

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Account of his Biography and Works

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Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi belonged to a distinguished family which traced its descent from the Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab' and Sirhindi being the twenty-eighth in the lineage.² One of his ancestors Sheikh Shahabuddin 'Ali, commonly known as Farrukh Shah Kabuli, was among the great nobles and ministers of the kings or *Salatin* of Kabul.³ Farrukh Shah, known for his zeal and love of Islam, is reported to have visited India with the army of king of Kabul as an important officer. Among his descendants was the famous Chisti saint, Sheikh Farid al-din Ganj-Shakar.⁴

Imam Rafi-ud-din⁵ was another great ancestor of Sirhindi. He was a distant descendent of Farrukh Shah Kabuli and a khalifa of Sayid Jalal al-din Surkh Bukhari generally known as Makhdum-i-Jahaniyan.⁶ When the latter was on his way to Delhi, Imam Rafi-ud-din accompanied him and met Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq (752-790 AH) in Delhi. After sometime the sultan sent Imam Rafi-ud-din back to Sirhind and asked him to lay the foundation of a fortress and establish a town there.⁷

Sheikh Ahad Faruqi,⁸ father of Sirhindi, was the fifth descendant of Imam Rafi-ud-din. He was a renowned sufi and scholar and impressed his contemporaries both by his spirituality and scholarship. He had established his own seminary at Sirhind, which with the passage of time had become a recognized center of Islamic theology in north India. A number of students from different parts of India, Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia flocked around him to acquire knowledge and slake their spiritual thirst.⁹ He had command over all mystic and traditional works like, the *Fusus al-Hikam*¹⁰ of Shiekh Mohiuddin Ibn al-'Arabi and *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*¹¹ of Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi.¹² Sheikh Ahad had

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thorough command over the concept of *wahdat al-wajud* and taught it to his students with great zeal, giving scholarly explanations of all subtleties¹³. He was a prolific writer also and his works like *Kanz al-Haqa'iq*¹⁴ and *Asrar-i-Tashahhud*¹⁵ reveal his profound understanding of the Islamic literature and mysticism. Sheikh Ahad had been initiated into various sufi orders.¹⁶ Thus he was a Khalifa of Sheikh Ruknuddin, the son and successor of Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi,¹⁷ in the Chisti silsilah.¹⁸ He also received the Khilafat in the Qadiriya order from the distinguished Sheikh Kamal Qadri of Kaithal.¹⁹ As a devout sufi Sheikh Ahad traveled to various cities and called on eminent saints of different silsilahs.²⁰

On his sojourn at Sikandara,²¹ he married a pious lady and then left to Sirhind along with his wife.²²

Birth and Early Life

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi was born on Friday, the 4th Shawal 971 AH/26th May 1564 A.D., at Sirhind.²³ His father named him 'Abdul Barakat Badruddin Ahmad.²⁴ As the father was devoted to Sheikh Kamal Qadri of Kaithal, he took the infant to the saint and obtained his spiritual favours and felicitation.²⁵

Sirhindi received his early education from his erudite father, acquiring knowledge of Islamic sciences and memorizing the Holy Qur'an. He was then sent to Sialkot (present Pakistan), an important seat of learning in those days. Here he learned logic, philosophy and some works of tafsir and Hadith like Azdi and Imthala, under the guidance of Maulana Kamal Kashmiri.²⁶ Later, he came in contact with another renowned scholar of Kashmir-Sheikh Yaqoob Sarfi²⁷ and acquired further knowledge of Hadith from him. It is maintained that Sarfi had deeply influenced and laid great impression upon Sirhindi. It was due to his association with Sarfi that Sirhindi always insisted on the Prophet's Sunnah and raised voice against Shi'a sect and its thought.²⁸ Sirhindi studied some advanced texts of tafsir and Hadith from Qadi Bahlul Badakhshani²⁹ like *Tafsir-i-Vahidi*³⁰, *Tafsir-i-Baizawi*,³¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*,³² *Mishkat-i-Tabrizi*,³³ *Shamail-i-Tirmizi*,³⁴ *Jame'*

Sagheer-i-Siyuti,³⁵ *Qasida-i-Burda*³⁶ and *Mishkat al-Masabih*.³⁷ Sirhindi completed his formal education at the age of seventeen and returned home as an erudite scholar and divine. At home he started imparting instructions in his seminary, benefiting students with his scholarly and divine guidance.³⁸ Later in 990/1582 Sirhindi went to Agra (Capital of the Mughals) and stayed there for a long time.³⁹ At Agra he had first hand information about the deteriorating religious conditions within and around the Mughal court. He also established contacts with the eminent nobles of the time⁴⁰ such as poet Laureate Faydi (951/1547-1004/1595) and his younger brother Abul Fadl (958/1551-1011/1602), a distinguished writer and an informal secretary of the Emperor Akbar. Both the brothers Faydi and Abul Fadl had great regard for Sirhindi who used to visit them frequently. It is said that at Faydi's residence he found him involved in certain intricacies, while writing Qur'anic exegesis, *Sawati al-Ilham*,⁴¹ being written in dot-less words. Sirhindi helped him out and wrote a few pages of it.⁴² Likewise in an encounter with Sirhindi, Abul Fadl denied the necessity of prophecy,⁴³ repudiated the Shari'ah, condemned worship as hypocrisy, regarded every religion as equally bad, and pinned faith in reason.⁴⁴ The former contested his ideas and argued the case for prophecy. To counter this antireligious attitude Sirhindi wrote his first book, *Ithbat-i-Nubuwwah, (Defence of Prophecy)*.⁴⁵ At Agra, Sirhindi left deep impression of his personality. In late 998/1591, Sirhindi's father asked him to leave Agra, having stayed there for a long period of time, and return to Sirhind.⁴⁶ Accompanied by his father, Sirhindi left for Sirhind. On their way back they met Sheikh Sultan Thaneshwari⁴⁷ at Thanehwar. Sirhindi got later married to the daughter of Thaneshwari, at the latter's request.

