SUFI TEXTS AND SUFI SAINTS: NOTE ON SOURCE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Historical interest in Sufism in South Asia has increased dramatically and in the last fifty-sixty years scholars have written, (more on this subject) than all that had been written about it in the previous hundred and thirty years.[1] This was in itself a significant development. To begin with, historians were largely interested in accomplishing two sets of tasks. First, bringing manuscripts of unnoticed hagiological texts to the light of students of medieval Indian history, and second, using this material to provide "authentic" biographical sketches of the Sufi Shaikhs.[2]

The largest contribution so far to the study of Sufism within the sub-continent has probably come from Professors Khaliq Ahmad Nizami and Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami argued that "no study of Medieval India can be complete unless the activities of the Muslim mystics are taken into consideration."[3] This was an

J.S. Grewal, *Medieval India History and Historians,* (Amritsar, Guru Nanak University, 1995), p. 125

1.   Peter Hardy, "Islam In Medieval India", in *Sources of Indian Tradition* ed. W. Theodore de Barry, New York, 1958 cited by Grewal, Medieval India ....p. 127

2.   K.A. Nizami, Early Indo-Muslim mystics and their attitude towards the state *"Islamic Culture",* 1948, Vol. pp. 387-398, No. 30

apt observation since Sufism played an important socio-religious role in the lives of common people in Medieval India. We owe a great deal to these historians; they opened new vistas of research to scholars in Sufism and medieval Indian history.

Both Rizvi and Nizami have worked extensively on Sufism for the last seventy years or so. Rizvi's massive translation of Persian sources into Hindi, has brought selections from these sources within the reach of many young scholars of our generation not "schooled" in the language. Nizami's most outstanding work in English on Sufism is "*Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century"*. In a "Preface" to the monograph. Prof. Muhammad Habib had remarked:

"(this is) the best work we have on all aspects (including political) of Indo-Muslim life in India during the thirteenth. His attitude is critical and scientific, and he has avoided both polemics and propaganda."[4] The attitude of the *Chishtis*, *Suhrawardis* and *Shattari* sufis to the state has been Nizami's favourite subject of research. Amongst these Sufi orders Nizami's own sympathies appear to lie with the *Chishtis*.

Rizvi's most important work on Sufism was the *History of*

3.   Muhammad Habib, "Introduction" in K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century.* (Delhi, Idrah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1961), p. iii. For a reference to Nizami's other monographs published in English see   the Bibliography.

Sufism (2 vols.); and *"The Muslim Revivalist Movements in India During the Sixteenth Century."*[5] The works of both these authors carry references to an impressive number of sources, both primary and secondary in their footnotes and the bibliography.

THRUST OF NIZAMI AND RIZVI'S VIEWPOINTS

Both Nizami and Rizvi present a very consistent and coherent picture of Sufism, in India, its development, impact, ideological basis and popular appeal. According to these historians, the *Suhrawardi* and the *Chishti silsilas* were the two most important orders and gained popularity in medieval India. The *Chishti silsila* was active in Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan and later in Bengal. In their opinion the *Chishti silsila* was in many ways more "dynamic" than the *Suhrawardis* and it best exemplified the history of Sufism in India. Till the fourteenth century the *Chishtis* remained distant from   political interference and very zealously guarded their authority from any encroachments. By the second half of the sixteenth century, however, the Shaikhs of the *Chishti silsila* had been "reduced" to the position of the official saints of Mughal emperors.

4.   S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism In India,* (Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983) 2   volumes and *Muslim Revivalist Movements In The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century,* (Delhi : MunshiRam Manohar Lal, 1993).

These scholars are of the opinion that the *Chishtis* had many things in common with the Shaikhs of other *silsilas.* They also operated on the "frontiers of Islam", diminishing social tensions in the newly conquered territories. They paid due respect to the *Shariah* but they were very flexible in the adherence to its dictates. The *Chishtis* differed from the *Suhrawardis* in many other respects, and   these differences were emphasised by both Nizami and Rizvi. In the   writings of these historians, the *Chishtis* were generally taken to be mystics who were large-hearted, liberal and broad minded in their views and sympathies. In Rizvi's words, "they (*Chishtis*) attached no importance to material power and wealth, stressing only piety, simplicity, and devotion to God."[6] Nizami argued that most of the *Chishti shaikhs* lived under conditions of the appalling poverty. They looked down upon possession of private property as a serious impediment to the growth of one's spiritual personality.[7] The Chishti *shaikhs* considered fasting to be "a remarkable expedient for weakening desires that lead never to happiness but either to disillusionment or to further desire."[8] They reduced their diet to control their carnal desires.

