

## Beyond the Orthodox: Situating Manikpur's Eclectic Sufis and the Development of Chishti Sufism in a Small Town near Allahabad (14th-17th Centuries)

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### Abstract:

This paper explores the emergence and development of Chishti Sufism in the town of Manikpur, located in the surrounding region of Allahabad, between the 14th and 17th centuries. It provides a linear, chronological overview of the key Chishti saints and Sufis connected to Manikpur during this period. The paper highlights how Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri (1341-1449) was a pioneering Sufi saint who promoted an inclusive approach towards Hindu traditions and practices. His master Shaikh Nurul Haqq used to hold sama in which devotional songs from Vaishnavite tradition (Vishnupads) were sung. His disciples Shaikh Raji Hamid Shah and Shaikh Kamaluddin (Shaikh Kalu) further spread Chishti teachings in the region. Another important Sufi was Shaikh Sayyidu Manikpuri (1432-1525) who was initially skeptical of Sufis but later became a disciple of Husamuddin after a miraculous incident. Several other influential Chishti Sufis of Manikpur covered in the paper include Shaikh Nizamuddin, Shaikh Qasim, Shaikh Abdullah, Shaikh Jalaluddin, Shaikh Abdul Karim, and others. The paper argues that Manikpur emerged as a significant center of Chishti Sufism in north India, known for syncretism and incorporation of Hindu cultural elements. Through a chronological exposition of the key Sufi figures in Manikpur, the paper traces the evolution and ascendancy of Chishti Sufism in the region during the 14th and 17th centuries, offering insights into its historical development and cultural significance.

**Keyword:** Chishti Sufism, Medieval India, Manikpur, Husamuddin Manikpuri, Allahabad, Syncretism, Hindu-Muslim relations, North Indian Sufism, composite culture, dargah.

**Methodology:** This research utilizes textual analysis of Sufi biographical accounts, chronicles, and literary works in Persian and Urdu dating from the 14th to 17th centuries. It examines writings authored by saints of Manikpur along with tazkiras, malfuzat, and archival records related to Chishti Sufism for insights into spiritual lineages, beliefs, and cultural practices. The study employs a chronological approach in tracing the development of Chishti Sufism in Manikpur by structuring the biographies of saints linearly across the period of study. It focuses on analyzing vernacular and syncretic elements reflected in hagiographies, teachings, and mystic traditions associated with Manikpur's Sufi figures. The paper also contextualizes the progression of Sufism by consulting secondary academic sources on medieval Indian religious history and assimilation. Through close textual study and biographical accounts, the paper reconstructs the distinctive character of Manikpur's Sufi culture between the 14th and 17th centuries.

**Introduction:** The assimilative nature of Sufism enabled it to fuse with diverse local cultures as it spread through the Indian subcontinent from the 12th century onwards under the umbrella of Turkic political authority. The syncretic orientation and mystical traditions associated with Sufism allowed it to take on localized expressions as it spread across India. While Delhi, Ajmer and other cities have been studied extensively as prominent Sufi centers, the emergence of unique Sufi cultures in smaller towns remains less explored. This paper aims to reconstruct the development of Sufism in the town of Manikpur, situated near Allahabad, between the 14th and 17th centuries. Manikpur was a small town during the medieval period under the Delhi Sultanate, located in the Allahabad region, previously known as Prayag. (Fig 1 & 2)

Textual analysis of biographical literature authored by them and hagiographical accounts about the prominent mystics of Manikpur provides insights into the unique cultural practices, spiritual lineages, doctrinal orientations and assimilation of vernacular elements that defined the Sufism of Manikpur and the distinctive orientation acquired by Sufism here. The paper is structured chronologically, tracing the journeys, beliefs, and traditions of key Sufi figures associated with Manikpur across four centuries. It demonstrates how Manikpur emerged as a significant provincial center of Chishti Sufism in north India, distinct from the Sufi cultures in Delhi and Rajasthan. The inclusive worldview and accommodative approach of pioneering Sufis like Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri created the template for Manikpur's unique brand of syncretic mysticism. By focusing on the vernacular assimilation and unorthodox practices of important but overlooked Sufi figures attached to a small town, this study complicates understandings of medieval mystical Islam in India. It resituates focus from elite, imperial Sufi centers to the local incarnations of lived religious traditions in provincial milieu (Ernst & Lawrence, 2002, pp.69-70). By uncovering the historiographical lacuna on localized rural incarnations of medieval Sufism through the micro-study of Manikpur's overlooked 'grassroots' Sufi figures, this paper aims to put forward a more nuanced framework for analyzing the cultural evolution of mystical Islam in medieval India, beyond the hierarchical perspectives centered on imperial Sufi hubs.

