

Muhammad Avfi's works in India A Brief Survey

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Well-known Muslim thinkers of the East have produced fundamental works at different times, which are considered a contribution to the development of world science, history, culture and, in general, the world's spiritual and cultural heritage. One of them was Muhammad ibn Muhammad Avfi, who was a poet, historian, literary critic and public official.

Short biography of Muhammad Avfi.

Full name of Avfi is Sedidaddin Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Tahir ibn Osman Avfi Bukhari Mervezi. Different sources indicate his birth town as Nishapur, Merv and Bukhara. However, we exactly know that he was from Merv. His father and grandfather were also well-known scientists in Merv.

Muhammad Avfi is a descendant of Abdurrahman ibn Avf - one of the dearest companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad,¹ for which he earned the nickname - Avfi. His father - Qadi Imam Abu Sherefeddin Tahyr Yahya Avfi was considered as a luminary of science in studying the Hadith and genealogy of Arabs in Transoxiana and Merv.² Uncle of Muhammad Avfi, Sherefuzzaman Mejdeddin Muhammad ibn Adnan Zyyaeddin Surhaketu was a skilled healer and served at the court of Sultan Gilich Tamgach Khan Ybrayym ibn Husseyn - the penultimate ruler, the heir to the western branch of the Garahany (Garahitayi) dynasty.³ Muhammad Avfi has traveled a lot, studied science at the feet of many prominent thinkers that had a significant influence on the development of his talent.

Date of birth of Muhammad Avfi is not precisely known,

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but date - 1171-1176 which is the most probable. After graduation from the madrasa in Bukhara, Avfi looking for the first earnings went to Samarkand, but did not stay there for a long time and returned back.⁴ In 1200 he again went to Samarkand, where with the help of his uncle Mejdeddin Surhaketli came to the court of Prince Royal of the western branch of the Gharahany dynasty in Transoxiana - Gilich Arslan Hakan Nusrateddin Uthman ibn Ybrahim (approximate time of governing 1202-1211 years.). Deep scientific knowledge of the scientist brought him high respect and soon he was assigned as the head officer of senior noble [12, 45-46]. Not long after serving in this position, Muhammad Avfi goes to Khorasan in 1204, where he stayed until 1219 and visited cities Nisa, Amul, Khorezm, Merv, Nishapur, Herat, Isfizar, Isfirayn, Shehri-Nov, Sistan, Fereh and Gazna.

During his long journey Avfi meets prominent scientists, expands his scientific knowledge, and eventually gets the blessing of some of them to transfer ahadith and legends to others. In addition, Avfi was the trustee of Khorezmshahs dynasty. In 1219 he returns back to the hordes of Mongol invaders to the destroyed Bukhara, then, among many others, scientists were forced to leave home and go to India.

In 1220 he had to move to India. After Gazna he visited the cities of Sind region - Lahore, Bakkar, Gunabad, Nehrvale, Uch, made meaningful scientific discussions with scholars and thinkers of the area, and also served in the court of the rulers. At first, he was a court scholar at one of emirs of Gur - Turkish Sultan Nasireddin Gubaja, who ruled in 1203-1228. Many scholars and thinkers from Khorasan, Gur and Gazna arrived to the court of the monarch. With his support, they were engaged in a fruitful creative activity.⁵ The exact date of arrival of Avfi to India is unknown, but some sources show that in 1220 he was at the court of the Sultan Nasireddin Gubaja.⁶

Until 1228, Muhammad Avfi serves as *qadi* (judge) in Lahore, Bakkar, Uch and Gunabad of Sind region. During this

period, he translated the work Tanukhi, *al-Faraju Ba'dash-Shiddah*, from the Arabic into Persian. In the court of Nasireddin Gubaja he started to write his first book *Lubabul-albab* and dedicated it to the wise vizier of Sultan Aynilmulk Fakhruddin Sharafulmulk Raziyyuddin Abu Bakr Ash'ari. In 1228, there was a siege of the city Uch and the battle between the armies of sultan Nasyreddin Gubaja and Shemseddin Iltutmush (founder of the sultanate Shemsie in Delhi, period of the reign is 1210-1235). In this battle Nasyreddin Gubaja was defeated, and could not bear sorrow and shame, therefore he rushed into the river Sind, where he drowned.