Back home Sirhindi started imparting education to the students in his ancestral seminary and spent most of the time in meditation. Very often he consulted his father in various matters of Islamic theology and mysticism. The father himself imparted Sirhindi the intricacies of spiritual process of different sufi Silsilahs. Sirhindi studied *Fusus al-Hikam*, *Futuh-at-i-Makkiya* and *Awarif al-*

Ma'arif under his father's guidance.⁴⁸ Meanwhile his father initiated Sirhindi into his own mystic discipline and conferred upon him the Khilafat in Chistiya, Suharwardiya and Qadiriya orders by declaring him his spiritual successor.⁴⁹ Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad Faruqi passed away on 17th Jamad I 1007/ 6th Dec 1598, at the age of eighty years. Sirhindi was then unanimously accepted as the spiritual head of his father's disciples and followers.⁵⁰

The Discipleship of Baqi-Billah

After the death of his father, Sirhindi decided to fulfill his old desire to perform Hajj. On his way to Makkah and Madina (in Oct. 1599) he met Maulana Hasan Kashmiri⁵¹ at Delhi, who was one of his fast friends and class-fellows during his studies at Sialkot. Maulana Kashmiri spoke to him about Khawaja Baqi-Billah, who had recently settled down in Delhi and had become very popular in the cross-section of Delhites. Developing keen desire to meet Baqi-Billah⁵² Hasan Kashmiri took him to the saint.⁵³ Sirhindi was received warmly by Khawaja Baqi Billah when the former called upon him with Maulana Hasan Kashmiri. Ordinarily Baqi-Billah never showed any interest in enrolling novices for spiritual training, but deviating from his usual practice, he persuaded Sirhindi to spend some time with him.⁵⁴

Accordingly, Sirhindi undertook spiritual practices and meditation under Baqi-Billah's guidance and within a short period of time he turned a devout mystic. He was so impressed by Baqi-Billah that he expressed the desire to be enrolled (*bai'at*) as a disciple in the Naqashbandiya Order.⁵⁵ Baqi-Billah initiated Sirhindi into the Naqashbandiya order as his murid (disciple) and in the month of Rajab, 1008/Jan. 1600, he conferred his Khilafat upon him.⁵⁶ During his first stay with Baqi-Billah, Sirhindi "acquired Perfection in outward and inward knowledge and was rewarded with a speedy ascent from one stage to another in the realm of spirit difficult to be expressed in words".⁵⁷ Having benefited from his stay with the saint, Sirhindi returned home, fully imbued with the Naqashbandiyah doctrines.

Both Khawaja Baqi-Billah and Sheikh Ahmad considered their (first) meeting with each other, a great event in their spiritual career. Baqi-Billah expressed his sentiments in a letter to a friend and wrote, "a man from Sirhind named Sheikh Ahmad has recently come. He is very learned and has great spiritual powers. He has lived with me for some days and on the basis of what I have seen of him in this period, I anticipate that he will be in future a lamp which will illuminate the world."⁵⁸ Similarly, Sirhindi also wrote in a letter to Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi that, "when I felt spiritual thirst, I fortunately reached the Khanqah of Baqi- Billah who taught me the lesson of Divine Names".⁵⁹ In another letter to Maulana Hasan Kashmiri, Sirhindi thanks the latter with great humility and says that it was he through whose guidance he reached the threshold of Baqi-Billah and attained higher and higher spiritual stages.⁶⁰

At home Sirhindi pursued *Sayr* and *Sluk*, as his spiritual mentor had suggested. He dispatched many letters to Baqi-Billah, describing his spiritual progress. It is learnt that the famous controversial letter in which he threw light on the various stages of his spiritual development was also written during these days.⁶¹

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi visited Baqi-Billah again in Ramadhan 1009/February 1601 and stayed with him for three months. Now Baqi-Billah held him in high esteem and paid him great honour. It is said that once in a reply to Sirhindi, Baqi Billah said, "It is me your servant Muhammad Baqi".⁶² During his entire stay with his spiritual mentor, Sirhindi continued meditation and benefited from his radiance as well as his discourses. Now when he intended to return, Baqi- Billah asked him to teach the tariqah and placed some disciples in his charge. Sirhindi was hesitant to take up the responsibility but Baqi-Billah testified his suitability for the task. Sirhindi bowed to his judgment and started the work.⁶³

In the same year, most probably the first half of 1010/1601, Sirhindi was conferred upon with the Khilafat in the Qadiriya order by Shah Sikandar Qadiri, the grandson and spiritual successor of Shah Kamal Qadiri.⁶⁴ Sirhindi, once sitting in the mosque, was

presented by Sikandar Qadiri, the spiritual religious garment (*khirqā*). Many supernatural events are said to have occurred when Sirhindi wore this garment.⁶⁵ It may be mentioned here that though in the beginning Sirhindi initiated disciples in all the mystic orders but subsequently he confined the practice to the Naqashbandiya order.

