



# THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CĀNDĀYAN

THE PIONEER INDO-SUFI MASNAVI OF  
MAULANĀ DĀŪD

Naseem A. Hines

ROUTLEDGE



## THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *CĀNDĀYAN*

This book is the first English translation of *Cāndāyan*, the pioneer work in a long tradition of Indian-Sufi love narratives. The story was adapted from an oral epic *Chanaini*, popular in the Awadhi speaking region of north India in the fourteenth century. The early manuscripts of *Cāndāyan*, though composed in the Awadhi dialect, were recorded in the Persian script. Each stanza-like unit is introduced by a phrase or sentences in the Persian language style, making it necessary for a reader to know the Persian script and language, as well as the Awadhi dialect. This somewhat limits the access to fully explore *Cāndāyan*. In addition to this, the esoteric interpretation, which is the distinguishing feature that gives the Indian-Sufi *masnavī* literature its unique identity, was also not yet realized.

*Cāndāyan* deserves to be celebrated and recognized because it marks the beginning of the indigenizing process of the *masnavī* in India, and served as a model for this literary genre for the next 540 years. A serious study of Maulana Daud's *Cāndāyan*, composed in 1379, in the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, did not begin until well into the twentieth century because only a few pages of its manuscript folios were discovered at a time, in various academic institutions and museums around the world. *Cāndāyan* is a fascinating study of the blending of the features of the Persian *masnavī* with the features of the Hindi *premākhyān* narratives and the features of the medieval Jain literature. Even today, annually in the Mahakoshala region *Cāndāyan* is presented in the form of drama and in the folk-song and play forms.

**Naseem Hines** has taught medieval and modern Hindi literature and Urdu prose and poetry at the University of Washington, Washington University in St. Louis, Harvard University, Boston University, Wellesley College and the University of British Columbia. She lives in Seattle now where she continues to teach Sufi poetry.



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# The English Translation of *Cāndāyan*

The Pioneer Indo-Sufi Masnavī of Maulanā Dāūd

with

The Historical and Socio-Political Context of the  
Arrival of the Chishti Sufis in India and the Creation  
of the First Indian Sufi Romance, *Cāndāyan* with  
Explanatory Notes on the Text and its Allegorical Symbolism

NASEEM A. HINES

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MANOHAR

*To*

SHAMEEM MAMDANI, SALMA SHAMSUDDIN,  
ALI AKBAR AMEER ALI, FARHAT AKBAR

&

SOHAIL TANVEER HINES AND SHABEENA HELSLEY

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# Foreword



It is my privilege to write a foreword for Dr. Naseem Hines's translation of the *Cāndāyan*. Composed in 1379 by Maulana Dā'ūd, a disciple of the Sufi pīr, Zain al-'Abidīn Chishtī, it is the first text in Hindawi that narrates an Indian romance in the form of a mystical allegory. Specifically, it tells the story of the legendary lovers, Lorik and Cāndā, by creatively inter-weaving strands from disparate literary and aesthetic traditions. This masterpiece is a reflection of a newly-emergent cosmopolitan culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth century India that sought to engage with and across divides and differences.

The pluralist ethos of this culture is popularly associated with Amīr Khusrau (d.1326), the iconic historian, poet, musician, and mystic. Widely acclaimed as being instrumental in the creation of a composite culture drawing on South Asia's Perso-Turkic and Indic heritages, Khusrau lived at a time when several dynasties of Central Asian origin had established kingdoms in the northern regions of the Indian Subcontinent. Since they used Persian as a language of administration and culture, these regions became an integral part of a transnational Persianate world, which connected regions and peoples stretching from Bengal to what is now modern Turkey. Various poets, mystics, religious teachers, artists, musicians, and architects traversed freely within this Persian-speaking cosmopolis, facilitating exchanges between communities, which were also embedded in various local cultures.

Son of a Turkic father and Indian mother, Amīr Khusrau straddled and actively engaged with the different worlds to which both his parents belonged. As an early cosmopolitan, Khusrau identified through his Persian poetry with this larger Persian literary world, while through his Hindawi compositions he showed his affiliation to the Indic world. Famously called as the *Tuti-i Hind*, ‘The Parrot of India’, on account of his eloquence, he synthesized the different strands of his identity in his literary and musical compositions.

