CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Sufism: An Introduction

The proclamation of Islam by Prophet Muhammad to the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century A.D. represents a watershed moment in human history. The Muslims considered it their sacred duty to disseminate the teachings and ideology of their religion worldwide. As a result, wherever it spread, it brought about changes and exerted a great influence on other religions and civilizations. These changes spanned from one region to another and from one social group to another. Gradually, new sects emerged within the fold of Islam with the passage of time and place. Islamic mysticism, also referred to as Sufism, is an example of this type of sect. In Arabic, it is known as *'Tasawwuf'*. It began as a spiritual movement in the early years of Islam. According to Syed Athar Abbas Rizvi, Sufism is the mystical aspect of Islam, which encompasses the more veiled or esoteric elements of Islam.[1] In Islam, Sufism stands out as a vibrant and fascinating religious and cultural movement. It primarily focuses on the internal aspects of religion rather than the external. Those who pursue Sufism are referred to as Sufis, and the name 'Sufism' encompasses the doctrines and rituals that seek to establish direct communication between God and man. The realisation of God is the ultimate goal of Sufism. It is, therefore, a process of spiritual progress activated by involvement, practice, and personal experience. Mere knowledge is insufficient to comprehend Sufism. It is devoid of all ill traits, including enmity, the urge for vengeance, and the temptation to use violence. Instead, it is characterised by affection, empathy, and altruism. In the words of Junayd al-Baghdadi, "The Sufi is like the earth on which every foul thing is thrown and from which only fair things come forth."[2]

Sufi philosophy is divided into three types: *shariah*, *tariqah*, and *haqiqah*. *Shariah* is the external Islamic law; *tariqah* is the road; and *haqiqah* is the truth. Prophet Muhammad declared, "The *shariah* is my speech, *tariqah* is my conduct, and *haqiqah* is my inward condition."[3] Sufis evolved their strategy of leading people towards righteousness as society changed throughout Islamic history, developing techniques that were appropriate for the times. Therefore, Sufism is a manifestation of Islam's

adaptability to local traditions and customs. It acknowledges the diversity of religious practices. In terms of method, Sufism puts a strong focus on meditation. The Sufis believe that the Prophet and those around him were engaged in contemplation, introspection, and pondering as forms of meditation in those times. The Sufis formalised this meditation into a strict discipline. They believe that meditation makes it easier for one to reach the higher phases of *'tazkia'* (the cleansing of the self), *'ihsan'* (the excellence in prayer), and *'ma'rifah'* (realisation of God).

1.2 Etymology

There is a debate among the scholars regarding the etymology of the term 'Sufi'. One hypothesis claims that the term 'Sufi' originates from the Arabic word *"saff,"* meaning "line or row," and so alludes to the early Muslims who accompanied the Prophet and sat in the front row during the compulsory prayer at the Prophet's mosque in Madinah.[4] Some say it is a derivation from the Arabic term *"suffa,"* which means "doorway" or *"varandah"* of the Prophet's mosque in Madinah.[5] According to legend, this *varandah* provided shelter for a number of homeless associates of the Prophet. They invested their time in devotion, memorization of the Prophet's sayings, and studying the Quranic sentences by heart. They were known as *"As-haab-i Suffa,"* or "People of the Porch," because the mosque's courtyard had essentially become their residence. Therefore, some Sufi scholars attribute the origin of Sufism to the *"Ahl-i-Suffa."*[6] Many scholars, however, trace the origin of the word 'Sufi' back to the word *"suf,"* which means wool.[7] The reason behind this is that the majority of the early devout Sufis were austere and donned rough, undyed wool clothes. Moreover, *"muraqqa,"* or a patched woollen garment, was worn by Prophet Muhammad and his followers. The ragged garments served as a metaphor for willingly giving up material wealth and the world's enjoyments. Subsequent mystics who adhered to this tradition also dressed simply in woollen attire and were referred to as Sufis. However, there are scholars who contend that the purity of heart possessed by Sufi saints is the root of the word "Sufi," which they interpret as coming from the Arabic word *"safa"* (meaning purity).[8]

1.3 Evolution of Sufism: Global Context

It is a pertinent question as to why and when Sufism developed in Islam. This question deserves careful consideration because it determines the very nature of Sufism and its influence on various facets of societal existence. A more simplified explanation is to see it as the natural development of ascetic tendencies, which, however, are difficult to testify to historically. In fact, Sufism, as S. A. A. Rizvi clarifies, was the result of political expansion, sectarian controversies, and theological and philosophical development during the 8th century A.D. in the Islamic world.[9] Although the term 'Sufi' did not exist during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, *Tasawwuf,* or Sufism, has its roots in early Islam. The Sufis consider the Prophet Muhammad to be the epitome of their principles and doctrines, and they attribute the origins of Sufism to his actions and teachings. They hold that the Prophet Muhammad was endowed with two types of knowledge: *"Ilm-e-Safina,"* or 'knowledge of the outside world', and *"Ilm-e-Sina or Ilm-e-Ladunni,"* or 'knowledge of the inner world'. In other words, they hold that the Prophet's revelations came in two forms: one was expressed in the language of the Quran, while the other was felt as divine inspiration in the Prophet's heart. The first kind was made to be accessible to all, while the second one was to be shared personally from heart to heart with a select group of people. 'Bookish knowledge' or familiarity with the learning of the Quran and *Hadith* was known as *"Ilm-e-Safina",* while 'the knowledge of the heart' was referred to as *"Ilm-e-Sina".* The Sufis are commonly believed to have possessed 'the knowledge of the heart', in contrast to the *ulama,* who were knowledgeable about the Quran and *Hadith.* The Prophet shared his inner knowledge *(Ilm-e-Sina)* with a select few of his companions, and he appointed his son-in-law Ali bin Abi Talib to be the *"Imam of the Walis"* (leader of the friends) and keeper of mystical wisdom.[10] According to scholars, Ali bin Abi Talib is credited with founding the Sufi tradition. Islamic tradition regards him as the "father of Sufism."

Since the word Sufi does not appear in the Quran, the books of *Hadith,* or the common Arab lexicons that developed as late as the eighth century A.D., scholars disagree as to its origin. Abu'l-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 1074 A.D.), compiler of *'Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf',* claims that the name 'Sufi' first appeared in use around the turn of the 9th century A.D. as a general term for those who adopted a religious

stance characterised by frugality and spirituality.[11] According to *'Kashf al-Mahjub',* people who have reached a state of perfection in their spiritual journey and possess advanced spiritual abilities are known as Sufis.[12] *'Awarif-u'l-Ma'rif'* states, "The term 'Sufi' was first adopted by Abu Hashim (d. 780 A.D.), a Syrian Zahid."[13] As per Abdur Rahman Jami, it was Shaykh Abu Hashim Kufi, who died in 776 A.D., was the first spiritualist to be labelled as a Sufi.[14]

Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, in his book *'Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century',* has categorised the evolution and expansion of the mystical movement within Islam into three separate phases: 1) the era of the Quietists; 2) the age of mystic philosophers; and 3) the era of the *silsilahs*.[15] He states that during the 1st phase, which roughly spans 661 A.D.–850 A.D., the mystic movement was based on individual practice. The people who were dissatisfied with the outside world withdrew into isolation and severed their ties to the material world.[16] They perceived this world as ephemeral and deceptive. Imam Hasan Basri (d. 728 A.D.), Rabia Basri (d. 776 A.D.), Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 777 A.D.), and Abu Hashim (d. 777 A.D.) are all associated with the Quietist school of mysticism. The early proponents of Sufism were known for their rigorous adherence to the teachings and values outlined in the Quran and *Hadith.* They were still outside of the theosophical and pantheistic ideas. They contributed to the doctrinal growth of mystical heritage through their meditative and artistic lives. This particular stage is commonly referred to as doctrinal Sufism.[17] It was not a formal community discipline in the beginning stages of Islam; rather, it was a personal way of life.

