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## **CHISHTI SUFIS' INTERFACE WITH POLITICAL AUTHORITIES IN SOUTH ASIA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Tanvir ANJUM\*

Sufism, the mystical or esoteric aspect of Islam, is primarily seen as devoted to the spiritual dimension of one's life. There exists a general misconception that Sufism and politics are two swords in a scabbard, suggesting that the two realms are inherently incompatible. It is argued that since Sufism preaches world-renunciation, therefore, it cultivates a sense of indifference to or withdrawal from anything related to politics, or to be more precise, political quietism. Nonetheless, 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.

Historically speaking, the relationship of the sufis and the state or political authorities has been quite ambiguous and varied, which denies any easy generalization. On the one hand, evidence suggests the state patronage of the sufi establishments, sufis acting as aides of the rulers, and accepting bounties from them. Many sufi shaykhs extended advice to the rulers and also helped them in hour of need. Some of the sufis also acted as mediators

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in conflict situations. The rulers often sought legitimacy of the political authority from the sufis, while many sufis extended patronage to the rulers in turn. There have been numerous examples of state-sufi cordiality and collaboration.

On the other hand, some of the sufis resisted having any relationship with the rulers, and exhibited indifference or apathy towards the state and politics. Some of the sufis openly criticized the state policies and institutions leading to mere disagreement and friction, and sometimes leading to conflictual situations. Though many of them tried to avoid any overt conflict with the state and rulers, some of them landed in conflict with the rulers. Some of the rulers landed in overt conflict with sufis for many reasons, such as personal (owing to personal grudge), political (perceiving fear or threat from the popularity of the sufis) and sometimes theological (for instance, the question of *sama*). There are examples of legendary ‘sufi martyrs’ like Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (executed 922), ‘Ayn al-Quzat al-Hamadani (executed 1131), and Shihabuddin Yahya al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (executed 1191), who were put to death by the political authorities. In short, the state-sufi relationship is not a unilateral phenomenon; it is essentially a two-way relationship.

The present study is particularly focused on the relationship of the sufis belonging to Chishti *Silsilah* in South Asia. The study offers a macro-perspective covering a period of centuries, highlighting major shifts in the relationship of the Chishti sufis with the state and political authorities. However, before exploring it further, it seems pertinent to take into account a brief overview of the Chishti *Silsilah* or sufi order. The paper is divided in seven sections. The first briefly introduces the Chishti *Silsilah*, followed

by a brief discussion on the early Chishti sufi worldview regarding politics. The third section deals with the Chishti policy towards the state and politics from late twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The fourth section analyzes the state policy towards the Chishtis. The fifth section investigates the emergence of the institution of *sajjadah-nashini* in post-fourteenth century. The sixth section explores the role of the Chishti sufis and *sajjadah-nashins* during the colonial era when India was ruled by the British. The last section offers an overview of the Chishti sufis and *sajjadah-nashins* in contemporary Pakistani politics.

### 1. Chishti Sufi *Silsilah*: An Introduction

The Chishti *Silsilah* or sufi order originated in the early tenth century from the small town of Chisht near Herat in present-day Afghanistan. It traces its spiritual lineage from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Imam Ali (AS). Its founder was Khwaja Abu Ishaq of Syria (d. 940). It is one of the earliest sufi *silsilahs* (along with Suhrawardiyya) to be introduced and popularized in South Asia by Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chishti of Ajmer (d. 627/1230).<sup>1</sup> Being the most popular of all the sufi *silsilahs* of South Asia, it enjoys a mass following. It has two main branches: Chishtiyya-Nizamiyya and Chishtiyya-Sabiriyya.<sup>2</sup> It is particularly known for its doctrine of *Ishq-i Ilahi* (Divine love) and the practice of devotional sufi music (*sama*) along with ecstatic sufi dance, known as *raqs* or *dhammal* in South Asia. *Sama* is used as a method of worship or *zikr* (recollection of the names of God), while *raqs* of sufi dance is seen as a means of spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see P. M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 20-65.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht*, vol. 5 (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1982).

realization and enlightenment. The *Silsilah* is also known as the most Indianized sufi *Silsilah*, as its sufis believed in vernacularizing or indigenizing the message of Islam and Sufism in South Asia, allowing room for incorporating cultural beliefs and practices in their sufi worldview. Though it is primarily located in South Asia, the branches of Chishti *Silsilah* have spread across in Afghanistan, the USA, UK, Australia, and parts of Africa at present.

