

## **Ethical Philosophy of Sayyid Ali Hamadani (R.'A.): An Overview**

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Like other Islamic sciences, Muslim scholars contributed to the development of Islamic ethics under the divine guidance and in the light of the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and the life and practices of the Suhaba (R.'A), Taba'yn and Taba Taba'yn.

In various streams of writings the terms and concepts which are either part of or relevant to Islamic ethics found elaboration in one way or the other. The Philosophical works like that of Abu Nasr al- Farabi (d. 329/950), Abu 'Ali Miskawaih (d.421/1030), Nasir al-Din Tusi (d.672/1273) and Jalal al-Din Dawwani (d.908/1502) are replete with such elaborations. The theologians seem to be very much concerned with the issues like the sources of ethical knowledge, the basis of moral obligations and the meaning and interpretation of ethical terms. However, while discussing the questions of human freedom, responsibility and divine justice they have taken different positions either like that of Jabarites (determinists), or Mu'atazilites (free-willers), or Ash'arites or Maturids. Works on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and the structure and objectives of the Islamic *Shari'ah* have discussed some normative questions and touched upon the knowledge of the *shari'ah* rules and the basis of their ethical obligation. Here, reference could be made of *al-Mustafa Min 'Ilm al-Usul* by Imam Ghazzali (d.1111), *Qawai'd al Ahkam i*

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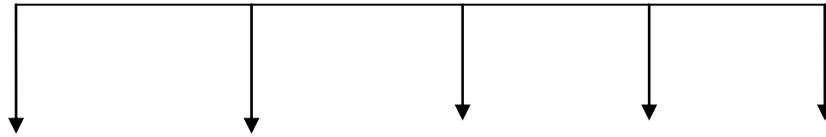
*Masalih al-Anam* by ‘Abd al-Salam (d.660/1262) and *al-Muwafaqat* by Abu Ishaq al Shatibi (d.790/1388). In these works, besides other issues, these scholars have raised the question of the ultimate purpose or objective of the *Shari’ah*. The answer, by and large, seems to be that the rules of the *shari’ah* have been designed to produce *masaliha* and remove *mafasid* and these appear certainly their ends and objectives. The *shari’ah*, in fact, aims at a comprehensive and balanced well being of human beings. In the political works of scholars like al-Mawardi (d.450/1058) and economic writings of jurists like Qadi Abu Yusuf there are discussions that help us to understand the Islamic concept of political and economic justice and ethics.

Thus, before Hamadani scholars contributed in various ways to the concept and prospect of Islamic ethics. Hamadani’s conception is, however, very comprehensive and exhaustive in nature. He asserts that everything that Allah has created is microcosmically present in the human body. The human heart which apparently is a small piece of flesh is very big (*kabir*) in its meaning and dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Human body is like a kingdom. The soul is its ruler (*Khalifah*). The human body is a microcosm in itself. Hamadani calls it “*alam saghir*” a small universe.<sup>2</sup> He maintains that the self has two powers, *muharrika* (motor) and *mudrika* (sensory).<sup>3</sup> The motor power also has two propensities: (a) active power (*quwwat-i- fa’ila*) which causes conservative movements (b) motivational power (*quwat-baisa*). It is classified as (i) appetite (*quwwat-al-shahwaniya*) and (ii) anger (*quwwat al- ghadabiya*). These are among the *muhlikat*(vices), but are necessary for the very existence of man.

Allah has bestowed man with two types of knowledge or apprehensions, one is called as the external apprehension and the second is termed as internal apprehension. The former includes five things; sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. This

knowledge or apprehension is the result of the combination of four elements, fire, water, air and earth. The internal apprehension is manifested in the following few dispositions (a) *quwwat-al-qalabi* (sense relating to heart) (b) *quwwat-al-‘aql’* (soul) and (d) *quwwat-al- khafi* (secret disposition). Hamadani says that each of them are known as the existential or earthly angelic power (*quwwat al-malaika al-ardi*).

In his *Dhakhiratu’l Muluk*, Sayyid gives another classification of internal senses. He divides human brain into five parts. Each part possesses its own sense.



