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HISTIOROGRAPHICAL TRENDS ON SUFI SHRINES: A STUDY OF NIZAMUDDIN AULIYA'S *DARGAH*.

SUBMITTED BY

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The study of Sufism and Sufi saints has been corroborated with new angles and perspectives in recent times. It has been accepted that Sufi saints and their shrines have played a subtle but important role in building of social-cultural environment of medieval India. With the establishment of Delhi sultanate various Sufis orders settled in the newly found Islamic empire, and gradually created a cultural space in which both the Muslims and the non Muslims could take part. The Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadiri, Naqshbandi and Shattari have all contributed in creating the visage of popular Islam. The role played by the Sufi shrines and sacred spaces for that matter is enlightening in accessing the construction of multi layered and specific cultural zones in history. Especially in medieval Indian history the Sufi *dargahs* are looked upon as stimulants which contributed massively in shaping social identities. The present paper seek to study the various historical models employed to study the famous *dargahs* of Chishti Sufi masters in Indian subcontinent with a special reference to the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi.

The word *dargah* literally means the royal chamber or a doorway. The word *dargah* is used for the tomb of a Sufi master in a symbolic way to stress the status of the saint and his supreme spiritual position. The saint in Sufi traditions thus matched the emperors of the material world in their

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outward projection, just as the emperor governs the physical territories the Sufi masters governs the spiritual ones. The word *dargah* in its very nature reflects not just an architecturally adorned tomb but it also symbolize the development of a complex structure of rituals, customs, traditions and festivals which are incorporated in the *dargah's* identity to celebrate the memory of the deceased saint. Through a nexus of care takers and popular following among the local masses, the *dargah* tends to display the living presence of the saint and popularize the belief that his spiritual powers are not deceased with his physical body. The rich offerings and the annual celebration of various festivals, on one hand gives the *dargah* a proper identity in the local belief system along with the historical context in which it was developed. The Chishti shrines because of their popular appeal have occupied the attention of modern researchers in a major way. Their indigenous character and their understanding of medieval Indian milieu have separated them from other Sufi orders. The major Chishti saints: Mu'inuddin Chishti, Shaikh Farid and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya have been studied within well defined scholarly frame.

P.M.Currie's 'The Shrine and the Cult of Mu 'in al din Chishti of Ajmer' has studied the cult of the founding saint of Chishti order.[1] The shrine of Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakkar has received the scholarly attention of Richard M Eaton. Eaton in a series of essays has attempted to study the historical evolution of the shrine of Shaikh Farid along with its role in shaping the social-religious identities of its environment.[2] Prof K. A. Nizami has also attempted to create the *khanqah* life of Shaikh Farid in his, 'Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-din'. Prof. Nizami has also studied the life and hospice of Shaikh Nizamuddin and his spiritual successor Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Delhi in two separate works.[3] Making use of some of the rare mystic sources of medieval times, Prof Nizami has outdone himself in the thorough depiction of daily life of these saints. Carl W

[1] P. M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in Al-Din Chishti Of Ajmer*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989.

[2] Richard. M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204-1760*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000; *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000; India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

[3] K. A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, New Delhi, 1975; *Life And Time of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007; *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chirag-i-Delhi*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, New Delhi, 2009.

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Ernst and Bruce B Lawrence have also produced some of the finest scholarly depiction of the Chishtis in their 'Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and beyond.'[4] Most of these works have made extensive use of the *malfuz* literature which was first produced in the Chishti circles and was later adopted by the compliers of other orders. The genre of *tazikra* or the biographies of the Sufi masters was already in existence but it was the *tazikra* like *Siyar-ul-Auliya* which have made the Chishti history more within the reach of the historians and scholars. *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad, Durar-i-Nizamiya, Khair-ul-Majalis* and works produced by later Chishti compliers and biographers have provided wide variety of material to construct the history of Chishtis.

The *dargah* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya however has failed to entice scholarly attention which is received by the *dargahs* of Ajmer and Pakpattan. It is more confusing since the *dargah* of Nizamuddin is visited by millions of followers every year. The *dargah* which celebrates festival of all major religions and sects in India (Basant, Prophet and even Muharram) has transcended religious, sectarian and other divides to infuse both Hindu and Islamic festivals. The shrine has become a popular place of devotion and cultural co-mingling yet its historical evolution has not drawn any attention from the historians.