### **Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri: (1341- 1449 A.D.)**

Shaikh Husamuddin, who lived between 1341-1449 A.D., was among the most influential and pioneering Chishti Sufi saints attached to Manikpur and played an instrumental role in laying the foundations of its syncretic and assimilative mystical tradition. (Fig. 1) He received his formative spiritual training under the guidance of the prominent Chishti Sufi master Shaikh Nurul Haqq, who was based in Panduah, Bengal (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p. 351; Chishti, pp. 1167-68). Shaikh Nurul Haqq was the spiritual successor and son of the eminent medieval Sufi Shaikh Alaul Haqq of Bengal (d.1398 A.D.) After being designated as a *khalifa* by Shaikh Nurul Haqq in 1401-02 A.D., Shaikh Husamuddin returned to Manikpur and established a thriving Sufi centre, initiating many locals into his Chishti order (Rizvi, 1978).

### **Life and Education**

Shaikh Husam-ul-Haq was born in 1341 A.D. to Hazrat Maulana Khwaja Khizr. His father was a learned scholar and a pious man who used to keep fasts and devoted himself in the service of Almighty (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p. 355; Rizvi, 1978, p. 264). According to the hagiographical accounts, once his family was having difficulty and there was nothing to eat in the house when a man reached out to him for advice on a religious matter. Shaikh explained the religious codes to him regarding his issue; after his problem was solved the man tried to gift him some money but Maulana Khwaja refused the gifts. On hearing this, his

family became very angry, but he didn't accept the gifts. In the evening Malik Ainuddin came to him asking for some help in the recitation of a dua (prayer) which he was unable to understand. Maulana Khwaja explained the meaning of prayers to him and he was very happy with the Maulana Khwaja and gifted him a good amount of money and garments. Then Maulana Khwaja told his family that I had refused the gifts in the noon so God gave me double in the evening (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, pp. 355-56).

This account highlights the piety and spiritual power attributed to Sufi saints, where their refusal of worldly wealth is rewarded by God with even greater provision. It emphasizes austerity and generosity as key virtues.

Shaikh Husamuddin's grandfather, Maulana Jalaluddin, was also a great Sufi and learned man of his time, and he led a simple and pious life. (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, pp. 354-55). He used to transcribe the Holy Quran for his livelihood. He was follower of Shaikh Muhammad who was a *khalifa* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Shaikh Muhammad used to live a very luxurious life and he had very cordial relations with the ruling class. Shaikh Muhammad associated himself with the Sultans to make him unpopular among the people and thus concealing his true spiritual achievements. Maulana Jalaluddin used to sleep after the prayers of *Isha* (night prayers) and he would awake when all the other inmates of khanqah would have slept, and then he used to recite *Surah Yasin* forty-one times and would pray continuously till morning and preached people in the morning. It is told that once Shaikh Muhammad was in Manikpur and Qazi of the town wanted to test his spiritual attainments by saying that I will only accept his spiritual achievements if he can arrange sugar candy for me. But for his astonishment, Shaikh had already told Maulana Jalaluddin to bring some sugar candy as few people were coming to test his abilities (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p. 355). Qazi felt very ashamed for his behavior and invited him for dinner but the Shaikh rejected it, saying that I have never accepted invitation from any Qazi.

This account highlights the mystical powers attributed to Sufi saints, including miracles, divination, and winning over skeptics. It also shows their avoidance of worldly power and position. The tranquility of solitary late night worship is contrasted with the more public preaching.

Shaikh Husam ul Haq received his early education and spiritual training under the auspicious guidance of his father. Shaikh Husam ul Haq was keen to learn about the deeper mystical practices and he expressed his quest in his letters wrote to Shaikh Nizamuddin Baran Shah. After completing his early literary and educational training in Manikpur, he went to Panduah (Bengal) and accepted discipleship of Shaikh Nuruddin Qutub-i-Alam. At the hospice of his master, Shaikh Husam ul Haq carried out a wide range of strenuous works including the burdensome assignment of gathering the woodland wood for the fuel. In 1401/02, he was appointed a *khalifa* by the Shaikh Nur Qutub-i-Alam and came back to Manikpur. The arduous tasks and selfless service under the master's guidance are seen as part of the spiritual training and preparation for leadership roles. Geographic mobility to study under famous masters was common.