- (1) Common sense (2) Imagination (3) Memory (4) Reflection (5) Reason  
*(hiss-i-mushtarika) (khayal) (hafiza) (dhakira) (‘aql)*

Hamadani says that common sense controls all the five senses. It picks up the information received by five senses. They are stored by imagination in *Khayal* and recalled by memory, *Hafiza*. *Khayal* (imagination) resides in the second part of the brain. The memory is located in the third part. To save it from the loss and forgetfulness the power of recollection (*dhakira*) works. It resides in the fourth part of the brain. It is the door keeper (*hajib*) of the reason. Reason differentiates between the good and evil deeds<sup>4</sup>. It is due to this reason that man’s soul gets nearness to Allah.<sup>5</sup>

Hamadani states that every creature is over-powered either by the good qualities (virtues) or evil dispositions (vices). The angles are dominated by the qualities of purity.<sup>6</sup> The Prophets possess the qualities of propagation and preaching of truth and are ruled by the commands and negations from Allah. The saints and Sufis are dominated by the passion of love

(*muhabbat*), yearning (*shauq*), will (*irada*) and the *Tawhid* (unity of Allah).<sup>7</sup>

According to Hamadani, human existence has two aspects; (a) the external aspect which includes his outer individuality and; (b) the internal aspect which consists in his inner individuality. The external appearance is called as *surat-i-zahir* and the internal as *sirat-i-batin*.<sup>8</sup> The former is created (*khalaq*) and the latter is moral (*khulq*). Both the aspects are either beautiful (*husn*) or ugly (*qubh*).<sup>9</sup> If there is a proportion, moderation and harmony in ones bodily organs it will be a beautiful appearance (*husn-i- surat*). Likewise, if there is moderation and balance in qualities, which are inherent in man it is called internal beautification (*husn-i- sirat*).

when man keeps balance in these forces, in him emerge the qualities of knowledge (*ilm*), wisdom (*hikmah*), piety (*taqwa*), munificence (*sakha*), courage (*shuja*), forbearance (*hilm*), humility (*tawazuh*), chastity (*ifa*), justice (*adl*).<sup>10</sup> If man is overpowered by evil forces and his reason is dominated by it, in him emerge the vices like, pride (*Kibr*), greed (*hirs*), miserliness (*bukhl*), self-love (*ujb*), jealousy (*hasad*), hypocrisy (*riya*).

Hamadani, like al-Ghazali, classifies the means into different groups in accordance with their usefulness or harmfulness: (a) Useful in both the worlds, for example knowledge (*ilm*) and good character (*husn-i-sirat*). Hamadani affirms that these two things are real gifts or benefits or means (*nimat-i-haqiqi*). Only the ignorant ones cannot get benefit from them. They are commendable in both the worlds.<sup>11</sup> (b) Harmful in this world but useful in the next world. Hamadani calls them as relative gifts (*majazi*), for these are not the gifts in the strict sense but lead to the real gift (*ni'amat-i-haqiqi*). These are of two kinds (i) physical, just as to take bitter medicine in illness with patience; (ii) spiritual, just as to abandon passions and resist the lower self, for ignorant ones it is a trouble but for Prophets and mystic it is a real gift<sup>12</sup>(c) which in appearance

seem to be useful but in actual are harmful. Hamadani calls these as “*ni‘amat-i-al-wahmi*.” They are of two kinds (i) related to world, for example, to take the honey in which poison is mixed. The ignorant one’s take it with likeness. It leads them to destruction,<sup>13</sup> (ii) related to next world, for example to do evil deeds. The ignorant ones think them gifts because of their pleasure. But to mystics (*arbab-i-qalub*) they are the real trouble for they lead to the bodily torture and shamefulness.<sup>14</sup>

There are two qualities in man, the divine and the devilish. The divine qualities are related with reason and the devilish qualities with passions. Hamadani says that there is a continuous tussle amongst these two rival forces in man. He acknowledges the existence of two kingdoms in the body. The soul is the ruler of the divine kingdom, the reason is its vizier, the controller (*jazm*) is its vicergent, the will its door keeper (*hajib*), justice is its judge (*qadi*), the thought (*fikr*) is its peruser (*musharraf*), the memory (*hafiza*) is its writer (*katib*), recollection (*dhikr*) is its door keeper, the bossom (*sadr*) is its post man (*burid*), the heart (*qalb*) is its friend (*nadim*) and the spiritual powers (*qawa-i-ruhani*) are its army (*lashkar*).<sup>15</sup>