The Sufis are mostly studied in biographic contexts and Chishtis have received maximum contribution from the biographic genre. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya has been studied in this context by a number of scholars such as Prof. K.A. Nizami, Muneera Harei, Sadia Dehlvi, and Prof Muhammad Habib. However the focus of Prof Habib was more occupied with the Chishti literature than Chishti biographies. His work in the form of articles studied the authenticity and genuineness of some of the earliest Chishti *malfuz*.[5] His concept of mystic literature and mystic teachings in India found the most prominent expression in the writings of his eminent student Prof. K.A.Nizami who made use of extensive Sufi literature in the form of *malfuzat* and *tazikrat*. He

[4] Carl. W. Ernst, Bruce. B. Lawrence, eds, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002

[5] Mohammad Habib, Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period (Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib), vol.1, ed, K.A. Nizami, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974.

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used Ali Jandar's less known *malfuz* of Nizamuddin, the *Durar-i-Nizami*. Nizami studies the daily life of Nizamuddin's *khanqah* and the role of *khalifa*, in the medieval mystic sources. Nizami's work on Nizamuddin was not only the earliest but for a long time it was a benchmark in its own way. Despite the usefulness of Nizami's valuable injunctions on Sufism and philosophy of Chishti saints, his works has serious limitations. 'The life and times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya', is centered on the *khanqah* and its daily life, therefore it does not analyze the development of Nizamuddin's shrine as a popular cult. In the biographical trend, one can further mention Muneera Haeri's work, 'Chishtis the living light'. Muneera Haeri traced the lives of famous Chishti masters including Nizamuddin. Muneera Haeri's personal relationship with the Chishtis has made her work wholly focused on devotional role played by these masters. The work is also limited to the study of Nizamuddin's *khanqah* and his daily routine.[6] The Mehru Zaffar's book on Nizamuddin is a short depiction of his life. It concentrates more on the pious persona of Nizamuddin and his philosophy as described in mystic literature.[7]

It must be understood that the biographical works of Shaikh Nizamuddin focused itself only on the devotional understanding of Shaikh without placing him in his complex political and social context. The biographical works hardly take note of his activities in the capital city of Delhi Sultanate. These works though useful in constructing the life sketch of Nizamuddin fail to provide any insight in the later history of his shrine and how it emerged as a popular place of pilgrimage. Why Shaikh Nizamuddin adopted various non conformist practices while he remained a devout Muslim himself? Sadia Dehlvi in her depiction of Sufi shrines in Delhi, have portrayed the *dargah* complex of Nizamuddin through the series of photographs and have mapped its mystical environment. She traced the history of this *dargah* with its burials and graveyard. Dehlvi in her work gives description of Nizamuddin's abandoned *khanqah* and the complex hierarchy of tombs in and around the shrine of Nizamuddin. The book tries to capture the soulful and stillness of Nizamuddin's *dargah* despite of the constant hustle bustle. The work though quoting heavily from the contemporary mystic sources is a reflection of author's personal devotion and allegiance to the

[6] Muneera Haeri, *The Chishtis: A Living Light*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2000.

[7] Mehru Jaffer, *The Book of Nizamuddin Auliya*, Penguin Press, New Delhi, 2012.

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Chishtis. There are two other works which do not fall under the biographical trends but are related to the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. One of these is the work of Desiderio Pinto, *'The piri-muridi Relationship: A Study of Nizamuddin dargah'*. Desidero Pinto in this work focuses on various dimensions of master-disciple relationship in the field set up of Nizamuddin's shrine. The work is concerned more with the practices and concept of piri-muridi than on the shrine or history of Nizamuddin.[8] Second work is that of Patricia Jeffery, 'Frogs in Well', it studied the lives of women related to *pirzade* families.[9] Though in a number of ways the scholars have dealt with the life and ideological current present in Nizamuddin's own life, making him a potential subject of research but his shrine never received the same attention as his life and philosophy has. There could be a number of reasons behind this evident neglect, but one primary reason lies in the fact that the potential models which are employed to study the two other popular *dargahs* of Chishtis i. e Ajmer and Pakpattan falls short to find a platform and evolve as suitable model to study the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin.