After the death of Lord all his treasures and scholars that worked at his court, including Muhammad Avfi, who started writing *Javami al-Hekayat* by assignment of Nasyreddin Gubaja, appeared before the sultan Shemseddin Iltutmush.⁷ From 1228, the scientist begins his service in Delhi in the palace of the Sultan Iltutmush and continues to work on *Javami al-Hekayat*, dedicating his work to his new vizier - Nizamulmulk Muhammad ibn Abu Sagt Juneydi. This fundamental work was completed in 1233. About the later life of Muhammad Avfi, no accurate information is preserved. Presumably, he died in 1233-1242.

Outstanding scientist, historian and writer Muhammad Avfi while serving at the court and under the patronage of powerful Turkmen Muslim rulers, used the richest libraries of that epoch to produce his most valuable scientific works. Avfi mainly worked in Merv and Khorezm, using thousands of valuable books which were stored there, also referring to tens of most important sources which did not survive. The purpose of his trips to various parts of the region was not the thirst for wealth and fame, but the only service to science in an effort to bequeath valuable luggage of cognition to future generations.⁸

Barbarian invasions of Mongol hordes, which destroyed in fire many centers of science and libraries, destroyed thousands of valuable scientific sources in various fields of

science. In his writings, Muhammad Avfi names more than 140 such works, which makes it possible to predict that he took with him a lot of different books in his journey to India. During his visits, Avfi not only learned the science, but he also was engaged in educational work.

Creative heritage of Muhammad Avfi: *Lubabul-Albab*.

Tazkire (anthology) in two volumes, includes a brief biography of 299 poets from high antiquity to the beginning of the 13th century, which made him to produce his works in Persian, as well as some excerpts from their poetic creations. This is the first anthology of poets who wrote verses in Persian. Such works were produced before Muhammad Avfi (*Menakibush-Shugara* of Abu Tahir Khatuni and *Chahar Maqala* of Nizami Aruzi Samarkandi), but they had no sustained theme, and therefore they were not considered in the full sense of the word *Tezkire* (anthology) that is the book, specifically devoted to the life and works of poets. *Lubabul-Albab* was completed in approximately 1221.

The work *Lubabul-Albab* forestalls the prologue, then it follows with 12 chapters. In I-IV chapters the author starts a conversation about the subtle world of poetry and poetic creativity, about the peculiarities of the impact of the lyrics to the spiritual world of man, and an amazing ability to be stored in memories for a long time. Then there is a speech about the content of the word *sha'r* (verse) (that is "knowledge, "cognition"), which states that because of this exact particularity it was named as *sha'r* ("verses"). It follows with information about first poets and a man, who first wrote a poem in Farsi. The author writes that after the spread of Islam, a resident of Merv Abbas ibn Tarhan Mervezi also began to write a poem in Farsi. When the khalifa of the Abbasi dynasty in 806-813, Mamun came to Merv for the first time, Mervezi dedicated a few lines of verses to him. Consequently, after about 400 years of break, the Turkmen poet gave a new life to poetry

in Farsi and has produced a standard of creative direction for the next generation of poets who write in Farsi.

Chapter V of the book *Lubabul-Albab* is devoted to biographies of 27 Shahs, emirs, governors of Ghazna, Seljuk, Khorezmshahs and Garahany dynasties, their poetic creativity. In Chapter VI the story of 43 vizir and government officials, who left behind a legacy of poetry is provided. Among them we can read short biography and some poetry of great vizirs like Ali ibn Hasan Bakhyrzy - Secretary of Sultan Togrul-Beg, Nizamulmulk – vizir Sultan Malik Shah, Muinudin Asamm - vizier of Sultan Sanjar and Reshidud-Din Watwat - head of the office of the Khorezm State.

Biographies and poems of 62 poets and thinkers are the contents of Chapter VII of the work of Muhammad Avfi. The Chapter is divided into sections, and sub-sections: poets and thinkers of Transoxiana, poets and thinkers of Khorasan, poets and thinkers of the sacred land of Merv, poets and thinkers of Nishapur, poets and thinkers of Herat and Sistan, poets and thinkers of Ajam (Iranian) Iraq, poets and thinkers of Gazna and Lahore.

Thus, these seven chapters that make up Volume I of the book are devoted to individuals for whom poetry was in some way an enthusiasm.

