

The Symbiotic Relationship of Sufism and Politics in the Islamicate South Asia

Sufism, the mystical or esoteric aspect of Islam, is primarily seen as devoted to the spiritual dimension of one's life, but despite its religio-spiritual outlook, Sufism is inextricably linked with power and politics. Historically, the sufi shaykhs as masters of the spiritual domain have engaged with the notions of power, authority and legitimacy. They have engaged with those who have been the custodians of political authority—the Caliphs, Emperors, Sultans, rulers, and their subordinates. In the words of a scholar on Sufism:

“The ethical vision of Islam . . . is no less a concern of Sufism than realization of an awareness of divine reality. This twofold conception of truth, spiritual and ethical, gives Sufism room to maneuver vis-à-vis the world: Engaging the visible order of society and the politics governing it—whether as cooperation or challenge—may make no less sense strategically than withdrawal, depending on circumstances.”²

Historically, the relationship of the sufis and the state or political authorities has been quite ambiguous and varied, which denies any easy generalization. Evidence suggests the state patronage of the sufi establishments, sufis acting as aides of the rulers, and accepting bounties from them, as well as legendary ‘sufi martyrs’ like Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (executed 922), ‘Ayn al-Quzat al-Hamadani (executed 1131), and Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (executed 1191), among others, being put to death by the political authorities.

In the Islamicate³ political traditions, the rulers were seen as upholders of *shari'ah* (at least in theory, if not always in practice), and as patrons of organized religion. The rulers' extension of patronage to the theologians, jurists, scholars and sufis had political and social implications for the ruling house. The rulers sought political legitimation through these religious and spiritual sources. During the early centuries of Islam, the *ulama* (scholars) as custodians of religious authority, had won over the caliphs, the traditional custodians of political authority. The relationship of the rulers and the *ulama* was relatively well defined, but that of the rulers with the sufis was less well defined and so there were chances of contestation. One comes across considerable ambivalence in the position of the

¹ Associate Professor (Tenured), Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan.

² Paul L. Heck, ed., *Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), see introduction by the editor, p. 1.

³ The term ‘Islamicate’ as an adjective was coined by Marshall G. S. Hodgson in 1960s. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 57-60. The usage of the term is not restricted to the practice of Islam as a religion. According to Eaton, the term was “intended to capture a broader, more flexible, and less communal notion of culture than is conveyed by the more narrowly defined religious terms ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’”. See introduction in Richard M. Eaton, ed. *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 13.

rulers in relation to the sufi shaykhs, and so no clear pattern of state's relationship with the sufis emerges.

On the other hand, there exists no strict and obvious pattern in Sufism regarding the relationship with the political authorities. Recognition by political authority or rulers was seen as a demonstration of the spiritual power and authority of a sufi shaykh. In hagiographical literature, many stories assert the superiority of the sufi shaykhs over worldly rulers. The sufi shaykhs also evoke authority like rulers, which is well reflected from their titles.⁴ Many of the sufis had cordial relationship with their contemporary rulers, through which the sufis tried to influence the state policies in favour of the common people, and redress their grievances from those in state positions as well. Many of the kings and the high state officials held the sufis in high esteem, so through direct or indirect intervention, the sufis got the grievances of the people redressed by the monarchs and/or the incumbents of high political offices, many of whom were their disciples or devotees.

For studying the state-sufi interaction, the concept of civil society may help conceptualize the dynamics of their relationship. Sufism may be interpreted as one of the many expressions of 'civil society' in the Islamic world, since most of its important features were also found in Muslim polities. Its civil society was differentiated, involving many organizations and institutions ranging from the concept of *umma* (the Muslim community) to the institutions of '*ulama*' (scholars), judges, *awqaf* (endowments), sufi groups and the like. Historically speaking, these institutions played roles similar to those identified with civil society.⁵ Said Amir Arjomand's study on the institution of charitable trusts as an agency of civil society in premodern Persia, for instance, reveals the complex and at times complementary relationship between the state and civil society. Historically, there existed the tradition of involvement of public authorities in philanthropy in Persia. The study views the involvement of public authorities in civil society activities as a source of empowering and strengthening the autonomous agency of civil society.⁶

Civil society theorists have classified the relationship of state and civil society, and come up with its varied models: (i) confrontational model; (ii) autonomous model; (iii) collaborative/associational model; and (iv) mediational

⁴ For details, see Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority," *Iran* (1990), pp. 71-81. See also Tanvir Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), see Appendix III, p. 407.

⁵ To quote Hasan Hanafi: "Islamic theory and practice sustain a number of legitimate human groupings existing between the state and the individual. These groupings are endowed with their own sphere of autonomy free from government intrusion, which made Islamic societies historically far less monolithic and undifferentiated than some Western stereotypes of a theocratic society allow." "Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society: A Reflective Islamic Approach" in *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, eds. Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 174; for details see 171-89.

⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, "Philanthropy, the Law, and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era", in *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*, eds. [Warren Frederick Ilchman](#), [Stanley Nider Katz](#) and [Edward L. Queen II](#) (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 109-132, see esp. p. 127.

model.⁷ The collaborative or associational model of state and civil society is based on cooperation between the two spheres. It is asserted that civil society may not always have a conflictual relationship with the state; it may have a constructive relationship with it, particularly a reformed state, and both the spheres may also join hands and work together in some sectors for achieving common goals and realizing shared values. It is argued that the collaborative model is better than the confrontational model; rather it is a preferred model.⁸

At a theoretical level, in recent years the role of civil society has been viewed as expanding beyond the conventional confrontational relationship with the state, and collaborative models of state and civil society have emerged. Both the spheres collaborate with each other to overcome problems like poverty. The collaborative model of civil society is more in line with its welfare state view, which does not pose any open and direct challenge to the state. The political dimension of civil society has been deemphasized in conceptual terms. The state-civil society collaboration is also in line with the neo-conservative paradigm wherein civil society is understood as a *depoliticized* sphere. In practice, this model of civil society is increasingly being adopted by NGOs and CSOs around the world.⁹ Consequently, civil society and the governments in many countries have evolved a broad range of ways to complement each other. A number of models and approaches have been developed ranging from complementary partnership with considerable degree of autonomy of civil society organizations from government, to financial support of the latter to the former with regulatory mechanisms.

The study is an attempt to explore the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ from an historical perspective with a particular focus on how the sufis and the state developed a symbiotic relationship in South Asia. A plethora of empirical evidence can be cited in this regard, but only limited empirical data have been presented in the present study, which does not intend to be exhaustive in nature.

1. Precedents of State-Sufi Symbiotic Relationship Outside South Asia

Historically, some of the early sufis enjoyed a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship with the state. This notion can be found articulated in the twelfth-century sufi text *Adab al-muridin* (Rules for the Novices) authored by Shaykh Najib al-Din Abu'l-Qahir al-Suhrawardi (d. 1168), the founder of Suhrawardi *Silsilah* (literally meaning a chain; initiatic genealogy or spiritual lineage/order). It states that the sufis are only conditionally permitted to join government service. The sufis may serve the government with the intention that they would protect the people from the atrocities of government officials and help

⁷ For details, see Tanvir Anjum, “From Confrontation to Collaboration: Contemporary Discourse on the State-Civil Society Relational Models”, *Journal of Political Studies*, Dept. of Political Science, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Issue XVII (Summer 2010), pp. 93-102.

