

**UNDERSTANDING SUFISM IN UNDIVIDED GOALPARA  
DISTRICT**



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## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

Sufism, also known as '*Tasawwuf*', is an indissoluble aspect of Islam and a fundamental component of Islamic faith and rituals. It is the mystical side of Islam that primarily rests on unadulterated love, submission, and devotion to the Almighty as the ultimate authority. Sufism emerged as a liberal movement within the framework of Islam. Muslim saints who made efforts to enhance their spiritual capacities through monastic practices, introspection, and abandonment are referred to as *Sufis*, *Walis*, *Darvesh*, *Pirs*, and *Faqirs*. These terms, despite having different meanings, are generally used in the same sense. The Sufis were recognised for their moral teachings and devout conduct. People thought they had supernatural abilities and served as intermediaries between God and mankind. Also, many had the notion that one must follow in their footsteps in order to find God. The land of Assam did not fall behind in accepting the missions of the Sufi saints. The advent of Sufi saints and their activities in Assam are important historical facts. Evidence indicates that the Sufi saints played a significant role in the dissemination of Islam and Sufism across Assam. The arrival of Sufism helped Assam flourish culturally, as evidenced by the proliferation of historic mosques, *khanqahs*, and *mazaars* across the state. Moreover, Sufi shrines are perfectly rooted in the pluralist cultures of Assam, and shrine-based Sufism has become recognised as the defender of inter-communal harmony and peace in Assam.

The undivided Goalpara district was one of the most prominent Sufi centres in Assam. At various points in history, a multitude of Sufi saints from all over the world arrived in this region. The profiles of the Sufi saints show that they were the true torchbearers of the Islamic faith in the study area. For this reason, the kind of Islam that developed in this region is more oriented towards Sufism than traditional Islam. In their spiritual activities, the Sufi saints upheld the key teachings of spirituality, equality, and universal brotherhood. These three elements, together with the flexibility of Prophetic Islam, greatly increased the popularity of the Sufi cult in this area. Sufis believed in the concept of "*Al-khalqu-Ayalullah*," meaning all people were members of the family of God. This ideology of Sufism had a significant impact on the locals, especially the lower

caste individuals inside the Brahmanical framework as well as members of aboriginal tribes, and they eventually converted to Islam. In his '*Census Report of Assam, 1891*', Edward Gait noted that, like in eastern Bengal, the vast majority of people who identified themselves as Muslims in western Assam were native converts from lower castes and indigenous tribes who identified as "*Shekhs*" after becoming Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The administrative census of 1891 A.D. classified certain Muslims of the study area who had converted to Islam as belonging to the '*Koch caste*' among Hindus. They were referred to as "*Musalman Koch*" by William Hunter.<sup>2</sup> A vernacularised form of Islam, or 'popular Islam' developed here as a process of cultural assimilation since the Muslim settlers here succumbed to local influence. Local customs and circumstances heavily impacted and fused the Sufis as well as the neo-converts. Despite the small number of Muslim populations in Assam compared to the Hindu population, the existence of numerous ancient Islamic religious institutions confirms their status as an important part of the country's population, enjoying advantages on par with their Hindu counterparts in social and religious matters.

### **Research Findings:**

1. **Gradual Development of Sufism in Assam:** The emergence of Sufism in Assam did not happen abruptly. It was an ongoing process. The arrival of Arab and Persian merchants, followed by Muslim political invaders, facilitated the entry of Sufi saints into Assam during the early medieval period. The available sources reveal the advent of several Sufi saints and the presence of numerous Sufi shrines in Assam from the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. until the twentieth century A.D. When considering the geographical distribution of Sufi *dargahs*, it becomes evident that they are not solely concentrated in urban centres or prominent locations but rather dispersed across the entirety of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys of Assam.
2. **Different Stages of Sufism:** From the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were three distinct epochs in the development of Sufism in Assam. During the initial phase, which began in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and continued until the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., western and southern Assam were the only areas in the state where the Sufi movement was active. In this stage, the prevalence of north Indian

intellectual discourse overshadowed the Sufi theological perspectives of Bengal and Assam. The second phase, from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, saw the emergence and assimilation of Sufism with local culture, leading to the formation of a distinctly Assamese brand of Sufism. This brand incorporated aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Tantric cults. The third phase witnessed a decrease in the prominence of Sufism in Assam and India. This was a period of reformation within Sufism, as Islamic reform movements emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These movements advocated for a more authentic expression of the religion by removing non-Islamic elements.

