text of the *malfūz* nor in any other contemporary text.¹²⁴ Even the main text of the *malfūz* carries no reference to the Shaikh's family.

Our second source, which provides indirect reference to Baʿī Buā, is *Siyaru'l-Ārifīn*, a biographical compendium of Chishtī and Suhrawardī Sufis of South Asia of Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu'llah Jamālī Kamboh (d. 1536). This reference is given in a section on the life of her illustrious brother, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd. Writing in 1530–1536, almost 180 years after the passing away of Khawāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd, Jamālī could spare only a few lines for her and describes her anonymously by an august appellation as *Rābi'a 'aṣr* (the Rā'bia [al-'Adawiyya] of her times).¹²⁵ Jamālī, however, has heavily borrowed from *Khair'ul-majālis*, often making verbatim statements without acknowledging his source.¹²⁶

The third source is *Bahr-e Zakhkhār*. Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf is the only author who presents a separate biographical notice of Bibī Bū Abādī, and thus restores her rightful place in the annals of lives of the mystics of South Asia.¹²⁷ In his narrative, though, he has not used this name but refers to her as Baʿī Buā. When Bibī Bū Abādī came to be addressed as the elder sister of all, i.e., Baʿī Buā (a local term), is not known.

I would, first, follow the details as given in *Khair'ul-majālis* about the ancestry of Baʿī Buā's family and would add additional information only in the footnotes. From *Khair'ul-majālis* we know that the grandfather of

prayers and to make offerings from outside the gate itself. Also, see www.asimrafiqui.com/blog/2009/...

124 This supplement is found only in Nizami's edited text of *Khairu'l-majālis*, which is a copy of the manuscript in the holdings of the Asafiya Library, Hyderabad. See Ḥāmid Qalandar and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1959. *Khair-u'l-majālis: conversations of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chirāgh of Delhi* compiled by Hamid Qalandar. Aligarh: Muslim University, pp. 282–90. For a cohesive account of Ḥāmid Qalandar's life, see *Ibid*, pp. 3–6.

125 Jamālī, p. 93.

126 See Nizami's Introduction, *KM*, pp. 10–17.

127 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*. pp. 369–370.

Shaikh Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd and Baḥī Buā was a scion of a family of Khorasan and was pushed to migrate to Lahore by the Mongol scourge.¹²⁸ Shaikh Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd's father, Shaikh Yaḥyā,¹²⁹ was born at Lahore.¹³⁰ At some stage, the emigrant family moved from Lahore to settle down finally in Awadh where Shaikh Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd and his sisters were born.¹³¹ In Awadh, Shaikh Yaḥyā lived an affluent life as a wool (*pashmīna*) merchant and had several employees (*ghulāmān*) working for him.¹³² When Shaikh Yaḥyā died, perhaps in 1280, he left behind a nine-year-old son, Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd, who was tenderly looked after by his widowed mother, matchless in her potentials and modesty (*dar ṣalāḥ wa 'iffat nazīr nā dāsh*t).¹³³ She brought up her children with great efforts (*sa'y-i-baligh*).¹³⁴ She died a little later after Khwāja Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd's arrival in Delhi, which happened when he was about forty-three years old, perhaps sometime in 1319 or a little later. Her grave existed in Awadh.¹³⁵

Shaikh Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd had two sisters—the elder was Bibī Bū Abādī and the younger was Bibī Lahri.¹³⁶ Bibī Bū Abādī, according to Ḥāmid Qalandar, had one son named Maulānā Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn 'Alī. Bibī Lahri also had one son, Maulānā Shaikh Kamālu'd-Dīn.¹³⁷ In the absence of dates of birth and death of Ḥaẓrat Bibī Bū Abādī, one can speculate that she was born a few years before the year 1276/1277, her younger brother Khwāja Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd's birth year. Although the date of birth of Khwāja Nāṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd is also not firm, Nizami calculates it to be about 675/1276–1277.¹³⁸

The first two authors mentioned above, Ḥāmid Qalandar and Jamālī Kamboh, and even other later scribes have not given any further accounts of Baḥī Buā's spiritual life. The only exception is Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf who extols her in the usual ornate Persian phrases, such as *Rābī'a 'aṣṣriya* (*Rābī'a* of her age),

128 See f. n. no. 1 in Urdu translation of *Siyaru'l 'Arifin* of Ḥāmid bin Faḥlu'llah Kamboh Jamālī by Ayyūb Qadri, p. 125.

129 Ḥāmid Qalandar identifies him as Yusuf, see *KM*, p. 282; Jamālī gives his name as Yaḥyā; Nizami, after assessing several other sources, has preferred Yaḥyā as the actual name. I prefer Nizami's arguments. See, Nizami, Introduction, *KM*, p. 39.

130 Jamālī, p. 92.

131 *KM*, p. 282.

132 K.A. Nizami. 1991. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nasiru'd din Chiragh-i-Delhi*. Delhi: I.A.D., p. 22.

133 *KM*, p. 282.

134 *Jamālī*, p. 92.

135 *KM*, p. 283.

136 *KM*, p. 284; Muhammad Habib identifies her as Bibi Lahori and the elder sister as Bibi Buhā-Abadi, see, Habib, Mohammad. 1974. *Politics and Society During the Early Medieval Period, Vol. 1*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, p. 360.

137 *Ibid*, p. 284.

138 See, *KM*, Nizami's Introduction, p. 38, f. n. 1.

afzala-yi dahr ba kamālāt-i humāyūn (the noblest in the world on account of her blessed virtues), and *waliyya bā kamāl ṣafā* (a friend of God with virtues of purity). Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf says that Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn used to refer to her as *mādar-i mihirbān* (affectionate mother).¹³⁹ While Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn went away to Delhi to serve his Shaikh, Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', Baḥī Buā, who in perfection was like Āsyā the Great and in miraculous powers like Mariyam,¹⁴⁰ remained engrossed in remembering Allāh in her small chamber in Awadh (*dar awadh ba ḥujra mashghūl ba ḥaqq*).¹⁴¹ Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf, on the authority of oral traditions that he heard from trustworthy persons (*az siqat shunīda*), says that suddenly a tyrant officer belonging to the elite class of Awadh (*ḥākim zālīm az ra'usā-yi awadh*) arrived and forced Baḥī Buā to marry him. In anger and distress, Baḥī Buā tried to disfigure herself by shaving her head and scratching her face (*mū-i sar khud rā tarāshīda wa rū-i khud rā kharāshīda*). As it happens with the powerless, her pleas went unheard and the Qāẓī did not listen to her (*hech masmū' na-kard*). Next morning, which was Friday, the Qāẓī decided to hold the marriage sermon (*khuṭba-yi 'aqd*). In the meantime, by his power of the inner self (*az sharf-i bāṭin*), Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd came to know of this whole affair and, travelling with miraculous speed (*ṭayy'ul-'arṣ*), arrived at the doorstep of the Qāẓī's house in Awadh and knocked. Hearing of the arrival of her brother, Baḥī Buā burst into tears. The brother comforted his grieving sister, telling her not to worry and to rest assured (*khāṭir jama' dārad*). He told her, "Apparently, though I have no power, I have God with me. Neither the tyrant nor the scholar will last" (*agar chih zor nā dāram magar khudā dāram, nā zālīm mānd nā 'ālim*). When the tyrant officer and the Qāẓī, along with their accomplices from among the elite of the city, assembled with great jubilation and triumph for Friday prayers and for the marriage, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd made the roof of the mosque collapse; none of the tyrants survived.

Contemporary sources refer to Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn as the son of Baḥī Buā. There are no references to when or whom Baḥī Buā married. Subsequent to the death of Baḥī Buā, Khwāja Naṣīru'd-Dīn brought his two orphaned nephews to Delhi and raised them up under his care. Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn's descendants were living around Amethi (a small town in UP, India) at the time of writing of *Bahr-e Zakhkhār*.¹⁴²

139 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 369.

140 For the life of Ḥaẓrat Āsiā and Ḥaẓrat Maryam (Mary), see Barbara F. Stowasser. 1994. *Women in the Qur'ān, Traditions, and Interpretation*. (pp. 57–61; 67–81) NY: OUP.

141 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 369.

142 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 370.

With a heart that knew only the fear of Allāh, this pious and virtuous woman never succumbed to the dictates of men in power.¹⁴³ Legends and oral traditions often repeated by her devotees, both Muslims and Hindus, who come to her shrine to seek her blessings and renew their courage and faith in the Divine power, recall the resilience of this woman. What this fearless woman told her contemporaries was what her brother had told her—that neither the cleric nor the tormentor would last long. These words, though based on oral hagiographical traditions, stand as a powerful message, much needed by women of today, circumvented and oppressed by truncated civil codes and by the fabricated male versions of the Divine commands.¹⁴⁴

Within the shrine complex of Baʿī Buā are the tombs of Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn 'Alī Awadhi and Shaikh Kamālu'd-Dīn Awadhi—Baʿī Buā's son and nephew—and Shaikh Fatehu'llah Awadhi.¹⁴⁵ Interestingly, the shrine of Baʿī Buā was repaired in 1977 by a Hindu, Mahant Ram Mangal Das of Gokul Bhawan of Ayodhya.¹⁴⁶

(4)

Dādī Bakhtū'ī

Period: Fourteenth Century

Shrine: Amroha, UP, India

Dādī Bakhtū'ī, whose tomb is built within the enclosure of the shrine of Saiyyidu'l 'Ārifin Saiyyid Ḥasan, known as Ḥaẓrat Shāh Wilāyat Sharfu'd-Dīn 'Alī, along with the tombs of other members of his family in Amroha, belongs to late fourteenth century. Ḥaẓrat Shāh Wilāyat, whose ancestry is traced to the tenth Imām, Imām 'Alī Naqī (829–868), came from Wāsit in Iraq to Multan and from there travelled to Amroha, in the modern day UP, sometime in the early fourteenth century during the time of Sultan Ghiyasu'd-Dīn Tughlaq (r. 1320–1325).¹⁴⁷ Shāh Wilāyat, who also built his *khānqāh* (which existed until

143 Habib, Mohammad. 1946. "Shaikh Nasir al-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi as a Great Historical Personality." *Islamic Culture*, (20): 129–53.

144 It is interesting to mention here that a Muslim orphanage, named the Bari Bua Muslim *Yatim khana*, was established in 1935 in the District of Faizabad on the Ayodhya-Faizabad Road and continues to offer shelter to the orphans, Esha Basabti Joshi, 1960. *Uttar Pradesh Gazetteers: Faizabad (Text & Supplement)*. Uttar Pradesh (India), Government of Uttar Pradesh, p. 341.

145 Jamālī identifies both of these as the sons of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Maḥmūd's elder sister, p. 93.

146 'Muslim Cultural Landscape of Ayodhya-Faizabad (India): a geographical scenario', p. 7.

147 For a detailed note on the life of Shāh Wilāyat, see Maḥmūd Aḥmad 'Abbāsī. 1932. *Tazkirat'ul kirām-y'ānī Tārīkh-i Amroha ki jild sānī*. Delhi: Maḥbūb ul maṭāb' Barqī Press,

the eighth Hijri),¹⁴⁸ is also credited by some with laying the foundation of the town of Amroha.¹⁴⁹ Shāh Wilāyat was a follower of the Suhrawardī *silsila*.

Dādī Bakhtū'ī's actual name is Bakhtū'ī; Dādī is an honorific title which means an elderly lady or grandmother. All the Urdu texts, as well as the British Government Survey Reports, refer to Dādī Bakhtū'ī as Musammāt (a woman, for example the use of Miss or Mrs. for a woman) Bakhtū'ī and describe her as the daughter of Shāh Wilāyat.¹⁵⁰ Neville also reported that she was a daughter of Shāh Wilāyat.¹⁵¹ Contrary to the textual evidence, local legends uphold that Dādī Bakhtū'ī was the sister of Shāh Wilāyat. These local legends say that she was married to a prince. These popular legends also claim that, realising her natal family was no match for her princely husband's life of wealth, Dādī Bakhtū'ī prayed for her own death. The Earth swallowed her, leaving a piece of her braid sticking out of the ground. Soon a tree grew up at the place where the braid was sticking out. The branches of the tree, entwined like strands of a braid, bear sugar-coated fruits. Devotees who visit Shāh Wilāyat's shrine also come to the shrine of Dādī Bakhtū'ī, tie coloured rags and ribbons to the branches of this tree, and make offerings. Neville reported that the shrine was visited by women forty days after the birth of their children.¹⁵²

(5)

Bibī Fāṭima

Period: Fourteenth Century

Shrine: 'Usmānābād, Awrangābād Division, Maharashtra, India

'Urs: 15–17 Rajab al-murajjab

Narratives of Bibī Fāṭima are extinct in texts. Her grave lies next to that of her husband, Khwāja Shamsu'd-Dīn, popularly known as Ghāzī Bābā. Local

pp. 4–20; also, by the same author *Tārikh-i Amroha*. Mumbai: Kitābdār, 2005 (originally written in 1930), p. 45; Justin Jones. 2009. "The Local Experiences of Reformist Islam in a 'Muslim' Town in Colonial India: The Case of Amroha." *Modern Asian Studies*, 43 (4), p. 875.

148 *Tārikh-i Amroha*, 137.

149 Justin Jones. 2012. *Shī'a Islam in Colonial India. Religion, Community and Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

150 *Tārikh-i Amroha*, p. 119; Jamāl Aḥmad Naqvi. 1934. *Tārikh-i Sādāt-i Amroha*. Hyderabad, Deccan: 'Aẓam Steam Press, p. 285, 288; Anton Führer. 1891. *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions, in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, described and arranged by A. Führer*. Allahabad: Government Press, p. 34.

151 H.R. Neville. 1911. *Moradabad. A Gazetteer*. Vo. xvi. Allahabad: Superintendent Government Press, p. 181.

152 *Ibid*, p. 181.

legends ascribe a narrative of Ghāzī Bābā's journey with several hundred Sufis across the Arabian Sea, from the shores of Dehmun or Dammam in 730/1329, first to Delhi and from there via Awrangābād to his final halt at 'Usmānābād (or Osmanabad), which at that time bore the name of Dharasur. It is said that Khwāja Shamsu'd-Dīn earned the title of *Ghāzī* (the victor) after slaying a devil named *Dharasur* who controlled the region now known as 'Usmānābād. On the three-day 'urs celebrations, women in large numbers participate and make vows at the tomb of Bibī Fāṭima. Women are not allowed to enter the shrine precincts of Ghāzī Bābā. Out of respect for the local traditions, beef is not allowed in the shrine complex. Women offer flowers, coconuts, and sweets. Pieces of hair, believed to belong to Bibī Fāṭima, hang from one of the walls of her shrine. Women come in large numbers to view this hair, which is believed to have great healing powers.¹⁵³

(6)

Bibī Jawindī

Date: D. 805/1402

Place: Uchch Sharif, Pakistan

Seventy-five kilometres from Bahawalpur, in the Bahawalpur District in South Punjab, stands the splendid shrine of Bibī Jawindī,¹⁵⁴ believed to be the great-granddaughter of Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jahāngasht (1308–1384) of the Suhrawardī Sufi *silsila*.¹⁵⁵ The imposing mausoleum with its ornate patterns, constructed in 900/1403 at the instruction of one Muḥammad Dilshād, a ruler of Khurasan,¹⁵⁶ is definitely the best example of medieval artisanship and stands as the finest homage to the memory of Bibī Jawindī.

Despite a good number of devotees, tourists, locals, and foreigners, the story of Bibī Jawindī, the woman buried in this finest piece of funerary architecture, remains little known. The mausoleum itself is in a highly neglected state. As one approaches the sandy open area of Uchch, where the shrine of Bibī Jawindī stands, several tombs, most unmarked and all covered with thick layers of dust, come into view; some raised ones have lost the engravings and

153 J.J. Roy Burman. 2002. *Hindu-Muslim Syncretic Shrines and Communities*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 221–223.

154 Beale says that her original name was Bibī Zinda Ābādī, see Thomas W. Arnold. 1881. *The Oriental Biographical Dictionary*. London: W.H. Allen & Co., p. 107.

155 For the life of Jahāniyān Jahāngasht see, Ayyūb Qādirī. 1963. *Ḥazrat Makhdūm Jahāniān Jahāngasht*, Karachi: Sa'īd Company; also, Jalāluddīn Munīr Shāh. 1899. *Safar nāma-i Makhdūm Jahāniān Jahāngasht*. Delhi: Maṭb'-i Aḥmadi.

156 Ahmad Nabi Khan, 1980. *Uchchh History and Architecture*. Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, p. 59.

inscriptions; all show a serious disregard for the past. A metal board posted by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, provides a brief note in English introducing the visitors to Bibī Jawindī. A similar metal board is there in the Urdu language. The text of the two boards, indeed, are the primary textual evidence about the life of Bibī Jawindī. Orally transmitted traditions, which one can hear from the local rustic visitors of the shrine, are the only source about the piety and virtues of the reposing woman. Indeed, little or no research has been conducted to explore the life of Bibī Jawindī. Most works that mention her replicate what the *Bahawalpur Gazetteer* recorded about her in 1904, which says that she “was a very pious lady, highly respected by the people for her devotion to religion.”¹⁵⁷ The *Gazetteer* also gives 805/1403 as the date of her death and refers to the floods of the Chenab river which cut down half of the dome of the shrine; the remaining half still exists today.

Answers are not found as to what led Muḥammad Dilshād of Khurasan to build Bibī Jawindī's tomb in Uchch. The mausoleum is octagonal on the exterior, with the interior walls angled to form a circle. The thick walls rise to two stories, transforming by way of squinches into a sixteen-sided drum upon which a dome sits, supported by bell-shaped brackets. Both the interior and exterior walls are decorated with a profusion of faience revetment. When I visited the shrine in February 2016, I found the monument in an unkempt state, though some rudimentary work of restoration was in progress. I did not see any supervised work at restoration, only rusted scaffolding and one or two labourers taking out rubble in baskets placed on their heads.

Some 170 years before my visit in 2016, Munshi Mohan Lal (1812–1877), an employee of the East India Company, mentioned in his travel accounts the havoc of the flood mentioned above. He gives a brief description of the tomb as he saw it, writing, “Zinda Ahadi commonly called Bibī Jind Wadi by the people of Uchch, was one of the descendants of Sayyad Jalal. She is buried at Uchch in Multan. The dome in which she rests is erected of burnt bricks and cemented by mortar. The whole of the edifice is ornamented by various hues, and lapis lazuli of the celebrated mines of Badakhshan.”¹⁵⁸ There were few traces of the dazzling turquoise tiles and embellishment with lapis lazuli from Badakhshan and Central Asia when Mohan Lal visited it.¹⁵⁹ Mohan Lal

157 *Bahawalpur State Gazetteer with Maps*, 1904. 1908. Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, p. 390.

158 Mohan Lal. 1846. *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan, Turkistan, to Balkh, Bokhara, and Herat; and a visit to Great Britain and Germany*. London: W.H. Allen & Co., p. 454; for details on the life and work of Mohan Lal, see C.A. Bayly. 1996. *Empire and information intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870* (pp. 230–232). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

159 *Ibid*, p. 455.

was so much shocked by the ruinous state of the shrine of Bibī Jawindī, whom he refers to as Zinda Ahadi, that he wrote another article about it, this time to draw the attention of the members of the *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, a research society established in 1784 to promote what it described as “oriental research.” In his paper, Mohan Lal concluded that the exquisite mausoleum was ruined by floods and by human neglect, a fact that the above metal boards avoid acknowledging.¹⁶⁰ Today the shrine, declared a world heritage site by UNESCO, is claimed to be restored and renovated by the Archaeology Department.

On my visit to the shrine, I found devotees were few; those present looked more like tourists from the nearby localities. My research assistant tried to talk with some present there, but none responded well. In my research, little was found about the spiritual merits of Bibī Jawindī; more is written about the funerary architecture of the tomb and its embellishments. Contrary to the conspicuous silence about Bibī Jawindī in Sufi texts, facts and hagiographical anecdotes about the male Sufis buried in Uchch and Multan are profuse.



FIGURE 2 Shrine of Bibi Jawindi, Uchch Sharif

160 Mohan Lal, Munshi, 1836. ‘Description of Uch-Sahrif.’ *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 5, (Edited by John Prinsep, Calcutta: Printed at the Baptist Mission Press), pp. 796–99.



FIGURE 3 Back view of the shrine of Bibi Jawindi Uchch Sharif



FIGURE 4 Metal board posted by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, provides a brief note in the Urdu language introducing the visitors to Bibi Jawindi, Uchch Sharif

(7)

Khawān Bibī Ṣāhibā**Period: Mid-Fourteenth Century****Place: Khuldabad, India**

Khawān Bibī's name—prefaced with the word *maulānā*, which is an honorific designation meaning a learned person, traditionally reserved for men only—shows her status as a learned person. Its use with the name of a female is indeed exceptional. It is not certain whether Khawān is her real name or a title, as the word *khawān* literally means a dinner table and perhaps because of an episode that is discussed later in this biographical notice, she was named as such. She was probably called Maulānā Khawān Bibī as she not only could read and recite but could do it with perfection and hence she was known as *maulānā*. A more rational explanation is given by Muḥammad 'Abdul Majīd, the narrator of the story of Khawān Bibī. He argues that, as *tālib-i mawlā* is used to refer to both male and female seekers of God, the designation *maulānā* is rightfully accorded to her.¹⁶¹

Khawān Bibī's brief life-sketch is given in the longer narrative of Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn Shīrāzī (701/1301–771/1369), the favourite scholarly disciple and *khalīfa* of Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb (d. 1338), by Muḥammad 'Abdul Majīd, the erudite translator of Āzād Bilgrāmi's Persian work, *Rawḥatu'l-Awliyā'*, in Urdu.¹⁶² The translator has added long footnotes, running into several pages, and several supplements about the life stories of Sufis. A story to illustrate the caring and nurturing nature of Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn Shīrāzī, given in a supplement added in this Urdu translation, tells us about Maulānā Khawān Bibī. Under the heading of *mutābannā ṣāhibzādi* (adopted daughter), 'Abdul Majīd, without providing any information about the blood parents of Khawān Bibī, writes that since her early childhood she grew up under the affectionate care of Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn Shīrāzī.¹⁶³

A local legend, however, says that Khawān Bibī was born to a childless Hindu ruler who sought Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn's blessings in begetting a child. When a daughter was born, the Raja in thanksgiving offered her to the Maulānā. A strong bond grew between the infant and the Maulānā who tenderly brought

161 Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Majīd Ghulām. Āzād Bilgrāmi's *Rawḥatu'l-Awliyā' al-ma'rūf Nafahātu'l-Asfiyā'*. Hyderabad: Maṭba'-'i Karīmī, (1345/1926), p. 127.

162 For a brief note on Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn Shīrāzī, see Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Majīd. 1345/1926. *Ẓamīna Jadīda number 4 az mutarajjim* in his Urdu translation of Āzād Bilgrāmi's *Rawḥatu'l-Awliyā' al-ma'rūf Nafahātu'l-Asfiyā'*. (Hyderabad: Maṭba'-'i Karīmī), pp. 123–24.

163 Ibid, pp. 126–127.

her up. It is said that when she cried for milk, the Maulānā let her suck his index finger from which milk oozed out.¹⁶⁴

Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn not only took care of her physical needs but also helped her grow and mature as a person of great spiritual heights. As the child grew, her longing for knowledge also increased. Along with the virtues of being a devotee and an ascetic, she attained the stage of *mukāshifa* (manifestation/intuitive knowledge) by acquiring the inward (*'ilm-i bāṭini*) and the outward sciences (*'ilm-i zahiri*) under the guidance of Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn. 'Abdul Majīd cites an anecdote that shows the miraculous powers of Khwān Bībī. According to this account, once while she was in a state of spiritual intoxication (*hālat-i sakr*), the time for meal came. The table was laid out and she was summoned. When she arrived, the meal had not yet begun, but she took the bread in her hands and said, "take it and eat it." When Maulānā Zainu'd-Dīn enquired to whom she was giving the bread, she said, "Can't you see a beggar (*sā'il*) in Makka M'uazzamā (the Exalted Makka) asking for bread and I am giving these to him."¹⁶⁵

(8)

Ḥazrat Bībī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba

Period: D. Late Fourteenth Century

Shrine: Koṛchi, Bijapur, India

'Urs: 5 Rabi'us-sānī

Known by various other aliases, such as Zachchā Bī and Sitti Mā Ṣāḥiba, the account of Ḥazrat Bībī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba is found in some detail in *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur* (the tombs or gardens of the Sufis of Bijapur). The author, paying tribute to her virtues, calls her *walī-yi kāmīl* (the perfect Sufi).¹⁶⁶ Bībī Khwānd Mā was not her real name. Her real name was Māh Khātūn.¹⁶⁷

Bībī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba had Sufi ancestors. She was the daughter of *Shaikhu'l-Shuyūkh* Ḥazrat 'Ainu'd-Dīn Ganju'l 'Ilm Junaidī (b. 706/1306)¹⁶⁸ and

164 Roy Burman, J.J. 2002. *Hindu-Muslim syncretic shrines and communities*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p. 77.

165 *Rawḥatu'l awliya' al-ma'rūf Nafahātu'l Asfiyā*, pp. 126–27.

166 *Rawḥatu'l awliya'-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 27–32 and 222–223.

167 Ibid, p. 30; Bashir u'd-Dīn Aḥmad. 1915. *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlakat-i Bijāpūr (hiṣṣā dom)*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufīd-i 'Ām. (Henceforth, referred to as *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlukat-i Bijāpūr*). p. 104.

168 'Ainu'd-Dīn Ganju'l 'Ilm Junaidī (b. 706/1306) was born near Delhi. Later, travelling through Gujarat, he migrated to the Deccan and in 773 H reached Bijapur. He was present at the time of the coronation of Sultan Alauddin Hasan Gangū Bahmani (1347). *Rawḥatu'l awliya'-yi Bijāpur*, the only source on the life of Bībī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba, gives 795/1395 as the year of his demise, pp. 27–32; *Maḥbūb zil-manān-Tazkira Awliya'-yi dakan*, pp. 538–49.

his wife, Nāz Bibī, daughter of Shaikh Sirāju'd-Dīn Junaidī (706/1306–795/1393). Ḥaẓrat Ganju'l 'Ilm Junaidī was born near Delhi but, as with most other scholars and elite, reached Deccan sometime around 730/1329 after travelling through Jaipur and Gujarat.¹⁶⁹

We have no information about the year of birth of Bibī Khwānd Mā or about her married life except that she had two sons who lie buried close to her grave.¹⁷⁰ Referred to by honorific titles such as *karāmat maṣḍar* (fountainhead of spiritual powers) and *waliyya daurān* (the Friend of Allāh of all the times), Bibī Khwānd Mā remains a much-revered woman Sufi. She had memorised the Qur'ān at an early age.

The Bibī, rightfully called *rawnaq-i dīn* (the splendour of faith) and *faiz mazhar* (the manifestation of munificence), reposes in her shrine close to that of her illustrious father.¹⁷¹ Although we do not know the date of Bibī Khwānd Mā's demise, we know that she died before 1393, the year of her father's death. According to one local legend, the illustrious father was first buried next to his virtuous daughter's grave. One day, a person visiting their shrines mistook the other grave (that of Bibī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba) as the grave of Ganju'l 'Ilm's wife. That night Ḥaẓrat Ganju'l 'Ilm appeared in a dream to his attendant and instructed him to transfer his grave to a different location, a little distance away from that of his daughter. The order was carried out the very next day.¹⁷²

According to another popular local legend, once, as soon as a robber with a horse that he had stolen passed by her shrine in the darkness of night, daylight suddenly broke out. Puzzled by this happening, the perplexed thief went inside her shrine and began rubbing his forehead on the floor in repentance, weeping and bemoaning to seek the Bibī's forgiveness and to shield his honour. His supplication was heard; miraculously the form and colour of the horse was transformed so much that nobody recognised it as the stolen horse. In homage, the thief built a *chaukhandī* (dome) over her tomb. Later, the Sultans of the Deccan made several land grants, including small towns and villages (*qaryājāt wa diḥāt*), for the maintenance and upkeep of the shrines and for the expenses of the 'urs celebrations of Bibī Khwānd Mā Ṣāḥiba and her father, Ganju'l 'Ilm.¹⁷³

For a short biography of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh 'Ainu'd-Dīn, see al-Hajj Raja Hassan Chowdhry. 2005. *Ḥaẓrat Shaikh 'Ainu'd-Dīn Ganju'l 'ulūm Junaidī Bijāpurī*. Bijāpur: Asār Maḥall.

169 *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira-yi Awliyā'-i dakkān*, pp. 538–539.

170 *Rawẓatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 222.

171 *Ibid*, p. 30.

172 *Rawẓatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 30; also, *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā'-yi dakan*. p. 541; also, *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlukat-i Bijāpur* (ḥiṣṣa do'm), pp. 104–105.

173 *Rawẓatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 223.

(9)

Lallā 'Arifā**Date:** D. 750/1355**Place:** Kashmir

Lallā, the fourteenth-century mystic woman from Kashmir, is known as 'ārifa to the Muslims and Lāl Ded or Lallā Yogishwari to the Hindus. Lore, legends, and hagiographies cover the real story of her life. Interest in her life is so great that at a time when women's biographies were rarely written, Munshi Muḥammad Dīn Fauq (1877–1945), a Kashmiri journalist and author of several valuable books, in 1929 chose to write a short biography of Lallā 'Ārifā in Urdu. Interestingly, the book was published by Darul Ishā'at, Lahore, a press established by the Urdu-language journalist Muḥammadi Begam, who with her husband had established a publishing house promoting literature by and about women.¹⁷⁴ Almost thirteen years later, in 1942, Darul Ishā'at's pioneering Urdu-language journal for women, *Tahzib-un niswan*, published an article in four parts on Lallā 'Ārifā for the benefit of women readers. Drawing upon legends and folklore, this long paper reasserted Lallā's common acceptance by the Muslims and the Hindus.¹⁷⁵ Her verses and couplets brimming with spiritual content in Kashmiri language continue till today as a solace to a soul yearning for spirituality. Because of her early life lived as a Hindu, some scholars claim her as a Bhakti reformer and not as a Muslim Sufi.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, she is also claimed to have been the disciple of Shaikh Bulbul Shāh (d. 727/1326), a Suhrawardī Sufi who came to Kashmir from Central Asia.¹⁷⁷ Modern-day scholars, re-evaluating Lallā's contribution to spirituality, tend to look at her beyond sectarian divides.¹⁷⁸

According to tradition, Lallā was born in Saupura village near Srinagar in 735/1335 to a Pandit family and was a devotee of Shiva. Marital life brought miseries in her life and she began wandering in the woods and forests, wearing the

174 Munshī Muḥammad Dīn Fauq. 1929. *Lallā 'Ārifā*. Lahore: Darul Ishā'at.

175 Maulānā Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Qureshī. 1942. "Lallā 'Ārifā." *Tahzib-un Niswān*, 45 (18) 273–78; (19): 291–96; (20): 309–12; and (21): 322–26.

176 See for the English translation of Lallā's verses composed in the Kashmiri language in *Lalla-Vākyāni or the Wise Sayings of Lal Ded* by George Grierson and Lionel D. Barnett (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1920). G.L. Tikku. 1963. "Mysticism in Kashmir: In the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Muslim World*, 53 (3): 226–233.

177 *Khazīnatul'Aṣfiyya'*, jild dom. pp. 424–26.

178 Papers presented at a seminar in Srinagar in 1998, emphasised this peace-creating aspect of Lalla's voice. See, Ghulām Nabī Khayal. 1998. *Lalla 'Ārifā aur Shaikhul 'Ālam kā tqābuli jā'izā'* (pp. 33–38) in *Karawān-i Khayāl*. Srinagar: Kashmiri Writers' Conference.

dress of *yogini*, in search of peace, often reciting her own verses.¹⁷⁹ Legends say that she embraced Islam at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Jalālu'd-Dīn Bukhārī *Jahānīyārī Jahāngasht* (the world trotter) (d. 1384). A more poetic version of Lallā 'Ārifā's life and spiritual journey is given by Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Mattu (d. 1832) in *Rishī namā* (composed in 1223/1808). In a section entitled *āmdan Ḥaẓrat Lallā 'Ārifā nizd Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l Ālam*, the Sufi poet compares Lallā to *badr-i yakta* (full moon with no parallel) and *sar āpā nūr* (light from head to foot).¹⁸⁰ According to the sources of the Rishī Sufis of Kashmir, Lallā had a great influence on the teachings of Shaikh Nūru'd-Dīn (d. 842/1439). Bahāu'd-Dīn Mattu and, later, Hasan say that Lallā and Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam's connection began right after the birth of Shaikhu'l 'Ālam when he refused breast milk of his mother and Lallā offered him her own which he accepted.¹⁸¹ This natural bond and connection grew as both learned from each other. Did she embrace Islam under the influence of Shaikh Nūru'd-Dīn? This question remains unanswered as Lallā's verses speak of her devotion to Shiva. Lallā, however, rejected all forms of dogmatism and rituals.¹⁸² Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, writing about the virtues of Lallā, says that as a gnostic she was aware of the matters of heart and of the state of the dead in their graves (*kashfu'l qulūb wa kashfu'l qabūr*). According to a legend described by Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, Lāl Ded or Lallā 'Ārifā, after being mistreated by her husband and in-laws, in her state of *sakr wa jazb wa istighrāq* was roaming naked on the streets. All of a sudden, Shaikh Bulbul Shāh arrived there.¹⁸³ Seeing him, Lallā cried out *mard āmad, mard āmad* (a man has come) and to shield her naked body leaped into a blazing hot stove. When she came

179 For her life sketch, see Pandit Anand Koul. 1921. "Life sketch of Laleshwari—a great hermitess of Kashmir." *The Indian Antiquary* (November 1921), pp. 302–308, and December 1921, pp. 308–312.

180 Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Matu. 1223/1832. *Rishī namā* (Edited by Muhammad Asadullah Wani and Masud Samun, Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 1982, pp. 73–75).

181 Ibid, p. 73; Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi. 1961. *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan. Tazkira-yi Awliyā'-yi Kashmir mausūm ba Isrāru'l akhyār* (written in 1305/1888). Srinagar, Kashmir: Research & Publication Department, Jammu & Kashmir Government. p. 118 (henceforth, referred to as *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*).

182 Richard Carnac Temple. 1924. *The Word of Lalla the Prophetess: being the sayings of Lal Ded or Lal Diddi of Kashmir. Done into English verse from the Lalla-Vakyaṇi*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 190, 199.

183 *Khazīnatu'l Aṣfiyā'*, jild dom, pp. 424–427; Saiyid Sharfu'd-Dīn 'Abdur Raḥmān Bulbul Shāh (d. 727/1326) is said to be the first Muslim to arrive and spread Islam in Kashmir. For more details, see Nabi Hadi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian literature*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, p. 143; also, Yoginder Sikand. 2000. "Hazrat Bulbul Shah: The First Muslim Missionary in Kashmir." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 20(2): 361–67.

out, she was fully covered.¹⁸⁴ Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi (d. 1898), in his *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, says that Lallā stands far above and beyond religious polemics and divides; Lallā, in reality, is one of the special ones of God (*khāsān-i khudā ast*).¹⁸⁵

(10)

Pānch Bībion k̄a chabūtrā

Period: Fourteenth Century

Place: Bijapur, India

Bibī ‘Āi’sha, Bibī Amna, Bibī Khadija, Bibī Maryam, and Bibī Ḥamīda were the five pious and virtuous sisters of Muntajibu’d-Dīn *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh* (d. 709/1309) and Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb (d. 738/1337). They travelled from North India to the Deccan along with their mother, Bibī Hājara.¹⁸⁶ As their graves are built over a slightly raised platform, which in Urdu is called *chabūtrā*, the graves are known as five sisters’ *chabūtrā*. Bibī Hājara, the mother of the five sisters, locally known as Mā Ṣāhibā,¹⁸⁷ was the sister of Shaikh Jamālu’d-Dīn Hānswī¹⁸⁸ and Shaikh Sirāju’d-Dīn, who also travelled from Delhi to the Deccan along with Bibī Hājara and are buried to the northwest of Ḥazrat Muntajibu’d-Dīn’s shrine.¹⁸⁹ Bibī Hājara was married to Shaikh Maḥmūd Hānswī, a disciple of Bābā Farīd.

From a reference in *Fathu’l-awliyā’* it can be inferred that Bibī Hājara travelled with her son Burhānu’d-Dīn Gharīb. One of the five instructions that Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ laid upon Burhānu’d-Dīn was “to give precedence to [your] mother’s happiness over everything else and to reckon it as a Blessing of Allāh (*rahmat-i haqq*).”¹⁹⁰ Other than this, information about Bibī Hājara and her daughters remains hidden. We know more about the death of the five sisters from their graves; we know almost nothing about their lives.

184 *Khazīnatu’l Asfiyā’*, jild dom, p. 426. Grierson and Barnett, however, disagree with this version and say that it was Sayid ‘Alī Hamadani who arrived in Kashmir in 1380 and stayed for six years. See *Lalla-Vākyāni or the Wise Sayings of Lal Ded*, p. 2.

185 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 560.

186 Rawnaq ‘Alī in his *Rawzatu’l u’l-Aqtāb* says that some sources have named Bibī ‘Āi’sha as Bibī Sara and Bibī Maryam as Bibī Karīman, pp. 43–44; Among the modern scholars, Carl Ernst also gives the name of Bibī Sara instead of Bibī Ḥamīda. See Carl W. Ernst. 1992. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. Albany: SUNY. p. 144.

187 Her ‘urs is celebrated on 11 Shawwāl, see *Rawzatu’l u’l-Aqtāb*, p. 50.

188 Ghulām Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1345/1926, *Rawzatu’l awliyā’ al-ma’rūf Nafahātu’l Asfiyā* (Urdu translation by Muḥammad ‘Abdu’l Majīd.) Hyderabad: Maṭba‘-i Karīmī, p. 7, footnote 1.

189 *Rawzatu’lu’l-Aqtāb*, p. 45.

190 *Rawzatu’lu’l-Aqtāb*, p. 120.

One can only conjecture that they died young and unmarried. The five sisters, or the *Pānch Bībīān*, are buried behind the mosque known as *Chaudah sau awliyā'ōn kī masjid* (the mosque of fourteen hundred friends of Allāh) and outside the tomb of Naṣīru'd-Dīn Pā'ōṇ Payk (d. before 761/1360) in Khuldabād. This place, being the final place of repose of hundreds of Sufis, mostly of the Chishtī *silsila* who came to the Deccan, is considered a highly sanctified space.¹⁹¹ Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, who rose to great prominence in the Deccan as he developed strong ties of mutual admiration and respect with the local rulers, left no record about his sisters.

Today, women devotees lay garlands of fresh flowers and glass bangles at the shrines of these five sisters in honour of their memory.

(11)

Ḥazrat Punch Bībīān Ṣaḥiba

Period: Fourteenth Century

Shrine: Raichur, Karnatka, India

Urs: 16 Rajab al-murajjab

Similar to most accounts of pious women, the story of Punch Bībīān Ṣaḥiba (five respected women) is wrapped in lore and legends. One such popular legend that has become part of texts relates that a group of five sisters of Saiyyid lineage, accompanied by their brother and a teacher, arrived in Raichur during the reign of a Hindu ruler named Raja Hoṛa. They settled on a hilltop where once stood a small ancient temple with a huge idol carved of stone and now (in 1829, the time of writing *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bījāpur*) a huge head of a bull stood. Perhaps these five women travelled from North India. *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'* and *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlukat-i Bījāpūr* identify only three of these five sisters as Chanda Bī, Gūngī Bī, and Zachcha Bī, and their brother as Chanda Ḥusainī, all of Saiyyid ancestry; and their teacher (*ustād*) as Shaikh Rawānī.¹⁹² These three sisters were no ordinary women. They were endowed with the exceptional power of flying (*marṭab-e ṭairī*).¹⁹³ Five small graves, each measuring

191 Rawnaq 'Alī quoting the 16th c. manuscript, *Fath al-awliyā'*, says that 700 persons, several of them being *pālki nishīn* (riding palanquins) came to the Deccan, see his *Rawḥatu'l u'l-Aqtāb*, pp. 45–46. Muḥammad Wāḥid Khān. 1913. *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharf ma' naqshājāt*. Maṭba' Abu'l'alāī Hyderabad, Deccan, p. 3, 7. *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlakat-i Bījāpūr* (*hiṣṣā som*), p. 212.

192 Not to be confused with Saiyyid Chanda Ḥusainī who migrated to Bidar in the late 15th century and lies buried at Gogī.

193 It means a miraculous power of flying from one place to another. Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh Dehli said, 'when perfection (*rūḥ-i-kāmil*) is achieved the power of flying (*quwwat-i-ṭairān*) is achieved.' KM, 13th Majlis.

one foot in length, are now the site of great visitation. Interestingly, the *mazār* of the mare of Chandā Ḥusainī is also next to these graves. Women who visit the *dargāh* tie small pieces of fabric to make vows. The author of *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'*, writing in the context of his time, says that the leaves of half a portion of the *neem* tree standing close to the graves of the sisters were sweet in taste whereas the leaves of the other half of the same tree were bitter due to the *karāmat* of the virtuous and pious women. The *urs* of Punch Bibiān is held on the sixteenth of Rajab.¹⁹⁴

(12)

Ḥazrat Bibī Raushan Ārā'

Date: 1279–1342

Place: Kaholia, 24 Pargana, Basirhāt, Bengal, India

Bibī Raushan Ārā', also known as Saiyyida Janāb Khātūn, is one of the first known women of saintly virtues of Bengal in the first half of the fourteenth century.¹⁹⁵ Local legends narrate that Bibī Raushan Ārā' was born in 1279 to Indian immigrants in Makkah, Mihr'un-nisā', and Saiyyid Karīmullah. 'Abbās 'Alī, her elder brother, was a man of learning known for his piety and asceticism. Although, there is no evidence, it is assumed that she acquired learning and knowledge while staying in Makkah. In 1321, at the age of forty-two, she travelled from Makka to Delhi along with Shaikh Ḥasan Shāh, a Sufi, and her elder brother and his wife. Delhi at this time was under Sultan Ghiyāsu'd-Dīn Tughlaq (r. 1320–1325). On his arrival in Delhi, Shaikh Ḥasan Shāh, who was of the Qādirī *silsila* of the Sufis, despatched his 125 followers (*murīdīn*) to different regions of India for the spread of Islam. Raushan Ārā' and her brother were sent to Bengal. They reached Bengal during the time of Ghiyāsu'd-Dīn Tughlaq's military expedition (1325–1326) to the region. Pīr Saiyyid 'Abbās 'Alī and Raushan Ārā' settled at a place called Taragunia. Saiyyid 'Abbās 'Alī (or Saiyyid 'Abbās Makkī, who also became known as Gorā Chānd Shāh because of his extremely fair skin) performed several miracles to attract local people to

194 *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 255; *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlukat-i Bijāpur (ḥiṣṣā som)*, pp. 311–312, 347–48. The story of the five sisters is also repeated, word by word, in *Tazkira ye Awliya'-i Raichūr* by Ḥājī Saiyyid Raushan 'Alī Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Šibghat Allāhī. Maṭba'-i-Sibghat Allāhī, Raichūr, Hyderabad. 1315/1897, p. 3.

195 *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, pp. 328–29.

Islam. It is said that he got involved in a fight and was wounded. Later he died of these wounds. He was buried at a place called Harua, near Basirhāt.¹⁹⁶

Bibī Raushan Ārā', like her brother, attracted local inhabitants to the message of Islam. She lived the life of a pious Sufi. Probably she remained celibate. Raushan Ārā' died in 1342 at the age of sixty-four and lies buried in her shrine in the village of Kathulia in Bashirhat at the banks of river Ichhamati.¹⁹⁷ She had a large number of women devotees who sought her spiritual blessings to solve their everyday problems.¹⁹⁸ Her 'urs is celebrated in the month of Chaitra, which is the twelfth month of the Bengali calendar and falls between the middle of March and the beginning of April. On this occasion, a ten-day-long fair is held.¹⁹⁹

Although Gorā Chānd Shāh and Bibī Raushan Ārā' worked for a similar cause and both migrated to Bengal together, biographical details about Bibī Raushan Ārā' are sparsely recorded.

(13)

Sōnā Bā'ī

Period: Fourteenth Century

Shrine: Bijapur, India

The narratives of the Sufis who travelled from the plains of North India to the hilly, rocky region of the Deccan in the thirteenth century are a treasure house of a variety of encounters that resulted in events beyond human comprehension. Of these encounters, one concerns a bucket of water, a young and charming princess, and a Sufi who lived surrounded by the Hoda Hill.

Two twentieth-century authors, Rawnaq 'Ali in the early twentieth century and Wahida Nasīm in 1988, both drawing upon earlier sources which they have not identified but were greatly familiar with, have described the story of Sōnā Bā'ī (the woman of gold) and Ḥaẓrat Muntajibu'd-Dīn, known as *Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh* (the giver of gold). According to a legend, Sōnā Bā'ī, whose

196 For further details, see W.W. Hunter. 1875. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. 1. (District of the 24 Parganas and Sundarbans). London: Trübner & Co., pp. 111–12; O'Malley, L.S.S. 1914. *Bengal District Gazetteers. 24 Parganas*. Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, pp. 240–41.

197 Muhammad Abdur Rahim. 1963. *Social and Cultural History of Bengal (1201–1576)*, Vol. 1, Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, p. 126; Muhammad Ismail. 2010. *Hagiology of Sufi Saints and the Spread of Islam in South Asia*. New Delhi: Jananada Prakashan, p. 174.

198 'Ijāzu'l Haqq Quddūsi, 1965. *Tazkira Şūfīyya'yi Bengal*. Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, p. 185, also see *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, p. 328.

199 Amit Dey. 1996. *Sufism in India*. Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, pp. 8–10.

father was a local chieftain, had built an underground well or a stepwell (*bauli*). When the Chishtī Sufi, Muntajibu'd-Dīn (675/ 1276–709/1390), brother of Ḥaẓrat Burhān'ud-Din Gharīb, arrived in Khuldabad from Delhi and settled on the Hoda Hill, this well was in the vicinity. One day he sent a servant to fetch water for ablutions. When the servant requested access to the well from an attendant, he was refused. Coincidentally, Sōnā Bā'ī happened to be there with her companions. The fame of Ḥaẓrat Muntajibu'd-Dīn as the giver of gold was known to Sōnā Bā'ī. Jestingly she suggested that the saint could have water if he turned the well water into gold. Sōnā Bā'ī was amazed to see that a few drops of water from the water-soaked handkerchief of *Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh* did turn the water into gold. The legend further says that the dazed Sōnā Bā'ī presented herself before *Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh* and became a Muslim and his follower and a mystic. She lies buried between the tombs of *Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh* and his mother, Bibī Hājara. Shrine visitors to the tomb of *Zar Zari Zar-Bakhsh* also offer prayers at Sōnā Bai's tomb for whom she is a holy person.²⁰⁰

9.5 Sufi Women of the Fifteenth Century

(1)

An Anonymous Sufi Woman

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Bidar, India

Shrine: Bidar

In *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, Indian archaeologist Ghulam Yazdani notes that at a short distance from the domed tomb of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid'us-Sādāt Muḥammad Ḥanīf, a native of Gilān (d. 901/1496) in Naubād which is close to Bidar, stands another structure, square in plan, covered by a dome and containing the unmarked grave of a woman. Though nothing is known about the identity of this pious woman, her grave is visited by the devotees with great reverence. We may surmise that either she was a family member of Muḥammad Ḥanīf or was spiritually related to him, for two reasons. First, to protect their modesty, usually women are not buried in close proximity to unrelated men; and second, because of the similarity of the architecture of the two tombs. In any case, one can say with some certainty that this anonymous woman

200 Rawnaq 'Alī. 1908. *Rawẓatu'l al-Aqṭāb*. p. 5; Wahida Nasīm. 1988. *Shahān-i-betāj*. Karachi: Maktabā-yi Asafiya, pp. 67–69; Carl W. Ernst. 1992. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. New York: SUNY, pp. 237–238.

belonged to the early group of migrant Muslims who arrived in the Deccan from North India, or Hindustan, as it was called in the early years of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. It is worth noticing that the domed structure housing the tomb of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid'us-Sādāt also has the tombs of two other women—his wife and daughter. These tombs are not acknowledged as sacred spaces by shrine visitors. On the other hand, women had continued to visit the tomb of this anonymous woman Sufi until the time Yazdani completed his survey. Women visitors probably find in this unnamed pious Bibī a helper and a friend.²⁰¹ A stream running nearby, blessed with the miraculous powers of either the anonymous Sufi woman or by Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid'us-Sādāt, is believed to cure women's infertility.

(2)

Behat Bibī

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Jammu and Kashmir

Shrine: Zalsu (near Charar Sahrif), Jammu and Kashmir

Behat Bibī, along with her sister, Duhat Bibī, was a disciple (*murīda*) of Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam Nūru'd-Dīn Walī, or Nund Rishī (d. 1439).²⁰² Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi (d. 1898) in his *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan's* section on the Sufis of Kashmir, which is titled as *Asrāru'l Akhyār* (the secrets of the Chosen Ones), writes that Behat Bibī's discourses (*kalām*) on the Sufi concept of *fanā' fi'l-lah* (absorption or total annihilation of self-consciousness before arriving in God's presence) were of sublime quality. Similarly, her austerity and asceticism (*riyāẓat*) were unparalleled.²⁰³

Behat Bibī's journey to the spiritual realm began with what might appear to a random onlooker as serendipity; to someone steeped with the knowledge of how our minds work, the story unravels the secrets of Nature. Her father, a Hindu by faith, was a petty village revenue officer (*patwāri*) of Duryagām. It is said that one day Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam passed by the village of Duryagām

201 *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, pp. 208–11.

202 For the life account of Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam Nūru'd-Dīn Walī, see Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi. 1961. *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan. Tazkira-i Awliya'-i Kashmir mausūm ba Isrāru'l akhyār* (written in 1305/1888). Srinagar, Kashmir: Research & Publication Department, Jammu & Kashmir Government, pp. 116–28. (Henceforth, referred to as *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*); Anand Koul, Pandit. 1929. "A Life of Nand Rishi," *The Indian Antiquary*, vol. 58(October): 194–198 and (December): 221–224; Saiyyid Muhammad Yusuf Bukhari. 1999. *Tazkira Šūfiya'-i Kashmir*. Lahore: Oriental College, pp. 128–36.

203 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, pp. 145–46.

where Behat Bībī and her sister, Duhat Bībī, were collecting some greens. Listening to the conversation between the two sisters, the Shaikhu'l 'Ālam was astonished (*mutanabbih shud*) and stopped from walking around. The Shaikh asked the girls why they were taking the lives of greens and vegetables as they also have life (*kāh sabzā jāndār ast*). Behat Bībī responded that they were cutting the grass and vegetables for the benefit of feeding themselves and their animals. She told the Shaikh that, on the contrary, "you, by striking your staff (*bāzarb-i 'aṣā-yi khud*), kill thousands of lives, and by sitting at various places destroy hundreds of lives." Hearing these words, the Shaikh began to cry (*giryā amad*). It is said that after this, he gave up wandering around and sat down (*pas az ān raftan wa sair kardan wa bar zamin nishastan tark farmūd*).²⁰⁴ At this time, while the conversation was taking place, suddenly the Shaikhu'l 'Ālam's spiritual gaze (*nazr-i raḥmat*) fell upon them and they converted to Islam. Since then, the two of them always remained in his service (*dar ḥuzūr mī būdand*) and engaged in prayers and worship (*riyāzat wa 'ibādat*). Thus, Ḥasan Khuihāmi comments, the two sisters attained the highest station (*rutba'-i 'ālī*). It is said that for a long period of time, Behat Bībī used to work (*kasb-i khud*) to earn her bread, and always commented on the benefits of self-earning. She used to say that human existence is the greatest veil between God and human beings (*wajūd-i bandā parda-i 'aẓīm ast miyān-i bandā wa khudā*). Like a true Sufi, she counselled that to attribute success to human action is the greatest act of polytheism (*wajūd-i khud dar kārhā maujūd pindāshtund shirk-i 'aẓīm ast*). She is buried in Zalsu, a small village in Kashmir.²⁰⁵

(3)

Duhat Bībī

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Budgam, Jammu and Kashmir

Shrine: Zalusa, near Charar-i Sharīf

Duhat Bībī, like her sister Behat Bībī, discussed above, was a disciple (*murīda*) of Ḥazrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam Nūru'd-Dīn Wali, or Nund Rishī (d. 1439). Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi, the author of the lives of Sufis of Kashmir, however, says that according to some historians the two were not real sisters but only had sisterly relations.²⁰⁶ In her state and virtues (*ḥālāt wa kamālāt*), Duhat Bībī possessed excellence. In her discourses and conversations, she always had sublime

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 146.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 146–47.

expressions. It is narrated that once Shaikhu'l 'Ālam Nūru'd-Dīn Wali and Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī (774/1372–852/1448) had a meeting.²⁰⁷ Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī, referring to the lean and weak physical condition of Shaikhu'l 'Ālam, asked him by means of an allegory, “Why have you kept your horse so lean and weak?” To this, the Shaikhu'l 'Ālam answered, “I seldom ride it as I am afraid that if the horse is strong and healthy, taking advantage of my weakness, it would throw me down.” Here, the Shaikh meant that a well-fed body would defeat the soul. During this conversation, Duhat Bibī and Behat Bibī were present. Duhat Bibī, intervening in the conversation, said, “Those who have reached their destination (*manzil rasīdgān*) are not worried either about their horse or its saddle (*fikr-i markab wa maḥmil na mi bāshad*).” “Who are these who have attained their goal?” enquired Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī. “They are the ones who have freed and liberated themselves from the self (*az khud rastagān*),” answered Duhat Bibī. “Are you one of these?” asked Hamadānī. She explained that if she were not, how could she be present at this august assembly (*majlis-i ālī*) and take part in a discussion regarding the secrets of Allāh (*maḥram-i asrār*). On being asked by Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī whether she was a daughter or a son, Duhat Bibī's answer was, “If I am not (*agar nīst*) I'm neither a daughter nor a son; if I exist, I'm nothing (*agar hast bāsham, pas hech nīstam*).” The conversation turned towards meat-eating. Duhat Bibī argued that meat-eating might be permissible to the *walīs*, however, as she has not attained that rank, she considers it not permissible for herself. Duhat Bibī was buried in Zalusa in Kashmir.²⁰⁸

(4)

Mīrā Bibī

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Gamru, Jammu and Kashmir

A short biographical notice on Mīrā Bibī is found only in Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi's (d. 1898) *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan: Tazkira-yi Awliyā'-yi Kashmīr mausūm ba Isrāru'l akhyār* (written in 1305/1888).²⁰⁹ He writes that Mīrā Bibī was a perfect gnostic (*ārīfā kāmila*) and was the disciple of Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam Nūru'd-Dīn Walī, or Nund Rishī (d. 842/1439). For her whole life, she lived in

207 For a biographical notice on Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī, see *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, pp. 23–26.

208 For Duhat Bibī's conversation see, Mohammad Ishaq Khan. 1994. *Kashmir's Transition to Islam: The Role of Muslim Rishis (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century)*. New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 246–47.

209 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 257.

retirement and seclusion (*dar khilwat wa inziwā'*) and did not show her face at all to any strangers or unrelated persons (*ghair mahram rā ru'-i khud nishān nami dād*). Wild beasts and fierce animals were her companions (*anīs-i o būdand*). For her livelihood, she earned money by spinning thread (*tār-i sūt*). Most of the time, however, she remained lost in Allāh's remembrance (*dar istighrāq*).

She lies buried in the village of Gamru, close to Khuihāma, the birthplace of Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi.

9.6 Sufi Women of the Sixteenth Century

(1)

Bibī Fāṭima Saiyyida Gilānī

Date: D. 1016/1607

Place: Lahore

Shrine: 1 Link Road, Lahore, Pakistan

'Urs: 23, 24 Rabi'-us sānī

Saiyyida Bibī Fāṭima, popularly addressed as Bibī Kalān (the first or the elder lady) or Bibī Waddi (the elder lady) by her devotees in the Punjabi language, was the wife of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Muḥammad Shāh Bukhārī, known as Mauj Daryā Bukhārī (d. 1014/1605). Ḥaẓrat Mauj Daryā was one of the descendants of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Jalālu'd-Dīn Surkh Bukhārī (d. 690/1291).²¹⁰ Ḥaẓrat Mauj Daryā was a contemporary of Emperor Akbar who conferred upon him several land grants, including the land on which his shrine and that of his wife, Bibī Kalān, stands today.²¹¹ The couple had one son, Saiyyid Ṣafiu'd-Dīn. Bibī Fāṭima was one of the glorious descendants (*awlad-i amjad*) of Sādāt-i Gilānī. Her father, Saiyyid 'Abdu'l Qādir Sālis bin Saiyyid Muḥammad Bālā Pīr Gilānī, was also a pious person. Bibī Kalān was a highly reverential person and a devout, God-fearing ascetic (*baghāyat buzurg ābida wa zāhida wa muttaqīyya*). She inherited the

210 *Khazīnatu'l Aṣfiyya*, *jild dom*, pp. 91–92; *Ḥadīqatu'l Awliyā*, pp. 169–70; Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, 1877. *Tārīkh-i Makhzan-i Panjāb*. Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press. (Henceforth, referred to as *Tārīkh-i Makhzan-i Panjāb*), p. 523.

211 Akbar developed great faith in the mystical powers of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Muḥammad Shāh Bukhārī as it was thought that the conquest of Chittor happened because of his prayers. See, *Khazīnatu'l Aṣfiyya*, *jild dom*, p. 91. Recently there was a dispute over this land. See "Emperor Akbar stands in the way of Orange Line"—The Nation: nation.com.pk/lahore/14-Jul-2016/emperor-akbar-stands-in-the-way-of-orange-line.

miraculous powers, charisma, and nobility (*khwāriq wa karamāt wa sharāfat*) of her father and ancestors.

Several miracles are associated with Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima. According to one legend, once her blessed headscarf (*ridā-yi mubārak*) fell off while performing ablution for the *ʿasr* prayer. As the scarf was soiled by mud, Bibī Fāṭima, doubting its cleanliness (*ridā-i mubārak mashkūk shud*), washed it at once. The sun was already going down, so drying the wet scarf was not easy. A little sunlight was still at the top branches of the jujube tree standing in her courtyard. Since it was not proper for a veiled woman to climb a tree, she commanded the tree to bow down its branches. The tree obeyed at once. Once the Bibī spread her scarf on the branches, the tree straightened up. According to this legend, when Ḥaẓrat Mirān Bukhārī saw that his wife's scarf was floating on top of the branches, acting in the pattern of a jealous husband who guards his wife's chastity and seclusion, he became annoyed. He assumed that the Bibī must have climbed up the tree, and thus breached the code of female honour. Uttering furious words (*kalimāt-i ghazab āmez*), he demanded an explanation. Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima vowed that she did not climb the tree but the tree itself bowed down (*darakht sar past kard*). The Bibī's story did not pacify him and he then demanded that she should get the scarf down the way she described putting it up in the treetop. The Bibī approached the tree and ordered it to bow down, which it did. Witnessing this great charisma of his wife, Ḥaẓrat Mauj Daryā wanted to know how she came to possess such status (*rutbā*). To this she simply answered, "This ancestral fortune (*daulat-i mawrūsī*) belongs to my ancestors (*ābā-yi man*)."²¹² Nūr Aḥmad Chishtī, without citing any sources, writes that the Bibī, much grieved at this lack of trust of her husband, did not remain silent but retorted that in each community there exist special and ordinary persons. Chiding her husband, she told him that there was no reason for his anger. She also said that from that day onwards there would be no family connections between the Sādāt-i Bukhārī (her family) and the Gilānī (her husband's family). Nūr Aḥmad Chishtī comments that this ban continues to exist today.²¹³

Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima left this world in 1016/1607 and lies buried adjacent to the shrine of her husband in Lahore. On my visit to the shrine of Bibī Kalān in February 2016, I found a padlock on the entrance to the shrine. I had to look around for the caretaker of the shrine and found him with the help of people

212 *Khazīnatu'l Aṣfiyya*, *jild dom*, pp. 427–28; *Ḥadiqat-ul Awliyā*, p. 242; The story of Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima is replicated in several Urdu books. For instance, see Pīr Ghulām Dastgīr Nāmī. *Buzurgān-i Lahore*. (Nūrī Book Depot, Lahore: 1966), p. 245.

213 Nūr Aḥmad Chishtī Lahorī. *Tahqiqāt-i Chishtī*. (Maṭba' Koh-i nūr (first published in 1867), Lahore: 1927), p. 343.

of the neighbourhood. After an hour or so, the man finally appeared and let us inside the shrine after some arguments. In the meantime, I took a walk around the shrine premises and found that there were several other graves. The man with the keys told me that the keys are deposited with the management of a *madrassa* situated close to the shrine. The shrine is opened for the devotees only on Thursdays from eight in the morning until seven in the evening. This person also told me that since the last *khādim* (shrine's caretaker), one Ḥājī Barkat, the shrine has had no *khādim*. A roadside niche, blackened with soot, serves the needs of those who visit the shrine to make oblation and offer prayers on days other than Thursday. A few earthen lamps, some burning brightly and others with no flickers, were resting on a brick-built slab. A small toy wooden crib was hanging by a nail. This small makeshift shrine extension needs much cleaning as plastic bottles, bottle lids, and burnt matchsticks were strewn all over this tiny place, making it unworthy of a sacred place.

Entrance to the shrine of Bibī Kalān is through a single door, which opens into a square chamber covered by a domed ceiling. On the upper side of the main doorway, under the arch, an inscription reads *Kalima, the Āyat al-Kursi* (Qur'ān: 255) and the names of the first four Caliphs of Islam. Underneath this, an inscription in Urdu offers information that is missing in the texts and indeed serves as a biographical notice about Bibī Kalān. The first line says Saiyyida Bibī Fāṭima *sānī*,²¹⁴ which means that Bibī Kalān is the eldest wife of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Muḥammad Shāh Bukhārī. The name of another woman, Bibī Naurang, is marked with the numeral "2" without saying that she was the second wife. The next line under the heading of the Sufis of Uchch Sharīf (the noble city of Uchch) gives a list of the Shaikhs beginning with Saiyyid Jalālu'd-Dīn Mir Surkh Bukhārī (d. 1291), Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm Jalālu'd-Dīn Jahāniyaṅ Jahāngasht (d. 1384), and Saiyyid Ḥaṣanu'd-Dīn, and ending with Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Jīlāni. The last line gives the most important information saying that Bibī Fāṭima *sānī* had attended the status of *wilāyat*.

The shrine chamber with the grave of Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima had an aura of sanctity. The ostentatious, splashy red synthetic grave-cover sheet with artificial golden tassels and an artificial garland of synthetic flowers presented a sharp contrast to the life of Saiyyidā Bibī Fāṭima. I wondered whether those who draped her grave in those colourful shiny tinsels knew that this woman had only one scarf and had to wash off the dirt from it so that she could cover her head for offering her *ʿaṣr* prayer. Unlike several other shrines I have visited, this one was unique in the sense that there were no visitors or devotees present.

214 *Sānī* means the second, thus in honour of Ḥaẓrat Fāṭima, the beloved daughter of the Prophet, traditionally pious Muslims used the term to show that the person is not the real (Ḥaẓrat) Fāṭima but a second one.



FIGURE 5 Shrine of Bibi Fāṭima Saiyyida Gilānī, 1 Link Road, Lahore

(2)

Bibī Fāṭima**Shrine: Bidar, India**

Ghulam Yazdani in his report on the monuments of Bidar, *Bidar, Its History and Monuments*, mentions that close to the grave of Shaikh Badru'd-Dīn Qādirī,²¹⁵ the fourth son of Multānī Padshāh (1458–1529),²¹⁶ there stands another tomb structure, square in plan. A polished casket of black stone with a tablet (*takhtī*) shows that this was probably the tomb of a woman. A stone tablet fixed above the doorway shows that it is the grave of Bibī Fāṭima. Neither Yazdani nor any other source gives further details about Bibī Fāṭima.²¹⁷

(3)

Gangā Bibī**Period: Early Sixteenth Century****Shrine: Handwarpura in Ḥamal, Jammu and Kashmir**

Gangā Bibī was the wife of Bābā Langar Mall, a person of immense wealth and a tyrant by nature who lived a life of luxury in Ḥamal.²¹⁸ It is said that once he came to pay his respects to Bābā Lidā Mall Rishī,²¹⁹ who had forsaken worldly pleasures and lived a life of total austerity as a devoted disciple of Zainu'd-Dīn Rishī. To Bābā Lidā Mall several miracles are ascribed. Of these miracles, the most significant one is the conversion of Bābā Langar Mall and his wife, Ganga, from their life of riches to self-chosen poverty and asceticism. It is said that when Langar Mall, dressed in his finest clothes, went to see Bābā Lidā Mall, the Bābā refused to see him, saying that he would have nothing to do with a person of worldly pleasures. These words hit Langar Mall so deeply and intensely that he gave up all wealth and adopted the life of poverty. His wife, Gangā Bibī, also followed him. So great was her renunciation that she not only repented but became a complete recluse. She fasted frequently and for long periods of time, breaking only occasionally. According to Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi, she would only eat once a year (*b'ād yak sāl iḡṭār mi kard*). Her piety and munificence

215 For a short note on Shaikh Badru'd-Dīn Qādirī, see *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, p. 199.

216 Abu'l Faṭḥ Shamsu'd-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qādirī, known as Multānī Padshāh because of his Multan ancestry was one of the most popular Sufis of Bidar, see *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, pp. 107–9; *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*, p. 134.

217 Ibid, p. 199.

218 For biographical notice on Bābā Langar Mall, see *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 167.

219 For biographical notice on Bābā Lidā Mall Rishī, see Ibid, pp. 166–67.

were so great that she is said to have constructed several mosques and repaired several bridges with her own self-earned money (*kasb-i khud*). When her husband, after giving up his worldly pursuits, retired to a cave in the Dandakvan mountains, she used to fetch water in a pitcher for his ablutions. On her way, wild beasts would not harm her but would instead run away as soon as they saw her approaching.

A few days before her passing, she said she would die on a Thursday and should be buried on Friday. Her words came true as she died on a Thursday. Gangā Bībī, along with her husband, rests in the enclosure of her spiritual preceptor, Bābā Lidā Mall, at Handwanpura in Ḥamal.²²⁰

(4)

Harro Bībī

Period: Early Sixteenth Century

Shrine: Mcleod Road, Lahore, Pakistan

Urs: 17–18 Safar

The life of Harro Bībī is part of a legend that has survived through centuries. She lies buried in a small tomb within the complex of the shrine of Shaikh Mūsā *Āhangar* Suhrawardī, a late fifteenth-century Suhrawardī Sufi who lived in the time of Sultan Bahlol Lodi (d. 1489) of the Delhi Sultanate. Shaikh Mūsā *Āhangar* (d. 925/1519) was a *khalifā* of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ‘Abdul Jalīl Chauhaṛ Bandagī (d. 910/1505).²²¹ Earlier, he was a disciple of Shahrullah bin Yusuf, *sajjādā-nishīn* of the shrine of Shaikh Bahā’u’d-Dīn Zakarīyya (1182–1262). Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī describes Shaikh Mūsā as one of the noted Sufis (*az awliyā’ ye nāmdār*) and as one of the deputies of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ‘Abdul Jalīl with an awakened heart (*dil-i bedār*).²²² Heavy bodied (*sāhib-i jasīm*), Shaikh Mūsā was an iron-monger (*āhangar*) by profession and a Sufi by devotion. Wajīhu’d-Dīn Ashraf, in his *Bahr-e Zakhkhar* (the rising ocean), a late eighteenth-century biographical dictionary of South Asian Sufis and mystics, eulogizes Shaikh Mūsā as *ahl-i kamāl lāraib* (one who entertained, no doubt [about Divine Glory]), *wāqif-i asrār-i ghaib* (knower of the secrets of the Unseen), and *sāhib-i irfān* (master of gnosis).²²³

220 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, pp. 167–68.

221 For an account of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ‘Abdul Jalīl Chauhaṛ Bandagī, see *Ḥaqīqat ul Awliyā’*, pp. 160–61.

222 *Khazīnatu’l Aṣfīyya*, jild dom. p. 80.

223 Wajīhu’d-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 227–28.

According to a legend described by Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, one day an exceedingly beautiful (*benazīr*) Hindu woman named Harro came to his workshop of iron mongering to get her iron spindle (*dok-i- āhani*) repaired. Edward Eastwick, an English orientalist, diplomat, and politician, recounts the legends that say it was not a spindle but her milk can that she came to get repaired.²²⁴ While the Shaikh was preparing to do the work for her, he got lost in gazing at her face and forgot to take the spindle out of the furnace (*kūzā-i ātish*). At this, the woman got enraged and angrily told him that she came to get her spindle mended and instead he was staring at her. The Shaikh explained he was not staring at her but was “paying tribute to the One who creates your beauty. To show you that I have no improper thoughts, I will draw the red-hot iron across my eyes. If I am guilty, I may lose my eyesight. If I do not, you will know that I am innocent.” As he spoke these words, the miracle happened. The Shaikh’s eyes remained unharmed. Seeing this miracle, Harro Bibī lost her senses and was overpowered by the Magnificence of the Creator (*mastānā jāmi- ‘ishq-i-ilāhī*). Like a person who has lost sanity (*dīwānāwār*), she ran out and began roaming around the streets and markets. Her relatives, watching this condition, caught hold of her and put her in chains. Harro Bibī’s faith in the power of the Unseen remained steadfast. Soon, she passed away. While her relatives were getting ready for her funeral rites, news of her death reached Shaikh Mūsā Āhangar. He arrived there soon and, addressing the supposedly dead Harro Bibī, commanded they stop the funeral saying that this one killed by the love of the Almighty might be alive (*zindā*). As soon as the word “alive” was uttered, Harro Bibī got up. The anecdote says that thereafter she became a disciple of the Shaikh.²²⁵ A tablet on the outside wall of the Shaikh’s shrine says that he permitted her burial within his shrine.

On my visit to the shrine on Mcleod Road, Lahore,²²⁶ in 2016, I met with several women devotees and men standing around the shrine who told me that following the demise of Shaikh Mūsā Āhangar, his devotees appointed Harro Bibī as his *Khalīfā*. On Thursdays and on the ‘*urs*, so many women visit Harro Bibī’s shrine that it is hard to even find a place to stand there.

224 Edward Backhouse Eastwick. 1883. *Handbook of the Punjab, Western Rajputana, Kashmir, and Upper Sindh*. London: J. Murray, p. 198.

225 *Khazīnatu’l Asfīyya*, jild dom, pp. 80–82; Pīr Ghulām Dastgīr Nāmī. 1966. *Buzurgān-i Lahore*. Lahore: Nūri Book Depot, p. 129.

226 Earlier, this area was known as *Thatti Mehtran* (the sweepers’ quarters), see Syad Muhammad Latif. 1892. *Lahore: its history, architectural remains and antiquities, with an account of its modern institutions, inhabitants, their trade, customs, &c.* Lahore: Printed at the New Imperial Press. P. 203.



FIGURE 6 Shrine of Harro Bibi, Mcleod Road, Lahore



FIGURE 7 Wall inscription in Urdu declaring that Harro Bibi was a disciple of Shaikh Mūsā Āhangar (d. 925/1519)

The brick-built shrine of Shaikh Mūsā Āhangar is considered one of the best specimens of early sixteenth-century Indo-Islamic art traditions with its surface decorations, tilework, and beautiful dome.²²⁷ To reach the actual tomb of Harro Bibi, a visitor has to go down a steep staircase to a dark underground chamber lighted by an oil lamp. The tomb next to her is said to be that of her daughter. Some others say it is of her mother. On my visit, I saw that the tomb of Harro Bibi was in a much-neglected state. Down the narrow staircase, the room was in a shabby state, brooms were lying in one corner, and drippings from the oil lamps had blackened some portions of the wall. Broken plastic bottles and earthen oil lamps were scattered around. The grave, however, was covered with fresh rose petals. Looking at the neglected state of the shrine,

227 For its architectural significance, see Shaikh Khurshid Hasan, 2001. *The Islamic Architectural Heritage of Pakistan: Funerary Memorial Architecture*. Karachi: Royal Book Co.; J.S. Grewal. 1975. *In the By-lanes of history: Some Persian Documents from a Punjab Town*. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study; Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair. 2009. *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic art and architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Yasmeen Lari. 2003. *Lahore: illustrated city guide*. Karachi: Heritage Foundation Pakistan; also, Clifford Edmund Bosworth. 1986. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 5, 5., Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 600.

built in the memory of a woman whose beauty made a Sufi lose touch with his surroundings, is nothing less than irony.

(5)

Hasti Bibī

Period: Sixteenth Century

Shrine: Tilak Road, near Bhadra Fort, Ahmadabad, India

Little is known about the life of Hasti Bibī (the laughing lady).²²⁸ It is said that she was a family member of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh bin ‘Abdullāh al-Edrūs (1513–1582), a Sufi of Yemeni (Hadhramaut) origin and the founder of the Edrūsiya *silsila* of the Sufis who arrived in 1552 in Ahmadabad.²²⁹ To her votaries this knowledge is of no concern as her shrine, despite its modest appearance, attracts large number of devotees who come to seek her blessings.

The shrine was first noticed by James Burgess in 1878–1889 while compiling a list of antiquities and dilapidated monuments of the Bombay Presidency. In the city of Ahmadabad—built by Sultan Aḥmad in 1412 and later improved by the other Bigarah rulers—the survey team found several such remains, including tombs, mosques, shrines, and other historical remains, some dating back to the pre-Muslim era as well. Among these findings, one was the shrine, or *gokhlo* as called in the local language, of Hasti Bibī. Lying in a predominantly Jain neighbourhood, close to Manek Chawk near *Rani no Hajiro* (the Rani's tomb), the shrine attracts large number of devotees, both Muslims and Hindus, who come to laugh out their worries and anxieties. This shrine, unlike the usual shrines built over a marked space with entrance doorways and grave, is what Esther David describes as a “quaint shrine,” built as a small marble cavity in the back wall of a shop and lighted by a small lamp.²³⁰ The flickering light of the clay lamp and the fragrance of roses and *mogra* flowers take away the pains

228 James Burgess and Henry Cousens. 1897. *Revised lists of antiquarian remains in the Bombay Presidency, and the native states of Baroda, Palanpur, Radhanpur, Kathiawad, Kachh, Kolhapur, and the southern Maratha minor states*. Bombay: Printed at the Government Central Press; Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane. 2012. *Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage touching the intangible*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, p. 87.

229 For short biographical notice on Ḥaẓrat Shaikh bin ‘Abdullah al-Edrūs, see *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*, p. 167. Gulshanābādī, however, gives 1591 as the date of his demise. For the arrival of Sufis from Hadhramaut, see Omar Khalid. 2004. “Saiyyid of Hadhramaut in Early Modern India.” *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 32 (3): 329–352.

230 Esther David. 2016. *Ahmedabad: City with a Past*. Noida: Harper Collins Publishers India (no page numbers).

and aches of many a devotee who come to seek her blessings, particularly on Thursday nights.²³¹

(6)

Bibī Mahkalī

Period: Late Sixteenth Century

Place: Qaṣūr, Punjab, India

Shaikh Ghulām Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn ʿAbduʿllah, known as al-Khalīfa al-Kheshgī al-Chishtī, is the only author who has introduced Bibī Mahkalī to us. His two manuscripts—*Akbāruʿl awliyāʾ min lisānuʿl asfīyāʾ* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the pure ones), which was probably completed in 1077/1666–1667, and *Maʿārijuʿl wilāyat* (the spread of Sufism), completed in 1094/1683—are the only sources on the life of Bibī Mahkalī. The following account is based on the narratives of these two sources.

Bibī Mahkalī, known for her piety and saintly virtues, was of Kheshgī descent and belongs to the ʿAzīzyān Afghānī clan. In Qaṣūr, she lived in ʿAzīzyān, a locality named after her clan. In her piety and virtuous living, she was similar to Rābīʿa al-ʿAdawīyya. Another saintly person, Miyyān Akhund Saʿīd,²³² used to visit her frequently in order to serve her (*ba-mulāzamat Bibī bisyār mīraft*). People objected to these visits and told him, “O Miyyān! considering your hal-lowed and dignified status (*shān-i wilāyat*) it is not appropriate for you to be close to an old woman (*ʿajūza*).” Miyyān Akhund Saʿīd told them, “O ignorant ones (*nadān*)! Don’t say this because Bibī Mahkalī is one of the gnostic, pious, and learned women of her times (*az ʿarīfāt wa ṣālihiāt wa faẓliāt*). When God distributed (*taqṣīm*) greatness, blessings, holiness and miracles (*buzurgī wa barakāt wa wilāyat wa karamāt*) upon the Kheshgīs, one entire part of it was bestowed upon her (*yak ḥiṣṣa tamām*) and the remaining two parts were given to the rest of the people.”²³³

Another story is about her fortitude, patience, and trust in God. It is said that when the Bibī had a stillborn son (*farzand-i murda*), she did not shed a tear at

231 Hasti Bibi likes jalebis | India News—Times of India.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com › News › India News › Hasti Bibi likes jalebis>.

232 ʿAbduʿllah Kheshgī. 1094/1683. *Maʿārijuʿl wilāyat*, MS. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidi Collection, Punjab University, Lahore. Fol.375b; *Khazīnatuʿl Asfīyāʾ, jild awwal*, p. 454. Miyyān Akhund Saʿīd Shuryānī (d. 1018/1609) is said to have received his *khirqā* (cloak) from ʿAbul Ḥasan Kharaqānī (d. 1033). For al-Kharaqānī, see Hujwīrī Alī ibn Usmān, and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson. 1911. *Kashfūʿl-Mahjūb*: p. 163; Shuryānīs belong to the Kheshgī clan. See *Tarikh-i Khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, p. 579.

233 *Akbāruʿl awliyāʾ*. MS. no. R343, fols. 123b, 124a.

her loss and did not lament (*har giz giryā wa nauḥa na kard*). At this, people around her commented, “Oh Bībī! Your beloved son (*farzand-i arjumand*) was born dead and even then you are not lamenting and grieving!” At this, she only said, “Why should a person who has despatched her own son to serve her (*ba jihat khidmat-i khud*), weep (*giryā*)?” She then quoted the Prophet’s blessed Tradition that whoever in his community would have two stillborn (*farṭ*), Allāh would reward them with Heaven. Finally, she told the curious people, “Although to you my son is invisible (*ghā’ib*), for me, he is present (*ḥāzīr ast*).”²³⁴

Kheshgī in *Ma’ārijū’l wilāyat* narrates another conversation of Miyañ Akhund Saīd about the spiritual excellence of Bībī Mahkalī. He used to say that if anyone tried to find a Sufi woman, he/she would find none except Bībī Mahkalī. He also used to say that “Mahkalī is a man born into the form of a woman (*Mahkalī mard ast ki dar qālib-i ‘aurat barāmad*). Because her supplications are heard and answered and therefore for this reason we ask her to pray for us.”²³⁵

(7)

Bībī Māhnau

Period: Sixteenth Century

Place: Kolhuaban, Azamgarh, UP, India

A hagiographical narrative places a princess in a Sufi abode in the woods of Kolhuaban in the *pargana* Nathupur, Azamgarh. This princess was Bībī Māhnau (the new moon), daughter of Emperor Sher Shāh Suri (d. 1545) and the disciple of Sufi Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā of the Madārī *silsila*. Hagiographical accounts ascribe that Sher Shāh Suri made a vow to offer his first child, whether a boy or a girl, to serve for life Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā.

Exceptionally incredible charismatic tales associated with Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā and his spiritual mentor Shāh Badī’u’-d-Dīn *Quṭbu’l-quṭṭāb al-madār* narrate that once when the Aleppo-born Shāh Madār (d. 840/1436), during his long travels, arrived in Baghdad, he met with Shaikh ‘Abdu’l Qādir Jilānī.²³⁶ A biographical compendium of Badī’u’-d-Dīn Madār and of his *khulafā’* written in 1292/1875 by Maulawī Saiyyid Muḥammad Amīr Ḥasan Madārī al-Fansūrī, a resident of Makanpur and a devotee of Shāh Madār, describes the

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ *Ma’ārijū’l Wilāyat*. MS no. R344, fols. 653a & b.

²³⁶ For the biography Shāh Badī’u’-d-Dīn Madār, see ‘Abdu’r Raḥmān Chishtī. 2011. *Mirāt-i Madārī*. Sidharathnagar: al-majmā. For short notices, AA, pp. 158–59; *Azkār-i abrār*, pp. 74–75; *Mirātu’l asrār*, pp. 1096–97.

fascinating anecdote of Badī'ud-Dīn Madār's meeting with Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā. Al-Fansūrī writes that Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Jilānī handed over Saiyyid Muḥammad Jamālud-Dīn and Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā, the sons of his sister Naṣībā Bibī, to Shāh Badī'ud-Dīn Madār with instructions to take care of them. Shāh Madār brought the boys with him to India.²³⁷

Mirāt-i Madārī, recounting the virtues and righteousness of Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā, a disciple and spiritual successor of *Ḥaẓrat Quṭbu'l Madār* Badī'ud-Dīn Madār, says that he was unrivalled in the realm of travelling and miraculous flying (*dar 'ālam-i sair wa tair bi nazīr būd*).²³⁸ Al-Fansūrī refers to his strange (*'ajīb wa ghaīb*) extreme ascetic feats, for instance, that for forty years (some accounts say twelve years) he remained standing only on his left foot (*bar pā-i chap īstādā*).²³⁹

After the death of Badī'ud-Dīn Madār in 838/1434, Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā, also known as Miran Shāh, settled at Kolhuaban in Mau in the Azamgarh district.²⁴⁰ He died there and was buried in his *dargāh* in *pargana* Nathupur. An early twentieth-century account notes that the 'urs festival of Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā lasts for six weeks with celebrations held on seven consecutive Thursdays, beginning with the last Thursday of the month of *Jeth*.²⁴¹

Saiyyid Shafīq Aḥmad, *sajjadānīshīn* of the *dargāh* of Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā, in a slim thirty-two-page Urdu booklet titled *Tazkira Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā* (n.d.), with the help of documents in the custody of the shrine of Aḥmad Bādpā, recounts the incredible story of Māhnau who voluntarily chose poverty and gave up all worldly comforts. Shafīq Aḥmad writes that in Kolhuaban, Farid Khan, the future Emperor Sher Shāh Suri, while still a student visited Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā. Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā prophesied that one day Farīd would become a king. He also told Farīd Khan that on becoming king, he should offer his firstborn to him. On capturing Delhi, Sher Shāh revisited Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā who reminded him of his promise and enquired why he had not brought his daughter Māhnau. Sher Shāh submitted that he had not

237 Maulawī Saiyyid Muḥammad Amīr Ḥasan Madārī al-Fanṣūrī. 1315/1898. *Tazkiratu'l Muttaqīn fi aḥwāl khulafā' Saiyyid Badī'ud-dīn*. Kanpur: Maṭba'-i 'Azīzī, pp. 8–11, 43–44; also, Zahir Aḥmad Zahirī Sahaswānī. 1900. *Sīyaru'l madār ma'rūf zahīru'l abrār*. Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, pp. 17–20; Qazi Athar Mubarakpurī rejects this story as a fabricated account. See Maulānā Qāzī Athar Mubarakpurī. "Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā." *Ma'arif*, January 1990, pp. 5–27.

238 *Mirāt-i Madārī*, p. 131, 159, 179.

239 *Tazkiratu'l Muttaqīn*, p. 44.

240 *Ibid*, p. 44.

241 D.L. Drake-Brockman. 1911. *Azamgarh: A Gazetteer*, vol. 33. Allahabad: Superintendent Government Press, p. 65. *Jeth* or *Jyaistha* is the third month of the *Hindu* calendar which begins at the end of May.

forgotten, but as the child was a minor and there was no proper arrangement for the princess's stay, he would soon arrange for everything.

When Sher Shāh began the construction of the *dargāh* and a fortress there, Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā appeared in Māhnau's dream and commanded her to reach Kolhuaban and to get immersed in remembering Allāh. Māhnau got ready. Sher Shāh sent her along with her teacher, Saiyyid Ismā'īl. Māhnau gave up all luxuries of life and spent her days in worshipping Allāh. She died at the age of seventy-two. Sher Shāh bestowed twelve revenue-free villages for the maintenance of Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā's shrine. A nearby village known as Chak Bano was actually Chak Māhnau. Māhnau lies buried on the west side of the shrine of Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā.²⁴² The story of Māhnau is not found in any other contemporary or near contemporary source.²⁴³

(8)

Mukkā Bī

Period: Early Sixteenth Century

Place: Bidar, Karnataka, India

The only source of information about Mukkā Bī is a small footnote in Yazdani's account of the shrine enclosure of Ḥaẓrat Multānī Bādshāh, or Bashā, whose original name was Abu'l Faṭḥ Shamsu'd-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qādirī (862/1458–935/1529).²⁴⁴ Among several other graves of Multānī Bashā's disciples, one is that of Mukkā Bī. Yazdani, while copying the inscription found on Mukkā Bī's tombstone, is more concerned with the style and quality of the language; for us, however, this inscription is significantly helpful in taking the first step in reconstructing the lost histories of women.²⁴⁵

Given below is the translation rendered from Yazdani's text of the inscription in Farsi and the Deccani Urdu (some text is missing in the inscription).

242 Saiyyid Shafiq Aḥmad. (n. d.). *Tazkira Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā*. Mau: Āsitāna 'āliya Dargah Sharīf.

243 Qāẓī Athar Mubarakpurī refers to this story as a local legend, see "Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Bādpā." *Ma'arif*, January 1990, p. 21.

244 Multānī Bādshāh's father, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Ibrāhīm migrated from Multan to Bidar during the reign of 'Alāu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Bahmanī (1436–58), hence his alias Multānī Bādshāh. *Wāqī'āt-i Mamlukat-i Bījāpūr (ḥiṣṣā som)*, p. 115.

245 Yazdani writes, "The style of writing as well as the language of the inscription is crude, and as it is dated 1258 H., it shows that public taste in literary matters at that time was at a very low level." *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, p. 108.

Translation

... the Chosen, Muḥammad ... bless ...

There is no god but God and Muḥammad is the Prophet of God.

Mukkā Bī, the pious slave of Quṭb Muḥammad Multānī Qadīrī.