Apart from the biographical and devotional model to study Nizamuddin and the other Chishti saints, it is imperative to analyze model created by Richard M. Eaton in his studies. His understanding of the Sufis and their working in the local areas as the interpreter of Islam has made him study the role of Sufi shrine through an all together different model. In his purposed theory he describes the Sufi shrines as not only the interpreter of Islam in devotional context but also as the displayer of courtly culture in the far off places of the Sultanate. He purposed that the Sufi shrines through an extensive adaptation of the royal symbols of Delhi's court into its ritualistic structure, have created a social hierarchy of its own. He brings forth the idea that the Sufi shrines display almost a theatrical drama of rituals and customs and involved the non-lettered masses both as a participant and as a sponsor.[10]

[8] Desiderio Pinto, *The Piri-Muridi Relationship: A Study of Nizamuddin Dargah,* Manohar, New Delhi, 1995

[9] Patricia Jeffery, *Frogs in a well: Indian women in Purdah*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979

[10] Richard. M. Eaton, 'The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid', in Richard M Eaton ed, *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 203-24.

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While structuring his study on royal symbols, Eaton tends to suggest that among geographically distant areas the concept of Sultan as a temporal authority and Caliph as the religious authority seem to be abstract terms for the non-Islamic and uneducated masses. For them, the spiritually powerful Sufis act both as the interpreter and symbol of devotional as well as material world.[11] As Gellener also purposes that in the tribal settings, the saints symbolize Islam. Whatever they do or say became Islam for the masses.[12] According to Eaton, the concept has been popularized both by the Sufi traditions and rulers, who patronized the Sufi shrines. The Sufi traditions capitalized the popularity of Sufi Shaikh by making use of terms such as *wali* i.e 'one who establish *wilayat*' or the friend of God or the protector of particular region. The Sufi traditions also integrate the concept of *barakat* into the identity of the shrine; the spiritual powers of the saint are forever enshrined in his tomb. The *barakat* also travelled from the saint to his descendent thus making them equally venerated and blessed.[13] While the rulers through the acceptance of shrine as a divine institute attempt to reach to the depths of their empires where these Sufi shrines acted as intermediaries. Eaton concludes that for the Sultans and later for the Mughals the popular and indigenous nature of Chishti shrines was too powerful to be ignored. He emphasized that the Chishtis shrines becomes important because of their structure local identities as Muslims and as Indians.[14] Similarly the shrine of Baba Farid both as a devotional place and as a powerful social and political entity enhanced its potential as a *dargah* and marked its place in the process of Islamization. It made universal culture system available to the local masses by making extensive use of its exaggerated symbols of authority which gave this shrine both power and an identity of its own.

[11] Richard. M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204-1760,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, pp.31- 32

[12] Ernest Gellner, 'Doctor and Saint', in Akbar. S. Ahmad and David. M. Hart, eds, Islam in Tribal societies: From the Atlas to Indus, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, pp. 21-38.

[13] Richard. M. Eaton, 'Approaches to the study of Conversion in India', in David Lorenzen, ed, *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800: Debates in Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 117-18.

[14] Richard. M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204,* p. 84.

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The interest ignited by Eaton has given way to the studies of several Chishti shrines with new perspectives. One such work falls to the credit of P.M. Currie who in 1989 published his work on the cult and shrine of Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti of Ajmer. It was a first complete study of the founder of Chishti *silsila* in India; the study was an attempt to segregate the mythical account from the actual history and emergence of the shrine. P.M. Currie has focused on the sacred structure of the shrine and how it has created a nexus of well defined offices and employees, who played their traditional role in its working. The succession disputes, heavy endowments and involvement of royal dynasties have presented the *dargah* as a royal extension on material front. Somewhere, the model of royal symbols and process of Islamization created by Eaton find a voice in Currie's technical analysis of fiancés and ritualistic projection created by the shrine. His projection of the role of spiritual heads and traditional *khuddam* is insightful and helps one to understand the structure of shrine administration. The *sajjadanishin* is the lineal descendent of a Sufi saint who along with his tomb complex inherits his *barakat* through the blood line. In many Sufi *silsila*, the blood relative or the sons of the saints not only receive the shrine and *barakat* but they also inherited their father's spiritual *wilayat*, as has been a custom among the Suhrawardi in India. But among the Chishtis, the inheritance is always of two kinds. The spiritual successor is always the chief *khalifah* who after the demise of saint take up his *wilayat*. The action as mentioned earlier is symbolized by saint's mystic regalia.[15] While there is a hereditary successor in the form of *sajjadanishin* who is a custodian of his shrine, he also receives the endowment and grants in the name of saint and shares it with the traditional servants of the shrine call *khuddam*. The hereditary custodian is not entitled to preserve the mystic principles of the Chishtis. It has been proven by the working of various shrines in which the successors mix freely with the royalty and accept grants and regular income from them. Currie dive deep into the hierarchy of the shrine, tracing the history of both the hereditary custodians and the traditional service classes and how they have been integrated in shrine complex.