3. **Influence of Geo-Political Landscapes of Bengal:** The infiltration of Sufism in Assam was influenced by the constantly changing geo-political and socio-cultural landscapes of Bengal. During the medieval period, the rise of Turko-Afghan and Mughal rule in Bengal primarily influenced the emergence and diffusion of Sufism in Assam. Consequently, the eastern border of Bengal with Assam became an important conduit for the spread of Islam and Sufism. During the medieval era, the concentration of Sufis in Assam can be attributed to two distinct places, both of which were adjacent to Bengal. One is Hajo, near Guwahati, while the other is Sylhet. Each of these locations served as prominent commercial hubs and emerged as early epicentres of Sufism in the region of Assam.
4. **Sufism in Assam as a North-Indian Extension:** The spread of Islam and Sufism in Assam is an extension of those movements in north India. The majority of the early Sufi saints in this area were disciples of renowned Sufis from north India. The prominent Sufi saints of north India sent their disciples to the north-eastern part of the country, specifically to the regions of Bengal. It is to be noted that the penetration of Islam into Assam occurred through Bengal. The Sufi saints, who spent a large portion of their lives in Bengal, are credited with the introduction of Islam and Sufism in this part of Assam. The gradual conversion of the people of Assam was mostly brought about by the proselytising efforts of the Bengali and north Indian-origin Sufis.
5. **Spread of Different Sufi Orders:** The *Suhrwardi* order was the first to enter Assam. Other prominent orders in Assam were *Chishti*, *Madari*, *Qadiri*, *Naqshbandi*, etc. These *silsilahs* were mainly the offshoots of north Indian

Sufism. Still, there were a number of Sufis in Assam who could not be ascribed to any *silsilah* or order. Mostly the Sufi saints of the *Hanafi* order of Islamic jurisprudence came to Assam.

6. **Push behind the Advent of Sufi Saints:** Most of the Sufi saints of Assam came here with the Muslim invading armies to cleanse their pathways from various adversities with the help of their supernatural abilities. A small number of them travelled to Assam with traders, and a few came out of personal zeal. However, a large number of others were sent here by their spiritual mentors with the explicit purpose of promoting Islam and Sufism. They arrived in this region with this intention in mind, and throughout their lives, despite situations that were not always friendly to them, they propagated Islam and Sufi principles.
7. **Assam's Legacy with Yogic Practices:** Assam has historically been recognised as a region associated with the esoteric practices of local yogis. Sufism is known to have visited this area in order to acquire knowledge and skills related to mystical rituals. Sufi literature mentions *yogic* activities, and Muslim holy persons are said to have travelled to Kamrupa to study *yogic* methods. The work '*Amrita Kunda*' (the Pool of Nectar) of Kamrupa had a profound influence on the efficacy of *yogic* spiritual techniques. The book gained widespread circulation throughout mystic communities in India and beyond, facilitating a convergence between the Sufi saints and the erudite individuals of pre-colonial Assam. In both Sufi groups of north India and Southeast Asia, it was widely believed that Kamrupa contained a clandestine site of worship frequented by medieval Muslim Sufi saints who ventured to the region.
8. **Categorization of Sufi Saints:** The Sufi saints of the study area can be classified into three groups: those who were the residents of undivided Goalpara district, non-resident Sufi saints, and semi-legendary figures. Those who came here from somewhere else but settled, died, and were buried here have been referred to as 'resident Sufi saints'. There were still a number of Sufi saints who were not the residents of the study area, but they frequently visited this area, thereby leaving a deep imprint of their ideology on contemporary society. Some of them even spent a large portion of their working lives establishing *khanqahs* and *astanas* in different parts of the undivided Goalpara district of Assam before leaving for their