⁸ Helen James, “Introduction”, in *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms for Power and Persuasion*, ed. Helen James (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

⁹ Ezra Mbogori and Hope Chigudu, “Civil Society and Government: A Continuum of Possibilities”, in *Civil Society at the Millennium* (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press in cooperation with CIVICUS, 1999), p. 115; for a detailed discussion on the relationship of state and civil society, see pp. 109-22.

redress the grievances of the aggrieved.¹⁰ Moreover, Shaykh Najib al-Din enjoyed such prestige and influence among the people that if anybody sought shelter in his *ribat* (sufi dwelling) he could not be forcibly taken away even by a ruler.¹¹

His nephew, Shaykh Shihab al-Din Abu Hafis Umar Suhrawardi (d. 1234) served as the envoy of, and chief religious adviser to, the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir (r. 1180-1225). The Shaykh developed a theory for unifying the Caliphate, and indeed for expanding the powers of the Caliph. The authority of the Caliph over his subjects, and as mediator between his people and God, was conceived by him in terms parallel to that of the authority of a sufi shaykh over his disciples.¹² Together they initiated a programme of political and religious, or more accurately, spiritual reform in the state. Moreover, a systematic reformation of sufi *silsilahs* was also initiated. Caliph al-Nasir himself founded at least six *khanqahs* (sufi dwellings) in Baghdad, and appointed him as the director of several other *khanqahs* established by others.¹³ The Shaykh also helped the 'Abbasid Caliphs in their hour of need. For instance, when Khwarizm Shah Muhammad II and his armies marched towards Baghdad in 1217-18, it was the Shaykh who dissuaded him from attacking the city.¹⁴

In addition to the Suhrawardis, one of the most prominent Central Asian Naqshbandi sufis, Khwaja 'Ubayd-Allah Ahrar (d. 1489) was also closely associated with the early Timurids in Central Asia. He was the *khalifa* (deputy, representative or spiritual successor) of Khwaja Baha al-Din Naqshband. Khwaja Ahrar received huge favours from Sultan Shahrukh Mirza (r. 1405-47; the fourth and youngest son of Emperor Amir Timur), and also got involved in politics after Shahrukh's death. He played a key role in ousting the Timurid governor of Samarqand, and placing Abu Sa'id as the sultan of Samarqand in 1450-51. He served as an adviser to Abu Sa'id and his son and successor, Sultan Ahmad. He continued to wield considerable political power, and also possessed huge wealth and land holdings.¹⁵ These legacies of the early sufis went a long way in affecting the behaviour of the sufis in South Asia. In her work *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, Manz analyzes the dialectic of state-sufi relationship:

“Mutual need and competition, combined with tricky boundaries between worldly and spiritual authority, created complicated conventions. Rulers used patronage of religious figures to prove their piety, but they had to choose the right men to honor. Shaykhs and ulama on their side found signs of respect from the ruler a valuable source of prestige, but could damage their reputation by appearing to serve worldly power, since such behavior was disapproved of. They faced the choice between losing their reputation for disinterestedness if they fully accepted the ruler's bounty, and losing their ability to function usefully as educators and

¹⁰ Saiyyid Muhammad Husayni Gesudiraz, *Khatimah (Tarjumah-i adab al-muridin)*, (completed in 1404), Urdu trans. Saiyyid Yasin 'Ali Nizami (Lahore: Al-kitab, 1977), pp. 36-37.

¹¹ K. A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of the Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century* (Aligarh: Department of History, Muslim University, 1961), p. 252.

¹² *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. VII, art. Al-Nasir Li-Din Allah by Angelika Hartmann (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1997), pp. 999-1000.

¹³ Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 241-42.

¹⁴ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, art. Al-Nasir Li-Din Allah by Hartmann, p. 997.

¹⁵ For details, see Itzhak Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 35-38.

protectors of the population if they removed themselves entirely from the worldly sphere.”¹⁶

The Saljuq sultans patronized the *madrasahs* (religious seminaries) and *khanqahs* for their ideological legitimization. The famous theologian-turned-sufi, Imam Ghazali (d. 1158) attempted to offer successive legitimization theories for the Saljuqs. He tried to legitimize the Saljuq State and its dominant religious ideology.¹⁷ However, when ‘Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani challenged the whole foundation of Saljuq religious ideology, he was executed by the political authorities.¹⁸ In the twelfth century, the Mamluk sultans in Egypt, a semi-autonomous kingdom and an appendage of the ‘Abbasids, were in dire need of legitimacy for their rule, and so they sought the help of the sufis for consolidation of their political authority. Interestingly, at the same time, afraid of the increasing influence of the sufis in the state and society, the Mamluk sultans also tried to regulate them and curtail their powers. The Mamluks appointed the director-shaykhs of *khanqahs*, and conferred the title of *Shaykh al-shuyukh* (literally meaning master of the masters) to the heads of various *khanqahs*. Though the official designation was of an honorific nature, and did not imply any specific or well-defined role and responsibilities, the *Shaykh al-shuyukh* exercised authority over other *khanqahs*. These *khanqahs* were officially supported, at times constructed or managed by the state. The buildings were, in fact, *awqaf* endowments. However, the directors of these *khanqahs* appointed by the state were not necessarily sufis; some of the former *wazirs* (ministers), for instance, were made in-charge of *khanqahs*.¹⁹ Even Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) was appointed the director of *Khanqah* Baybars in 1389.²⁰

2. State-Sufi Collaboration in the Islamicate South Asia

There were a number of precedents of state-sufi collaboration in the Islamicate South Asia. The state sought the support of the sufis for different reasons. Some kings sincerely sought their blessings for their success by inviting them to their courts or visiting them in their *khanqahs*, or offering cash and land grants and stipends to them. Others tried to use their support for political purposes such as gaining political legitimacy or public acclaim. On the other hand, those sufis who extended their support to the state and accepted royal patronage were generally not always doing it in response to the state demand; at times the sufi shaykhs tried to influence the rulers and their policies in favour of the people by having cordial relations with the political establishment. Moreover, in some cases, the sufis used the state support for dissemination of the teachings and traditions of

¹⁶ Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 195.

¹⁷ Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 90-93; see also Chapter 4: “The Shifting Politics of al-Ghazali,” pp. 105-124.

¹⁸ For details, see *ibid.*, Chapter 6: “An Oppositional Sufi: ‘Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani,” pp. 158-200.

¹⁹ For details, see Spencer J. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 19-20.

²⁰ Caroline Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo* (Cairo & New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), p. 188; and Linda Walton, “Educational Institutions,” in *The Cambridge World History: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500CE-1500CE*, eds. Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 134.

Sufism in general, and their *silsilah* in particular. At times, the sufis collaborated with the state in the hour of need as well for the welfare of the people or for the larger interest of the community.

Though Nizami opines that among the various sufi *silsilahs* in India, it was only the Naqshbandiyya which not only considered it permissible but imperative to establish contact with the rulers in order to influence their ideas and state policies,²¹ it may be argued that the Naqshbandis in Mughal India did not uniformly follow the legacy of Khwaja Ahrar, as one comes across empirical inconsistencies in the Naqshbandi sufi attitude towards the state and politics. Khwaja Baqi Bi-Allah (d. 1603), who introduced the Naqshbandi *Silsilah* in India, took no interest in politics, though he welcomed influential *umara*' (nobles) at his *khanqah*. His successor, Shaykh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi (d. 1624) played an important role in politics of the state, which has been discussed later in the present study. So it seems difficult to generalize the Naqshbandi attitude towards the state. Moreover, unlike the early Timurids in Central Asia, the Timurids or the Mughals in India tried to seek the support of many sufi *silsilahs* simultaneously, including the Chishtis.²² What follows is a discussion on various dimensions of the associational relationship between the state and the sufis in South Asia.