According to Nizami, "the traditions of the *Chishti silsila*

5.   S.A.A. Rizvi, *History of Sufism,* Vol.II, p. 116

6.   K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics, p. 199.*

7.   Ibid, p. 201

demanded total rejection of all earthly ties and severance of all contacts with the rulers and bureaucracy."[9] Keeping in line with the traditions of the *silsila,* almost all the notable *Chishti shaikhs* in India scrupulously avoided the company of kings and nobles. The *Chishti shaikhs,* according to these historians, not only abstained from the society of kings and nobles, but they also rejected their offers of land and other endowments. They thought that the acceptance of such gifts would make them subservient to the royal wish and fetter the independence of their soul.[10] In the opinion of these historians equally strong was the condemnation of *shughl* (government service) by the *Chishti* shaikhs.*"* "No *shughl*" was the explicit order of the *Chishti* shaikhs.[11]

In the opinion of these historians, in sharp contrast to the *Suhrawardis*, the *Chishtis* laid great emphasis on the efficacy of audition parties (*sama*) in attuning the hearts of mystics to the Infinite and the Eternal.[12] The *Chishti* mystics did not demand formal conversion to Islam as a pre-requisite to initiation in mystic discipline. Formal conversion, the *Chishti* Shaikhs said, should not precede but follow a change in emotional life. This attitude of the *Chishtis* was in sharp contrast to the *Suhrawardi* principles.[13]

8.   Ibid, p. 199

9.   Ibid, p. 201

10.   Idem, *State and Culture in Medeival India,* (Delhi : Adam Publishers, 1985), p. 191

11.   Idem, "Chishtiyya", *Encyclopedia of Islam,* ed. C.E. Boseworth, et al., (Leiden : E.J. Brill, 1960), Vol II, p. 55

12.   Ibid, p. 56

PROBLEMS IN A POSITIVISTIC READING OF THE SOURCES

In common with many other students of the subject, Nizami underlined the importance of hagiological literature as a useful source on medieval Indian history. Following Prof. Habib, Nizami and Rizvi also favoured the use only of "authentic" *malfuzat* and not of "fabricated" works.[14] *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad, Khair-al-Majalis* and *Sarur-us-Sudur* are often treated by these historians as "authentic" *malfuzat.* Along with these sources Nizami and Rizvi also rely a great deal on texts like *Siyar-al-Auliya Akhbar-al-Akhyar, Kashf-al-Mashaikh* and later texts like the *Jawami-al- Kalim. Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* is the collection of the conversations of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, complied by one of his senior disciples. Amir Hasan Sijzi. Great value and importance are attached to the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* as it is considered a pioneering work, a trendsetter in the writing of the genre of 'authentic' *malfuzat.* Though *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* was compiled by Sijzi its script was regularly checked by Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya himself. Thus, the work bears a stamp of Auliya himself. Following the trend set by *Fawa'al- Fu'ad, Khair-al-Majalis,* "The Best of the

Assemblies", the *malfuz* of Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi compiled by his disciple

13.   Muhammad Habib, "Chishti Mystic Records of the Sultanate Period" *Medieval India Quarterly 1* (1950) p.p. 1-42

Hamid Qalandar was also corrected by the shaikh himself. *Sarur- us-Sudur* is the collection of the conversations of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri, collected and compiled by his own grandson. *Siyar-al-Auliya* and *Akhbar-al-Akhyar* are two very important *tazkirats* of the *Chishti* shaikhs of the Delhi Sultanate. *Siyar-al- Auliya* was compiled by Amir Khwurd and because of its propensity to describe miracles and the supernatural powers of the shaikh its usages were cautioned by scholars like Muhammad Habib, P.M. Currie, K.A. Nizami and Bruce B. Lawrence. Yet, because of the range of information that it carries, scholars are forced to rely on it. *Akhbar-al-Akhyar* was written by Abd-al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi. It is considered a great work by almost all the scholars of medieval Indian history. Bruce B. Lawrence comments Abh-al-Haqq as "the most scrupulous biographer of saints."[15] Abd-al-Haqq strenuously consulted all the proceeding works keeping in mind the long gap of 200 years between the life of these shaikhs and the writing of his *tazkirat*.

This distinction between "genuine" and "fabricated" *malfuzat* and treating the former as "authentic" works of history needs a comment. Muhammad Habib has listed more than three-fourths of

14.   Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Earlist Chishtiyya and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325)" in *Delhi Through the Ages Essays in urban History, Culture and Society.* ed. R.E. Frykenberg (Delhi; Oxford University Press, 1986), P. 113.

the hagiological literature as "fabricated" works in the "The Chishti Mystical Records of the Sultanate Period" and argued that they were not only useless but also misleading. Mohammad Habib, himself, admitted that these "fabricated" works had a great circulation and were read by a large number of devotees. The fact that these works are later fabrications does not imply that they are of no value to the historian; their historical value cannot be denied because their popularity illustrates how mystic ideas expounded by the great *Chishti* shaikhs were received, understood and interpreted by a larger audience. One might, infact, say that for a study of popular perceptions of a *Shaikh's barakat,* the study of these "fabricated" works is especially useful. It would present a sense of how common people wanted to perceive the *barakat* of a shaikh*,* the kind of qualities, charisma they attached to the figure they venerated so deeply.