To Khusrau are popularly attributed various cross-cultural pollinations in language and poetry. He is, for example, credited with composing bilingual poetry in which one verse was in Persian, the other in Hindi. He is also said to have invented the *sitar* and the musical genre of *qawwali*. This gifted genius is best remembered today at a popular level through the many songs attributed to him. As Jawaharlal Nehru remarks in his book, *Discovery of India*, ‘I do not know if there is any other instance anywhere of songs written 600 years ago maintaining their popularity and mass appeal in being still sung without any change of words.’<sup>1</sup>

It is the spirit of this Khusrawi tradition that we see in manifestation in *Cāndāyan*, a work that imaginatively translates into Hindawi the ethos of the Persian *masnawi*, or narrative epic, popularized by great Persian Sufi poets, such as Attar and Rūmī. Here, we witness the emergence of a rich tradition in which key Sufi mystical concepts and ideas were translated into regional traditions of folk romances. I use the term ‘translated’, as proposed by Tony Stewart, who defines ‘translation’ as an interpretative strategy in which religious practitioners seek ‘equivalence’ among their counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Through the use of *rasa*, Maulana Dā’ūd links the ‘pleasure of listening to love stories with the erotics of union with an impossibly transcendent God’.<sup>3</sup> He also incorporated into the *bārahmāsā* epic, the rural folk songs lamenting the twelve months of separation from a beloved.<sup>4</sup>

Two centuries after the composition of the *Cāndāyan*, Badā’unī, the celebrated chronicler of the Mughal Court, records in the *Muntakhab-ut-tawārikh* (composed after AD 1596) that the poem attained such popularity that a prominent Muslim preacher regularly recited selections from it for his sermons in the mosque every Friday. He found that the Hindawi verses from this poem exercised

a strangely powerful influence upon his congregation. When questioned by certain learned men about the appropriateness of including his versified Indian romance in his sermons, he replied:

The whole of it is divine truth and pleasing in subject, worthy of the ecstatic contemplation of devout lovers [of God], and conformable to the interpretation of some of the verses of the Koran by the sweet singers of Hindustan. Moreover, by its public recitation, human hearts are taken captive.<sup>5</sup>

These remarks reveal that the *Cāndāyan*, much like Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī's Persian masterpiece, the *Masnawī*, was perceived as an esoteric commentary, through which the inner meanings or spiritual truths of the Quran are revealed to – and experienced by – an audience in their own language and idiom. Maulana Dā'ūd's work initiated a brilliant tradition of Sufi epics that included masterpieces such as Quṭban's *Mriḡāvatī* (composed AD 1503), Malik Muhammad Jayāsī's *Padmāvat* (composed AD 1540), and Manjhan's *Madhumālatī* (composed AD 1545). Though drawing on different romances, the central goal of these mystically interpreted epics was to suggest and awaken through aesthetics 'the circulation of love between human lovers'<sup>6</sup> and the love between a transcendent God and humanity.

These compositions in Hindi highlight the important role that Sufi poetry has played in promoting cosmopolitanism and inclusion in South Asia and elsewhere. The power of these poetic traditions to mediate between peoples of different traditions is best illustrated by an incident that took place in Arifwala, a small town in the Punjab province, during the Partition in the midst of riots and horrific massacres. A train carrying Hindu and Sikh passengers fleeing Rawalpindi had stopped at Arifwala railway station on its way to India. At the station were groups of angry Muslims incited by religious leaders to attack the train in revenge for Muslim passengers who had been killed by Hindus and Sikhs. A Sikh, apparently under the influence of opium, was hanging out from one of the windows of the train singing verses from one of the most famous epic poems of Punjabi literature, titled *Hir Ranjha*. Composed around 1776, by the renowned Punjabi poet Waris Shah, a poet who has been called the Shakespeare of the Punjab, the poem tells the tragic love story of Hir, the daughter of a chieftain, and Ranjha, the son of a rival chief-

tain. The verses the Sikh was reciting were from the section of the epic in which the poet criticizes a corrupt and hypocritical *mullah* who denied refuge to Ranjha when he had fled from his family to be with Hir. Hearing these verses, the mob at once halted and refused to obey the instructions of the *mullah* to attack the train. Literally saved by verses of Punjabi poetry, the train and its passengers left the station without incident. As Suba Singh, an eyewitness, remarks, ‘His eyes half-closed, the opium addict sang away and hatred turned into fellow feeling. Varis Shah’s words were working a miracle. The soul of the Punjab was speaking through Varis Shah’s soul.’<sup>77</sup> Clearly, Waris Shah’s epic *Hir* represented a fundamental ethnic and cultural unity shared by most Punjabis, irrespective of religious affiliations. It was recognition of this unity and shared humanity that saved the fleeing Hindus and Sikhs from a cruel fate.

This incident provides a moving testimony to the powerful role that the poetic arts can and do play in the daily lives of people in South Asia even today. They are not only vehicles through which knowledge is transmitted and worldviews constructed, but they are also forces promoting communal harmony by creating shared understandings of life and promoting common frameworks for moral and cultural understanding. Indeed, in certain regions of South Asia, they have been crucial to peace building initiatives.