Sirhindi visited his mentor again (third time) in the beginning of 1012/1603, when the latter was seriously ill. Baqi-Billah, however, received his favourite disciple by walking some distance to welcome him.⁶⁶ He is also reported to have sought his blessings and favours for himself, his infant sons and both the wives.⁶⁷ Baqi-Billah then appointed Sirhindi as his chief Khalifa and spiritual successor and enjoined disciples to strictly follow and associate themselves with Sirhindi. Later on when Sirhindi left for home, Baqi entrusted his sons to him for spiritual guidance.⁶⁸ At home Sirhindi spent some days with his family and then proceeded to Lahore. There he met a number of 'ulama, sufis and scholars of the time. Maulana Tahir, a famous 'alim of the town joined the spiritual circle of Sirhindi. Khawaja Farrukh Hussain of Transoxiana and Mir Syed Nasir Ahmad of Rum also did the same. A large number of local inhabitants are reported to have been benefited from and enlisted in the mystic discipline of Sirhindi.

Khawaja Muhammad Baqi-Billah died in Delhi on 25th Jamad al-thani 1012/20th Nov. 1603, when Sirhindi was still in Lahore.⁶⁹ The sad demise of the saint greatly shocked and caused grief to Sirhindi and he immediately left for Delhi to attend the funeral ceremony. At Delhi he visited his master's grave and mourned his death with his sons, wife, khulafa and disciples. All of them later accepted him as their supreme head and Baqi-Billah's chief successor, though few are reported to have objected to it.⁷⁰ Sirhindi then returned to his native land and engaged himself in scholarly activities and spiritual exercises. It became his usual practice to visit Delhi every year in the month of Jamad-i-Thani to take part in the 'urs of Khawaja Baqi-Billah. Simultaneously, he made contacts with the eminent nobles of the Mughal Empire and started

correspondence with the important political and religious figures of the time.

Chief Patron of Naqashbandiya Order in India

As the chief patron of Naqashbandiya order Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi organized the Naqashbandiya order in India in a systematic manner. To establish the Order he deputed his followers (*khulafa'*) to important cities and towns in India. The followers worked zealously and were successful in spreading the ideology and message of the Order in various regions of the country.

Among the prominent and senior most *Khulafa'* of Sirhindi was Mir Muhammad Nu'man. He was sent to Burhanpur, a famous town of Deccan (present Madhya Pradesh), which had been an important center of Sufism since its very foundation.⁷¹ Accordingly Nu'man reached Burhanpur, established a khanqah there and devoted himself to the spread of Naqashbandiya Silsilah. According to the author of *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa*, a large number of people were benefited from the spiritual radiance of Nu'man and consequently many of them joined his mystic fold.⁷² After the death of Muhammad Nu'man in 1058/1648, his disciple and son-in-law, Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi took over the charge of the Silsilah in Burhanpur. The latter is the author of famous work, *Zubdat al-Maqamat*.⁷³ The work occupies a significant place in the Sufi literature of medieval India and is considered a *magnum opus* of the Naqashbandi-Mujaddidi saints. He also compiled the third volume of *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*.

The next important place, which Sirhindi chose for the propagation of Naqashbandi teachings, was Agra-the capital of Mughal Empire. Sheikh Badi'udin Saharanpuri was deputed for the task. Instead of civilian people, Badi'udin under the instructions from Sirhindi chose the Mughal army to be addressed for religious and mystic propagation.⁷⁴ Another team was sent to Jaunpur, an important city of medieval India, under Sheikh Tahir Badekshani, to introduce the order there.⁷⁵ Syed Mohibullah, another Khalifa of Sirhindi was deputed to Allahabad.⁷⁶

The other deputations sent by Sirhindi were that of Sheikh Ahmad to Deoband,⁷⁷ Sheikh Hameed to Malda (Bengal),⁷⁸ and Sheikh Nur Muhammad to Patna (Bihar).⁷⁹ The sons of Sirhindi, Muhammad Sadiq, Muhammad Sa'id and Muhammad Ma'sum played vital role in spreading the order in their native land.⁸⁰ Khawaja Muhammad Sadiq of Badakshan was sent to Lahore (Punjab), who was later succeeded by Sheikh Tahir Lahori.⁸¹ Sheikh Adam of Banur (Punjab) was deputed to his native land.⁸²

Sirhindi and the 'Ulama of Kashmir

The author of *Zubdat al-Maqamat* and *Hadhrat al-Quds* do not give any information about Sirhindi's missionary activities in Kashmir. So far as Sirhindi's relations with the Kashmiri 'ulama and sufis are concerned, he had been in close contact with some of them during his studies at Sialkot. Both Maulana Muhammad Kamal and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi Kubrawi under whose guidance Sirhindi completed his higher education, belonged to Kashmir. Sirhindi's fast friend Maulana Hasan Kashmiri, who introduced him to Khawaja Baqi-Billah, came from Kashmir. It is pertinent to mention here that, as to what extent was Sirhindi influenced in his ideas and actions by Kashmiri friends and teachers can be a study of great interest.

