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6 Between patron and piety

Jahān Ārā Begam's Sufi affiliations and articulations in seventeenth-century Mughal India

Afshan Bokhari

This chapter considers the manner in which the initiation and ascension of the Mughal princess Jahān Ārā Begam (1023–92/1614–81) within the Sufi Qādiriyya order emboldened the reconfiguration of her spirituality and imperial status in the context of eleventh/seventeenth-century Muslim India. Sufism enjoined Jahān Ārā to artfully negotiate and modify both prevailing social and religious gender constructions as well as modes of empowerment and representation. Through her Sufi treatises and sacred commissions, Jahān Ārā's acts of patronage and visible piety index the growth of her authority and reify her official and spiritual personas. This study relies on two Sufi treatises authored by her in Persian: the *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ*¹ ("Confidant of Spirits") (1049/1639) and the *Risāla-i ṣāḥibiyya*² ("Message of the Madame") (1050/1640); the latter includes thirty-nine pages of passionate narratives detailing her motivations to seek an alternative Islamic space and voice. The quest to satiate her spiritual longings through the Qādiriyya ultimately linked her to the Timurid legacy and reclaimed the Sufi-sovereign pattern of legitimacy. Within the context of her experience, and particularly in the *Risāla-i ṣāḥibiyya*, Jahān Ārā evokes Sufi ideology and its dialectical relationship with dominant Islamic discourses alongside the social and religious ambiguities and practices that have transpired between sharia and *ṭarīqa* modalities.

Jahān Ārā's literary and spiritual achievements, coupled with her official patronage of the congregational mosque in Agra (1058/1648) and the Mullā Shāh mosque and *khānaqāh* complex in Srinagar (1061/1650), not only exceeded the imperial charge imposed on her gender and rank but modified the prevailing modes of representation and patronage for imperial women's enduring legacy. The spiritual framework of Sufism inculcated to the Mughals and their subjects the perception of Jahān Ārā's spiritually guided deeds as "noble, pious, exemplary" and her public conduct and charitable acts as becoming and almost necessary for the unmarried Mughal princess. Jahān Ārā's unprecedented accomplishments as the head of the royal harem and as a Qādiri Sufi-devout modified and reclaimed the imperial and religious *modus operandi* of the Mughal machine that ensured empire at the nexus of Sufism and Mughal society.

Sufism contributed significantly to the characteristic tenor of a nuanced Islam in the Indian subcontinent from the tenth/sixteenth century onward during the

reign of the Indian-Timurids/Mughals in northern India. Though Islamic theology and jurisprudence formed the basis of political life and ideology in Mughal India, the influence of Sufism and its mystical belief systems was an integral part of the

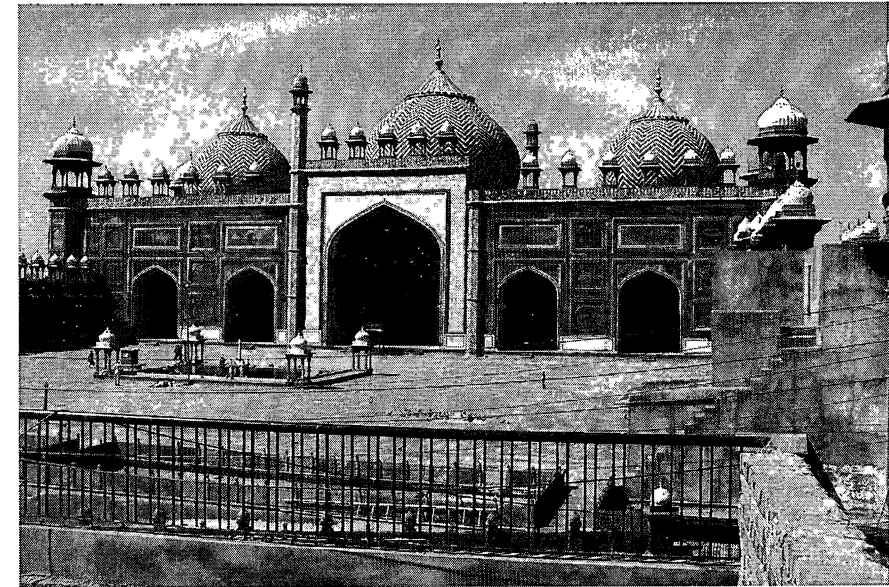


Figure 6.1 West elevation at main prayer hall and courtyard, Agra Mosque.



Figure 6.2 View from northeast corner of main entrance to mosque courtyard, Mullā Shāh mosque and *khānaqāh* complex in Srinagar, Kashmir.

social psyche and imperial ethos of the ruling house. The innate constructions of Sufism attended some of the most deeply felt social and spiritual needs of Mughal elites and commoners alike that official or legally-focused Islam may not have addressed. The inextricable connection of the imperial family to Sufi institutions was further galvanized and made more visible through the women of the ruling house, their piety and their largesse. Female support of Sufi leaders and the patronage of monuments associated with Sufi orders was conducive to the Timurid-Mughal ideology of the ruling milieu and located axes that revealed elite women, their socio-political roles, the power they wielded and their modes of representation.

Intrinsic to imperial ideology and practical politics, the ruling house of the Indian Timurids or Mughals relied on female agency to convey the sovereign's pietistic and Islamic face through public acts of patronage, piety and pilgrimage. Jahān Ārā Begam exceeded the imperial obligations imposed on her gender and rank by recasting her contributions through prevalent patterns of male authority in both the sacred and secular spheres, which are perceived to some extent in this work as the feminine symbolization of the mystical path. As a Sufi devotee, Jahān Ārā achieved the rank of *pīrī-murīdī* (master-disciple),³ the advanced stage of a disciple who is qualified to become a *pīr* but is denied the rank due to her gender. Women were disallowed from achieving this position within formalized Sufi institutions, therefore relegating Jahān Ārā to a liminal place between a *pīr* and a *murīd*. The interstitial space of *pīrī-murīdī* status sanctioned her artful negotiations of her roles as both authority and subject, bold patron of the arts and humble Sufi servant.

Mughal political alignment with Sufi saints, particularly those of the Chishtiyya order, reflected the specific relationship that existed between mystical Islam and the Timurid and Mughal emperors who were "exponents of worldly and spiritual powers."⁴ The Sufi-sovereign relationship created an aura of sanctity around both the imperial family and Mughal-sponsored *dargāhs* and mosques. To effectively and visibly achieve political and spiritual imperatives, the ruling house assimilated state to household, which required that royal women, the keepers of imperial genealogies, make public associations with exemplary Sufi personalities through their piety and patronage of religious institutions. This study maintains that Jahān Ārā Begam's association and subsequent spiritual ascension under the guidance of her *pīr* Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī (d. 1050/1661)⁵ transcended the imperial expectations imposed on her class and gender. Through her active participation in Sufi ritual, and the recording of this act in her Sufi treatises, Jahān Ārā transcended her relegated role of female agency in the service of the state. The princess's public piety was not only an imperial prerogative, but a personal imperative that ultimately legitimized her claims to unprecedented authority. It sustained an enduring Timurid-Mughal legacy and sanctioned her bold representation in the Mughal landscape.

As early as Bābur's invasion in 933/1526, spiritual beliefs among the Mughal emperors found expressions within a spectrum of piety that involved deeper commitments to holy persons or saints than to the details of Islamic orthopraxy.

