

History of Islam

An encyclopedia of Islamic history

The Sufis of India and Pakistan

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In the words of Muhammed Iqbal, the philosopher-poet of India-Pakistan, Islam is like a balloon. When it is squeezed in one direction, it bulges out in another. Within a hundred years after Genghis Khan, Islam conquered the conquerors. The Mongols who had destroyed Bukhara and Baghdad themselves became the standard bearers of the new faith. The westward thrust of Islam carried it into Europe. To the east, it put down new roots in India and Indonesia. The center of gravity of the Islamic world shifted from Cairo and Damascus to Lahore and Kuala Lumpur.

After the conquest of Sindh by Muhammed bin Qasim in 711, the borders between the Baghdad Caliphate and India were relatively stable for 500 years. Islam made limited inroads into the subcontinent along the coast of Malabar in southern India and in southern Pakistan. Political Islam had reached equilibrium and was preoccupied as much with internal debates as with external threats. For almost 200 years, Fatimid chieftains controlled Multan and Sindh. Propagation of the faith took second place to the global struggle between the Sunnis and the Fatimids and later between the Muslims and the Crusaders. This situation changed towards the end of the 12th century with the dissolution of the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo (1171), the defeat of the Crusaders at the Battle of Hittin (1186) and the conquest of Delhi by Muhammed Ghori (1192).

The Islamic penetration of the subcontinent accelerated in the 13th century. Several reasons may be cited for this change. First, the establishment of the Delhi sultanate enabled Muslim scholars and traders to travel freely throughout India under the protection of the political authorities. Second, India was a beneficiary of the Mongol invasions (1219-1261) that devastated Central Asia and Persia. Many noted scholars fled the Mongols into the security of Hindustan. Third and perhaps the most important element, was the establishment of Sufi orders throughout the vast subcontinent. Indeed, Islam spread in India and Pakistan not by the force of conquest or the elaborate arguments of *mullahs* and *kadis* but through the work of the great Sufi shaykhs. In this respect, Muslim India is different from the Arab countries where Islam was introduced during the classical period (665-1258) through the work of the *muhaddithin* and the *mujahideen*.

The process by which a faith enters the hearts of the believers has a profound impact on the way religion is felt and followed by them. In the Arab experience, the solidification of Islamic life took place during the imperial days of the Baghdad Caliphate and was tilted heavily in favor of the exoteric aspects of religion. By contrast, the Indo-Pakistanis, Indonesians and Africans were exposed more to the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam.

The Sufi shaykhs of the 13th century were not missionaries. They were not merchants of faith peddling their religion. They were men drunk with the love of God, giving of themselves for no gain but the prospect of divine pleasure, serving humanity irrespective of creed or nationality and sharing their spiritual bounty with whoever would partake of it. Proselytizing was not their goal; it was a byproduct of their selfless service. The Sufi way strove to mend human behavior and to open up human vistas to the sublime peace that comes from proximity to God. Their “miracles” were the transformations of human hearts. The Muslims needed this spirituality as much as did the Hindus and the Buddhists. When a Muslim experienced a spiritual rebirth through a Sufi, it was called an awakening. When a non-Muslim was similarly transformed, it was called conversion.

India, whose social structure was fossilized by the caste system, was ready to accept a universal religion like Islam. In a predominantly Hindu society, the position of a person was determined at birth. The Brahmans reserved for themselves the exclusive privilege to recite the *mantras* and propitiate the gods. The warrior Rajput class whose princely privileges were also guaranteed by birth backed the status quo. The *vyasias* tilled the soil and paid the taxes. At the bottom of the social ladder were the *shudras* or the untouchables. To quote a well-known Indian writer V.T. Rajshekar: “These untouchables were denied the use of public wells and were condemned to drink any filthy water they could find. Their children were not admitted to schools attended by the caste Hindu children. Though they worshiped the gods of Hindus and observed the same festivals, the Hindu temples were closed to them. Barbers and washer men refused to render them service. Caste Hindus, who fondly threw sugar to ants and reared dogs and other pets and welcomed persons of other religions to their houses, refused to give a drop of water to the untouchables or to show them one iota of sympathy. These untouchable Hindus were treated by the caste Hindus as sub-human, less than men, worse than beasts . . .” In this social matrix, the message of Islam with its emphasis on the brotherhood of man and the transcendence of God found a ready reception.