[15] Tanvir Anjum, 'Sons of Bread and Sons of Soul: Lineal and Spiritual Descendants of Baba Farid and the Issue of Succession', in Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur, eds, *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, Aakar Books, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 63-79

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In another interesting study on the Chishtis, one finds the works produced by Carl.W. Ernst and Bruce B Lawrence. The work provides an interesting and probing proposition to the study of Sufism. Their works ranging from a wide variety of Sufi orders in India and outside present an altogether different approach to the study of Sufi saints. But their research consisting of Chishti orders is an outright magnificent contribution to the development of the order beyond the realm of Sultanate and Mughal. They create a continuous chain of evolution from the initial establishment of Chishtis to the shrines of famous Chishti masters in present time, taking note of how the order shaped in colonial times.

Carl W Ernst in an interesting evaluation considers the situation in which the Chishti struggled to maintain balance between their mystic pursuits and the obligations of Islam in Indian environment. He points out that these saints had to struggle against the three principles paradoxes of their societies in the form of marriage, family duties and pilgrimage or *hajj*. While the Chishti masters excelled in all other required qualities as mentioned by Simon Digby and Annemarie Schimmel, they had to deal with the constant struggle to maintain a family and a self imposed poverty.[16] The responsibility of taking care of the children always collided with their austerities and wishes to have seclusion for meditations. The three early Chishti masters resolved these conflicts and paradoxes in their own way, but they always have to be mindful of the accepted social norms. Even when they fail to perform *hajj* they would replace it with some ideological mystic injunction such as *ziyarat* to their master's grave or a pious Sufi, which according to them would give benefit of *hajj*.[17] Ernst, while placing Nizamuddin in the context of these accepted features of a medieval Sufis, observes the absence of the vital paradox from Nizamuddin's life in the form of marriage as he adopted celibacy. Ernst fails to suggest any possible interpretation of such a strong action of Nizamuddin which did not fall either with belief of Islamic elites of his

[16] Simon Digby, 'Abdul Quddas Gangohi (1456-1537): The personality and attitude of Medieval Indian Sufi', in K.A. Nizami, ed., *Medieval India- A Miscellany*, vol. 3, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1975, pp-1-58; Annemarie Schimmel, 'Sufi Biographies', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for the study of Cincinnati, Ohio, April 27, 1979.

[17] Carl. W. Ernst and Bruce. B. Lawrence, eds, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, p.65

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time nor with the *sunnah* of prophet. In order to respect the command of his master Nizamuddin deviated from the model behavior of Muslim mystics. However Nizamuddin suffered with another kind of paradoxes in the form of his intellectual arrogance and the path of mysticism in which he was guided by Shaikh Farid, through strict methods. But the absence of accepted paradox which enhances the mass appeal of a popular saint seems to be misfit for the mass image of Nizamuddin. To find out a potential reason for it, the scholars devised the model of literary traditions. The literary traditions means that the *malfuz* i.e. recorded conversation of Sufi masters and *tazikra* i.e. biographies of Sufi masters, played vital role in the popularity of Nizamuddin.[18] Ernst, while describing the impact of hagiological traditions on the image of a popular saint, writes that 'the reputation of a Sufi master largely depended on the hagiographical process that may be divided into two parts, first the pivotal life events of the saints as noted by his contemporaries and applauded during his life time.' He also observes that these life events have to be in the 'conformity to the attitude, activities and allegiances esteemed by the various groups of elite of the saint's time and region.' While the second requirement of his fame depend upon the posthumous projection created by his family and followers through the construction of impressive tomb shrine or through the oral dissemination of his teachings.[19] Lawrence however believes that tomb cult can be ignored to an extent while assessing the degree of fame of the saint in but the biographical or literary traditions cannot be ignored.[20]

[18] Carl. W. Ernst and Bruce. B. Lawrence, eds, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, p.72; Simon Digby, 'Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India', in Raziuddin Aquil eds., *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp.118-147.

