

**UNDERSTANDING SUFISM IN UNDIVIDED GOALPARA
DISTRICT**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO BODOLAND UNIVERSITY FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
HISTORY**

BY

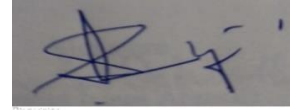
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Understanding Sufism in Undivided Goalpara District,**” submitted to **Bodoland University** in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the **Department of History**, embodies the result of genuine research work conducted by **Ashraful Islam Ahmed** bearing University Registration No. 035960 of 2021-22 under my guidance and supervision, and it is an original contribution to the existing knowledge. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis has not been submitted in part or full for consideration for any other diploma, degree, fellowship, or associateship.

He has dutifully acknowledged all assistance received during the course of the investigation. I recommend that the thesis be presented to the examiners for evaluation by the concerned authority.



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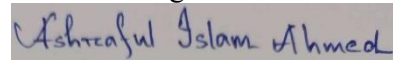
DECLARATION

I, Ashraful Islam Ahmed, do hereby declare that the work contained in the thesis titled “**Understanding Sufism in Undivided Goalpara District**” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. **Sudev Chandra Basumatary, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of History, Bodoland University**, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This thesis has never been submitted elsewhere for the award of any diploma, degree, fellowship, associateship, or any other similar title or recognition. This is an entirely original research work.

I would further declare that all the valuable suggestions and recommendations made by the experts during the Pre-Submission Seminar have been incorporated into this work.

Place: Bodoland University
Date: 26-07-2024

Signature



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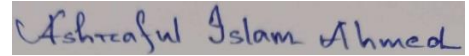
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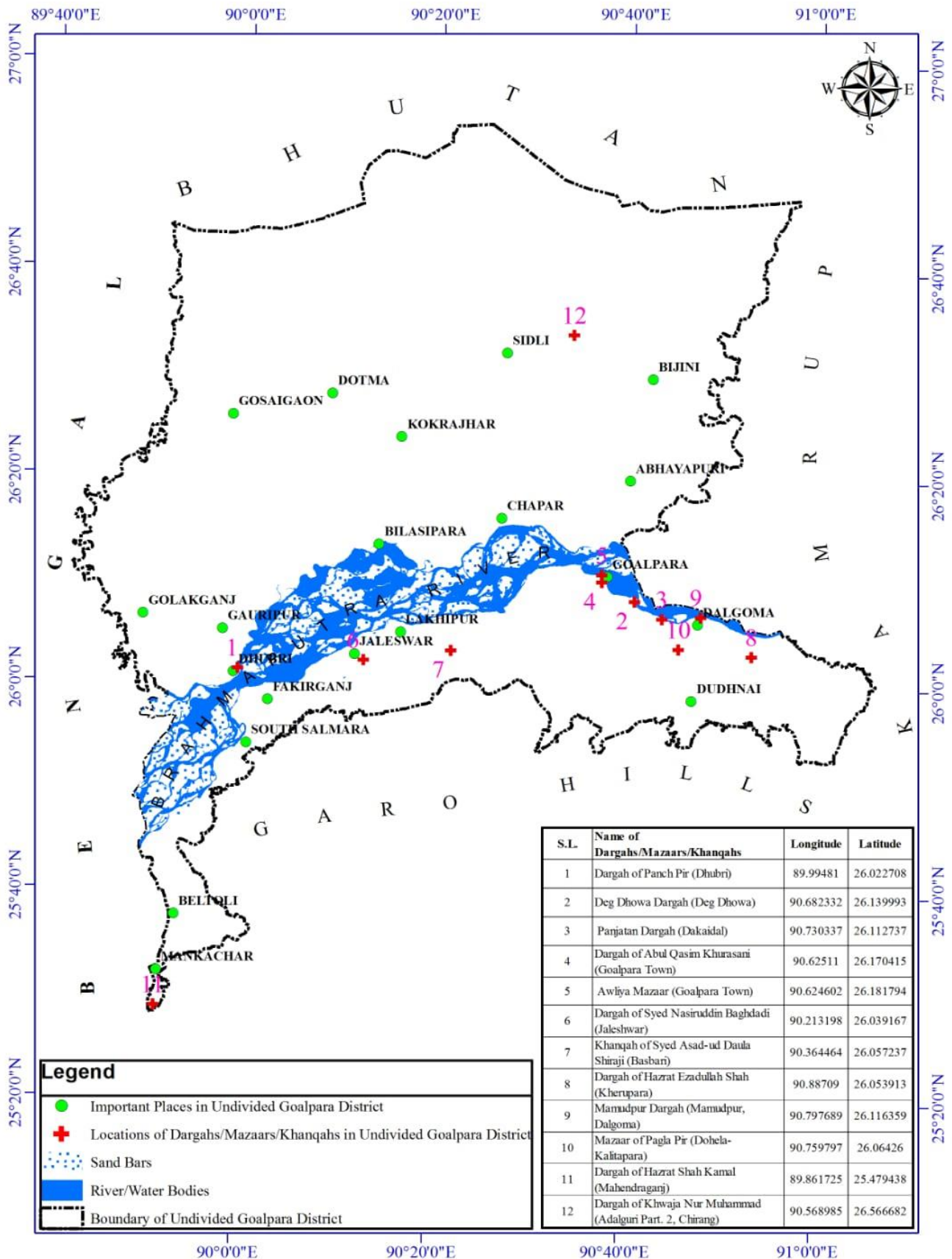
I have obtained assistance in preparing this work from my teachers, friends, fellows, relatives, and several others who have consistently motivated, inspired, and stood by me during the entire process. It would be improper for me to end this note without expressing my gratitude to them. No single word can adequately express my profound