#### **Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri and his Sufi thoughts:**

Shaikh Nurul Haqq was an ardent believer of *wahdat ul-wujud* and he also taught it to Shaikh Husamuddin. According to him the best form of asceticism was to help God's servant and he also advised the same to Shaikh Husamuddin, that his generosity should be like the Sun which is, universal, his humbleness like free-flowing water and his tolerance like earth, that is, steadfast (Rizvi, 1978, p. 258). Shaikh Husamuddin also became spiritual successor of his master and he was acknowledged for his deep understanding of religious and mystic subjects. Shah Shaikh Nur Qutub-i-Alam was very impressed with the spiritual achievements of Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri and he wished him to put *khirqah* on his son and successors of Shaikh Alaul Haqq. It became a tradition for the sons and successors of Shaikh Husamuddin

to put the *khirqah* on the sons and successors Shaikh Alaul Haqq (Chishti, 1993, pp. 1222-23). Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri became very popular among the circle of ulema and mystics equally and he was revered for his abilities. His Malfuzat were compiled by one of his followers, Farid bin Salar, as “*Rafiq ul-Arifeen*” (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, . p. 351; Rizvi, 1978, p.264).

In one of his books, *Anis-ul-Ashiqin*, Shaikh Husamuddin had pointed out that Sufism existed before the rise of Islam and Prophet Sheesh was the first Sufi. (Manikpuri, (n.d.). Basically, he tried to put forward the idea of Sufism as universal and preceding the history of Islam. According to him, Tasawwuf was a phenomenon, which originated from the time of Prophet Sheesh and he was the first Sufi of his times. He likewise expressed that this pattern can be predated before the historical backdrop of Islam itself, that is, it certainly existed before the Prophet Muhammad. He has enthusiastically referred to another belief that recognizes Sufism as a phenomenon which originated from the time of Prophet Abraham, from whom all the Semitic religions follow their origin.

This view reflects attempts by Sufis to present Sufism as an eternal inner spiritual truth rather than just a sect within Islam. Linking it to prophets gave legitimacy.

Shaikh Husamuddin had very deep and cordial relations with the locals and Hindus. His master Shaikh Nurul Haqq used to hold sama in which devotional songs from Vaishnavite tradition (Vishnupads) were sung (Ikram, 1991, p. 498). Many orthodox and reformist scholars attacked Shaikh for it but he defended it vigorously and he believed that these songs represented the divine message. When some people objected to the names of Radha, Krishna and other Hindu names in these devotional songs being sung in sama, he replied that even in the holy book non-believers like Firoun are mentioned. Like his master Shaikh Husamuddin also held sama and in his gatherings, many literary compositions from other tradition were sung. Many literary forms and traditions which pre-existed before the arrival of Islam were also freely used in Sufi traditions. Most of the Sufi poets who were related to the order of Nurul Haqq Qutb-i-Alam freely adopted the folklore and popular tales in their writings. Most popular tradition which is called to be originated from Shaikh Husamuddin’s *khanqah* was the tradition of Gagar (Hussain, 2008).

This demonstrates the assimilation of Hindu traditions and pluralism of the Chishti order. The use of musical and poetic celebrations highlights the aesthetic dimension of Sufism. Sama was a very popular practice in Chishti order. The Indianization of sama devotional music began with the Chishti Sufi order. Its tone, direction and persistence were shaped by the talented Delhi saints who were part of Nizam ad-din's close circle. Their writings showed the impact that early Chishti attitudes had not just on their own followers, but on Indo-Muslim society more broadly, including the Suhrawardiyas at the time and later orders like the Qadiriyyas and Firdausiyas (Lawrence et al., 1983).

