

Advent of Sufism in Khuldabad

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Abstract

Khuldabad is a town in the present-day Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, India. The present paper deals with the inception of Sufism in Khuldabad, which dates back to the time of the Delhi Sultanate, circa 14th CE. Though there are no substantial details for the earliest Sufis who settled in the place, the references that we get from non-hagiographical sources such as that of Mohammed Qasim Ferishta, corroborate that it was the Junaydi Sufi order that seemed to have flourished in the vicinity of Daulatabad and the larger Deccan. This validates the fact that even before the transmigration of the elite population of Delhi at the instance of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq in 1326-27 CE, Sufism had already arrived in the Deccan; although we do not have extensive information about the activities of these early Sufis. Beginning with a brief introduction to the idea of Sufism, the present paper delves into constructing a detailed history of the inception of Sufism at Khuldabad, highlighting which prominent Sufi orders were active there, which ones gained greater control and which ones vanished into obscurity. For the purpose of this paper, wherever the name Khuldabad is used, it implies the early medieval context of the city that was known as "Rauza," unless specifically stated as 'modern Khuldabad.'

Keywords: Sufism, Khuldabad, Deccan

Introduction

For a novice unfamiliar with the basic idea of Sufism, it is an offshoot of Islam, emphasizing mysticism (*tasawwuf*) derived from and rooted in the Quranic teachings and the life of the last Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH). While Islam is practically followed based on the *shariah* laws as derived from the Qur'an and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad besides the obligatory rituals specified therein, Sufism seeks for internal purification of the human soul - the carnal soul called *Nafs* in Sufi jargon, by following the outward obligatory religious practices complementarily to the inner spiritual journey. It originated as a simple process of interiorization and focus on God, taking roots after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in the Middle Eastern lands of Iran, Egypt, and Syria in the early 9th CE. The term "Sufi" emerged from the Arabic root *Suf*, meaning wool. By the 9th CE, the mystics had started wearing a patched garment of wool (*suf*) which according to them was the legacy of the Prophet, and Christian apostles and ascetics.¹ Sufism began as an internal process of reaching a state of absolute communion with God (*Zat*) by merging the Self (*Wajood*) with Him, thus annihilating the Self; the culminating state called *Fana-Fi-Allah* in Sufi parlance. Where the *shariah* (Islamic law) formed the exoteric structure of Islam, the Sufi tradition rooted in *tariqah* (Sufi way of life), formed the esoteric essence of the Islamic faith.

¹ Satish Chandra, "Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals, Part I," (Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi), 2016, p. 238

Thus, early Sufis were absolutely rooted in Islamic practices and traditions. Eventually, several *silsilahs* or Sufi orders gradually got crystallized in different parts of the world, each centering on a chief preceptor and his disciples, thus paving the way for the formation of an institutionalized form of Sufism. However, this is not to say that institutional Sufism abandoned the Islamic practices altogether, just that each order interpreted it as per its own understanding and usually in concord with the core Islamic beliefs. Though Sufism in India grew and acquired mass popularity based on its institutionalized form, it did not deviate from the fundamental message of the love of God and absolute union with Him. Sufi orders over time became numerous and each propagated their way of reaching the Divine. It is this institutional form of Sufism with which we are concerned, deeply penetrating the territory of Khuldabad, making it a significant pilgrim center in the Deccan.

What began as a message by simple, wandering mystics usually referred to as *dervishes*, became an established cult with some unique characteristics of its own. By the twelfth century, the Sufis had developed certain rules of discipline and had established organizations.² One of the common features of the institutional form of Sufism at least in India, is that it is strictly rooted in a strong Master-Disciple relationship. The center of this institutional form of Sufism was the *khanqah* or the hospices of the Sufi Master, from where he propounded his teachings and served the needy. As the idea developed and Sufis gained mass popularity on account of their simple and pious lives, their disciples too increased in number, and over a period of time, a lot of mystic literature came to be composed on various Sufi Master's discourses and teachings, including biographies and hagiographies. The fame of these Sufi mystics grew far and wide to the point that many Sultans of the day became alarmed and saw them as a threat to their political sovereignty. This led many of the medieval rulers to patronize the Sufis not only to seek their blessings but also because of their mass appeal, viewing it as a way to legitimize popular support for the crown.

