

## Mystical Ideas of Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani

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Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani (714/1314—786/1385)<sup>1</sup> was a religious scholar, a prolific writer<sup>2</sup>, a political theorist<sup>3</sup> and a widely travelled<sup>4</sup> sufi. His sojourns in Kashmir<sup>5</sup> left very deep imprints on every aspect of life there; including polity, economy, social set-up, demography, religious outlook, arts and crafts, architecture, technology and mystical attitude. The Sayyid's dynamic personality and contribution invited the attention of scholars of the world and a number of books and articles have been written on him treating his life and thought. But as a matter of fact, not much amount of attention has been paid to the study of mystical dimensions of his thought. As such, we treat here some of the aspects of the subject in the context of his treatises including *Mashārbu'l Azwāq*, *Kashfu'l Haqā'iq*, *Dhikriyya*, *Futūhiyya*, *Dah Qā'idah* and *Muqamatu'l Sūfiyya*.

Like all other sufis, Hamadani believes that no one can travel the path of Allah without the guidance of a preceptor who is duly authorised to initiate disciples<sup>6</sup> and that the simple acquisition of knowledge is of no avail.<sup>7</sup> He asserts that religious and spiritual guidance is a very specialised subject and without a perfect and experienced person no one can transcend the bondage and darkness of desires and that the essential realities of all devotions are only known to the prophets, physicians of the faith, the saints, the holy ones of the *tariqa* (sufi path) and the ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars), who know remedies of the sickness of heart.<sup>8</sup> Hamadani, however, advises that teachers for the acquisition of religious knowledge

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should be selected with great care as there is no dearth of such so called religious scholars who ignore the teachings of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* and do not care for the subtle points of Divine knowledge, and thus they misguide the people.<sup>9</sup>

While elaborating his discussion<sup>10</sup> on the degrees of *ma'arifa* (gnosis), the Sayyid maintains that the lowest degree of it is possessed by the common Muslims who acknowledge that Allah is Unique in His attributes and that everything in the world is His handiwork.<sup>11</sup> The higher degree of it is possessed by the 'ulama', whom he calls the '*Ulamā'-i-rusūm* (the traditional '*ulamā'*'), who attempt to prove the existence of Allah on the basis of their knowledge and wisdom, this he terms as *ma'arifa-i-istidlāli* (gnosis based on reason).<sup>12</sup> The highest degree of it, the *ma'arifa-mushahadah* (gnosis based on observation) leads to *wisal* (mystical union) between the *Khāliq* (The Creator) and *makhliūkh* (the created).<sup>13</sup> At this stage the aspirant, according to Hamadani, is completely absorbed in the contemplation of the nature, attributes and works of Allah and it is achieved only when the heart is purged of all evil and dross.<sup>14</sup>

The *ma'rifa-i-mushāhādah*, is obtained through *wahy* (Divine revelation) and *Ilham* (Divine inspiration).<sup>15</sup> Sayyid like many other sufis, holds that love of Allah emerges from *ma'rifa*. The greater the *ma'rifa* the more perfect is the love of Allah.<sup>16</sup> The Sayyid asserts that the reason that led the Angels to prostrate themselves before Adam (A.S.) was that man alone is capable to attain the love of Allah to the stage of utmost perfection.<sup>17</sup> In his *Risāla-i-Mashāribu'l Azwaq*, The Hamadani ascribes the impulsion for love to five reasons:<sup>18</sup> *mahabat-i-nafs* (love of the self), *mahabat-i-muhsin* (love of the benefactor), *mahbat-i-sahib-i-kamāl* (love of the perfect man), *mahbat-i-jamal* (love of the beautiful) and *mahabat-i-ta'arif-i-ruhāni* (love based on spiritual relationship). After an elaborate discussion he concludes that these causes which infuse love in man are combined in their highest perfection in Allah. Therefore, Allah alone is worthy of love. He, however, asserts that the love based on spiritual relationship has no worldly source. It is the result of Allah's own gift and is predestined. Allah, according to the Hamadani, bestows spiritual love on one whom He chooses.<sup>19</sup>