Shaikh Husamuddin also had very cordial relation with the Shah Abdullah Shattari, the founder of Shattariya order in India. After his return from Pandua, he was warmly welcomed by him and kept very lively relations with Shah Abdullah. Shah Abdullah also met him in Manikpur and he told him that he has come here as a student and requested him to enlighten about mystic thoughts, and if he wanted some *futuhat* (spiritual gifts) he was ready to give it to Shaikh Husam. On hearing this Shaikh Husam said that he has received so much from his master Shaikh Nur Qutub-i- Alam that he didn’t need any more from any other saint. Shah Abdullah Shattari was satisfied with this and he was much impressed with Shaikh Husamuddin’s mystic achievements and regarded him the most fearless saint in India. (Chishti & Chishti, 1993, pp. 1222-23; Quddusi & Chishti, 1993, p. 62)

Shaikh Husamuddin promoted tolerance and acceptance of Hindu customs and practices, in contrast to the attitude of ulema and orthodox Sufis of his time. This universal worldview shaped Shaikh

Husamuddin's accommodative mystical approach that harmonized Islamic and Hindu traditions, setting the tone for Manikpur's unique Sufi culture. Recent analysis has highlighted that Shaikh Husamuddin's syncretism was part of a broader trend of cultural assimilation also found in the traditions of other rural Sufi centers like Pandua (Bengal), and khuldabad (Maharashtra) during the medieval period and later.

When it came time to appoint a successor, Shaikh Husamuddin chose his son, Qazi Shah Faizullah. Husamuddin prophesied that Faizullah's first disciple would be of the highest spiritual ranking. At that time, Raji Hamid Shah was present. Eager to cement ties between the two families, Raji went and brought his six-month old son to be initiated by Faizullah. Husamuddin was pleased with Raji's dedication. He said their spiritual wealth was now shared between Faizullah and Raji's son (Chishti, 1993, pp. 1249). Many miracles were attributed to Faizullah. In such a miracle we are told that Shah Sayyidu who used to cross the river Ganges without boat by walking over the water and one-day Shah Qazi Faizullah who was very young at the time, became angry and said that he had received these gifts from my home and he is flaunting it to us. After, this, Sayyidu started to drown while crossing the river. But Husamuddin saved him. When Sayyidu returned to his center, he told his master what had happened. Husamuddin asked Sayyidu to visit Faizullah and make peace over the incident and persuaded Shah Faizullah to return his gifts (Ashraf, 2011, pp. 534-535).

This story suggests tensions over spiritual authority between the saints, which was not uncommon as different Sufi orders competed for prestige and followers. Overall, the succession of Faizullah as head of the Manikpur center reflects typical Sufi customs. The ties between him and Raji Hamid Shah show the importance of forging spiritual links between saints and disciples. And the conflict over miracles hints between orders vying for authority.

The prophecy that Faizullah's first disciple would be of the highest spiritual ranking also echoes tendencies seen in other Sufi centers. Establishing spiritual links between saints and their disciples was important for consolidating authority and lineage. The prediction underscores the close ties between the *Pir* and *murid* and their leadership roles.

The account of Shah Sayyidu miraculously walking across the river Ganges relates to the common motif in Sufi hagiographies of saints possessing mystical powers or "*karamat*." However, Qazi Shah Faizullah's anger at this display suggests tensions over wilayat (spiritual authority). Overall, the passage provides insight into the succession practices, discipleship ties, miracle stories, and rivalries that characterized medieval Sufi centers as they vied for spiritual prestige and followers.

Sheikh Husamuddin, revered as a prominent Chishti Sufi saint within the region, continues to hold a revered position in the hearts and minds of his followers. Renowned for his benevolence and inclusive disposition during his lifetime, his legacy endures even beyond his earthly existence. The annual commemoration of his Urs serves as a poignant testament to his enduring greatness and enduring memory among his devoted adherents. (Fig 5)

#### **Shaikh Raji Hamid Shah Manikpuri (d.1495)**

Shaikh Raji Hamid Shah was one of the most eminent disciples and deputies (*khulafa*) of Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri. According to the author of *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, ancestors of Sayyid Hamid Raji Shah came to India during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish from Ghurdiz. One of his ancestors was Sayyid Shamsuddin, who came to Bayana in Mewat and settled here. Another one from his ancestors was Sayyid Shihabuddin who settled in Delhi. He was very much respected by the locals, who as their respect for him started calling him 'Raji' and it became the title of his descendants (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, . p. 387). Raji Hamid Shah was a professional soldier in his young age and always wore the dress of a soldier, but he was

attracted towards mysticism and his heart kept him restless until he resigned from his profession and accepted discipleship of Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri. But the author of *Mirat-ul-Israr* gives us different account of his early life. According to him, Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri saw him one day after Friday prayers when he was only seven years old and Shaikh was very impressed with his innocence and grace and when someone told about this incident to the father of Raji Hamid Shah, who was also a pious man, he came to Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpur and gave Raji Hamid Shah in the custody of Shaikh and asked him to teach him. Shaikh Husamuddin taught him about esoteric and exoteric sciences and trained him in mysticism and very soon he became a learned Sufi (Chishti, 1993, p.1247). Shaikh Husamuddin gave him *khirqah-i-khilafat* and ordered him to go to Jaunpur and preach Sufism.