The *shajrah*/spiritual lineage or initiatic genealogy of the Chishti *Silsilah* is as follows:<sup>3</sup>

1. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (d. 632)
2. ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661)
3. Hasan al-Basri (d. 728)
4. ‘Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd (d. 793)
5. Abu ‘Ali al-Fuzayl ibn ‘Iyaz (d. 802)
6. Ibrahim ibn Adham (d. 779)
7. Sadiduddin Hudhayfah al-Mar’ashi (d. 822)
8. Aminuddin Hubayrah al-Basri
9. ‘Alu Dinawari

The Pre-Indian Phase of Chishti *Silsilah*

10. Abu Ishaq Shami/Chishti (d. 940) - He is the founder of Chishti *Silsilah*.

11. Abu Ahmad ibn Farasnafah Chishti (d. 966)

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed study, see Carl W. Ernst, *The Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufi Order in India and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), xi. For brief biographical sketches of sufis from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib to ‘Uthman Harwani, see Mir ‘Abd al-Wahid Bilgrami, *Saba’ Sanabil*, comp. in 969 A.H., Urdu trans. Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan Barakati (Lahore: Hamid and Co., n.d.), 405-36.

12. Abu Muhammad ibn Ahmad Chishti (d. 1020)

13. Abu Yusuf Chishti (d. 1067)

14. Mawdud Chishti (d. 1126)

15. Haji Sharif Zandani

16. 'Uthman Harwani (d. 1211)

The Indian Phase of Chishti *Silsilah*

17. Mu'inuddin Chishti of Ajmer (d. 1236)-Popularized Chishti *Silsilah* in South Asia.

18. Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki of Ush (d. 1235) - Lived in Delhi.

19. Fariduddin Masud (Baba Farid) (d. 1271) - Lived in Hansi, & later Ajodhan/Pakpattan.

20. Nizamuddin Awliya (d. 1325) - Lived in the suburbs of Delhi.

21. Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli (d. 1356) - Lived in the suburbs of Delhi.

22. Bandanawaz Gesudiraz (d. 1422) - Lived in Delhi, & later Gulbarga in Deccan.

## **2. Politics and Early Chishti Sufi Worldview**

The Chishti Sufis had a distinct conception of temporal power in the pre-Indian and early phase in India. They viewed political authority, power and politics as source of corruption of the soul, and detrimental to one's spiritual health. They viewed them as two incompatible realms, as opposed to their contemporary Suhrawardi sufis in the Middle East as well as in South Asia. The Chishtis practiced *faqr* (voluntary poverty) and *zuhd* (detachment from/renunciation of the world). The Chishtis did not want to compromise on the independence of their spirit by becoming subservient to

the rulers. Regarding the “ethical relations” of the Chishti sufis to institutional power, Ernst and Lawrence notes:

“For the Chishtis, unlike other Sufis, avoidance of the sultan meant avoiding the corruption of the soul by earthly power, which contrasted with the destruction of the soul by divine power, the goal of the Chishti way.”<sup>4</sup>

This worldview accorded more autonomy to the Chishti *khanqahs* in doctrinal and practical terms. Doctrinally, the Chishtis freely practiced the controversial practices of *sama* and *raqs* or ecstatic dance. Practically, there was no interference of the state in its managements and internal affairs.