2.1 Construction of Sufi *Khanqahs* and Shrines and their Visits by the Rulers

The rulers of the pre-Mughal and Mughal era made public manifestations of respect and reverence for the sufis, at times out of personal and devotional reasons and at times for political purposes. That is why, the kings, *umara* and the members of the royal family constructed their tombs and *khanqahs* or visited their shrines. Crown Prince Khizr Khan (assassinated in 1318), the son of Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalji (r. 1296-1316), who was a disciple of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya (d. 1325), got constructed a mosque in the *jama'atkhana* of the Shaykh in Ghiyathpur in the suburbs of Delhi.²³ Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (r. 1325-51) not only constructed the *khanqah* of Firdawsi sufi, Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Ahmad Yahya Maneri (1263-1381) in Bihar around 1337,²⁴ he also built splendid mausoleums over the grave of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya' in Delhi and Shaykh 'Ala al-Din of Ajodhan (d. 1334) within the premises of Baba Farid's shrine in Pakpattan.²⁵ Ahmad Khan *Khan-i Khanan*, the brother of Bahmani Sultan Taj al-Din Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422), constructed a *khanqah* for Chishti sufi, Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudiraz (1321-1422) in Gulbargah.²⁶ Later, after becoming king, Sultan Ahmad Shah (r. 1422-36) constructed a splendid mausoleum over his grave

²¹ K. A. Nizami, "Naqshbandi Influence on Mughal Rulers and Politics." *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad, Deccan), Vol. XXXIX, (1965), p. 41.

²² Muzaffar Alam, "The Mughals, the Sufi Shaykhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009), pp. 135-74.

²³ Saiyyid Ahmad Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid* (Lucknow: Newal Kishore Press, 1876), p. 38.

²⁴ Sharaf al-Din Ahmad Yahya Maneri, *In Quest of God: Maneri's Second Collection of 150 Letters*, Translation, Introduction & Notes by Paul Jackson (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2004), see Introduction, p. xv.

²⁵ Amir Khurd (Saiyyid Muhammad ibn Mubarak 'Alawi Kirmani), *Siyar al-awliya'* (comp. in 1351-82 A.D.), ed. Chiranji Lal (Delhi: Muhibb-i Hind Press, 1302 A.H./1885 A.D.), pp. 154, 196.

²⁶ Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim Hindu Shah Farishtah, *Tarikh-i Farishtah*, Urdu trans. Mawlawi Muhammad Fida 'Ali Talib, vol. III (Hyderabad: Dar al-Tab' Jami'ah 'Uthmaniyyah, 1926), p. 110.

in Gulbargah. Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat (r. 1526-1535 and 1536-1537) constructed the *khanqah* for Shaykh Jamal of Pathri at Ahmadabad.²⁷

The rulers also visited the shrines and *khanqahs* of the sufis for personal/devotional and/or political purposes. Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq visited the shrine of Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (1141-1236) in Ajmer.²⁸ The Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) also visited the tomb of Khwaja Mu'in al-Din in Ajmer several times.²⁹ Emperor Akbar had great regard for Shaykh Salim Chishti (1497-1570). Being issueless, he requested the Shaykh to pray for a male successor. At the order of the Shaykh, Akbar sent his expecting wife to the Shaykh's *khanqah*. The first son born to Akbar was named Salim (later Emperor Jahangir, r. 1605-27) by the Shaykh himself, whose daughter served as the foster mother of the child.³⁰ Later, her son was recognized as Emperor Jahangir's foster brother. So the rulers of South Asia exhibited devotion and reverence for the sufis in varied forms and for many reasons.

2.2 Rulers as Disciples and Devotees of the Sufi Shaykhs

Some of the Muslim rulers in South Asia became disciples of the sufi shaykhs, and even attributed their political successes to the latter's prayers. Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq was a disciple of Shaykh 'Ala al-Din of Ajodhan (d. 1334),³¹ a grandson of Baba Farid (d. 1271). Emperor Islam Shah Suri (r. 1545-54) had entered the discipleship of a Qadiri sufi, Shah Muhammad Firuzabadi.³² 'Ala al-Din Hasan Shah (r. 1347-58) of Bahmani dynasty was a disciple of Chishti sufi, Shaykh Zayn al-Din Shirazi (d. 1369), who was a *khalifa* of Chishti sufi, Shaykh Burhan al-Din Gharib (d. 1337).³³ Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1627), the king of 'Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, was a disciple of a Qadiri sufi, Saiyyid Shah Abul Hasan of Bijapur.³⁴ The Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh (assassinated in 1659) was the disciple of Qadiri sufi Shaykh Muhammad Mir, popularly known as Miyān Mir of Lahore (d. 1655). Her sister Princess Jahanara (d. 1681) was a disciple of Qadiri sufi, Mulla Shah Badakhshi (d. 1661) of Kashmir.³⁵ Sultan

²⁷ Muhammad Ghauthi Shattari Mandvi, *Gulzar-i abrar* (The Garden of the Pious), (comp. in 1014 A.H.) Urdu trans. Fazl Ahmad Jewari, *Adhkar-i abrar* (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1395 A.H.), p. 231.

²⁸ Mawlana 'Isami, *Futuh al-salatin, (Shahnamah-'i Hind)*, (comp. in 1348), ed. Agha Mahdi Husain (Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1938), p. 447. The Sultan is said to be the first recorded visitor to the shrine in Ajmer. P. M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu' n al-d n Chisht of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 97.

²⁹ Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer*, p. 100.

³⁰ Dara Shukoh, *Safinat al-awliya'*, Urdu trans. Muhammad Ali Lutfi, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Nafis Academy, 1961), p. 241.

³¹ Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya'*, p. 196.

³² Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India* (16th -18th Century), Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2005), p. 333.

³³ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-i mashaikh-i Chisht*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Idarah-'i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1980), p. 260. For the favours received by the Shaykh on the Sultan's accession to the throne, see Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* (The New Cambridge History of India, I.8), (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 46.

³⁴ Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 111, and Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, p. 338.

³⁵ Princess Jahanara, *Risala Sahibiyyah*, ed. Muhammad Aslam, *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, (University of the Punjab, Lahore), Vol. xvi, No. 4 (1970), pp. 12, 14, 24, 30-32.

Ahmad Shah of Gujarat (r. 1411-42) was a disciple of Shaykh Rukn al-Din *Kan-i shakar* (The Mine of Sweetness).³⁶ Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211-36) was a devotee of Chishti sufi, Shaykh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235), though many hagiographical sources assert that the former was a disciple of the latter.³⁷

2.3 Sufis' Acceptance of State Patronage

Not only the Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal Emperors extended patronage to the sufis of varied *silsilahs*, the rulers of local independent kingdoms and regional courts also tried to patronize the sufis. Bahmani Sultans of Gulbarga and Bidar patronized the Chishtis, Qadiris and its sub-branch Nimat-Allahis. Qutb Shahi Sultans of Golconda extended patronized to the Qadiris. The independent rulers of Gujarat patronized the Suhrawardis. 'Adil Shahi Sultans of Bijapur patronized the sufis of Qadiri and Shattari *Silsilahs*, while the 'Imad Shahi Sultans of Berar and the Ilyas Shahi Sultans of Bengal patronized the Qadiri sufis and the Chishti-Nizami sufis respectively.

Many sufis of Islamicate South Asia enjoyed cordial relations with the rulers. However, it is important to note that it does not necessarily indicate the acceptance of a formal kind of patronage by the rulers. However, many others accepted the patronage of the rulers by accepting official posts and financial support from the state. Those who served at state positions performed their duties, and those who accepted cash and land grants from the state utilized them for their families, disciples and devotees, the poor and the needy, for the upkeep of their *khanqahs* and for other charitable purposes. Moreover, in most of the cases, despite their political association, the sufis in India did not allow political interference of the state in their affairs, and their *khanqahs* retained autonomy and independence unlike the sufi establishments in Mamluk Egypt. In short, the association of the sufis with the rulers and political authorities had some benefits for the state and the society at large.

The Suhrawardi sufis of Multan cherished cordial relations with the Sultans of Delhi so that they could instruct the latter in the principles of religion and public welfare. Shaykh Baha' al-Din Zakariyya of Multan (d. 1262) had friendly terms with Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish, whom he supported against the rival political contender, Nasir al-Din Qabacha (r. 1203-1228).³⁸ The Shaykh's grandson Rukn al-Din Abu'l-Fath of Multan (d. 1334) also accepted the official title as well as the land grant of a hundred villages from Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq.³⁹ The Suhrawardi sufis of Multan also extended help to the Sultans for better conduct of the internal affairs as well as external security against the Mongols.⁴⁰ Makhdum Jahaniyan's grandson Shaykh Qutb-i 'Alam (d. 1453) and

³⁶ Sikandar ibn Muhammad, *Mirat-i Sikandari* (The Mirror of Sikandar), Eng. tr. Fazlullah Lutfullah Faridi (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1899), p. 22.