After completion of rigorous spiritual training under Husamuddin, Raji Hamid Shah was granted permission to propagate the Chishti doctrine in Jaunpur, where he garnered great popularity (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, ., p.387). Shaikh Husamuddin developed an intense personal bond with Raji Hamid Shah and expressed immense love for his leading disciple. When Raji Hamid Shah was leaving for Jaunpur, Shaikh Husamuddin personally came out of town to bid him farewell, professing through evocative verses that with the departure of Raji Hamid Shah, he expressed his emotions in the following couplets:

“You are leaving and with you, my soul is also departing,

I give you to Almighty who is the best Protector”. (Chishti, 1993, p. 1248)

This emotional account provides a window into the strong master-disciple relationships within medieval Sufi social networks based on spiritual initiation.

The fact that he was given a prominent neighboring region like Jaunpur points to Husamuddin's confidence in his abilities. Numerous scholars and notables became his devotees, including the well-known Sufi Shaikh Iahdad to whom he later conferred the spiritual and administrative authority (*wilayah*) of Jaunpur (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, ., p.392). His descendants included the influential Chishti Sufi saint Raji Sayyid Nur of Manikpur (d. 1597 A.D.)

Shaikh Iahdad was one of the most popular disciples of Raji Hamid Shah and he was appointed *khalifa* by Shaikh Raji Hamid Shah and he also received the *wilayat* of Jaunpur. After, giving him the territory of Jaunpur, Shaikh Hamid returned to Manikpur to his *pir-o-murshid* and remained in his service there. Shaikh Hasan Tahir Chishti (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, ., p.388) and Daniyal Chishti Jaunpuri were among the famous disciples of Shaikh Raji Hamid Shah. Maulana Bahauddin Jaunpuri (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, ., p.393) was also a disciple of Raji Hamid Shah; he remained in the service of his master for nine years and received *khirqah-i-khilafat* from him.

Raji Hamid Shah died in 904/1495 and was buried in Manikpur. Many miracles are related to him and he is believed to have the knowledge of *gaib* (hidden). His son, Raji Hamid Sayyid Nur (901-997 AH) was also a reputed saint (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p.388). Shaikh Husamuddin had made a prophecy that son of Raji Hamid Shah will be a qutub (highest ranking Sufi). Raji Hamid Shah took keen interest in his education from his early childhood. He used to wear the dress of soldiers to conceal his true spiritual identity and lived a simple life. He was buried in Manikpur (Lahori, 1868, p.409; Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p.388). Shaikh Nizamuddin Amethi was among the notable disciples of Raji Sayyid Nur (Chishti, 1993, p.1249)

### **Shaikh Kamaluddin (Shaikh Kalu)**

Shaikh Kamaluddin, popularly known as Shaikh Kalu, was one of the closest and most dedicated disciples of Shaikh Husamuddin who also appointed him as his spiritual successor (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p. 356;

Chishti, 1993, p. 1249). Shaikh Kamaluddin led an austere and pious life, spending his days in ascetic disciplines, prayer and meditation. He acquired reputation as a saint of miraculous powers. In addition, he composed several Persian treatises on Sufi conduct and practices, most notably the '*Awrad Kalu*' (Hai, 2006, Vol 3, p. 164). His literary output demonstrates the continuity of Sufi textual traditions between Central Asia and India. Shaikh Kamaluddin was one of the most enlightened and devout man of his times. He is revered as a great Sufi of Manikpur. He died in Kara and was buried there (Husain, 1876).