But the most important reason for the success of the Sufis lay in the spiritual bent of the Indian mind. Every culture produces an archetype that personifies the ethos of that culture. For instance, in contemporary America, it is the businessman who personifies the ethos of the American culture. During the industrial revolution in Europe it was the empiricist and the inventor. During the Dark Ages in Europe it was the monk. In medieval Japan it was the Samurai. In the Muslim Middle East it was the traditionalist. In India, it was the *sadhu* and the *rishi*. Gautama Buddha personified this archetype; so did Shankara Acharya and Tulsi Das. These men of faith enjoyed and continue to enjoy an honor and respect that is the envy of kings and emperors. As Islam entered the subcontinent, it adapted its mode to fit the spiritual paradigm. The Sufi could intuitively and immediately relate to the Indian psyche in a manner that the learned doctors of law could not. Thus, it was the great Sufis who not only succeeded in introducing millions of Indians to Islam but also contributed to the evolution of a unique Hindustani language, culture, poetry and music which amalgamated the ancient inheritance of India with the vibrancy of Islam.

In the subcontinent, by far the most outstanding among the great Sufi shaykhs was Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer. Indeed, he is generally accepted as the fountainhead of Islamic spiritual movements in India and Pakistan. The Khwaja was born in Sajistan in Central Asia in the year 1139. Orphaned at the young age of twelve, he traveled to Samarqand and received his early education in that great center of learning. He was a *Hafiz* e Qur’an at age fifteen and had mastered the Arabic, Farsi and Turkic languages. He then traveled to Nishapur where he became a disciple of Khwaja Uthman Chisti. After receiving his training in the methodology of the Chishti Order for seven years, Khwaja Moeenuddin was inducted into that Order. From Nishapur, he traveled to Baghdad where he met the towering personages of the age including Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani, Shaykh Ziauddin Suhrawardi, Khwaja Awhaduddin

Kirmanji and Khwaja Abu Saeed Tabrizi. In Isfahan, he met Khwaja Qutbuddin, who became his disciple and later his successor in Delhi. From Isfahan, Khwaja Moeenuddin traveled to Ghazna, Lahore and Multan where he mastered Sanskrit and Hindi so that he could communicate with the local people.

It was about this time that Muhammed Ghori defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan at the Battle of Tarain (1192) and added Delhi and Ajmer to the Ghoriid Sultanate. Khwaja Moeenuddin moved from Multan to Delhi and then to Ajmer, which had been the capital of the Chauhan dynasty. This town in the Rajasthan desert became the fountainhead of a Sufi movement that touched every corner of India and Pakistan. Thousands embraced Islam through his efforts. Millions did so through the efforts of his disciples. Three of his disciples themselves became towering personages of renown and occupy an important place in the hierarchy of the great Sufis. These were Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki (after whom the *Qutub Minar* of Delhi is named), Shaykh Hameeduddin Naguri and Baba Fareed Ganj of Lahore. Only once did the Khwaja of Ajmer return to Delhi. Sultan Shamsuddin Altumish was the Sultan of Delhi. When the Khwaja approached the capital, the Sultan presented himself in person with enormous presents of gold, silver and jewels. The presents were politely declined. This pattern of solicitation on the part of the ruling monarchs and a rebuff by the great Sufis was to be repeated countless times in Muslim history. The vision of the Sufis was fixed on a far higher goal than the gold of the world. They scorned the world; so, the world chased after them. Theirs was the kingdom of heaven, eternal, transcendent, unscathed and untouched by the rise and fall of dynasties. It was this selflessness that made them the beloved of the masses, something the rulers wanted but could not attain.