All the representatives of Sirhindi deputed to different regions of the sub-continent worked zealously for the development of Naqashbandiya order and attracted a large multitude to their master's mission. On the one hand, they fulfilled the spiritual urges and religious expectations of the masses, and on the other, they also wielded a considerable and generally sobering influence on the ruling elite which helped them in the organization of their Order. The good character of the delegation also impressed the people around them. As they enjoyed respect and reverence from cross-section of the Muslim society, a large number of people joined the Naqashbandiya Silsilah. Thus it can be said that thousands of people joined the Silsilah and it spread far and wide in India, practically in the sub-continent, under the powerful and influential patronage of

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

The Last Days

Zubdat al-Maqamat of Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, which is our main source of the biography of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, has described in detail the daily routine and the regular worship of the latter. According to him Sirhindi strictly followed the Shari'ah and performed all the religious rituals according to the Qur'anic ordinances and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (SAAS). Though a born Hanafite, he at times followed the other Schools too.⁸³ As a routine matter, he used to get up at the mid night, perform ablution and offer *Tahajud* (prayers offered after mid-night). Just before the sun rise Sirhindi used to offer his morning prayer in the mosque situated in the premises of the Khanqah. After *Fajr* (morning prayers) he turned the beads of rosary, reciting the litanies. Thereafter he performed meditations (*muraqabah*) for some time. Later on, he met his family members and inquired about their problems and necessities. He took his breakfast there and spend sometime with them. He would then sit alone, recite the Qur'an and then teach his students. He had his lunch before the noon prayer (*Zuhr*) and followed it by the recitation of the Qur'an. After offering afternoon prayers (*Asr*) he used to meditate with his companions for half an hour.⁸⁴

After offering *Maghrib* prayers (just after sun-set), he loudly recited the Kalima, i.e., the declaration of faith. Having offered the night prayers (*Isha*), completed all the *wadh'if*, Sirhindi would go to bed.⁸⁵ On Monday and Friday nights, Sirhindi repeatedly recited the *darud* (invoking of God's blessings and peace for the Holy Prophet (SAAS)). He offered the congregational Friday prayer in the main mosque of Sirhind whereas the prayers of 'Idd al-Fitr (the festival on the eve of completion of Ramadhan) and 'Idd al-Azha (the festival of sacrifice remembered in the honour of Hadhrat Ibrahim and Isma'il, AS), were offered in his own mosque.⁸⁶ During the first ten days of the month Dhil-Hijah, he neither shaved his head nor cut the nails. Sometimes he visited the graveyards of the

town and prayed for the dead. Previously he would kiss his father's grave but later he gave up this practice.⁸⁷

According to Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, during his last days, Sirhindi spent his time mostly in his house and usually did not come out except for the purpose of offering five-time prayers and the congregational Friday prayer. Only his sons and three or four followers were allowed to see him inside the house. Meanwhile Hashim Kishmi sought his master's permission to depart to Burhanpur to look after his family. The Sheikh permitted him to leave. When Kishmi asked him to invoke for their next meeting in the near future, Sirhindi drew a sigh and said, "I invoke that we may gather in the hereafter."⁸⁸ The words caused sorrow and grief to Kishmi. Sirhindi restricted himself to a particular place in his house from Sha'ban 1033 AH/May 1624 A.D. Now he appeared outside only on Fridays to offer the weekly congregation prayer whereas daily five time prayers were performed inside the home along with some devout followers and his own sons.⁸⁹ Badr al-din Sirhindi, the author of *Wisal-i-Ahmadi* states that in 1033 AH/1624 A.D., near about six months before his death, Sirhindi in a letter to Sadiq Khan wrote:

"You should know that since the Emperor has released me and departed from the royal camp, I have been leading a secluded life. By God's grace I am passing my time with great satisfaction. As there occurs a natural calamity in this city, it seems that I may not survive this year. Be you pleased and happy".

Sirhindi died in the month of Nov., 1624.⁹⁰ Sirhindi's dead body was washed and shrouded in accordance with the Shari'ah. In the last days the asthma disease, which would attack Sirhindi every year in winter, started to affect him again. He also suffered from high fever on the 17th Zil Hijjah 1033/20th Sep., 1624. Despite his deteriorating physical condition, Sirhindi did not miss any of his prayers and litanies. Keeping in view his health condition he asked his family members and followers to perform all rites and rituals of death in accordance with the commands of the Shari'ah.

He also desired to be buried either at any unknown place or near the grave of his father. But on his sons' submission he left the matter to them.⁹¹ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi died on Tuesday 28th Safar 1034. The corpse was buried in a tomb, near the mosque inside the saint's own Khanqah, where his eldest son Khawaja Muhammad Sadiq already lied buried. A number of supernatural events (karamat) are alleged to have occurred at the time of Sirhindi's death.⁹²

Works of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani the most important work, which is also the most important source of thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, is the collection of his letters, known as *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*. Sirhindi wrote numerous letters to his contemporary 'ulama, sufis, nobles, statesmen and masses. The *Maktubat* give expression not only to his heart-felt affections, sentiments and thought but also his research in the realm of spiritual realities. It bears witness to his intellectual gift and the originality of thought. It has been one of the most esteemed and popular works in the circles of sufis, many of whom have made it the principal book of study. The *Maktubat* throw light on religious, mystical, social and political themes. In the words of Professor Sheikh Abdur Rashid, the letters of *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani* cover a vast field ranging from the technology and metaphysics to politics and missionary activities. According to him these letters are a mirror of the intellectual and spiritual ferment which swept over the spiritually saturated Indian Muslim Society.⁹³ *Maktubat* also form a very important source of Indian history and reflect the socio-political environment of Akbar and Jehangir's reign. These also shed a flood of light on the revivalist efforts of Sirhindi and his followers and disciples, primarily on mystical subjects.⁹⁴ Most importantly, the *Maktubat* are the powerful exposition of the ideas of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. The 536 letters (*Maktubat*) are divided into three volumes. The first volume entitled *Durr al-Ma'rifat* contains 313 letters and was compiled by Sheikh Yar Muhammad Badakhshi Talqani in the year 1025/1616. The second volume *Nur al-Khalayiq* was compiled