Though medieval India is rich in source material, which is varied and prolific, we have to admit that every source has a discursiveness of a different nature. Before using any source, we have to understand the minds of those who compiled them and the intentionality of the text. Unless the subjective element in an author's approach his social and religious prejudices, cultural associations, class, and ideological backgrounds— are clearly and accurately enquired into, the information supplied by him cannot be decontextualized and used. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and *Khair-al-Majalis,* the *malfuzat* of the two most popular shaikhs of the *Chishti silsila* - Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli exercise a specific kind of discursiveness. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* formulated a paradigm of conduct ideal for a Sufi Shaikh. Amir Hasan Sijzi, author

of the text and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya projected an image with a whole range of qualities and virtues which an ideal saint possessed which impressed the audience. Since a paradigm of "ideal" conduct suitable to s Sufi *shaikh* was laid out in the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, its logical conclusion was that this paradigm became a yardstick to measure the piety of later saints as well. The two *malfuzats* therefore aimed to present their respective protagonists as possessors of great moral and pious virtues. The messages of their piety, exemplary austerity conveyed a message of how they had been able to attain a high spiritual status. Infact, one can say that at least one reason why Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya as well as Shaikh Nasiruddin became extremely popular was a result of the success with which these *malfuzats* portrayed the qualities of their saints.

On the other hand, a *tazkirat* like the *Siyar-al-Auliya* has a totally different kind of discursiveness. In P.M. Currie's opinion, "Amir Khwurd's narrative needs to be read with caution for two reasons. First, because Amir Khwurd, unlike Amir Hasan and Hamid Qalandar, was subject to no internal or external checks."[16] On the basis of his study of Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti, P.M. Currie observed that "much of the detail of Shaikh Mu'inuddin's life and all the sayings which appear in the *Siyar-al-Auliya* have been taken by Amir Khwurd from the fabricated *malfuzat*. The miraculous element begins to appear."[17] Bruce Lawrence says that "the book is, infact, neither a *tazkirat* as its title implies, nor a collection of *malfuzat,* but an untidy amalgam of both literary genres."[18]

Siyar-al-Auliya needs to be appreciated as the first attempt at a biographical sketch of the Chishtis in a chronological order. Yet one needs to be conscious that in an endeavour to present a complete chronological sketch, the author relies heavily on the miraculous element. As a fifteenth century *tazkirat,* the *Siyar-ul-Auliya* reflected the influence of paradigms of conduct and piety wherein the trait of *karamat,* the power to perform miracles was seen as a quality with which one is blessed as a recipient of a special Divine Grace. By fifteenth century, *karamat* had become synonymous with spiritual attainments. The *Siyar-al-Auliya* reflects the influence of this mentality.

15.   P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and cult of Muin-al-Din Chishti of Ajmer,* (Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 1989), p. 37.

16.   Ibid, p. 38.

17.   Bruce B. Lawrence, "An Overview of Sufi Literature in the Sultanate Period (1206- 1526 AD)", *Patna Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Liberary Publications,* No. 5. (n.d.), p. 12

To conclude, it needs to be stressed that the sources historians use to study the Sufi shaikh can hardly be used positivistically. Any simplistic division into "genuine" and "spurious" *malfuzat* does not help in elaborating upon the enormous influence that Sufi shaikhs possessed upon a lay audience. By the same token accepting the veracity of a "genuine" *malfuz* does not elaborate upon the way the text constructed an image of the virtue and piety of a saint. The manner in which a text like *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* or *Khair-al-Majalis* propagated and popularized the merits of their protagonists is obscured if the discursiveness in the literature is ignored.

Moreover, genres of sources differ dramatically and the *malfuzats* and the *tazkirats* were quite different types of literature. The *Malfuzat* was a genre of literature which carried a "self-image" of the way in which the shaikh themselves viewed their *barakat* and wanted others to perceive them and this self-image cannot be read literally. On the other hand, the *tazkirats* sought to construct a general chronological outline of the entire *silsila* and place the *shaikh* with in an evolving dynasty of great and famous *Pirs.* The

selectivity was certainly influenced by the notion of charisma, qualities, and the extent of influence which later devotees attached to their venerated shaikhs. The *tazkirats* are important for an analysis of the manner in which a chronology of like-minded saints, sharing a common mystical affiliation was constructed by a later audience. But the information from a fourteenth century *tazkirat* or one compiled still later cannot be used positivistically to assess the influence and perception of a particular shaikh in the thirteenth century. The problem in a positivistic reading of the source, without concern for the nature of the text or its genre, becomes clearer when we evaluate the way historians have studied a specific *Chishti* practice.