K. A. Nizami believes that during the late ninth century A.D., there emerged mystic cults that focused primarily on the issue of mystic metaphysics. These groups were formed by highly educated men who wrote a vast amount of literature on mystic topics.[18] Although this literature included interesting discussions, it still lacked a coherent mystical philosophy. Harith-al-Muhasibi (d. 857 A.D.), Zun-Nun Misri (d. 859 A.D.), Sari Saqti (d. 870 A.D.), Bayazid Bistami (d. 876 A.D.), Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896 A.D.), Junaid Baghdadi (d. 910 A.D.), Mansur Hallaj (d. 921 A.D.), Abu Bakr Kalabadhi (d. 994 A.D.), Abu Talib Makki (d. 996 A.D.), Abu Nasr Sarraj (d. 998 A.D.), and others were part of this group. Following these groups, there emerged mystic philosophers who synthesised the teachings of the previous schools, incorporating other religious and mystical concepts

to form a coherent mystic philosophy. Imam Qushairi (d. 1074 A.D.) and Imam Ghazzali (d. 1111 A.D.) were the first Sufi saints to provide a methodical explanation of Islamic mysticism. Since then, Sufism has spread to vast geographical and cultural regions like Iran, Central Asia, Anatolia, and India, and later to other countries as well. As Islam developed and spread over the centuries, the emphasis on Sufism shifted. The cult was expanded to include new rituals, including singing, dancing, and saint worship.

According to K. A. Nizami, the emergence of the *silsilahs* in the 12th and 13th centuries was the final and most significant stage in the evolution of Islamic mysticism.[19] The total collapse of Muslim social life, the deterioration of Muslim ethics, and the fragmentation of the Muslim soul just before and after the sack of Baghdad by Halagu Khan posed a significant challenge to mystical thinking. During this crucial period, the mystics devoted all of their efforts to the revival of Muslim society. They established explicit domains of jurisdiction and divided the world into spiritual provinces, or *wilayats,* with the purpose of rejuvenating the spirituality of the Muslims. Consequently, the spiritual orders *(silsilahs)* were efficiently structured, and *khanqahs,* which subsequently formed an essential component of the mystic discipline, were widely established. The *silsilahs* served as a means to establish a connection between disciples and Prophet Muhammad, thus establishing an apparent connection to Allah through a sequence of transmissions. During this stage, notable theologians who contributed to the development of the Sufi notion included Fariduddin Attar (1140 A.D.–1234 A.D.), Jalaluddin Rumi (1207 A.D.–1273 A.D.), Shaykh Sadi (1184 A.D.–1291 A.D.), and others. During the same time period, Mohiuddin Ibn-al Arabi (1165 A.D.–1240 A.D.), a renowned Sufi saint hailing from Spain, proposed the theory of *"Wahdat-ul Wujud,"* denoting the 'unity of existence'. He believed that, as everything is an expression of divine substance, everything is fundamentally one. These innovations resulted in the development of Sufi doctrines as a distinct discipline of philosophical inquiry.

Historians disagree on how much other religions impacted the growth of Sufism. Several scholars, including R. A. Nicholson, have argued that Greek philosophy significantly impacted the growth of Sufism in Islam.[20] During the periods of Ibn Sina (980 A.D.–1037 A.D.) and Abu Sayeed Abil Khair (967 A.D.–1049 A.D.), Greek philosophy had an impact on the latter phase of Sufi theology. Pantheism and the concept of emanation are two examples of this effect. Suniti Kumar Chaterjee bolsters this idea

by arguing that Neo-Platonic mysticism in particular greatly influenced the evolution of Sufism.[21] Dozy Von Kremer looked to the ancient Hindu scriptures to try to find their roots.[22] Several authors have also noted the influence of Buddhism on Sufism. So far as the influence of Indian philosophy on the evolution of Sufism is concerned, R. A. Nicholson states, "The direct influence of Indian ideas on Sufism, though undeniably great, was posterior and secondary to the influence exerted by Greek and Syrian speculation."[23] The subsequent Sufis, such as Al-Ghazzali and Al-Hujwiri, criticised and disapproved of their worldview. Al-Ghazzali provided a methodical and organised exposition of Sufi doctrine in his famous work, *"Yahya-ul-Ulum."* Although non-Islamic ideologies influenced the evolution of the Sufi notion, the bulk of scholars agree that its basic spirit is rooted in the Quran and the *Hadith.* In the words of J. Spencer Trimingham, "Sufism was a natural development within Islam, owing little to non-Muslim sources, though receiving radiations from the ascetical-mystical life and thought of eastern Christianity. Whatever it may owe to Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Christian mysticism, or other systems, we may truly regard, as did the Sufis themselves, the inner doctrine of Islam, as the underlying mystery of the Quran."[24]

1.4 Attributes of Sufism

In Sufi masterpieces like *'Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf', 'Kitab-al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab-i-Ahl al-Tasawwuf', 'Awarif-u'l-Ma'rif', 'Kashf al-Mahjub',* etc., a detailed discussion regarding important features of Sufism has been done meticulously. The Sufis made an effort to uphold the teachings of the Prophet of humble living and lofty thought. They believed that union with Allah was the pinnacle of illumination. So, they advocated cleansing the spiritual heart *(qalb)* and enhancing its transparency so that it might more clearly reflect the love of the Almighty. The prominent features that make up the Sufi doctrine include *tawbah* (repentance), *zuhd* (piety), *tawakkul* (absolute reliance on God), *faqr* (poverty), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (thanksgiving), *rida* (contentment), *mohabbat* (love), *ihsan* (an intense religious state of mind), and *ma'rifah* (divine understanding).[25] These qualities are acquired through the practice of *'mujahida',* or self-mortification.