[19] Carl.W. Ernst and Bruce. B. Lawrence, eds, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond*, p.72.

[20] Bruce. B. Lawrence, 'The Earliest Chishtya and Shaikh Nizam al-Din Awliya', in R.E. Frykenberg, ed, *Delhi Through Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, (Delhi Omnibus), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p. 32; but he also observes that in the absence of literature it is the tomb which further the memories of a mystic through ages. As happened to the founder of Chishti order, Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chishti, he is remembered through his shrine because there is absence to any authentic literature in his context. There are some other Sufis like Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilliani who become popular through striking combination of successful *silsila*, tomb cult and rich biographical literature as well. p. 41.

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The literary works creates the persona of the saint as the perfect model of behavior and as the superior to all human. They would use terminology to reflect this supreme divinity of the saint making him above and apart from his contemporaries.[21] Fawa'id refers to Shaikh Nizamuddin with various titles such as 'axis of the world', 'poles of the poles of earth', 'seal of the saints of the earth', 'munificent master' and so on to depict his status both as the foremost among others but also alleviating him beyond the scriptural and personal mode of authority.[22] The dream vision of Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ja'far Makki, in which he was informed that Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Abdul Qadir Gilliani, had received the title of Mahbubiyat from God.[23] Both Lawrence and Ernst further build their argument on the point that the biographical works related to a Sufi would not be able to solve the paradoxes of his life but they would either ignore these paradoxes or find a way to solve them by creating conformity with the social behavior of their time. In the later hagiography, readers are informed that every evening a camel would arrive at the window of Nizamuddin to take him to *makka* for *ziyarat*.[24] So the literary tradition would not only create space for the saint but would also make him accepted through the social norms. Both Ernst and Lawrence have emphasized the fact that the urban residence of Nizamuddin was also an attraction for the intellectuals and elite of Delhi Sultanate towards the Chishti hospice. But Nizamuddin's own literary tastes and his sensibility for music and poetry worked as a bigger pull for these poets

[21] Ibid., 33

[22] Ravinder Gargesh, 'Some Aspects of Discourse Analysis in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad, in *Journal of Subcontinent Researches*, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, vol. 2, no.4, 2010, pp. 64-72.

[23] Carl.W.Ernst, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, p. 70. Sayyid Jafar Makki (d.1486) was the *khalifah* of Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Delhi, and in a curious way, in his dream vision he did not see his own spiritual mentor as the beloved of God but it was the memory of Shaikh Nizamuddin with heavy literary traditions which earn him the special privilege of being the beloved of God for Makki. But Amir Khurd even before Makki made such observation regarding the beloved status of Nizamuddin in siyar-ul-auliya, p. 98.

[24] Amir Khurd, Siyar-ul-Auliya, translated as *Kirmani's Siyar-ul-Awliya*,I, by I.H.Ansari and Hamid Afaq Qureshi, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, New Delhi, 2013, pp.101-102, Amir Khurd quoted an eminent disciple of Nizamuddin Molana Badr-ud-din Yar, Badr-ud-din narrates that one night he saw a camel at the threshold of Nizamuddin's window. Another authority of Amir Khurd was Shaikh Najm-ud-din Safahani who was an attendant of *Khana-i-Kaba*, he replied to a question about why Nizamuddin the leader of entire world does not come for the *ziyarat* of Kaba, Najm-ud-din replied that Nizamuddin always take part in the morning prayers in the *Khana-i-Kaba* and attend the congregational prayer as well.