#### **Hazrat Shah Sayyidu Manikpuri (1432-1526 A.D.)**

Hazrat Mir Sayyid Masud or Shah Sayyidu was among the famous nobles of his time. According to the author of *Manba ul Ansab*, he was working as iqatadar of Kara-Manikpur, Kora, and Jaunpur (Jhunsvi, 2010, p.371.). His genealogy goes to the Zain Shahid bin Imam Zainul Abidin. He is said to have reached Manikpur at a time when Urs celebration of Shaikh Nur ul Haq Qutub-i-Alam was going on and many Qawwals were performing in the celebration. Mir Sayyidu reached there and he initially ridiculed the Sufi musical gatherings (sama) for the death anniversary rites of Shaikh Nur Qutub-i-Alam. However, Shaikh Husamuddin's spiritual force miraculously overwhelmed him, causing him to repent and become Husamuddin's disciple (Jhunsvi, 2010, p.371.) This account is reminiscent of the 'conquest of hearts' motif in hagiographies of early Sufi masters like Ali Hujwiri where spiritual prowess leads to conversion experiences.

According to the author of *Akhbar ul Akhyar*, in his early days, he was in the government service and he had accumulated lot of wealth. But he didn't like his current position and a deep yearning of divine love kept him restless. So he decided to leave the luxurious life once he used to live and he became a pupil of Shaikh Husamuddin. (Dehlavi & Khan, 2005, p. 386; Lahori & Farooqui, 2001, pp. 330-31. He also received spiritual robe (*khirqah-i-khilafat*) from Shaikh Husamuddin and became famous as a reputed Sufi of Chishti order in the region.

A story is related to Shaikh Husamuddin that once on the day of Eid he had nothing to wear and a student presented a cloth which had three layers in it; Shaikh Husamuddin separated the cloth and gave a part of it to Shaikh Kalu and another one to Shah Sayyidu and kept one for him. After some time, he gave khilafat of Fatehpur to Shah Sayyidu. (Jhunsvi & Sehshrami, 2010, p. 373) According to the author of *Akhbar ul Akhyar*, his transformation into a Sufi saint also affected his beloved and she also joined him in spiritual quest. Many miracles are related with him.

The sharing of clothes represents the sharing of spiritual status and blessings. The joint spiritual quest with his beloved reflects the ideal of platonic romantic love in Sufism. It shows the emotional and personal dimension of the master-disciple relationship. Writing poetry and music again point to the aesthetic orientation.

Shaikh died in 933/ 1526 A.D. and his tomb is in Fatehpur, Hanswa. Author of *Mirat ul Israr* has given few lines from his poems-(Chishti & Chishti, 1993, p. 1248)

(My heart urges to me to tell Him (my beloved) about my condition

but when my Beloved comes, I am speechless and unconscious)

This poetic fragment expresses the ineffable experience of mystical love and union with the divine. It also highlights the mystical experience of passing out and spiritual transformation, as well as the renunciation of worldly success for the Sufi path.

Shaikh Sayyidu was inclined towards composing mystical poetry and strongly promoted sama.

He also wrote poetry and was fond of music. Shah Sayyidu also wrote some diwans, His syncretic approach is evident in his verses which contain terms and imagery related to Hindu themes. He authored a compiled collection of poems titled *Diwan-i-Sayyidu*, (Sayyidu, n.d.), currently preserved in the library of Aligarh Muslim University. Sayyidu exemplified the cultural assimilation and vernacularization trends that were defining features of Sufism in Manikpur. Scholars point out that the incorporation of imagery and narrative traditions from local non-Muslim cultures was a hallmark of rural Sufi centers across India and helped attract spiritual seekers from all faiths (Suvorova, 2004).

#### **Shaikh Jalaluddin Manikpuri:**

Qazi Shaikh Jalaluddin bin Ismail was a renowned scholar and saint who lived in Manikpur (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 3, pp. 90-91). He was highly educated in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), hadith, and spiritual sciences, having studied under Shaikh Muhammad, who was a khalifa of Shaikh Nizamuddin Badayuni. Qazi Shaikh Jalaluddin bin Ismail led a pious and simple life, sleeping early while others were awake and then waking in the night to pray until morning. During the day, he taught students and copied books to earn a humble living. He passed away in Manikpur, where he was also buried (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 3, pp. 90-91).

This exemplifies the combination of scholarly learning, spiritual practice, teaching and manual livelihood that characterized many Sufi saints. Night vigils and asceticism are again emphasized.

#### **Shaikh Ahmad Manikpuri: (d.1630/1631)**

Ahmad Halim's teachings and influence extended far beyond his lifetime. His profound knowledge and spiritual wisdom attracted disciples and followers from all walks of life, and his legacy continues to inspire seekers of truth and enlightenment to this day. His devotion to his father and his deep respect for his spiritual lineage exemplified his humility and reverence for the Sufi tradition. Ahmad Halim's unwavering commitment to serving others and his dedication to nurturing the spiritual growth of his disciples earned him a reputation as a compassionate and benevolent guide.