Sufism holds that the only real knowledge is that which originates from the Almighty Allah and is transmitted from a mentor *(murshid)* to a pupil *(murid).* Therefore,

the primary focus of the *murshid* is to mould the moral values of the disciple and aid him in achieving his objective, which is to get close to God and unite with Him. In Sufism, there is a route to travel mystically, and this mystic journey is termed *'suluk'.* One who travels on this path is known as a *'salik',* or wanderer who needs a spiritual guide, or *shaykh,* or *murshid*. According to the Sufis, every man has the innate capacity to achieve liberation from one's own self and oneness with God. This potential, however, is dormant, and the aspirant will need a mentor in order to develop it. Regarding the importance of a mentor in Sufism, it is stated that only with guidance from an experienced guide can one learn how to meditate properly and gain knowledge of spiritual reality.[26] So far as the role of *murshid* is concerned, it is stated in *'Awarif-u'l-Ma'rif'* that "the *shaikh's* purpose is to cleanse, from the rust of lust and of nature, the *murid's* heart, so that in it, by attractions and inclinations, may be reflected the rays of the beauty of unity and the glory of eternity; so that by beholding them, his eyes may be attracted; and so that, thus, divine love may rest in his sincere heart."[27] The highest stage in Sufism, according to many Sufis, usually necessitates the pupil staying with the mentor and following his guidance for a considerable amount of time. According to Arthur J. Arberry, this method of serving the mentor is comparable to the Hindu practices of *'guruseva'* and *'gurucharan'* of the Sanatan school of thought.[28] Thus, the role of the spiritual guide holds significant importance within the theological framework of Sufism. Other prominent attributes of Sufism are practising *ba'ya* (pledge of allegiance), *chilla* (fourty days of seclusion), *hal* (mystic state), *maqam* (spiritual stage), *muraqabah* (a meditative response), *kashf* (unveiling of divine knowledge in the hearts of lovers), *baqa* (permanency), *tajalli* (epiphany), *fana* (effacement), *halqa* (a spiritual gathering), *khilafat nama* (deed of recognition), *karamat* (miracles), *mujahida* (spiritual struggle), *shijra* (spiritual family tree of a Sufi order), *sama* (musical audition), etc.[29]

1.5 Genesis of Sufism in India

According to Richard Maxwell Eaton, Islam reached India in three waves.[30] In the first wave, the people who were connecting India as traders brought the Islamic ideology and message with them. During this period, the Arab maritime traders brought Islam to India for the first time in the Malabar coast and Ceylon during the seventh century A.D.[31] Patricia Crone claims that 600 years prior to the arrival of the brand-new religion that

Prophet Muhammad preached, Arab traders frequently travelled to the Malabar coast of south India.[32] But once these traders converted to Islam and brought missionaries with them to propagate the faith, the religion made its way to the area. Thus, Islam was introduced to the Indian subcontinent from Arabia, mostly through trade. The second wave of Islam in India started in the years 712–13 A.D., when Arab political power began to spread over Sindh and the Punjab. Muhammad Bin Qasim launched his expedition in Sind between 711 A.D. and 712 A.D. The towns of Sind and the coastline regions saw a considerable influx of Arab warriors who placed their families there. A lot of people, for a variety causes, turned to Islam during this invasion. S. A. A. Rizvi writes that a significant portion of Buddhists converted to Islam because they opposed Hindu tyranny and Brahmanical dominance.[33] From the *'Chachnama',* it is known that Muhammad Bin Qasim converted a number of chieftains to Islam.[34] In 712 A.D., when the Arabs had taken control of Sindh and the neighbouring provinces to the north up to Multan, the western provinces were included in the Muslim empire. Scholars like Alberuni (d. 1048 A.D.), along with other historians and the Sufis, arrived in India with the second wave of Muslim conquests. In the third wave, due to the Mongol invasion of Iran, Iraq, and other parts of west and central Asia in the 13th and 14th centuries, a number of *ulama* and other Muslims migrated from their homelands to India and settled here. Sultan Alauddin Khilji had to extend the boundary of *Quwwat-ul-Islam* Mosque and the adjacent Madrassa to provide accommodation for these migrated scholars in the early 14th century A.D.

India is reputed to have a large number of Sufis and *faqirs.* In the words of James Wise, "What, however, chiefly distinguishes the Indian Muhammadan from his brethren of other lands is his servile veneration for Pirs, or holy men. The diptych of Indian saints is very voluminous, and its province of India, nay, every district and city, has its own patron saint."[35] During the Umayyad Caliphate (661 A.D.–750 A.D.), the Sufis, who belonged to the four Sunni Islamic traditions such as *Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi'i,* moved from Baghdad to other areas of the globe with a vigorous missionary spirit. The *Shafi'i* Arabs were responsible for the process of Islamization along the Malabar coastline of south India, while the Sufis belonging to the *Hanafi* order carried out the same mission in the Gangetic plains and Bengal.[36] A number of Sufi saints from various *silsilahs* made their homes in different parts of north India after the Delhi Sultanate was founded. Sufism entered this subcontinent as a well-organised institution and in its final shape. According

to Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, the very first Sufi to establish himself in the subcontinent was Shaykh Safiuddin Kaziruni during the mid-eleventh century A.D.[37] The Shaykh was born in Kazirun, an Iranian village close to Shiraz. His spiritual mentor was Shaykh Abu Ishaq Kaziruni. Commenting on the influence of the Sufis in the area, Ibn Batuta writes that people in China and India held Shaykh Abu Ishaq Kaziruni in great regard. His *khanqah* at Uch received substantial presents from both traders and monarchs. Seafarers on the China Sea vowed to the Shaykh and offered gifts in exchange for their safe return from the choppy sea.[38] The acquisition of Punjab by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni led to the settlement of numerous Sufis in the region. Following the rise of Sufi activities in Punjab, the city of Lahore emerged as a prominent centre for such practices. Shaykh Ali Bin Uthman Al-Hujwiri of Ghazni (d. 1072 A.D.) was a prominent Sufi scholar to reside in the Indian city of Lahore, the seat of the Ghaznavid empire. He composed the renowned literary work *'The Kashf al-Mahjub'* (Uncovering of Veils), which stands as the earliest documented guide to Sufism in the Persian language. According to this work, the eleventh century A.D. saw the arrival of several Sufi saints in Lahore.

Upon the arrival of Sufism in India, its theological horizons expanded significantly due to the presence of several theosophical, mystical, and spiritual traditions that had already developed within the Indian context. The later evolution of Sufism was affected more by the surroundings of India than by variations of Sufism that originated in other parts of the world. The Sufi orders subsequently followed their own cycles of expansion, stagnation, and renaissance once they established themselves in various regions of India. The history of Sufism and Sufis' relationship with the multiple organs of society in India was different from the Islamic world. The widespread growth of Sufism in India was based on certain socio-economic and political reasons. The emergence of Sufism throughout India was a complex process driven by societal demands, political shifts, cross-cultural interactions, and the spiritual and altruistic value of Sufi teachings.

1.6 Various *Silsilahs* (Orders) in India

Sufism has become associated with a plethora of teachers, innumerable establishments, and an enormous literature over the centuries. With the passage of time, the expansive framework of Sufism experienced the formation of orders known as *silsilahs*, which served as lineages connecting various Sufis. According to S. A. A. Rizvi,

the establishment of *silsilahs,* or spiritual lineages, was an attempt to provide Sufism with a more solid foundation and greater personal meaning for its adherents.[39] The *silsilahs* started to emerge around a specific saint and his teachings. The initial *silsilahs* were established and given titles similar to those of their founders. For instance, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani's name is connected with the *Qadiri silsilah.* As they evolved, the Sufi *silsilahs* split into numerous branches. There are currently countless *silsilahs* operating in India. Distinguished by their nature and characteristics, the Sufi orders are classified into two categories*:* those who rigorously follow the *shariah* and go by the name *"ba-shara,"* and those who do not conform to the *shariah* and go by the name *"be-shara."* In his book *'Ain-i-Akbari',* Abul Fazl listed the fourteen orders that were active in India throughout the 16th century.[40] These were *Habibi, Tayfuri, Karkhi, Saqatiy, Junaydi, Kazruni, Tusi, Firdausi, Suhrawardi, Zaydi, Iyazi, Adhami, Hubayri,* and *Chishti.*[41] Besides these fourteen orders, Abul Fazl also mentioned another twelve orders, along with some Sufi schools having worldwide repute.[42] However, in the subsequent period, the *Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadiri, and Naqshbandi silsilahs* appeared as the most well-known *'ba-shara' silsilahs* in India. Writing in 1942 A.D., A. J. Arberry says, "To-day more than two-thirds of India's Muslim population are under the influence of someone or other of the Darwish orders or fraternities, the principal ones being *Chishtiyah, Suhrawardiyah, Qadiriyah, and Naqshbandiyah."*[43] In addition, there were several branches and distinct *silsilahs,* which were largely derived from those four main orders. These *silsilahs* played key roles in the cultural milieu of the time. The prominent *silsilahs* prevalent in India have been highlighted below in a nutshell:

