

Freedom of Religion, Faith and Religious Tolerance in Bangladesh: A Case Study on the Islamic Mysticism

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Abstract: A common concept in Bangladesh is that religious communities live together in peaceful coexistence, and this culture has come from ancient times. Generally, Bangladesh is a Muslim country with a majority in Islam. But, according to the constitution of Bangladesh, all citizens have equal rights regardless of religion. There are 169 million people in Bangladesh. There is about 90 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, 9.5 percent of the people depend on Hindu religion, 0.6 percent of people belong to Buddhists religion, 0.3 percent are Christians. It has less than one percent is Ahmadi Muslims and Shi'ite as well. Every religion of People gets vacations for their celebrating on national holidays according to the constitution of Bangladesh. There is evidence of celebrating various religious ceremonies and festivals. There is all public participation in religious programs and festivals like Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Azha for Muslims, Durga Puja for Hindus, Buddha Purnima for Buddhists and Christmas for Christians. It is a significant achievement in the country of such a religious majority. In similar circumstances, there is no such kind of behavior in Bangladesh with respect to religious diversity in other parts of the world. The common masses of Bangladesh deserve praise for this achievement. In the country's constitution, there has been an assurance of all religions, which serves as a protector against intolerance. Bangladesh is recognized as a tolerant society for all these reasons. Religious intolerance and extremism are not yet common in Bangladesh society. Unfortunately, this is not the case in other parts of the world. The worlds advanced continents like America and Europe, religious intolerance exists as well as there is widespread discrimination against Muslim men and women. To prevent Muslims from praying in the mosque, Muslim women were prevented from wearing the hijab and scarf as well. Even Muslims are not given vacation on the day of Eid festivals every year. Thus, the countries which were consid-

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ered the ideal of tolerance could not be enduring like Bangladesh. The Religious communities in Bangladesh are the main reason for peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance: the great influence of Islamic Mysticism, Bengali Unity, and Bengali language as well. However, Islamic Mysticism in Bangladesh depends directly on the beliefs, history, and culture of the Bangladeshi Muslims. Islamic Mysticism contributed to reducing the religious hatred, fanaticism, and fundamentalism among the people of Bangladesh. Therefore, the result of my study shows that how to Islamic Mysticism is establishing status equality, love, and brotherhood among the masses and taught people to respect each other's religion, emotions, and practices in Bangladesh. The research tries to highlight that the influence of Islamic Mysticism was investigated to promote religious cohesion and tolerance in Bangladesh from the 11th to the 21st century..

Keywords: Ahl al-Hadith, Ahl al-Qur'an, Indian sub-continent, religion, sect.

Introduction

Islamic mysticism is a liberal, non-communal, tolerant and universal doctrine. The importance of moral and spiritual education to Islamic mysticism is immense in keeping family life in peace and keeping social life orderly and beautiful. Islamic mysticism makes people as real, perfect and belongs to Islamic ideological people. This is a unique contribution of Islamic Mysticism in the development of social life and the civilization of Bangladesh. There are Sufi, Pir, Fakir, Dervish, Gauss, and Qutub who are known in Bangladesh; basically, the propagation of Islam has been spread in Bangladesh through them. The millions of people of Bangladesh were excited and attractive about the teachings of Islamic Mysticism. Islam was promoted in Bangladesh through Turkish, Iranian and Arab Sufis.¹ Many prominent scholars in Bangladesh have created an exceptional history by utilizing the Sufis attitude of liberal, tolerant and non-communal Islam.

After entering Islamic Mysticism in Bangladesh, it became fascinated by simplicity. At that time, Sufism combined with the reform of Bangladesh, folklore, belief, etc. The general people of this

¹ AKM Shahnawaz, "Daily jugantor", The primary section of the spread of Muslim society in Bengal, Accessed 3 April 2019, <https://www.jugantor.com/old/the-number-of-anniversaries/2015/04/05/245127>.

country adopt the ideas of Sufism easily. The Sufis communicated and interacted with all kinds of people. Because of this, the common people of this country got the right to gain spiritual wealth from Pir, and Sufis. The contribution of Pir, Fakir, and Sufis in the social and cultural changes of East Bengal is important. In fact, Sufis were the true patron of Islam and Muslim civilization of Bangladesh. Inspired by the great ideology of Islam, Sufis dedicated themselves to the spread of true religion and humanity. The role that Sufis and Prominent Islamic Scholars played in Bangladesh, is surprising. Sufis and scholars came from different countries. Some of them have come by way of the river, and some of them by walking. However, Ibn Battuta has come to Bangladesh to the propagation of Islam in the fourteenth century. At that time, He met prominent Sufis in Bengal "Ibn Battuta was impressed with the cheap prices of food and other consumer goods of Bengal. On the other hand, the weather in Bengal made him frightened."²

1. Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to explore and document the role of Islamic Mysticism has played in Social development in Bangladesh. The following objectives have been set for the study:

- i. Explaining the role of Sufism to promote Islam in Bangladesh along with its different approaches.
- ii. Identify the worthwhile activities regarding Freedom of religion, faith and religious tolerance in Bangladesh
- iii. To discuss the main reasons for coming prominent Sufis from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Middle East to Bangladesh.
- iv. The role of Sufism's activities is enhancing social and political development, removing discrimination and tranquility with focusing upon to Bangladesh.
- v. Evaluating the role of Sufi Tariqat to teach Islamic activities to general people for helping to accept Islam in Bangladesh.

² Muhammad Enamul Haq, A History of Sufism in Bengal, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1975), 25.

2. Research Question

Considering the importance of these matters, this research will have a two-research question. The first is Primary question and second is a secondary question.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question of this study will be-

Bangladesh is geographically located between India and Myanmar. These two countries have been dominated by the Hindu and Buddhist religions basically. On the other hand, How Sufi scholars were so much success in promoting Islam in Bangladesh.