The core message at the heart of these traditions is aptly summarized by the phrase from the *Chandogya Upanishads*, ‘*tat tvam asi*’, ‘you are that’. This expression led the philosopher, Shankaracharya, to the realization that there is a single enduring spiritual reality (*brahman*) that underlies all transitory physical forms and differences. In this sense duality is an illusion: you are the other and the other is you. Recognizing our existential connection with all forms of being led the esteemed Gujarati poet, Narsinha Mehta, to proclaim in his renowned *bhajan* ‘*Vaisnav jan to tene kabiyē*’: The true Vaishnav feels the pain of others, helps those who are in misery, but never lets self-conceit enter their mind.

At a time when dehumanizing discourses in contemporary South Asia have resulted in individuals becoming targets of violence on account of their caste, religion, class, ethnicity, gender, these centuries-old poetic traditions offer us a compelling alternative model

for engaging with and understanding human diversity, one that has endured over many centuries and, indeed, is an integral part of the South Asian heritage.

ALI S. ASANI

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and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion  
and Cultures, Harvard University*

### Notes

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 245
2. Tony Stewart, 'In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving the Muslim Hindu Encounter Through Translation Theory', *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750*, ed. Richard Eaton (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 363–92.
3. Manjhan, *Madhumālātī: An Indian Sufi Romance*, trans. with introduction and notes by Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman with Shyam Manohar Pandey (Oxford, 2000), p. xiv.
4. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
5. 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'unī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārikh*, tr. George Ranking, (Calcutta, 1898), p. 333.
6. Manjhan, *Madhumālātī*, op. cit., p. xxxix.
7. Suba Singh, 'Varis Shah lok kavi', *Punjabi Dunia* 5 (2-3), as cited in Jeevan Deol, 'Sex, Social Critique and the Female Figure in Premodern Punjabi Poetry: Varis Shah's Hir', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2002), p. 141.



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This English translation of Maulana Daud's *Cāndāyan* would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of teachers, scholar friends, and institutions that have played a significant role in the completion of this volume.

First and foremost I acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Ali Asani of Harvard University, a leading authority on Islam in South Asia. Back, when I joined Harvard University in 2001, Dr. Asani, as the Director of the Urdu Hindi Programme and my mentor, gave me the opportunity to teach graduate level courses in Urdu and Hindi literature. The reading materials developed for these semester-long courses included medieval devotional poetry in the Braj and Awadhi languages. The interactions, more recent research, and a class atmosphere conducive to mutual exchange of ideas, contributed a lot to the popularity of these courses. When I began to translate *Cāndāyan* into English, Dr. Asani, with the unbelievable generosity for which he is known, agreed to read my work and give his feedback. Dr. Asani's scholarly comments and suggestions have contributed richly to this study. His unreserved faith in my work has been a pivotal factor in the completion of this project. It is a singular honour that he has written the Foreword to this book, the truest expression of our friendship. I thank him from the depths of my heart for nurturing this project at every step on the way. This work would not have been possible without his unconditional support and encouragement.

I am forever indebted to the late Professor Alan Entwistle

(1949-96), my dissertation advisor at the University of Washington in Seattle, for encouraging me to pursue a PhD with a focus on the Indo-Sufi literature. Professor Entwistle always encouraged new research and received his students' works with an open mind. He was highly respected in the international scholarly community. To his graduate students and colleagues he still remains a shining model of mentoring and a constant source of inspiration.

In 1996 Dr. Entwistle was snatched away from us. His untimely demise robbed a bright light from the field of South Asian Devotional Studies; my scholarship owes a lasting debt of gratitude to Professor Entwistle.

When Dr. Entwistle passed away, Professor Michael S. Shapiro, on top of his on-going obligations, took on the mantle of Dr. Entwistle. In the case of my dissertation, Dr. Shapiro continued to consult with Dr. Shyam Manohar Pandey, a faculty member of the Università Degli studi di Napoli, Itali, and a leading authority on *Cāndāyan*. I have learned a great deal from Dr. Shapiro and would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge what a great teacher he is.

In 2018 Dr. Pandey published his critical edition of *Cāndāyan* in two volumes. These volumes are of utmost importance to the scholars of Indo-Sufi literatures, especially for those who read the Arabic script because often the readings can be interpreted in more than one way. Dr. Pandey's volumes provide the spellings of the (critical) words as they appear in the various manuscripts, and lay down the justification for his interpretation. So far I had consulted Mataprasad Gupta's edition of *Cāndāyan*. Dr. Pandey's critical edition was very helpful in my translations. I am deeply indebted to him for his work. It is truly a labour of love.