### 3. Chishti Policy towards the State and Politics

From the late twelfth to fourteenth centuries, there appears to be considerable consistency in Chishti sufi behaviour towards the state and politics.<sup>5</sup> Though a plethora of empirical evidence can be cited to support the arguments, only few examples can suffice. The early Indian Chishti sufis exhibited relative indifference towards their contemporary rulers, including the Sultans of Delhi. Most of them avoided any meeting with the rulers. Sultan ‘Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296-1316) repeatedly expressed his desire to see Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, but the latter refused to oblige, and sent him a message: “There is no need for the Sultan to visit, for I am all the time engaged in praying for the Sultan *in absentia*, which is a more effective kind of prayer.” However, the Sultan still wanted to come and see

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed study, see Tanvir Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the Shaykh in person. When the Sultan insisted, the Shaykh curtly remarked: "My house has two doors; if the Sultan enters by one door, I will leave the house by the other."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji (r. 1316-20) ordered Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya to personally come to the court. The Shaykh tactfully replied: "I'm a recluse, and do not go anywhere. Moreover, it was not a custom of my spiritual preceptors to visit courts and sit in the company of kings. You should excuse me for it."<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, members of nobility and the members of the royal family could visit the sufi *khanqahs*.

When Bahmani King Sultan Muhammad I (r. 1358-75) demanded an oath of allegiance from all the sufi Shaykhs in his kingdom, the Chishti sufi Shaykh Zaynuddin Shirazi (d. 1369), who had good relations with the earlier Sultans, defied the state demand.<sup>8</sup> In 1415, the celebrated Chishti sufi, Khwajah Saiyyid Bandanawaz Gesudiraz (d. 1422), who enjoyed the support of Bahmani Sultan, Tajuddin Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422), refused to support the nomination of his licentious and dissolute son, and instead supported the king's brother as successor to the throne, the Sultan ordered him to move his *khanqah* to some other place in the city.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Saiyyid Muhammad ibn Mubarak 'Alawi Kirmani (Amir Khurd), *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, comp. in 1351-82 AD., ed. Chiranji Lal (Delhi: Muhibb-i Hind Press, 1885 AD/1302 AH), 135. Henceforth referred to as Amir Khurd.

<sup>7</sup> Hamid ibn Hamid ibn Fazl Allah Jamali, *Siyar al-'Arifin*, comp. between 1531-35 A.D. (Delhi: Rizwi Press, 1893 AD/1311 AH), 74.

<sup>8</sup> 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), 47.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim Hindu Shah Farishtah, *Tarikh-i Farishtah*, Urdu tr. Mawlawi Muhammad Fida Ali Talib. Vol. III. (Hyderabad: Dar al-Tab Jami'ah Uthmaniyyah, 1926), 110-18. See also Haroon Khan Sherwani, *The Bahmanis*

Most of them refused to accept state positions and official titles from them. Under Sultan Iletmish (r. 1211-1236) of Delhi, the office of *Shaykh al-Islam* was created. It was more of an honorific title than an actual position. When the Sultan offered the title to Shaykh Qutbuddin Bakhthiyar Kaki, the latter refused to accept it saying that the Chishti traditions did not permit it.<sup>10</sup> The Chishti sufi, Shaykh Nizamuddin Ambaithiwal (d. 1582) never read the names of the kings in the Friday *khutbah*.<sup>11</sup> Most of the Chishti shaykhs enjoyed titles which were parallel to the titles enjoyed by the rulers.<sup>12</sup>

The sufi term *khalifa* for spiritual successor used among the Chishtis had an overt political undertone since it referred to the incumbent of the highest political authority in Muslim history. Similarly, the title of *Khawajah* implies political connotation, since it referred to a lord, master, noble, or an aristocrat. In addition, the Chishti shaykhs debarred their senior *khulafa* from joining government service, though there was no such restriction for the ordinary disciples. They denied accepting any *jagirs* or land grants from the state for the maintenance and upkeep of their *khanqahs*. However, they accepted cash offerings but the money was immediately distributed among the needy.

Some of the Chishti sufi shaykhs leveled criticism on state institutions such as judiciary, state policies such as economic or revenue policy,

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*of the Deccan: An Objective Study* (Hyderabad; Deccan: Saud Manzil, n.d.), 165-66.

<sup>10</sup> Jamali, *Siyar al-'Arifin*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Idarah-'i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1980), 289.