Khwaja Moeenuddin was a poet of renown. Over 10,000 couplets in Farsi are ascribed to him. He was a prolific writer, but most of his writings have been lost. He died in 1236, adored, venerated and extolled. If there is one person to whom belongs the credit for introducing Islam to India and Pakistan and of building the largest Islamic community in the world today, it was Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti of Ajmer.

The Sufis were eminently successful not just because they recited the *dhikr*, chanted devotional songs and practiced charity, but because they established effective institutions to do their work in their own lifetime and to continue it after they departed. At the center of the Sufi approach is the belief that only a learned and pious teacher can impart true knowledge to a discipline. The structure of a Sufic order is pyramidal. At the apex of the pyramid is the *Qutub* (the pole) or the *Wali* (master, protector), *Khalifa* (representative) or *Sajjadah Nishin* (one who resides in the sanctuary). For instance, the *Qutub* of the Qadariya School is Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad.

The methodology, method, process and approach of a Sufic order is called the *tareeqa*. Initiation into a Sufi order is voluntary. Upon initiation, a person becomes a *murid*. The word *murid* derives from the Arabic word *iradah*, meaning desire or will. A *murid* is one who desires and craves for proximity to God and is inclined towards Divine Love. In this journey, he is guided by a Shaykh. The *murid's* progression in the ranks of the *tareeqa* takes him (her) through the following stages: *Mubtadi* (student); *Mutadarrij* (practitioner, one who is making progress); *Shaykh* (teacher) and finally the *Qutub* (the pillar or pole). The exact terms may vary between the *tareeqas*. Obedience to the teacher and an extraordinary degree of discipline is required of the *murid*. There is no conflict between the various Sufi orders. A person may belong to several orders at the same time, although attachment to a single teacher is preferred.

The progress of a *murid* is measured in *darajat* (degrees) or *maqamat* (stages) *tawbah* (repentance), *zuhd* (avoidance of impure actions), *faqr* (humility, renunciation of worldly goods), *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (reliance on God alone for one's needs) and *rada* (earning Divine pleasure). Thus, a Sufi order establishes an organizational structure, provides a methodology for instruction, measures progress of the initiates and takes them step-by-step towards certainty of knowledge (*ilm al yaqin*).

The principal place where adherents of a Sufi order meet is called a *zawiyah*. Secondary places of meeting for *dhikr* and study are referred to as *halqah* (circle). *Zawiyahs* and *halqahs* grew up throughout the Muslim world. The Sufi orders and their organizations provided continuity through their *silsilah* (spiritual connectivity relating a Sufi through his teachers to the Prophet). Ascension to the highest position in the organization was by appointment of the *Qutub*, who, as he approached the end of his life, would nominate and confirm his heir. Syed Mohammed Ghouse of Sindh introduced the *silsilah* of Abdul Qader Jeelani into India and Pakistan in the 15th century (1482). Although the Qadariya *silsilah* had less of an impact on Indian soil than the Chishtiya order, the name of Abdul Qader Jeelani is revered throughout the subcontinent. He is commonly referred to as *Peeran-e-pir Dastagir* or *Ghouse-ul-Azam Dastagir*. One of the most famous shaykhs of the Qadariya *silsilah* was Miyan Pir who passed away in Lahore in 1635. Miyan Pir was a teacher to Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan. Dara Shikoh, a scholar of repute who was well versed in several languages, wrote a biography of Miyan Pir, who is widely credited with introducing Islam to the rural areas of Punjab and Kashmir.

From Ajmer the Chishtiya order spread to Delhi, Punjab, Bengal and the Deccan. Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti trained and dispatched to the far-flung corners of the subcontinent men who stand out as spiritual giants in the region. These include Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki (Delhi, d. 1236), Baba Farid of Punjab (Pak Patan, d. 1265), Nizamuddin Awliya (Delhi, d. 1325) who was a disciple of Baba Farid, Hazrat Maqsum, another disciple of Baba Farid (Rourki, Bihar, d. 1291), Nasiruddin Muhammed, commonly referred to as *Chirag-e-Dehli* (a disciple of Nizamuddin Awliya, Delhi, d. 1356) and Hazrat Gaysu Daraz (a disciple of *Chirag-e-Dehli*, Gulbarga, d.1422). Together, these men transformed a continent, molded it in an Islamic crucible, lit the candle of faith in the hearts of millions and laid the spiritual foundation for one of the richest and most powerful dynasties the world has ever known, namely the great Moghuls of India.