³⁷ See some discussion in Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi*, p. 111.

³⁸ Shaykh Hamid ibn Hamid ibn Fazl Allah Jamali, *Siyar al-'arifin* (comp. between 1531-35), (Delhi: Rizwi Press, 1311 A.H./1893 A.D.), p. 112.

³⁹ Ibn Battutah, *'Aja'ib al-asfar (Safarnamah-'i Ibn Battutah)*, Urdu trans. & Notes Khan Bahadur Mawlavi Muhammad Husayn (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1983), p. 165.

⁴⁰ For details, see Sayf ibn Muhammad Ya'qub Harawi, *Tarikhnama-'i Hirat* [History of Heart], ed. M. Z. Siddiqi (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1944), pp. 157-58.

his great grandson Shaykh Shah ‘Alam (d. 1474) enjoyed the patronage of the rulers of Sultanate of Gujarat (1407-1583), as they lived in its capital Ahmadabad.⁴¹

Though the early Chishtis of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries kept a distance from the court and the rulers, the later Chishtis modified and softened their position towards political authorities as they thought it more prudent to accept royal patronage instead of following the early Chishti policy of detachment from state and politics. The Chishti sufi, Shaykh ‘Ala al-Din Ajodhani’s sons and grandsons accepted high official positions during the reign of Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq. The Shaykh’s son, Mu‘izz al-Din (d. 1338) was given administrative responsibility in Gujarat,⁴² while his second son ‘Alam al-Din received the title of *Shaykh al-Islam* and became the supervisor of the sufi establishments.⁴³ After his demise, his son, Mazhar al-Din was elevated to the position of the *Shaykh al-Islam*.⁴⁴ The Chishti sufi, Khwaja Gesudiraz in his early years remained aloof from court and politics in Delhi, but later in 1398-99 shortly before the invasion by Turco-Mongol conqueror, Amir Timur (d. 1405), he migrated to Deccan and settled in the Bahmani Kingdom, where he enjoyed cordial relationship with the Bahmani Sultans during the last three decades of his life. The Khwaja seems to have been influenced by the Suhrawardi views regarding the relationship of the sufis with the government, as he translated the famous Suhrawardi text, *Adab al-muridin* in Persian and also wrote its supplement in 1404. In the beginning, he enjoyed cordial relations with the Bahmani king, Sultan Taj al-Din Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422), and even settled at his capital Gulbargah at the request of the Sultan,⁴⁵ but later their relations were strained in 1415 over the issue of political succession. After the Sultan’s death, the Khwaja again enjoyed cordial relations with his successor, Sultan Ahmad Shah (r. 1422-36), who granted him towns and villages.⁴⁶ A number of sufis of Bijapur accepted land grants from the ‘Adil Shahi rulers.⁴⁷

The Chishti-Nizami sufis in Bengal including Shaykh ‘Ala al-Haqq As‘ad (d. 1398) of Panduah in West Bengal, who was a *khalifa* of Shaykh Siraj al-Din ‘Uthman (d. 1357), and his son and *khalifa*, Shaykh Nur Qutb-i ‘Alam (d. 1415), enjoyed friendly relations with Sultan Sikandar Shah (r. 1357-89) and Sultan Ghiyath al-Din A‘zam Shah (r. 1389-1409) of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty in Bengal (1342-1486).⁴⁸ Similarly, Shaykh Ashraf Jahangir Simnani (d. 1425), the *khalifa*

⁴¹ Muhammad Aslam, *Malfuzati adab ki tarikh-i ahammiyyat* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, 1995), p. 207.

⁴² Ziya al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*, (comp. in 1359), ed. Saiyyid Ahmad Khan (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1862), pp. 508, 518; and Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya*, p. 196.

⁴³ Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya*, p. 196.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴⁵ Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni-i Gisudiraz: On Sufism* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1983), p. 8; and Shah Muhammad ‘Ali Samani, *Siyar-i Muhammadi* (comp. 1427-28), as cited in Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 264.

⁴⁶ Farishtah, *Tarikh-i Farishtah* (Talib), vol. III, pp. 118-19, and Mandavi, *Gulzar-i abrar*, p. 139.

⁴⁷ See details in Table 6 in Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, pp. 211-15.

⁴⁸ Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 86, 91.

of Shaykh Nur Qutb-i 'Alam, who lived in eastern Uttar Pradesh, kept contacts with the rulers.⁴⁹

Many Qadiri sufis also accepted state patronage, which can be established through the following empirical evidence:⁵⁰ Makhdum Muhammad Ghaus Qadiri (d. 1517), a contemporary of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi (r. 1489-1517), received grants from the state, and the Sultan also appointed him *qazi* (chief judicial officer; a judge) of Multan. Another Qadiri sufi, Shaykh Ismail Multani accepted land grant from Sultan 'Imad Shah, the ruler of 'Imad Shahi dynasty of Berar Sultanate (1490-1572). Saiyyid Ahmad Qadiri served as *Sadr al-sudur* (In-charge of religious and judicial affairs) under Emperor Jahangir. During his *sadarat*, land grants were freely distributed among the needy. His son, Saiyyid Hidayat-Allah Qadiri served as *Sadr al-sudur* under Emperors Shahjahan and Aurengzeb (r. 1658-1707). The Qadiri sufi, Saiyyid Shah Mustafa accepted land grant from Emperor Aurengzeb. Shaykh Nur al-Haqq Qadiri accepted land grants as well as the post of *qazi* of Akbarabad from Emperor Shahjahan. He efficiently and conscientiously performed his duties.

The Nimat-Allahis, a sub-branch of the Qadiri *Silsilah*, flourished in Deccan. Shah Nimat-Allah Wali (b. 1329-d. 1431) the founder of the *Silsilah*, never visited India but sent his grandson Shah Nur-Allah (d. 1436) to the Bahmani court at the request of Sultan Shihab al-Din Ahmad Shah (r. 1422-36), which caused the Nimat-Allahi *Silsilah* to spread in Deccan.⁵¹ The successors and descendants of Shattari sufi, Shaykh Wajih al-Din 'Alavi of Gujarat (d. 1589) received lavish grants from Emperor Jahangir when he visited Ahmadabad.⁵²

Many of the sufis accepted the cash gifts or *nazars* (offerings) and *futuh* (unasked for charity) from the rulers, *umara'*, other affluent people as well as commoners but mostly the money was immediately distributed among the needy. Sometimes the money was also used for meeting the expenses of the *khanqahs*, which included *langar* (public/community kitchen) and boarding and lodging of the travelers, visitors, and the inmates of *khanqahs*. Once Shaykh Qutb al-Din Munawwar of Hansi (d. 1358/9) accepted a cash grant from Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq only to save Firuz Tughluq, Sultan's *na'ib barbak* (deputy chamberlain and master of ceremonies) and his courtier Ziya al-Din Barani, who had brought the grant, from embarrassment and the displeasure of the Sultan. The Shaykh had accepted it unwillingly, and distributed it among the people.⁵³ A Qadiri sufi, Saiyyid Shah Ismail of Nellore (in present day Andhra Pradesh) accepted presents from the *umara'* only to be distributed among the deserving people later on. Another Qadiri sufi, Shah Bilawal Qadiri of Lahore accepted *futuh*

⁴⁹ See details in Md. Gholam Rasool, *Chishti-Nizami Sufi Order of Bengal (till Mid-15th Century) and its Socio-religious Contribution* (Delhi: Idarah-'i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1990), pp. 145-46.