Beginning with Tīmūr himself, the development of a cult of the sovereign associated with historical and contemporary Sufi saints and scholars became one more argument on behalf of Tīmūr's descendants' right to dominion. The Timurid dynasty's endurance rested in particular on its ability to secure the support of prominent Sufi saints and scholars, and furthermore to employ female agency in publicly forging political ties with Sufi institutions. The cultivation of the Sufi-king association, where Sufi saints or shaykhs served as imperial emissaries in local communities, was one that Tīmūr actively used to advance his social and political agenda.⁶ However, the reliance on female agency, or matronage, as part of imperial policy was an appropriation by the early Mughals from indigenous Hindu belief systems. Indian Sufi literature of the post-Tīmūr period shows a significant change in thought content and includes veneration and even deification of women through an androcentric perspective based on the early female Sufi paragon of Basra, Rābi'a al-'Adawīya (d. 185/801).⁷ Through the Sufi saints, the Mughals adopted and formalized the concept of visible female devotion distilled from the Vaishnava Vedantic doctrine that included the ecstatic *bhakti* devotion to Krishna, the Puranic domestic commentary regarding the auspicious female of *shakti*, and the aesthetic *rasa* theory of Sanskrit poetics.⁸ Ritually and liturgically these visible forms of devotion were centered on the presence of the auspicious female, her agency and authority. It would follow that the invasion of the Mughals in the early tenth/sixteenth century may have witnessed a decline of prevailing Muslim orthodoxy as a result of the resurgence of Indian Sufism which combined indigenous Hindu belief systems into a form of piety that complemented a mystical Islamic ideology. During the Mughal emperor Akbar's reign (r. 964–1014/1556–1605), Sufi saints and their followers became free from the control of the strictures of Islamic doctrine and began formal and constructive dialogues with Hindu saints who influenced the social and ritual practices of Sufis and their imperial supporters.⁹

The veneration of Sufi saints was more than an elite practice, and transcended social, religious and gender boundaries in Mughal India. Popular saints drew together ordinary and elite men and women both Hindu and Muslim, who congregated and worshiped in the same performative space of a Sufi *dargāh* complex as equals in their access and devotion to the *pīr*. The democratic dynamics that Sufi practice provoked allowed imperial women to rhetorically make their presence felt in the public realm through their visible associations with and patronage of Sufism, its religious leaders and sites without compromising imperial and Islamic etiquette. The political and financial support of a Sufi leader or a Sufi *dargāh* established a personal connection between the populace and its would-be masters and mistresses. Even when the elite were not present physically at the performative site, the residue of their aura was palpable around the place and performance of their pious act, to the extent where absence was perceived as presence. In addition to public displays of spiritual piety, Jahān Ārā pronounced her enduring piety through her sacred commissions, which remained to serve as physical enunciations of her spiritual and imperial personae.

The princess and the *pīr*

Jahān Ārā Begam, the first surviving daughter of Shāh Jahān and Mumtāz Maḥall, was born on 12 Šafar, 1023/23 March, 1614 in the auspicious Sufi pilgrimage city of Ajmer, the final resting place of the eponym of the Chishtiyya order, Khwāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī (535–627/1141–1230). Ajmer was not only Jahān Ārā's birthplace but later served as her spiritual axis mundi and the context of the passionate Sufi rituals recorded in the *Šāhibiyya*, as well as the framework for the Chishtiyya anthology, *Muʿnis al-arvāḥ*. In 1040/1631, upon her mother's untimely death, the seventeen-year-old princess assumed her mother's position as the head of the imperial harem and with it, the social and fiscal responsibilities of the women's domain and the domestic duties of her immediate family. Jahān Ārā was assigned the honor of "keeper of the imperial seal," and "from that date, the duty of affixing the great seal to the imperial edicts devolved upon her,"¹⁰ an honor never before conferred upon any imperial female. The princess was designated as the "*begam šāhiba*," a weighty honorific usually given to married or middle-aged women.

In 1046/1637, the prince Dārā Shikōh, Jahān Ārā Begam's younger brother and a Sufi devotee, introduced the Qādiri saint, Miān Mīr (957–1044/1550–1635) to his sister. By 1050/1641, Jahān Ārā was in a complete state of obeisance and devotion to the Sufi Qādiriyya order. The princess was inspired and influenced by her brother Dārā Shikōh to pursue the Sufi path to satiate her spiritual longings and religious restlessness. These shared affinities forged an inextricable bond, one that Jahān Ārā describes in the *Šāhibiyya* using the poetic language of Sufi metaphysics:

I have a spiritual and material attachment to him [Dārā] and we are one soul and spirit (*rūḥ*) breathed into two forms. We are one life in two bodies.¹¹

Further, in the climate of Shāh Jahān's Sunni revivalism, reclaiming a more personalized Islamic mode of religiosity may have been the respite both brother and sister sought for spiritual release. Miān Mīr ultimately led Jahān Ārā to her *pīr* Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī, whose life and teaching became the motivating force for Jahān Ārā to write her spiritual treatises.

Among the earliest of the Sufi orders, the Qādiriyya was associated with the teachings of the Hanbalite scholar ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). Spreading initially from Baghdad, it was his sons who broadened his sharia-minded community into an order and encouraged its spread into North Africa, Central Asia and India. As articulated amongst the Indian Qādiriyya, the order laid great stress on the purification of the self. According to this philosophy, cleaning the rust of the mundane world from the mirror of the heart is an essential part of one's spiritual journey and purification. For Jahān Ārā, the purification required renouncing her imperial persona to the extent where it facilitated entrance into the liminal state of a *pīrī-murīdī* and divine illumination. She acknowledges this charge and challenge in the *Šāhibiyya*:

When I realized that the truth for this existence requires *fanā*' (annihilation of the self), I decided to follow what my *pīr* requires, to die before death, to not wait for death to extinguish me, to die before death to become one with the divine.¹²

Jahān Ārā desired to deeply search Islam for spiritual truths through its mysticism, to search outside of the prevalent prescriptive Islam. Though Shāh Jahān did not privilege the ulama's orthodoxy, his imperial policies represented his missionary zeal to exalt Islam as part of imperial policy and forsake all other forms of religion, especially Hinduism.¹³ In the *Muʿnis al-arvāḥ*, Jahān Ārā indicates her father's skepticism regarding Sufism and how she convinced him of its legitimacy, particularly its intrinsic spiritual and historic connection to traditional Islam and the revered religious figures of the past:

... even though the current emperor, the father of this weak one, did not know the truth of the importance of his path. Because of this, he was always wondering about it and was floundering. And me, the poor one (*faqīra*), I constantly told him that [Muʿīn al-Dīn] Chishtī was a sayyid but he did not believe me until he read the *Akbar-nāma*. In the *Akbar-nāma*, Abū ʿl-Faḏl wrote about the path (*taṣawwuf*) and thoughts of Chishtī's ideas. From that day, this meaning that was brighter than the sun, it became clear to Shāh Jahān, the shadow of God, that Chishtī was an honored member of the Prophet's family ... his [Chishtī's] relation to the Prophet Muhammad is fifteen generations removed.¹⁴

The emperor Akbar favored the Chishtiyya order whose roots can be traced to Persia and hence the Mughal's Timurid history and lineage. The Chishtiyya order was founded by Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 633/1236) and continues to be one of the most widespread orders in India and Pakistan today. Jahān Ārā indicated her strong desire in the *Šāhibiyya* to join the Chishtiyya; however, she was not initiated into the order:

Though I am devoted to the Chishtī order, the Chishtī shaykhs do not show themselves in public and remain secluded. I am twenty-seven years old and did not want to lose any more time. I wanted to become a disciple of any order ... I was a Chishtī disciple in my heart. Now that I have joined the Qādiriyya, will I achieve realization?¹⁵

The *Šāhibiyya* acknowledged the historical origins of Sufism in the path she pursued by affirming the most esteemed and lauded exemplars, both men and women, from the foundational period of Islam. Jahān Ārā's treatises also provide a complete account of the *awliyā*' (saints) and link their history to the origins of Islam. The *Šāhibiyya* furnishes birth and death dates and the locations of the notable saints' tombs. Jahān Ārā begins the *Muʿnis al-arvāḥ* by acknowledging and honoring the Chishti saints, their alliances and their history by tracing their line to the Prophet Muhammad:

Khwāja Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī . . . disciple of Khwāja ‘Uṣmān Hārvanī who was the disciple of Ḥaẓrat Ḥājī Sharīf Zindanī . . . who was the disciple of Ḥaẓrat ‘Alī, who was disciple of the Prophet Muhammad. The lives of these great ones are inextricably linked to each other and to the court of eternity and our creator. I have extracted with great care from well-known books and treatises, their history and have committed these to writing in this *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya*.¹⁶

Jahān Ārā’s objective for surveying the Chishtiyya and further linking these Sufi saints to Muhammad and his son-in-law ‘Alī is multi-layered. In the *Mu’nis al-arvāḥ*, Jahān Ārā artfully binds the precarious and often heretical association of Sufism and its manifestations within Islam, giving Sufism—and thereby her own agency—spiritual legitimacy. Jahān Ārā’s objectives in the *Mu’nis al-arvāḥ* and *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya* are to ensure historical accuracy and appeal to, and invoke, the Muslim heroes of the past to affirm associations with Sufi exemplars; in particular, Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī, the patron saint of the house of Akbar and Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī, her own Sufi preceptor. Furthermore, to use the Islamic mantle to represent and extol the spiritual value of the Chishtiyya and Qādiriyya underscores Jahān Ārā’s authority and legitimacy as a *pīrī-murīdī*. The significance of the Islamic past is purely functional: it firmly binds and affirms her status as a *pīrī-murīdī* in the sacred history of the Islamic tradition. The Chishtiyya anthology is a testament to Jahān Ārā’s awareness of the long tradition in which she and her Timurid-Mughal legacy stood. Therefore, the ambition of each treatise and its author is to provide a sanctioned field of inquiry onto which Jahān Ārā placed as central exhibit her own elevated state of *pīrī-murīdī* among present and past spiritual mentors.