by Khawaja Abdul Haiy in 1028/1619 on the suggestion of Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum. It contains 99 letters. The third volume known as *Ma'arif al-Haqaiq*, comprise of 114 letters. It was compiled by Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi in 1031/1622. Ten more letters were later added to this volume after the death of Sirhindi.⁹⁵

Ithbat al-Nabuwat:⁹⁶ Written in Arabic, the work sheds light on the necessity of prophecy in general and the prophecy of Muhammad (SAAS) in particular. It also gives Sirhindi's assessment of the situation of Islam in India during the Mughal period.⁹⁷

Risala Radd-i-Rawafiz:⁹⁸ The Persian treatise was written in 1002/1593-4⁹⁹ in refutation of the Shi'ia beliefs. It also discusses the superiority and importance of *Khulafa-i-Thalatha* (Hadhrat Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman) over all the Companions of Prophet (SAAS). It also describes the different sects of Shi'as and their early history in India. Shah Waliullah has written a commentary on this work.¹⁰⁰

Mabda-wa-Ma'ad:¹⁰¹ Written in Persian between 1008/1599-1600 and 1019/1610, it contains fifty four short chapters dealing with the various sufi subjects, such as *bi'at*, *qutb-i-irshad*, *adab-i-tariqat*, *kamalat-i-auliya*, *haqiqat-i-ka'ba*, and *haqiqat-i-Qur'an*, etc.¹⁰² Sirhindi frequently refers to the brochure in the first volume of his *Maktubat*. Both the authors of *Zubdat al-Maqamat* and *Hadhrat al-Quds* quote extensively from it.¹⁰³

Risala-i-Tahliliya:¹⁰⁴ An Arabic treatise, written in 1010/1601-2. It deals with the importance of *kalima-i-taiyyiba*-the Muslim confession of faith. Sirhindi is reported to have written the brochure at a time when Akbar and his followers had removed "Muhammad is the Prophet of God" from the Kalima and introduced "There is no God but God and Akbar is God's representative".¹⁰⁵

The *Risala* sheds light on *Tawhid* (Monotheism) and *Risalat* (Prophethood). *Ma'arif Ladunya*¹⁰⁶ is the subject of the Persian work is mysticism. It is said to have been written after Sirhindi had joined the *Naqashbandiya* order.¹⁰⁷ It defines the secrets of Divine attributes and sheds light on the hidden meaning of some Qur'anic

verses. *Makashfat al-'Ainiya*¹⁰⁸ it was compiled by Muhammad Hashim Kishmi in 1641.¹⁰⁹ It is a collection of different *ijazat namas* (written authority or permission) that Mujaddid gave to his successors from time to time.¹¹⁰ It also contains the shajras, spiritual as well as genealogical trees of different sufi orders-Chistiya, Naqashbandiya and Qadiriya. *Sharh Ruba'iyah*.¹¹¹ It is a commentary on two quatrains of Khawaja Baqi Billah, first by Khawaja himself and the second by Sirhindi. Another commentary on the Sharh was written by Shah Waliullah under the title of *Kashf al-Ghain fi Sharh Ruba'iyatin*. It has been printed by Mujtabai Press, Delhi, in 1310/1892.

Notes and References:

- ¹ Some writers have addressed Sirhindi as Sayyid Ahmad Sirhindi which is not correct. For instance see Qiyammudin Ahmad, *Wahabi Movement of India*, Calcutta, 1966, pp 12-13.
- ² The genealogical chain of Sirhindi is as follows:-
Sheikh Ahmad S/O 'Abdul Ahad Faruqi S/O Zain-al-'Abidin S/O 'Abdul Haiy S/O Sheikh Muhammad S/O Habibullah S/O Imam Rafiuddin S/O Nasir al-din S/O Sulaiman S/O Yousuf S/O Ishaq S/O Abdullah S/O Shoiab S/O Ahmad S/O Yousuf S/O Farrkh Shah Kabuli S/O Nasir al-din S/O Mahmud S/O Sulaiman S/O Mas'ud S/O 'Abdullah Wa'iz S/O 'Abdullah al Wa'iz (Akbar) S/O Abul Fateh S/O Ishaq S/O Ibrahim S/O Nasir S/O 'Abdullah S/O Umar b. al-Khattab (Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, 1890, pp. 88-89; Sheikh Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *Hadhrat al-Quds*, tr. Dr. Gh. Mustafa Khan, Delhi, 1991, pp. 14-15.)
- ³ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 88.
- ⁴ He was an eminent saint of the Chisti silsilah in India and the spiritual successor of Bhakhtiyar Kaki. Born in a village near Multan, Kaki devoted his life in propagation of Chisti mystic thought. He left deep impact on the Indian society and a large number of people, Umara, 'Ulama and Sufis flocked to him and joined his mission. He died in 1265 A.D. in Ajodhan (now Pakpattan) in Punjab. For his detailed biography, see K.A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Sheikh Farid-uddin Ganj Shakar*, Delhi, 1955, and *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chist*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1979; Sheikh Abdnl Haq Muhadith Dehlavi, *Akhbar al-Akhyar*, Delhi, pp. 55-59. Also, S. M. Ikram, *Aab-i-Kauthar*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 217-26.