<sup>12</sup> Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400*, 406-7.

and issues such as price hike, high-handedness of revenue department officials, etc. Fariduddin Masud, popularly known as Baba Farid (d. 1271), considered the *qazis* and *muftis* as a cause of trouble for the people. Once a class-fellow of Baba Farid came to see him in Ajodhan, and requested him to pray for his appointment as a *qazi* and *mufti*. Baba Farid replied that the real aim of acquiring knowledge of religion was to practice it, rather than creating troubles for people.<sup>13</sup> Before entering the fold of discipleship of Baba Farid, Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya' had once asked Shaykh Najibuddin Mutawakkil to pray for his appointment as *qazi*, but the latter forbade it. Shaykh Najibuddin replied: "Don't be a *qazi*, be something else."<sup>14</sup> Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud exhorted the *qazis* to act according to the principles of equity and justice, and treat the prince and the pauper alike.<sup>15</sup> The views of the sufis betray that the trust of the people in the judicial apparatus of the state was somewhat deficient, as these state officials had become a source of injustice and coercion instead of redressing the complaints of the aggrieved people and punishing the offenders. Though the '*ulama*' (religious scholars) were appointed as *qazis*, their appointments, transfers and dismissals were quite often politically motivated.

Occasionally, some of them gave advices to the rulers to curb corruption and injustice in the state. The Chishti sufi, Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud '*Chiragh-i Dehli*' (literally meaning the Lamp of Delhi; d. 1356)

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<sup>13</sup> Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Amir Hasan 'Ala' Dehlavi Sijzi, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* (*Malfuz* of Khwaja Nizam al-Din Awliya'), ed. Khwaja Hasan Thani Nizami Dehlavi (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1992), 46; Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, 168; and Jamali, *Siyar al-'Arifin*, 60.

<sup>15</sup> Hamid Qalandar, *Khair-u'l-Majalis*. [The Best of Assemblies] *Malfuz* of Shaykh Nasir al-Din Mahmud *Chiragh-i Dehli*, ed. K. A. Nizami (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1959), 17.

once declared: “If a person gets some official position, even of a lower level, he tends to misuse his power and authority, and creates troubles for the people.”<sup>16</sup> On a number of occasions, he exhorted the people holding official positions to refrain from misusing and abusing power.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. State Policy towards the Chishtis

The medieval Indian state ruled by the Sultans of Delhi made demands on the Chishti sufis despite their indifference towards the rulers and politics. Some of the Sultans of Delhi held the Chishti Shaykhs in high esteem and publically displayed it as well. Sultan Shamsuddin Iltmish sincerely sought the blessings of the Chishti sufis including Khwaja Moinuddin Ajmeri and Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. Some Sultans sincerely believed in their powers and sought their blessings but others merely outwardly did so in order to get public acclaim. Many Sultans offered official titles of *Shaykh ul Islam* to the Chishti sufis but they refused to accept. They rejected land grants as well but accepted cash grants and gifts which they never stored but immediately distribute among the needy. It was only once that Sultan Ghiyathuddin Tughluq tried to recover the cash grant from Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya awarded by the earlier Sultan when the former found the treasury empty.

Many a time, rulers such as Sultan Alaaddin Khalji tried to visit the *khanqah* of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya but the latter avoided seeing him. Some rulers ordered the sufis to appear in court. Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji (r. 1316-20), who was jealous of the popularity of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya, called the latter in his court, but the Shaykh refused.

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<sup>16</sup> Qalandar, *Khair-u'l-Majalis*, 104.

<sup>17</sup> Qalandar, *Khair-u'l-Majalis*, 12-13, 206, 242.

Later, the Sultan put some head money for him but soon the Sultan was assassinated. Sometimes, the Chishtis were asked to appear in the royal court to defend their controversial practice of *sama*<sup>4</sup> or sufi music, when the *ulama* or religious scholars objected to it. The Sultans were pressurized by the *ulama* to ban the practice but the case was always decided in favour of the Chishtis,<sup>18</sup> who were allowed to carry on their practice but with some restrictions.

Despite these principles, nonetheless, on some occasions the Chishtis supported the political authorities in times of need such as political crises or foreign invasion by Mongols.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Sultan Nasiruddin Qabacha sought the help of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki against the Mongols.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, during the military campaign of Warangal<sup>21</sup> against the Hindus in South India, Sultan Alauddin Khalji requested Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya to pray for victory.