Central in the evaluation of Chishti mystical practice is the belief in *faqr* or poverty, and with it the associated ideas of *faqa,* or deprivation, and an antipathy to *shughl,* or government service. In the writings of both Nizami and Rizvi these ideas and practices distinguished the *Chishtis* from the rest of the mystic fraternity. They were understood as the hallmarks of their piety and self- abnegation a virtue possessed only by *Chishti* saints.

A REPRESENTATIVE STUDY OF *FAQR, FAQA* AND *SHUGHL*

General mystical attitude to *faqr,* was universally recommended in all *isharat, malfuzat* and *tazkirat* literature. Nizami and Rizvi, however, seem to regard the practice of *faqr* and *faqa* as a special characteristic of the *Chishtis* exclusively.

It is an intriguing question to search for the link which led historians to associate *faqr* with piety. The process of portraying *faqr* and *faqa* as great virtues of *Chishti* conduct began in the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad.* In the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* it was, however, noted that not all Sufis apparently abided by the principles of *faqr.* The examples put forward in the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* focused specifically on Baba Farid's contemporary, Baha'uddin Zakarriya. Baha'uddin Zakarriya differed from Baba Farid and Nazimuddin Auliya in that he did not view possession of wealth as a deterrent in the spiritual path. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's discourse suggested, however, that Baba Farid was a better and more pious Sufi than Zakarriya. As an extension of this portrayal, it followed that since Baba Farid was better than his peers, Nizamuddin's own practice and training imbibed from his teacher, qualified him to be a more accomplished mystic in the next generation.

Siyar-al-Auliya developed *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad's* dicta to suggest that Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's conduct was a paradigm for all *Chishtis*. It was only in the *Siyar-al-Auliya* that the thrust on *faqr* and *faqa* became extremely focused and the two emerged as major tenets of Chishti ideology. In fact, the practice of *faqr* and *faqa* by the *Chishti* shaikhs became a yardstick of their piety. And since the *Chishtis* differed from the *Suhrawardis* in their attitude towards wealth, it was put forward by the *tazkirat* genre of literature as a quality which made the *Chishtis* more "dynamic" and pious than the *Suhrawardis*. It was this projection of the piety of the *Chishtis* that was picked up by Rizvi and Nizami.

It is, however, problematic to use poverty as some kind of a yardstick to measure spiritual piety. Muhammad Habib in the foreword to Rizvi's *The Muslim Revivalist Movements in North India*[19] makes an extremely apt observation in the context of the *ulemai-duniya wa ulema-i-akhirat*. Muhammad Habib argued that no measuring rod for unworldliness or lust for wealth could ever be discovered. Wealth or poverty could never be fixed as standards of piety. This, in my opinion, should apply to the posthumous ranking of the shaikhs as well.

Both Nizami and Rizvi extract examples from the sources, primarily the *tazkirats* produced at different moments of time, exemplifying the extreme conditions of *faqr* under which all *Chishti* shaikhs lived. The careful research of these scholars has shown that both Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti and Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki never owned houses of their own. Baba Farid has strictly forbidden the use of burnt bricks for structure, which according to the *Chishtis* were not simple enough for an ascetic's dwelling. A small *kucha*

18.   Muhammad Habib, "Foreword" in S.A.A. Rizvi's, *Muslim Revivalist Movements…,* p. VII

(unmetalled) house was the only exception which the *Chishtis* permitted and Shaikh Nasiruddin, however, did not like even this exception.[20]

It is admitted by both Nizami and Rizvi that we lack any reliable source of information regarding Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti, the founder of the *Chishti silsila* in India. In the context of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, it is mentioned elsewhere that he chose the place of his *khanqah* very carefully. If Baba Farid did not possess a house of burnt bricks, then how can we forget the socio-economic reality that in those times it was not a very common practice to use burnt bricks for construction in the Indian sub-continent. It is put forward by Nizami that Shaikh Nasiruddin did not like even the possession of a *kucha* (unmetalled) house.

But it is well known that Nasiruddin had a *Khanqah* where he lived along with his *murids*. Neither the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* nor *Khair-al-Majalis* talk of the dwellings as evidence of the extreme *faqr* practiced by the *Chishti* shaikhs. It was the picture projected by the *tazkirat* genre of literature and as noted earlier both Nizami and Rizvi picked up this emphasis on the dwellings.