Historical Geography of Khuldabad

By deploying the term historical geography, it has been presupposed that the city of Khuldabad borrows a lot from its natural setting, which has affected its historical development. Given the inception of the fortress city of Deogiri (modern Daulatabad) in the 12th CE by the Yadavas of Deogiri and its strategic importance in the Deccan, the town of Khuldabad was nowhere known in history until the arrival of the first Sufis. It was only in the 13th-14th CE that we get references to certain Sufis who had lived in the region of present-day Khuldabad and later interred in that territory that the place came to be known as "*Rauza*" or a place of "Holy Tombs." In fact, Khuldabad was known as *Rauza* until the early 18th CE and only after the burial of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 CE that it became renowned as "*Khuldabad*," meaning Heavenly Abode; while Emperor Aurangzeb came to be reminisced in local memory as *Khuld Makaan* – He whose abode is Heaven/Eternity.³

² Atiya Parveen Qazi and Dr. Arvind Kumar, "Mysticism and Sufi Order in the Deccan," Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal Peer-Reviewed E-Journal, Vol. VI, Issue V. May 2019, ISSN No. 2349-638X, p. 81.

³ Emperor Aurangzeb's tombstone at Khuldabad mentions him as "Khuld Makaan." Literally, "Khuld" means heaven, and "Makaan" implies "living place." So "Khuld Makaan" as a phrase is metaphorically used to imply "one who is resting at Khuldabad that is a heavenly abode."

It is important to consider as to what led the Sufis to choose this particularly remote geography as their dwelling place. While Daulatabad flourished as an economic center of the Delhi Sultanate and came to be recognized as the second capital under the Tughlaqs besides Delhi, this region in the Deccan must have attracted a large number of people from both the ruling and working classes. This must have impelled the Sufis to find a solitary abode within the precincts of the inhabited city of Daulatabad and continue their lifestyle and propagation of religious doctrines from there. As the popularity of the Sufis at Khuldabad grew, the place acquired a distinct identity of its own different from Daulatabad. Thus, one can reasonably conclude that it was the serenity and geographical landscape of Khuldabad that fostered the dissemination of mystic culture in the land.

Another significant dimension that is highly imperative to understand the advent of Sufism in Khuldabad is the multiple layers of cultural continuities abounding in the territorial setting of Khuldabad. Its many historical layers have given a distinct character to the place at each point in time. Right from its proximity to the famous Ellora caves to references of Buddhavanti⁴ near Khuldabad as a center of Buddhism, to the rise of Yadavas of Deogiri in the 12th CE and thereafter the accession of Deogiri into the Delhi Sultanate by Sultan Alauddin Khalji, and the subsequent renaming of Deogiri as Daulatabad (literally “flourishing dominion”) under the Tughlaqs – the rise of Sufism in Khuldabad can be attributed to these multiple contextual viewpoints and the resulting prominence of the place that developed it as a sacred geography right from early times. From the viewpoint of not only its geography but the spirituality it inhabited, the rulers who sought its control as well as the resulting socio-cultural changes that the change of political powers ushered in, to even the nomenclature of the place revealing a plethora of information about its antiquity, it is to be understood that Khuldabad is a place with a layered and vibrant past.

Interestingly, the mint at Deogiri (also written as *Devagiri*) was established by the Yadava dynasty and (they) became the first rulers to mint coins at Fort Devagiri (modern Daulatabad).⁵ Thereafter, when Daulatabad became a prominent city and a flourishing economic center in the Deccan, men from both ruling and working classes thronged to this newly prosperous town, and there are references to the arrival of several Sufi orders in Khuldabad – then only a secluded uninhabited land, eventually becoming *Rauza*, as its name and fame grew in the Deccan. Oral history narratives suggest that Sufi orders like Suhrawardi, Qadri, Madari, Jilanizami, Naqshbandi, and many others came to be established at Khuldabad.

Situated at a distance of about 26 kms in the northwest of Aurangabad, the town of Khuldabad evidently displays traces of its glorious Sufi past. Its geographical location, positioned on a cliff at an elevation of 857 meters above sea level, makes it most befitting for being a secluded place yet closely situated to the bustling economic center and trade route of the Deccan - the historic city of Daulatabad. *Rauza, Valley of the Saints, and Abode of the Sufis* are some of the sobriquets that the town of Khuldabad had earned for its distinction of being the resting place of roughly about 1400 Sufi saints. As Azad Bilgrami, the 17th CE historian of Khuldabad affirms, because of the innumerable Sufis resting at Khuldabad, the town was called *Rauza* (Place of Holy Tombs) by the locals.