Volume II of *Lubabul-Albab* consists of chapters VIII-XII, and, unlike the first volume, it tells about people who have dedicated to poetry his whole life. Chapter VIII contains information about more than 30 poets from the reign of the sons of Leis (868-903 years), sons of Takhir (820-872 years) and sons of Saman (820-999 years). In the Chapter IX of this work, biographical information and excerpts from poems of 29 poets from the reign of Ghaznavies is offered to the reader, like Kesayi Mervezi, Asjadi Mervezi, Muzaffar Penjehi and others.

Chapters X-XI, which form the bases of the second volume, devoted to the poets who worked during the reign of

the Seljuks. This part of the book differentiates the information about place of birth or the formation of 103 poets. Mu'ezzi, Azrakhi, Adib Sabir, Anvari Abiwerdi, Semayy Mervezi, Fakhreddin Gurgeni, Nizami Aruzi Samarkhandi, Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Zahir Faryabi, Shamsuddin Mubarak shah, the famous poets of this period.

Last Chapter – XII of the work contains biographical information and excerpts from poems of poets that were during the reign Nasyreddin Gubaja, and in the afterword, the author, expressing his gratitude for the support in this work, devotes a kind of ode to the monarch.

Thanks to the famous book *Lubabul-Albab* of Muhammad Avfi some names and excerpts from the works of poets who composed their works in Persian before a devastating invasion by the Mongol hordes reached us. The Indian historian Golamali Khan Azad Bilgrami (d.1784) in his anthology *Hazanayi-amyra* speaks about the importance of the work of Avfi as follows: "All later authors of *tezkira* that are writing the life of the early poets are his (Avfi - D.O.) students".⁹ Davletsha Samarkandi, who considered himself as a pioneer in writing *tezkira* of poets and who has not read the book of Avfi *Lubabul-Albab*, did not have any information, in particular, about the poets of the reign of Saffar, Saman and Ghaznav dynasties. He mixed the extant evidences about the lives of some poets with fairy tales, tall tales, which significantly reduces the scientific value of provided details. This fact clearly indicates to really great scientific value of the work *Lubabul-Albab*.

Takiyeddin Muhammad Bilyani Isfahani in his volume anthology, *Arafatul-Ashiqin*, which was written in 1565-1612 and which contains information about the biography of 3300 poets, speaks of the work of Muhammad Avfi as follows: "Until now, there has not been such descriptive and informative *tezkira* as *Lubabul-Albab* of Muhammad Avfi. I also used information from this book when compiling collection of biographies of ancient poets. One can understand the blessed words of Avfi

and appreciate the authenticity of true stories provided by him".¹⁰

Modern Iranian scholar Ahmed Golchin Maani in his two-volume work *History of tezkira*, written in Persian," notes that "historical and literary importance of this *tezkira* is extremely large".¹¹ Well-known Iranian scholar, author of the volume work "The History of Iranian Literature" Professor Zabihulla Safa speaks about the value of famous works as follows: "The significance of the *Lubabul-Albab* is not limited to that, it is the most ancient work on biographies of the poets who created their works in Farsi. The work is also valuable from the sense that during his numerous trips, Avfi closely communicated with the poets, whose collections of poems did not reached a wide audience and had been lost in the era of the Mongol invasion. The author has included biographies and excerpts from the poems of these poets in his anthology. Thus, with his work, he provides us with a vivid picture of pre-Mongolian period of Persian poetry.¹²

Lubabul-Albab of Muhammad Avfi – was the most ancient and reliable source in the study of Oriental literature, including Turkmen literature in Persian until the beginning of the 13th century, as well as the creation of Turkmen writers who have written in Persian, and that have made a solid contribution to the development and improvement of the language.

There are three manuscripts of *Lubabul-Albab* now. One copy is Elliot - is kept in the library of Manchester (UK), the second copy is Springer - located in the Royal Library in Berlin, the third - a handwritten specimen in the library of the University of Lucknow in India.¹³

Iranian scholar Muhammad ibn Abdulvahhab Ghazvini, who studied manuscripts that stored in the libraries of the European states and closely acquainted with many of the Orientalists, at the request of the English scholar Edward Browne, who was preparing to publish *Lubabul-Albab*, conducted searches of manuscript of this book in libraries of

Britain. As a result, he discovered a manuscript of the work *Bazm Ara*, which was dedicated to the biography of poets and was written in 1592, in India by Seyyed Ali ibn Mahmud Husseini. It turned out that this author rewrote *Lubabul-Albab* entirely, replacing the name of the author Muhammad Avfi on his own and changing the title of the book.¹⁴ Detection of this finding was equal to the attainment of the fourth handwritten copy of the famous work. Thus, we now have four copies of the manuscript of famous work of Avfi. Three of them are known as the original, and the fourth as *Bazm Ara*.