According to these historians, general starvation conditions prevailed in the houses of the *Chishti* shaikhs. The medieval Muslim mystics believed in two means of livelihood: cultivating the fallow

19.   K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics,* p. 191

land or living on *futuh* (unsolicited charity). But *futuh* was preferred as the cultivation brought the mystic into touch with revenue officers.[21] Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri was probably the only *Chishti* shaikh of the thirteenth century who adopted cultivation in preference to *futuh*. Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakkar was forced by his circumstances to permit his disciples to circulate *zanbil* (a bowl made of dried and hollow gourd) and collect food.[22]

Nizami writes that elaborate rules were, however laid down for the acceptance of *futuh:* (a) it became illegal if one aspired for it; (b) it could not be in the form of a guaranteed payment or immovable property and; (c) it had to be utilized and distributed as soon as it was received.[23] For such a precise elaboration, Nizami does not cite his source of information nor does he state who the framers and practitioners of these "rules" were.

Nizami emphasizes that, infact, even incurring of debts for household expenses was considered inappropriate for a mystic. In the context of Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, the author relies on the sixteenth century and fourteenth century *tazkirats, Siyar-al- Arifin* and *Siyar-al-Auliya*. He notes that Kaki's household consisted of nine people[24] and to support his household the Sufi went to the

20.   Ibid, p. 198

21.   Idem, *Some Aspects of Society and Politics,* p. 201

22.   Idem, *State and Culture,* p. 198

23.   Jamali, *Siyar-ul-Arifin,* p. 24, cited by K.A. Nizami, *State and Culture,* p. 198

extreme of borrowing money up to 300 *dirhams*, from a grocer[25], although his spiritual mentor had permitted him to borrow money up to only 500 *dirhams.* It is further added by Jamali that later the *shaikh* decided to starve rather than incur any debts whatever. Now, this piece of information is directly borrowed from *Siyar-al- Arifin.*[26] Nizami himself elaborates that "Jamali says that one day, during their conversation, the grocer's wife told the wife of the shaikh, 'but for us you would have died of starvation.' The shaikh and his wife deeply pained by this remark decided then not to borrow anything in future from the grocer."

We observe that the prestige of the shaikhs also depended on the ability to construct, extend, and organise a *khanqah* (hospice) to feed, accommodate and attend to the material and spiritual needs of their dependent and disciples and to accommodate travelers according to established expectations of hospitality. The means to run such "charitable" establishments necessitated accumulation of huge amounts of food grains and other resources in the form of offerings from the wealthy and the powerful. Such offerings implied the accessibility of the *khanqah* and the shaikh himself to a mass of people which was contrary to their ascetic preferences. In fact,

24.   Amir Khwurd, *Siyar-al-Auliya;* p. 19, cited by S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements.....,* p. VII

25.   Jamali, *Siyar-ul-Arifin,* pp. 25-26, cited by K.A. Nizami, *State and Culture,* p. 198

the very location of *khanqahs* of Baba Farid and Nizamuddin Auliya either on major trade routes or near major urban centers suggests that proclaimed preferences to a rustic, ascetic life may well have been rhetorical devices aimed to obscure their 'worldly' links with regional society.

The practice of *faqr* and *faqa* was crucial in the historiographical conceptualization of the *Chishti* attitude towards *shughl* (government service). According to both Nizami and Rizvi, the *Chishtis* rejected contact with the state in every form, cut themselves off completely from kings, politics, and government service. This kind of antipathy towards *shughl* was in keeping with the accepted traditions of Islamic mysticism. Nizami emphasises that these were historical, legal, and psychological reasons for this attitude of the Chishti *shaikhs.* Nizami quotes Imam Ghazzali for the elaboration of these reasons and agrees with the solution suggested by Imam Ghazzali that, "the other alternative is that a man should keep away from kings so that he does not come face to face with them and this alone is feasible for there is safety in it."[27]

It is interesting to note that there are repeated references to *shughl* (government service) in both *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and *Khair- al-Majalis. Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* does not recommend *shughl* but neither does it criticize it. Shaikh Nizamuddin thought that *shughl*

26.   Imam Ghazzali cited by K.A. Nizami, *Society and Politics In India,* p. 201

(Government service) was not good for him but it does not follow that all government servants were bad in his opinion. In fact a promise to abstain from the service of Kings was demanded by Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya only from his elder disciples.[28] Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya mentions Khwaja Hamid, who was engaged in service with the state, with deep respect and commented that Khwaja Hamid, "In spiritual discipline, as in ritual observance, he was unswerving."[29] In the *Khair-al-Majalis,* Shaikh Nasiruddin repeatedly emphasised that any occupation, including the service to the state, was not bad provided it was performed with an honest attitude *(sadiqiyat)* and one did not get possessed by it until it hampered the spiritual growth of the individual.[30] Both the historians, Nizami and Rizvi ignore the multileveled discourse of the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and the *Khair-al-Majalis.* They do not acknowledge that both the sources do not simply criticise the service with the state, at least for devotees and disciples of lower ranks. Oblivious of the ambivalent attitude of the *Chishtis* to the state, these historians project a very uniform coherent policy of *Chishti* rejection of the state and its institutions. These historians also fail to account for the changes that come in social and political milieus