In the course of my research, I had read Dr. Shahnaz Parveen's book entitled *Cāndāyan kā Sānskritik Adhyayana*. Professor Shiv Kumar Shandilya of the Aligarh Muslim University was her PhD advisor. His own work focused on the Sufi elements in the early Indo-Sufi *masnavīs*, especially, the *Cāndāyan*. Dr. Shyam Manohar Pandey also quotes Shandilyaji's opinions a number of times in his *Critical Edition* of 2018. When I was at the Aligarh Muslim University for my fieldwork and research at the Maulana Azad Library, I visited

Professor Shandilyaji. He warmly welcomed me and was very interested in my project. As we discussed the message of *Cāndāyan*, Dr. Shandilya opened a little trunk and got out his own photocopy of Mataprasad Gupta's edition of *Cāndāyan*. He explained to me that no study of *Cāndāyan* could be considered meaningful unless it was examined in the context of the verses in the Koran. He very kindly gave me the entire set with his handwritten notes in the margins. This treasure has been extremely helpful to me in determining the interpretation of a text in question. Dr. Shandilya's generosity did not end here. His son had moved to the Boston area around the same period that I had moved to Cambridge to teach at Harvard University. Dr. Shandilya often came to Boston to see his son. He often dropped by with his family to my office where over a cup of tea we would discuss issues related to *Cāndāyan*. Those afternoons are some of my most cherished moments in his company.

In this volume, it is my privilege to include two pages of Dr. Shandilya's handwritten notes where he cites the *suras* and the *ayats* from the Koran to show the context in which that particular text finds its true interpretation.

As the translation project progressed, I consulted a number of knowledgeable persons on Sufi literature and practices. Noteworthy are my conversations on the practice of Sufism in Iran with Ms. Guita Monfaredi of the Library at the University of Washington in Seattle. Speaking to her opened a window for me to understand the journey of Sufism from Iran to India. I am indebted to her for our enriching discourses.

Initially, almost a quarter of the *Cāndāyan* was translated in verse. However, in early 2019, I decided in favour of a prose translation. This change made it necessary for me to rework the poetic translation into prose. To help me with this I invited Ms. Annie Penta an accomplished musician of the North Indian Classical Dhrupad tradition to join me to disentangle the earlier rhyming stanzas into English prose. I thank Annie Penta not only for reworking the first quarter of the translations but also for reading some of the later portions of the text with me. I am forever grateful to her for her assistance in enriching this translation project.

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NASEEM A. HINES

# Notes on Transliteration



In terms of spellings, in Europe, the letter 'c' is used for 'ch', like it is pronounced in the word 'chair' c. whereas 'ch' stands for chh C. I have adopted this system. However, all quotes remain unchanged.



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# Introduction



What is Cāndāyan?

In the history of Indian literature *Cāndāyan* has a very special place because it is the very first *masnavī* composed in Awadhi, the regional language of the eastern Gangetic plains. For over a century, the *masnavīs* in the courtly states of India were composed in the Persian language and followed the Persian model. Maulana Daud's *Cāndāyan* was the first *masnavī* adapted from a popular local love narrative called *Canainī*. It is a story of love between Cāndā and Lorik, also known as *Lorikī* in the Awadhi-speaking pastoral and farming communities of north India. *Lorik* means the sun, and *Cāndā* means the moon. For the first time, with Maulana Daud's *Cāndāyan*, a *masnavī* was composed in a regional Indian language, based on a local folk tale, in a rhyme scheme that was popular.

In terms of definition, the word *masnavī* is derived from a Hebrew/Arabic word that means a story that is capable of being construed on more than one level. Maulana Daud created a new genre of literature that embraced the features of the traditional *masnavī* with the features of the *Premākhyān*. To this elixir he blended in the *rasas*, i.e. emotions the Indian treatise on literature and performing arts recommend. His creative imagination was the secret ingredient stirred in. The result was magical; the very first Indian allegorical romance. The appearance of *Cāndāyan* launched the indigenization of the Persian *masnavī* literature in India.

For centuries the Indian subcontinent has been a land of oral transmission of knowledge, widely known as the practice of *paramparā*. A number of art forms, particularly literature and musical knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next without any written treatise. The practice of *paramparā* requires large sections of literature and musical knowledge to be accurately committed to memory by the most adept persons of one generation. This knowledge is then transmitted to the next generation only by recitation and simulation.

In the fourteenth century the Awadhi-speaking pastoral and farming community was not literate in the modern sense of the word, however, by listening to *Canainī* year after year, people of Awadh were familiar with the story of the epic and the events in it. They considered *Cāndāyan* to be a new version of their favourite ballad and identified with it as they followed the familiar episodes of *Canainī*. *Cāndāyan's* elegant descriptions of their own land and culture touched the sensibilities of the Awadhi people. The fact that *Cāndāyan* celebrated the song of their own lives brought them a sense of pride and joy.