1.6.1 *Chishti* Order

This *silsilah,* or order, was founded by Khwaja Abu Abdullah Chishti (d. 966 A.D.).[44] But it was intended to grow and prosper in India. Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (d. 1236 A.D.) introduced it to India during the twelfth century A.D. and founded a *Chishti* centre in Ajmer. This order remained important from the 13th to the 18th centuries. Gradually, it spread to all parts of India. There were several notable Sufis of the *Chishti* order, including Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, Shaykh Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki of Delhi, Shaykh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar of Pakpattan, Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi, Shaykh Nasiruddin Mahmud Chiragh-i-Dehli, and many more. They had their

own disciples and successors, through whom this order reached various parts of the subcontinent. The early *Chishti* Sufis did not accept government favour; however, the majority of the later *Chishti* Sufis welcomed government assistance. The *Chishti silsilah* has largely preserved *qawwali* (Sufi song) in recent decades. The *Nizami* and *Sabiri* orders are among the numerous divisions of the *Chishti silsilah.*

1.6.2 *Suhrawardi* Order

During the Delhi Sultanate, one of the most well-known orders was the *Suhrawardi silsilah*. The establishment of this sect can be attributed to Shaykh Najibuddin Abdul Qahir Suhrawardi (d. 1169 A.D.), a resident of Suhraward in Iran.[45] His nephew, Shaykh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi of Iran, however, was responsible for its expansion and development.[46] He dispatched a number of his disciples to India. Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariya (1118 A.D.–1262 A.D.) is credited with establishing it in India. He belonged to the Khurasani ethnic group and was a disciple of Shaykh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi. He centred his activities in Sind and Multan. Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariya represented the *Suhrawardi silsilah* in Multan, Saiyid Nuruddin Mubarak in Delhi, Qazi Hamiduddin in Nagaur, and Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrezi in Lakhnauti. Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrezi played a significant role in the Islamization of Bengal. Jalaluddin Bukhari, better known as Jalal Surkh, was a *khalifa* (spiritual successor) of Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariya. The descendants of Jalal Surkh, like Makhdum Jahanian, Shah Raju Qattal, etc., were instrumental in spreading Sufism in Uchh, Punjab, Kashmir, and Gujrat. The *Suhrawardi* order came to Kashmir with Saiyid Sharafuddin, better known as Bulbul Shah.[47] The *Suhrawardis,* in contrast to the *Chishtis,* highly valued the accumulation of wealth, wisdom, and mystical illumination. They encouraged a harmonious fusion of scholarship and mysticism rather than extreme austerity or self-mortification.

1.6.3 *Naqshbandi* Order

The *Naqshbandi* order was first brought to India by Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi.[48] Babur invited the two prominent *Naqshbandi* Sufis, namely Khwaja Abdul Shahid and Khwaja Kalan, who arrived at the Mughal court but left quickly. Later, Khwaja Muhammad Baqi, often referred to as Baqi Billah, enabled this *silsilah* to gain widespread acceptance in India. But the most renowned Sufi of this order was Shaykh

Ahmad Sirhindi (1563 A.D.–1624 A.D.). He was very famous due to his philosophy, *"Wahdat-ush Shuhud."* He further asserted that he was the *"Mujaddid-e-Alfi-Sani"* (renovator of the second millennium).[49] The *Naqshbandis* were orthodox in outlook and opposed visiting the graves of Sufi saints and listening to *sama*. After Sirhindi's demise, the order was headed by two eminent Sufis, each with a distinctive viewpoint. Shah Waliullah led the adoption of a conservative strategy, while Mirza Mazhar *Jan-i-Jahan* spearheaded the adoption of a liberal approach. The *Naqshbandis* strictly adhered to the *shariah* rule and condemned any form of innovation.

1.6.4 *Qadiri* Order

Abdul Qadir Jilani (d. 1166 A.D.) formed the *Qadiri* Sufi order in Baghdad. India was its destination by the mid-fourteenth century A.D. *'Ain-i-Akbari',* written in 1600 A.D., does not list the *silsilah* among the orders represented in India, indicating that this *silsilah* was not well-liked until the 16th century A.D.[50] The *Qadiris* were orthodox in their outlook. The *Qadiri* order, which mainly flourished in the 17th century A.D., was founded in India by Mir Nurullah bin Shah Khalilullah. Jahanara, a princess of the Mughal dynasty, and her brother, Dara Shikoh, were followers of this mystical organization. The *Qadiri* Sufis were well-connected to provincial Sultanate elites and frequently received financial support from the government. The important centres of the *Qadiri* Sufi order were Ludhiana, Sind, Sirhind, Kaithal, Panipat, Delhi, and Agra. Some *Qadiri* Sufis established *khanqahs* in Kashmir, too. During the 17th century A.D., Shaykh Mir Muhammad, better known as Mian Mir, the teacher of Dara Shikoh, rose in prominence in Punjab. The seventeenth century A.D. saw the establishment of a few *khanqahs* of the *Qadiri* order in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal as well.[51]

1.6.5 *Firdausi* Order

This is a branch of the *Suhrawardi* order. The *Firdausi silsilah* can be traced back to Saifuddin Sa'id Bakharzi,[52] who passed away in the central Asian city of Bukhara in 1260 A.D. But before he passed away, he sent Khwaja Badruddin of Samarqand, one of his pupils, to reside in Delhi and spread the spiritual knowledge throughout India. It was Khwaja Badruddin of Samarqand who introduced this *silsilah* to India.[53] Here, Khwaja Badruddin Samarqandi gained widespread popularity and amassed a substantial

following. His two *khalifas,* Khwaja Najibuddin and Khwaja Rukunuddin, succeeded him. Nevertheless, the most remarkable Sufi belonging to this *silsilah* in India was Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, who was both a disciple and spiritual successor of Khwaja Najibuddin. Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri (d. 1380 A.D.) founded the *silsilah* in Rajgir, Bihar, near the end of the 14th century A.D. Though this order was initially introduced in Delhi by Khwaja Badruddin Samarqandi, it gained popularity in Bihar and eastern India due to the key role played by Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri. The Shaykh had a significant number of devoted followers. Farida Khanam, in her book '*Sufism: An Introduction',* has mentioned that according to tradition, Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri had around 100,000 disciples.[54] The most well-known among them were Maulana Nizamuddin, Shaykh Muzaffar, and Malikzada Fazluddin. His disciples established a network of *khanqahs* from Bihar to Sonargaon in Bengal, and the spiritual lessons expressed in his numerous letters were rapidly disseminated over the whole subcontinent.

