

Rise and Development of Sufism in Bihar: A Study

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Abstract

Bihar has played a prominent role in the promotion of Persian language and literature in India. Sufi saints of various shades of Bihar had greatly contributed in the development of Persian literature and the society in India. Sufism stands for unity of mind and soul and works towards realization of self. Sufis not only were spiritual men but also were great literary figures. They produced brilliant literature during medieval period and enriched the Persian, Arabic and Hindi literature during the whole of medieval period. They were always in favour of social justice and were fully imbued with a sense of humanity. To serve the needy and the oppressed ones was their routine affair. The great Sufis like Makhdoom Sharfuddin Maneri, Sultan Ahmad Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi and many have produced valuable literature and have done tremendous service for humanity in general.

Key Words: Sufi, Persian, Literature, Bihar

Without doubt Bihar produced to world not only noble thinkers, reformers and humanists as Gautam Buddha, Mahavir and Ashoka but also great Sufis like Makhdoom Sharfuddin Maneri, Sultan Ahmad Chirmposh, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi and many others.

Apart from these brightest stars of Sufi galaxy, there were innumerable other Sufis who contributed to the development of Persian literature in Bihar. All of them have left behind a considerable literature in the form of Maktubat, Mulfuzat, Isharat, Aurads and other mystical tracts from which we can form an idea of their beliefs, preaching and outlook along with something that is of cultural and historical value.

Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri is one of the most relevant Sufi saints of Bihar. His Maktubat-e-sadi and Maktubat-do-sadi are considered to be a best collection of letters on mystical doctrines and principles of Islam. Regarding the Malfuzats, Lataif-i-

Maani, is a shortened version of Madanul-Mani, which was compiled by Zain Badr-i-Arabi, which contains the discourses delivered by Maneri. The contribution of prominent Sufis of Bihar, particularly the Firdausi Sufi saint Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri is unparalleled and he is greatly admired, loved and revered by the people of Bihar and Bengal during Sultanate period and continued to be respected and followed for centuries and even at present.

Bihar has produced a number of Sufi mystics of the various orders that they may claim to be regarded as the home of Indian Sufism. Out of the fourteen orders or Khanwadahs those of the highest repute were represented in Bihar, and each had a share in the general spread and development of Islam in different parts of the states. The lives and writings of the early Sufis of Bihar show that whether they belonged to one or other of the chief orders, Chistiya, Suharwardia, Qadriya, Firdausia, Shuttaria, orthodox, Ba-Shara'(with law) and Beshara'(without law), they followed

the Quran and the Sunnat (tradition), accepted all the cardinal principles of Islam, denounced all innovations and devotions in the sphere of dogma and practices and Bid'at (heresy), insisted upon the strict observance of obligatory duties of their faith, and discarded all that was obviously antagonistic to the fundamental teachings of Islam.

They put aside their own desires to render themselves agreeable to all, irrespective of caste or creed and they were free from all complexes and shackles of colour and race. (Rizvi 1965) The lives of the early Sufis of Bihar and their writings clearly show that whether they belonged to one or the other of chief orders, Chistiya, Suhrawardis, Qadiria, Firdausia, Shuttaria, etc.

Maner, Phulwarisharif and Azimabad were important places for Sufis. Phulwarisharif has been an important seat of Persian learning. Shah Abdul Hasan Fard and Md. Habib Nasr belonged to this place. They are to the lineage of Hazrat Tajul Arfin Peer Mojibullah. They left behind their Persian diwan and a number of treatises dealing with different theological problems. In poetry they expressed their Sufistic experiences and mystic thoughts through their works.

Among the earliest to come, were the Sufis of Chistiya order. Some of the renowned name of this order being Shah Mahmud Bihari and Saiyad Taju-ddin of Danapur, the disciples of Qutbudin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Maulana' Ali Bihari, a disciple of Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, Makhdum Adam Sufi, son of Saiyid Ibrahim Chisti of what later became Hajipur, and his son Makhdum Hamidu'd Din and the latter's son Taimullah Sufaid Baz, the spiritual guide of Shaikh Faidullah of Kurgi near Patna, Shamsud' Din of Chanda's (Biharsharif).

Suharwardia and Firdausia order were more prominent in South Bihar. The most celebrated and earliest personalities were the descendants of, or connected with, the family of Imam Taj Faqih. His eldest son, Israil and youngest Abdul Aziz, and the former's son, Makhdum Yahya Maneri and the latter's two sons Jalal Maneri and Sulaiman Langar Zamin Kakavi, were all Suharwardi saints. The father-in-law of M. Yahya Maneri and Sulaiman Kakavi, was Shihabuddin Pir Jagjot, a former Qazi of Kashghar who came to preach the faith in Bihar, settled down and died at Jethuli, on 21 september 1266, in the time of Balbun, and was buried at what is still known as Kachchi Dargah, on the banks of Ganges, at a short distance to the east of the old Patna city. He belonged to the Suharwardia order.