Enclosed (right). Muḥi' u'd-Dīn Jīlānī Qāidīrī. 1258 H. Mukkā Bī.

Enclosed (left). Ḥusain. 812.

And one well built by 'Ālamgīr (or during 'Ālamgīr's reign) and ten wells of Shaikh Bāwī, purchased by me (are an endowment for the distribution of) bread and sweets, for the fee of the Qur'ān reciters, and for the expenses of oil (for the lamps of the *dargāh*). I also dedicate the villages, lands, mango trees, etc., attached to the tomb of Mukkā Bī. Whoever shows avarice in respect of this endowment, may he be deprived tomorrow (the Day of Judgment) of the Divine vision and the intercession of the Prophet!

In the name of God, the most Merciful and Compassionate.

Verse

The thirsty may drink the water and the hungry enjoy the bread, but if thou committest a theft it is tantamount to thy cutting the nose or the tresses of Mukkā Bī.²⁴⁶

The last line of the above inscription could also be translated, as whoever commits theft, Mukkā Bī will cut his nose or her tresses.

From the above few lines of the inscription, we can glean the following information about Mukkā Bī. Of course, one has to be careful in drawing conclusions. The first line of the inscription says *Mukkā Bī zāhid kanīzak Quṭb Muḥammad Multānī*, which literally would mean, as Yazdani has also translated, "a pious slave of Quṭb Muḥammad Multānī." Though the word *kanīzak* means a maidservant or a slave girl, it is also often used for a female disciple. The word *zāhid* (pious) defines her status as a person who abstains from worldly luxuries. We do not know anything about her family. Did she come with Quṭb Muḥammad Multānī Qadīrī or was she related to him? Indeed, more research and investigation on the theme of women travelling, either as Sufis or in the caravan of Sufis, from North India to the Deccan states would be a fascinating subject.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 108; also, see Bendrey, Vasudeo Sitaram. 1944. *A Study of Muslim inscriptions; with special reference to the inscriptions published in the Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1907-1938. Together with summaries of inscriptions chronologically arranged*. Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, p. 177.

(9)

Bībī Rānī**Period: Sixteenth Century****Place: Thatta, Pakistan**

Paying tribute to Bībī Rānī, Muḥammad ‘Āzam Thattawī, in *Tuḥfatu’l-ṭāhirīn* (the gift of the holy ones), a compendium of biographical notices of Sufis of Makli Hills and Thatta compiled in 1190/1776, describes her as the woman friend of Allāh of her time (*walīya -yi’āṣr*), the most accomplished of the age (*kāmila yi dahr*), and one of those who were the masters of gnosis (*aṣḥāb-i’irfān*). Bībī Rānī was a resident of Thatta, a city in present-day Sindh. However, while she was still alive, for a long period of time, no one either knew about her real status (*ḥaqīqat-i ḥāl*) or had any information (*iṭṭilā’ nā dāsht*) about her spiritual attainments as she seldom associated with anyone. Like a true Sufi, she avoided publicity and remained concealed. ‘Āzam Thattawī narrates how this secret was unveiled by a chance incident. A story about her goes like this: Once a man suffering from a strange and painful disease presented himself at the august assembly of Ḥaẓrat Bahā’u’d-Dīn Gudriyā Faqīr, to seek his blessings for a cure.²⁴⁷ Ḥaẓrat Gudriyā Faqīr, who always remained engrossed in ecstasy (*wajd wa ḥāl istighrāq būd*), upon hearing his story, bowed his head down in deep meditation. He then told the man, “You have hurt some righteous person (*ṣāhib-i dil*) and it is beyond my prowess to heal what afflicts you. However, I can give you information (*surāgh*) to seek help from a respectable woman in your neighbourhood, a virtuous person of great piety, *ṣāhib-i dil wa pārsā*, who is also *khudāwand-i mā’rifat wa taqwā* (master of gnosis and piety) and is a *walīya kāmila* (perfect mystic) of her time. Go to her and seek her help. Her prayers might solve your problems. Her name is Bībī Rānī.” Hearing this, the man urgently presented himself in front of Bībī Rānī. Listening to his tale of misery and affliction, Bībī Rānī first comforted him by telling him not to worry and that soon he would be well. Then she said, “I used to pass my days in privacy and solitude and nobody knew about my real status. Now, unveiled and known all over (*aknūn shuhrāh āfāq shudam*), living is bereft of all charm (*man dar duniyā ḥalāwat nā khwāhad dād*). Therefore, it is better to depart from this

247 Ḥaẓrat Bahā’u’d-Dīn Gudriyā Faqīr was a disciple of Makhdūm Luṭfullah known as Makhdūm Nuḥ (1500–1590) of the Suhrawardī Sufi *silsila* and is buried in Hala, Sindh. See Shaikh Muḥammad ‘Āzam Thattawī. 1956. *Tuḥfatu’l-ṭāhirīn*. Karachi: Sinhdī Adabī Board, p. 61.

world." Three days following this dialogue, the man was fully cured. That night, the righteous woman (*nek zan*) Bibī Rānī, the *Maryam-i zamānī* (the Maryam of her time), passed away. She lies buried in Thatta.²⁴⁸

(10)

Ḥazrat Bibī Shamsa Mā Ṣāḥiba

Period: Sixteenth Century

Shrine: Fakhraabad, Bijapur, India

ʿUrs: 16 Rajabul-murajjab

Bibī Shamsa Mā Ṣāḥiba belonged to the family of Khwāja Saiyyid Muḥammad Ḥusainī Gisū Darāz. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zubairī, in his *tazkira*, *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, written in 1825–1826, stated that because of her piety, virtues, and miraculous powers, he extolled her as the crown of men of her age (*apne zamāne ke rijāl kī tāj*). Her domed shrine stands outside the gate of Zuhrapur, near Fakhraabad.²⁴⁹ There are four graves of males, one of which is of Ḥazrat Shāh Abu'l Ḥasan Fakhrābādī (d. 1010/1601) who was related to her.²⁵⁰

Shāh Saifullah Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Sibghat Allāh, the translator of *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, added a note to the translation. He reports that in 1315/1896, the year of the publication of the Urdu translation, as Bibī Shamsa Mā Ṣāḥiba had left no family members, the people of the neighbourhood celebrated the ʿurs. No further details could be found about her either by Zubairī or later by Saifullah Qādirī.²⁵¹ Because of the similarity of the style of construction of the tombs of Ḥazrat Shāh Abu'l Ḥasan Fakhrābādī and of Bibī Shamsa, and the proximity of the graves to each other, it is assumed that both were contemporary Sufis.

248 *Tuhfatu'l-tāhirīn*, pp. 140–41; also, see Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Na'imī. 1987. *Tazkira-yi awliyā'-yi Sindh*. Karachi: Shāriq Publications, p. 42; I'jāzu'l-ḥaqq Quddūsī, 1959. *Tazkira Ṣūfiyya'-yi Sindh*. Karachi: Urdu Academy, pp. 432–33.

249 *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 223. Zuhrapura is a suburb of Bijapur and is named after Zuhra Sultan (d. 1625), one of the daughters of Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shāh of Bijapur (d. 1627).

250 A member of the family of Khwāja Gisū Darāz, Ḥazrat Shāh Abu'l Ḥasan Fakhrābādī was highly revered by Sultan Ibrāhīm 'Adil Shāh. Ḥazrat Shāh Abu'l Ḥasan built a well-flourished quarter in the suburbs of Bijapur and named it as Fakhrābād. See *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 48–9; also, *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā'-yi dakan*. p. 42.

251 *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 223.

(11)

Sulṭāna Bibī**Period: Sixteenth Century****Shrine: Nagapattinam, Tamilnadu, India**

In the *dargāh* of Ḥaẓrat Mīrā Ṣaḥīb at Nagapattinam, the graves of sixteenth-century saint Shāhul Ḥamīd Nagori (d. 1579), also called Nagore Andawar,²⁵² and of his pious wife, Ḥaẓrat Sulṭāna Bibī, lie next to each other.²⁵³ The *dargāh* (also known as Palli maṣjid) of Shāhul Ḥamīd Nagori, most venerated for his miraculous powers, celebrates a splendid fourteen-day-long *ʿurs* called Kanturī or *jhande* (flag) in local language. On this occasion, huge crowds of devotees from all religions, including Hindu and Muslim pilgrims from Sri Lanka, Penang (Malaysia), and Indonesia, assemble at the premises.²⁵⁴ On the *ʿurs* days women in large numbers sit around the tomb and chant devotional poems, called *Nakiyan antatim* in the Tamil language. Offerings are made with coconuts, garlands of marigold flowers, sandal paste, and sweetmeats. Women come to offer their supplications and pay their tributes to the honorific life and the blessed memory of the saints.²⁵⁵

(12)

Bibī Ṣūrat**Period: Sixteenth Century****Place: Samana, Punjab**

²⁵² *Andawar*, a Tamil word for lord or master; for more details, see S.A.A. Saheb. 1998. 'A Festival of Flags' Hindu-Muslim devotion and the sacralising of localism at the shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu,' in Prina Werbner and Helene Basu (Edited) *Embodying Charisma Modernity, Locality, and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults* (pp. 55–76). London: Routledge.

²⁵³ The dargah complex because of its size and amenities that it provides is 'like a self-contained township'. See Sunil S. Amrith, 2013. *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: the furies of nature and the fortunes of migrants*. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10767726>; also S.S. Amrith. 2009. "Tamil diasporas across the Bay of Bengal." *The American Historical Review*, 114 (3): pp. 547–72.

²⁵⁴ Malika Mohammada. 2007. *The foundations of the Composite Culture in India*. Delhi: Aakar Books, pp. 223–27; For replicas of this dargah in Singapore and Penang and the veneration for Shahul Ḥamīd Naguri in these regions, see Torsten Tschacher, *The Impact of being Tamil on Religious life among Tamil Muslims in Singapore*. A Thesis Submitted to the University of Cologne, 2006; Susan Baylay. 1988. "Islam and State Power in Pre-colonial India," in P.J. Marshall et al. (Edited), *Indonesia during the Ancien Regime*. (pp. 143–164) Leiden: Brill.

²⁵⁵ Sita Anantha Raman. 2009. *Women in India: A Social and Cultural History*, vol. 1., Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger, p. 32.

Bibī Šūrat was the daughter of Miyān Bustān Kakar,²⁵⁶ the grandfather of Haibat Khan who helped Khwāja Nī'matu'llah Harāwī in collecting material for the writing of his book *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*.²⁵⁷ Haibat Khan, in terms of family relationship, was the grandson of Bibī Šūrat's only brother, Shādī Khan. This family connection is the major source of the notice on Bibī Šūrat.

Khwāja Nī'matu'llah Harāwī, in his narrative of Bibī Šūrat, describes her as *ṣālīḥ daurān* (the chaste of her age) and *sājida-yi zamān* (the worshipper of her time). Throughout her life, she did not spend even one single moment without recitation (*tilāwat*) of the Qur'ān or recollection and invocation (*zikr*) of Allāh. Bibī Šūrat was blessed both by physical charm and sharp intellect (*bā kamāl ṣūri wa m'anwi ārāsta būdand*).²⁵⁸ When Bibī Šūrat grew up and reached the age of discretion and learning (*sinn-i rushd wa tamīz*), she acquired such profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and scholarship in matters related to Islamic law (*sharī'ā*) that was incomparable with anyone. Women in large numbers used to visit her daily to seek information about various legal issues. As she had good looks, too, relatives and kinsfolk began to approach with marriage proposals. Her mother, seeing Bibī Šūrat all the time reciting the Qur'ān and lost in spiritual meditation, did not say yes to these proposals. However, the demand and the pressure of the relatives kept mounting. One day, one of them asked the mother the reasons for women visiting her house each day in large numbers. The mother had to tell the truth. From that day onward, the mother began refusing the proposals.

Following the demise of her father, Miyān Bustān Kakar, Bibī Šūrat inherited a large share of his possessions. She distributed all her inherited wealth among the poor and did not keep anything for herself. The author of *Tārīkh-i*

256 Malik Bustān Kakar's family connection with the Lodi Sultanate began in the era of Sultan Bahlul Lodi (1451–89) who in recognition of the political-military services of Malik Firūz Kakar gave him the fief of Sirhind. The Kakars, though amassed great wealth due to continuous state patronage, however, they remained equally involved in promoting learning. Malik Bustān Kakar, Bibī Šūrat's father was given the fief of Samana by Sultan Sikandar Lodi (r.1489–1517). However, following the death of the next ruler, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (r.1517–26) which marked the end of the Lodi rule, Bustān Kakar retired to Samana, giving up worldly by giving away his wealth and position. He spent his days remembering Allāh, helping others by giving away his wealth. For further details, see Nī'matu'llah Harāwī. 1962. *Tārīkh-i Khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī: (a complete history of the Afghānīs in Indo-Pak sub-continent)*, Vol. 2. Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, pp. 886–87.

257 Nī'matu'llah Harāwī has mentioned this at several places in his work, however, in the notice on Bibī Šūrat, he makes a particular reference to his role while describing the ancestry of Bibī Šūrat, p. 828.

258 *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, vol., 2, p. 887.

khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī rightly comments that thus, in devotion and prayers, Bibī Šūrat was so far ahead of men (*dar 'ibādat wa ri'yāzat az maidān-i mardān rubūda būd*) that not only women but also men sought her blessings so that their prayers and supplications were heard by Allāh. These men remained associated with her (*maqrūn mishud*).²⁵⁹

The story of Bibī Šūrat redefines a Pashtūn woman. Contrary to the popular representation of a Pashtūn woman as voiceless, deprived of inheritance, and devoid of agency, Bibī Šūrat possessed profound knowledge in jurisprudence, helped other women by sharing this knowledge and solving their legal issues, made her own decision not to marry, and inherited a large ancestral fortune which she chose to give away to the poor and needy. Her male relatives, including her father and brother, did not hinder her work. More importantly, scribes of Pashtūn ethnicity have praised and commemorated her achievements by documenting her life. Khwāja Ni'matu'llah Harāwī's concluding words say that after Rāb'īā al-'Adawiyya, in virtues of munificence and generosity (*sakhāwat*) and in helping humankind (*dast-gīrī-i khalā'iq*), no other woman like Bibī Šūrat has existed in this world. These are not words of conventional appreciation; they are words spoken in truth.

9.7 Sufi Women of the Seventeenth Century

(1)

Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī

Period: Not known

Place: Bidar

Shrine: Bidar, Karnataka, India

Ḥazrat Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī has come to be known through her shrine and her devotees. The presence of her impressive-looking tomb enclosure near other Sufi shrines in Bidar, and the visitation of her grave by devotees, convince one of the historicity of her spiritual station. As evident from her name, the Bibī was a close family member of the Chishtī Sufi, Ḥazrat Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz (d. 1422).²⁶⁰

The only reference about Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī comes from Ghulām Yazdani's *Bidar, Its History and Monuments*, a report published in 1947. At the time of his survey of these monuments, he located several other monuments

²⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 828–30.

²⁶⁰ *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, p. 170.

in the vicinity of Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī's tomb, including a mosque, part of which had already fallen down and what was left was covered with "prickly shrubs and rank vegetation." Near this mosque, and close to the tomb of Ḥaẓrat Walī Ullāh Ḥusainī,²⁶¹—a Sufi regarded with great veneration and who is a descendant of Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz—Yazdani discovered the shrine of Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī. Surrounded by an eighteen-foot-high parapet wall, the sepulchral chamber is entered through a single low doorway. The Bibī reposes in the centre, with two graves of unnamed women on her right and one grave of a male on her left, all of whom were most probably her close family members.²⁶²

I could not ascertain the time that Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī lived. Ḥaẓrat Walī Ullāh Ḥusainī is known to be present around 1656, the year when the major areas of Bidar and the surrounding territory fell into the hands of Aurangzeb. Until more research is done by archaeologists to uncover the hidden history of monuments or by historians to document the history of the large number of descendants of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, Bibī Bandagī Ḥusainī's story will remain hidden and obscure.

(2)

Bibī Durrā Quṣūrī

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan

Bibī Durrā belonged to the Ḥusainza'ī clan of the Shammuz'iān Pashtūn tribe. Her husband, Sa'īd Khan, was a Mūsāza'ī Pashtūn. 'Abdullah Kheshgī, in his seventeenth-century work *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l aṣṭiyā'*, pays tribute to her saintly virtues and accounts for her several miracles (*khwāriq bisyār*). He eulogises her as *'arīfa-yi waqt* (gnostic of her age) and as *kāmil-i zamān* (a perfect mystic of her time).²⁶³ Narrating her miraculous powers to foresee the future, Kheshgī writes that one day while her sons were away from Quṣūr with their employer, Bibī Durrā was lost in deep meditation. After a while, she lifted her head up (*sar az marāqba bar āwarda*) and said, "What did happen that I see my sons without their heads?" A few days later, news of her sons being beheaded by their own employer was brought to her. At this time, though 'Ālam Khan, Bibī Durrā's paternal grandson, was not yet born, she stated that she was seeing 'Ālam Khan's garden (*bāgh*), which meant she was

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 110.

²⁶² Ibid, pp. 169–70.

²⁶³ *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fols. 653a & b.

foreseeing his sons and grandsons. This prediction came true. A grandson was born named 'Ālam Khan, and he later had one daughter and four sons. This daughter of 'Ālam Khan was later married to 'Abdullah Kheshgī, the author of *Akbāru'l awliyā'* and *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat*.²⁶⁴ Mujaddidī calculates 1070/1660 as the year of this marriage.²⁶⁵

(3)

Khwashtarā Bibī

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India

The story of Khwashtarā Bibī²⁶⁶ comes from *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī*, a mid-eighteenth-century account of the history of Gujarat by 'Alī Muḥammad Khan.²⁶⁷ A devoted gnostic of her time and of all times (*'ābida zamān wa 'ārifa āwān*), Khwashtarā Bibī belonged to the family of Sufis and ascetics. Tracing her ancestry to the celebrated Sufi, Shaikh 'Azīzullah Mutāwakkil (912/1506), *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī* says that she was his great-granddaughter through his son Shaikh Sa'adu'llah's son Shaikh Makhdūm Rafi'u'llah. She was the maternal aunt (*khālā*) of another Sufi, Shaikh Muḥammad Chishtī (d. 1040), who in his external and hidden knowledge was incomparable in his times (*dar 'ilm-i-zāhir wa bāṭin yaḡānā-yi ruzḡār būdand*).²⁶⁸ Though she lived long (*'umr darāzyāftāh*), details of her life are missing.

Similar to the ascetic traditions of her great-grandfather, Shaikh 'Azīzullah Mutāwakkil—who chose to live in poverty, had extreme trust in Allāh (*baghāyat faqr o tawakkul dāsh*t), and did not allow people of wealth to be present in his sessions (*aghniyā rā majlis-i-khud rāh nadād*)²⁶⁹—she also had no inclination for worldly possessions. Illustrating this quality of Khwashtarā Bibī, *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī* narrates an incident. When the Mughal Emperor Jahangir arrived in 1618 on a tour of Gujarat, along with others, he also called the Bibī to meet her.²⁷⁰ The meeting, however, did not happen as the Bibī declined the

264 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fol. 124b.

265 Muḥammad Iqbal Mujaddidī. 1972. *Aḥwāl wa Āsār 'Abdullah Kheshgī Quṣūrī* (Lahore: Dāru'l Mu'arrikhin), p. 28.

266 Her name is the feminine derived from the word *khwashtar*, which in Persian means sweeter or pleasanter.

267 'Alī Muḥammad Khan. 1306/1889. *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī-jild sānī*. Bombay: Maṭba' Fathu'l Karīm, p. 54.

268 Ibid, pp. 48–51. During Emperor Jahangir's tour of Gujarat, the Shaikh had a meeting with him. He spent his life in seclusion in a mosque on the banks of river Sabarmati in Gujarat.

269 For his short biographical notice, see AA, p. 267.

270 Though there is no direct evidence to show that Emperor Jahangir had desired to meet Khwashtarā Bibī, there are references in the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* showing that during his

invitation saying that as she lived in seclusion (*mā mastūrāt goshānishīn*) what had she to do by meeting with the kings (*mārā bā mulāqāt bādshahān chih kār*).²⁷¹ To avoid any appearance of arrogance, however, she added that if the emperor wished for prayers and benedictions (*agar du'ā mī khwāhand*), she could do that in absentia (*ghā'ibānā du'ā kunam*).²⁷² At this, the Emperor was disappointed but had no other option (*ma'zūr dāsht wa muta'qid shud*).

Her noble grave (*qabr sharīf*) is in Nasirabad, close to that of Makhdūm 'Aṭā'ullah, father of Shaikh Naṣru'llah Chishtī.²⁷³

(4)

Bībī Māhlat

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Allahabad, India

Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf, a resident of Lucknow, is the only author who, in his biography of South Asian Sufis and mystics, *Bahr-e Zakhkhār*, written in 1788–1789, included a notice on the life of Bībī Māhlat.²⁷⁴ The notice begins with the most eulogistic description: *aḥwāl ān mustaghriq jamāl-i m'ābud, ān maḥw-i mushāhidā-i wadūd, ān Bilqīs Šaba-yi khudārasī* (Account of one engrossed by the beauty of the Divine, overpowered by the vision of Allāh -the Bilqīs of Saba, obtaining Divine proximity).

Comparing and equalising Bībī Māhlat with Bilqīs of Saba, Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf has raised Bībī Māhlat to unsurpassed sublime heights of Bilqīs.²⁷⁵ Though much information about Bībī Māhlat remains lost, according to his

tour of Gujarat, Jahangir visited several Sufi shrines and met with Shaikhs. Explaining the reasons for such meetings, Jahangir writes that he directed the leading Shaikhs "to produce whatever persons they believed to be in want. Similarly, I appointed some women to do the same thing in the harem. My soul endeavour was that as I a king had come to this country after many years, no single person should be excluded." See Henry Beveridge and Alexander Rogers. 1909. *The Tūzūk-i-Jahāngīrī, or Memoirs of Jahāngīr*. London: The Royal Asiatic Society, p. 440. Perhaps the author of *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadi* was aware of an invitation sent to Khwashtarā Bībī. In addition, *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadi* narrates Jahangir's meeting with Khwashtarā Bībī's nephew, Shaikh Muḥammad Chishtī in Gujarat to whom Jahangir had earlier made several cash and land grants, which the Shaikh declined, except one piece of land as a maintenance grant. See *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadi, jild sānī*, pp. 449–51.

²⁷¹ *Mirāt-i Aḥmadi, jild sānī*, p. 54.

²⁷² *Ibid*, p. 55.

²⁷³ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁴ *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar* (vol. 3), pp. 370–71.

²⁷⁵ Surah *An-Naml* (27) of the Qur'ān is believed to have the story of Bilqīs of Sheba. For further details of this story, see Chapter 6: 'The Chapter of Bilqīs, Queen of Sheba' (no page nos.) in Barbara Freyer Stowaser's *Women in the Qur'ān, Traditions, and Interpretation*. NY: OUP (1994).

brief narrative, she was married early but her husband passed away. She grew up in an environment permeated with some of the best traditions of South Asian *taṣawwuf* having strong bonds with the excellent legacy of the South Asian Chishtiyya devotion which led to the emergence of dynamism in Muslim thinking. Qāzī Ṣadru'd-Dīn, commonly known as Qāzī Ghāsī, was the Qāzī of Allahabad and was the first disciple and *khalīfa* of Shaikh Muḥibu'llah Illāhābādī (also spelt Allāhābādī) (1587–1648) of the *silsila-yi Chishtiyya-Sābiriyya* of the Sufis.²⁷⁶ Qāzī Ghāsī, a virtuous person of excellent qualities (*bisṣār buzurg*), was a man of learning with exalted traits (*khuḥjasta shamā'il wa afḥal fuḥḥā'il*).²⁷⁷

Qāzī Ghāsī and his mentor, Muḥibu'llah Illāhābādī,²⁷⁸ through their teachings and writings, from the days of Dārā Shikūh²⁷⁹ to the present day have left a formidable influence of rationalistic thoughts on the socioreligious and intellectual trends of South Asian Muslims.²⁸⁰ Muḥibu'llah Allāhābādī, in the words of Chittick, “was the most learned representative of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabī in the subcontinent.”²⁸¹ It is significant note that Mullā Quṭbu'd-Dīn Sihālwi Shahīd (murdered in 1691) the ancestor of the ‘ulamā’ of Farangi Maḥall, Lucknow, took *b'ait* at the hands of Qāzī Ghāsī and became his spiritual successor.²⁸²

276 Qāzī Ghāsī's father, Qāzī Ṣadru'd-Dīn, was also a high-ranking judicial officer of Allahabad and possessed wealth, see *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir*, vol. 5, p. 542.

277 *Bahr-e-Zakḥkhar*, (vol. 1), p. 648.

278 For a notice on Shaikh Muḥibu'llah Allāhābādī, see ‘Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī. 1982. *Mīrātu'l asrār*. pp. 1193–95; *Bahr-e-Zakḥkhar*, Vol. 1, pp. 645–648; Muḥammad Ḥusain. 1876. *Anwāru'l ‘Arīfīn*. Lucknow, Nawal Kishore, pp. 502–507; *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir*, vol. 5, pp. 609–11 gives a list of his literary works.

279 For Shaikh Muḥibu'llah Allāhābādī's relations with Dārā Shikūh, see Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Ali. 1973. “Shaikh Muḥibu'llah of Allahabad—Life and Times,” *Islamic Culture*, 47: 241–56; Mirdula Jha. 2017. ‘Mingling of the Oceans: A Journey through the Works of Dara Shikuh,’ (93–106) in Raziuddin Aquil and David L. Curley ed. *Literary and Religious Practices in Medieval and Early Modern India* (Edited). Routledge.

280 Zamiruddin Siddiqui, M. 1981. “Shah Muhibb Alahh Ilahabadi and The Liberal Tradition in Islam”. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. 42: 289–294; also, see Yusuf Husain Khan. 1964. “Shah Muhibullah of Allahabad and his mystical thought,” in *Islamic Culture* 38: pp. 315–322.

281 William Chittick, “The School of Ibn ‘Arabī”, in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 520.

282 Ghulām ‘Alī Azād Bilgrāmī. 1884. *Subḥat al-marjān fī athār Hindustān*. Bombay: M.S. Maḥmūd, p. 76; Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1328/1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma‘āshiru'l-kirām*. Agra: Matba‘ Mufid-i ‘Ām, pp. 209–210. Azād Bilgrāmī, however gives the date of Mullā Quṭbu'd-Dīn's murder as 1013. Also, for Qāzī Ghāsī's influence on Mullā Quṭbu'd-Dīn Sihālwi, see Muḥammad ‘Ināyatu'llah Anṣarī. 1930. *Tazkira-yi ‘ulamā’-yi Farangi Maḥall*. Lucknow: Farangi Mahal, p. 11; Husain, Iqbal. 2002. “Change Within the Islamic Tradition

Qāzī Ghāsi, whose dates of birth and death remain unknown, had two children, a son named Shaikh Muhi' u'd-Dīn, who was like a matchless pearl (*durr-i yaktā*), and like his father had acquired worldly and spiritual learning; and a daughter, Bibī Māhlat, a friend of Allāh (*waliyya*).²⁸³ Bibī Māhlat was a highly pious person who remained absorbed in remembering Allāh (*bisyār buzurg wa sāhib-i istighrāq*). She was well known for her Sufi perfections (*dar kamālat mashhūr āfāq būd*). Early in her life, she was married to a valiant person who went away to fight (*bā mujāhidat dar āmad*). Bibī Māhlat, now left alone, gave away all the wealth she possessed to the impoverished and the indigent (*bā muhtājān bakhshīd*).²⁸⁴ She also spent all the proceeds of her ancestral grants on the needy and the poor ones (*hāsilāt-i tamghā bar hāsil jadd-i khud rā sarf miskinān wa muhtājān*). She met her own expenses with her earnings from spinning yarn (*az farokht resmān*). She was indeed one of those pious persons who contemplated Allāh's Glory (*sāhib-i mushāhidā bud*).²⁸⁵ She lies buried in a graveyard known as Bāgh Bibī Māhlat, near Hassan Manzil, Allahabad. Her father's shrine is close by. Large numbers of devotees continue to visit her shrine and seek her blessings.²⁸⁶

(5)

Bibī Mammi

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Pakistan

According to a notice by 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī, in *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l aṣfiyā'* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the pure ones), completed in 1077/1666–1667, Bibī Mammi was the sister of Shaikh Yusuf Batukza'ī. She always remained engaged in worship and other spiritual exercises (*'ibādāt wa ri'yāzāt shughul tamām dāsht*). Bibī Mammi was careful to remain in ritual purification at all times. She was careful that she would take along with her, wherever she went, a water vessel for performing *waṣū* (ablution required for offering prayers).²⁸⁷ Kheshgī also says that all through her life, since she

of Learning: Firangi Mahal and the Dars-i Nizami". *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. 63: 439–446.

283 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, Vol. 1, p. 649.

284 Bibī Māhlat must have inherited a large fortune from her paternal grandfather, Qāzi Da'ūd of Allahabad who also held the post of Qāzī of Allahabad and was from a wealthy family having landed property. see *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, Vol. 1, p. 648.

285 Ibid.

286 Documentary Ḥaẓrat Sadaruddin Qāzi Ghāsi Hasan Manzil Allahabad ... www.youtube.com.

287 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fols. 124b, 125a.

entered puberty (*ibtidā-i bulūgh*), Bibī Mammi did not miss a single prayer except for natural reasons (during menstrual cycles).²⁸⁸

Bibī Mammi's husband, Mūsā, was impotent (*'innīn*). Following the blessed Tradition of the Prophet that whoever would cover the faults of another Muslim in this world, God will forgive his/her sins in the world hereafter, Bibī Mammi, to shield her husband from humiliation and embarrassment, and to cover his condition, would bathe regularly (*hameshā ghusl kardi*).²⁸⁹ Kheshgī, in his other biographical work of Chishtiyya Sufis, *Ma'āriju'l Wilāyat* completed in 1094/1683, adds that her husband, because of shame and embarrassment, disappeared and was never found.²⁹⁰

In closing his brief narrative of Bibī Mammi, Kheshgī adds that he had seen her in his early childhood (*dar hangām-i ṭufūliyat*). She used to pray for him. He also recalled that people would often bring water to her to be blessed by her. Kheshgī cites a case when someone once asked a pious person who was higher in spiritual status, Bibī Mammi or her brother, Shaikh Yusuf Batukza'i. His answer was that he found Bibī Mammi higher in rank than her brother.²⁹¹

(6)

Ḥazrat Bibī Qādirīyyā

Date: Seventeenth Century

Shrine: Bijapur, India

Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zubairī Qādirī Shattārī Bijāpuri, in his excellent work *Rawzatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, has done a great service by placing life accounts of Sufi women of the region whose narratives are missing in other texts about South Asian Sufis. Ḥazrat Bibī Qādirīyyā is one of them. Drawing upon *Maqṣūd al-murād*, the *maḥfūz* of Shāh Hāshim Ḥusainī 'Alāwī (1576 or 1577–1646), popularly known as Hāshim Gujarati or Hāshim Pīr, Zubairī says that Bibī Qādirīyyā's lineage goes back to Saiyyid 'Abdul Qādir Gilānī of Iraq (d. 561/1166). She was known for her perfect virtues of being a perfect friend of Allāh (*kāmil awliyā'*) and had attained great revelations (*kāmil mukāshafe*).²⁹²

288 *Ma'āriju'l Wilāyat*, ms. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidi Collection, Punjab University, Lahore, fol. 654a.

289 Rules for ritual purification in Islam require washing the body, including the head, after each sexual intercourse.

290 *Ma'āriju'l Wilāyat* fols. 653b, 654a.

291 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. ms. no. R343, fol. 125a.

292 For the life account of Hāshim Pīr and his *maḥfūzāt*, see *Rawzatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 94–115; also, Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 118–122 and for Ḥazrat Bibī Qādirīyyā, p. 225.

The author of *Maqṣūd al-murād*, as noted in *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, recounts that Hāshim Pīr once met a person who did not pay respect to any woman other than Ḥaḥrat Bībī Qādirīyyā. One can infer from this reference that Bībī Qādirīyyā was a highly revered person. Perhaps she was known to Hāshim Ḥusainī 'Alawī, or she was Hāshim Ḥusainī 'Alāwī's contemporary or lived before him. Her burial place is within the fortification of the Bijapur fort.²⁹³

(7)

Ḥaḥrat Quraish Bībī

Period: Seventeenth Century

Shrine: Porto Novo, near Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India

Except for the charismatic powers of this seventeenth-century Sufi woman, Ḥaḥrat Quraish Bībī, buried in Porto Novo,²⁹⁴ not much is known. The shrine is visited for relief from "scorpion bite and all kinds of limb pains."²⁹⁵ The miraculous power of Quraish Bībī, Anantha Raman says, represents *Shakti*, the female power.²⁹⁶

(8)

Bībī Ṣajīnī

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Kachori Gali, Patna, India

Bībī Ṣajīnī, the eldest daughter of Mīr Saiyyid Muḥammad Bāṣīr (d. 1022/1613), was a pious and virtuous woman who spent her whole life trusting Allāh (*bāṭawakkul-i-khudā*). A perfect gnostic (*'ārīfā kāmīl*), Bībī Ṣajīnī possessed knowledge. Early in her life, she decided not to marry and remained engrossed

293 This narrative is drawn from *Rawḥatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 225.

294 Porto Novo (also called Parangipettai), located on the Coromandel coast is a small town in Cuddalore district in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It used to be the most important trading destination of the Arabs, especially the Yemenis. For the history of Muslims in Kerala, see J.B.P. More. 2011. *Origin and Early History of the Muslims of Keralam, 700 AD–1600 AD* Calicut: Other Books.

295 Quoted in Susan Bayly. *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press (1989) quotes from an unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Delhi, 1986) by Hasrat Suhrawardī on 'The life and works of the Past-Muslim Sufis of Tamilnad with special reference to Urdu language', p. 134; Jaweda Habib. 2002. *Tārīkh Awliya'-i Tamil Nadu*. Chennai: Urdu Publications, p. 95.

296 Sita Anantha Raman. 2009. *Women in India. A Social and Cultural History Volume 1*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger/ABC-CLIO, p. 32.

in remembrance (*dar yād-i-ilāhī*), concentrating on the essence of Allāh (*bā mashghūlī ḥaqq*). She chose seclusion and the life of a recluse (*dar chillā-i ‘uzlat khānā nishīnī*).²⁹⁷

(9)

Ḥazrat Ṣalehā Mā Ṣāḥiba

Date: Seventeenth Century

Shrine: Bijapur, Karnatika, India

Bibī Ṣalehā was the wife of Shāh Hāshim ‘Alawī (d. 1646) of the Shaṭṭārī Sufi *silsila*.²⁹⁸ *Mā Ṣāḥiba* (the reverend mother) was a title given to her as a mark of respect. It is said that she had the blessings of witnessing *Laylat al-qadr* (the Night of Power).²⁹⁹ According to a hagiographical narrative related in *Rawḥatu’l awliyā’*, one night while she was engrossed in prayers and meditation in her closet (*ḥujra*), the signs of *Laylat al-qadr* began to manifest. Everything, including trees and stones, fell into prostration. To prove the incident, she threw her scarf on the branches of one such tree. Once that tree straightened up from its position of prostration, her scarf was still hanging atop the branches of the tree. Next morning people saw her scarf hanging atop the tree. Her grave lies inside the shrine of Shāh Hāshim ‘Alawī.³⁰⁰

(10)

Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima

Period: Early to Mid-Seventeenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan

A resident of Quṣūr, Punjab, Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima hailed from the Ḥusainza’ī clan of the Saiyyidza’īs of the Pashtūns. ‘Abdu’llah Kheshgī’s biography of the Chishtī Sufis, *Akbāru’l awliyā’ min lisānu’l aṣṭiyā’* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the pure ones), completed in 1077/1666–1667, is the only source about Sufi women of Quṣūr. Kheshgī had seen her in his boyhood and

297 ‘Abdur Razzāq, ‘Atā’ Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu’l Ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭba‘ Ṣafdarī, p. 258.

298 For details of his life, see *Rawḥatu’l awliyā’-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 94–104; also, Eaton, Richard Maxwell. 1978. *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufi in Medieval India*. Princeton University Press. pp. 118–22.

299 *Laylat al-qadr* marks the night when the first verse of the Qur’ān was revealed. For more details, see Imam Malik ibn Anas. 1989. *al-Mutawatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*. London: Routledge, p. 126.

300 *Rawḥatu’l awliyā’-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 223–224.

remembered her well.³⁰¹ Kheshgī, like most other chroniclers of biographies of the pious and saintly persons, neglects chronology and gives no dates. His reference to his boyhood in this narrative, however, helps us in determining Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima's historical timeline. Kheshgī was so greatly absorbed in recording these lives, or perhaps he considered himself insignificant, that he forgot to mention his own date of birth. With the help of other dates, Iqbal Mujaddidī, however, comes to an acceptable conclusion that Kheshgī was born in or around 1043/1633.³⁰² Thus, Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima was born in the early seventeenth century and lived in Quṣūr.

Kheshgī recollects that Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima had little interaction with other women, spending her days and nights in worshipping, praying, and remembering Allāh. As a worshipper and as an ascetic, she ate little and prayed all through the night. Like a true abstinent, she kept herself away from sensual pleasures (*lazzat-i naṣāni*). Her disinterest in the ordinary life of a married woman went to such an extent that she requested that her husband get another wife so that she would be free to worship and pray. She told him that to perform Allāh's obedience (*tā'at-i maulā*) and service to His creation (*khidmat-i makhḷūq*), i.e., living with a husband and fulfilling his needs, at the same time was not possible for her. The husband could not reject her words and got another wife.

As she was continually engrossed in prayers, Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima spoke little. Kheshgī recalls how once she got in a trance (*ba jazba būd*) and then recovered and was back to her normal state. Sometime after her passing away, a person in his dream saw Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima in the company of Bibī Fāṭima, the beloved daughter of the Prophet. When asked how she attained such a high rank, she said it was because of her excessive remembrance of Allāh (*kasrat-i zikr*).

(11)

Ḥazrat Sittī Mā Ṣaḥība

Date: D. 1036/1627

Place: Bijapur, Karnatika, India

Shrine: Bijapur, Karnatika, India

The author of *Rawḍatu'l-Awliya'-yi Bijapur* says that Ḥazrat Sittī Mā Ṣaḥība was *walīyya Allāh* (a friend of God), *ṣāḥib-i kashf wa 'irfān* (master of revelation and esoteric knowledge), and *tāj-i rijāl* (glory of men). Legends and hagiographical narratives associate several miracles (*ghaibi wāridāt*) with her. She became a

301 *Akbāru'l-awliya'*. MS. no. R343, fols. 125b, 126a.

302 Iqbal Mujaddidī. 1972. *Aḥwāl wa asār 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī Quṣūrī* (Lahore: Dāru'l Muarrikhin), pp. 26–27.

disciple of Ḥabīb Allāh Ṣibghat Allāhī (d. 1632) by taking his *bai'at* and spent considerable time in his company.³⁰³ Ḥabīb Allah Ṣibghat Allāhī was a *khalīfa* of Shāh Sibghat Allāh of the Shaṭṭārī Sufi *silsila*.³⁰⁴ His blessed company raised her to such a high rank that she could know and share his inner thoughts (*maḥram-i rāz*) and his mystical experiences became known to her. It is said that twice she was blessed with the vision of the Divine Light (*tajalli-i Haqq ta'alā*) and once with the *rūyat* (vision) of the Prophet. While on her deathbed, she was fed miraculously by heavenly meals (*Ālam-i 'ulwī*). With her spiritual powers, she could tell exactly how many days were left for her to die. Ḥaẓrat Sittī Mā Ṣaḥība passed away on the seventh of *Jamādi-u's Sānī* of 1036/1627 and was buried in a shrine next to that of Ḥabīb Allah Ṣibghat Allāhī.

Once, after her passing away, Ḥabīb Allāh Ṣibghat Allāhī dreamt that while Sittī Mā Ṣaḥība was sitting with him, a maidservant appeared and informed her that flowers and *sandal* brought for her grave were suddenly blown away by a strong wind. Ṣibghat Allāhī interpreted the dream as Sittī Mā's disapproval of the practice of people making offerings of flowers, fragrance, and *sandal* at her tomb.³⁰⁵

(12)

Bībī Yasso

Period: Early to Mid-Seventeenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan

Bībī Yasso, a scion of the Ḥusainza'ī Pashtūn clan, was a saintly woman of great spiritual merits. A spiritual camaraderie existed between Bībī Yasso and Bībī Shaikhī Fāṭima. In addition to their common tribal Pashtūn ancestry of belonging to the Ḥusainza'ī clan and their relocation to Quṣūr, which probably was their birthplace, too, these two devout and godly women had spiritual bonds. 'Abdullah Kheshgī, who was also from Quṣūr and had the same common ethnic ties and had spent his boyhood time in the company of Bībī Shaikhī Fāṭima, might have been an eyewitness.³⁰⁶

Bībī Shaikhī Fāṭima, who used to spend much time in the company of Bībī Yasso, knew about her state of (*kashf*) and about her spiritual merits. Similar to a spiritual Master (*murshid*), Bībī Shaikhī Fāṭima would be with Bībī Yasso all

303 *Rawḍatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 63–64, 224–225; *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufi in Medieval India*, pp. 236–37.

304 For a short notice on Shāh Sibghat Allāh, see *Azkār-i Abrār*, pp. 586–88; Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma'ūshiru'l-kirām*, pp. 40–42.

305 *Rawḍatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 225.

306 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. ms. no. R343, fol.126a.

the time- whether she was in the state of *ṣaḥw* (sobriety) or in *jazb* (Divine rapture). During the ecstatic moments of experiencing *hangām-i tajalli* (theophany), Bibī Yasso was comforted (*taskīn*) and instructed how to remain under control and manage it (*ḡabṭ*) by Bibī Shaikhī Fāṭima.³⁰⁷

It is said that once Bibī Yasso visited the wife of one Qāsim, a Bahdanza'i Afghān, to do some mediation (*shifā'at*). The woman, however, not only did not accept her request, but treated Bibī Yasso with disrespect (*ba itmām khwārī*) and turned her out of her house. Bibī Yasso cursed that Allāh would set the house on fire and burn all the residents. After a few days, Qāsim and his wife and children were killed and the house was completely ruined.

9.8 Sufi Women of the Eighteenth Century

(1)

Bibī Ajjī Šāḥiba

Period: Early Eighteenth Century

Place: Tajpura, Arcot, Tamil Nadu, India

An incidental reference to Bibī Ajjī in *Rawḡatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur* addressing her as Ḥaẓrat (respected Sir), in a long note on the life of her husband, Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid 'Alī Muḥammad Ḥusainī (1076/1665–1138/1725),³⁰⁸ is the only source about her saintly virtues and speaks volumes about her exalted status. Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid 'Alī Muḥammad Ḥusainī was the son and *khalīfa* of Ḥaẓrat Sulṭān Sayyid 'Abdur Raḥman Ḥusainī (d. 1120/1708).³⁰⁹ In addition to his miracle stories, the more lasting contribution of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid 'Alī Muḥammad Ḥusainī is his *Tajalliyāt-i Raḥmānī*, a small hagiographic treatise on Sufi doctrines.³¹⁰

Ḥaẓrat Bibī Ajjī, a daughter of one Nawāb Sarfaraz Khan, had an elite, upper-class background. Interestingly, the author of *Rawḡatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur* uses the term *waliya kāmila* (perfect Sufi woman) to describe her merits.³¹¹ To

307 For details on aspects of *tajalli*, the manifestation of the Essence of the Divine, see Suhrawardī, 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-, Maḥmūd b. 'Alī al-Kāshānī, and Henry Wilberforce Clarke. 1891. *The Awārif-al-ma'ārif, written in the thirteenth century*. Calcutta: Government of India Central Printing Office, pp. 80–82.

308 *Rawḡatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*. pp. 170–172.

309 Ibid, 161–69; this family was related to the family of Saiyyid Muḥammad Mudarris, father of Shāh Sibghatu'llah (d. 1606). For details, see Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur—1300–1700*, pp. 205–10.

310 This Persian manuscript is in the Salār Jang Museum.

311 *Rawḡatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, p. 171.

demonstrate and substantiate her spiritual merits and charismatic powers, he cites an episode. Once fifty visitors arrived unannounced at midday from Hasanpura, where Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid ‘Alī Muḥammad’s paternal cousin Ḥaẓrat Shāh Sibghatu’llah lived. Two cauldrons were already ready with food for those who were usually fed by the household. Bibī Ajjī’s husband now asked her to serve the food to all the guests, including the newly arrived ones. Removing the lids of the pots, Bibī Ajjī covered them with her blessed scarf (*dāman-i mubarak*). She instructed the servants to dish out the food from under her scarf. When all were fed and the scarf was removed, the cauldrons were still full to the brim with food.³¹²

She gave birth to two daughters and three sons. No other details are known about this pious Sufi woman with charismatic powers.

(2)

Bibī ‘Āṣima

Date: D. 17 Zilhajj 1196/23 November 1782

Place: Damgarh, Allahabad, UP, India

Shrine: Damgarh, Allahabad, UP, India

Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar (1181/1768–1275/1858),³¹³ in *Mujāhadātu’l Awliyā’* (Self-denial of friends of Allāh), a biography of the Sufis, includes a short notice on the life of Bibī ‘Āṣima under the heading *dar ḥāl Bibī ‘Āṣima zaujā Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ ‘Alī Qalandar qudisasirra-hu Allahabadī* (an account of Bibī ‘Āṣima, wife of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ ‘Alī Qalandar, may his tomb be hallowed).³¹⁴ The couple had four children: two sons—Ḥaẓrat Mas‘ūd ‘Alī Qalandar and Shāh Khudā Bakhsh—and two daughters—Bibī Wajīha and Bibī Āmna.³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid, p. 171.

³¹³ Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar, the eldest son and *khalīfa* of Ḥaẓrat ‘Arif Billah Shāh Muḥammad Kāzim Qalandar (d. 1806) and whom he describes as a born Sufi, was a well-read person and a poet of great merit. He was also a *Khalīfa* of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Mas‘ūd ‘Alī Qalandar. His dargah in Kākorī where several other pious persons are also buried is a centre of great reverence. See Ḥāfiz Muḥammad ‘Alī Haidar ‘Alawī Kākorwī. 1927. *Tazkira Mahāhūr-i Kākorī*. Lucknow: Ashāl maṭāb’, pp. 75–81; Mas‘ūd Anwar ‘Alawī Kākorwī. 1990. *Tafṣīāt Mazārāt Sāhibān-i khānqāh Kāzimiyya*. Kākorī Sharīf: Kutubkhānā Anwariya.

³¹⁴ Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar ‘Alawī Kākorwī. 1293/1876. *Mujāhadātu’l Awliyā’* (no name of the publisher), p. 298.

³¹⁵ Shāh Turāb ‘Alī Qalandar. *Uṣūlu’l maqṣūd*. (Lucknow: Asaḥh-u’l maṭāb’, 1312/1894), p. 176. For a short notice on Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ ‘Alī Qalandar, see *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* vol. 6 (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm), p. 702.

Bībī ‘Āṣima was a disciple of the sixteenth-century Sufi scholar Ḥaẓrat Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥmān Jānībāz Qalandar Lāharpurī of the Qādiriyya-Uwaisiyya Sufi *silsila*.³¹⁶ Her husband, Shāh Bāsiṭ ‘Alī Qalandar, was the son of Phūl Bībī (d. 1758) and Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar. The author of Bībī ‘Āṣima’s biographical notice, Shāh Turāb‘Alī Qalandar, was the most devoted disciple of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ ‘Alī Qalandar and thus had personal knowledge about Bībī ‘Āṣima.

Bībī ‘Āṣima was known as a friend of Allāh of her time (*waliyya ‘aṣr*). Many times she was blessed with the presence (*ḥuẓūrī*) of Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī, the fourth Caliph, in her dreams. As she was fully informed about the timing of her death (*az waḥāt-i khud peshtar muṭṭala‘ būdand*), certain words and signs indicative of the approaching death were expressed by her. Her son, Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Mas‘ūd ‘Alī (d. 1221/1806),³¹⁷ is quoted to have said that two days before her demise—that is, on Wednesday, 14 Zilḥajj, 1196—she felt slightly more indisposed as compared to other days. She therefore did not talk much and soon began having convulsions (*ghashi ṭārī*). By evening, her condition slightly improved and she appealed to Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī. She raised her hands and supplicated to Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī to allow her two more days to live, as she wished to see her son Saiyyid Mas‘ūd ‘Alī commence his work smoothly. As the supplications of Allāh’s chosen ones (*khāsān-i ḥaqq*) are never rejected (*radd*), her prayer was also answered (*mustājāb shud*).³¹⁸ While Saiyyid Mas‘ūd ‘Alī, Bībī ‘Āṣima’s son, was sitting near her dead body, his father, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ‘Alī Qalandar, performed ablution, called his son, and, resting his head on his son’s chest, breathed his last. When the graves of the two were dug, the scent of camphor (*kāfur*) spread all over, attracting countless flies (*magas*).³¹⁹

(3)

Daughter of Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Mīr

Period: Eighteenth Century

Place: Delhi, India

Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī (1745–1824) who succeeded Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i Janān (martyred in 1781) as his *khalīfa* of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila*, wrote an account of

316 For a short notice on Jānībāz Qalandar Lāharpurī, see *Mujāhadātu’l Awliyā’*, pp. 142–143.

317 A Persian chronogram at his grave in the Damgaṛh shrine says that he died at the age of fifty years on Monday 25 Jamādiu’l awwal 1221, see Madhav N. Katti (Edited). *Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Report of Epigraphy for 1992–93* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1996), p. 89.

318 *Mujāhadātu’l Awliyā’*, p. 298. *Uṣūlu’l maqṣūd*. p. 159.

319 *Uṣūlu’l maqṣūd*, pp. 161–163.

the life of Mirzā Mazhar's spiritual teachers in *Maqāmāt-i Mazhari* (Stations [Sufi] of Mazhar). Of his several teachers, one was Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ābid Sanāmi (d. 1747).³²⁰ One of Shaikh 'Ābid Sanāmi's disciples was Muḥammad Mīr, distinguished for his life of extreme poverty, austerity, and seclusion. He was known for his great knowledge, which he generously shared not only with his disciples but also with anyone who came as a seeker. Shāh Ghulām 'Alī writes that he had heard from a pious person that at least twenty persons attained the status of *wilāyat* under Muḥammad Mīr's guidance.³²¹

Muḥammad Mīr's daughter, who remains unnamed, inherited the mystical qualities of her father. In a short notice about her which appears in the larger account of her father, without disclosing her name and referring to her as *dukhtar* (daughter), Shāh Ghulām 'Alī writes that she was one of the female Sufis of her time (*walāyyāt-i 'aṣr*).³²² She had the unique honour and privilege (*ikhtisās dāsh*t) of being blessed in many ways by the Prophet's closeness and favours. Several amazing events are associated with her. Whenever anyone enquired about the various states (*aḥwāl*) of the Sufi path, she would explain it well. To those who came to her to seek knowledge (*ṭālibān*), she used to give them the Prophet's blessed hair (*mūyi sharīf*) as benediction (*tabarruk*).³²³

A saintly man of Delhi who had an excellent understanding of ecstasy (*wajdān*), of the Light of His Love (*nūr-i wilāyat*), and of the office of the Prophet (*nabuwwat*), told Shāh Ghulām 'Alī that the house of this pious woman was luminous with the Prophet's radiance. Because of her intense love for the Prophet, she was not interested in improving her financial status, which remained extremely poor. She thus lived in poverty. Matters grew worse for her, and she could no longer face the intense poverty and considered the option to migrate to Afghanistan. However, the Prophet directed her not to do so but to bear poverty and indigence with patience, as patience brings about nearness

320 Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī. 1309/ 1892. *Maqāmāt-i-Mazhari*. Dihlī: Maṭba' Muḥtabāi', pp. 11–14.

321 Ibid, 13.

322 This pious person was alive and living in Dehli at the time of the writing of *Maqāmāt-i-Mazhari*. Pp. 13–14.

323 *Tabarruk* is something that causes or gives blessings. Obtaining blessings from the physical essence of the Prophet, which has caused serious debates among the scholars and theologians of Islam, was a popular practice in South Asia during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

to and union with the Almighty (*ṣabr mūjib i qurb wā ma'iyat-i ilāhī ast*).³²⁴ No information could be found about her later life.

(4)

Bibī Jiyā

Period: Eighteenth Century

Place: Akbarābād (Agra), India

Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf's *Bahr-e Zakhkhar* (the rising ocean), a biographical compendium of Sufis composed around 1788–1789, is the only source that has narrated the life of Bibī Jiyā.³²⁵ Undoubtedly a great Sufi (*walīyyā muṣaffā*), she belonged to the community of oil pressers (*qaum-i 'assār*) of Akbarābād (Agra). She had an intense, never-ending love and an everlasting passion for the Divine (*muwāhabāt-i īzidī, jazbāt-i sarmadī*). Not only the rich and the elite who witnessed her spiritual excellence and perfection and bowed their heads in supplication before her, but even her contemporary Sufi masters came to her and had friendly relations (*mashā'ikh-i waqt bādū paiwastand*). To illustrate Sufi Shaikh's reverence for Bibī Jiyā, Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf cites a conversation he had with Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Shāh,³²⁶ a disciple of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Āl-i Muḥammad.³²⁷ Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad Shāh narrated that once his Shaikh, Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Āl-i Muḥammad, whom Āzād Bilgrāmī describes as possessing the Christ-like powers to heal the ailments of heart (*izāla-yi amrāz-i qalb-i masihātī dāsht*), sent a message to Bibī Jiyā submitting that his welfare was in her hands. In response, Bibī Jiyā sent him in writing some Sufi (*b'āz asghāl wa ad'iyā*) practices and supplications for him to practice.

Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf did not mention Bibī Jiyā's dates of birth and death. A reference to her contacts with Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Āl-i Muḥammad, however, helps us to surmise that she was alive during the first half of the eighteenth century.

324 *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī*, pp. 13–14.

325 Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*. (vol. 3), p. 371.

326 I could not find any information about Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Aḥmad.

327 Probably Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf is referring to Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Āl-i Muḥammad (1111/1700–1164/1751) of Bilgram, settled in Marhara, a dependency of Akbarabad, and a disciple and *khalīfa* of his father Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Barkatullāh, known as *Ṣāhib ul barākāt* (1070/1660–1142/1729) and a Sufi of excellent virtues with a large number of disciples and devotees. His other son, Saiyyid Nijātullāh, known as Shāh Miyān (b. 1117/1705) was alive when Āzād Bilgrami was composing *Ma'āsiru'l Kirām*. He was also a Sufi of great virtues, see Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1328/1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma'āsiru'l kirām*. Agra: Matba' Mufid-i 'Ām, pp. 121–124.

(5)

Khānam Jī**Date:** D. before 1785**Place:** Delhi, India

Khānam Jī was a disciple of Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī (d. 1199/1785), a Chishtī Sufi who, after his arrival from Awrangābād, Deccan, in Delhi in 1751, had established his *khānqāh* in the city. A brief reference in the *mafūzāt* of Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn says that Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn used to take great care of Khānam Jī, who had become a widow in her early youth and entered his *sil-sila* as a disciple. Ḥaẓrat Fahkhru'd-Dīn used to get new clothes for her, with gold-coloured trimmings—the sort of thing much liked by women. Her long skirts (*peshwāz*) displayed myriad types of quilting (*bakhiyā*).³²⁸ Nawāb Ghāẓīu'd-Dīn Khan, the author of *Mafūzāt*, comments that Ḥaẓrat Ṣāhib made all these arrangements for her so that she could remain engaged in the remembrance of Allāh. Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī and Nawāb Ghāẓīu'd-Dīn Khan were present when she passed away.³²⁹

(6)

Mā'ī Sapūrañ/Şafūrā Qādirīyyā**Date:** B. 1747, D. 1209/1795**Shrine:** Basti Mā'ī Safūra or Mauza' Mā'ī Safoora,
Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, Paksitan

Mā'ī Sapūrañ, or Şafūrā, lies buried in a beautifully built, well-illuminated shrine managed by her descendants in Basti Mā'ī Şafoora in Punjab. Textual accounts in primary Sufi sources for this venerated person are missing. A brief note, based on legends, by Arnold (1864–1939), an orientalist who taught at the MAO College (Aligarh), seems to form the source for all the later notices about Mā'ī Sapūrañ. He writes that in the District of Multan there “is the tomb of a woman named Mā'ī Sapūrañ, who has given her name to the village where she lies buried.” She was “a disciple of a saint named 'Abdul Ḥakīm, who died in 1732. She was able to spread her prayer-carpet on the waters of the River Ravi

328 Quilting is one of the preferred practices of Sufis. Needle and not the scissor is preferred by the Sufis. Khwāja Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār is reported to have told a man to bring him a needle and not a knife. The knife cuts, whereas the needle joins. See, *FF*, Assembly 5, 28th Shawwāl 719/1319.

329 Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī. *Mafūzāt wa ḥālāt Shāh Fahkhru'd-Dīn Dihlawī* (Urdu translation of *Fakhru'l Tālibūn wa Manāqib-i Fakhariyā* by Mīr Nazar 'Alī Dard Kakorwī) Karachi; Salman Academy, 1961, pp. 118–19.

and kneel for prayer upon it, and could cure the bites of mad dogs.”³³⁰ The *Multan District Gazetteer* says that Mā’ī Sapūrañ belonged to the Nunari caste.³³¹

Imtiyāz Ḥusain Shāh, in his *Tazkira Awliyā’-i Multan*, a book of short biographies of Sufis of Multan in Urdu, gives some more information in addition to what Arnold has mentioned.³³² His dates, however, do not agree with those given by Arnold. Although her shrine gives 1209/1794 as the date of her death,³³³ Imtiyāz Ḥusain Shāh writes that Mā’ī Sapūrañ, whose original name was Şafūrāñ, was born in 1155/1742 and died in 1909³³⁴ in the small town of Jarfālā in the Nonari community, a community of salt makers.³³⁵

Oral traditions, confirmed by her descendants on FaceBook,³³⁶ trace her lineage to Caliph ‘Umar Farūq, saying that she was of Arab descent. Her descendants claim that her father’s name was Rustam ‘Alī and her grandfather was one Khwāja Abu’l-Faṭḥ Dāw’ūd Qādirī, an Arab merchant. The same sources confirm that Şaleḥ Muḥammad Safūri, author of the poetical collection *Kulliyāt-i Şāleh*, was her son.

Since early childhood, she was devoted to prayers and remembrance of Allāh and thus came to be known as one who possesses spiritual knowledge. Later on, she took *bai‘at* at the hands of ‘Abdul Ḥakīm and performed forty *chillās*. Later, she stayed at his *khānqāh*, which is quite unusual as women are not known to have stayed within the *khānqāhs*. Soon people began addressing her as *Āsan puran* (one who fulfils wishes) which later turned into *Sapūrañ*. At an early age, she was betrothed to one Nūr Muḥammad who was from her own community. She had one son, Maulawī Muḥammad Şāleḥ, who constructed her shrine.

330 T.W. Arnold. 1908. ‘Saints and Martyrs (Muhammadan in India),’ In James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray (Edited). *Encyclopædia of religion and ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, pp. 68–73; for other sources, see E.D. MacLagan. 1902. *Gazetteer of the Multan district, 1901–02*. Lahore: “Civil and Military Gazette” Press, pp. 122; Annemarie Schimmel, 1980. *Islam in the Indian subcontinent*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 129; Margaret Smith. 1994. *Muslim Women Mystics: The Life and Work of Rābi‘a and Other Women Mystics in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld, p. 216; Chaudhry Nazir Ahmad. 2002. *Multan glimpses: with an account of siege and surrender*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, p. 89.

331 *Gazetteer of the Multan district, 1901–02*. Lahore, p. 122.

332 Imtiyāz Ḥusain Shāh. *Tazkira Awliyā’-yi Multan*. Multan: Kutub-Khana Haji Niaz Ahmad. (n. d.), pp. 199–200.

333 Rabia Zamaa Hazrat Mai Safoora Qādirīyya | Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/Rabia-Zmaa-Hazrat-Mai-Safoora-Qadiriyya-15327962337>.

334 This date is ambiguous, as 1909 makes her several centuries old.

335 *Tazkira Awliyā’-yi Multan*, pp. 199–200.

336 Rabia Zamaa Hazrat Mai Safoora Qādirīyya | Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/Rabia-Zmaa-Hazrat-Mai-Safoora-Qadiriyya-15327962337>.

(7)

Sharīfa, Daughter of Muḥammad Fāzil**Period: Eighteenth Century****Place: Delhi, India**

The hagiographic narrative of a young girl named Sharīfa is buried in the narratives of Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm (d. 1719), the founder of the famous *Madrasa Raḥīmīyya* of Delhi. This story of her incredible esoteric encounters comes through the testimony of two towering and illustrious Sufi scholars of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century India, i.e., Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm (d. 1719) and his eminent son and successor, Shāh Waliullah (d. 1762). Shāh Waliu’llah gives the story in some detail in *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* (Voices of the Gnostics), a book of biographies of his ancestors, which also includes his father’s miraculous attainments and his own life written in Farsi. The work was completed sometime before 1143/1731.³³⁷ To most of its audiences, *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* is more than a hagiography. Thus, its Urdu translator lauds the work as a treasure house of *sharī‘ā*, *m‘arifāt* (laws and experiential knowledge).³³⁸

Shāh Waliu’llah in *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* records the most incredible anecdote regarding Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm and his young female disciple, Sharīfa Khatūn, daughter of one Muḥammad Fāzil.³³⁹ According to this story, Sharīfa Khatūn was no ordinary disciple; despite her young age, she had absorbed the complete reflection of her Shaikh. This gave her the power of revelations. Due to her esoteric powers, several unseen events were manifested (*munkashif*) to her. One evening, when Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm was on his way to the house of Muḥammad Fāzil, her father, his rosary fell down from his hand. When Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm arrived at Muḥammad Fāzil’s house and explained about his lost rosary, Sharīfa told Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm that she could see the spot where the *tasbeḥ* fell down. Someone went there with a candle, looked for it, and found it. In another instance, one day while sitting in her house, Sharīfa said that Ḥaẓrat (Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm) was about to arrive at her house and wished to partake of a certain dish. The dish was readied. On his arrival, Ḥaẓrat Ṣāḥib confirmed what Sharīfa has foretold. Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz Muḥaddis (d. 1824), son of Shāh Waliullah, confirmed this story up to this point. Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz, once while enumerating the benefits of certain stones and wood, narrated the

337 The earliest known print of *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* is of 1315/1897 from Maṭba‘ Aḥmadī, Dehli. The work has had several editions, including translations in Urdu.

338 Farūq Qādirī, Pir Saiyyid Muḥammad. 2007. *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn*. Lahore: Farid Book Stall, p. 20.

339 Shāh Waliullah Dihlawī. 1315/1897. *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn*. Dihli: Maṭba‘ Aḥmadī, pp. 64–66.

story of one Muḥammad Murtazā's pet pair of cranes. This narration reminded him of Muḥammad Murtazā's sister, Sharīfa. Referring to Sharīfa more respectfully as Bī Sharīfa, Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz described her as *sāhib-i tawajjuh* (master of spiritual focus) and *sāhib-i kashf* (master of esoteric knowledge) and as one who received *faiz* (benefits) from his grandfather. He also expressed his deep respect for her *pīr* and said that she would prepare his favourite food for him to eat. Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz personally knew Muḥammad Murtazā, the younger brother of Sharīfa Khatūn and the same person who was sent to get the lost rosary of Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm.³⁴⁰

Shāh Waliu'llah recounts another incredible miraculous power of Sharīfa Khatūn. One day, when Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm was present in her house, she told him that Khalīfa Faṭḥ Muḥammad, one of the closest friends (*yarān-i qadīm*)³⁴¹ of Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm, was about to arrive at her house. She then described with such perfection the details of where he was exactly at that time as if she was watching him with her eyes. She said that Khalīfa Faṭḥ Muḥammad was talking with someone. This man was standing under a shed, while Khalīfa Faṭḥ Muḥammad was standing under sunlight. Then she said, "Now he has bought three oranges, one for you and two for his sons. Now he has changed his mind, two for you and one for his two sons. He is now standing right at the door." Faṭḥ Muḥammad later confirmed the details of the story.

Shāh Waliu'llah finally relates one more strange anecdote which he heard from Sharīfa Khatūn. One day while Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm was at her house, she requested of him that she desired to see his heart (*mī kāham ki dil-i Ḥaẓrat rā ba bīnam*). At this, Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm told her to sit in front of him (*pesh-i man ba nashīn*) and focus her *tawajjuh* (spiritual concentration) on him. As she focused, she went into a trance (*ghaybat*) and in this state she saw as if she had slipped inside his throat and his heart looked like a mirror. From this heart, the size of one arm in length and an open fist in breadth, the Essence of Allāh (*ism-i zāt*) manifested in colours such as those that appear when the flames of a lamp fall upon a mirror. Because of having intense love for Allāh (*shah-ghaf*), she took the luminous reflection in her mouth (*ān sho'la ra bādāhān giraftam*) and swallowed it. At that very moment, Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm felt restless, fainted, and became unconscious (*beqarār shudand wā ghashī kardand wā bihosh uftād*). Regaining his consciousness, he told her that as she took the

340 Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz. *Malfūzāt Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz* (including *Kamālāt-i 'Azīzī*) (Translated by Maulawī 'Azmat Ilāhī). Meerut: Maṭba' Hāshmi, 1897. [First published in 1896], pp. 166–167.

341 *Anfasu l'Ārifīn*, p. 66.

inner soul of his heart (*latîfâ-yi dil*)³⁴² into her throat (*baḥalaq*), he felt weak (*beṭâqat shud*).³⁴³

Similar to several other narratives about women in Sufi accounts, this account is also told with a male perspective and with the purpose of highlighting the attainments of Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm. *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* includes a large number of such incredible hagiographies. In the context of women’s spiritual experiences, this anecdote, which the author also describes as “strange” anecdote, raises several questions in the context of Shāh Waliullah’s views on women’s *ba’at*. This episode relates incidents of close proximity between Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm, the young girl, and even with Khalīfa Faṭḥ Muḥammad. They all met frequently in an environment where no veiling or segregation was observed. Indeed, Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm sat in close physical proximity to her and a curtain to segregate the two is not mentioned in the episode. Shāh ‘Abdur Raḥīm died in 1719 and Shāh Waliullah authored most of his works, including *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* in 1732/1733, almost twenty-three years after his father’s demise. Sharīfa Khatūn was alive when *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* was written. Thus, it may be assumed that though she was young when the above strange events took place, she was mature in age at the time of recording these events. Despite Sharīfa Khātūn’s intense *shahghaf* and her esoteric qualities, Shāh Waliu’llah leaves her story incomplete, as obviously he was not interested in Sharīfa Khatūn the person. *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn* was created to record the *kashf wa karamāt* of his father and not to glorify a woman whose spiritual attainments are exploited to illuminate the performance of his father. Sharīfa Khatūn, at best, remains a prop. One wonders how different this story would have been if Sharīfa Khatūn were of a different gender.

(8)

Bibī Waliya

Date: D. 19 Jamādiu’l awwal 1149/25 September 1736

Place: Phulwari Sharif, Bihar, India

Narratives of Bibī Waliya, the most celebrated mystic woman of Phulwarī Sharīf, Bihar, are found in two biographical accounts of the Sufis of this region. The first source, in Persian, is by Muḥammad Abu’l Ḥayāt Qādirī (date not known), a Sufi of Phulwarī Sharīf, near Patna in Bihar. His biographies of Sufis

342 *Latîfâ* is a term used by the Sufis for any sign or influence, which has such a mysterious effect on the heart that cannot be expressed in words.

343 *Anfāsu’l ‘Ārifīn*, p. 64.

of Bihar is titled *Tazkiratu'l kirām* (Memoirs of the nobles).³⁴⁴ In this compendium, reference to Bibī Waliya is found in two places. The first account is under the subheading *Zikr Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Makhdūm 'Ālam*, the husband of Bibī Waliya.³⁴⁵ The second narrative in the same work is a separate account of Bibī Waliya under the heading *Zikr Ḥaẓrat Bibī Waliya quds sirraha* (an account of Ḥaẓrat Bibī Waliya, may her grave be hollowed)³⁴⁶ The second source, *Āsarāt Phulwarī Sharīf mausūm bā A'yān-i-waṭn*, written in Urdu by Saiyyid Muḥammad, is a biographical account of 224 Sufis, divines, theologians, scholars, and government officials of Phulwarī Sharīf.³⁴⁷

Bibī Waliya, the most celebrated Sufi of Phulwarī Sharīf and known for her ecstatic utterances, was born in Amjhar Sharīf³⁴⁸ in a pious family which traced its lineage to Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī of Baghdad (d. 1166).³⁴⁹ Her father, Shāh 'Azīzu'd-Dīn Amjharī, was a celebrated Sufi. She was married to her maternal cousin, Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Makhdūm 'Ālam (1093/1681–1173/1759), a resident of Tajia, Phulwarī Sharīf.³⁵⁰ Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Makhdūm 'Ālam, a Sufi, was one of the perfect saintly friends (*yarān-i-kāmilīn*) of Maulānā Rasūlnumā (1087/1676–1166/1753) from whom he acquired exoteric and esoteric knowledge. Maulānā Rasūlnumā conferred upon him *khilāfat*.³⁵¹ The couple had a son, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Shāh Āyatullah 'Shorish' (1126/1714–1210/1796) a poet who composed in Urdu and Farsi.³⁵²

Bibī Waliya's spiritual powers lay in her utmost devotion to Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī. Her spiritual connection with the Shaikh was so strong and overpowering that it enabled her to provide solutions to the most difficult situations. Often, her husband would seek her help to provide answers to the most challenging queries which she did successfully as a blessing of the Prophet and

344 Muḥammad Abu'l Ḥayāt Qādirī. *Tazkiratu'l kirām*. Lucknow: Maṭba' Anwār-i-Muḥammadi. n. d.

345 Ibid, pp. 69–73.

346 Ibid, pp. 78–81.

347 Maulānā Ḥakīm Saiyyid Muḥammad Shu'aib. *Āsarāt Phulwarī Sharīf mausūm bā A'yān-i-waṭn*. Phulwarī Sharīf: Dāru'l isharāt Khānqāh Mujiḃīyya, 1947.

348 Amjhar is a village in District Jamui of Monger Division of Bihar.

349 *Āsarāt Phulwarī Sharīf mausūm bā A'yān-i-waṭn*, p. 59; for the ancestry of the Amjharī Sufis, see 'Abdur Razzāq, 'Aṭā' Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭba' Ṣafdarī, pp. 26, 10–11.

350 *Āsarāt Phulwarī Sharīf mausūm bā A'yān-i-waṭn*, p. 59.

351 *Tazkiratu'l kirām*, pp. 69–77. For a short biographical sketch of Maulānā Shāh Saiyyid Muḥammad Wāris Rasūlnumā, see 'Abdu's Salām N'umānī, *Tazkira Mashā'ikh-i Banaras*. Banaras: Maktaba Nadwatu'l Ma'ārif, 1961, pp. 40–51.

352 *Āsarāt Phulwarī Sharīf mausūm bā A'yān-i-waṭn*, p. 60.

of Shaikh ‘Abdul Qādir Jilānī. She had taken the oath of allegiance at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Rasūlnumā Qādirī Banarsi (d. 1166/1752–1753).³⁵³

Once when her husband, Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Makhdūm ‘Ālam, was suffering from dropsy or oedema (*istisqā’*) and all the known physicians could do nothing to cure it, Bibī Waliya spent three days and nights seeking the blessings of Shaikh Abdu’l Qādir Jilānī. The Shaikh appeared in person before her, consoled her, and recited some verses of the Qur’ān for the quick recovery of her ailing husband. The Shaikh also gazed at her and at once the doors of esoteric knowledge were opened for her, and all of a sudden, she achieved the highest stations (*ānan fānan tarqqī darajāt*). Within no time she reached the station of a friend of Allāh (*martabā-i wilāyat*) with infinite *mukāshafat* (direct witnessing of Allāh).³⁵⁴

Another incredible hagiographical episode of her spiritual excellence related by Abu’l Ḥayāt Qādirī is about the completion of the *shajra* of her family which was lost during the military inroads of Bargis, the Marathas. Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Makhdūm ‘Ālam, her husband, requested her to supplicate to the Prophet for the recovery of their lost *shajra*. Bibī Waliya complied and as she was blessed in abundance with the Prophet’s kindness and bounty (*az bas maurid lutf wa ināyat būd*), the Prophet ordered that each member of Makhdūm ‘Ālam’s family should present himself and call out clearly his and his father’s name. Bibī Waliya wrote down all the names in order and thus handed to her husband his complete *shajra*. Later, when the lost *shajra* document was recovered and was compared with the one that was compiled at the orders of the Prophet by Bibī Waliya, no difference was found.³⁵⁵ This episode shows that she was the recipient of the Prophet’s favours. Because of this special status, Bibī Waliya came to be known as *kalīmatu’r-rasūl* (one who speaks with the Prophet).³⁵⁶

Though she did not have formal education, Bibī Waliya miraculously had command of three languages, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, in addition to the local dialect. She composed verses in Persian and Urdu.³⁵⁷ Her mystical tract, *M’ālūmāt-i-Waliya*, is preserved in the *Khānqāh* Mujībīyya in Phulwarī Sharīf.³⁵⁸ She passed away on 19 Jamādiu’l awwal 1149/25 September 1736 and was buried in Maqbara-i Junaidīyya.³⁵⁹

353 *Tazkiratu’l kirām*, pp. 4–12; *Āsarāt*, p. 60.

354 *Tazkiratu’l kirām*, p. 79.

355 *Ibid*, pp. 80–81.

356 *Tazkiratu’l kirām*, p. 81.

357 B.S. Chandrababu & L. Thilagavathi. 2009. *Woman: Her History and Struggle for Emancipation*. Chennai: Bharathi Puthakalam, pp. 210–11.

358 *Khuda Bakhsh Library Journal*, no. 153, 2008, p. 66.

359 *Tazkiratu’l kirām*, p. 81; *Āsarāt*, p. 60.

9.9 Sufi Women of the Nineteenth Century

(1)

Bibī Ḥusnu

Period: Late Nineteenth Century

Place: Amroha, UP, India

Maḥmūd Aḥmad ‘Abbāsī’s *Tazkirat’ul kirām- Tārīkh-i-Amroha, jild sānī*, which is a biographical compendium of Sufis of Amroha, includes only one brief account of a Sufi woman in a list of about two hundred male Sufis and scholars. This notice is on Bibī Ḥusnu, who hailed from Punjab and probably later settled in Muradabad, now in Uttar Pradesh, India. In her youth, Bibī Ḥusnu took the oath of allegiance (*bai’at*) at the hands of Maulānā Saiyyid Amānat ‘Alī Chishtī (d. 1280/1864), a Chishtī Sufi of Muradabad. Saiyyid Amānat ‘Alī Chishtī left Muradabad in 1814 and came to Amroha along with his followers. His shrine exists in the area of Hajiwala Bagh in Amroha. His devotees, most of whom are local weavers, look after the shrine.³⁶⁰

Bibī Ḥusnu lived a low-profile life and spent her days in a house built of sun-baked bricks. As she lived alone and had no family of her own, the weavers of the neighbourhood, who were her devotees, looked after her. Local legends say that she lived long and died at a ripe old age. She was buried at the feet of her Shaikh, Maulānā Saiyyid Amānat ‘Alī Chishtī, where her shrine continues to shower blessings upon whoever comes to visit her to pay homage.³⁶¹

(2)

Mā’ī Khadija

Period: Early Nineteenth Century

Shrine: Katbar Sharif, Lahri, Balochistan, Pakistan

Mā’ī Khadija was the illustrious daughter of a renowned pious person, Miān Muḥammad Kāmil (d. 1239/1823),³⁶² whose family was settled at Chattar and Lahri, a part of the Kachhi area in Balochistan. Miān Muḥammad Kāmil was a cultivator by profession and a Sufi by the Grace of Allāh. His shrine in Katbar attracts a large crowd of devotees even today. Miān Muḥammad Kāmil and his wife, Bibī Ḥurmat Khatūn, had several children. Their son, Miān Muḥammad Kamāl, was also a man of saintly virtues.

360 Maḥmūd Aḥmad ‘Abbāsī. 1932. *Tazkirat’ul kirām-Tārīkh-i- Amroha, jild sānī*. Dehli: Maḥbūbul maṭāb’ Barqī Press, pp. 188–191.

361 Ibid, p. 228.

362 For an account of his life, see In‘ām-ul Ḥaqq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira Suḥfā-yi Balochistān*. Lahore Urdu Science Board, pp. 246–256.

Mā'ī Khadija was born in Ghotki, Sindh. She was married to the son of Mā'ī Nihāl Khātūn, a female disciple of Miān Muḥammad Kāmil. Widowed after one year of marriage, young Mā'ī Khadija returned to her natal family. Under the influence of her parents who were of the Qādirīyyā Sufi *silsila*, Mā'ī Khadija followed a life of austerity, spending most of her time in prayers and meditation.

A local tradition says that at the time of her father's death, Mā'ī Khadija laughed loudly. On being asked the reason, she said, "The Prophet was here." Of the several miracles associated with her, one relates that once driven by hunger caused by drought and shortage of rainfall, one *khalīfa* Mullā Bachchā Katbar, an attendant of Ḥaẓrat Miān Muḥammad Katbar, her brother and a highly revered person, approached Mā'ī Khadija to help him. Mā'ī Khadija told him to go to the arid area of Koh Gorhi, near Katbar, dig out roots of a certain plant from the sand there, and live on them. She also told him not to tell anyone, least they would vex her. Obeying the command of the august lady, the *khalīfa* did what he was ordered to do. Reaching home, when he opened the sack of roots, to his surprise, instead of the dried roots that he had packed, he found millet, *jowār*! Her brother, Miān Muḥammad Ḥayāt,³⁶³ a Sufi and the successor (*sajjādā-nishīn*) of Miān Muḥammad Kāmil, used to seek her advice and used to instruct his disciple as well to seek her spiritual guidance. He used to tell her, "All good things come from you." She used to lay great emphasis on seeking Allāh's Bounty and Grace for relief from worldly needs and for spiritual bliss.³⁶⁴ Members of her family and her devotees visit her shrine to seek her blessings. Devotees continue to visit her shrine even today.

(3)

Nūr Bā'ī

Period: Mid-Nineteenth Century

Place: Tando Muhammad Khan, Sindh, Pakistan

Although local Sufi accounts of Sindh record the presence of mystic women, Nūr Bā'ī appears only in the travel account of Richard Burton (1821–1890), an employee of the East India Company and a spy who spent years exploring the region, which he looked at with colonial contempt.³⁶⁵ Burton records an eye-witness account of Nūr Bā'ī.

³⁶³ Ibid, pp. 256–258.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 258, 261–62.

³⁶⁵ Richard F. Burton. 1851. *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*. London: Allen & Co., p. 231. For Burton's life as a spy-traveller, see Indira Ghose. 2006. 'Imperial Player: Richard Burton in Sindh'. In Tim Youngs (Edited). *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (pp. 71–86). London: Anthem Press.

Nūr Bā'ī, perhaps a widow of one Rahimo Fakir of the Jaheja clan, was a follower of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila*, which was well rooted in the area around the Goonee River where she was found living on its banks.³⁶⁶ Burton writes, "Her progress in the Naqshbandi path has been such that she is termed Mashaikh (teacher) and instructs a number of pupil of both sexes. She lives in great pomp, with no small show of respectability."³⁶⁷

(4)

Bibī Shamsu'n-nisā'

Date: D. 1295/1878

Place Patna, Bihar, India

Shamsu'n-nisā' was the younger sister of 'Abdur Razzāq 'Aṭā' Ḥusain, author of *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Her father, Mīr Saiyyid Sulṭān Aḥmad Qādirī al-Mun'amī, was the son of a Sufi, Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Ghulām Ḥusain Chishtī al-Mun'amī, known by his title *'umdatu'l mashā'ikhīn Saiyyidu'l wāṣilīn*.³⁶⁸ She took an oath of allegiance of the Qādirī Sufi *silsila* (*b'ait bā ṭarīqa 'āliya Qadiriyya*) at the hands of her grandfather. Though married and the mother of only one female child, she was an excellent Sufi and always remained engrossed in Allāh's remembrance (*mashghūli bāṭin būdand*). A gnostic (*misl-i 'arīfā*), extolling Divine virtues (*bā zikr-i ilāhī tasbīḥ*), Bibī Shamsu'n-nisā' died at the age of fifty-six on Friday, 22 Rabi'-us sānī 1295/26 April 1878.

9.10 Sufi Women of the Twentieth Century

(1)

Ḥaẓrat Mā'ī Nūru'n nisā' Begam

Date: 1873–1974

Place: Dhok Sāhi Sharīf, near Dina, Jhelum, Pakistan

'Urs: April 8

Mā'ī Nūru'n nisā' Begam, of the 'Awān family, was born in 1291/1873 in the small rural settlement of Dhok Sāhi in the Jhelum district of Punjab. She is also known by several reverential titles, such as *Nūru'l 'aṣr* (the light of times),

³⁶⁶ Guni is the old name of the Fuleli canal. The neighbouring area of Tando Saindād Tando Muhammad Khan is still under strong Naqshbandī influence. For the early presence of the Naqshbandis in Sindh, see Sāhibzāda Abu'l-Khair Zubair, 2007. *Sindh ke Sufiyya-yi Naqshband*, vol. 1. Lahore: Ziaul Qur'an Publications, p. 71, and vol. 2, pp. 152–60.

³⁶⁷ *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, p. 231.

³⁶⁸ 'Abdur Razzāq, 'Aṭā' Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭba' Ṣafdarī, p. 294.

Sarkār Dhok Sāhi Sharīf (the lady of Dhok Sāhi Sharīf), and *Shama‘-yi ‘ishq-i ḥaqqānī* (the candle of Divine love). This biographical notice is prepared with the help of two printed works that are only available at the shrine of Mā‘ī Nūru’n nisā’ Begam. Of these, one is her biography and the other is a collection of her verses.³⁶⁹

According to local legends, one of her ancestors, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Quṭb Shāh, arrived from Hijaz to preach Islam and succeeded in converting the Khokars, a local Rajput tribe, to Islam; hence her family came to be known as Quṭb shāhī ‘Awān in honour of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Quṭb Shāh.³⁷⁰

Nūru’n nisā’ Begam was born into a God-fearing family of farmers which traced its ancestry to the Quṭb Shāhī ‘Awān clan of the Punjab, hailing from Warapura, District Baramulla of Jammu and Kashmir. Her mother and father, Mā‘ī Panah Bibī and Malik Mihr Bakhsh, were persons of particular piety. Mā‘ī Nūru’n nisā’ was a precocious child, interested in learning more about her faith than engaging in the usual playful activities of children of her age. Her dedication to Islam was so deep that each day she would recite ten chapters of the Qur’ān. In addition to the five daily prayers, she would also offer super-erogatory prayers. Instead of spending her time in the company of her family members, she used to retire to a small separate small room where she would remain awake and absorbed in remembering Allāh all through the night. As most of her supplications and prayers were answered, she became known as *mustājabu’d da‘wat*. Several popular anecdotes and miracle stories testify to the charismatic powers of Mā‘ī Nūru’n nisā’ while she was still a child.³⁷¹ Once her prayers saved a man from the gallows.³⁷²

Nūru’n nisā’ Begam showed signs of a born Sufi. From early childhood, she used to pray at night and fast regularly, and the Divine rewarded her supplications. Because of her saintly virtues, even as a child she was popularly addressed as *Faqīrnī Ṣāḥiba*.³⁷³ As a child with great physical charms, her family called her *Baggi*, a local term for a beautiful girl. Later, as her spiritual affiliation with Baḥelāh Sharīf, an affiliate of Chishtī *silsila*, finally chiselled her into a Sufi with excellent virtues, her devotees began to address her as *nūru’l ‘asr* (the light of her times).

369 Muhammad Majeed. 1999. *Jagṭai rahay Kahani*. Lahore: Nadeem Younis Printers; *Shama‘-i ‘ishq* by Ḥaẓrat Mā‘ī Nūru’n nisā’ Begam (Edited by Baba Muḥammad Siddique Miskīn). Jhelum, n. d.

370 *Jagṭai rahay Kahani*, p. 32.

371 Ibid, p. 36.

372 Ibid, p. 37.

373 *Faqīrnī* is the feminine of the word *faqīr*, which though means a poor person but is used to describe a person of abstinence and piety.

As early as age thirteen, Mā'ī Nūru'n nisā' was already experiencing spiritual states of *sakr* and *jazb*. Overpowered by Divine love, she would often wander into the woods, reciting self-composed devotional verses. It is said that she would walk such long distances that her shoes would get torn. As she grew up, her family arranged for her marriage. She was already betrothed to her cousin in childhood. It is said that on her wedding day, as soon she arrived at her husband's place, she left it within minutes. The marriage was not consummated and thus she lived a celibate life.

Soon, she left her home and moved to live in a thatched place in the nearby jungle. Her women followers and disciples also followed her. From the thatched quarter, Mā'ī Sāḥiba, as she was now known, moved to live in an old open grave where she would mediate. She would eat little, hardly a small piece of bread.

Mā'ī Sāḥiba's deep devotion for the Divine and her love for the Prophet is reflected in her poetry. Though not formerly educated, she composed poems in her local Potohari dialect which are of exceptional spiritual and literary merit. Her collection of verses (*dīwān*), titled *Shama-e-īshq* (Love's Candle), has been published by Darbar Sagri Sharif Jhelum, bearing no date. Her poetry is received with such deep devotion that her followers continue to recite one of her poems, called *Tawba Nama* (the epistle of repentance), at religious ceremonies. In her verses, what touches tenderly the chords of the heart is her message beyond religious divisions created by the seekers of worldly authority in the garb of religiosity. Much of her work still remains unpublished and is preserved in her devotees' memories.

Mā'ī Sāḥiba was dearly loved by all, including non-Muslims. Among her regular devoted visitors were several educated Hindus who, even after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 into India and Pakistan, remained in contact with her through correspondence.

