

The Social Production of Sufi Stature: Intervention of the Early Chishtī Shaikhs

Khurshid Khan*

Associate Professor, Department of History, Shivaji College, University of Delhi, India

Abstract – The Early Chishtī malfūzāt are peppered with avowals of lamentations and hesitancy of Chishtī Shaikhs-Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd regarding their responsibility as Social actors. These discursive statements were seen as mere rhetoric in past historiography. The essay indicates that these were plotted in the texts for a crucial purpose. The mantle of leading the community conflicted with the basic ideals of mystics to renounce the world and lead a life of prayer and contemplation. It seemed a major detour on the part of the Shaikhs providing scope for condemnation by their opponents. The study illustrates that these narrative devices were employed to convey that the Saints had taken on this burdensome task unwillingly. They effectively bring out the agency of people and God in the Shaikhs taking on social responsibility. Subsequently it endorses that it was philanthropy and not worldliness behind the digression in the professed aims and actual practice of the Shaikhs. Effort is to investigate the ways in which the Shaikhs utilized these communicative tools both to silence their critics and opponents as well as validate and prioritize their functions as Social actors. The paper also examines the detailed norms of conduct that the Shaikhs prescribed for darweshes to balance their twin opposing responsibilities without falling prey to allurements.

Keywords – Chishtī Shaikhs, Malfūzāt, Narrative Devices, Social Actors Sufism

-----X-----

1. INTRODUCTION

Chishti literary productions largely of the fourteenth century Delhi abound in the lamentations of Sufi Shaikhs like Farid al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d.1265), Nizam al-Dīn Awliyā' (d.1325) and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd (d.1356) about having too little time to be engrossed in the devotion of God³⁶. Their adherents in search of guidance on matters social and spiritual flocked to them from all walks of life. People sought them out to seek counsel on mundane issues too. The Sufi Shaikhs by lamenting thus communicated that they shouldered the task of guiding people with great reluctance. Their hesitations largely stemmed from the fact that they had to be always accessible to people which was time consuming leaving little leisure for spiritual quest. The Early Chishtī Shaikhs voiced these dilemmas before their congregations to convey the predicaments that they faced on account of their conflicted functions. These are well reported by the compilers who penned the discourses of Shaikhs in a literary genre called *malfūzāt* (plural of *malfūz*).

Amīr Hasan Sijzī (d.1336), a poet and soldier in the court of Delhi Sultans authored the *malfūz* (discourse/table talk) of Shaikh, Nizām al-Dīn titled *Fawā'id al-Fu'ūd*. Nizām al-Dīn had spoken to congregations at his hospice over a span of fifteen years (1307-22). "A self-styled poet", Maulana Hamīd Qalandar, compiled the discourse of Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd, in a *malfūz* called *Khair al-Majālis* in a period of two years (1354-56)^{37[1]}. Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd, to whom is ascribed the epithet *Chirāgh-i Dehli* was a disciple and successor of Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' in Delhi from 1325-56.³⁸

³⁷ A vast corpus of literature was penned in the circle of the Chishtiyyas in the fourteenth century in diverse literary genres like *malfūzāt* and *tazkirāt*. The discourses of Sūfi Shaikhs with their congregations are memorialized in *malfūzāt*, the *tazkirāt* are biographical accounts of Sufis. The *malfūzāt* of this period unlike the earlier ones are not flat monologues but are interactive in nature bringing alive the persona of the Shaikhs and their moods. The authorship in a *malfūz* is dispersed, as the providers of the main content were undoubtedly the Shaikhs. But proximate disciples penned them from memory sifting and sorting the words of the Shaikhs from their perspective as well. The participants in the gatherings of the Shaikhs too contributed to the discourses.

³⁸ Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn popularly came to be referred as Ganj-i Shakkār (treasure of Sugar) and Baba Farīd. The followers of Nizām al-Dīn added Awliyā' (friend/s of God) to his name and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd became famous as Chirāgh-i-Dehli (lamp of Delhi) much later. Neither court chronicle *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī* of Barani nor the *malfūzāt* and *tazkirāt* of the Early Chishtī Shaikhs of the 14th century use these titles for the Shaikhs.

³⁶ The Chishti Silsilah/ tarīqa/(brotherhood/path) made its mark in India since its establishment in Ajmer (modern Rajasthan) by Mu'tīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d.1233). It various exponents spread it throughout South Asia. Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d.1232), Nizām al-Dīn (d.1325) and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd (d.1356) popularized it in Delhi. Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265) propagated it in Punjab and Burhān al-Dīn Gharrīb (d.1337) in Khuldabad in the Deccan.