⁵⁰ Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, pp. 333, 325, 337-39.

⁵¹ Muhammad Suleman Siddiqi, "The Pro-Alien Policy of Ahmad Shah and the Role of the Ni'matullahis of Bidar," in *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture*, ed. Anup Taneja (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research in Association with Northern Book Centre, 2003), p. 183; for details see pp. 179-203.

⁵² Nur al-Din Jahangir, *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, or Memoirs of Jahangir*, Eng. tr. Alexander Rogers, ed. Henry Beveridge (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), vol. 1, p. 426.

⁵³ Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya'*, pp. 254-55.

offered by the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan but distributed the entire amount among the poor.⁵⁴

Sometimes the sufis accepted *jagirs* (land grants) not for their personal use but for the upkeep of their *khanqahs* and for the expenses of their disciples. Shah Hamid Qadiri refused to accept a land grant from Sultan Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II for his personal consumption but accepted it for his disciples.⁵⁵ Another Qadiri sufi, Shah Abd al-Qadir also received grants from Sultan Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II and his *umara*, but he always distributed the proceeds from the lands among the poor, keeping nothing for himself or his family. That was why, before his death, he burnt all the official documents relating to these grants fearing conflict among his sons over the issue of distribution of inheritance.⁵⁶ The Chishti sufi, Khwaja Abd al-Haqq Jami of Burhanpur, a *khalifa* of Shaykh Safi Gujarati, used to divide the *futuh* in three parts: he spent one on the children, one on the poor and the dervishes of his *khanqah*, and sent the remaining one to Makkah and Madinah.⁵⁷ Saiyyid Taj al-Din, who was sent to Kashmir by Saiyyid Ali Hamadani, accepted the revenue of the village of Nagam (in District Budgam) from Sultan Shihab al-Din (r. 1357-73) of Shah Mir dynasty for the upkeep of his *khanqah*.⁵⁸ Saiyyid Hussain Simnani, sent to Kashmir by Saiyyid Ali Hamadani, was able to establish a community kitchen or *langar* in Kulgam near Srinagar through a grant from the state during the reign of Sultan Shihab al-Din.⁵⁹

Some of the sufis settled in the state capitals at the request of the kings as the latter saw their presence at the seat of the kingdom or Empire as a source of blessing for their regime. Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi (d. 1224/5) took up an official residence in Delhi on the request of Sultan Iletmish.⁶⁰ The Chishti sufi, Khwaja Gesudiraz settled at Gulbargah, the capital of the Bahmani Kingdom in 1400 at the request of Sultan Taj al-Din Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422).⁶¹ Shaykh Hasan Tahir (d. 1503/4), a disciple of Raji Hamid Sheh and a *khalifa* of Raji Saiyyid Nur, left Jaunpur and went to Agra and later settled at Delhi at the request of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi.⁶² A Chishti sufi-scholar Mir Saiyyid ‘Abd al-Awwal (d. 1560-61), a disciple of one of the descendants of Khwaja Gesudiraz, lived in Deccan. Later, he moved to Ahmadabad in Gujarat, and then to Delhi on the invitation of Khan-i Khanan Bayram Khan (d. 1561).⁶³ Sultan Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II sent letters to the sufis of Gujarat requesting them to settle in Bijapur.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, pp. 338, 345.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁵⁷ Dara Shukoh, *Safinat al-awliya*, pp. 245-46.

⁵⁸ Mohammad Ishaq Khan, “*Shari’a*, State and Conversions in Medieval Kashmir: An Assessment of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani’s Historical Role”, in *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture*, ed. Taneja, p. 149.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

⁶⁰ Jamali, *Siyar al-’arifin*, pp. 164-65.

⁶¹ Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad al Husayni-i-Gisudiraz: On Sufism*, p. 8, and Shah Muhammad ‘Ali Samani, *Siyar-i Muhammadi*, as cited in Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia*, p. 264.

⁶² Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi, *Akhbar al-akhyar fi asrar al-abrar* (Delhi: Matb’a Mujtabai’, 1332/1914), p. 195

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

⁶⁴ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, p. 71.

Some of the sufis who were on friendly terms with the rulers, however, distanced themselves from the court when some tyrant king ascended the throne. A Qadiri sufi, Shaykh Ibrahim Multani, who lived in Bidar, enjoyed friendly relations with the Bahmani Sultans, but when Sultan Humayun Shah (r. 1458-61), a tyrant and debauchee, ascended the throne, he distanced himself from the court.⁶⁵ Moreover, many of the sufis refused to accept the *futuh* sent by usurper rulers. Saiyyid ‘Ala al-Din, Shaykh Wahid al-Din, the *khalifa* of Baba Farid, and Shaykh ‘Uthman Saiyah of Sunnam (d. 1338), the *khalifa* of Shaykh Rukn al-Din of Multan, turned down the *futuh* sent by Sultan Nasir al-Din Khusrau of Delhi (r. 1320). Those who accepted, kept it and did not distribute or consume it.⁶⁶ Later, his successor Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq of Delhi (r. 1320-25) ordered the recovery of these grants from their recipients when he found the treasury empty.⁶⁷

2.4 Sufis Demanding the State Support

In some cases, the sufis themselves sought the patronage of the rulers. The Chishti sufi, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (d. 1537) tried to seek royal support by requesting for a grant from the Mughal Emperor Humayun (r. 1530-40 & 1555-56).⁶⁸ Similarly, when the Qadiri sufi Shaykh Ibrahim Multani, who had migrated to Bidar—the capital of Bahmani Sultanate, was faced with financial crisis, he sought financial assistance from Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Bahman Shah, who granted him a high *mansab* (a rank in civil-military bureaucracy) as well as a grant of fourteen villages.⁶⁹

2.5 Sufi Shaykhs Extending Patronage to the Rulers

Many sufis acted as a source of authority in Islamicate South Asia. Some of them predicted the temporal authority of the kings,⁷⁰ while others presented the royal insignia symbolizing the shift of political power to the new kings. The robe symbolizing political authority was bestowed by a Chishti sufi, Shaykh Zayn al-Din Shirazi (d. 1369), the *khalifa* of Shaykh Burhan al-Din Gharib, to Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Bahman Shah, the founder of Bahmani State, at his coronation in 1347.⁷¹ Similarly, Shaykh Siraj al-Din Junaydi (d. 1379-80) presented the robe and turban to his three contemporary Bahmani Sultans on the occasion of their coronations in 1347, 1358 and 1375 respectively.⁷² In a similar way, another Chishti sufi, Shah

⁶⁵ Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, p. 334.

⁶⁶ Jamali, *Siyar al-‘arifin*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ See details in Jamali, *Siyar al-‘arifin*, p. 87.

⁶⁸ In his early years, Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi felt great aversion to the company of people in authority but later after 1491 when he moved to Shahabad in eastern Punjab, his views were changed. Iqtidar Alam Khan, “Shaikh ‘Abdul Quddus Gangohi’s Relations with Political Authorities: A Reappraisal,” in *Muslims in India (a miscellany)*, eds. Irfan Habib and K. A. Nizami, vol. III (Lahore: Book Traders, 1976-1987), pp. 80-83, 87; see details of the Shaykh’s relationship with political authorities, pp. 73-90.

⁶⁹ Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, pp. 333-34.

⁷⁰ Simon Digby, “The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India,” in *Islam et Sociéte` en Asie du Sud (Islam and Society in South Asia)*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Paris: L’Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1986), pp. 57-77.

⁷¹ Mawlana ‘Isami, *Futuhu’s Salatin*, ed. with commentary and Eng. trans. Agha Mahdi Husain (Aligarh: The Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Muslim University, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 11-13. See also Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, p. 46.

⁷² Eaton, *A Social History of Deccan*, pp. 46-47.