original place. There were also a few semi-legendary Sufi saints, such as Khwaja Khizr, Satya Pir, Shah Madar, Pir of Mamudpur *dargah*, *Pagla Pir* of Dohela *dargah*, and so forth. There is relatively little historical information available on the lives and deeds of these figures. Due to a lack of sources, it is very difficult to reconstruct their lives and histories. However, observing various traditions and rituals prevalent in the present society, it can certainly be said that they once upon a time must have exerted immense influence on the society of this region of Assam. Moreover, the presence of their adherents, from medieval times to the present day, can be found in the study area.

9. **Arab Stock of People:** As discussed in Chapter 3, it is apparent that the majority of the Sufi saints who arrived in this area of Assam were of Arab descent. It is also documented that a large number of disciples travelled to this area with each of the saints. A total of 360 disciples followed Hazrat Shah Jalal, and they all settled in and around Sylhet. This demonstrates that a sizable portion of Arab immigrants migrated here as Sufis and Islamic missionaries.
10. **Participation in Politics:** During the initial period, several Sufi saints played a significant role in the invasions led by the Muslim monarchs and their generals, contributing to the expansion of Muslim political influence as well as Sufi doctrines in medieval western Assam. Saints like Hazrat Shah Jalal, Shah Ismail Ghazi, Ghiyasuddin Awliya, etc. led Muslim armies in conquering the region. A few Sufi saints also exerted pressure on the decision-making power of the Sultans of Bengal. In addition, the Sultans of Bengal provided the Sufis with abundant and generous opportunities to establish permanent bases in various areas of the country. However, there are many dimensions to the relationship between the Sufi saints and political power. The latter Sufi saints were not much concerned with the political affairs of the time, generally avoided the court, and did not maintain a close connection with the political elite.
11. **Sufi Saints and Land Grants:** Ahom rulers supported the Sufi *dargahs*, granting them revenue-free land and holding Muslim saints in high regard. It is evident that many of the Sufis in this area received '*pirpal*' land from the contemporary state apparatus for their maintenance. Some prominent Sufis and their *dargahs* received land grants from both the central and local political authorities. This sponsorship

involved the establishment of *khanaqahs*, the endowment of revenue-free estates for the management of either *khanaqahs* or *dargahs*, occasional financial assistance for the Sufi saints, the construction of tombs to commemorate the deceased, etc. Because of this patronage by the governing class, the Sufi saints were quite able to freely and securely disseminate their religious beliefs and doctrines among the inhabitants of this territory.

12. **Participation in the Indian Freedom Struggle:** In addition to the realm of spiritualism, a number of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi saints were also active in the ongoing freedom struggle in India. Among them, Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiqui of *Furfura Sharif*, Maulana Ruhul Amin of Basirhat, Yunus Ali Enayetpuri, Asad-ud Daula Shiraji, Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, and Abdur Rahman Firuzi were the prominent ones. They played an important role in the freedom struggle in India by mobilising the people of Bengal and the Bengali-speaking people of western Assam. Some of their actions included organising picketing events in villages to encourage people to use native items and abstain from purchasing foreign goods. On multiple occasions, the colonial government put several of them in jail because of anti-British agitations.
13. **Interaction with Other Faiths:** Sufism is a mystical tradition, and it shares intimate ties with the mystical traditions of other faiths. It is noticed that certain *dargahs* were constructed on the remains of Buddhist shrines, as evidenced by the presence of a Buddhist site near the vicinity of Deg Dhowa *dargah* in Goalpara. There were a few stone-built votive stupas in the Deg Dhowa *dargah* enclosure on the Mahadeva Hill of Goalpara district. The *dargah* of Shah Kamal in Mahendraganj, West Garo Hill district of the present-day state of Meghalaya, also contains similar stones. These archaeological findings from the Deg Dhowa and Mahendraganj areas provide evidence of the connection between Sufism and Tantricism in the medieval era. The *dargah* of *Pagal Pir*, situated at Patpara village near Dhupdhara town, stood close to ‘Sri Sri Maa Kalpani Temple’. Some Hindu artefacts and medieval coins have been discovered at this location. There is also evidence of both Hindu and Buddhist sculptures at the Paglatek location, which is largely believed to have been the abode of a “*Pagla*,” alias a Sufi saint, in the past. The newly converts in the past perceived similarities between the Sufi