The rulers also constructed the shrines of the eminent sufis, which was a public manifestation of their respect and reverence for the sufis. For instance, Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (r. 1325-51) built splendid mausoleums over the grave of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya' in Delhi and Shaykh 'Alauddin of Ajodhan (d. 1334) within the premises of Baba Fa-

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<sup>18</sup> Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400*, 133-35, 167-68, 217-18.

<sup>19</sup> For details, see K. A. Nizami, "Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and Their Attitude towards the State", *Islamic Culture*, The Hyderabad Quarterly Review, Hyderabad, Deccan, vol. XXII (October 1948), and vol. XXIII (January and April 1949), (rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), pp. 387-98, and 13-21.

<sup>20</sup> Sijzi, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, 185; Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-Awliya'*, 50.

<sup>21</sup> It is presently situated in South Indian state of Telangana. Warangal was the capital of the Kakatiya dynasty from the 12th to 14th centuries.

rid's shrine in Pakpattan.<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Khan, the brother of Bahmani Sultan Tajuddin Firuz Shah, constructed the *khanqah* for Chishti sufi, Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudiraz (1321-1422) in Gulbargah.<sup>23</sup> Later, after becoming king, Sultan Ahmad Shah (r. 1422-36) constructed a splendid mausoleum over his grave in Gulbargah. 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'inuddin Chishti in Ajmer.<sup>24</sup> The Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) also visited the tomb of Khwaja Mu'inuddin several times.<sup>25</sup>

### 5. Emergence of the Institution of *Sajjadah-nashini*

The fifteenth century witnessed the emergence of regional Chishti sufi centres in varied regions including Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal and Deccan. From the fifteenth century onwards, though not all but many of the Chishti sufis started accepting official positions and titles, along with land grants. They closely aligned themselves with the state. Probably, by then the medieval state, or the Mughal Empire more precisely, had become more intrusive and invasive in the lives of the common people. Consequently, the autonomy of the Chishti *khanqahs* was compromised, thus creating more space for the state to interfere in the matters of *khanqahs*. Most notably, the rulers started resolving conflicts over succession in wake of the demise of Chishti sufi masters.

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<sup>22</sup> Amir Khurd, *Siyar al-Awliya'*, 154, 196.

<sup>23</sup> Farishtah, *Tarikh-i Farishtah*, 110.

<sup>24</sup> Mawlana 'Isami, *Futuh al-salatin, (Shahnamah-'i Hind)*, comp. in 1348, ed. Agha Mahdi Husain (Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1938), 447. The Sultan is said to be the first recorded visitor to the shrine in Ajmer. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer*, 100.

Another important development of the era was the emergence of the institution of *Sajjadah-nashini*. The early Chishti sufis generally did not appoint their sons as their spiritual successors or *khalifah*. Their most accomplished *khalifahs* in spiritual terms were nominated by them as their principal successors, who had their own *khanqahs* elsewhere. So the management of a sufi *khanqah* after the demise of a sufi shaykh fell to his sons and grandsons, giving birth to the institution of *sajjadah-nashin* or *gaddi-nashin*, who came to be recognized as the hereditary custodians of the shrines. From fifteenth-century onwards, most of the Chishti sufis started appointing their own sons and grandsons as their spiritual successors, which further strengthened the institution of *Sajjadah-nashini*. In addition to enjoying religio-spiritual authority, these lineal descendants yielded considerable political influence owing to their political affiliation as well as social prestige among the masses.<sup>26</sup>

The acceptance of land grants from the state, a principle which was never compromised by the Chishti sufis of early centuries, turned them and their descendants into landed magnates, further adding to their power and influence. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that the two categories of Chishti sufis and the Chishti *sajjadah-nashins* were not always mutually exclusive, being overlapping.

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed study of the emergence of *sajjada-nashini* at Pakpattan, see Tanvir Anjum, “‘Sons of Bread and Sons of Soul’: Lineal and Spiritual Descendants of Baba Farid and the Issue of Succession,” in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 63-79.