Muhammad Sulayman of Taunsa, (b. 1770-d. 1850), who lived in a small village near Dera Ghazi Khan, himself tied the turban on the heads of the local rulers symbolizing conferral of political authority in their succession ceremonies.⁷³ Shah Sibghat-Allah Shattari (d. 1606) once prayed for Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur, when the latter faced a revolt.⁷⁴

2.6 Sufis Influencing the Rulers & their State Conduct and Policies through Association

In many cases, the state-sufi relationship was symbiotic and mutually beneficial for both of them. The rulers drew legitimacy and won public acclaim for their rule from their patronage of eminent sufi shaykhs and also sought their blessings and support for their temporal and political successes. The sufis, on the other hand, collaborated with the political authority or associated themselves with the regimes either by cherishing cordial relations with the ruling house, and/or accepting the state patronage in varied forms, or by extending support and patronage to the rulers. However, the goal of most of the sufis was to influence the behaviour of the rulers, their state conduct and the state policies through having cordial relations with the ruling elite and hence, promote welfare of the people at large. While meeting the rulers, the sufis took the opportunity of giving a good counsel to them in implicit or explicit manner.

Many sufi shaykhs instructed the rulers through verbal means in personal meetings, other wrote treatises and letters to them for this purpose. However, such instructional treatises and letters cannot be classified in two categories of political purpose and religious instruction since the two categories often overlapped. One finds both kinds of instructions of religious and political nature in them. Moreover, the religious instructions were also meant to influence the political conduct of the rulers.

The Kubrawi sufi shaykh, Mir Saiyyid Ali Hamadani (b.1314-d.1384), popularly known as *Shah-i Hamadan*,⁷⁵ tried to reform the behaviour of the rulers and the ruling elite in Kashmir Valley. His views influenced Sultan Qutb al-Din (r. 1373-89) and his successor Sultan Sikandar (r. 1389-1413) of Shah Mir dynasty. The former was also enrolled as his disciple. Saiyyid Ali Hamadani authored a treatise *Zakhirat al-muluk* [The Treasure for the Kings] for guiding the conduct of the rulers. In *Zakhirat al-muluk*, he repeatedly advised the rulers to dispense justice ('*adl*) and beneficence (*ihsan*) to his subjects, and denounced those rulers who violate tolerance and equity. Moreover, he urged the rulers to render equitable justice to both the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects irrespective of religious differences.⁷⁶ He was critical of worldly '*ulama* holding official positions and

⁷³ Nizami, *Tarikh-i mashaikh-i Chisht*, vol. 5, p. 376.

⁷⁴ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, p. 117.

⁷⁵ He was born in Hamadan, traveled extensively in Central Asia and Persia, and came to Kashmir in 1384 during the reign of Sultan Qutb al-Din (r. 1373-89). He stayed in the Valley for less than a year, but left considerable social impact on the region. The Shaykh's son, Saiyyid Muhammad Hamadani came to Kashmir in 1393 along with his 300 disciples after his father's demise and continued his father's mission.

⁷⁶ Saiyyid Ali Hamadani, *Zakhirat al-muluk*, Urdu trans. Muhammad Riyaz Qadiri (Delhi: Islamic Foundation, 1989), pp. 179, 187.

serving petty vested interests.⁷⁷ In addition, he also wrote letters (*maktubat*) addressed to the rulers for instructing them. Since Saiyyid Ali Hamadani did not settle in Kashmir, he sent his two cousins Saiyyid Taj al-Din and Saiyyid Husayn Simnani to permanently settle there. Thus, Saiyyid Taj al-Din became the first Kubrawi sufi to settle in the Valley. Sultan Shihab al-Din (r. 1357-73) of Shah Mir dynasty used to consult him on religious and administrative matters, and founded a *khanqah* for him near the royal palace.⁷⁸

The Firdawsi sufi, Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maneri enjoyed cordial relations with Sultan Firuz Tughluq (1351-88). While writing to the Sultan once, the Shaykh reminded him that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that one hour of justice is better than sixty years of worship. The Shaykh also encouraged the Sultan to administer evenhanded justice to the oppressed.⁷⁹ Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq himself wrote to Shaykh Sharaf al-Din seeking his advice and prayers. In his reply, while referring to the monarchs of the past such as Qarun, Pharaoh, Nimrod and Shaddad, the Shaykh wrote that these monarchs did not transgress the path of virtue as long as their desires remained unfulfilled. But later when their desires were fulfilled, they puffed up with pride and claimed divinity.⁸⁰ The Shaykh also regularly wrote letters to the King of Bengal, Sultan Sikandar Shah (d. 1389) to exert some positive influence on him.⁸¹ He wrote letters to high state officials and *umara'*, for whom the Shaykh even considered service to humanity and meeting the needs of the people more rewarding than supererogatory prayer and fasting.⁸² One of his letters is addressed to a sufi-minded wealthy merchant stressing on the virtues of poverty.⁸³

The renowned Suhrawardi sufi, Makhdum Jahaniyan (d. 1384) had most cordial relations with Sultan Firuz Tughluq. The Shaykh used his countervailing influence on him on many occasions. The Sultan not only abolished about twenty-two illegal taxes levied on brokers, butchers, vintners, wine merchants, soap-makers, entertainers, and on items like grains, cereals, vegetables and fish, but also introduced twenty-six reforms in the Sultanate due to prodding of Makhdum Jahaniyan.⁸⁴

The Chishti sufi Shaykh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki once advised Sultan Iltutmish in a meeting in these words: "It is incumbent on thee to be good to all poor people, mendicants, *darveshes* and helpless folk. Treat all men kindly and

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 120-21, 183-84.

⁷⁸ Khan, "Shari'a, State and Conversions in Medieval Kashmir," p. 149.

⁷⁹ See for instance, Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maneri's letter to Sultan Firuz Tughluq, which contained a petition on behalf of Khwaja Abid Zafarabadi, whose property had been illegally destroyed. Maneri, *In Quest of God*, Letter no. 95, pp. 199-200.

⁸⁰ Paul Jackson, *The Way of a Sufi: Sharafuddin Maneri* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1987), pp. 112-14.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 117.

⁸² See, for instance, Maneri, *In Quest of God*, see letter no. 72 addressed to Malik Mufarrih, pp. 151-52.

⁸³ Ibid., see letter no. 54, pp. 119-20, note 258, p. 303.

⁸⁴ Firuz Shah Tughluq, *Futuh-i Firuzshahi*, ed. Shaikh Abdur Rashid (Aligarh: Department of History, Muslim University, 1954), p. 5, and Shams Siraj 'Afif, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi (Manaqib-i Firuzshahi)*, Urdu trans. Mawlawi Muhammad Fida 'Ali Talib (Hyderabad: Dar al-Tab' Jami'ah 'Uthmaniyyah, 1938), pp. 256-57. See also Sakhawat Mirza, *Tazkirah-i Hazrat Makhdum Jahaniyan Jahangashit* (Hyderabad: Institute of Indo-Middle East Cultural Studies, 1962), p. 39, Saiyyid Sabah al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman, *Bazm-i sufiyah* (Assembly of the Sufis), (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1990 rpt., first pub. 1949), pp. 423-26.

strive for their welfare. Everyone who thus behaves towards his subjects is looked after by the Almighty and all his enemies turn into friends.”⁸⁵ The Chishti-Sabiri sufi, Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi wrote letters to high ranking officials including the Afghan and Mughal *umara*’ as well as to Sultan Sikandar Lodhi as well as the Mughal Emperors Babar and Humayun in order to influence the state policy.⁸⁶ In a letter addressed to Sultan Sikandar Lodhi, the Shaykh requested him to restore the stipends and grants of the *‘ulama*.⁸⁷ He wrote another epistle to Emperor Babur (r. 1526-30) to stop the imposition of *‘ushr* (a tithe) which had been levied on the revenue-producing lands owned by the religious scholars. The Emperor was also advised to appoint market inspectors for checking unfair trade practices.⁸⁸ Though his letters to Emperor Babar largely remained unheeded, those he wrote to Emperor Humayun were well received.⁸⁹ Shaykh Gangohi also wrote letters to *umara* including Khwas Khan, Haibat Khan Sherwani, Ibrahim Khan Sherwani and Tardi Baig and urged them to follow *shari‘ah* (the law of Islam).⁹⁰ A Shattari sufi, Shah Hashim Pir ‘Alavi (d. 1646), who had migrated from Ahmadabad to Bijapur, enjoyed cordial relationship with Sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah II (r. 1627-57) of Bijapur, who consulted the former in all important state matters.⁹¹