The *malfūzāt* point that the Shaikhs primarily used Persian in their congregations. Amīr Hasan and Hamīd Qalandar too were targeting Persian conversant readers as the audience of their literary compositions. As such they penned their works in simple spoken Persian interspersed with Arabic. Some usage of *Hindvī* words and sentences in the *Khair al-Majālis* suggests the composition of these congregations to be diverse and hints at the Shaikh occasionally employing the local tongue.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The discursive statements in the *malfūzāt* relating to the stature of the early Chishtī Shaikhs as social actors is worthy of note and analysis³⁹.^[2] The paper critically and closely examines these avowals of the Shaikhs to unravel their purpose. The dilemma on account of their conflicted obligations to be engrossed in God on the one hand and serve His people on the other was not lamented in vain. My research indicates that these expressions were a part of a process of resolution of the predicaments of the Shaikhs as well as a validation of their public role in the eyes of their followers and peers. In addition, it emphasizes on the interventions of Nizām al-Dīn and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd in giving priority to the role of Sufis as leaders of the community. The study demonstrates that the Early Chishtī Sufi Shaikhs prioritized Social investment, as it was crucial in the making of the Chishti brotherhood (*silṣilah*), its propagation and perpetuation. Additionally, it also indicated how these Shaikhs were aware of the worldly temptations that a Sufi might encounter while engaging with people. Consequently, to avoid those pitfalls, these Chishtī exponents strove to lay down detailed norms of socialization for a Sufi. The paper deliberates on the narrative mechanisms deployed by the two Shaikhs regarding their role as public figures. My inquiry indicates the manner in which the Shaikhs utilized these conversational devices to persuade their followers, opponents and critiques that the responsibility of leading the community was entrusted to them by God and the people. The aim is to indicate that Chishtīyyas were aware that social investment was vital for recognition of their stature as Shaikhs. Moreover it furnished an opportunity to guide people and acquaint them with the ways of the Chishtīyyas. Such an engagement with the people was also necessary for the popularization of their *tarīqa*.

3. HISTORIOGRAPHY

The contribution of the Early Chishtī Shaikhs in concretizing the norms and doctrines of the *tarīqa* was not focused in modern scholarship as late as the 1990's. Mohammed Habib and K.A. Nizami who were pioneers in the field wrote considerably on

mysticism. Nevertheless, they began with the assumption that both Islam and especially Sufism/*tasawwuf* was introduced in South Asia as a "complete system" of beliefs and there was no scope for further development in its thought process. They argued that all that the South Asian Sufis contributed was to "mystic practices" and "mystic living".^[3] In their view as far as mystic life was concerned the Chishtīyyas excelled in leading a devout life marked by utter penury and abstinence. Hence the two authors utilized the Sufi literary texts- *Siyar al-Auliya'*, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ad* and *Khair al-Majālis* to pen the life and times of the Early Chishtī Sufis exemplifying their ascetic virtues.^[4]

A marked departure in the historiography occurred when Bruce B. Lawrence characterized the Sufi literary production into genres, and Carl Ernst investigated the literary processes of the *malfūzāt*. Carl Ernst studied the nature of authorship, the targeted audience, stylistic features and the mechanism employed to maintain the oral genesis of *malfūzāt* compiled in the circle of the Chishtī mystics.^[5]

As far as historiography on the discursive statements of the Early Chishtī Shaikhs is concerned, Habīb focusing on the ascetic life of the Shaikhs considered these lamentations as mere desires of these saints to live as recluses engrossed in the divine. Habib indicated that Farīd al-Dīn and Nizām al-Dīn chose to live in desolate places -Ajudhan and Ghyaspur respectively instead of the crowded capital city of the Sultans of Delhi.⁴⁰^[6] The author also indicated that despite his desire to be a meditative recluse, the hospice of Farīd al-Dīn was accessible to people even in late hours of the night. Similarly his disciple Nizām al-Dīn who succeeded Farīd al-Dīn, considered serving people as an important part of Sufism/*tasawwuf*.^[7] Nizami also pointed that for decades Nizām al-Dīn guided people in religious and spiritual matters and helped them to overcome tribulations of life.^[8] Nevertheless the scholars paid little heed to the expression of the dilemmas of the Shaikhs in fulfilling the obligations of their conflicted roles and the contexts in which these were expressed. How should a Sufi resolve the contradictory obligation of interacting with people on the one hand and lead a life of quiet contemplation engrossed in the divine, on the other. Nor did they deliberate on the ways in which the early Chishtī Shaikhs projected their struggle to achieve a balance between their twin contradictory obligations. They overlooked these aspects as they did not study the textual process and the narrative mechanism used in the composition of the *malfūzāt*.

³⁹ Bruce B. Lawrence has used the term Early Chishtī Saints (Shaikhs) for the spiritual masters of the 13th and 14th century Chishtī *tarīqa*/*silṣilah* (order) of South Asia from Mu'īn al-Dīn to Gesū Darāz (d.1422)..