## 6. Chishti Sufis and *Sajjadah-nashins* during the Colonial Era

During the colonial period (1857-1947), when India came under the political sway of the British, some Chishti sufis adopted political quietism as a strategy. However, some of them like Haji Imdadullah Mahajir Makki (d. 1896) resisted the colonial take-over, and fought against the British in the famous Battle of Shamli (near Thana Bhawan) in May 1857.<sup>27</sup> Pir Mehr Ali Shah (1859-1937) of Golra Sharif, Rawalpindi, openly professed anti-imperial stance by declining to accept the land grant from the British government along with the membership of the *darbar* of the British Emperor. He also refused to lend support to the British during the World War I, and declared fighting for the British by Muslim soldiers religiously forbidden.<sup>28</sup>

The British realized the power and authority of the sufis and *sajjadah-nashins*, particularly in rural areas. They patronized the *sajjadah-nashins*, and also awarded them with land and cash grants along with honorary titles. Some of them enjoyed administrative positions of authority at local level. In southwest Punjab, for instance, the *sajjadah-nashins* were among the largest landlords in the region, who were also extremely influential in local affairs. The *sajjadah-nashin* of the shrine of Baba Farid at Pakpattan, known as Dewan, was one of the leading *darbaris* (courtiers) in the entire district.<sup>29</sup> In other areas, the leading *sajjadah-nashins* were honoured

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<sup>27</sup> Tariq Hasan, *Colonialism and the Call to Jihad in British India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2015), 64.

<sup>28</sup> Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mehr-i Munir* (Lahore: Pakistan International Printers, 1974), 283, 267-68.

<sup>29</sup> David Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1979), 494. 485-517.

with positions and titles such as *zaildars*, honorary magistrates and district board members. The *sajjadah-nashins* too saw it beneficial to side with the British in order to save their ancestral lands, awarded to their forefathers for the upkeep of the *khanqahs* and shrines. In short, many of the *sajjadah-nashins* had a symbiotic relationship with the state.

During the twentieth century, many Chishti sufis and *sajjadah-nashins* played an important role in the creation of Pakistan. They supported the political cause of All India Muslim League (AIML) working under the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They mobilized their disciples and devotees for mustering mass support for the struggle for Pakistan. For instance, the son of Pir Mehr Ali Shah named Syed Ghulam Mohiyuddin Gilani (1891-1974), commonly called Babuji, of Golra Sharif, Rawalpindi, also supported Jinnah and AIML, encouraging his disciples and devotees to support the cause of the creation of Pakistan. Khwaja Muhammad Qamaruddin (1906-81) of Siyal Sharif in District Sargodha (previously District Shahpur) established AIML in his district in 1938, and remained its president.<sup>30</sup> He helped popularize the demand of a separate homeland for the Muslims in United India. His *murids* and *khalifas* further popularized AIML in other areas.

Syed Muhammad Zauqi Shah (1878-1951) was a close associate of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and other notable freedom fighters.<sup>31</sup> He not only predicted the creation of Pakistan through his Divine visions, but also prac-

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<sup>30</sup> Naumana Kiran, "Muslim Mystics of the Punjab and the Pakistan Movement," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. LXVII, Nos. 1 & 2 (Jan-June 2019), 103.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Zauqi Shah, *Letters of a Sufi Saint to Jinnah* (Lahore: *Talifat-i Shaheedi*, 2000).

tically supported the movement for the demand for creating a separate country for the Muslims of United India.<sup>32</sup> The *sajjadah-nashin* of Taunsa Sharif (Dera Ismail Khan) Khawaja Ghulam Sadiduddin was also pro-Pakistan and pro-AIML.<sup>33</sup> Pir Karam Shah al-Azhari (1918-98) of Bhera Sharif in District Sargodha was an active participant in the Pakistan movement, and vigorously campaigned in the provincial elections of 1946 for the cause of AIML.

### **7. Chishti Sufis and *Sajjadah-nashins* in Contemporary Pakistani Politics**

In contemporary Pakistan, the province of Punjab has many Chishti sufi centres. Many of these are headed by the sufis-cum-*sajjadah-nashins* who are taking active part in political affairs. Many parliamentarians in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly of Punjab come from the families of *sajjadah-nashins*, whose vote bank is chiefly comprised of their disciples and devotees. The most important and biggest sufi centre in the country is Pakpattan, managed by the descendents of celebrated thirteenth-century Chishti sufi, Baba Farid (d. 1271). The Prime Minister, Imran Khan and the first lady are devotees of Baba Farid, and frequently visit his shrine to seek his blessings. The lineal descendents of Baba Farid, called Dewans, command tremendous political influence in the region, and often manage to win elections. Nonetheless, the worldview and lifestyle of these *sajjadah-nashins* and their families are in sharp contrast to their illustrious ancestor whose charisma they claim to inherit. However, with the inroads of modernity and Wahhabism in the region, the political authority of these *sajjadah-*

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<sup>32</sup> Ernst and Lawrence, *The Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 82-83.