- ⁵ According to Kishmi he was a pious man, devoted to religion and spiritual pursuits.
- ⁶ Born on 15th Sha'ban 707/89th Feb. 1308, was an eminent Chisti as well as a Suhrawardi saint of medieval India. He belonged to Bukhara and influenced Sultan Firoz Shah Taghlaq. For details, see, Ziauddin Barni, *Tarikh Firoz Shahi*, Calcutta, 1891; K.A. Nizami, "The Suhrawardi Silsilah and its Influence on Medieval Indian Politics", *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, Jul-Oct, 1957, p. 131.
- ⁷ According to Hashim Kishmi, when Makhdum-i-Jahaniyan and Imam Rafiuddin were enroute to Delhi, they passed through the village Sirhind and made a sojourn there. The people accorded warm welcome to the saints and requested them to make recommendation before Sultan Feroz Shah for establishing a town there. The Sultan accepted the recommendation. See Kishmi, op. cit., p. 90. According to Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, once in the reign of Sultan Feroz Shah the royal treasury was passing through a forest under the Imperial guard. A saint was traveling along with the treasury. When the caravan reached the spot where Sirhind is now situated, the saint had inspiration that a great saint will be born at the place. The news reached the king. He therefore ordered the construction of a town there. (Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid*, Delhi, p. 7) According to A. A. Rizvi, he belonged to the Naqashbandi Silsila (*Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, Agra, 1965, p. 202). But the author of *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, (p. 116), contests the information.
- ⁸ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 89.
- ⁹ It is considered one of the most difficult works of Ibn al-'Arabi. Written in 1230 A.D. in Arabic language, it deals with the teachings of eminent prophets. The book is divided into twenty-seven chapters, each being named after a prophet. A number of commentaries have been written over it, in different languages. For detail see, K A Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, Delhi, pp. 24-31.
- ¹⁰ It has been used as manual for the study of Islamic mysticism by the sufis of all silsilahs and is considered one of the best works produced by Muslim saints. It was first published at Cairo in 1888.
- ¹¹ Born in 539/1145, he was the nephew, Khalifa and the spiritual successor of Sheikh Abdun Najib Suhrawardi. He studied under Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Jeelani and other eminent 'Ulama and Masha'ikh of the time. The Sheikh visited extensively. He died in Baghdad in 1234-35.
- ¹² Kishmi, op. cit., p. 113.
- ¹³ According to Hashim Kishmi, the treatise deals with tasawwuf and

sheds valuable light on various spiritual themes. (p. 117). Sirhindi himself refers to the treatise in one of his brochure *Risalat-i-Tahliliya*, (Published from Karachi, 1965, p. 28).

¹⁴ It is considered one of the standard works dealing with the ascension (Me'raj) of the Holy Prophet of Islam. It gives a scientific discussion on the subject in Arabic language. Kishmi has reproduced its opening and concluding paragraphs. (Kishmi, op. cit., p. 118-20).

¹⁵ It may be noted that it was a tradition in medieval period to be initiated into various sufi silsilahs at a time.

¹⁶ He was a renowned saint of the Sabiriya branch of the Chisti silsilah. He was the resident of Rudauli but in 1491 AD, migrated to Shahabad near Ambala in Punjab, where he lived for 30 years. Finally, in 1526, he settled in Gangohi where he died in 1536-37. He is author of *Maktubat-i-Qudusiyah*. He wrote commentary on *Fusus al-Hikam*. See Nizami, *Tarikh Masha'ikh Chisti*. Vol. 1, pp. 272-4.

¹⁷ Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 92-96.

¹⁸ He was an eminent saint of the Qadiriya Silsilah and played an important role in popularization of order in India. He died in 1573.

¹⁹ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 110.

²⁰ A town near Etawah in present Uttar Pradesh.

²¹ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 126.

²² Ibid., p. 127. Kishmi gives the chronographic term "KHASHE" which reveals 971 A.H.

²³ Khawaja Muhammad Ahsan, *Rauzat al-Qaiyyumiyah*, (Urdu), Part I, Lahore, 1335AH, p. 54.

²⁴ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 127.

²⁵ He was a famous 'alim of Kashmir who migrated to Sialkot in 971/1563 where he established a seminary in which a number of students studied. Kashmiri had among his students the last great theologian of Islam, 'Abdul Hakim Sialkoti (d. 1067/1656), the writer of a super-commentary on the *Sharh al-Maqasid* of Jurjani, besides other treatises. (M Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, London, 1986, p. 140). Kashmiri died in 1010/1601 and was buried in Lahore.

²⁶ Sarfi was born in 908/1501-2 in Kashmir. He was one of the renowned scholars of his time and a well-known poet as well. He was the spiritual successor of great Kubrawi saint Sheikh Husain Khawarizmi. He received from Ibn Hajar the authority to give instructions in Hadith. He traveled far and wide. He died on 18th Zeeq'da 1003/25th July 1595. He was the author of some sublime and beautiful works and wrote many treatises. He wrote a commentary on the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. He is also said to have written a commentary on the Holy Qur'an. See Badayuni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Calcutta, 1869, Vol.