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and scholars as they found in him the epitome of their own talents.[25] The three eminent scholars of 14th century Amir Khusrau, Amir Hasan Sizi, and Ziauddin Barani were the disciples of Shaikh Nizamuddin. Amir Khusrau dedicated several of his works to his master, he immortalize the presence of his mentor in verses like *chaap tilak sab chini* and others. These verses of Khusrau are sung today in the shrine of Nizamuddin have created a popular image of the saint. Amir Hasan Size, another court poet during Alauddin Khalji composed the classical and first *malfuz* produced in India call *Fawa'id–ul Fu'ad* and it was consisted of recorded conversations of Nizamuddin. Ziauddin Barani, the medieval historiographer of *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi, Fatwa-i-Jahandari* and *Hasaratnama,* was also a disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin. He quoted example how the Shaikh's blessings caused the victory of Warangal and how the Sultan Alauddin dedicated this victory to the fact that Shaikh Nizamuddin's words could never end in vain.[26] Barani *in Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* also emphasized the fact that due to the presence of Nizamuddin in Delhi, the spread of Islamic knowledge increased as devout Muslims were influenced by Shaikh's piety and therefore become free of evil.[27] The framework of literary tradition does not merely imply the essentiality of the presence of *malfuz* or *tazaikra* regarding a saint but it also emphasized that the artistic composition of the work is equally important. Lawrence gives example of *Khair-ul-Majalis* of Hamid Qalander, a poet disciple of Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Delhi who was the spiritual successor of Nizamuddin. Hamid Qalander in this *malfuz* recorded the conversation of Shaikh Nasiruddin, but as a *malfuz* it is lesser known than *Fawa'id* of Hasan Size. The two poets are incomparable in their poetic talent and the two *malfuz* cannot be compared on the account of elegance and sophistication. Lawrence suggests that since Nasiruddin was far less famous than his spiritual mentor, so it can be suggested that Shaikh Nizamuddin could not rise to fame if he was not captured by an able poet

[25] Bruce.B.Lawrence, 'The Earliest Chishtya and Shaikh Nizam al-Din Awliya', p.51.

[26] Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi,* quoted in Maulvi Zafar Hasan, *Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India, No. 10: A Guide to Nizamu-d Din,* Archeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1998 (reprint), p. 4; Barani mentions that Alauddin sent his two nobles Malik Qara Beg and Qazi Mughithuddin to Nizamuddin in this regard; Blain.H.Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion, and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate*, Viva Books, New Delhi, 2013, p. 85-86

[27] Amir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Auliya,* pp. 270-71.

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like Hasan Size.[28] Though Lawrence suggests that it might not be entirely true as the personality of the saint also matters but as mentioned earlier he summed up saying that Nizamuddin himself was a tasteful poet.

Thus he contends that had Nizamuddin been the same kind of austerous, devout and compassionate saint living in some small city or village other than the capital city of Sultanate, it was quite possible that in the absence of some distinctive literary tradition he would have submerged in the obscurity of time. Whether he dealt with the rulers or not, the Shaikh was connected to the court through his disciples who were court poets and historians. He was open to all but it was the elite who created his enduring fame.

In its own context the findings and analysis of both Ernst and Lawrence have displayed interesting and thoughtful propositions. Their work definitely helps in constructing Sufism in a new form. But even if their analysis of Shaikh Nizamuddin as an urban, scholar, compassionate mystic whose fame rested heavily on the poet disciples is acceptable to a degree. It is yet to be studied whether Shaikh Nizamuddin as perceived by the literate and illiterate mass of people ranging from all walks and fields of life depend upon simple literary traditions? The countless beggars, homeless people, wandering fakirs and even the educated and well to do average Muslim and non-Muslim are hardly have heard about Amir Hasan Sijzi or Ziauddin Barani, though they have an idea of Amir Khusrau (in his tomb) who remains as the gate keeper of the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin. And even though he was not the spiritual successor or *khalifah* of Nizamuddin yet his memories are cherished and celebrated because of his extreme devotion to his master not because he was the *Tuti-i-hind* or the inventor of musical instruments or *ragas*.

The text-centric approach of literary traditions is an effort to understand the life and activities of Shaikh Nizamuddin but it defiantly does not explain the popular thrust of his shrine

[28] Bruce.B.Lawrence, 'The Earliest Chishtya and Shaikh Nizam al-Din Awliya', in R.E.Frykenberg, ed, *Delhi Through Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, (Delhi Omnibus), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp.38-52.

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which for a long time remain in poverty. This approach defiantly pays homage to the texts and sources to construct the medieval mystic current yet this microscopic approach is strictly elite in its nature. The subaltern school has long contended that as long as the social structure would be studied from above it would yield half baked theories and would miss the vital source material in the form of masses. Talking about the objectives of Subaltern Studies Ranjit Guha once said:-

> "What is clearly left out of this unhistorical (elitist) historiography is the politics of people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed…in which the principle actors were not the dominant groups of indigenous society. But the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the laboring population and intermediate strata in town and country…This was not an autonomous domain, for it originated from the elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter"[29]

The faceless crowd which proves to be the strength of any idea, theory or concept can no longer be termed as non-existent in the historical and social-cultural process. The role of masses in creating and popularizing an idea can no longer be overlooked and they cannot always be stocked into theories created by the scholars to feed their elitist ideas.