Hamadani, in his *Kashafu'l Haqāi'q* defines the highest form of the sufi development as one where a devotee experiences *tajalli-dhat* or the self



manifestation of the Essence.<sup>20</sup> To attain this spiritual end he suggests a scheme of mystical journey into four worlds which he terms as *mulk*<sup>21</sup> (the visible world), *malakūt*<sup>22</sup> (Angelic world), *jabarūt*<sup>23</sup> (the world of spiritual existence) and *lahūt*<sup>24</sup> (the world of divinity).

The devotees who belong to these four worlds are termed by the Sayyid as *taliban* (the beginners), *sālik* (the devotees), *muqarraba* (those near to Allah), and the *sidiqan* (the truthful ones), respectively. In his *Risāla-i-Dhikriyya*, *Muqtasidan* (those who follow moderate cause) and *sabiqan-i-Safīf-i Wilāyat* (leaders of the ranks of friends of Allah) emerge as two main categories of sufis.<sup>25</sup> The Sayyid discusses the qualities of the *Muqtasidan* in these words; “They are the people who succeed in crushing the beastly elements in their self, and seek to lead a pure and pious life. They overcome the difficulties and afflictions of the worldly life... This is a real *jihād* (utmost struggle).<sup>26</sup> Sayyid ‘Ali also refers to the verse of the *Qur’ān* to substantiate his view point, “Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised.”<sup>27</sup>

With regard to the qualities of the second category, Sayyid Ali Hamadani writes:

They are the people who are not engrossed in the darkness of *nasūt*, and have found a place in the wide expanse of *lahūt*. They consume their moth-like imaginary existence with the light of the lamp of Divine Majesty. By annihilating their ephemeral existence they find an everlasting life with Divine Majesty.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Risāla-i-Futūhiya*, he talks about another category of sufis, the *maqbulan* (accepted ones) and divides them into *muqarraban* and *abrār*. Before making further classification of *abrār*, the Hamadani writes about the characteristics of *muqarraban* that, “they are the travellers on the path of *tariqa* and the soldiers of the battle field of *haqiqa*. They do not pollute their spirit with all that is transitory and do not bother themselves with the problems of space and time... They subdue their reason, control their carnal self and the lusts and desires of both worlds.<sup>29</sup> They are not concerned with subtleties of the nature of *wajud* or hair-splitting doctrines related to it and try to see Allah through Allah. They pass through the narrow world of ‘*ubūdiya* (servitude) and fly into the world of *huwiya* (Divine essence)... The light of their mysteries kindles the lamp of the assembly of all the

spiritually minded."<sup>30</sup>

Sayyid Ali Hamadani also sub-divides *abrar* into *ahl-i-futūwāt* (bountiful), *walihān-i-Tarīqa*<sup>31</sup> (astonished ones of the path) or *maslūb 'l- 'aql*<sup>32</sup> (bereft of reason) and *zahidan*<sup>33</sup> (asectics) or *zu 'aql*<sup>34</sup> (endowed with reason).

*Ahl-i-futūwāt*, according to the Hamadani consist of those whose hearts are full of kindness and compassion for others, their existence is the source of comfort for mankind and they spend their lives and wealth in treating their fellow-men kindly and generously.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to the nature and qualities of the *ahl-i-futūwāt*, the Sayyid quotes the sayings of various sufis including. Hasan Basri<sup>38</sup> (21/110/641-728) Fuzail 'Iyaz<sup>37</sup> (d. 187/802), Yahya ibn Ma'az<sup>38</sup> (d.258/871). Sayyid 'Ali, however, on the authority of Caliph 'Ali (Rad. A) holds that the main pillars of *futūwāt* are four,<sup>39</sup>

1. To forgive despite power to wreak vengeance.
2. To exhibit patience in anger.
3. To wish well even to an enemy.
4. To prefer the needs of others to one's own.