The miracles and anecdotes attributed to him serve as a testament to the profound spiritual power that he embodied. Through his exemplary life and teachings, Ahmad Halim left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all who had the privilege of encountering his wisdom and grace. The khanqah that he inherited from his father became a place of spiritual refuge and enlightenment, attracting seekers from near and far. His teachings, preserved in the book 'Al-khwariq al Ahmadiya', continue to illuminate the path of spiritual seekers, providing timeless guidance and inspiration.

Ahmad Halim's passing in 1040 A.H. marked the end of an era, but his spiritual presence continues to resonate in the hearts of those who seek the light of his wisdom. The sacred ground of his burial in Manikpur remains a place of pilgrimage for those who wish to pay their respects and seek blessings from the earthly remains of this revered Chishti Sufi master.

#### **Maulana Shaikhan Manikpuri:**

Maulana Shaikhan was another prominent Sufi of Manikpur. According to Dehlavi and Khan (1383 A.H.), Maulana Shaikhan was a prominent Sufi of Manikpur who lived during the same time period as Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri (p. 356). As a Hafiz, Maulana Shaikhan had many followers who would visit him to receive blessings. He led a simple, ascetic life, refusing gifts from visitors and only taking a small morsel of any food brought to him before returning the rest. When asked by Shaikh Husamuddin



why he conversed with visitors about mundane matters like their lands, cultivation, and animals rather than teaching them mysticism, Maulana Shaikhan replied that these novice people were unfamiliar with tasawwuf. Therefore, by discussing their personal affairs, they would feel pride and divine pleasure when retelling these conversations with others. In this way, Maulana Shaikhan's discussions were more useful for these individuals than lessons in mysticism would have been (Dehlavi & Khan, 1383 A.H., p. 356).

This demonstrates the pragmatic pastoral approach of some Sufis, tailored to the situation of the common believers. It shows flexibility in teaching methods along with maintaining an ascetic detachment.

#### **Shaikh Ahmad Chishti Manikpuri: (d. 1516/1517 A.D.)**

Shaikh Ahmad bin Nizam bin Faizullah bin Husamuddin Manikpuri was a Chishti Sufi saint who hailed from and lived in Manikpur (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 4, p. 256). Born and raised in Manikpur, he was educated by his father, Shaikh Nizam, and uncle, Hasan Kalimullah Manikpuri. After being appointed as spiritual successor by his father, Shaikh Ahmad went on to lead an ascetic life dedicated to furthering Sufism and training devotees in mystical practices, as many Sufis of the time did. He passed away in 922 A.H. (1516/1517 A.D.) and was laid to rest in his hometown of Manikpur (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 4, p. 256).

#### **Other Eminent Sufis of Manikpur**

Several other influential Sufi saints attached to Manikpur have been chronicled, including Shaikh Nizamuddin, Shaikh Qasim bin Ahmad, (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 4, p. 508) Shaikh Abdullah Manikpuri (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 5, p.353), Shaikh Abdul Karim (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 5, p.334), and among Shaikh Jalaluddin (Hai & Qasmi, 2006, Vol. 3, pp. 90-94), others spanning the 14th to 17th centuries. The hagiographies and writings associated with these Sufi personalities reveal their participation in cultural practices at variance with orthodox Islam, assimilation of customs followed by Hindu communities of the region, and development of Manikpur's distinctive style of synthesized mystical tradition. For instance, the Sufi master Shaikh Jalaluddin from a family of Qur'an scribes earned his livelihood through hand-copying manuscripts while observing a strict spiritual routine - defying the stereotype of mystics as otherworldly and detached from society.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has comprehensively mapped the progression of Chishti Sufism in the relatively lesser known small town of Manikpur adjoining Allahabad between the 14th and 17th centuries through thorough examination of original Sufi biographical sources and scholarly perspectives. The in-depth investigation of the syncretic orientation, tolerance of Hindu cultural elements, and unorthodox rituals practiced by Manikpur's Sufi figures demonstrates how provincial Sufism often diverged from the better known traditions of eminent Sufi hubs like Delhi and Ajmer. Recent historiography has emphasized the need to uncover the stories of these 'peripheral' Sufi centers to gain a well-rounded understanding of how mystical Islam was actually lived and experienced by ordinary believers, saints and converts in the vast hinterlands of India (Pirbhai, 2009). The paper fills a void in current research on medieval mysticism which is disproportionately centered on imperial Sufi centers, bypassing the significance of localized rural incarnations. By recuperating and analyzing the overlooked trajectory of Sufism in Manikpur, this study puts forward a framework for examining the cultural evolution of mystical Islam in medieval India through situating peripheral Sufi spaces within the broader landscape.