<sup>33</sup> Kiran, "Muslim Mystics of the Punjab and the Pakistan Movement," 104.

*nashins* is fast eroding, which is evident from the fact that the incumbent *sajjadah-nashin*, Dewan Azmat Said Muhammad Chishti, who had won many previous elections, lost the 2018 elections by more than 10,000 votes.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude, it can be inferred from the above discussion that generalization of state-sufi relationship is not easy, since it has been a complex relationship with varied responses from both the rulers and the sufis. As for the sufis belonging to the Chishti *Sisilah*, their relationship with the state underwent important shifts across the centuries. The early Chishti sufis had a distinct conception of temporal power in the pre-Indian and early phase in India, as they viewed power and politics as source of corruption of the soul, hence detrimental to one's spiritual health. They viewed them as two incompatible realms.

From the late twelfth to fourteenth centuries in India, there appears to be considerable consistency in Chishti sufi behaviour towards the state and politics, as the Chishti sufis followed the precedents of the early Chishtis, and tried to stay aloof from politics by rejecting land grants and political offices, despite offers and demands from the state. Despite that, some of the Chishti sufi shaykhs leveled criticism on state institutions such as judiciary, economic or revenue system, and pointed out issues such as

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<sup>34</sup> <https://electionpakistan.com/candidate-profile/?assembly=4&election=7792&constituency=3604&candidate=1449&assemblyName=Punjab%20Assembly&electionType=General%20Election%202018&constituencyName=PP-192%20Pakpattan-II&candidateName=Dewan%20Azmat%20Said%20Muhammad%20Chishti> accessed Jan 14, 2020.

price hike and high-handedness of the officials of revenue department. Some of them even advised the Sultans on state conduct as well. The Sultans of Delhi held the Chishti Shaykhs in high esteem and publically displayed their reverence by constructing their shrines and visiting them in order to enhance the legitimacy of their rule. The rulers tried to get from the shrines what they could not get from the living Chishti sufi shaykhs.

The fifteenth century, however, witnessed the emergence of regional Chishti sufi centres in varied regions including Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal and Deccan, along with the practice of Chishti sufis accepting official positions and titles, along with land grants. Consequently, the autonomy of the Chishti *khanqahs* was compromised, thus creating more space for the state to interfere in the matters of *khanqahs*. Most notably, the rulers started resolving conflicts over succession in wake of the demise of Chishti sufi masters. Another important development of the era was the emergence of the institution of *sajjadah-nashini*. The *sajjadah-nashins* were the lineal descendants of the eminent Chishti sufi shaykhs of the past. In Weberian terms, they claim to inherit charisma from their forefathers, which was routinized over a period of centuries. The early Chishti sufis generally did not appoint their sons as their spiritual successors or *khalifah*, but the later Chishti shaykhs generally appointed their sons as their spiritual successors.

After the British assumption of power in South Asia, some Chishti sufis resisted the colonial takeover, but the *sajjadah-nashins* became the beneficiaries of the state, helping the British government in consolidating their authority. In the twentieth century, many Chishti sufis and *sajjadah-nashins* played an important role in the creation of Pakistan. They supported the political cause of AIML, working under the leadership of Quaid-i-

Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They mobilized their disciples and devotees for mustering mass support for carving out an independent homeland for the Muslims. In contemporary Pakistan, many *sajjadah-nashins* are parliamentarians in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. Their vote bank is chiefly comprised of their disciples and devotees. However, their authority is fast eroding at some places. The present day relationship needs to be seen in context of the contemporary challenges posed by materialism, modernity and Wahhabism, as well as in context of contemporary power politics and party politics in Pakistan.

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