⁴ Mirza Khizar, “Sufism in the Deccan Early Phase,” PhD. Thesis, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathawada University, 1987.

⁵ Ashutosh Patil, “Coins from Devagiri/Daulatabad Mint,” COINEX 25th Anniversary edition, International Collectors’ Society of Rare Items, Pune, p. 55.

When the transmigration from Delhi to Daulatabad happened under Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325-26 CE), the region of Khuldabad saw an influx of people from across diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Whatever may have been the Sultan's motives, one long-term effect of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's exodus to Daulatabad was that many of the Sufis and men of letters continued to stay back at Daulatabad even when the reverse migration from Daulatabad to Delhi was allowed by the Sultan, so that in course of time it became a center of Islamic learning.⁶ Thus, on the basis of contemporary and later sources, including the hagiographies, it can be said that the history of Sufism in the Deccan passed through the following four phases: Sufis working in the Deccan before A.D 1300; Sufi settlements between A.D 1300 and 1347; Sufi activity from 1347 A.D and the Qadris who worked during Bahmani times; and the Shuttaris and the Rafais during the post-Bahmani period.⁷

The Junaydi Sufi Order

The recorded literary history of Khuldabad can be dated back to the 12th CE, when Deogiri was the capital of the regional kingdom of the Yadavas in Maharashtra. Local legends in the Deccan disseminate tales that when Deogiri was still under the Yadavas, the Sufis came there to admonish and convert the idolaters to Islam. Who exactly were these rulers or the people who converted, and who actually were the Sufis that affected these conversions seemed to have faded in collective memory. With no historical nomenclatures attached to it, it is difficult to ascertain the exact historical premise of this story. However, stray records from medieval Deccan do mention about the prevalence of a Sufi order in the vicinity of Daulatabad. Tracing the foundation of the order to Abul Qasim Junayd of Baghdad, a Sufi mystic of the 8th-9th CE, it was probably the Junaydi (or Junaidi) Sufis that may have been the earliest settlers at Khuldabad and the adjoining regions. Much of their activities remain shrouded in mystery but few prominent Junaydi Sufi names do feature in the histories dating to the Bahmani period as well as in the works of Abul Fazl during the 16th CE. Besides, the accounts of the 17th CE historian Ferishta also divulge some details about the Junaydis operating in the Deccan. Important Junaidi saints lived in Delhi, Kara in North India and at Khuldabad, Gulbarga, Bijapur, and other places in the Deccan.⁸

The earliest Junaydi saint to have come to India was Ali Hujwari, also known as *Data Ganj Baksh* (1072 A.D), who had settled in Lahore, and authored the well-known Persian manual on Sufism, *Kashf-ul-Mahjoob* (Revelation of the Veiled). Shaikh Sirajuddin Junaydi (1271-1380 CE) and Shaikh Aynuddin *Ganj-ul-Ilm* (1300-1393) became the foremost Junaydi Sufis in the Deccan. It was for Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah, the founder of the Bahmani kingdom, that one of these early Sufis had predicted kingship, although the same story is attributed to many other prominent Sufis like Nizamuddin Auliya. Rafiuddin Shirazi in *Tazkirat-ul-Muluk* mentions that Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah's coronation ceremony was performed by his spiritual preceptor, Shaikh Muhammad Ruknuddin Junaidi in the grand mosque of Daulatabad. However, it is strange to not find concrete details about this obscure Sufi figure when he played such an important role in the political sphere. In return for the Sufi's continued blessing and prayers for the Sultan's long life, Sirajuddin Junaydi received what was perhaps the first land grant ever given to

⁶ Chandra, op.cit. p.102.

⁷ Qazi, et. al., op.cit. p. 85.