Mā'ī Sāḥiba was a true traveler in the path of spirituality. To meet other friends of Allāh and to connect with her devotees, she undertook several journeys, often alone. She used to visit several other nearby shrines. Mā'ī Sāḥiba's biographer, paying homage to the spiritual attributes of this friend of Allāh, observes that, though born in the form of a woman, Mā'ī Sāḥiba is one of the *mardān-i khudā* (lovers of Allāh) and holds the status of *mard-i haqq* (male follower of the Truth).³⁷⁴ Even after her death, this exceptional woman remains a guiding light for many. Her shrine at Dhok Sāhi illustrates this best. During my research assistant's visit to the shrine in December 2018, she met with several women, visitors, devotees, and women managers of the shrine. Supported by generous donations, mostly given by Pakistani immigrants, the shrine is

374 Ibid, *Jagtai rahay Kahani*, pp. 21–22.

managed by women alone. Most of the women attendants, who are also Mā'ī Ṣāḥiba's followers, live on the premises. In addition to women attendants, the shrine also serves as a shelter for homeless women. Truly, the candle of love set aglow by Mā'ī Ṣāḥiba continues as a beacon of light, erasing darkness and enlightening the hearts of all those who visit her shrine. A significant number of men are also her spiritual followers.

9.11 Sufi Women of Unknown Time Period

(1)

Beemā Bīwī

Shrine: Trivandrum, Kerala, India

'Urs: 1 Jamādiu'l-awwal

The coastline in the State of Kerala, India, has a trail of shrines, or *nerchas*, as these are locally termed. Miller, who has conducted several research projects on the Mappila Muslims³⁷⁵ of this region, notes that the shrine dedicated to the memory of Beemā Bīwī is one that attracts a large number of devotees, particularly on the occasion of the annual 'urs celebrations.³⁷⁶ Located five kilometres south of Trivandrum, the shrine of Beemā Bīwī is a reverential spot, as it is believed that the first congregational Friday prayers in India were held here in the pink-coloured Beemapally mosque, in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala. The shrines or the *dargāh sharīf* (the noble shrine) of Saiyyid'un-nisā' Beemā Bīwī (also spelt Beevi) and of her son Shihābu'd-Dīn Abu Bakr are next to the mosque complex.³⁷⁷ Another source, without any supporting citation, says that her name was Saiyyida Nizam Bīwī.³⁷⁸ The shrine complex turns into a surging sea of devotees at the occasion of the annual 'urs, known locally as the *chandanakudam maha-otsavam* (the great festival of sandal-pot).³⁷⁹ Beemā Bīwī's historicity, though lost in texts, is commemorated by local legends that

375 For the arrival of Muslims in Kerala, see Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn M'ābari's *Tuhfatu'l-mujāhidīn*, originally written in Arabic in 992/1584 and translated in Urdu by Saiyyid Shamsu'llah Qādirī. Aligarh: Sharwani Printing Press, 1942, pp. 13–19.

376 Ronald E. Miller. *Mappila Muslim Culture: How a Historic Muslim Community in India Has Blended Tradition* (New York: SUNY, 2015), p. 275.

377 George Jacob. *Religious Life of the Ilavas of Kerala: Change and Continuity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1995), p. 82.

378 Asghar Ali Engineer. 1995. *Kerala Muslims: a historical perspective*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, p. 28.

379 The Kerala State Government declared March 10, 2016, the day of 'Uroos at Beemapally as a regional holiday for all government offices and educational institutions. See Beemapally Uroos festival to begin on Monday—The New Indian

narrate that this pious woman was a member of the Prophet's family and that she, along with her son now referred as Māhīn Abu'l Bakr Awliyā' Allāh (also spelt Ouliya Allāh), voyaged from Arabia and disembarked on the shores of Kerala to bless it with her spiritual powers. Local legends ascribe proselytizing activities of the mother and son and even say that Beemā Bīwī was killed in one such encounter.³⁸⁰ These oral anecdotes manifest themselves strongly during the ten-day-long 'urs festivities, which begin on the first of the lunar Islamic month of Jamādi'ul awwal. On the first day, a colourful devotional ceremony of the shrine's flag-hoisting in front of a sea of devotees takes place. The surging crowd, representing a cross-section of the populace, stands there with clay pots perched atop their heads, smeared with sandal-paste, filled with coins, and wrapped in fragrant jasmine flower wreaths with incense sticks stuck into the clay pots, emitting aroma. As the pots are smeared with sandal or *chandan*, the name of the festival is *chandanakudam*. All through the 'urs festivities, several public performances are scheduled which come to an end on the final day called *Chandanakudam Mahotsavam* (the sandal-pot great festival) with a procession of caparisoned elephants, green- and red-coloured sheets (*chādars*), and decorated coloured umbrellas. All through the events, devotees recite *kalimā* (the basic creed of Islam) and verses from the Qur'ān.³⁸¹ The ceremony of viewing the sacred sanctum of the shrine is called *dīdār* (Persian for viewing), which is somewhat equivalent to the Hindu devotees' practice of the *darshan*. The water with which the tombs are washed is distributed among the devotees and is supposed to carry healing powers.

(2)

Bibī Fāṭima (or Bibī Ḥajjīānī)

Place: Makli Hills, Thatta, Pakistan

Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ām Thattawī, in *Tuḥfatu'l-tāhīrīn* (the gift of the holy ones), gives a brief biographical sketch of Bibī Fāṭima (or Bibī Ḥajjīānī), an illustrious and pious woman who lived in the city of Thatta.³⁸² It is said that on her return from the Ḥajj pilgrimage, people began addressing Bibī Fāṭima with the honorific title of Bibī Ḥajjīānī, i.e., the woman who has performed Ḥajj.

380 For more details, see V.A. Ahmed Kabeer. *Muslim Monuments in Kerala*. (Part 1) (Trivandrum: Velavoor Publishing House), p. 198.

381 These scenes can be viewed at Beemapally uroos 2016 songs—YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GT4U7Jp_xgs.

382 Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī. 1956. *Tuḥfatu'l-tāhīrīn*, p. 91. Schimmel has confused the word Hajjani with Hajrani, See Annemarie Schimmel. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. p. 434; also see Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Na'imī. 1987. *Tazkira-i awliyā-yi Sindh*, p. 58.

In view of her piety and devotion, Thattawī calls her *Rābi'a-i zamān* (the Rābi'a of the Age).³⁸³

Her yearning to be close to God and earn His proximity (*qurb*) was so overpowering that to remember Him constantly, Bibī Ḥajjīānī used to recite the Qur'ān continually with great devotion and passion. Her trust in the Qur'ān was so strong that she learned all thirty chapters of the Qur'ān by heart (*Qur'ān bar zabān dāsht*), and thus she was a *ḥāfiza* (one who has memorised the Qur'ān). During the Ḥajj travel, each day she used to recite the whole Qur'ān and would pray to Allāh that the reward (*swāb*) of the Qur'ān recitation should go to the Prophet.

A hagiographical legend about her miraculous powers, which is still popular among the local people, narrates that on her way back home from the Ḥajj pilgrimage, while everyone was seated in the vessel and the ship began to move, a dark hurricane developed (*bād-i tīrā paidā shud*) and blackened the horizon. The boat was soon caught in a severe typhoon (*tūfān-i 'azīm*). Her fellow travellers lost all hope for their survival. Agitated by fear, they approached Bibī Fāṭima and beseeched her to rescue their lives and to pray for their safety. She raised her hands in prayer (*dast bā du'a bardāsht*) and said, "Oh God! I accept what pleases you. These powerless beings and the distressed ones seek refuge in your Benevolence and petition to be saved from this hurricane. Bestow Mercy upon them." It is said that as soon as she finished her supplication (*manājāt*), the typhoon stopped suddenly and the boat and its occupants were saved.³⁸⁴

Richard Burton, who was present in Sindh in 1840 as an employee of the East India Company, wrote about one of the numerous miraculous powers of Bibī Fāṭima that he heard from the local people. Among her other miracles, the one that he found popular was about the sea storm. He writes that the people of the area recalled the story of Bibī Fāṭima's spiritual powers of how she once stilled a storm that threatened destruction to the pilgrim ship in which she was returning home after performing the *hajj*.³⁸⁵

(3)

Hāro Ana

Shrine: District Loralai, Balochistan, Pakistan

Bibī Hāro Ana, about whom little is researched and known and about whom little is written, is remembered by the Baloch tribes as a God-fearing, God-loving

³⁸³ Ibid, p. 91.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 91.

³⁸⁵ *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, p. 230.

virgin and ascetic. Local legends celebrating the auspicious miracles of Hāro Ana were probably first textualised by the colonial ethnographers and compilers of gazettes while documenting indigenous religious practices. One such documentation is by Arnold, who writes, "In the Loralai District a virgin saint, named Hāro Ana, guards the Wanechis³⁸⁶ (a section of the Tarīn Afghāns) from the incursions of their enemies."³⁸⁷

Expanding on the above information, local legends say that Hāro Ana lived the life of an ascetic virgin a few miles away from Chauter. As an expression of reverence for her piety and abstinence from worldly attractions, some affluent members of the Wanechi tribe gifted her some land in the Karbi Kachch area. These lands are still in the possession of Hāro Ana's tribe, the Tehānri. Local anecdotes say that at the time of her death, Hāro Ana told her people that she should be buried at a place safe from the inroads of the Dumars,³⁸⁸ the age-old rivals of the Wanechis. She also made a prophecy that never again would enemies dare to come to this land, but if they did, they would suffer immensely. Thus, according to her last wish, Hāro Ana was buried four miles away from Chauter in the Loralai District on the western banks of Wani Manda, now a fishing stream.

Local legends ascribe several miracles to Hāro Ana. One is how through the intercession of Hāro Ana, two hundred Wanechis succeeded in recovering their livestock, which had been forcibly driven away by the thousands of Dumars, their traditional rivals. The Wanechis made supplications at the grave of Hāro Ana and these were answered and rewarded. Later, these Wanechis came to be known as *Hāro Ana pēriye* (the followers of Hāro Ana).

Another narrative of the miraculous powers of Hāro Ana relates that once when the Dumars rejected the spiritual powers (*wilāyat*) of Hāro Ana in

386 Wanechi has various spellings, such as Waneci, Wanetsi, and Vanechi, See Joan L.G. Baart and Esther L. Baart-Bremer. 2001. *Bibliography of Languages of Northern Pakistan*. Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, p. 109. *The Census of India*, 1901, vol. 4, records that the Wanechis of the Tarin, are found in the area of Wani, Chauter and the Shirin Valley and have a rivalry with the Dumars, often engaging in blood feuds with them. P. 119.

387 T.W. Arnold. 1908. 'Saints and Martyrs (Muhammadan in India),' In James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray (Edited) *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 71.

388 The Domars (variously spelt) lived around the area of Sanjawi, considered of Kakar origin, are described by Bellew as 'a tribe formerly very numerous, and figuring prominently in the history of Kashmir (*Rajatarangini*) as a powerful and turbulent people in the country about Lahore'. See for more details, H.W. Bellew. 1891. *An inquiry into the ethnography of Afghānistan, prepared and presented to the Ninth international congress of Orientalists* (London, September 1891). Woking: Oriental University Institute, p. 122.

derogatory expressions, Hāro Ana turned into a pigeon and began hovering over the heads of the Dumars. So great was the power of Hāro Ana that only three Wanechi herdsmen killed several of their rivals. Humbled in fight, the Dumars, it is said, acknowledged the spiritual powers of Hāro Ana and turned into her followers.³⁸⁹

The grave of Hāro Ana stands as a modest shrine with a few flags and a wooden shed. Most devotees come from unassuming backgrounds. They seek her blessings, make vows, and tie coloured threads and pieces of fabric as a mark of reverence for the departed soul.

(4)

Mā'ī Maklī

Makli Hills, Thatta, Pakistan

No other mystery is as challenging as the historicity of Mā'ī Maklī, the woman who lies buried in the Maklī graveyard in the vast necropolis of Maklī, now known as the city of the dead rather than the thriving city that it used to be. Describing Maklī in his *Tuhfahtu'l-Kirām* (completed in 1767), Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' wrote that there was at each step a resting place of a friend of Allāh (*mazja'-yi awliyā'*), and at each pace refuge of a God-fearing devout (*marja'-yi atqiyā'*). Among these countless graves, by some estimates numbering more than one hundred thousand, are reposed people of faith and reason (*ahl-i taḥqīq wā yaqīn*). Along with its lost history, the genesis of the name of Maklī also remains a subject of inquiry.³⁹⁰

Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' suggests that one reason for naming the necropolis Maklī is because a chaste, innocent and godly woman (*mastūra mā'sūma az ahlul'allah*) named Maklī is reposed close to the *mihrāb* of the Maklī mosque and that the name Maklī for the mosque was suggested by Shaikh Ḥammād, a pious person of the fourteenth century.³⁹¹ Shaikh Ḥammād's suggestion of naming a mosque after a woman whose only credentials were her godliness

389 The details about the life of Haro Ana are drawn from several published sources, such as In'ām-ul-Ḥaqq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira Sufiyyā'-yi Balochistān*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 54–55; Balochistan. 1979. *Balochistan through the ages: Tribes*. Quetta: Nisa Traders, pp. 175–76; also see Margaret Smith. 1994. *Rabī'a the Mystic and her fellow-saints in Islam Other Women Mystics of Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld, p. 215–16.

390 Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' Thattawī. 1304/1887. *Tuhfahtu'l-Kirām, jild som*. Dehli: Matba' Nāshirī, p. 184.

391 Ibid, p. 185.

is a testimony of great worth as Shaikh Ḥammād ruled the hearts of men and controlled the destinies of rulers.³⁹²

Today, few recall Shaikh Ḥammād's testimony about Mā'ī Maklī; more emphasis is laid on lore and fables. Mā'ī Maklī's humble-looking grave, true to what she stood for, rules the hearts of those who come here to seek her shelter and blessings.

In 2016 when I visited the place, the rural poverty of the surrounding region overwhelmed me. Least concerned whether Mā'ī Maklī was a historic entity or not, her devotees practiced the simple tenets of the Sufi way of life. The woman, mythical though she might be, is real in the sense that the whole necropolis celebrates her veiled persona. Those who trust Mā'ī Maklī's power to heal their physical and mental wounds, bring flowers and flower petals, tie strings, put a few coins in the cash box, and lick the blessed salt kept in plastic bowls for them. I met at least twelve women shrine visitors between the ages of thirty and forty. All were from around the neighbourhood and appeared feeble in physique and weak in economic resources. Reluctant initially to share with me what they were soliciting through the Mā'ī's intercession, a few of them later told me privately that it was family wellbeing, health for their children, or the birth of a son—the three major challenges of any family in Pakistan. Frequently mothers bring to the shrine their newborn children because of their supplications at the shrine, to offer *salām* (salutation). On this occasion, the mothers will untie the thread they had tied earlier and put it around the neck of their newborn, believing that because of the blessings of Mā'ī Maklī, their child will survive. The ritual of tying this thread around the newborn's neck is an assurance that from now on the child has been initiated as the life-long disciple (*murīd*) of Mā'ī Maklī and will be protected and shielded by her spiritual charisma.

(5)

***Mukhaddarāt Abdālīyā*: Three Chaste Veiled Women Abdāl
Shrine: Thatta, Pakistan**

Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī, in *Tuḥfatu'l-tāhirīn*, gives a brief account of three sisters who, true to the essence of mysticism, lived a life of abstinence and remembering Allāh. Thattawī eulogizes them as *qudsī nihādan* (endowed with heavenly virtues), *ʿiṣmat qibāb* (cloaked with chastity), *pāk dāmanān* (pure),

392 Shaikh Ḥammād bin Shaikh Rashīdud-Dīn Jamālī wielded great spiritual powers and claimed *wilāyā* (dominion) over the whole region of Sindh. For more details, see *Tuḥfatu'l-Kirām*, pp. 182–183.

and *ʿiffat niqāb* (covered with modesty). Living in solitude, they remained continually engaged in Allāh's remembrance. Though they were of the rank of Abdāls (*rutba-yi abdāl dāshtand*), they kept themselves hidden from the eyes of the people and publicity (*shuhraṭ-i-khalq*).³⁹³ Thus, they are not remembered by their names, argues ʿĀzam Thattawī. Their personal identity meant nothing to the men and women who came there to seek their blessings. All through their lives, while the three sisters remained anonymous, their virtues spread everywhere. Local legends say that if anyone is in trouble and needs help, he or she should visit the shrine of these exalted persons (*martaba-yi manīʿ*) with sincerity and faith (*ṣidq-i niyyat*) and recite *Sura Yāsīn*³⁹⁴ seven times and make vows, then their needs (*hājāt*) will be fulfilled. The three sisters, possessing virtues similar to those of Bibī Maryam (*Maryam ṣifatān*), bless these people.³⁹⁵

The shrine of these three sisters is in Qandsar, a locality of Thatta.

(6)

Bibī Nānī

Shrine: Bolan, Qalat Division, Balochistan, Pakistan

Situated in the Bolan Pass, near the southern end of the Bibī Nānī Bridge, the shrine of Bibī Nānī is a popular place “celebrated from the Euphrates to the Ganges” as a highly revered pilgrimage site by both Hindus and Muslims.³⁹⁶ Captain Hart of the Bombay Infantry, in his travel account of 1840, also describes this shrine.³⁹⁷ Charles Masson (1800–1853), an East India Company soldier and also a traveller and archaeologist, discovered seven copper coins in the Beghrām region. He classified them as Indo-Scythic, saying that they “refer to the legend of NANAIA ... there are numerous shrines in these parts of Asia, called by the Muhammedans, the *Zearate of Bibī Nannī*, or ‘the lady Nanee.’” He further observed that the Hindus probably referred to her as the goddess

393 According to Sufi hagiography, Abdāls remain veiled by God.

394 Qurʾān 36.

395 Shaikh Muḥammad ʿĀzam Thattawī. 1956. *Tuḥfatuʾl-tāhirīn*. (Edited by Badr-i-ʿĀlam Durrani). Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board. p. 138; also, Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Naʿīmī. 1987. *Tazkira-i awliyā-yi Sindh*. Karachi: Shāriq Publications, p. 272.

396 R. Hughes-Buller, C.F. Minchin, and Jamiat Rai. 1907. *Balochistan District Gazetteer—Las Bela: text and appendices*. Allahabad: Pioneer Press, pp. 35–36.

397 S.W. Hart. 1840. ‘Some Account of a Journey from Kurrachee to Hinglaj, in the Lus territory, descriptive of the intermediate country, and of the port of Soumeanee,’ in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, Part. pp. 134–54.

Parbatī.³⁹⁸ Masson conjectures that Bībī Nānī may have had some connection with the figure of Nānīā, the goddess of the old Persians and Bactrians.³⁹⁹ Later, Maclean, in his study of Arabs in Sind, also proposes that the site was probably that of “a Savite temple dedicated to the goddess, known as Bībī or Māī Nānī to the Muslims and Pārvatī, Kālī or Mātā to the Hindus.”⁴⁰⁰

Whatever might have been the origin and historicity of Bībī or Māī Nānī, today her devotees remember her as the one who protects them and blesses them. It is said that Kuchiks of the Rind Baloch tribe used to offer a fixed amount of grain to the shrine at each harvest. With this grain, sacrificial sheep were purchased and offered to the shrine for the safe continuation of the water channel. Bībī Nānī, thus, was revered as the guardian and protector of the water supply by the local Muslim tribes of the region. Local tradition says that since 1895, when the ceremony of sheep sacrifice was abandoned, the water supply in Bībī Nānī Kaur, the western tributary of the Bolan River, has decreased.⁴⁰¹

As with most other women lost in antiquity, Bībī Nānī's life account can be recreated only with the help of oral traditions and the memories of those who trust in her spiritual charisma. According to local legends, she was of Saiyyid ancestry.⁴⁰² Her father was one Yā ‘Alī.⁴⁰³ Hittu Ram,⁴⁰⁴ drawing upon local traditions, writes that Bībī Rānī, being a devout believer in God and a woman of immense virtues, never married. Some miscreants, taking advantage of her

398 Charles Masson. 1834. “Memoire of the ancient coins found in Beghram, in the Kohistan of Kabul.” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 28 (April), p. 172; Parvati is the consort of Lord Siva, and is also worshipped as Devi, the greatest goddess. She has a great variety of names, such as Uma, Durga, Chandi, and Kali. For more, see John Dowson, *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature*. Ludhiana: Lyall Book Depot, (12th ed.), pp. 86–88.

399 Charles Masson. 1843. *Narrative of a Journey to Kalāt—including an account of the insurrection at that place in 1840; and a memoir on Eastern Balochistan*. London: Richard Bentley, p. 391.

400 Derryl N. Maclean. 1989. *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 15.

401 S. Zoha. 1952. “The Physiographical Personality of Baluchistan.” *Pakistan Geographical Review*, 8 (1), p. 27; also, see Baluchistan (Pakistan). 1985. *Baluchistan District Gazetteer Series*. Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, p. 3.

402 Families claiming descent from the Prophet Muḥammad through his daughter Bībī Fatima.

403 In‘ām-ul-Ḥaq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira sufiyā-yi Balochistan*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 52–54.

404 Rai Bahadur Hittu Ram, C.I.E., Settlement Extra Assistant Commissioner, Quetta was a trusted and loyal employee of the colonial administration. In 1893, he was assigned a special duty to crush disturbance in the Kalāt State. For a short biography of Hittu Ram, see Roper Lethbridge. 2005. *The Golden Book of India: a genealogical and biographical dictionary of the ruling princes, chiefs, nobles, and other personages, titled or decorated of the Indian empire*. Delhi: Aakar Books (first published in 1883), p. 177.

loneliness, attempted to dishonour her. Seeing no other way to protect herself from the mischief of these villains, she invoked Allāh's mercy. Soon, the earth opened up and swallowed her. People, on coming to know of this, raised a grave over the spot where she vanished. Within no time, the grave turned into a venerated shrine. Those whose supplications and vows were answered distributed *nān* (oven-baked flattened bread) to the shrine visitors as a mark of gratitude. Since then, Bibī Nānī came to be known by the epithet *Bibī nānwālī* (the lady of the *nāns*), which soon changed into Bibī Nānī.⁴⁰⁵

(7)

Bibī Nekzan

Shrine: Ziarat, Qalat, Balochistan, Pakistan

Similar to the lives of most other women who lived a life of piety and abstinence, Bibī Nekzan's life remains little known.⁴⁰⁶ According to local legends, this pious and virtuous woman, who was not a native of Balochistan, arrived from elsewhere to settle there. Once, while travelling, some non-Muslim bandits waylaid her and her husband. As all pleading went in vain, she prayed to Allāh for protecting her honour. As soon as she finished her supplication, the earth opened and swallowed her. Arnold (1869–1930), known for his long association with the Indian Muslims, particularly through the Aligarh Muslim University, refers to her as Bibī Nāhzan and presents this legend with little variation. He writes, "Bibi Nāhzan, who sank into the earth together with her maid when they were persecuted by some infidels, is visited by persons who have been bitten by mad dogs, and those who pay a fixed contribution to the shrine to secure immunity from cholera."⁴⁰⁷ Margaret Smith also recounts the same story.⁴⁰⁸ In'ām-ul Haq Kausar's narrative is little different from that of Arnold. He writes that when the highway robbers attacked Bibī Nekzan and her husband, Bibī Nekzan prayed to Allāh saying, "I am a feeble sinner (*ẓa'ifā ḡunahgār*) but I am of the community of Muḥammad (*ummat-i-Muḥammadi*). O' Allāh! Thou alone are the Protector of my honour and respectability, for the sake of Muḥammad, save us from imprisonment at the hands of these

405 Hittū Rām, and Saleem Akhtar. 2012. *Tārīkh-i Balochistān*. Lahore: Sang-i Meel Publications (First published in 1907), p. 275.

406 Nekzan, a Persian word, which means a good woman.

407 T.W. Arnold. 1908. 'Saints and Martyrs (Muhammadan in India),' In James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray (Edited) *Encyclopædia of religion and ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 71.

408 Margaret Smith. 1994. *Rabī'ā the Mystic and her fellow-saints in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld, p. 212.

non-believers, and from disgrace and agony.” The supplication was answered and the earth swallowed them up. People of the area built a shrine at the spot.⁴⁰⁹

About the sanctity of the shrine of Bibī Nekzan, Bray, in his *Census of Baluchistan* (1911), writes that “no one may sleep on a bedstead in the village, though it [the shrine] lies a mile or so away.”⁴¹⁰ The shrine of Bibī Nekzan continues to attract devotees and visitors.

(8)

Pānch Bibī ki Dargāh

Dabhoi, Vadodara District, Gujarat, India

In the *Annual Report of the Director of Archaeology, Baroda State* for the years 1934–1935, a reference to a historic site found in a dilapidated and neglectful state led to the identification of a shrine dedicated to five virtuous sisters, Pānch Bibī (five respected women).⁴¹¹

The discovery of this shrine was purely by chance. While the survey work was in progress for several areas of the historic Baroda fort, a close investigation of the Baroda citadel’s wall finally resulted in this discovery. Although the actual shrine was not found, what led to the confirmation that there once existed a *dargāh* commemorating five pious women was based on finding several inscribed stone slabs, most of which were covered by thick coats of whitewash.⁴¹² Major portions of this *dargāh* built in stone were found in such a bad condition that Hirananda Sastri, the compiler of the report, commented that the “fragmentary or ruinous” state hindered any work of repair.⁴¹³

I have included the above narrative—which is far too obscure and blurred and obviously is of little help in reconstructing the lives of these five women Sufis—to show how damage caused by negligence and disrespect towards history and heritage deprive us of the knowledge of much of our past.⁴¹⁴

409 In‘ām-ul Ḥaq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira sufiyā- yi Balochistān*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 55–56.

410 Denys Bray. 1913. *Census of India, 1911, vol. 4, Baluchistan*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, p. 63.

411 Hirananda Sastri. 1936. *Annual Report of the Director of Archaeology, Baroda State: 1934–35 (year ending 31st July, 1939)*. [Place of publication not identified]: Baroda State Press; also, Hirananda Sastri. 1940. *The Ruins of Dabhoi or Darbhavati in Baroda State*. [Baroda]: Baroda State Press, p. 2.

412 Ibid, p. 5.

413 Ibid, p. 2.

414 For recent destruction, plunder, and arson of *dargah* and mosques in Gujarat see, District wise Detail of Damage to mosques, dargahs etc in Gujarat ... www.ummah.com > Forum > Learning Area > Learn about Islam.

(9)

Mā'ī Qadam***Dargāh*: Thatta, Pakistan*****Urs*: 25 Sha'bān**

Mā'ī Qadam is also known as Jījā Mīrān. No information is found in books about her life. Local traditions say that she lived several centuries back and used to sell milk during the day in Thatta and at nightfall she was miraculously transported to Makkah with her milk vessels. Because of her powers to travel, devotees come here to seek her blessings before travelling. Her shrine is built inside a mosque which is also named after her, Mā'ī Qadam Jama' Masjid. The grave looks recently built.

(10)

Ḥazrat Rājī Laulashtī**Place: Bijapur, India**

Ḥazrat Rājī Laulashtī was one of the virtuous and pious women of Bijapur. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zubairī Qādirī Shaṭṭārī, an early nineteenth-century historian who compiled reliable biographical notices of Sufis of Bijapur, with the help of written sources that are now extinct and oral traditions that he gathered from the descendants of Sufis, in his *Rawẓatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur* (compiled in 1825) writes that Ḥazrat Rājī Laulashtī was an 'ārifa with excellent virtues. Not much is recorded about her life. Zubairī, however, refers to a mystical legend which narrates that the night she was buried, a thief approached her grave with the intent of stealing her coffin. The thief lost his eyesight as soon as he touched the grave. The date of her demise is not known.⁴¹⁵ Ḥazrat Rājī Laulashtī lies buried outside the western wall of the shrine of Ḥabīb Allāh Sibghat Allāhī (d. 1632).

(11)

Saidānī Bibī or Nādān Bibī**Shrine: Mahekar, District Buldhana, Amravati Division, Maharashtra, India**

Close to the *dargāh* of Punch Pīr (five pious persons) in Mahekar, Maharashtra, is the *dargāh* of Saidānī Bibī or Nādān Bibī (the innocent lady).⁴¹⁶ Men are not allowed to enter the precincts of the shrine. Childless women come here to

⁴¹⁵ *Rawẓatu'l awliyā'-yi Bijāpur*, pp. 223–224.

⁴¹⁶ Locally this area is known as *pariyā kā thānā*.

make vows, and once they get a child they return with offerings of thanksgiving. Women who make wishes here hang green glass bangles and green sheets of fabric around the shrine.⁴¹⁷ There was a dispute over the income of the shrine and a lawsuit was filed in 1996 with the Madras High Court.⁴¹⁸ A recent press report highlighted the role of this shrine in creating public harmony in the area.⁴¹⁹

(12)

Shāh Parioṇ jo Āsitāna (Shrine of the King Fairies)

Place: Makli, Thatta

Some eighty kilometres east of Karachi, near Thatta, stands Makli Hill, known for its vast cemetery consisting of the graves of more than 125,000 Sufis and other luminaries. To Mīr Sher Ali Qānī' (1727–1788),⁴²⁰ this was not merely the resting place of the Sufis and of those who feared Allāh; to him it was *jilwāgāh-i Imāmīn* (a display platform of the saintly leaders).⁴²¹ Some of these tombs are now crumbling into dust; some are marked while others bear no name.

Here, within a walled enclosure, close to the grave of Saiyyid Shāh Ḥusain Shāh Bukhārī, are two graves, known as the graves of two chaste and pious women. They were the adopted daughters of Saiyyid Shāh Ḥusain Shāh and are popularly known as kings of fairies—Shāh Parioṇ. Qānī', in his *Makli Nameh*, written in Persian in 1760–1761, gives a glimpse of the grandeur of the grave enclosure of the *āsitāna* (a saint's tomb/a place for resting) and of the charm of its female visitors (*ālam-i inās*),⁴²² whose "sight raises a resurrection of the strength of the sight seers."⁴²³ Qānī', however, was less interested

417 Roy Burman, J.J. 2002. *Syncretic Shrines and Communities*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p. 110.

418 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MASJID E FARKHUNDA
www.the-laws.com/Encyclopedia/Browse/Case?CaseId=216991777000.

419 Dargah dedicated to woman centre of harmony—Deccan Herald.
www.deccanherald.com › District, Aug. 8, 2013.

420 Mīr Sher 'Alī Qānī' (1727–1788) was born in Thatta and is buried in Makli. Commissioned by the Ghulām 'Alī Shāh Kalhoḡā, Qānī' wrote the history of the Kalhoḡas, *Ṭuḡfatul-kirām*.

421 Mīr Sher 'Alī Qānī'. 2011. *Makli Nameh* or *Bostān Bahār*. (Translated by Dr. N.B.G. Qazi). Karachi: Sindh Archives, p. 59. A *jilwa-gāh*, as defined by Steingass, in addition to its meaning as the world, also as a bride's chamber in which she is unveiled by her husband, see *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*.

422 Plural of Arabic word *unsā*, meaning female.

423 *Makli Nameh* or *Bostān Bahār*, p. 44; also see, A. Schimmel, 1983. *Makli Hill: A Centre of Islamic Culture in Sindh*. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

in writing more about Shāh Parioṇ and does not tell who was buried in these graves. Saiyyid Ḥusamuddīn Rashdi, who edited the *Makli Nameh*, also does not offer any details about them. Thus, the names of the Shāh Parioṇ remain unknown. During my visit to Thatta and Makli, I met Abu'l Sirāj Muftī Ṭufail Aḥmad Thattawī, *imām* of the Dargāh of 'Abdullah Shāh Aṣḥābi, Makli, Thatta, in February of 2016 and again a month later. He was kind enough to explain the history of these two women and also gave me, as a gift, two of his books in Urdu.

Rejecting the popular myth that these two women were fairies, *jinn*s, or some superhuman beings, Abu'l Sirāj Muftī Ṭufail Aḥmad told me that once a caravan of travellers stopped near Saiyyid Shāh Ḥusain Shāh's abode. One of the travellers of this caravan brought two ailing sisters suffering from some mysterious disease to seek his blessings. Shāh Ṣāhib, being a person of loving and caring nature, asked the parents of the two girls to leave them with him. He then took them to his home and said to his wife, "Look here, I have brought two fairies for you. Look after them." The two grew into healthy, saintly beings. Soon these sisters were blessed with the charismatic powers of healing and curing anyone who would come to them to seek their blessings. At the time of his death, Saiyyid Shāh Ḥusain Shāh willed that his two adopted daughters should be buried next to him.⁴²⁴

At the shrine, visitors related another legend which said that these two little girls were the sisters of the seven sisters buried at *Sattiṇ jo āsitāno*. Later, as these two sisters miraculously grew wings and could fly, they came to be called fairies and were buried separately here.

The *mazār* of the Shāh Parioṇ is under the custody of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Sindh. Devotee women told me that the Shāh Parioṇ were of the family of Ḥaẓrat Sulaimān (the Prophet Solomon) who is believed to control the *jinn* (genii). There is a square-shaped hallowed portion of the floor at the foot of the graves of Shāh Parioṇ. Devotees take out a small piece of rock lying inside, lick it, and put it back there. They take out the dust from this hole and rub it on their hands and faces. It is believed that this dust has the power of blessings and those who touch it are blessed with health and wealth. I saw all the visitors rubbing the leftover oil of the lamps on their faces, hands, and heads. Women who believe that they begot babies by the blessings of the Shāh Parioṇ bring their child for saluting the pious sisters. On this occasion, they offer live fowl to the shrine.

424 'Abul Sirāj Muftī Ṭufail Aḥmad Thattawī. 2008. *Tuḥfat-uz zā'irīn*. Thatta: *Darbār Ḥaẓrat Saiyyidna 'Abdullah Shāh Aṣḥābi*, pp. 151–2; also see by the same author, *Jadīd makli nāma*. Thatta: Aṣḥābi kitāb ghar (2010), pp. 94–95.

At the feet of the graves of Shāh Parioṇ, there are two graves of their male attendants. People visit them also with great reverence. The *khalīfa* of the shrine, a male, told us that the Shāh Parioṇ travel from one place to another in order to receive the petitions of their devotees. To facilitate this, he told me that there are several *āsītānas* of the Shāh Parioṇ in cities such as Karachi, Lahore, and Faisalabad. I have visited one such *āsītāna* within the shrine complex of the *darbār* of Māī Mirān in Karachi.

Although men are barred from entering the shrine premises, there were several of them inside the shrine. Menstruating women's entry is strictly banned. I saw that a woman guard was asking women about their status and those who were menstruating were asked to step back. All the women present at the shrine unanimously believed in the great charismatic powers of the Shāh Parioṇ. The shrine thus acts as a therapy centre and heals the devotees by raising their hopes for a solution to their miseries, which are many.



FIGURE 8 Shrine of Shāh Parioṇ jo Āsītāna (Shrine of the King Fairies), Makli, Thatta. The chicken brought as a gift is roaming around in the background



FIGURE 9 A woman devotee is presenting her infant for treatment to the spiritual healer, Shāh Parioṇ



FIGURE 10 A devotee holding a piece of salt to lick for spiritual healing at the shrine of Shāh Parioṇ, Makli, Thatta

(13)

Bibī Saiyyidānī or Ḥaẓrat Saidānī Ṣaḥība**Shrine: Bangalore (now called Bengaluru), Karnatika, India****Urs: 15 Rabi' u'l awwal**

The shrine of Bibī Saiyyidānī, daughter of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Madni of Ullāl and wife of Ḥaẓrat Tawakkal Mastān Bābā Suhrawardī, spiritual successor of Bābā Fahkhru'd-Dīn of Penukonda in the Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh (d. 1295), is on Richmond Road in Bangalore. Bābā Fahkhru'd-Dīn introduced the Suhrawardī Sufi *silsila* in South India. No details about Bibī Saiyyidānī could be found in any text. Hundreds of women, mostly childless, visit her dargāh to seek her blessings. They address her as Māji (the Mother) out of devotion and affection, and thus establish familial ties of mother-daughter relationship. The devotee women tie coloured ribbons around the nearby trees and hang coloured bangles as their offerings.

(14)

Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī**Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan**

Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī was a Ḥusainza'ī Pashtūn, whereas her husband belonged to the Baduza'ī clan. 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī, her only biographer, writes in *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l asfīyā'* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the pure ones) that Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī, a person of deep piety, would fast frequently and pray all through the night. Kheshgī's account is considered reliable and trusted, first because Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī was a member of his community of the Afghānī /Pashtūns of Quṣūr, and secondly because his other writings, thus far, are considered undisputed. Thus, drawing upon his knowledge and experiences of his community and the tales he had heard, Kheshgī writes that Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī, similar to persons who consider this world transitory and are always prepared to depart for their journey like a traveller on his way (*misl-i musāfirān*), would remain ready for the journey (*tahīya-i safar*). When people enquired about the secret (*sirr*) of this preparedness, she would tell them, "I am waiting for Allāh's Angel of Death (*muntazir paik-i ilāhī am*). I do not know when he would arrive."⁴²⁵

Another thing about her that puzzled onlookers was that she would not light a lamp near her, even in the darkness of night. When people asked the

425 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fols. 124 a & b. This same notice is in Kheshgī's other work, *Ma'ārij-u'l wilāyat*, completed in 1094/1683. MS. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidī Collection, Punjab University, Lahore, fol. 653b.

reason (*ḥikmat*) for doing this, her answer was, “If one is void of inner Light (*nūr-i bāṭinī*), then what is the use of an external light (*roshni zāhiri*)?” She would also tell them that if one is blessed with the inner Light, the external light, then, is of no use.

Bibī Shaikhī Durkhānī was often heard saying that a grandson would be born who would be named Ayyūb and would be blessed with several children and wealth. This happened exactly as per her predictions.⁴²⁶

It is sad that Kheshgī gives no clue to draw any inference about the time period of this excellent Sufi. Probably she lived sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, a time period which coincides with the arrival of the Pashtūn settlers to Quṣūr. A mere conjecture, however, is not sufficient enough to assign a firm date.

(15)

Bibī Shaikhzādī

Place: Multan/Uchch, Pakistan

Bibī Shaikhzādī belonged to the family of Khwāja Yaḥyā Kabīr (d. 834/1430).⁴²⁷ She was married to one Miyān Turmān, son of Miyān Dūdū. Two most trusted historians, Khwāja Ni‘matu’llah and ‘Abdu’llah Kheshgī, say that she was a perfect gnostic (*‘arīfa-yi kāmila*) and always remained busy in prayers and remembrance of Allāh (*ṣāhib-i riyāzat wa mujāhida*),⁴²⁸ and fasted regularly and continuously without breaking it in the evening (*rozā-yi wiṣāl*).⁴²⁹

Although Bibī Shaikhzādī remained engrossed in remembering Allāh and showed no interest in her wifely duties, her husband, Miyān Turmān, treated her with great respect and reverence (*ta‘zīm wa takrīm*). However, as she continued to be occupied only by her mystical experience (*maghlū’l ḥāl*), her husband could not bear it any longer and secretly remarried (*khufiya zan-i diagr nikāh dāshta*). After some time, Bibī Shaikhzādī discovered the secret marriage and said to him, “O Turmān! I see that your eyesight is gone now.” Miyān

426 Ibid.

427 For short biographical notice on Khwāja Yaḥyā Kabīr, a disciple of Saiyyid Jalālu’d-Dīn Bukhārī, see Khwāja Ni‘matu’llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību’llah al-Harāwī in *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī* pp. 723–40.

428 Ibid, p. 827; *Akbāru’l awliyā’*. MS. no. R343, fol. 128a.

429 The Prophet has decreed against continuous fasts. The Prophet said, “Do not practice Al-Wisal (fasting continuously without breaking one’s fast in the evening or eating before the following dawn).” The people said to the Prophet, “But you practice Al-Wisal?” The Prophet replied, “I am not like any of you, for I am given food and drink (by Allāh) during the night.” See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 30, Ḥadīth 68, vol. 3, Book 31, Ḥadīth 18.

Turmān went to her father and complained against her. A few days later, Miyān Turmān fell critically ill, lost his vision, and soon died.⁴³⁰

Surprisingly, neither Khwāja Nī'matu'llah nor 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī, who were basically interested in recording the history of the Pashtūns, tell us about the place or date of birth or death of Bibī Shaikhzādī.

(16)

Bibī Ṣāḥiba Surkhposh

Period: Not known

Place: Delhi

A hagiographical story of this saintly woman is found in only one source, *Tārīkh Awliya'-i Dihli* (1935), under the heading *barguzīdā mūmin nek'auraton kā bayān* (an account of saintly, believing, and virtuous women). Presumably, she belongs to the early days of the arrival of the Muslims in India. According to a legend, she arrived from Ghazni to the city of Delhi along with her brother. When her brother, along with his other companions, was martyred in a battle with nonbelievers (*kuffār*), she was left alone. She prayed to Allāh to protect her honour and soon the earth took her in and only a small part of her red scarf was left out; hence her name is Bibī Ṣāḥiba Surkhposh, the lady covered in red.⁴³¹

(17)

Bibī Tārī

Place: Makli Hills, Thatta, Pakistan

The story of Bibī Tārī, a pious woman of Sindh, presents the essence of *taṣawwuf* as it was understood by God-wary women. Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī, in *Tuḥfatu'l-tāhīrīn* (the gift of the holy persons), adopted a nontraditional way of presenting the lives of the Sufis. Instead of setting a separate section for Sufi women or submerging them within the narratives of the male Sufis, he included their life histories according to the places of their origin or burial. Thus, in the first of the two sections of his book, *awliyā' Allāh ki dar koh Makli wa shahr Thatta āsūdā and* (friends of Allāh buried in the Makli Hills or

430 *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, p. 827–28; *Akbāru'l awliyā'*, fol. 128b.

431 Maulawī Aḥmad Sā'id. 1354/1935. *Tārīkh Awliyā'-i Dihli*. Maḥbūbu'l-maṭāb' Barqī Press, Dihlī, p. 144.

Thatta), ‘Āzam Thattawī presents the narratives of Bībī Tārī and Bībī Fāṭima (aka Bībī Ḥajjānī).⁴³²

Introducing Bībī Tārī as *nek zan* (virtuous woman), ‘Āzam Thattawī says that she was born in Thatta and was a scion of the famous Soomra dynasty (1024–1351).⁴³³ Fear of Allāh (*khauf-i ilāhī*) was so deeply ingrained in her that she would weep and cry (*gīrya*) all the time. Like a true Sufi, engrossed in Allāh’s remembrance, she would never lie down or recline to even take a short nap, and would continually sit with her skirt wrapped around her legs (*hamwarā pā-i khud-rā ba-dāman paichida nishasti*) which she never stretched or straightened (*darāz*) and thus avoided falling into deep sleep. Whenever overpowered by sleep, she would rest against a wall. When fully awake, she would keep gazing at the sky above, and with tears flowing down like a stream, she would pray like a humble slave, submitting in total obedience to Allāh. This reminds us of the rules laid down by the great Sufi Shaikh Abu’l Najīb Suhrāwardī (d. 663/1168) in his *kitāb ādābū’l-murīdīn* (book of rules for the novices) under the heading of rules for sleeping. Suhrāwardī writes that when sleep overpowers, a Sufi sits up against a wall and fasts during the day.⁴³⁴ Bībī Tārī, a Sufi of excellent virtues, with tears streaming from her eyes, would look up towards the sky, seeking Allāh’s mercy, and would implore, “O’ Allāh thou are the Merciful who has kept me protected (*mas’un dāshta*) from all misfortunes (*jami’ āfāt*) while I am a forgetful creature (*bandā-i-ghaflam*) who forgets you all the time (*hamā waqt tirā farāmosh dāram*).”

Her everyday schedule tells us that she never forgot Allāh. In addition to the fasts of *Ramaḥan*, she used to fast frequently. It is said that to break her fast, she would eat a little from a half-filled bowl of broth (*nīm kāsā-yi āsh*). To make the broth tasteless (*be-zā’iqa*), she would pour more water in it. Whenever a person in need (*ahl-i ḥājī*) would come to her, she would pray for him or her. The Grace of Allāh answered all her prayers. Known to the local people as *walīyya* (female friend of Allāh), Bībī Tārī lies buried in the graveyard of Thatta, a few steps away from the grave of Ḥaḥrat Shukru’llah Shīrāzī, great-grandfather of Mīr Alī Sher Qānī’ (1725–1789), the author of *Tuḥfaṭu’l-Kīrām*.⁴³⁵

432 For Bībī Tārī, see ‘Āzam Thattawī. 1956. *Tuḥfaṭu’l-tāhīrīn*. (Edited by Badr-i-‘Ālam Durrani). Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board, p. 48.

433 Ibid, p. 48. For the history of the Soomra rule, see Mīr Muḥammad Marsūm. *Tārīkh-i Sind ma’arūf bih Tārīkh-i Ma’sūmī*.

434 Bandā Nawāz, and Saiyyid ‘Aṭā Ḥusain. 1939. *Tarjumā-i ādābū’l-murīdīn* (Persian translation of Suhrāwardī’s Arabic work *adāb al-murīdīn*). Ḥaidarābād: Maṭbū’a-i Intizāmī, p. 35.

435 *Tuḥfaṭu’l-tāhīrīn*, p. 48; also, see I’jāzu’l-ḥaqq Quddūsī. *Tazkira-yi Šūfīyya-yi Sindh*, 329–30; Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Na’īmī. *Tazkira awliyā-yi Sindh*, pp. 47–8; Muftī Abu Sirāj

Later historians have retold the story of Bībī Tārī without adding any new information about her life. Thus, as with most other women included in this text, Bībī Tārī also remains little known. Pious women like Bībī Tārī do not need to be designated as a *walī* by a *shaikh* or a *pīr*; people know their worth and endorse their *wilāyat*. I hope that someday some researchers would find a lost record to establish the chronological data about Bībī Tārī.

(18)

Turta-turt Bībī

Place: Trichinopoly, India

In *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī*, an early nineteenth-century travel diary of the pilgrimage of ‘Azam Jāh Bahādur Nawāb Wālājāh IV of Carnatic (1820–1825), accounting the lives of the male Sufis of Nathar Nagar,⁴³⁶ brief biographical notices of some Sufi women are also included. Of these, Turta-turt Bībī is one such pious woman.⁴³⁷ *Turta-turt* appears to be a popular title and not the real name of this pious woman as the word in the local Deccani language means “in haste” (*fīl-faur*). Her grave, which was located close to the mote alongside the gate of Nathar Nagar at the time of Wālājāh’s pilgrimage, seems to belong to a much earlier period. A hagiographical tradition says that when the foundations of the city were dug, suddenly blood began to ooze out (*khūn jāri shud*). On excavating deeper, a grave appeared which was believed to be of this chaste, veiled woman (*mastūra-yi ‘iffat nishān*), who was reposing in eternal peace there in a white dress (*bā-libās safaid bākhwāb rāhat ast*). The diggers, amazed and shocked, immediately covered the ground (*mā’an pinhān sākhta*) and repaired the grave. Paying tribute to this saintly woman, Ghulām Qādir Nāzir, the compiler of the travel diary, comparing her to Rāb’ia al-‘Adawiyya, says that she was in the category of men of Allāh (*ba ṣaf-i rijāl Allāh*). Lamenting that virtuous persons like her are gone into the dust of obscurity (*darīn khāk tīra rafta*), he

Muḥammad Ṭufail Thattawī. 2010. *Jadīd Maklī nāma*. Hyderabad: Hydri Printing Press, pp. 57–58.

436 The city of Trichinopoly was renamed as Nathar Nagar by the Walajahs in honour of Sufi Nathar Wali (969–1039). See *Madras District Gazetteers, Trichinopoly*, vol. 1. Calcutta: Government Printing Press, 1907, p. 338; T.W. Arnold. 1913. *Preaching of Islam. A History of the Muslim faith*. London: Constable & Co., p. 267. Susan Bayly. 1989. *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, p. 164.

437 *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī* of Ghulām ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Nāzir. 1961. Edited by Muhamamd Yusuf Kokan Usmani. Madras: Electric Press, p. 178.

says all traces of their existence are lost till they gather again on the day of resurrection (*ḥaṣhr wa nashr*).⁴³⁸

The above short narrative, part of the daily diary of a royal pageant, dramatically turns into a thesis on the lost and buried histories of Sufi women. When discovered, they still remain veiled (*mastūra*). Their identity does not lie in their given or known names; nor do their family links and connections matter. Significant in the above short notice is that Nāzīr accords the highest status that historically men have been conferring upon the pious and virtuous women, that is identifying them as a man (*rijāl*), thus echoing ibn al-ʿArabī's praise of Rābiʿa that "when a woman becomes a 'man' in the path of God, she is a man and one cannot call her a woman."⁴³⁹

The grave of Tura-turt Bibī was covered immediately. The caravan moved forward. The story was recorded and forgotten. After a long gap, a woman scholar, Jaweda Habib, mentioned her in 2002 in her history of the Sufis of Tamilnadu written in Urdu.⁴⁴⁰ Ghulām Qādir Nāzīr, however, has included a similar story of chance discovery of the grave of a male Sufi, Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Ḥasan Qadīrī, also known as Pīr Ghāʾib Ṣāḥib, in his travelogue. In this story, the tomb of Pīr Ghāʾib Ṣāḥib was struck when at the orders of Nawab Zuʾlfiqār Khan Bahadur Nuṣrat Jang, the governor of Carnatic, the wooded area around Tanjore was being cleared. The grave was damaged and blood oozing out like water out of a fountain scared the labourer. The Nawab also felt concerned. That night, the Pīr appeared in the Nawāb's dream, narrated his story, and questioned why he was disturbed in his sleep. He also told him that the grave would now be marked by a bunch of fresh flowers lying on top of it. Next morning, the Nawab went to the spot, recognised the grave by fresh flowers lying on the grave, and immediately ordered the construction of a domed mausoleum. Nawab Wālājāh I established a special endowment for the shrine's maintenance. Later, during the controversial governorship of George Pigot,⁴⁴¹ the Raja of Tanjore reduced the endowment.

438 Belief in 'gathering on the Day of Resurrection is obligatory for Muslims as it is part of faith (*īmān*), see sura 4:87. Also, for Al-Ghazali's exposition of this Qur'ānic concept, see Gianotti, Timothy J. 2001. *Al-Ghazali's unspeakable doctrine of the soul unveiling the esoteric psychology and eschatology of the Iḥyāʾ*. Leiden: Brill, p. 170.

439 A.J. Arberry. 1979. *Muslim saints and mystics: episodes from the "Tadhkirat al-Auliya" ("Memorial of the Saints")*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 18.

440 Jaweda Habib. 2002. *Tārīkh Awliyāʾ-yi Tamil Nadu*. Chennai: Urdu Publications, p. 60.

441 During the governorship of Madras under George Pigot (1755–63) great political tussles happened. Pigot amassed huge fortunes. Later, in 1777, he died in captivity. For Pigot's life, see Sudip Bhattacharya. 2013. *The Strange Case of Lord Pigot*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

(19)

Ḥazrat Zachchā Bibī**Period:** Not known**Shrine:** Thanjavur, Karnataka, India**Urs:** 12 Rabi'us Sāni

Another reference to another shrine named after Zachchā Bibī is found in the early nineteenth-century pilgrimage diary of 1238/1823, *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī*, of Āzam Jāh Bahādur Nawāb Wālājāh (1820–1825). On his pilgrimage tour from Madras to the shrine at Nagore in the Thanjavur District, the Nawab arrived at the gates of the fort of Chanji, also known as Nusratgarh. Before entering the city, the Nawab stopped at the well-known (*shuhrāh darad*) shrine of Zachchā Bibī to pay homage and seek her blessings. Regarding the miraculous powers of Zachchā Bibī, Ghulām ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Nāzir, the scribe of the diary, observes that her charisma and munificence continues greatly to this day (*tā ḥāl karāmat wa faiz-i ōu is qadr jāri ast*). Whoever makes supplications (*istimdād*) at her *mazār* with sincere faith (*bā-ḥusn-i ‘itiqād*) has all of them granted by her mercy (*rahmat*).⁴⁴²

Her name, Zachchā, is of great significance. It is a Persian word that means a woman who has recently delivered and is in her postpartum period. In all probability, this could not have been her real name. True to the meaning of her known name, Zachchā Bibī is associated with pregnant women and women who have delivered recently. Thus, she remains until today the patron of women who are about to deliver or have recently delivered. Bayly, quoting an unpublished source, the basis of which seems to be oral traditions, writes that this pious woman “comes in the vision of the delivering women and helps them in their times of distress.”⁴⁴³ Appearance of a sufi and virtuous person in the dream of a Muslim woman at the time of birthing or during the forty days of postpartum bleeding (*nifās*) is a significant reference because in most tradition-bound Muslim societies, women during postpartum are usually associated with some form of bodily pollution and their touch and presence is avoided.⁴⁴⁴ Contrary to these negative traditions, in this instance a birthing

442 *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī* of Ghulām ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Nazir. 1961. Edited by Muhammad Yusuf Kokan Usmani. Madras: Electric Press, p. 142.

443 Susan Bayly. 1989. *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, pp. 134–35.

444 For further details and a modern perspective on this issue, see Marrión Holmes Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press (2013), also by the same author, *Body of text: the emergence of the Sunnī law of ritual purity*. Albany: State University of New York Press (2002).

woman is glorified and is offered homage by a large number of male and female devotees through the memory of Zachchā Bibī.⁴⁴⁵

Today, the shrine is located inside the compound of a government hospital in the Thanjavur district and is regularly visited by patients of the maternity ward. Bayly comments that this *dargāh* is “particularly interesting for its success in bridging the gulf between the world of modern ‘scientific’ medicine, and the traditions of healing associated with the *pir* and his *barakat*.”⁴⁴⁶

(20)

Bibī Zulaikhā

Date: Unknown

Place: Gulbarga

Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān, in his account of the Sufis of Gulbarga, *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga* (1924), writes that in 803/1400 on his arrival from Delhi in Gulbarga, Khwāja Gisū Darāz went first to visit the shrine of Shaikh Sirāju'd-Dīn Junaidī (d. 781/1379).⁴⁴⁷ On his way back from shrine visitation, Khwāja Gisū Darāz stopped for the *ziyārat* at the shrine of a pious woman (*‘aurat-i ṣāliḥa*), Bibī Zulaikhā. As soon as he approached the grave, he heard a female voice reciting the Qur’ān coming from inside the blessed grave (*marqad-i mubārak*). The Shaikh commented, “Good women do not let their voice be heard by unrelated men (*nā mahram*). As soon as these words were uttered, the voice stopped.”⁴⁴⁸

The above narrative is not found in any other text. I could not find any other evidence, archaeological or otherwise, in support of the existence of Bibī Zulaikhā's grave. The fact that Khwāja Gisū Darāz is reported to have visited another female Sufi's shrine on his arrival in Gulbarga encourages accepting the authenticity of Bibī Zulaikhā. Bibī Zulaikhā might have arrived in the Deccan during the earlier exodus of Sufis from the north to the Deccan about whom much information remains missing.

445 Jaweda Habib. 2002. *Tārīkh Awliyā'-yi Tamil Nadu*. Chennai: Urdu Publications, p. 38.

446 Susan Bayly. 1989. *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, pp. 134–35.

447 *Rawṣatu'l awliyā'-i Bijāpur*, p. 126.

448 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, 161.

Biographical Notices of Sufi Women according to Their Specific Status

10.1 Sufi Women *Khalīfas*

(1)

Ḥazrat ‘Ajība Khānam

Period: Mid-Eighteenth Century

Place: Panipat

Shrine: Panipat, India

In the late eighteenth-century Sufi chronicles, Ḥazrat ‘Ajība Khānam emerges as one of the *khalīfas* of the Delhi-based Naqshbandī Sufi Shaikh Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān (martyred in 1195/1780 at the hands of a religious fanatic) to instruct and guide women disciples of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī *silsila* of the Sufis. Born at a time of intense political chaos, economic ruination, and social mayhem that engulfed the North Indian Muslims, ‘Ajība Khānam’s life presents a picture much different from other Muslim women of her time.

‘Ajība Khānam’s father was a resident of the historic city of Panipat, near Delhi. Though his name is not found, we know that he was a well-off man with a large heart and Sufi leaning, and had strong devotional affiliations with Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān,¹ the Naqshbandī- Mujaddidī Sufi Master.² Thus, growing up in a household familiar with the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa* of Mirzā Mazhar, ‘Ajība Khānam’s devotion towards Mirzā Mazhar is not surprising. Another and rather exceptional fact about ‘Ajība Khānam is that compared to most other Muslim women of eighteenth-century India, she was an educated person. Further, contrary to the tradition of her contemporary society, ‘Ajība Khānam used to write letters and correspond regularly with Mirzā Mazhar and his wife, Mardum Maḥall, who was also Mirzā Mazhar’s disciple and *khalīfa* for women only.³ Mirzā Mazhar and his wife’s relationship with ‘Ajība Khānam

1 He gifted ten *bighas* of land to Mirzā Lalan, an adopted son of Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān. See Maḥmudu’l Ḥasan ‘Ārif, *Tazkira Qāzi Muḥammad Sanā’u’llah Pānīpatī*. (Lahore: Idara Sharāfat-i Islamiyah, 1995), p. 238.

2 For the life of Mirzā Mazhar, see Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī. *Maqāmāt-i-Mazharī*. (Dihli: Maṭba‘ Muṭtabāi’ 1309/1892).

3 Ibid, p. 63.

was more than that of a master-disciple relationship. Mirzā Mazhar treated her as his daughter and therefore in his letters to her, written after her marriage, he affectionately addressed her *farzand-i bar-khwur-dār* (my child with good fortune),⁴ or simply as Bahū Jīū (the blessed daughter-in-law). Thus, long before 'Ajība Khānam attained spiritual virtues, she was already a woman whose life was much different from most women of her time.

Sometime before 1166/1753, 'Ajība Khānam was married to Ḥaẓrat Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810), a Sufi scholar and a disciple and *khalīfa* of Mirzā Mazhar.⁵ Sanā'u'llah was a man of great virtues, the most important virtue being his generous heart in sharing his wealth with others. In view of Mirzā Mazhar's close proximity to the two families, i.e., that of 'Ajība Khānam and of Ḥaẓrat Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī, Mirzā Mazhar might have arranged the matrimonial match of Sanā'u'llah and 'Ajība Khānam, though we have no evidence.⁶ Interestingly, although 'Ajība Khānam had good relations with her husband, took care of his personal needs, and bore him three sons and two daughters,⁷ Sanā'u'llah took another wife, Rābi'a Khānam.⁸ The second wife also performed *bai'at* at Mirzā Mazhar's hands.

Life for 'Ajība Khānam with a co-wife and a powerful mother-in-law must have been a challenging one. Her mother-in-law, Bādshāh Begam, addressed as Begamī Šāhib by Mirzā Mazhar, was an accomplished daughter of Nawāb Luṭfu'llah Khan Bahādur Šādiq of Panīpat who held the rank of 7000 at the Mughal court.⁹ Similar to most other women of her time, 'Ajība Khānam experienced conflicts in her wedded life. However, so great was her confidence in her spiritual mentor, Mirzā Mazhar, that instead of fighting with

4 See Letter No. 132 in 'Abdur Razzāq Qureshi. *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*. (Bombay: 'Alawī Book Depot, 1966), p. 191.

5 Maḥmudu'l Ḥasan 'Ārif. 1995. *Tazkira Qāzī Muḥammad Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī*. Lahore: Idāra Saqāfat-i Islāmiyya, p. 238. For his life also, see *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī*, pp. 65–68.

6 Qāzī Sanā'u'llah's mother whom Mirzā Mazhar used to address as Begamī Šāhib and Qāzī Sanā'u'llah brothers and sons had taken an oath of allegiance at the hands of Mirzā Mazhar.

7 Maḥmudu'l Ḥasan 'Ārif. 1995. *Tazkira Qāzī Muḥammad Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī*, Lahore: Idāra Saqāfat-i Islāmiyya, p. 238; also, see Letter No. 25, p. 34 in *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, which relates that she would get new dresses prepared for her husband and send these to him even while he was travelling. Her sons, Maulawī Aḥmadu'llah (d. 1784), Maulawī Sibghatu'llah and Maulawī Dalīlu'llah were also deputies of Mirzā Mazhar.

8 *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, p. 142; also, *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī* [(Urdu translation by Muḥammad Iqbal Mujaddidi). Lahore: Urdu Board, 2001], p. 402, f. n. 26.

9 For Luṭfu'llah Khan, see *Later Mughals* by William Irvine ((Reprint, 1991), Delhi: Atlantic Publishers), p. 131 & 190, and Denzil Ibbetson. *Gazetteer of the Karnal District—1883–84* (Lahore: Arya Press, 1884), p. 153.

her tormentors, she would seek solace by complaining to him and seeking his advice.¹⁰ One such quarrel with her husband drove her to report it to Mirzā Mazhar, who rewarded her with a unique honour—authorization for her to instruct and enrol women disciples in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*.

We do not know the nature of the complaint lodged but we can understand its seriousness. ‘Ajība Khānam’s hurt was so intense that as a strategy to seek solace and peace of heart she chose to present herself at the House of Allāh in Makka. It could also be that to distance herself from her husband, she decided to go on a Ḥajj pilgrimage with her son. The fact that her husband was unsuccessful in his efforts to dissuade her from this journey and then sought Mirzā Mazhar’s mediation to stop her, convinces us further that the intended journey of ‘Ajība Khānam had more meanings than just pilgrimage.

Concerning ‘Ajība Khānam’s journey on the path of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, scarce information emerges. We do not know when or at what age she entered the discipleship of Jān-i-Jānān—before or after her marriage. One can only conjecture that it may have happened while she was unmarried as her father was also a disciple of Mirzā Mazhar. However, it can also be argued that, as in most cases, unmarried girls usually were not encouraged to undertake initiation, she may have entered formal discipleship after her marriage.

However, we do know that ‘Ajība Khānam was very close to her Shaikh who once wrote to her husband that “Bahū Jīū lives constantly in my thoughts.”¹¹ Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī Dihlawī (d. 1240/1824), a disciple and the first *khalīfa* of Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān, writes that ‘Ajība Khānam, the noble wife of Maulawī Sanā’u’llah, gained inward knowledge (*ḥayyūz-i-bāṭini*) from Mirzā Mazhar. She was also well versed with the mystical notions of existence and nonexistence (*fanā’ wa baqā’*). Her constant engagement with Sufi practices, such as repetition of Allāh’s names, submission to the Divine, and meditation (*wazā’if, iṭā’at, zikr wa murāqaba*) turned her into a favourite and accomplished disciple of Mirzā Mazhar. Because of these accomplishments of ‘Ajība Khānam, Mirzā Mazhar wrote a letter to her permitting her to instruct women.¹²

This letter was in response to two other earlier letters, one from ‘Ajība Khānam and the other from her husband, Sanā’u’llah Pānīpatī, to Mirzā Mazhar. Muḥammad Na‘īmu’llah Bahrā’īchī (d. 1218/1802), a *khalīfa* of Jan-i-Janān, in *Bishārat-i-Mazahriyyā*, presents this letter under the heading *dar zikr-i*

10 See letter No. 40, p. 55 in *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar* in which Mirzā Mazhar enquired with displeasure about the tense relations with her mother-in-law over the issue of the marriage of ‘Ajība Khānam’s son.

11 *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, Letter No. 119, p. 176.

12 *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī*, (Dihli: Maṭba‘ Muḥtabāi’ 1309/1892), p. 68.

aḥwāl wālida mājjida makhdūmzāda hā'i 'ālīmiqdār Maulawī Dalīlu'llah wā Aḥmadu'llah sallamāha tā'alā (narration about the noble mother of Maulawī Dalīlu'llah and Aḥmadu'llah, the dignified sons of the Makhdūm).¹³ The complete text of the letter is also included in *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*.¹⁴ Let us now look at the contents of the letter.

Addressing 'Ajība Khānam as *farzand-i bar-khwurdār* (long live my child), Mirzā Mazhar wrote that he had received two letters from her, informing him of her intention to proceed on a Ḥajj pilgrimage due to her annoyance with her husband. To find out the reasons of 'Ajība Khānam's distress, he considered it appropriate to discuss the matter with the Maulawī Šāhib (her husband) and her sons. He told her that he held the right to counsel her on what was best, and that if she considered him wise and just (*'āqil wā munṣif*) she should follow his advice. Continuing further, he said that generally all the hateful and painful things caused by human beings are indeed the results of our own actions (*jazā' ī 'āmāl mā ast*). Assuring her that he was on her side, he then gave her several pieces of advice. First, no one will treat her badly if she treats her elders respectfully and the younger ones with love and affection. Second, happiness in this world and in the hereafter (*falāḥ-i dīn wā dunyā*) depends upon obedience (*iṭā'at*) and service (*khidmat*) to a husband. Third, rage and anger (*ghazab wā ghuṣṣa*) must be controlled and use of improper words (*kalimāt nālā'iqa*) must be avoided. Fourth, prayers must be offered regularly (*taqqayad dar namāz bāyad kard*). Finally, he said that if she follows the above, no one would ever dare to harm her. Regarding her intention to go for Ḥajj, Jān-i-Janān said that no Muslim would ever stop another Muslim from this if the pilgrimage were mandatory for the person. He then declared that, as Ḥajj was not binding upon her (*bar shumā farz nīst*), she should act on his advice and not proceed on the pilgrimage. Next, he offered condolence on the recent demise of Bibī Ammatu'l Batūl, 'Ajība Khānam's sister, saying that he was intensely grieved by her passing away and had recited the whole Qur'ān for (the forgiveness) of her soul. He then, consoled her by saying that her (sister's) state there (in the other world) was good (*aḥwāl-i- oū dar ānjah khūb ast*).¹⁵

13 Fozail Ahmad Qadri. "Edition of Bisharat-i-Mazhariyah." (Unpublished dissertation of Master of Philosophy, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1981), pp. 523–24.

14 *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, Letter No. 132, p. 191.

15 Letter no. 132, *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, p. 191. Mirzā Mazhar in a letter to 'Ajība Khānam's son, Maulawī Aḥmadu'llah, dissuading him from proceeding on Hajj, argues that pilgrimage is not mandatory if it violates the rights of parents and wife. See *Makātīb Mirzā Mazhar*, Letter no. 136, p. 196.

The last paragraph of the letter then authorised 'Ajība Khānam to instruct women in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*. He wrote, "If women wish, and ask for your attention, then it is permitted by me (*wa agar mastūrāt tawfiq yāband wa az hamā tawajjuh khwāhand, ijāzat ast*). It is highly hoped from the masters of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa* that it [her efforts] will be effective. Whenever I have given *tawajjuh* to you, I have noticed success. Keep yourself constantly engaged in the remembrance of Allāh (*bā zikr-i-ilāhī*), and in following the traditions of the Prophet. It is necessary to protect the rights of others and to inculcate good habits as these cause reputation and success."¹⁶

There is no evidence to show how and where 'Ajība Khānam acted as Jān-i- Jānān's *khalīfa*. Combining two different issues, i.e., the dispute with her husband and the authorization to act as a Naqshbandī guide, raise queries regarding the true nature of this permission. *Ijāzat nama*, or letter of authorisation, is a significant document and usually follows a fixed format, which is not visible in this letter. Was this permission a stratagem to appease her and stop her from her intended pilgrimage? These queries do not intend to question 'Ajība Khānam's spiritual attainments or to cast any negative reflection on the intent of Mirzā Jān-i- Jānān. The queries are valid, however, and have a significant and key connection with the debated issue of women's status and position in institutionalised Sufism.

Ḥazrat 'Ajība Khānam stands as a unique figure in the annals of late eighteenth-century South Asia. At the time of receiving this honour, 'Ajība Khānam was a woman of mature age, the mother of two adult sons who already had acquired formal education to qualify themselves for being addressed as Maulawī and were married. Indeed, the elder son, Maulawī Aḥmadu'llah, was also conferred *khilāfat* by Mirzā Mazhar.¹⁷ In an era when women were condemned for promoting *shirk* and *bid'at*, 'Ajība Khānam was an example of how women, through their learning and mystical experiences, could gain higher status in Sufi hierarchy and change men's estimation of women as ignorant beings. Her power of resistance was one such example. Regrettably, nothing further about her saintly virtues is yet known to us.

16 Ibid, Letter no. 132, p. 191.

17 *Maqāmāt-i Mazhari*, p. 67. For a brief notice on Ḥazrat 'Ajība Khānam, also see Muḥammad Nazīr Ranjha. *Tārīkh wa tazkira khānqāh Mazhariyya Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya*. (Lahore: Mushtaq Printers, 2010), p. 258.

(2)

Ḥaẓrat Bānu Zuhṛā Khatūn**Date: B. 1861****Place: Kharera, Murshidabad, Bengal, India**

Ḥaẓrat Bānu Zuhṛā Khatūn, known as Rābi'a of Bengal, was a perfect virtuous person of her time.¹⁸ Because of her piety and ascetic life, Bānu Zuhṛā Khatūn is one of the celebrated Sufis of Bengal.¹⁹ Ḥaẓrat Zuhṛā Khatūn belonged to a family of Sufis, scholars, and reformers. Her grandfather, Sufi Saiyyid Wāris 'Alī, also known as Saiyyid Wāris 'Alī Bengali, believed that eradication of extra Islamic practices was much needed for Islam's rejuvenation in India. He joined Saiyyid Aḥmad Shahīd Barelwī (1786–1831) and was one of his most trusted and prominent lieutenants in his *jihad* campaigns in the Swat region where he died in action at Panjtar.²⁰

Ḥaẓrat Bānu Zuhṛā Khatūn was the daughter of Ḥaẓrat Faṭḥ 'Alī Wā'isī (1825–1886) and Fāṭima Khatūn. Ḥaẓrat Wā'isī, who hailed from Chittagong, was a Naqshbandī Sufi, an acknowledged scholar of Arabic and Persian and a mystic poet of great merit. He was also known as *Rasūl-numā*.²¹ Ḥaẓrat Wā'isī earned this epithet because all those who followed him were blessed with seeing the vision of the Prophet in a dream or in meditation. He had taken his oath of allegiance at the hands of Sufi Nūr Muḥammad of Sylhet, one of the trusted *khalīfas* of Saiyyid Aḥmad Shahīd (martyred in 1831).²² His love for the Prophet and his mystic engagements led him in 1867 to resign his job as the political secretary of the Nawāb of Awadh living in exile in Calcutta.²³ Ḥaẓrat Wā'isī's shrine in Calcutta attracts a large number of devotees, including non-Muslims, even today.²⁴

Ḥaẓrat Bānu Zuhṛā Khatūn was born in Calcutta where her father was serving the exiled Nawāb of Awadh.²⁵ As the daughter of Ḥaẓrat Faṭḥ 'Alī Wā'isī, she

18 Muḥammad Muṭī'ur Raḥmān. 1967. *Ā'ina-i Waisī*. Patna: Labul Litho Press, p. 189.

19 Muhammad Ismail. 2010. *Hagiology of Sufi Saints and the Spread of Islam in South Asia*. New Delhi: Jananada Prakashan, p. 139.

20 Ibid, p. 138.

21 His collection of verses in Persian language, titled *Dīwān-i-Wai'sī* was first published in 1867 at Maṭba'ī-Ghawsīya, Calcutta and ran into two reprints in 1898 and 1922 (Maṭba'ī-Qayyūmī, Kanpur).

22 *Ā'ina-i-Waisī*, p. 149.

23 Ibid, pp. 152–53.

24 Among several biographies of Ḥaẓrat Faṭaḥ 'Alī Wā'isī written in Bengali as a devotional tribute, *Shan-i-Waisi* is also translated into English. See *Shan-i Waisi* by Ahmadul Islam Chowdhury, Kolkotta, Waisi Darbār Sharīf, 2007.

25 *Shan-i Waisi*, p. 59.

grew up in a household where devotion for Allāh and love for the Prophet and his Traditions were the guiding principles. Bānu Zuhra Khatūn was well versed in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu and could write in these three languages with ease. Under the guidance of her father, she acquired knowledge of the Qurʾān, its exegesis (*tafsīr*), and Ḥadīth.²⁶ As a child, she received spiritual knowledge and training from her father.²⁷ Piety, asceticism, and love for humanity became so deeply entrenched in her life that while still a young person, she was acclaimed for her saintly virtues. Her devotees and followers address her as *Qutbuʾl Aqṭāb* (head of the Aqṭāb) and *Durr-i-Maknūn* (the secret pearl). She was one of the major spiritual successors (*khalīfa*) of her father.

Ḥazrat Bānu Zuhra Khatūn was married to Saiyyid Muḥammad Ḥusain, who belonged to the family of landowners of Shahpur. She left behind a son and two daughters.²⁸ Local traditions say that when the time of her death approached, she told her son to leave the door of her room ajar and let no one enter. All alone in the room, she kept reciting the Qurʾān and offering prayers for the next eight days and then passed away.²⁹ Her shrine in Shahpur, Murshidabad (West Bengal, India), is a centre of great devotional activities and is visited by a large number of her followers.

(3)

Ḥazrat Bibī Ṣāḥiba

Date: D. 12 Rabīʿuʾl awwal 1218/3 July 1803

Place: Delhi/Peshawar

Shrine: Mazar Sharif, Afghanistan

Ḥazrat Bibī Ṣāḥiba, also known as Bibī Kalān (the grand lady) and Bibī Qayyūmi, is the only woman Sufi whose *khilāfat nāma* and *ijāzat nama*, conferred upon her by her spiritual guide and mentor, Ḥazrat Ṣafīuʾllāh *Qayyūm-i Jahan*, is on record. A copy of this document is included in *ʿUmdatul Maqāmāt* (Assemblies of the Highest Ones), a collection of biographies of the Naqshbandī Sufi Shaikhs, written in Persian by her son, Muḥammad Faḥḥuʾllāh Naqshbandī (1184/1771–1238/1822).³⁰ Pīr Muḥammad Hāshim Mujaddidī of Tando Saindād, Sindh, in his preface to *ʿUmdatul Maqāmāt*, addresses her as Bibī Kalān and

26 Ibid, p. 59.

27 *Hagiology of Sufi Saints*, p. 139.

28 *Āʿina-i Wāʿisi*, pp. 191–92.

29 *Shān-i Wāisi*, p. 60.

30 Muḥammad Faḥḥuʾllāh *ʿUmdatul Maqāmāt* (Lahore: Litho Expert Printing Press, 1355/1936), pp. 249, 495–511.

says that she was the highest deputy and noble successor (*khalīfa-i āzam wa jā-nishūn-i akram*) of Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan.³¹

The only source of information about the life of Ḥaẓrat Bibī Ṣāḥiba, *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, however, neither identifies her by her personal name nor gives the date of her birth.³² Bibī Ṣāḥiba belonged to an illustrious family of scholars and Sufis. Her father, Shāh ‘Aṭā’u’llāh Sirhindi Bukhārī, of the Sādāt-i Bukhārī-Delhi ancestry, was a descendant of Shaikh ‘Abdul Wahāb bin Yusuf bin ‘Abdul Wahāb Ḥusainī Bukhārī Uchchi whose lineage is traced to Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jahāngasht (1308–1384). Shaikh ‘Abdul Wahāb is counted among the well-acclaimed scholars (*al-m’arūfīn bil ‘ilm*)³³ and is known for instructing and guiding people of Delhi in the mystic path (*ṣāhib-i irshād*). He had friendly relations with Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī (d. 1624), who wrote at least two letters to him in which, according to Khwāja Faḍlu’llah, the Mujaddid addressed him with eulogistic terms (*fiqrāt-i madḥiyā*).³⁴ On her maternal side, she was related to the descendants of Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī. She was the maternal niece of Ḥaẓrat Ṣafiullah, Qayyūm-i Jahan (1746–1798).³⁵ She was married to Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām Nabī (d. 1226/1811),³⁶ son of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām Ḥasan (d. 1789),³⁷ whose father, Ḥaẓrat Ghulām Muḥammad (d. 1178/1765), was a direct descendant of Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī. From this

31 *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, p. b. For Pīr Muḥammad Hāshim Mujaddidī (1904–1975), see Ṣāhibzāda Abu’l-Khair Zubair. *Sindh ke Sufiya-i Naqshband*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Zīā’u’l Qur’ān Publications, 2007) pp. 152–60; also see Abu’l Afsār ‘Alī Muḥammad Balkhī. 1983. *Tārīkh-i Awliyā’ al-ma’rūf bi ilhamāt-i ghaiybīya fi salās-il-i Saifiya*. Peshawar: Nūrāni Kutubkhānā, pp. 133–138.

32 Though Muḥammad Faḍlu’llah does not give Ḥaẓrat Bibī Ṣāḥiba’s date of birth, however, based on his statement that she died exactly at the age of fifty-two (*‘umr-i mubarak īshān ba panjah wa du sāl kāmīl rasīda*) on Friday, 12 Rabi’u’l Awwal 1218/July 2, 1803, her year of birth would be 1166 AH. See *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, p. 508.

33 Ḥaẓrat ‘Abdul Wahāb Bukhārī who arrived in Delhi during the last days of Emperor Akbar and the early days of Emperor Jahangir held an administrative office in Delhi. He returned to Delhi after Ḥajj in 1060/1680. See *Nuzhat al-Khwāṭir*, vol. 5, entry no. 434, p. 583.

34 *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 496–97. For letters, see Letter Nos. 56 and 57 in *Maktūbāt Ḥaẓrat Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī*. (*daftar awwal*) Urdu translation by Saiyyid Zawwār Ḥusain (Karachi: Idāra Mujaddidiya, 1988), pp. 186–87.

35 Shāh Ṣafiullah Sirhindī founded the Mujjaddidī *silsila* in Afghānistan where he settled in Kabul at the time of Timur Shāh (1772–1793) and was also there when Zamān Shāh came into power in 1793. He died during his Ḥajj pilgrimage and was buried in Yemen. See, *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 445–87.

36 For the life sketch of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām Nabī, see *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 438–41.

37 A large number of devotees, running into thousands, came each day to seek the blessings Ḥaẓrat Shāh Ghulām Ḥasan whom Muḥammad Faḍlu’llah describes as *pīr ‘arīf-i kāmīl* (perfect gnostic). Some of these disciples, because of the power of his ecstatic state (*qadr-i jazb*), became unconscious, some even became mad (*aksar murdum ḥalqā-i īshān bihosh*

marriage, she had two sons, Muḥammad Faḡlu'llah (1184/1771–1238/1822), the author of *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, and Ḥaḡrat Muḥammad Ḥiā'u'l Ḥaqq (d. 1839), and a daughter (d. 1800) whose name is not recorded. Ḥaḡrat Muḥammad Faḡlu'llah and Muḥammad Ḥiā'u'l Ḥaqq (1839) were disciples and *khalīfas* of Ḥaḡrat Ṣafiullah, Qayyūm-i Jahan.

After describing Bibi Ṣāḡiba's ancestry (*nasb-i zāhirī*), the author moves to narrate her spiritual connections (*nisbat-i bāṡinī*) and asks his readers to pay attention to this account of the spiritual journey of Bibi Ṣāḡiba.³⁸ At the age of seven, on the twenty-ninth of Ramaḡan, while she was fasting, she took her oath of allegiance (*murīd shudam*) at the hands of Ḥaḡrat Ṣafiullah. Describing that spiritual experience to her son at a later date, the feeling of contentment which never left her (*lazzat ān ilā-alyaum az man na-raftā*), she recalled that once he finished giving instructions (*talqīn*) to his disciples, he turned his attention (*mutawajjih*) towards her.³⁹ Under his guidance, Bibi Ṣāḡiba covered the journey of years in no time (*mu'āmilāt sanīn ra basā'at ṡayī farmūdand*) and soon attained high stations and exalted ranks (*maqāmāt-i ālī wa marātib-i muta'ālī*). Once she absorbed the way of Muḥammad, and reached all the stages of mysticism (*bajam'i madārī-i wilāyat*) and all the secrets (*asrār*) were revealed to her, her *murshid* (spiritual teacher), Ḥaḡrat Qayyūm-i Jahan, ordered her to take the responsibility of instructing others. Bibi Ṣāḡiba, however, remained hesitant for some time until she was blessed with the vision (*ba-sharf-i ziyārat*) of the Prophet in her dream. In her dream, the Prophet bestowed upon her a special cloak (*khil'at khāṡṡa*) of *khilāfat* and stressed the importance of accepting *khilāfat*. She narrated her dream to her *murshid* who had long waited for this and was overjoyed. He then wrote a letter of authorisation for instructions (*nāma-i ijāzat wa irshād*) and as a token of blessings (*tabarrukāt*), conferred upon her his own cloak and turban wrap (*jubā wa dastār-i khud*). Further, Ḥaḡrat Qayyūm-i Jahan ordered all his students who were present in the assembly, most being males, to stand outside Bibi Ṣāḡiba's cell (*ḡujrā*) for instructions and attention. He also instructed his excellent spiritual deputies (*khulāfā'-yi kāmīl*), his sons, small children, and even his daughters and wives to become Bibi Ṣāḡiba's disciples. Bibi Ṣāḡiba, willingly but with some worries (*ṡau'an wa karhan*), took up her responsibilities earnestly. Her influence spread everywhere at an unbelievable pace. A large number of people, particularly women, whether from the neighbourhood or distant places, approached

mīshudund wa b'āz bajunūn mī rasīdund). His shrine exists in Peshawar. See *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 435–37.

38 Ibid, p. 499.

39 *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, p. 425.

her to seek spiritual knowledge (*mardam az dūr wa nazdīk, khusūsan az ‘ālam nisa’ ba-īshān rujū‘ awardand*). Many women left their homes and came to live under her protection, where they were intoxicated (*sarmast wa sarshār*) by the exposition of Light and with the subtleties of mysteries (*asrār*). Several of these women seekers of Truth who became *majzūbā* (intoxicated Sufi) were seen with chains tied around their legs (*zanjīr bapā*) at Bibī Šāḥiba’s place. Such a unique sight of women congregating, as witnessed here, had never before been seen anywhere in the women’s world. Indeed, such a manifestation of spiritual gathering was rare even in men’s universe (*dar ‘ālam-i rajāl*).⁴⁰

Next, Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan conferred upon her the *irshād nāma* and appointed her as one of his twenty-eight deputies.⁴¹ The document began by invoking Allāh, the Prophet, friends of Allāh, and the virtuous ones. Next, Bibī Šāḥiba was honoured and addressed as *makhdūma* (one who is waited upon), *muḥtarma* (the venerable), *mu‘azzama* (the respected one), *mukarrāma* (the noble), *mazhar anwāru’l Qayyūm* (manifestation of the Eternal Light), *nūru’l ‘ain wa samaratu’l fu‘ād* (light of eyes and the reward of heart) and *ummatu’l m’āsūma* (mother of the innocent). Ḥājī Šafi’u’llah al-Sirhindi then states that under his guidance, Bibī Šāḥiba learned with perfection (*bā-itmām*) the rules and the way (*sulūk wa tamlik*) of the Naqshbandī *silsila* and attained the highest stages of *wilāyat*, comprehending the secrets of *tauḥīd-i-wajūdi* and *shahūdi* and the teachings of Ḥaẓrat Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī. Qayyūm-i Jahan also added that since the Prophet had already bestowed *khilāfat* upon her, there was no need for him to confer this letter of authorization. Concluding this letter of investiture, Qayyūm-i Jahan observes that according to the noble traditions of guidance and instruction of disciples, nothing ought to be done without the permission of the Master (*be izn-i pīr*). He therefore declares in writing that whoever, from among men or women, seeks the path of the Sublime God (*ṭalīb rāh-i īzād muta‘āl*) and approaches her and follows her path, it is as if he or she has sought his own guidance.⁴²

An incredible hagiographical narrative describing Ḥaẓrat Bibī Šāḥiba’s mystical experience (*ilhām*) says that once when Ḥaẓrat Rābi’a passed by the assembly of Bibī Šāḥiba, she wondered about Ḥaẓrat Rābi’a attributes. The moment this thought entered her mind, she found that Ḥaẓrat Rābi’a’s qualities were similar to those of some of her disciples. When Bibī Šāḥiba related this to Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan, he told her that if Rābi’a was there, she would have

40 The above narrative is based on translations from *‘Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 499–500.

41 For the list of deputies, which also included Bibī Šāḥiba’s two sons, see *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 490–95.

42 *‘Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 500–501.

served Bibī Ṣāḥiba (*agar Rābi'a darīn waqt mi būd khidmat-i īshān ikhtiyār mi farmūd*).⁴³ To celebrate this unique honour and in thanksgiving (*bashukrāna*), Bibī Ṣāḥiba distributed food and money among the pious persons.⁴⁴

Another incident also demonstrates the public recognition of Bibī Ṣāḥiba's status. In 1797 she, along with her two sons and a daughter who remains anonymous, accompanied Qayyūm-i Jahan on his second Ḥajj pilgrimage as the leader of the caravan (*sar barāh-i qāfila*).⁴⁵ During this travel, from Kabul via Qalat and Kohistan towards the coast of Karachi, devotees in large number came to seek her blessings (*barakāt suḥbat-i īshān*) and entered the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa* (*dākhil ṭarīqa*). Facing a severe typhoon close to Masqat, the pilgrims disembarked there for a few days. The pilgrims reached al-Hudaydah in Yemen via the Port of al-Mukhā (Mocha). In al-Hudaydah, Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan passed away on 6 Ziq'ad 1212/22 April 1798 after a brief illness.⁴⁶ After his burial, the pilgrims' caravan reached Makkah. Muḥammad Faḥlu'llāh records several incredible anecdotes that occurred during the 'Umra performance of Bibī Ṣāḥiba.

After performing the 'Umra, Bibī Ṣāḥiba narrated that Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan, prior to his demise, had conferred upon her the cloak (*khil'at*) of *Qayyūmiyat* along with several other favours (*in'āyāt*) that he found hard to list in the book. Quoting Bibī Ṣāḥiba, Faḥlu'llāh writes that whenever she focussed spiritually (*mutawajjih*) during her pilgrimage, she would feel as if the four corners of the Ka'ba were around her and all the pious worshippers were prostrating in front of her (*sijda 'ābidān ra ba sū-i khud miyāftam*). When she would approach the Black Stone, she would hear a voice calling her from inside the Black Stone, "O' ye the favourite exalted one" (*ta 'āllī yā maqbūla*), "O' ye the exalted beloved" (*ta 'āllī yā maḥbūba*), and "O' ye Hindiya." Miraculously, when she was about to kiss the Black Stone, the whole space around it would be free of pilgrims. On her arrival in Makkah, after the completion of the pilgrimage, another incredible event occurred. A letter of acceptance (*nama-i qabūl*) of Ḥajj, stating that that year the pilgrimage of all was accepted because of her, was conferred upon her. She was blessed with the vision of the Prophet and of the two caliphs. The Prophet blessed her with a green-coloured *khil'at* and the

43 Ibid, p. 502.

44 Ibid, p. 502.

45 Ibid, p. b.

46 Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan perhaps passed away due to a severe tooth infection. He already had broken his four front teeth in Kabul (*Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 452, 474). For travel and death of Ḥaẓrat Qayyūm-i Jahan, see *Umdatul Maqāmāt*, pp. 472–78.