Secondary Research Question

The secondary research question of this study will be-

- i. There are 33 ethnic tribes of different religions in Bangladesh. Why did so many people accept Islam as their main religion by giving up their own religion?
- ii. When the spread of Islam was started by prominent Sufis in Bangladesh?
- iii. How Sufi Tariqat and Sufi Dargah could have contributed to the spread of Islam in Bangladesh?

3. Literature Review

Islam was started in Bangladesh through Sufism. Sufi researcher Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haque. He worked for Sufism for a long time. He wrote a book titled 'Sufi Impact of Bengal which was the first full-fledged Sufi research book in Bengali literature. The book was first published in 1935 from Kolkata in India. According to Dr. Enamul Haque in his book, "Father Adam came to be the first Sufi to preach Islam in Bangladesh. 'Shah Muhammad Sultan Rumi came to Bengal (1053 AD) to give the invitation to Islam after the father Adam. He originally invited Islam in Mymensingh of Bangladesh. Jalaluddin Tabrizi (died in 1,225 BCE) came to Bengal after Shah Mohammed Sultan Rumi. After that, Hazrat Shahjalal (r) came to Bangladesh from Turkey to preaching to Islam in 1303.

After his arrival, Sufism started to contribute to Bangladeshi people. At that time, most people were known as popular Sufi, Hazrat Shahjalal (r). He preached Islam in Bengal through his followers. He preached Tauhid's message throughout Bangladesh."³

Dr. Ahmad Sharif was a Bangla linguist. He edited nine books on Sufi literature in Bangla. Mir Syed Sultan wrote a book titled "Gyan Chautisha (Different knowledge)". Ahmed Sharif edited this book.⁴ Besides, he edited "Hargauri Sambad and Talibnama (Application to God)" by Sheikh Chand, "Suratnama or Nurjamal (Enlightenment)" by Haji Muhammad, Nuranama (Light of Islam) by Mir Mohammed Shafi, "Agam and Knowledge Sea" by Sheikh Mansur, and "the book of Knowledge Sea" by Abdul Karim Sahityabisarad. Among these books, a description of how Sufism had influenced the Bengal in the Middle Ages was given. The most notable of these books is that Sufis came from the Middle East, Turkey, and Iran to preach to Islam in Bengal. Originally, since the victory of Turkish General Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad Bin Bakhtiyar Khiljir in Bengal, the Sufis started the invitation to Islam officially. Millions of people of Bangladesh accepted Islam by calling Sufis.⁵

According to Dewan Nurul Hussain Choudhury, there were fourteen Sufi orders (Tariqat) in Bangladesh. And its subsections were many. Kaderia, Suhrawardia, Chishtiya, Nakshbandiya Tariqat too was very popular. Along with this, Kalandariya, Madariya, Gawatmiya, Nizamia, etc. were also popular in Bangladesh. There are plenty of Hindu and Buddhist religions in Bangladesh. Because of which the Sufis invited Islam to face various problems. Subsequently, the Sufis of Bengal were able to get closer with the Hindu Yogis and Buddhist monks. Initially, the Sufi scholars were eager to learn about the Hindu religion and philosophy and their tantrism and addiction. For this reason, it is seen that within a few years of the conquest of Bengal, Muslim scholars could become

³ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A history of Sufism in Bengal*, 154-158.

⁴ Ahmad Sharif, *Bengali Sufi Literature*, (Dhaka Time Publication., 2nd Printed, 2011), 20-26.

⁵ Ahmad Sharif, *Baul and Sufi Literature*, (Dhaka: Anbasha Publishing., 1995), 27.

familiar with Hindu philosophy and mysticism. During this time there was a Hindu book called 'Amritakand' that was written on Hindu Yogas. Since this book was translated into Arabic and Persian, the Sufis became familiar with Hindu philosophy and mysticism. In connection with the Hindu yogis, the Muslim Sufis adopted some of the external norms. And the Sufis linked them to the life of Bangladeshi people. Thus, in the life of Bengal, the new form of Sufism was influenced. That is why many people were converted into Islam.⁶

Abdul Karim, the author of "Knowledge Sea"⁷ book, believes that the propagation of Islam spread mainly through the Sufi saints in Bangladesh. There are many people of Hindu or Christian religion among the predecessors of Bangladesh. When the Sufis invoked the people of Bengal in the way of Islam, they adopted Islam very much. At this time, Muslims could not exclude some of their predecessors. That is why Sufism was influenced by the culture of Buddhism, inherent tantric pursuit, yoga activities, etc.⁸

M. Mohar Ali mentioned that the influence of Sufism in Bengal was noticed at the beginning of the 12th century. At the end of the 13th century and at the beginning of the 14th century, Sufis in Bangladesh were doing great work while many people accepted Islam. Sufism easily attracted people of other religions to Islam.⁹

According to Syed Mahmudul Hasan, Shah Mohammed Sultan Rumi is one of the Sufi-saint who came to Bengal. He was the first Sufi saint in the entire Indian sub-continent. His holy shrine is located at the Madanpur union of Netrokona district of Bangladesh. He came to Madanpur in 445 A H. There was also a shrine of his companions in various places around the shrine of Shah Sultan

⁶ Choudhury, Dewan Nurul Hussain. Ed. *Amader Sufiaye Kiram, (A collection of the Life-sketch of the Sufis)*. 2nd ed. (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh., 2004), 122.

⁷ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology in English Language Reference accessed via Oxford, Retrieved 6 April 2019.

⁸ Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslim in Bengal*, (2nd ed.) (Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitta Prakash., 2007), 84.

⁹ M. Mohar Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, vol. 1A (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University, 1985), 33-35.