For example, in *Cāndāyan*, when the Brahmins calculate an auspicious moment based on the position of the constellations in the sky to launch an important undertaking, the Awadhis appreciated the representation of their beliefs and practices. The recognition of the beauty of their crops and fields in *Cāndāyan* made them proud. The mention of their temples, the local deities and the rituals at their own shrines touched a deep cord in the hearts of the rural communities.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine a world without television, cinema, museums or even a radio. After a day's hard work in the fields, farmers and herdsmen used to, and still do, get together daily around a platform at the edge of their village. This platform, under a large leafy tree like a mango, margosa, or a Bodhi tree, is a perfect place to exchange news and other social issues, discuss crops or simply to relax. If a member of the family or a member of the community were to return from a visit to the city or to come back from pilgrimage, the get together was treated like a special occasion not to be missed. Even today folks who live in the pastoral areas are very curious about the lifestyle in the urban centres and ask questions about the new and interesting devel-

opments in the cities. Back in those days, storytelling and singing used to be the most popular means of relaxation and entertainment. In such circumstances what could be better than when a master storyteller like Maulana Daud was entertaining them with a new version of *Canaini*. The people of Dalmau considered *Cāndāyan* to be their own romance, with new additions. They enjoyed the tantalizing descriptions of Gowar, a city of citadels, palaces, gardens, and bazars laden with exotic merchandise! Enriched from their story hour, the listeners could go home to share the highlights of *Cāndāyan* with their families.

The farmers and herders gathered again and again to listen to the next fascinating episode of Maulana Daud's story. The names of the various communities that lived in Gowar were not that different from the communities that lived in Dalmau. The listeners were charmed with the account of the Goddess like beauty of Cāndā, the cupid like charm of brave Lorik, and the grandeur and orderliness of Gowar, the capital of Cāndā's father King Mahar. They were not strangers to the orderliness described in *Cāndāyan* because their contemporary governor was famous for his administrative expertise. In short, the Awadhi-speaking community enjoyed the retelling of *Lorikī*. As they evolved as the connoisseurs of *Cāndāyan*, in their minds they followed Lorik, the protagonist, into the isolated temple in the wilderness. They kept him company when he entered the dark narrow swath of land in a stormy night, risking his life in pursuit of his passion, and in their hearts they wished him success as he took impossible risks to be close to his love. The Awadhis had become partners of Lorik's sojourns, and they stayed with him through the dangerous ventures he dared for his love. The mystery and suspense woven together through the tapestry of *Cāndāyan* held Maulana Daud's community spellbound.

In Mahar's boundless love for his daughter, people of Awadh saw scenes of their own families. In the description of war between Mahar and Rupchand, the listeners tasted the *vir rasa*, i.e. the emotion of valour. In Rupchand's unscrupulous character they witnessed deceit personified, and Bānthā's malicious cunning defined cowardice and spinelessness.

After anxiously listening to the lengthy, gory accounts of the

war between Cāndā's father king Mahar's army and Raja Rupchand, the listeners must have felt a sense of relief when with Lorik's help, Mahar's army won the war. At the behest of Cāndā, her father Mahar threw a party. The culinary details of the delectable dishes prepared for this occasion are truly astounding! It is at this victory feast, that Lorik, the chief guest, saw Cāndā for the first time. Her celestial beauty moved in him emotions strong enough to make him faint. How breathtaking! People watched Lorik's heart snatched away right before their eyes!

Sacrificing all his comforts and worldly possessions, love struck Lorik moved to an isolated shrine in a forest to meditate on how to find his love. As if in answer to Lorik's prayers, Cāndā, along with her dazzlingly beautiful friends visited the very same temple. Contrary to the eager anticipation of a dialogue between Lorik and Cāndā by the audience, this meeting failed to bring Lorik closer to Cāndā. One can imagine that the anticipation and curiosity about Lorik's next step moved the listeners to the edge of their seats. When Lorik scaled up Cāndā's resplendent balcony with a hook, Maulana Daud's audience held their breath, sharing Lorik's experience of what it was like to play with fire! Lorik and Cāndā realized how dangerous it was to meet each other under their present circumstances. The only way they could be together was elopement. Therefore leaving Gowar they crossed the Ganges.

Like *Lorikī*, there are two snake bite episodes in *Cāndāyan* as well. On their travels, Cāndā succumbs to two different snake bites, rendering Lorik inconsolable. When Cāndā does not revive after the second snake bite, Lorik says it is foolish of him not to have realized that the body cannot survive without the soul. He repents for his sins. Reconciled to his fate, he is ready to sit on the funeral pyre holding Cāndā in his embrace. At this emotive moment Lorik is free from all carnal desires and ego. Right then a *gārudī*, i.e. a snake charmer appears and brings Cāndā back to life. Lorik rewards him with all his wealth and Cāndā's ornaments as well. Daud's snake bite episodes are deeply moving. Some historic accounts report that the audience used to experience cathartic emotions.