1.6.6 *Sattari* Order

The *Sattari silsilah* is an extension of the *Suhrawardi* order. In the 15th century A.D., Shaykh Abdullah Sattari founded the conservative *Sattari* order in India.[55] The most important Sufis of this order were Shaykh Muhammad Ullah, Shaykh Abul Fateh, Shaykh Hafiz, Shaykh Buddhan, and Shaykh Abul Muyyad Muhammad. Abul Muyyad Muhammad, better known as Ghaus of Gwalior, was associated with Babur, Humayun, and Akbar. He received a large grant of land from the Mughal emperors. In addition, he wrote several Sufi compositions. The important centres of the *Sattari* order were Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal, Deccan, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh.[56] The *Sattari* Sufis, similar to the *Qadiris,* maintained close connections with the royal court and welcomed government assistance.

1.6.7 *Rishi* Order

It was an indigenous Sufi order that flourished in Kashmir. Hazrat Bulbul Shah of the *Suhrawardi* order is credited with introducing Sufism to Kashmir. He arrived in the valley while King Sukhdev was ruling there.[57] During the last part of the 14th century A.D., an attempt to introduce Islam to Kashmir was led by a famous Sufi, namely Mir

Saiyyid Ali Hamadani (1314 A.D.–1385 A.D.), the founder of the *Kubrawiyya* order in Kashmir.[58] Hamadani, his sons, and his students all had little success in spreading their religion among the people of Kashmir. However, Kashmir experienced a golden age of Sufism in the 15th and 16th centuries. Shaykh Nuruddin Wali (d. 1439 A.D.), better known as *'Nund Sanz',* founded the indigenous *Rishi* order in Kashmir.[59] To Jonaraja, the 15th-century Kashmiri historian, "The shaykh was the greatest sage of his time."[60] This order emerged as a cross-fertilisation of Sufi beliefs with those expressed by Lalla in her mystic verses. Lalla, or Lalleshwari, also known as Lal Ded, is regarded as one of the most influential female mystics in Kashmiri history. She effectively integrated aspects of Kashmiri Shaivism and Sufism into her teachings. In Kashmir's rural areas, the *Rishi* order flourished and had an impact on the religious customs of the people in the 15th and 16th centuries. Similar to Lal Ded, the lessons of Nuruddin Wali encompassed elements from both Sufism and Kashmiri Shaivism.[61] The local Kashmiri Sufis preferred to identify themselves as *Rishis*, and their organisation embraced indigenous practices combining Islamic and Hindu esoteric customs.

1.6.8 *Qalandari* Order

A number of roaming *darveshes* who disregarded recognised social norms were included in the *Qalandari* order. According to Islamic law, they were morally repugnant. They lacked a well-known spiritual leader and institution. It is said that several *Qalandars* were assimilated into the *Chishti* order after frequenting *Chishti khanqahs,* and a few of them were also absorbed into the *Suhrawardi silsilah.*[62] Through their interactions with the *Nath Panthi Yogis,* the *Qalandars* were influenced to embrace many of their practices, such as piercing their ears, etc. Celibacy, wandering, extreme poverty, and beggarly lifestyles were all part of their ideology.

Apart from these, there are still a large number of Sufi *silsilahs* operating in different regions of India. Some *silsilahs* are specific, region-based, and local in nature. The teachings, beliefs, and practices of different *silsilahs* differ slightly from one another. These Sufi organisations have been instrumental in forming India's religious landscape over many centuries. The establishment of these *silsilahs* provided Sufism with a stable and structured foundation, enabling the Sufis to gain more credibility and a more solid defence against attacks from orthodox religious scholars. Many of these *silsilahs* blended

their rituals with regional customs to create a distinct mystical tradition that promoted respect and tolerance for all religions.

1.7 Sufism and Indigenous Faiths

Sufism appears to have encountered Hinduism and Buddhist mystical concepts on a broader scale. In the eleventh century A.D., the *Nath Yogis* of north India left Peshawar for Central Asia and Iran to impart yogic practices there. Similarly, other nomadic *yogis* and Sanskrit intellectuals influenced Sufi organisations in Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and Central Asia. Hindu scholars imparted knowledge of Indian sciences in the esteemed educational institutions of Baghdad, where they engaged in inter-faith dialogues with the Muslim Sufis. So, the early pantheistic philosophical expositions found in the *Upanishads* had a significant influence on Sufi thinking. The *Nath Panthi Yogis,* who had their *'Markaz'* (HQ) in Peshawar, were responsible for introducing the Sufis to *'hath-yoga'*.[63] Two Arabic and Persian versions of the Sanskrit book *'Amrita Kunda'* on *hath-yoga* were published, providing further evidence of the dialogue between *yogis* and Sufis that bolstered the multifaceted aspect of Indian culture in the era of medieval Indian history. In the 13th century A.D., Ibn al-Arabi, also known as *"Shaykh-ul Akbar"* or the 'Greatest Master', developed the notion of *"Wahdad-ul Wujud"* (oneness of God), which became the most influential thought to dominate the subsequent Sufi ideologies.[64] The Muslim interpretation of this idea mirrored the *Advaita* philosophy. Thus, Vedanta and Sufism in India eventually began to practise the same discipline in their spiritual endeavours.

The frequent and significant communication between Hindu and Muslim mystics was reflected in many facets of social life. The themes covered in Baba Farid's *'jamaat khana'* (assembly hall) at Ajodhan aroused the inquisitiveness of *yogis* whose ideologies were rooted in *hath-yoga*. The Sufis gladly adopted the Hindu meditative practices of deep breathing and focused-attention. The followers of the *Chishti* discipline still chant many of the meditation prayers in Punjabi that Baba Farid wrote for his students. Sadia Dehlvi states that Guru Nanak was profoundly influenced by his poems, and 134 of the Sufi songs have been included in the sacred compositions of the Sikh people.[65] She further asserts that Guru Nanak and his successors are supposed to have authored the renowned *"Asa-ki-Var,"* a morning song chanted by Sikhs at the *khanqah* of the Baba Farid at Pakpattan.[66] The *Chishti* Sufis engaged Hindu and Jaina *yogis* in open discussion on a

range of subjects, including yogic practices. Nizamuddin Auliya, deeply moved by a group of Hindu devotees, once told Amir Khusru that every community had its own set of customs, beliefs, and manners of worship.[67] Similar to the *yogis*, some *Sattari* Sufis stayed in forest areas, subsisting on a meagre regimen of fruits and herbs while subjecting themselves to rigorous physical and spiritual training. There are many striking similarities between Sufism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Buddhist and Christian monasteries appear to have inspired the structure of *khanqahs* and the rituals associated with them. Comparisons can be drawn between the Buddhist noble path and the Sufi mystic routes, such as the Buddhist *'Dhyana'* and the Sufi concentration of *'Muraqaba'* (contemplative reaction). The Sufi tenet of 'peace with all' *(sulh-i-kul*) bears a noteworthy resemblance to the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism and Yogi Hinduism.