⁴⁰ Ajudhan today is known as Pakpattan in Pakistan. Ghyaspur is named after Nizam al-Dīn who lived and preached there. The saint lies buried here and his shrine attracts followers in large numbers even today.

A turn in the historiography related to the hesitations and reservations of the Shaikhs pertaining to their public role occurred with the writings of Simon Digby. He argued that these discursive statements were “rhetorics” and should be taken with a pinch of salt. He contended that these expressions of the Shaikhs indicate that there was a divergence between the professed aims of the Shaikhs and their actual practice. Undoubtedly the Chishtī Shaikhs achieved their pietistic charisma by devotion and ascetic practices however for recognition of their charisma, they had to act contrary to their claims of being just contemplative solitaries inhabiting forsaken villages. They had to organize their hospices, feed, accommodate and cater to the material and spiritual needs for their disciples, dependents and followers. These realities made them act contrary to their avowed aspirations to being mere recluses living in desolate places. In reality the hospices of Chishti saints were located on important trade routes and near centres of power.^[9]

Riaz al-Islam has also amply demonstrated that the famous Sufi hospices (*khānqāhs*) were in prosperous cities like Delhi, Multan, Lahore and Jaunpur and important townships like Hansi and Uchh. The growth of towns also augmented the resources of Sufi hospices. The small township of Pakpattan (Ajudhan) the seat of Farīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāspur-a village-where the hospice of Nizām al-Dīn was located and Kaliyar – where Ala al-Dīn Sabir settled –soon led to prosperity of commerce, industry and population of these small places. Simon Digby and Riaz al-Islam put forth that Sufis were not merely contemplative isolated individuals but were public figures who lived amongst people in towns and capital cities. Riaz al-Islam further contended that such tensions emerged due to the ascetic origins of Sufism on the one hand and gregarious spirit of Islam on the other. Congregational aspects of Sufism/ *tasawwuf* like *Qawwali*, *zikr* and *urs* also encouraged socialization and settlements.^[10]

4. ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE STATEMENT OF THE EARLY CHISHTI SHAIKHS

Amir Hasan Sijzī and Hamīd Qalandar have recounted the lamentations and great hesitations with which their Chishtī masters accepted their role as leaders of the community. Nizam al-Din Awliyā‘ spoke not only of his reservations about being in the company of people but also that of his spiritual mentor-Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn (better known as Baba Farīd). To his audience, the Shaikh recounts that Baba Farīd longed to be isolated from the crowds that often gathered to meet him. So much so that on one occasion beleaguered by a large number of visitors, he requested his disciples to barricade him from them by closely encircling him. The disciple did his bidding but somehow an old Janitor (*farrāsh*) managed to break past his disciples and crawl to the Shaikh to kiss his feet, which obviously

annoyed the Shaikh. Seeing Baba Farīd respond thus, the janitor said to him:

Shaikh! You are displeased. (Instead) thank God for such a blessing^[11].

Shaikh, tang mī āyī, shukr-i ne‘mat-i-khudā beh azīn biguzār.

Nizām al-Dīn then summed up his talk with the words that Baba Farid then blessed the old man and was extremely apologetic. Nizām al-Dīn Auliya informed his gatherings too, about his own longing to lead a quiet meditative life. He recounted to them how that desire had led him to choose *Ghiyāspur* a forsaken village for that purpose. But soon it became crowded when the Sultan of Delhi Kaiqubad (1287-90) established his capital in *Kīlūkhīrī* close to *Ghiyāspur*. Accordingly Nizām al-Dīn resolved to leave *Ghiyāspur* for an isolated place. A day before the Shaikh was to depart from the village, a handsome but a rather frail youth joined him for the afternoon prayer. The young man who seemed to be from the men of the unseen (*az mardān-i-ghaib*) addressed the Shaikh thus:

It cannot be courage or strength that makes you shun people to be engrossed in the divine. Real courage is you remain with them and still be immersed in God.^[12]

(In cheh qūwat bāshad wa cheh hausaleh ke az khalq gūsheh gīrand wa behaq mashghūl shawand, yā‘nī qūwat wa hausaleh ān bāshad ke bāwajūd-i khalq behaq mashghūl bāshand.)

Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd-the immediate successor-disciple of Nizām al-Dīn had similar reservations about devoting time to people as Hamīd Qalandar in the *Khair al-Majālis* has cited:

Were it not for the command of my Shaikh (Nizām al-Dīn) to live in the town and endure the torment and cruelty of people, I would be elsewhere and so would you? I would be better off wandering in the mountains, jungles and deserts.^[13]

(Agar farmān-i Shaikh nabūdī keh dar shahr mī bāyad būd wa jafā wa qafā-ī khalq mī bāyad kashīd. Kujā man wa kujā shumā. Man būdamī wa biyābānī wa kuhī wa dashtī.)