The Sufi saints of the Allahabad region, centered in Manikpur, represent the spread of Chishti Sufism in North India during the medieval period. They were part of the spiritual lineage tracing back to Shaikh

Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi through masters like Shaikh Nur Qutub Alam. (Ernst & Lawrence, 2002, pp. 183-84). At the same time, they reveal the localization and acculturation of mystical Islam in new areas.

The Sufis of Manikpur assimilated local Hindu influences, as seen in their incorporation of vernacular languages, poetic and musical traditions. Their teachings at times showed flexibility to appeal to ordinary believers over sophisticated doctrines. Many of them continued to lead lives combining scholarship with asceticism, solitary contemplation with pastoral care. Their hagiographies highlight recurring motifs like childhood spiritual precocity, miracles, dreams, and fulfillment of prophecies (Ernst & Lawrence, 2002, pp. 45-67).

In these aspects, the Manikpur Sufis share common features with other medieval Indian Sufi centers like Ajmer, Gulbarga or Pandua. They exemplify the Chishti emphasis on poverty, tolerance and music (Ernst & Lawrence, 2002, pp. 5-6). However, they also reveal regional variations within the broader trends. The evolution of local spiritual lineages and unique practices like the Gagar rituals can be seen.

Thus the Sufis of Manikpur demonstrate the porous, pluralistic nature of medieval mystical Islam in India. Their hagiographies and teachings shed light on the lived realities of Sufism as it struck roots in the Hindu-Muslim milieu of North India.

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(Fig 1 Ruins of the Medieval town of Kara-Manikpur)



(Fig 2 Remains of the old buildings of graveyard compound in Manikpur (Physical Survey)



(Fig. 3 Mazar of Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri (Physical Survey)



(Fig 4 Mazar of Saiyid Raji Hamid Shah at Manikpur (Physical Survey)



(Fig. 5 Poster of Urs celebration of Shaikh Husamuddin, 2021)

**بفیض کرم عطائے رسول والی ہندوستان خواجہ خواجگان حضرت معین الدین چشتی اجمیری**

(بہ عنایت خاص مخدوم شیخ عثمان اخی سراج آئینہ ہند)

(بفیض روحانیت حضرت مرشدنا شیخ نور قسط جالم ہندوی)

۵۷۲۰ وال

# عرسِ حسامی

شہنشاہِ ولایت اکبر عیش علامتہ لوری حضرت شیخ حسام الدین چشتی نظامی ماکھی پوری

(بدرہ طریقت شریکِ لیبوتی باسقا حضرت شاہ خادم احمد المعروف بدل بیان پختی اللہی حسامی مدظلہ)

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پانچین ہندوستان اور طریقت اہلکار

**شاہ احمد حسامی**

(افسر میاں)

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**مقرر محقق رشیدیات حضرت مولانا ابرار رضا مصباحی رشیدی دہلی**

**نعت خواں** جناب عظمت رضا صاحب مظفر پوری

**مشائخ چشتیہ حسامیہ رشیدیہ کے حالات اور افکار پر مشتمل ڈھائی سو سال سے زائد مقدمہ، ایک نایاب قاری تذکرے کا اردو ترجمہ نام "وسیلۃ الحاجۃ" کا رسم اجرا**

اس عرس سعید میں آپ حضرات سے شرکت کی پر خلوص گزارش ہے

منجانب: محفل عجبان حسامیہ، گڑھی ماٹک پورہ، ضلع پرتاپ گڑھ، اتر پردیش

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**572 واں**

## عرس-ع-ہوسامی

11 مارچ 2021

بجورج جومیرات

شاہ شاہیہ ویلاہت ایف سیر-ع-ڈشک اہللامتولورا ہجرت مہدوم شہد ہوسامدین چشتی نیجامی مانیکپوری رھمتوللاہ اہلہ

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**اچمت رجا ساہب**

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**مؤکیر**

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