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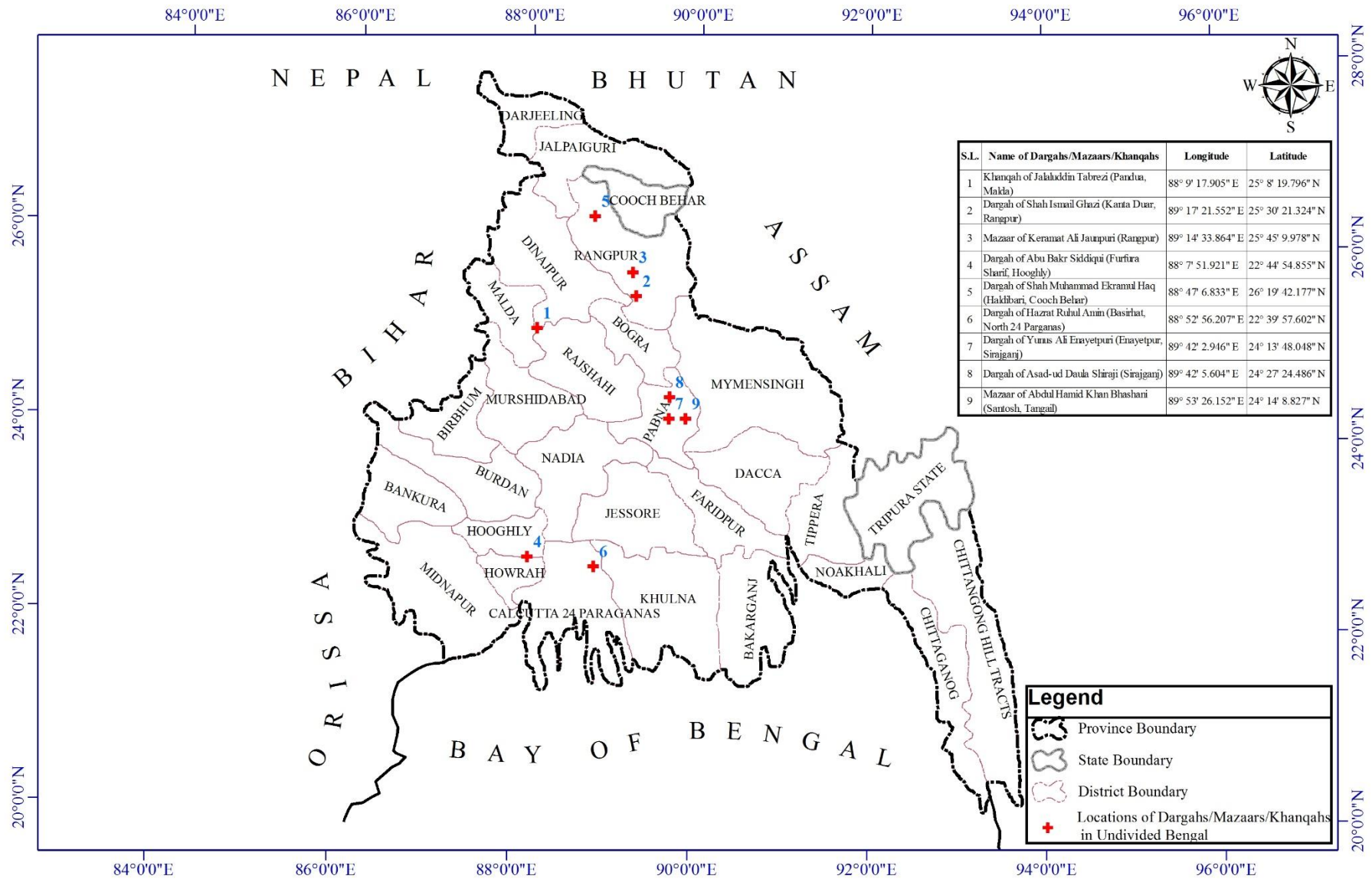
(Ashraful Islam Ahmed)

MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF DARGAHS/MAZAARS/KHANQAHS
IN UNDIVIDED GOALPARA DISTRICT (BEFORE PARTITION, 1947 A.D.)



Source: Birendranath Datta, *A Study of the Folk Culture of the Goalpara Region of Assam*, University Publication Department, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 1995, p. ix

MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF DARGAHS/MAZAARS/KHANQAHS IN UNDIVIDED BENGAL (BEFORE PARTITION, 1947 A.D.)



Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/librandu/comments/tikoil/came_across_a_post_here_on_pre_partition_map_of/

GLOSSARY

Alim: A person properly educated in Quran, Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence

Allah: Creator (God)

Amol: Deed

Ashram: Hermitage

Astana: Hermitage or khanqah

Awliya: The friends of Allah (Plural of 'Wali')

Azan: A call for congregational prayer

Badshah: A Mughal emperor

Baqā: A state of continuance in God after annihilation

Ba-shara: Those who rigorously follow the shariah

Baul song: Bengali Sufi devotional song

Be-shara: Those who do not conform to the shariah

Bhakti: Devotion

Bi'daat: Unacceptable religious innovation

Bigha: Unit of land measurement

Bodyism: Appearance of body

Boithok: Assembly

Buranji: Assamese chronicles composed during the Ahom period

Caliph: A title bestowed on individuals who officially succeeded the Prophet Muhammad as leaders of the Muslim world

Char: River basin or river island

Char-Chapori: Low-lying flood-prone riverbanks

Chishti: Name of a Sufi silsilah founded by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti

Dargah: The grave or tomb of a Sufi

Darul Uloom: Islamic seminary or educational institution

Darvesh: A Muslim ascetic person or member of a Sufi fraternity

Dayal: Spiritual guide

Deh-tattwa: A spirituality that pertains to the physical body as opposed to the mental realm

Dharma: Religion

Dhikr: Remembrance of Allah

Doriya: River

Dotora: Two-stringed, plucked musical instrument

Duar: A narrow stretch of territory located between the regions of Assam and Bhutan, characterised by mountain passes

Ektara: A musical instrument with one wire

Fana: Self-annihilation

Faqir: A religious mendicant; it signifies the spiritual poverty of a Sufi.

Faraizi: It was an Islamic reformist group led by Hajji Shariatullah and his son Dudu Miyan that originated in Bengal during the early 19th century A.D. This puritanical and political movement opposed un-Islamic practices prevalent in Muslim society.