Rumi. This Sufi saint is immortal in this region with the invitation to Islam throughout his life.¹⁰

4. Findings and Analysis

The Sufis, who came to Bengal from different countries, often performed miraculous works and fascinated and loyal people of the region. Many of the holders and rulers of ancient religion could not easily accept their arrival and religion publicity. In fact, the fundamental principles of Islam and the main ideology of Tawhid and its underlying spiritual power have been able to stand against idol worship. Because of liberal social, state and economic policy of Islam is so much attractive.¹¹ For this reason, people used to accept Islam more intentionally. Lower caste of Hindus could not accept racism and communalism of Hindu Brahmins. At all times, the first class of Hindus like Brahmins did not hesitate to kill them as well. That is why lower-class Hindus were easily attracted to Islam.¹² It has been discussed below,

4.1. Advent and Influence of Islamic Mysticism in Bengal

The propagation and spread of Islam in Bengal led to the collapse of the Hindu rule. In 1203, Muslim commander Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji won the battle of Gaur in the Indian subcontinent. From then on, the religion of Islam was rapidly spread in Bangladesh and the path to the development of the concept of Sufism was facilitated. When he went to the Tibetan expedition, then he helped the coach king to accept Islam. Later, he gave the name of the king Ali Mech and this Ali Mech later became Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji's adviser.¹³

Other Muslim rulers, such as Husam Uddin (1212-1226),

¹⁰ Hasan, Syed Mahmudul. *Islam. 2nd ed*, (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1980), 122.

¹¹ Syed Anwar Hossain, "Daily Manab Zamin", Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal, Accessed 2 April 2019. <http://www.mzamin.com/details-archive2016.php?mzamin=70909>.

¹² Hossain, *Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal*, 8.

¹³ Mohammad Bahauddin, "Daily Samakal" Relevance of Sufism, Accessed April 2019. <https://samakal.com/todays-print-edition/tp-islam-society/article/1701260653>

Nasir Uddin Mahmud Shah (1226–2128), Ruknuddin Barabak Shah (1459–1474), etc. contributed to the spread of Islam in Bengal. Because of their religious beliefs, many Sufi saints came from the place of Turkey, Arabian countries, Persian and Baghdad to propagated to Islam.¹⁴ As a result of the patronage of the sultans, this country became a stronghold of the Sufis activities. According to the social and religious history of medieval Bangladesh, Islamic ideas spread in this country with the patronage of Muslim traders, Sufi saints, and rulers coming from areas such as Arabia, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Turkistan, and Afghanistan. The lifestyle of these Sufi saints was interesting and instructive.¹⁵

Islam's greatest campaign and spread in the country from the middle of the eleventh century to the seventeenth century. Sufis from Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Khorasan, Central Asia, and Northern India came and preached Sufism in Bangladesh. Among the Sufi saints who have devoted themselves to spreading Islam in the 11th-12th century, the most notable of these are: Shah Sultan Rumi (r), Baba Adam Shaheed (r), Shah Sultan Balkhi (r), Shah Niyamatullah Boatsaken (r), Shah Makhdum Ruposh (r), Sheikh Fari-duddin Shkkarganj (r), Makhdum Shah Dowah Shaheed (r) and others.¹⁶ They were proficient in Islamic jurisprudence. It is also mentioned that there were various miraculous powers. Due to their extraordinary knowledge, eloquence and human love, the common people of this country were attracted towards Sufism. In this way, Sufism flourished in Bangladesh gradually.¹⁷ In the meanwhile, the North Indian Sufism did take strong sense in the half-century.¹⁸ Mainly, the North Indian Sufi doctrine of Ganga came into Bangladesh. Among the North Indian Sufis, who are the most influential in propagating Sufi in Bengal and spreading Is-

¹⁴ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A history of Sufism in Bengal*, 154-158.

¹⁵ Hossain, *Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal*, 8.

¹⁶ Mohammad Bahauddin, "Daily Samakal", Sufism in Bangladesh, Accessed 4 April 2019. <https://samakal.com/todays-print-edition/tp-islam-society/article/1610245583>

¹⁷ Hossain, *Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal*, 8.

¹⁸ Bahauddin, *Relevance of Sufism*, 7.

lam, among them are Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Khwaja Kutubuddin Bakhtiyar Khaki, Sheikh Fariduddin Ganje Shakar, Nizamuddin Awlia, Sheikh Sharfuddin Bu Ali Shah Qalandar, Badiuddin Shah Mardar, Sheikh Ahmad Sarhind Mazdade Alfesani (r).¹⁹ Some Sufi groups came to the Indian subcontinent before the advent of Muslim military power. They came to Bangladesh in that era. Despite the success of the first team and the expansion of the country, the infiltration of Sufis continued for centuries.²⁰ During the Muslim rule, that type of government spread with the help of ruling power. In the Muslim era, Bengal was very well in contact with Sufi saints.

Shah Sultan Maheshwar (r), who was the first of the Sufi in the 10th and 11th centuries before the emergence of Muslim power in Bengal who devoted himself to spread Islam in Bangladesh. His full name is Mir Shah Syed Sultan Mahmud Balkhi Maheshwar (r). His holy shrine was in Mahasthan of Bogra district in Bangladesh. He came to Bengal in 1047 AD. Mahasthan has been named as 'Mastanagar' or 'Mahasthan' instead of Pundravardhana due to Shah Sultan Balkhi Maheshwar and later many other shrines of the saints. Sufi Mahiswar crossed the sea by ship and came to Bengal to stand in Sandwip. After some time, he came to the city of Hari-rampur in Dhaka city. At that time, the Hindu king Balaram battled with him. He defeated the Hindu king Balaram. Hindu king's minister was fascinated by his miracle and accepted Islam. Then he went to Bogra to invite Islam. And another Hindu Raja Parshuram obstructed him.²¹ Later, King Parshuram was involved in a war with Sufi Maheshwar and was killed in this war. Maheshwar defeated the tyrannical kings with his miraculous power and amazing combination of self-confidence and courage. His honesty, justice, and religiousness played a helpful role in the victory of Islam at Bogura in Bangladesh.²²

¹⁹ Bahauddin, *Sufism in Bangladesh*, 7.

²⁰ Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslim in Bengal*, 84

²¹ Hossain, *Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal*, 8.