Caliphs bestowed upon her *khil'at-i paichīda*.⁴⁷ Further, Bibī Ṣāḥiba also narrated another mystical experience of her *ziyārat* of Bibī Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, who affectionately kissed her forehead and welcomed her as a venerable visitor (*bātariqa mehmān-i 'azīz*). From Madīna, travelling via Jidda and Ṭā'if, the pilgrims' caravan returned to Ḥaram Sharīf with the intention of performing a second Ḥajj. However, in the month of Ramaḥān, after being told in a vision that her pilgrimage and that of her companions was already accepted, she resumed her return journey.⁴⁸

On her way back to her country, she stopped at al-Hudaydah and arranged for the construction of Ḥaḥrat Qayyūm-i Jahan's shrine. She arrived in Sindh and stayed there for some time in the town of Mut'alwi.⁴⁹ Large numbers of people (*mardum bisyār*) received her blessings and entered her *ṭarīqa*. Her sixteen-year-old daughter passed away in the town of Mut'alwi in 1214/1800.⁵⁰ Bibī Ṣāḥiba constructed a mosque and her women devotees built a shrine (*qubbā*) for her daughter within the mosque complex.⁵¹ This incident, while documenting women's spiritual activism, also indicates the possibility of further research on pious Sindhi women's roles.

From Matiari, Sindh, Bibī Ṣāḥiba travelled to Sirhind to visit the shrine of the Muḥaddid. Finally, the end of her earthly journeys approached and she returned to Kabul, from where after a yearlong stay she went to Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan to visit the shrine of Ḥaḥrat Bahā'u'd-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389). In Bukhara, Bibī Ṣāḥiba began to have a premonition that she was to depart soon from this world and that her last resting place was destined to be Bukhara. Thus, one day she related to her sons a conversation she had with Ḥaḥrat Khwāja Bahā'u'd-Dīn Naqshband in her dream in which the Khwāja said that though her life was about to end soon, he had supplicated for an extension of thirty years for her. To this, she submitted that as she loved death (*marā chunān muḥabbat-i wiṣāl uftāda*), she would therefore request that half of the gift, i.e., fifteen years, be given to one of her sons and the other fifteen years to her other son. Her supplication was granted.⁵²

47 Whereas *paichīda* means twisted, I could not find its extended usage for a category of *khil'at*.

48 'Umdatul Maqāmāt, pp. 4–505.

49 Mut'alwi is the present-day Matiari. See M.H. Panhwar, *Chronological Dictionary of Sind* (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, 1983), p. 340.

50 Muḥammad Faḥlu'llah writes that when his mother, Bibī Ṣāḥiba was pregnant with her daughter, his father, Ḥaḥrat Shāh Ghulām Nabī, had already predicted the birth of a female child who would die in her youth. See 'Umdatul Maqāmāt, p. 439.

51 Ibid, p. 505.

52 Ibid, p. 506.

On Friday, 12 Rabi'ul Awwal 1218/2 July 1803, she passed away at the age of fifty-two years while doing *zikr* and after reciting passages from the Qur'an. When her body, wrapped in a shroud and soaked in the water of *zamzam* that she had brought from Makka, was lowered into the grave, Muḥammad Faḍlu'llāh lifted the shroud to view her face. When he did this, she opened her eyes and with a smile looked affectionately at her two sons (*nigāh-i mihr ālūda andākhta zahk*).⁵³ When one of her sons, Shāh Zī'ul Ḥaqq, said that she must be alive, a man standing nearby commented that "awliyā' performs such miracles even after death" (*az awliyā'-i azīn nau' khawāriq bisyār ba'd marg wuqū' yāfta*). Recalling this comment, Faḍlu'llāh remembered that a similar miracle was experienced at the time of the burial of Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Muḥammad Parsā (d. 822/1420) by his son Khawāja Burhānu'd-Dīn Abu Naṣr.⁵⁴ Bībī Šāḥiba was buried within the shrine complex of Imām 'Alī (*rawāq-i az qubba sānī*) at Mazār-i-Sharif.⁵⁵

Curiously, throughout the book Bībī Šāḥiba is not mentioned by name and is addressed only by an honorific title used for addressing a woman of respect and high position. Thus, most women, irrespective of their status within power hierarchies, remained veiled. Far more surprising than Bībī Šāḥiba's anonymity is the closing observation of her son and the scribe of her glorious deeds. Concluding the narrative of women coming in unprecedented numbers to benefit from Bībī Šāḥiba's instructions, Muḥammad Faḍlu'llāh could not, however, rise above the deep-seated misogyny and wonders how women, who as a class (*jama'a*) are known for being deficient in intellect and faith (*bānuqṣ 'aql wa dīn muttaṣif and*), acquired excellence in gnostic and certitude (*'irfān wa yaqīn*).

Sufi biographical compendiums and even accounts of Mujaddidī *silsila* have not acknowledged the status of Ḥaẓrat Bībī Šāḥiba. Surprisingly, Buehler, in his study of the Indian Naqshbandīyya Sufis, though he had access to *'Umdatul Maqāmāt* and also noticed the name of Bībī Šāḥiba, left the topic largely unexplored except for mentioning her name once in the preface of his work.⁵⁶ Despite these omissions, Bībī Šāḥiba's rare example of spiritual activism remains unmatched.

53 Ibid, pp. 507–8.

54 'Abdur Raḥman Jami in *Nafahāt al-uns* narrates that when laid in his grave, Khwāja Muḥammad Parsā, a disciple and *khalīfa* of Ḥaẓrat Bahā'ud Dīn Naqshband, opened his eyes and looked smilingly at his son. See 'Abdur Raḥman Jāmī, and William Nassau Lees. 1858. *The Nafahat-uns min hadharāt alqods, or The lives of the Soofis*. Calcutta: Matba' Leesi, p. 452.

55 'Umdatul Maqāmāt, p. 508.

56 Arthur Buehler. 1998. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandīyya and the Rise of the Meditating Sufi Shaykh*. University of South Carolina Press, p. xxiv.

(4)

Ḥazrat Bibī Daulat**Period: Late Sixteenth–Early Seventeenth Century****Place: Delhi, India**

Ḥazrat Bibī Daulat is one of the several women permitted to teach and instruct women in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*. Bibī Daulat's journey from being an ordinary housewife to attaining the most sought-after status in the hierarchy of Sufi organizations began in an extraordinary way. Bibī Daulat's narrative is found only in Hāshim Kishmī's (d. 1643) *Zubdat al-muqāmāt* (the essence of mystical station), an important source on the lives of the Naqshbandī Sufis based on the author's personal information and what he had learned from his Naqshbandī friends.⁵⁷ Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn Sambhalī (d. 1051/1641),⁵⁸ the closest and most trusted disciple of Khwāja Bāqī Billah (971/1563–1012/1603),⁵⁹ related Bibī Daulat's story to Kishmī.⁶⁰ It is said that subsequent to Khwāja Bāqī Billah's giving his permission to Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn to instruct others about the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, strange transformations occurred in the *nafs* (the inner self) and *nazr* (gaze) of Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn. His one glance was, thus, enough to cause anyone who sought his attention to fall into mystical rapture (*ghalaba*), experiencing the highest state of mystical ecstasy (*aḥwāl*).

Once while on his way to his hometown of Sambhal (now in UP, India), Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn stopped for an overnight stay at the house of his friend Shaikh Allāh. Shaikh Allāh, with his wife, Bibī Daulat, lived somewhere in Firuzabad at the edge of Delhi. Shaikh Allāh was also a disciple of Khwāja Bāqī Billah. Shaikh Allāh's wife, Bibī Daulat, a righteous woman, already had an intense desire for spirituality and expressed a desire to learn from Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn about the *zīkr* practice of the Naqshbandīs. Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn agreed. That night Bibī Daulat went through strange mystical experiences that revealed to

57 Iqbal Sabir. "A critical study of Zubdat-ul-Maqāmāt." Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1985.

58 For his short biography, see Badru'd-Dīn Sirhindī ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm. *Ḥazarat'l quds mukammal* [Urdu translation by Hafiz Muḥammad Ashraf, (Lahore: Maktab Hanafia, 2016)] pp. 316–21; *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir*, vol. 5, pp. 507–8; Nasim Ahmad Faridi Amrohwī. *Tazkira Khwāja Bāqī Billah ma' ṣāhibzadagān wa khulafā'*. (Lucknow: Kutubkhānā al-Furqān, 1978), pp. 86–98.

59 Some short-lived dissensions, however, took place between the two over Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn's treatment of other Sufis, particularly of a *majzūb*. See A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2, pp. 336–38.

60 Khwāja Muḥammad Hāshim Kishmī. 1890. *Zubdat al-muqāmāt*. (Kanpur: Maṭba' Munshī Nawal Kishore, 1980. All references here are from the Urdu translation by Ghulām Mustafa Khan and Maulānā Abul Fath Saghiruddin. Maṭba' Nu'mānia, Sialkot, 1407/1987), pp. 111–2.

her the secrets of the soul and of the spiritual world (*kashf-i malākī wa arwāh*). Later, she narrated her experience to her husband so that he could tell Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn about it. As soon as the husband heard his wife's story of mystical experiences, he began behaving as if some supernatural powers possessed him. Shaikh Allāh had earlier requested Khwāja Bāqī Billah through Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn for his spiritual attention and favours (*tawajjuh aur 'ināyat*). He went to Shaikh Tāju'd-Dīn and enquired about his request. On his insistence, Tāju'd-Dīn reluctantly said that the Khwāja's response was that there was little chance for this person (Shaikh Allāh) to gain anything from him. Hearing this, Shaikh Allāh became agitated, tearing his clothes and pulling his hair, and ran towards the abode of Khwāja Bāqī Billah. The moment he was in the presence of the Khwāja and glanced at his forehead, he became overpowered by an unknown force and fell unconscious. Instructing someone to look after Shaikh Allāh, Khwāja Bāqī Billah went to the house of Shaikh Allāh to enquire after Bibī Daulat's condition. He brought her with him to Delhi, arranged for her stay in his neighbourhood, and began visiting her daily. With the blessings of his constant attention (*tawajjuh*), Bibī Daulat attained higher stages (*darajāt*). Soon permission to teach (*ijāzat nama t'ālīm*) her disciples was bestowed upon her. At the time of writing *Zubdat al-muqāmāt* (1627–1628), Bibī Daulat was instructing the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa* of *zīkr* in the Qila' Sultān Firūz (Kotla Firūz Shāh Tughlaq) to a large number of women, many of whom benefitted from her instructions. She excelled in teaching them how to attain *zīkr*, *jazba*, and *ḥuzūr* (remembrance, Divine attraction, and awareness of Allāh's presence)—these three being the essential teachings for the seeker of the spiritual path (*sulūk*) of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*. Kishmī, in closing the narrative of Bibī Daulat, writes that her daughter was married to Khwāja Ḥusāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 1043/1633), one of the disciples of Khwāja Bāqī Billah.⁶¹

(5)

Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl

Period: Thirteenth Century

Place: Ajmer, India

Urs: 19 Rajabu'l Murajjab

Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl's life presents some highly significant aspects of early medieval Muslim society in Hindustan. She was the daughter of the Sijistan-born

61 *Zubdat al-muqāmāt*, pp. 113–115; also see *Ḥayāt-i Bāqīya*. Compiled & translated in Urdu by Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Raḥīm Bakhsh Dihlawī. Dihli: Afzal al-maṭāb', 1905, p. 92. For the biography of Khwāja Ḥusāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad, see *Ibid*, pp. 122–134. Khwāja Ḥusāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad had earlier married a sister of Abu'l Faḥl, the author of *Akbarnama*.

wandering Sufi, Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri (d. 633/1236), who finally settled down in the region of Ana Sagar Lake in Ajmer, Rajasthan, around the end of the twelfth century.⁶² The Khwāja had two wives and at least three male children but only one daughter, Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, whose mother, Bibī Ummat Allāh, was the daughter of a Hindu chieftain, probably of Rajput ancestry.⁶³ *Manāqibuʿl Maḥbūbīn*, a late nineteenth-century Persian hagiography of Chishtī Sufis, without citing any source, says that Bibī Ummat Allāh was captured during war and was a bondmaid (*kanīz*) of Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī who kept her as *malk-i yamīn* (war booty).⁶⁴

Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl was married to Shaikh Raḥīmuʿd-Dīn alias ʿAbdullah, son of Ḥamīduʿd-Dīn Suwalī (d. 1274), the closest disciple and *khalīfa* of her father.⁶⁵ ʿAlī Aṣghar Chishtī in *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* (1623) says that she had no children with this marriage but they all died in infancy.⁶⁶ Most other sources, including *Mūnisuʿl arwāḥ* (1638), the passionate hagiographical account of Khwāja Ajmeri by Jahān Ārāʾ Begam, the daughter of Shāh Jahan, the Mughal Emperor, also say that two sons were born of this marriage but died in infancy.⁶⁷

With mixed parental ancestry, Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl's life exemplifies the historical process of the growth of Muslim community. More importantly, she is the first woman, known thus far, to don the *khirqā-i khilāfat* (cloak of *khilāfat*) of the Chishtī *silsila* of the Sufis, which was conferred upon her on 11 Rabiʿuʿl ākhir 599 after ʿishaʾ prayers by her father, Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri, popularly known as Khwāja Gharīb Nawāz.⁶⁸ The authors of *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*,

62 For short biographical sketch of Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī, see s.a., pp. 4–18; *Jawāhir-i Farīdī yāʿnī Tazkira-i Farīdī* by ʿAlī Aṣghar Chishtī (Urdu translation by Fazluʿd-Dīn Naqshbandi Mujaddidī). Pakpattan: Maktabā Bābā Farīd (n. d.), pp. 220–234.

63 Jahān Ārāʾ Begam, *Mūnisuʿl-arwāḥ*. 1638. Translated in Urdu as *Muʿīnuʿl-arwāḥ* by Maulawī Muḥammad ʿAbdus Ṣamad Kalīm Qādirī. Delhi: Matbaʿ Rizvi, (1891), p. 25; ʿAlī Aṣghar Chishtī in *Jawāhir-i Farīdī* says that she was the daughter of a chieftain p. 162. Ilah Diyā Chishtī in *Risālā Siyaruʿl Aqṭāb* (translated in Urdu by Muḥammad ʿAlī Joyā. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1906) also writes that she was the daughter of a Raja of Deccan, p. 126; Munshi Babū Lāl. 1881. *Waqāʾiʾ Shāh Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī*. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, p. 54; ʿAbduʿl Razzāq ʿAtāʾ Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzuʿl ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭbaʿ ʿṢafdarī, p. 74; Muḥammad ʿAbduʿl Ahad. 1319/1901. *Panch Ganj-Malfūzāt Khwājgān-i-Chisht ahl-i-bihisht*. Delhi: Matbaʿ Muṭtabāʾī, p. 9.

64 Najmuʿd-Dīn Sulaimānī. *Manāqibuʿl Maḥbūbīn* (Urdu translation by Iftikhar Aḥmad Chishtī). Faisalabad: Chishtīyya Academy, 1987. (First published in 1278/1861, Maṭbaʿ Muḥammadi Lahore) p. 83; No other source supports this claim.

65 *Mūnisuʿl-arwāḥ*, p. 25.

66 *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 162.

67 *Mūnisuʿl-arwāḥ*. p. 25; also, see *Risālā Siyaruʿl Aqṭāb*, p. 127.

68 *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, p. 162; Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī. 1930. *Tārīkh Khwāja Muʿīnuʿd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmerī*. Delhi: Afzal Book Depot, p. 80.

a hagiographical *tazkira* completed in 1623, and of *Tārīkh Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī Ajmerī*, written in 1930, extolling the virtues of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, further write that, subsequently, Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl instructed thousands of women and helped them attain a station close to spirituality (*martabā qarīb*). Shaikh Illah Diyā, a Sufi of the time of Emperor Aurangzeb, in his *Risāla Siyaru'l Aqṭāb* (1646), referring to the charisma (*karāmat*) of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, confirms that Khwāja Ajmeri conferred upon her *khirqā-i khilāfat*. In the list of at least eighteen *khalīfas* of Khwāja Ajmeri, with illustrious and pious Sufis such as Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī and Shaikh Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Suwalī, Shaikh Illah Diyā has included the name of one woman, Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl. Her devotion to Allāh was unbounded. Thousands of women were blessed by Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl's teachings and attained high station (*maqām*) because of her *tawajjuh*.⁶⁹

A modern author, Abul Fazal Ezzati, acknowledging Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl's spiritual accomplishments as the "best examples of a virtuous woman," writes that "Bibi Hafiz Jamal is one of the very few examples of a female pir in the history of Sufism. Normally, a woman can only be a murid, not a murshid, but Bibi Hafiz was allowed to have a murid, who took the baiḥ to her in the manner normally for men."⁷⁰

Known for her piety and ascetic life, Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl had learned the Qur'ān by heart at the age of seven.⁷¹ She lies buried in Ajmer within the premises of the *dargāh* of her father. Emperor Jahangir improved the tomb structure and added silver-plated doors. The tomb enclosure, called the Begam Dālān or "Women's arcade," is in the premises of the main *mazār*.⁷² Princess Jahan Ara in 1637 built the Begam Dālān. In the area around the tomb of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl, lying to the west of Taragah fortress, is the spring Chashma-yi Ḥāfiz Jamāl. Several Mughal princesses are also buried there.⁷³ Her 'urs is celebrated on the nineteenth of Rajab and is also known as *Nāl kā melā* or as *Melā of Bibī Ḥāfiz Jamāl*.⁷⁴

69 *Risāla Siyaru'l Aqṭāb*, p. 127.

70 Ezzatī, Abū al-Faẓl. 2002. *The spread of Islam: the contributing factors*. London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies, p. 216.

71 Waḥīd Aḥmad Mas'ūd. *Sawaniḥ Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī*. Karachi: Salman Academy, Karachi: Salman Academy (n. d.), p. 170.

72 Tirmizi, S.A.I. 1968. *Ajmer through inscriptions [1532–1852 AD]* New Delhi: Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, p. 16. Maḥmūd, Sanāullāh. 2006. *Sāu baṛī zāhid khwātīn aūr un kī sardār Ḥaẓrat Fāṭima bint-i Muḥammad: Ummhātu-lmu'minīn, banāt-i Rāsul, Ṣaḥābīyāt*. Lahore: Baitul'ulūm, pp. 471–73.

73 Rushbrook Williams. 1965. *A Handbook for Travellers in India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon*. London: John Murray, p. 178.

74 Troll records the date as 18 of Rajab, see C.W. Troll. 1982. *Islam in India*, vol. 1. Delhi: Vikas, p. 70.

(6)

Bibī Islām Khāno**Period: Sixteenth Century****Place: Shahābād, Karnal, India**

Similar to most other women mystics, Bibī Islām Khāno's life story is sparse in the Sufi texts. She was a disciple and *khalīfa* of Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī (d. 456/1537) of the Ṣabrī-Chishtī Sufi *silsila*.⁷⁵

Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī, *malfūz* of Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī by his son Shaikh Ruknu'd-Dīn (d. 1575–1576), tells that Bibī Islām Khāno belonged to the most politically active Sarwānī clan of the Afghāns of early sixteenth-century Hindustan. 'Umar Khan Sarwānī, son of Sikandar Khan Sarwānī⁷⁶ and father of Bibī Islām Khāno, who held the *jāgīr* of Shahābād (Ambala District) near Karnal, first came in contact with Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī in Radauli, the hometown of the Shaikh, during the closing years of Sulṭān Bahlul Lodi (r. 1451–1489) and became his disciple.⁷⁷ Around 897/1492, during the time of Sultan Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489–1517), due to some unpleasant events in Radauli, Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī along with his family moved to Shahābād where he lived until 934/1528. Most probably, it was during his long stay of more than three decades in Shahābād that 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī enrolled Bibī Islām Khāno and her other family members as his disciples.⁷⁸

75 *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī*, a collection of letters of 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī that his second son and first deputy, Shaikh Ruknu'd-Dīn started compiling before his father's death, provides foundational material for the life of 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī. See Shaikh Ruknu'd-Dīn. 1311/1894. *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī (Ḥālāt Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī)* Dehli: Matba' Muḥtabā'ī. For a short biography of Gangohī, which discusses his spiritual excellence and discusses the role of his son, see Khwāja Muḥammad Hāshim Kishmī, *Zubdat al-muqāmāt*. Kanpur: Matba' Munshī Nawal Kishore, 1980 (Urdu translation by Ghulām Muṣṭafa Khan and Maulānā Abul Fath Ṣaghīru'ddīn. Matba' Nu'mānia, Sialkot, 1407/1987), pp. 148–57. Also, 44 pp. 213–15; 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī, *Mirātu'l asrār* [Urdu translation by Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl, (Lahore: Ziaul Qur'ān Publications, 1993)], p. 1186–1190; for a comprehensive biography, see 'Ijāzu'l Ḥaqq Quddūsī. 1961. *Ḥaẓrat 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq-Quddūs Gangohī ḥayat aur unki t'ālīmāt*. Karachi: Educational Press. Drawing mostly on 'Ijāzu'l Ḥaqq Quddūsī's work is Simon Digby's 1975. "Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (1456–1537): The personality and attitude of a medieval Indian Sufi," in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Edited), *Medieval India: a miscellany*. (pp. 1–66). (London: Asia Publishing House, 1975).

76 For more details about the Sarwānīs, Sikandar Khan and his sons, see Ḥājī 'Abbās Khan Sarwānī, *Sarwānī-nāma* (pp. 29–46) (Aligarh: Aligarh Sharwani Printing Press 1953). 'Umar Khan Sarwānī, *wazīr* of Sultan Bahlul Lodi, played a crucial role in the accession of Sikandar Lodi.

77 *Laṭīfā* no. 35, vide *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī*, pp. 30–31.

78 Haibat Khan, her brother and Sa'īd Khan, 'Umar Khan's son who first became Gangohī's disciples but later earned his displeasure. See *Laṭīfā* no. 52, vide *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī*, p. 52.

Laṭīfā no. 57 in *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī* reveals significant details about the spiritual status of Bibī Islām Khāno. It says that Bibī Islām Khāno, daughter of 'Umar Khan Sarwānī, was a disciple (*murīd*) of Ḥaẓrat Qutbī, as 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī was addressed by his sons and disciples. Bibī Islām Khāno remained engaged in internal spiritual exercises (*shughl-i bāṭin*) and went through great afflictions and hard work in following this path. As a result, *zīkr-i bāṭin* (hidden or silent remembrance of Allāh) overcame her. She used to say that the sound of the word Allāh came from all of her body parts (*jam'ī a'ẓa'*). As the sound came from her feet, too, out of respect, she did not put her feet down on the ground. Bibī Islām Khāno's devotion was so strong that she was convinced that the wrath of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, which fell upon her brothers and led to their exile to Gujarat, was because of the animosity they had for her Shaikh.⁷⁹

These high esoteric qualities of Bibī Islām Khāno, however, were not sufficient to weaken the power of traditions that reigned supreme in South Asia and controlled all aspects of Muslims society there, including denying women their rightful status. Thus, when Bibī Islām Khāno requested that 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī permit her to enroll disciples and to bestow upon her the cloak of the Sufis, it was denied.

To propagate his views, Gangohī corresponded regularly and addressed about two hundred letters to rulers, elites, disciples, and relatives on a variety of themes, most dealing with Allāh's worship and following the Tradition. Among these letters, number sixty-six is the only one addressed to Bibī Islām Khātūn or Khāno, on the crucial theme *dar bayān 'adam jawāz khilāfat bara' ye zanān har chih bākamāl mardān rasad* (an explanation of nonexistence of justification for women's *khilāfat*, albeit they might have reached excellence of men). This letter, similar to almost all the letters of 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī, instead of beginning with the traditional form of salutation, opens by thrice repeating the word *Ḥaqq*, one of the ninety-nine attributes of Allāh and which literally means "the truth." Gangohī addresses Bibī Islām Khātūn as "my sister" (*khawāharam*) and adds several eulogizing terms for her, such as *'afīfā* (the chaste one), *sājida* (one who prostrates), and *fakhru 'n-nisā' fil 'ālamīn* (pride of women worldwide). Below are translated excerpts of this letter.

Undoubtedly this world is the bridge to afterlife. The purpose of worldly life is to seek the Truth (*ṭalab-i ḥaqq*). Therefore, one should be concerned about the afterlife and considering oneself a traveller, should lead the life totally in submission (*ibādat*), remembrance of Allāh, manifestly and internally (*zīkr-i zāhir wa bāṭin*), and in leading life in seeking Allāh

79 *Laṭīfā* no. 57, vide *Laṭā'if-i Quddūsī*, p. 41.

with pleasure and interest. Remembrance of Allāh's essence (*ism-i zāt*) and attributes (*asmā' wa šifāt*), along with the inner visualisation of the Shaikh's image (*tasawwur-i shaikh*) must be done so intensely that the heart is completely engrossed (*mustaghriq*) and nothing but Allah only remains in it.

As you have stepped courageously in the midst of men of Allāh (*miyān-i mardān-i haqq ta'alā*), therefore it behoves that you should continue the chain of instruction. If a woman attains excellence similar to that of men, and steps into the world of men of Allāh, she deserves praise. The patched frock of the Sufis (*khirqā-i mashā'iq*), however, is not sent to you because *khilāfat* is not lawful (*mujāz gardānīdā nāshud*) for women, and the authority to make *bai'at* also is not conferred (because of this). However, if a truthful (*ṣādiq*) man or woman requests to seek spiritual discipleship, you are, then, permitted to confer the hat (*kulāh*) and the frock (*dāman*) on behalf of your Shaikh (*bā wikālat pīr-i khud*). For this, woman should be present or absent, but for men only in absentia (*ghai-bat*). Also, give them the spiritual genealogical table of your Shaikh in the written form, and enrol them as the disciples (*murīd*) of your Shaikh. Consider this fortune as the highest fortune. Afterlife be praised (*ākhirat maḥmūd bād*).⁸⁰

Of the two sources of this letter, the first one, *Majmūa' khuṭūṭ*, has included the letter without any comments or observations about its content or purpose. The second source, *Fatāwā-i-Rashīdiya*, links it with the continuous problematic issue of women's status in the Sufi hierarchy and Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (1829–1905) uses it as a source for his *fatwā*. The *fatwā* is made in response to a query regarding the appropriateness of pious women who follow the *Sharī'at* and are well versed with the rules of *taṣawwuf*, and initiate oaths of allegiance to women and men. Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, a descendant of 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī and a prolific *fatwā* giver, in support of his *fatwā* declaring women's *bai'at* improper, quoted excerpts from 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī's letter. It is significant to note here that Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī not only refers to 'Abdu'l Quddūs Gangohī but also adds that, according to the masters of mysticism and

80 Translation from the Urdu text of his letters, *Majmūa' khuṭūṭ- Maktūbāt Quddūsia Qutb-i Ālam Ḥaṣrat Shaikh 'Abdul Quddūs Gangohī*. Compiled and translated by Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl, Lahore: al-Faisal, 2010, pp. 229–30. The same letter, with little variation, is translated in Urdu in Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī's *Fatāwā-i-Rashīdiya (Kamūl) Fiḥ Ḥanaḥī kā Anmol Khazīna*. Karachi: Dāru'l Ishā'at, n. d., p. 72. In my translation, I have used both these sources.

scholars of Islamic law (*ahl-i taṣawwuf wa Shari'at*), [implementing]] *bai'at* by women is not proper.⁸¹

‘Ijāzu’l Ḥaqq Quddūsī, a recent biographer of ‘Abdu’l Quddūs Gangohī, has included her name in the list of his twenty-three deputies and prominent disciples.⁸²

(7)

Ḥaẓrat Mardum Maḥall

Date: D. 10 Muḥarram 1216/23 May 1801

Place: Chitli Qabar, Delhi, Pakistan

Addressed affectionately by her husband, Mirzā Mazhar Jan-i-Janān (d. 1781), eighteenth-century Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī Sufi, as Mardum Maḥall⁸³ and by his disciples and *khalīfas* as Ḥaẓrat Bībī Šāḥiba, her real name was Bībī Ḥayātu’n-nisā’.⁸⁴ Details about her natal family and her life before marriage remain little known. Her marriage was solemnised with Mirzā Mazhar in his old age, as Khaliq Anjum infers from a letter by Mirzā Mazhar addressed to Maulawī Na’īmu’llah Bahrā’ichī, his disciple and successor.⁸⁵ A biographer of Qāzī Sanā’u’llah Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810), a Sufi scholar and a disciple and *khalīfa* of Mirzā Mazhar, gives the date of marriage as 1761, around the time of the third battle of Panipat. The author also suggests that probably it was Mardum Maḥall’s second marriage.⁸⁶ The couple had no children; an adopted son, named Pīr ‘Alī, a relative of Mardum Maḥall (*qarābat-i Ḥaẓrat Bībī Šāḥiba*) lived with them.⁸⁷

Mardum Maḥall’s name appears frequently in her husband’s letters addressed to his disciples. A coherent narrative drawn from these letters and texts and written by Mirzā Mazhar’s two disciples (who were also his *khalīfas*) Maulawī

81 *Fatāwā-yi-Rashīdiyya (Kāmīl) Fiqh Ḥanafī kā Anmol Khazīna*, p. 72.

82 *Ḥaẓrat ‘Abdu’l Ḥaqq-Quddūs Gangohī hayat aur unki t’ālīmāt*, pp. 534–535.

83 The word *mardum* means a mermaid or the pupil of the eye.

84 Muḥammad Hasan Naqshbandī. 1904. *Ḥālāt mashāikh-i Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya*. Muradabad: Maṭba’ al-Maṭāba Aḥsan, p. 401. Zafar Aḥsan Bahrā’ichī. 2015. *Āsār Ḥaẓrat Mirzā Mazhar Jan-i-Janān*. Bahrā’ich: Khānqāh Na’īmia, p. 179, f. n. no.9.

85 Khaliq Anjum (Edited and compiled). 1997. *Maktūbāt-i Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān shahīd: ma’ Sawaniḥ ‘umrī*. Lahore: Makki Dārulkutub. p. 35; for the life of Maulawī Na’īmu’llah Bahrā’ichī, see. *Āsār Ḥaẓrat Mirzā Mazhar Jan-i-Janān*, pp. 257–338.

86 Maḥmudu’l Ḥasan ‘Ārif. 1995. *Tazkira Qāzī Muḥammad Sanā’u’llah Pānīpatī*. Lahore: Idāra Saqāfat-i Islāmyya, p. 227.

87 Fozail Ahmad Qadri. 1981. ‘*Edition of Bisharat-i-Mazhariyah*.’ Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, p. 511. (The thesis consists of the original Farsi text).

Naʿīmu'llah Bahrā'ichī (d. 1218/1804) and Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (d. 1240/1824), helps to create a life account of Mardum Maḥall. These two valuable sources, *Bishārat-i-Mazhariyya* (written in 1204–1207/1792–1795) and *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī* (probably written in 1796), refer to the daily personal interaction of the two authors with Mirzā Mazhar and his wife. In *Bishārat-i-Mazhariyya*, Bahrā'ichī sets a separate section under the subheading *dar zikr aḥwāl 'iffat wā kamālāt wā dast-gāh maḥram-i muḥtaram ahl-i bait ān Ḥaẓrat* (a narration regarding the excellence and virtues of the venerable wife of the Ḥaẓrat).⁸⁸

This narrative begins by saying that Mardum Maḥall was one from among the rest of pious and excellent women of the world (*ishān az jumla 'arifāt wā kāmīlāt nisa'-yi 'ālam and*). She was authorised by the Master of the *silsila* [Mirzā Mazhar] to instruct women. During the early days of her mystical state of authorisation [to instruct], the effect and fervour of her spiritual concentration [on her pupils] (*tāsīr wā garmī dar tawajjuh*) was abundant (*bisṣār mī dāshtand*). Mirzā Mazhar is quoted to have said that during the early stages of her state of authorization (*dar ibtidā' hāl ijāzat*), as her inward self (*dar bāṭin īn mastūra*) could create a high degree of impact, most women would often experience the highest form of ecstasy and would lose consciousness. However, as her spiritual connection (*nisbat*) became weak because of carelessness (*bīparwā'ī*) and lack of control (*bī iḥtimāmī*) and fits of mental disorder (*'arīzā saudā*), she could no longer endure the intensity of spiritual instruction; otherwise, the whole world would have benefitted by her virtues. Mirzā Mazhar acknowledging the inner qualities of Mardum Maḥall, further observed that “thanks to God, despite her indisposition, the essence of her spiritual connection with this *faqīr* [Mirzā Mazhar], her strong love for the Sufi masters remained intact.”⁸⁹ In a letter addressed to Qāẓī Sanā'u'llah Pānīpatī, Mirzā Mazhar said that Mardum Maḥall had arranged for two sessions for women's instructions (*tawajjuh*) at her home. Instructions to women, Mirzā Mazhar commented further, also had a positive effect on Mardum Maḥall as her mental status improved and she severed her worldly connections further.⁹⁰

Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, in his *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī*, confirms the above narrative. Paying respect to Mardum Maḥall, Shāh Ghulām 'Alī describes her as the refuge of purity (*'iffat panāh*) and power of chastity (*'ishmat dast-gāh*), further adding that she had learned to offer instruction to others under the supervision of Mirzā Mazhar. She attained the *martaba* (rank) of *ḥuzūr wā āgāhī*

88 Ibid, pp. 504–8.

89 Ibid, p. 504.

90 Khaliq Anjum (Edited & compiled). 1997. Letter no. 81 in *Maktūbāt-i Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānāh shahīd: ma' sawāniḥ 'unrī*. Lahore: Makkī Dārulkutub, p. 247.

(presence of Allāh and His awareness) because of his exalted companionship (*ṣuḥbat mubārak*) and was given the *ijāzat irshād nisāʾ-i ṣāliḥa* (permission to instruct virtuous women). Ghulām ‘Alī’s statement that Mardum Maḥall once was blessed with the vision of the Prophet offers another evidence of her spiritual status. She dreamt that the Prophet had bestowed great favour (*ʿināyat-i balīgha*) on Mirzā Mazhar. This episode reflects upon the highest status of Mardum Maḥall as it is held that the honour of Prophet’s vision in a dream is a rare gift for the chosen ones only. It was because of these highest spiritual attainments that Mirzā Mazhar asked his disciples to forgive Mardum Maḥall’s mental illness as, in his words, an insane person deserves to be excused (*dīwāna maʿzūr ast*).⁹¹

Mirzā Mazhar, in several of his letters, refers to the mental disorder of his wife, and says that though this illness had made his life miserable, he had no grudge against her.⁹² Indeed, he asked his disciples to treat Mardum Maḥall with respect and to take care of her even after his death. In a will that he left with Maulawī Sanāʾu’llah, he instructed all his sincere friends (*mukhlisān*) to keep her pleased as much as possible. After the martyrdom of Mirzā Mazhar in 1195/1781 at the hands of a religious fanatic, his disciples followed the instruction and took utmost care of Mardum Maḥall for the next twenty years. She died in 1801 in Panipat at the house of Maulawī Sanāʾu’llah Pānīpatī.⁹³ Her body was later brought to Delhi where she was buried in the house where her husband, Mirzā Mazhar, was already buried.

(8)

Shāmma Bibī

Period: Fifteenth Century

Shrine: Poshkar, Kashmir

Shāmma Bibī⁹⁴ was a mystic woman of great merits. She had the unique honour of being one of the spiritual deputies (*khulāfaʾ*) of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Nūru’d-Dīn Rishī (779/1378–842/1439) of Kashmir, popularly remembered even

91 Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī. 1309/1892. *Maqāmāt-i Mazharī*. Dihli: Maṭbaʿ Mujtabāʾi, p. 63.

92 Zahīru’l Ḥasan Kasolwī, who added his own stories while editing Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī’s *Ḥikāyāt-i Awliyāʾ* in 1983, without mentioning the name of Mardum Maḥall, writes that Mirzā Mazhar knowingly married a woman who was bad-tempered and used excessively abusive language. He says nothing about her spiritual virtues, see Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī. 1983. *Ḥikāyāt-i Awliyāʾ*. Deoband: Khwāja Ajmeri Books House, p. 28.

93 For details, see *ʿEdition of Bisharat-i-Mazhariyah*, pp. 504–507.

94 Shāmma Bibī is referred by various names, such as Shām Bibī and Shām Ded.

today as Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam.⁹⁵ There is, however, no letter of authorisation to show her appointment as the *khalīfa*. The only reference is the opening line of Ghulām Ḥassan Khuihāmi in the notice on Shāmma Bibī that she was one of the spiritual successors of Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam (*az khulāfā-yi Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam ast*). Shaikh Nūru'd-Dīn, in the words of Ghulām Ḥassan, was the best and the chosen one and known among all the Sufis of Kashmir (*zubda'-i reshiyān, nāmdār wa bar-guzīda awliya'*) as unique in worshipping, abstinence, ego control, and earnest striving (*dar 'ibādat wa riyāẓat wa mujāhidāt wa nafs kushī waḥīd-i 'asr wa farīd dahar būd*).⁹⁶

The transformation of Shāmma Bibī from an ordinary young girl into a mystic took place under miraculous circumstances. As narrated by Ghulām Ḥassan Khuihāmi, it is said that on her wedding day (*ba-roz-i zifāf*) as Shāmma Bibī was being carried to the house of her husband (*dar khāna-yi shauhar mi burdand*), her glance fell upon Ḥaẓrat Shaikhu'l 'Ālam. The moment she looked at his face, she had a strange experience. Discarding the local traditions, which prohibit a bride to show her face to a stranger, Shāmma Bibī stepped out of her bridal litter and, placing her head at the feet of the Shaikh, began crying. At this, the Shaikh advised her that considering the respect and dignity of her parents (*nāmūs-i wālidain*), she must remain covered and serve her husband (*dar parda ba-nishīn wa khidmat-i shauhar kun*). With humility and modesty (*ba chashm-i bīmār wa khāṭir-i afgār*), Shāmma Bibī listened to this advice. From that moment, however, Shāmma Bibī went through a charismatic transformation. Worldly dignity, riches, and power became meaningless for her. She developed a feeling of aversion (*bezār shudā*) for all material possessions. Engrossed in remembering Allāh, she would eat nothing but wild vegetables (*sāg-i jan-gālī*) and would not even drink cold water. When asked why she would not eat bread made of grain, she said it was because of following the way of her *pīr* (*ba mutāba'at pīr-i khud*).⁹⁷

Ghulām Ḥassan Khuihāmi notes a large number of gnostic and mystical sayings (*maqūlāt wa ma'ārif*) that are attributed to Shāmma Bibī. So great was her devotion to her Shaikh, Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī, that often she would say that a *pīr* is the fountainhead of life (*pīr chashma-i āb-i haiwān ast*); one who drinks from it is purified. She would often express her wish to get close to the status of Bābā Naṣru'd-Dīn or Naṣr Rishī (d. 855/1451), a favourite disciple and deputy

95 For her life account, see *Tārīkh-i Ḥassan*, pp. 116–125.

96 Ibid, p. 116.

97 Ibid, pp. 144–145.

of Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī.⁹⁸ One of her mystical sayings is that revealing the secrets of Allāh is worse than killing thousands of innocents (*afshān kardān darūn-i ḥaqq badtar az hazār khūn-i naḥaqq*). Shām̃ma Bībī told her disciples that though men have authority in this world (*dar jahān mardān afsar ast*), in the heavenly kingdom (*dar malakūt*) their status depends on courage (*himmat mu'tabar*). A man without courage (*mard bi-himmat*) is worse than a woman; a woman with courage is noble and better (*afẓal wa bihtar*) than a man. Expressing stages of her mystical experiences, she used to say that in seeking union with God she was intoxicated, and in ecstasy lost recognition of her own self; recognizing herself, she recognised God (*Chūn bākhudā būdam bikhud būdam; chūn bākhud būdam bi khudā būdam*).⁹⁹

Shām̃ma Bībī, known as the first woman poet, is said to have composed the first elegy in Kashmiri language to mourn the death of her spiritual mentor, Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī.¹⁰⁰ Subsequent to the sad demise of her Shaikh, Shām̃ma Bībī, following the traditions of Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī, travelled widely in the region. Her worldly life came to its end in Poshkar, at the hermitage of Shaikh Bābā Laṭīfu'd-Dīn Rishī, the third deputy (*khalīfā*) of Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī.¹⁰¹ She was buried within the shrine complex.

(9)

Sangha Bībī

Period: Sixteenth Century

Place: Hamal, Kachal, Kashmir

The narrative of Sangha Bībī is most unusual. According to Ḥasan Khuihāmi, she is reported to have had a male disciple, Bābā Nekī Rishī, who later became

98 Bābā Naṣru'd-Dīn lies buried within the shrine of his Shaikh at Charār Sharīf in Badgam district of J& K. For his short biographical notice, see *Tārīkh-i Hassan*, pp. 137–39; see *Rishī namā* (composed in 1223/1832) (Edited by Muhammad Asadullah Wani and Masud Samun, Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 1882, pp. 114–119) of Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Matu (d. 1248/1833) (for instructions given by Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī to Bābā Naṣru'd-Dīn. For dialogue between Ḥaẓrat Nūru'd-Dīn Rishī and Bābā Naṣru'd-Dīn, see Pandit Anand Koul. 1930. "A Life of Nand Rishi," *The Indian Antiquary*, vol. 59 (February): 28–32.

99 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 145.

100 For the original elegy and its English translation, see Appendix E & F in Mohammad Ishaq Khan. 1994. *Kashmir's Transition to Islam: The Role of Muslim Rishis (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century)*. New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 258–260. Also, see Muhammad Asadullah Wani. 1993. *Shaikhul'Ālam: ek muṭālaʿ*. Srinagar: Mirzā Publications, p. 115.

101 For a short biographical notice of Shaikh Bābā Laṭīfu'd-Dīn Rishī, see *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, pp. 136–137.

her *khalīfa*. Ḥasan Khuihāmi begins his narrative on Bābā Nekī Rishī by presenting some unique and rather startling information that is not found anywhere else about any other Sufi women in the sources on Sufi women of South Asia. He writes *Bābā Nekī Rishī khalīfa-yi Sangha Bibī ast* (Bābā Nekī Rishī is the spiritual successor of Sangha Bibī).¹⁰²

Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Mattu (d. 1832), in *Rishī namā*, a versified account of Sufis of Kashmir (composed in 1223/1808) paid highest homage to the remarkable ascetic virtues of Sangha Bibī, a gnostic of Kashmir who like a true Sufi was *zāhida* (renunciate) and *‘abida* (devoted to Allāh). He compares her to a shining star (*akhtar-i pur-nūr*) filled with the Blessed Light (*nūr-i saṭī‘a*). Living in seclusion in the mountainous region of Khuihāma, surrounded by the scent of saffron (*gul-i ‘anbrīn*), Sangha Bibī was intoxicated by Divine Presence (*mast shud zi jān-i shuhūd*) and was absorbed by Celestial Manifestation (*maḥw dar tajallī būd*).¹⁰³

In his *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*'s section on the Sufis of Kashmir, which is titled *Asrāru'l Akhyār* (the secrets of the Chosen), Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi (d. 1898) wrote a short notice on Sangha Bibī. In it, he extols her virtues as a mystic par excellence and comments that she was known as a female worshipper of the highest rank. She belonged to the village of Kachalwan in the *pargana* of Ḥamal.¹⁰⁴ Ḥasan Khuihāmi identifies her as *‘abidāt-i Haqq sa‘īd muṭlaq* (devotee of the Absolute Truth).¹⁰⁵ *Rawḥatu'l Abrār* identifies her as an *‘arīfa* who manifested several miraculous powers (*karamāt bisyār*).¹⁰⁶

Ḥasan Khuihāmi is silent about Sangha Bibī's early life. Rafiqi, however, on the authority of Bābā Naṣību'd-Dīn Rishī (d. 1047/1637) says that Sangha Bibī came from a wealthy family. She had seven sisters and all of them renounced the world.¹⁰⁷ Sangha Bibī, after severing her relations with the world, became a disciple of Shukru'd-Dīn and made the forest of Āham in Khuyham her abode. From Bābā Shakūru'd-Dīn Walī she learned the rules of *ṭarīqat*. People of the

102 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 165.

103 Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Matu. 1223/1832. *Rishī namā* (Edited by Muhammad Asadullah Wani and Masud Samun, Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 1982, pp. 311–314).

104 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 164.

105 *Ibid*, p. 164.

106 Muḥammad Amīn Ḥanafī. *Rawḥatu'l Abrār y'ānī Ḥaṣrāt-i Kashmir* (Sirāju'l Maṭba', Jhelum, 1302/1884), p. 36.

107 Abdul Qaiyyum Rafiqi. *Sufism in Kashmir from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*. PhD Thesis submitted to the Australian National University, 1972, p. 257.
http://hdl.handle.net/1885/11225, DOI: 10.25911/5d74e508a72bd.

neighbourhood built a cottage for her. There in the forest, she befriended animals and looked after a large herd of cattle.¹⁰⁸

As an adept Sufi, she was well versed in mystical exercises which she mastered by her devotion and by engaging in intense remembrance of Allāh. She used to fast continuously and pray at night regularly.¹⁰⁹ She could converse with wild beasts such as lions. Mullā Bahāu'd-Dīn Matu, in *Rishī namā* (composed in 1223/1808), an account of the Sufis of Kashmir in verse, expressing this power of Sangha Bibī writes that she could talk with lions, panthers, dragons, and serpents (*guft sher wa palang wa azhdar wa mār*).¹¹⁰

According to one legend given by Ghulām Ḥasan Khuihāmi, once when a lion caught one of her attendants by the head, the Bibī said to the lion, "Why have you molested an innocent man?" The lion heard her voice and released the man. Rafiqi, adding more details to this legend on the authority of Bābā Naṣību'd-Dīn, says that once the disciple was released, Sangha Bibī had a conversation with the disciple. She said that the incident of the lion attacking her disciples happened because one of them had done mischief. One of her disciples then confessed that he had hidden some corn in her store. Sangha Bibī was much grieved and declared, "What greater theft could be committed by the Rishīs."¹¹¹

An interesting fact about Sangha Bibī which makes her narrative distinct from the accounts of other female Sufis is that a male, Sufi Bābā Nekī Rishī, was her disciple and later became her *khalīfā*. Honouring the excellent mystical status of Bābā Nekī Rishī, Ḥasan Khuihāmi writes that he was *ṣāhib-i war' wa taqwā az ahl-i ṣafā būd* (an abstinent, virtuous person of the group of Sufis). He had served Sangha Bibī for a long time and was her closest attendant and disciple. He was not only the manager and administrator of her place of stay (*muntazīm maqām*) but was the keeper of her coffer (*ṣandūq-dār*). Subsequent to Sangha Bibī's demise, not only did he become her spiritual successor but also inherited all her money and other possessions, including her cattle (*māl wa maweshī*). He gave away the money and cattle to the poor and the needy in charity (*ṣadaqa*) and also used to feed by his own hands at least four cattle each day.¹¹² Devotees continue to visit her shrine to gain her blessings.

108 *Tārīkh-i Ḥasan*, p. 164.

109 *Ibid*, p. 164.

110 *Rishī namā*, p. 312.

111 Abdul Qaiyyum Rafiqi. *Sufism in Kashmir from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*. PhD Thesis submitted to the Australian National University, 1972, p. 258.
<http://hdl.handle.net/1885/11225>, DOI: 10.25911/5d74e508a72bd.

112 *Ibid*, p. 259; also, see Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf Bukhari. 1999. *Tazkira Ṣūfiyya'-yi Kashmir*. Lahore: Oriental College, p. 202.

10.2 Sufi Women's Spiritual Sessions for Women Only

(1)

Bibī Bebe

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Quṣūr, Punjab, Pakistan

A biographical compendium, *Akbāru'l awliyā' min lisānu'l asfiyā'* (Tales of friends of God as a tribute to the holy persons), compiled by Shaikh Ghulām Mu'īnu'd-Dīn 'Abdullah—known as al-Khalīfa al-Kheshgī al-Chishtī in 1077/1666–1667 while he was serving as an employee of a Mughal noble in the Deccan—is a storehouse of information of the life of Pashtūn women living in the Quṣūr region of Punjab. In chapter three of this work, which still remains in manuscript form, Kheshgī, under the heading *dar bayān aḥwāl nisā 'arīfāt Kheshgīān wa sā'ir-i Afghānīān* (an account of pious women of the Kheshgīs and travellers [of the Path] from the Afghānīs), narrates these life stories.¹¹³

Among these pious women, one is Bibī Bebe, a Ḥusainza'ī Pashtūn of the Shammuza'ī tribe. Bibī Bebe was a person of great piety whose life was marked by continuous and intense prayers and submission to God. From her midnight prayers (*tahajjud*) till the predawn prayers (*ḥajr*), she would remain awake, occupied in remembering Allāh by doing *zikr-i khafi* (silent recollection and invocation of God) and *shughl-i jārob* (spiritual exercise of cleansing the heart [as a brush or broom will do]), which is the highest Sufi exercise of breath control.¹¹⁴ Here, Kheshgī digresses slightly from the narrative and devotes a long paragraph to methods and ways of doing *zikr*. It is also possible that Kheshgī's intent in explaining the methods of *zikr* performance was to show that women could also do this spiritual exercise.

Returning to the story of Bibī Bebe, Kheshgī writes that most of the time, the Bibī used to recite the Qur'ān. A striking and distinctive feature about Bibī Bebe was her quality of sharing her knowledge and experiences with her women contemporaries. Thus, all the time (*har dam*) she used to warmly and cordially

113 For details about the holdings of the different copies of the ms, see Muḥammad Iqbal Mujaddid's biography of Kheshgī, *Aḥwāl wa asār 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī Quṣūrī* (Lahore: Dāru'l Muarrikhīn, 1972), pp. 77–79; I have consulted ms (no. R343) of the Iqbal Mujaddidī collection, Punjab University, Lahore.

114 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. ms. no. R343, fol. 126a. Kheshgī, here cites a passage, in verse form, from *Talqīnu'l Murīdīn*, explaining the method of performing *shughl-i jārob*, saying that its purpose is to seek Divine proximity (*qurb-i ḥaqq*). I could not find *Talqīnu'l Murīdīn*. For the importance and performance of *shughl-i jārob*, see a later source, *Ẓiā'u'l qulūb* by Imdādu'llah Makkī (Maṭb' Aḥmadī, Lucknow, 1332/1914), pp. 40–41.

meet with other women of faith (*mu'mināt*). To all those who kept company with her, she would preach and counsel (*wa'z wa naṣā'ih*).¹¹⁵ Here, one wishes for further details about these women's spiritual gatherings. The reference, though brief, is of critical significance for two reasons. First, it undoubtedly evidences people's acceptance of Sufi women in society. Second, not only does it negate the traditional image of a Muslim woman—particularly a Pashtūn woman—as one bonded within the walls of her home, but on the contrary presents them as women who knew their identity, were knowledgeable, and as true seekers of more knowledge, travelled to acquire it. Thus, these women attendees were not commonplace persons who would have merely social meetings. Kheshgī presents these women by using the Qur'ān's term for the highest category of obedience to Allāh for women—*mu'mināt*, the feminine noun of the male plural noun *mu'minūn* in the Arabic language. The Qur'ān's definition of *mu'minūn* says that “Only those are Believers (*mu'minūn*) who have believed in Allāh and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allāh: Such are the sincere ones” (49:15).

These women's gatherings at Bībī Bebe's house, indeed, in all probability were sessions of spiritual discourses. The use of the descriptive phrases in Kheshgī's brief annotation of Bībī Bebe's narrative are of immense significance. These meetings were held constantly and Bībī Bebe was busy preparing and giving her sermons all the time (*har dam*). Kheshgī is not limiting these sessions to a fixed schedule; instead, by using the two words *har dam*—which literally mean “each and every single breath”—he elevates these gatherings from women's neighbourhood chat groups to the sublime level of spiritual sessions. As these women constantly sought and were present in her company, Kheshgī addresses them as *ahl-i ṣuḥbat*. A *ṣuḥba*, the Arabic term for its Persian *ṣuḥbat*, in Sufi practices is an intimate conversational session of high spiritual level, between the Sufi guide (*shaikh*) and the spiritual seeker or disciple (*murīd*) for the purpose of the training of the latter group.¹¹⁶ Members of this group (*ahl-i ṣuḥbat*) are thus followers and disciples of the Sufi teacher. My above explanation is based on the two significant words of this narrative: *wa'z wa naṣā'ih*. A *wa'z* is a sermon and when delivered by a Sufi with the added self-explanatory word *naṣā'ih*, the nature of these sessions takes on a new image where the mentor guides her disciples to the free universe of spiritual peace. This brief observation, in Kheshgī's estimation, was not worthy of further details and he

115 *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fol. 127b.

116 See for more on this, Ahmet T. Karamustafa. 2007. *Sufism. The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, ps.120, 148.

soon was taken over by self-glorification as he moved to describe the affinity between himself and Bibī Bebe. We have chronologically documented accounts of male discourse sessions (*majālis*) in the Sufi *malḥūzāt* but none for women's assemblies has not yet come to light. With the unfortunate brevity of Kheshgī's account, invaluable details of this unique and rare case of women-only spiritual learning sessions are lost.

It is relevant to reiterate here that the above biographical notice was recorded by Kheshgī while he was posted in Awrangābād. While writing this notice, he recalled his meetings with the God-fearing Bibī Bebe in Quṣūr while he was still young (*aṣghar*). Out of her kindness and generosity (*karm wa 'ināyat*), Bibī Bebe used to refer to Kheshgī as her son (*pisar-i man*). The relationship between the two was so strong that not only in his presence, but in his absence (*dar ghaibat wa ḥuṣūr*) as well, she would make him appear distinct (*mumtāz*) by saying good words about him (*zīkr-i khair*).¹¹⁷ The above lines about the personal relationship between Bibī Bebe and her narrator are relevant to this account as it assists us in verifying the authenticity of accounts based on memory and thus validates the role of memory in documenting history.

10.3 Women as Disciples of Their Fathers/Husbands/Sons/Brothers

(1)

Bibī Abdāl

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: District Nalanda, Bihar

Shrine: Debi Sāra i, District Nalanda, Bihar

Bibī Abdāl's real name was Khuḡasta Akhtar.¹¹⁸ Recounting oral history, Ghulām Nabī Firdawsī, in his late nineteenth-century monumental work *Mirātu'l Kaunain* (mirror of the worlds)—a biographical compendium of men and women, both rulers and spiritual persons, arranged in chronological order and drawing upon a variety of large sources, some of which are now extinct—says that her original name was Bibī Johda.¹¹⁹ She came from a family of several generations of pious, God-fearing mystic persons. Her father, Ḥaṣrat

¹¹⁷ Ibid, fol. 127b.

¹¹⁸ 'Abdur Razzāq 'Aṭā' Ḥusain. *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. (Bombay: Maṭba' Ṣafdarī, 1302/1884), p. 85.

¹¹⁹ Ghulām Nabī Firdawsī in *Mirātu'l kaunain* (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1894) gives her name as Bibī Johida, p. 317. (Henceforth, referred to as *Mirātu'l kaunain*). (I wonder this name could be a local corrupted form for Zāhida).

Makhdūm Badru'd-Dīn 'Ālam Zāhidī (d. 844/1440) of the Junaidī *silsila* of the Sufis is known by various appellations, such as Pīr Badr, Badar Maqām, and Badr Awliyā'.¹²⁰ His family is said to have arrived from Arabia and settled in Meerut, in North India. At the invitation of Sharfu'd-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Manerī (d. 1381) of Bihar, Makhdūm Badru'd-Dīn left Meerut in 1380 and arrived in Bengal.

In Bihar, his piety and devotion to Allāh inspired many to enter Islam. Legends describe Badru'd-Dīn as the guardian saint of sailors and boatmen, recognised by both the Hindus and Muslims.¹²¹ Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf, writing in 1788–1789, noted that the shrine of Pīr Badr radiates wondrous miracles (*bā-kamāl khwāriq*) and in its sublime grandeur many people found their needs fulfilled. Whenever a boat was caught in high seas by strong winds, as soon as the troubled boatman, whether infidel or Muslim, calls out loudly and repeatedly and eloquently to Pīr Badr or one of his popular aliases, the boat is saved from drowning and from the tempest.¹²²

Recounting oral history, Ghulām Nabī Firdawsī in his *Mirātu'l Kaunain*, narrates that once in her childhood, Bibī Abdāl donned the *dastār* (wrap around the turban) of her father and ran outside the house. Since then, she came to be known as Bibī Abdāl.¹²³ Brought up under the care of her father, Bibī Abdāl followed the same pathway as was practiced by her illustrious father. She was a disciple of her father as she took the oath of allegiance at his hands. Since early childhood, she spent most of her time in offering prayers and in the remembrance of Allāh. Often, she remained in the mystical state of ecstasy (*ḥālat-i jazb*). Several miracles are associated with her. Later, her father married her to one of his students, Saiyyid Aḥmad, who came to Bihar from the

120 For short biographical notice of Badru'd-Dīn Badr-i-'Ālam, see *Mirātu'l kaunain*, Ibid., pp. 371–373; H. Blochmann. 1873. "Geography and History of Bengal." *Journal of the Royal Society of Bengal*, 42(3):209310; R.C.T. 1894. "Pir Badar in Burma." *Journal of the Royal Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (July), pp. 566–76; John Beames. 1894. "The Saint Pir Badar." *Journal of the Royal Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 838–40.

121 L.S.S. O'Malley. 1908. *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer. Chittagong*. Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, pp. 56–57; Sir Richard Temple, in 1925 noted the presence of small shrines across the eastern Indian Ocean built by Muslim sailors, which he called "Buddermokan" (*badr-muqam*). Badr-al-Din Awliya, Temple writes, 'is worshipped as a spirit (*nat*) by the Buddhist, as a lesser god (*deva*) by the Hindus, as a sacred spirit by the Chinese and as a Sufi by the Muslims. His worship was the same as that offered throughout the region to spirits and supernatural creatures, revered by the whole population, regardless of religion.' See, R.C. Temple. 1925. "Buddermokan." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15(1): 1–33.

122 Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, pp. 84–85.

123 *Mirātu'l Kaunain*, p. 373.

outside (*wilāyat*) to seek knowledge at his *khānqāh*. He was the son of Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Saiyyid ‘Alīmu’d-Dīn Gīsū Darāz. Soon, the couple had a son and named him Saiyyid Maḥmūd.¹²⁴ While the baby was still breastfeeding, Bibī Abdāl requested her husband to marry again as married life did not suit her and was hindering her from worshipping and serving Allāh. The husband, as he found her engrossed in Allāh’s remembrance all the time, agreed to remarry. Soon after her husband married a girl of a Saiyyid family, Bibī Abdāl retired to a small room to pray and contemplate. She was so greatly enraptured (*ḥālat-i sakr*) by the Divine manifestation that, in her enraptured state, riding a lion and holding a black snake in her hand as if it were a whip, she left her home and her baby and began roaming in the wilderness. Returning to a normal state of sobriety (*sahw*), she came back home but remained deeply intoxicated by Allāh’s remembrance. Like a perfect Sufi, her trust in Allāh was strong and her patience was exemplary. Whenever her maidservants would tell her that there was nothing in the house to prepare a meal, she would starve. Instead of complaining, Bibī Abdāl would be thankful for Allāh’s bounty because missing a meal would free her of being accountable before Allāh for consuming food. Legends say that because she rode a lion and controlled a black cobra, these two cannot harm her descendants.¹²⁵

Mirātu’l kaunain narrates several other hagiographical accounts of Bibī Abdāl’s miracles. Once, while she was sitting in a boat in a state of deep meditation, she became irritated by a crying baby and threw it in the river. On hearing the wails of the mother, she put her hand in the deep waters and took out the child who was laughing and giggling and was unhurt. Similarly, by her miraculous powers, an empty food cauldron got filled and she fed a large number of people by serving them with her own hands.¹²⁶ Her son, Makhdūm Saiyyid Maḥmūd, was a disciple and a *khalīfa* of her elder brother, Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm Shāh Shihābu’d-Dīn Qattāl Zāhid.

Bibī Abdāl’s *chillā* is in Bibīpur. Villages around this area are given as tax-free villages (*mu‘āfi*) to her descendants. While dates of birth and death of her father and brothers are known, the same about her are not found recorded anywhere. Her shrine is managed by the All India Ulama and Mashaikh Board, Delhi.¹²⁷

124 *Kanzu’l Ansāb*, p. 85; *Mirātu’l kaunain*, 373.

125 Shāh Farzand ‘Alī. 1313/1895. *Wasīla-i Sharf Zarī‘a-i Daulat*. Patna: Maṭba‘ Aḥsanu’l Maṭab’, pp. 175–76.

126 *Mirātu’l kaunain*, p. 374.

127 www.aiumb.org › sufism › dargahs-in-india dargahs-in-india.

(2)

Phūl Bībī**Date:** D. 5 Muḥarram 1172/8 September 1758**Shrine:** Damgarh Sharif, Allahabad

Phūl Bībī (the flower lady),¹²⁸ wife of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar (1140/1728), hailed from Soth of Pargana Sakar of Allahabad. Though little is known about her early life, we do have details about her later life as the wife of a devout Sufi, and as the mother of three sons each of whom reached the highest stations of mystic path and left a trail of excellent (*kāmil*) Sufis which continues until today. Phūl Bībī is one of those veiled friends of Allāh who walked on the path of a devoted Sufi all through their life with no exposure to the world outside.

Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar Kākorwī (1181/1768–1275/1858),¹²⁹ the devoted disciple of Phūl Bībī's son, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bāsiṭ 'Alī Qalandar Allahabadī (d. 1782), writes that Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar was one of the trustworthy and perfect spiritual deputies (*az khulafā'-yi mu'tabarīn wa kāmilīn*) of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥtabā Qalandar, known as Shāh Majjā Qalandar (d. 1084/1673),¹³⁰ who disseminated and rejuvenated this sublime (i.e., Qalandariyyā) *silsila*.¹³¹ At the orders of his Shaikh, Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar, who lived for 125 years,

128 For her life, see Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar 'Alawī Kākorwī. 1293/1876. *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'* (publisher's name not given), pp. 296–98.

129 Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar's shrine is in Kākorī and attracts large number of devotees, see Mas'ūd Anwar 'Alawī Kākorwī. 1990. *Tafṣilāt mazarāt ṣāhibān-i khānqāh kazimīyya kakorwī*. Kākorī Sharif: kutubkhānā Anwariyya, pp. 25–35. For his life account, see Taqī Anwar 'Alawī Kāzimī Kākorwī. 1985. *Tazkira Gulshan-i karam-dargah 'ālam panāh kazimīya*. Kākorī: Kutubkhānā Anwariyya Takiyā Sharif, pp. 65–102.

130 Shāh Majjā Qalandar Lahirpur lies buried in Lahirpur, close to Khairabad, UP. Shāh Majjā Qalandar who remained lost, so intensely, day and night in Allāh's remembrance (*shab wa roz dar zikr wa fikr mashghūl shudand*) that he would forget to eat and drink, ease nature, and prayers and fasting. He had a large following and several spiritual deputies (*khalifā-i īshān bisyar būdand*). In addition to two books *Hujjatu'l 'Arifīn* and *Manāqibu'l khulafā'*, he regularly corresponded with his disciples and followers. For his letters, see *T'ālimāt-i Qalandariyya* compiled by Ḥaẓrat Maulānā Shāh Muḥammad Taqī Haidari Alāwī, Lucknow: Barqi Press, 1932; Esha Basanti Joshi. 1964. *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Sitapur*. Lucknow: Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, Dept. of District Gazetteers, p. 216.

131 Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar. 1312/1894. *Uṣūlu'l maqsūd*. Lucknow: Asaḥḥu'l maṭab', p. 9; for his life account, see *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 220–224. He wrote two Farsi works, *Manāqibu'l Khulafā'* and *Hujjatu'l 'Arifīn*. See Esha Basanti Joshi. 1964. *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Sitapur*. Lucknow: Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, Dept. of District Gazetteers, p. 216; also, Ḥabību'llah Mukhtār. 2000. *Anwāru'l Awliyā'*. Ed. by Saiyyid Ni'matu'llah. Karachi: Bisāt-i Adab, pp. 68–75.

at the age of eighty years sent a proposal of his second marriage to marry the young daughter of a person named Lālā Miyān son of Saiyyid Aḥmad.¹³² Although the family members of Lālā Miyān opposed this proposal because of the advanced age of Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar, he finally married this young girl, Phūl Bibī, who became the mother of three noteworthy sons.¹³³

Phūl Bibī's household in Damgaṛh, where she came after her marriage,¹³⁴ similar to the Triveni Sangam of Prayag (Allahabad), emerged as the confluence of the three most revered streams of eighteenth-century North India Sufism representing Damgaṛh Sharīf, Laharpur, and Kākori Sahrīf. Her husband, Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar of the Qādirīyyā-Qalandariyyā Sufi *sil-sila*, traced his lineage to Ḥaẓrat 'Alī and always remained engrossed in prayers, worshipping, and meditation. As his time was spent continuously in meditation, he never stretched his legs and used to say that one stretches his legs only in the grave.¹³⁵ Prayers, meditation, and abstinence bring one into proximity to the Divine (*qurb-i lāhī*) and nearness to Muḥammad and 'Alī (*ra*) (*ḥuẓūrī Muḥammad wa Murtaẓawī ḥāsil būd*).¹³⁶

Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar, in a separate biographical notice on her, addresses Phūl Bibī as *makhdūma* and describes her as one of the pious and perfect virtuous women with excellence (*az nisā'yi ṣālīḥāt wa kāmīlāt*) who was extremely pious with intense devotion for Allāh (*nihāyat zāhida wa khudā parast*).¹³⁷ Her qualities of abstinence and love for poverty were further chiselled by the blessed company of her husband. Thus, she attained a status which would be often blessed by the presence (*ḥuẓūrī*) of Ḥaẓrat 'Alī.

This God-fearing couple lived in some comfort. One day, however, Phūl Bibī asked her husband how her ancestor (*jadda-i man*) Ḥaẓrat Bibī Fāṭima lived her life. To this the husband replied that she lived a life of hardship, poverty, and abstinence (*taklīf wa 'usrat wa zuhd*). Hearing this, Phūl Bibī instantly decided and declared that all the prosperity and affluence that they had was no longer acceptable to her (*īn daulat wa farāghat khush namī āyad*) and therefore

132 Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar's first wife, his maternal cousin, whom he married at the age of sixty, died leaving behind two sons (the first one died in infancy). See Ibid, p. 128.

133 Ibid, p. 128. Turāb 'Alī Qalandar gives this story in *Uṣūlu'l maqṣūd* also, see p. 228.

134 The village of Damgaṛh in the Handiya *tehsil* of Allahabad was the abode of Nishapuri Saiyyids to which Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar belonged. See, William Hoey, 1898. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad: Being translation of the Tarikh Farahbakhsh of Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh from the original Persian*, vol. 2. Allahabad: The Government Press, p. 218.

135 *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, p. 235.

136 Ibid.

137 Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar gives the story of Phūl Bibī with no variation of the text in his two works, i.e., *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 296–298 and *Uṣūlu'l maqṣūd*, pp. 165–167.

she gave away all the comforts and adopted a life of *faqr-i Muḥammadi wa Murtaẓawī* (the poverty of Muḥammad and of 'Alī Murtazā). Though the husband tried to dissuade her from adopting this abstinence and inconvenience—as adoption of poverty and starvation is a difficult task—Phūl Bibī did not change her decision. She argued that for her, the poverty of Muḥammad and of 'Alī Murtazā was right. Like a Sufi, fearful of worldly comforts, she questioned the ultimate futility of worldly possessions and argued that, after all, what would all this prosperity accomplish (*in farāghat chih kār āyad*). At last, Shāh Muḥammad Māh Qalandar agreed and said that whatever she wished he was with her. From that day onwards, the household went through unspeakably difficult times. Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar, her biographer and a disciple of her son Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī Qalandar, admiring her decision, comments that the status and rank (*darajā*) of Phūl Bibī (as a Sufi) is linked to the fact that she chose a life of poverty, because voluntary poverty is extremely demanding (*faqr ikhtiyārī bisyār mushkil ast*).

Phūl Bibī was a disciple of her son, Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī Qalandar¹³⁸ of the Qādirī *silsila* and who was the *khalifā* of Shāh Illahdiyā Aḥmad Qalandar of Laharpur (d. 1147/1735).¹³⁹ On the authority of Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī, Shāh Turāb'Alī narrates another incredible anecdote. This story says that as the time of her death approached, her looks turned youthful (*shakl jawānī namūdā shud*) and she began chanting a welcome song/nuptial song (*sohal*). Being asked why she was singing, she replied that it was to welcome a son that soon would be born to her grandson Mas'ūd 'Alī. Reciting the *kalimā ṭayyaba*, she then breathed her last. Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī further narrates that after forty days, while engrossed in worship and Allāh's remembrance, suddenly he remembered his mother. Instantly he was transported into the presence of his mother and enquired about her welfare in the other world. The dead Phūl Bibī said that as soon as she left this world, she found herself in the presence of *Ḥaẓrat Khātūn-i Jannat* (the Blessed lady of Heaven, meaning the Prophet's daughter Ḥaẓrat Bibī Fāṭima), who at once deputed all the women who were in her service to wait upon Phūl Bibī.

138 *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 227–235. A Persian chronogram on his tomb in Damgaḥ gives the date of his demise as 1196/1782. See A. Führer. 1891. *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*. Allahabad: The Government Press, p. 143; a mosque adjacent to Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī Qalandar's shrine bears a Persian chronogram yielding the date of its construction to the year 1198 (1783–84) and assigns its construction to Raja Tikait Rai (1760–1808), an officer in the accounts office of Awadh and a devotee of Shāh Bāsiṭ'Alī Qalandar. See, *Usūlu'l maqsūd*, p. 161; also Madhav N. Katti (Edited). 1996. *Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Report of Epigraphy for 1992–93*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, p. 88.

139 For his biographical note, see *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'* Ibid, pp. 226–227. Laharpur is now a small town in District Sitapur, UP, India.

She told her son, "I am very well and happy here, and I am in the presence of *Ḥaẓrat Khātūn-i Jannat*."

She died on 5 Muḥarram 1172/8 September 1758 and was buried in Bāgh-i Ghawsu'l Āzam in Damgarh, a garden laid out by her youngest son, Syed Muḥammad Wāsil (known as Shahanshāh Qalandar) where he himself was buried.¹⁴⁰ Shahanshāh Qalandar died about four years before his mother in 1168/1755. Her eldest son, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Muḥammad Wāris, is also buried there.¹⁴¹

(3)

Bibī Sharīfa, Daughter of Bābā Farīd

Date: Thirteenth Century

Place: Ajodhan

Bibī Sharīfa, a thirteenth-century woman born into a family of exceptional spiritual merits, has a significant place in rewriting the history of women, gender, and Sufism. She was the second daughter of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar (1175–1265), the fountainhead of the Chishtī Sufi *silsila* whose message has spread to almost the whole of South Asia, touching the hearts and the core teachings of other faiths in India.¹⁴² Her mother's identity, however, is not confirmed. 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī's statement that Bibī Huzaira Khātūn, a daughter of Sultan Balban of Delhi (d. 1287), was her mother remains doubtful as no other scribe has mentioned it.¹⁴³

Early Chishtī sources account for three daughters of Shaikh Farīd. Amīr Khwurd, a contemporary whose immediate family had access to Shaikh Farīd's household, writes about his three daughters. Bibī Mastūra (the hidden one),

140 Ḥaẓrat Shahanshāh Qalandar who remained unmarried was a born Sufi who since early childhood remained in spiritual ecstasy (*ḥālat-i jazb*). For more details of his life, see *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 239–242; The grave of Shahanshāh Qalandar in the Damgarh shrine bears a Persian chronogram giving the date of his demise as Wednesday 2 Zilhajj, 1168/September 9, 1755. According to another chronogram, his burial took place on Thursday 3 Zilhajj, 1168/ September 10, 1755. See Madhav N. Katti (Edited), op cit. 1996, p. 89.

141 *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, p. 298. Shāh Muḥammad Wāris who like his mother lived a life of poverty. According to a hagiographical anecdote narrated by Shāh Bāsiṭ 'Alī Qalandar in his *Risālā Tuḥfā-yi Nishapūriā*, Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Gilānī conferred the cloak (*khirqā*) and the club (*'aṣā*) upon Shāh Muḥammad Wāris. The anecdote further says that Ḥaẓrat 'Alī once told him that in rank, Shāh Bāsiṭ 'Alī was equal to that of *Sulṭānu'l 'Arifīn* Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmi. For more details, see *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 237–239.

142 For studies on his connections with the Sikh faith, see Rajwant Singh Chalana. 2005. *International Bibliography on Sikh Studies*. The Netherlands: Springer.

143 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. Lahore: Victoria Press, p. 215; Rizvi rejects it as he finds it historically incorrect. See *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 1, p. 144.

the eldest, remained a veiled, chaste, and saintly person until the very end of her life. Several miracles were associated with her. Bibī Fāṭima was the third and youngest daughter. She was the widow of Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq (601/1205–670/1272), the most loyal, close, and trusted disciple of Bābā Farīd and who also became one of his *khalīfas*. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', following the death of Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq, looked after the children born of this marriage.¹⁴⁴ Bibī Fāṭima's two Sufi sons, Khwajā Muḥammad and Khwajā Mūsā, grew into saintly persons of great merit.

Bibī Sharīfa, the middle daughter, similar to her two God-fearing pious sisters, had also the quintessential characteristics of a friend of Allāh. Like the other two, she also had the privilege of being brought up in a family that personified the Sufi ideal of *faqr* (poverty) and *ṣabr* (patience) under the care of her grandmother, Bibī Qarsum Khatūn, and her father, Bābā Farīd. Her paternal uncle, Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil (559/1164–671/1273), and her first paternal cousin, 'Alā'ud-Dīn Ṣābir of Kalyar Sharīf (d. 690/1291), who spent several years in Bābā Farīd's house, also must have left a mark on her. The environment in which she grew was thus the epitome of *zuhd* and *taqwā*.

Apart from her family background and circumstantial privileges, what indeed made Bibī Sharīfa an exceptional person in the estimation of her father, Bābā Farīd, a man who created and polished gems of the Chistiyya *silsila* in South Asia, were her inner virtues that she acquired by following the path of the Sufi *ṭarīqa*.

The most important and cohesive statement, albeit brief, about Bibī Sharīfa's virtues and excellence comes from Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Mubārak bin Muḥammad 'Alawī Kirmānī, known as Amīr or Amīr Khwurd, the author of *Siyaru'l-Awliyā'*, the earliest known and most authentic biographical compendium of the Chishtī Sufis of the early period. Amīr Khwurd's few lines—under the heading *nukta dar bayān fuṣṣā'il wa ṣalahiyyāt wa karāmāt dukhtarān Shaikh Shyūkhul-'ālam Farīd al-ḥaqq wā dīn quds Allāh Sara h-ul 'azīz* (an account of the subtleties of attainments, excellence, and virtues of the daughters of head of the Shaikhs of the world, Farīdu'l-Ḥaqq, may God sanctify his grave)—helps to conceptualise the virtues of Bibī Sharīfa.¹⁴⁵ Before proceeding further, it is essential at this point to establish the credibility of Amīr Khwurd's text. Amīr Khwurd's family, the Kirmānīs, since the last two generations had remained the most devoted disciples of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar and had access to the family life of Bābā Farīd.¹⁴⁶ A more significant fact is that Amīr Khwurd's

144 SA, p. 202.

145 SA, p. 201.

146 For the service and devotion of the Kirmānīs, see SA, pp. 208–10; Rizvi, 1, pp. 158–59.

paternal grandmother, Bibī Rānī, was also a *murīd* of Bābā Farīd, on whose hands she had taken an oath of allegiance and in obedience to her Shaikh had given up worldly possessions in favour of poverty and privation (*faqr wa fāqa*).¹⁴⁷ She later served Bābā's disciple and *khalīfa*, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Din Awliyā', in Delhi. Thus, in view of this proximity and the historical validity of the text, Amīr Khwurd's few lines, six to be exact, carry more weight and credibility than lengthy hagiographical accounts do.

Let us now look at this account, which in its essence is a testimony coming from a person none other than Bābā Farīd. Thus, this testimony is of great significance and is sufficient to place Bibī Sharīfa in the cadre of acclaimed Sufis who follow the path of *ḥaqq* (the ultimate Truth). Amīr Khwurd writes that of Shaikh Farīd's three daughters, Bibī Sharīfa, the second daughter, because of her excellence in devotion and submission to God was the most exalted one (*bāsharf-i'ibādat wa ṭā'at musharraḥ būd*). Though widowed in the prime of her youth, she had no desire for another husband until the last day of her life.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, instead of showing an interest in remarrying, she remained engaged and engrossed in remembering Allāh (*ba ḥaqq mashghūl shud*). In view of her intense devotion and piety, Bābā Farīd said that "had it been permitted to give the authorization for succession and the permission to sit on the rug of prayer to a woman, I would have given it to Bibī Sharīfa" (*agar 'aurat rā khilāfat wa sajjāda-yi mashā'ikh dādan rawā būd man Bibī Sharīfa rā mī dādam*).¹⁴⁹ It is not clear whether the next sentence following that one, "if other women had been like her, women would have taken precedence over men," is a saying of Bābā Farīd or comes from Amīr Khwurd. Amīr Khwurd ends his account of Bibī Sharīfa by quoting a verse of Sa'dī (d. 1291). However, he mixes two different hemistiches from Sa'dī's ode (*qaṣīda*) written in praise of Turkan Khatūn (d. 1094), the chief consort of Malik Shāhī of the Seljuk Empire.¹⁵⁰

Viewed and assessed in the wider perspective of South Asian Muslim women's lives, the narrative of Bibī Sharīfa acquires more significance than merely a father's decision not to give what a daughter deserves. The focal point of this assessment rests in the sharply held debate whether depriving a woman of what she qualifies for and deserves is fair and justified, and does such deprivation violate the spirit of the Qur'ān and is worthy of Sufi spirit or not. It is also significant to consider that in the formative era of Muslim society in Hindustan, a Sufi, i.e., Bābā Farīd, and a Sultan, i.e., Iltutmish (d. 1236), "seemed

147 SA, p. 209.

148 SA, p. 191.

149 SA, p. 191.

150 I am grateful to Dr. Ansar Zahid Khan and Kaleem Chaghtai of Pakistan Historical Society for their help in identifying the misquoted couplet by Mir Khwurd.

to have thought along the same lines” in considering their daughters as their future successors.¹⁵¹ The similarity, however, was short-lived as Iltutmish went ahead with his decision, overriding male opposition, while Bābā Farīd hesitated to put it into practice. Bibī Sharīfa’s deprivation of *khilāfat*, despite her excellent Sufi virtues, finally runs parallel to Rāziya Sultan’s (r. 1236–1240) narrative of losing the support of the court elites and ultimately her crown and her life, despite the spirit of the Qur’ān which teaches gender equity. How these two incidences become a prelude to the overwhelming growth of misogynist traditions is further evidenced in the words of Bābā Farīd’s contemporary court chronicler, Minhāj-us Sirāj (b. 1193). Sirāj, writing about Rāziya Sultan, states that she was “a great sovereign, sagacious, just, benevolent, the patron of the learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects and of warlike talent, endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for a king ... [b]ut she was not born of the right sex,”¹⁵² echoing Farīd’s decision. Finally, that *khilāfat* was not conferred on Bibī Sharīfa because of her gender is, thus, the core argument in her life and remains for most other Muslim women of South Asia.

The continuity and tenacity of traditional treatment of women’s position is so strong that in the early twentieth century, while endorsing Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār’s decision regarding Bibī Sharīfa’s *khilāfat*, Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (1863–1943)—a Sufi and a prolific author, and affectionately addressed as *Ḥakīmū’l ummā* (the wise man of the [Muslim] community)—could only argue that the Shaikh’s denial of *khilāfat* to the Bibī was based on traditions. Addressing his audience, Thānawī presented a feeble excuse by way of explanation and said, “Look! How meticulous care is taken in following the *Sharī‘at* (*Sharī‘at kā kis qadr daqīq atbā’ hai*) in spite of the presence of any clear dictum prohibiting (*bawajūd kisī sarīḥ qaul-i nahī kai wārid hone kai*) [women holding *khilāfat*].”¹⁵³

(4)

Bibī Ḥalīma

Period: Seventeenth Century

Place: Akora Khattak/Bannu, Pakistan

151 Tanvir Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190–1400*. Karachi: OUP, 2011, pp. 158, 345.

152 Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī, and Ghulām Rasūl Mahr. 1985. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī. jild awwal*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, p. 806–7.

153 Thanawī, Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī. 1932. *al-Sunnah al-Jalīyyah fī Chishtīyah al-‘Alīyyah*. Dehli: Kutubkhāna Ashrafiyih, pp. 58–59.

Bibī Ḥalīma, the daughter of the eminent Pashtūn poet Khushāl Khan Khattak (1613–1689), was a mystic poet and scholar of great merit (*fāzila wa ʿarīfa*). The only narrative that I could find about her is given in *Pata Khazana* (Hidden treasury), an anthology of Pashto poets by Muḥammad Hotak.¹⁵⁴ Hotak begins this narrative by addressing Bibī Ḥalīma as *durr-i shahwār-i ʿiṣmat* (the precious pearl of chastity).¹⁵⁵

Bibī Ḥalīma's account is based on the testimony of Muḥammad Hotak's father, Daʿūd Khan (1620–1724). On one visit of Daʿūd Khan to Bannu, Bibī Ḥalīma was apparently living there. While her father, Khushāl Khan Khattak, was still alive, Bibī Ḥalīma studied several branches of learning (*ʿulūm*) and memorised the Qurʾān and was a *ḥāfiẓa*. Her mystic nature led her to become the disciple (*murīd*) of one Shaikh Sʿadi Lahorī. She took *baiʿat* at the hands of her brother, ʿAbdu'l Qādir Khan, who was a *khalīfa* of Shaikh Saʿadi Lahorī. Bibī Ḥalīma did not marry and spent most of her time in mystical pursuits and studying books on *taṣawwuf*. She had studied several such books and could explain the meanings of *Masnawī Sharīf*.¹⁵⁶ She had also read *Maktūbāt-i Ḥaẓrat Imām Rabbānī* (1564–1624). She used to teach other Pashtun women in her brother's house.

In her poetry, instead of worldly love, Divine love was the theme. Muḥammad Hotak's father could recite some of her poems. I quote here one such piece from *The Hidden Treasure*:

To everyone I look
I picture His face,
I am overwhelmed with joy
By His charming face.¹⁵⁷

154 *Pata Khazana* was written sometime in 1728–29 by Muḥammad Hotak under the patronage of Shāh Husain Hotak (1725–1738), ruler of the Hotak dynasty of Qandahar. The book was, translated into Persian by Abdul Hai Habibi in 1944 and later published in Kabul by the Pashto Academy in 1997. It was translated into English by Khushal Habibi and published by the University Press of America, 1997. See Hotak, Muḥammad, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, and Khushal Habibi. 1997. *The Hidden treasure: a biography of Pashtoon poets = Pata khazana*. Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 137–38. All my references are from this English translation and the original Pashto text. It was copied in 1303/1886 by Muhammad ʿAbbas Kasi of Quetta, Baluchistan. See *Pata Khazana Original*: <https://archive.org/details/BPataKhazanaOriginal>.

155 *Pata Khazana Original*, p. 96.

156 *Masnawī-i-Maʿnawī* (also spelt as *Mathnawī*) of Jalal al-Din Muḥammad Balkhi, also known as Rum.

157 *The Hidden treasure: a biography of Pashtoon poets = Pata khazana*, p. 138.

(5)

Ḥaẓrat Naʿīma (Baʿī Šāḥiba)**Date:** D. 1035/1626**Shrine:** Bijapur, Karnatika, India

Muḥammad Ibrāḥīm Zubairī Qādirī Shaṭṭārī Bijāpurī, in his biographical compendium of Sufis of Bijapur in a separate section under the subheading of *zīkr awliyāʾ-yi zumra-yi niswān Bijapur* (an account of friends of Allāh in the category of women), introduces Bibī Naʿīma, first as one of the perfect (*kāmil*) women of her age and then as the mother of Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī (d. 1632).¹⁵⁸ Bibī Naʿīma took *baiʿat* at the hands of her son. Known for her piety and excellence in spiritual virtues, Ḥaẓrat Naʿīma also had attained the spiritual power of performing miracles (*karamāt*).

Bibī Naʿīma lived through the most critical days in Bijapur's history. Emperor Shāhjahān's (r. 1628–1658) military advancement against Bijapur and the other Deccani states not only was a serious threat to the sovereignty of the states but it also disturbed the serenity of the spiritual environment of the region.¹⁵⁹ Although information about her illustrious son, Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī, and her grandson Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Šibghat Allāh, also known as Shāh Šāḥib (d. 1660),¹⁶⁰ is known, little is recorded about Bibī Naʿīma, except that which is relational to the narrative of her son. In the narrative of Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī, Ibrāḥīm Zubairī mentions that his father was Mullā Aḥmad bin Khalīlu'llah Qādirī who took good care of his son's spiritual and religious education.¹⁶¹ One can only assume that Mullā Aḥmad must have been a good husband, too.

Ibrāḥīm Zubairī says that Bibī Naʿīma was a disciple of her son with whom she had performed *baiʿat* (oath of allegiance). Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī was an influential Sufi with a large following.¹⁶² According to a narrative in the *malfūz* of Šibghat Allāhī, since she took the *baiʿat*, day and night she remained engrossed (*mashghūl*) in prayers and *zīkr*. She acquired such excellent purification of heart (*ṣafāʾ*) that often while fully awake, she would witness *ʿālam-i*

158 *Rawḥatu'l awliyāʾ-yi Bijāpur*, p. 224.