The other kingdom is headed by passions. To the ruler of this kingdom, Hamadani uses the title as Amir. He does not use the word Caliph (*Khalifa*) for it. There may be two reasons: (a) that there inheres a piety to the word Caliph and it cannot be used for a perverted ruler; (b) That the Amir is under the subjugation of caliph but rebels frequently as and when gets opportunity. It is not a real ruler but a usurper. Hamadani being a Sufi supports this view. He frequently emphasizes on the weakening of the devilish forces. Like the divine kingdom, here again, there are various nobles which serve this kingdom. The superstition (*wahm*) is its vizier, the deceitfulness (*makr*) is its viceregent, the procrastination (*taswif*) its door keeper (*hajib*), the stratagem (*kaid*) is its judge (*qadi*), the treachery (*ghadr*) is its pursuer, the greed is its guard, (*ujb*) is its friend (*nadim*) and

the animal powers (*quwai-i-haiwani*) are its army (*lashkar*).<sup>16</sup> Hamadani derives this analogy from the then existing political system. The *vizier*, *naib*, *katib*, *nadim*, *musharraf*, *hajib*, *burid* were the different posts in the court. The two kingdoms can be well illustrated as:

**i) The Divine Kingdom**

- Soul is the ruler
- Reason is the vizier
- Will its controller (*Hajib*)
- ‘*Adl* its judge (*Qadi*)
- Fikr* (thought) is perused
  
- Hafiza* (memory) its writer (*Katib*)
- Dhikr* the doorkeeper
- Qalb*, the heart its, friend (*Nadim*)
  
- Quwwat-i-Ruhani* (spiritual powers) are its army (*Lashkar*)

**(ii) The Devilish Kingdom**

- It is headed by passions.
  
- *Wahm*(superstitious) is its vizier
- Makr* (deceitfulness) its vicegerent
- *Taswif*, the procrastination is *Hajib* (doorkeeper)
- Kaid*, the stratagem its judge (*Qadi*)
- Ghadr*, the treachery its peruser.
- Hirs* (greed) its guard
- Expectation the *katib*
- Kiahib* self(*ujb*)the friend (*Nadim*)
  
- Quwwat-i-Haiwani* (animal powers) are its (*Lashkar*) .

And in accordance with the dominance of these powers the men are classified into five categories:

- (a) The saved friends of Allah who are deemed to be true believers. They are of two kinds: (i) The Righteous ones (ii) The mystics.
- (b)Unbelievers and polytheists;
- (c)Conspirator;
- (d)Insistent sinners;
- (e)Hypocrites.<sup>17</sup>

The knowledge of Allah has many forms. It is differentiated on the basis of one’s perfection, ability and capacity. Like al-Ghazali, Hamadani states the following three fundamental forms of the knowledge of Allah. The lowest form of knowledge is to know that there is a God, who is one,

Omnipotent, eternal and Incomparable. He did what He willed and will do what He wills. This kind of knowledge is shared with all faithful persons by animals and mountains. It is innate.<sup>18</sup>

The second type of knowledge is rational. It is the conventional knowledge which is concerned with the objects and information regarding them. It is attained through the words of the Books and Tradition. It includes the traditional or rational proofs of Allah.<sup>19</sup>

The third type of knowledge is attained through the vision (*mushahadah*). It is imparted to the Prophets and the friends of Allah after the purification of the heart and the soul, through revelation, divine intuition, angelic inspiration and divine secrets. At this stage man is lost in the divine secrets due to continuous inspirations.

Hamadani states that love of Allah results from divine blessings and divine mercy. Allah out of His mercy bestows it upon His servants. When they are gifted with it they have the knowledge of the divine secrets. It purifies heart from all impurities. It ends all the causes of eternal destruction of man and leads him to the nearness of Allah.<sup>20</sup> Knowledge of Allah leads to the love of Allah and the love of Allah to His vision. It can, however, be deduced from his writings that to him the vision of Allah is not possible in this world but in the life here after. A traveller can know the secrets of the world in this life but cannot have His vision.