saints (*Pirs*) and the *Tantric Gurus*, while equally drawing parallels between the graves and *dargahs* of the *pir* and the chaityas or stupas of the Buddhists. Moreover, the *dargah* of *Panch Pir* in Dhubri town, which stands across the '*Netai Dhubuni Ghat*', represents harmonious coexistence among the different faiths.

14. **Clash between Sufis and Orthodox Ulama:** The Sufi saints did not proclaim the orthodox Islamic faith, which is typically limited in its conception, sectarian in its application, and restrictive in its viewpoint. The Sufis propagated a tolerant and inclusive version of Islam throughout the region. These holy people, in contrast to the traditional religious scholars of their own religion, did not criticise the ancient religions of this land or excessively praise their own faith. Therefore, numerous clashes occurred between the Sufi saints and the orthodox *ulama* on various grounds in the study area. On several occasions, there were complaints raised by the *ulama* against the Sufis for not following the precepts of Islamic *shariah*; so, '*fatwa*' (religious decrees) were issued against them by the orthodox *ulama*. Whenever there was a confrontation with the traditionalists (*ulama*), the common people rallied with the Sufi saints, as they were more popular among the people than the orthodox *ulama*.
15. **Predominance of Naqshbandi-Mujaddadi Order:** The predominance of *Naqshbandi-Mujaddadi* Sufi order is palpable in the study area. During the late-Mughal period and British era, many *Naqshbandi-Mujaddadi* Sufi saints propagated Sufi doctrines in the study area. These included Hazrat Abul Qasim Khurasani, Abu Bakr Siddiqui of *Furfura Sharif*, Maulana Ruhul Amin, Shah Muhammad Ekramul Haq, Maulana Abdul Qadir, Hazrat Ezadullah Shah, and Nurullah Misri. This explains why the undivided Goalpara district of Assam exhibits a noticeable predominance of this *silsilah* compared to other Sufi orders. Some of them undertook Islamic reform movements to eradicate non-Islamic elements from Muslim society. Their role was more prominent in the purification of Islam among Muslim society than the conversion of non-Muslims.
16. **Existence of a few Decentralised and Local Sufi Orders:** There were certain regional *pirs* in the study area who attracted disciples from the poorer classes of society and contributed to the formation of new regional *tariqahs*. Some notable localised *tariqahs* include *Faqiri tariqah*, *Pagla tariqah*, and *Krishna tariqah*.



Uncertainty surrounds the foundation of these *tariqahs*, but secret cults from other communities must have influenced their formation. Moreover, some of the Sufi saints continued spreading their ideology on their own. They favoured a decentralised approach to attract people from all walks of life rather than working under a centralised Sufi *silsilah*. As a result, a few decentralised Sufi orders emerged, somewhat impeding the growth of mainstream Sufi orders within the study area.

17. **Perceiving Sufi Saints as Supernatural Entities:** The people thought that the Sufi saints possessed amazing spiritual and superhuman abilities that Allah had enlightened them about. They were known in society for having the ability to perform miracles. In those days, people had deeply ingrained superstitions in their minds, viewing the Sufis with a sense of superhuman awe. As a result, a significant number of them were drawn to the Sufis for various reasons, including medical treatment.
18. **Mixed Responses to Sufi Teachings:** The teachings of the Sufi saints elicited varied responses among people of all backgrounds. Their teachings enlightened several people to the true essence of Islam, while others were misguided. Several *Bid'at*, or religious innovations, were subsequently assimilated into Muslim society under the guise of Sufi traditions. When examining the manners and traditions of the Muslims during that time, it becomes evident that unhealthy and erroneous practices had infiltrated Muslim culture under the disguise of Islam, for which the Sufis of that age should bear responsibility. On the contrary, some of the Sufis of the later period, especially the ones belonging to the *Naqshbandi-Mujaddadi* order, contributed a lot to reforming Muslim society by eliminating un-Islamic rituals.
19. **Scarcity of Sources:** Many Sufi saints from this region did not pay enough attention to documenting their biographies, ideas, and practices in written form. Even their disciples did not leave behind a comprehensive hagiography. So very little is known about their lives and deeds. In some cases, other than their names, not much is known. Our limited knowledge of them is primarily based on local legends and a few surviving literary writings from a much later period. Therefore, it is very challenging to verify their accuracy or place them in a clear