1.8 Statement of Problems

Sufism in Assam has been the subject of a few literary works. Currently, it has received attention from authors and researchers, and a few writings on Sufism in Assam have been produced. However, the academics have never adequately explained the lives and activities of the Sufis in the undivided Goalpara district of Assam. There has been no systematic and cohesive attempt to provide a full account of the life-sketches of the Sufi saints of this area of Assam and their contribution to the development of Islam and Sufism. Some of the writings regarding them that are currently available contain only meagre references, and they also mostly focus on the political aspect of these saints, giving little consideration to the socio-cultural significance of their deeds. Again, it is difficult to say anything about their lives and pursuits because contemporary records are almost silent on them. Moreover, most of the Sufi saints themselves left no legacy in the form of writings. Furthermore, myths and stories obscure the available knowledge about these Sufis. Some of the Sufi-biographies at present on the market are replete with fanciful tales and stories, boasting of the miraculous feats and supernatural powers of these holy men. The majority of these biographies were written by those who exhibited a lack of objectivity and were written much later, after the deaths of the Sufi saints. So, a researcher needs to use these resources with the utmost caution. Considering these aspects, the proposed research has tried to deal with all facets of Sufism in the undivided Goalpara district of Assam.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To trace the evolution of Sufism in Assam
- To examine the lives and teachings of the Sufi saints of undivided Goalpara district
- To discuss the influence and impact of Sufism on the society of the undivided Goalpara district

1.10 Study Area and Period

The study area is confined to the activities of the Sufis in the undivided Goalpara district of Assam, consisting of the present-day districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Chirang, and South Salmara-Mankachar. This region is also known as 'western Assam' or 'Lower Assam'. The study period spans from the arrival of Sufism in this region until the independence of India in 1947 A.D.

1.11 Survey of Literature

Although the literature on Sufism in Assam is not as extensive as in other regions, there are still some resources that provide insights into the presence and influence of Sufism in the region. The works of different scholars on the origin and development of Sufism and Sufi practices have been consulted in order to trace the advent and expansion of Sufi mystical trends in various corners of the globe and India. Western Assam is adjacent to undivided Bengal, so Sufi literature from both undivided Bengal and Assam has been consulted in order to get a holistic picture of the topic. Following are the works that have been reviewed at the respective points:

Ali Bin Uthman Al-Hujwiri's *"Kashf al-Mahjub,"*[68] translated into English by Reynold A. Nicholson, is the earliest extensive Persian work on Sufism. It is the primary and most authoritative source on Sufi doctrines in the Persian language. The arrangement of the book is thoughtful and artistic. The author begins with a brief discussion on the assertion of knowledge, which serves as the foundation of all learning. He elaborates on the true meaning of *'Tasawwuf'* in five chapters, providing detailed explanations of its numerous definitions and intricacies. Following the definitions, he provides succinct

descriptions of selected companions of the Prophet and their adherents. Hujwiri then proceeds to enumerate several Sufi sects that bear the names of their progenitors. The name of the book specifically pertains to the eleven chapters titled "The Uncovering of the Veils." The profound understanding and expressive abilities of Hujwiri are demonstrated in these chapters.

"'Awarif-u'l-Ma'arif" [69] is another important masterpiece on *Tasawwuf* or Sufism. It was originally written by Shaikh Shahab-u'd-Din 'Umar B. Muhammad Suhrawardi, and later translated into English by H. Wilberforce Clarke. This book is one of the earliest and most genuine works on Sufism. It explores the spiritual sciences of Sufism. It contains multiple layers of the writer's comprehension of the material and spiritual viewpoints. The work is structured topically, with distinct subheadings. Within each segment, the author provides specific information that is relevant and connects to broader themes. The topics covered include Quranic interpretation, *Hadith, Tafsir*, logical arguments on epistemology, stages of spirituality, etiquette, and critical analysis of Sufi orders and their interpretations of Sufism. The text incorporates references from the Quran and *Hadith.*

"Kitab-al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab-i-Ahl al-Tasawwuf (The Doctrine of the Sufis),"[70] originally written in Arabic by Abu Bakr bin Abi Ishaque al-Kalabadhi and translated into English by Arthur John Arberry, is a definitive work on Sufi beliefs. Several distinguished writers have written commentaries about it. This book is organically divided into five sections. (I) Prooemium, Chapters 1–4. In these chapters, the author introduces the subject, investigates the definition and origins of the term Sufi, and lists the names of prominent Sufis. (II) Chapters 5–30. This section outlines the principles of Islam as embraced by the Sufis. (III) Chapters 31–51. This is a description of the different stages experienced by Sufis, including fear, hope, love, and others. (IV) Chapters 52–63. This part examines the technical terminology employed by Sufis to describe the authentic mystical encounter known as union with God. (V) Chapters 64–75. In the last chapters, the book delves into the many occurrences of Sufism and the extraordinary favours bestowed upon the Sufis by God.

John Spencer Trimingham's book *"The Sufi Orders in Islam"*[71] focuses on the historical evolution of Sufi *silsilahs* or orders and strives to outline the several stages

during which Sufi spirituality evolved. He states that this process occurred within the Arabic and Persian domains. Following this, other cultural domains assumed control of this progression, which persisted in its dominance despite the contributions and formation of unique practices by regional cultures. The book extensively discusses how Sufism facilitated the spread of Islam to non-Muslim lands. It showcases the missionary achievements of Sufism as a demonstration of its good impact on Islam. Trimingham proposes a three-stage philosophy of Sufism. He refers to the initial *'khanaqah'* stage as 'the golden age of Islamic mysticism'. In the second *'tariqa'* phase, Sufis conform to legal and customary norms, and in the third *'ta'ifa'* stage, Sufism becomes a popular movement. According to the author, there was a steady decline in Sufism's mystical substance, spiritual freedom, and overall development at each successive period.

The book titled *"A History of Sufism in India, Vol. I"*[72] written by Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, delves into the origins of Sufism and how it evolved in India from the 13th to the early 16th centuries. This book studies Sufism from a psycho-historical standpoint. The focus of the text is mostly on the *Chishti, Suhrawardi, Firdausi, and Kubrawiyya* orders, but it also acknowledges the significant contributions of the *Qalandars* and both legendary and semi-legendary saints. A significant portion of this work deals with the relationship between Sufism and medieval Hindu mysticism. The author recognises Bengal as a significant hub for Sufis and discusses the migration of Sufi saints to the Bengal and Kamrupa regions.

In his work titled *"Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century",*[73] Khaliq Ahmad Nizami investigates the political expansion and ideological integration of Islam up until the thirteenth century A.D. He also delves into the politics and religion of India during this period, as well as the role of the *ulama,* the lives of Muslim mystics, and various organisations. The text highlights the introduction of fourteen Sufi *silsilahs* in India, with a particular emphasis on the *Chishti and Suhrawardi* orders. He talks about the Sufi teachings, the organisation of *silsilahs,* the individual and household lives of the saints, the founding of *khanqahs,* and the impact of Sufism on Indian society and culture.

"Baharistan-i-Ghaybi,"[74] originally written in Persian by Mirza Nathan and translated into English by M. I. Borah, is a rare and well-documented seventeenth-century

text that covers the history of modern-day Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam. The author was both an active participant and an eyewitness to the events he documented. The book describes the unsuccessful war against Assam, the invasion of Koch Hajo, and the subjection of Koch Behar to a tributary vassalage. The text includes descriptions of the geographical features of Assam as well as brief mentions of the Muslim population residing in various areas of Assam. Compared to others, this account is more comprehensive and coherent.