Chronicles of Cāndā and Lorik's travels, adventures and new experiences continued to capture people's interest and curiosity. One

year after their elopement Lorik received a message from his wife Mainā imploring him to come back. The listeners were now curious to know how their clever Lorik was going to bring peace between the two uncompromising women. As charming and tactful, as Lorik was, to bring about mollification was not easy. Even before reaching home, a physical fight ensued between Cāndā and Mainā complete with coiffeurs and clothes in disarray, jewellery askew and bodice strings broken; ingredients indeed for the peanut gallery. Finally by honouring and welcoming both the women into the house, Lorik's mother Kholin helped Lorik establish a sense of balance.

Towards the end, Maulana Daud shared with his listeners a secret 'key' which made the other side of the coin visible. With the help of this 'key' the audience realizes that certain characters in certain situations were spiritual symbols. The audience appreciated that all this time when they had thought they were enjoying an entertaining story, they were also receiving a spiritually moving discourse. The Sufis composed their *masnavīs* to be enjoyed on both the secular and spiritual levels. Maulana Daud's *Cāndāyan* in reality was an invitation to deny *nafs*, i.e. the sensual instinct for gratification, and embark on a mystical journey to realize their spiritual goals. Step by step, the Sufi path could make it possible for the soul to move closer to God. In recognizing and appreciating the esoteric features of *Cāndāyan*, people grasped why they felt purified and redeemed. Their respect and faith in the wisdom of their storyteller doubled. *Cāndāyan*, Maulana Daud's 'Indianised' miracle, had arrived!

It may be recognized that from the beginning *Cāndāyan* (1379) had two distinct sets of audiences, members of the pastoral and farming communities and members of the courtly community. Maulana Daud, disciple of a Chishti Sufi, lived in Rudauli (in modern-day Bihar) away from the seat of power, Delhi. The Sufis took a vow of poverty and service to the poor, so they lived with the economically disadvantaged people and shared their lives with the weak and the meek because that brought them closer to God. The local people enjoyed *Cāndāyan* as it was told in the form of a story. Even today, after six centuries, recitals of *Cāndāyan* continue to be very popular with the pastoral folks of the Mahakoshal region. In the annual festival that falls in January (*makar-samkranti*), parts of the story is

dramatized. Oral presentation of stories has been popular in India because as late as 1947 the rate of literacy in the north was 12 per cent.

The second set of connoisseurs of *Cāndāyan* included the learned nobles who were well versed in the Persian literature and aware of the esoteric symbolism of the *masnavī*. Khana-i-Jahan, Jauna Shah, Malik Bayan, Malik Mubarak (one of the sponsors) and Mulla Taqi-al-Din Rabbani were Maulana Daud's chief supporters and patrons (Pandey 2006: 11-12 and 32-9).

*Cāndāyan* was well received by the general public and the courtly communities alike. It is well documented that Maulana Taqi al-Din Rabbani used to recite passages of the *masnavī* from the pulpit of a Delhi mosque. S.A. Rizvi writes,

In 772H/1370 Khan-i-Jahan, the *wazir*, died; and his son Juna obtained that title. Maulana Dawud wrote in his honour *Chandā'in*, a *masnavi* in Hindawi, relating the story of the love of Lorak and Chanda. It is a very moving piece indeed, and too well known to need praise. Even Maulana Shaikh Taqi'ud-Din, a godly preacher (wa'iz-I rabbani, d. 1431-32) used to recite its verses from the pulpit of a mosque in Delhi. It had an indescribable ecstatic effect upon the audience. When certain learned men asked the Shaikh why he chose that *masnavi* for his discourses, he replied, 'the whole of it is divine truth and is not only agreeable to the taste of people who are interested in divine Love, but it is compatible with the interpretation of some verses of the Qur'an. Even now sweet-singers of India captivate the hearts by reciting it'. (Rizvi 1986 no.1: 364)<sup>2</sup>

S.M. Pandey in his *Most Recent Research and Discussion* also confirms that the recitation of sections from *Cāndāyan* resonated intensely with audiences who were overcome by their experience of sorrow, repentance, spiritual cleansing, and connection with God. Pandey cites a number of historical documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries where *Cāndāyan* is mentioned (S.M. Pandey 2006: 20).

### The Socio-Political Milieu of the *Masnavī*

To understand the true importance of *Cāndāyan*.