⁸ Fatima Maryam, "Relations of the Sufis with the rulers of Deccan: 14th-17th centuries," PhD Thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 2013.

a Deccani Sufi - the village of Korchi (in modern Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra), which has continued into this century in the hands of his descendants.”⁹ This historical backdrop, although stray and not well-grounded in facts, shows that when in 1325-26 CE the population of Delhi migrated to the Deccan at the instance of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq and with them, the Chishti Sufi circles of Delhi arrived in Daulatabad, there was already a group of Sufis who had established themselves in the Khuldabad region and had gained popular support. These earliest Sufis perhaps belonged to the Junaydi order, which preceded the early Chishtis of the 14th CE in Khuldabad.

The activities of these early Sufis seem to be closely attached to the Sultans of the day as corroborated by Ferishta’s accounts. Sirajuddin Junaydi had migrated to Gulbarga after which the order became obscure in the Deccan, whereas Aynuddin *Ganj-ul-Ilm* became the first intellectual Sufi of the Deccan and the only in the Junaydi Sufi to have written 125 works in various subjects like *Quranic commentary*, *Qirat*, *Hadith*, *Kalam*, *Ilm-ul-Usul*, *fiqh*, *suluk*, *nahw*, *sarf*, *lughat*, *nasab*, *hikmat* and history.¹⁰ There are references that a certain Sangani family of Daulatabad were patrons of Sufi Aynuddin *Ganj-ul-Ilm*. Likewise, M.S.Siddiqi in his paper titled “*The Bahmani Sufis*” (New Delhi, 1989, pp. 31-45) corroborates that there were Sufis in the Deccan before the arrival of the North Indian disciples of Chishti Sufis that settled at Khuldabad. Based on the above information, we may conclude that there were learned Sufis in Daulatabad who were not Chishtis, who later migrated from Daulatabad to Gulbarga and Bijapur, although possibly not until after these cities became prominent in the Bahmani empire.¹¹

The Chishtis at Khuldabad

Moving on from the earliest Sufi order of the Junaydis in the Deccan, another interesting dimension about the advent of Sufism in Khuldabad is related to one of the most popular Sufi orders of South Asia – the Chishtis. It is with the Chishti Sufis that the recorded history of Khuldabad can be historically traced. As mentioned earlier, it was the ruling elites, the wealthy, and the learned population of Delhi that got transferred to Deogiri, which Muhammad bin Tughlaq renamed as *Daulatabad* – meaning ‘prosperous land.’ It has been validated by many accounts that the prominent Chishti Sufi of Delhi, Hazrat Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya *Mehboob-i-Ilahi*, did not leave a singular spiritual successor for the order. Instead, he gave away *wilayahs* (spiritual dominions) to his many distinguished disciples and ordered them to disperse to their assigned territories to preach and espouse the Sufi message far and wide. Accordingly, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya gave the *wilayah* or sainthood authority of the dominion of Delhi to Nasir al-Din Mahmud *Chirag-i-Dehli*, and Malwa to Wajih al-Din Yusuf, and so on, in this way, Muntajib al-Din received the dominion over the entire Deccan.¹² Thus, the Chishti brothers, Sufi Muntajibuddin *Zarzari Zar Bakhsh* and later his younger brother Sufi Burhanuddin *Gharib*, became the two earliest Chishti Sufis at Khuldabad.

Despite Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq ordering the reverse migration from Daulatabad to Delhi in 1337 CE, most of the Muslim families who had established themselves in the Deccan decided against the

⁹ Abdul Jabbar Malkapuri, “Tazkirah-i-Auliya-i-Dakkan,” Vol. 2, p. 392.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 538.

¹¹ Carl Ernst, “Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South-Asian Sufi Centre,” (SUNY Albany), 1992, p. 107-117.

¹² Musak Rajjak Shaikh, “Sufis of Marathwada: A Study,” PhD Thesis, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, 2013.

exodus. Thus, the migration of Delhi Muslims to Daulatabad had the permanent effect of consolidating the social and cultural traditions of Hindustan (Northern India) in the Deccan.¹³ Interestingly, we get references that when Sufi Burhanuddin *Gharib* became seriously ill in 735 AH/1334 CE, his disciples began to pack his belongings, intending to take him back to Delhi. He refused to leave, however, and pointed to the spot where he did his devotions, declaring that he would be buried there.¹⁴ Thereafter, Sufi Burhanuddin was succeeded by his chief disciple, Hazrat Zainuddin Dawood Shirazi at Khuldabad, who acquired a notable position in the Sufi circle at the place. This is how Chishti Sufism formally took root in the land of Khuldabad, as Sufi Zainuddin too, chose to be buried close to his Master. The shrines of these two prominent Chishti Sufis are located opposite each other in the bustling neighborhood of Khuldabad.