In his yet another treatise entitled *Risāla-i-Dah Qā'idah* the sayyid asserts that there are innumerable ways to Allah. These ways, however, can be consolidated into three major paths, namely *Rāh-i-arbāb-i-Mu'amlāt* (the path of external observance of Islam), *rāh-i-arbāb-i-mujāhadah* (path of those who undergo self-mortification) and that of *sa'irān-i-hadrat-i-samdiyat* (travellers to the court of the Most High). The Sayyid elaborates his scheme in these words:

This road (Ist one) is traversed by common Muslims, who perform only the obligatory duties prescribed by the religion and is a means for their salvation. But *wisal-i-haqīqat* (real mystical union) cannot be obtained by performing only such external devotion... The second path is traversed by the righteous ones of the community, the *muqtasidan*, whose basic aim is to wean the nafs from evil... The third path is the most perfect and the noblest of all the paths and is based on the principle of killing one's own will'. This is the last stage of mystic journey.<sup>39</sup>



The Hamadani prescribes certain rules for the achievement of this highest path.<sup>40</sup> These include mainly *tawba*<sup>41</sup> (repentance/return), *zuhd*<sup>42</sup> (renunciation), *tawakkul*<sup>43</sup> (trust in Allah), *qanā'at*<sup>44</sup> (resignation), *'uzlat*<sup>45</sup> (retirement), *dhikr*<sup>46</sup> (recollection or remembrance), *tawajjuh*<sup>47</sup> (attention or concentration) *sabr*<sup>48</sup> (patience), *murāqaba*<sup>49</sup> (contemplation) and *riḍā*<sup>50</sup> (pleasure).

The Hamadani regards *tawba* is an act of returning to Allah (رجوع إلى الله) and for a real devotee all the thoughts of the visible world and the invisible world are sins. He classifies *tawba* into voluntary and involuntary kinds. Death, according to him, can be treated as involuntary form and making a conscious effort to give up all those things which keep one away from Allah as the voluntary form.<sup>51</sup>

*Zuhd*, is not only the abandonment of even permitted indulgence but also demands that the desire for the worldly objects and honours be given up and a sufi desirous to tread on the highest path should renounce even desire for objects relating to the next world.<sup>52</sup> Sayyid divides *'Uzlat* into two stages in these words:

In the first stage the devotee must turn his back on mankind and keep himself away from the people. He must sever all ties, outward inward, except relations with his preceptor, who purifies his heart and mind like a *ghusal* (one who washes the corpse)... In the second stage ( of *'Uzlat*) one should divert the senses from the forbidden to the lawful. Although he lives among the people, but is isolated and severed from the rest of mankind.<sup>53</sup>

*Dhikr* to Hamadani means the conscious recollection of Allah, to the exclusion of all that is "other than Allah" and the best form of it is لا اله الا الله (there is no god but Allah). He elaborates:

It (*Dhikr*) is spiritual medicine composed of both negative and positive elements. *La ilaha* is the negative element and purifies the self from evils such as jealousy, pride, greed and hypocrisy... it purifies the heart, the dwelling place of Allah... *Illa 'l-lah*, the positive element makes the heart healthy and protects it from evil dispositions. It directs self to piety. The effulgence of *nūr-i-wahdat* (light of unity) dispels the darkness of plurality, it makes the soul, the ruler, the deputy of Allah, manifest itself on the throne of firm belief in the Divine Beauty...<sup>54</sup>

Sayyid disapproves *dhikr-i-jahr* (outward or aloud *dhikr*) and recommends *dhikr-i-khafi* (inward or silent *dhikr*).<sup>55</sup> He substantiates his view point on few verses of the *Qur'an*.<sup>56</sup>