The autobiographical nature of the *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya* is in effect a testimony of a royal female exceeding the limits of the imperial charges imposed on her gender and rank. This is done, however, not by cultivating a political and social network (akin to royal women) or through dynastic reproduction but rather through her direct associations with Sufi institutions and their leaders. Jahān Ārā’s primary claim in the treatise is that as a direct function of her devotion and piety the light of the Timurid lamp¹⁷ is finally and eternally illuminated:

In our family no one took the step on the path to seek God or the truth that would light the Timurid lamp eternally. I was grateful for having received this great fortune and wealth. There was no end to my happiness.¹⁸

The *Ṣāhibiyya*’s function is not only as a field of inquiry or literary referent into Jahān Ārā Begam’s identity in the elevated state of a *pīrī-murīdī*, but is also key in its role and accumulated significance in portraying and perpetuating the socio-religious and political objectives of Shāh Jahān’s court and his “Timurid Renaissance”¹⁹ initiatives.

In order for Jahān Ārā to completely access the inner and feminine dimension of Sufism, she had to lift her veil of modesty and transcend, if not annihilate, her

mundane imperial persona. The author has classified Jahān Ārā’s spiritual transformation as a function of her “confessions” in the *Ṣāhibiyya*, in which she liberally expresses the intense interiority of her mystical experience. Jahān Ārā configures and negotiates her spiritual ascension and realization through her personal narratives and experiential accounts in the *Ṣāhibiyya*:

Since my eyes have been illuminated by the perfection of my guide (*murshid*), I have been flooded with the sea of truth and the fountain of mysticism that will reveal my own truth. I have benefited from Mullā Shāh’s attributes and gaze and they have become qualities of truth . . . O you whose being has become absolute, my hidden secrets have become confirmed in your light of truth.²⁰

Jahān Ārā distinguishes her former self from the true self that has been revealed to her through the guidance of Mullā Shāh. She claims to have hidden secrets that have finally come to light. Whether this is an admission of her hidden religiosity before it was “confirmed in the light of truth” is not clear. What is clear is that “the fountain of mysticism” has presented a sacred and sanctioned forum for her to cultivate her “hidden” and religious “truisms.” Sufi theosophy is distinguished from traditional sharia-oriented disciplines of Islamic religious learning and is manifest with a significant space for what Annemarie Schimmel termed the female voice and feminine presence.²¹ The feminine dimension of Sufism is not physical female agency but a feminine element present in both males and females. When invoked through spiritual practice, it could facilitate union with God the beloved and enable realization. Jahān Ārā may have considered the alternative site of mystical Islam as an appropriate sphere where she could render her spirituality more effective.

Medieval female mystics often saw themselves at a disadvantage because mystical experience was difficult to communicate; moreover, as women, they lacked both the authority and authoritative language to communicate spiritual truths and the authenticity to legitimate their spiritual agency. In the introduction of the *Ṣāhibiyya*, Jahān Ārā deliberated the reasons for her sanctioned authority and the impetus for writing the treatise as dictated by God and his Messenger:

This poor one (*faqīra*), only through the assistance, favor, and approval of God the all-knowing and all-mighty and His beloved messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, and with the helping grace of my revered master, Mullā Shāh who took my hand, I am filled with desire to write this treatise and place it on the mantle with the other accounts of the great ones of religion and the revered ones of certainty.²²

Lacking the authority of a clerical order or male gender, the only justification for female mystics’ writing was that of being an instrument of the creator and feeling the compulsion to relate the intensity of their spiritual experience. Throughout the treatise, Jahān Ārā defers to male authority to establish her authenticity as a

pīrī-murīdī. She cites her Sufi master, Mullā Shāh, the Prophet Muhammad and the patriarchal omnipresence of God as guides and inspiration for her devotion.

Jahān Ārā is completely fulfilled spiritually in realizing the fruits of her devotion. However, this mystical realization also provoked her to commit her experience to paper. Immediately after she receives the vision of the Holy Prophet among his companions, she composes a quatrain:

I prostrated myself in gratitude and this quatrain came out of my mouth:
O King [Mullā Shāh] you are the One, the blessings of your gaze deliver the
seekers to God. Whoever you look at reaches his goal. The light of your gaze
has become the light of God through you.²³

Sufi biographical dictionaries often have a section entitled "Women who achieved the status of men," and the Indian saint Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (568–664/1173–1266) refers to a pious woman as "a man sent in the form of a woman."²⁴ It is clear from the sources listed in the *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ* and *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya* that Jahān Ārā would have read selections about achievements of women in Sufi literature, including Ganj-i Shakar's writings, and thereby found motivation for her own recording of her experiences and reflections. In the *Ṣāhibiyya*, Jahān Ārā establishes a framework for her own spiritual authority and privileges her gender by asserting Rābi'a's own and further equalizes the genders in their ability to access and progress along the Sufi path:

Mullā Shāh has said about Rābi'a, "She is not one woman but a hundred men from head to toe. She is entirely drowned in pain like a good Sufi and her longing and devotion on the path is equal to the piety of one hundred men."²⁵

Jahān Ārā uses Rābi'a's juxtaposition against the male gender to measure a woman's worth; not to limit or make women subordinate to men, but to present existing constructions of gender hierarchy in eleventh/seventeenth-century Mughal India. Jahān Ārā uses Mullā Shāh's comments to critique patriarchy and privilege women in their devotion and practice of Sufi doctrines. Moreover, in subsequent verses she equalizes the genders in their access to the ultimate objective of the Sufi path: perfection and knowledge of self which ultimately leads to divine union. At the center of Jahān Ārā's justification for pursuing the Sufi path toward realization and ascension is her gender and its full and equal access to God. She writes in the *Ṣāhibiyya*:

Whoever is honored by the greatest happiness of knowing and realization is the perfect human (*insān-i kāmīl*) or the absolute essence of the world (*zāt-i muṭlaq*) and is superior among all living creatures whether man or woman. God's grace will favor whoever he likes, be it man or woman.²⁶

After legitimizing her female agency within the Sufi framework, Jahān Ārā utilizes Sufi histories and literature to express her informed yet passionate

devotion to the mystical tradition. As part of the process of authentication, Jahān Ārā cites well-known Sufi treatises and bibliographic sources to passively promote herself as a spiritual authority through her deep knowledge of Sufi and other texts:

Because of my deep beliefs and convictions, the idea behind this manuscript is to guide you and I hope that the readers and listeners of this manuscript will benefit and understand the ideas and thoughts of Chishtī in the best way. I have used reliable and respected sources: the *Akhhār al-akhyār fī asrār al-abrār* by 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddiḥ Dihlavī [d. 1051/1642], the *Dīvān* of Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i Shakar [d. 663/1265], the *Akbar-nāma* of Shaykh Abū 'l-Faḥr Mubārak [d. 1010/1602], the *Kalām-i lām yāzī* of Khwāja Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī [d. 633/1236], the *Sakīnat al-awliyā* and *Safīnat al-awliyā* by Dārā Shikōh [d. 1069/1659] . . .²⁷