All handwritten copies of the *Lubabul-Albab* were produced in India and five authors of this country that created *Tezkira*, used this book as a source. It is Seyid Ali ibn Mahmud Husseini, who wrote an anthology of *Bezm Ara* in 1592, Emin Anmet Razi, that compiled *tezkira* Haft Aqlim in 1594, Taqiyeud-Din Muhammad Bilyani Isfahani, who wrote *Arafatul-ashqin* in 1613, Hasan ibn Lutfullah Razi Tahrani who produced approximately in 1629 the anthology *Meyhana* and Aliguli Khan Wale Daghistani, who created in 1748 *Ryyazush-Shugara*. Well-known scholar of literature Ryzaguly Khan Hidayat Lalebashi, who lived in Iran in 1836-1900 years in his *Tezkira*, *Majmaul-fusaha* often refers to *Lubabul-Albab*.

Javami'ul-Hekayat and Lavami'ur-Ravayat

This is the most famous and very voluminous eight-volume historical, literary, moral and didactic work of Muhammad Avfi in the encyclopedic character. It contains a prologue, four sections and 25 chapters each, and an epilogue.

Part I: Cognition of God, the miracles shown by Prophets, the noble deeds of friends of Allah, history and dignity worthy of praise for *padishahs* and caliphs.

Part II: Fine manners and exemplary virtue.

Part III: Bad manners.

Part IV: Lives of people, the amazing features of seas and countries, as well as the nature of animals.

In the 25th chapter of the first part of this work there is a large amount of historical information. However, this does not mean that in other parts, this information is missing or that the first part is especially devoted to historical events. Chapters 4 and 5 of the first part are devoted only to historical events and there are described the lives of all sovereigns since the time of Adam until 1242.¹⁵ Each chapter of *Javami'ul-Hekayat*, is accompanied by different stories. These are not fairy tale or fiction; these are stories about real events and adventures. In order to attract the reader, Avfi expresses them in the form of artistically designed stories. In total, the work contains 2113 historically accurate stories.

Avfi began to write this work on the basis of request of Nasir-ud-Din Gubaja, but after his death (1228), has devoted it to vizier of Iltutmush, Nizamul Mulk Muhammad ibn Abu Sagd Junidi. Date of completion of this work is not known. If we consider that the latter narrated event refers to 1230, we can assume that the book was completed in 1231-1235.

Javami'ul-Hekayat is the first encyclopedia in Islamic world and differs with diversity of subjects that are reflected in it, by the richness of historical information, using a range of sources that did not reach us, with the elegance of presentation and easiness of reading. Written in prose in Farsi, which is sufficiently voluminous, this work offers the reader the information both of historical character and in moralizing didactic sense. They are presented with references to the extremely reliable sources. Avfi used more than hundred sources when preparing his work. In the list of literature used by author, in addition to those sources that did not reach us, we can specify the ones such as *Ghuraru Akhbari Muluki Furs* by Sa'alibi, *Tarikhi Muluk-i Ajam* by Ibn-i Mukaffa, *Siyasat Nama* by Khaja Nizamulmulk, *Kabusnama* by Unsurylma'ali and *Agrazus-Siyasah* by Zahir Samarkandi. *Javami'ul-Hekayat* for many years the work of Avfi served as guide for scholars and writers. For example, Amin Ahmad Razi in *Haft Aqlim*,

Minhaj Siraj in the *Tabakaty Nasiri*, Zekeriya Tabrizi in *Ajayybul-makhlukat*, Hindusha Ibn Sanjar in *Tejaribus-selef*, Hamdulla Mustavfi in *Nuzhetil-qulub* and *Taryhy Gozide*, Hafiz Ebru in *Zubdatut-tavarikh*, Mirkhand in *Rovzatus-Safa*, Handemir in *Mesairul-Muluk*, Fakhreddin Ali Safi in *Latayifut-Tavayif* and Kadi Ahmed Ghaffari in *Tarikhi Nigarestan* gave reference to this valuable source.

The historical work of Avfi did not lose its historical significance at the present. In 19th-20th centuries, orientalist William Ouseley, Edward Thomas, Barthold, Marquart, and Edward Browne widely used this work in their works.¹⁶ Some historical information given in this book is not found elsewhere or is not made so clearly and widely. In addition, this work, in particular, the second and the third parts of it are rich in moral and instructive aphorisms and metaphors. Didactic morale, set out by the various stories and legends, will impress any reader.