159 Ibrāḥīm Zubairī writes that Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī assured his wife that the invading Mughal forces under the command of Āṣif Khan would not harm Bijapur. Indeed, the author of his *malfūz* is cited to observe that Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī passed away to the next world to ward off (*dafʿ*) this evil (*balā*), i.e. the Mughal onslaught, see *Ibid.*, p. 72.

160 *Ibid.*, pp. 63–74.

161 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

162 For the life account of Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī, see *Ibid.*, pp. 63–74; also, *Azkār-i Abrār*, pp. 586–88.

ghaib (the other world) and *arwāḥ* (spirits). Ḥabīb Allāh Sibghat Allāhī, her son, relates another incredible story of her charismatic powers that when she passed away he wanted to place the *shajra* (spiritual line of succession) in her hand.¹⁶³ A man holding the *shajra* stood near her coffin. All of a sudden, before it could be placed inside the coffin, the *shajra* vanished miraculously from the hands of the man holding it. Upon opening the coffin, the *shajra* was found clutched in the right hand of the deceased Bībī Naʿīma. Her shrine is within the *mazār* of Ḥabīb Allāh Šibghat Allāhī in Zuhrapur, Bijapur.¹⁶⁴

10.4 Sufi Women: Mothers of Sufi Men/Women

(1)

Bībī Fāṭima, Mother of Miyān Mīr

Period: Early Seventeenth Century

Place: Swistan, Sindh, Pakistan

Bībī Fāṭima's life history is overshadowed by her illustrious children—daughter, Bībī Jamāl Khatūn (d. 1647), and son Miyān Mīr (d. 1635)¹⁶⁵—whose memories are preserved by the mystical writings of Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659) and Jahān Ārāʾ Begam (1614–1681), son and daughter of the Mughal Emperor Shāh Jahan (1599–1666). Here, I present the story of Bībī Fāṭima, not in her capacity as a mother, but as a Sufi *par excellence*, whose prayers were heard and answered without any intercessor. Indeed, despite scarce information about her life, Bībī Fāṭima's narrative emerges as a rare example of a Sufi and as one who by her prayers and spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*) turned her son and daughter into Sufis of excellent virtues.

Bībī Fāṭima lived and died in Swistan, Sindh, which lies between Thatta and Bhakkar and is now known as Sehwan Sharif.¹⁶⁶ She was the daughter of Qāzī Qāẓan (1463–1551), son of Qāzī Abū Saʿīd, who besides being *ḥāfiẓ-i Qurʾān* (one

163 A *shajara* is similar to a family tree. In the Sufi traditions, it is a chronological order of Sufi Shaikhs related by the *baiʿah*. In some Sufi traditions, it is permissible to place this written record with the dead body in the grave at the time of the burial.

164 Ibid, p. 72.

165 For Miyān Mīr, see Dārā Shikūh, Muḥammad. *Sakīnatu'l-awliyāʾ*. Lahore: Nawal Kishore Steam Press. (n. d.), also Dārā Shikūh, Muḥammad. 1853. *Safīnatu'l-awliyāʾ* (Lithograph text). Agra: Maṭbaʿ-ī Madrasa Agra, pp. 116–22; also, see Brahma, Brahma Singh. 1994. *Ḥazrat Mian Mīr and the Sufi tradition*. Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University.

166 Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh. *Sakīnatu'l-awliyāʾ*. (Urdu tarjuma) Lahore: Nawal Kishore Steam Press. (n. d.), p. 19; Mīr ʿAlī Sher Qānī ʿṬhattāwī and Akhtar Rizvī. 1959. *Tuḥfahtu'l-Kirām*. Jamshoro: Sindhī Adabī Board. p. 427.

who has memorised the Qurʾān) and *qārī* (one who recites the Qurʾān with proper rules of recitation) was a great scholar of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qurʾān) and one of the earliest poets of the Sindhi language. Mīr Mʿāṣūm Bhakkari (d. 1606), who completed his history of Sindh in 1600, in a section on the scholars, Sufis, and poets of Sindh, pays rich tribute to the devotion and virtues of Qāzī Qāṣan and describes him as one of those who achieved revelation (*ahl-i mukāshafa*) and was adorned with the virtues of piety and abstinence (*bā zuhud wa taqwā ārāstabūd*).¹⁶⁷ He was appointed Qāzī of Bhakkar but gave his job to his younger brother, Qāzī Naṣru'llah, and adopted a life of renunciation and solitude (*tark wā tajrīd*). Following the path of abstinence and self-purification through ascetic discipline (*riyāḥat wa mujāhada*), Qāzī Qāṣan attained great heights of *walāyat*.¹⁶⁸

Bībī Fāṭima was married to Qāzī Sāi'n Dittā bin Qāzī Qalandar Farūqī whose lineage is traced to Caliph Ḥaṣrat 'Umar Farūq. Mʿāṣūm Bhakkari describes Qāzī Sāi'n Dittā as *ṣāhib-i kashf* with an unusual ability to remember all the texts that he read.¹⁶⁹ Dārā Shikūh describes Sāi'n Dittā as a person with charismatic mystical powers (*ṣāhib-i karāmat*) who had attained high state (*maqāmāt-i 'āliya*). Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī Thattawī, narrating the lives of the Sufis and Shaikhs of Swistan, gives his name as Qāzī Sāi'n Dinno and writes that he was known for his knowledge of *shari'at* and *ṭarīqat* for his saintly virtues throughout Sindh. 'Alī Sher Qānī also says that later in his life, Qāzī Sāi'n Dinno became a disciple of Saiyyid Muḥammad Jaunpuri (d. 1505).¹⁷⁰

Bībī Fāṭima had seven children, all born rather in quick succession. The marriage was short lived, as Qāzī Sāi'n died when their second son, Miya'n Mīr, was seven years old. Two of her children, Miya'n Mīr and Bībī Jamāl Khātūn, were Sufis while the rest of her sons—Qāzī Bolān, Qāzī 'Usmān, Qāzī Ṭahīr, and Qāzī Muḥammad—were persons with saintly virtues and disciples of their brother, Miya'n Mīr. We have no information about her second daughter, Bībī Badī.

167 Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Bhakkari, and 'Umar Muḥammad Daudpota. *Tārīkh-i-Sind: al-m'arūf Tārīkh-i-M'asūmī*, (Poona: Maṭb'-'i Qimāh, 1938), pp. 200–202. Ma'ṣūm Bhakkari also notes that Qāzī Qāṣan was a follower and disciple of Saiyyid Muḥammad Jaunpuri; also, *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 275.

168 Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh. *Sakīnatu'l-awliyā'*. (*Urdu tarjuma*) (Lahore: Nawal Kishore Steam Press. (n. d.), p. 20. Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī Thattawī and Akhtar Rizvī. *Tuḥfatu'l-Kirām*. Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1959) p. 433; Motilal Wadhwal Jotwani. *Sufis of Sindh*, (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1986). pp. 34–57; Ayyappanikkar. *Medieval Indian literature: an anthology*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997), p. 549–500.

169 *Tārīkh-i-Sind: al-m'arūf Tārīkh-i-M'asūmī*, pp. 199–200.

170 *Tuḥfatu'l-Kirām*, pp. 434–435.

Bībī Fāṭima, referred to as the Rābi‘a of her times, learned the Qur’ān by heart.¹⁷¹ Few glimpses of Bībī Fāṭima’s life are found in Dārā Shikūh’s *Ṣafīnatu’l Awliyā’* (the ship [or notebook] of the Sufis), a compendium of Sufis that he compiled in 1631. As a humble Sufi, describing himself as *faqīr ḥaqīr* (the lowly destitute),¹⁷² Dārā, in a notice on his Sufi teacher, Miyān Mīr, adds few sentences about Miyān Mīr’s mother, Bībī Fāṭima. These few sentences are our only source of information about her. Miyān Mīr is said to have narrated that he heard from his mother that when his elder brother was born, his mother by her powers of *kashf* (mystical cognition) found out that this son of hers was not an ‘*ārīf* (a gnostic). She then prayed to Allāh (*manājāt kardand*), “O’ God I wish for a son—a perfect gnostic and hermit, engrossed always in remembering you.” As soon as she uttered these words, the guardian angel (*ḥātif*) said, “Allāh has bestowed upon you a son and a daughter with these attributes (*bā in ṣifāt atā khwahid farmūd*).” This account of Bībī Fāṭima hearing a voice that gave her the good news of a son and a daughter who would become Sufis proves her mystical powers. Thus, Miyān Mīr and his sister, Bībī Jamāl, were born. Miyān Mīr also told Dārā that he learned the secrets of the other world from his noble and respectable mother (*kashf ālam-i malkūt rā pesh wālida mājida mu‘azzama khud ḥāṣil karda būdand*).¹⁷³ This further testifies that Bībī Fāṭima was not only a Sufi but was also endowed with the ability to instruct others in the path of Sufism. Later historians have built their theses on this primary information given in *Ṣafīnatu’l Awliyā’*.¹⁷⁴ None, however, has included her in the list of women Sufis with the charisma of bringing up her two children as Sufis.

Bībī Fāṭima lived and died in Swistan, a land that has produced countless Sufis. Her story is an evidence that women are not only not a hurdle in the path of the male Sufis, but they can fashion and make Sufis by training and attention.

171 A.A. Rizvi. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2. (Lahore Suhail Academy, 2004), p. 480; *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, pp. 516–17.

172 *Faqīr* in the ordinary sense means a beggar or a poor person; in Sufi terminology, it means a person in need of Allāh’s Mercy. The literal meaning of *ḥaqīr* is low ranking, when used as a mystical term for self-description it means humble status.

173 Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh. *Ṣafīnatu’l-awliyā’* (Agra: Maṭba‘-i Madrasa Agra, 1853), pp. 116–17.

174 Fatima Zehra Bilgrami. *History of the Qādirī order in India: 16th–18th century*. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Dehli, 2005) pp. 113–114; *Khazīnatu’l aṣṣiyā’*, p. 234.

(2)

Bibī Hājara**Date: Thirteenth Century****Shrine: Khuldabad, India**

Bibī Hājara, the mother of the Chishtī Sūfis Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb and Muntajibu'd-Dīn,¹⁷⁵ is buried in Khuldabad largest and most beautiful shrine complex, along with the tomb of Muntajibu'd-Dīn (d. 709/1309), known more familiarly by his epithet, *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh*, giver of gold.¹⁷⁶ The *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh dargāh*, located at the edge of town at the foot of a rocky desolate hill, has traditionally attracted the largest numbers of pilgrims throughout the year, as the saint and his mother are understood to be powerful mediators. Devotees travel long distances to petition *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh's* help with matters such as conceiving a healthy child or finding a spouse. Women visitors tie bangles over the doorway of Bibī Hājara's shrine as symbols of their petitions.

Bibī Hājara's life story, despite the fact that she came from one of the most revered Sufis of the first group of Chishtī Sufis of South Asia, remains blurred. Most accounts say that she came from the town of Haṅsi (Haryana, India) and was married to Shaikh Maḥmūd Hānswī. The couple had nine children, four sons—Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn (654/1256), Shaikh Muntajibu'd-Dīn (675/1276–1390), 'Azīz Qattāl, and Abu'l Fath—and five daughters—Bibī Khadija, Bibī 'A'isha, Bibī Maryam, Bibī Āmna, and Bibī Ḥamīda.¹⁷⁷

We have no information whether Bibī Hājara travelled along with her husband, brothers, and daughters to Khuldabād or if they arrived earlier. What we know is that one of her brothers, Sirāju'd-Dīn, is buried next to her.¹⁷⁸ Her grandson, Ḥaẓrat Muḥammad Shamsu'd-Dīn, one of her daughter's sons, arrived with her and is buried in the shrine of *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh*.¹⁷⁹

Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Majīd, referring to an unnamed manuscript, narrates a hagiographical story in a footnote in his translation of Azād Bilgrāmi's *Rawḍatu'l awliyā'* about Bibī Hājara experiencing unusual signs while pregnant with Muntajibu'd-Dīn. A pious man interpreted these experiences to her husband,

175 *Rawḍatu'l-aqtāb*, p. 43. For a brief account of Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb, see Rizvi, *A History of Sufism*, Vol. 1, p. 183.

176 Muḥammad Wāḥid Khān. 1913. *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharīf ma' naqshājāt*. Maṭba' Abu'l'alāi' Hyderabad, Deccan, p. 6.

177 *Rawḍatu'l-aqtāb*, p. 43; also, *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharīf ma' naqshājāt*, p. 3.

178 Her other brother was Shaikh Jamālu'd-Dīn Aḥmad Hānswī (628/1230–700/1300), a favourite disciple of Shaikh Faridu'd-Dīn.

179 Muḥammad Wāḥid Khān. 1913. *Chār Chaman Khuldābād Sharīf ma' naqshājāt*. Maṭba' Abu'l'alāi' Hyderabad, Deccan, pp. 6–7.

Ḥazrat Shaikh Maḥmūd Hānswī, as an omen of the birth of a virtuous son of extraordinary merit who would be the chosen one of Allāh and His Prophet. A more miraculous experience of Bibī Hājara, also reported in the same footnote, relates that when the time of delivery approached, a voice came from within, telling her that he (the baby) would not enter this world without *satr-i tahmad* (covering for the “zone of shame”). She then was made to swallow a piece of fabric wrapped round jaggery. The baby, Muntajibu'd-Dīn, who earned the epithet of *Zar Zarī Zar Bakhsh*, was then born covered by fabric with golden stripes.¹⁸⁰

As a loving and caring mother, she wanted to see her son Shaikh Burhānu'd-Dīn Gharīb married and have his own family. This son, however, was so engrossed in remembering Allāh that he had no time or inclination for marriage. As he did not want to hurt his mother or be disrespectful towards her motherly affection and care, he reduced his meals further. This lack of nutrition made him so frail and weak that he could hardly turn his face upwards to look at the sky. Bibī Hājara knew the inner spiritual power of her son and, therefore, instead of insisting on marriage, she stepped back and let her son pursue his path of seeking Allāh's love.¹⁸¹

Bibī Hājara's tomb is next to the shrine of her son with Muntajibu'd-Dīn *Zar Zarī Zar-Bakhsh* outside the city of Khuldabad (Maharashtra) built on the north side of the Hoda Hill.

(3)

Bibī Jīū/Jī

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Bibīpura, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India

Urs: 4 Jamādī'us Sānī

Similar to several other women of saintly virtues who remain hidden in the narratives of their male Sufis and pious relatives, no separate account of Bibī Jīū¹⁸² is found in contemporary chronicles. *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī* (The mirror of Aḥmad), a mid-eighteenth-century history of Gujarat written in Persian by

180 Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Majīd, *Rawḥatu'l awliya' al-ma'rūf Nafahātu'l Asfiyā*. Hyderabad: Maṭba'-i Karīmī (1345/1926), p. 49, f. n. 1.

181 Mīr Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgramī. 1310/1892. *Rawḥatu'l Awliyā'*. Maṭba' 'Ijāz Ṣafdarī, p. 5.

182 English translation of *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī* has misread her name as Bibī Ḥassu. See Syed Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon. 1928. *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī. Supplement*. Gaekwad's Oriental Series. No. XLIII. Baroda: Oriental Institute, p. 58.

‘Alī Muḥammad Khan,¹⁸³ is the only source about the life of Bibī Jīū.¹⁸⁴ This account of Bibī Jīū, too, is not given separately. The narrative about her son, Saiyyid Khwānd Mīr ‘Arīzī, a Chishtī Sufi (d. 874/1469) who lies buried in Pattan, Naharwala, contains references about Bibī Jīū.

Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr, son of Saiyyid Buddā son of Saiyyid Ya‘qūb, was the *khalīfa* of his paternal uncle, Saiyyid Shādī son of Ya‘qūb, son of Saiyyid Muḥammad Kabīr, brother of Saiyyid Ḥusain *khang suwār* (rider of white/grey horse).¹⁸⁵ Khwānd Mīr’s mother, Bibī Jīū, also belonged to a family with Sufi leanings. Her father, according to *Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi*, was one of the *ṣulahā wa ṣāhib-i taqwā* (pious and God-fearing persons).¹⁸⁶ *Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi*’s statement that Bibī Jīū’s mother, daughter of one named Maulānā Ziyā’, was *Mughlai’ būd* could mean either she was of Mughal descent or one who came from some Central Asian state.¹⁸⁷

Regarding the excellent spiritual qualities and piety, ‘Alī Muḥammad Khan writes that she was one of those who had fear of Allāh and was chaste and innocent (*ṣāhib-i wara’ wa iṣmat wa iffat*). She had acquired great blessings from the persons of excellent virtues (*ni‘mat az buzurgān dasht*). Little is known about her personal life. Bibī Jīū was married to Saiyyid Budda who died early. The couple probably had only one child. So great was her devotion to Allāh that during his infancy when her son Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr desired to be nursed, she would first perform fresh ablution to offer optional prayers each time before breast-feeding him (*Bibī Jīū tajdīd-i waṣū namūda dogānā adā mīkard*). As her motherly instincts were secondary to her devotion and love for the Divine, she would supplicate to Allāh that “if the child is one of Thy devotees, protect him, otherwise take away his life (*ba-dargāh manajāt mī khwāst ilāhī īn pīsar agar yak-i-az sitūdgān tū bashad nigāhdārī wa illā khāk īn ‘azīz gardān*).” As her husband passed away when Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr was just

183 ‘Alī Muḥammad Khan, the author of this valuable source, was the Diwan or the revenue minister of the province of Gujarat. He completed the work between 1750 and 1760. For his short biographical notice, see Syed Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon. 1928. *Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi. Supplement*. Gaekwad’s Oriental Series. No. XLIII. Baroda: Oriental Institute, pp. xi–xii.

184 ‘Alī Muḥammad Khan. 1306/1889. *Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi- jild sānī*. Bombay: Maṭba‘ Fathu’l Karīm, pp. 42–43.

185 Saiyyid Ḥusain *khang suwār* also known as Mīrān Ṣāhib is buried in Taragarh, Ajmer. Emperor Akbar after his conquest of Gujarat, visited Ajmer to pay his homage to the shrine of Khwāja Mu‘īnu’d-Dīn Chishtī on 12 Rabi’u’l awwal 980/1572. The next day, he visited Saiyyid Ḥusain Khang’s grave and performed circumambulation. See ‘Abdu’l Qādir Badaoni. *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, vol. 2 (Translated by W.H. Lowe, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1884), p. 143.

186 *Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi- jild sānī*, p. 42.

187 *Ibid*, p. 42.

two and a half years of age, she was the only parent left to look after her son.¹⁸⁸ Soon, Khwānd Mīr came under the spiritual training of his uncle, Saiyyid Shādī, who perfected him in external and internal knowledge (*zāhir u bāṭin ārāsta*). The uncle appointed him as his *khalīfa* at the young age of eleven and soon passed away. As relations with his other uncle grew tense, Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr, on the advice of Makhdūm Saiyyid Ḥusain, moved to Ahmadabad along with his widowed mother, Bībī Jīū.

Though the date of birth of Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr is not found anywhere, Commissariat says that he was twelve years of age when he arrived in Ahmadabad from Pattan.¹⁸⁹ In Ahmadabad, Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr received the blessings of the spiritual guidance (*niʿmat*) of Ḥaẓrat Saiyyid Burhānu'd-Dīn Quṭb-i-Ālam¹⁹⁰ and instructions (*talqīn*) from Shaikh 'Abdu'l Faṭḥ.¹⁹¹ Soon he was married in Ahmadabad and won the respect and following of men of influence in Gujarat's power hierarchy. Of these, one was Malik Sh'abān,¹⁹² *wazīr* of Sultan Aḥmad (r. 1451–1457), who had great faith (*'itiqād tamām dāsht*) in Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr.

Malik Sh'abān, being busy with his important state responsibilities (*ba-sabab ashghāl umūr-i mumālik iltizām*), could not present himself before Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr every day, so he directed his son Malik Khushbāsh¹⁹³ to remain in attendance every day to seek his blessings. More than Malik Sh'abān's devotion for Ḥaẓrat Khwānd Mīr is the recognition of his righteousness and spiritual attainments by his mother. Bībī Jīū became a disciple of her son by taking an oath of allegiance (*ba'it pīsr-i khud darad*).¹⁹⁴

Bībī Jīū must have reached old age by now as one day she told her son to ask Malik Khushbāsh to convey to Malik Sh'abān of her desire for a piece of land for her burial place (*maqbara*). Malik Khushbāsh offered the mausoleum that

188 Ibid, p. 42.

189 M.S. Commissariat. 1938. *A History of Gujerat. Including a Survey of its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions. Vol. 1.* Bombay: Longmans, Green & Co., p. 160.

190 Quṭb-i-Ālam was the grandson of Makhdūm Jahāniyaṅ Jahāngasht (1308–1384) and was brought up by his uncle, Rājū Qattāl who sent him to Pattan, Gujarat, in 802/1400, along with his mother Bībī Hājara, known as Sa'adat Khatūn. He passed away in 857/1453.

191 *Mīrat-i Aḥmadi-jild sālī*, p. 42.

192 Malik Sh'abān (d. 866/1461), son of Tuḥfa Sulṭānī, was a man with spiritual leanings. Giving up his position of power, after a plot against him, of which he was honourably absolved, he became a religious recluse and never stepped out of the superb garden he had built at Rakhyal, Ahmadabad and died there shortly after.

193 *Mīrat-i Aḥmadi. Supplement* translates it as son-in-law, see p. 58. Similarly, Abu Zafar Nadwi translates it as *matabannā* (adopted), see Nadwi, Abu Zafar. 1934. *Tārīkh Awliya-i Gujarat (tarjumā Mīrāt-i Aḥmadi)*. Lahore: Himāyat-i Islam Press, p. 85.

194 *Mīrat-i Aḥmadi-jild sālī*, p. 42.

he had constructed for himself. Ḥazrat Bibī Ṣaḥiba, riding a bullock (*bar bail suwār shudā*, perhaps a bullock driven vehicle), arrived there and, smelling the dust of the place, said, “this is my place” (*in jā man ast*). She also added that whichever of the two (Bibī Jīū or Malik Sh‘abān) died first would be buried first in this place. As Malik Sh‘abān died first, he was buried there.

Bibī Jīū passed away on 4 Jamādī‘us Sānī (the year is not mentioned) and lies buried in her shrine in Bībīpura, Ahmadabad.¹⁹⁵ Her son, who died later, in 1469, is also buried in the same shrine.

Mirāt-i Aḥmadi, narrating the esoteric virtues of Bibī Jīū, gives an incredible anecdote. Once she gave a gold coin (*ashrafi*) to her pious father to buy a robe (*jāma*) from the market. It so happened that this gold coin slipped from his hand somewhere in the market. When he searched for it, instead of one, he saw two gold coins lying there in dust. He left both under the dust and returned home. When enquired about the robe by Bibī Jīū, he told her that he left the coin there, as he wondered whether it might belong to someone else. Bibī Jīū, pointing towards the niche in the wall, said, “When it fell down from your hands, instantly it came back to me” (*chūn az dast uftādah būd filḥāl pesh-i man amad*).¹⁹⁶

An imposing mosque was built in the memory of Bibī Jī by Sultan Abu Muzaffar Aḥmad Shāh of Gujarat in the suburbs of Rajpur.¹⁹⁷ The following inscription on its central *miḥrāb* in the Persian language establishes its historicity:

This noble Jami Masjid (*hāzā al masjid al jam ‘al rafti*) “mistress of the world” [name of the mosque] (*makhdūmat jahān*) was built by the great sultan (*Sulṭānu’l ‘Azam*) Quṭbu’d dunyā wa Dīn Abu’l Muzaffar Aḥmad Shāh, son of Muḥammad Shāh, son of Aḥmad Shāh, son of Muḥammad Shāh, son of Muzaffar, the sultan; and the Hijra date of the mosque is *Rabi‘ u’l ākhir* in the year eight hundred fifty-eight (April 1454).¹⁹⁸

195 Bībīpura is the old name of Rajpur-Hirpur, a suburb where Malik Sh‘abān had built gardens and other superb buildings.

196 *Mirāt-i Aḥmadi*-jild sānī, p. 43.

197 M.S. Commissariat. 1938. *A History of Gujerat. Including a Survey of its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions*. Vol. 1, p. 159.

198 James Burgess. 1885. *Lists of Antiquarian Remains in the Bombay Presidency: With an Appendix of Inscriptions from Gujerat*. Bombay: The Government Central Press, p. 246. Burgess, however, has mistakenly identified Bibī Jī as the daughter of ‘Sayyid Khund Mir, and wife of Sayyid Buda Sahib’.

Interestingly, the above translation by Burgess changes totally when in 1941 another scholar, Chaghtai, read the word *man* in the inscription translated by Burgess as *umm*, meaning mother. Thus, according to Chaghtai the mosque's name was not *makhdūmat jahān* but that it was built by Makhdūma Jahān, the Sultan's mother, who had built several other significant buildings including her own mausoleum while still alive.¹⁹⁹ Chaghtai also says that some even alleged that the mosque was built by Saiyyid Buddha bin Ya'qūb, Bibī Jī's/ Bibī Jīū's husband.²⁰⁰ We know that she was widowed early and therefore the construction by her husband could not be possible. A far more significant legacy than the architectural remains and monuments that this noble Sufi woman left behind was her grandson, Saiyyid Ya'qūb Chishtī, son of Saiyyid Khwānd Mīr. Saiyyid Ya'qūb Chishtī (d. 1521) was a Sufi with excellent virtues (*jamī' ṣifāt ārāsta*) who earned the reverence of all.²⁰¹

Abdul Jabbār Khan Mulkapūrī in 1912, without acknowledging the original source ('Alī Muḥammad Khan's *Mirāt-i Aḥmadi*), reproduced the brief account of Bibī Jīū's life.²⁰² More research might uncover several missing aspects of Bibī Jīū's story.

(4)

Bibī Khunza (also spelt Khunjā) Sulṭāna

Period: Fifteenth Century

Shrine: Gulbarga Sharif, Karnataka, India

Urs: 27 Rajabū'l murajjab

Bibī Khunza Sulṭāna was a remarkable person of excellent piety, with ascetic qualities of self-denial and staunch devotion. Bashīruddīn Aḥmad rightly describes her as *ṣāḥib-i kashf wa karamāt* (master of gnostic and miraculous powers).²⁰³ On the Shrirangapattana-Bidar state highway near Kapnur stands a sublime, square-shaped, domed mausoleum on an elevated square platform. Built in the fifteenth century, the vaulted chambers of this funerary monument contain several graves of the Sufis, the most famous being that of Bibī Khunza Sulṭāna.

Bibī Khunza Sulṭāna was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, being the daughter of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Bahmani. No detailed reference about this

199 Chaghtai, M. Abdulla. 1942. *Muslim Monuments Through Their Inscriptions*. Poona: Deccan College Research Institute, p. 132.

200 Ibid, p. 131.

201 *Mirāt-i Aḥmadi-jild sānī*, p. 43.

202 *Maḥbūbzil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 316–18.

203 *Wāqī'āt-i Mumlatat-i Bijāpūr (ḥiṣṣā som)*, p. 537.

pious and righteous woman, whose *ʿurs* is celebrated each year on 27 Rajab in Gulbarga, could be found in the Sufi narratives. Bashīruddīn Aḥmad's *Wāq'āt-i Mumlakat-i Bījāpūr*, written in 1915, gives some information about her. Another source, *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*, written in Urdu by Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān, adds more details.²⁰⁴ Born as a princess, being the daughter of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Bahmani (r. 1378–1397) of the Deccan, she later performed *bai'at* at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (1276–1356). She chose poverty over riches.

Her husband was Ḥaẓrat Shams ul-ʿUshshāq alias Mīrān Ḥusainī (d. 1499), one of the most reknowned holy persons of the Deccan. In Sadluga, a small administrative unit of *taluk* Hukeri, is his magnificent shrine. Ḥaẓrat Shamsu'd-Dīn, alias Khwāja Shamnā Mīrān (d. 798/1395), a person of piety and a master of gnostic and miracles, was born of her. He was the successor of Ḥaẓrat Zain al-Ḥaqq Shirāzī and battled with the infidels. His shrine is in Miraj, Murtaẓābād (near Sangli, now in Maharashtra).²⁰⁵

These facts create more questions about Bībī Khunza Sulṭāna, or Bībī Kamāla, as she is popularly known till today. Her name does not occur in the narratives about Shams ul-ʿUshshāq, alias Mīrān Ḥusainī. Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān's statement that Bībī Khunza Sulṭāna was the daughter of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Bahmani is not found anywhere else.²⁰⁶

My search for more information about Bībī Khunza Sulṭāna led me to at least two Facebook pages. I communicated with one of the two,²⁰⁷ whose administrator provided me with the following information, which I translate from Urdu here:

The *dargāh's* name is Ḥaẓratha Kamāla Bī Sulṭāna, may Allāh Bless her, and popularly known as Khunja Ma Saḥiba, which is her appellation. This appellation was conferred upon her by Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz, may Allāh Bless him. Khunjā means a bunch of keys. This appellation was given to her because none of the *walis* of the Deccan could do anything without [seeking] her permission.

204 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī al-ma'rūf sair-i Gulbarga*, pp. 182–33.

205 The shrine of Mīrān Ḥusainī (d. Rajab 21, 792/ July 4, 1390) attracts mentally ill persons and those possessed by spirits. See *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 183. For more information, see Johannes Quack, 'Possession and the Anti-Superstition Law in Maharashtra: Disenchantment,' in *The Law of Possession—Ritual, Healing and the Secular State* (Edited) William Sax and Helen Basu. (pp. 138–161). New York: OUP, 2015.

206 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, p. 182.

207 Dargah Khunja Maa Saheba (Gulbarga) <https://www.facebook.com/dargahkhunja.maasaheba>.

For the last 620 years, her *ʿurs* celebrations are held on the twenty-seventh of Rajabul-Murajjab, the seventh lunar month of the Hijri calendar. Each *ʿurs* is carefully managed and executed by the Dargāh Managing Committee, which is an all-male body. The *ʿurs*, attended by thousands of men and women devotees, begins with the *Sandal* ceremony (smearing the shrine with saffron paste); on day two *charāghān* (lighting of lamps) is held; the *ʿurs* ends on day three with the *ziyārat* ceremony (visitation). On these three days, several other events are also held, such as continuous and complete recitation of the Qurʾān (*khatm-i Qurʾān*) by the devotees, *naʿat* recitations, placing of the floral wreaths (*phūlon ki chādar*) at her grave, lectures by religious scholars, *qawwālī*, and wrestling matches.

Local legends say that the water of the well, situated in the *dargāh* complex, has healing powers for patients suffering from dog bites. Bashīruddīn Aḥmad relates an incident of the Bibī's miraculous powers, which happened during his time. According to this story, a government employee riding his horse came to visit the shrine. He tied his horse outside and entered the shrine to offer his respects. As torrential rain with lightning began, the horse got frightened and ran away. When told by his servant that the horse had run away, the horse rider said, "Let it be. I came riding [the horse], now if the Bibī Sāḥiba wishes to send me back on foot, I would do so." He came out to leave and, to his surprise, saw that the horse had returned.²⁰⁸ The *dargāh* Bibī Khunza Sulṭāna is included in the list of *waqf* grants of the state of Karanatak. In 2010–2011, it received a grant of 100,000 Indian rupees.²⁰⁹

(5)

Mother of Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Bāqī Billah

Period: Late Fourteenth–Early Fifteenth Century

Place: Delhi, India

Not much has been recorded about the mother of Khwāja Bāqī Billah (d. 1012/1603) who introduced the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila* in Hindustan. Though much has been written about Khwāja Bāqī Billah, information about his mother, who left a great mark on his life, is scanty. Even Khwāja Bāqī Billah, who wrote paying homage to his mother, did not identify her by her name.

208 *Wāqīʾāt-i Mumlakat-i Bijāpūr*, p. 537; *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, pp. 182–83.

209 2010–11 Details of grants/loans/expenditure to Autonomous Bodies. karwafk.org/Grant's%20List-10-11-12.pdf; also THE KARNATAKA STATE BOARD OF WAKFS www.karwafk.org/.../Entry%20of%20measurement%20of%20wakf%20properties%20. THE KARNATAKA STATE BOARD OF WAKFS. OFFICE OF Gulbarga Darga Hazrat Khunza Maa Saheba 302 Gulbarga Darga Bibi Lashker bi (Sunni).

What we gather from scattered references is that she belonged to a family of Sufis and scholars. Her father, Shaikh 'Umar Yaghestani, was the maternal grandfather of Khwāja Ubaidullah Aḥrār (d. 855/1490) of the Naqshbandī Sufi *silsila*. Her mother was a Saiyyid by lineage. She was married to Qāzī 'AbduṣṢalām Khaljī Samarqandī Qureshī, a scholar with a deep interest in mysticism (*sāhib-i wajd wa ḥāl*).²¹⁰ The marriage probably took place sometime before 1563 in Kabul.²¹¹ Nothing further is known about her married life or about her husband.

Perhaps she travelled with her son, Khwāja Bāqī Billah, from Kabul to Lahore and then finally settled in Delhi in 1599. A reference to her piety, fear of Allāh, and devotion towards serving Allāh's creatures is found in *Zubdatu'l-Muqāmāt*, an account of the Naqshbandīyya Sufis by Khwāja Hāshim Kishmī (d. 1643), a Naqshbandī Sufi and a disciple of Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sānī, compiled in 1037/1627–1628, during the period of Emperor Jahangir. Hāshim Kishmī, without identifying Bāqī Billah's mother by name, based on what he had heard from some reliable sources, writes that she was one of the *qānitāt wa ṣāliḥāt* (obedient and devout) persons. So great was her piety that though she had several maid-servants and female servants working for her, she took it upon herself to cook and prepare meals and serve them to the *fuqarā'* (dervishes). So deep was her devotion for the Sufis and so great was her humility that she used to bake the bread in a clay oven with her own hands. Often, in the end, she would partake of whatever was left over, often just a piece or two of dried bread. Seeing his mother's infirmity and diminishing energies, probably because of aging, Khwāja Bāqī Billah entrusted the work of cooking to some Sufis. Hearing this, the pious mother began to weep and cry (*giryā-o- zārī*), saying that she did not know what mistakes she had committed (*kudām jarīma būd*) which caused her deprivation of this blessing (*sa'ādat*) of serving the *fuqarā'*. Some time passed by, and because of her wisdom, sagacity, sincerity, and discipleship, which were considered her noble traits (*dānā'ī wa zīrakī wa ghalba nisbat ikhlās wa murīdī ki markūz jauhar sahrīf īshān ast*), she did not say anything. The Khwāja, however, came to know of his mother's grieving condition and let her once again take the responsibility of cooking the meals.²¹² However, he

210 Badru'd-Dīn ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sirhindī. 2010. *Ḥaṣarāt-ul-quds- daftar awwal* (Urdu translation by Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Ashraf. Lahore: Qādirī Rizvi Kutubkhana), p. 265.

211 Khwāja Muḥammad Hāshim Kishmī, *Zubdatu'l-Muqāmāt*. Kanpur: Maṭba' Munshī Nawal Kishore, 1890. All references and translations in this work are from its Urdu translation by Ghulām Mustafa Khan and Maulānā Abul Fath Ṣaghīrū'd-Dīn. Maṭba' Nu'mānia, Sialkot, 1407/1987, p. 34.

212 Bāqī Billah Dihlawī, Khwāja Muḥammad, Abū al-Ḥasan Zid Fārūqī Ṣāhib Naqshbandī Mujaddidī, and Burhan Ahmad Faruqi. 1967. *Kulliyāt-i Bāqī Billah, ya'nī, Majmū'a -i kalām*

asked his brother-in-law Muḥammad Ṣādiq's wife, Bibī Bānu, to assist her in meal preparation. He also directed Bibī Āghā, the wife of one of his disciples, Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣiddique, to prepare dough for bread (*khamīr*) and to help her in general.²¹³

Besides Hāshim Kishmī, Badru'd-Dīn Sirhindi, a *khalīfā* of Muḥaddid-i Alf-i Sānī, who compiled the biographies of the Naqshbandīyya Sufis in *Ḥazarātu'l-quḍs* in 1053/1643, also refers to the saintly virtues of Khwāja Bāqī Billah's mother and confirms the details as given in *Zubdatu'l-Muqāmāt*. Khwāja Bāqī Billah, recalling his early days, told the author how his mother used to pray with tears in her eyes for his son to attain what he was striving for—spirituality and Divine Blessings. He also said that all his success and his status were due to his mother's prayers.²¹⁴

She is lying buried close to the grave of her son in old Delhi near the Lahorī Gate off the Quṭb Road. Writing in 1964, Abū al-Ḥasan Zīd Fāruqī Ṣāhib Naqshbandī Muḥaddidī and Burhan Ahmad Faruqī found both the shrines in dilapidated condition.²¹⁵

(6)

Bibī Qarsum Khātūn

Period: Thirteenth Century

Place: Ajodhan (Punjab), Pakistan

Bibī Qarsum Khātūn was the mother of Shaikh Faridu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar and Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil. Nizami's words go undisputed, that "Bābā Farīd's first teacher whose influence was lasting on him was his mother."²¹⁶ Indeed, Bibī Qarsum Khātūn is one of those rare persons whose story is not a story of one single person; she left a trail followed by several individuals, each being an exemplary person. Except a few anecdotal references repeated in contemporary texts with no dates, the life of this illustrious woman, an epitome of *Sufi ṭarīqa*, remains mostly veiled. Most of our information about her

wa rasā'il wa malfūzāt wa maktūbāt. Lahore: Malik Dīn Muḥammad and Sons, p. 57; also, *Ḥayāt-i Bāqīyya*. Compiled & translated in Urdu by Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Raḥīm Bakhsh Dihlawī. Dihlī: Afzal al-maṭāb', 1905, pp. 82–83. *Zubdatu'l-Muqāmāt*, p. 34.

213 *Ḥayāt-i Bāqīyya*. Compiled & translated in Urdu by Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Raḥīm Bakhsh Dihlawī. Dihlī: Afzal al-maṭāb', 1905, pp. 82–83.

214 *Ḥazarāt al-quḍs- daftar awwal*, pp. 266, 276; Nasim Ahmad Faridi Amrohi 1978. *Tazkira Khwāja Bāqī Billah ma' ṣāhibzadagān wa khulafā'*. Lucknow: Kutubkhana al-Furqān, pp. 11–12.

215 *Kulliyāt-i Bāqī Billah, ya'nī, Majmū'a-i kalām wa rasā'il wa malfūzāt wa maktūbāt*, pp. 15–16.

216 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1955. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakar*. Aligarh: Dept. of History, Muslim University, p. 15.

comes from Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā's *Fawa'idu'l-fu'ād*, the most authentic source in the history of South Asian Sufism. Constructing her life story, however, the quintessential evidence of her saintly qualities comes not from the spoken word or textual sources. Her children and grandchildren, whom she nurtured and trained with exemplary virtues of *zuhd* (renunciation), *taqwā* (piety), *ṣabr* (patience), and *faqr* (poverty), are the most authentic sources of knowledge about her. She was not only a pious woman but had the rare distinction of having three sons, two of whom, Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakkar (1175 or 1176–1265) and Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutawakkil (1164–1273),²¹⁷ have left behind an increasing circle of Chishtī Sufis, spread throughout the landscape of South Asia and beyond. She also had the unique honour of being the grandmother of three saintly and devoted women, the daughters of Bābā Farīd—Bībī Mastūra, Bībī Sharīfa, and Bībī Fāṭima. The second one, Bībī Sharīfa, possessed all the characteristics that in the estimation of the Bābā Farīd were quintessential for the rank of a Sufi *khalīfā*. Further, if we add the name of Bībī 'Ā'isha of Khuldabad as another daughter of Bābā Farīd and of Bībī 'Ā'isha's anonymous daughter, the number of her pious women descendants increases further. Thus, the mystical credentials of Bībī Qarsum Khātūn are highlighted by her guidance of her children to the path of asceticism. Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā testified this in his discourse on the topic of the greatness of Bābā Farīd and his family. When the conversation turned towards the greatness (*buzurgī*) of Bābā Farīd's mother, the Khwāja first commented, "The goodness (*ṣalāhiyyat*) of mother and father strongly affect (*qawī asr*) the children."²¹⁸

What makes the narrative of Bībī Qarsum Khātūn distinctive is that, like a true *murshid*, she taught the basic lessons of *tazkiyatu'l-nafs* (purification of the soul) to her sons, thus polishing their faculties for *taṣawwuf*.²¹⁹ The way she accomplished this task, without donning a Sufi *khirqā* or holding discourse sessions at a *khānqāh*, is an index to what a Sufi woman experiences while negotiating with a culture burdened with the weight of patriarchal norms.

Jawāhir-i Farīdī is the only source that identifies Bībī Qarsum Khātūn by her name.²²⁰ Surprisingly, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā, while referring to her as *buzurg* (excellent person), identifies her not by her name but as *Shāikh-i kabīr rā walidā* (mother of the Great Shaikh). Perhaps this manner

217 For his short biography, see AA, pp. 62–61.

218 FF, *Majlis* 5, 17 Rabi'u'l awwal, 714.

219 For the Qur'ānic concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, see 'Purification of the Soul. The concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam,' by Gavin Picken in his *Spiritual purification in Islam: the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī*. (pp. 123–167). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge (2000).

220 JF, 259.

of avoiding her name was out of devotional courtesy. Illah Diyā Joyā, a contemporary of Emperor Aurangzeb, in his *Risālā Siyaru'l Aqṭāb* (completed in 1646–1647), identifies her name as Bibī Maryam Khātūn.²²¹ Another hagiography of the Ṣabirī-Chishtī *silsila*, *Tawārikh āina-yi taṣawwuf*, not only gives her name as Ḥaẓrat Maryam Khātūn but says that she was the daughter of Saiyyid Muḥammad ‘Abdullah and was born on 28 Muḥarram 483/1090 in Gujrat, Punjab, and died on Thursday, 3 Ramaẓān 585/1189, and that she was buried in Kothewal.²²² *Kanzu'l Ansāb*, a repository of genealogy of South Asian Sufis, says that Bābā Farīd's mother's name was Jamīla who was the daughter of Saiyyid Wajihu'd-Dīn Khijwandī whose ancestry is traced to Ḥaẓrat Ja'far Ṣādiq.²²³

Bibī Qarsum's father, Maulānā Wajihu'd-Dīn Khijwandī, an accomplished scholar and a pious person whose ancestry is traced to Ḥaẓrat ‘Abbās bin ‘Abdu'l Muṭṭalib, migrated to the vicinity of Multan from Kabul.²²⁴ Perhaps Bibī Qarsum was born in Kothewal (Kothaywal),²²⁵ a town in Multan where Bābā Farīd's father, Qāzī Shu'aib, was appointed as Qāzī. Qāzī Shu'aib was also a scion of the twelfth-century immigrants from Kabul to the Ghaznavid Punjab.²²⁶ They later got married sometime before 1175, the year of the birth of their second son, Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd.

Jawāhir-i Farīdī narrates an anecdote of how Bibī Qarsum used to leave her son Farīd alone in the woods for long periods of time to train him in the life of a future Sufi. While combing the ruffled hair of Farīd after one such long trip of ten years to the forest, the child cried out for pain. The anguished mother, aghast at Farīd's sensation of pain, said, “You have wasted your time and have achieved nothing.” Bābā Farīd resumed his journeys in search of the Divine, abstaining from food and sustaining himself by chewing a piece of wood to satisfy his desire to eat.²²⁷ Again, on his return, the mother enquired about his experience and again her comment was that he had wasted his time and

221 Allāh Diyā Joyā. 1906. *Risālā Siyaru'l Aqṭāb* (translated in Urdu by Muḥammad ‘Alī Joyā. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore), p. 146.

222 Muḥammad Farūq Ḥasan Ṣābirī. 1311/1893. *Tawārikh-i āina-yi taṣawwuf*. Rampur: Maṭba‘ Ḥusainī. (Reprint Lahore: Muḥammad Sulṭān Ṣābirī, 1971), p. 459.

223 ‘Abdur Razzāq ‘Aṭā’ Ḥusain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Maṭba‘ Ṣafdarī, pp. 67–8.

224 ‘Alī Aṣghar Chishtī. *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. Lahore: Victoria Press, 1884, pp. 182–185; W. Begg. 1999. *The Big Five Sufis of India and Pakistan*. New Delhi: Millat Book Centre, p. 53.

225 This small locality today is known as Chawali mashā’ikh. For its description, see “Journal of Capt. Wade's Voyage from Lodiana to Mithankot by the river Satlaj, on his Mission to Lahor and Bahawalpur in 1832–33,” by Lieut. F. Mackeson in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. V1, Part 1, No. 63 (March, 1837), pp. 169–217, especially p. 193.

226 *Jamālī*, p. 32.

227 Capt. Wade reports that during his visit to the shrine of Bābā Farīd in Pakpattan, among several other relics, he was shown this piece of wood and describes it as “a round flat piece

had learned nothing. It was only after his last wandering in the forest, the time when he performed *Chilla-i mā'kūs*,²²⁸ that the pious mother applauded his efforts.²²⁹

Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliya', who had great regard and respect for Bābā Farīd's mother, narrated a story about her spiritual excellence and charismatic powers. Later, the story was also retold by Amīr Khwurd.²³⁰ According to this story, one night while her family was asleep and she was doing her nightly vigils (*bāḥaqq mashghūl*), a burglar entered the house. The moment he stepped inside the house, he lost his eyesight (*kor shud*) because of the radiating aura of Bibī Qarsum. He knew his loss of sight was not merely a physical impairment; it was something supernatural. Frightened, the thief sought forgiveness and called out for help and for the restoration of his eyesight, imploring that whosoever was in the house, if it be a man, he was like his father and brother, and if a woman she was like his mother and sister. Bibī Qarsum then prayed for his eyesight and it was restored (*wālida-i Shaikh Kabīr du'ā kard wa ō bīnā shud*). The thief ran out of (*bāraft*) the house. Next morning, the mother of Bābā Farīd did not say anything about the last night's incident (*īn ḥikāyat pesh hīch kas nā kushāyad*). Soon the same man with a jar of curdled milk on his head (*sabū-i-jughrāt bar sar karda*) returned with his family and related that last night he entered the house with the intent of robbery (*bā duzdi*) but the fear of a pious woman who was awake, blinded him (*man az haibat-i-ō kor shudam*). He then added that because of her supplications, his eyesight was restored, and therefore he had vowed not to steal any longer (*bā du'ā i-ō chasm yāftam wa man 'ahd aradam ki b'ād azīn duzdi nākunam*). He begged for forgiveness and, along with his family, entered into Islam. Thus, because of the blessings of this woman-friend of Allāh, they all became Muslims (*barkat-i ān walīya hamā musulmān shudand*).²³¹ Muḥammad 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī adds that

of wood of the size and shape of an Indian's bread or chapāti." See *Journal of Capt. Wade's Voyage*, p. 192.

228 *Chilla-i mā'kūs* is an inverted *chilla* which requires the person 'to tie a rope around his feet and remain suspended in a well, head down, for forty days and nights, while both fasting and praying'. Athar Abbas Rizvi. *A History of Sufism*, vol. 1, p. 140.

229 'Alī Aṣghar Chishtī, *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*. Lahore: Victoria Press, 1884, p. 184; *Jamālī*, p. 31, also Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 1955. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-Din Ganj-i-Shakkar*. Aligarh: Dept. of History, Muslim University, p. 24.

230 *Jamālī*, p. 88; This anecdote is also narrated by Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq who was Bibī Qarsum's granddaughter's husband in *Faṣl 20* of his *Asrār-u'l awliyā'*. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1890, p. 89. The *malfūz* of Khwajā Faridu'd-Dīn, however, is considered fake.

231 *FF*, *Majlis* 5, 17 *Rabī' al-awwal*, 714; *Jamālī*, p. 88; *Jawāhir-i Farīdī*, pp. 184–185; *Akhbār-u'l Aṣfiyā'* also repeats this story, see Shadma Shahzad. 2013. 'A Critical Edition of Akhbar-ul-Asfiya with Introduction and Notes.' A thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Persian. Department of Persian, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, p. 311.

this man, now named ‘Abdu’llah, turned into a pious person (*sālīḥ*) and served well. He lies buried close to the tombs of Bābā Farīd’s father and elder brother, ‘Izzu’d-Dīn Maḥmūd.²³² This story thus tells how, like a true Sufi, Bibī Qarsum changed the life of a robber by night and a curd seller by day into a God-fearing pious man and thus saved him from causing further harm to others.

Bibī Qarsum’s death, too, was a miraculous one. Indeed, Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’s eyes were filled with tears (*chashm pur āb kard*) while recalling the mysterious incident of her death. While travelling to Ajodhan with her second son, Shaikh Najību’d-Dīn Mutāwakkil, through a forest, the mother and son stopped to get some water to drink. Najību’d-Dīn left her under a tree and went in search of water. Returning to the spot where he had left his mother, Najību’d-Dīn was shocked to see her missing. As all efforts failed to find her, the saddened son returned home to relate the woeful tale of the disappearance of their exalted mother to Bābā Farīd. As customary, funeral prayers were offered and food was distributed among the poor in charity. After some time, once again Najību’d-Dīn happened to pass along the same route where he had lost his mother. He looked around the same tree where he had left her to wait for him and found some human bones (*ustukhwān-i-ādmi*) lying around. Thinking that these must have been of his mother who might have been mauled by a lion or some other man-eating animal, he put the bones in a bag (*dar kharīṭa andākht*) and brought them to his brother, Bābā Farīd. When the bag was opened, not a single bone was found in it. Narrating this, Khwāja Nizāmu’d-Dīn’s eyes were once again filled with tears.²³³ The story of Bibī Qarsum, though full of gaps, remains inspirational for all.

(7)

Bibī Rāstī/ Pāk Mā’ī/Pāk Dāmnān

Date: D. 695/1295

Shrine: Off Nishat Road, Basti Daira, Multan, Pakistan

Bibī Rāstī (the righteous one) was the mother of Shaikh Ruknu’d-Dīn Abu’l Faṭḥ, known as Shaikh *Rukn-i-Ālam* (Support of the world, d. 1335).²³⁴ She was

²³² *Jawāhir-i Farīd*, p. 60; also see Jahān Ārā’ Begum, *Mūnisu’l-arwāḥ*. 1638. Translated in Urdu as *Mu’īnu’l- arwāḥ* by Maulawī Muḥammad ‘Abdus-Ṣamad Kalīm Qādirī. Dehli: Matbā’ Rizvi, (1891), p. 34.

²³³ *Ibid*, FF, *Majlis* 5, 17 Rabi’u’l-awwal, 714; *Jamālī*, p. 88; Bibī Qarsum’s narrative is also included in Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf’s late eighteenth-century *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar* (vol. 3), p. 3763.

²³⁴ *Jamālī*, pp. 140–47; AA gives an account of the excellence of this saint. For details, see pp. 65–68.

also the daughter of Sultan Jamālu'd-Dīn of Farghana, a state in Central Asia, and came to Hindustan along with her family. She was married to Makhdūm Shaikh Ṣadru'd-Dīn 'Ārif Qattāl (d. 1286),²³⁵ son of Shaikhu'l Islam Bahā'ud-Dīn Zakariyya (d. 1267),²³⁶ the founder of the Suhrawardī *silṣila* of the Sufis in South Asia. She became a disciple of her father-in-law, Shaikh Bahāu'd-Dīn Zakariyya.²³⁷ Ḥāmid Jamālī Kamboh (d. 1530), himself a Suhrawardī Sufi, in *Siṭyaru'l 'Ārifīn*, a narrative of the Chishtī and Suhrawardī Sufis of India, writes that Bībī Rāstī, being an embodiment of her name, in her uprightness and modesty (*dar rāstī wa durustī*) was the Rāb'ia of her times.²³⁸ Bahā'ud-dīn Zakariyya conferred upon her the title of *Bībī Pākdāman* (literally, the woman with a holy scarf, or, metaphorically, the virtuous lady).

Another chronicler, Saiyyid 'Abdul Qādir, about whom little is known,²³⁹ in his biographical compendium of the Sufis of Sindh, written in 1016/1607,



FIGURE 11 Shrine Bībī Rāstī also known as Pāk Mā'ī and as Pāk Dāmnān, Multan

235 For his biographical notices, see AA, pp. 63–65.

236 For an account of his life, see AA, pp. 30–31.

237 *Jamālī*, p. 140.

238 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

239 Nabi Hadi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, p. 21.

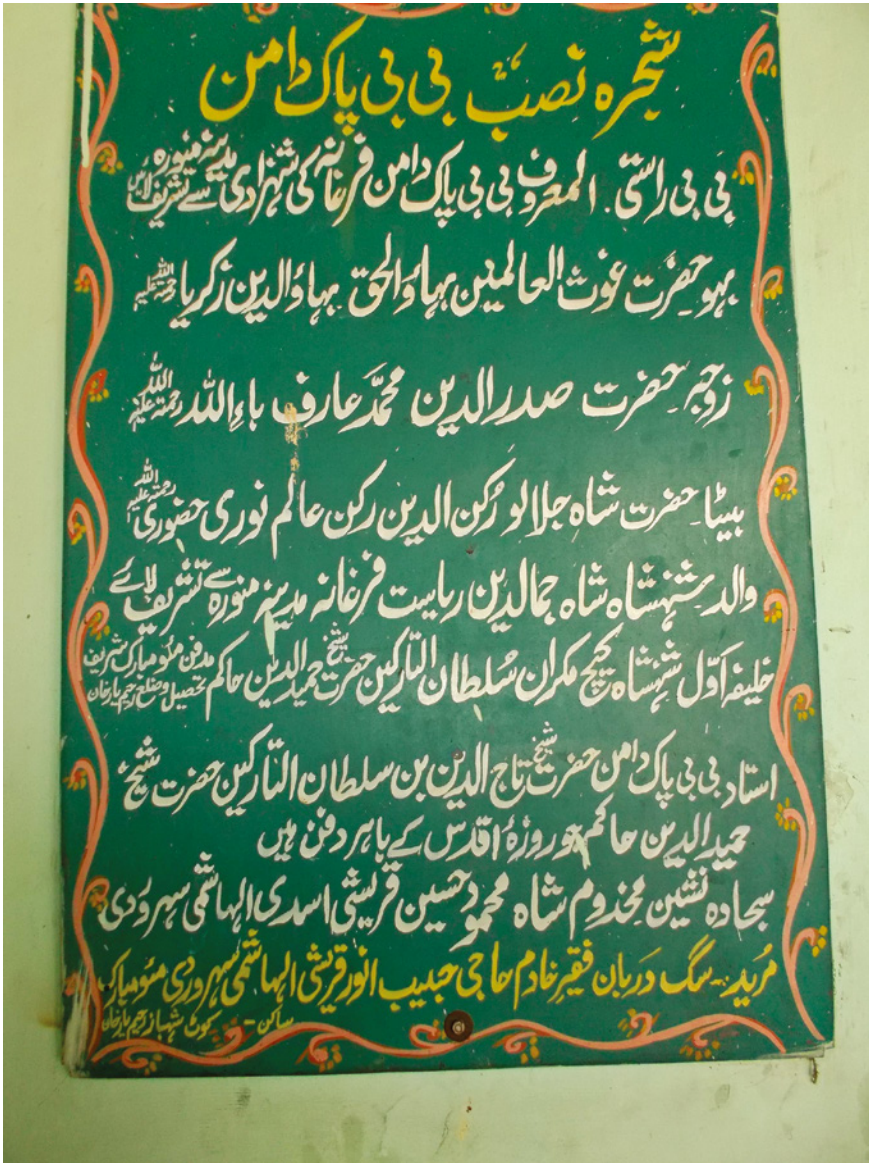


FIGURE 12 Ancestral history of Bibi Rāstī, Multan

addresses her with honorific titles, such as *‘afīfā-i daurān* (the virtuous woman of all ages), *mukhaddarā-yi zamān* (the concealed woman of her time), *tāju’lmukhaddarāt* (crown of the veiled women),²⁴⁰ *zainu’l mastūrāt* (adornment of the hidden ones), *‘afīfā-yi āfāq* (chaste woman of the heavens), and *maryam akhlāq* ([one with] morals of Mary).²⁴¹ It is worth noticing that despite this admiration and adulation, Saiyyid ‘Abdul Qādir did not include a separate account of Bibī Rāstī. The above eulogy falls in the account of her husband, Makhdūm Shaikh Ṣadru’d-Dīn ‘Arif Qattāl, and serves to extol the virtues of the foetus she carried in her womb, i.e., Shaikh Rukn-i-‘Ālam. ‘Abdullah Kheshgī, in *Ma‘ārijū’l wilāyat*, completed in 1094/1683, repeats the same story and says that she used to recite the whole Qur’ān each day.²⁴²

Indeed, her excellent virtues as a pious and abstinent person made her a perfect friend of Allāh. Her devotion to the Qur’ān, which she had memorised, was so great that each day she would recite the whole book.²⁴³ Jamālī writes that while she was seven month pregnant with Shaikh Ruknu’d-Dīn Abu’l Faṭḥ, on the evening of the fourteenth of lunar month she came to offer her salutation (*salām*) to her father-in-law and her spiritual mentor, Shaikh Bahāu’d-Dīn Zakariyya. The Shaikh stood up to greet her. As the Shaikh had not done this before, she asked the reason for it. The Shaikh answered that he was paying respect to the child she was carrying in her womb and who was the light of his family (*chirāgh-i khāndān*).²⁴⁴ Legends say that she always fed her son, Shaikh Rukn-i-‘Ālam, whom she affectionately called Shāh Jalūlā, in a state of complete purity, i.e., after performing *wazū*. While feeding her baby, instead of crooning a lullaby as is usually done by mothers, she would recite the Qur’ān to him.²⁴⁵ So great was her spiritual influence that even her slave girls, instead of singing folksongs, used to recite the Qur’ān while grinding away on the grinding stone.²⁴⁶

240 For further meanings of the term *mukhaddarā*, see Marion Holmes Katz, *Women in Mosque. A History of Legal Thought and Social Practice*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2014, pp. 108–8.

241 Saiyyid ‘Abdul Qādir. 1016/1607. *Ḥadiqat’ul Awliyā’*. Edited by Saiyyid Hisāmu’d-Dīn Rashdi. Hyderabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1967. pp. 22–23.

242 ‘Abdu’llah Kheshgī. 1094/1683. *Ma‘ārijū’l wilāyat*, ms. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidi Collection, Punjab University, Lahore. Fol. 653b.

243 Jamālī, p. 140; *Khazīnatu’l Asfiyā’*, *jild dom*, p. 424.

244 Jamālī, p. 141; *Khazīnatu’l Asfiyā’*, p. 47.

245 Muḥammad Aulād ‘Alī Gilānī. 1963. *Awliyā-yi Multān* Lahore: Sang-i Meel Publications, pp. 233–34; Bashīr Ḥusain Nāzim. 2005. *Awliyā-yi Multan*. Lahore: Sang-i Meel Publications, pp. 86–87.

246 Nūru’d-Dīn Khan Farīdī. 1977. *Tārīkh-i Multān*, vol. 1. Multan: Qaṣrul Adab, p. 228.



FIGURE 13 Front view of Bibi Rāstī shrine, Multan



FIGURE 14 Another front view of Bibi Rāstī shrine, Multan

Bībī Rāstī acted as a spiritual guide and mentor to women. Several women benefitted from the teachings of the Suhrawardī *sisila* through her guidance.²⁴⁷ She left this world in 695/1295 and lies buried in Multan. Her shrine, a protected monument under the Auqaf Department and the Punjab Archaeology Department, displays her ancestry (*shajra-yi nasb*). The inscription refers to her as both Bībī Pāk dāman and Bībī Rāstī. Translated in English, the inscription says:

The Family Tree of Bībī Pāk Dāman

Bībī Rāstī, known as Bībī Pāk Dāman, princess of Farghana, arrived from Madīna, the illuminated city. Daughter-in-law of Ḥaẓrat Ghaws-u'l 'Ālamīn Bahāu'l Ḥaqq Bahāu'd-Dīn Zakariyya, Allāh have Mercy upon him. Wife of Ḥaẓrat Ṣadru'd-Dīn Muḥammad 'Arif Ba-Allāh, may Allāh have Mercy upon him. Son is Ḥaẓrat Shāh Jalālū Ruknu'd-Dīn Rukn-i 'Ālam Nūrī Ḥuẓūrī, may Allāh have Mercy upon him. Father, the king of the kings, Shāh Jamālū'd-Dīn of the kingdom of Farghana, arrived from Madīna, the illuminated city, the First Khalifā, the ruler of Kuchch Makrān. Sulṭānu'l Tārikīn, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Ḥākim—auspicious place of burial, Mau Mubarak, District and *taḥsīl* of Rahīmīyār Khan, teacher of Bībī Pāk Dāman is Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Tājū'd-Dīn Sulṭānu'l Tārikīn, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Ḥamīdu'd-Dīn Ḥākim who is lying buried outside this most holy shrine.

Sajjadānīshīn- Makhdūm Shāh Maḥmūd Qureishi Asadī al-Hashimī Suhrawardī.

Murīd: the dog-guard: the humble servant Ḥājī Ḥabīb Anwar Qureishi al-Hashimī Suhrawardī, resident of Kot Shāhbāz, Rahim Yar Khan.

The brick-built entrance to the *dargāh* opens into a brick-paved open area where on one side stands the oblong tomb structure of Bībī Rāstī with a flat roof and arched wood-pillared veranda with two small cupolas standing at the two front corners of the façade. In this veranda lie reposed several female members of the Zakariyya family. At one side of the veranda, a door leads into the grave chamber of Bībī Rāstī.

'Abdullah Kheshtgī, writing in the late seventeenth century, records that on Thursdays when people assembled at her shrine to seek her blessings, men were not allowed to enter the premises but prayed standing outside the wall; women entered the shrine and prayed.²⁴⁸ On my visit, I noticed that males

247 *Ḥadiqat'ul Awliyā'*, p. 240; Rizvi, vol. 1, pp. 210–11.

248 'Abdu'llah Kheshtgī. 1094/1683. *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat*, ms. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidi Collection, Punjab University, Lahore. Fol. 653b.



FIGURE 15 Women's graves at the shrine of Bibi Rāstī, Multan



FIGURE 16 An anonymous woman's grave in the courtyard of Bibi Rāstī shrine, Multan

were barred from entering the precincts of the shrine. The shrine is managed by women attendants only. A notice on the outer wall allows men to walk up only to the threshold (*chaukhat*) of the main shrine. Women devotees use the water of the shrine's well, with rose petals floating on its surface, for ablution. It is believed that this water has healing power and cures infertility and barrenness. Petals are collected from the waters' surface for making offerings at the tomb. Large numbers of women visit the shrine, making supplications to the Bibī, and tie shreds of coloured fabric and threads as symbols of their *mannat* (vows). Some visitors tie these bands and rags to a window grill from outside.

On my visit to the shrine in February 2016, I met with several women devotees present at the shrine. One newly married woman told me, *main ḥāziri denai ayi hun. Apni shādī par salām karne wastai aur yeh ki Allāh mujhe beta dai* (I present myself here to offer my respects after my marriage and to seek through her the blessings of begetting a son as my first child). Accompanied by her sister-in-law, she had brought rose petals, sweetmeats, and a small vessel full of cooked rice and meat for distribution among the devotees present there.

The shrine of Bibī Rāstī is almost like history preserved through monuments. Looking at the large number of graves within the covered area, marked for women's graves, some named and some unnamed, of which some are centuries old and some from recent times, a sense of history overwhelms the visitor. Walking through the graves, with some of the tombstones covered by red- or green-coloured shiny fabric, I felt as if I was in the company of women of the past and got a strange feeling of camaraderie. Portions of the structure are crumbling due to natural deterioration and human neglect. More research is required to document the history of those who lie buried there. This research needs to be undertaken now, before it gets too late and the evidence is lost forever.

(8)

Bibī Sāra

Date: D. 638/1240

Shrine: Near *Masjid kuhna*, Delhi, India

Among the early Sufi travellers, including Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236) and Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1235), who reached Hindustan was also the family of Bibī Sāra. Bibī Sāra belonged to a scholarly and devout family. Her son, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'īyyad, a great scholar and Sufi, also arrived during this time²⁴⁹ along with other male relatives, including Saiyyid

249 Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'īyyad (d. H 725/1325), a scholar of great merit with miraculous powers, was a nephew of *Amir-i Dihlī* and *Shaikhul Islam of Dihlī*, Saiyyid

Nūru'd-Dīn Mubārak Ghaznawī (d. 632/1234), a *khalīfa* of Shaikh Shihābu'd-Dīn Suhrawardī and Bibī Sāra's husband's brother.²⁵⁰

Bibī Sāra lived in Delhi, or Dihli as it was known then, which was in the midst of far-reaching political and social changes under the rule of Sultan Shamsu'd-Dīn Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236). With the Sultan's death in 1236, Muslim South Asia experienced the first public display of gender bias against women. The accession of Sultan Shamsu'd-Dīn Iltutmish's daughter, Raḡiya Sultan (1236–1240), to the throne as his rightful heir resulted in her fall and death which was orchestrated by male power holders. Probably it is because of this prevalent social attitude towards women that contemporary accounts are silent about the presence or absence of women who, like men, travelled to Hindustan. One can assume that Bibī Sāra arrived in Delhi along with her son.

Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād, the *malfūz* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', which identifies her not by name but by her familial relationship, records an incredible anecdote of the charismatic powers of Bibī Sāra. We are not sure whether her name was intentionally withheld by Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' as a mark of respect for women, especially for mothers, or the omission was not considered significant in the context of the narrative. Ḥasan Sijzi, in *Fawā'id ul-fu'ād*, records that in the session held on 11 Rajab 722/1322, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' recalled that once, due to shortfall of rain, famine became imminent (*āghāz-i-qaḥṭ*) in Delhi. At the request of the public of Delhi (*khalq-i-shahr*), Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad stepped to the pulpit (*minbar*) and, taking out a piece of fabric from his sleeve, lifted it towards the sky and prayed for rain. Soon rain came down heavily (*qawī hāl*). When asked about the piece of fabric, Shaikh Abu'l Mua'yyad said it was the scarf of his late mother (*dāman wālida-i man būd*).²⁵¹ It is also related that Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad told someone that the piece of fabric which he had in his hands while praying for rain belonged to Khwāja Qutbu'd-Dīn Kākī who had gifted it to Bibī Sāra, who always covered her head with that fabric while praying, for added blessings.²⁵² The relationship between the families of Bibī Sāra and

Nūru'd-Dīn Mubārak Ghaznawī (d. 1325). For more details, see, *FF, Majlis* 25, 15th *Jamādiu'l awwal*, 711/1311; 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī refers him as *az mashāhīr buzurgān ast* (a renowned person among the saintly persons). His son Jamāl Kolvī was also a saintly person. See, *AA*, p. 49.

250 For a notice on Saiyyid Nūru'd-Dīn Mubārak, see *AA*, p. 32.

251 *FF, Majlis* 31 of 11th *Rajab*, 722/1322.

252 Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakḥkhar*. (Edited) Azarmi Dukht Safavi. 2012. *Bahr-e-Zakḥkhar, Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes* (vol. 3). Aligarh: Institute of Persian Research, Aligarh Muslim University, p. 256; Sanāullāh Maḥmūd. 2006. *Sāu baḥī zāḥid khwatīn aūr un kī sardār Ḥaẓrat Fātima bint-i Muḥammad: Ummahātu'l mu'mīnīn, banāt-i Rāsul, Ṣaḥābiyāt*. Lahore: Baitul'ulūm, pp. 480–82.

Khawāja Qutbu'd-Dīn Kākī was so close that the latter used to consider her son, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad as his brother and guided him on his spiritual path.²⁵³

Following Ḥasan Sijzi's story, for the next four hundred years Bibī Sāra did not appear in any other Sufi biographical collections. Shaikh 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī (d. 1642) added a four-line note about her under a section titled "an account of some righteous women" (*zīkr bā'z az nisā'-i ṣaliḥāt*), at the end of his seventeenth-century magnum opus compendium of more than three hundred biographies of male Sufis, the *Akhhbāru'l akhyār fī asrāru'l-abrār*. It is significant to note that not only is she the first in the list of righteous women included by Muḥaddis Dihlawī, as chronologically she qualifies for it, but she is also identified by her name. He writes that Bibī Sāra belonged to saintly persons of the past (*mutaqaddimīn*) and was a highly revered person (*bisyār buzurg*). Muḥaddis Dihlawī repeats the miraculous tale as given in *Fawā'id ul-Fuād* showing the charismatic powers that even a thread of the garment worn by Bibī Sāra held. Thus, the piece of fabric of the first narrative now turned into a mere thread in *Akhhbāru'l akhyār*, thus adding more weight to the miraculous powers of Bibī Sāra. Filling in more details, Muḥaddis Dihlawī writes that once when Delhi suffered from scarcity of rainfall (*imsāk*) and drought-like conditions developed, people came to Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad, Bibī Sāra's son and beseeched him to pray for rain. Holding a thread of his auspicious mother's skirt in his hands (*rishta az dāman-i mādar khud badast girift*), he invoked Allāh's mercy by praying, "My Lord! Send down rain in honour of the respected woman to whose scarf this thread belongs and on whom stranger's gaze never fell upon" (*bāḥurmat-i ān ki īn rishta dāman-i ṣa'īfa ast ki hargiz chashm-i nāmaḥram bārū niftātādah ast barān bafīrast*). As he uttered these words, rain came down.²⁵⁴ This narrative is also mentioned in *Asrāru'l awliyā'*, the alleged conversations of Khwajā Faridu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar (d. 1265) attributed to his disciple and son-in-law, Maulānā Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq. This *malḥūz*, however, is considered fake and spurious.²⁵⁵

The above narrative, with slight variation of diction and not facts, is given in another seventeenth-century source, *Ma'āriju'l-Wilāyat*, a biography of South Asian Sufis written in 1094/1682 by 'Abdullah Khesghī.²⁵⁶ Bibī Sāra's story kept inspiring the scribes of Sufi biographies even further. Thus, Wajihu'd-Dīn

253 'Abdu'llah Khesghī. *Ma'āriju'l-Wilāyat*, ms. No. R344, Iqbal Mujaddidi Collection, Punjab University, Lahore. Fol. B.

254 AA, p. 280.

255 *Faṣl 19* in Badru'd-Dīn Ishāq. *Asrāru'l awliyā'*. Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1890, p. 88.

256 *Ma'āriju'l-Wilāyat*, ms. No. R344, fol. 652, a & b.

Ashraf in 1788–1789 pays his tributes to Bibī Sāra by addressing her as ‘*arīfā kāmīl*’ (perfect gnostic) and ‘*āshiq-i wāhīd*’ (lover of the Only One [Allāh]), and as having *kamālāt-i fāṭiq* (superb spiritual excellence).²⁵⁷

As medieval South Asian historical writings are a mix of facts and hagiography, one can assume that in addition to *Fawā'id ul-fu'ūd* Muḥaddis Dihlawī and other sources might have been based upon local traditions, which kept alive Bibī Sāra's memory. *Akhbāru'l akhyār*, however, gives no date of her demise. Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, without identifying his source, says that she died in 638/1240, thus adding more historicity to Bibī Sāra's account.²⁵⁸ Lahorī also says that she had memorised the Qur'ān, used to fast frequently, and spent her days and nights in remembering Allāh. Bibī Sāra's scholarship and knowledge of *fiqh* was so great that people used to listen to her with rapt attention.

The year Bibī Sāra passed away, Raḥīya Sultan also died.²⁵⁹ Thus, the nascent Muslim community of South Asia suffered the loss of two notable women in the same year, one from the mundane realm and the other of the spiritual domain. Few know that Bibī Sāra reposes in her grave in Mehrauli, near Masjid Kuhna, close to the shrine of Khwāja Quṭbu'd-Dīn Kākī.²⁶⁰ Thus, the long affectionate relationship that the two had with each other—the Khwāja treated her as his sister—continues.

In the above narrative, in addition to the saintly virtues of Bibī Sāra, some other points emerge that help us significantly in the estimation of the time she lived and in exemplifying male perception of Sufi women. The narrative in *Fawā'id ul-fu'ūd* gives the primary credit for the relief rainfall to Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mu'ayyad who was approached by the people to pray for them. Only when the raindrops stopped after the first shower did Shaikh Abu'l Mu'ayyad bring out Bibī Sāra's scarf from his pocket. The woman in whose name supplication was made remained veiled and hidden. In the seventeenth-century narration of Muḥaddis Dihlawī, the story's emphasis shifts to the concept of women's virtues allied to their veiling. Thus, Muḥaddis Dihlawī, a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence with excellence in the knowledge of the Prophet's Traditions, declares that the core essence of Bibī Sāra's spiritual virtues was because a stranger's gaze did not catch a glimpse of her face at all. Later, around 1985, when Ḥasan Sānī Nizāmi, *sajjāda-nishīn* (spiritual successor) and nephew of the prolific Urdu author, journalist, and mystic Khwāja

257 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 367.

258 *Ḥadīqat ul Awliyā'*, p. 238.

259 *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, p. 812.

260 AA, p. 280; *Ḥadīqat ul Awliyā'*, p. 238; Farīdī, Muḥammad 'Ālam Shāh. 1912. *Mazārāt awliyā'-i Dihlī (ḥiṣṣa awwal)*. Dihlī: Jān-i Jahan Press, p. 76.

Ḥasan Nizami, translated the *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* into Urdu, he further changed the direction of the above story of Bibī Sāra by adding a subtitle to the entry of the thirty-first *Majlis* 11 Rajab 722/1322 in the table of contents. This heading by describing it as *Ḥazrat Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad ki buazargī kai bārai main hīkāyat* (narrative about the magnificence of Ḥazrat Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Abu'l Mua'yyad) covers the story under another veil.

(9)

Bibī Zulaikhā

Date: D. 648/1250

Shrine: Delhi, India

'Urs: 29–30 Jamādiu'l-awwal

Place of 'Urs Celebrations: Adchini near Mehrauli, Delhi

Bibī Zulaikhā's life account comes to us through the most reliable spoken words of her son, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' (d. 1325) which were transcribed by his loyal and trusted disciple Amīr Ḥasan Sijzi in *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* between 707/1308 and 722/1322.²⁶¹ As the disciples and spiritual successors of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' had a devotional regard and affection for the only parent of their Shaikh, i.e., his mother, their *tazkirāt* and *malfūzāt* are also replete, albeit repetitive in nature, with narratives about her. Thus, for reconstructing the life of Bibī Zulaikhā, *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād* remains the most authentic source. *Sīyaru'l Awliyā'* (Biographies of the Friends of God) of Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Mubārak Kirmāni (known as Amīr Khwurd), which was composed around the middle of the fourteenth century, is the second reliable source for information about Bibī Zulaikhā's life.²⁶² *Sīyaru'l 'Ārifīn* (Biographies of the Gnostics) of Ḥāmid bin Faḍlu'llah Jamālī (d. 942/1536), written between 938/1531 and 941/1535, is another authentic source of information.²⁶³ It is interesting to note that none of the contemporary sources nor any later ones offer any information about Bibī Zulaikhā's formal initiation into a Sufi *silsila* by entering into *baī'at*. This missing information is not because of wilful omission or sheer neglect of details about the righteous women on the part of male scribes of her story, including her son, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. Silence about formal nonaffiliation of Bibī Zulaikhā's path of Sufism thus abundantly illustrates

261 Amīr Ḥasan 'Alā Sijzi Dihlawī. 1302/1885. *Fawā'idu'l-fu'ād*. Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore.

262 Amīr Khwurd and his family had deep spiritual reverence for the Chishtīs. He was even named as Muḥammad by Ḥazrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. See *SA*, pp. 356–57.

263 Ḥāmid Faḍlu'llah Jamālī. 1310/1892. *Sīyaru'l 'Ārifīn*. Dihli: Maṭba' Rizvi.

her intense servitude to God alone and to her unconditional submission to the pleasure of God (*riḡā*). Later events of her life, as briefly described below, confirm her resolute trust (*tawakkul*) in God as follower of the path of *taṣawwuf*.

Bibī Zulaikhā's father, Khwāja 'Arab, and his paternal cousin Khwāja 'Alī, who later became the Bibī's father-in-law, escaped from their ancestral home in Bukhara, which was *ganj-i 'ilm wa kân-i taqwā* (treasure house of learning and a mine of piety and devotion)²⁶⁴ in the wake of the Mongol ravages in Central Asia. Travelling through Lahore and Delhi, this émigré family made Badayun, a small town in northern India where a sizeable Muslim community already existed and was the *Qubbatu'l Islam*,²⁶⁵ their final destination.²⁶⁶ We do not know how old Bibī Zulaikhā was at this time. The first reference we find is that she was married in Badayun to Khwāja Aḥmad,²⁶⁷ son of Khwāja 'Alī, and was given dowry as was the tradition by her father.²⁶⁸ Khwāja 'Arab could afford this expenditure as he was a man of means and possessed huge assets and countless workers or slaves (*māl bisyār wā bandagān beshumār*) of whom some earned money for him while some did business for him (*b'āz ba kasb wa b'āz ba-māl-i tijārat*).²⁶⁹

In Badayun, Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn, the second child, was born (640–641/1243–1244) to the couple. Married life proved short-lived. While Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn was an infant (*'ālam-i ṣughrā būd*), Khwāja Aḥmad fell ill (*zaḥmat shud*) and soon died.²⁷⁰ Amīr Khwurd says that while her husband was approaching his death, Bibī Zulaikhā heard a voice in a dream to choose (*ikhtiyār kun*) between her husband and her son.²⁷¹ Muḥammad Jamāl Qiwāmu'd-Dīn, one of the disciples of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', records more details of this dream in *Qiwāmu'l-'aqqā'id*, a *tazkira* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' which he wrote in 755/1354 and which is based on

264 SA, p. 94.

265 The word *qubba* means a cupola, a dome, or a tent. Here it means a stronghold.

266 SA, p. 94; Jamālī in *Siyaru'l 'Arifīn* says that the two families migrated from Ghazni, see p. 59; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. 2004. *Sheikh Nizamuddin Awliya*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p. 15; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. *Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, pp. 76–77.

267 Jamālī gives the name as Aḥmad bin Dānyāl, p. 59; also, see Shaikh Muḥammad Rāzi'u'd-Dīn Siddiqi Farshori Badayuni. 1318/1900. *Tazkira wāṣilīn (faṣl dom)*. Lucknow: Munshi Gulab Singh & Sons, pp. 60–67.

268 SA, p. 95.

269 Ibid, p. 94.

270 Ibid, p. 95; Jamālī says that Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn was five years of age (*dar waqt pānch sālgī pirash az sarguzashta*), p. 59. An Urdu work, *Tazkira wāṣilīn (faṣl dom)* of Muḥammad Rāzi'u'd-Dīn Bismil Badayni, also gives the same age. See p. 60.

271 SA, p. 95.

his personal observations.²⁷² He writes that the voice in her dream told Bibī Zulaikhā that the son she carried in her womb was one of the most revered persons of faith, a benefactor and a friend of Allāh (*buzurgān-i dīn wa ṣāhib-i niʿmat wa wilāyat ast*). She chose her son because Allāh had shown her by His Majesty (*jalāl*) the Blessed status (*darajāt-i saʿadat*) of her son.²⁷³ After the husband died, he was buried in Badayun.²⁷⁴ Devotees with great reverence visited his grave, until the time of the writing of *Siyaru'l-Awliyāʾ*.²⁷⁵

The young, widowed Bibī Zulaikhā, with great patience and fortitude, prepared her son Nizām for his future life in which later he earned the blessings of Shaikh Faridu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar.²⁷⁶ Under her careful planning and superb management, the young Nizām spent the first twenty years of his life polishing his scholarship and building trust in the Divine Will. Despite her poverty and diminishing resources, Bibī Zulaikhā, instead of giving up, kept her resilience and determination, and above all her trust in Allāh. A narrative showing her excellence in managing arduous situations is about the early career of her son Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn when she prepared with her own hands a headwrap for her young son on completing the study of the text, Qudūrī.²⁷⁷ Narrated by Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, the immediate *khalīfa* of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyāʾ, Bibī Zulaikhā, determined not to disappoint him, got the headwrap (*dastār*) readied at home and even offered food to those who assembled there for the celebrations.²⁷⁸ She then, along with her daughter, accompanied her son, who was now about twenty years of age, to Delhi.²⁷⁹

272 Muḥammad Jamāl Qiwām. *Qiwāmu'l-'aḳā'id*, as reproduced by Nisar Ahmad Faruqui in *Qand-e Farsi*, Cultural House of Iran, Dec–May, 1994, pp. 2–110. (The manuscript of *Qiwām*, *Qiwām u'l- 'Alā'ud* is in the University of Osmania, Hyderabad). I have not seen or accessed this source. All my translations are from the Farsi printed version. An Urdu translation by Nisar Ahmad Faruqui is also available. See *Qiwāmu'l-'aḳā'id* (1994 edn.). Rampur: Idara Nashr-o-Ishā'at.

273 Ibid, pp. 4–5 (ms. Folios. 7 a, b).

274 *Tazkira waṣīlīn* says that Khwāja Aḥmad died on 6 Shawwāl, 635/ May 22, 1238, and was buried in Badayun near Sagar Tal, see pp. 60–69.

275 SA describes the grave of Khwāja Aḥmad in Badayun as *rawzā-yi mutabarraka* (the blessed shrine) P. 95; Muḥammad Raḏīu'd-Dīn Bismil Badayuni in his Urdu book, *Kanzu'l tārikh* identifies the place of the shrine as near Sagar Tāl and writes further that the tomb was rebuilt in 1184/1771 by the Rohilla Chief, Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khan (d.1774). See *Kanzu'l tārikh*. 1907. Badayun: Nizami Press, p. 67; also *Tazkira waṣīlīn* (*fasl dom*), p. 67.

276 SA, p. 95.

277 The *Mukhtaṣar* of Abu'l Ḥusain al-Qudūrī (d. 438/1037) a leading Ḥanafī scholar of Baghdad.

278 KM, *Majlis* 56.

279 *Jamālī*, p. 59. Delhi at this time was ruled by Sultan Ghiyasu'd-Dīn Balban (1266–1287).

Sīyaru'l Awliyā', under the heading “some miracles of the Rābi'a of the Age, Bībī Zulaikhā, the glory of womankind worldwide” (*ba'ze karāmāt an fakhrun-nisā' fi'al-‘ālamīn Rābi'a al-‘aṣr*), presents an account of Bībī Zulaikhā's miraculous powers which, at all counts, if not higher than those of male Sufis, are not of a lower category.²⁸⁰ Recalling the hardships of his childhood, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn related his revered mother's access to God (*wālida-i mirā ba khudā-i ta'lā rasāt būd*). Thus, whenever she needed something, a solution would appear in her dream (*itmām an kār dar khwāb badīd*) and the choice (to fulfil her needs) would thus be given to her (*ikhtiyār badast-i o mīdādand*).

Amīr Khwurd further narrates a few other incidences which reflect Bībī Zulaikhā's virtues of *kashf-i ilāhī* or Divine revelation that accrue only when a person's heart, purged of all worldly desires by constant worship and remembrance, acquires the mystic attributes of seeing what is not perceived by an ordinary eye. Thus, Bībī Zulaikhā could discern the signs of good fortune and auspiciousness (*ālāmat-i nekbakhtī wa sa'ādat*) by looking at the feet of her young son. However, as life was too harsh and poverty and indigence enclosed the Shaikh's days of childhood, the young Shaikh, not solaced by his mother's words, submitted to his mother by saying, “You say I am lucky and fortunate, however I see no signs of it.” The mother responded that he “would experience it when I am gone.” The words came true. Amīr Khwurd mentions that Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' further narrated how all the difficulties and challenges of their life would vanish within a week or so, or at most within a month, due to the charisma of his mother. “If my mother had some need, she would recite *ṣalāt* (prayers) five hundred times in a day and would make supplications by spreading the hem of her shirt. Her prayers were answered by the Grace of Allāh.”²⁸¹

Another incident recalled by Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn which shows the effectiveness of her prayers happened when Bībī Zulaikhā's only housemaid (*kanīz*) absconded. Grieved by the loss, the Bībī, spreading her scarf, prayed to Allāh (*munajāt*) and vowed that she would not cover her head with her scarf until the maid came back. The moment these words were uttered, a man came to the door and said, “Come, here is your maid.”

Recalling his mother's illness, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' narrated, “When my mother—may she be blessed—fell ill, she asked me several times to visit the tomb of a certain martyr or a certain pious person. I would obey her command, and when I returned home, she would say, ‘My illness is better, my

280 SA, pp. 149–152.

281 Ibid.

affliction has eased.”²⁸² So great was the love and adoration of the Shaikh for his mother that he mourned her death all through his life.

As the transmission of a Sufi's *barakā* (spiritual power) is believed to remain active even after a pious person's death, miracles of Bibī Zulaikhā similarly did not end with her passing away. Indeed, on the other hand, *Sulṭānu'l-Mashā'ikh*, despite the sanctity of his spiritual attainments, used to visit his mother's tomb to seek her blessings. Thus, when his relations with Sulṭān Quṭbu'd-Dīn were estranged and the Sultan threatened him, the Sulṭānu'l-Mashā'ikh, instead of taking any action at the advice of his sincere followers, kept quiet (*hech na guft*) and went to visit his mother's grave (*ba ziyārat walidā-yi khud baraft*). He believed that she alone could intercede on his behalf and would seek the Divine protection against his worldly opponent. In the words of the Shaikh, this is what he submitted to his dead mother: “This king intends to harm me. If by the end of the coming month, the time when he plans to put me in trouble, he is not seized, I would never come to visit you again.” Saying this, the Shaikh returned to his place. While his followers and attendants were worried and vexed, the Sulṭānu'l-Mashā'ikh remained calm and composed with confidence (*khāṭir jama' bar i 'timād*) as he had petitioned his dead mother. While everyone was worried that with the appearance of the new moon the Sultan's wrath would fall upon the Shaikh, the miracle did happen finally. Before the Sultan could dare to harm the Sulṭānu'l-Mashā'ikh, Khusraw Khan, the Sultan's old enemy, severed his head and threw his headless body from the rampart of the fort. Not satisfied with this, the ruthless Khusraw Khan hanged the severed head pierced with a spear to be viewed by the public.²⁸³

Amīr Khwurd, in *Siṣaru'l-Awliyā'*, narrates another story as a testimony of Bibī Zulaikhā's *baraka*. Amīr Khwurd's wife, a regular visitor of the Jamā'at Khānā, the *khānqāh* of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', and known for her trustworthiness, once in a dream saw that people were running hither and thither as if it was the day of Resurrection (*qiāmat qā'im shudā ast*). She saw a man standing there with a banner in his hand who told her, “This is the standard of Bibī Zulaikhā, the glorious mother of Sulṭānu'l-Mashā'ikh (*in 'alam Bibī Zulaikhā ast wālida mājida Sulṭān'ul mashā'ikh*). You also come under the cover of this standard.' I, then, took refuge under this standard from all the tumult and commotion.”²⁸⁴

282 FF *Majlis* 17, 709H.

283 For details of the assassination of Sultan Quṭb-u'd-Dīn Mubārak (1316–20) see, Barani, Ziyā' u'd-Dīn. 1862. *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhī*. (Edited by Syed Ahmad Khan). Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, The Asiatic Society of Bengal (originally composed in 1359), pp. 401–9; Nizami. *The life and times of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya*. Delhi.