Fatwa: A legal decision delivered by Muftis

Faujdar: A petty officer under the Mughals

Fiqh: Islamic Jurisprudence

Gaan: Song

Gaddis: Positions

Geet: Song

Ghazal: A kind of Islamic devotional and spiritual song

Ghazi: A Muslim victorious warrior

Ghaus: The highest rank in the Sufi hierarchy

Gosain: Spiritual mentor

Guru: Teacher

Hadith: The recorded sayings of Prophet Muhammad based upon a chain of transmitters

Hagiography: Sufi biography

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

Hakimi: Herbal

Hal: A mystical state

Halqa: A circular spiritual assemblage

Hanafi: Muslims who adhere to the legal tradition established by Imam Abu Hanifa

Haqiqah: The Divine Reality

Hazrat: A prefix to a name indicating respect

Idd: There are two festivals of Muslims, namely, Idd-ul Fitar, observed after breaking the fast in the month of Ramzan, and Idd-ud Zoha, which means 'feast of sacrifice'. Both are usually referred to as Idd.

Iddgah: A venue for Idd congregational prayer

Ihsan: Excellence in virtue

Ijara land: Granting a land assignment to the highest-bidder in exchange for a certain amount of money

Ilm-e-ladunni: Sacred wisdom bestowed upon individuals by the Almighty Allah

Ilm-e-safina: The information found in the books that were revealed

Ilm-e-sina: The inner insights imparted by spiritual guides

Imam: One who leads the mandatory prayer in a mosque

Jalsah: Religious gathering or convention

Jamaat: A gathering or congregation for prayer or Islamic missionary work

Jamaat Khana: An assembly hall

Jihad: A conflict or battle

Juma Prayer: Friday congregational prayer

Kafir: Infidel

Kashf: Unveiling of divine knowledge in the hearts of lovers of God

Kavya: A poetic composition

Khadim: Caretaker of dargahs

Khalifa: The successor to a Sufi master

Khalq-o-Ayalullah: It means all people are members of the family of one God.

Khanqah: A Sufi hospice

Khilafat: A degree conferred by a Sufi master to a disciple that allows him to initiate disciples

Khilafat Nama: Deed of recognition for officially succeeding a Sufi master

Khoda: It is a Persian word meaning God or Allah

Khutba: Sermon.

Khwaja: Sufi master

Langar Khana: The community kitchen in a Sufi hospice or dargah

Lathi-Khel: A mock fighting with sticks

Madrassa: Islamic theological seminary

Maktab: An Islamic primary school typically connected to a mosque, providing basic Islamic education to Muslim children

Mahut-moishal: A keeper or driver of a buffalo cart

Majlis: An assembly in remembrance of God

Mannat: Vow

Mansabdar: A civil or military officer under the Mughals

Mantra: A word or sentence believed to possess spiritual power

Maqam: Spiritual station; it also means place of residence.

Ma'rifah: Knowledge of Divine mysteries

Markaz: Headquarter

Marshiya: Poems in remembrance of the Karbala martyrs

Masjid: Mosque or place for Muslim collective worship

Maulana: A title of respect for a Muslim who is well-versed in religious learning

Maulavi: A learned man in the conduct of Islamic religion

Mazaar: A Sufi shrine

Mehfil: Gathering or assembly

Mendicant: Alms-seeking members of religious orders

Mohalla: A group of houses that act as a social unit

Muazzin: An office-bearer of a mosque who calls the faithful to prayer five times a day.

Muharram: The first month of the Arabic calendar

Mujaddid: The reviver of Islam

Mujahida: Self-mortification

Mujarrad: Celibate

Munazira: Literary debate

Muraqaba: A contemplative reaction; in Sufism, it alludes to both the practice of meditation and a continuous state of perception.

Murid: A disciple

Murshid: A spiritual guide

Musafir: A traveller who goes 48 miles away from his house and stays up to fifteen days there

Musafir Khana: A dormitory providing overnight lodging for travellers

Mutawalli: Custodian

Nafs: The animal spirit, ego, or lower self that is at the root of all evil. The Sufis hold that the only way to overcome this lower self is via prayer, meditation, and other forms of spiritual practices.

Namaz: It is a Persian word. It denotes mandatory or formal prayer. Every Muslim has to perform it five times a day.

Nawab: It usually refers to the Viceroy. Upholding the sovereignty of the Mughal empire and overseeing the administration of a particular province were the main responsibilities of a Nawab.