Hamadani's ethical system is very much similar, both in its form as well as in its content, to that of al-Ghazali. His analysis of the nature of man, the ultimate end and the means of its attainment is essentially Ghazalian. But his description of virtues that leads to the attainment of the ultimate end, though follows Ghazalian form, seems to have been influenced by Shaikh Najmud-Din-Kubra, the founder of the Kubrawiya order, in its contents.

Hamadani like Shaikh Najmud-Din-Kubra has laid down ten basic principles of excellences (i.e., virtues) to attain the highest end or *sa'adat*. These include; *Tauba*(repentance), *Zuhd* (abstinence), *Tawakkul* (Trust in Allah), *Qana't*(contentment), *Sabr* (Patience), *Muraqaba*(Contemplation), *Rida*(Conciliation).

Hamadani gives an extensive list of the virtues in his *Risala Fuqriya*. These include: remembrance, thought, determination, fear, hope, lament, attention, humility, abstinence, self-restraint, sincerity, trust in Allah, submission, total surrender, patience, conciliation, thankfulness, modesty, truthfulness, sacrifice, will, conviction, devotion, poverty, knowledge, forbearance, wisdom, insight, understanding, peace, love, yearning, Unity of Allah, and annihilation. All these virtues, according to him, are also the stages of the Sufi path.<sup>21</sup>

Allah created the entire creatures from nothing ('*adam*). Man is the epitome of all creatures. Allah bestowed him with the beauty of faith (*husn-i- iman*) and recognition and wisdom (*irfan*). He made love and *Futut* complementary for his perfection. *Futut* is from the munificence of Allah. It is the alchemy of the eternity. Allah breathed it into human soul. It was partly present in every prophet but was perfected in Prophet Muhammad (SAAS).<sup>22</sup> One can attain it in the relation to him. *Futut* is, on the one hand, a stage of Sufi path, and, on the other, it runs through all the stages of the path. It is the soul of all stages.

Hamadani states that the word *akhi* (brother) is a word of common use. But in its real sense it has a broader connotation. The common people do use it in its literal sense and do not understand its real meaning.<sup>23</sup> They are ignorant of the realities of the religion (*Din*). Some people call others as their brothers because of their interests. But it results in nothing except enmity.<sup>24</sup>

Hamadani holds that *Futut* has a wide connotation but concludes that it consists of four major pillars. He accepts it on the authority of Hadrat Ali,(R.A) whom he accepts as the leader (*Iman*) of pious ones and the embodiment of *Futut*.

- (a) To forgive others even after being powerful.
- (b) To keep forbearance in the stage of anger.
- (c) To do good with enemy.
- (d) To sacrifice for others even after being in need.<sup>25</sup>

Hamadani says that it is related with the rights of people. He classifies men broadly into two groups: (a) favoured by Allah (*muqbulan-i- hazrat-i- samadiyat*), (b) damned by Allah (*mardudan-i- bargah*). The latter are further classified into two groups: (i) the people of distress (*ahl-i- shaqawat*), (ii) the people in loss (*ahl-i-khasarat*).

Hamadani states that *sa'adah* is attained through these types of prayers and obedience:

- a) The prayers related to heart: it includes the unity of Allah, trust in Allah, patience, thankfulness, submission, resignation, truthfulness, sincerity, pleasure, conviction, love and cognition etc. these are the key to intuition and comprehension and are the stages of *Sufi* course also.<sup>26</sup>
- b) Bodily prayers: they are of two types (i) which are concerned with Allah like *Salah* and *Saum.*, (ii) which are related to creatures. It is beautification and related to the rights of man. The liquidation of the rights of Allah is not possible for the common people. The Sufi alone do it in the real sense. The common people worship Allah either traditionally or to avoid shameful. Every creature is dominated by some specific quality. It may be a good quality (virtue) or evil quality (vice).<sup>28</sup> Man becomes animal, a beast, a devil or an angel according to the dominance of these qualities. We may reduce these qualities into two groups; the angelic, for example, reason if it operates in

moderation and the satanic like, appetite and anger, if they deviate from the path of moderation. Thus both anger and appetite are not in themselves satanic. It is the deviation from the path of moderation that makes them devilish.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Allah has created these forces in man for his protection. If they are controlled and used for the very purpose for which they are created, they lead man to *sa'adat*. But, if they dominate him, they lead him to *shaqawa*, ultimate destruction.<sup>30</sup> Hamadani calls them as '*muhlikat*'.<sup>31</sup>