In yet another gathering, Nasīr al-Dīn addressing his audience bemoaned and elaborated that social investment was a major impediment in his spiritual path:

After heaving a cold sigh, he (Nasīr al-Dīn) spoke, ... ‘ Now I have no solitude and time to be busy in devotion. I’m always with people and do not have the time even for a nap, though I long for one. Whenever I try to sleep, I’m woken up to attend to visitors. You

(Ḥamīd Qalandar) have time, why don't you get engrossed in devotion'.^[14]

(Aknūn man bārī fursat mashghūli wa khilwat nadāram. Hameh rūz bā khalq mī bāyad būd, Balkeh qaīlūlah nīz moyassar namī shawad. Bārḥā mī khwāham qaīlūlah bekunam bar mī kunand keh āindah āmdah ast bar khīzīd. Shuma keh fursat dārid chera mashghūl namī shawīd.)

I, the slave Ḥamīd (Qalandar) humbly responded, 'Khawāja (lord/ master) even though your apparent self (zāhirī) is with people, your inner self (bāṭinī) is engrossed in the devotion of God'.

(Bandah'arzdāsht kard keh khidmat-i Khawāja agar cheh zāhir bā khalq mī namāyad ammā bāṭin mashghūl ba haq ast.)

The Khawāja responded, 'I keep wakeful nights and forego studies, yet by no means do I get time during the day. Still I am hopeful'.^[15]

(Khawāja) farmūdand shab khīzī tawānam kard, khwāndanī, guzārdanī keh hasht. Amaā rūz aslā maqdūr nīst. Fa ammā naumīd neh am.)

These statements indicate that the Shaikhs were at pains to communicate that they interacted with great reluctance. And on no count were they undertaking their task as social actors out of worldliness and of their own volition. Rather they took up that mantle, pressurized by people. The avowals of the Shaikhs communicate that leadership of the community was thrust on all the three Shaikhs, Baba Farīd, Nizām al-Dīn and Nasīr al-Dīn, by their followers. The old janitor from the crowd made Baba Farīd realise that it was due to divine will and blessing that people flocked to the Shaikh. In Nizām al-Dīn's case the Shaikh was reminded of his duty to live with people by a man from the unseen. Thus the Shaikhs conveyed effectively that social investment was a part and parcel of a Sufi master's duty and it was entrusted to him by divine intervention. Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd's dilemma was resolved by his follower and disciple-Ḥamīd Qalandar, who was a part of the audience in his congregations as well as the collator of his discourses. He reasoned that it was possible for a Sufi Shaikh to be simultaneously connected to God and be with people as his inner self ((bāṭin) was so evolved that it remained connected to God even when his external or the apparent self (zāhir) was with people. This attribute a Sufi is on account of his proximity to the divine acquired by rigorous devotion and an abstemious life. Thus the Shaikhs through these discursive statements effectively demonstrated the agency of the people and God in their taking up the responsibility of leading the community.

In addition, the Shaikhs were keen to project that in reaching out to people they were merely following a tradition of their predecessors. For instance Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' pointed that in making himself accessible

to people, he was merely following the example of his spiritual mentor-Baba Farīd. Nasīr al-Dīn also underscores in the above narrative that he was in the company of people, on the command of his spiritual master Nizām al-Dīn. Nile Green has argued that resorting to tradition helped in legitimizing the stature and functions of the Shaikhs as standard bearers of the legacy of their emerging *ṭarīqa*.^[16] It also helped the Shaikhs to communicate that they were merely following their precursors and were not indulging in any innovation.

This was meant to stall accusations by their adversaries that the Chishtī Shaikhs were deviating from the ideals of mysticism. These discursive statements effectively convey that the Chishtī Shaikhs were reaching out to people not for materiality but on account of the responsibility assigned to them by God. The Early Chishtī Shaikhs probably felt the need to validate their public role, as their piety did not deter their opponents and competitors from critiquing them. Their role as public figures was always under scrutiny. Nizām al-Dīn in one of the gatherings mentions that in Ajudhan, there was a Qāzi who always opposed Farīd al-Dīn. He was so envious of the Shaikh that he complained to high officials and scholars of Multan that the Shaikh indulged in the illegal practices of *samā'* (listening to song) and *raqs* (dance). But Farīd al-Dīn was so popular that the official and the learned men paid no heed to the Qāzi's complaint.^[17] Similarly Amīr Hasan Sijzī informs that amongst the opponents of the Shaikhs one of them had become his arch enemy and tried to oppose the Shaikh by raising numerous objectionable questions about the legality of *samā'*. In response to such accusations the Shaikh informed his audience about the do's and don'ts of listening to *samā'*.^[18]

Despite clarifying and justifying their functions as leader of the community, the Sufi Shaikh faced one major quandary. The fundamental requirement to traverse the mystic path is to renounce the world (*tark-i duniyā*). In the ensuing paragraph I discuss how the Shaikhs resolved their predicaments arising from their need to renounce the world while engaging with it.