Language of *Javami'ul-Hekayat* is elegant, easy and organic. Only the language of the prologue is heavy and ornate, in the tradition of that era. This book is of great importance for the study of Persian literature of XII-XIII centuries. This work, which includes more than 1650 verses of poetry in Persian and Arabic, allows more fully to understand the originality of the ancient Persian language. The language is presented clear and simple, only 5 percent of vocabulary consists of dialects and words that are obsolete now.

Heroes set forth in the stories of *Javami'ul-Hekayat* – are real historical figures. A list of names given in it is so great that you can write a book for their explanations. Only the number of stories relating to the Gaznavi state is 84.¹⁷

While reading the works of Muhammad Avfi, one is being convinced that he was sincere, demanding academic researcher, serious about the subject, is a man deeply virtuous and who gave the lights to immutable moral principles.¹⁸ These positive qualities made him famous not only in the Islamic world and scientific communities. He drew attentions and gained honor

of the powerful rulers, especially the Turkmen sultans. According to the information of Katib Chelebi, described in the work *Kashfuz-Zunun*, during the reign of the Turkmen-Ottoman sultans, this book was translated into Turkmen three times by Atabek of Sultan Murat II Ahmed ibn Muhammad Arabsha, by Maulana Muhammad Nejati and by Maulana Jalal ibn Salih. In addition, Muhammad ibn Asgad ibn Abdullah Tusteri wrote in Turkish language abridged version of this book and Hudabende - one of the poets of the Sultan Muhammad - made a verse transcription of the work in Turkish language.¹⁹

Many scholars have commended the Avfi and his works. Well known scholar Mansur Esfezari characterizes the degree of perfection of the literary and scientific talent of Avfi as follows:

*My eyes have not seen for the whole life
Such great keeper as Sedid Avfi.*²⁰

Muhammad ibn Abdulvahhab Gaznavi in the preface to *Lubabul-albab* writes: *Javami'ul-Hekayat* – is the most important of the books written in Farsi. It includes many historical and literary data, which are not found in any other book.²¹

Scholar and professor from India Dr. Muhammad Nizamuddin, carefully studied the life and work of Muhammad Avfi and writes about *Javami'ul-Hekayat* as follows:

Avfi – is a heir of scientific knowledge and an outstanding scientist, who gives knowledge to descendants ... His *Javami'ul-Hekayat* includes very voluminous subjects, and we can see in it all the spiritual treasures in Farsi and Arabic that have survived to this day. There is no other work in Farsi, which encloses a legacy of all civilizations of the East, its culture, literature, moral values, scientific and philosophical tenets of Islam. When creating *Javami'ul-Hekayat*, the author has used many reliable sources which did not reached us, but were very famous in their time such as “El-avrak fi akhbari ali Abbas ve esh’arihim” of Suli

and “Kitabut-Tarikh fi akhbari vulati Khurasan” of Sullami”.²²

Mrs. Emirbanu Musaffa (Kerimi), known for her basic scientific researches about Muhammad Avfi and his “*Javami ’ul-Hekayat*”, in her article “Lost sources of *Javami ’ul-Hekayat*” writes: “There are so much valuable information about history, social life, literature and linguistics in *Javami ’ul-Hekayat*, that it even can be called an encyclopedia in Farsi”. In this book, scientist makes a reference to more than 93 sources, of which so far established are only 37.²³

Manuscripts of *Javami ’ul-Hekayat* remained in several copies in many libraries around the world. This means that the work was of great interest among a wide audience. As an early copy may be given a handwritten copy that is stored in the folder “Ancien Fonds Persan 75” at the National Library in Paris. The copy was made about 70 years after the completion of the book, that is, in the year 1300. It presents the first part and the chapters 1-5 of the second part. Together with a manuscript of year 1332 and stored at the British Library under the number Or. 2676, it forms a complete and accurate copy. Edward Brown, who prepared “*Lubabul-Albab*” of Muhammad Avfi to the press, in his book “History of Iranian Literature” writes that the most ancient and elegant copy of *Javami ’ul-Hekayat* is the one that first belonged to a man named Sir William Jones and kept current the London Library “India office library numbered W.79”.²⁴ Handwritten copies of this work are kept also in the libraries of Germany, France, Italy, and also in India, Iran, CIS countries.