²² Shah Nawaz, *The primary section of the spread of Muslim society in Bengal*, 7.

Shah Mohammad Sultan Rumi (r) was one of the Sufi-saint who came to Bengal from Iran. His holy shrine was located at under Madanpur union of Netrokona district. He came to Madanpur in 445 A H.²³ According to Shashibhusan Dasgupta, he was the first Sufi in the entire Indian sub-continent. Around the shrine of Shah Sultan Rumi, there is also a Mazar of his companions in various places of Madanpur area. This Sufi saint is immortal in this region. He invited to Islam throughout his life. Every year, in the month of Falgun in Bangla year, a lot of followers are coming and pray him. And in this way millions of people from different places of the country are united.²⁴

Sylhet Shahjalal Yamani (r) occupied a prominent place among Sufi saints of Bangladesh. He came to Bengal in 1227 AD. Ibn Battuta came to Bengal in 1345 and met with Shahjalal. According to him, "Shahjalal Yamani was the greatest of his time. His contribution to the expansion of Islam in Bangladesh is incredible. He was once a missionary and a warrior. He was the first to proclaim Islam in East Bengal and West Assam in the 14th century. So, Muslims of Bengal still have respect different Islamic programs in their honor."²⁵ Hindu King Gaur Gobinda of Sylhet used to humiliate the people. Even a Muslim named Burhanuddin was harassed by the Sultan of Gaur. Later, the innocent Burhanuddin had gone to the Nayadelli and met with Sultan Firoz Shah as well as he complained against the Hindu king about this issue. Sultan Firoz Shah Dehlavi had sent his representative Sikandar Ghazi to punishment to King Gaur Govind in Sylhet. At that time, Shahjalal also participated in this war as the cooperative force of this army and defeated King Gaur Gobind. As a result, the king fled. Sylhet was first conquered by the Muslims. Shahjalal (r) spent the rest of his life in preaching Islam there. Ibn Battuta said that "the people of this hill country had embraced Islam from Shahjalal and there-

²³ Bahauddin, *Relevance of Sufism*, 7.

²⁴ Bahauddin, *Sufism in Bangladesh*, 7.

²⁵ Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, trans Mahdi Hussain, 45.

fore he also lived among them.”²⁶ Hazrat Syed Shah Makhdum Rupos, who is famous for spreading Islam in the northern region of Bangladesh, has been unforgettable. His holy shrine was situated on the north bank of the river Padma along the Rajshahi City in the Dargapara Mahalla. He came to Bengal during the reign of Sultan Hussein Shah.²⁷ He took his stand against religious prejudice in the Muslim society at that time. And he called on people to Islam.

Hazrat Khan Azam Khan Jahan Ali, who has been unmasked in history by making an unprecedented contribution to the spread of Islam especially in Khulna and Jessore areas of Bengal. Khan Jahan Ali (r), the descendant of Abdul Qadir Jilani, came in faraway Turkey to Delhi and later in Gaur. After coming to the Khulna in Bangladesh from Gaur in India only for inviting to the people in terms of Islam²⁸.

Hazrat Shah Sharif Zindani (r) in the Sundarbans province, Baba Adam (r) in Bogra province, Malma (r) on Sonargaw of Dhaka, Shahjalal and Shah Ali (r) in Dhaka region, Shah Afzal Mahmud (r) and Gazi Shah Makh Muhammad Bahadur (r) in Pabna district, Shah Muajam Danish (r) in Rajshahi region, Shah Adam Kashmeeri (r) and Shah Jamal (r) in Tangail region, Shahpur (r) and Qazi Mujarjirjil (r) in Chattagram region, along with many other Sufis have played a great role in spreading Islam in Bangladesh.²⁹

In addition, many other Sufi saints came to Bengal. They invited people from Sylhet-Chittagong in Bangladesh to the Mangalokot of Bardhaman India as well as from South Bagerhat to Dinajpur district, they organized various activities for Islam. From the turn of the fifteen centuries, the Muslim kingdom was firmly established in Bengal. As a result, the way of propagators for Islam

²⁶ Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, trans Mahdi Hussain, 46.

²⁷ Hossain, *Sufis contribution to the spread of Islam in Bengal*, 8.

²⁸ Bahauddin, *Relevance of Sufism*, 7.

²⁹ Tazeen, M. Murshid. *The Sacred and the Secular Muslim Discourses*, (1871-1977), (Calcutta: Oxford University Press., 1995), 117.

of this time was relatively easy.³⁰ In the third phase, Shah Nur Qutbul Alam (r) was one of the preachers of Islam. Therefore, Hazrat Khan Jahan Ali (r) who proclaimed Islam in Jessore and Khulna regions. The name of Hazrat Khan Jahan Ali came to the forefront of reform the society with the Islamic ideology.

4.2. The Prime Islamic Mystic Orders in Bangladesh

Sufism has different rituals and Sufi orders in the world. Many Sufi orders were introduced in the world by space and time. The people who used to preach Islam and called on the path of Islam. Impressed by their call and invitation, many non-Muslims were converted to Islam. Basically, there are five main Sufi orders in Bangladesh who follows the general people.

1. Kaderia Sufi order was founded by Ghausul Azam Pir Abdul Kadir Jilani (r),

2. Chistia Sufi order was founded by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (r),

3. Kaderia Maizbandaria Sufi order was established by Hazrat Ahmad Ullah Maijabhandari,

4. Naqshbandi Sufi order was founded by Hazrat Khwaja Bahauddin Nakshbandi (r),

5. Mujaddidiyya Sufi order was established by Hazrat Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddid-i-Alf Sani.³¹

The names of these five Sufi orders are heard in Bangladesh as well as to be widely spoken till now. In addition, many sub-signs are found, such as Suhrawardia, Madariya, Ahmadiya, and Kalandariya Tariqa. There are various cultures of the region have mixed with different Sufi orders. There is no way to deny the influence of Sufism as the people of Bangladesh. In the culture and civilization of the people of this country for thousands of years, the influence of Sufism has been affected. It is also true that some doctrines of

³⁰ Miller Roland Eric, *The Mappila Muslims of Southwest India- A Study in Islamic Trends*, (U.S.A: University Microfilms International., 1973).