There is no denying the fact that *khanqah* of Nizamuddin Auliya throbbed with literary and intellectual activities as majority of the Shaikh's disciples were highly educated and trained in various fields of scholarship. It is also accepted that Shaikh Nizamuddin in his time was considered the most literate and highly intellectual mystic. He had great taste for poetry and music. He would indulge in healthy discussion on mysticism and other topics with his disciples and as in the case of *sama* controversy with theologians as well. But to believe that these literary activities and bent of the Shaikh's *khanqah* made it popular among the non-Muslims and Muslim commoner do not explain itself. The three eminent disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin were also the highly skilled artists and authors who composed their panegyric in Persian and in highly intricate

[29] Ranjit Guha, ed, *Subaltern Studies I*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982. p. 4; Though Ranjit Guha attempts to understand the problem of elite historiography in colonial construct and Indian freedom struggle, the researcher has employed the statement to highlight the importance of studying the need of studying the attitude of non elitist, comers, laborers in the popularity of the dargah of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

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expression. Even though Persian was the court language, it cannot be assumed that it would have become mass language. Khusrau as a poet could reach to the masses and become a popular name only when he composed his verses in *hindavi* which was the local dialect of people at large. While his Persian works and verses even to this day are constrained to the literary shelves of scholars.

Amir Hasan Sijzi's *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* was defiantly a classic in its own self, and without doubt it has contributed in making Nizamuddin available to generations across time, but one must be aware that the *malfuz* contains complex mystic phenomena and philosophies. Nizamuddin's anecdotes involve countless saints of his time and before. He would quote from mystic books and treaties. Even the book in itself is not very resourceful for a literate person who is not aware of basic principles of the mysticism and Islam. Today when English translations are available in print, the books incite the interest of those who would be into mystic studies and therefore even in recent times it has remained an elite source in its character. It would be helpful in constructing the historical ethos of Nizamuddin's time, his philosophy but it is not comprehensive while explaining the reasons of popular image and popularity of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

Ziauddin Barani was a conservative jurist and historian of medieval India. Though a devout disciple of Nizamuddin, he did not share the ideas of his master concerning the masses. As is quoted in an extract from his *Hasratnama* in *Siyar-ul-Auliya,* Barani was not open to idea that the saint enrolled people from all walks of life as his *murid*. His other work like *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* contains his suggestions and commands how a Sunni Sultan should behave to his non-Muslim subjects. Barani had no tolerance for the commoners and never intended to write his works for masses.[30] Literature produced by these scholars did not contain popular ethos and had little to interest them. It leaves vital doubt regarding its usefulness. Such literature can defiantly keep the memory alive but only to those who were well versed in it, not for those who were both unable to understand and were unaware of it. In another way, one finds that even during the time of Shaikh

[30] Mohammad Habib, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate: Including a translation of Ziauddin Barani's Fatawa-i Jahandari, Circa 1358-9 A.D.* trans. Asfar Umar Salim Khan, Caxton Press Private Limited, New Delhi, 1961, 47.

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Nizamuddin, it was not only Amir Hasan who compiles his *malfuz*. There are reference of *Durar-i-Nizamiya* of Ali Jandar and *tazikra* like *Qiawam-ul-Aaid*. It seems that these lesser known works existed but from the point of present day scholarship are not available. While there are several Urdu and English translations of *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* and *Siyar-ul Auliya*, it is probable that while constructing the relevance of literary traditions, scholars tended to take into account only available works. Otherwise there would be no justification of the fact that an important *malfuz* of Shaikh Nizamuddin skipped to the obscurity while *Fawa'id* survived and is consulted by all those who study medieval Sufism.