This exhaustive list of Sufi sources intellectually informs the spiritual subject matter of Jahān Ārā's treatise and gives her own work intellectual import. Although the narratives in the *Ṣāhibiyya* are expressed through mystical unveilings and visions, her spiritual notions deliberately indicate her familiarity with the relevant historical and religious writings. The uninitiated Sufi-devout or reader may construe this level of higher learning and the princess's intelligence to be commensurate with male saints, thereby authenticating her spiritual authority as a Sufi *pīr* or de facto *khalīfat*. The assumption of this rank is substantiated in the *Ṣāhibiyya*, where Jahān Ārā claims that the contents of her treatise serve as spiritual "truths," and if the reader adheres to its message, the knowledge will confer blessings and ensure realization for any Sufi on the path. She says, "In the belief that this text is completely correct, readers will have the full blessings of God and benefit from its spiritual knowledge."²⁸

The *Ṣāhibiyya* also includes Jahān Ārā's personal reasons for writing the treatise, in the form of an apologetic "confession." The princess leads the reader through her reasons for seeking an alternative site of a more practiced Islam. The narratives denounce her imperial status and serve as a testimony of her "lowly character" as well as a form of redemption from her worldly excesses as an imperial princess:

This is a treatise that the abject *faqīra*, weak, lowly person and servant of the saints of God, believer in the *faqīrs* of the gate of God, Jahān Ārā, daughter of Bādshāh Shāh Jahān, may God pardon her sins and conceal her faults, has written as a compendium of the felicitous circumstances of the protector of saintliness, Hazrat Mawlānā Shāh . . . who is the master and guide of this abject one and also includes a bit of the disordered circumstances of myself—about becoming a disciple and acquiring the zeal for seeking awareness and taking the protector of saintliness . . . and the real purpose in writing about my own circumstances was that I wanted that the name of this sinful lowly one and [her] black book be mentioned and written after the sublime name of that Hazrat and the munificent who might forgive this *faqīra* who has wasted

her life in worldly matters and incite [her] on to the path of seekers, sincere ones and the ones faithful to Haṣrat and God. I had also read in some books that shaykhs in the past, may God sanctify their secrets, have written about their own circumstances as guidance; I too have followed in their tradition.²⁹

Jahān Ārā rejected the imperial status that produced her mundane self, wasted her efforts on worldly matters and was complicit in her unrealized state. Though Jahān Ārā repents her worldly existence, she does not abandon pursuits of authority through other means and channels outright. This Sufi-devout wants her name to be considered alongside Mullā Shāh's, albeit not through the conventional modes of representation or authorization. The relative proximity the *murīd* has to his or her Sufi *pīr* is based upon an elevated rank of devotion and understanding of the *pīr*'s innermost thoughts and ideology. At one point, Jahān Ārā as Sufi-devout stood before God, the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, who sanctioned her to seek out to write and record her devotional Sufi narratives. During this spiritually charged moment, Jahān Ārā visually and emotionally equated her authority to theirs:

I was in a peculiar state which was neither sleep nor wakefulness and it completely overpowered me. I saw the *majlis* (conclave) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, where the Four Friends, noble Companions and great saints were also present. Mullā Shāh was among the latter, and had placed his head on the feet of the Holy Prophet, who graciously remarked, "Why have you illuminated the Timurid lamp?" When I regained consciousness, my heart beamed with joy on account of these blessings. Even though it is not acceptable for a *faqīra* to talk about herself, since meeting the revered group in my spiritual reverie last night and being blessed with eternal happiness, I need to include myself among and on the mantle of this blessed group.³⁰

Jahān Ārā's authoritative claims to the same spiritual mantle as God and the Prophet may indicate the ulama and Naqshbandi Sufi order's lack of influence and authority over the climate of orthodoxy generated during Shāh Jahān's reign.

Though Jahān Ārā's elevated spiritual status as a *pīrī-murīdī* is self-appointed, or achieved vis-à-vis spiritual visions, the potential of her elevated rank within the Qādiriyya order is substantiated in the writings of Mullā Shāh's eleventh/seventeenth-century biographer and Sufi disciple Tawakkul Beg. Here, only her gender, not her devotion, compromised her ascension and rank:

She passed through all the normal visions and attained a pure union with God and gained an intuitive perception. Mullā Shāh said to her, "She has attained so extraordinary a development of the mystical knowledge that she is worthy of being my representative if she were not a woman."³¹

In this passage, Mullā Shāh uses her gender to respectfully deny Jahān Ārā her rightful place as a spiritual guide and *pīr*, but acknowledges that her mystical knowledge and devotion is equal to his.

In the *Ṣāhibiyya*, Jahān Ārā describes the impasse of self-realization and the true meaning of her existence as a Sufi devout and as a princess. She expresses her longing and God's need for her to seek an alternative mode of spirituality:

Since I was twenty years old I have been attached in the corner of my faith to the Chishtiyya sect and the circle of the Shaykh [Mu'in al-Dīn Chishtī] tugs at my soul . . . God has created this desire and zeal for me to follow this pull and seek out where it might lead.³²

Jahān Ārā responds to the divine pull by cultivating and reclaiming her unconscious personas in a mystical and earthly sphere and within the literary landscape of her two Sufi treatises. The treatises are located at the nexus of this critical moment in her youth and become the field where she confesses, seeks redemption and spiritually ascends. Jahān Ārā's Sufi treatises also shed light on one woman's negotiation of her innermost complexities where her spiritual persona is realized at the intersection of the cosmological and human realms.

In her earlier treatise, the *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ*, Jahān Ārā uses language that indicates that the affinity or pull toward a place or sphere for introspection and self-realization is no longer her choice, but a sacred obligation dictated alternately by God, Timurid initiatives and/or otherworldly forces:

The beloved has placed a noose on my neck. He pulls me wherever He wishes. If I had any control over these things, I would always choose to be around him.³³

Here the "beloved" may be Mullā Shāh, whom she had visited with Dārā Shikōh at least four times until 1053/1643.³⁴ The beloved may also refer to God's presence and his directives in her search for an alternative spirituality and divine union. Sufism and its existential objective of achieving an ultimate union with the beloved fulfilled the princess's yearnings for conjugal love and earthly longings. Jahān Ārā fills the *Ṣāhibiyya* with ambiguous and passionate declarations of love for her various beloveds: Mullā Shāh, the Prophet Muhammad and God. The princess's poetic verses are charged with a particular duality and may be read as either thinly veiled amorous objectives of uniting with the earthy beloved and/or with the otherworldly beloved:

My beloved came easily into my arms on the nights of parting without efforts. I was a crazed lover . . . My yearning has finally rewarded me with you in embrace . . . Your passion takes me in embrace and caresses me . . . Every moment I am anointed by your rapture . . . O lord (*shāh*)! You have finished me with one glance. Bravo to you my beloved, how well you showed me your gaze . . . Separation is good whose end is union . . . My *pīr*, my God, my religion, my refuge, without you there is no one, my lord, my friend.³⁵

Jahān Ārā's passionate and sincere declarations of love for both God and Mullā Shāh as inextricable entities allude to the interchangeability of her spiritual focus

and carnal desires. Mullā Shāh is her *shāh* or lord, then God and her religion. He is her beloved who embraces, caresses and finishes her. She is nothing with and without this metaphysical anchor.