284 SA, pp. 151–152.

The last conversation between the dying mother and her grieving young son shows her staunch trust in Allāh. The son with tears in his eyes asked his dying mother, “O Makhdūma! To whom would you leave this poor one?” Holding the right hand of her son, she said, “God All Mighty! I leave him to Thee.” Recalling the last words of his dying mother, Sultānu’l Mashā’ikh said how grateful and satisfied he was at the *mīrās* (heritage) his mother left for him—the protection by Allāh. He added, “I said to myself that even if she had left for me a house full of gold and pearls, I would not have been happy.”²⁸⁵ The shrine of Bibī Zulaikhā in Delhi, affectionately addressed as Mā’ī Ṣāhibā, offers blessings and peace to all its visitors.²⁸⁶ The shrine of Bibī Zulaikhā near Mehrauli, Delhi, also has graves of several other pious women, including the graves of two sisters, Bibī Hūr and Bibī Nūr, the pious daughters of Shaikh Shihābu’d-Dīn Suhrawardī (1145–1234/1235), the teacher and guide of Shaikh Baha’u’d-Dīn Zakāriyya (1182–1262). They served Bibī Zulaikhā when she moved to Delhi with utmost devotion and love. In the shrine complex of Bibī Zulaikhā are also the graves of her daughter, Bibī Ruqayya, and granddaughter, Bibī Zainab. Both these righteous women lived their whole life in the company of Bibī Zulaikhā and were looked after by Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’.

10.5 Sufi Women Recognised as *Murshid* by Their Husbands

(1)

Ḥaẓrat Bibī Makhdūma

Period: Sixteenth Century

Place: Amethi, Lucknow, India

Ḥaẓrat Bibī Makhdūma, a woman immersed in Allāh’s devotion, was doubly blessed as she was born and brought up in Amethi, a locality small in size but with a glorious tradition in spirituality, the care of two celebrated Sufis, her father and her husband. In a society where married women were subjected to give obedience (*ṭā’at*) to their husbands, Ḥaẓrat Bibī Makhdūma’s story presents a rare case of husband-wife relationship. Her husband, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Bandagī Mian Nizāmu’d-Dīn Ambethwī, a mystic with a huge following, used

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 152.

²⁸⁶ Muḥammad ‘Ālam Shāh Farīdī. 1912. *Mazarāt awliyā’-i Dihlī (ḥiṣṣa awwal)*. Dihlī: Jān-i Jahan Press, pp. 56–58; Maulawī Aḥmad Sa’id, *Tārīkh Awliyā’-i Dihlī m’arūf ba Tuḥfa-i sa’id*. Dihlī: Maḥbūb al-Maṭāba’ Barqī Press (1354/1935), p. 144.

to address Bibi Makhdūma as his *murshid* (spiritual guide). As this reference is rarely found, I assume that this was not a public statement of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Bandagī Miañ. However, his acknowledgment of learning from his wife is a significant gesture as it reflects a relationship based on mutual respect between two pious persons.

Bibi Makhdūma's family was renowned for its deep affiliations with the Qalandariyyā Sufi *silsila* in North India. She later married a man whose scholarship and love of Allāh brought a large number of devoted followers to his house. A short life-sketch of Ḥaẓrat Bibi Makhdūma was given in a manuscript, *Manāqibu'l Awliyā'*, which was authored by Amethi-born Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan (1047/1638–1130/1718).²⁸⁷ Mullā Jīwan, Emperor Aurangzeb's (d. 1703) tutor, was a descendant of Ḥaẓrat Makhdūm Bahāu'l-ḥaqq Khāṣṣa-yi Khudā Amethwī²⁸⁸ (d. 1517), the father of Bibi Makhdūma Jahān, a Chishtī Sufi who is known as the founder of the Qalandariyyā Sufi *silsila* in Amethi.²⁸⁹ Ḥaẓrat Khāṣṣa-yi Khudā married two daughters (the second one following the death of the first) of his disciple Shaikh Muḥammad bin Khwājī Sidhorī.²⁹⁰ Ḥaẓrat Khāṣṣa-yi Khudā's second wife, Nāsika, became the mother of Bibi Makhdūma Jahān and six more children.²⁹¹

By the age of nine, Bibi Makhdūma Jahān came to acquire extreme spiritual learning and knowledge.²⁹² Mullā Jīwan, and later Lucknow-based mystic and author Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf in his *Bahr-e Zakhkhār* (completed in 1788–1789),

287 This ms is extinct now. Another small Farsi text, about 35 pages, at some unidentified date, titled *Tazkira Buzurgān-i Amethi*, based on the earlier manuscript was prepared. Detailed quotes from this second Farsi text are included in *Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī-ḥayāt aur khidmāt*. Lucknow: Dāru'l 'Ulūm Ahl-i sunna (2015) by Muhammad Ṭufail Aḥmad Miṣbāhī. I have used these references to reconstruct the life of Bibi Makhdūma Jahān.

288 Badaoni identifies him as Aḥmad Faiyāẓ Amethiwāl and eulogises his spiritual merits. See 'Abdu'l Qādir Badaoni 1284/1867. *Muntakhabu't tawārīkh*. Lucknow: Maṭbā' Khās Munshi Nawal Kishore, p. 307.

289 Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan, *Tazkira buzurgān-i Amethi* (Persian ms) quoted in Muḥammad Ṭufail Aḥmad Miṣbāhī. 2015. *Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī-ḥayāt aur khidmāt*. Lucknow: Dāru'l 'Ulūm Ahl-i sunna, pp. 175–180. For a short notice, see 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī and Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl. 1993. *Mir'ātu'l asrār*. Lahore: Zīā'u'l Qur'ān Publications, pp. 1183–84. 'Abdu'r Raḥmān Chishtī's paternal grandfather, Shaikh Budhdh was a *khalīfa* of Makhdūm Khāṣṣa-yi khudā. see *Nuzhat al Khwātir*, vol. 4, p. 335. Amethi, being a centre of learning and as the home of some acclaimed Sufis, was designated as *Madina u'l awliyā'* by Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan, see *Tazkira buzurgān-i Amethi* (Persian ms) quoted in *Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī-ḥayāt aur khidmāt*, p. 28.

290 *Nuzhatu'l khwātir* describes Shaikh Sidhorī as one of the men of learning and devotion, vol. 4, p. 408.

291 *Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī*, p. 177.

292 *Ibid*, p. 183.

while addressing Bibī Makhdūma as *kāmila bā šifāt* (perfect in virtues) and *wāsilā-i zāt* (one who is merged with the Essence [of God]), refer to the spiritual blessings (*niʿmat*) of Ḥaẓrat Khāṣṣa-yi Khudā in refining Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān's spiritual yearnings.²⁹³

Ḥaẓrat Bibī Makhdūma was married to Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Bandagī Mian Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī (1494–1571/1572).²⁹⁴ The marriage took place in 918/1512.²⁹⁵ Mian Nizāmu'd-Dīn was a *khalifā* of Shaikh Mʿarūf of Jaunpur (869/1464–987/1579)²⁹⁶ who was a disciple of Maulānā Illahdād (d. 932/1526).²⁹⁷ Shaikh Mʿarūf, a perfect Sufi described as *sāhibu'l mujāhidāt*, conferred on Bandagī Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī the *walāyā* of Kākori.²⁹⁸ Nizāmu'd-Dīn Amethwī, whose spiritual connection is traced to Shaikh Nūru'l Ḥaqq (known as Ḥaẓrat Nūr Quṭb-i ʿĀlam of Padua, Bengal [d. 813/1410]), was a master of gnostic and charismatic qualities (*ṣāhib-i kash wa karamāt*) in Dārā Shikūh's estimation.²⁹⁹ Because of his continuous and severe mystical exercises (*sulūk riṣyāzāt-i shāqqā*), he enjoyed an excellent status of a gnostic whom Muḥaddis Dihlawī describes as *sālik-i majzūb* and who remained intoxicated with Divine Glory.³⁰⁰

Growing up under the influence of the above-mentioned spiritual masters, Bibī Makhdūma Jahān, from her early childhood, developed a deep interest in spiritual pursuits. Although Bibī Makhdūma Jahān was a gnostic and a mystic (*ʿarīfa waliyya*), she learned more in the company of her Sufi husband.

293 Ibid, p. 183; *Bahr-e-Zakhhār* (vol. 3). pp. 369–69.

294 For his biographical notice, see, *Muntakhabu't tawārikh*, pp. 282–86. Badaoni shows great appreciation for Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī whom he visited twice in Ambethī and was well-received by the mystic; Ghawṣī Shaṭṭārī, writes about the spiritual merits of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī, though he could not personally know him but collected information through a relative of the Shaikh, see *Azkār-i abrār*, pp. 577–97; AA, pp. 272; A short note on Nizāmu'd-Dīn Ambethwī is given by ʿAbdu's Samad bin Afzal Muḥammad in his *Akhhāru'l Asfiyā* which was composed probably in 1017/1608. See Shadma Shahzad. 2013, p. 261.

295 Muḥammad Samīʿuddīn. 2008. *Saiyyid ʿAbdurrahmān bin Faḍlu'llah al-mʿarūf ba Saiyyid Sulṭān Bahrāʿichī*. Aligarh: Markaz-i Habib, p. 237.

296 The tomb of Shaikh Makhdūm Mʿarūf lies in Aldemau, a village in tehsil Kazipur, near Sultanpur, UP. See, Anton Führer. 1891. *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces of Oudh*. Allahabad: The superintendent Government Press, p. 325.

297 This scholar-mystic is the author *Sharah Kāfiya* and *Hidāya*. See Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh. 1269/1853. *Safīnatu'l-awliyāʾ* (Lithograph text). Agra: Maṭbaʿ-iyi Madrasa Agra, p. 331; AA, pp. 188–89.

298 For short notice on Shaikh Mʿarūf see AA, p. 189.

299 *Safīnatu'l-awliyāʾ*, p. 331.

300 AA, p. 272.

Interestingly, she also mentored and tutored her husband in several ways. Thus, for example, Mullā Jīwan Amethwī, who himself excelled in external and internal knowledge (*bā kamālāt zāhir wa bāṭin*), writes that once Bandagī Miyān Nizāmu'd-Dīn and Ḥaẓrat Shāh 'Abdur Razzāq, Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān's younger brother, were performing *ḥabs-i dam* (breath control) but did not know how to perform it properly and correctly (*rāst nami āmad*). Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān was watching this. She said, "Look, this is how you do *ḥabs-i dam*," and then she demonstrated by doing it herself (*khud ḥabs-i dam kardan shuru' namūd*). Referring to her father, Makhdūm Shaikh Khāṣṣa-yi Khudā, she said, "This is how I learnt it from Ḥaẓrat Bābū Jiū (*mā īn nau' rā az Ḥaẓrat Bābū Jiū akhaz kard*)." It is said that whenever her father would begin *zikr*, jasmine flowers (*chambelī*) would begin falling out of his mouth. Each time Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān used to utter *la ilāhā* (there is no God) she would disappear and the moment the words *ilallāh* (but Allāh) were uttered, she would be present. Both Ḥaẓrat Shāh 'Abdur Razzāq and Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Nizāmu'd-Dīn learnt the practice of *zikr* from Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān.³⁰¹ Because of these merits, Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn even acknowledged her as his *murshid*.³⁰²

Recalling Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān's *ṣabr* (patience) and *tawakkul* (trust of Allāh), the superb merits of a perfect Sufi, Mullā Jīwan narrates that when pressed by poverty and privation, Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Nizāmu'd-Dīn was on the verge of seeking redress from royal bounty. Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān sought her father's intercession to dissuade him as she firmly believed that one should beg for Allāh's blessings only.³⁰³

Referring to the esoteric powers of Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān, Mullā Jīwan narrates a few incidences. For instance, she could comprehend birds' conversations and even could hear the cooking pot's complaints. Once, at the request of a barren woman to bless her with children, Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Nizāmu'd-Dīn indirectly predicted the birth of seven children by giving her seven green mangoes. But Bibī Makhdūma Jāhān immediately said, "No, this woman is not fated to have seven children." This turned out to be true as the woman lost two pregnancies and had only five children.³⁰⁴

301 Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī, p. 186; Ḥaẓrat Maulānā Shāh Turāb 'Alī Qalandar. 1293/1876. *Mujāhadātu'l Awliyā'*. Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore, p. 296.

302 Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī- *ḥayāt aur khidmāt*. p. 186.

303 Ibid, p. 185; Another record, on the contrary, shows that Emperor Akbar, on his way back from Bengal-Bihar, visited Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Nizāmu'd-Dīn in Amethi and granted him and his father-in-law, Ḥaẓrat Bahāu'l-ḥaqq revenue-free land. See *Lucknow: A Gazetteer*, vol. xxxviii. Ed. by H.R. Neville (Allahabad: Government Press United Provinces, 1904), pp. 170–71.

304 Mullā Aḥmad Jīwan Amethwī, p. 184; *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 369.

Bībī Makhdūma Jahān, with the exemplary merits of a Sufi, was the mother of six sons. Her date of birth and death is found nowhere. We know that she was buried in Amethi. Following her demise, her elderly husband, past eighty years, remarried. This time, the new wife was the young niece of Bībī Makhdūma Jahān, her brother Ḥaẓrat Shāh ‘Abdur Razzāq’s daughter.³⁰⁵ This was the third marriage of the Shaikh.³⁰⁶

10.6 Sufi Women Who Chose Not to Marry

(1)

Bībī Ārām Ḥaṣūr

Date: D. 790/1388–1389

Place: Dabhoi, Vlodara District, Gujarat

Shrine: Sahasrling in Naharwala, Gujarat, India

The only brief biographical notice about Bībī Ārām Ḥaṣūr is given by Muḥammad Ghawsī bin Ḥasan bin Mūsā Shaṭṭārī Māndawī (b. 962/1554) in his *Gulzār-i Abrār* (the rose garden of the pious), a biographical compendium of Sufis. This biographical history of more than six hundred Sufis, mostly from Gujrat, was completed between 1014/1605 and 1022/1613 during the era of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) and was dedicated to him.

Contrary to the prevalent method of referring to pious women as part of the narrative of male Sufis, particularly their relatives, Ghawsī includes Bībī Ārām Ḥaṣūr’s account as a separate entry in the main text itself. In a section dedicated to the remembrance of the spiritual successors of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ (*yād khulāfa’-i Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ Quds Allāh*), who were at least seven hundred in number and were posted to various parts of the country by Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’, Bībī Ārām Ḥaṣūr’s story is given.³⁰⁷ By placing the notice on Bībī Ārām Ḥaṣūr as a separate entry, Ghawsī also revived the old Islamic tradition of entering biographical notices about pious women in writing biographical compendiums.³⁰⁸ Perhaps in following the same vein,

305 Badaoni, closing his narrative Ḥaẓrat Bandagī Nizāmu’d-Dīn, wrote that even at this ripe age he was still producing children, see *Muntakhabu’t tawārikh*, p. 286.

306 Muḥammad Samī’uddīn. 2008, p. 237.

307 *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 118.

308 Ghawsī is also the first *tazkira* author to add a notice on Khadija Bībī of Mandu and Būbū Rāstī.

Ghawsī's first line in the notice on Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr says that "she is Saiyyid Ḥasan Naharwālā's sister."³⁰⁹

Ḥaṣūr was not part of Bibī Ārām's name, but rather an alias—the Arabic word *ḥaṣūr* means close or abstaining from all commerce with women or a celibate. Ghawsī writes that the brother and the sister both were celibate.³¹⁰ The family of Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr, which originally hailed from Ghyaspur, a suburb of Delhi where Ḥaṣrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' had built his *jamā'at khāna*, was blessed with several saintly persons. Among these were her brother, Saiyyid Ḥasan Naharwālā (d. 798/1395)³¹¹ and Saiyyid Ḥamid Ḥasan Chishtī, her nephew, the son of another brother who passed away in the state of ecstasy.³¹²

We do not know much about Bibī Ārām's personal life except that she was an unmarried sister of Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwālā. We do not even know whether she was older or younger than her brother. Details about the personal life of a Sufi are of less significance while mapping their spiritual journey. Thus, the most outstanding information about her, and of far greater significance than events of her personal life, is that Ghawsī accords Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr's status as equal to that of her saintly (*ʿarif*) brother in following the path of *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa*. Both were the disciples of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and both were permitted by him to proceed to Gujarat and stay there (*in donoḥ ko buzurgwār pīr Sulṭānu'l Mashā'ikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' kī khidmat se Gujrat jāne aur rahne kī ijāzat milī*). This information, though conveyed in three short sentences, is of far greater significance than an exhaustive volume on women and gender status in medieval South Asia.

On Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwālā, whose charismatic powers are recorded by Ghawsī Māndawī, the mantle of *khilāfat* was bestowed by Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' with orders to proceed to Gujarat for the guidance of the people there.³¹³ Ghawsī does not explicitly state that Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr was appointed as his *khalīfa* by Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā'. What he simply says is that with the permission of her *pīr buzurgwār* (Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā') and with Divine guidance as their companion (*ilāhī taufīq ko rafīq banā kar*), she arrived with her brother in Gujarat and reached a small place named Kadūri, near Dabhoi in Gujarat.³¹⁴ There, in a small place which was not visited by many, they both settled down and were lost in worshipping and remembering

309 *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 118.

310 *Ibid*, p. 117.

311 For a short biographical notice of Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwala, see *Azkār-i Abrār*, pp. 116–117.

312 *Ibid*, pp. 194–5.

313 *Ibid*, p. 117.

314 Kadūri could not be found on the map of Gujarat. An Internet search, however, showed the word *kadūri* as the surname or the last name of several persons.

Allāh in each of their breaths. Thus, through constant remembrance they both received Divine bliss.

Ghawsī narrates that once an ill-mannered, ignorant, and impudent person came there and made some insolent insinuations about the sister-brother relationship of these two Sufis. It so happened that this impertinent man hit the back of Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwālā with a stick. But instead of striking Saiyyid Ḥusain, the back of the rude man was miraculously hit. Ghawsī says that since then, every child born into the family of this man carries the mark of this beating on his back.³¹⁵ Following this ugly incident, both brother and sister with the permission of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' shifted to a secluded spot near a pond named Sahasrling in Naharwālā and began spending their days lost in Allāh's remembrance in a small cottage. Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr died in 790/1388 and was buried in Sahasrling in Naharwālā, Gujarat. Later, Saiyyid Ḥusain Naharwālā was also buried at the same place.³¹⁶

Less than two centuries later, following the completion of *Gulzār-i Abrār*, Bibī Ārām Ḥaṣūr appears in another biographical compendium of the Sufis, *Bahr-e Zakhkhār*, written in 1788–1789 by Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf. Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf's account appears to be identical to Ghawsī Shaṭṭārī's narrative, except that he does not suffix her name with *ḥaṣūr*. This second account also confirms that she was a disciple of Ḥaẓrat Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' (*irādat ba Sultānu'l Awliyā' dāsh*t) and was equal to her brother in following the path of spirituality (*dar sulūk rāh i ṭarīqat*).³¹⁷

(2)

Bibī Fāṭima Sām

Date: D. 643/1246

Place: Delhi, India

Shrine: near *Qal'a kuhna*, (Kakanagar, opposite Oberoi Hotel) Delhi

Urs: 17–18 Sh'aban

*Ḥaẓrat Bibī Fāṭima Sām (raḥi Allāhu 'anha) quddisa sirra-ha az ṣāliḥāt, qānī'tāt, 'ābidāt zamānā būd. (Ḥaẓrat Bibī Fāṭima Sām [may Allāh be pleased with her and may her secrets be sanctified] was among the virtuous, devout worshippers [of God] of her times).*³¹⁸

³¹⁵ *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 118.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 118.

³¹⁷ *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar*, p. 370.

³¹⁸ Text of the inscription on the tomb of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, displaying a quote of 'Abdu'l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī from his *Akhhāru'l Akhyār*, p. 280; Bashīruddīn Aḥmad writing in 1918,

The story of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, unlike the narratives of many other Sufi women of South Asia, is not appended to male connections—a father, husband, or son—perhaps because she had none on record. Bibī Fāṭima Sām, also known as Bibī Sām or Bibī Ṣāʾima, lived in the historic area of Delhi called Inderpat (Old Fort area of Delhi), during the heyday of the growth of the Chishtī *silsila* of South Asia.³¹⁹ Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī, without any citations, conjectures that perhaps her father's name was Sām.³²⁰ Although contemporary sources do not say anything about Bibī Fāṭima Sām's formal initiation into any Sufi *silsila*, Nizāmī says that Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn's probably was her Shaikh.³²¹ Farīdī, without citing any source, says that as she was a disciple of Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār, therefore Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', disciple and *khalīfa* of Ganj-i Shakkār, was her *pīr bhāī'* (spiritual brother).³²² Thus, she had close relationship with three Chishtī Sufis, i.e., Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār (d. 1265), his brother Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil (d. 1273), and Farīdu'd-Dīn's *khalīfa*, Sulṭān'ul Mashā'ikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', who as a young person visited her often. Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', though much younger in age, also had great devotion for her and spent hours listening to her.³²³ Thus, the narrative of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, unlike most other Sufi women of South Asia, achieved significant visibility and an exceptional recognition in the accounts scribed by medieval Sufis who otherwise did not entertain unbiased views about women.

Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn's brother, Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil, had great regard for her and had a unique relationship with her (*bā īn Bibī Fāṭima mawaddat būdā ast*) such as that which exists between a sister and a brother (*bar ṭarīq-i-khwāhar wa birādar*).³²⁴ Abdu's Ṣamad bin Afzal Muḥammad, a seventeenth-century biographer of Sufis, in his *Akhbāru'l Aṣṣfyā'* (Reports on the Sufis), eulogises Bibī Fāṭima Sām as *sājida* (one who prostrates herself),

however, says that this inscription was placed recently. See his *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dihlī*, pp. 657–58.

319 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of Zil Ḥajj, 720/1321; Dating back to India's early history, Inderpat is now a small neighbourhood near the Old Fort, Delhi. See Anirudha Ray, *Towns and Cities of Medieval India: A Brief Survey* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); also A.K. Narain, 'On the Proto-history of Delhi and its Environs,' (pp. 3–17), in E.R. Frykenberg (Edited) *Delhi through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi: OUP, 1993).

320 Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī. 1947. *bā'is Khwāja kī chaukhat kā ziyārat nāma*. Dehli: Daftar ḥalqā mashā'ikh, dargah Ḥazrat Khwāja Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', p. 19.

321 Khaliq Aḥmad Nizāmī. *Ḥazrat Bibi Fāṭima Sām*, (Dilli: Idara-i Adbiyāt Dilli, 1982), pp. 7–8.

322 Muḥammad 'Ālam Shāh Farīdī. 1912. *Mazarāt awliyā'-i Dihlī (ḥiṣṣā awwal)*. (Dihli: Jān-i Jahan Press 1912), p. 16.

323 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of Zil Ḥajj, 720/12 January 1321.

324 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of Zil Ḥajj, 720/1321; SA, p. 168; *Jamālī*, p. 101.

sāliḥa (virtuous), and *‘ābida zamāna* (a worshipper [of Allāh] of her times). He also notes that she maintained friendly relations (*rābiṭa mawakhāt dāsht*) with Najibu’d-Dīn Mutāwakkil.³²⁵

Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’s spiritual successor, Shaikh Naṣīru’d-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 1356), and the latter’s *khalīfa*, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz (d. 1422), remembered her with utmost devotion and reverence. Gīsū Darāz, in a state of meditation, even conversed with her after her death. Of all the above great Chishtī Sufis, Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’s account of Bibī Fāṭima Sām is the only firsthand eyewitness account as he had seen her (*man o rā didā būdam*) and conversed with her. Though she was old (*mu‘ammar*) when he met her, she retained good memory and could quote verses pertaining to a situation (*ḥasb-i ḥāl*).³²⁶

Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār, who had seen Bibī Fāṭima Sām, praised her as a virtuously remarkable woman (*‘azīz ‘aurat*).³²⁷ Testifying of Bibī Fāṭima Sām’s mystical virtues of worshipping and remembering Allāh, Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn is reported by Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ to have said that “the amount of this (one) woman’s remembrance of Allāh equals that of ten perfect [perfect Sufi] men” (*mashghūlī ūn ‘aurat ma dah mard-i kāmīl ast*).³²⁸ Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ recalled this adulation of Bibī Fāṭima Sām by Bābā Farīd at another time in his conversations as recorded by Ḥasan Sijzi. A woman who came to Ghiaspur to take the oath of allegiance at the hands of the Shaikh on the evening of 27 Jumādiu’l-ukhrā 708/1308, caused a conversation about the numerous virtues that accrue from the virtues of women (*dar samara-i ṣalaḥiyyat-i ‘aurāt*). Recalling the memory of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, a woman of uttermost virtues and sanctity (*dar ghayat-i ‘iffat wa ṣalaḥiyyat*),³²⁹ the Shaikh told his audience what his spiritual mentor, Shaikh u’l Islam Farīdu’d-Dīn, repeatedly used to say about her. Referring to Bibī Fāṭima Sām, Farīdu’d-Dīn said, “That woman was a man sent in the form of a woman” (*ānī zan mard ast ki o rā dar ṣūrat-i zanān faristādand*). Shaikh Nizāmu’d-Dīn Awliyā’ then said that it is a custom of the *derwishes* that when they supplicate with the intercessions of virtuous women and virtuous men, they invoke saintly women first, because pious women are rare (*darweshān du‘ā mī kunanand bā ḥurmat-i nek zanān wā nek mardān, awwal nek zanān rā yād mī kunanad bā*

325 ‘Abdu’s Ṣamad was a nephew of Abu’l Faṣl, the author of *Akbar Nama. Akhbāru’l Aṣfiyā*’ a manuscript completed in 1017/1608, has recently been studied by Shadma Shahzad for her PhD dissertation. My references are drawn from this dissertation. See. Shadma Shahzad 2013, p. 313.

326 FF, *Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zilhajj*, 720/12 January 1321.

327 *Ma‘ārij u’l-Wilāyat*. Fol. 652A.

328 *Jamālī*, p. 101.

329 FF, *Majlis* 20, 27 of *Jumādiu’l-ukhrā*, 707/24 December 1307.

i'tibār ānki nek zanān gharīb bashand). The conversation ended with a significant statement which, though made in the context of Bibī Fāṭima, sums up Sufi males' attitude towards Sufi women. He commented, "When a lion comes out from the jungle, no one asks 'is it male or female.' That is to say, what matters is that the children of Adam, whether they be men or women, are known for their submission [to Allāh] and piety" (*farmūd ki sher az beshā berūn āyad ki nā pursad ki īn sher nar ast yā mādah, ya'nī mi bāyad ki farzand-i ādam ba ṭā'at wa taqwā ma'rūf āyad khwāh mard bāshad khwāh zan*).³³⁰

About twelve years later, in 1321, Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' again recalled Bibī Fāṭima Sām. This time, the theme of his conversation was about revelation and charisma (*dar kashf wa karāmāt*)—the two major characteristics of Sufism. The Shaikh told the Assembly—and we assume that all present were men—about the virtues of a woman, i.e., Bibī Fāṭima Sām. When he met her, she was old in age (*ma'mar shudā būd*) and was known for extreme chastity (*ghāyat-i ṣalāḥiyyat*) and magnificent virtues (*buzurg*). One can surmise that Bibī Fāṭima Sām was a well-educated person with an ability to remember several verses, which she could recite relevant to the conversation (*bait hā' bisyār dar ḥasb-i ḥāl*) even in her old age. He then recited two of her hemistiches (*mišra'ā*):

They may seek love, and they may desire for life.

Both desires, however, are not attainable.³³¹

Bibī Fāṭima Sām had a tender heart and was always prepared to help others. Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' narrated two instances to show how she cared for others. One of these episodes is related to Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil (559–671). Like a true Sufi, Bibī Fāṭima often used to send food to Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn and his family who mostly went for days without eating anything.³³² Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn not only thanked her for her kindness but also is reported to have commented on the purity of her heart that was not even possessed by rulers who are expected to care for their needy subjects. Describing her caring nature, Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' said that once while he was sitting with her, Bibī Fāṭima suggested to him to consider marrying a girl she knew. Marriage had never been in the cards for the Shaikh!³³³ Bibī Fāṭima's love and care for fellow human beings is illustrated further by

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ *FF, Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zilhajj*, 720/12 January 1321.

³³² *Jamālī*, p. 101; For the poverty of Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutawakkil and his family, see *KM, Majlis* 21.

³³³ *FF, Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zilhajj*, 720/12 January 1321.

ʿAbdullah Kheshgī in his *Maʿārijūʾl-Wilāyat*, a biography of South Asian Sufis written in 1094/1682. Kheshgī quotes a saying of Bibī Fāṭima, “All the bounties of this world and the hereafter are tossed away (*niʿmat hāʾye dīnī wa dunyawī nisār*) for the bread and a cup of water given to a needy (*az barāʾye nān wa kūzā-i āb ki bakisi dehand*).”³³⁴

Hāmid Qalandar, in *Khairuʾl Majālis*, the *malfūz* of Shaikh Naṣīruʾd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (1276–1356), writes about the forty-one *Majlis*, which took place when most of the devotees in attendance were observing six-day obligatory fasts of Shawwāl. In this assembly, the Shaikh recalled Bibī Fāṭima Sām’s piety, abstinence, extreme asceticism, and utmost trust in Allāh, even when death overtook her. According to this narrative, Bibī Fāṭima Sām used to fast continuously (*ṣaum bar ṭarīq dawām*), except on days in which fasting is not permissible. She never used to break her fast (*hargiz rozā ifṭār nākardī*). Her maidservant (*kanīzak*), who used to earn money by doing some kind of labour all day (*mazdūri*), in the evening would place, close to Bibī Fāṭima’s prayer mat (*pesh-i muṣallā*), two pieces of dried barley bread (*du nān-i jau khushk*) and a bowl of water (*yak kūzā āb*) for her to break the fast. She then would get back to work on her spindle to make cotton thread. Once, after the evening prayer, while Bibī Fāṭima was about to partake of some of this meal, a thought crossed her mind that if this night was to be her last night (*agar im-shab ākhriṇ shab ḥayāt-i tū bāshad*), she would depart after having a full gratification (*ḥazz-i dunyā*), i.e., after eating a meal. She then wrapped the bread, put it away in a niche (*tāq*), and, pushing the bowl of water away, resumed her prayers. In the meantime, a beggar came to the door and she gave away the bread to him. That night when sleep overpowered her (*nīm shab khwāb ghalbā kard*), she experienced a sort of soliloquy—a dialogue with herself (*bākhud guft*) in which she reprimanded herself saying that if she had passed away that evening (after eating the meal) what a pity, as the Angel of Death (*malakuʾl maut*) would have found her asleep (*khuftā*) as a result of having eaten a meal. Since this nocturnal self-admonition, Bibī Fāṭima remained awake for the rest of the night (*hamā shab bedār būd*) and kept offering prayers. Perhaps this was the month of Ramaḥan because towards the second half of the night, her maidservant or slave girl placed two pieces of bread and a bowl of water in front her prayer rug. The Bibī did not touch the meal. For the next forty days, she continued fasting without eating anything and reminded herself that this could be her last night on this earth. On the fortieth eve, she saw a fearful-looking stranger

334 *Maʿārijūʾl-Wilāyat*, folio. 652 alif.

(*mard-i bā haibat*) standing in her courtyard.³³⁵ On enquiry, he told her that he was the Angel of Death and was there to seize her spirit (*qabz rūḥ-i tū*). Instead of getting terrified, she requested that he spare her a little time so that she could perform fresh ablution (*tajdīd-i waṣū*) and offer prayer for ablution. He did that. While she was in prostration, the Angel of Death seized her life (*jān-i o qabz kard*) and she passed away. Concluding the narrative of Bibī Fāṭima, Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī observed, "A Sufi serves the time (*al-Sufi ibnu'l waqt*) and should make the best of this time (*ghanīmat dārad*) and should remain engaged in prayer all the time as one does not know whether one would have time [for prayers and remembrance] or not."³³⁶

That same night, Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil arrived at Bibī Fāṭima Sām's house and led her funeral prayers. She was buried on the banks of a water tank (*bar-kinar-i ḥauṣ*) of Inderpat.³³⁷ Later that same night, after her burial, Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil saw her in dream as if she was offering prayers in Heaven (*bālā-i'arsh*). To Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil's query about where she was, she said, "in the realm of Transcendental Manifestation (*ʿālam-i-jabarūt*) in the company of Bibī Fāṭima Zahra, may Allāh be pleased with her."³³⁸

A story (*ḥikāyat*) of a mystical experience of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz in which Bibī Fāṭima Sām is the central character and which was well known in the Khwāja's *khānqāh*, is cited in *Siyar-i Muḥammadi*. According to this legend, once Khwāja Gīsū Darāz went to visit the shrine of Bibī Fāṭima Sām in Inderpat and sat for meditation (*nazdīk dar qabr-i mubarak murāqaba shudand*) close to her grave. In this state, he met with the spirit (*rūḥ*) of Bibī Fāṭima Sām and asked her to say something about her station (*maqām*) and stage (*martaba*). She told him that when she was going far up, from her place to that of God (*dar bālā dar Ḥaṣrat mī raftam*), she arrived at the celestial gateway (*dar-i āsmānī*). The doorkeepers told her to stop until the permission (*iẓn*) came. The Bibī said, in the story, "I sat down there and took an oath (*saugand khordum*) not to go until I was allowed to go without any other's intercession (*baghair wāsiṭā*)." The story further says that soon Ḥaṣrat Khadija, Ḥaṣrat Bibī Fāṭima, and other wives and daughters of the Prophet arrived and told her that they were sent (by Allāh) to fetch her. She refused and said that though she has the highest reverence for the august persons yet she would move only without any intercession. Allāh ordered them to move away, and suddenly "a soft melodious superlunary

335 'Abdu's Samad, the author of *Akhbāru'l Asfiyā*, describes this person as *mard-i Nūrāni* (luminous man), see Shadma Shahzad. 2013. p. 314.

336 KM, *Majlis 41; Jamālī*, pp. 101–2.

337 SA, p. 168; *Jamālī*, p. 102.

338 *Jamālī*, p. 102.

voice called out (*naghma-yi laṭīf wa ṣaut-ī ẓarīf nidā kardand*)—‘come towards Me’—only then she moved ahead.”³³⁹

The above hagiographical narrative, with a little twist at the end of the story, is found in *Sharah Jawāmiu’l kilam*. Its compiler, Saiyyid Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī, Khwāja Gīsū Darāz’s eldest son and *khalifā*, cast doubts about the above narrative and speculated that this anecdote is about the Khwāja himself who according to his old habit, refers to himself in this episode in mysterious and hidden ways (*sīghā-i-ghaib*).³⁴⁰ Khwāja Gīsū Darāz, however, narrating another incident about the miraculous powers of Bibī Fāṭima Sām said that a son was born to a childless man with the power of a talisman given by Bibī Fāṭima. Later, as this child, being born crippled, could not walk, was cured completely by her miraculous powers.³⁴¹

Khwāja Gīsū Darāz’s reverence for Bibī Fāṭima was so great that on Thursdays, the day marked for *talqīn* (instructions) after the *zuhr* prayers (afternoon prayer, the second mandatory prayer of a day), his disciples were instructed to bring *khichri* (rice mixed with lintels), *raughan* (purified butter), *jughrāt* (curd), *hezam* (firewood), and *namak* (salt) for the reward of Bibī Fāṭima’s soul (*bar rūḥ-i Bibī Fāṭima*).³⁴²

After a long gap of more than three and a half centuries, when ‘Abdu’l Ḥaqq Muḥaddis Dihlawī compiled his *Akhhbāru’l Akhyār* (Narratives of the Chosen Ones), he placed Bibī Fāṭima first in his section on Sufi women as she was one of the *ṣāliḥāt*, *qānitāt wa‘ābidāt* (virtuous, devout, and worshipper of God) of her time.³⁴³

Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī, writing in the early twentieth century, gives an incredible anecdote regarding the miracles of Bibī Fāṭima Sām. It is said that she weaved a cover sheet for the grave of Shaikh Farīdu’d-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkār with her own hands. Once, thieves stole all the covers of the grave, as some of them were woven with gold threads. The Bibī’s cover was also stolen, though it had no gold threads. The thieves burned the covers, hoping to extract the gold. Miraculously, the cover made by Bibī Fāṭima Sām was not ruined by the fire.

339 Shāh Muḥammad ‘Alī Sāmānī, *Siyar-i Muḥammadi* (compiled in 1427) National Museum, Karachi, MS No. NM-1970-267. Urdu translation by Shāh Nazīr Aḥmad. 1347/1928. *Siyar-i Muḥammadi: ma’ tarjama al-m’arūf, Tuḥfah al-Aḥmadi*. Ilāhābād: Yūnānī Dawakhānah, pp. 50–51; this hagiographical narrative, without mentioning the name of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz is also given in *Bahr-e-Zakhhār*, p. 363.

340 5 *Sha‘bān*, 802, pp. 106–8 in Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz and Muḥammad Akbar Ḥusainī. 2010. *Sharah Jawāmi’ul’ u’l-kilam (maḥfūzāt of Saiyyid Gīsū Darāz, compiled by Akbar Ḥusainī*. Translated by Wāhid Bakhsh Siyāl Chishtī Ṣabirī). Lahore: al-Faisal, 2010.

341 Ibid.

342 *Siyar-i Muḥammadi* (*Siyar-i Muḥammadi tarjama al-m’arūf, Tuḥfah ye-Aḥmadi*), p. 82.

343 AA, p. 280.

Ḥasan Nizāmī says that this cover, with some signs of fire on it, is still kept in the shrine of Bābā Farīd so that the devotees can view it.³⁴⁴

The story of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, Nizāmī says, stands as an exemplary story for women.³⁴⁵ Her story helps us in reviewing women's status in the age she and the male Sufis, with whom she was on friendly terms, lived. First, all the five major male Sufis of the Chishtīyya *silsila*—Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar, his brother, Shaikh Najību'd-Dīn Mutāwakkil, and his *khalīfa*, Sulṭānu'l Mashā'ikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, a *khalīfa* of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', and Khwāja Gīsū Darāz—accepted Bibī Fāṭima as a Sufi of excellent virtues. In addition, from the perspective of women's history, it is interesting to note that Bibī Fāṭima was a contemporary of two other virtuous women, Bibī Sāra (d. 1240) and Bibī Zulaikha (d. 1250), and of one ruler, Raṣīyya Sulṭān (d. 1240). Perhaps they were not destined to meet each other and did not have camaraderie with each other.

Probably Bibī Fāṭima was not a married woman and lived alone in the company of her female attendant. We find no reference about her family, husband, or children in the discourses of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' or of Shaikh Naṣīru'd-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī. Only one reference about her personal life comes from Khwāja Gīsū Darāz who recounts Bibī Fāṭima's words that once her parents selected a husband for her. He went into battle, perhaps before the consummation of marriage, and was martyred. Later, when the parents tried to select another one for her, she told them if she had been fated to have one, the first one would have survived. Now she would not marry.³⁴⁶ Bibī Fāṭima not only met freely with men who were not her blood relatives (*maḥram*), but also spent considerable time talking with them, not only on spiritual matters but worldly matters as well, such as suggesting a girl for marriage to Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' who at that time must have been young but of a marriageable age.³⁴⁷ Thus, both Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' and Saiyyid Gīsū Darāz, as shown above, often used to visit her grave, spending hours meditating and praying.³⁴⁸ So great was her sanctity that even the *abdāls* remained in attendance while she was alive and continued to be present at the shrine as well.³⁴⁹

As the city of Delhi went through several vicissitudes of history, the shrine of Bibī Fāṭima Sām, which in the words of Amīr Khwurd was *qibla-i ḥājat-i khalq* (provider of people's needs) and was luminous with the Inner Light

344 Bā'is Khwāja kī chaukhat kā ziyārat nāma, p. 19.

345 K.A. Nizāmī, *Ḥaṣrat Bibī Fāṭima Sām*, P. 10.

346 *Sharaḥ*, 5 *Sha'bān*, 802/1 April 1400, p. 108.

347 *FF*, *Majlis* 19, 11 of *Zilhajj*, 720/12 January 1321.

348 *KM*, *Majlis* 99.

349 *KM*, *Majlis* 99; *JK*, 5 *Sh'abān* 802/1 April 1400. pp. 106–107.

(*nūr-i bāṭin*), gradually turned into relatively a quieter place. In 1935, Khwāja Ḥasan Nizāmī (d. 1955), a custodian of the *dargāh* of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā', saw devotees assemble for the 'urs celebrations at Bibī Fāṭima Sām's painted limestone shrine surrounded by clumps of trees.³⁵⁰ More recently, in 2002, a Muslim philanthropist of Delhi rebuilt the shrine.³⁵¹ Today, the shrine continues to receive pilgrims and devotees.

Thus, Bibī Fāṭima Sām has retained her visibility through several centuries to the present. Thus, Syed Abdul Hayy Nadwi al-Hasani (d. 1999), in his Arabic language monumental biographical dictionary of five thousand Indian scholars and Sufis, acknowledges Bibī Fāṭima Sām's *taqwā* (piety) and *ṣalāḥ* (virtues) and refers to her as one of the virtuous women.³⁵²

(3)

Saiyyida Ḥāfiza Bibī

Date: Unknown

Place: Uṭātūr, Tamilnadu, India

Shrine: Uṭātūr on the banks of River Kaveri

Source material for reconstructing the life of Saiyyida Ḥāfiza Bibī, whose shrine is in Uṭātūr, a small village on the banks of river Kaveri in Karnataka, comes from *Bahār-i 'Āzam Jāhī*, the early nineteenth-century pilgrimage travel account written in Persian of 'Āzam Jāh Bahādur Nawāb Wālājāh IV of Carnatic (1820–1825) written in Persian³⁵³ and which its English translator rightly describes as “an indispensable supplement and corrective to the accepted notions of the history of Islam in south Asia.”³⁵⁴ The Nawāb's royal cavalcade arrived at this place in 1238/1823. Close to a small rivulet whose water

350 Muḥammad 'Alam Shāh Farīdī. 1330/1912. *Mazārāt awliyā'-i Dihlī (ḥiṣṣā awwal)*. Dehli: Jān-i jahān press. p. 17. Also, Ruknu'd-Dīn Nizāmī. 1935. *Tārīkh Awliyā'-yi Šubā Dehli*. Kutb khānā Maḥbūbī, Dehli, p. 23; also. *Bā'is Khwāja kī chaukhat kā ziyārat nāma*, pp. 18–19.

351 The *dargah* and its adjacent land, a property of Waqf Board, came into the limelight, as the area was illegally occupied and sold away in 2013. See, 'Sale of and illegal construction on Waqf Land in Delhi's Kaka Nagar' ... <https://www.urduamediamonitor.com/.../sale-illegal-construction-waqf-land-delhis-kak>

352 *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* vol. 1, p. 113.

353 *Bahār-i 'Āzam Jāhī: rūdād-i safar-i maimanat asr-i Nawāb 'Āzam Jāh Bahādur* of Ghulām 'Abdu'l-Qādir Nāzir. 1961. Edited by Muhammad Yusuf Kokan Usmani. Madras: Electric Press, pp. 124–25. (The travel account was later translated into English and edited by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nainar of Madras University). See *Bahār-i 'Āzam Jāhī* of Ghulām 'Abdu'l-Qādir Nāzir. 1950. Translated by S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar. Sources of the History of the Nawābs of the Carnatic. Madras University Islamic Series No. 11.

354 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nainar, p. ix.

is not palatable due its high-grade lime properties, the royal travel party stopped at the shrine (*gumbad*) of Saiyyida Ḥāfiza Bibī to pay her homage. Maulawī Ghulām ‘Abdu’l Qādir Nāzīr (1200/1786–1243/1828),³⁵⁵ Nawāb Walājah’s travel diary scribe, despite his reverence for Ḥāfiza Bibī, refrains from giving details about her life. Even her real name is not recorded. She was known as Saiyyida Ḥāfiza Bibī because she had memorized the Qur’ān, and this name probably also indicates her lineage as being a descendant of the Prophet’s family. In closing his brief narrative of this pious (*ṣāliḥa*), unmarried (*nā-katkhudā*) woman who died at young age, he writes, “It is not possible to describe in this book what all I heard about her purity and chastity (*taqaddus wa ‘iffat*),” and thus keeps the details to himself. Nāzīr’s narrative of Saiyyida Ḥāfiza Bibī, despite its brevity, is significant. She had memorised the Qur’ān by heart (*Ḥāfiza Qur’ān sharīf būd*) and could recite it well. She had also performed the Ḥajj pilgrimage and thus gained an exalted status for the next world (*sharf-i ‘uqbā ḥāsul namūd*). Hajj pilgrimage by a young, unmarried woman must have been a remarkable feat. At the time of his visit, the Nawāb found a lamp over her grave, which used to be lighted on the third day of her death anniversary and kept burning for the next forty days.³⁵⁶ The author, however, does not give the date of Ḥāfiza Bibī’s death anniversary nor mentions the year of her birth or death.

(4)

Bibī Khwurd

Place of Birth: Bilgram

Shrine: Mohalla Khurdpura, Bilgram, UP, India

Ghulām ‘Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī (d. 1200/1786), the most erudite eighteenth-century scholar and a person of spiritual pursuits, in 1180/1767 published *Ma‘āşiru’l-kirām* (the contemporary celebrities), which he describes as *tazkira dar ṣāḥib kamilān-i Bilgrām* (Memoirs of mystics of Bilgram) and which indeed is a treasure house of information about mystics and scholars about whom little or nothing was recorded earlier. In the first section, *faṣl awwal dar zikr fuqrā quds* (first chapter about the pious mystics) of his native Bilgram, Āzād presents brief narratives of eighty Sufis and Mashā’ikh. The last notice in this list is about Bibī Khwurd (the young lady) without giving any dates about her birth or death. Bibī Khwurd, though young in years, was strong in her resistance of

355 Maulawī Ghulām ‘Abdu’l Qādir Nāzīr had inherited traditions of great scholarship and devotion from his family. For an introduction to his life and achievements, see *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī*, pp. 1–46 (Introduction by Muhammad Yūṣuf Kokan Usmanī).

356 *Bahār-i Āzam Jāhī*, pp. 124–25.

all worldly indulgences. She preferred death to marriage as, for her, there was no place for anything except the yearning for the Divine in her heart.

Bibī Khwurd was born and brought up (*maulid wa manshā*) in Bilgram, a town in Uttar Pradesh, India. When she reached adulthood, her parents wanted to arrange marriage for her (*o rā kad-khudā sāzand*) and started preparing for her marriage. She refused (*ibā kard*) to marry, but the parents did not stop (*nā guzāshtand*) and went ahead with their celebrations (*marāsim-i tūṭī shrū' kardand*). When the *mashāṭṭā* (bride-dresser) adorned Bibī Khwurd with finery and presented her for bridal display (*jalwa*), a different kind of display happened. The bride, with a smile on her lips, passed away to the world of the souls (*anjuman-i ruhaniān kharāmūd*). Witnessing this, the parents were grieved (*dāgh shudand*). They buried her in her bridal attire adorned with ornaments. At nightfall, when greedy and callous robbers and thieves (*duzdān*) came to open the grave and plunder the rich adornments, by the will of Allāh they all went blind (*nabīnā shudand*) even before they could lay their hands upon the grave to defile it. Aghast, they remained lying there. At dawn, as the news of her charisma spread, devotees thronged to her last resting place. Āzād says that her grave would remain a place of visitation for people (*ziyāratgāh-i khalā'iq*) till the Last Day. The area where her shrine stands is named after her as Khwurdpurā.³⁵⁷

More than two decades later, following the publication of *Ma'āşiru'l-kirām*, Shaikh Wajihu'd-Dīn Ashraf Awadhi composed his voluminous work, *Bahr-e-Zakhkhār* (the rising sea) in 1788–1789, which consists of brief life accounts of Sufis and other mystics. One of the notices of mystic women in *Bahr-e-Zakhkhār* is a verbatim narrative of Āzād's story above of Bibī Khwurd, though Wajihu'd-Dīn does not admit this.³⁵⁸

Saiyyid Farzand Aḥmad Bilgrāmī (d. 1890), in his *Tārīkh-i Bilgrām* (History of Bilgrām), says that most probably Bibī Lohri, in whose remembrance prayers are held by women in Bilgram, is Bibī Khwurd. He also says that some of the songs sung for the bride and which create a condition called *harārā* (passion or frenzy) in the bride are the songs that were sung on the occasion of Bibī Khwurd's wedding.³⁵⁹ Thus, women keep the memory of Bibī Khwurd alive.

357 Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī. 1910. *Daftar-i awwal Ma'āşiru'l-kirām*. Agra: Maṭba' Mufid-i 'Ām, p. 175.

358 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhār*, vol. 3, p. 367.

359 Saiyyid Farzand Aḥmad Bilgrāmī. 1983. *Tārīkh-i Bilgrām*. Karachi: Ṣaghīr Bilgrami Academy (first published in 1883), p. 60.

(5)

Makhkhan Bī**Date:** D. Sunday, 6 Safar 1140/22 September 1727**Place:** Burhanpur, India

Born in a pious family, Makhkhan Bī's life story is told in a narrative by 'Abdu'l Jabbār Khan Mulkapuri.³⁶⁰ Her grandfather, Shāh 'Abdullah, alias Bhikājī Qādirī (d. 999/1590), was a person of ascetic virtues of self-denial who gave up his well-paid job in the mint and spent the rest of his life in search of the Divine. It is said that his virtuous life encouraged several persons to enter into Islam.³⁶¹ Makhkhan Bī was the daughter of his second son, Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir. As a voluntary decision, she chose to remain unmarried and to spend her days in devotion and worship.³⁶²

The pious (*'afīfa*) and virtuous Makhkhan Bī was unparalleled in perfection (*kamālāt*) and Allāh's obedience (*'ibādāt*). She was *ḥāfiẓ-i-Qur'ān* and used to recite it every day. An ascetic par excellence, she used to fast always (*ṣā'imū'd-Dahr*) and even on *ayyāmu'l tashrīq*³⁶³ and on the two 'Ids would eat only as little as one usually eats for breaking a fast. Even her maidservants, forty in number, learned the Qur'ān by heart and kept fasts on a regular basis, in addition to those in the month of Ramaẓan. She used to lead the *tarāwīḥ*³⁶⁴ prayers in which all her forty maidservants used to be the *muqtadi*.³⁶⁵ During these prayers, Makhkhan Bī used to recite the whole Qur'ān. She was also well versed in the Persian language.

A mustajābu'd-Da'wāt (one whose prayers are answered by Allāh), Makhkhan Bī was blessed with miraculous healing powers. Often a mere touch of her

360 *Maḥbūb zi al-minān: tazkira-awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 523–24.

361 Shāh 'Abdu'llah Bhikājī travelled to Madina to pursue spiritual knowledge. After staying there for 21 years, he returned to India during the days of Emperor Shāh Jahan and became a disciple of Shaikh Muḥammad bin Faḡlu'llah in Burhanpur. Aurangzeb conferred upon him land grants. For more details, see *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 393; also, *Maḥbūb zil-al-minān: tazkira awliyā'-yi dakan*. pp. 520–22.

362 *Maḥbūb zil al-minān: tazkira-awliyā'-yi dakan*, pp. 522–24.

363 *ayyāmu'l tashrīq* are the 11th, 12th and 13th of the month of *Zilḥajj*, the 12th and the final month of the Islamic lunar calendar and are counted as days when fasting are not permissible. See, 'Amr 'Abdul-Mun'im Saleem. 2005. *Important Lessons for Muslim Women*. Riyadh: Darussalam, p. 249.

364 *Tarāwīḥ* is an additional prayer offered in the month of *Ramaẓan* after the last evening prayer of 'isha'.

365 *Muqtadi* is a person who stands behind the prayer leader during *ṣalāt*.

hand (*yad-i-baiṣā*)³⁶⁶ would cure ailments. With her power of intuition, she could warn people of future mishaps. Her final hour approached in a mystical way. She dreamt that Bibī Fāṭima Zahra, the beloved daughter of the Prophet, beckoned her to offer prayers standing on her (Bibī Fāṭima Zahra's) scarf. Once she had finished the prayer, Bibī Fāṭima Zahra raising her three fingers, signalled her to come close. Interpreting the dream when she awoke, Makhkhan Bī announced that only three days were left before she was to die. The prediction came true as she passed away exactly three days later. All through the eighty-five years of her life, this God-fearing woman missed not a single *ṣalāt* or fast. At the time of her death, she left behind a meagre sum of two rupees which she had borrowed from someone for her burial expenses. Makhkhan Bī never married, but she tenderly took care of the children of her brother, Shaikh Shukru'llah, and provided for their education.

(6)

Bübū Rāstī

Period: Sixteenth Century

Place: Burhanpur, India

Bübū Rāstī is the only daughter of Shaikh Lashkar Muḥammad 'Ārif (d. 993/1585),³⁶⁷ who was a disciple of Shaikh Muḥammad Ghaws of Gwalior (d. 970/1563) of the Shaṭṭārī Sufi *silsila*. Bübū Rāstī was an exceptionally learned person whose scholarly lectures and discourses were regularly attended in large numbers by scholars and Sufis. 'Abdu'llah Kheshgī, in *Ma'ārijū'l wilāyat*, which he completed in 1094/1683, erroneously says that Bübū Rāstī was Shaikh Lashkar's wife (*mankūḥa*).³⁶⁸

Casual and brief references about this superbly qualified scholar who taught men some of the most challenging texts on mystical expositions illustrate the worst example of textual marginalisation of women. Shaikh Lashkar Muḥammad 'Ārif was born in Mahalsa, a small suburb in Gujrat. In his early teens he joined the army. As his heart was pulled by the mystic teachings of Qāzī

366 *Yad-i-baiṣā* means a white hand but allegorically refers to the miracles of Ḥazrat Mūsā (Prophet Moses).

367 Shaikh Lashkar Muḥammad 'Ārif was born in Mahalsa, a small suburb in Gujrat. In his early teens, he joined the army. As his heart was pulled by the mystic teachings of Qāzī Maḥmūd Birpuri, he left the army at the age of sixteen. Later, he was blessed by the guidance of Shaikh Qutb-i Jahan Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣadru'd-Dīn Zākir Nahrwala (996/1587–8 or 997/1588–89) and Shaikh Muḥammad Ghaws of Gwalior (d. 970/10/1563). For his biography, see *Azkār-i abrār*, pp. 361–64.

368 Cited by Makhdūm Salimullah Siddiqui in his edited footnotes in *Burhanpur ke Sindhi Awliyā'* by Saiyyid Muḥammad Maṭī'u'llah Rashid Burhanpurī. Haidarabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1957, p. 134.

Maḥmūd Bīrpuri, he left the army at the age of sixteen. Later, he was blessed by the guidance of Shaikh Qutb-i Jahan Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣadru'd-Dīn Zākir Nahrwala (d. 996/1587–1588 or 997/1588–1589) and of Shaikh Muḥammad Ghaws of Gwalior.³⁶⁹

Muḥammad Ghawsī Shattārī Māndawī (b. 962/1554),³⁷⁰ the author of *Gulzār-i Abrār* (the rose garden of the pious), is the first one to mention the name of Būbū Rāstī while narrating a mystical episode of Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ārif on the authority of his disciple, Masīhu'l awliyā' 'Īsā Jundu'llah (962/1555–1031/1621–1622). In this narrative, Ghawsī Shattārī suffixes the name of Būbū Rāstī with the most honorific description, i.e., addressing her as the Rāb'īā of her times.³⁷¹ Ghawsī then describes two anecdotes narrated by Būbū Rāstī to Ḥaẓrat 'Īsā Jundu'llah. According to the first one, Būbū Rāstī told 'Īsā Jundu'llah that one morning, her father told a secret to her and her brother, Malik Muḥammad, on the promise of guarding its secrecy. Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ārif told them that for the last thirty years, he had kept his status as the *Qutb* a secret. He also told them about his mystical experience when, while in deep meditation, he heard a voice calling him, asking him why he was sitting in darkness when "I am sending you the Light." As soon as these words were uttered, the whole place became luminous. On another occasion, Būbū Rāstī related the incredible mystical experience of her father which she had witnessed. According to this, once Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ārif was in an indescribable state of intense mystical absorption. When he recovered from this state, he told her, he was taken to the station of Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī and saved himself by the Grace of Allāh from uttering *Subḥānī* (Glory be to me) and instead said, *Subḥānahu* (Glory be to Him). 'Īsā Jundu'llah, verifying the authenticity of the narrative, also added that when this incident happened, he was also called by his mentor, Shaikh Muḥammad 'Ārif.³⁷²

Muḥammad Ghawsī stops writing anything further about Būbū Rāstī. This silence, or omission, comes as a surprise, particularly because Ghawsī was in a privileged position of knowing the Shattārī Sufis well and often corresponded

369 For his biography, see *Azkār-i Abrār*. pp. 286–90; Also see the hagiographical account, mostly, stories of miracles of Shaikh Muḥammad Ghaws by Shāh Faḍlu'llah Shattārī. *Manāqib-i Ghawsiya*. Translated from the author's manuscript in Urdu by Saiyyid Muḥammad Zahīru'l Ḥaqq. Agra: Abu'l 'Alā' Steam Press, 1933 [the manuscript ends in the year 941/1534. Further information was added by the translator]. Also see Ernst, Carl W. "Persecution and Circumspection in Shattārī Sufism." In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Debate and Conflict*. Edited by Fred De Jong and Berndt Radtke, 3–7. Islamic History and Civilization. Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1999.

370 Like Muḥammad 'Ārif Lashkar, Ghawsī was also a disciple of Shaikh Muḥammad Ghaws of Gwalior.

371 *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 363.

372 Ibid, pp. 363–64.

with ʿĪsā Jundu'llah. Ghawsī refers to his correspondence with ʿĪsā Jundu'llah on the issue of the above-referenced last episode concerning the station of Bāyazīd Bastāmi.³⁷³

Another significant aspect of the story of Būbū Rāstī—which again is described mainly within the context of the activities of three prominent men, i.e., ʿĪsā Jundu'llah, Khān-i Khānān ʿAbdu'r Raḥīm (964/1556–1036/1672), and his son, Darāb Khan—is about attending a lecture of Būbū Rāstī at her *hujra* (cell).³⁷⁴ Saiyyid Muḥammad Maṭī'u'llah Rāshid Burhanpurī, in his account of the lives of the Sufis of Sindh in Burhanpur, adds this anecdote as a prop supporting Shaikh ʿĪsā Jundu'llah's connections and activities and not as an account of Būbū Rāstī. According to this story, once Khān-i Khānān ʿAbdu'r Raḥīm and his son Darāb Khan requested Masīhu'l Awliyā' Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ʿĪsā Jundu'llah to take them to Būbū Rāstī as they were greatly interested in attending her lectures. Riding *bahli*, a bullock-driven vehicle, they reached Rastipura.³⁷⁵ When they arrived there, they found Būbū Rāstī delivering a lecture on scholarly treatises such as *Lam'āt* (Divine flashes), authored by Fahkhrū'd-Dīn Irāqī (1213–1289), and *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ*, written by Sadāt Ḥusainī (d. 717/1317).³⁷⁶ A recent author, ʿAtīqu'llah Talmīzsāz, without citing any reference, claims that thousands of people received the blessings (*faiz*) of her instructions. Although Talmīzsāz has not specified the gender of the attendees, one can presume that these were largely men. Despite this rare and exceptional quality of high scholarship, Būbū Rāstī appears in short references in the larger narrative of her father. Talmīzsāz also says that she managed and supervised the shrine of her father and used to distribute *tabarruk* to the devotees, including the male devotees.³⁷⁷ Despite her excellence and virtues, her brother, Shaikh Abu Yazīd Shaṭṭārī Burhanpurī (d. 999), succeeded his father.³⁷⁸ Būbū Rāstī died where she used to teach and instruct. The dates of her birth and demise remain unknown. Perhaps she lived alone and did not marry.

373 Ibid, p. 365.

374 Though no description of this place is given in the texts, however, it appears to be a place spacious enough to accommodate a large audience.

375 Rastipura is a small neighbourhood in the southern parts of Burhanpur where Shaikh ʿArif Lashkar used to stay. The place came to be known after Būbū Rāstī.

376 Saiyyid Muḥammad Maṭī'u'llah Rāshid Burhanpurī. 1957. *Burhānpur ke Sindhi Awliyā'*. Haidarabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, p. 95; Shaikh ʿArif Lashkar's maternal uncle, Shaikh Walī Muḥammad, a disciple of Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣadru'd-Dīn Zākir Nahrwala, wrote a commentary of *Nuzhat al-arwah* which was widely read in Gujrat. For the biography of Shaikh Walī Muḥammad, see *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 345.

377 ʿAtīqu'llah Talmīzsāz. 1987. *Anwār-i Burhānpur*. Burhanpur: Maṭī'u'llah Hafizullah *khānqāh*, p. 63.

378 Ibid, pp. 126–27; *Azkār-i Abrār*, pp. 393–94. *Maḥbūbzil-manān-Tazkira Awliyā' yi dakan*, p. 102.

10.7 Sufi Women Who Managed the Male Shrines

(1)

Bibī Allāh Dī**Period: Sixteenth Century****Place of Birth: Ajodhan****Place of Death: Burhanpur, India**

The life story of Bibī Allāh Dī (Gift of Allāh), a scion of the family of Shaikh Farīdu'd-Dīn Mas'ūd *Ganj-i-Shakkar*, though lacking in details, shows how the decision of Shaikh Farīd not to appoint his daughter as one of his spiritual deputies underwent change at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī. Bibī Allāh Dī was the eldest daughter of Shaikh Yūsuf, known as Shaikh Jūsī (d. 850/1446), a migrant Sufi from Ajodhan. Similar to most other early medieval Sufis, Shaikh Jūsī, a spiritual successor of his father, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Muḥītu'd-Dīn, along with his family left his place of birth and settled in the Deccan. Shaikh Jūsī travelled widely. On his return from the Ḥajj pilgrimage, he travelled to Asirgarh where he was warmly welcomed by the ruler, 'Ādil Shāh, who, along with his courtiers, became his devoted disciple and made several endowments, including a land grant in Burhanpur where the Shaikh built a mosque and his *khānqah*.³⁷⁹

In the account of Shaikh Nizāmu'd-Dīn, popularly known as Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī of Burhanpur (d. 907/1501), recorded by 'Abdul Jabbār Khan Mulkapurī, a few lines about the merits and virtues of Bibī Allāh Dī are included as part of the major narrative of her brother.³⁸⁰ The first reference is to the childhood days of Bibī Allāh Dī when her mother passed away after giving birth to a son following a miraculous pregnancy lasting for more than twelve years.³⁸¹ Later, her father, Shaikh Jūsī, brought the family from Ajodhan to Burhanpur. There is no information about at what age Bibī Allāh Dī arrived in the Deccan. We next hear about Bibī Allāh Dī when her younger brother, whom she had brought up like a mother, was about to die. We know that Bibī Allāh Dī lived with her brother and took care of his household. Most probably she remained celibate.

379 *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 116–17.

380 For a biographical notice on Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī, see *Mahbūb zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi-dakan*, pp. 213–221. 'Alī 'Ādil Shāh of Bijapur (r.1538–1580) was his great devotee; also, see *Barakātu'l Awliyā'*, pp. 129–131; Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. 2004. *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2, pp. 283–4; *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, pp. 297–98. In public memory, Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī is *Sarkar-i Burhanpur* (master of Burhanpur).

381 According to this miracle story, on the fortieth day, following the birth of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī, the mother could not survive the shock when the new-born son began talking to her. See *Mahbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā'-yi-dakan*, p. 220.

As the time of his death approached, Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī handed over his newborn daughter and the administration and supervision of his *khānqāh* to his elder sister, Allāh Dī.³⁸²

Though she had taken care of Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī from his infancy, Bibī Allāh Dī was reluctant to take the responsibility of managing the *khānqāh*. A sagacious person with high qualities of abstinence and devotion for Allāh, she said, “How could a humble fox (*rūbah miskīn*) manage the affairs of the lions (*sheron*)? Men only can do men’s jobs.” To this, Shāh Bhikārī Chishtī responded, “In qualifications (*ṣifāt*) you are no less than men,” and that settled the issue. After his demise in 907/1501, Bibī Allāh Dī managed the *khānqāh*, looked after the needs of the incoming travellers, and cared for the disciples and attendants (*murīdīn wa khādīmīn*), a task that required regular and strong contacts with the *khānqāh* and its visitors, the majority of whom were men.³⁸³ Although contemporary historians and scribes have mentioned the position and status of Bibī Allāh Dī as the manager and supervisor of the *khānqāh* without acknowledging its unique importance, it is significant to note that Ḥaẓrat Shāh Bhikārī had a large number of male disciples and also several spiritual deputies, including Shāh Maṣṣūr Majzūb (d. 958/1551),³⁸⁴ Shāh Ḥamīdu’-d-Dīn, Shaikh Barkatu’llah, and Shāh Manjhu.³⁸⁵

(2)

Khadija Bibī

Date: B. 1534

Place: Mandu, District Dhar, Malwa, India

The only narrative about Khadija Bibī is found in *Gulzār-i Abrār*, a late sixteenth-century *tazkira* of 422 Sufis of Hindustan, especially of Gujarat, by Shaikh Muḥammad Ghawṣī Shatṭārī (962/1554–1027/1618).³⁸⁶ Sadly, Ghawṣī, despite his own admission that Khadija Bibī’s real status (*haqīqat-i ḥāl*) is far too great and far-reaching, cuts short her story. Khadija Bibī, born sometime in 941/1534, belonged to a family with strong Sufi traditions.³⁸⁷ Her father’s

382 This *khānqāh* stands on the banks of river Utawali and continues to be the centre of devotional visitation.

383 *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā’-yi-dakan*, pp. 215–16.

384 For his biographical notice, see *Barakātu’l-Awliyā’*, pp. 144–45.

385 *Maḥbūb al-zilmanān: tazkira-yi-awliyā’-yi-dakan*, p. 221.

386 *Azkār-i Abrār*, pp. 119–20.

387 Her great grandfather, Shaikh Baha’u’-d-Dīn Ṣiddiqī, grandfather, Shaikh Najmu’-d-Dīn, and uncle, Shāh Miyān Jī Chishtī (d. 918/1512) were Sufis. For legends of their miraculous powers, see *Azkār-i Abrār*, p. 219.

paternal uncle, Miān Jī Chishtī (d. 918/1512) was known for his spiritual powers and charisma. When her father, Shaikh Nūru'llah, the spiritual successor of Miān Jī Chishtī, died in 941/1534, Khadija Bibī, his only child, was just four months old. From that time forward, there is a long gap in the narrative of Khadija Bibī. The next information in *Gulzār-i Abrār* is when her son, Shaikh Quṭbu'd-Dīn, passed away in 1010/1601. The death of her only son did not cause Khadija Bibī to give up her trust in Allāh. Instead of mourning and shedding tears over her loss, Khadija Bibī decided to look after the shrines of her ancestors in Mandu. She continued doing this until the time of Ghawsī's writing in 1612. Thus, at the age of sixty-seven, the widowed Khadija Bibī, despite the loss of her grown son, was looking after the shrines of her ancestors. Ghawsī says nothing about the nature of her responsibilities. It can be assumed that she had to deal with unrelated men—devotees and disciples of her father, uncles, and grandfather, as well as shrine visitors.

Muḥammad Ghawsī knew her personally. Since 1601, the year of her arrival in Mandu after her son's demise, she stayed with Ghawsī. Thus, Ghawsī for at least eleven years had observed her saintly living. Based upon his personal observations, writing in 1021/1612, Ghawsī noted that undoubtedly Khadija Bibī was one of the gnostics (*ʿarīfāt*), which speaks volumes about her saintly virtues. Finally, he concludes that none among the women Sufis of her times were like her in virtues of steadfastness, magnanimity (*jawānḡmardī*), selflessness, and abstinence.³⁸⁸ There is no information about the year of her death.

10.8 The *Majzūb* (Intoxicated) Sufi Women

(1)

Bī Amma Ṣāḥiba

Period: Early Twentieth Century

Place: Kamptee, Maharashtra, India

Bī Amma Ṣāḥiba's story of spiritual journey began in Kamthi (now called Kamptee), located nine miles northeast of Nagpur in the state of Maharashtra, India, just below the confluence of the Kanhan, Pench, and Kolar rivers. Founded in 1821 as a military cantonment of the British colonial army in the neighbourhood of the native capital of Nagpur, Kamptee is now an important centre of trade.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 220.

The city was blessed by the presence of *Tāj Awliyā'* (the crown of the friends of Allāh), Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn Nāgpurī (1861–1925), whose spiritual blessings turned a little girl to the path of Allāh.³⁸⁹ An orphaned child of Saiyyid Badru'd-Dīn, an Indian soldier in the Madras regiment, Tāju'd-Dīn also began his career as a soldier in the colonial army. Soon, sometimes in 1892, Tāju'd-Dīn was thrown into a lunatic asylum on charges of roaming around naked in the cantonment. It was in this asylum that the first meeting between Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn Nāgpurī and Bī Amma took place.

Among several legends about the life of this little girl, now reverentially addressed as Bī Amma (the Mother), one says that she was born as a boon to her parents who made supplications before Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn Nāgpurī for a child. According to this tale, Bī Amma's father was a *pesh imām* (one who leads the prayer) of a mosque who had lost all his children. His wife vowed that if any future child of theirs survived, she would offer that child to Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn. The prayers were answered and the girl survived (b. 1302/1885) and spent several years in training under Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn's auspicious care. When she grew up, her family took her away to marry her off. However, after a little while, Bī Amma would get into transformative moods (*jazb*). The parents took her back to the presence of Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn, where she soon came out of this state.³⁹⁰

Another story, which appears more credible, is related by Abdul Ghani Munsif. Munsif writes that, like Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn, Bī Amma was a *majzūb*. At the command of Ḥaẓrat Da'ūd Shāh Chishtī, she visited him while Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn was in a lunatic asylum. As soon as Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn saw her, he threw a stone towards her, breaking her glass bangles and thus shattering all her chains with the world. Addressing her, he said, "Where were you? I have been waiting for you for the last twelve years." Bī Amma became a disciple of Bābā Tāju'd-Dīn under whose guidance she went through long and enduring spiritual exercises of self-denial and piety, including spending several years all alone in forests and thick woods.³⁹¹

389 Abdul Ghani Munsif. 1939. "Miracles of Baba Tajuddin." *Meher Baba Journal*, 1(12): 21–30; P.S.V. Aiyer. 1959. *Perfect Masters*. Calcutta: Sri Sai Samaj; Nile Green. 2009. *Islam and the Army in Colonial India. Sepoy Religion in the Service of the Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 120–127; James Richard Newell. *Experiencing Qawali: Sound as Spiritual Power in Sufi India* (Unpublished submitted to the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University for Doctor of Philosophy, 2007), pp. 40–70.

390 Roy Burman. 2002. *Hindu-Muslim Syncretic Shrines and Communities*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 192–198.

391 Abdul Ghani Munsif. 1939. "Hazrat Baba Tajuddin of Nagpore." *Meher Baba Journal*, 1(6): 46–55.

Several incidences of her miraculous performances are related with great devotion by her followers. It is said that once she cured a patient of leprosy by covering him overnight with her headscarf (*dupatta*). She loved gardening and took great care of fragrant flowers.³⁹² To attain Allāh's love, she taught simple things to her followers, such as to love all and to have contentment in life. Humility in this world is obedience to Allāh, she said. A person should remain flexible as only in death does one get stiff.³⁹³

(2)

Anonymous *Majzūba* of Muḥammadpur

Period: Late Eighteenth Century

Place: Muḥammadpur, near Lucknow, India

Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf Awadhi was a resident of Awadh who composed biographical notices of South Asian Sufis. His work, *Bahr-e Zakhkhār* (the rising ocean), was published in 1789. Since his early childhood, he had been an ardent and devout follower of *ṭaṣawwuf*, spending his time in the company of the mystics. The mystic woman whom Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf identifies by the anonymous title *Zan-i majzūba* (an intoxicated Sufi woman), in this anthology, was his contemporary and was known to him. She lived in Muḥammadpur, in District Barabanki, which is at a distance of twenty-eight kilometres to the north of Lucknow, now the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Zan-i majzūba lived life as a recluse, avoiding public places or meeting with anyone, and therefore did not step out of her place (*muṭlaq sair na kardī*). Perhaps because of the heat of the intensity of her mystical powers, she used to eat whey (*dogh*) during the summer. With her mystical powers of knowing the unknown (*az rū'-i kashf*), she could tell about a person's past and present. Once, Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf, from a distance (probably from Lucknow), sent a verbal message to her through one of her devotees (*mu'taqid*). This person, on reaching the presence of the *Majzūba* in Muḥammadpur, forgot to deliver the message. Looking at him, she said loudly, "The message has reached me." Repeating the message, what she said was exactly what Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf had earlier told the man to convey.³⁹⁴ Narrating another miraculous power of *Zan-i majzūba*, Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf writes that she could hold boiling hot pots of food with her bare hands and would not feel the heat.

392 *Hindu-Muslim syncretic shrines and communities*, pp. 192–198.

393 Khwāja Shamsu'd-Dīn 'Aẓīmī. 2002. *Ek sau ek Awliyā'-yi Allāh khwatīn*. Karachi: al-Kitāb Publications, pp. 197–200.

394 *Bahr-e-Zakhkhar* (vol. 3). p. 342.

Wajīhu'd-Dīn Ashraf, like most other scribes, has left the story of *Zan-i majzūba* incomplete.

(3)

Ḥazrat Bābājān

Date: D. 8 Jamādiu'l awwal 1350/21 September 1931

Shrine: Pune, India

Urs: 9–11 Jamādiu'l-awwal

A strange-looking woman in a dishevelled state of appearance, with a huge crop of matted grey hair and known by a male name, Ḥazrat Bābājān, is revered for her virtues of self-denial and her ascetic and miraculous powers. Her small but solemn-looking and beautifully built shrine, made of white marble with teak doors, is located on the Malcolm Tank Road in Pune, India, in an area locally known as Char Bawdi. It attracts not only devotees but academic researchers as well.³⁹⁵

The story about her ancestry emerges from local legends and hagiography. Some of her biographers say that she was a Pashtu-speaking Baloch of noble descent.³⁹⁶ In his recent research, Newell says that she came from an elite Afghānī family.³⁹⁷ Most, however, agree that she was a Pashtun woman called Gul-rukh at birth who left home at the age of eighteen to begin her journey of spirituality. For a while, she donned a male disguise to hide her female identity and wandered around. She reached Poona where she settled down in 1905 under a *neem* tree on the Malcolm Tank Road.³⁹⁸ It was here that she died at the age of 125 years in 1931. Ramakrishnan describes one of her miracles, as observed by one eyewitness. According to this narrative, Ḥazrat Bābājān, while on a steamer going for Ḥajj, saved the steamer and its passengers from a hurricane by her miraculous powers.³⁹⁹

The dissertation of Newell documents additional information not known before. Drawing upon interviews, Newell writes that though Bābājān was not

395 James Richard Newell. *Experiencing Qawwali: Sound as Spiritual Power in Sufi India*, (Ph.D. thesis in Religion)—Vanderbilt University. Dec. 2007, pp. 78–79.

396 K.K. Ramakrishnan. 1998. *Hazrat Babajan: The Emperor of the Spiritual Realm*. Pune: Meher Era Publications.; B. Kalachuri. 1986. *Meher Prabhu*. North Myrtle Beach: Manifestation, Inc.; Abdul Ghani Munsif. 1961. "Baba's own masters: Part One: Ḥazrat Babajan of Pune." *Awakening Magazine*, 8 (1): 12–22.

397 James Richard Newell. *Experiencing Qawwali: Sound as Spiritual Power in Sufi India*, (Ph.D. thesis in Religion)—Vanderbilt University. Dec. 2007, 78–79.

398 *Hazrat Babajan: The Emperor of the Spiritual Realm*, p. 80.

399 *Ibid*, p. 20.

initiated into any Sufi *silsila*, today this mystic woman has a “broad popular appeal with many followers in Pune and all over India.” Interesting information that comes from Newell is that “her shrine and the cultural capital associated with her legacy, was appropriated by representatives of the Chishtī *silsila* soon after her death, or perhaps even as her death seemed to be imminent.”⁴⁰⁰

Drawing upon two letters published in the *Times of India* in September 1926, Newell writes that her presence in the cantonment area irked the authorities, but they could not dare move her from where she used to lie under a *neem* tree because of the fear of mob outcry. The colonial administration was not alone in their dislike of her; though persecuted and tormented by orthodox religionists, she remained unruffled and continued her mission of extending hope and peace to those who came to seek her blessings. Viewed as a Sufi by some, Bābājān was indeed a *qalandar* (mystic or ascetic who travels from place to place in search of the Divine).⁴⁰¹

I close this account of Bābājān with a quote by Newell: “Babajan’s popularity was not inspired by her institutional affiliation or bloodline, but rather, by her austerities as a *faqir*, and her state of mind, which was understood by her followers as an ascetic state of divine absorption, of *majdubiyya* [attraction to the Divine].”⁴⁰²

(4)

Bā’ī Jī

Date: D. 1837 or 1838

Place: Delhi, India

Bā’ī Jī, a woman with mystical powers, lived in a dishevelled state during the twilight years of the Mughal Empire in Delhi.⁴⁰³ Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) gives the first biographical notice of Bā’ī Jī⁴⁰⁴ in his *Āsāru’s Sanādīd*, a book on the monuments of Delhi, which also includes biographical notices of mystics, scholars, poets, painters, musicians, and singers who had lived in the city. In the last chapter of this book, in a section titled “an account of people of ecstasy” (*majzūboñ kā bayān*), Sir Syed writes that Bā’ī Jī “was an excellent woman” (*aurat bā kamāl*). No one knew what her real name was but to

400 *Experiencing Qawwali: Sound as Spiritual Power in Sufi India*, 2007, p. 80.

401 Kevin R.D. Sheperd. 1985. *A Sufi Matriarch: Hazrat Babajan*. Cambridge: Anthropographia Publications; *Hazrat Babajan*, 1981.

402 *Experiencing Qawwali: Sound as Spiritual Power in Sufi India*, p. 80.

403 Bā’ī Jī is a respectful term for women of position.

404 Syed Ahmad Khan, Sir. 1293/1876. *Āsāru’s Sanādīd*, (Chapter Four). Lucknow: Maṭba’ Nawal Kishore, p. 33.

all she was known as Bā'ī Jī. Outside Shāhjahānābād, the old name of Delhi, next to the old Īdgah, she lived her whole life under a thatched shed. It is said that during conversations, she frequently repeated Qur'ān verses, especially *Inna 'āṭaynākal Kawṣar* (Qur'an: verse 108). When anyone would go to her to seek her blessings, she would select seventeen *kūziān*⁴⁰⁵ out of whatever was brought as an offering and would place these on the floor and pick them up again seventeen times, reciting *Innā' āṭaynākal Kawṣar* each time. Whatever would come to her heart, she would say that to the petitioner (*sā'il*), and whatever she would utter would happen exactly the way she had said.⁴⁰⁶ She passed away a year before Sir Syed Ahmad Khan completed his book.

Later on, two authors, Bashīruddīn Aḥmad in his extensive account of the city of Delhi, *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dihlī*, and Maulawī Aḥmad Sā'id in *Tārīkh Awliyā'-i Dihlī*, included Sir Syed's narrative almost verbatim.⁴⁰⁷

(5)

Mā'ī Bhāgī

Date: D. 1847

Place: Lahore, Pakistan

Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī (d. 1890) has included a brief narrative of Mā'ī Bhāgī in the list of eleven pious women in his *Ḥadiqatu'l-Awliyā'*, a book on lives of Sufis.⁴⁰⁸ This narrative was written forty-three years after the death of Mā'ī Bhāgī, yet both of them, i.e., Mā'ī Bhāgī and Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, had lived as contemporaries in the city of Lahore. Thus, the narrative could be considered an eyewitness account, though the author does not say this.

Mā'ī Bhāgī's years of youth were spent in frivolous activities. She used to sell alcoholic drinks in the city of Lahore during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (d. 1839). Her ravishing beauty, youth, and the wealth that she earned by selling intoxicants brought a large number of pleasure-seeking men around her. She was lost in the glamour of this life, which soon ended in a mysterious way. One day a man named Zulfiqār came to her and asked her for a cup of wine.

⁴⁰⁵ Lumps of crystalized sugar.

⁴⁰⁶ Sir Syed wrote this work probably in 1839 and published it in 1840. Thus, Bā'ī Jī passed away in 1839 or a little before this. For details about the year of publication of *Āsāru's Sanādīd*, see C.M. Naim. 2011. "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called 'Āsar-al-Sanadid.'" *Modern Asian Studies*. 45 (03): 669–708.

⁴⁰⁷ *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dihlī* (*ḥiṣṣā du'm*), p. 404; Maulawī Aḥmad Sā'id. 1354/1935. *Tārīkh Awliyā'-i Dihlī ma'rūf bā Tuḥfa-i Sā'id*. Maḥbūbu'l-maṭāb' Barqī Press, Dihlī, 148.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ḥadiqat-ul-Awliyā'*, p. 243.

She filled it for him. He took a sip and then gave it back to her, telling her, "Sip [the rest of it]." She drank all of it. As she sipped it, a miracle happened. She tore off her clothes, threw away all the ornaments that adorned her body, and turned into a *majzūbā*. She gave away all the wealth and properties that she had accumulated over the years. Wrapped in tattered old rags, she took abode in an open space near the Akbari Gate in Lahore. People thronged around her because whatever she uttered came true. Even Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of Sikh rule in Lahore, had great faith in her. To seek her blessings, Pandit Ganga Ram Kaul Dehlawi⁴⁰⁹ used to visit her so frequently that one day out of desperation she sternly said to him, "Why are you pestering me? Go away and do some job in the *Divānī* (state department)." So, he got a job there.

Ghulām Sarwar ends this account by saying that towards the end of her life, Māī Bhāgī developed an interest in constructing buildings. He does not say any more about it. Māī Bhāgī died in 1847. I could not trace her last resting place in Lahore.

(6)

Khānam Ṣāhib

Period: First Half of the Nineteenth Century

Place: Delhi, India

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), in the fourth chapter, "an account of Delhi and the people of Delhi" (*ahl-i Dihlī*), in his *Āsāru's Sanādīd* (a book on the monuments and people of Delhi), gives biographical notices of mystics, scholars, poets, painters, musicians, and singers. The section on mystics is followed by an account of people of ecstasy (*majzūboṅ kā bayān*). In this section, Sir Syed writes about two women who were his contemporaries and were alive around 1840, the time of the completion of *Āsāru's Sanādīd*.

The first of these two women is Khānam Ṣāhib (not to be confused with Khānam Jī). Sir Syed writes, "Khānam Ṣāhib was a godly woman (*bākhudā 'aurat*). In her inner purification (*ṣafā'ī-i bāṭin*), she was better than thousands of men. She lived in Haweli Sher Afghan Khan near Ballimaran. Though

409 Pandit Ganga Ram (1851–1926) remembered for Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore and Government College, Lahore, was invited in 1813 by Ranjit Singh from Delhi to Lahore and was appointed as his finance minister. Lepel H. Griffin. 1890. *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Families of Lahore and Rawalpindi Division of the Punjab* (vol. 1), Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette, pp. 56–58; Syad Muhammad Latif. 1892. *Lahore: its history, architectural remains and antiquities, with an account of its modern institutions, inhabitants, their trade, customs, &c.* Lahore: Printed at the New Imperial Press, p. 332.

ecstasy (*jazb*) mostly overpowered her temperament, but not to the extent of losing herself (*khud raftagī*). Large numbers of people, elite as well as the common people, came to her to seek the fulfilment of their needs (*adā-yi ḥājīt*) through her intercession. Whatever she uttered in response to their petitions and entreaties entirely came true (*bi kam-o-kāst*). About two or four months have passed since she left this world.”⁴¹⁰

Bashīruddīn Aḥmad, in his voluminous account of the city of Delhi, *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Delhi*, has copied the above narrative of Sir Syed almost verbatim without acknowledging the source. He does not mention about her passing away.⁴¹¹ Later, Aḥmad Sā'id in 1935 wrote another account of the Sufis of Delhi in which he, too, like Bashīruddīn Aḥmad, repeated Sir Syed's narrative of Khānam Ṣāhib. The only change he made was that instead of Khānam Ṣāhib he called her Khānam Ṣāhiba.⁴¹²

(7)

Bibī Nawāzan

Date: Eighteenth Century

Place: Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Bibī Nawāzan's early life remains unknown. She used to roam around the street of Jaipur, in Rajasthan, in mystic ecstasy. Jaipur was then under the rule of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh (1835–1880). As an enraptured Sufi (*majzūbā*), whatever was uttered by Bibī Nawāzan always came true. She was found sitting around Char Darwaza, a Muslim part of the city. Oral traditions relate that Maharaja Ram Singh wanted to meet with her and sent her several messages which the Bibī ignored. When the Maharaja was on his death bed, he again sent some of his influential courtiers to persuade the Bibī to see him. Bibī Nawāzan was not moved by any of these entreaties. The Maharaja passed away in 1880 and sometime later Bibī Nawāzan too left this world. She was buried in Bans Badanpura near the *takiyā* of Shakir Shāh. Large number of devotees seeking her blessings visit her shrine.⁴¹³

410 Syed Ahmad Khan. 1293/1876. *Āsāru's Sanādīd*, (Chapter Four.). Lucknow: Maṭba' Nawal Kishore, p. 33.

411 *Wāqī'āt Dāru'l Ḥukūmat Dihlī* (*ḥiṣṣā du'm*), p. 404.