chronological order. For reconstructing their history, oral sources play an important role. Furthermore, it is highly likely that we have not inherited the names of many Sufi saints. However, they exerted significant influence on the society and culture of the study area, and their impact and influence on the Muslim society of the study area are still noticeable.

20. **Proliferation of Islam:** A strong correlation exists between the expansion of Islam and the introduction of Sufism in the study area. Various factors, such as the commercial interactions between the Arab-Persian traders and the Kamrupa kingdom, the Turko-Afghan and Mughal incursions, the advent of Sufi saints, and other causes, contributed to the proliferation of Islam in the study area. However, the Sufi saints can be said to be largely responsible for the spread of Islam and most of its subsequent growth in this region. According to R. M. Eaton, East Bengal was a delta during the Sultanate period. There were tribal and semi-tribal people living with their own autonomous natural religion. This region became fertile and cultivable because the rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra changed their directions over time. During the Mughal period, some Sufis were sent to East Bengal, where they established their *astanas*, which became the centre of socio-religious and cultural activities of the tribal and semi-tribal people. As discussed in the previous chapter, after coming into contact with these Sufi saints, the native people slowly and gradually became associated with the Islamic culture. Subsequently, several of these Sufi saints and the newly converted Muslims migrated to the western part of Assam, and now they make up the majority of the Muslim population in Assam's undivided Goalpara district.
21. **Growth of Syncretism:** Sufism in medieval Assam has undergone a steady evolution over several centuries, resulting in conversion, religious education, and cultural assimilation. It facilitated the emergence of a new composite culture that incorporated elements from other religions. Their interactions with the native population and adoption of numerous regional customs and traditions resulted in a syncretic culture. In the western part of medieval Assam and the eastern part of Bengal, the worship of Satya Pir, or Satyanarayan, Manik Pir, Madar Pir, etc. emerged. These cults exhibit characteristics of Vaishnava and Sufi traditions. Hindus and Muslims alike revered and worshipped these saints as spiritual

mentors in this area. They collaborated for social harmony and mutual respect. Moreover, the folk songs prevalent in this region, such as *baul* songs, *bisshed* songs, songs of Ghazi Pir, songs of Doriya Pir, etc., are the best examples of syncretic culture.

22. **Cultural Expression:** The undivided Goalpara district has benefited culturally from Sufi practices, poetry, and music. Overcoming linguistic and cultural boundaries, Sufi music, including *Qawwali* and Sufi melodies, has enthralled audiences and prompted profound spiritual encounters. The presence of Sufi poetry, characterised by its emphasis on devotion, mysticism, and dedication, has had a significant impact on both Bengali and Assamese literature and artistic production in this area of Assam.
23. **Role in Agriculture and Human Habitation:** Besides proselytization, the Sufi saints performed socio-cultural functions as well. Their contributions to the advancement of the agricultural milieu are remarkable. In their spiritual pursuit, the Sufi saints were always in search of desolate and forest areas. A few saints pioneered the effort to clear the forest to build their *khanqahs* and *astanas*. By building *khanqahs* and *astanas* in some of the remote and forest areas, they indirectly aided in the expansion of agriculture and human settlements close to their *ashrams*. It was a Mughal policy from emperor Akbar onwards to depute and settle the spiritually influential people in isolated places for the purpose of bringing the areas under cultivation. It was due to the setting up of *khanqahs* and *dargahs* that agricultural production as well as human settlement gradually began to start. The construction of *khanqahs* in various remote locations benefited the state because the locals there turned to agriculture, thereby increasing the state's revenue.
24. **Sufistic Islam more influential than Political Islam:** The Sufi saints were the driving force of the Muslim society of the study area in the past. Islam spread by the Sufi saints was unquestionably more influential than the Islam of the daring invaders. The Muslim invaders who took over the land and later had to leave the country were unable to undertake any systematic attempts to spread Islam due to their precarious political situation. Moreover, they were more concerned with political gains than the propagation of Islam. In such circumstances, we might