He regards *sabr* (patience) as the basis of all worships. He says,

It (*sabr*) means to subdue one's carnal self, and to inculcate love for Allah's worship and firmness in *mujāhadah* (mortification).<sup>57</sup> In his *Maqamat al-Sūfiya*, the Sayyid writes, "Even if the sufi suffers from the calamities of both the visible and invisible worlds, he should not utter a sigh (in grief). And if he is subjected to the hardships of both worlds, he should accept them patiently."<sup>58</sup>

Hamadani, like Sarraj<sup>59</sup> and Ghazzali<sup>60</sup> regards *Rida* as a *maqām* (stage) and considers it as the highest of all the stages of sufi path. While elaborating this concept he writes, "Rida is that sufi should stop taking interest in themselves in order to gain the satisfaction of the beloved (Allah)... when they (sufis) think no more of their own plans and entrust the great works to Allah, they begin to receive limitless grace and start to shine with the Divine light and fly into the wide expanse of *lahūt*."<sup>61</sup>

## References and Notes:

1. For detailed account of Hamadani's biography *Khulasat al-Manaqib* by Nuru'd-Din Ja'far Badakhshi serves the purpose of the primary source. Badakhshi was himself the most celebrated disciple of Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani.
2. The number of treatises and books authored by the Sayyid is more than one hundred. Certain biographers of Sayyid 'Ali mention this number as 170. These deal with various branches of knowledge related to Theology, Jurisprudence, Polity, *Tasawwuf*, grammar, 'ulūmu'l Qur'an, 'ulūmu'l Hadīth, literature, logic, poetry etc. A few prominent ones are; *Risāla-i Amīriya*, R. 'Aqliya, R. *Arba'eyn*, R. *Asrār-i-Ruhi*, R. *Khawatiriya*, R. *Chihil Asrār*, R. *Dah Qā'idah*, R. *Darweshiya*, R. *Dawūdiya*, R. *Futūhiya*, R. *I'tiqādiya*, R. *Kashfu'l Haqā'iq*, R. *Makārimu'l Akhlāq*, R. *Mashāribu'l Azwāq*, R. *Nūriya*, R. *Sharh-i-Mushkilhal*, R. *Dhikriya*, R. *Talqiniya*, *Dhakhirtu'l Mulūk*, R. *Awradiya* etc.
3. *Dhakhirtu'l Mulūk* and *Risala-i-Maktubāt* provide broader guidelines with regard to Islamic Political Theory as put forward by Hamadani. The Sayyid discusses in detail the position and qualities of a Muslim Ruler, his primary duties, rights of Muslim subjects and *Dhimmies* (Non-Muslim subjects). He also makes a comparison of a legitimate Muslim ruler, to whom he raises to the status of *khālifāt Allah* and one who simply pretends to be so.
4. The Sufīs in general and the Kubrawiyas in particular travelled extensively in various parts of the Muslim world. Hamadani is said to have performed world tour thrice and some of his biographies opine that he performed pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina about twelve times.  
cf. Amin Ahmad Rizi; *Haft Iqlīm*, Tehran, n.d. II, P. 539.  
Dawud Mishkati, *Asraru'l Abrār*, Ms. (O.R.D. Srinagar), f. 10b.  
Abdul Wahhab Nuri; *Futuhāt al-Kubrawiyya*, Ms. (O.R.D. Sgr.), f 55b.  
Also cf. Ja'far Badakhshi; *Khulāsatu'l Manāqib*, Ms (O.R.D. Srinagar).
5. It seems difficult to reconcile the accounts of various chroniclers with regard to the the chronology of Hamadani's sojourns in Kashmir. Some of these suggest that Hamadani visited Kashmir in 1774/1372-73, 781/1379-80 and 785/1383-84, during the reign of Sultan Qutubu'd-Din (1373-1389 C.E.), there. Such chroniclers include Hasan Shah, Muhy-u'd-Din Miskin. cf. *Tārīkh-i-Hasan*, Vol. III, pp 14-15. and *Tārīkh-i Kabīr*, pp 12-14.  
Tahir, Haider Maik and Rafi'ud-Din Ahmad mention the 783/1381 as the year of arrival of Hamadani to Kashmir. cf. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, (Ms. O.R.D. Sgr.) f. 23 a, *Tārīkh-i-Kashmir*, (Ms. O.R.D.Sgr.) f 91a and *Nawādiru'l Akhbar*, (Ms O.R.D. Sgr.) f 35 a.



6. Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani; *Risala-i-Futuhiya*, (Ms. OR. D Sgr), F 255 a  
Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and ‘Ali al-Hujwiri are of the similar view.  
cf. *Kimiya-i Sa‘adat*, p. 268 and *Kashf al-Mahjüb*, p. 17.
7. Hamadani, *Risāla-i-Darweshiya*, Ms. O.R.D. Sgr, f 249b.
8. Idem.
9. Ibid., f. 251 a,b.
10. Hamadani, *Risāla-i-Sharh-i Mukkil Hāl*, Ms. (Riza Lib. Rampur), f. 269 a.
11. Idem.
12. Idem.
13. Idem.
14. One can easily understand this point of Hmadani in the light of certain verse  
of the Qur’an. cf.III: 190.
15. The Divine revelation is obviously granted to the Prophets and Divine inspiration  
to the saints.  
Many Sufis like Hujwiri do not subscribe to this concept that *ma‘rifa* (gnosis)  
is the result of *Ilhām*. Hujwiri says, “*ma‘rifa* supplies a criterion for  
distinguishing *Haq* (truth) from *batil* (falsehood), whereas the inspired have  
no such criterion.”  
(*Kashaf al-Mahjüb*, Eng. tr. R.A. Nicholson, p. 271.)
16. *Risala-Masharibu’l Azwaq*, Ms. f. 237 a.
17. Cf. Qur’an; II: 34, VII: 11 and XXXIII; 72. Also cf. *Risāla-Dhikriyya* f. 282  
a-b.
18. F. 237-a.  
Some other sufis, like Ghazzali (d.1111) attribute inclination to love to four  
causes; love of the self, love of benefactor, love for beauty and love based on  
affinity between two souls; cf. *Ihya*, IV, pp. 289 ff...
19. *Risāla Masharibu’l Azwāq*, f 237 a.
20. Ibid., f 232 a.
21. In his *Mashār’bu’l Azwāq*, the Sayyid calls this world as ‘*alam-i Shahadat*  
(the visible world) where the seeker after truth operates through his senses.
22. This world is also termed as ‘*alam-i-Ghā’ib wa Misāl* (invisible of similitude),  
where, according to Sayyid, one experiences some aspects of Divine beauty  
and action. Also cf. R.M. Azwaq, f 237 b.
23. The Sayyid holds that in this world, the Sufi begins to view the Divine beauty  
in its entirety and his love does not undergo any change now.
24. In the world of *Lahūt* the aspirant receives the manifestation of the Divine  
essence and achieves *fana* (annihilation). Cf. *Kashful Haqā’iq.*, Ibid., ff 232  
a-b.
25. Ibid., f. 280b.