The history of the Chishtiya order is so intricately woven into the politics of the Delhi court that no survey of Indian history is complete without an acknowledgment of the profound impact made by the Chishtiya order. The first Moghul emperor Babur was himself a Sufi mystic. Emperor Akbar was a *murid* of Shaykh Salim Chishti (Fatehpur Sikri, d. 1572). He made annual pilgrimages on foot to the tomb of Shaykh Salim as well as to the tomb of Khwaja Moeenuddin of Ajmer. Emperors Jehangir, Shah Jehan and his son Dara Shikoh were ardent believers in these shaykhs. Since the methods and processes of the Sufis have changed little over the last thousand years, the Chishtiya order, together with its sister Qadariya and Suhrwardi orders, provide a cultural link between modern Islam with the Middle Ages. Their history helps us understand the condition of the Muslims in the world today.

Khwaja Khutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki was the designee of Khwaja Moeenuddin for the Delhi region. Born in Turkistan, he was educated in Baghdad where he met Khwaja Moeenuddin and became his *murid*. When Khwaja Moeenuddin migrated to Ajmer, Bakhtiar Khaki followed him and was sent to Delhi as the Chishtiya representative. Delhi was the seat of political power and a cauldron of political intrigue. Sultan Altumish offered the post of the Kadi of Delhi to Shaykh Bakhtiar but the Shaykh declined, preferring the independence of the spiritual pursuit to the constraint of official power. The sultan was an avid supporter of *tasawwuf*. Sufi practices received official protection and common acceptance. Shaykh Bakhtiar himself was a well-known *khawwal* (reciter of mystic poetry) and often led *qawwali* gatherings (called *sama'a* by the Sufis). Thousands in the Delhi area accepted Islam through the radiance of this great mystic. Shaykh Bakhtiar passed away in 1236 and the mantle of the Chishtiya order passed on to Baba Fareed Ganj Shahr.

The emergence of *tasawwuf* as a powerful force in the Indian milieu did not go unchallenged by competing ideas. In the 14th century, the courts of Delhi witnessed a tug-of-war between the Sufis, the reformers, the *kadis*, the philosophers and the ruling elite. The geopolitics of the times presents a colorful backdrop for the war of ideas in the Delhi courts.

By the middle of the 14th century, trade routes between Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, India and China, which had been cut by the Mongol invasions, had been restored. With the conversion of Ghazan the Great (1295), Persia was back in the fold of Islam. This removed the impediment to travel by land from India to west Asia and from there to Africa and Spain. A resilient Islam welded together a world order wherein people and ideas traveled freely from one continent to another.

There emerged three centers of political power in the Muslim world. The first was the rich Mali Kingdom in Africa, which attained its zenith under Mansa Musa (d. 1332). The second was the Mamluke Empire embracing Egypt and Syria. The third, and by far the most powerful, was the Sultanate of Delhi. (Yuan China was a global power but we will refer to it only in the context of diplomatic relations between Delhi and Beijing). The Khiljis (1296-1316) conquered all of India and Pakistan, from Peshawar to Malabar, an area covering more than a million and half square miles. The Tughlaqs (1316-1451), who followed the Khiljis, inherited this vast empire. We shall focus on the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d. 1351), primarily because we know a great deal about his court through the writings of Ibn Batuta. So rich was the Delhi Sultanate that Ibn Batuta, who was a *kadi* in Delhi from 1335-1341, records that whenever the Emperor passed through the streets of Delhi, the courtiers following him threw coins of gold and silver in the streets for the *amah* (common folk) to pick up. It was in this magnificent Delhi court that the final resolution of the tug-of-war between the Sufis, the anti-Sufis, the philosophers, the doctors of law and the ruling elite took place. It is a fascinating story because the outcome of the events in the 14th century directly affected the course of further historical developments down to our own times.