The content of the *Ṣāhibiyya* is charged with multiple meanings and questions regarding the significance and use of gender imagery in the subtext and in Jahān Ārā's psychological framework. How, for example, should one interpret the nurturing and at times erotic hierarchical ties of dependence and obligation used to describe Jahān Ārā's relationship with God, her master Mullā Shāh, her brother Dārā Shikōh and even her father the emperor Shāh Jahān? Sufi literature often contains a subtext of passionate love (*ishq*) and sexual union as a metaphorical aid in describing the master-disciple relationship and the divine-human encounter. Jahān Ārā uses the Sufi language of love to describe her human experience of God, just as Rūmī and Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī viewed love as a "bride walking in a procession towards God."³⁶ During Sufi ritual and instruction it is believed that a *pīr* can arouse the devotion of the *murīd* to the same extent as emulating the Prophet, whom God loved so much that he allowed him to ascend (*mi'rāj*) into his presence. In her treatise, Jahān Ārā describes the intensity of her love for the divine through Mullā Shāh as an intermediary to the extent that she envisions herself in the company of the Prophet, his noble companions and saints.³⁷

The "reifications" of Jahān Ārā Begam: the Agra Mosque (1058/1648) and Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī Complex (1060/1650)

In 1047/1638, Jahān Ārā had spent six months in Kashmir under Mullā Shāh's constant tutelage. Accompanied by the emperor, Jahān Ārā reluctantly and with a spiritually heavy heart left the aura of Mullā Shāh in Kashmir and returned to Agra, the Mughal capital. In addition to completing the Taj Mahal, there were other pressing capital improvement projects waiting in the city of Agra. 'Inayāt Khān reports in his *Shāh Jahān-nāma* that Shāh Jahān had ordered the construction of a large forecourt and bazaar and proposed a "stately metropolitan mosque" in front of the Agra fort at the Delhi gate.³⁸ Jahān Ārā "begged that this [new proposed] sacred place of worship might be erected out of her personal funds and under her auspices."³⁹ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī, the Mughal court chronicler, records this event:

Begam Jahān Ārā who earnestly sought after the rewards of the next world requested permission to endow a congregational mosque. To build a mosque is a virtuous act and people built a mosque from their personal allowances in order to gain everlasting fame, reputation and reward in the life to come.⁴⁰

Jahān Ārā's request to endow a mosque was accepted and Shāh Jahān authorized the financial ministers of the princess's household to undertake the work and issued an imperial edict (*farmān*) to that effect.

Though Jahān Ārā had assumed the role of *begam ṣāhibā* in 1040/1631, for ten years she made no contributions to the Mughal landscape save successfully performing the perfunctory duties of her imperial position.⁴¹ In the *Ṣāhibiyya*, Jahān Ārā makes references to being "trapped and lost" in her imperial role by its worldly obligations and finally has clarity and freedom in her life's choices through her participation in the Qādiriyya order and her subsequent spiritual ascension. Since Jahān Ārā had completed her two Sufi treatises by 1049/1640, the decade thereafter marked a period during which the princess made prolific contributions to the Mughal landscape, including a bathhouse, bazaars and gardens in Agra, Delhi, Ajmer and Kashmir, totaling nineteen imperial projects in all.

According to the *naskhī* inscriptions on the *pīshṭāq* (a high portal) entry to the prayer hall, the mosque of Agra was built over a period of five years, completed in 1058/1648, and cost half a million rupees. Construction of the collegiate

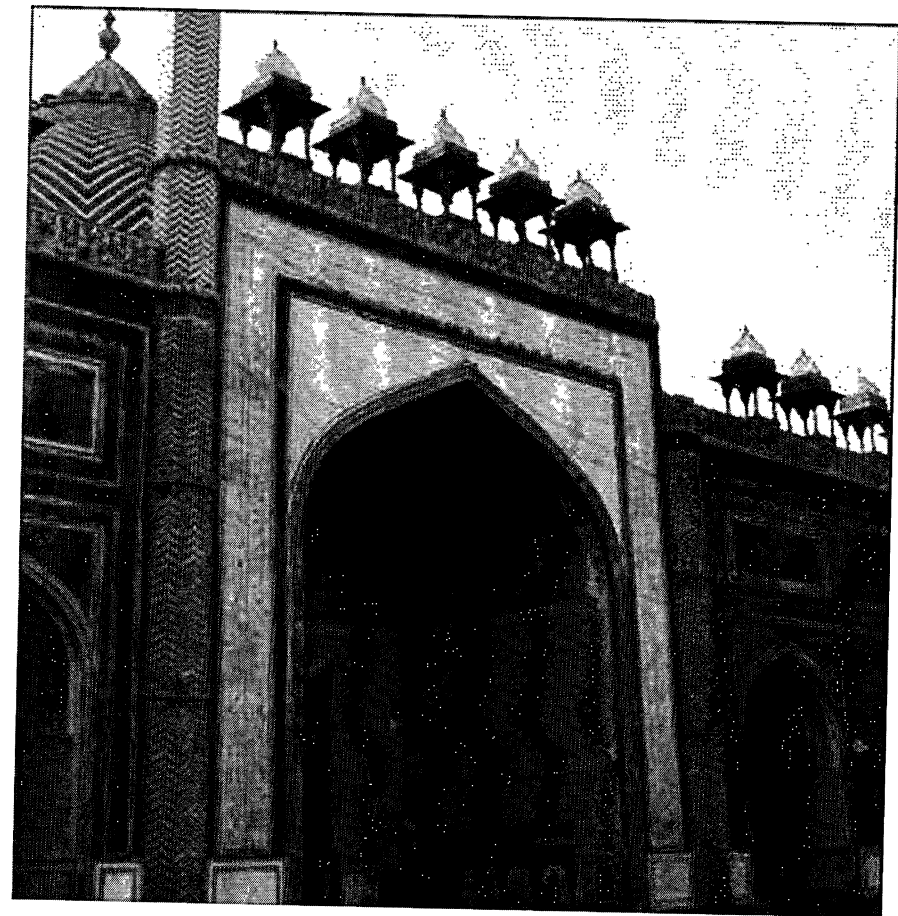


Figure 6.3 Detail of *pīshṭāq* arch leading to prayer hall with dedicatory Persian inscriptions, Agra Mosque.

mosque and *khānaqāh* complex for Jahān Ārā's *pīr*, Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī in Srinagar, Kashmir began shortly after the completion of the Agra Mosque and was completed in 1061/1650. The construction of these high-profile projects was concurrent with the completion of the Taj Mahal and the Delhi Mosque in Shāh Jahān's new capital at Shahjahanabad in 1053/1643. The hidden and revealed symmetries of scale, function and overall design of the emperor and the princess's patronage in Agra and Delhi visually and politically locate Jahān Ārā's elevated rank in the empire. The design details of the Agra Mosque would not qualify as extraordinary or unique, particularly as it sits in the parentheses of the most notorious architectural expressions of Mughal grandeur under Shāh Jahān's reign: the Taj Mahal and the Delhi Mosque. As Ebba Koch has noted, Mughal monuments in general served as "a powerful historical source that emerges as a form of communication through a topos of symbols,"⁴² and further participate in what Gülrü Necipoğlu has described as the "staging" to frame the "optical politics" on and through which the imperial ideology is "performed."⁴³ The two commissions both activate the visual and practical politics of Shāh Jahān's imperial vision and advocate Jahān Ārā Begam's imperial and spiritual authority.

The Agra Mosque is based on a standard Shahjahani archetype appropriated from the Sultanate architecture of Delhi:⁴⁴ an oblong prayer hall formed of vaulted bays or rooms arranged in a row with a dominant central *pīshṭāq* surmounted by three domes (Figure 6.2). One enters the courtyard on an axis to the almost thirty-meter-high *pīshṭāq* framing the main arch (Figure 6.3). An extraordinary feature of the central *pīshṭāq* is the subject and content of the inscriptions framing the entrance to the *mihrāb* that publicly enunciate Jahān Ārā's character and identity. The Persian eulogies, in *naskhī* script, boldly praise the details of the mosque and Jahān Ārā Begam's dual persona:

It [the congregational mosque] was built by her order who is high in dignity, who is as elevated as the firmament on which it sits, screened with curtains bright as the sun, possessing a glorious palace as illuminated as her wisdom, veiled with chastity, the most revered of the ladies of the age, the pride of her gender, the princess of the realm, the possessor of the three domes as worldly crowns, the chosen of the people of the world, the most honored of the issue of the head of the Faithful, Jahān Ārā Begam.⁴⁵

The laudatory statement of Jahān Ārā's virtues is metaphorically woven into the mosque's architectural features where one perceives, in the dialectic of the verses related to the structure, the personification of the princess. That the princess's name was not merely inscribed, but profusely eulogized on a congregational mosque in the capital city and seat of government, suggests limitations on ulama power during Shāh Jahān's reign, but more telling is how the encomiums clearly advance an imperial female as a spiritual and imperial exemplar among women. Furthermore, the poetic narratives reference Jahān Ārā's dual persona and authenticate her place in both imperial and Sufi hierarchies.