27.   Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad.* trans., Bruce B. Lawrence (New York : Paulist Press, 1992), cited as *FF,* pp. 204-205

29.   Ibid, p. 309-310

30.   Hamid Qalandar, *Khair-al-Majalis,* Urdu trans. Maulana Ahmed Ali, (Delhi : Naaz Publishing House, n.d.), hare after cited as K.M., M. 21. p. 78

with the passage of time. They tend to assume that in the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries all the *Chishti* Shaikhs were like irrespective of the changed times and circumstances in which they lived. Moreover, altered time contexts, according to these historians, failed to bring any changes in the nature of the state as well. Both Nizami and Rizvi assume that the Sultanate elicited the same response from Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti and Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli, it is hardly surprising when both the Sultanate and the Sufis remained unchanged over a century and a half.

Another major problem in portraying a uniform policy of rejecting government service *(shughl)* is the existence of contrary evidence. It is known from other sources like *Siyar-al-auliya*[31] and *Akhbar-al-Akhyar*[32] that Shaikh Nasiruddin was compelled by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq to serve him as *Kharitadar.* This piece of information disturbs the unilinear presentation of Nizami as it shows that Shaikh Nasiruddin not only joined the government service but, infact, bowed before the pressures (imprisonment) inflicted upon him by the Sultan. Nizami writes "Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq desired to bind the saints to the state chariots, (and the) main disciples of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya strongly opposed the

31.   Amir Khwurd, *Siyar-al-Auliya,* trans. Aijaz-ul-Haqq Audaisi, (Lahore : Urdu Board, 1980) hereafter cited S.A., p. 393

32.   Abd-al-Haqq, *Akhbar-al-Akhyar,* trans. Maulana Muhammad Fazil, (Karachi : Nashar Madina, n.d.), hereafter cited as A.A., p. 179

policy of the Sultan. Three of his elder disciples, Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi, Maulana Shamsuddin Yahiya and Shaikh Qutbuddin Munawwar, withstood the threats of the Sultan with a

courage and determination that elicited universal praise."[33] This information according to Nizami is furnished by *Khair-al- Majalis*.[34] Nizami's account is difficult to accept because there is only one reference to Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the entire *Khair- al-Majalis*. When the audience asks the *shaikh* about the problems inflicted on him by the Sultan, the *Shaikh* replies briefly. "It is a matter between God and Me."[35]

The *Chishti* Shaikhs according to these historians not only abstained from the society of kings and nobles, but they also rejected their offers of land and other endowments. These historians want us to believe, in line with their reading of the sources that the *Chishti* shaikhs held that the acceptance of such gifts would make them subservient to the royal wish and fetter the independence of their soul. And examples of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Hamiduddin Nagauri, Baba Farid and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya were cited as proof. With reference to the *Siyar-al-Auliya*. Nizami could confidently extrapolate that Shaikh Nizamuddin's instructions to

33.   K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics,* pp. 246-247
34.   K.M. pp. 12-13; cited by K.A. Nizami, *State And Culture,* p. 122 35. K.M., M. 45, p.

his disciples were definite and clear on this point; "Do not accept any village or stipend or favour from kings and officials. It is not permitted to a *darvesh*.[36] Not to speak of land endowments; even presents by kings and nobles were rarely and reluctantly accepted. Both Nizami and Rizvi extract a long list of examples consolidating their argument from *Siyar-al-Auliya, Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and *Jawahir-i-Faridi*. But this kind of simplistic treatment of the sources is very problematic. The sources do not present such a consistent statement where endowments and presents, were refused by the *Chishti* shaikhs.

Both Nizami and Rizvi emphasise that almost all the notable *Shaikhs* of the *Chishti silsila* in India scrupulously avoided the company of kings and nobles.[37] But a careful study of the sources suggest that matters were not quite so simple. Baba Farid, for example, is portrayed by both the historians as a great symbol of piety who enjoyed *faqr* with *faqa*. Since Baba Farid's intimate relations with Sultan Balban cannot be fitted into the uniform anti- state attitude of *Chishti* shaikhs as portrayed by these historians. Rizvi says that the "later Chishti records give an exaggerated account" and that "Baba Farid was not associated with the political intrigues of his time."[38] But *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* had several references where

36.   Amir Khwurd, S.A., p. 295, cited by K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics,* p. 244
37.   K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics,* p. 246
38.   S.A.A. Rizvi, *History of Sufism, vol. II, p. 142*

Balban looks for approval from Baba Farid.