It was Sufi Zainuddin Shirazi who continued the tradition of his Master, Sufi Burhanuddin's teachings in Khuldabad, accepted many disciples, and acquired great popularity in the land. So much so that Emperor Aurangzeb chose his resting place in the shrine complex of Sufi Zainuddin Shirazi at Khuldabad. Aurangzeb had often visited Khuldabad as a pilgrim, and the first stipulation in his will had specified that he be buried there: "*That they shroud and carry this sinner drenched in sins to the neighborhood of the holy Chishti tomb of the revered leader, Sayyid and Shaykh, Zayn al-Din Da'ud Husaini Shirazi, since without the protection of that court [of the saints], which is the refuge of forgiveness, there is no refuge for those drowned in the ocean of sin*".¹⁵ It can therefore be concluded that the place of Khuldabad began to enjoy the special status of being "blessed" owing to the presence of Sufis and perhaps a notion amidst the people got created that one who is buried there goes to heaven, hence the nomenclature of the place as *Khuldabad* (Heavenly Abode).

Unlike the Junaydi Sufis who participated in political activities of their times, the Chishti Sufis did not believe in having associations with political powers of the day. But this trend amongst the Chishtis of Khuldabad underwent drastic changes over time. In fact, it was after Sufi Zainuddin Shirazi that the shrine culture of Khuldabad developed political affiliations with rulers of the day and the long-cherished Chishti tradition of maintaining distance from kings and courts eventually fell obsolete. Interestingly, the second Bahmani Sultan Muhammad Shah I (1358-1377 A.D) enforced the *shariah* and dealt sternly with unsocial elements like highway robberies and thieves, closed down wine shops, and banned the institutions of prostitutes. This he did mostly to please Shaikh Zainuddin Shirazi Daulatabadi, a leading Sufi of Khuldabad and the spiritual successor of Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib (the senior most *khalifa* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi).¹⁶

It was with Shaikh Zainuddin Dawood Shirazi that the shrine culture at Khuldabad got crystallized and underwent remarkable changes from its traditional standpoint. He was born in Shiraz, Iran around circa 1301-1302 CE, and had traveled from the Middle Eastern land to come to India in search of knowledge.

¹³ Ernst, op.cit, p.116.

¹⁴ Azad Bilgrami, in his "Rawzat-ul-Auliya" (p.28) interprets this as part of the reverse transmigration back to Delhi, announced by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

¹⁵ Shaikh M.R., op.cit, p.125.

¹⁶ H.K. Sherwani and P.M. Joshi; "History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724," (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973,) pp.183-184.

He first arrived at Delhi and over time traveled across famous shrines in North India before settling at Khuldabad. When he arrived in the town of Khuldabad, at that time the prestige of Sufi Burhanuddin Gharib was already well-established and he had numerous disciples and a massive following at the place. Sufi Burhanuddin was fond of *sama'a* and when Zainuddin Shirazi came to know of this, he disparagingly stayed away from associating with him since Zainuddin lived a life of piety as an *alim* (pl. *ulema*, a term used for a learned scholar in Islamic sciences) until then and strictly followed the *shari'ah*. However, as the fame of Sufi Burhanuddin multiplied, Zainuddin Shirazi developed a curiosity towards gauging the Sufi's depth of knowledge and the cause for his widespread popularity amongst the locals. He sent a set of difficult questions to Sufi Burhanuddin and received highly satisfactory responses in return, which made Sufi Zainuddin acknowledge the spiritual status of Sufi Burhanuddin Gharib, eventually in around 1335-1336 CE, Zainuddin Shirazi came to the presence of Sufi Burhanuddin along with Maulana Ruknuddin Hammad Kashani (the author of *Nafa'is-ul-Anfas*), and took formal initiation into the discipleship of Sufi Burhanuddin. On 18th Rabbi-us-Sani, 737 Hijri, the urs of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Sufi Zainuddin was bestowed with the *khilafah* from Sufi Burhanuddin and accordingly, he became the chief proponent of the Chishti order at Khuldabad.¹⁷ It is noteworthy to mention that from Sufi Zainuddin's rise to spiritual prestige at Khuldabad, the shrine policies too underwent a massive transformation, and eventually political dissociation of Chishti Sufis with the ruling regimes, formally ended.