³¹ Bahauddin, *Sufism in Bangladesh*, 7.

Buddhism and Hinduism have been mixed with it. Still, the simplified philosophy that was developed throughout Bengal was by the hands of Sufism.³²

4.3. The contribution of Islamic Mysticism to the Freedom of Religion & Religious Tolerance in Bangladesh

When Bangladesh was conquered by Bakhtiar Khalji in 1204-5, both the Shariah and the Marifat were promoted and spread quickly. Many Pirs-saints came to the country with the ruling class to concentrate on spreading Islam. Among those who played an important role in promoting Islam and Sufism, Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (r), Shah Jalal (r), Sheikh Alaul Haque (r), Khan Jahan Ali (r), Sharfuddin Abu Taawama (ra), Shah Fariduddin (r) and others. These were public greatly influenced by the prominent Sufis by spreading the spiritual doctrines of Sufism, so this doctrine flourished in different regions of Bengal. Before the arrival of Sufis, people of Hindu and Buddhism lived in Bengal. At that time, they were inspired by different doctrines. When prominent Sufi started preaching Islam to the general people, most of the unbeliever accept Islam. Because Sufis have called people to Islam through love. The main theme of Sufism is to the love of the creator by loving his creation.

The Sufis were able to conquer the minds of ordinary people of this country irrespective of caste and creed, promoting their ideal life and love-brotherhood of Sufism. Some of them became legends and men. Many people still pray in the shrine; Regardless of the sanctity and the place of worship, some people regularly visit with the reciting of the Holy Quran for them. By the love of creation, love of God, this ideology of Sufism influenced to Vaisnava (Hindu) religion, folk miracles, Baul culture, and other devotion. Sufis influence is noticed in the normal life of ordinary people. During the journey of rivers and seas, Boatmen remembers the reminiscences of Badr Pir's advice and song.³³ Not only that, the

³² Shah nawaz, *The primary section of the spread of Muslim society in Bengal*, 7.

³³ Bahauddin, *Sufism in Bangladesh*, 7.

name of Pir-Awliya has been written until the city's transport to reach the destination safely. The folk-tunes were composed of various Pir-saint's biography, such as Murshidi-Marfati song, Gajir's song, Gaziklu-Champawati poems and Song of Sona Pir. In this way, the influence of Sufism in Bengal, in the religious, social, cultural and material life of the people, remains intact.

Sufis played a complementary role in propagating Islam in Bengal through four organizations.

Firstly, the most important organization that contributed to the promotion and spread of Islam was the Langarkhana (Canteen)). In the canteen, free food was provided to all non-people, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. The money came from the state treasury of the Muslim rulers. The result of this system was most beneficial during the orthodox Hindu Sen's rule (1161-1204). The disfigured community members were victims of caste discrimination because they were at the lowest position among the caste system of Hinduism. The Namasudraras group of Hindu caste were assaulted at different times. It is noted that there is a cast tradition of Hinduism. Then they looked, Muslims taught religion by giving food at no cost. And they began to think that the new religion is socially equality Islam, which is not in Hinduism. So, the attraction of Islam was more to the lower caste Hindus. And they started to become Muslims in time.³⁴

Secondly, Khanqah played a very important role in spreading and promoting Islam. Langarakhana (Free food to the General people through Canteen) was a real example of social Islam, And Khanqah was the theoretical training center of Islam. Sufi was a trainer. In the Langarakhana, free food could eat, the exploited and deprived people could survive.³⁵ They went to Khanqah to acquire knowledge about Islam. These two organizations were mentally

³⁴ Carl. W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden- Mysticism*, (New York: History, and Politics at a South Asain Sufi Centre, State University of New York Press, 2001).

³⁵ Peter Hardy, "Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia: A Preliminary Survey of the Literature," in Conversion to Islam, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 78.

prepared for their initiation into Islam. In this context, non-Muslims accepted Islam. A quote can be taken for a realistic explanation of Sufi's activities to the expansion of Islam in Bengal. According to Syed Anwar Husain, "The foremost consideration appears to be an intent to find a refuge where there are a social stratification and discrimination as these people have been going through the Sena rule; and Islam Furthermore, there was some of the material considerations uppermost in the psyche of the converts and the background to the way which the Sufis welcomed the people first by the Langarkhana, and then Khanqah.³⁶

Thirdly, the third institution to play a special role in propagating Islam in Bengal was the Dargah. Most of the people united in the dargah, which is still in use today. It is seen that Dargah has occupied the place of khanqah continuously. Dargah's supremacy started in Bengal during the rule of Hussein Shahi (1493-1538).³⁷ However, there were some Islamic ceremonial formalities in the dargah, which remains to be seen. Historian Professor Abdul Karim commented that The Sufis used to conduct Dargah as most of the cities of Bangladesh. So, they spread Islam through Dargah throughout the whole of Bengal life. It is also included that Muslim sovereignty was instrumental in the propagation of Islam, but Islam was not spread by this power entirely. However, Sufism spread the light of Islam in Bengal.³⁸

The role that Sufis and Prominent Islamic Scholars played in Bangladesh, is surprising. The Sufis and scholars came from Turkey, the Arab region, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Khorasan, Central Asia, and Northern India to Bengal. Some of them have come by way of the river, and some of them by walking. Even though Ibn Battuta has come to Bangladesh to the propagation of Islam in the fourteenth century. At that time, He met prominent Sufis in Bengal. "Ibn

³⁶ Syed Anwar Husain, *Human Rights in Bengal: Atish Dipankar to Sufis*, p. 116

³⁷ D. N. Majumdar and C. R. Rao, *Race Elements in Bengal* (Calcutta: Asia Publishing House, 1960), 96-114.