In the time of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, important members of the court were regular visitors to Nizamuddins's gatherings. *Siyar-al-Auliya* informs that Alauddin Khalji and members of his family including the heir-apparent Khizr Khan shared great trust in Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Two of the *Shaikh's* favourite disciples, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Sijzi held high posts in the court of the sultan.

A strained relationship between Shaikh Nasiruddin and Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq is reported by

Nizami and Rizvi, but we have to be careful in our evaluation of this complex relationship. Certainly it is hard to conclude that Shaikh Nasiruddin was hostile towards the state and its institutions. If we carefully observe the sequence of events, we realise that the *shaikh* had such a phase in their relationship. In the *Khair-al-Majalis* this was represented as an example of his patience and tolerance. He refused to make it a subject of controversy and deliberately evaded a discussion of his problems with the Sultan by suggesting that "It was a matter between me and God." But should we ignore that fact that Shaikh Nasiruddin actually accompanied Muhammad bin Tughlaq's army, built public opinion in favour of his campaigns, and accepted the employment with the state. In fact, the *Shaikh* also imposed restrictions on the use of music in Sufi worship *(sama)*, in response to the widespread criticism of the practice of *sama* by the orthodox *ulema.*

An important aspect emphasised by Nizami and Rizvi to strengthen their argument of the *Chishti mashaikh* being "anti-state" is that the *Shaikh* kept aloof from all political development and intrigues. But Shaikh Nasiruddin played an important role in the accession of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq. His role is, infact, very clearly mentioned in many contemporary sources like Barani and *Afifs Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* and later works like Badaoni's *Muntakhab-al-Tawarikh.*[39] This kind of actual participation of Shaikh Nasiruddin in the political intrigues typical of the period of accession, cannot be fitted well into the structure of a hostile *Chishti* attitude towards the state. But since Shaikh Nasiruddin is clearly mentioned in these contemporary works, it becomes difficult for Nizami to dismiss the information furnished by them, so he creates somewhat of a jargon of ideas. Nizami writes that "Badaoni's account is not corroborated by any contemporary or semi- contemporary authority and may, therefore be dismissed as baseless". Nizami elaborates that "His (Nasiruddin's appeal to Firuz Tughlaq to ascend the throne after the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq cannot be

39. Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi,* pp. 526-535; Afif's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi,* p. 29 and Badaoni's *Muntakhab-al-Tawarikh,* Vol. 1, p. 242. cited by K.A. Nizami, trans. *Khair-al-Majalis,* p. 57

cited as an example of his interest in political matters. The circumstances under which he joined the army, the scholar, and the nobles, in requesting Firoz to ascend the throne in Sind were abnormal."[40] Nizami elaborates that after the accession of Firoz Shah Tughlaq when the affairs of state took a positive turn, the *Shaikh* immediately withdrew from political affairs and started leading a life of seclusion expected of a *Chishti* shaikh. Nizami further strengthens his point by observing that the shaikh kept the Sultan waiting when he came to visit the *khanqah* (hospice*).*

Elaborating his argument of the *Chishti* shaikhs keeping aloof from political affairs Nizami notes that the "early *Chishti* records contain innumerable moral precepts for the general public, but hardly anything for the rulers or the bureaucracy."[41] Firstly it is anachronistic to use modern term like "bureaucracy" for medieval times. Secondly and more importantly, a careful study of both the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and the *Khair-al-Majalis* makes evident that neither Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya nor Shaikh Nasiruddin saw some Muslims as "bureaucrats". Their emphasis was that an individual should become a good Muslim. Whatever his occupation it should be performed with *sadiqiyat* (honest attitude). The morals and the

40.   K.A. Nizami, "Introduction" in *Khair-al-Majalis,* ed. K.A. Nizami, (Aligarh : Department of History, 1959), p. 57

41.   K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics,* p. 248

virtues which made an individual a "good" Muslim were equally applicable to so-called bureaucrats. In the eyes of the Shaikhs even the Sultan was a Muslim first, but a special Muslim because common people depended on him, thus, he should work for the welfare of the common masses. Even a cursory glance at the *Khair-al-Majalis* would prove that there are several references which establish the morals and sensitivity appropriate to a Sultan. There is an anecdote of a Badshah who repented sincerely for the ill-conduct of his soldiers who had slaughtered the cow of an old woman and gave her lots of money as a penance.[42] Shaikh Nasiruddin repeatedly comments on the way a ruler should work for the welfare of the common masses. This advice was expanded through an anecdote where not even a patch of fallow, uninhabited land could be found in the *iqta* of a virtuous *Hakim* who fulfilled his public responsibilities like a pious Muslim.[43] Shaikh Nasiruddin clearly states that the image of a ruler is perceived by the masses in accordance with their own comprehension and appreciation of morality. If people were themselves virtuous then they wanted their Sultan to be morally upright as well. This moral was related in the context of a *darvesh* who asked the inhabitants of a town about the conduct of the ruler. Most important of all, there is a clear reference to Sultan Ala'uddin Khalji[44], infact, he is highly applauded for his