Another famous Chishti Sufi at Khuldabad was Hazrat Sayyad Muhammad bin Yusuf Al-Hussaini, popularly known as *Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz*, who had migrated to Daulatabad with his father, Sufi Sayyad Yusuf Al-Husaini in the 14th century on account of Timur's invasion and Delhi's precarious position at the time. After Sufi Zainuddin, it was Sufi *Gesu Daraz* who broke away from the most established Chishti tradition of detachment from politics and kings, when he accepted the invitation of Bahmani Sultan Tajuddin Firoz Shah (1397-1422CE) to settle at the Bahmani capital of Gulbarga. His shrine stands revered till today and is an important place of worship for people of all faiths in Gulbarga, modern Kalburgi, Karnataka. The shrine of Sufi Gesu Daraz's father, Sufi Sayyad Yusuf Al-Hussaini *Raju Qattal* is located at Khuldabad and many local legends are associated with his shrine like the famous story of a black sparrow, who dared to cross the aerial path above the Sufi's tomb and fell to pieces. Perhaps it is because of this incident that he earned the sobriquet *Qattal*, meaning slayer. It is believed by locals that even today no bird can fly over the dome of this Sufi saint.

After Sufi Gesu Daraz's migration from Khuldabad, many Chishti Sufis of the 15th-16th CE such as Shah Miranji *Shamsul Ushshaq* and Shaikh Burhanuddin *Jaanam* stationed themselves near Shahpur hillock near Bijapur and reverted to the former Chishti tradition of remaining away from the political centers of Bijapur, Gulbarga, and Delhi.¹⁸

Given the conspicuously prominent position that the Chishti Sufis Burhanuddin and Zainuddin held at Khuldabad, the social composition of the Muslim community at Khuldabad revolves around claiming descent from the attendants of these two chief shrines. Those claiming descent from Sufi Burhanuddin's shrine culture are known to be belonging to the *Dargah-i-Hadd-i-Kalaan* or the Greater Dargah Society

¹⁷ Abdus Samad Dehlavi, "Rauzat-ul-Auliya," Urdu to Hindi Transcription, (M.R. Publications, New Delhi, 2015), p. 40.

¹⁸ Richard Eaton, "Sufis of Bijapur: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India, 1300-1700," (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978), p. 73-78.

and those from Sufi Zainuddin's are known as *Dargah-i-Hadd-i-Khurd* or the Lesser Dargah Society.¹⁹ In local parlance, it is colloquially referred to as *Badi Hadd* (Greater Descent) and *Chhoti Hadd* (Lesser Descent) respectively.

Another interesting phenomenon is the existence of several women Sufi saints in Khuldabad. These include Sufi saint Bibi Hajira, the revered mother of Chishti Sufis Muntajibuddin and Burhanuddin; Bibi Ayesha, considered to be the daughter of renowned Chishti Sufi Hazrat Baba Fariduddin *Ganj-e-Shakar* of Ajodhan, and the five sisters of Sufis Burhanuddin and Muntajibuddin, known locally as the *Panch Bibiyani* (Five Pious Ladies).

Suharwardiya/Soharwardiya Order

The Suharwardiya order owes its origins to a certain Sufi Abul Najibuddin Abdul Qadir Suharwardiya, who was a native of Sohrevard in Iran around 11th CE. The rise of the Suharwardiya order in Central Asia was almost contemporary to the advent of Chishti Sufism in the Indian subcontinent with Chishti Sufi Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. However, it was the paternal nephew of Abul Najibuddin Suharwardiya, Shahabuddin Abu Hafs Umar Suharwardiya, who is regarded as the real founder of the Suharwardiya order, and one who consolidated Suharwardiya's position as a distinct Sufi order. He also authored one of the most famous Sufi works, *Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*, which gained widespread popularity across the Islamic world.