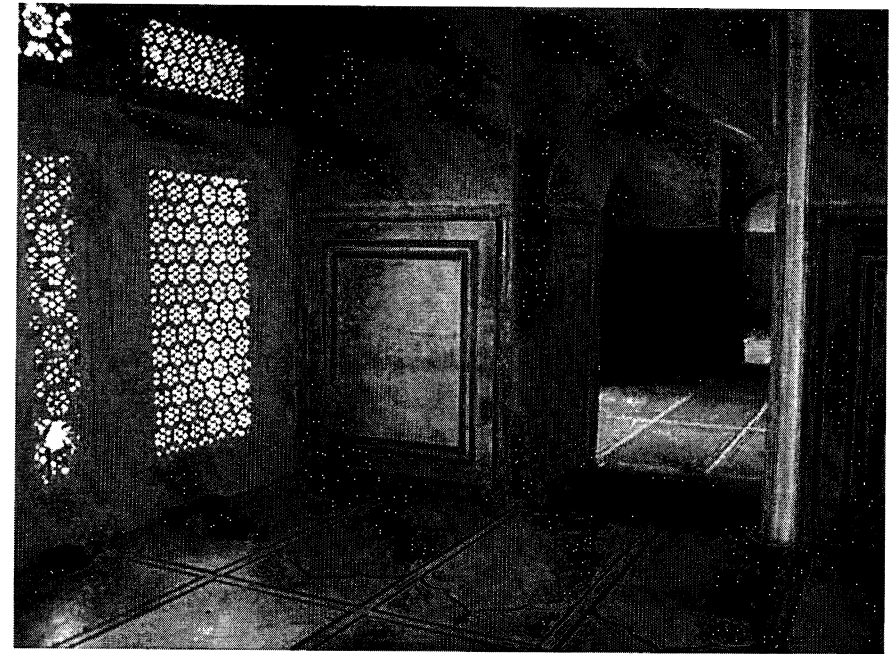


Figure 6.4 *Zināna*, or women's area prayer hall, at the northern wing of the sanctuary, Agra Mosque.

A highly gendered feature in the Agra Mosque that has commemorated Jahān Ārā's spiritual memory even into the twentieth century is found in the *zināna* (Figure 6.4) or the women's prayer halls in the north and south wings of the sanctuary. These are not used by women for daily or Friday prayers; the marble-screened rooms are reserved for the exclusive use of women on Thursday evenings for devotional Sufi *'urs* rituals. During the ceremony, women light incense and make flower and candle effigies while performing the *ṣūfiyāna-kalām* or mystical poetry.⁴⁶ At the conclusion of the performance, the group recites a prayer for Jahān Ārā or Fāṭima Begam,⁴⁷ their patron saint and patron of the mosque. They dip their palms in henna and leave the mark of their spiritual devotion on the *qibla* wall (Figure 6.5). Jahān Ārā's spiritual authority is evoked and memorialized in the performative site of her patronage through the ritualized Sufi practice.

Whether this ritual in the *zināna* is specific to the twentieth and/or twenty-first centuries, or is based upon an earlier practice, is unknown. However, what is significant is that compared to mosque-centered Islam, where women are noticeable by the virtue attached to their visual absence rather than incorporation into the religious body and public ritual, these contemporary women—like their sister and patron saint Jahān Ārā, who four hundred years ago advocated for an alternative Islamic space—have found in the sacred sphere of Sufism, and in the auxiliary space of the *zināna* the representation of a less prescriptive and more practiced Islam in the devotional rituals of its mysticism.

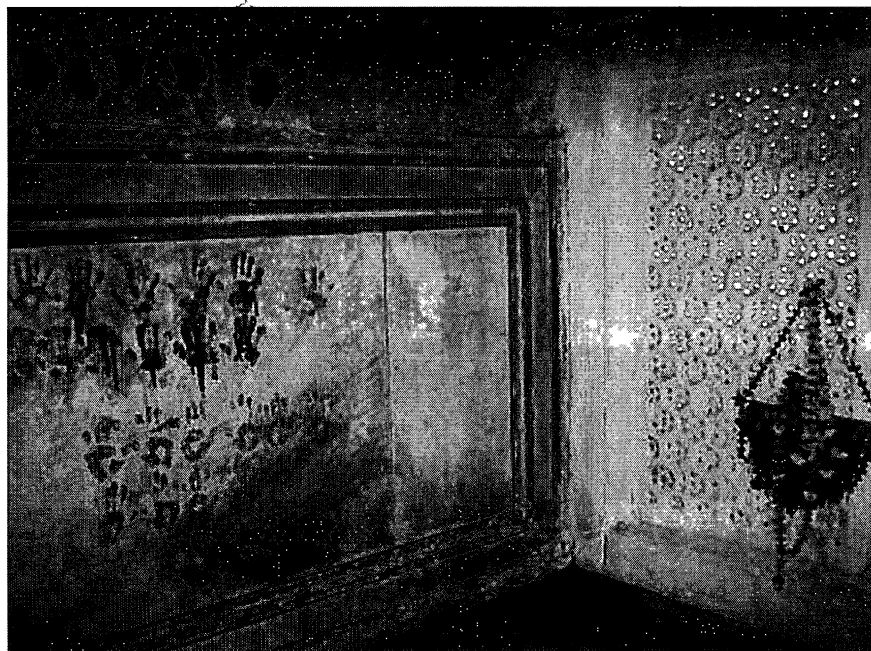


Figure 6.5 Henna hand prints on *qibla* wall in *zināna* prayer area, northern wing of the sanctuary, Agra Mosque.

In 1061/1650, two years after the construction of the Agra Mosque, Jahān Ārā commissioned the Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī Mosque located in Srinagar, Kashmir. Drawing upon the newly articulated epigraphical idioms in Agra, the intensity of Jahān Ārā's religiosity finds its fullest expression in the mosque dedicated to her *pīr*, Mullā Shāh. The overall structure is compact in organization and exhibits an attempt towards a standard Shahjahani typology, including baluster columns, multi-cusped arches and an intuitive symmetry in the overall design of the plan and elevation. Unusual design elements on the southern elevation are the bands of Persian poetic verses inscribed within four framed panels of the blind arches (Figures 6.6 and 6.7). Based on the stylistic composition of each verse and the unique ending (Persian *umad*, indicating "he has come" or "arrived"), it is assumed that Shāh Jahān's court poet Abū Ṭālib Kalīm (d. 1061/1650) may be the author.⁴⁸ A complete translation of the verses is not possible due to their ruinous state. However, the following verses are mostly intact:

The guide for the lost heart has come (*umad*). The conquest of the hearts is all in his hands. The beloved, to fill the goblet has come (*umad*). This is the second Mecca. For circumambulation the enlightened king has come (*umad*). The chronogram from God has come (*umad*).

Kalīm's veiled meanings are communicated to the Sufi-devout through poetic language. The embedded meanings of the verses conform to Jahān Ārā's public



Figure 6.6 Southwest corner with blind arches and bands of Persian verses inscribed, Mullā Shāh Mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir.

persona: simultaneously revealing and hiding the complexities and dualities of her metaphysical "aura" and mystical worldview, as evident from Jahān Ārā's poetry expressing the duality of Mullā Shāh's identity and her relationship with him:

Panel: The guide for the lost heart has come.

Risāla-i šāhibiyya: You, Mullā Shāh, who have come, are my heart's guide.

Panel: The conquest of the hearts is all in his hands. The beloved, to fill the goblet has come.

Risāla-i šāhibiyya: O' Mullā Shāh, you are the beloved who conquers and fills the hearts like empty goblets.⁴⁹

Persian poetry on the Mullā Shāh Mosque inscribes the vision of Jahān Ārā's piety into the discursive realm of Sufi poetry and ideology and confirms her spiritual and imperial authority. The poetic verses and their abstract language of love inextricably link the princess's relationship with Mullā Shāh as both her "beloved" and her *pīr*. The panels exalt the spiritual attributes of Mullā Shāh and, by proxy, of Jahān Ārā. The inscriptions serve as physical extensions and representations of Jahān Ārā's spiritual identity in poetic verse and her imperial authority as the patron of the mosque.