presume that the missionary and charitable efforts of the Sufi saints were the only ones that ensured the peaceful dissemination of the Islamic message throughout the study area. So, it follows that Sufistic Islam was able to gain a deeper hold on the people of the study area than the theoretical Islam pioneered by political invaders.

25. **Spiritual Guidance and Healing:** The Sufi saints and mystics in the region were highly respected for their profound spiritual insight and remarkable healing prowess. They acted as spiritual mentors and advisors for numerous people, providing guidance, comfort, and solutions for both spiritual and practical problems. Their burial sites, also known as *dargahs*, remain destinations of pilgrimage and spiritual consolation for pilgrims who seek blessings and healing.
26. **Institutionalisation of Islam:** After establishing themselves in this area, they dedicated themselves to formalising their religious beliefs by setting up mosques, *maktabs*, madrassas, *khanqahs*, *dargahs*, and *iddgahs*. They endeavoured to build these institutions in order to consolidate their teachings, customs, and rites. These exemplified the zenith of Islamic structural development in this area. The process also contributed to the formation of Muslim individual identities.
27. **Influence of Persian Culture:** Persian culture has greatly influenced the people of the study area, leaving its mark in almost every facet of their lives. The credit for this goes largely to the Sufi saints, who themselves were immensely influenced by Persian culture during the course of their migration from west and central Asia to India. As they were very accessible and popular in society, the society and culture of the local people experienced a versatile influence from Persian culture. Some celebrations, like the Muharram festival and the nomenclature of Ali, Hussain, etc., are a few examples of Sufi Persian influence. Moreover, many Persian terminologies are still in vogue in this region.
28. **Emergence of Bengali Sufi Folk Songs:** The undivided Goalpara district of Assam has long-standing borders with erstwhile Bengal and is home to the largest population of migrant Muslims from Bengal. These people had a stronger affinity for Bengali traditional culture, and they subsequently introduced the same to this region. Consequently, this area witnessed the emergence and progression of Bengali Sufi musical culture. So, the region gave rise to the traditions of three

distinct genres of Bengali folk and Sufi songs: *murshidi*, *marifati*, and *baul*. Apart from these, many Bengali spiritual songs were recently popular among them, such as “*Baromashi Geet*,” “*Doria Pirer Geet*,” and “*Ghazi Pirer Geet*,” etc. The migrant Muslims in this region have carried the remnants of Bengali Muslim culture with them. However, these songs have considerably lost their significance due to various reasons.

29. **Sufism and Women:** There is little information about the involvement of women with Sufism in the study area. The absence of evidence leaves us uncertain about the treatment of women in the Sufi tradition within the study area. It is assumed that medieval Sufi views were unfriendly towards women because of the compliance of the *pardah* rule. The majority of the *dargahs* in the study area have placed certain limitations on women’s entry into the *dargahs* for the last few centuries. Nevertheless, a few women have successfully transcended societal constraints and actively participated in Sufism through various means, such as attending Sufi gatherings like *urs*, *sama*, recounting their extraordinary deeds, and so on. Therefore, it can be stated that women have contributed to the growth of the Sufi doctrine, despite its continued diffusion and ambiguity.
30. **Causes of Success of the Sufi Mission:** Due to a variety of factors, the efforts of the Sufis were successful in converting a sizable number of members of diverse tribes and communities to Islam as well as in imparting Islamic education and the doctrines of Sufism among the Muslim communities in the study area. Firstly, the Sufi saints adapted and simplified Islamic principles to make them easily comprehensible for the average person. Secondly, the prevailing socio-religious conditions of society and the doctrine of universal brotherhood advocated by the Sufi saints were contributing factors. The Sufi mission attempted to eliminate social distinctions between high and low castes and classes and allowed the underprivileged and untouchable populations to convert to Islam. Thirdly, the distinctive personalities of the Sufis, such as their miracle-performing powers, unwavering enthusiasm, exceptional devotion, austere lifestyle, etc., also contributed a lot in this regard. Fourthly, the formation of Muslim rule in Bengal and the generous support of Muslim kings and nobles towards the Sufi saints also