5. EFFORTS TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN CONFLICTING OBLIGATIONS

5.1 Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn's Interventions

Nizām al-Dīn resolved this paradox by demonstrating that renouncing the world (*tark-i duniyā*) for a Sufi did not imply physical abandonment of the world that is wearing a loincloth and roaming in the wilderness. It denotes living in it but with detachment.^[19] On account of a Sufi Shaikhs's compulsions to live in the world along with being engrossed in the Divine, Nizām al-Dīn informed his audience that the realm of a Sufi was bifurcated. "Whatever is between him and

God that is *wilāyat* “(*āncheh miyān o wa miyān haq ast ān wilāyat ast*) and departs with a Shaikh after his demise. “Whatever is between him and people that is called *walayāt*” (*ān cheh miyān o wa miyān khalq ast ān ra walāyat gūyand*) that is either passed on to his disciple either by him or by divine intervention after his demise.^[20]

The telling alludes that Nizām al-Dīn endeavoured to establish a balance between the social and mystical obligations of a Sufi. It is true that contrary to their professed aims of being merely hermits, these Chishti Sufi Saints invariably lived amidst people to lead and guide them. But they were mindful of these departures in their conduct. The inclusion of their discursive statements emerging from their *malfūzāt* reveal how the Shaikhs took care to inform and explain to their congregations that both these functions were vital aspects of their mystic life. It was imperative for the Chishtī Shaikhs to interact with people as it provided them opportunities to recruit disciples and motivate them for initiation into the Chistī tarīqa. Hence social investment on the part of the Sufis was important for the continuation and dissemination of their path.

5.2 Interventions of Shaikh Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd

Nasīr al-Dīn justified the role of a Sufi Shaikh as a leader of the community, even more comprehensively and systematically than his predecessor Nizām al-Dīn. In fact there seems to be an effort on his part to prioritize this responsibility for a Sufi Shaikh as he conveyed to his audience:

The stature of those who beckon people to faith is superior to those engrossed in devotion. While the latter are aspiring for divine presence and vision, the former are not only engrossed in God but are also busy beckoning people (to Him).^[21]

Martaba-i ahl-i- da'wat bālātar ast az martaba-i ahl-i- isteghrāq. Zīrā keh ahl-i- isteghrāq mutaghariq-i huzūr wa mushāhida and, ammā ahl-i-da'wat baisteghrāq mashghulī behaq wa dā 'wat-i-khalq nīz mīkunand.

The above contention of Shaikh Nasīr al-Dīn suggests that it was not enough for a Sufi master to strike a balance between the obligations to serve God and His people but also to prioritize his task to guide and aid people to adhere to faith. He also advocated that a Sufi can lead the community without digressing from his spiritual quest on account his ability to be withdrawn from people even when he was with them (*Sufi bakhalq bāshad wa az ishān judā bāshad*).^[22] He further emphasized on the significance of the functions of a Sufi to guide his flock, by expounding that it was vital for him to engage with “this world” as it was needed to prepare for “the world hereafter.” Nasīr al-Dīn illustrated it with an anecdote of Abūl Fazl Fūrātī, who once paid a debt incurred by Abū Sa'īd Abī'l-Khair. Moved by Abūl Fazl Fūrātī's gesture Abū Sa'īd Abī'l-Khair blessed him thus:

“I pray for you that the world forsakes you as the world is despised by God,”^[23]

(“*du'ā yat bekunam keh duniyā az tū berawad. Zīrā keh duniyā mabghūz-i khudā ast*”).

Listening to him pray thus, Abul Fazl immediately beseeched the Shaikh to refrain from blessing him that the world forsakes him as he wished to serve daweshes. If the world would be non-existent from where would he come across a Shaikh like Abū Sa'īd Abī'l-Khair. The latter then prayed, “O God! Do not entrust Abūl-Fazl Fūrātī to the world. Instead make the world as well as his religion a provision for his other life and means for his deliverance and not the cause for his punishment” (“*Khudawand ! Abūl Fazl rā beh duniyā nasiparī, wa duniyā wa dīn rā tūshah-i ākharat o gardānī wa sabab-i najāt o gardānī ta bā'i's-i nakl nabāshad*”).^[24]