There must be a mention of Nizami Bansuri, written in Persian by a Hindu disciple of Nizamuddin named Rajkumar Hardev. He belonged to the royal family of Deccan and become a *murid* of Nizamuddin. He recorded the sayings of the Shaikh, but modern scholars have ignored it completely while analyzing the image of Nizamuddin. The literary framework also misses some important observation made by Prof Muhammad Habib regarding the presence of fraudulent literature during the lifetime of Nizamuddin Auliya. In his article on early Chishti literature, Prof Habib observes that fake literature was quite popular and was available in markets. These spurious *malfuz* were attributed to Chishti masters beginning from Usman Harwani. This type of literature taking cue from authentic hagiographies, but concentrate more on the daily rituals, prayers, *nukta* or homely tips to use during illness, potions to ward off evil and farfetched *karamat* attributed to the Shaikh. While the authentic *malfuz* as mentioned earlier are still not available to all but these fake *malfuz* are easily available around *dargah* and easily sought after by common disciples. The scholars have dismissed this popular figment of Chishti saints images. However one wonders that if the authentic literature written and composed was available to masses and they could relate to it there would hardly have any need of the fraudulent literature. The popularity of such a literature however as Prof Habib observed was to encash the popularity of Shaikh and was mostly produced by shopkeepers and marketer to gain profit. But it also points that popular image of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya as conceived by masses through such literature instead of strict elitist writing, alludes to other circumstances which made the Shaikh, '*Mehboob-i-Ilahi*.' The intellectual literary traditions were not successful in connecting the *dargah* with its masses. The composition of Amir

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Khusrau composed in Hindwavi with native symbols like, "*chap tilak*", "*sindoor*" or "*suhaag*" were exceptions as these were celebrated and performed in *dargah* in the form of *qawaali*. Therefore the literary model does not provide all the necessary understanding to access the popularity of Nizamuddin shrine.

The shrine of Nizamuddin cannot be studied merely through the process of Islamization, nor did it adopt any royal symbols to engage the local population. For a long time, the *dargah* of Nizamuddin was considered as a cemetery or burial place instead of a proper shrine complex.[31] The poverty and lack of resources had forced the custodians to sell lands in order to keep the community kitchen functioning. In spite of such a perpetual penury the *dargah* managed to survive through the whirlpool of time, independent of any regular income and support. It still managed to provide peace to both the Sultans and the masses who wished to be buried under the spiritual *barakat* of the saint. The models created by Eaton, Nizami, Ernst and Currie do not enable the scholar to understand the socio-cultural thrust of Nizamuddin's shrine. Thus it is submitted that one potential model to understand its ethos would be through its cultural symbols. The real value and place of this shrine can be understood from below; from the popular point of view this *dargah* is the symbol of India's shared cultural heritage and pluralistic traditions.

Austerity, celibacy, piousness, personal strength, compassion, humanistic approach and forbearance to relate to the lowest to the highest, a non-elite, non-literate attitude of a highly literate saint have travelled to the popular imagination through the cultural symbols that Nizamuddin have consciously or unconsciously have devised. Despite being a devout Muslim, he was first in his order not to conform to the model behavior of prophet, to keep the words of a master who Himself married was an immediate act of utmost devotion. It had a mass appeal and the saint is perceived as the hall mark of piety. Hindus are *kafir* but even in their *kufr* they are true to their belief and therefore worthy. Rajkumar Hardev records one incident in which Nizamuddin

[31] Pardeep Datta, 'Understanding Communal Violence: Nizamuddin Riots', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25:45, 1990, p. 2487-2495; Michael Snyder, 'Where Delhi is Still Quite Far: Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and the Making of the Nizamuddin Basti', in *The Columbia Undergraduate Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol.1,2010 pp. 1-29

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rejected the concept of *zimmi*, the saint in his typical Sufi way said, 'we all are God's *zimmi*. No human being can be another's *zimmi*.[32] These were the sayings which come from mass-saint like Nizamuddin. Only he could accept a Hindu festival with equal joy and enthusiasm, and the integration of *basant* in the festive structure. It reflects that even his shrine did not remain strictly Islamic in character as happen to other shrines. The people and the custodians all celebrated the image of Nizamuddin because of his potentiality to assimilate and create a shared culture for all the classes and religion. The *dargah* today serves the vegetarian langar so that the majority of Hindu population could partake from it.[33] The concept of cultural assimilation expressed in the fact that during the riots of partition, when the entire North India burned and when the *dargah* of Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was raged by the angry mobs, the vicinity of Nizamuddin remain immune to the communal frenzy and was declared secure for the Muslims. Even decades later the partition, there have been occasion for communal riots but they could never reach to the *dargah* of Shaikh Nizamuddin.

[32] Rajkumar Hardev quoted in,translation by H.Sajun, *A Diary of A Disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya*, Talifat-e-Shalidi, Lahore, 2001, p. 21
[33] Pardeep Datta, 'Understanding Communal Violence, p.2488

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