played a significant role. Lastly, the positive attitude of the Ahom monarchs towards the Sufi saints was another contributing factor in this regard.

31. **Degeneration of Sufism:** Sufism is gradually losing ground in the study area, and it is surely in a state of collapse today. Its current base of support comprises the poor, the un-educated, the oppressed, the irrational, and not the educated ones. This is due to the fact that authentic Sufism is rare today, and what prevails in the name of Sufism is a diluted and twisted form of Sufism. With the passage of time, numerous non-Islamic rituals and unhealthy practices began to be connected with Sufi ideologies and institutions. In addition, the hereditary nature of these institutions, coupled with the issuance of numerous deeds and *waqfs* for *dargahs* and the influx of cash from various sources, has led to corruption among those associated with the *dargahs*. Moreover, in many cases, under the names of some real Sufis, some wandering *faqirs* and beggars are constructing fake *khanqahs* and *mazaars*, and they have made these innovative ideas as an excellent way to make money. As a result, Sufism has gradually lost its original spiritual magnificence, and the common people have begun to lose faith in it.
32. **Legacy of Sufism:** One of the most fundamental Sufi beliefs is that we should treat all living beings with kindness and pity, as they all contain the souls of Allah, and therefore, we should respect and treat them without any discrimination. Because of these Sufi doctrines, many individuals are still seen as being exceedingly humble, straightforward, well-behaved, dedicated, refined, and virtuous. Among other factors, this could be due to their direct or indirect exposure to Sufi doctrines or the inheritance of Sufi legacies.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the lives and endeavours of the Sufi saints served to introduce Sufism as a brand-new religious, intellectual, and cultural concept within the study area. The initial efforts of proselytization by the Sufis were highly challenging because the country was ruled by Hindu potentates who, with a few exceptions, were largely conservative, orthodox, and hostile to Islam. This meant that their early initiatives were doomed to failure, but their subsequent attempts, for a number of reasons, were more fruitful. The Sufi saints were universally admired and appreciated by people of all social standings, ranging from commoners to royalty. The Sufis did not distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as between Muslims who

converted to Islam and Muslims who were born into the religion. By adopting a straightforward and accessible doctrine, they gave the common people an excellent chance to soothe their souls. This allowed the saints to establish a rapport with the villagers. By fostering a sense of uniformity in manners and practices, these Sufi saints lessened the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. It appeared that the impact of every major Sufi in the region went far beyond the bounds of his own lifetime. The Sufi saints received significant funds from the local authority, which they generously distributed to the needy while urging their devotees and supporters to do the same. These initiatives encouraged a feeling of selflessness among the people, thereby enhancing their human and ethical traits. To conclude, it can be claimed that Sufism, with its inclusive ideology, has the potential to unite people from all roots and allow them to share ideas, understand, empathise with, and learn from one another. In an era characterised by growing intolerance and exclusion across societies worldwide, Sufism may offer a viable remedy to the prevailing violence and hostility. With its focus on peace, love, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures, Sufism has the capacity to counteract these negative tendencies prevalent in contemporary society.

## References and Notes

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<sup>1</sup> E. A. Gait, *Census of India, 1891 (Assam)*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1892, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Volume II, Thubner & Co., London, 1879, p. 31.