42.   K.M; M. 42, p. 146

43.   Ibid, p. 148

44.   Ibid, M. 77, pp. 289-292

market regulations as these measures, according to the *Shaikh,* were guided by the Sultan's concern for the welfare of the common masses. Ala'uddin Khalji is presented as an ideal sultan. It is intriguing to note that both Nizami and Rizvi following Muhammad Habib, treat *Khair-al-Majalis*[45] as one of three 'authentic' *malfuzats* (the other two being *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and *Sarur-us-Sudur)* and rely a great deal on it, then how could they ignore a whole range of reference to the values and conduct appropriate to a Sultan and reached the conclusion that the shaikhs kept themselves so far away from the political affairs that they did not prescribe moral precepts for their rulers.

In sum, it must be said that a careful study of the treatment of the principal tenets of mystic ideology-*faqr, faqa* and *shughl* by these historians point to a major limitation in their methodology. Both Rizvi and Nizami do not see any difference in the *malfuzat* and *tazkirat* genre of literature and use them indiscriminately. They are not ready to view the sources as constructors of knowledge, as statement attempting to project an image. Texts in the early *malfuzat* genre initiate their audience to the basic feature of an emerging *silsila.* They develop the unique significance of their protagonist within a larger mystical fraternity. Sometimes the ideas and conduct

45.   K.A. Nizami, trans. *Khair-al-Majalis, pp. 57*

of a particular *shaikh* as enumerated in a *malfuzat* would contradict and complicate an earlier presentation of "codes of conduct" for the members of the *silsila*. For example, in the *Khair-al-Majalis* this problem becomes evident in the treatment of adherence to rituals and practices and the question of *sama* where Shaikh Nasiruddin's teaching were at variance with his master's. However, the entire discourse is presented in a manner where this difference in outlook and practice is developed as a unique characteristic of Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli. Nasiruddin's level of piety matches the most pious figure such as Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi. In fact, within the *malfuzat* genre of literature, a complicated and complex texture of pictures becomes apparent. There was a difference in reporting and advice offered by the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* and *Khair-al-Majalis.* These divergences were not simply a matter of details but rather of a larger ideology. The *tazkirats* on the other hand have a different kind of intentionality altogether. Although the core of the *tazkirat* information is derivative - these works develop a much clearer, coherent p i c t u r e of the *silsila* formulated over a longer span of time incorporating the expectations and the quality of charisma expected from Sufi shaikhs by disciples of a later generation. In the case of the *Siyar-al-Auliya,* for example, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya is used as "model" through which the text can embody a "*Chishti*" practice.

Rizvi and Nizami borrow a great deal from the *tazkirats.* Their uniform and coherent projection of the Chishti practices and ideology bears a stamp of the image constructed by the *tazkirats* as evinced by their treatment of *faqr, faqa* and *shughl.*

CONCLUSION

My comments on the methodology of Nizami and Rizvi are not meant to undermine their contributions to the field of Sufi studies. One can certainly not fail to appreciate their attempt to write a detailed history of Sufism in India based on a detailed, strenuous study of the contemporary *tazkirat* and *malfuzat* literature. But one also must point out that there are some basic limitations in their methodology. They read the sources too literally, without making any distinction between different genres the *malfuzat* and *tazkirats.* In consequences, they get entrapped in the discursiveness of the sources they use and tend to simply adopt the linkages put forward by the texts. This kind of conception of linkages imposed by these historical sources restricts the understanding of the nuances in the development of *Chishti* practices.

In a linear, homogeneous, and coherent projection of the *Chishtis* in India both the historians forget that the *Chishtis* were not and could not have been the same over a long period of one and a half centuries. In their endeavour to present a consistent picture of the *Chishtis,* the time context is not given its due importance. With the passage of time the social and political milieus of the Delhi Sultanate altered. These historians, however, assume that for a century and a half Sufi thought underwent no transformation and the passage of time did not alter the nature of the Sultanate.

It is important to recognise that the literature, like the saints themselves, comprised a variety of different stylistic forms. These created specific images of the saints which differed over time. It would be important to consider, though the scope of this paper does not permit, how three types of texts, belonging to the *malfuzat,* the *tazkirat* and the oral narratives, and ritual present in the dargah impressed the audience at different moments in time with contrasting impressions of the protagonist shaikh.