A notable Suharwardi Sufi at Khuldabad is Hazrat Jalaluddin *Ganj-i-Ravaan*. Though details of his activities and precise role in disseminating Suharwardiya teachings at Khuldabad are not known, his monumental shrine complex is located against a splendid water tank, locally called the *Pariyon ka Talaab* (Pond of Fairies). *Rauzat-ul-Auliya* of Khuldabad's historian, Azad Bilgrami records the scenic beauty of this well-fortified water body at Sufi Jalaluddin's shrine and goes on to speculate that perhaps he was one of the earliest Sufis to have come to Khuldabad, much before the Chishtis. Since the *malfuzat*²⁰ of Sufi Jalaluddin is no longer extant, we have very little information about this saint or the operations of the Suharwardiya order at Khuldabad in general.

Interestingly, a huge stone can be seen in the courtyard of Sufi Jalaluddin, which resembles a yoni of a *shiva lingam*. Local traditions believe it to be Sufi Jalaluddin's praying stone, while legends say that the Sufi is said to have trapped a demon or djinn named 'Azaar' in the stone. Perhaps the existence of the ritual stone attests to the pre-eminence of some ancient cult of Shiva in the region, and Ellora being in close proximity, this speculation seems to hold considerable ground. It is also important to note that *Rauza* (modern Khuldabad) was known for including a region called '*Buddhavanti*' within its limits in the Imperial Rashtrakuta period (7th-9th CE), thereby attesting to some non-Islamic religious confluence at the place. Moreover, since Khuldabad is situated at an elevation, water availability here is better than most of its adjoining regions in Aurangabad. Thus, water bodies like the *Pariyon ka Talaab*, the *Thatte Nahar*, *Pangra*, *Dharm*, *Bhadra*, *Hauz-e-Kullam* and other dams demonstrate a rich tradition of rainwater

¹⁹ Shaikh M.R., op.cit. p. 97.

²⁰ Literally means the spoken words and records of a Sufi Master as recorded by disciples. It forms one of the primary sources of Sufi literature.

harvesting in the city – an ancient practice that has several non-Islamic parallels and is believed to be a good deed in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, leading one to *moksha* or salvation.

It has been documented by *Khaksar Sabzawari*, an 18th CE chronicler of the Deccan, that Hazrat Momin Arif Billah Suharwardi of Daulatabad, believed to have descended from the eighth Shia Imam, Ali Raza, had started the paper industry at Kagzipura in Khuldabad for the first time.²¹ Both Momin Arif Suharwardi and Jalaluddin *Ganj Ravaan* are regarded as the two earliest Sufis at Khuldabad, even before the arrival of Chishtis. However, it is a well-known fact that, unlike the Chishti order, Suhrawardis were actively involved in the political developments of the period. They accepted government service, amassed wealth, and frequently associated with the rulers. Their *khanqah* organization was different from the Chishtis.²² Unfortunately, nothing specific is known with regards to the functioning of this particular order in Khuldabad, although an oral tradition suggesting Sufi Momin Arif's miraculous resurrection of a poor woman's dead cow, is quite well-known in the region and the grave of the cow too, is located in the said Sufi's shrine. The shrine of Sufi Momin Arif is not located within the limits of the present-day city of Khuldabad, but is positioned near the fortress of Daulatabad.

Miscellaneous Sufi orders in the Deccan

Other Sufi orders like the Shattari, Naqshbandi, and Qadri *silsilahs* were also prevalent in the 15th CE Deccan. The Shattaris were considerably active in Gujarat and Maharashtra and the overall Deccan, in addition to their influence as far as Bengal and Jaunpur. The Shattari order was established by Muhammad Ghaus Shattari, a revered saint of the *silsilah*. As a scholar of Sanskrit, he produced a lot of literature on Sufi and yogic practices, and his liberal approach helped the order to expand and bring many into its fold. This *silsilah* did not follow strict policies pertaining to politics and each subsequent Sufi would either have a liberal attitude towards state and government or stick to a conservative view of non-association with ruling elites. The Shattaris under Sufi Ghaus established close contacts with the rich and powerful, neglecting the common people. Thereafter, his disciple Shah Wajihuddin Alavi Gujarati (d. 1569 A.D) reversed his policy by declining state favors, discouraging non-Muslim influence like yogic practices, and strictly adhering to Islamic law. But his descendants, especially Shah Hashim Pir Alavi (d. 1648 A.D) and Shah Sibghatullah (d. 1606 A.D), who migrated to Deccan, established close contacts with the Ibrahim Shahi court (1580-1627 A.D) at Bijapur. They accepted grants and endowments and even allowed *sama* (audition) and *raqs* (ecstatic dances).²³