- III, pp. 142-9. Also, A.Q. Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir*, Delhi, 1976, pp. 116-24. Sirhindi also joined the mystic discipline of and received Khilafat from Sarfi in the Kubrawiya and Suhrawardiya orders. (Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 18).
- ²⁷ Rafiqi, op. cit., pp. 221-2. According to Rafiqi, it might be possible that Sirhindi wrote his Risala *Radd-i-Rawafiz* under Sarfi's deep influence.
- ²⁸ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 128.
- ²⁹ Famous tafsir of the Qur'an and still taught in the traditional Muslim educational institutions.
- ³⁰ Also a famous tafsir of the Qur'an.
- ³¹ The full name of the most important collection of Hadith is *al-Jami' al-Sahih al-Musnad al-Mukhtasar min Umir-i-Rasul-Allah*. It contains 7000 traditions collected in about 16 years.
- ³² Also a collection of Hadith.
- ³³ A famous collection of Hadith by Imam Tirmizi.
- ³⁴ One of the most important texts included in the syllabus of Islamic theology.
- ³⁵ A famous poem composed by al-Busiri. No other Arabic poem has attained such fame. About ninety commentaries have been written over it in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Berber.
- ³⁶ Also a famous collection of Hadith, compiled by Abn Muhammad al-Husain bin Mas'ud bin Muhammad al-Bhaghawi (ob. 510/1116), a renowned Sha'fite scholar. It contains 4436 Hadith and was first published in 733/1336. Its first English translation by A. N. Mathew appeared in 1810 from Calcutta.
- ³⁷ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 129.
- ³⁸ Exact period of stay at Agra although not known but historical events show that it was from 990/1583 to 998/1591 (eight years).
- ³⁹ According to Friedman, Sirhindi had been invited to the Mughal court. (Youhanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi*, London, 1971, p. XIII). But the author of *Rauzat al-Qatyyumiya*, disagrees (p. 62).
- ⁴⁰ A commentary on the Holy Qur'an with the distinction of being free from letters containing diacritics. It has been characterized by critics to be a "masterpiece of Arabic writing". It was completed in 1002/1593. See Badayuni, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 300. Also the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. II, p. 871.
- ⁴¹ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 19.
- ⁴² Such ideas were held by many others in royal court. (Ansari, op. cit., p. 18).
- ⁴³ For religious and political ideas of Abul Fadl, see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, pp. 339-373

and *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 117.

⁴⁴ Ansari, op. cit., p. 78.

⁴⁵ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 133.

⁴⁶ He was well versed with those branches of learning, which depend on memory. He acquired the honour of performing pilgrimage to Makkah and Medinah. For a long time he was in the Imperial service. He worked for four years alone and without any co-adjustor, in the project of the translation of *Mahabarta*, which is known as *Ramz Nama*. He was appointed Karori of Thaneshwar and Karnal by Akbar. (Badayuni, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 118-19).

⁴⁷ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴⁸ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Mabda'-wa-Ma'ad*, Karachi, 1984, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁹ Kishmi, op. cit., pp.9-10; Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵⁰ Actually the native of Kashmir but resided permanently at Delhi where he himself had joined the mystic discipline of Khawaja Baqi-Billah.

⁵¹ Khawaja Muhammad Baqi-Billah (actual name Syed Raziuddin) was born in Kabul on 5th Zil Hija 971/16th Dec. 1563. (Kishmi, op. cit., p. 5). His father Qazi Abdus Salam, genealogically a Quraishi Syed, was famous for piety and scholarship. (Ibid.) After completing formal education he spent considerable time in mystic travels. He visited Hindustan, Lahore, Afghanistan and met eminent saints, benefiting from their spiritual experiences. He also visited Kashmir and remained there for about two years in the company of Sheikh Baba Wali (Wali was a Naqashbandi saint and belonged to Khawarism. He came to Kashmir in 999/1590-1 and stayed at the Khanqah of Syed Ali Hamadani). He finally settled down in Delhi in 1008/1599, and devoted himself to the popularity of the Naqashbandiya Silsilah. He died in 1012/1603. (Kishmi, op. cit., p. 18). Baqi Billah did not participate in the Mughal politics but maintained cordial relation with the ruling class.

Baqi Billah laid great emphasis on the adherence to Kitab-wa-Sunnah and considered Tasawwuf a complete devotion and surrender to it. He maintained that no one could become a perfect saint without following the Shari'ah. He advised his disciples to earn livelihood through legal means and personal efforts. (*Kulliyat-i Baqi Billah*, pp. 20-22). He strongly favoured tawakkul (trust in God) and considered it one of the significant features of Islamic mysticism. He also laid emphasis on rabita or tasawwur-i-sheikh and enjoyed to practice it regularly. (Kishmi, op. cit., p. 17). It appears that Baqi Billah believed in wahdat al-wujud, within the framework of the Shari'ah. But it is said that during the last days of his life he changed