Both the Agra Mosque and Mullā Shāh Complex use the Shahjahani vocabulary, a culmination of dynastic and iconic traditions including references to Timurid-inspired details⁵⁰ that inscribed Jahān Ārā's legacy and authority into each commission's planning and design. The two sacred structures are indicative of the unmarried princess's proclivities and passion for spiritual matters. More importantly, however, her agency is conveyed through these prominent buildings to evoke and serve as vehicles for perpetuating her own spiritual authority alongside Shāh Jahān's self-created imperial image as the *mujaddid*, the "renewer"

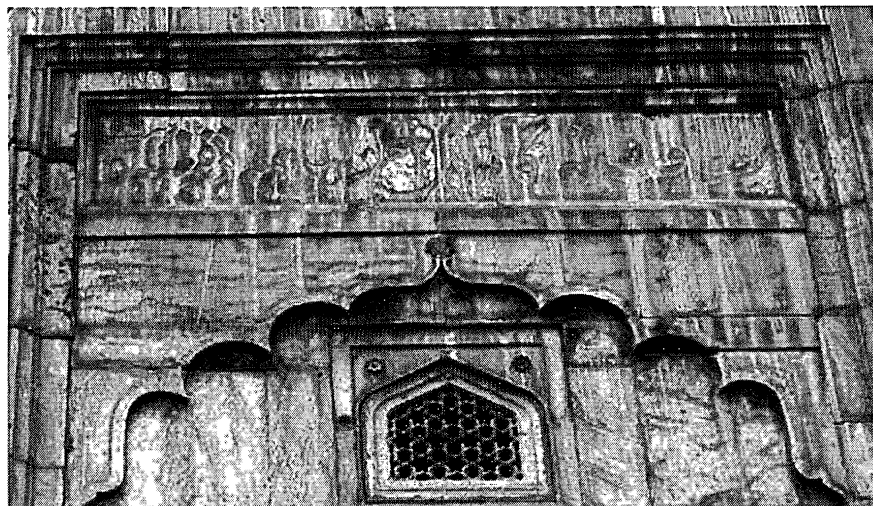


Figure 6.7 Detail at blind arch with band of Persian verses inscribed, Mullā Shāh Mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir.

of faith who will ensure a just and peaceful existence for his subjects by restoring the laws of Islam.⁵¹ Toward this end the reifications of the princess's religiosity via her sacred commissions function as the necessary spiritual intercessors to the emperor's divine judgment and eminence.

Jahān Ārā's perceived public persona as "pious, noble and diplomatic" was fundamental and instrumental in conveying the benevolent rhetoric of imperial ideology of which women were prime agents. The benevolent and spiritual face of empire through Jahān Ārā's activities was urgently needed as a necessary salve or counterweight to the Sunni revivalism and bellicose climate created by Shāh Jahān's repeated military campaigns in Balkh in the 1050s/1640s.⁵² Similarly, Jahān Ārā's benevolence was activated through the promotion of Sufi institutions to neutralize Shāh Jahān's emerging attachment to politically centered Islam that diminished the inclusive socio-religious policies of Akbar and Jahāngīr.⁵³

Conclusion

Sufism did not require the same kind of knowledge and erudition as jurisprudence, and was thus more open to women's participation and even leadership. Schimmel proposed that "Sufism, more than stern orthodoxy, offered women a certain amount of possibilities to participate actively in the religious and social life within Islamic cultures."⁵⁴ The seeming female-centeredness of Sufism may explain the prolific patronage by ninth/fifteenth-century Timurid women of *khānaqāhs* and Sufi complexes that supported mystical Muslim traditions. This pattern of matronage was discontinued until the eleventh/seventeenth century, when it was appropriated by the spiritual and donative acts of the Mughal princess Jahān Ārā Begam. Faced with the charge and challenge of keeping an equally illustrious past

and future intact, Jahān Ārā sought to bear and ignite the Timurid flame through her piety and the guidance of her *pīr* Mullā Shāh and the Sufi subtext of a successful union with the beloved. The intensity of Jahān Ārā's devotion and Sufi practice are specific to lighting the lamp of the Timurids and thereby perpetuating and extending the metaphysical genealogy of ancestral legacies to both her and her father's sovereignty. Jahān Ārā's illumination of the Timurid lamp could outlive her and the collective dynastic production of the imperial harem. In achieving the apogee of Timurid spirituality, Jahān Ārā sought to surpass her female predecessors and the conventional keepers of imperial genealogies and legitimate her spiritual authority and female agency without dynastic reproduction. Jahān Ārā artfully negotiated her membership into the genealogical argument through her spiritual devotion that enabled her to "illuminate the light of the Tīmūria." Through this pious act, Jahān Ārā grafted her identity onto the Timurid-Mughal legacy and elevated her sacred and spiritual authority, all the while centering her visions of legacy on sustaining sovereign and empire in perpetuity.

With the exception of the *Risāla-i Šāhibiyya*, there exist no narratives from the Mughal period told in the first person that access the inner turmoil and compromises to which women were likely to be subjected as a consequence of challenging social norms. This treatise offers and outlines a new framework of enquiry for considering female religiosity and issues of identity within Sufi traditions. Jahān Ārā's emphatic invocations in the *Risāla-i Šāhibiyya* shed light upon how the framework of mystical Islam and its feminine-centered ideology may have emboldened an imperial female to cultivate and claim an individual identity—not as an exalted Islamic ideal, but with all the humility and self-effacement of a noble *faqīra* of her contemporary context. While the treatise serves as visible evidence of the princess publicly fulfilling her imperial obligations and upholding Islamic paradigms, her public and private personas are simultaneously hidden and revealed in the intertextuality and subtext of her Sufi prose and poetry as well as her architectural commissions. The accumulated contributions and assertions of Jahān Ārā negotiate and redefine norms by testing and redefining the symbolic limits of the private/public realms and her place within and beyond the predetermined limits for women.

Notes

- 1 This study relies on the following sources for Jahān Ārā's *Mu'nis al-arvāh*: 1) the original Persian MS (1048/1639) held in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), MS Fraser 229; 2) Qamar Jahan Begam, *Princess Jahān Ārā Begam: Her Life and Works* (Karachi: S.M. Hamid Ali, 1991); and 3) an unpublished English translation completed by Pamela Karimi and Afshan Bokhari in 2006.
- 2 Although the original Persian MS of Jahān Ārā Begam's *Risāla-i šāhibiyya* (1049/1640) has been cited as being held by the Apa Rao Bhola Nath Library at Ahmadabad (India), the author was unable to locate it in the library's holdings and it has been reported as "lost." Several translated and original copies of the text have been consulted for this study, namely: 1) a typed Persian copy of the original manuscript published by Dr Muhammad Aslam in *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, XVI, 4 (1979); 2) the Urdu translation of the original published by Professor

