

# **Genesis of the *Suhrawardiyyah* Sufi Order in Medieval Bengal: Reflections on the Contribution of Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī**

Mohammad Irfan Shah \*

*Exploring the phenomenon of the emergence, growth, impact and status of the Sufis or Sufi orders in the (medieval Indian) society has been of crucial significance in understanding not only the intellectual history or spiritual legacy but the overall development of Islam in South Asia or the Indian subcontinent. Sufis and Sufi fraternities/Salāsil/Orders have been considered an integral part of Indian society during the medieval period. The Sufis indisputably played an instrumental role in promoting and sustaining the peaceful, tolerant and pluralistic character along with the unity amid diversity in the society. In particular, their remarkable piety and religiosity, egalitarian approach and advocacy of love, peace, harmony, sympathy, philanthropy and unconditional service to humanity (irrespective of caste, colour and creed), left an indelible mark on the Indian religious and social history besides engraving everlasting imprints on the minds and hearts of the people. Given the significance of the multi-dimensional role(s) played by the Sufis and the impact thereof on the socio-cultural, political, economic and religious milieu of medieval Indian society, any attempt to understand the historical development of Islam in the subcontinent would be incomplete and partial without referring to the Sufis or the Sufi orders that flourished in the Indian subcontinent.*

*With this backdrop, the current study humbly attempts to explore the role, activities and contributions made by a prominent Sufi master, Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, in medieval Bengal, engaging with the sources through analytical, historical and descriptive methods. Tabrizi spearheaded the process of developing the *Suhrawardiyyah* Sufi Silsilah/Order—the earliest Sufi Order introduced in the subcontinent—in Bengal as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The study will endeavour to analyse the role and activities played by Tabrīzī in the social, political, ritual and pedagogical domains of 13th-century Bengal furnishing an essential link to understand the religious and social structure of the then Bengali*