- his views. (Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. 1, Letter No. 43).
- ⁵² Sayyid Muhammad Miyan, *'Ulama-i-Hind Ka Shandar Madi*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1963, p. 7.
- ⁵³ It is reported that Baqi-Billah had been spiritually informed of Sirhindi's visit to him. (Kishmi op. cit., p. 141)
- ⁵⁴ Ansari, op. cit., p. 13.
- ⁵⁵ Sirhindi, *Mabda-wa-Ma'ad*, pp. 141-46.
- ⁵⁶ Nadwi, op. cit., p. 155.
- ⁵⁷ *Kulliyat-i-Khawaja Baqi Billah*, op. cit., p. 130. Also Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 144-45.
- ⁵⁸ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. 1, Letter No. 290.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Letter No.279.
- ⁶⁰ In the beginning of the letter, Sirhindi throws light on the initial stages of his mystical journey. Then he describes its second phase and says, "Now I reached some higher stages, the stage of 'Uthman Zenurnin, the third pious caliph. Other caliphs are also authorized to live in this stage. This too is the stage of perfection and direction (maqam-i-takmil-o-irshad). Later on I saw another station, higher to the previous one. I was told that it was place of the second pious caliph, 'Umar al-Faruq and then there is the station of Abu Bakr, the first pious caliph. I visited that very place also. At this stage I found myself accompanied by Khawaja Muhammad Bahuddin Naqashband. And above all there is the stage of Holy Prophet (SAAS). Below this stage and above the stage of Abu Bakr, there was a bright and luminous stage, which I had not seen. I came to know that it was Maqam-i-Mahbubiyat, the stage of divine love and I experienced this stage also. Thence I found myself like air and clouds. Khawaja Bahauddin Naqashband resides in the stage of Siddiq Akbar. (Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. 1, Letter No.11).
- ⁶¹ Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 153-154.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- ⁶⁵ Nadwi, op. cit., p. 156.
- ⁶⁶ Ansari, op. cit., p. 14.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ Kishmi, op.cit., p. 32.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.
- ⁷⁰ The town was built by Nasir Khan Faruqi, the ruler of Khandesh, in 1400 A.D., in the memory of Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib, a Khalifa of Sheikh Nizam al-Din Awliya. See Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Farishta, *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi (Tarikh Farishta)*. Lucknow, 1322 AH,

- p. 279.
- ⁷¹ Muhammad Baqa, *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa*, (MS, in British Museum), Rotograph in the Research Library, Department of History, A.M.U.
- ⁷² He is also the author of *Nusmot al-Quds*. The manuscript of this work belongs to the Leningrad University Library, USSR. (See C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature*, London, 1972, p. 990).
- ⁷³ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 347.
- ⁷⁴ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 299ff.
- ⁷⁵ Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 382-83.
- ⁷⁶ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., pp. 329-30.
- ⁷⁷ Kishmi, op. cit., p. 335.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 351.
- ⁷⁹ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 201 ff.
- ⁸⁰ Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 343-46.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 383.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 198.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 202.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 205.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 208.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 210.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 284.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 285.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 290; Badr al-Din Sirhindi, op. cit., p. 190.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁹¹ For details see Ibid., (Kishmi), pp. 293-94, and Ibid., (Badr al-Din Sirhindi), pp. 190-93.
- ⁹² C. H. Philips, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylone*, London, 1961, p. 132.
- ⁹³ Zawwar Husain, *Hadhrat Majaddid-i Alf-i Thani*, Karachi, 1975, p. 683.
- ⁹⁴ *The Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani* have been frequently published. A complete Persian text was published from Lucknow, Nawal Kishore, 1877. Again published by Sher Muhammad Khan from Delhi, Matba' Ahmadi in 1871. Amritsar, 1331-4 AH; Delhi, Matba' Murtadwi in 1873; Lahore, Nur Company, 1964 and Istanbul (Turkey), 1977.
- ⁹⁵ The brochure is reported to have been written in 990-1/1582-3, at Agra (Zawwar Husain, op. cit., pp. 676-77). It has been published in 1303/1963 by the Kutb Khana Idara Mujaddidiyah, Karachi along with Urdu translation.
- ⁹⁶ Friedmann, op. cit., p. 5.
- ⁹⁷ Published in 1964 from Lahore, by Idarah Sayyidiyah Mujaddidiya. Also published by Hashmat 'Ali Khan from Rampur, in 1964, with

- Urdu translation by Ghulam Mustafa Khan along with the text.
- ⁹⁸ Kabir Khan, "A Select Bibliography on Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi", *The Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Winter 1992, pp. 65-71.
- ⁹⁹ Abul Hasan Zaid Faruqi, *Hadhrat Mujaddid Aur Unke Naqidin*, Delhi, 1977, p. 47.
- ¹⁰⁰ Published from Delhi, 1889; Amritsar 1912; Karachi, 1968.
- ¹⁰¹ Zawwar Husain, op. cit., pp. 680-1; Friedmann, op. cit., p. 5.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., (Friedmann), p. 59; Kishmi, op. cit., pp. 141-4, 170-4.
- ¹⁰³ Published from Lahore in 1965 by Idarah Sayyidiyah Mujaddidiyah. First Urdu translation along with the text by Idarah Mujaddidiyah, Karachi, in 1965.
- ¹⁰⁴ For details see, Badayuni, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 273.
- ¹⁰⁵ Published from Rampur 1889; Lahore 1956-57; Karachi 1965. Urdu translation along with the text was published from Karachi, Idarah Mujaddidiyah, 1968.
- ¹⁰⁶ Friedmann, op. cit., p. 5.
- ¹⁰⁷ The text with Urdu translation was published from Karachi, Idarah Majaddidiyah in 1964.
- ¹⁰⁸ Zawwar Husain, op. cit., p. 792.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 682.
- ¹¹⁰ Published from Lahore in 1965. The text with Urdu translation published from Karachi, in 1966.