The Mongol devastations resulted in a substantial migration of men of learning from Central Asia and Persia into India. The influx of the Sufis provided the spiritual momentum for the spread of Islam in India and Pakistan. However, the migration was not confined to dervishes and Sufis. A large number of *ulema* and *kadis* also fled and sought employment in Hindustan. Others migrated further east to the Indonesian islands.

The Delhi sultans, eager to show that they were defenders of the faith, made every effort to employ these scholars. They also sent out emissaries to the far-flung corners of the Islamic world to hire renowned *kadis*, *ulema* and philosophers for official service in the Indian empire. The simultaneous presence of the Sufis who pursued the intuitive and spiritual approach to Islam and the *kadis* who sought strict adherence to the rules of *Fiqh* provided the first element of tension in the Delhi courts. The doctors of law sought to influence the empire in the direction of strict adherence to the Shariah. They found some Sufi practices, such as *sama'a* (a forerunner of modern day *qawwali*) objectionable and sought to influence the Delhi court to declare a ban on them.

A second element of tension was introduced by the reform movements of the era. In the 13th century, as it is today, there were reformers who saw in *tasawwuf* the possibility of social stagnation. One of the best-known reformers of the age was Ibn Taymiyah of Damascus (d. 1326). Ibn Taymiyah was one of the last of the scholars of the classical age of Islam and he saw in the other-worldliness of *tasawwuf* the seeds of social decadence. Through his writings and his speeches, he sought to energize a defeated community, which was reeling from the Mongol onslaught. His model was the activist model of the early

Companions of the Prophet. As a young man, he aroused the Mamlukes to take a stand against the Mongols. Ibn Taymiya's ideas traveled to Delhi where they were pitted against the powerful Sufi movement of the Chishtiya Order.

A third element of tension was the presence of the Mu'tazilites (philosophers). The Mu'tazilites emerged in the eighth century as a result of the impact of Greek ideas on Islam. They won the patronage of the Abbasids and their dogma became the court dogma at the court of Harun al Rashid. Taking advantage of official patronage, the Mu'tazilites overextended themselves, applied the philosophical approach to the Qur'an, incurred the wrath of the conservative *ulema* and were finally dethroned from power towards the beginning of the 9th century. But philosophy was by no means dead among the Muslims. The Islamic intellectual world rediscovered the empirical method within its own ethos and became the originators of the scientific method. The Islamic world continued to produce a galaxy of philosopher-scientists right up to the time of the Mongol invasions. Among the more renowned were Al Khwarizmi (d. 863), Al Farabi (d. 950), Abu Ali Sina (d. 1037), Omar Khayyam (d. 1132) and Al Tusi (d. 1274). The great philosopher of the Maghrib, Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) wrote his commentaries on Aristotle in the 12th century. During the 13th and 14th centuries, some of the philosopher-scholars migrated to India and found a receptive environment in the Delhi courts. Amongst the more notable of the philosophers in Delhi was Shaykh Ilmuddin. The philosophers, too, were pitted against the popular Sufi movement of the Chishtiya Order.

It was under the Tughlaq emperors that the Sufi movement ran headlong into the combined opposition of the *ulema*, the philosophers and the monarchs. The *kadis* and the *ulema* sought a ban on *sama'a*, declaring it to be against the injunctions of the Shariah. To sort out these controversies, Gayasuddin Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi, convened a conference of the leading *ulema*, *kadis* and philosophers in Delhi at his court in 1320. Nizamuddin Awliya was also invited. What started as a conference turned into a court martial of the Chishtiya Sufis. Kadi Jalaluddin, chief *kadi* of Delhi and Shaykh ZadaJam argued against *sama'a*. Nizamuddin Awliya defended the practice, basing his arguments on certain *Hadith*. The opposition argued that the supporting *Hadith* were weak. The discussion became heated, so the Sultan turned to Shaykh Ilmuddin, who was a philosopher (Mu'tazilite) and had traveled extensively through Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Shaykh Ilmuddin answered that *sama'a* was halal for those who listened to it with their hearts and was *haram* for those who heard it with their *nafs*. Nonetheless, he too sided with Kadi Jalaluddin and asked the Emperor to forbid *sama'a*. The Emperor deliberated and, not to be drawn into a religious controversy, gave a split decision permitting *sama'a* gatherings for the Chishtiya Order but forbidding it to the followers of the Qalandariya and Haidari Orders. (The Qalandariya and Haidari orders had not yet made major inroads into India at that time so the Emperor had nothing to lose in taking a position against the practices of these two orders).