The famous Suharwardi saint, Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi, one of the chief disciples of Shihabuddin Suharwardi also came to Bihar via Delhi and Badaun and from there went to Bengal where his "Chillakhanas" are still found. Bihar also has felt the influence of the Suharwardi order through the activities of the followers of Syed Jalal Bukhari Makhdum Jahanian (d1383) and of still earlier, the celebrated H. Bahauddin Zakaria Multani. Makhdum Syed Hasan, a contemporary of Humayun and Sher Shah, after whom Hasanpurain Saran district is named and his sons and grandsons, Syed Ahmad of Hajipur, Syed Muhammad of Mansurganj, Patna and Syed Husain of Bhagalpur all called 'Pir Damaria' were Suharwardia saints and were linked in the chain of spiritual disciplinship to Makhdum Jahanian.

Sharfuddin Ahmad Maneri was the son of Maneri, a great Sufi saint who was born in Manerin 661 A.H. his pen-name being Sharaf Behari. After completion of his education, he became a disciple of Sheikh Najeebuddin of Delhi and received spiritual

inspirations from him. He came to Biharsharif in 725 A.H. where he lived till the last days of his life and where he died on Thursday, the 6th, Shawal 782 A.H. besides his spiritual pursuits he was prone to literary endeavors too. He left behind him a dozen of books. Some of them are published. He was a poet and used to compose poems in Persian as well as Urdu which was then termed as Hindi or Hindustani. (Sher1983)

The tomb of Makhdoom Yahya Maneri's called Barhi Dargah at Maner, as distinguished from the magnificent Mausoleum of Shaikh Bayazid known as Shah Daulat; eighth in direct descent from Imam Taj Faqih through Shah Kaliluddin, a son of Shah Yahya Maneri, and called as Choti Dargah, has always been held in great veneration and was visited among others by princes and kings including Sultan Sikander Lodi and Babur.

Ahmad Chirmposh, the saint of Amber the spiritual disciple of Shaikh Alauddin Chirmposh of Puraini (Bhagalpur) who was linked through Shaikh Sulaiman of Mahsunto the famous Maulana Taqiuddin Suharwardi of Mahsun referred to above.

The Qadria Order entered Bihar in a much latter time nevertheless it was strong with chief centre at Phulwarisharif. Notable among Chisti saints were Shaikh Manjhan Kunjnashin who lies buried in mahalla Sakanut of Biharsharif and Qumais of Sadhaura where 'Takia' is situated within the fort area of the town. He was a contemporary of Akbar (Askari, 1952). He died in Bihar on his way from Bengal to his native place, Sadhaura where his dead body was carried to be buried.

The Madaria Order was also strong in Bihar at one point of time. Perhaps the greatest of then four disciples of Badiuddin

References:

Madar, sometime a teacher of Husain Muiz Balkhi at Zafarabad, Jaunpur, whose mausoleum at Makanpur is still an object of veneration of both Hindus and Muslims, was the extremely pious and ascetic personage H. Jamaluddin Hurmuzi known as JamanJati (Yati). He lies buried at Hsla, within a domed mausoleum built in 950=1543 by Jaman Madari of Darbhanga. Shah Kangan Diwan who lies buried in Biharsharif was also a disciple of H. Shah Badiuddin Madar of Makanpur. The Madaria Qalandars who performed their devotion every year in a peculiar Indian way by walking on fire have disappeared. H. Abdul Quddus Gangohiofthe15th century writes about his Pir, Abdul Haque of Rudauli that the latter met some "Majdhubans" in Bihar while he was on his way to and from Pandua, Bengal. Such distracted bare-bodied religious zealots, often referred to in early literature are not found now. (Franklin, 1998.)

Hence we find that Bihar has been a land of Sufis and they have done a remarkable job in the area of promotion of peace and harmony in that region. Since the main language of their conversation and writing had been Persian, the language has gained a lot from their contributions. A number of Maktubat and Malfuzaat were produced that are being used for the study of history and socio political scenario of their times. Persian literature in general has really been enriched by these Sufis of Bihar.

Summary:

Sufism and Sufistic literature had a lot of positive influence in the Socio-cultural development of Bihar. They put aside their own desires to render themselves agreeable to all, irrespective of caste and creed and they were free from all complexes and shackles of colour and race.

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