In his *Risala-i-Dah-Qa'idah* Hamadani gives a classification of True believers into three kinds:

- (I) *Arbab-i- Mu'amalat*; the common Muslims who follows the external rules of religion. They perform the obligatory duties.
- (II) *Arbab-i- Mujahidat and Muqtasidan*; who constantly purge their hearts from evil and dross.
- (III) The Mystics; They travel to the court of Most High, the *Sa'iran-i-Hadrat-i-Samadiyahat* .They have controlled not only their own self but their will also. They are most near to Allah.

Sayyid lays down 10 (ten) basic principles of excellence to attain this highest end or *Sa'adat*. These are:

(1) **Tauba** (*repentance/return to Allah*): It implies a deliberate abandonment of all the vices. It means *raju'Ilallah*. It is to give up all the objects and sins which are obstacles in the way of Allah. One can return to Allah either voluntarily or involuntarily. Giving up all vices consciously is a voluntary act while as death (which is also *raju'Ilallah*) is involuntary act. *Taubah* is imperative for attaining *sa'adat*. One should have a firm conviction in the *wahdat* of Allah and should purify his heart from all impurities.

(2) **Zuhd** (*austerity/Abstinence*): Here, one should voluntarily give up all undesirable wishes and desires. One should neither

be pleased on possession of worldly things nor grieved at their loss.

(3) **Tawwakul** (*absolute Trust in Allah*): Hamadani asserts that the *Salik* should abandon all the things and relations voluntarily for the pleasure of Allah. He should trust in Allah completely and without any hesitation and qualification. It helps one to attain *Sa'adat*.

(4) **Qana'at** (*contentment*): A good realization of the transitory and the eternal life leads one to contentment. One should take only that much which is necessary for his life. One should maintain moderation and should rely upon minimum requirements.

(5) **Sabr** (*patience*): It is obligatory to remain patient on the illness, grief and hardships. Those who bear the hardships and remain content on the will of Allah are bestowed with gifts of Him. The cultivation of religious excellences and *Sa'adat* is related to patience.

(6) **Muraqabah** (*contemplation*): Here, at every moment one remains in the presence of Allah. At the first stage the devotee continuously keeps his eye on the goal. At the second stage often the purification of heart from all things waits for the blessings of Allah.

(7) **Solitude**: It is one of the ways to attain salvation. One should not sit in the company of the people except his guide. The *Salik* should be like a corpse in the hands of his *murshid* (preceptor) who purifies his heart as the Ghosaal (*Bather*) washes the dead person.

(8) **Tawajjuh** (*perfect attention*): It means to present one's self entirely with all devotion before Allah. It also implies the

negligence of all the stages and rising higher to all claims. One should pay no attention towards anything except Allah.

**(9) *Dhikr* (remembrance of Allah):** It is spiritual medicine, comprising both negative and positive elements. It aims to forget voluntarily the remembrance of everything except Allah. Hamadani favours inward *dhikr*.

**(10) *Rida* (to be pleased):** It is highest stage. It means to accept voluntarily and pleasingly that what comes from Allah. Here, one should give up his wishes and will for the will of Allah. To Hamadani, it is a stage (*maqam*) in Sufi path.

Hamadani also elaborates his views on some vices like: pride, greed, vanity, miserliness, hypocrisy etc.<sup>32</sup>

**Miserliness:** It is the first amongst the seven major vices. Generosity, '*karam*' is one of the attributes of Allah and miserliness is its opposite. Thus it is one of the greatest vices.<sup>33</sup>

**Anger:** Hamadani states that anger is power which has been embedded in the nature of man to keep away the destructive and harmful things from him. The power of anger is manifested in revenge, which brings satisfaction to his excited self. one who is caught by excessive anger becomes ignorant of its harms.