Gayasuddin Tughlaq died in 1325. The tug-of-war between the Sufis, the *kadis* and the philosophers, continued in the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d. 1351). One of the most capable monarchs of the age, Muhammed bin Tughlaq is an enigma to students of history. He was a scholar, a *hafiz-e-Qur'an*, well versed in *Fiqh* and was punctual in his prayers, fasting and *zakat*. Like the first four caliphs, he treated the non-Muslims with dignity and ensured that taxation was fair to all of his subjects. Yet, he was impetuous, intolerant of dissent and punished, with a vengeance, those who stood in his way. He was the first monarch who realized that ruling the vast subcontinent from far-away Delhi was hopeless and sought to establish his capital near the center of gravity of Hindustan, namely at Daulatabad, located about a hundred miles inland from the modern city of Bombay. When the entrenched bureaucrats, comfortable in their luxurious villas in the capital, dragged their feet, he forced them to move. Then, as

fate would have it, the monsoons failed for five consecutive years and India was hit with a terrible famine. Daulatabad was without water. Tughlaq had the entire court trek back to Delhi, causing untold misery for everyone.

It was during the Tughlaq period and the preceding Khilji period that Islam was introduced into the Deccan and the Dakhni language, the parent of modern Urdu, was born. Borrowing an idea from Kublai Khan of China (d. 1294), Tughlaq introduced leather currency. This was a far-sighted move designed to further trade, which was constrained by the availability of gold and silver. But the wily Indians, Muslims and Hindus alike, frustrated this move by creating counterfeit currency. Tughlaq had to withdraw the currency at an enormous cost to the treasury. However, it is his interactions with the *ulema*, *kadis*, philosophers and Sufis of the age that concern us here because these interactions determined the shape of Islam for centuries to come.

Returning to the powerful Chishtiya movement, Shaykh Baba Fareed Ganj succeeded Khwaja Qutbuddin in 1235. His forefathers had migrated from Kabul during the Mongol devastations. As directed by Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer, Baba Fareed migrated to western Punjab. If there was one person who may be given credit for the introduction of Islam into Punjab (and hence into today's Pakistan), it was Baba Fareed. Impressed with his piety, sincerity and dedication, thousands, including some of the powerful Rajput clans, accepted Islam. Baba Fareed was a doctor of *Fiqh* and was a noted poet in Arabic and Farsi. Both the Sabiriya and Nizamiya branches of the Chishti Order within the subcontinent originated from him. He trained and sent teachers to the far corners of India and Pakistan. Notable among them were Shaykh Jamal of Hanswi, Imamul Haq of Sialkot, Mawzum Alauddin Sabir of Sahranpur, Shaykh Muntaqaddin of Deccan and most importantly, Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi. Baba Fareed was the author of *Israr ul Awliya* (secrets of the sages), which contains encyclopedic information about Sufi thought and practices.

The mantle of leadership of the Chishtiya Order passed on to Nizamuddin Awliya in 1257. No other Sufi master achieved the acceptance of the Indian masses and the Sultans of Delhi, as did Nizamuddin Awliya. Indeed, his was the zenith of the Sufi movement in Hindustan. He was a scholar of *Hadith*, a fountain of spirituality, a powerful debater and a dedicated teacher. It is related that at any given time, over 3,000 students and two hundred *qawwals* attended his *zawiyah* at the outskirts of Delhi. Chief among his students were Shaykh Hishamuddin of Multan, Shaykh Burhanuddin Gareeb of Deccan, Shaykh Yaqub Patni of Gujrat, Sirajuddin Uthmani and Bu Ali Qalandar of Panipat. The great poet Emir Khusrô was a *murid* of Nizamuddin Awliya.