The Qadiri sufi, Miyan Mir of Lahore believed that the reform of a ruler is the reform of the whole society. He urged the rulers to work for the welfare of the people. Though he had friendly relations with the Mughal rulers and princes, he never got involved in the political activities. He had meetings with Emperor Jahangir,⁹² and he advised the Emperor to protect his subjects and provide them security and peace. When the Emperor requested him to accept him as a disciple, he said that he would do it on the condition that the Emperor would nominate a successor who would be able to protect people and work for their welfare.⁹³ Emperor Jahangir also wrote letters to Miyan Mir seeking his guidance and prayers.⁹⁴ Miyan Mir had some meetings with Emperor Shahjahan. In one such meeting, he advised the Emperor to dispense justice and work for the welfare, security and prosperity of his subjects.⁹⁵ Miyan Mir greatly influenced the ideas of

⁸⁵ Mawlana Taj al-Din, *Risalah-‘i hal-i khandadah-‘i Chisht*, MS, Personal Collection of K. A. Nizami, f. 17b as cited in Nizami, *Some Aspects of the Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century*, p. 189.

⁸⁶ Shaykh Gangohi’s collection of letters (titled *Maktubat-i Quddusiyya*) was compiled by his disciple, Buddhan, the son of Rukn Siddiqui of Jaunpur.

⁸⁷ Shaykh ‘Abd al-Quddus Gangohi, *Maktubat-i Quddusiyya* (Delhi: Matb‘a-i Ahmadi, 1287 A.H./1870 A.D.), see letter no. 34, pp. 44-46.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, see letter no. 169, pp. 335-37. The letter also included suggestions such as exclusion of the Hindus from high offices, particularly in the revenue department, as he considered them responsible for the imposition of illegal taxes.

⁸⁹ Khan, “Shaikh ‘Abdul Quddus Gangohi’s Relations with Political Authorities,” pp. 88-89.

⁹⁰ Nizami, *Tarikh-i mashaikh-i Chisht*, vol. 1, p. 275.

⁹¹ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, p. 120.

⁹² Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (Memoirs of Jahangir), Eng tr. Alexander Rogers, ed. Henry Beveridge, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), p. 287.

⁹³ Dara Shukoh, *Sakinat al-awliya’*, eds. Tara Chand and Saiyid Raza Jalali Naini (Tehran: Mu’assasah-i Matbu‘at-i ‘Almi, 1965), pp. 46-47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Prince Dara Shikoh, who was also his disciple.⁹⁶ Mulla Shah Badakhshi also considerably influenced the religious and political outlook of Prince Dara Shukoh.

Shaykh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi had both confrontational as well as associational relationship with the political authorities. The Shaykh played a crucial role in the accession of Emperor Jahangir in 1605 by lobbying with the *umara*' at the Mughal court, most prominent of whom was Nawab Muztaza Khan Farid Bukhari (d. 1616; the *mir bakhshi* or the head of the royal army under Emperor Akbar), who had Naqshbandi sympathies. During his post-imprisonment period after 1619, he tried to influence the ideas and policies of Emperor Jahangir. The collection of correspondence of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi titled *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani* containing 524 letters in three volumes is one of the most important *maktubat* collections.⁹⁷ In addition to some *umara*' of the Mughal court, the Shaykh wrote letters to Emperor Jahangir and his sons to give them religious instruction, which were also meant to influence their state conduct.⁹⁸ The Shaykh also demanded from his contemporary Mughal officials the appointment of a *qazi* in the town of Sirhind, where there was no *qazi* for the several years.⁹⁹ His son and *khalifa*, Khwaja Muhammad Masum (d. 1668) exercised considerable influence over Emperor Aurangzeb as an advisor.

Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi (d. 1642), the author of a renowned hagiographical text, *Akhbar al-akhyar* [Reports of the Pious], was a Qadiri sufi, who was a contemporary of Islam Shah Suri, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. He kept a distance from Emperor Akbar but after his death he developed contacts with the court officials including Farid Bukhari and Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan (d. 1624) in order to give them guidance in religious and political matters.¹⁰⁰ He also authored *Risalah-i nuraniyya sultaniyya* for instructing Emperor Nur al-Din Jahangir on state conduct in the light of Islamic principles, and that was why, it was named after the Emperor. He composed another treatise *Tarjuma al-ahadith al-araba'in fi nasihat al-muluk wa al-salatin*, which contained forty *ahadith* (traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)) along with Persian translation concerning the rules of government for the guidance of Emperor Shahjahan.¹⁰¹ Another sufi, Shah Hazrat Qadiri, a *khalifa* of Shah Abd al-Latif Qadiri, acted as the political advisor to Emperor Aurengzeb, who used to consult him in political matters, while another Qadiri sufi, Saiyyid Shah Abul Hasan Qurbi of Bijapur (d. 1768), instructed Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II on an occasion to curb greed and desire from his heart.¹⁰² Shaykh Qutb al-Din Ahmad, popularly known as Shah Wali-Allah of Delhi (b.1703-d.1762), the renowned sufi-scholar of eighteenth century India, extensively wrote letters to his contemporary

⁹⁶ Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, "Mian Mir's Relations with the Mughal Rulers," *Journal of the Punjab University*, Lahore, vol. XXIII (1986), pp. 7-21.

⁹⁷ Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani Naqshbandi Sirhindi ma' savanih 'umri*, Urdu tr. Qazi Aalim al-Din, 3 vols. (Lahore: Malik Fazl al-Din and Co., 1913).

⁹⁸ Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1971), p. 85.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁰ For details, see 'Alim Ashraf Khan, *Hayat wa 'ilmi khidmat-i Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi* (New Delhi: Islamic Wonders Bureau, 2001), pp. 69-73; see also Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Hayat-i Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Musannifin, 1964), pp. 144-46.

¹⁰¹ Khan, *Hayat wa 'ilmi khidmat-i Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi*, pp. 89, 109.

¹⁰² Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, pp. 337-38.

rulers and the ruling elite giving them advices for improving political and administrative conditions of the declining Mughal Empire. Many of these letters were addressed to a prominent noble at the court, Najib al-Dawlah (d. 1770). The Shaykh urged him to curb corruption and restore peace in the Empire.¹⁰³

2.7 The Price of Political Affiliation: Sufis in Trouble

Whereas association of the sufis with the rulers had some benefits for the state, sufis and the society at large, some of them had to pay the price for their political affiliation, as it did not always accrue benefits to the sufis. There is evidence that suggests that some sufis who enjoyed good relations with the rulers or accepted royal patronage and state support in some form, faced problems and hardships due to their association with the political authorities.