It is necessary to study the contemporary socio-political milieu

of India. Even after the defeat and death of Prithviraj (d. 1192) the north-west region of India remained a hotbed of intrigue and unrest for many decades. The chaos caused by the Mongol invasion of Persia and her neighbouring countries added greatly to the migration of notable scholars, statesmen and artists from Central Asia and Persia to the Indian peninsula. Several leading intellectuals and noblemen sought safety in principalities like Bhakkar, the court of Nasiruddin Qabaca, as well as in Multan and Uch. The *Tārīkh-i-Jahān-Gushā*, the *Jami'ut-Tawārīkh*, and the works of Sir Henri Howorth describe the sufferings endured by Persia and Asia Minor as well as Central Asia and China at the hands of the Mongol rulers Ghenghis Khan (1219-27) and Halaqu Khan (1255-65). In his *A Literary History of Persia*, E.G. Browne writes:

The several periods of Mongol ascendance in Persia may be said to extend from the first invasion of that country by Chingiz Khan in AD 1219 to the death of Abu Sa'id Khan in AD 1335 to which succeeded half a century of anarchy, culminating in another Tartar invasion, that of Timur-i-Lang better known in Europe as Tamerlane. (Browne 1926, vol. 2: 443)

Discussing the causes of the Muslim success in north Indian territories, S.M. Ikram writes in *Muslim Civilization in India*:

The consolidation of Muslim rule owed not a little to another event, a tragedy for the Muslim countries of the central and western Asia. The Mongol invasion drove large numbers of refugees, among them whom were princes, chiefs, soldiers, scholars, and saints, to Muslim India. (S.M. Ikram 1964: 41-2)

Muzaffar Alam, the author of *The Language of Political Islam in India c. 1200-1800*, continues:

Many of these immigrants later moved on to the Delhi court with Ilutmish (d. 1236) to settle down in safe havens. These immigrants brought with them their, art, music, belief systems, languages, and literary traditions. They introduced new poetic genres in India such as the *ghazal*, the *qawwali*, the *masnavi*, and the *rubai*. (Alam 2004: 86)

In view of the political and social conditions that prevailed around the time of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, it became necessary for the Muslim rulers to promote friendly, liberal

and tolerant policies throughout their newly gained territories. This effort led to an era of integration of the cultures of the immigrants with those of the indigenous people. In the first volume of his *A History of Sufism in India*, Athar Abbas Rizvi dedicates an entire chapter titled 'The Interaction between Medieval Hindu Mystic Traditions and Sufism' to describe the mutual responses between the medieval Hindu mystic traditions and Sufism (1986: 322-400).

Athar Abbas Rizvi clearly believed that the conversations between the two groups on mutual philosophies, belief systems and practices and cultural customs were catalysts in building appreciation, friendship and more importantly, mutual trust. In his writings he explained that the wandering *yogis*, *siddhas*, and the roaming dervishes who followed the Indic belief systems, often found shelter and hospitality at the Sufi hospices. These visits provided an ideal opportunity for conversation between the hosts and the guests who were keen to know about each other's lives, beliefs, philosophies and traditions.

According to Rizvi, it was a common practice of the Sufi *Khānqāh*, i.e. hospices, to maintain a detailed housekeeping journal of their 'house'. Owing to the Chisti Sufi vow of poverty, the journals kept an accurate account of the dispensation of the donation a 'house' received. In addition, they logged the names of their visitors and recorded their conversations. In the coming years, these records have been instrumental in recreating the true nature of exchanges between the two people. For example, one such journal describes a *yogi* sharing his knowledge and practice of *yoga* at a hospice visit. The exchanges of this nature gave rise to a remarkable appreciation and synthesis of ideas that found expression in the subsequent literary output. Although not always a smooth process, nevertheless by familiarizing themselves with the local beliefs and practices and by learning the languages and customs of the region, the Sufis actively promoted friendly coexistence and earned the respect and trust of their visitors and the local communities as well. The exchange of mutual knowledge ushered in a new culture in north India. She was waking up to a fresh sunrise.

## The Chishti Sufi Order in India

To contextualize the information above one can take a look at Sufism in India. The oldest of the Sufi orders in India is the Chishti order, introduced in 1192 by Khwajah Mu'inuddin Chishti (1142-1236) of Sistan. According to the legend, when Khwajah Mu'inuddin was in Medina after performing the Hajj, he was told in a dream by Prophet Muhammad to proceed to India and show the Path of Truth to the people there. In compliance with this spiritual command, Khwajah Sahib left Medina for India. He continued his journey, passing through Isfahan, Bokhara, Herat, Lahore and Delhi, meeting many eminent scholars and people of spiritual power. He settled in Ajmer where people of all faiths visited his establishment (en.wikipedia.org.)

The early Sufis experienced great resistance from the high born and ruling class Hindus but were befriended by the lower class of the general population regardless of their faith. Even today, Hindus irrespective of their caste, and people of all faiths visit the Sufi shrines enjoying the *qawwālī* music that is the distinguishing feature of Sufi Chishti.