The relationship between the Chishtiya Order and the Delhi Sultanate had been cordial until that time. The Sultans, aware of the hold that the Sufis had over the masses, sought to cultivate the blessings of the Sufi masters. The advent of the Khilji dynasty (1296-1316) saw the armies of the Delhi Sultans conquer the entire subcontinent, all the way to the southern tip of the peninsula. The architect of these conquests, the mighty Alauddin Khilji, was of a secular bent. But he was aware of the power of the Sufis and sought cordial relations with them. It was Alauddin who sent word to Nizamuddin Awliya expressing his desire to meet the Master. The message elicited the famous riposte from the Shaykh: "My hut has two doors. If the Emperor enters it through one door, I go out the other". After Alauddin, there was a brief period of turbulence in Delhi, followed by the establishment of the Tughlaq dynasty (1316-1351).

Nizamuddin Awliya passed away in 1325 and designated Maqdam Nasiruddin Mahmud (commonly known as *Chirag-e-Dehli*, the light of Delhi) as his successor. It was the same year that Muhammed bin Tughlaq ascended the throne of Hindustan. To break the hold of the Sufis and to keep them busy with superfluous work, Muhammed bin Tughlaq forced them into his service. *Chirag-e-Dehli* was asked to assist the king with royal robes, a ceremony that signified obedience and submission to the crown. When

the Master refused, he was thrown into jail. Others were forced out of the capital. For instance, Shaykh Shamsuddin Yahya was forced to retire to Kashmir. Shaykh Shahabuddin was told to serve the king. When the learned Shaykh refused, his beard was pulled out, a *fatwa* was passed against him by Kadi Kamaluddin of Delhi and he was finally killed. Delhi was depleted of the Sufi masters, except for those who could not leave because of age or official constraint.

Muhammed bin Tughlaq had spent his youth in the company of philosophers and he was a Mu'tazilite by training. He was particularly influenced by Shaykh Ilmuddin, the renowned philosopher of the times, who lived in Delhi. Shaykh Ilmuddin had traveled through Syria and had met Ibn Taymiyah of Damascus (d. 1326) and had absorbed his reformist and counter-Sufi thoughts. Tughlaq, in his Mu'tazilite thinking, was similar to Harun al Rashid, but he lacked the sagacity and statesmanship of Harun. Just as the successors of Harun punished those who opposed the Mu'tazilite doctrines, so did Muhammed bin Tughlaq.

It is an irony of Islamic history that those who should have been the most liberal in their tolerance of dissident thought, namely the philosophers, turned out to be the most intolerant. Twice they had the opportunity to influence history—once during the early years of the Abbasids (circa 800) and the second time during the powerful Tughlaq dynasty of India (circa 1330). Both times they failed miserably and embarked on a tyrannical suppression of those who disagreed with them. Islamic history, in turn, rejected them. Their role was relegated to the periphery of the Islamic body politic, to the detriment of both philosophy and the Muslim *ummah*. Muhammed bin Tughlaq died in 1335, classified a maverick sultan by history.

The Sufis survived and prospered because theirs was the kingdom of God, untouched by the vagaries of time. They sang of the love of God and people resonated to their tune. They gave of themselves for the love of humankind and fought for what was right, often laying down their lives in the struggle. The *ulema* and *kadis* were defeated, because they were employees of the kings and could be fired from their jobs at will. Despite their independence, they were construed to be an arm of the ruling classes. The philosophers lost because of their tyrannical approach. They were bogged down in endless argumentation and they over-extended their approach to the Qur'an, a subject that was clearly beyond the scope of their methodology. The Islam that survived was a Sufic Islam, inward-looking, spiritual, amalgamating within its folds the cultures of the lands where it flourished. It was different in color and character from classical Islam (up to the destruction of Baghdad in 1258), which was empirical, vibrant, extrovert. It was this Sufic Islam that was destined to shape the history of Muslim peoples after the 13th century.

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