6. MEASURES TO AVOID WORLDLY TEMPTATIONS AS THE LEADER OF THE COMMUNITY

In the process of prioritizing Social investment for a Sufi and his need to engage with the world, the Nasīr al-Dīn was mindful of the temptations that a mystic might encounter. He detailed the precautions that a Shaikh should take to avoid those pitfalls. He instructed that a Spiritual master should engage with earthly realm with an otherworldly attitude that is treat it merely as a preparing ground to attain the world hereafter (*ākharat*). To give weight to his argument he cited a saying of the prophet (*hadīs*):

One who pursues the world in a rightful manner but with the intention to amass riches will encounter God in a furious state. But one who, engages with it, just to save oneself from seeking, will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement, with a face as bright as the full moon.^[25]

There are other instances as well of Shaikh Nasīr al-Dīn instructing Sufis as to how to engage with the world. Apart from this he also spelt out the activities that a mystic should refrain from while interacting with people. The Shaikh warned that he should not wear the Sufi robe (*khirqā*) and the cap (*kulāh*) and seek from men in power. Nor should he use his spiritual stature for materialistic gains. Additionally the Shaikh warned that a Sufi is forbidden to ask from people even if he is in dire need. Nasīr al-Dīn then underscored that a Spiritual guide is severely punished if he does not abstain from seeking from people. He conveyed this to his gathering by recounting the tale of Shaikh Abū Sa'īd Aqtā' who after facing days of starvation went to the bazaar for alms to satiate his hunger. As soon as he stretched out his hand to take offerings, he was accused of pick pocketing and his hands were severed on that charge. Then Shaikh Abū Sa'īd Aqtā' bemoaned, “O Hand! Whoever abandons divine treasures for other

riches, his punishment is this,” (*“Ai dast ! her keh khazānah-i khudā guzāshteh der khazānah-i ghair dast zanad sazā-i o in bāshad.”*)^[26]

7. NORMS OF SOCIALIZATION

Nizām al-Dīn and Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd assigned importance to the stature of Sufis as religious guides of the community highlighting that in that capacity they had to dispense a fundamental social role. Consequently these Chishtī masters prescribed detailed norms of socialization for a Sufi Shaikh. Nizām al-Dīn stressed in his discourses that it was not enough for a Sufi to address the doubts and queries of people relating to religion and spirituality. It was equally important to give an ear to their woes and worries and comfort them. Amīr Hasan Sijzi did acknowledge the solace that words of his Spiritual guide provided when he titled the discourses of the Nizām al-Dīn as *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād* an Arabic phrase meaning, *Morals For distressed hearts*.^[27] Nasīr al-Dīn Mahmūd detailed standards of conduct that a Shaikh should conform to, when people from diverse backgrounds approached him. He cited the example of Shaikh Abdullah Ansari that when he was with merchants, the Shaikh behaved in a manner that they felt that the Shaikh was one of them. Scholars, wandering darweshes (*Qalandars*), and people from other groups also experienced the same camaraderie in his company.^[28]

Nasīr al-Dīn cautioned Sufis that they should be prepared to endure with grace and patience the misconduct and quirkiness of people while dealing with them. He demonstrated it by citing an episode from Nizām al-Dīn's life that once the grandson of Najīb al-Dīn Motawakkil requested Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn to pen a recommendation letter for him to a noble.^[29] The Shaikh politely refused reasoning that the noble was not his acquaintance and he had never set eyes on him. This enraged the grandson of Najīb al-Dīn Motawakkil and began to abuse the Shaikh thus:

You are the disciple of my grandfather and (hence) my slave. I am the grandson of your Spiritual mentor. I am asking you to write a letter (but) you are refusing.^[30]

Tū murīd-i jadd-i man bāshī wa bandah-i mā bāshī. Man Khwāja zādah- i-tū bāsham. Man mī gūyam keh ruqqah' benawisi, namī nawīsī.”

In a jiffy, the visitor rose to leave but Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn held his garment and beseeched him not to depart in anger, calmed him and sent him happy.^[31]

Sometimes people got violent with sufis, as Hamīd Qalandar reports of a wandering darwesh (*Qalandar*) named Turābi inflicting grievous injuries on Shaikh Nasīr al-Dīn from which he never recovered and ultimately succumbed three years later.^[32]

In the *Khair al-Majālis* one comes across people approaching the Shaikh not only for guidance and solace but for financial assistance as well:

There were many friends in the assembly of the Shaikh (Nasīr al-Dīn). Some were 'darweshes', others were scholars and there were some petitioners too. A lame and a blind man were present as well. The *Khawāja* was an embodiment of excellent manners: he first took care of the needs of the sightless person and showered generosity on the lame one. Thereafter, he gave money to those who were setting off on a journey.^[33]

Bisyār 'azīzān rasīdah būdand, ba'zī fuqarā wa ba'zī 'ulamā wa ba'zī khwāhandgān. Yakī lang būd wa mahjūb būd. Khidmat-i Khwāja az ānjā keh makārim-i akhlāq-i īshānast. Awwal mahjūb ra pursīdand wa tawaquqī keh kard, badū farmūdand, bā'd azān lang rā bisyār marhamat farmūdand wa chīzī dahānīdand wa bā'zī bar janāh-i safar būdand.

