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**Abstract Only – Work in Progress**

“Sufism and Syncretism in Early Indo-Islamic Literature:  
Maulana Da’ud’s *Chandayan* as Exemplary Text”

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Although it is generally known that the Sufi *silsilas* or lineages of shaykhs played an extremely important role in the introduction of Islam into the Indian subcontinent, it is less well understood how the process worked. Historians have focused on the dynastic sultanates that ruled from Delhi beginning in CE 1206 until 1526, and the politics associated with the regimes, to assemble an understanding of how the state, religion and society interacted. It has also been recognized that the Sufi *silsilas* operated sometimes in concert and at other times in contradistinction to the power of the sultanate. The Chishtiyya *silsila* in particular, especially during the time of Nizamuddin Auliya (1238 - 1325), is distinctive for resisting the overtures from the sultanate to provide validation of its suzerainty. Nizamuddin Auliya oversaw a large *khanqah* or hospice in Delhi where he allowed the use of *sama'* or spiritual concert, during which prayer, usually in the form of *dhikr* or remembrance of the names of God, music, dance, singing and other ritualistic activities were observed. It was in this context that it became possible for Maulana Da’ud, a disciple of a relative of Nasiruddin Chiragh-e Delhi (1274 - 1356), the successor Shaykh to Nizamuddin Auliya, to compose a didactic tale, the *Chandayan*, to be used in various teaching environments, such as the public *Khutba*, or the more private *sama'*. Out of such a milieu developed *qawwali*, a Sufi devotional music form popular even today in parts of north India and southern Pakistan. The *Chandayan*, composed in CE 1379 in Avadhi (spoken in central parts of the modern state of Uttar Pradesh), is the first literary text in that language, as well as being one of the first lengthy, literary texts in a north Indian vernacular. In the form of an allegory, the story describes the passionate and exigent relationship between God and man, wherein the *God character* takes the form of a woman, Chanda, and the *love-crazed young man* is the supplicant before God. The text is a true synthesis of an Indian (read Hindu) folktale, composed in an indigenous, rather rustic north Indian regional language, adapted to the purpose of the highly charged, subtly didactic venue of the Sufi *sama'*. The *Chandayan* became literally and rhetorically the model for a series of similar, very popular Sufi allegories, mainly composed in Avadhi. In this sense, the creation and

deployment of the *Chandayan* exemplifies the conditions in which the composite, Islamic and Hindu (read Indian) culture became possible.