³⁸ Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslim in Bengal*, (2nd ed.) (Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitya Prakash., 2007), 84.

Battuta was impressed with the cheap prices of food and other consumer goods of Bengal. On the other hand, the weather in Bengal made him frightened.”³⁹

After nearly 600 years of Islam's birth, Muslims of Bengal were mainly influenced by the Sufi saints and reflected the beauty of Islam. Before that person of Bengal were Hindus, Buddhists, or any other religion. So, the influence of Sufi saints in Bengal still exists today. Jalaluddin Rumi (r), Ibn al Arabi (r), Hafiz Shirazi (r), etc., influenced Sufi doctrine of murshidi, baul, and fakri songs; Especially Lalon Shah, Hassan Raja's song has been unprecedentedly reflected which is still singing to the singers.⁴⁰

4.3. At the Perspective of Religious Tolerance in the Constitution of Bangladesh

There are 169 million people of a different religion in Bangladesh. Every religion of People gets vacations for their celebrating on national holidays according to the constitution of Bangladesh. In the country's constitution, there has been an assurance of all religions, which serves as a protector against intolerance.

There is about 90 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim. Generally, the cabinet of this country announces 6 days as a general holiday and 8 days by the executive order for every year to the Muslim People.⁴¹ Muslim celebrates in Eidul Fitr and Eidul Adha with comfortably and freely. It has been discussed such as a general holiday, 1. Eid-ul-Fitr holiday, 2. Eid-e-Miladunnabi, 3., Shab-e-Barat, 4. Shab-e-Kader, 5.6. Before and after Eid- Uth-Fitr,7.8 before and after Eid-ul-Azhar, 9. Ashura. And as an optional holiday for Muslim like 10. Shab-e-Miraz, 11. Eid-ul-Fitr (the second day after the Eid holiday), 12. Eid-ul-Aza (the second day after the Eid holiday) 13. Akhari Chahar Swoba and, 14. Fateh-e-Yazdaham.

³⁹ Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, trans Mahdi Hussain, 46.

⁴⁰ Shahnawaz, *The primary section of the spread of Muslim society in Bengal*, 7.

⁴¹ bdnews24.com. "List of holiday & vacations". accessed April 30, 2019. <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/bangladesh/article1420429.bdnews>.

9.5 percent of the people of Bangladesh depends on the Hindu religion. Generally, Hindu's get 2 days as a general holiday as well as eight days as an executive leave. Hindus celebrate religious holidays very much comfortably and freely.⁴² It has been discussed as a general holiday, 1. Janmashtami, 2. Durga Puja. There has an optional holiday for Hindu people like 3. Saraswati Puja, 4. Shivratri Brat, 5. Marriage, 6. Harichand Tagore's arrival 7. Mahalaya, 8. After the day of Durgapuja 9, Lakshmi Puja, 10. Shyama Puja.⁴³

In Bangladesh, where the ratio of Buddhists is 0.60%, Buddhists can comfortably celebrate religious holidays.⁴⁴ In Buddhists, the religion of people gets six days to leave. They get a one general holiday and five optional holidays from the Bangladesh government. It has been discussed as a general holiday like Buddha Purnima as well as optional holidays like 2. Maghi Purnima, 3. Chaitra Sankranti, 4. Akshara Purnima, 5. Madhu Purnima, 6. Prabarna Purnima.

There are 0.30% of Christians people. Christians celebrate their religious programs freely in Bangladesh. Generally, Christian get nine days to leave from the Bangladesh government. There is one general holiday for the Christians people to the 1. Jesus Christ's birthday (big day) . And they get nine days to leave as an optional holiday like 2. 1 January English New Year, 3. On Wednesday, February 14th, 4. Mercury on 29th March 5. 30th March Glorified Friday, 6. On 31st March Pure Saturday, 7. April 1 Easter Sunday, 8. 9. And on the 24th and the 26th, the birthday of Jesus Christ (the day before and next day).⁴⁵

⁴² bdnews24.com. "List of holiday & vacations". accessed April 30, 2019. <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/bangladesh/article1420429.bdnews>.

⁴³ bdnews24.com. "List of holiday & vacations". accessed April 30, 2019. <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/bangladesh/article1420429.bdnews>.

⁴⁴ AsiaNews.it. "Bangladesh, Easter is a national holiday". accessed May 1, 2019. <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangladesh,-Easter-is-a-national-holiday-46817.html>.

⁴⁵ AsiaNews.it. "Bangladesh, Easter is a national holiday". accessed May 1, 2019. <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangladesh,-Easter-is-a-national-holiday->

Therefore, there are other small ethnic groups in Bangladesh those employees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area get two optional leave for on 12th and 15th April, the social festival of Baisabi⁴⁶. However, there are other a lot of examples for ensuring religious tolerance among the different religious groups in Bangladesh.

4.4. The Contribution of The Sufis in the Social Development of Bangladesh

There is no scope to deny the influence of Sufism in the propagation of Islam in Bangladesh. The Sufis gave up the life of many of them for preaching Islam in this country. Many have been martyred in the hands of Hindu kings. Many were injured again. Their contribution to the spread of Islam in 64 districts of Bangladesh is much more. People of Bangladesh still remember them by various works. That is why the name of the main airport of Bangladesh has been named in the name of the Sufis. The countless universities of the country have been named after them. In addition to the names of the Sufis, countless hospitals, colleges, schools, madrasas, Maktabs, and mosques have been named. So, finally, the contribution of Sufism in the long history of Bangladesh is undeniable. The history of Islam in Bangladesh is the history of Sufism. Because, through Sufism, Islam was proclaimed in this country, which is still present.