The above description of Shaikh Nasīr al-Dīn's dealing with petitioners was meant to communicate that since the deprived approached a Sufi Shaikh for monetary aid, there was no harm in his having some wealth. But the Shaikh expressed the need for a Sufi Shaikh to have some money rather subtly. Additionally, he was cautious and quick to communicate that in doing so he was merely following the tradition of his spiritual mentor-Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn. Nasīr al-Dīn immediately after attending to his audience in the above manner recounted a similar incidence of kindness and generosity of Nizām al-Dīn towards his visitors. On one occasion soon after returning to Delhi from Multan, *Qalandars* and *Jūwālqiyān* visited Shaikh Nizām. The *Qalandars* asked the Shaikh for a sweet drink. The Shaikh offered them the drink and they left satiated. The *Jūwālqiyāns* then asked the Shaikh for money and he obliged them. Nasīr al-Dīn concluded the tale saying:

A leader of the community requires three things. First, he should have wealth so that when people seek from him, he can oblige them. The *qalandars* had asked for sweet drink. If the darwesh had nothing from where would he have given? In such a scenario, the *qalandars* would have cursed him and the Shaikh would be punished for it on the Day of Judgement. Second, a Shaikh should have knowledge so that whenever scholars visit him, he can converse with them. Third, he should be a master of ecstasy so that he can provide company to darweshes in their ecstatic state. But I must say that wealth is not so vital but knowledge and ecstasy are.^[34]

Ānkeh sar-i-qawm ast, o rā sih chīz mī bāyad. Awaal māl mī bāyad ta in tāifah har cheh betalbīd twānad dād. Qalandarān in zamān sharbat talbīdand agar bar darwesh chīzī nabāshad, az kuja dahad? Wa īshān

⁴¹ Shaikh Najib al-Dīn Motawakkil was Baba Farid's brother. He was also a Sufi who was known for his asceticism.

⁴² Ibid. *Jūwālqiyān* are itinerant darweshes.

badgūyān bīrūn rawand wa be'aqūbat-i qayāmat girāftār shawand. Dūwam mībayad ke 'ilm bāshad, tā chūn 'ulemā biyāyand bā tshān az 'ilm bigūyad. Sūm mī bāyad keh hāl bāshad tā ba darwishān az hāl bikjunbad. Ammā mīgūyam keh bemāl hājat nīst. 'ilm wa hāl mī bāyad keh bāshad.

Shaikh Nasir al-Din discussed the consequences that a darwesh would suffer in failing to help the needy. Yet he was extremely cautious not to advocate out rightly that possession of wealth was necessary for a darwesh as it was against the principle of a Sufi to be materialistic and would invite his condemnation. Consequently, he was vigilant and quick to suggest that wealth for a Sufi Shaikh was only a minor requirement, the most vital ones being knowledge and ecstasy. The Shaikh recommended that if a Sufi has nothing to offer to his guests then it was a custom amidst darweshes to stand at the end of a gathering with a bowl of water, as Najib al-Din Motawakkil had done. That would reveal his state of penury and visitors would just drink water from the container and depart. It seems that Nasir al-Din Mahmud was suggesting these measures keeping the requisites of a life in a hospice (*khānqāh*).

8. CONCLUSION

The above discussion suggests that the Early Chishti Shaikhs Baba Farid, Nizam al-Din and Nasir al-Din despite all reservations gave primacy to social investment as it was vital for them to reach out to people to get recognition of their charisma as Sufi Shaikhs. This decision to take on social responsibility in actual practice was definitely a departure from their professed aims to be meditative recluses. The Early Chishtī Shaikhs were fully aware and used these discursive statements to prevent their reputations from getting affected adversely. They were also conscious that such a detour would also subject them to censure from their critiques, competitors and adversaries. Consequently, they employed these discursive statements in their congregations, to stall such criticisms and also persuade their adherents that they considered their role as Social actors an onerous one as it was an obstacle in their spiritual quest. Yet they accepted it but with great reservation compelled by their followers. Rather the Shaikhs underscored that the task was entrusted to them by divine will. Thus these statements were not mere rhetoric, they were carefully devised narrative mechanisms to make people appreciate that their digressions in practice stemmed from their altruistic motives to guide people to become better believers. And they had not accepted this public responsibility of their own volition nor out of worldliness and personal ambitions.