- Tanvir Alvi in *Navā-yi adab* (Anjuman-i-Islam Urdu Research Institute of Bombay, India) (October 1986), pp. 34–51; 3) an unpublished English translation of Tanvir Alvi's Urdu translation completed by Dr Yunus Jaffrey and Afshan Bokhari in Delhi, January 2007; and 4) an unpublished English translation of Dr Aslam's Persian transcribed copy completed by Dr Sunil Sharma in Cambridge, MA, 2007, hereafter Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya* to which minor editorial amendments have been made by the author.
- 3 For an overview of the *pīrī-murīdī* state see K. Pemberton, "Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism," in P. Stewart and A. Strathern (eds), *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 3–39. As the term *pīrī-murīdī* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the twentieth century, the author has taken liberties to label Jahān Ārā's spiritual persona to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qādiriyya order.
 - 4 E. Koch, *Mughal Arts and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 176.
 - 5 For a biographical sketch of Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī's life and works see Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskhah-i aḥvāl-i shāhī*, MS British Museum, Persian 3203, Rotograph no. 138.
 - 6 K. Rizvi, "Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence during the Early Safavid Empire," in D.F. Ruggles (ed.), *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 123–53. Rizvi analyses the Safavid precedent and tradition of cultivating a shrine-specific "imperial aura" and culture to visibly "enact their vision of rulership."
 - 7 In U. King, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 99–100, she writes: "The dominant androcentric perspective required, however, that women of such strength of spirit were likened to be 'as men' who had transcended what were perceived to be the innate limitations of womanhood." Referring to Rābi'a, Annemarie Schimmel noted that, "One should not be misled by the constant use of the word 'man' in the mystical literature of the Islamic languages: it merely points to the ideal human being who has reached proximity to God where there is no distinction of sexes; and Rābi'a is the prime model of this proximity" ("Women in Mystical Islam," in A. al-Hibri (ed.), *Women and Islam* [New York: Pergamon Publishers, 1982], p. 146).
 - 8 S.R. Sharda, *Sufi Thought: Its Development in Panjab and its Impact on Panjabi Literature, from Baba Farid to 1850 A.D.* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1974), pp. 23–6.
 - 9 Abū'l-Faḍl ibn Mubārak, *The Akbar Nama of 'Abu-l Fazl*, Henry Beveridge (trans.) (Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1977), vol. 3, pp. 204–5.
 - 10 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan*, A.R. Fuller, (trans.), edited and completed by W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 74.
 - 11 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, p. 3.
 - 12 Ibid., p. 8.
 - 13 To fully understand the extreme ends or the limits of Shāh Jahān's spirituality that wavered between Muslim orthodoxy and a "profane" tradition of mysticism, see K.R. Qanungo, "Some Side-Lights on The Character and Court Life of Shāh Jahān," *Journal of Indian History*, 8 (1929), pp. 45–52.
 - 14 Jahān Ārā Begam, *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ*, MS Bodleian Library (Oxford), Fraser 229, fol. 36.
 - 15 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, pp. 11–12.
 - 16 Ibid., pp. 10–11.
 - 17 Divine effulgence is "[a] Persian concept of a manifestation of the sacred element of fire or light in the person of the rightful ruler, which had evidently endured from Sasanian times but without its original Zoroastrian implications" (Koch, *Mughal Arts and Imperial Ideology*, p. 164). Furthermore, the Arabic inscriptions on the base and neck of some mosque lamps are verses from the Qur'an (24:35), in which the light of God is likened to the light from an oil lamp. This indicates that mosque lamps were fabricated to "visualize" God in a religious setting and in an imperial context the light of the lamp was a metaphor appropriated to describe the semi-divine nature or power of reigning emperors like the Timurid and later Mughal dynasty. The light of the lamp itself is a visual and metaphysical "re-creation" of both God's light and a symbol for an enduring imperial dynasty.
 - 18 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, pp. 14–16.
 - 19 The author has taken the liberty of classifying Shāh Jahān's political and cultural initiatives as a form of "Timurid Renaissance" where the emperor constructed historical and political links with his Timurid heritage primarily through his multiple and unsuccessful invasions of his ancestral grounds of Balkh, appropriating honorific titles similar to Timūr. The dynamics of this phenomenon extended into Jahān Ārā's narratives in the *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya* where she describes her deep disappointment at separating from her brother Dārā Shikōh as he departs for another invasion of Balkh at the behest of Shāh Jahān. On the multiple ways Shāh Jahān appropriated his Timurid heritage and grafted it onto his imperial legacy see S.F. Dale, "The Legacy of the Timurids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 8 (1998), pp. 43–58.
 - 20 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, p. 7–9.
 - 21 For an overview of the feminine element in Sufism, see A. Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum Press, 1999).
 - 22 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, p. 11.
 - 23 Ibid., p. 15.
 - 24 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddiḥ Dihlavī, *Akhbar al-akhyār*, trans. I. Aḥmad (Karachi: Dār al-Ishā'at, 1963), p. 488.
 - 25 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, pp. 15–16.
 - 26 Ibid., p. 18.
 - 27 *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ*, fol. 10.
 - 28 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, 19–20.
 - 29 Ibid., p. 11.
 - 30 Ibid., pp. 16–17.
 - 31 Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskhah*, fols. 11–14.
 - 32 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, pp. 18–19.
 - 33 *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ*, fol. 16.
 - 34 According to the narratives in the *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ* and the *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya*, I have hypothesized the trips Jahān Ārā made to Kashmir and with whom she traveled. From 1043–63/1634–53, she made several trips to Kashmir accompanied either by her father or her brother Dārā Shikōh. She traveled twice to Kashmir with her father, once from Akbarabad to Shahjahanabad and once from Ajmer; and four times to Kashmir with her brother. The second trip to Kashmir (1047–9/1638–40) was particularly relevant as she began writing the *Mu'nis al-arvāḥ* and, subsequently, the *Risāla-i Ṣāhibiyya*; moreover, in 1047/1638 she had been granted the Agra Congregational Mosque commission. In 1049/1640, Jahān Ārā arrived in Kashmir, where she found that both Mullā Shāh Bādakhshī and his *pīr*, the famous Miān Mīr 'Arif of Lahore, were both residing there. At this time, Jahān Ārā became aware of his fame and tried to join Miān Mīr's circle, but was referred to Mullā Shāh instead. Jahān Ārā's last two visits in 1058/1648 and 1061/1651 are not mentioned in her treatises, but are chronicled in 'Ināyat Khān's biography of Shāh Jahān. During her last two visits Jahān Ārā ordered the construction of the Mullā Shāh mosque, *khānaqāh* and bath house for her *pīr* and his disciples in Kashmir.
 - 35 Sharma (ed.), *Ṣāhibiyya*, pp. 13–14.
 - 36 Ibid., p. 15.

- 37 See p. 19 of the *Risāla-i Šāhibiyya* for the quotation describing Jahān Ārā's revelation.
- 38 'Ināyat Khān, *The Shah Jahan Nama*, pp. 205–6.
- 39 Ibid., p. 206.
- 40 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhōrī, *Bādshāh Nāma* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1868), vol. I, pt. II, p. 252.
- 41 The only exception was the construction of the "Begami Dalan" porch for women in Ajmer, built in 1046/1637 as part of Shāh Jahān's imperial improvements to the Chishtiyya saint's mausoleum complex; see H.B. Sarda, *Ajmer: Historical and Descriptive* (Ajmer: Fine Art Print Press, 1941).
- 42 E. Koch, "The Mughal Hunt" (lecture presented through the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, April, 2007).
- 43 For the usage of this term see G. Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993), pp. 303–4. She uses the term "ocular politics" as an "instrument" of visual control used by imperial males within the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid empires to spatially and socially organize royal women's visibility and hierarchy that yielded an "asymmetry of power" in gender politics.
- 44 E. Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526–1858)* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1991), p. 54.
- 45 M. Latif, *Agra, Historical and Descriptive* (Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press Company, 1896), pp. 186–8. The author has relied on Latif's Persian text of the *pīshṭāq* inscriptions on the Agra mosque for the translation. The direct translation was completed in December 2006 through the assistance of Dr Yunus Jaffrey in Delhi.
- 46 For a closer study of the *šūfiyāna-kalām* tradition in South Asia, see S.B. Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sūfi Ritual Devotional Practices in Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). In medieval and contemporary South Asia, female singers have performed *šūfiyāna-kalām* at both Sufi shrines and in concerts, folk festivals and domestic life, while male singers assume the female voice when singing the myths of heroines in *qawwālī*.
- 47 Jahān Ārā's initiation into the Qādiriyya order included investing her Sufi persona with a new name. She was given the name Fāṭima; see Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskhah*, fol. 54.
- 48 Close and comprehensive analysis of the Persian poetic verses from the exterior of Mullā Shāh mosque with Sunil Sharma in Cambridge, MA, December 2006, and Dr Yunus Jaffrey in Delhi, January 2007 confirmed the court poet Abū Ṭālib Kalīm as the probable author of the inscriptions. Supporting literary evidence that further identifies Kalīm as present in Kashmir in the late 1050s/1640s can be found in Wheeler Thackston, "The Poetry of Abū-Ṭālib Kalim; Persian poet-laureate of Shahjahan, Mughal emperor of India" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1974).
- 49 Sharma (ed.), *Šāhibiyya*, pp. 22–3.
- 50 The herringbone pattern on the three domes in the Agra mosque is unique in this detail among contemporary and classical Mughal architecture, but does appear in Timurid tomb designs found in Khurasan. The broad, pear-shaped, full-bottomed domes offset by a little or marginal neck also link its typology to Khurasan; see D. Wilber and L. Golombek, *The Timūrid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), vols 1 and 2.
- 51 For official chronicles citing Shāh Jahān as the *mujaddid*, see Koch, "Shāh Jahān and Orpheus," in idem, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, pp. xxvi, xxvii, 111, 227.
- 52 J.F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 132–3.
- 53 S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 2 vols (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1978–83), vol. 2, pp. 185–93, 223–41.
- 54 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 432.

Part III

Doctrine and praxis