412 Maulawī Aḥmad Sā'id. 1354/1935. *Tārīkh Awliyā'-i Dihlī ma'rūf ba Tuḥfa-i Sā'id*. Maḥbūbu'l-maṭāb' Barqī Press, Dihlī, p. 146.

413 Shahid Aḥmad Jamālī. 2012. *Tazkira Awliyā' i Rajasthan*. Jaipur: Faiz Ahmad, p. 195.

(8)

Bībī Nūrbharī**Date: Unknown****Shrine: Bazar Naṣrpur, Thatta, Pakistan**

Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām, completed in 1767 in three volumes by Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' (1727–1788),⁴¹⁴ is the first source giving a brief narrative—merely four lines—about Bībī Nūrbharī (one filled with the Light), who belonged to the Dabbāgha community.⁴¹⁵ She probably lived in or around the city of Thatta (also spelt Tatta) near Bazār Naṣrpur. Thatta at this time was a major centre of Islamic scholarship until its decadence set in, first with the shifting of the capital from Thatta to Hyderabad in 1768 by the Kalhoṛas, and later, following its occupation in 1843 by the English colonialists.⁴¹⁶

Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' (d. 1788), a poet and historian whose contribution to the history of Sindh remains matchless,⁴¹⁷ eulogised Bībī Nūrbharī, describing her as a *majzūbā* and a *sālīka* and extolling her as *kāmila-yi waqt* (perfect [mystic] of her time) and *Rābī'a-yi sānī* (the second Rābī'ā [of Basra] of her age). Several charismatic powers were associated with her. Her shrine remains a place of refuge (*maḥjā'*) for those who seek her blessings. Qānī' does not give any chronological details about Bībī Nūrbharī.⁴¹⁸

414 *Tuḥfaṭu'l Kirām* of Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' Ṭhattāwī is a family history of the Kalhoṛas by Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' Ṭhattāwī commissioned by Ghulām 'Alī Shāh 'Abbāsī (1757–1772), the Kalhoṛā ruler.

415 Dabbāghas are tanners or curriers by profession.

416 For an account of Thatta's scholars and learning institutions, see Abu Zafar Nadwī. 1970. *Tārīkh-i Sindh*. 'Azamgarh: Matba' Ma'arūf, Dāru'l-Muṣannifin, pp. 369–379; for an introduction to the history of Thatta, see, Patrick Heenan. 1996. 'Tata,' in Paul Schellinger and Robert Salkin (Eds.) *International Dictionary of Historic Places*, vol. 5. 5. London: Routledge, pp. 801–804; also 'An account of the country of Sindh with remarks on the state of society, the government, manners, and customs of the people' by Captain James M'Murdo in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1834, pp. 223–258.

417 For the contributions of Qānī', see Fatima Zahra Bilgrami. 1991. 'Mir Ali Sher Thattavi's life and contributions to the history and culture of Sind'. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. 52: 322–331.

418 Mīr 'Alī Sher Qānī' Ṭhattāwī. 1304/1887. *Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām*, jild som Dehli: Matba' Nāṣirī, p. 157; 'Ijāzu'l Ḥaqq Quddūsī has borrowed Bībī Nūrbharī's account from *Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām* in *Tazkira-i Ṣūfiyya-i Sindh*. Karachi: Urdu Academy (1959), p. 336.

(9)

Bībī Rāstī**Period: Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries****Place: Uchch, Pakistan**

Bībī Rāstī was the daughter of Khwāja Yahyā Kabīr, a Suhrawardī Sufi, a disciple of Jalālu'd-Dīn Bukhārī of Uchch (d. 1384),⁴¹⁹ and was married to Khwāja Wais Sarwānī. Describing her mystical merits, Ni'matu'llah al-Harāwī, the author of *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī* (completed in 1612), writes about the four major signs of mystical virtues of Bībī Rāstī, namely, that she was *ṣāhib-i lafz* (one who could make predictions), *majzūb* (the one captivated by God), *mūlah* (sad and grieving), and was perpetually absorbed and totally immersed in Allāh (*dā'im istighrāq tamām dāsht*). Most of the time, she remained overpowered by her mystical state (*maghlū'l hāl būd*). Thus, totally and completely, she was not interested in worldly affairs (*muhimmāt-i dunyawī*).⁴²⁰

Khwāja Wais Sarwānī, because of his dislike of his wife's state, after some time married the daughter of a silk-thread trader but kept it a secret from the trader as well as from Bībī Rāstī. When the secret was divulged, it did not make even the smallest change in the Bībī's way of life. Her husband went away to live in Lahore and from there he sent a costly Iraqi horse to Bībī Rāstī, telling her to look after it and to keep it healthy and fat. Bībī Rāstī was so engrossed in Allāh's remembrance (*mashghūl-i ḥaqq*) that a horse could not distract her attention. When news of the horse's failing health reached Wais Sarwānī, he transferred it to the stable of his second wife who began to take good care of the horse. One day when Bībī Rāstī visited her own stable and noticed that the horse was not there, she asked about it. When she was told the whole story and about Wais Sarwānī's directions to keep the horse fit and healthy, Bībī Rāstī said, "Khwāja Wais wants me to keep his horse fat (*farbiḥ*); however, I see it in a dunghill, grazing a leafless branch of a palm tree." As soon as these words came out of her mouth, the horse quit eating and began striking its head against the wall. All efforts to make it eat grass or grain failed. It would thrust its head into a dunghill and its condition changed into that of a donkey. After a few days, the horse was found lying dead in the dunghill.

419 Khwāja Ni'matu'llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību'llah al-Harāwī's *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzanī*, pp. 723–40.

420 Ibid, pp. 826–27; also, *Akbāru'l awliyā'*. MS. no. R343, fols. 127a & 128b.

Concluding his brief account, Ni‘matu’llah comments that several similar miraculous tales of Bībī Rāstī are narrated.

10.9 Sufi Girl-Children

(1)

Chimnī Bī Ṣāḥiba

Period: Fifteenth Century

Place: Gulbarga Sharīf, India

A hagiographical story of the mystical feats of five-year-old Chimnī Bī Ṣāḥiba⁴²¹ is given in *Armughān-i Sulṭānī, al-ma’rūf sair-i Gulbarga* by Maulawī Muḥammad Sulṭān.⁴²² Chimnī Bī, whose actual name was Fāṭima, was the daughter of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Khwānd Mīr Junaidī (d. 934/1528), a Sufi of great charismatic powers (*ṣāḥib-i karamat*) who was a perfect friend of Allāh (*walī mukammal*) and remained lost in meditation, contemplation (*murāqaba*), and prayers.⁴²³ According to popular legends, once Chimnī Bī happened to see her father, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Khwānd Mīr, suspended in the air (*mu’allaq*) in his state of ecstasy (*wajd*) during *murāqaba*. Without knowing what her father was doing, she pulled her father’s robe to draw his attention towards her. Sensing some disruption, Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Khwānd Mīr, who was lost in meditation, angrily uttered, “Who are thou (*tū kaun hai*)! Go, get away (*jā dūr ho*) and be dead (*mar jā*).” Hearing this, Chimnī Bī, was much grieved. She ran to her grandfather Ḥaẓrat Khwajā Shaikh Abu’l Faẓl Junaidī’s (d. 840/1436) grave to seek some solace. There, she cried a lot and prayed and ordered the Earth to split because she wished to enter into her (*shaqq ho, main tujh main samāti hūn*). As soon she uttered these words, a breach in the Earth appeared and suddenly Chimnī Bī was buried under the earth; a part of her red headscarf that she was wearing, and which was prepared for her recently held *Bismillah* ceremony,⁴²⁴ was left showing. In the meantime, Shaikh Khwānd Mīr came out

421 Little girls are often affectionately called Chimnī or Chumnī which is a local word for dolls, mostly rag dolls.

422 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, pp. 162–63.

423 Ḥaẓrat Shaikh Khwand Mīr Junaidī was the grandson of the celebrated Sufi, Ḥaẓrat Khwajā Shaikh Abu’l Faẓl Junaidī who died in 840/1436. Some scholars give this date as 850/1446, *Ibid.*, pp. 161–62.

424 *Bismillah* is a ceremony held for a child at the age of four years, four months, and four days and marks the start of formal education.

of his trance and looked around for his daughter. A servant found the scarf buried and, realising what might have happened to the child, informed the father. Nothing could be done now, except mourning the loss. The father built her grave over the same spot where the earth had swallowed her.⁴²⁵ Muḥammad Sulṭān, writing in 1924, says that it is customary in the area that people make supplications in her name and offer sweetened bread and sweet drinks (*sherbet*) in her memory at her shrine, especially on the occasions of *Bismillah* ceremony of children.⁴²⁶

(2)

Daughter of Saiyyid Shāh Jamāl Baghdādī Wārangalī

Period: Late Sixteenth Century

Place: ‘Urs, Qāzīpura village, Warangal, India

‘Abdu’l Jabbār Khan Mulkapurī gives a minor reference to an unnamed child, the daughter of Saiyyid Shāh Jalālu’d-Dīn Jamālu’l-Baḥar M’āshūq-i Rabbānī Baghdādī Wārangalī (died on 22 Rajab 999/15 May 1591), popularly remembered by his devotees with great reverence and affection as M’āshūq Rabbānī. Saiyyid Shāh Jamāl Baghdādī’s lineage is traced to the great Sufi Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ‘Abdu’l Qādir Jilānī. Narrating numerous miracles and charismas of M’āshūq Rabbānī and of his vast travels, most of them based on hagiography and local legends, Malkapurī writes that as soon as M’āshūq Rabbānī observed his two young sons publicly displaying their miraculous powers, they both passed away at his command, as he did not approve of Sufis who disclosed their secrets.⁴²⁷ Similarly, once while his young daughter was combing her hair, women of the household watched as suddenly *motiā* and *chambelī* flowers began to fall down from her hair. M’āshūq Rabbānī, who also witnessed this miracle, at once said to her, “Depart from this world, now.” As soon as these words were uttered, the little daughter passed away.⁴²⁸

The three children of M’āshūq Rabbānī lie buried in his shrine in the village of ‘Urs (now known as Qāzīpura village, about five miles away from the

425 *Armughān-i Sulṭānī*, pp. 162–63.

426 Salim Chaoush, 1354/1935. *Ḥālāt jamī‘ u’l awliyā‘-i ṣāliḥīn Gulbarga Sharīf*. Hyderabad: Nizāmiyya Paoti Press, p. 14.

427 Muḥammad Sulṭān. 1326/1908. *Waqā‘ Warangal*. Hyderabad: Maṭba‘ Dāru’l Tāb’. pp. 50–53; *Barakātu’l Awliyā’*, pp. 168–169; *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā’ yi dakan*, pp. 245–49.

428 *Maḥbūb zil-manan-Tazkira Awliyā’ yi dakan*. *Ḥissā awwal*, p. 248; also, *Waqā‘ Warangal*, pp. 50–53.

Warangal city). The shrine, along with the graves of the children, is maintained by *waqf* grants.⁴²⁹

(3)

Mā'ī Fāṭima Mastū'īn

Period: Late Seventeenth Century

Shrine: Katkar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan

There is a miracle story of a little baby crying in her crib who turned into a friend of Allāh by the luminous gaze of Ḥaẓrat Sulṭān Bāhū (d. 1691),⁴³⁰ a mystical poet and founder of the Sarwarī Qādirī Sufi *silsila*. This is the story of Fāṭima Mastū'īn. It is said that once Sultan Bāhū, who used to travel from village to village and never settled down in any Khānqāh, arrived along with his fellow travelling *dervishes* at a village named Chabri, close to Kakar near a small town of Fatah Khan in Dera Ghazi Khan. To get something to eat, they came to the residence of a *dā'ī* (a wet nurse/midwife) and asked her to cook some food for them. As her baby was crying in the crib due to some eye infection, she asked them to help her in setting the fire for cooking. As the other *dervishes* were busy helping her, Sultan Bāhū went to the crib, sat by the baby, and gazed at her. The baby not only stopped crying but also her whole being was transformed, her face glowed, and each part of her body echoed with the Sufi *zikr*, *Allāh hū*. The news spread throughout the village, and all those who came to see her fell under the spell of *Allāh hū*.⁴³¹

Some say that she came to be known as *Mastū'īn* as the word means “the one who has absorbed.” Others argue that as she belonged to the Mastoi' tribe of the Balochs, that was the origin of her name. The fame of Fāṭima Mastū'īn soon spread. Seekers of Truth thronged to the little-known village to seek the blessings of this *majzūbā*. Kausar writes that the Makhdūms of Mahesar in Sindh and Baluchistan were blessed by her.⁴³²

429 The brief biography of Hadrat Mashooq Rabbani Warangal | Sheikh.
<https://www.scribd.com/.../The-brief-biography-of-Hadrat-Mashooq-Rabbani-Warang>.

430 *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, pp. 367–75.

431 *Makhzan-ul-Asrār-o-Sultan-ul-Aurad* (mohrasharif.com—Mukhzan-ul-Asrar-o-Sultan-ul-Aurad) www.mohrasharif.com/index.php/al.../270-mukhzan-ul-asrar-o-sultan-ul-aura.

432 In'ām ul-Ḥaq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira Şūfiyya'-yi Balochistan*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, p. 121.

10.10 Sufi Women's *Khānqāh*

(1)

Minnat-Ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba**Date:** D. 28 Zilhajj 888/26 January 1484***Khānqāh:*** Bidar, Karnataka, India

Within the *khānqāh* complex of Saiyyid Muḥammad bin Yusuf al-Ḥusainī, popularly known as Ḥaẓrat Khwāja Bandā Nawāz Gīsū Darāz (d. 1422), are two *khānqāhs*—the *baṛī khānqāh* (the big *khānqāh*) and the *chotī khānqāh* (the small *khānqāh*). Northwest of the *chotī khānqāh* stands the *khānqāh*, “the everlasting abode of divine grace,” of Minnat-Ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba. Minnat-Ullah Bibī was Khwāja Bandā Nawāz’s great-granddaughter, i.e., his daughter Bibī Khwānja Batūl Khātūn and her husband Saiyyid Salār Lahori’s eldest daughter.

According to an inscription found in the *khānqāh*, Yad Ullāh Shāh, aka Qabūlā Ḥusainī, the spiritual guide of Sulṭān ‘Alā’u’d-Dīn Aḥmad Bahmani (1436–1458), built it.⁴³³ Later, in 1108/1696, his son Min Allāh Shāh renovated it. Yazdani refers to a local tradition which says that Minnat-Ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba was the sister of Ḥaẓrat Abu’l-Faiẓ (d. 879/1474), a grandson of Khwāja Gīsū Darāz.⁴³⁴

An inscription in Persian on one of the walls, on a black stone slab, establishes not only the historicity of Minnat-Ullah Bibī Ṣāḥiba but also reflects her spiritual attainments. The inscription says:

In the beginning this monastery by the grace of God was built by
Yad-Ullah, the king of faith,
Afterwards it was renovated by Min-Allāh Shāh, the son of [lit. the apple
of the eye] of Wali Ullāh Shāh,
When I enquired of Wisdom regarding the chronogram, it said [that it
was contained in the phrase], “the everlasting abode of divine grace.”

Yazdani, transcribing this inscription, says that according to the *abjad* system, which helps determine dates and chronologies according to the numbers assigned to each Arabic/Persian alphabet, the date is 1108/1696, the closing decade of Aurangzeb’s rule.⁴³⁵

433 *Tārīkh Muḥammadiya*. Hyderabad: Baldha’ (1911) (author’s name lost), pp. 107–9. For a strange story of the height of ecstasy that Yad Ullah Shāh experienced on seeing the reflection of her bride’s face in the mirror and died, see Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbas. *A History of Sufism in India*. Vol. 1, p. 256.

434 *Bidar, its History and Monuments*, p. 13.

435 *Ibid*, p. 113; also, *Tārīkh-i Muḥammadiya* p. 109.

10.11 Sufi Women Who Preferred Death to a Life of Dishonour

(1)

Bibīān Pākdāmnān**Shrine: Gaʿrī Shāhū, Lahore, Pakistan****Urs: 7–9 Jamādi-us Sanī**

At the shrine of Bibīān Pākdāmnān (the pious/virtuous ladies) in Lahore, facts and fiction, myth and religious fervour come to full bloom.⁴³⁶ To the large crowd of men and women devotees who assemble here each day of the week, it is devotion and not historic facts that make them bow their heads in reverence before the altar of the shrine.

Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī argues that the shrine of Bibīān Pākdāmnān existed in 441/1049 in Lahore when Saiyyid ‘Alī Hujwīrī arrived there. Without citing any reference, Lahorī claims that Saiyyid ‘Alī Hujwīrī, to pay his homage to the virtuous women, used to visit the shrine barefooted.⁴³⁷ Among the various legends about the shrine’s sanctity, one associates it with the descendants of the Prophet’s family through Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī, the Prophet’s cousin, son-in-law, and the fourth Pious Caliph (656–661). According to this legend, the shrine contains the remains of six pious women of the family of Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī who are named Bibī Taj, Bibī Ḥūr, Bibī Nūr, Bibī Gauhar, and Bibī Shāhbāz, and together are known as Bibīān Pākdāmnān. According to this legend, these pious women accompanied Imām Ḥusain, the Prophet’s grandson, when he left Madina to march towards Kūfa. On the ninth of Muḥarram, when Imām Ḥusain, in view of the impending tragedy that happened the next day at Karbala, and his concern for the safety of his female relatives, asked these women to leave his camp and go away. They argued against it saying how could they desert him in a time of conflict. An emotional dialogue ensued between these pious women and Imām Ḥusain, in which they beseeched him not to ask them to leave, otherwise how they would face Bibī Fāṭima, the Prophet’s daughter, on the Day of Judgement. Finally, at his urgent suggestion, they left for India.⁴³⁸

They arrived at Lahore and encamped near a mound, which later came to be known as their *khānqāh*. Around this deserted place dwelt a small local community. The chieftain of the area ordered his astrologers to find out why the

436 For these legendary accounts, see *Ḥadīqat u’l Awliyā’*: pp. 235–236; Kanhayya Lal, Munshi. 1977. *Tārīkh-i Lahore*. Lahore: Majlis-i tarqqi-yi adab [First published in 1884], pp. 159–163, 580.

437 Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī. 1877. *Tārīkh-i Makhzan-i Panjāb*. 1877, Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press, p. 525.

438 Muḥammad Laṭīf Malik. *Awliyā’-yi Lahore*. Lahore: Urdu Press, (1962.), pp. 94–101.

leaping flames in their sacred fireplaces went cold suddenly by the presence of these women. In addition, whoever went near where the five women were encamped embraced Islam, influenced by the virtues of the Bibīs. Enraged, the Raja marched towards the Bibīs with the intention of harming them. As he got closer, the Bibīs prayed to Allāh for their safety and honour, imploring that the earth should open up and swallow them. Their prayer was granted. The earth swallowed them all, leaving behind only a part of their scarf. (Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī and Pīr Ghulām Dastgīr Nāmī rejected this narrative and gave a different account.)⁴³⁹

Another legend describes these pious women as the daughters of Saiyyid Aḥmad Tokhtah Tirmizī (d. 602/1205), one of the early migrant Sufis who arrived in Lahore along with his six daughters and settled there. According to this narrative, Tokhtah Tirmizī, arrived first in Kech, Makrān, which is in the southern part of Balochistan. He got his two elder daughters, Bibī Ḥājj and Bibī Tāj, married soon; the other four, Bibī Ḥūr, Bibī Nūr, Bibī Gauhar, and Bibī Shāhbāz, died unmarried. Bibī Ḥājj was married to the son of the ruler of Makrān.⁴⁴⁰ Another legend says that all these sisters, to escape from the hands of the soldiers of the invading Mongol army, prayed to Allah to protect their honour. The earth then opened and swallowed them. Nūr Aḥmad Chishtī, another scholar, gives further details in the context of the first legend. He says that the pious women of the family of Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī were good scholars as well, especially Bibī Hajj (whom he also identifies as Bibī Ruqayya), who also instructed men.⁴⁴¹ Chishtī also mentions the name of Bibī Ḥalīma, daughter of Ḥaẓrat Mas‘ūd Quraishi, a descendant of Hazrat Ism‘īl Zabiḥ Allāh. This lady, a pious and devoted person, also had come along with the pious daughters of ‘Aqīl. As she used to bake bread for them, she came to be known as Bibī Tanūrī (the woman of the clay oven).⁴⁴²

10.11.1 *Observations of My Visit to the Shrine of Bibīān Pākdāmnān*

In February 2016, I spent three days at the shrine of Bibīān Pākdāmnān in Lahore and managed to take some photographs and make a short video as well. Situated in Garhi Shāhū, near the Lahore railway station, the shrine is visited by a large number of devotees representing a cross-section of Pakistanis coming

439 *Ḥadiqat-ul Awliyā*, pp. 107–8; Pīr Ghulām Dastgīr Nāmī. *Buzurgān-i-Lahore*. (Nūrī Book Depot, Lahore: 1966), pp. 193, 242–44.

440 For further details, see Muḥammad Iqbal Mujaddidī, 2013. *Tazkira ‘ulāmā’ wa mashā’ikh Pak wa Hind. Vol. 1*. Lahore: Progressive Books, pp. 591–92.

441 Nūr Aḥmad Chishtī Lahorī. 1927. *Tahqiqāt-i Chishtī*. Lahore: Matba‘ Koh-i nūr. (First published in 1867), pp. 159–162; 580–581.

442 Ibid, p. 162.

from distant parts of the country. Some were encamping there in nearby locations for several days.

Entry to the *dargāh* is under tight security. Visitors have to walk a distance of about one-and-a-half kilometres and are bodily searched at three spots along the way. Identity cards are checked; cameras are not allowed, though cell phones are. The walkway leading to the shrine is lined on both sides with shops and vendors selling fresh flowers, rose petals, incense sticks, sweetmeats, and shiny green sheets of fabric embossed in gold colours with passages from the Qur'ān. One will also find tiny wooden cribs, *'alams*,⁴⁴³ and metal lockets and chains for making oblations to the shrine. Special *motichoor laddūs* (a popular ball-shaped sweetmeat) with a ring affixed to its top were sold outside and were heaped inside the shrine on each of the graves for the devotees to take free of cost for the *baraka*. To each ring a small slip of paper with prayers written on it was attached. The main entrance to the shrine was thronged by the shrine visitors (*zā'irīn*) who were putting oil into the earthen lamps and anointing their and their children's hands, heads, and faces—including the newborns—with the oil of these lamps. Nearby, other devotees were tying each *laddū* kept around the graves, saying, "Whosoever would pick up one *laddū* for *mannat*, his or her wish (*murād*) would surely be fulfilled. After picking one *laddū*, place back fourteen *laddūs*, fourteen rings and coloured threads to a latticed wall to make oblations (*mannat*)."

Devotees, both men and women, are not allowed to enter the actual grave area of the shrine. The *zā'irīn* kiss the windowsill opening into the graves' cell and throw rose petals through the window onto the graves, and some even do prostration. I saw an elderly woman on the other side of the window handing blessed threads (*mannat ke dhāge*) to mothers who were tying them around the necks of their children for healing and cure. Inside the *mazār* cell, women were reciting *sura yāsīn* (Qur'ān: 36); some were offering *ṣalāt*. Around the tombs were kept small bowls filled with salt. I observed women taking a pinch of this salt and licking it; some wrapped the salt in a piece of paper and tied it in their scarves to take home for blessings. Right in the centre of the *mazār* an *'alam* was fixed to a stone grinding wheel (*chakki*) and the devotees were making seven circumambulations around it. Women in groups were reciting *nauḥas* (lamentations), crying and hitting their chest in *matam* (mourning). I observed that at intervals of half an hour or so, women would stand up, chanting *yā Ḥasan*, *yā Ḥusain* and doing *matam*. One woman told me that the

443 The *'alams* are replicas of Imam Ḥusain's standards, ceremoniously set up in the religious assembly halls, called *Imāmbārgahs*.



FIGURE 17 Bibiān Pākdāmnañ Garhī Shāhū, Lahore



FIGURE 18 *Motichoor laddūs* (a popular ball-shaped sweetmeat) with a ring affixed to its top, Bibiān Pākdāmnañ, Garhī Shāhū, Lahore

‘urs of the Bībīs is not celebrated as celebration of ‘urs of women Sufis is not permissible.

A woman visiting the shrine from Azad Kashmir told me that as due to the *barkat* of the Bībīs her wish had been granted (she did not tell me about the wish), she placed her six gold bangles in the green box kept in the shrine for collecting *nazrāna* (offerings) from the shrine visitors. I managed to have a brief exchange with the *mutawallī* of the shrine who told me that the daily income from the shrine was between two and three hundred thousand rupees which, compared to the high cost of gold of six bangles, is far below the estimated amount of the daily income as quoted by the shrine’s caretaker.

(2)

Haft ‘Afifa (Seven Virtuous Ladies)/*sattiōñ jo āstāno* (Shrine of the Virtuous Women)

Shrine: Thatta, Pakistan

‘Urs: 19–20 Safar

Unlike most other Sufi and pious women of Sindh who are forgotten, *Haft ‘Afifa*, or the seven virtuous women (sisters), are remembered with great devotion until today. Two eighteenth-century male authors of Sindh’s history immortalised the tale narrating an incredible story of these seven young, unmarried sisters who preferred death to a life of dishonour and thus have valorised and sanctified the belief that for women death is better than an unchaste life. Today, *sattiōñ jo āstāno* (the shrine of the chaste women) is a popular place of visitation by local devotees.

Tuḥfatu’l-kirām (Gift of the noble), a family history of the Kalhoṛa dynasty, completed in 1767–1768 by Mīr ‘Alī Sher Qānī⁴⁴⁴ (1727–1788), is the first source for the study of these seven sisters. Qānī⁴⁴⁵ gives a short account of seven innocent daughters (*dukhtar mā’sūma*) under the subheading *az ‘ajā’ibāt Sāmū’i khasf haft dukhtarān* (from the wonders of Samui—eclipse of seven virgin daughters).⁴⁴⁴ Expanding the story, Qānī⁴⁴⁵ writes, “There were seven beautiful (*malīḥ*), chaste (*‘iffat*) young girls of the family of the Soomra and by nature (*sar-isht*) were ascetic (*tāriku’d-Dunyā*) and God worshipping (*khudā parast*). All the time, they remained busy in remembering God. Frightened by the tyranny of the people, they, like the *Aṣḥāb-i kahf*, were living a life of solitary confinement.”⁴⁴⁵

444 Samui, situated about three miles north-west to Thatta, under the Makli hills, was the capital of the Samma dynasty of Sindh. For a brief introduction, see Albert William Hughes, 1874. *A Gazetteer of the Province of Sind*. London: G. Bell.

445 Mīr ‘Alī Sher Qānī⁴⁴⁵ Thattawī. 1887. *Tārikh-i Nāyāb- Tuḥfatu’l-Kirām, jild som*, Delhi: Maṭba‘ Nāsirī. pp. 182.

Meanwhile when Saiyyid Ya'qūb Mashhadī,⁴⁴⁶ with all the grandeur and splendour of a Shaikh (*karr-u-farr-i-mashīkhat*), passed by this area, the seven sisters came under his refuge (*ba-amān*) and began living in Samui. There was no respite for them there as well. Soon, a gang of the rich of the area came after them. As these girls were not willing [to accept their proposal], these men of wealth sent soldiers to capture them. Thus, one morning, just before sunrise, as it was their custom (*bā rasm-i ma'hūd*), they reached the embankment (*bar lab-i daryā*) for taking a bath. These adversaries (*ḥarifān*) arrived and began insisting [to accept the proposal]. Shaikh Jundhi Patni,⁴⁴⁷ by his charismatic powers came to know of their condition and at once rescued them from the clutches of these rogues and miraculously took them away to the other bank of the river. The soldiers followed them there. As there is no respite and shelter for the helpless, except that of God, Qānī' observes that, therefore these chaste women lamented to God (*bā dargāh-i khudā nalīdā*) to hide them. The earth then opened up and swallowed all the seven. Since then, the place where the earth swallowed these pious girls has become a *ziyārat-gāh* (place of pilgrimage) for all.⁴⁴⁸

After a lapse of some thirteen years, following *Tuḥfatu'l-kirām*, another celebrated chronicler, Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī, in 1194/1780 in his Persian work *Tuḥfatu'l-ṭāhirīn* (A present of the chaste ones), added more information about these ascetic sisters. In a section entitled '*dar zikr awliyā'Allah ki dar sawād-i baldah āsūdund*' (in remembrance of friends of God who repose in the suburbs of the city), he writes about the Seven Sisters of Thatta under the heading *zikr haft 'afīfā ki bā iṣtilāḥ inās "sattiōn" goyand* (an account of seven virtuous [females] called chaste women).⁴⁴⁹

446 According to Qānī', Saiyyid Ya'qūb Mashhadī, a person of excellent piety and virtues, along with his brother and riding a lion, arrived in Sindh from Mashhad in 901 H and died in 922 H. See *Tārikh-i Nāyāb- Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām*, *jild som*, pp. 191–92.

447 Shaikh Jundha Patni was said to be a Mahdawi who because of the prayers of the Seven Chaste Sisters attained great acclamation as a Sufi. For more, see *Tārikh-i Nāyāb- Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām*, *jild som*, p. 184.

448 *Tuḥfaṭu'l-Kirām*, *jild som*, p. 182.

449 *Inās "sattiōn"* is a combination of two words, Arabic and Sindhi. *Inās* means females and *sattiōn* is a derivation of the Sanskrit word *sati*, meaning a virtuous wife and not as erroneously understood to mean widow burning. For further information, see John Stratton Hawley. 1994. *Sati, the blessing and the curse: the burning of wives in India*. New York: Oxford University Press; Shaikh Muḥammad 'Āzam Thattawī. *Tuḥfat u'l-ṭahirīn*. (Edited by Badr-i Alam Durrani). Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1956, pp. 175–176.

‘Āzam Thattawi’s story identifies the soldiers pursuing the chaste sisters to achieve clandestine motives as the soldiers of Sulṭān ‘Alāu’d-Dīn Khaljī (d. 1316).⁴⁵⁰ While the Sultan’s army pursued the family members of the Sumra ruler who were running to seek shelter, these seven sisters lost their way. Seeing the pursuing army of the Sultan approaching them, the chaste sisters got terrified and sought Allāh’s blessings to protect their honour (*ān pākdāmanān bākhudā ruju*). At that moment something strange, not witnessed before, happened with the Blessings of God’s Eminent Glory. The earth split and all the sisters who were a bouquet of chastity (*guldastā-i ‘iffat*) were swallowed by the earth (*dar ḥāl ba-qudrat badrūl-‘ajā’ib jalla jalālahū zamīn az ham munfarīj gardīd*). When the horse-riding soldiers came close, they were surprised to see only the edges of the girls’ headscarves (*mignā*). Astonished at what the pursuing horse riders watched from a distance, they said, “certainly these veiled females were divinely ordained (*ṣāhib-i-tawfīq*) and were believing women (*khudāwand-i taḥqīq*).” The place where this happened is called Samui, the first capital of the Sumra, a few miles north of Thatta. Women pilgrims visit this place of women who are honoured as having the virtues of Bībī Ḥaṣrat Maryam (*Maryam ṣifatān*) and get their wishes (*murād*) granted.⁴⁵¹ This narrative does not mention the help provided by the two eminent male Sufis to the seven sisters while they were in distress.

Mirzā Mehdi Shirāzī in 1888 wrote a compendium of women’s short biographies selected from almost all the Muslim lands. In the long list of women of prominence, the last entry is about *Haft ‘Afīfa*. The account repeats the above two narratives with no credit to the earlier authors.⁴⁵²

On my visit to the graves of the seven sisters in January 2016, another version of the story was narrated by the *khalīfa* of the graves. He told me that these girls were first married to the Qur’ān, and later on they achieved *‘irfān* and attained spiritual states. Another legend that I heard during my visit was that actually the seven sisters were not seven but were nine in number. Two of them had

450 Mir ‘Alī Sher Qānī’ also says that Samui was ruined by the invading armies of the Sultan, See *Tuḥfaṭu’l-Kirām*, jild som, p. 182.

451 *Tuḥfaṭu’l-tāhīrīn*, 176; Na’īmī, Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain. 1987. *Tazkira-i awliyā-yi Sindh*. Karachi: Shāriq Publications, p. 214.

452 Mirzā Mehdi Shirāzī. 1889. *Kitāb-i Tazkirat ‘al-khwātīn dar Sharāḥ-i ḥāl-i mashāhīr-i niswān-i ‘ālam az ‘Arab wa Rūm wa Hind wa ‘Ajām az ṣadr-i Islām tā kunūn mushtamal bar awṣāf-i ḥamīda wa ṣifāt-i pasandīda ‘ānhā wa ‘ash’ārī ki dar ‘Arabī wa Fārsī wa Turkī guftahand*. (Place of publication not known, probably Bombay), p. 165.

wings and therefore were called *parion* (fairies) and were buried separately at the shrine of *Shāh parion* (the noble fairies) in Makli, while the remaining seven were buried at this *dargāh*. A grave lying across the graves of the Seven Sisters is said to be that of their brother. Women are prohibited to attend this grave. On the 'urs day and on *nauchandi* evenings (the first Thursday of a lunar month), large crowds of men and women along with children and toddlers arrive to pay homage to the shrine of the *sattion*, make supplications, and offer flowers, sweetmeat, and cash. Those whose wishes are granted offer home-raised live fowl. In *tabarruk* blessed articles, such as food, flowers, and incense sticks are distributed free of cost among the pilgrims, the *mujāwir* (shrine attendant) distributes blessed oil for anointing, dust of the graves, and flower petals among the shrine visitors. Occasionally some well-to-do persons also give rice cooked with meat in *langar* (free food).

Two weeks following my first visit to *sattion jo āstāno*, I returned to Thatta and Makli in the last week of January 2016. This time I wanted to meet the women *khalīfa* of the shrine. I had asked someone in Thatta to make sure that these women were present. I also requested that the *Khalīfa* women should not be informed about my visit. On arriving at the shrine, we were told by one woman *khalīfa* not to visit the shrine in the fashion of tourists who visit the shrine for sightseeing or for collecting information. Shrines must be visited, she warned me, only to pay respect to the *awliyā* 'Allāh buried there. One woman, who refused to introduce herself, glared at me and asked me why I kept coming there as I was neither making a *ba'it* nor any *mannat*. After some negotiations, which involved the transaction of paltry cash, her temper cooled down. She told me that there were at least five families "running" the *dargāh* as ancestral custodians and were responsible for its safe management. The women *khalīfa* belonged to the *Aṣṣhābī silsilā* and also perform *b'ait* for women. These *khalīfa* also hold the key to the cash box. An average daily income of the shrine is about Rs. 300, which is spent on the routine upkeep of the shrine. One of these *khalīfa* also said that the present *dargāh* was built by a Hindu. All these women did not allow me to take their pictures.

A shrine dedicated to the *sattion* of Thatta and known locally as *sattion jo āstāno* exists in Karachi within the shrine complex of Mā'ī Mirān Shāh for the benefit of those women devotees who cannot travel to Thatta to pay homage. In one of my earlier visits to the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān Shāh, I interviewed the woman who managed *sattion jo āstāno* and also took her photo. She told me that *sattion jo āstāno* in Karachi was managed for women who cannot travel to Thatta but want to benefit from the blessings of the *sattion*.

10.12 A Sufi Woman Who Wrote a Book of Instructions for the Sufis

(1)

Bebe Nekbakhta**Period: Sixteenth Century****Place: Bannu, Pakistan**

Bebe Nekbakhta was a virtuous gnostic and learned (*'ārifa wa kāmila*) daughter of Shaikh Allahdād of the Mumuza'ī tribe of the Pashtūns living near Ashnagar (also called Hashtnagar), north of Peshawar. Her family had long traditions of following the path of mysticism and religious learning. Her grandfather was a known religious scholar. Muḥammad Hotak, the author of *Pata Khazana*, the source of this biographical notice, says that his father, Da'ūd Khan, narrated that in *Awliyā'-i Afghānī*, a book written by Imāmu'd-Dīn Ghoryāl, Shaikh Allahdād was a man of great saintly virtues and that his daughter, Bebe Nekbakhta, a gnostic (*'ārifa*) by nature, studied theology (*'ulūm-i dīnī*) and spent her life in prayers and worshipping (*ba-riyāzat wa 'ibādat-i khudā*) and remained lost in Allāh's remembrance. In 951/1544, Bebe Nekbakhta was married to Shaikh Qadam, son of Khwāja Muḥammad Zāhid Khalīl Mathiza'ī.⁴⁵³ Soon after the marriage, a daughter, named Ruqayyā, was born but died in infancy. In 955/1549, a son, Shaikh Miyān Qāsim Afghānī Qādirī, was born. Muḥammad Hotak reverently describes Shaikh Miyān Qāsim as the greatest benefit to humanity and the pole star of the age (*Ghawsu's zamān* and *Qutb-i daurān*), whose fame spread to all parts of Hind.

On the authority of Imāmu'd-Dīn Ghoryāl and his own father, Da'ūd Khan, Hotak writes that in 969/1562, Bebe Nekbakhta wrote *Irshādu'l Fuqarā'* (directions for the right way for the ascetics), a valuable book of guidance in verse form for the *fuqarā'* (Sufis who have voluntarily opted for poverty) and the *'ibādu'llah* (servants of Allāh). Muḥammad Hotak's father had seen this book while he was visiting Bannu, a town not far away from Peshawar, and recited some of the verses from the book. Hotak cites some of these mystical verses composed by the elegant (*rangīn*) Bebe Nekbakhta in the Pashtu language as

453 Shaikh Qadam had two wives. He had no children from his second wife. See Khwāja Nī'matu'llah bin Khwāja Ḥabību'llah al-Harāwī's *Tārīkh-i khānjahānī wa Makhzan-i Afghānī*, vol. 2, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan. 1962), p. 85; see also *Pata Khazana* Original: <https://archive.org/details/BPataKhazanaOriginal>, p. 99. Hotak, Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, and Khushal Ḥabībī. 1997. *The Hidden treasure: a biography of Pashtoon poets = Pata khazana*. Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 138–39.

counsel (*naṣīḥat*) for the people, addressing them as *múmin* (believer). Thus, her addressees were primarily the Pashtun males. I have selected a few verses to present here:

God bless you O believer
Be truthful in and out.
Pray only with sincerity
In faith do not have doubt.

Always seek God's love
And serve in His way,
Stay away from sin
From virtue do not sway.

Leave this world aside
If you have any wisdom,
Go and seek eternity
In God's sacred kingdom.⁴⁵⁴

These verses, compared to any other spiritual sermon with which we are familiar and which usually are associated with male voices, are of unique significance. Bebe Nekbakhta chose to spread her spiritual guidance not through the spoken words in spiritual discourse sessions but through the medium of written verses. This novel method was more suitable and effective, mainly because it did not breach the traditional distancing between male and female attendance at one place, a reality of the social life of most Muslim societies. Additionally, it added more permanency to the message and ensured wider outreach. The verses guide the reader to be sincere (*ba-ikhlās*). Like a true Sufi, she exhorts her readers to know the foundational difference between the outward (*zāhir*) and the inner (*bāṭin*) concept of the Reality (*ḥaqq*), thus ending travel in this world by rejecting worldly lures and attractions (*tark-i duniyā*). The traveller, however, warns Bebe Nekbakhta, should remain watchful of God's wrath (*ghazab*) caused by human wrongdoing and instead seek Allāh's Mercy (*raḥm*), practice offering thanks (*shukr*) for all His *iḥsān* (beautiful gifts) and adopt patience (*ṣabr*) in all actions and thoughts.

It is worth noticing that as the book mostly had Pashtūn male readership, and thus Bebe Nekbakhta, without sitting in a *khānqāh* or holding discourse sessions, shared her wisdom with a large and unbounded audience. It is also

454 Translation from Muḥammad Hotak, 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, and Khushal Ḥabībī. p. 139.

significant that Bebe Nekbakhta's *Irshādu'l Fuqarā'* is the only Sufi treatise on record on the right way for the Sufis authored by a Sufi woman. The book did not remain hidden from the male readers as is evidenced that Hotak's father, Da'ūd Khan, not only read it but, after a lapse of several years, could quote it with accuracy and passion too. In view of the year 1562, the year of its completion, *Irshādu'l Fuqarā'* predates all other works, whether Sufi texts or other, written by women.

10.13 A Sufi Woman Who Wrote Sufi Biographies and about Her Own Spiritual Journey

(1)

Jahān Ārā' Begam

Date: Safar 1023/1614–Ramazān 1092/1681

Shrine: Delhi, India

The narrative of Jahān Ārā' Begam presented here stands unique among Sufi women discussed in this volume for two reasons: first, born into an imperial household at a time when it was known for its fabulous wealth and treasures, she sought the company of the Sufis; and second, she is the only Sufi woman discussed in this volume who ever inscribed her own spiritual journey and an account of male Sufis.

Jahān Ārā' Begam (1614–1681), the eldest and the favourite child of the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahan (r. 1628–1658) and Mumtāz Mahal (d. 1040/1631) of Iranian lineage, was born during the apex of Mughal glory when her father, a favourite son of Emperor Jahangir, was busy in his Mewar expedition. With the untimely demise of her mother, Mumtāz Mahal, the lady of the Taj, during childbirth in 1040/1631, Jahān Ārā' Begam was destined to go through a tumultuous life. With her father's succession to the throne, she came to be addressed by the august imperial title, Begam Şāhib. She lies buried in the sanctuary of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Awliyā' in Delhi with this epitaph on her tomb:

Let naught but green grass grow over my grave.
For mortals' poor turf alone is the cover.

Jahān Ārā', like her younger brother Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659), had a deep yearning for seeking the Truth and followed the path of a spiritual seeker (*sālik*). Among all pious women who are seekers of Truth and whose narratives are included in this book, Jahān Ārā' is the only one to inscribe experiences of her

spiritual journey. Tutored by Satīu'n Nisā' (d. 1056/1640),⁴⁵⁵ who was endowed with excellent learning in poetry, medicine, and the Qur'ān, Jahān Ārā' was well trained in the art of writing. Inspired by her devotion as a *sālik* and equipped with learning and writing skills, Jahān Ārā' produced two unique treatises on South Asian Sufis which remain unmatched in their merit as being the only two works authored by a woman on this subject. More importantly, these two small tracts remain the only two hitherto known autobiographical narratives of a pious woman's spiritual journeying.⁴⁵⁶

At the age of twenty-six years, Jahān Ārā', who never married, after carefully consulting reliable works and treatises on *taṣawwuf*, extracted relevant material (*az kutub wa rasā'il mu'tabarā ba ihtiyāṭ tamām bīrūn āwarda*) and wrote in 1049/1639 *Mūnisu'l-arwāh* (Companion of the souls), a biographical compendium (*tazkira*) of Chishtī Sufis.⁴⁵⁷ In her own words, she wrote *Mūnisu'l-arwāh* because of her tremendous sincerity and devotion (*kamāl-i ikhlās wa a'qīdat*) for Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī.⁴⁵⁸ After narrating the lives of Chishtī Sufis, she describes her pilgrimage to the shrine of Khwāja Mu'īnu'd-Dīn Chishtī at Ajmer, which is the first account of shrine visitation by a South Asian Muslim woman known to exist.⁴⁵⁹ In *Mūnisu'l-arwāh*, Jahān Ārā' also refers to her discussions about Sufis and Sufism with her father, Shāh Jahan.

A little more than a year later, in 1051/1641, Jahān Ārā' completed another Sufi treatise, *Risāla-yi ṣāhibiyya*.⁴⁶⁰ In this tract, Jahān Ārā' narrates her association

455 Satīu'n Nisā' was the eldest sister of Ṭālib Amulī (d.1626), poet laureate (*maliku'l-shu'arā'*). For more about Satīu'n Nisā', see Maulawī Maḥbūbur Raḥmān Kalīm. 1906. *Jahān Ārā' Begam*. Aligarh: Maṭb' Aḥmadi, pp. 15–16; Rekha Misra. 1967. *Women in Mughal India, 1526–1748*. Allahabad: Munsihiram Manoharlal, pp. 227–238.

456 For biographies of Jahān Ārā' Begam, see Maulawī Maḥbūbur Raḥmān Kalīm. 1906. *Jahān Ārā' Begam*. Aligarh: Maṭb' Aḥmadi; For her biography see, Qamar Jahan Begam. 1991. *Princess Jahan Ara Begam: Her Life and Works*. Karachi: S.M. Hamid Ali; Tahera Azmat. 1970. 'Jahan Ara,' in *Women Mentors of Men* by Tahera Azmat, Ujjain: Siddhartha Prakashan, pp. 67–77; Ziauddin Aḥmad Baranī. 1921. *Jahan Ara Begam*. Delhi: Ghani'l maṭab'; Maḥbūbur Rahman. 1907. *Jahan Ara: Shāh jahān bādshāh ki fāzil beti*. Aligarh: Maṭba' Faiz-i Ām; Mirzā Muḥammad Wahid. 1953. 'Great Muslim Women of India,' in *Great Women of India* (Edited) Swami Madhavnanda & Ramesh Chandra Majumdar. Almora: Advait Ashrama, pp. 378–94; for allegations against her, see Sakul Kundra. 2014. "Visiblizing" Women: French Travellers' Memoirs and the Construction of Women of Mughal India. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*. 21(1): pp. 71–86.

457 Jahān Ārā' Begam 1891. *Mūnisu'l-arwāh*. Translated in Urdu as *Mu'īnu'l-arwāh* by Maulawī Muḥammad 'Abdus-Ṣamad Kalīm Qādīrī. Dehli: Maṭbā' Rizvi, p. 43. Persian quote from Maulawī Maḥbūbur Raḥmān Kalīm. 1906. *Jahān Ārā' Begam*, p. 18.

458 Quoted in Maulawī Maḥbūbur Raḥmān Kalīm. 1906. *Jahān Ārā' Begam*, p. 18.

459 *Mūnisu'l-arwāh*, pp. 43–44.

460 Jahān Ārā' Begam *Risāla-yi ṣāhibiyya* with Persian text and Urdu and English translation by Muhammad Aslam and Sardar Ali Ahmad Khan. Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1993.

with the *silsila-yi Qādirīyyā* and her devotion to Shaikh Mullā Shāh Badakhshī (1585–1661).⁴⁶¹ She introduces herself with great humility first as *faqīrā, ẓaʿīfa wa ḥaqīrā naḥīfā* (powerless, small and frail), and *khādima awliyāʾ* (slave of the friends of Allāh) and later as the daughter of Emperor Shāh Jahan. With dexterity of polished penmanship in highly ornate Farsi, the celibate Mughal princess writes that Maulānā Shāh is the *Qutb-i waqt* and *Ghaws-i zamān* (the pole star of the age and the benefit of humanity) and could transform the seekers (*ṭalibān*) from nothing to golden existence with his greatest elixir (*iksīr-i Āzam*). She addresses him as *wilāyat panāh* (sanctuary of holiness), *murshid-i kāmīl* (perfect Master) and *sarkhail ahl-i-hādi* (commander of the people of Allāh). To her, Maulānā Shāh was *Murshid-i Kāmīl*, and *ʿArif-i Rabbānī* (the perfect Master, and the Gnostic of the Divine).⁴⁶² Jahān Ārāʾ, finally, pays her greatest tribute to the charismatic powers of her mentor by saying that Ḥaẓrat ʿIsā revived the dead; Mullā Shāh always revived the dead hearts (*murdagān-i dīl rā hameshā zindagi mī bakhshand*).⁴⁶³

In a separate section in *Risāla-i šāhibīyya*, under the heading *zīkr aḥwāl īn ẓaʿīfā* (an account of this lowly one), Jahān Ārāʾ briefly narrates various stages of her spiritual journey.⁴⁶⁴ Recounting her journey, Jahān Ārāʾ writes that since the age of twenty, despite her life as a princess, she had a sincere and strong devotion for the Chishtī Sufis (*Khawājgān-i Chisht*) and entered the discipleship with devotion of Khwāja Muʾīnuʾd-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer. Her devotion for the Shaikh, she writes, increased each day since her visit to the shrine in Ajmer.⁴⁶⁵ She went through several experiences in search of the true path and met with several Sufis. During this period, her brother Dārā Shikūh also guided her. At the time of his departure for the Kabul expedition in 1049/1639, Dārā gave her a copy of *Nafahātuʾl uns* (written in 1478) of Mullā Jāmī (d. 1492). Jahān Ārāʾ was so deeply influenced by the book that she took it as her constant companion, kept it all the time with her, and read it.⁴⁶⁶

While journeying with her father to Kabul via Hasan Abdal (in Pakistan) in 1049/1639, Jahān Ārāʾ had another mystical experience, which finally changed the course of her life. The quest to know the Truth led her to contact through

461 Mullā Shāh from Rustaq in Badakhshan arrived in Hindustan and became a disciple of Ḥaẓrat Miān Mīr of Lahore. For his biography and teachings, see Sulṭān Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh Qādirī. *Sakīnatuʾl-awliyāʾ*. Lahore: Nawal Kishore Steam Press. (n. d.), pp. 116–158.

462 Jahān Ārāʾ Begam *Risāla-yi šāhibīyya*, p. 32.

463 Ibid, p. 15.

464 Ibid, pp. 18–33.

465 Ibid, p. 18.

466 Ibid, p. 19.

her eunuchs (*khwajāsārā*) two Sufis—Shaikh Shāh Daulā of Gujrat, Punjab (1581–1676),⁴⁶⁷ and Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah, a recluse living in the neighbourhood of Tāl Jalāl Ghakhar. From the first one, despite her request for blessings (*iltimās faiz*), she could not receive what she was seeking.

Her contact with Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah proved more fruitful. Not only did Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah accept her offerings (*nazr*) submitted through a eunuch, but he sent her instructions for doing Allāh’s remembrance by *zīkr* and *tasbīḥ*, along with a prayer rug that he had made himself and two loaves of bread (*nān*).⁴⁶⁸ The moment she swallowed a small piece of this loaf, she experienced purity of heart which was filled with Light and she felt composure and the Presence of the Divine (*dar dil ṣafā’ī wa nūrī wa dar bāṭin jam’iyat wa ḥuṣūrī yāftam*). She kept the bread for three days and shared it with her female attendants. Filled with this new awakening, Jahān Ārā’ went through deep internal transformation and experienced a strong quest for seeking the Truth (*ṭalab-i ḥaqq*).

Though now around forty years in age, Jahān Ārā’ felt the weight of her age and thought that her energy was ebbing away (*quwwat-i zāhiri dar ma’raḥ zawāl ast*). She grew cold towards the world and its useless affairs. Realising that Allāh is all-seeing and all-knowing, she repented (*tawba mī bāyad kard*) and regretted what she had done in the past. She began offering prayers missed earlier and also kept missed fasts (*faut shudā*). Most of her time was now spent in meditation and remembrance (*bāzīkr wa tasbīḥ*) and in reading the lives of Sufi Masters (*muṭāla‘ aḥwāl-i mashā’ikh*).⁴⁶⁹

467 An account of a meeting with Shāh Daulā Daryai is given by ‘Abdu’llah Khesghi in his *Ma‘ārijū’l wilāyat* (completed in 1683). Khesghi writes that Shāh Daulā was of Afghānī descent. See *Ma‘ārijū’l wilāyat*, MS no. R344 in the holdings of Punjab University (Lahore) library, Iqbal Mujaddidī Collection (zakhirā Iqbal Mujaddidī), fols. 431a & b; Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhhkar*, (vol. 3), pp. 121–122. Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf says that originally Shāh Daulā Gujrati was from a Hindu princely family (*az shahzadgān-hunūd*); *Ḥadīqat’ul Awliyā’*, p. 174; *Gazetteer of the Gujrat District*, 1883–84. Punjab Government, Lahore: The Arya Press, p. 115; Mahomed Latif. 1896. ‘Dwarfs in the Punjab,’ in *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, vol. 1 written for the year 1840 to 1897 by Robert Needham Cust. London: Luzac & Co. 1898, p. 416. Elliott, Major A.C. ‘The Legend of Shāh Daula’ in Rose, H.A. 1919. *A glossary of the tribes & castes of the Punjab & North-west frontier province*. Lahore: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, pp. 631–637.

468 Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah earned his livelihood by weaving prayer rugs. For the past thirty years, Jahān Ārā’ says that Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah had not stepped out of his residence. *Risāla-i ṣāhibīyyā*, p. 21. The only other reference to Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah is found in Dārā Shikūh’s *Sakīnatu’l Awliyā’*. Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah arrived in Kashmir from Lahore, and at the request of Dārā, Mullā Shāh accepted to instruct him to perform *zīkr-i ilāhi*. In a letter addressed to Dārā Shikūh, Mullā Shāh wrote that he (Mullā Shāh) had accepted Ḥājī ‘Abdu’llah because of him. See *Sakīnatu’l Awliyā’*, p. 137.

469 *Risāla-yi ṣāhibīyya*, pp. 20–21.

Later that same year, 1639, Jahān Ārā' came in contact with Mullā Shāh, a disciple of Miyān Mīr in Kashmir. Jahān Ārā' corresponded with Mullā Shāh⁴⁷⁰ and once even sent him bread and some vegetables that she had cooked herself. Before a meeting could be held between Mullā Shāh and Jahān Ārā', the princess found a way to communicate spiritually with her Master. She would sit in front of a portrait of him, sketched by one of the court painters of Dārā, and imagining his presence would meditate.⁴⁷¹ One evening, Jahān Ārā', after taking a bath and donning ritually clean dress (*libās-i pākīza*), ate *bahī* (quince fruit) sent to her by Mullā Shāh and sat down in the small mosque that she had built for herself in her palace. She meditated till midnight, and after performing *tahajjud* (midnight supererogatory prayer) retired to her bedchamber. There, in a corner of her room facing the *qibla*, she began meditation by focussing her attention on the picture of her spiritual teacher (*shabīh ḥaẓrat-i murshid*) and visualising the company of the Prophet and his chosen companions (*yārān-i burguzīdā wa ṣaḥāba*) and friends of Allāh (*awliyā' Allāh*).⁴⁷² Describing her gnostic experience, the first known one penned by a woman devotee, Jahān Ārā' inscribes:

As soon as I focussed my first attention (*man awwal mutāwajjuh shudam*), I experienced a state in which I was neither asleep nor awake (*nā khwāb būd nā bedārī*) and beheld the sanctified assembly (*majlis muqaddas*) of the Prophet and his companions and the great Friends of Allāh (*awliyā'-yi 'uzzām*). In this august assembly, *Ḥaẓrat Akhund Ṣāhib* [i.e., Mullā Shāh] was also there with his head placed at the holy feet of the Prophet. The Holy Prophet said, "O' Mullā Shāh! you have lighted the lamp of the house of the Timurids" (*Aye Mullā Shāh! tū chirāgh-i taimūriya rā roushan kardī*). Emerging from this state, my heart was gladdened with this tidings (*dil-i manazīn bishārat bāgh bāgh ba-shaḡuft*) and prostrated in thanksgiving.⁴⁷³

Hearing the above from the blessed tongue of the Prophet, Jahān Ārā' realised that none other from the house of Timur, but only she and her brother, Dārā, had set on the path of Truth (*bā-ṭalab rāh-i ḥaqq*).⁴⁷⁴ Dārā, himself a disciple of Mullā Shāh, confirmed the spiritual pursuits and attainments of Jahān Ārā'

470 Two letters of Mullā Shāh, written in response to Jahān Ārā's letters are included in *Sakīnatu'l-Awliyā'*, pp. 144–148.

471 *Risāla-yi ṣāhibīyya*, p. 25.

472 Ibid. p. 25.

473 Ibid. p. 26.

474 Ibid. p. 27.

and that she learned *mashghūliyat* at the hands of Mullā Shāh.⁴⁷⁵ In one of the letters that Mullā Shāh addressed to Jahān Ārā', Mullā Shāh directed her to read and consider carefully two things, along with Dārā. First, "one who has gained [access to] Allāh, needs nothing else," and second, "doubts and ambiguities happen only because of deficiency in comprehension."⁴⁷⁶ Mullā Shāh also directed Jahān Ārā' to "value (*qadr*) your worthy brother. If he were not there, you would not have the good fortune to have this wealth and blessings. If you do not value him, how would you do mine [value]?"⁴⁷⁷

Inscribed in the luxurious imperial abodes of the Mughals, *Risāla-yi šāhibiyya* of Jahān Ārā' serves a double purpose. On one hand, it unveils the self of the author, as all autobiographical narratives do; on the other, it made public Jahān Ārā's communications with unrelated males which was a taboo among the royal Mughals.

Jahān Ārā's life presents a curious combination of two opposites. On one side, Jahān Ārā' was a princess, born in luxury and one who experienced the taste of power meant for a queen consort and participated actively in the fiercest battles fought for the throne;⁴⁷⁸ on the other side, she yearned for the life of a traveller on the path of a gnostic. These two opposites have made Jahān Ārā' Begam the subject of great fascination for writers, including both Indian and European. Some have praised her virtues; others have accused her of immorality. A contemporary Persian text, *Dabistān-i mazāhib*, completed a little after 1656 whose authorship is attributed to Muḥsin Fānī (d. 1670–1671),⁴⁷⁹ referred to Jahān Ārā' in ornate Persian idioms such as *Maryam-i rozgār* (Mary of the age), *Fāṭima zamān* (Fāṭima of the time), *a'šār 'iffat-i 'unṣur* (the root of purity of the world), and *'iṣmat paikar* (model of chastity). It says that, driven by her heart, she followed Mullā Shāh and thus turned towards the right direction.⁴⁸⁰

475 *Sakīnatu'l Awliyā'*, p. 144.

476 *Ibid*, p. 147.

477 *Ibid*, p. 147.

478 She wrote several significant letters that reflect her influential position in Mughal court politics. See H.A. Rose. 1911. "Persian Letters from Jahan Ara, Daughter of Shāh Jahan, King of Delhi, to Raja Budh Prakash of Sirmur." *Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 8: pp. 449–58.

479 Irfan Habib. "A fragmentary exploration of an Indian text on religion and sects: Notes on the earlier version of the "Dabistan-i mazahib"." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 6, 2000–2001, pp. 474–497. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44148125>.

480 Muḥsin Fānī. 1294/1877. *Dabistān-i Mazāhib*. Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, p. 389. (For an English translation of *Dabistān-i Mazāhib*, see David Shea, and Anthony Troyer. 1843). *The Dabistan, or School of Manners, translated from the original Persian [of the Muhammad*

A modern-day writer, Ezzati, refers to her as having the “humility of the true Sufi.”⁴⁸¹

10.14 A Sufi Woman Who Led an Agitation and Revoked Her *Bai‘at*

(1)

Mujibu’n-nisā’

Period: Sixteenth Century

Place: Lahore

Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣābirī gives an incredible anecdote about a learned (*fāẓila*) woman, Mujibu’n-nisā’ in *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*, a hagiographical account of the Ṣābirī *silsila* of the Sufis.⁴⁸² Mujibu’n-nisā’, daughter of one Saiyyid Ghulām Aḥmad b. Saiyyid ‘Azīzullah b. Nūr Aḥmad b. Saiyyid Jalāl Bukhari, on 21 Muḥarram 904/7 September 1498, came with some sweets (*shirīnī*) for an offering after her initiation, to a mosque in Lahore, to take *bai‘at* at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh ‘Abduṣ Ṣamad, *khalīfa* of Shāh ‘Abdul Quddūs Gangohī (456/1537). When the Shaikh took his seat for the ceremony, Mujibu’n-nisā’ requested that he recite the genealogy of the Ṣābirī *silsila* from the beginning, starting from the blessed name of the Prophet and his companions. Mujibu’n-nisā’ kept counting all the names. Next, she asked about the locations of the shrines of the *silsila* so that she could perform *ziyārat* (shrine visitation) after her *bai‘at*. At the mention of the name of Khwāja ‘Alāu’d-Dīn Ṣābir, she got up and took back the sweets, saying who could dare reach that desolate place as for miles around the place of his burial, the sword of Allāh’s wrath (*shamshūr-i qahhārī*) guards the place. She then began misguiding (*ighwā*) the other disciples, arguing that as it was not possible for one to present himself in the *bārgāh* (a court, here the last resting place of the saint) of ‘Alāu’d-Dīn Ṣābir at Kalyar, how could his *silsila* be maintained. A large number of people

Muhsin Fani]. Vol. 3, Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland. London: B. Durpat and Allen and Co.

481 Abū al-Faẓl Ezzatī. 2002. *The Spread of Islam: The Contributing Factors*. London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies, p. 215.

482 See *aḥwāl bai‘at na karnai Mujibu’n-nisā’ kā khulāfā-yi Ḥaẓrat Quṭb-i ‘Ālam Ṣāhib sai bā ba’is dafīnā na honai Ḥaẓrat Bādshāh do-jahān Makhdūm Ṣāhib kai* in Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ṣābirī Chishtī Rampurī. 1304/1856. *Ḥaqīqat-i Gulzār-i Ṣābirī*. Rampur: Ḥasanī Press, pp. 407–37.

agreed with this argument and stopped seeking *bai'at* at the hands of Ḥaẓrat Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad. About 3,720 disciples who were already under *bai'at* turned away (*munḥarif*) from 'Abduṣ Ṣamad and were expelled from the *silsila* (*rānda-ye dargāh*).

The discord and agitation lasted for more than three years. Finally, on 7 Rabi'ū'l awwal 907/1501, after the Friday prayers, Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad came out of his prayer closet. At least seventeen hundred devoted disciples, including his spiritual deputies, were also there. Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad was in high state of spiritual intoxication (*wajd*). When in that state, he asked the assembled if they had come to know Allāh through him. Most, including the highly devoted followers, responded they had not reached to the level of knowing Allāh. The author here adds charismatic disappearance of Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad, leaving his cloak and head cover (*khirqā wa chādar*). In the meantime, thousands of devotees kept a vigil and moved in circles around the cloak, reciting the Divine attributes. Twenty-one days later, on 19 Rabi'ū'l awwal, without being noticed by the watching crowd, Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad reappeared, donning his cloak. In the meantime, a huge crowd, led by Muḥibū'n-nisā', entered the premises. Shah Jalālu'd-Dīn Thānesrī, one of the trusted lieutenants, explained the public demand for the construction of a proper shrine over the tomb of 'Alāu'd-Dīn Ṣābir at Kalyar. If this was not done, Shah Jalālu'd-Dīn Thānesrī pleaded, the movement would get stronger and would hurt the cause of the *silsila*. He also added that already it was considered by many as a *silsila* which had come to a stop (*maqṭū'*). At this point Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad asked to fetch Muḥibū'n-nisā'. When she approached, Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad stood up to greet her in respect and said, "Thanks to God. It is because of you the shrine of Makhdūm 'Alāu'd-Dīn Ṣābir at Kalyar would be complete on the sixteenth day, counting from today. It would be Friday, 5 Rabi'ūs sānī 507." Hearing this, Muḥibū'n-nisā' requested for *bai'at*. Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad, however, told her to wait till the shrine was completed per her insistence.

Finally, the construction of the shrine became possible in 907/1501, and that too, according to this hagiography, with the help of eleven thousand *jinn*s and scholars, led by Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qādir Gilānī (d. 1166 in Baghdad, Iraq). Thus, a woman's agitation resulted in the proper construction of a shrine. One wishes to know more about Muḥibū'n-nisā', the daring woman who had launched a public campaign among men and finally success came to her in the form of a well-built marbled shrine and clearance of a danger-infested land. Thus, her popular campaign brought together deceased saints, *jinn*s, and living spiritual heads who all worked together for the shrine construction. Surprisingly, Muḥibū'n-nisā' was not condemned either by Shaikh 'Abduṣ Ṣamad or by the public in general. Indeed, when she came again for initiation on the fifth of

Rabī'us Sānī, 907, the Shaikh, instead of rebuffing her, asked her to wait until the shrine was completed.⁴⁸³

This incident, though a rare example of women's spiritual activism, made no headway in moulding and reforming arguments against women's visible presence in Sufi *silsilās* which continued to gain momentum in volume and in the number of its adherents.

483 For the story of Mujibu'n-nisā' also see *The Big Five of India in Sufism* by W.D. Begg (1999), pp. 126–27.

Biographical Notices of Women Sufis Based on Oral Traditions Collected by Visiting Their Shrines

This chapter presents accounts of seventeen Sufi women about whom textual evidence is not found. They are, however, recognised as pious women and venerated by their devotees who visit their shrines to seek blessings and make offerings. Information given below was collected by visiting these shrines and conducting interviews with the devotees and members of the shrine-managing committees. All entries are made according to the location of the shrines in alphabetical order of the cities visited.

In visiting these shrines, what is particularly striking is their neglected state. Barring a few, most of these shrines are not known except to the people of the neighbourhood. The number of such shrines could be larger as there might be several such shrines in areas that have not yet been explored and documented. For instance, in several localities in Karachi, within the labyrinth of lanes, I saw niches and alcoves built into the outer walls of the houses, dedicated to anonymous saintly females. These tiny shrines are maintained by women of the neighbourhood who pool money for making offerings (*nazar*) and lighting small earthen lamps (*diyā battī*). These women's shrines work as instant therapeutic centres for women burdened with daily chores and emotional stress.

11.1 Karachi

(1)

Amma Khairu'n-nisā'

Period: Twentieth Century

Shrine: Mewa Shāh Graveyard, Karachi

Situated in the Site Town, near the old Mewa Shāh graveyard in Karachi, the shrine of Amma Khairu'n-nisā' stands within the shrine complex of her husband, Bābā Kausar. Women devotees feel that, similar to a loving and caring mother, Amma (mother) Khairu'n-nisā' listens to them patiently and solves their problems. The shrine is of recent origin as Bābā Kausar passed away in



FIGURE 19 Amma Khairu'n-nisā', Mewa Shāh Graveyard, Karachi

1990 in Karachi. Hailing from Junagarh, Gujarat (India), Bābā Kausar belonged to the Qadiriyya-Chishtiyya Sufi order and has a sizeable following in Karachi. His *urs* is held on a large scale on 9 *Jamādi'us-sānī*. Amma Khairu'n-nisā' lies buried along with her husband and his second wife. Amma was the Bābā's first wife.

Local women, whom I met at the shrine and in the neighbourhood, have deep faith in her spiritual attainments and charismatic powers. Women of the Gujarati community pay routine visits to her grave to seek her blessings. One such woman I interviewed confided that after finishing her daily chores, she comes there and sits silently with her right hand placed at the *chadar* (fabric covering the grave) of the shrine. She told me that the Amma listens to her tale, and she feels as if there is someone who cares for her and is prepared to help her.

The custodian of the shrine (*mujāwir*), however, felt otherwise. He said that there were no *urs* celebrations for the Amma, as it is not permissible to hold *urs* for women because women are not Sufis; only men have the honour of attaining the spiritual status (*maqām*) and the prestige of being a Sufi.

(2)

Amma Bibī Maryam**Date: 1974****Shrine: Near Keamari Post Office, Karachi**

Close to the Keamari Post Office, in a congested market area where traffic is constantly jammed, stands a makeshift, one-room, asbestos-roofed *mazār* of Amma Bibī Maryam. One of my students whose aunt lives close by and is a regular visitor to the shrine of Pīr Ghāyab Shāh (which stands close to Amma Bibī Maryam's shrine) told me about this shrine.

In November 2016 when I visited the shrine, it was locked from inside. We could not get the door open. I was able to gather some information about her from people around this area. They told me that Amma Bibī Maryam passed away in 1974. The shopkeepers and the passersby knew nothing more about her. On our next visit, fifteen days later, the shrine door was open. The grave appeared to be of recent construction. We met with a young woman who told us that she had come “to stay” at the shrine as she had no relatives. A sort of bedding, rolled up, was lying in one corner and a bag, perhaps holding her personal stuff, was next to it. We did not stay there for more than ten minutes, as the environment looked suspicious. While we were leaving, a woman entered



FIGURE 20 Outside Amma Bibī Maryam shrine, Near Keamari Post Office, Karachi



FIGURE 21 Amma Bibi Maryam shrine, Near Keamari Post Office, Karachi

the shrine premises and began offering salutations and prayers. I took a photograph to which she did not object.

Stepping out, a fruit seller who had parked his cart outside the shrine wall looked angrily at us and said, "Why do you keep coming to this place? Not a right place for persons like you."

(3)

Bibī Maryam Bukhārī Shahīd

Shrine: Near Karachi Airport, Karachi

Urs: 1–4 Zil Ḥajj

This shrine is of very recent origin. It is said that some fifty years back a saintly woman made her abode in the jungle which then existed around the area where the present Karachi Airport is now built.

Sayyid Jamāl Shah, the *gaddi nishīn* (hereditary head of the shrine) of the *dargāh*, in an interview, gave us some details about the life of Bibī Maryam. While talking to me, he was distributing *tabarruk* among the shrine visitors. He said that when some hooligans attempted to dishonour her, she sought Allāh's refuge. Before the ruffians could molest her, she passed out and died on the spot. Later, when people tried to take her body for her funeral, they could not move it, so she was buried at the spot where she had died. The present shrine stands on this spot to commemorate her miraculous death. As her death was not a natural one, she is now known as *shahīd* (martyr).

I saw several devotees placing cash offerings on a tray covered with a green-coloured piece of glittery fabric. A locked cashbox was also there for the visitors to put cash offerings. Devotees write their wishes on a piece of paper and leave it in a plastic basket, kept close to the grave of Bibī Maryam. Sayyid Jamāl Shah told me that written requests are speedily answered by the Bibī. Young, unmarried girls who seek the Bibī's intercession in arranging an early marriage for them leave coloured bangles tied to a wooden stand near the grave. Women who wish for a child bring small replicas of baby cribs and leave them at the shrine. Oil, blessed by the *barakat* (blessings) of Bibī Maryam's miraculous powers of healing, is kept outside on a table and devotees smear their hands and heads and also those of their children to seek cure from ailments and sufferings. Some tie rags to the tree trunk or leave their written supplications in a coloured bag tied to the tree. Those whose wishes are granted bring huge cauldrons of food to offer in oblation. There are several big and small trees in the compound of the shrine. I also observed that passersby and drivers of public transport slow down for a while at the entrance gate of the shrine and offer *salām* (salutation) with a hand gesture. Some even throw some small

change towards the shrine's gate which is collected by a person deputed there for this purpose.

(4)

The *Chilla* of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid 'Alī Datār
Shrine: Bhimpura, off Nishtar Road, Karachi

The *Chilla*¹ of Mirān Saiyyid 'Alī Datār, a hagiographical holy person who is believed to have lived and died as a soldier fighting against a local chieftain in Gujarat, India, is in Karachi. The original *dargāh* of Mirān Datār, enclosed within a fort-like structure and believed to be more than three hundred years old, is situated in the Unawa village, District Mehsana, in Gujarat in India.² 'Alī Muḥammad Khan, the author of *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī*, the most authentic account of the political and statistical history of Gujarat and which also includes notices on Sufis, is curiously silent about Saiyyid 'Alī Datār. Later translators of *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī*, however, noticing this striking omission, have added a footnote about him. According to this note, Saiyyid 'Alī Datār's grandfather, Saiyyid 'Ilmu'ud-Dīn, a migrant from Uchch, settled in Ahmadabad around 830/1426–1427. His father, Dosan Miyān, married in the family of Shama'-yi Burhānī and settled in Unawa in 867/1462.³ A passionate devotee of Saiyyid 'Alī Datār, however, does not bother about the historicity of the Unawa shrine. On the contrary, the force of devotion had led them to create replicas in places far away from Unawa. Thus, if the devotees cannot travel long distances, they have brought the *pīr* to their locations. Mirān Saiyyid 'Alī Datār's *baraka* thus has crossed the barriers of time and space.

The fascinating story of the foundation of the *Chilla* of Mirān Saiyyid 'Alī Datār in Karachi is part of the untold experiences of migration in 1947, which upturned the lives of millions of South Asians. The ingenious Gujarati Memon immigrant community, when they migrated to make Karachi their new home, following the Partition riots of 1947, brought with it their saints as well. The

1 A *chilla* is a place for prayers and meditation in seclusion. The word is also used for shrines that are made as replicas in honour of a saint who is lying buried elsewhere.

2 Some scholars identify Saiyyid 'Alī Datār as one of the generals of Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat and as one who fell in a battle. See Beatrix Pfeleiderer, 'Mira Datar Dargah: The Psychiatry of a Muslim Shrine in India,' in *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (Edited) by Imtiaz Ahmad (pp. 195–233). New Delhi: Manohar (1984). Curiously, 'Alī Muḥammad Khan, the compiler of *Mirāt-i Aḥmadī* (1750s), a political and statistical history of Gujarat, is silent about Saiyyid 'Alī Mirān Datār.

3 Syed Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon. 1928. *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī. Supplement*. Gaekwad's Oriental Series. No. XLIII. Baroda: Oriental Institute. p. 91, fn. 2.

local residents, however, related a different story to me. The story runs like this: immediately after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, life for the large number of refugees in Karachi was full of misery. Bhimpura, a locality of the Gujarati Memon and Kuchchi community, off Nishtar Road, had a large vacant lot at that time. In this area, in one of the hutments, built out of bamboo poles and gunny sacks, lived a lonely, frail old woman. Hooligans and young jobless youth roamed around the area day and night, making life miserable for all. Perhaps to ward off the threatening presence of these street bullies, the old woman sought Saiyyid ‘Alī Mirān Datār’s shelter. She must have memories of her visits to the shrine of Saiyyid ‘Alī Mirān Datār in Unawa. With dusk approaching, she would light a little lamp in honour of Saiyyid Mirān Datār, hoping this would bring the spirit of ‘Alī Mirān Datār’s for her rescue. The news spread fast; everyone in the locality needed the saint’s grace to get out of the quagmire they were caught in at that time. Soon, the hut was overflowing with others who joined the lonely old woman in her evening ritual of lighting the little lamp and invoking Mirān Datār’s spirit to bestow his blessings. A modest amount of money was voluntarily pooled to build a *t’āwīz* (sepulchre) as a sort of cenotaph for Saiyyid Mirān Datār. A boundary wall surrounding the tomb added much to the sanctity of the otherwise simple-looking structure. Sayyid Mirān Datār, like his devotees, now had migrated and settled in Karachi.

More than two decades later, in 1970, this simple structure was extended. Tombs of other family members of the saint’s family were also added. The family reunion was now complete as the shrines of Rāstī Mā and Dāmā Mā (the first was the real mother of the saint and the second was the one who had nursed him), Dādi Mā (paternal grandmother), and Māmūn (maternal uncle), Hamzā, were built.

Beatrix Pfleiderer, a German medical anthropologist, in her ethnographic study of the shrine of Mirān Datār at Unawa, which she visited several times and stayed at for several weeks, probably was not aware of the replica of the shrine in Karachi.⁴ Other studies, including one by Malika Mohammada and Nile Green, refer to replicas of the shrine in Bombay and Poone, but say nothing about the one in Karachi.⁵ For me, the discovery of the *chilla* of Mirān Datār was a mere serendipity. I came to know about the magical powers of healing of Mirān Datār through the life story of a woman whom I met and interviewed

4 Beatrix Pfleiderer. 2006. *The Red Thread: Healing Possession at A Muslim Shrine in North India*. Delhi: Aakar Books (Translated from German by Malcolm R. Green, and Virchand Dharamsey). [First published in 1994].

5 Malika Mohammada. 2007. *The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India*. Delhi: Aakar Books; Nile Green. 2011. *Bombay Islam. The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915*. Los Angeles: Cambridge University Press.



FIGURE 22 *Chilla* of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār, Karachi



FIGURE 23 Shrine visitor receiving blessings at the shrine of Rāstī Mā, located within the *Chilla* of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār Karachi

almost twenty years back. This woman, she told me, was freed of the evil spell that would not let her conceive, by the intercession of Mirān Datār.

A journalist friend who had connections in the Memon community chaperoned me to the shrine area. As we got close to the shrine, I saw above the archway of the entrance gate pictures of Ka’ba and Maṣjid-i-Nabawī in Madina were painted. Underneath these depictions, the first verse of the couplet in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad was inscribed in beautiful calligraphy. The title and the name of Mirān Datār, on this board, is like a brief bio-note. It says,

Chilla Ḥaẓrat faṣṣ rasān Ḥaẓrat Miran Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār Shahīd Raḥmatu’lah ‘Alsi-hī’

(shrine of the beneficent, Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār, the martyr in the path of Allah).

The *chilla* of Mirān Datār is known for curing possessed women. On my several visits to the shrine, we were led into the shrine by a pathway to a separate women’s entrance. A stone pillar, now fully wrapped by strips of coloured fabric, stands in the open courtyard. Women tie pieces of cloth and ribbons



FIGURE 24 A devotee woman putting oil from the earthen lamp on her tongue at the *Chilla* of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār Karachi

around it and make supplications. Once their vow is fulfilled they will return, untie the knot of the fabric, and offer gifts to the shrine. The inner courtyard, which is fairly large, was dimly lighted and I could hardly see around for a while. I could see several locked doors on the side walls. I was later told that women possessed by evil spirits, some in chains, were kept there for months. Some possessed women, probably semicured, were lying on the ground with metal chains around their ankles tied to iron pegs. They made faces at me and made hand gestures which I could not understand. We were not allowed to enter into this area or get close to the possessed women.



FIGURE 25 A woman oiling hair of a child as a cure at the *Chilla* of Ḥazrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār Karachi

The main hall, which is profusely lighted and decorated with tinsels, had a pillar in the centre and several men were circumambulating it (women also circumambulated the pillar but at different times than the men). This ritual is the *chakki* (grinding stone) ritual. The pillar represents the handle of a *chakki*. Men and women perform this ritual separately and at fixed times. On the floor, several older women were napping or resting against the wall. Several others were reciting the Qur’ān. One corner of this hall is partitioned off by a two-foot-high structure. My informant led me to this area. A female attendant (*khādima*) was standing behind this counter-type walled enclosure. Behind her, on the wall, the names of Rāstī Mā, Dāmā Mā, and Dādi Mā (grandmother) were written in



FIGURE 26 Women visitors waiting to enter the Chilla of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār Karachi

gold and were glittering. As I approached her, she signalled me to bow my head and before I could prepare myself for her next action, swiftly she thumped my head thrice with a stuffed cotton bag and with the same swift action spread her free hand to get *nazrāna* (cash offering). I took out some money and placed it on her palm. She was obviously impressed and with the extra money and allowed me to take photographs.

11.1.1 *Female Shrines within the Dargāh of Ḥaẓrat Mirān Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār*

There are three shrines dedicated to the three close women relatives of Saiyyid ‘Alī Datār: Rāstī Mā, Dāmā Mā, and Dādi Mā. Rāstī Mā is said to be the birth

mother of 'Alī Datār. Dādi Mā is the grandmother of the saint. Their 'urs is jointly celebrated on the fifteenth of Rajab. The 'urs of Dāmā Mā, who nursed the saint, is celebrated the following day. Women who come to perform *ziyārat* of these three women's shrines, on approaching the shrines, are offered *sawa sau ghoṛōñ ki salāmi* (salutation of a hundred and fifty horses). This is done by making salutations to the shrine by placing a green-coloured basket (similar to plastic baskets used for grocery shopping) containing three to four gold-coloured *pagṛīs* (fabric wrapped around the heads by males), first on the head of the visiting woman, then on her right shoulder, followed by placing it on her left shoulder. This is repeated seven times. While this ritual is performed, the devotee stands with eyes downcast and hands folded. Once the performance finishes, the devotee is swiftly exorcised with peacock feathers. Now the visitor kisses the basket and walks backwards and exits the shrine's marked area. Asiya, the woman who performed the ritual for me, told me that for the last two generations, this work has been done by her family. There were several hagiographical narratives popular in the local Memon community and which later Asiya told me, about the sufferings of Rāstī Mā on account of her husband bringing another wife and abandoning her and her son. Women who traditionally are victims of spousal neglect and other related domestic abuses find spiritual therapeutic relief in the narration of these anecdotes and are not the least concerned with the accuracy or historicity of the events.

11.1.2 *Healing Rituals at the Shrines*

This shrine is known as a place where malevolent spirits, ghosts and demons (*bhūt, chuṛail, pichchal perī*), and jenii (*jinn or jinnāt*) are captured and the possessed person is set free of their shackles. The saint's 'urs falls on 27 Rajab. I am told that it is an occasion of great celebrations as on this auspicious day great relief is brought to the sufferers and the devils are defeated by Saiyyid 'Alī Datār. I visited the shrine on one Thursday evening in the month of Rajab. Thursdays are the days when women possessed by spirits or under the spell of black magic (*kālā jādū*), are brought for exorcism.⁶ These women are known as *hāzri wālī' auraten* (women who are possessed and who act under spell/trance). In local parlance, the Memon community, both in Karachi and elsewhere, uses

6 Mumtaz Nasir conducted an ethnographic study of exorcism where afflicted women from the strict parda observing background were brought to the healing room of a man healer created an appropriate environment for his work by playing audio-tapes of devotional songs that brought the listener into a trance. See his "Baithak: Exorcism in Peshawar (Pakistan)." *Asian Folklore Studies* 46, no. 2 (1987): 159–78. For the role of the exorcist, see K. Ewing, 1984. "Sufi as saint, curer and exorcist in modern Pakistan." *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 18: 108–114.

the term *hajari* for *hāzri*. Following the evening prayer (*maghrib*), crowds of women began to get thicker and soon the whole ground, where women sat on the floor, had no space left. Some women, eyes closed, slowly started opening their hair braids, their hair flowing from side to side with the jerk of their heads. Those sitting next to them inched away to give more space for their performance. A middle-aged woman, sitting almost glued to my side, whispered into my ears, "This is what used to happen to me earlier." Before I could take a good look at her, to my bewilderment, she threw her arms into the air, stood up, and started to shout filthy words, abusing Mirān Datar. She was using male verbs in her language. All the abuses were about unnatural acts of sex! While this woman was still continuing, a young girl, slim, fair-skinned, clad in a black *shalwar-kamiz*, with long open hair, entered through the shrine door. The moment she appeared in the doorway of the main hall opening into the courtyard, the packed crowd of women sitting on the ground quickly divided itself into two neat sections, making a clear pathway down the centre. The girl now started running through the open space as if it were a running track. She would run straight from one point to the other. Slowly she gained speed. With speed came volleys of obscenities, the kind of which I have never heard before. All the abuses were for Mirān Datar. In a hoarse male voice, she was now threatening Mirān Datar of the worst possible sexual abuse. Suddenly she smashed her glass bangles that she had on both her wrists. The glass shreds cut her wrists and blood fell onto the ground. She licked some of it. This, I was told, meant that the dirty spirit is a blood-sucking witch. The pace at which the possessed girl was running and the speed at which abuses were hurling out of her mouth was amazing. I felt as if my head was spinning. Some women in the crowd were reciting *darūd* (salutations upon the Prophet) and passages of the Qur'ān to ward off the evil from getting hold of them. The performance lasted for about fifteen to twenty minutes. The possessed girl suddenly slumped on the ground, her body quivering and shaking. A few women moved forward and took her away into the main shrine building. This was the signal for the onlookers to move. Soon, women began to move towards the exit. I also came out. Outside, my informant was waiting to walk with me to where my vehicle was parked. He was a cynical person and told me, "Well, you saw the *tamāsha* (the show)." He said that this girl now would be given hot glasses of milk and would sleep over it. Her turn (for the performance) would come again next month.

I returned to the shrine four days later and took some gifts for the two *khādimās*, female attendants, of the shrine. They accepted the gifts with thanks and agreed not only to talk to me but to share some details about the chained women in the cells. The stories that I heard are no less than tales of horror that

women suffer. Indeed, at the shrine of Mirān Datār, women's sufferings, deprivation, and social neglect and injustice are witnessed at great height.

(5)

Bibī Umm-i Ḥabība

Shrine: Kharadar, off Nishtar Road, Karachi

ʿUrs: 10 Rabi ʿus-sānī

Except a few oral tales, no information is available about Bibī Umm-i Ḥabība. The shrine is within the larger *mazār* of Muḥammad Shāh Sabzwāri Kandilwāley, located opposite the Khoja Jamāʿat Khāna in Kharadar, one of the oldest residential areas of Karachi with narrow, winding lanes. On our visit in 2016, the old inhabitants of the area of the Mir Bahar community of fishermen narrated this story about the *Kandilwāley buzurg* (person of great merit). According to this narrative, more than a hundred years back, an old saintly man lived in a hut on the beach of Karachi. He kept a lighted lantern at the hut's door for the guidance of the fishing boats. Another person also told me that the word *Kandilwāley* is a twisted form of the word *qandīl* (candle or lantern). Nobody could identify what relationship Umm-i Ḥabība had with this saint. Some say she was his *murīd*.

Strangely, women are not allowed to enter the shrine of Umm-i Ḥabība but have to stand outside the grilled doors to offer *fatiḥa* (prayers) and do the *ziyārat* (viewing) through the steel-mesh doorway. On enquiry, the managing committee members said this was done under the orders of the Auqaf Department, Government of Sindh. When I insisted that I would seek confirmation from the Auqaf Department, after more than an hour-long wait, reluctantly they allowed me and my two research assistants to enter the premises at two o'clock in the afternoon. We were not allowed to take our cameras inside the premises. Interestingly, in 2001, when I first visited this shrine, I was allowed to take pictures of the grave of Umm-i Ḥabība, which lies in a small cell along with the graves of other males. At my first visit, I was accompanied by a photojournalist of a reputable English-language daily newspaper. This time, our driver was kind enough to take some photographs from outside the shrine.

The standard of Umm-i Ḥabība is changed at five o'clock pm on the tenth of Rabi ʿus-sānī. Her ʿurs is not celebrated. The males present at the shrine told me that the ʿurs celebration of women saints is not permissible. Men who come to pray at the shrine of Ḥaẓrat Sabzwari also pray at the shrine of Umm-i Ḥabība and seek her blessings.



FIGURE 27 Shrine of Bibi Umm-i Ḥabība, Kharadar, off Nishtar Road, Karachi

(6)

Saiyyida Bibī Āmna and Saiyyida Bibī Banū

Date: 1868 and 1863

Shrine: Site Town, Karachi

The shrine of these two women is close to the old graveyard, Mewa Shah, in a building which appears to be a residential one. A woman shrine visitor at the shrine of Pīr Ghā'ib Shāh first told me about this shrine. On reaching the

premises, we were stopped by an elderly man perched on a stool outside the shrine's entrance. After several questions about the purpose of our visit, he finally allowed us to enter. He insisted that, as a rule, only *parda*-observing women of Saiyyid ancestry are allowed to enter the shrine. He allowed us to enter because he said that we looked to be good persons to him. The entrance doorway was curtained off. Stepping inside, we could hardly see anything as it was too dark. At my request, he switched on a bulb and opened a window. We were allowed to take photographs on payment of cash gifts for the maintenance of the shrine.