26. *Ibid.*, f 281a.
27. Holy Qur'an: XLI:30.
28. *Risāla-Dhikriyya*, Ms. (O.R.D.Sgr.)f 281 a-b.
29. *Risāla-Futūhiya*, Ms. (O.R.D. Sgr.), ff. 257 a-b.
30. *Ibid.*, f 257 b.
31. *Ibid.*, f 258 b.
32. *Ibid.*, f. 289 a.
33. *Ibid.*, f. 258a
34. *Ibid.*, f. 289a.
35. *Ibid.*, f 258a.
36. According to Hasn those who are the enemies of their carnal self belong to the *ahli futūwāt*.
37. He remarked that *ahl-i-futūwāt* are those who are kind and distribute their wealth to the people indiscriminately to friend and foe, or believer and non-believer.
38. He believed that the *ahl-i-futūwāt* have three virtues; they are pious, honest and loyal to their friends, cf. R.F. ff. 255b-256a.
39. Cf. *Risāla-i-Dah Qā'idah*, f. 134a.
40. *Risāla-i-Dah Qā'idah*, f. 134b.
41. *Dhun-Nūn Misri* (d. 246/861) holds that *tawba* for ordinary men is to repent of their sins and for sufis it means repent of their heedlessness. Abu Hafsa Hadad (d.265/879) opines that repentance is the gift of Allah and cannot be acquired by human effort.  
cf. al-Hujwri, *Kashaf al-Mahjūb*, Eng. tr. R.A. Nicholson, p. 298.
42. Hamadani, *Risāla-i Dah Qā'idah*, f. 135a.
43. *Tawakkul* (Trust in Allah) demands that a devotee should entrust himself and all his affairs to Allah under a spirit of complete and unqualified trust.  
cf. Hamadani, *Ibid.*, f 136a.
44. *Qana'at* stands for acceptance of only what is necessary to maintain one's existence.
45. The sufis give two different interpretation of '*uzlat*'. Some regard it complete retirement from the world and worldly people, while others opine that this type of solitude exposes the self to increasingly more satanic suggestions. The latter recommend inner solitude even in assembly i.e. *خلوت در انجمن*. Also cf. Hujwiri, *ibid*, p. 103.
46. Hamadani, *Risāla-i-Dah Qā'idah*, *ibid*, f 136a.
47. Sayyid 'Ali asserts that *tawajjah* means to turn to Allah entirely so that aspirant is not distracted by things other than Allah. He opines that if a devotee

- struggles on the path to Allah for thousands of years but shows negligence for a single moment, there is every apprehension that he may lose all the bestowed blessings. Cf. Hamadani, *ibid.*, f 136b.
48. The term *Sabr* is mentioned in the holy Qur'an at a number of places as the highest form of virtue. Cf. Holy Qur'an, VIII:46; XI:11. Also cf. Sarraj; *Kitābu'l Luma'*, p. 39. Ghazzali, *Ihya*, IV, p. 61, and Hamadani, *Ibid*, ff 136b-137a for further explanation.
  49. Hamadani elaborates the nature and importance of *murāqaba* in these words; "It (*muraqaba*) amounts to giving up all authority and activity over which the seeker has control. It is an instrument in the hands of sufis through which they try to achieve their goal and concentrate on nothing else but Allah." Cf. Hamadani, *ibid*, f 137 a-b.
  50. Some sufis regard *Rida* to be *hal* (state) while others treat it as *maqām* (stage). *Hal* and *Maqām* differ in their meaning. *Hal* represents a gift of Divine grace, over which one has no control, on the other hand *maqām* is that which one acquires oneself.  
Hujwiri remarks, "maqām belongs to the category of acts while *hal* to the category cf. *kashf*, *ibid*, p. 181.
  51. *Risāla-i Dah Qa'idah*, f. 135a.
  52. *Ibid.*, ff 135b-136a.
  53. *Ibid.*, ff 135a-b also this stage is termed as *خلوت در انجمن* (solitude in gathering) by some other sufis.
  54. *Risāla-Dah Qā'idah*. ff 135b. 136a.
  55. *Risāla-i-Dhikriyya*; f. 286a.
  56. Cf. Holy Qur'an; III:55 and IL:02.
  57. *Risala-Dah Qa'idah.*, ff 136b-137a.
  58. *Ibid.*, F. 275b.
  59. Cf. *Kitābu'l Luma*, *Ibid.*,p. 53.
  60. Cf. *Ihya*, IV, p. 333.
  61. Cf. *Risāla- Dah Qa'idah*. ff. 137b-138a.