With the guiding principles of charity for all, helping the poor, the helpless, widows and orphans, depending on God's mercy alone, reciting the names of Allah silently and audibly, concentrating on the divine while in isolation, and practising austerities and spiritual progress, the early Sufis set their hospices in order.

Once a dervish asked Khwajah Mu'inuddin what was expected of a true ascetic, the Khwajah replied that in addition to following the commandments of God, *sharia*, the following nine tenets must be observed:

1. Money should not be earned for spiritual guidance.
2. One should not borrow money from anyone.
3. One should not reveal to anyone nor seek help from anyone if one has eaten nothing, even for seven days.
4. If one gains plenty of food, money, grain or clothing, one should not keep anything until the following day.
5. One should not curse anyone; if anyone is very hurt, one should pray to God to guide one's enemy towards the right path.

6. If one performs a virtuous deed, one should consider that the source of the virtue is due either to one's *pir's* kindness, to the intercession of the Prophet or to divine mercy.
7. If one performs an evil deed, he alone is responsible. He should avoid actions which may involve him in such a situation again.
8. Having fulfilled all the above, one should fast during the day and spend the night in prayer.
9. One should remain quiet and speak only when it is imperative. Shari'a makes it unlawful to speak unnecessarily and keep totally silent. One should speak only such words as those which please God. (Rizvi 1975, vol. 1: 123-4)

After their emigration to India, the Sufi mystics who were scholars of the Persian language and literary genres, undertook the study of Indian languages and the philosophical systems. Some Sufis learned Sanskrit and translated the sacred texts into Persian. They also learned the vernacular dialects and eventually became familiar with the history, literature, aesthetics and the customs of the indigenous people of their regions. The Sufi masters encouraged their disciples to keep an open mind to mutual learning. The Chishtis stayed clear of politics. For example, if there was an invitation to attend a royal mosque, they rejected it on the basis that the local mosque had the first claim on them. Rather than put away for a rainy day, they immediately gave in charity everything they received as gifts of money, food or clothing. The Sufis focused on the welfare of their immediate community; their aim was to bring people closer to God.

Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia (1238-1325) was the most outstanding and celebrated Chishti Sufi and Amir Khusrau (d. 1326) was one of his favourite disciples. Both, master and disciple are buried in the same complex in Delhi. Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmood (1277-1356) also known as Chirāgh Dehli or light of Delhi received the relics from his master Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia. Although Shaikh Nasiruddin trained many disciples, he did not consider any of them worthy of receiving the relics, *tabarrukat*, of Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia. These relics were placed in his grave as he had instructed. One of Chirāgh Dehli's devoted disciples was Muhammad bin Yusuf al-Hussaini, also known as Khwaja Banda Nawaz or Gisu Daraz (d. 1422). Gisu

Daraz washed his master's body and after that he took some of the twisted ropes from that cot and wrapped them around his neck saying, 'These relics are sufficient for me', moved to Gulbarga, as his *pir*, i.e. spiritual guide, Shaikh Nasiruddin, had insisted. Thus, the Sufism that spread in the south of India was essentially from the Chishti order. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi writes:

The emergence of the Shattariyya, Qadariyya and Nakshbandi orders in the 16<sup>th</sup> century failed to undermine the significance of the Chishtiyya order in India. By the end of the seventeenth century Delhi was again a great Chishtiyya center in which the traditions of the glorious days of Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia were once more revived. (Rizvi, vol. 2: 264)

Shaikh Nasiruddin's nephew Shaikh Zainuddin was his disciple as well. He stayed in Delhi for many years and took care of the administration of the Delhi *khānqāh*, i.e. hospice. Maulana Daud, the author of *Cāndāyan*, was Shaikh Zainuddin's disciple.

### Amir Khusrau and the Qawwālī

Amir Khusrau, as mentioned above, was Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia's favourite disciple and is credited for many innovations including the musical instrument sitar (3 strings in Persian) and the *qawwali* genre of music. The Sufi Chishtis are recognized for their love of music. They believe that music is of two kinds. The kind of music that distracts a listener away from his focus should be avoided, but the music that is capable of heightening the spiritual experience is precious. This style of music is known as *qawwālī* and the gatherings for listening to this spiritually uplifting music are called *sam'a*. The root of the word *qawwālī* is the Arabic word *qaul*, i.e. (worthy) saying/s. The text of a *qawwālī* could consist of a selection from the hundred beautiful names of God, i.e. *asma-al husna*, repeated cyclically, or a famous phrase attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or to Hazrat Ali. It could also be a spiritually powerful message. The Sufi practice of *sam'a* is a very important feature of the Chishti Sufi order. In her book, *The Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, Regula Qureshi writes:

The *Qawwālī* is essentially a performance genre born in the Sufi *sam'a* sessions and remains the central ritual of Sufism to this day. Under the