"*Sufi Movements in Eastern India"*[75] by Mohammad Yahya Tamizi is a very important work for my research. He has endeavoured to examine the emergence and undertakings of Sufism in the regions of undivided Bengal, including eastern Bihar and Assam. During the discussion of the lives and contributions of Sufi saints of undivided Bengal and Assam, the author asserts that the bulk of these Sufis arrived here alongside the Muslim invading army, while a minority of them accompanied traders or were dispatched to this region by their spiritual mentors with the purpose of propagating Islamic faith.

Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, in his book *"Islam in Bengal (Thirteenth to Nineteenth Century)"*[76] discusses the establishment and expansion of Muslim rule over Bengal, along with the different reformist and revivalist movements in Muslim society. He also talks about how saint worship *(Pirism)* has become more popular in Bengal. He explains how several Sufi saints, backed by famous Sufi masters from north India, spread their teachings throughout eastern Bengal. The author highlights several patron saints, such as Shah Jalal of Sylhet, Shah Madar, and *Panch Pir*, who played significant roles in the emergence and progression of Sufism in the region of Bengal and neighbouring areas of Assam.

"A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal"[77] *by* Muhammad Enamul Haq is a well-researched book on the life and deeds of the Sufis of undivided Bengal, particularly eastern Bengal, now present-day Bangladesh. He discusses the various facets of Sufism between the 11th and 17th centuries in north India and Bengal. The author has categorised the evolution of Sufism in Bengal into distinct centres based on their geographical significance, namely Varendra, Radha, Vanga, and Chattala centres. The author has also provided an account of the biographical information pertaining to the Sufis and their

impact on contemporary society. Additionally, the author has examined the contributions of Jalaluddin Tabrezi of Pandua, Shah Jalal Mujarrad of Sylhet, Pir Badar of Chittagong, and other saints in connection with the development of Sufism in the vicinity of Assam.

Abdul Karim, in his book "*Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (down to A.D. 1538)"*[78] has made a brief discussion about the foundation and consolidation of Muslim rule as well as Islamic institutions in Bengal. The author has additionally included a biographical overview of Bengali Sufis and their impact on the societal and cultural landscape of Bengal. He has named a few Sufis of Bengal who had a substantial impact on the development of Sufism on the frontiers of Assam during the medieval period of history.

Richard Maxwel Eaton, in his pioneering book, namely "*The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204–1760*"[79] provides an insightful and detailed analysis of Islamization in the Bengal frontier. Eaton investigates the process by which mass religious conversion occurred in rural east Bengal. The author employs a variety of sources, including archaeological data, monuments, oral histories, poetry, and Mughal administrative documents, to examine the extensive historical interaction between indigenous and Islamic cultures. One of the main themes of the book is that deforestation and community building were led by religious figures called *"Pirs"* in the lower Gangetic delta. Eaton examines especially the ever-changing borders of agrarian expansion and religious transformation.

"Kochbiharer Itihash"[80] by Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmad is a comprehensive and well-researched Bengali book for the kingdom of Koch Behar from ancient times to the British period. This work also deals with the relationship between Koch Behar and the Muslim power of medieval India. Chapter Six of this book discusses the several Sufi saints who have had an impact on north Bengal and western Assam.

The book "*Bangladesher Sufi-Sadhak (Lives and Activities of the Saints of Bangladesh)"*[81] written by Golam Saklayen in Bengali, is an important work dealing with the prominent Sufi saints of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal. The text explores the lives and actions of the Sufi saints from Bangladesh and West Bengal, arranged by district. It also talks about the lives and deeds of a few Sufi saints from

Bangladesh and West Bengal who played an important role in disseminating Islamic doctrines in the Bengali-speaking areas of Assam.

"Amader Sufiaye Kiram (A Collection of the Life-Sketch of the Sufis),"[82] edited by Dewan Nurul Anwar Hussain Choudhury, is another important book written in Bengali dealing with the Sufi saints. There are two sections in the book: one discusses the great Sufi saints of Bangladesh, while the second section touches upon the renowned Sufi saints of India. Incidentally, it also discusses the spread of Islam and Sufi ideology in the western and southern portions of Assam by the Sufi saints.

The work titled *"Tarikh-e-Aasham"*[83] often referred to as *"Fathiyah-i-Ibriya,"* was originally written in Persian by Shehabuddin Talesh during the years 1662–63 A.D. This piece of work provides first-hand information on the campaigns of Mir Jumla in Koch Behar, and Assam during the period of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The account includes a comprehensive depiction of Assam, covering its topography, natural resources, rulers, and people, as well as its social, political, economic, and religious aspects. This book consists of one preface and two chapters and is written in a simple and easy style. In 1872 A.D., H. Blochmann partially translated this work into English under the aegis of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Upon discovering errors in Blochmann's translation, Jadunath Sarkar re-translated the portion pertaining to Assam and its people in 1917 A.D. In 2009 A.D., the complete book was translated to English with notes by Asif Mazhar.

"Annals of the Delhi Badshahate,"[84] translated from the previous Assamese chronicle *"Padshah Buranji,"* with an introduction and annotations by Surjya Kumar Bhuyan, is a crucial source for reconstructing the history of Ahom-Muslim relations in medieval times. It is a treasure trove of information about Muhammadan contact with Assam. It is likely that the *'Padshah Buranji'* was composed due to political exigency, with the goal of familiarising the Ahom royalty with the history and customs of the Mughals so that they would be better prepared to deal with them in the event of an encounter. In contrast to other *Buranjis,* it frequently employs Arabic and Persian vocabulary. Along with political engagement, this work has also mentioned the advent of Sufi saints, their *dargahs,* their relationship with the state machinery, and so on.

Edward Gait has done fantastic work in his book *"A History of Assam."*[85] Published in the year 1906 A.D., this book is considered to be the first genuine historical

study on Assam, using the methods of modern research. This text utilises the accounts gathered from the *Buranjis* and the Persian chronicles to offer a methodical and all-encompassing history of Assam. It provides a thorough and reliable history of Muslim invasions on the eastern frontier from the time of Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji to the Mughal era. Moreover, his other work, titled *"Report on the Census of Assam, 1891"*[86] includes a demographic overview of the population as well as information on the social makeup of the Muslim society in the state.

"Assam District Gazetteers, Goalpara"[87] by B. C. Allen, published in 1905 A.D., is an important primary source for detailed descriptions of contemporary Goalpara district. This book provides excellent information on the geography, history, culture, society, and economy of the then-Goalpara district of Assam. Along with the narration of some sketches of the Muslim population in the area, it also gives an incidental reference to the *dargah* of *Panch Pir* of Dhubri in the undivided Goalpara district of Assam.

"Pavitra Asam"[88] is a comprehensive account written in Assamese regarding the sacred sites in Assam, including Hindu temples and shrines, as well as *Neo-Vaishnava Satras,* Islamic mosques and *dargahs,* Sikh Gurudwaras, Buddhist viharas, Jain temples, Christian churches, and tribal places of worship. It is a compilation of writings by different authors, edited by Maheshwar Neog. The book has rightly mentioned the Sufis and their sanctuaries scattered in different locations of Assam.