Reaching out to people was necessary for Sufi Shaikhs as it provided them an opportunity to acquaint people about their doctrines and beliefs and motivate them to embark on the path of *tasawwuf* along with inculcating religiosity in them. The spread of their

ideas and beliefs were significant both for the survival and propagation of the Chishtī *tarīqa*. It was probably the decision of the Early Chistiyyas to prioritize their role as Social actors that catapulted them to fame in South Asia as they were little known in the land of its origin in Chisht. The Early Chishtiyyas thus used these discursive statements to validate their public role on the one hand. On the other hand by detailing the hazards that they would encounter as Social actors, they communicated to their audience that they were walking a tight rope in striking a balance between their spiritual and social obligations. They formalized detailed norms that a Sufi Shaikh must observe while engaging with people to ensure that he never lost sight of his ultimate spiritual goal. They sought to silence all criticism from their opponents by effectively arguing that a Sufi had a capacity to handle his conflicted role and obligations on account of his unique attributes, which set him apart from ordinary mortals.

REFERENCES

- [1] See Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: The Extant Literature of Pre-Mughal Indian Sufism* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of philosophy 1978), pp. 27-35; Carl Ernst, 'The Textual Formation of Oral Teachings in the Early Chishtī Order', in *The Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Centre* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1992), pp. 62-84. See also, Sunil Kumar, 'Assertion of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi', in M. Alam, F.N. Delvoye and M.Gaborieau ed., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000), pp.52- 55 and Pankaj Jha, 'A Table Laden with Good Things: Reading of a 14th century Sufi Text', in A. Gupta and S. Chakarovsky eds., *Movable Type Book History in India* (Ranikhet: Permanent and Black,2008), pp.3-25.
- [2] See Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: The Extant Literature of Pre-Mughal Indian Sufism* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of philosophy 1978), pp. 20-35.
- [3] Mohammad Habib, 'Chishti Mystics Records of the Sultanate period', in K.A. Nizami, ed., *Politics and Society during the Medieval Period, Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974), vol.1 pp. 385-86.
- [4] Mohammad Habib, 'Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud Chiragh-i-Dehli as a Great Historical Personality in *Islamic Culture*, 20 (1946), pp. 129-53; Mohammad Habib, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya: Hayat wa

- Ta'limat (Delhi: Department of Urdu, Delhi University), 1970; K.A. Nizami, Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi), 1987 reprint and K.A. Nizami, Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi), 2009 reprint.
- [5] Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute*, pp. 27-44 and Carl W. Ernst, 'The Textual Formation of Oral Teachings in the Early Chishtī Order', in *The Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sūfī Centre* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1992), pp. 62-84;
- [6] Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Nizām uddīn Auliya: Hayāt aur ta'limāt* (Delhi: Department of Urdu, University of Delhi, 1970), pp. 71, 93-94.
- [7] Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Nizām uddīn Auliya: Hayāt aur ta'limāt*, p. 71 & 156.
- [8] K. A. Nizami (2009). *The Life and times of Shaykh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i-Delhi), 2009 reprint, pp. 1-15, 57-79 and 131-32.
- [9] Simon Digby, 'The Sufī Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India', *Purusartha (Islam and Society in South Asia)*, 9 (1986) pp. 67-68.
- [10] Riazul Islam, *Şūfism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 73 and 452.
- [11] Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*, edited by Khwaja Hasan Thani Nizami Dihlawi (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1990), p. 248
- [12] Ibid., p. 243.
- [13] Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, edited by Khaliq A. Nizami (Aligarh: Department of History, Aligarh University Press, 1959), p. 46.
- [14] Ibid., 60.
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Nile Green, *Şūfism: A global History* (USA: Willy Blackwell press, 2012), pp. 2-5.
- [17] Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*, p. 166.
- [18] Ibid., p. 418
- [19] Ibid., pp. 12-13.
- [20] Ibid., p. 22.
- [21] Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, p. 83.
- [22] Ibid., p. 227.
- [23] Ibid, p. 254-55.
- [24] Ibid., pp. 254-255.
- [25] Ibid., p. 254.
- [26] Ibid., p. 80-1.
- [27] Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*, p. 69.
- [28] Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, pp. 112-3.
- [29] Shaikh Najib al-Dīn Motawakkil was Baba Farid's brother. He was also a Sufi who was known for his asceticism.
- [30] Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*, p. 23 and Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, pp. 75-76.
- [31] Hamīd Qalandar, *Khair al-Majālis*, p. 106.
- [32] Ibid.
- [33] Ibid., pp. 286-7.
- [34] Ibid., p. 74.
- [35] Ibid.

Corresponding Author

Khurshid Khan*

Associate Professor, Department of History, Shivaji College, University of Delhi, India