The Naqshbandis emerged contemporarily to the Chishti order and it is one of the earliest *silsilahs* in the Islamic world. However, it reached India only in the 16th CE under the patronage of the Mughals. The founder is believed to be Khwaja Ahmed Ara Yasri in the 12th CE, but it was Sufi Baqi Billah who organized the order and disseminated his teachings in India. Similarly, the Qadri *silsilah* too came into India quite late, but was exceedingly popular in the Middle Eastern lands and even as far as Greece, Spain, and Morocco. Qadri order played a dynamic role in the religious and spiritual life of Indian masses between the 16th and 18th centuries. Prince Dara Shikoh and Princess Jahan Ara had formally initiated

²¹ Shaikh M.R., op.cit, p. 102.

²² K.A Nizami; "Some Aspects of Religion and Politics during the Thirteenth Century," (Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i Delli, New Delhi, 1974), pp. 225-28.

²³ Qazi, et.al., op.cit, p. 86

themselves as disciples of Qadri Sufi Miyan Mir. It flourished with great vigor under the patronage of the Bahmanis and many Sufi saints were associated with the Bahmanid court. However, Emperor Aurangzeb did not patronize this order and the *silsilah* suffered a setback due to his callousness. One principal saint of the Qadriyya order resting at Khuldabad is Shah Khaksar *Sabzawari*. He earned the epithet ‘Sabzawari’ on account of the lush greenery that surrounds his tomb at Khuldabad. He is said to have authored *Sawanih*, an autobiography that is no longer extant. All these subsidiary *silsilahs* must have played some role in the socio-cultural life at Khuldabad. The Chishtis Sufis however, dominated the socio-cultural as well as the political landscape at Khuldabad.

Conclusion

It was the Sufi shrines that acted as catalysts for socio-political changes in the spiritual landscape of Khuldabad. From being a secluded land of mystics, Khuldabad became renowned as the spiritual hub of Deccan and acquired great political significance. Although the locality was already famous owing to the Ellora caves, its antiquity and significance in the religious history of the subcontinent; Khuldabad Sufis added a new dimension of spirituality to the existing prestige of the place and enhanced its political as well as historical importance. To quote Carl Ernst: “The Khuldabad texts portray the Sufis’ relations with political power as somewhere between independence and inter-dependence... Some eminent members of the court, like Malik-ul-Muluk and Qutlugh Khan, could become close disciples of shaykhs like Burhanuddin Gharib. What is most surprising is the frequency with which The Chishti shaykhs refused to entertain the notion that their courtier disciples should renounce the world.”²⁴ The Chishtis strictly enjoined the precept of “*la radd, wa la kadd, wa la madd*” (no rejecting, no asking, no saving).²⁵

Thus, the balance between the Sufi establishment and the political power was delicate. It was the Chishti Sufis that played a greater role in the spread of Islam at Khuldabad. Besides, Ibn Arabi’s proposition of the doctrine of *wahdat-al-wajood* in the 15th CE, gave a great boost to the dissemination of Sufi ideas in medieval India. Places like Khuldabad, Bijapur, and Gulbarga became the abode of Sufi mystics, who went on to amass wide popular support. This, in turn, led the ruling regimes of the time to patronize them and bring them closer to the crown.

In Khuldabad overtime, the politicization of the shrine culture and close proximity of ruling elites with the shrines in terms of obtaining spiritual blessings in lieu of grants and gifts, reversed the established Chishti tradition of minimal contact with rulers and thus, a large number of common people, courtiers as well as kings of the day became patrons of Khuldabad Sufis. The place came to acquire a symbolic significance as a road to political hegemony for subsequent dynasties emerging in the Deccan. The impact that such ties generated in the larger socio-cultural landscape of medieval Khuldabad and the resulting dynastic politics entrenched strong political associations of various kingdoms with the shrine culture at Khuldabad.

²⁴ Ernst, op.cit, p. 200

²⁵ Originally cited in “Ahsan-ul-Aqwal,” p. 82-83.

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