4.4.1. Social Significance in Bengal

The prominent Sufis would give advice to those taking bai'at at their hands. At that time, Sufis offer the people to repentance for their sins. Sufis made a solemn affirmation of loyalty and obedience to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Sufis would warn them against licentiousness and self-indulgence, injustice, oppression and the violation of the rights of others. Sufis addressed themselves to the moral elevation of their disciples by prescribing measures for the eradication of malice, jealousy and the lust for wealth

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⁴⁶ bdnews24.com. "List of holiday & vacations". accessed April 30, 2019. <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/bangladesh/article1420429.bdnews>.

and power. They urged them to remember Allah and to do well by his creatures and practice self-abnegation. Sufi also gave good counsel to whoever came to himself. And tried to awaken in his mind the love for the Divine and for self-correction and inner reform.⁴⁷

The society has been changed by the Sufi leaders though their tremendous sincerity, moral excellence, and preaching. According to the historian, Ziauddin Barni, depicting the social conditions prevailing in India during the reign of Alauddin Khilji. "The prominent three Sufis who have an advisor of the Sultan Allauddin Khilji. They were Sheikh-ul-Islam Nizamuddin, Sheikh-ul-Islam Alauddin, and Sheikh-ul-Islam Ruknuddin. A world received enlightenment from them. People took the bai'at at their hands. Sinners were inspired by them to repent for their sins. Thousands of evil-doers abandoned their evil. They became devout worshippers. A strong fervor was created among them for religious deeds. People grew truthful because of their blessings. They became honest in the management of their worldly affairs.⁴⁸

The historian goes on to say, "In the last years of Sultan Alauddin's rule, the moral level had improved. Many of the people abstained from drink, adultery, gambling. The major sins were shunned as equivalents of infidelity. Muslims refrained from open usury. Adulteration, deceit and under weighing were eliminated from the market. Historical picture of the Reformation brought in public morals by the Sufi divines.⁴⁹ The Sufi saints have made an enormous contribution towards the evolution of a conscientious environment in the Indian subcontinent which is the nation's greatest asset of its history. The life of Syed Ahmad Shaheed, a religious reformer and Sufi saint of the 19th Century. He has been shown the moral impact of his personality on society.

It is also included that Islam has been gradually speeding up

⁴⁷ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, trans. Muhammad Asif Kidwai (Ankara: South Asian Youth Organization, 2018), 44.

⁴⁸ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 45.

⁴⁹ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 45.

in Bangladesh by the Sufi saint in the sphere of their spirituality and greatness of character. No government, no law, no other institution could bring about so much improvement. On the other hand, many people have changed into morality and rectitude by the Sufi saint at that time.

4.4.2. Propagation of Islamic Knowledge and Sharia

The Sufis of Bangladesh were the outstanding talented person themselves. Their belief was that it was quite impossible to know Allah and his creation without knowledge. It considered the remarkable educational and literary progress of Indian subcontinent under the Muslims rule. It has been said that for the contribution of prominent Sufis was due directly or indirectly. The two of the greatest scholars and teachers of the 14th Century were Qazi Abdul Muqtadir Kindi and Sheikh Ahmad Thanasari. They were the spiritual murid of Khwaja Naseeruddin Chiragh-i-Dehli. They were so much educated person. The renowned 17th Century educationist and teacher, Mawlana Lutfullah Kora Jahanabad. Whose pupils, and pupils of whose pupils, educational activity was kept going till the 19th Century. He was a Khalifa of the Chistiya tariqah.⁵⁰

The Sufis used Khanqah and the Madrassa for the instrument of educational activity. The Khanqah-i-Rasheediya of Jaunpur, the Madrassa of Shah Pir Mohammad at Lucknow, the educational seat of Shah Waliullah at Delhi and the Khanqah of Maulana Rasheed Ahmad at Gangohi, the Khanqah of She Celal were the best examples of Bangladesh as well as the Indian subcontinent. Sufis propagated Islamic knowledge and Sariah to the general people through these institutions.

4.4.3. Generosity and Benevolence of Sufis

Most of the general people are satisfied at every time because of Sufi's benevolence and behavior. A vast number of people lived in Khanqahs as permanent guests, enjoying all the reasonable comforts of their life. There were provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner

⁵⁰ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 48.

in the Khanqahs. In Khankha, The Sufis had not discriminated between the rich and the poor, the friend and the foe. A prominent Sufi Sheikh Saifuddin Sirhindi was a Khalifa of Mujaddidiya tariqah in the Seventeenth Century. In his Khankhas, 1,400 persons used to dinner every day. Every one of them was served with food of his own choice. There is another Chishti saint of the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, Syed Mohammad Saeed alias Shah Bheek. In his Khanqah, 5,000 votaries who lived permanently. An equal number from among the daily visitors also joined in at the meals. With the result that about 1,000 persons dined with him regularly.⁵¹

There was other prominent Sufi Hazrat Shah Jalal (r) in Bangladesh. There were more than thousands of people stayed in his Khankhas. Everyone has been provided the meals from the Khankhas without paying money. Mawlana Manazir Ahsan Gilani had very appropriately observed that: The Khanqahs of the Sufi saints served as the connecting link between the rich and the poor. Innumerable destitute Muslim families were satisfied. They were satisfied with Sufis generosity, benevolence, and Excellency.⁵²

4.4.4. Resignation and Impregnation of Sufis

Generally, Sufis did not accept offices, gifts or grants from the president, Prime minister, lords, Kings, and princes. Some Sufis did not like kings and their activities. It can be said that there were two types of Sufis. One group was that when any Sufis have seen the king's bad activities, they were believing in asceticism. They were gone to the mountain as well as they lived there and performed Islamic ritual activities. Another group was that when they had seen the king's worsened activities, they protested and even battled with kings. In Bangladesh perspective, Most of the Sufis have battled with the oppressor Hindu kings. Some prominent Sufis in Bangladesh like Shah Jalal, Shah Paran, Shah Rophus, Shah Makhдум, Baba Adam Shahid involved in a war with oppressor

⁵¹ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 49.

⁵² Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 50.