On one side of the wall, an inscription in Urdu gives the date of death of Bibī Āmna (12 Rabi'ul awwal 1285/1868) and of Bibī Banū (25 Rabi'us-sānī 1280/1863). On the grave of Bibī Banū, a square wooden structure stood, covered on all sides by green cloth; the other grave was a low grave covered by a green sheet. We did not stay long as there was a strong and unfamiliar whiff that made us feel uncomfortable. I have included this shrine in my work as on Thursdays a large number of women, at times hundreds of them, visit it and place offerings at the threshold of the shrine. I have not been able to verify the dates given on the wall inscription which at first sight looks spurious.

I could see at least four women sitting next to the outer wall of the shrine. These women refused to speak to us.

(7)

Saiyyida Khadija Bibī

Date: D. 2 Rajab 1221/14 September 1806

Shrine: Kharadar, off Nishtar Road, Karachi

Urs: 27 Rajab

Bibī Khadija's shrine is situated in the congested Old Hājī Camp in Kharadar, Karachi. On my first visit in 2003, I saw that this shrine's condition, compared with other women shrines in Karachi, was far better. Males are not allowed to visit the shrine. I heard a fascinating legend narrated by its woman caretaker, a Gujarati-speaking woman who declined to tell us her name. The woman said that more than fifty years back, when she was a mere child of seven or eight years, the *suwārī* of the Bibī for the first time came over her, meaning the Bibī's spirit entered her body.⁷ It was under this condition of trance of this woman that the Bibī disclosed her identity. She said that her name was Sayyida Khadija Bibī and that she was the daughter of Shāh Murād, a saint of Thatta. Since that

⁷ The word *suwārī* means 'to ride' or a transportation vehicle; when used as *suwārī ānā*, it means being possessed by a spirit.



FIGURE 28 Shrine of Saiyyida Khadija Bibi, Kharadar, off Nishtar Road, Karachi

first revelation, the woman told me, she turned into a permanent vehicle of the Bibī. Whenever the Bibī's spirit would enter her body, she could heal people, relate things that were not known to other people, and provide answers to people's queries, for instance about their employment, marriage prospects, birth of a son, etc. Narrating the miraculous powers of the saint, she said that water brought here and kept overnight at the *mazār* is blessed by the charismatic healing powers of Khadija Bibī. When this miraculous water is sipped by a childless woman, she is blessed with the birth of a child within a year; it also heals chronic patients and takes away all their worldly problems. When asked whether she experiences the trance now, the woman said, "No, I am too old and feeble and the force of Khadija Bibī overpowering me is beyond my capacity of endurance."

In January 2016, on my second visit, I had some difficulty in locating the shrine as new structures had been raised which made the area look somewhat unfamiliar. I was told that the area where the shrine stands is known as *Mazaron wālī gali* (the shrines' lane). Arriving at the address, I found the door of the shrine locked. A woman of the neighbourhood came and unlocked the shrine for us. This woman was not aware of the above narrated story of Bibī Khadija. She said that the shrine was centuries old (*qadīmī*) and the saint acts as the guardian of the community. The community manages the shrine. She also told me that usually women visit the shrine to seek Bibī Khadija's blessings before making any decisions, such as letting someone bring a marriage proposal for their daughters. The tomb's headstone gives the date of her death as 2 Rajab 1221 (14 September 1806). Her *urs*, however is celebrated on 27 Rajab. The cenotaph was covered with a green sheet, and fresh wreaths were lying at the head of the grave. The actual tomb was in an underground chamber, which was visible through an opening in the floor. The underground grave was surrounded by white painted iron grill to which coloured threads of *mannat* (making a vow) were tied. Next to her tomb, there is a small tomb said to be that of her grandson, who died in infancy. A woman from the neighbourhood entered the shrine with her mother-in-law and narrated several legends of Bibī Khadija's miraculous powers of healing women in mental distress.

(8)

Mā'ī Gārhī

Shrine: Gārhī Goth, Altaf Nagar,

Orangi Township–Karachi off the Northern Bypass, Karachi

Urs: 12 Shawwāl

The shrine of Mā'ī Gārhī is almost at the end of Karachi's boundary, a short distance from the Balochistan border. This locality is also called Altaf Nagar.

The whole area looks desolate with stretches of sandy and rocky land. Except the *mujāwir* of the *dargāh*, there was no one around. Close to the shrine are two old graveyards, one named after Mā'ī Gārhi. The graves looked old and neglected.

Similar to most other local female Sufis and their shrines in Karachi and elsewhere, Mā'ī Gārhi's narrative is not found in any Sufi canon. To the local community, however, who are least concerned with the written word, Sufis like Mā'ī Gārhi are a reality. The *mujāwir* of the shrine, on my visit in 2016, told me that the word *Gārhi* or *Gā'ī* in the Sindhi language means the colour red. He also told me that *Gārhi* was not the real name of the Mā'ī but it was conferred upon her by the great scholar and saint, Shah 'Abdu'l Laṭīf Bhittai, also known as Bhit jo Shāh (1689–1752). Mā'ī Gārhi was married and had children. A grave of her son lies outside her shrine.⁸

Compared to several other female Sufi shrines in Karachi, this shrine has an impressive structure and appears to be well looked after, though there is neither a managing committee nor did I see any sign of the presence of the Department of Aūqaf. A green cash box was kept in one corner of the shrine chamber. The key to the cash box was under the control of the *mujāwir* who opens it periodically and takes out money for the sundry expenses of the shrine. He buys his daily meals from this money as well.

The *mujāwir* of the shrine also told me that the Baloch community living in the Mahajir Camp, Baldia, supervises the day-to-day management and maintenance of the shrine. They also provide for the celebration of the 'urs on 12 Shawwāl. The *mujāwir* had been serving the shrine for the last fifty years, he told me. This seemed incredible as he did not look more than sixty years old. Devotees, mostly from the low-income neighbourhood community, bring in offerings of fresh flowers, fabric pieces for grave covering, and small amounts of money. Average cash offerings range between fifty and a hundred rupees, out of which the caretaker takes some for his personal needs and leaves the rest for the 'urs. As regular transport is not available, most devotees come on Sundays, holidays, or on the 'urs day. On the 'urs day, several devotees bring big pots of *biryani* (rice cooked with meat) which is given out in *langar* (free food).

There were no signs of earthen oil lamps. The grave did not have fresh flowers, a usual sight in all the shrines. The shrine had no electricity. As some shrine visitors come from distant locations and transport is not easily available, some devotees stay at the shrine for the whole day. There are a few room-like structures standing in a row at one side of the shrine, each without a door or a window. The *mujāwir*, however, insisted on using the word *rooms*.

8 For Shah 'Abdu'l Laṭīf Bhittai, see Fahmida Husain. 2001. *Images of 'woman' in the poetry Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai*. The University of Karachi Press.

The shrine is built on a hillock. Outside the shrine to one side is a grave said to be that of Mā'ī Gārhī's two male attendants. One can see from here a large graveyard, which in some ways resembled that of the Makli graveyard. The graveyard is named after Mā'ī Gārhī. This place definitely needs more research.

(9)

Mā'ī Lānjī

Shrine: Siddique Wahab Road, Karachi

Urs: 11 Rabi'ul murajjab

This shrine is on the main Siddique Wahab Road, opposite the timber market in Usmanabad. Most of the devotees are people from the neighbourhood who narrate that the shrine has been there for more than a century. My research did not yield any textual references about Mā'ī Lānjī; travelogues and gazetteers also do not provide any information. An inscription in Arabic, which is of a recent origin, describes Mā'ī Lānjī as a Qadiriyyā and Qalandariyyā Sufi. A man named Javid, who claims that he is the ancestral custodian (*mutawallī*) of the *darbār*, told me in his interview in 2016 that his family had been taking care of the shrine since the British rule (*angrezon ke rāj*). Also, the whole history of Mā'ī Lānjī, he claimed, could be found in a book titled *Karachi ke awliyā'*. This book was not found anywhere. Local traditions ascribe Mā'ī Lānjī as a descendant of *Ghaus-i pāk* (Shaikh'Abdul Qādir Gilāni). In 2016 when I visited this shrine, an elderly man who claimed that his family has been the recipient of Mā'ī Lānjī's blessings for generations, told me that Mā'ī Mirān (included in this work) and Mā'ī Lānjī were real sisters and that they both arrived by a boat from across the sea to Karachi.

In March 2016 we met with a woman shrine visitor who came there with her children. She did not answer any of our queries and stared back at us. As Javid was not prepared to talk more, we attempted making small conversations with people of the neighbourhood. Some of them told us that the salt kept in small jars at the shrine has the charisma of healing powers of Bibī and the blessed oil of the shrine is a cure for infertility and skin diseases. A man who owned a nearby shop said that devotees take bottles of this oil to other parts of the country as well.

The shrine's maintenance is the community's joint responsibility while Mā'ī Lānjī is responsible for the well-being of the community. The actual tomb, Javid told us, was in an underground chamber, but there was no staircase to take visitors down to the grave. When we looked down through a square opening, we could hardly see anything as it was too dark, and the strong whiff of incense and smoke made our eyes go watery.

When I asked the custodian about the income of the shrine (*nazrāna*), he got a little frightened and rudely asked us to leave the shrine, sternly telling me that a shrine is not a place for making worldly conversations. A week later, when we went again, he did not let us in, and said the shrine was locked for the day for some repair work. A poster decorated with golden and green tinsels was now pasted at the outside wall announcing Mā'ī Lānjī's 'urs on 27 Rajab.

(10)

Mā'ī Mirān Shāh/Sayyida Junaid Bībī/Mirān Pīr

Shrine: Lea Market, Karachi

'Urs: 11 Rabi'ul Ākhir

As I walked towards the pathway leading to the entry of Mā'ī Mirān' shrine in the congested narrow lane of Lea Market in the old Karachi area, I was amazed that the metal board adjusted between the two walls announced her name as Ḥazrat Saiyyidina Mirān Pīr. *Saiyyidina*, an Arabic term which means "my master," is a devotional way of addressing the Prophet. Some have agreed to its use for the members of the Prophet's family also and for the first four Caliphs. I have not seen this term being used for the Sufis. Also, pious women are hardly known to be addressed as *pīr*, a term used only for male Sufis.

According to local legends, Mā'ī Mirān belonged to the Jilānī Saiyyid family and was an accomplished (*kāmila*) and virtuous person. She never married. It is said that she arrived in Karachi on her way to Ḥajj pilgrimage from her ancestral home in Larkana. In Karachi, she fell ill and rested for a while near a place where there already stood a dome/vaulted structure (*guṇbad*).⁹ Further details of the story about her intended Ḥajj pilgrimage are not known. According to another oral anecdote, Mā'ī Mirān, when death approached her, instructed those who were present with her to keep her bier outside the dome and lock the entrance to the dome from outside. She told them that if this locked door opened on its own, she then should be buried inside the dome. This is what exactly happened. As per her dying instructions, she was buried inside the dome. According to another legend, Mā'ī Mirān and her sister Mā'ī Lānjī arrived together by a boat from across the seas. Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Na'īmī collected the above details in an interview with Maulānā 'Abdu'llah

⁹ *Guṇbad* is also used as a synonym for a shrine or grave of a holy person.

Şiddique Khatri, a former *Imām* of the mosque near the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān.¹⁰ Her 'urs is celebrated on 10 Rabi'ul Ākhir.¹¹

Although I have visited the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān (or Mirān Pīr) several times, here I would refer to my five visits that are related to this research. My first visit was in 1997, followed by my second visit in April 2002, and again in May 2006. I revisited the shrine in 2011 with some of my friends. My last visit was in 2016. During my visits over these years, I spent several hours, often whole afternoons, on the shrine's premises. During these visits, I met with hundreds of women and have detailed notes and photographs of these interviews. Comparing my field notes, I am amazed at the similarity of women's responses who shared their thoughts with me. The environs of the shrine also showed little change over the years. On all my visits, I did not hear the legend narrated by Na'imī.

On my first visit, the area around the shrine was overcrowded by all sorts of vehicles, from automobiles to donkey-driven carts. Wayside shops lined both sides of the lane, selling flower garlands, rose petals, incense, candles, and small earthenware lamps, filled with mustard oil or ghee, with a cotton wick in them. The shopkeepers also educated their clients by extolling the merits of visiting the shrine and making offerings. The shops also sold green sheets (*chādar sharīf*), mostly of synthetic fibre, with gold tinsels and gold-coloured calligraphy and glittery tassels (*jandhiyān*), as well as rose-scented candies (*rewriyān*). Women devotees on their way to the shrine buy these flowers, sweetmeats, and bottles of oil for making offerings (*nazr*), and later distribute them among those present there.

To reach the actual shrine of Mā'ī Mirān, one has to pass through three gateways. The main entrance to the *mazār* has quite an ordinary appearance. Litter and dirt are scattered everywhere. On my first visit, I was told, on enquiry, that the shrine belongs (*milkiyat*) to the Makhdūms of Rānipur, Sindh.¹² In 2016, members of the managing committee avoided answering this query. Passing through the gateway, one sees several low-level graves all covered with green sheets.

10 Muḥammad Iqbāl Ḥusain Na'imī. 1987. *Tazkira awliyā'-yi Sindh*. Karachi: Shāriq Publications, p. 54.

11 *Fihrist 'Urs Buzurgān-i dīn Karachi, Taṣṣiḥ az Ḥaẓrat Maulānā Jamīl Aḥmad Na'imī Ṣāhib, Khaṭīb Masjid Ṣarrafa Bazar*, Mithadar, Karachi, dated, 1st Rabi'ul-awwal, 1398/1978.

12 The *pīrs* of Rānipur form a powerful group in Sindh politics today. They trace their lineage to Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī. On my two visits to the house of the custodian of the *mazār*, I was told that he was out of the country. The house is situated within the *mazār* complex. On my visit to this house, I was greeted by women who welcomed me with a smile but did not converse and did not answer any of my questions.



FIGURE 29 A woman healer at the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān Shāh/Sayyida Junaid Bibi/Mirān Pīr Lea Market, Karachi



FIGURE 30 *Khalifas* (representatives), appointed by the Sindh Government to look after the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān Shāh, Karachi



FIGURE 31 Women visitors resting at the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān Shāh, Karachi

Totally different from the well-maintained, well-built, and imposing shrines of male holy persons, Mā'ī Mirān's shrine is a simple, modest, single green-domed one-celled structure. The shrine is hardly impressive, compared to the awesome architecture and embellishments noticed in shrines commemorating the male saints. The tomb of Mā'ī Mirān stands in the centre of this one-roomed structure. The front of the low-domed *mazār* is covered by a corrugated-tin-roofed shed. Women devotees gather outside the one-door entrance to the shrine of Mā'ī Mirān. On the sill of the arch over the doorway is written *Haṣrat Sayyidana Mirān Pīr*. Devotees, before stepping into the one-room cell, touch the lintel of the door frame (*choukhat*) with their right hand and then touch their chest and kiss their hand, imitating the usual greeting pattern in Pakistan. The lintel, here, replaces the unseen saint. For the devotee, she is not dead; ordinary vision is incapable of beholding a person who has passed away.

11.1.3 *Legends about Mirān Pīr*

Myths and legends surround the story of Mirān Pīr, though I have not found any written reference to her. To check any record or find documents about the history of the shrine, I visited the Auqaf Department of the Government of Sindh. The bureaucrats and their assistants kept me waiting in the lounge

and did not provide any information. The department earns a good amount of money from this shrine. Their explanation that no information was stored by them sounded like a weak excuse.¹³ Interestingly, my first visit caused a bit of commotion in this office. I was accompanied by two males, my driver and an office-help. Both these men sat outside the office of the person who I was told was in charge of the information I wanted to get. Somehow, they mistook me for someone involved in a property litigation case, in connection with the ownership (*milkiyat*) rights of the land over which the *mazār* complex is situated. I am sure that I could not convince the officials that I was not the person they believed I was, and that I was an ordinary woman doing academic research! The man in charge of the files told me that the file cabinet was locked and the key was with his boss who was on a long leave. However, he promised he would bring the required files to my residence, along with a rare video film of the *ʿurs* celebrations of Māʾī Mirān. That never happened.

Thus, the following account is based on oral sources and my observations. Those who are skeptical of the authenticity of oral sources and only trust the written texts would certainly remain doubtful. In 1997 and again in 2011, the woman caretaker (*khādima*) of the *mazār* told me that Māʾī Mirān was the virgin granddaughter of Shaikh ʿAbdul Qādir Gilānī.¹⁴ It is important to note that the *nisbat* (lineage) connecting Māʾī Mirān with Shaikh ʿAbdul Qādir raises her social and spiritual hierarchy in the Sufi order. It is said that because of high and respected lineage, she always kept herself veiled from male gaze. Today, no male can step inside her *mazār*. The informant further told me that Māʾī Mirān was a virtuous woman to the extent that no male, other than her brothers and father, ever saw her face. Far more interesting than this ban on male entry, is the ban on pregnant women. Pregnant women are not allowed, lest the child in their womb is a male child! The woman who told of this legend said, in a warning voice, that if a pregnant woman dares to enter the sepulchre, her unborn

13 In 1960, the Government of Pakistan nationalized all shrines and created the Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf which operates at the provincial level. Sindh Auqaf Department was established in 1970. In 1976, this Department was made a central subject under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Government of Pakistan. In 1979, this was again made a provincial subject. This has remained unchanged until now.

14 Shaikh ʿAbdul Qādir Gilānī (1088–1166) is the most revered name in Sufi traditions. Popularly known as Ghaus-i ʿĀzam (the greatest help) and the *pir-i dastgīr* (the *pir* who holds one's hand for support), has a large number of followers in Sindh. Sir Richard Burton writing in the mid-nineteenth century, says that in Sindh, the name of Shaikh ʿAbdul Qādir Gilānī is greater than in any other Muslim country. He also writes that there were about a hundred large trees in Sind, all called after Gilānī. *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*. London: Allen & Co., p. 405 and 177 respectively.

male child will be born blind. Women with male children under the age of seven are free to enter the *mazār* complex.

Another narrative of Mā'ī Mirān is a typical narrative of an ocean-voyaging Sufi, arriving on the coasts of Hindustan, riding over the mighty waves of the Indian Ocean. It is said that she, along with her male relatives and seven virgin female playmates (*sat sahelīyān*), all travelling in a boat, landed on the coasts of Sindh. The narrative does not name the place of her embarkation. Similar to other legends concerning the arrival of Sufis in the subcontinent, travel plays a central role in this narrative, too.¹⁵ The legend has gained popularity in the Makrāni community of the Lea Market and Lyari, in Karachi, and among the local fishermen, the majority of whom venerate Mā'ī Mirān. The Makranis trace their origin to African lands.¹⁶

The absence of written accounts of Mā'ī Mirān are of no concern to her devotees. On all of my visits, I asked women about the history of Mā'ī Mirān. The majority of women, who appeared to be from the urban poor localities and seemed to have little or no formal schooling or education, looked aghast. One of these women, in a convincing tone, said, "She was a godly person (*Allāh lok*). This is what we know about her." Some who were from the affluent classes and were well dressed, told me, "Men write books. We, women, bear children. Why would they [write] about women."

11.1.4 Mā'ī Mirān: Infertility Healer

Mā'ī Mirān is believed to have miraculous powers (*karamāt*) of bestowing fertility on women who have no children.¹⁷ Women's fertility-seeking rituals at the shrine, especially for getting a male child, speak volumes about wives' harassment at the hands of their husbands and their in-laws. In case they fail to produce a child within a year of marriage or if they give birth to a girl, the fear of desertion, a broken marriage, or domestic violence is so great that a woman is a willing to negotiate a vow (*mannat*), irrespective of the cost involved, in

15 See D.F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori (Eds.) *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Imagination of the House of Islam*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996.

16 For an early history of the Makrani community see John B. Eddlefsen, et al. 1960. "Makranis, the Negroes of West Pakistan." *Phylo*, 21 (2): 124–30; also, Abdul Aziz Y. Lodhi. 1992. "African Settlements in India." *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 1 (1): 83–86; for more, see R. Hughes-Buller, R. 1907. *District Gazetteer of Makran*, Bombay Times Press, 1907. p. 69.

17 It is interesting to note that Bāvā Gor's sister, Mai Misra whose shrine is with her brother in Ratnapur, Gujarat, India, is known for her fertility healing miracles. Infertile women are fed Mai Misra's *khichri*, supposed to have the miraculous power of healing female infertility. See for details Helene Basu. 1995. *Habshi-Sklaven, Sidi Fakir Muslimische Heiligenverehrung im westlichen Indien*. Berlin; DArabische buch.

return for the blessing of a male child. Thus, desperate women come here to be blessed with the birth of a male child. Women with fading hopes of bearing children told me that they present themselves in the august assembly of Mā'ī Mirān (*Mā'ī Mirān ke samne hāzrī detī hūn*) with their appeal (*faryād*) and to seek her blessings for a child. Indeed, a large number of women, from newly married brides to women in their late twenties, make this *hāzīrī* (presence before the saint) to get a child with the help (*wasīla*) of Mā'ī Mirān. The young newlyweds were mostly accompanied by their mothers. Women who come to seek Mā'ī Mirān's blessings for a child usually bring with them a small wooden cradle toy for babies (*jhūlnā*). They tie these *jhūlnās* to the four posters standing at the corners of the tomb. I saw a huge number of these toy cribs there. Once their prayers are heard and their vow to get a child is fulfilled, the proud, jubilant mothers return with their babies in their arms, to pay a thanksgiving visit to Mā'ī Mirān. These *salām* visits are often occasion for community celebrations, marked by free distribution of food (*langar*) brought by the celebrating family. They bring flowers, sweets, green coverlets for the *mazār*, and sometimes huge amounts of food. A young woman told me she was willing to spend more than what she can normally afford to bring *langar* (food for the poor) for seven Thursdays, a day usually marked for devotional visits, when her vow of having a son would be fulfilled. Her two daughters were her calamity, she told me. Her mother-in-law had warned her that the next daughter would be the end of her marriage.

In Sufi hagiographical literature of South Asia, Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Gilāni, the supposed ancestor of Mā'ī Mirān, is venerated for his Divine gift of bestowing sons to barren women. Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī, in his devotional account of the life and charismas of the Shaikh, *Guldasta-yi karamāt* (Bouquet of miracles), narrates a story of a barren woman (*'aurat 'aqīma*). The saint, devotionally addressed as *Maḥbūb-i subḥānī* (the beloved of the Divine), interceded on her behalf in seeking Allāh's blessings, not just for one child or one son, but for seven sons.¹⁸ The woman, however, after being blessed with seven sons, fell under a satanic spell (*wiswās-i shaitānī*) and started doubting the power of the saint. At once, all her seven sons died. Finally, the woman repented, the saint forgave her, and her sons' lives were restored.¹⁹

18 Seven is considered an auspicious number in Islamic devotional literature. See, Annemarie Schimmel and Franz Carl Endres. 1994. *The Mystery of Numbers*. New York: Oxford University Press.

19 Ghulām Sarwar Lahorī. 1900. *Guldasta-yi karāmāt*. Kanpur: 'Abdul Qaiyyūm, pp. 133–34.

For most girls in Pakistan, marriage is the only option for an honourable existence. Mothers, therefore, come to seek Mā'ī Mirān's blessings for an early marriage for their daughters. A woman from the Lyari area, being the elder unmarried daughter of a family with several sons working in Sharjah and Qatar, self-educated, and a Qur'ān teacher, was there to seek Mā'ī Mirān's help for her own marriage. She told me, "Why not? Why shouldn't I pray for my own marriage? It is the blessed tradition (*sunna*) of my beloved Prophet. Mā'ī Mirān is our mother; sure, she would listen to me. That's why I'm here. As a mother she knows what is best for me."

In the courtyard of the *mazār*, during my earlier visits, there was standing the trunk of a dead tree.²⁰ In fact, it was tied to a big rock so that it could remain standing. The tree trunk was believed to have the power to cure people ailing from a variety of diseases. I interviewed a burqa-clad young woman who, with her seven-year-old daughter, was going around the tree seven times in circumambulation. When she stopped and sat down next to the "tree," I asked her what she was doing. She told me, "*chakkar nikāl rahi hūn* [I am encircling the tree] *apni beti ke liye-Sūkha ho gaya hai*" [for my daughter]. She is drying [has stopped growing]." The woman also told me that her daughter was passing blood in her urine and was extremely emaciated. In response to my query whether she had consulted any physician for her daughter's ailment, she said no, adding that others had told her that this tree had the healing power. According to a legend, related by a spiritual healer who used to sit under the tin-roofed shed of the shrine, the trunk was a remnant of a tree of the time of Mā'ī Mirān and carried the charismatic touch of her hands.

During my first visit to the shrine, in 1997, I met with a fascinating spiritual healer. Outside the doorway of the grave chamber, under the tin-roofed shed, sat a cross-legged, grey-haired, pale-faced woman, with several jars of varying sizes and little cloth bundles heaped around her. Next to her, on one side were kept peacock feathers, tightly tied in the shape of a broom. The woman looked uneasily towards me, transmitting an unspoken message that I should not get close to her. I watched her from a distance and made a video and took photographs of what she was doing. She did not object to it. Soon it became clear that she was a healer, and a group of clients was on their way towards her. A woman, accompanied by several children and a man, came and sat in front of her. All the actions that followed were performed in complete silence, with not a single word spoken. It seemed as if both parties knew what was to be done.

20 The trunk was removed in 2014 during the renovation of the shrine, which consisted of painting the walls in green colour. I was told that some local reformist males of the area were not happy with the presence of this trunk, as it was adding to 'religious malpractices.'

The healer woman took out from one jar a reel of thread, measured it with her hand, from the little finger to the thumb, at the same time looking at the size of the neck of the child for whom she was going to prepare a charm. She then motioned to the child with a nod of her head to move forward and crane his neck. The child was pushed forward by his father. Swiftly she tied the thread at the back of the neck and cut the extra part with scissors. The child moved back to his original position. Next, she started briskly brushing the face, hands, and head of the client with the broom made of peacock feathers. Finally came the turn of the smallest client—a toddler, skeleton-like, with sunken eyes. He was aware of his turn. As soon as the others were done with, he began to sob and looked pathetically towards his mother. The healer woman silently gestured with her hand to make the child stand. The mother propelled him up. He began to cry aloud, this being the only sound made during the ritual performance. The healer woman was least moved by this noise, and silently continued with her performance, without delaying for a second. As the toddler was the worst of all the patients, the treatment lasted longer and the broom brushed him several times. At each stroke, the child shrieked and pushed the healer woman's hand away. The whole performance lasted for no more than fifteen minutes. The *khādima* of the *mazār* later told me that this healing woman actually was her mother-in-law and that she had been performing healing rituals for the last thirty-some years. The woman was blessed by Mā'ī Mirān, especially for curing patients suffering from chronic cases of *pīlyā* (jaundice). The toddler was definitely a case of jaundice.

On my next visit, in 2006, I found the place of the healing woman was occupied by her daughter-in-law. The passing away of the mother-in-law changed the role of the daughter-in-law. Thus, similar to the succession in Sufi *silsila*, hierarchical structures of spiritual powers are inherited in shrine culture as well. On my first visit, this new healing woman conversed with me freely. Now that she had succeeded her deceased mother-in-law and was holding a position of spiritual charisma, her behaviour too changed. Not only did she not look towards me, but she also signaled me that I should not expect any conversations with her. That interactions change so dramatically with transformation of status was not known to me earlier.

At the back of the *mazār* complex, in a shed covered by corrugated-tin sheets, I saw a woman sitting close to a small earthen structure. She told me this was the *āsītānā* of Shāh Parioṇ of Makli, Thatta.²¹ In the shrine's courtyard there are several tombs. A cluster of seven tombs is identified as the tombs of *sat sahelīyān* or *sat bibīān* (seven virgins, chaste friends of Mā'ī Mirān). It is said

21 See the narrative of Shāh Parioṇ in this book.

that the graves of these seven chaste women are replicas of those that are in the Makli graveyard. The spot attracts women visitors who often sit in circles to recite the Qur'ān, chat with each other, and sometime even share a meal which they bring with them from home. Children who accompany them play around.

11.1.5 *Urs Celebrations*

Each year the 'Urs of Mā'ī Mirān is held on 11 Rabi'us-sānī.²² Although preparations start much earlier, on the eleventh the changing ceremony of the 'alam (the standard) takes place under the supervision of the Auqaf Department and is watched by a large number of women devotees who actually come there several days ahead from outside Karachi. The 'Urs begins after sunset on the eleventh (which actually is reckoned as the twelfth according to the lunar calendar). I attended the 'urs in 1997 and again in 2016.

On 'urs celebrations, which occurred late in the evening on both occasions, the crowd got emotionally frenzied with the beating of drums. The din and noise were so great that I found it almost impossible to talk with the devotees. The door to the *hujra* (cell) was jammed by women. I could not stand there for more than a minute. Indeed, I found myself suddenly pushed inside by the milling crowd. Inside, the air was thick and heavy with incense burning, with the mixed scent of flowers, some almost decomposed due to the intense heat, and the body heat of women. Each one was vying with the other to touch the fabric of the coverlet, to kiss it and put flower wreaths on the tombs. The ground was covered with rose petals and had become slippery.

In 2016, on occasion of the 'urs, I watched as a young girl got up suddenly from among the crowds of women. She began jerking her body and pulling at her hair. In a thundering voice, she was shouting "Mā'ī! Mā'ī!" Women made way for her with folded hands. She was in a trance now. I tried to record a short video but other women rushed towards me to snatch my mobile phone. They warned me that I should delete all the recording, otherwise I would be cursed by the Mā'ī. This time, in 2016, I was also not allowed to photograph the actual grave inside the cell of the *dargāh*.

11.1.6 *Shrine: Space for Women's Bonding*

The shrine space provides women sisterly certitude and bonding. I found women, total strangers to each other, crossing borders of ethnic and linguistic frontiers, mingling as friends, sharing stories of their lives. Some even promised

22 *Fehrist 'urs buzurgūn-i dīn Karachi. Prepared by Ḥaṣrat Maulāna Jamilū'd-Dīn Aḥmad Na'imī.* This is a small four-paged pamphlet with no publication details. I got this, free of cost, from the office of *Dawat-i Islami*, an organisation known for its growing following and a reformist programme with its headquarters in Karachi.

to meet again on certain days. While sharing their common stories of ailments, domestic disputes, financial burdens, and family worries, they often find solutions, or at least a feeling of not being alone. I witnessed one such magical meeting taking place in the compound of the Mā'ī Mirān. A group of women was reading the Qur'ān on the 'urs day. I sat next to them. After finishing their readings, two women sitting next to me started a conversation. One was there to seek Mā'ī Mirān's intercession for the marriage of her daughter. The other got interested in her story and told her she might have the right boy for her daughter. They both agreed that it was all because of the charisma of the Mā'ī who, like a doting mother, never forgets her restless (*be-chain*) daughters. They exchanged their addresses and asked me if I could write for them, in legible handwriting, their addresses and phone numbers for each other. I gladly did that. What a perfect example of quick networking of all women present there, including Mā'ī Mirān!

An interesting tradition that I observed on this occasion was that almost all women brought with them *hina* paste in large containers, on platters, or in plastic bags. This *hina* was freely smeared on the hands and hair of each other.²³ As this *hina* was brought as an offering for Mā'ī Mirān, women took special care to grind it on stone slabs. A similar use of *hina* by women, as a mark of their devotion, is reported by Afshan Bukhari in her study of the women's prayer chamber in the Jami Masjid, Agra.²⁴

Those who did not bring *hina* with them were given it in large quantities by other women. *Tabarruk* in the form of small sweets or *suji halwa* (halwa prepared with semolina) was also distributed among the devotees, particularly among the poor women.

11.1.7 Shrine's Management

In 2016, women employees of the Auqaf Department, wearing uniforms (white shalwar-shirt with white headscarf) and name tags, were standing close to the cashboxes. I heard them telling women to put whatever cash they can afford to offer in the cashboxes, otherwise the Mā'ī would not grant them their wishes. Women between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five, appointed by the Auqaf managing committee and designated as *Khalīfa* (representative) of the shrine, work in two shifts at the shrine. The last shift ends at eight o'clock pm, the time when the shrine is locked to be reopened next morning around nine am. The

23 Hina (henna) paste is prepared by grinding the tiny leaves of *Lawsonia inermis*, a scented shrub, which often grows into the shape of a tall tree also. Now it is available in dry powder shape or in liquid form.

24 Afshan Bukhari. 2008. *The "Light" of the Timuria: Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage, Piety and Poetry in 17th century Mughal India.* *Marg*, 60(1): 53–61.

office of the Mirān Dargāh Committee at the premises of the shrine was all cluttered with broken chairs, plastic bottles, and soiled clothes. The entrance was completely blocked by the litter. I met Muḥammad Khan and Muḥammad Lahuti, chairman and vice chairman of the Māī Mirān Dargāh Committee, at the gate of the shrine. They told me they had set up a meeting with the Auqaf Department to discuss the expenses of the *dargāh*.

This shrine of Māī Mirān mirrors the complexities of ordinary women's lives in Pakistan. The shrine is indeed a kaleidoscope through which one can watch the myriad patterns of women's everyday lives in Pakistan. As one enters the shrine complex, to the left of the pathway is a low, tin-roofed, large shed with one door opening. The shed seemed dark inside and it took a while for my eyes to get accustomed to the dim environment. During my 1997 visit, as I got close to the entrance, a few women, middle-aged to past sixty years, moved ahead to stare at me. I could now see that there were several low-level tombs, all covered with green sheets, over which were laying withered flower inside this room. Blackened wall niches with unlit earthen lamps made the atmosphere more depressing. Several women, wearing dirty clothes and with matted hair, were squatting, sitting, and lying around. Soon, my eyes caught sight of a woman sitting against the entrance door, a few inches away from where I was standing. From her looks she appeared to belong to the *makrani* community of Karachi. She told me that for the last fifty years of her life she was doing *ḥāẓirī*, from early morning till sunset, sitting at the same spot. In this very short woman—hardly more than three-and-a-half feet—I discovered a natural storyteller. She told me that she lived in the neighbourhood and had never married. In early childhood, she was afflicted with a high fever and her parents, being too poor, could not do much to seek treatment for her. The illness permanently stunted her growth. No one would, therefore, marry her. After her parents' death, the only way to support herself was to come to the shrine and live on the *langar* and charity of God-fearing devotees who come to seek the blessings of Māī Mirān. Looking at her physique, I wondered how painful it must be for her to walk to the shrine and back every day in the hope of getting a few morsels of food. I asked her whether she managed to walk all by herself every day. To answer my question, she slowly stood up and said in a resolute voice, "See here, I can stand and walk." In this sixty-plus woman's life, running parallel to the history of Pakistan, the narrative of women's experiences in Pakistan is enveloped. During my next three visits, I encountered this fascinating woman again and talked more about her life and her experiences. On one occasion, she confided to me that the *mazar* was neglected by the government and, though men's entry is banned, they still loiter around to prey upon less-alert females.

11.2 Lahore

(1)

Bibī Jamīla Mastānī

Place: Shafiqabad, Lahore

Urs: 21–22 Jamādi-us Sānī

The shrine of Bibī Jamīla is inside the Dargāh of Chatrīwālī Sarkar (the shrine of the man with an umbrella). It originally existed in the Timber market, Main Ravi Road, Lahore, but recently, because of the construction of the Metro Bus lines, the shrine was relocated to Shafiqabad. On my visit, I was told that on opening the grave of Bibī Jamīla, in order to shift the shroud to the new location, the remains were found covered in a fresh shroud. When the grave was exhumed, a waft of pleasant fragrance emitted. The shrine now is near the Ravi Road graveyard and is part of a complex of six shrines, including the shrine of Chatrīwālī Sarkar. The lime-painted walls of almost all the shrines were decorated with slogans and paintings of faces of some religious men. A man loitering around and chewing on a sugarcane told me that Bibī Jamīla was a disciple of the Chatrīwālī Sarkar. This was later confirmed by the nodding gesture of another man, who, I was told, was the manager (*mutawallī*) of the shrines. This man, with a flowing beard and wearing several rings on his fingers, did not answer any of my questions. The man with the sugarcane told me that, as this man is “a very big pious person,” he does not talk with women. The surrounding area was very unkempt. Close by sprawled an animal farm, and the stench was burdensome. The taxi driver was getting restless as he was worried that the little boys who were playing around would soon become troublesome. Even otherwise, there was no point in staying further. As the taxi began to move, the man who had volunteered to be our help, stepped in front of the vehicle and said that it is not the tradition to leave a shrine without *nazrāna*. The amount, to his satisfaction, was paid.

(2)

Bībīān Pākdamān

Place: Shoe Market, Bazar Shaikūpura, Taxali Darwāzā, Lahore

Urs: 7 Muḥarram

This shrine should not be confused with the shrine of Bībīān Pākdamnān, which is also in the city of Lahore. This small shrine is in a narrow lane adjacent to the Shoe Market, near the Taxali Gate. On my visit, I found the shrine locked. Through the iron grill covered with mesh, I could read that the title

Bibīān Pākdāman was suffixed with another virtue, *‘mā’sūm* (innocent), perhaps to note Bibīān Pākdāman’s lineage to the family of Hazrat Imām Ḥusain. Bhola, a shopkeeper selling Lahore’s famous *khussas* (hand-crafted leather footwear with gold and silver thread embroidery), on enquiry told me that this shrine contained the graves of the wife and daughter of Bābā Qāsim of the Gilānī Sufi order. I could find no information about Bābā Qāsim. He also told me that men were not allowed to enter the shrine in honour of the Saiyyid lineage of the Bibīs. The shrine is looked after by the shopkeepers of the shoe market. Another man who strolled in to join our conversation told me that the shrine was as old as three hundred years. Shrine visitors (women only) bring flowers and sweetmeats every Thursday and light earthen lamps. Those who arrive when the shrine is locked leave flower garlands hanging on the iron grills at the shrine entrance. In a room next to the shrine wall, I saw several women drug addicts. Since the Taxali Darwāzā was adjacent to the infamous *Heera Mandi* of Lahore, our driver warned us that we should leave the area before sunset, which we did.

(3)

Hazrat Shah ‘Abdu’l Mannān Ḥuẓūrī *al-ma’ārūf Burqā’-posh*

Shrine: Hall Road, Lahore

‘Urs: 27 Rajab

I came to know about the shrine of Hazrat Shah ‘Abdu’l Mannān Ḥuẓūrī *Burqā’-posh* (one wearing the *burqā’*) during my visit to Lahore. This saintly person with a male name was in reality a woman.

According to a legend related by male and female shrine visitors, this shrine has existed since 1040/1631. The inscription on the grave’s headstone also had the same date. The inscription describes the saint as belonging to the Naqshbandiyya order of the Sufis. The visitors also told me that Hazrat Shah ‘Abdu’l Mannān *Burqā’-posh* was indeed a woman and not a man, though all addressed the saint as “him” and not “her.” It is said that an unknown burqā-clad woman traveller was once sitting at the place where the present shrine stands. She was thirsty, and drinking water was not available in the vicinity. A water well, which had gone dry, was nearby. As she looked down into the well, water gushed up suddenly. The present well in the shrine complex is the one that was touched by the miraculous gaze of the burqā-clad woman traveller, Hazrat Shah ‘Abdu’l Mannān *Burqā’-posh*. Today, this well is below ground level and one has to stand in long queues waiting for a turn to touch this healing water.



FIGURE 32 Shrine of Hazrat Shah 'Abdu'l Mannān Ḥuẓūrī alma'ārūf Burqa' posh, Hall Road, Lahore

On visiting the shrine in March 2016, I met a woman who had brought her two-year-old ailing son to be cured by the water of the shrine's well. Several other women, including young girls, were there for this purpose. There were three bathrooms to take showers with this blessed water, which is brought there in small buckets, water jars, and even large-sized plastic bottles. Not only no separate bathrooms for women were there, but also the existing bathrooms had no doors; instead, there were only soiled curtains hanging at the entrance. Family members, mostly women, had to stand nearby to guard the privacy of women inside the bathrooms. I was not allowed to take photos of this area, though I photographed the tomb chamber.

The grave chamber was in a most unkempt condition. Large bundles, filled to their capacity and looking heavy, were piled on top of each other in one corner. Shabbily folded coverlets were lying around. A white piece of fabric, perhaps a cloth that men wrap around their heads in rural areas, was hanging by the headstone of the grave. The grave chamber was filled with a strong odour of leftover food. The flower petals, sprinkled over the top of the grave, were dry.

The shrine visitors, however, appeared not to be bothered by this condition. I wonder whether the healing charisma of the water to cure ailments was the reason for this.

(4)

Sakhī Bī Jī Sarkār Qalandarī**Place: Sahfiqabad, Lahore**

Before my visit to Lahore, I was not aware of Sakhī Bī Jī Sarkār Qalandarī. The shrine is within the Shafiqabad Graveyard. Arriving at the site, I was disappointed to see the premises locked. I could not find anyone to give any details about her. *Bījī*, in the local language of the area, means “mother.”

11.3 Multan

(1)

Amma Bī**Period: Not Known****Place: Hasan Parwana Colony, Multan**

Inside the *dargāh* of Pīr Saiyyid Walī Muḥammad, popularly addressed as *Chādarwālī Sarkār*, is the shrine of Amma Bī, whose original name was Maḥmūdā Bībī. She is the wife of *Chadar wālī Sarkār*, a Naqshbandi Sufi. Next



FIGURE 33 *Chādarwālī Sarkār* shrine, Hasan Parwana Colony, Multan. The shrine of Amma Bī, his wife, is inside this shrine complex

to her grave lies buried their daughter, Zubaida Bibī. Women devotees from as far away as Lahore and Gujranwala come here to solicit Amma Bī's intercession for Allāh's Mercy. The descendants of *Chādarwālī Sarkār* manage the *dargāh*. The Punjab Auqaf Department has no presence at the shrine. A member of the managing committee told me that the shrine earns a fairly large amount of money from the cash offerings of the devotees.

On my visit in December 2016, I found several women who were licking the salt kept in earthen pots for the devotees. The salt is believed to have the charismatic powers of Amma Bī and magically cures several ailments. Women put locks on wires, tied at a height which is difficult to reach. No one could tell me how the locks were tied at a nonreachable height. Women bring their children, even their newborns, to offer *salām* (salutations) to Amma Bī. These babies, I was told by a woman shrine visitor, owe their birth to the blessings of Amma Bī.

(2)

Mā'ī Meharbān

Period: Not Known

Place: Chowk Shahbaz, Multan

Urs: Last Friday of Rabi'ul-awwal

Near Chowk Shahbaz in the Timber Market stands the shrine of Mā'ī Meharbān. On reaching the shrine, I met Mukhtiyār Bibī, who is the *khidmat guzār* (care-taker) of the shrine. Nothing is known about Mā'ī Meharbān except what I was told by Mukhtiyār Bibī, a stern-looking woman. The *dargāh*, she told me, was a hundred years old, and her family is its ancestral *mujāwir*. The *urs* is celebrated on the last Friday of each *Rabi'ul-awwal*. Expenses for the *urs* celebrations are defrayed from the money deposited in the cashbox by the shrine visitors who are mainly women. The Bhutta community of the Punjab, to which Mukhtiyār Bibī belonged, also contributes for the celebrations as well as for the shrine's maintenance. The *dargāh* opens only on Thursdays. Women bring small cash offerings, cooked food, and fresh flowers. Food is also distributed among the poor who gather here on Thursdays in large numbers.

On my visit to the shrine in December 2016, I found the shrine door locked. Mukhtiyār Bibī lives close by. She came to open the main entrance, but she did not allow us to enter the shrine. She told me that she had first to seek the permission of Mā'ī Meharbān to allow us to enter the grave chamber. This she did by knocking at the grave while we were kept waiting at the doorstep. Finally, we were allowed to step in. She asked us to put some money in the cashbox, which we did. Inside the chamber, we saw litter scattered around, a rusty wall clock which was not running, and paper flower wreaths tied to the grave's aluminum

railings. Within five to seven minutes, we were asked to leave. As we wanted to take photographs, the woman agreed after accepting a little amount of money. Outside the shrine, within its walled enclosure, oil was stored in plastic jars. Mukhtiyār Bibī sells small plastic bottles of oil and charges ten rupees per bottle from the devotees and puts this money in the cashbox, she told me.

Most women come here to seek boons for fertility. Some come for their better economic life, good relations with their husbands, and the health of their children. As Mā'ī Meharbān was a virgin, not only adult males but even male children are not allowed to enter the shrine premises. The rule for screening the dead saint from male gaze is so rigid that even pregnant women are not allowed to enter the grave chamber, lest they might be pregnant with a male foetus.

On my way back from the shrine, I noticed that several small shops in the neighbourhood, to seek Mā'ī Meharbān's blessings, bore her name.

(3)

Pākdāman Bibīān

Date: 1970s

Place: Mumtazabad Railway Phatak, Multan

ʿUrs: 13 Shawwāl

Pākdāman Bibīān's shrine, also known as *Rawzā-i mubārak ḥaqq Pākdāman Bibīān* (the holy shrine of chaste women), is built over the graves of two women whose names on the headstones are given as *zauja muḥtarama* (the honourable spouse) of Bābā Mastān ʿUmru'd-Dīn Chishtī-Ṣabirī (d. 11 September 1973) and *zauja muḥtarama* of Bābā Sirāju'l Ḥaqq Shah Chishtī-Ṣabirī. I visited the shrine in December 2016. The graves of these two virtuous women are within a curtained small room built within the mosque complex. The room was too dark for me to see well. I had to make several requests to switch on the lights inside. The woman guard, after switching on the single bulb, closed the door from inside. I was allowed to take photographs only after much pleading.

Women devotees visit the graves of the two women and place *chādars* (fabric covers, mostly made of green-coloured shiny fabric with embossed verses of the Qur'an in gold lettering) and flowers on their graves, light oil lamps, and make cash offerings. In our conversation, the *Imam* of the masjid, Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Zamān, told us that these two women, similar to other pious women, are not Sufis because Allāh has accorded *wilāyat* only to men and not to women. Because of this, he argued further, the *ʿurs* celebrations are not permissible for women, irrespective of the fact that they might have been pious and virtuous women.

Sufi Women Identified by Name Only

12.1 Balochistan's Forgotten Women Saints

This brief note is added here with the purpose of revealing lost or hidden knowledge about pious women with the hope that soon more research will be undertaken to explore women's spiritual experiences, roles, and lives.

Sufis and Sufism are part of the religious experience of the people of Balochistan. Shrines have also existed in abundance in Balochistan for the past several hundred years. Documents and records in the local languages, similar to the other regions of South Asia, have yet to be documented and archived properly. In the absence of or nonavailability of indigenous sources, district gazetteers, despite their heavy colonialist point of view, often fill this gap. These gazetteers record the presence of women saints in Balochistan in large number. Some of this pertinent information was lost even when these gazetteers were prepared. In 1907, McConaghey, who compiled the Sibi District Gazetteer, pointed out the much-needed extensive research to document the remnants of these shrines. To illustrate his comment, he referred to Bray who mentioned the existence of a shrine of Mā'i Baréchāni or Gondrani in Las Bela,¹ "where no one may stay more than two nights or he will be overwhelmed with a shower of stones from heaven."² The area named after Mā'i Gondrani (which is also known as Shehr-i Roghan) is an archaeological cave-city site near Bela.³ According to local legends, Mai Gondrani (or Mā'i Balochani/Mā'i Pir) fought and killed demons and freed her city from their spell. After independence, some commendable efforts were initiated to rescue historical evidence from total loss. In this context, In'am-ul-Haq Kausar produced some studies in Urdu in which he mentions the names of a few other female saints of Balochistan, such as Mā'i Khairū of the Bhawlanazi tribe, Mā'i Saidū of the Muḥammadāni tribe, and Mā'i Natrū of the Ghazli tribe.⁴ The shrine of Bībī Peroz Khātūn in Dopasi between Sibi and Quetta has been partially washed away by flash

1 It is a coastal district of Balochistan, which remained a princely state until 1955.

2 Denis Bray, 1913. *Census of India, 1911, vol. 4, Baluchistan*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, p. 63.

3 Government of Balochistan, Quetta & UNICEF, Provincial Office, Quetta. 2011. *District Development Profile*. Quetta: Lasbela Planning & Development Department.

4 In'am-ul-Haq Kausar. 1986. *Tazkira sufiyā-yi Balochistān*. Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp. 293–94.

floods. About the presence of women saints in Sibi, McConaghey had earlier noted, “The Marris also have their female saints who include Mā’i Khairi, a Bahawalanzai lady; Mā’i Sado, to whom a shrine has been erected in the Nesau plain; and Mā’i Natro, a Ghazani saint, whose shrine lies close to Buzher.”⁵

Describing the religious beliefs of the Balochs and the healing powers of their saints, the Gazetteer observed, “These saints are invoked to cure diseases, to avert calamities, to bring rain, and to bless the childless with offspring. Saiads and *mullās* also play an important part, and their amulets, charms and blessings are constantly invoked. Some of them are credited with the power of bringing rain, of curing disease, of granting children, of averting rust and locusts from the crops and of exorcising evil spirits.”⁶

12.2 Sufi Women of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Whose Narratives Are Lost

Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf, author of a biography of Indian saints and mystics, *Bahr-e-Zakhkhār*, compiled in 1788–1789, writes that a large number of Sufis of the highest spiritual merits (*dar ḥālāt, wilāyat wa kamālāt be ghāyat mumtāz and*) have existed. Even Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf could not find any narratives of these Sufis in any texts, but he says that their names are remembered in the *awrād* (daily remembrance exercise) of Ḥāfiz Ghulām Rasūl Gujarati.⁷ The list of names of these Sufis includes women Sufis as well. Following are the names of these pious women. Details about these women are not known.⁸

Sister of Baba Gaur and Baba Habsh

Bībī Faṭḥ Shah

Bībī Māñ

Bībī Ummatu’l Ḥabīb

Bībī Rābi’a

Jān Bībī

Achūt Kokhī

Bībī Achchī

Bībī Bañī

5 McConaghey, Allen. 1907. *Sibi District Gazetteer. Compiled by Major A. McConaghey and assisted by Rai Sāhib Diwān Jamiat Rai*. Bombay: The Time Press, p. 298.

6 Ibid, p. 73.

7 I could not find information about Hafiz Ghulam Rasul Gujarati.

8 Wajihu’d-Dīn Ashraf. *Bahr-e-Zakhkhār*. (Ed.) Azarmi Dukht Safavi. 2012. *Bahr-e Zakhkhār, Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes* (vol. 3). Aligarh: Institute of Persian Research, Aligarh Muslim University (Originally composed in 1788–89), pp. 17–20.

Rani Yasmatī
 Dhrman Harī
 Bibī Jī
 Mā'ī Jī
 Bibī Maryam
 Bibī Şāhib
 Şāhib Jamāl
 Bibī Zarīf

12.3 Women Sufis of Bengal and Bihar with Scanty Information

1. Bibī Sua of Bishnupur, Dinajpur, West Bengal.⁹
2. Majzubū Bibī (thirteenth century), sister of Saiyyid Miran Shāh of Kanchanpur, Noakhali, West Bengal.¹⁰
3. Bibī Anwar, alias Bibī Chaladdhī, *waliyyā kāmīlā*, did not marry (*shadi na-kardand*). Dates are not known.¹¹
4. Bibī Tājan, daughter of Makhdūm Shah 'Abdul Ḥa'ī, was an *'ārifa, şāhib-i-kamālāt wa karāmāt* (an excellent gnostic with miraculous powers).¹²
5. Bibī Daulat Jahān (Chishtī), wife of Ḥazrat Sayyid Muḥammad, was an *'ārifa kāmīlā* (perfect saint).¹³
6. Bibī Ḥifzu'n-nisā' (18th c.) of Patna, Bihar, was a perfect saint with virtues similar to Rābi'a.¹⁴

12.4 Women Sufis of Bijapur Whose Names Only Are Known

1. Bibī Qadiriyya (d. 12 Rajab). Shrine was built on a raised platform.¹⁵
2. Jachcha Bī, shrine inside Faṭḥ (also spelt Fatah) Darwāzā.¹⁶

9 Muhammad Ismail. 2010. *Hagiology of Sufi saints and the spread of Islam in South Asia*, p. 160.

10 Ibid, p. 167.

11 'Abdur Razzāq, 'Aṭā' Ḥussain. 1302/1884. *Kanzu'l Ansāb*. Bombay: Maṭba' Şafdarī, p. 230.

12 Ibid, p. 232.

13 Ibid, pp. 235.

14 Ibid, p. 283.

15 *Rawzatul'awlīyā'-i Bijāpur* (1825), p. 231.

16 Ibid.

3. Bībī Sāhibā, Chāh Bibī, Şāhibnī Şāhibā, Āmīr Şāhibā, and Bibī Shamsa (daughter of 'Abul Alādi [d. 16 Rajab]), was buried in domed shrine in Zuhrapur, Şāhibā Rājā (d. 21 Rabi'ul awwal) had a shrine near Dargāh Hāshim Dastgīr. Ummatu'l Islām, Ummatu'l Ḥafiz, Ummatu'l Majīd, Achcho Şāhibā, and Puchchā Bībī were known as saintly women.¹⁷

12.5 Women Sufis (Ḥazrāt 'aurāt 'arīfā) Mentioned in a Hagiographical Work by Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Şābirī-Chishtī Rampurī. 1311/1893. *Tawārīkh āina-yi taṣawwuf*. Rampur: Ḥasani Press

12.5.1 Women Appointed as Khalīfas

Name of Sufi	Date of birth/death/ other details	Date/place of appointment	Pages
1. Zahūrun-nisā' <i>bint-i</i> Sayyid Na'īmu'd-Dīn	Naqshbandī silsila, lived in Hugly, Bengal	13 Muḥarram 1293/1876, Hugly, Bengal	p. 518
2. Khadija Begam <i>bint-i</i> Zamān Khan	Şābirī-Qādrī, living in Ahmadabad at the time of the completion of the source	23 Şafar 1293/1876. Appointment con- ferred in Rampur, UP	Ibid.

12.5.2 Women Sufis (Ḥazrāt 'aurāt 'arīfā)

Name	Date & place of birth	Date & place of death	Pages
1. Ḥazrat Ummatu'l Islām	1 Rajab 318/30 July 930	4 Rajab 390/30 July 1000. Shrine near Makanpur, UP	p. 344
2. Ḥazrat Bībī Jamīl Khatūn	21 Ramazān 592/18 August 1196	7 Rajab 699/28 March 1300. Shrine Dīpālpur, Punjab	p. 344
3. Ḥazrat Zuhra	16 Shawwāl 602/26 May 1206	11 Safar 602/20 April 1350. Shrine near Bahraich, UP	p. 345

¹⁷ Ibid.

12.5.3 *Dar Zikr-i majāzīb (Plural of majzūb) (An Account of the Intoxicated Ones), pp. 349–386*

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
1. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Qamarī bint-i Shamsu'd-dīn, caste Mughai	13 Muḥarram 205/29 June 820. Near Hirat, Afghanistan	22 Ziq'ad 299/10 July 912. Shrine near Delhi, Kuhna
2. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Karīmya Dīwānī	21 Ziq'ad 203/20 May 819	14 Shawwāl 300/24 May 913. Shrine in Amroha, UP
3. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Fakhrun	23 Zilhajj 215/10 February 831	11 Rajab 301/10 February 914 Shrine Kotana, UP
4. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Fkhru'n nisa' bint-i Ismāʿīl	27 Safar 221/20 February 836. Farrukhabad (UP)	12 Safar 311/1 June 923. Shrine Delhi Kuhna (East)
5. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Waiziya Qaşūrī	22 Şafar 257/January 871	14 Sh'abān 337/16 February 949. Shrine in Farrukhabad, UP
6. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Ḥabīban	16 Safar 292/28 December 904	12 Ziq'ad 377/4 March 988. Shrine in Sambhal, District Muradabad, UP
7. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Ḥamwia	17 Shawwāl 277/1 February 891	19 Safar 382/26 April 992. Shrine in Murādnagar, near Delhi
8. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> J'afri	22 Ramazān 301/22 May 913	16 Rajab 396/18 April 1006. Shrine, Farrukhabad, UP
9. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Walī Nī'mata	19 Safar 301/24 September 913	22 Shawwāl 397/11 July 1007. Shrine, Delhi
10. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Farīfah	13 Ramazān 307/6 February 920	16 Shawwāl 400/2 June 1010. Shrine, Meeruth, UP
11. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Nī'mat Aswad	12 Rabil'ul Awwal 357/15 February 968	17 Sh'abān 427/15 June 1036. Shrine, Kanpur.
12. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Munawwar Begam	27 Safar 377/28 June 987	23 Zilhajj 455/17 December 1063. Shrine in Qannauj
13. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Asgharī	12 Ramazān 417/27 October 1026	16 Ziq'ad 500/9 July 1107. Shrine Hyderabad, Sindh
14. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Nihāyat Begam	22 Muḥarram/19 January 1031	24 Shawwāl 501/6 June 1108. Shrine in Shahjahanpur

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
15. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Mubārak	14 Sh'abān 427/12 June 1036	23 Rajab 527/30 May 1133. Shrine in Ahmadabad, Gujarat
16. <i>Abd-i khās</i> J'afri Sughra	27 Shawwāl 487/8 November 1094	17 Ramazān 542/9 February 1148. Shrine near Bagh Rani, Allahabad
17. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Iqrār, caste Shaikh Farūqi	9 Safar 511/12 June 1117. Born in Sūrat	17 Rabi'ul Awwal 600/24 November 1203. Shrine in Sūrat
18. <i>'Abd-i khās</i> Bī 'Ismat Panāh	11 Rajab 515/25 September 1121	16 Shawwāl 600/17 June 1204. Shrine in Sardhana, UP
19. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Banjāwar Khatam	13 Rajab 512/30 October 1118. Born in Burhanpur	22 Sh'abān 613/5 December 1216. Shrine in Burhanpur, Deccan
20. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Amna (Afghan)	16 Rabi'ul awwal 515/4 June 1121. Gujarat	13 Safar 615/11 May 1218. Shrine in Gujarat
21. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Ḥurmat (Turk)	17 Shawwāl 522/14 October 1128. Gujarat	11 Rajab 622/19 July 1225. Shrine in Gujarat
22. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Wīza (Nusrat Ḥusainī Saiyyid)	3 Rajab 521/July 1127. Born in Surat	7 Muḥarram 641/7 July 1242. Shrine in Surat.
23. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Sarāmat Zū (Turk)	22 Shawwāl 555/25 October 1160. Gujarat	13 Zilhajj 656/10 December 1258. Shrine in Gujarat.
24. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Jagga Jī Jogan	18 Rajab 555/24 July 1160. Bijapur	9 Muḥarram 671/6 August 1272. Shrine in Bijapur
25. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bībī Bakhtāwar	6 Rajab 575/7 December 1179. Qannauj, UP	9 Safar 681/19 May 1282. Shrine in Qannauj, UP
26. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bībī Karmwant (Saiyyid)	16 Jamādiu'l Awwal 521/30 May 1127. Kalpi	17 Jamādiu'l Awwal 691/6 May 1292. Shrine in Kalpi
27. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Ṣamad Wahīd (Jalālī Sayyidani)	11 Sh'abān 609/6 January 1213. Sistan, Sindh	18 Rajab 700/29 March 1301. Shrine in Sistan, Sindh

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
28. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Makoh (Rajput neo-Muslim)	2 Sh'abān 947/2 December 1540. Jodhpur	12 Ramazān 1000/22 June 1592. Shrine in Jodhpur
29. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Hauri (Maḥbūb Sikh Musalmān)	16 Shawwāl 903/7 June 1498. Lahore, Punjab	12 Ramazān 1001/12 June 1593. Shrine in Lahore, Punjab
30. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Khud Raiḥān (Shaikh)	13 Zilhajj 901/23 August 1496. Kashmir	19 Shawwāl 1007/15 May 1599. Shrine in Kashmir
31. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Baharangī (Neo-Muslim)	13 Ramazān 905/12 April 1500. Jammu	11 Zilhajj 1011/22 May 1603. Shrine in Jammu
32. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī 'Azīmu'n-nisā' (Siddiqui Shaikh)	17 Rajab 900/13 April 1495. Born in Ajmer Sharīf	28 Sh'abān 1017/7 December 1608. Shrine in Ajmer Sharīf, Rajasthan
33. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Dorī (Jat)	22 Rabi' u'l awwal 912/12 August 1506. Jodhpur	21 Shawwāl 1017/28 January 1609. Shrine in Jodhpur
34. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Sangī Jog (Neo Muslim)	28 Sh'abān 918/8 November 1512. Jammu	14 Rajab 1021/10 September 1612. Shrine in Jammu.
35. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī 'Azīman (Sayyidani)	11 Sh'abān 921/20 September 1515. Hyderabad, Sindh	22 Jamādiu'l-awwal 1027/17 May 1618. Shrine in Hyderabad, Sindh
36. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Maddu (Afghan)	27 Rabi'u'l awwal 999/23 January 1591. Multan	22 Rajab 1047/10 December 1637. Shrine in Multan
37. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Khūbān (Shaikh or Sayyid)	19 Jamādiu'l Awwal 921/1 July 1515. Jaipur	14 Muḥarram 1061/7 January 1651. Shrine in Jaipur
38. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Ḥurmat (Shaikh)	7 Muḥarram 977/22 June 1569. Hyderabad, Sindh	21 Sh'abān 1067/4 June 1657. Shrine in Hyderabad, Sindh
39. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Aḥmar	13 Jamādiu'l Awwal 999/9 March 1591. Hyderabad, Deccan	14 Muḥarram 1097/11 December 1685. Shrine in Hyderabad, Deccan

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
40. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Sadā Mantī (Jogan Musalmān)	22 Ramaẓān 1082/22 January 1672. Murshidabad	9 Shʿabān 1100/29 May 1689. Shrine in Murshidabad
41. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Jaggo, <i>naddafā</i> (carder)	17 Safar 1007/19 September 1598. Hugli	23 Shʿabān 1103/9 May 1692. Shrine in Hugli
42. ʿAbd-i khās Mor Banī (neo-Muslim)	27 Shawwāl 1013/12 March 1605. Murshidabad	7 Zilhajj 1109/16 June 1698. Shrine in Murshidabad
43. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Ghaurī Sultan	11 Zilhajj 981/3 April 1579. Peshawar	14 Shʿabān 1117/1 December 1705. Shrine in Peshawar
44. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Bagrī Dīwanī (Sikh Musalmān)	17 Rajab 972/6 August 1583. Lahore	11 Shawwāl 1171/18 June 1758. Shrine in Lahore
45. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Gori (neo-Musalmān)	3 Safar 972/10 September 1564. Gajj Makrān	18 Rajab 1187/5 October 1773. Shrine in Gajj Makrān
46. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Ṣāliḥa (Afghan)	27 Rajab 1110/29 June 1699. Āonla, UP	13 Shʿabān 1187/30 October 1773. Shrine in Rampur, UP
47. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Mukandī (Brahman neo-Musalmān)	27 Ziqʿad 1011/8 May 1603. Dhaka	3 Muḥarram 1191/11 February 1777. Shrine in Dhaka, Bengal
48. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Naumāh (Afghan)	22 Jamādiuʾl Akhir 1107/28 January 1696. Āonla, UP	17 Zilhajj 1196/11 February 1777. Shrine in Bareilly,
49. ʿAbd-i khās Bī Zahra Begam (Afghan).	14 Shawwāl 1127/13 October 1715. Gujarat	12 Shʿabān 1197/13 July 1783. Shrine in Bagi, near Rampur, UP
50. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Ḥalīma (Afghan)	22 Shawwāl 1119/16 January 1708. Swat	22 Ramaẓān 1197/21 August 1783. Shrine in Rampur, UP
51. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Niloh (Rajput Musalmān)	7 Shawwāl 1022/20 November 1613. Jodhpur	13 Zilhajj 1197/8 November 1783. Shrine in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
52. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Jokhī (Musalmān Turk)	27 Sh'abān 900/23 May 1495. Jaipur, Rajasthan	23 Shawwāl 1198/9 September 1784. Shrine in Jaipur, Rajasthan
53. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Khusrān (Afghan)	13 Zilhajj 1112/21 May 1701. Āonla, UP	22 Rabi' u'l ākhir 1199/2 February 1785. Shrine in <i>Mohalla</i> Rajdwara, Rampur, UP
54. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Jabīn (Afghan)	3 Safar 999/1 December 1590. B. Peshawar	12 Sh'abān 1199/18 July 1785. Shrine in Peshawar
55. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Mirās (seam- stress by profession)	21 Sh'abān 1111/11 February 1700. B. Bareilly, UP	14 Rabi'ul awwal 1202/24 December 1787. Shrine in Bareilly, UP
56. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Munawwarī (Dry fruit seller)	17 Rabi' u'l awwal, 1110/23 September 1698. Benares.	22 Sh'abān 1202/28 May 1788. Shrine in Benares
57. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Gumānī Bibī (Afghan)	11 Rajab 1103/29 March 1692. Patna, Bihar	12 Zilhajj 1202/13 September 1788. Shrine in Patna, Bihar
58. <i>Abd-i khās</i> 'Ajab Begam (Dry fruit seller)	11 Sh'abān 1121/16 October 1709. B. Akbarabad, UP	13 Muḥarram 1203/14 October 1788. Shrine near Tajganj, Akbarabad
59. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Rūpī (Ahīr Musalmān)	14 Sh'abān 1111/4 February 1700. Manka, suburbs of Sundarban, Bengal	3 Safar 1203/3 November 1788. Shrine in Sundarban, Bengal
60. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Umrao' Begam (Sayyidani)	16 Rabi'ul awwal 1101/27 January 1690. Lucknow, UP	13 Ramaẓān 1203/7 June 1789. Shrine in Lucknow, UP
61. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Jammo (Afghan)	13 Rabi'ul awwal, 1105/12 November 1693. Bareilly, UP	16 Shawwāl 1203/10 July 1789. Shrine in Bareilly, UP
62. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Da'oghni	7 Safar 1102/10 November 1690. Chittagong, Bengal	12 Zilhajj 1203/3 September 1789. Shrine in Chittagong, Bengal

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
63. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bībī Khātūn (Hussaini Sayyid)	12 Rajab 1115/21 November 1703. B. Akbarabad, UP	12 Zilhajj 1203/3 September 1789. Shrine in Akbarabad, UP
64. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Zahūrat (Sayyidani)	12 Sh'abān 1111/2 February 1700. Faizabad, UP	14 Zilhajj 1203/5 September 1789. Shrine in Faizabad, UP
65. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Nī'matī Begam (Turk)	11 Sh'abān 1103/28 April 1692. Muradabad, UP	14 Muḥarram 1205/23 September 1790. Shrine in Sambhal, UP
66. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Amānī (Mughal)	21 Zilhajj 1103/3 September 1692. Lucknow, UP	11 Sh'abān, 1205/15 April 1791. Shrine in Lucknow, near the riverbank
67. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Namūn (Rajput Musalmān)	9 Safar 1111/6 August 1699. Murshidabad, Bengal	7 Muḥarram 1206/6 September 1791. Shrine in Murshidabad, Bengal
68. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Shammūn (Jogan)	16 Muḥarram 1103/9 October 1691. Murshidabad, Bengal	22 Safar 1207/9 October 1792. Shrine in Murshidabad, Bengal
69. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Qarāmī (Shaikh Qureshi)	14 Zilhajj 1103/27 August 1692. Farrukhabad, UP	3 Rabi'ul awwal 1207/19 October 1792. Shrine in Farrukhabad, UP
70. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Ḥashmat Jān (Mughal)	2 Shawwāl 1103/17 June 1692. Lucknow, UP	3 Rajab 1207/4 February 1793. Shrine in Lucknow, UP
71. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Mammun (Butcher)	12 Shawwāl 1103/27 June 1692. Bareilly.	2 Shawwāl 1207/13 May 1793. Shrine in Old Bareilly
72. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Namūdī (Shaikh)	13 Shawwāl 1100/31 July 1689. Calcutta, Bengal	11 Muḥarram 1209/8 August 1794. Shrine in Calcutta
73. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Mughlo Begam (Carder).	27 Zilhajj 1102/21 September 1691. Lucknow, UP	14 Sh'abān 1209/6 March 1795. Shrine in Lucknow, UP

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
74. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Ābādi Begam (Majzūbā Saiyyidānī)	16 Safar 1109/3 September 1697. Muradabad, UP	21 Shawwāl 1209/11 May 1795. Shrine in Muradabad, UP
75. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Bano Begam (Shaikh Farūqī)	22 Sh'abān 1103/9 May 1692. Saharanpur, UP	11 Zilhajj 1211/7 June 1797. Shrine in Saharanpur, UP
76. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Burhano (Ironsmith)	2 Safar 1113/9 July 1701. Dhaka, Bengal	22 Sh'abān 1212/9 February 1798. Shrine in Dhaka, Bengal
77. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Karānī Begam (Mughal)	27 Rajab 1111/18 January 1700. Patna, Bihar	12 Sh'abān, 1211/12 January 1702. Shrine in Patna, Bihar ^a
78. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Sītā Rāmjani (Jāt, nau- Muslim)	2 Safar 1102/5 November 1690. Muradabad, UP	14 Sh'abān 1213/21 January 1799. Shrine in Muradabad, UP
79. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Ghurbat Begam	16 Rajab 1119/13 October 1707. Faizabad, UP	22 Sh'abān 1213/29 January 1799. Shrine in Faizabad, UP
80. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Jammo Dīwānī (Bundela Rajput Muslim).	13 Ramazān 1102/10 June 1691. Muradabad, UP	27 Ziq'ad 1213/2 May 1799. Shrine in Muradabad, UP
81. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Raḥm Jān (Sayyidani).	27 Ramazān 1105/22 May 1694. Farrukhabad, UP	3 Rajab 1215/20 November 1800. Shrine in Farrukhabad, near the riverbank
82. <i>Abd-i khās</i> Bī Amīran (Sayyidani)	13 Rajab 1121/18 September 1709. Dhaka, Bengal	11 Sh'abān 1215/28 December 1800. Shrine in Dhaka, Bengal

a This is a doubtful date. Perhaps the copyist made a mistake here. I assume that it should be 1213 because all the dates immediately preceding this entry and following it, are for the year 1213.

(cont.)

Name	Date/place of birth	Date of death
83. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Muḥabbatu'n nisā' (Fārūqī Shaikh).	16 Ramaẓān 1127/15 September 1715. Faizabad, UP	22 Ziq'ad 1215/6 April 1801. Shrine in Faizabad, UP
84. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Khūbi Jī (Weaver).	16 Zilhajj 1103/29 August 1692. Dhaka, Bengal	27 Shawwāl 1216/2 March 1802. Shrine in Dhaka, Bengal
85. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī 'Azīmu'n nisā' (Sadāt)	13 Ziq'ad 1117/26 February 1706. Pilibhīt, UP	7 Sh'abān 1218/22 November 1803. Shrine in Pilibhīt, UP
86. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Kallo (Carder by profession).	27 Shawwāl 1207/7 June 1793. Murshidabad, Bengal	21 Ramaẓān 1222/22 November 1807. Shrine in Murshidabad, Bengal
87. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Zahūran (Carder)	7 Muḥarram 1120/29 March 1708. Dhaka, Bengal	11 Zilhajj 1227/16 December 1812. Shrine in Dhaka, Bengal
88. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Karīman (Siddiqui Shaikh)	12 Shawwāl 1111/3 April 1700. Pilibhīt, UP	27 Rajab 1245/22 January 1830. Shrine in Pilibhīt, UP
89. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Nizāmu'n-nisā' (Mughal)	27 Rajab 1144/25 January 1732. Agra, UP	22 Ramaẓān 1245/17 March 1830. Shrine in Agra, UP
90. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī 'Aishā (Turk)	19 Ziq'ad 1195/6 November 1781. Rampur, UP	27 Sh'abān 1249/9 January 1834. Shrine in Rampur, UP
91. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Mā'sūma (Afghan)	27 Zilhajj 1193/5 January 1780. Shahabad, Rampur, UP	7 Safar 1255/17 April 1839. Shrine in Shahabad, Rampur, UP
92. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bī Anārā (Afghan)	16 Ramaẓān 1203/10 June 1789. Rampur, UP	16 Shawwāl 1267/14 August 1851. Shrine in Bilaspur Darwaza, Rampur, UP
93. <i>ʿAbd-i khās</i> Bibī Munawwara (Sadāt)	13 Ramaẓān 1201/29 June 1787. Agra, UP	11 Rabi'ul awwal 1272/21 November 1855. Shrine in Delhi

Conclusions

To conclude this book, which has been years in the making, perhaps I could do no better than to reproduce here the words of Ghulām ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Nāzīr, the official scribe of *Bahār-i-‘Āzam Jāhī*, an early nineteenth-century travel diary of the pilgrimage of ‘Āzam Jāh Bahādur Nawab Wālājāh IV of Carnatic (1820–1825). In his brief notice of Turta-turt Bibī, a woman Sufi, whose details remain unknown, Nāzīr describes extraordinary circumstances in which Turta-turt Bibī’s grave was discovered. When near the foundations of the fort for constructing anew the city wall, while digging alongside the Natharnagar gate, her hidden grave was struck by chance. The grave was disturbed, and blood began to ooze out. The diggers excavated further, and the body of a woman (*mastūra-yi ‘iffat nishān*), dressed in white robes and reposing in peace (*bākhwāb rāhat ast*), was sighted. The diggers immediately covered the ground (*mā’an pinhān sākhta*). Nāzīr writes: “Such women who may be styled as Rābī’a’s of their days are too many.... There are no traces of them. May Allah bless us with their help.” He concludes by commenting that there are many more friends of Allāh, pious (*awliyā’, ṣulahā’, wa darwishān*) about whom we know nothing and whose memories are lost (*khāk-i tīra rafta*).¹ But we know that God-aware and God-loving women have been present throughout history in all regions of South Asia.

Accounting for the lives of women of the past is an arduous task for historians. The lives of mystic women become more obscure since the pious women chose to remain veiled and hidden. Acceptance and recognition of Sufi women as equal members of the mystic community was not unproblematic for the male Sufis. The preceding overview of the Sufi perception of women has verified it. The Sufi texts, through two types of documentation, i.e., written and oral, further developed and strengthened the Sufi Shaikh’s averseness for women, including Sufi women. On the one hand, there is the issue of omission, suppression, and evasion of public disclosure of the lives of women. On the other hand, since almost all of the entries in this book have come from the scattered and sparse references in Sufi textual sources—created within and nourished by the social religious paradigms that cherish veiling women—it is warranted to ask what religious codes, social patterns, and mystical trends caused this fragmented information. The preceding sections have responded

1 ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Nāzīr, Ghulām. 1961. *Bahār-i-‘Āzam Jāhī: rūdād-i safar-i maimanat asr-i Nawāb ‘Āzam Jāh Bahādur*. (Written in 1823 in Farsi and edited by Muhammad Yusuf Kokan Usmani. Madras: Electric Press), p. 178.

to these questions and in turn have generated more queries, thus calling for a thoughtful reading of the contents of this book.

Thus, as the Sufi women's notices in this book verify, the piety of these women was not bounded by the institutions of organised Sufism. They expressed their devotion for Allāh and His Prophet outside the formalities of a *ṭarīqa*. As the narratives show, all these pious women were not formally initiated into a *silsila*. A woman friend of Allāh (*awlīyā' Allāh*) embarks on her journey (*sulūk*) towards the Divine alone because each person stands responsible for their actions and therefore is rewarded or punished accordingly.

Instead of rigorous asceticism and self-mortification, Sufi women cherished life without indulging in it. Those who went through initiation did it primarily for self-guidance and as a mark of *baraka*. Indeed, asceticism and renunciation are not the practices of all the *silsilas*. Indeed, all male Sufis neither relinquished their families nor turned away from riches. They did not direct their disciples and followers to give up their professions (*kasb*). Therefore, it would be erroneous and misleading to characterise and assess Sufi women's practices as replicas of the mystical path of the male Sufis. Moving beyond and discarding the tradition of applying males as a yardstick to measure women, pious and virtuous women's mode of piety and their trust in Allāh is instead found in their inner self, in the core of their heart (*lubb*). This deepest and innermost locus of God is not for public display; it remains veiled.

It becomes clear from the biographical notices of Sufi women and from the analysis of the Sufi Shaikh's perception of women's spiritual experiences that there were two different understandings of following the path of *taṣawwuf*. The acclaimed Sufi Shaikhs, who were acknowledged as mainstream guides of Sufism, projected *taṣawwuf* within the frame of Sufi institutions with an emphasis on following (*taqlīd*) the word and practice of authority, in this case, the Shaikh of the *silsila* and of the *ṭarīqa*. Pious and devout women, fulfilling the obligations of their social milieu, lived as mothers and wives, or as unmarried women, followed the path of *taṣawwuf* differently. This path was not an alternative to the path followed by Sufi males. Instead, their path was a mingling of the mystical modes of piety with the mundane life which they understood as a Divine gift to them and as the ultimate site to test their love for God. Thus, synthesising love for the Divine with love for children and other family members—which in the eyes of Sufi men worked as detractors, derailing their piety—Sufi women followed *taṣawwuf* in its truest form. Sufi men and Sufi women, therefore, demonstrated their love and expressed their gratitude for Allāh on two different platforms. The Sufi men healed bruised and fractured morals and social ethos through a vigilantly monitored *murīd-murshid*—a

master-disciple relationship controlled by written codes of behaviour for the novice as well as the mentor, both living on the premises of the hospice. Sufi women remained tied to the home, not because they were mandated to do so; for them, home was the prime location, requiring a spiritual therapeutic cure for the moral and social sufferings, which, if left untreated, turn into much larger problems.

As discussed, in light of the reported words of male Sufis, the male Sufi perception of women was not generously welcoming, at times to the extreme extent of abhorring and dreading their physical presence and proximity. At the same time, Sufi men and Sufi women did not exist in complete isolation from each other. Also, all Sufi males were neither celibate nor shunned, nor did they relinquish their family responsibilities. Thus, it would be erroneous to claim that the mysticism of South Asia turned women into outcasts.

Textual invisibility has not made Sufi women socially invisible. Despite their obscurity in the texts and the missing historical references, women Sufis won the hearts of their devotees. They avoided egoistic self-display (*riyāʿ*) and pride (*kibr*) and fulfilled what is due to God—*ḥuqūq Allāh* (e.g., offering prayers, sharing wealth with the needy, etc.). Thus, ascetic piety and deep yearning for Allāh through His constant remembrance and by caring for the people were arguably the most cherished qualities of women Sufis, and this resulted in making bridges between them and other human beings, including men. The founding fathers of the Chishtī *silsila*—Shaikh Farīduʿd-Dīn Ganj-i Shakkar and his *khalīfa* Khwāja Nizāmuʿd-Dīn Awliyāʾ, and Shaikh Farīd's younger brother, Shaikh Muntajibuʿd-Dīn—maintained close ties with Bibī Fāṭima Sām. The last two had hours-long conversations with her at her house, where she was mostly alone as her female attendant usually returned home by late evenings. Similarly, the narrative of the sixteenth-century Khesghī Pashtun Sufi, Bibī Mahkalī, is another example that this book has recorded. Miyān Akhund Saʿīd Shuryānī (d. 1018/1609), a contemporary Sufi who is said to have received his *khirqā* from ʿAbul Ḥasan Kharaqani (d. 1033), remained so much in her company that common and ignorant people began to taunt him. They said that it was below the dignity of his spiritual status (*shān-i wilāyat*) to remain in a woman's company. Miyān Akhund Saʿīd's response to this public censure is an answer to all similar queries regarding women's spiritual status. He told them, "O' ignorant ones (*nadān*)! Don't say this because Bibī Mahkalī is one of the gnostics, pious, and learned women of her times (*az ʿarīfāt wa ṣālīhāt wa faẓlīāt*). When God distributed (*taqṣīm*) greatness, blessings, holiness and miracles (*buzurgī wa barakāt wa wilāyat wa karamāt*) upon the Khesghīs, one entire part of it was bestowed upon her (*yak ḥiṣṣa tamām*) and the remaining

two parts were given to the rest of the people.”² The same is true in the case of Māī Nūru’n nisā’ Begam (d. 1974). The number of her followers among male Pakistani expatriates in the United Kingdom is considerably large and is growing. Thus, questioning women’s piety, weighing it against men’s piety and measuring their stature with that of men, is not prudent.

This compassionate virtue of the Sufi women has generated a confluence between them and the devout women who visit their shrines to seek their blessings (*baraka*). The shrines of Sufi women, whether “authenticated” or not by the written word, found almost all over the South Asian region, even in the remotest locations, are open houses for unscheduled meetings, generating stronger and instant ties of camaraderie. Shrine visitation, in itself, functions as a spiritual guide. At several shrines, I have conversed with women who, without the least access to any type of formal education and living under acute lack of resources, yet carry with them a flawlessly perfect understanding of Sufism. Knowledge comes from inside, one woman told me, because knowledge rests in our hearts (*‘ilm dil main rahta hai*). Another woman at the shrine of Māī Mirān, in response to my asking how she came to know of her, said, “He [God] alone guides us. Who else?”

Yet, for all its acceptance by women devotees of the spiritual charisma of women Sufis, the stand of the traditional theologians, which is often shared by the common men, remains nonacceptance. The manager of the shrine of Umm-i Ḥabība, in Karachi, told me that the ‘urs celebration of women saints is not permissible because women are not Sufis as men are. Interestingly, men visitors also pray at the shrine of Umm-i Ḥabība and seek her blessings.

The canvas of this book is large, in terms of time period covered, areas surveyed, and sources studied. Additionally, variegated cultural patterns, linguistic differences, and multiple ethnicities had to be carefully assessed. I am aware that such ambitious studies often leave some questions inadequately or not at all answered. I must admit that the present work has its inadequacies. However, I hope that these would inspire further studies that would be more comprehensive, inclusive, and analytical, and that, in the end, the readers of this book would feel encouraged to draw their own conclusions about Sufi women.

2 *Akbāru’l awliyā’*. MS. no. R343, fols. 123b, 124a.

Glossary

<i>abdāl</i>	plural of <i>badal</i> (substitutes); a category of the Sufi hierarchy
<i>‘ābid</i>	religious devotee; worshipper
<i>ādāb</i>	manners; etiquette
<i>aḥwāl</i>	spiritual states
<i>akhlāq</i>	ethics; moral qualities; character traits
<i>ālayams</i>	shrines in the Tamil language
<i>akhyār</i>	“the chosen ones,” a category of the Sufis
<i>ammā</i>	mother
<i>‘arīf</i>	gnostic; knower
<i>burqā‘</i>	A long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet, worn in public by some Muslim women
<i>darbār</i>	royal court; shrine
<i>dunyā</i>	world
<i>faqr</i>	poverty
<i>fitna</i>	chaos
<i>futūḥ</i>	unsolicited donations
<i>ḥāziri</i>	presence; state of being possessed
<i>‘ilm</i>	learning; knowledge
<i>‘irfān</i>	gnosis
<i>ijāzat</i>	authorisation to teach; permission
<i>irādat</i>	discipleship
<i>jazb</i>	absorption (in God); ecstatic state
<i>kandūrī</i>	a feast held in honour of Bībī Fāṭima; a table cover
<i>karāmāt</i>	saintly marvels (pl. of <i>karāmat</i>)
<i>kashf</i>	revealed knowledge; unveiling
<i>khādims</i>	attendants
<i>khalīfa</i>	spiritual deputy (pl. <i>khulafā‘</i>)
<i>khānqāh</i>	Sufi lodges or hospices
<i>khilāfat-namā</i>	letter of investiture
<i>khirqā</i>	patched garment worn by male Sufis
<i>kulāh</i>	the Sufi’s hat
<i>langar</i>	soup kitchens; free meals
<i>latīfā</i>	subtle centres of human consciousness
<i>madrasa</i>	seminary; schools
<i>majlis</i>	assembly
<i>maqām</i>	mystical station; grave

- murīd* spiritual disciple
murshid spiritual guide
murāqaba contemplation of God
mutawallīs superintendent or treasurer of a mosque or shrine
naḥ lower self
neḳzan pious, chaste woman
nerchas the act of taking a vow at a shrine with festivities (Tamil language)
nijāt salvation; redemption
rijāl man
riḳā Ar. Ridā; satisfaction/perfect contentment
ṣabr patience
ṣālīḥāt pious women
sakr intoxication
sālik wayfarer on the Path (of Sufism) (feminine, *sālīka*)
samāʿ listening; spiritual music; *qawwālī*
sawāb Divine reward; spiritual merit
shaikhas female Shaikhs
shahwat ordinary thoughts; lust or sensuality
shajara a genealogical table of a Sufi *silsila*, starting from the Prophet
silsila a chain of spiritual descent (literally, “chain,” a Sufi spiritual genealogy/lineage)
sijda prostration
sajjāda-nishin successor of a Sufi shrine (literally, “sitting on the carpet”)
sīra life story
sulūk spiritual path
tabarruk derivation from the word *barakā* (Divine blessings)
tajarrud celibacy
tajallī theophany
tajrīd detachment
talqīn inculcation
talqīnu’l-zikr foundational formula of recollection of Allāh for training of Sufi novice
taqwā fear of God; piety; abstinence
tafsīr exegesis
taqlīd imitation
ṭarīqa/ṭarīqat spiritual path
tarkā shrine in Tamil
ṭabaqāt classifications; generations
tawḥīd Divine Unity

- tazkira* remembrance; recollections; biographical compendiums
taṣawwur-i shaikh visualising the Shaikh
tawajjuh spiritual attention; focus; Divine energy
tawakkul trust in God
taykal Tamil word for shrines
tazkiyatu'l nafs purification of the soul
'urs wedding; celebration of death-anniversary of Sufi
wajd ecstasy
walī friend of Allāh; saint
wilāyat spiritual authority; sainthood
war' abstinence from anything doubtful; wary of God
wilāya the state of being walī
zāhid ascetic
zāhir exoteric
zan woman
zīkr (Arabic *dhikr*) recollection of Allāh
ziyārat pilgrimage
zuhd asceticism

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