The book *"Assam-Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance"*[89] by Mohini Kumar Saikia is an essential resource for my thesis writing. The book offers a thorough account of the relationship between the Ahoms and the Muslim kings of Bengal and Delhi. It also highlights the Muslim saints, *dargahs,* and *khanqahs* of medieval and modern Assam. The impact and influence of the Muslims on the native people of Assam have found a significant place in the discussion of the book. The book examines the historical dynamics of the interaction between Muslims and other people, resulting in the development of indigenous Assamese Muslim culture and the integration of Muslims into the larger Assamese society.

"Luit Borak Aru Islam,"[90] authored by Medhini Choudhury and published in 1982 A.D., is a concise Assamese book providing a brief overview of the role played by the Muslims of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys of Assam in the region's economy and

cultural legacy. The author has conducted a comparative analysis of two valleys, each traversed by a significant river, representing the cultural traditions of the Assamese and Bengali communities in these two regions of the state. In the process, the author has discussed the advent and impact of Islam in Assam, along with highlighting the arrival of different Sufis, the construction of *khanqahs* and *dargahs* in Assam, and their relationship with contemporary political authority.

"The Muslims of Assam"[91] authored by Kasim Ali Ahmed, is a valuable source for acquiring comprehensive insights into the various facets of the Muslim community in Assam. This book focuses on the social beliefs and cultural components of the Muslim minority in Assam, as well as their historical arrival, growth, and progress. The study covers the entire region of Assam; however, it focuses specifically on western Assam. The third chapter of the book includes a description of the Sufi saints and their shrines scattered all over the lower Assam region.

"Islamic Heritage in India's Northeast: Assam and Manipur"[92] authored by Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, is a seminal work on the Muslims of Assam and Manipur. This text explores significant elements of Islamic heritage, including the establishment of the Muslim community in two regions of India's north-east, starting from the 13th century to the 20th century. It also delves into their life events, the blending of their culture with local folk traditions, the presence of Sufi saints and their devotional songs, Islamic institutions, and the expression of creativity through art and literature. The book examines the gradual merging of Sufi Islam with Vaishnavism over a period of time.

The article *"The Muslim Population in Pre-British Assam: Their Social Status and Role in Cultural History"*[93] by S. L. Baruah explores the history of Muslims in Assam and the circumstances that led to their rapid expansion in pre-British Assam. These factors include multiple Muslim invasions, the arrival of Sufi saints, the transportation of Muslim craftsmen by the Ahom monarchs from the Mughal dominion, as well as the liberal and inclusive attitude of the Ahom monarchs towards Muslims. She has highlighted that Assam's interaction and clashes with the Muslim authority of India and the settlement of the Muslim populace in the country led to the cultural syncretism and vernacularisation of Islam.

In his article entitled *"Sufis and the Process of Islamization in the Pre-Colonial North East India"*[94] F. A. Qadri states that Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrezi had a significant impact in persuading and converting a substantial number of individuals to embrace Islam in Bengal. It seems that he travelled to Assam while carrying out his missionary work, and it was at Kamrupa that he met the Moroccan traveller, Ibn Batuta. The article also provides a concise overview of the works of some other saints who were active in Assam, including Pir Badr, Shah Ismail Ghazi, Azan Faqir, etc. He also gives an account of yogic practices that were common in ancient Assam.

Anowar Hussain, in his article *"Islam and Assam: A Socio-cultural Study in Historical Perspective"*[95] published in the Proceeding of the North East India History Association (NEIHA), outlines the numerous factors that contributed to the arrival and subsequent settlement of Muslims in Assam during different time periods. He also mentions the missionary activities of different Sufi saints, including Jalaluddin Tabrezi, and the construction of various Islamic institutions like mosques, *khanqahs*, and *dargahs* in various parts of Assam. Furthermore, he states that the establishment of shrines by Sufi saints in Assam functioned as hubs for religious education, spiritual guidance, and the integration of Islamic practices into the broader Assamese cultural context.

"The Sufis and the Political Authorities in Medieval Assam: A Historical Study,"[96] and *"Vernacularisation of Islam and Sufism in Medieval Assam: A Study of the Production of Sufi Literature in Local Languages"*[97] published by Tania Begum, are two important articles for Sufi movements in Assam. In the first paper, she has highlighted the relationship between the Sufi saints and the contemporary ruling elites, and the second article deals with the production of Sufi literature in vernacular languages, especially in Assamese and Bengali during the medieval period. According to her, these literary works have created communal harmony in Assam.

The above-mentioned works deal with the various aspects of Sufism as well as the history of the undivided Goalpara district of Assam. Most of the works described above focus on the Sufi movements that took place in Islamic countries as well as in India, Bengal, and Assam during the medieval and colonial eras. The activities of the Sufi saints who came to the western part of Assam have not received adequate attention in these

accounts. Therefore, the present study has addressed this research gap by conducting a thorough and extensive investigation into the subject matter.

1.12 Methodology

So far as the methodology is concerned, the historical method has been applied here. The work is based on several primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Perso-Arabic literature, accounts of foreign travellers, Assamese chronicles, manuscripts, government gazetteers, British reports, census data, data collected by personal interviews with knowledgeable persons, field studies, etc. Archaeological records and oral histories pertaining to Sufi institutions have also been consulted. Moreover, secondary sources such as research books, unpublished theses, journals, proceedings, magazines, newspapers, souvenirs, internet sources, etc. have been consulted for the composition of the study.

1.13 Chapterisation

The research work has been organised into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Evolution of Sufism in Assam

Chapter 3: Life and Teachings of the Sufis of the Undivided Goalpara District

Chapter 4: Influence and Impact of Sufism on the Society of the Undivided Goalpara District

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The first chapter, '**Introduction',** highlights an overview of Sufism, its etymology, the evolution of Sufism both in a global and Indian context, the attributes of Sufism, the spread of different *silsilahs* in India, Sufism and other indigenous faiths in India, a statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the research area and period, a survey of literature, methodology, and organisation of chapters.

The second chapter, **'Evolution of Sufism in Assam',** includes a brief discussion regarding the advent of Muslims to Assam in both the pre- and post-Bakhtiyar Khilji era, the Muslim exodus to Assam during the colonial period, conversion to Islam in Assam,

the advent of Sufism to the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, including the Sylhet region of present-day Bangladesh, different stages of Sufism in Assam, the spread of different Sufi *silsilahs* in Assam, and the prominent Sufi-shrines of Assam.

The third chapter, **'Life and Teachings of the Sufis of the Undivided Goalpara District'** deals with a brief profile of the undivided Goalpara district of Assam, the life and deeds of the native Sufis of the undivided Goalpara district, other prominent Sufi saints having influence in the undivided Goalpara district, semi-legendary Sufi saints, and the mission and teachings of the Sufis saints.

The fourth chapter, **'Influence and Impact of Sufism on the Society of the Undivided Goalpara District'** discusses the different aspects of the society of the original Goalpara district of Assam on which Sufism had an impact and vice versa. It explores the process of Islamization, religious syncretism, Sufism and the expansion of Muslim power, the Sufi nexus with contemporary political authority, the societal effects of *khanqah* and *dargah*, Sufism and Vaishnavism, the literary compositions of the Sufi saints, how Sufism influenced different spheres such as agriculture, education, language, literature, folk songs, folk tales, Sufi saints and social reforms, Sufism and the context of women, the present status of Sufism, and others.

The fifth chapter, **'Conclusion',** examines the final outcome and significant discoveries of the research work.

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