The Suhrawardi sufi Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi (d. 1224/5) had cordial relations with Sultan Iltutmish. However, owing to the hostility of the *'ulama* holding official positions, who were jealous of the Sultan's high regard for him, he was forced to leave Delhi for Badaun,¹⁰⁴ from where he later went to West Bengal. The Chishti sufi, Shaykh Badr al-Din Ghaznavi (d. 1259) of Delhi, a *khalifa* of Shaykh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, spent most of his time in the company of *umara'* and high state officials in Delhi after the death of his preceptor. Malik Nizam al-Din *Kharitadar* (the Treasurer) not only constructed a *khanqah* for him, he also bore all the expenses of boarding and lodging of *darveshes*. However, after some time, the Malik was charged with embezzlement, and it caused a lot of worry and anxiety for the Shaykh, who later requested Baba Farid to pray for him and for the release of the Malik.¹⁰⁵

The Suhrawardi sufi, Shaykh Rukn al-Din Abu'l Fath Multani's brother Shaykh 'Imad al-Din had sided with Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq during the revolt of Bahram Aibah Kishlu Khan, the then Governor of Multan. Since Shaykh 'Imad had close resemblance with the Sultan, so he was seated in the Sultan's place under the royal canopy during the military assault on the rebel forces, which mistook him for the Sultan and killed him. As a compensation for Shaykh 'Imad's murder, his brother, Shaykh Rukn al-Din was granted hundred villages as *jagir* by the Sultan.¹⁰⁶ The Shaykh, who had accepted the official title of *Shaykh al-Islam* in addition to the land grant,¹⁰⁷ used to seek the permission of the governor of Multan before providing accommodation to any one in his *khanqah*.¹⁰⁸ Although the grant was unconditional, its acceptance adversely affected the autonomy and independence of his *khanqah* by allowing state interference in it. Moreover, the cooperative relationship of the sufis with the state sometimes led to interference by the rulers in the affairs of the *khanqahs*. After the demise of Shaykh Rukn al-Din

¹⁰³ K. A. Nizami, ed., *Shah Wali-Allah kay siyasi maktubat* (Delhi: Nadwat ul-Musannifin, 1969), passim. See also Muhammad al-Ghazali, *The socio-political Tjhought of Shah Wali Allah* (Islamabad: International Institute for Islamic Thought & Islamic Research Institute, 2001), pp. 127-29.

¹⁰⁴ Jamali, *Siyar al-'arifin*, pp. 165-69.

¹⁰⁵ Amir Hasan 'Ala' Dehlavi Sijzi, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* (*Malfiz* of Khwaja Nizam al-Din Awliya'), ed. Khwaja Hasan Thani Nizami Dehlavi (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1992), pp. 134-35, and Jamali, *Siyar al-'arifin*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Battutah, *'Aja'ib al-asfar*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

of Multan, who was issueless, the conflict over the issue of succession was eventually decided by Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq,¹⁰⁹ which provided an opportunity to the Sultan to take control of the entire Suhrawardi establishment at Multan.

The Chishti sufi, Shaykh Mu‘izz al-Din, the son of Shaykh ‘Ala al-Din Ajodhani, was entrusted some administrative responsibility Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq in the troubled region of Gujarat, where he was later killed during the rebellion of Malik Taghi.¹¹⁰ The Chishti-Sabiri sufi, Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi¹¹¹ had considerable following among the Afghan soldiers during the Lodhi era, which strengthened his ties with the Lodhi-Afghan nobility. However, after the defeat of Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi at the hands of Babur in 1526, the Shaykh, who was in the royal camp against his will, was captured by the Mughal armies, and released later.¹¹² Despite the fact that Saiyyid Muhammad Ghaus Shattari of Gwalior (d. 1563) cherished good relations with Mughal Emperors Humayun and Akbar, he had to face problems due to it.¹¹³

The Qadiri sufi, Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlevi, the author of *Akhbar al-akhyar*, initially enjoyed good relations with Emperor Jahangir but later the relations were embittered probably owing to the influence of Queen Nur Jahan, and consequently, the Shaykh was summoned to Kashmir while his son was exiled to Kabul.¹¹⁴ The Mughal Prince, Dara Shukoh was a devotee of Qadiri sufi, Mulla Shah Badakhshi, and was very close to him during Shahjahan’s reign. However, when Dara’s brother Aurengzeb ascended the throne in the wake of a war of succession in which Prince Dara was killed, his relations with Mulla Shah got strained. He was accused of heresy and forced to appear in the court in Delhi.¹¹⁵ Though there were theological reasons behind it, the political factor cannot be ignored.

2.8 Coerced Collaboration

In Islamicate South Asia, sometimes the rulers forced the sufis to accept royal patronage in the form of some grant or some political office. By doing so, apparently, these rulers were trying to harness their services for the state, but it was an attempt to make the sufis subservient to the political authorities. In the fourteenth century, Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq, who believed that ‘politics and religion are twins’,¹¹⁶ pressurized many eminent ‘*ulama* and sufis to join the government service. However, in some instances, it seems that he tried to get rid of some of them by sending them to places far away from the capital. The Sultan

¹⁰⁹ See details in *ibid.*, pp. 152-54 and Hasan Bakhsh Shah Qurayshi, *Anwar-i ghauthiyyah* (Kot Mir Muhammad Khan: privately published, 1985), p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*, pp. 508, 518, and Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya’*, p. 196.

¹¹¹ He was born in Rudauli, a village in modern Uttar Pradesh, and settled in Shahabad (District Karnal, Haryana) in eastern Punjab. In 1525, he moved to Gangoh (District Saharanpur, U.P.), where he lived till his death, and hence acquired the title Gangohi.

¹¹² Simon Digby, “Shaikh ‘Abdul Quddus Gangohi (A.D. 1456-1537): The Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi,” *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, vol. III (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1975), p. 11.

¹¹³ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India*, pp. 326-27.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-31.

¹¹⁶ Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-awliya’*, pp. 196, 206.

sent the Chishti sufi, Shaykh Shams al-Din Yahya (d. 1345) to Kashmir to propagate Islam.¹¹⁷ Another Chishti sufi, Saiyyid Qutb al-Din Husayn Kirmani was sent to Dawlatabad but he accepted it on the condition that he would not give up wearing his dress of the sufis, and would not accept any official position.¹¹⁸ The Chishti sufi, Khwaja Karim al-Din Samarqandi of Bayanah was granted the titles of *Shaykh al-Islam* and *Anwar Ra'e Malik Satgaun*, and entrusted with some administrative responsibility in Satgaun (Bengal).¹¹⁹ Some of the sufis were forced to accept stipends by Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq. Shaykh Nasir al-Din Mahmud was, for instance, coerced into accepting the stipend of eighty *tankahs* (silver coins) daily from the state treasury. The Shaykh accepted this but never spent it on himself or on the *langar* of his *jama'atkhanah*,¹²⁰ and distributed it in charity.

To sum up, evidence suggests a complementary interdependence of temporal power and spiritual authority. Historically, there were precedents of state-sufi symbiotic relationship outside South Asia. In the Islamicate South Asia, some of the rulers were not only the disciples and devotees of the sufi shaykhs, they also constructed their *khanqahs* and shrines and also visited them, particularly for seeking blessings in the hour of need. The sufis accepted state patronage when offered by the rulers, and at times, sought the help of political authorities for overcoming various problems. Rarely, the state tried to coerce the sufis into collaboration for political purposes, and many sufis tried to resist such efforts. The sufi shaykhs extended patronage to the rulers, but at the same time, they also tried to influence their personal behavior as well as state conduct and policies through association. However, sometimes the sufis had to pay the price of political affiliation as well by facing difficulties and troubles from the political authorities.

Though many sufis became the beneficiaries of the state, they tried to retain their autonomy. Those who collaborated with the state or associated themselves the rulers were better able to influence the behaviour, policies and state conduct of the rulers, as well as use the state support for various ends ranging from consolidation of Sufism or their *silsilahs*, delivering services to the people and working for their welfare, to mediation between the common people having no access to those in power. However, the sufis are not to be confused with the *sajjada-nashins* or the lineal descendants of the sufi shaykhs, often custodians of their shrines or tombs, most of whom accepted state patronage. These *sajjada-nashins* often did not share the spiritual credentials and moral eminence with their more illustrious ancestors, but subsequently enjoyed increasing social prestige, religious authority, and political power.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 228.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 218.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 307, and Mandavi, *Gulzar-i abrar*, p. 88.

¹²⁰ Husayni, *Jawami' al-kalim*, p. 106.