The anger like all other qualities has three degrees: (a) excessive, (b) deficient and (c) moderate. In its excessive expression, anger overcomes the man and his reason is unable to see any expediency.<sup>34</sup>

In this stage he needs a company of virtuous ones. If he is accompanied by ignorant ones, who on the basis of their ignorance call his anger as bravery and source of his perfection,

he is caught by anger.<sup>35</sup> It comes into its real expressions, when he ignores the advice of others. He loses the distinction of good and evil.

**Pride:** All vices, says Hamadani, are rooted in pride and vanity. It is obligatory to overcome them. One can overcome these and purify his heart from all impurities in two ways.<sup>36</sup>

(a) The realization of faults of the self and their result.

(b) Realization of the power and wisdom of Allah. Realization of the self leads one to realization of Allah. Hamadani states that one should realize the various stages of the development of his self, as it will lead him to realization of Allah and ultimately to *Sa'ada*.

Hamadani states that the Pride is the source of other vices like; miserliness, envy, backbiting and lie and all these vices lead one to hell. The pride is the source of anger and the anger is the cause of Allah's wrath.

From the foregoing analysis of human nature, it is clear that, according to Hamadani, all bodily organs and mental faculties have been created to help man to realize the ideal but it is knowledge which makes possible the right use of all these qualities in him and enables him to realize it. Everything has some special purpose or end for which it is created. If it is achieved, it renders happiness. There must be some ultimate end to which all things return, "beyond which nothing can be desired"<sup>37</sup> and it must give the greatest happiness. Hamadani calls this end as *sa'ada*, or *saadat-i- ukhravi* or *saadat-i- abadi* or *saadat-i- haqiqi*.<sup>38</sup> To him *sa'ada* is the end. But no end is end in itself, it becomes a means for another end. The end in itself is *saadet-i-ukhravi*. All other ends are means to this end. Any end which is not a means to this end is not *saada*.

**Reference and Notes**

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- <sup>1</sup> Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani, *Dhakhiratu’l Muluk*, Niyaz Ali Khan Tajir Kutub, Matba ‘i Afghani. Amritsar, 1321A.H p. 119.
- <sup>2</sup> Idem.
- <sup>3</sup> The *Muharrika* also has two propensities; (a) *Quwwat-i- Fa ‘ila* (active power) which causes conservative movements e.g. trembling of the body; (b) *Quwwat-i- Baisa* (motivational power).
- <sup>4</sup> S.M. D. Nadvi, *Muslim Thought and Its Sources*, M. Ashraf, Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore, n.d., pp. 64-65.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.42.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.223.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.232.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.230..
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.230.
- <sup>10</sup> Op.Cit. pp. 11-12.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.,p.20.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.,p.24.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.,p.28.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.,p.31.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.,p.47.
- <sup>16</sup> M.M. Sharif (Ed), *History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol.I, Pakistan, 1966, p.306.
- <sup>17</sup> Ansari A.H. *The Ethical Philosophy of Ibn-Miskawaih*.p41.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.,p.70.
- <sup>19</sup> A.H. Ansari, *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih*, A.M.U., Aligarh, 1964, p. 41.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.,p.208
- <sup>21</sup> Hamadani, *Risala -i- Fuqriya*, O.R.D., Srinagar, p.116b.
- <sup>22</sup> Hamadani, *Risala -i- Fututia*, O.R.D., Srinagar, p.61b.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.,p.62a.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.,p.62a.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.,p.65b.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.,p.68a.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.,p.68a.
- <sup>28</sup> Hamadani, *Dhakhiratu’l Muluk*,Op.Cit., p. 136.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.,p.58.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.,p.66.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.,p.58.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,p.66.

<sup>33</sup> Hamadani, *Risala-i- Akhlaqia*, O.R.D., Srinagar.p.12.

<sup>34</sup> Hamadani, *Dhakhiratu 'l Muluk*,Op.Cit., p. 252.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,p.253.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.,p.257.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.,p.16.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.,p.16.