Hindu and Buddha kings. Basically, in different wars, they won and established Islamic Society in Bangladesh.⁵³

Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan was a Sufi leader of the Naqshbandiya and Mujaddidiya tariqa. The Emperor of Delhi requests him for accepting money from the Empire. At that time, he refused government request. Once Nawab Asaf Jah has provided 20,000 (dollars or equivalent) money. Last, In which he refused this money. The Nawab Asaf Jah urged, "Take them and give them away to the poor". Mirza Jan-i-Janan replied, "Mirza Jan-i-Janan replied, "You may start distributing them. Please, you don't donate this money to my Khanqah. I don't like this. I manage money for the poor myself. Once a high-ranking Government official, who had come to meet prominent Sufi Maulana Shah Fazlur Rahman of Ganj Moradabad (died, 1895).⁵⁴ The government officer wants to bestow a grant on his Khanqah, but Sufi Maulana Shah Fazlur Rahman rejected this fund. By seeing their good conduct, most of the unbeliever converted into Islam easily. Many Hindus had a curiosity about Islam. They had come to the Khankhas and asked different questions about Islam. They were encouraged in Islam by the Sufis.

4.4.5. *Asylum of Humanity*

The Sufis got imbued with excellent humanitarian ideals in society. They guided to the general people an earnest solicitude for humanity. The Sufis advised the general people to follow the Prophet's biography. They told to the followers for thinking 'God's creatures. "Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia (r) is reported to have said about himself that, when a person comes to me and relates his troubles, I feel twice as much distressed as him. Most of the Hindus have faced the caste system. Most of the time, Lower caste Hindus have been persecuted and oppressed by the High-caste Hindus. Sometimes, they have been killed by High-caste Hindus. For this reason, Lower caste Hindus frighten and feared from

⁵³ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 51.

⁵⁴ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 52.

High-caste Hindus. They were escaped from their own cities as well as wanted to get asylum to the Sufis.⁵⁵ At that time, Sufis had given to asylum in Khanqas. It is also included that there is a lot of Khanqas system in Bangladesh. They were provided food three times a day from Khanqas. Sufis met with them in good behavior. Sufis discussed at Islam and advised them. They were attracted in Sufis lecture. Later, they were so much satisfied in Khanqa system. And they were converted into Islam intentionally.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The influence of ruling class, Sufi saint and Muslim scholars have played an important role in the development of Muslim society. This coordinated effort has accelerated the development of Muslim society. And this is being reflected in the madrasa (Muslim educational institution), khanqah (shelter of saint saints), etc. Mosque was mandatory with Muslim settlement because the compulsory religious provisions of the Muslims performing daily prayers five times a day. The mosque was a Muslim prayer or prayer house. Thus, the status of the mosque can be identified as the symbol of Muslim society. After the mosque, the second compulsory establishment of the Muslim society is the establishment of educational institutions and madrasas. Here students got access to religion and other subjects. In the khanqahs, the Sufi saints encouraged the common man's religion. It was also considered a center for preaching to Islam. The role of public welfare was also played from the khankhas. As a result, the spread of Muslim society continued to accelerate.⁵⁶ In addition to ensuring coexistence with other religions in Bengal, Sufism gave great importance to the common people. Because of which many people have been converted to Islam in peace.

Sufis and saints have a lot to play in promoting Islam in Bangladesh. Especially in the Indian subcontinent, many Islamic perso-

⁵⁵ Nadwi, *Contributions of Muslims To Indian Subcontinents*, 53.

⁵⁶ Sells, Michael. Ed. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

nalities have been working for the propagation of Islam and spreading all over their life based on the Qur'an and Hadith. But after their lifelong, many hypocrite devotees are using the popularity of these great people and earning money by making general people shirk. Many people split Islam and create a new doctrine and flourish. Some people are screaming with the name but hate also comes in the name. Some of these Pirs' has upheld charges including rape, extortion, possession of people and land. The name Hypocritical Pir suppression platform (Bhand Pir Daman Mancha) an organization named after 100 Hypocrites and deceivers Pir and the name of their Darbar, was published by analyzing the activities of these Hypocrites and deceivers Peers across the country. Hypocrites and deceivers Pirs' compelled ordinary people to perform grave pooja, prostration in the grave and shirk the Pir sahibs. Encourage ordinary people to work different bid' at. Through this, the hypocrites tried to rescue their political interests. Another thing is that there are many women coming to the Pir house. These hypocrites, by misusing women, exploit their interests. Women are seen to prostrate themselves, worship them. Because of this, the main section of the mainstream of Bangladesh is also acknowledged because of different times. Thus, the miscreants have secret connections with various political parties. Through this political looting. A lot of ordinary people are admired by the fraud of hypocrites Peers. So, the movement against them was a different time. The common people of Bengal came to the streets and protested them. But there is no success in finding the success of the state behind the misguided peers.

The good Pirs' of Bangladesh must continue the movement against the false deceptive Pirs' and to inform the common people about the activities of the hypocrites, they must wake them up. The honest Pirs' will have to increase the propagation of Islam. All good leaders must be united. It is seen in Bangladesh that as well as for political reasons and the mainstream patrons of different social causes, they cannot be united. One party does not hesitate to give others the fatwa, the disbelievers, and the polytheists. There-

fore, the scholars and the Sufis should go out of the work and unite and increase the invitation of Islam among ordinary people. And to stop the work of uniting against hypocrisy in Bangladesh, their work will be stopped. Then ordinary people can understand Islam easily Islam. The misuse of religion will be reduced. At present, various hypocrites Pirs' encouraged to the general people to prostrate (Sujūd or sajdah) themselves. It is forbidden to prostrate to anyone except Allah. So, now the Muslims' duty of faith is to protest them with all the power. The Muslim's faithful duty is to protest these with all power and to counter such unbelief. Pir who encourage prostration (Sajdah or Sujūd) in the Dargah and Khankqa, the people of the country will have to play a vocal role against social evils against these shocking activities.

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