Nobism: Prophethood

Oju: Ablution

Pagal: Mad

Pargana: A group of villages forming an administrative unit like the sub-division

Pir: A spiritual mentor, teacher, and master; sometimes known as a shaykh (leader) or murshid (guide); in Indian parlance, the word 'pir' is more commonly used than the Arabic word 'shaykh'.

Pirpal land: Land granted by the Ahom ruler to a Sufi or pir as a means of sustenance

Powa Makkah: The one-fourth of Makkah

Purdah: Seclusion of women from public observation

Qalandar: A mystic intoxicated with the love of God leading to neglect of mandatory religious prayers.

Qalb: Spiritual heart

Qawwali: A unique Sufi singing associated with the Indian subcontinent

Qibla: The direction of prayer towards the ‘Kaaba’ in Makkah

Quran: The most sacred religious book of the Muslims

Ramadan: Fasting month for Muslims. It is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

Rasul: The Messenger and Prophet of Allah

Rida: Satisfaction

Roza: Fasting

Sabr: Patience

Safa: Purity

Salat: It is an Arabic word equivalent to the Persian word ‘*namaj*’. It denotes compulsory prayer.

Salik: In the literal sense, a Sufi learner who has undertaken the ‘suluk’, or voyage towards God. He is also called a ‘traveller’ or ‘wayfarer’. In addition to his spiritual journey, the *salik* frequently travels physically as he roams from one location to another in quest of spiritual teachers and information.

Sama: Sufi concert or audition. It was most frequently practised by the Chishtis out of all the Sufi organisations founded in the Indian subcontinent.

Satras: Monastic institutions of the neo-Vaishnavite tradition of Assam

Shariah: It is the body of Islamic law that derives from the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith.

Shaykh: A spiritual mentor or guide

Shaykh-ul Akbar: The greatest master

Shaykh-ul Islam: Master or leader of Islam

Shirk: Associating something with God

Silsilah: A spiritual chain of a Sufi order

Sinni: Food offered after the prayer

Sufi: A Muslim mystic

Sufism: The mystic trend within Islam

Sulh-i-Kul: Peaceful co-existence with all

Syed: A descendant of the family of Prophet Muhammad

Tafsir: Explanation or interpretation of the verses of the Quran

Tariqah: The way or the path; it refers to the spiritual path that a Sufi must take in order to realise God.

Tasawwuf: The doctrine of Sufism

Tauhid: Oneness of God or genuine monotheistic belief

Tawakkul: Complete trust in God

Tawba: Repentance

Tawiz: An amulet

Tazia: Commemorating the martyrs of Karbala, especially the representation of the tombs of Hasan and Hussain during the Muharram celebration

Torowal Khel: Mock fight with sword

Ulama: It is an Arabic word and plural form of '*Alim*' meaning Islamic theologians.

Urs: Celebration of the death anniversary of a Sufi saint

Wahdat-ul Wujud: The Unity of Being or Oneness of Being

Wahdat-ush Shuhud: 'Unity of Witness', 'Unity of Consciousness', or 'Unity of Vision' is a doctrine formulated by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi in response to Ibn al-Arabi's Wahdat-ul Wujud, which he believed to be pantheistic. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi implied in the concept that the experience of being one with God is more like a vision than a real thing.

Wahabi: It was an Islamic puritan movement initiated by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab in the 18th century A.D. in Najd, Arabia. Saiyid Ahmad, hailing from the British territory in Rai Bareli of present-day Uttar Pradesh, brought the Wahabi doctrine to India.

Waj: An act of propagating Islamic knowledge

Waj-Mehfil: A public place for Islamic instruction to Muslims

Wali: A friend of Allah; the plural form is Awliya.

Waqf: An Islamic endowment of property to support a religious, educational, or philanthropic purpose.

Wilayat: Spiritual jurisdiction

Yogi: A person who is proficient in yoga

Zari song: Zari songs are mainly based on the tragedy of Karbala episodes, which have demonstrative expressions of grief and are an important part of Muharram celebrations.

Zikir: Assamese Sufi Songs

Ziyarat: Visit to the dargah or a Sufi shrine

Zuhd: Piety