One of the handwritten copies of translation of the book into ancient Turkmen language, executed and recorded his own by Salih ibn Jelal, is stored in library of Sulaymania in Turkey under number A-Tekelioglu 756. The Tajik scientist S.Vohidov in his book *The Life and Musical Legacy of Muhammad Avfi* notes that a copy of *Javami ’ul-Hekayat*, which is stored under the number 423 in the library of Vienna, is the original

translation of the book, carried out by the Turkmen poet Nejati for Sultan Muhammad II.²⁵ The copy of the translation into Turkmen of selected parts of *Javami'ul-Hekayat*, carried out by Muhammet ibn Abdullah ibn Asghar Tusteri, is being stored in the library "Nur-i Usmaniye" of Turkey. In addition, a copy of an abridged version of the translation of the famous work named *Al-ajayib wal-Garayib* is stored at the British Library under the number Or. 1874.²⁶

Javami'ul-Hekayat has not yet been published in full. There is information that Iranian scientists in literature professor, Mr. Mazaher Musaffa and Mrs. Professor Emirbanu Musaffa are engaged in preparing the text of the work with notes; work in six volumes have been completed, there are still two volumes.²⁷ Besides, the Indian scholar Muhammad Nizamuddin, Iranian scientists Mohammet Moin, Mazahir Musaffa, Mrs. Emirbanu Musaffa, Jafar Shaggar, Tajik scientists S. Volidov, R. Mukymov, Uzbek scholars I.Nizamuddin, M.Shahzoda conducted research work on *Javami'ul-Hekayat* of Muhammad Avfi.

Al-Faraju Ba'dash-Shiddah

Muhammad Avfi translated the book of Abu Ali Muhsin ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Davut Tanuhi, *Al-Faraju Ba'dash-shiddah* from Arabic into persian in 1223 when he served as qadi in the city Gonabat (Kenyabat, Konabat) (the territory of modern Pakistan). He says this in chapter 7 of the fourth part of *Javami'ul-Hekayat* when tells about the people who endured great hardships, but showed remarkable patience, they suffered difficulties and have found joy and peace. The text of translation of Avfi is not completely preserved to the present day. Some excerpts of the last two volumes of this translation, notes Dr. Nizam-ud Din, are preserved among the collections of British Library.²⁸ This work of Tanukhi in persia was translated by Hussein ibn Asgad ibn Hussein Dehistani Mueyyedi of Dehistan, situated on the territory of modern

Balkan province of Turkmenistan, about fifty years later, that is, in the second half of the 13th century. Translation preserved to present day.²⁹ Dehistani updated in it some information. It must be admitted that the translation is done more artistic than the one done by Avfi, but a bit overwhelmed with unwieldy metaphors. At the end of each presentation of the history the author offers the reader to make independent conclusions.³⁰

Madayihus-Sultan

This poetic work of the scholar wrote in imitation of the poetic epic *Hadykatul-haqyqa* of Abulmajd Mejdud Sanai, who lived in the 12th century. Only one of the four bayts (couplets) reached us, the text of which is reproduced in chapter 12 of the first part of *Javami 'ul-Hekayat*. In it, Avfi, stress the necessity to restrain emotions and not to commit reckless acts, to always think first and act carefully and reasonably, provides the poem of the Arab poet Mutenebbi (915-965) and notes: "This idea is also contained in my book of poems *Madayihus-Sultan*."³¹ In order to understand the content of this work of Avfi it is necessary to pay attention to writing of Senai, *Hadikatul-haqiqa* which he wrote in imitation of *Madayihus-Sultan*. Being as a moral-didactic work, preaching the need to preserve the purity of the spiritual world, the rule of reason and knowledge, *Hadikatul-haqiqa* serves as a reliable guide of vital principles for the individual and for society in whole. Senai wrote it in 1113, dedicating to the governor of Ghazna Turkmen, Sultan Bahram Shah.³²

Risalay i Arba'in.

Well-known Iranian writer and researcher of *tazkira*, Anmet Golchin Maani in his book, *Stories of Tezkire Written in Farsi*, noting the existence, along with other works and books of Avfi "Risalay i Arba'in", writes: "Among the works produced by Avfi, there are works not so well known to researchers such as *Risalay i Arba'in*. One of the followers of Khwaja

Nizameddin Awliyya Sheikh Rukneddin ibn Imam ud-Din Debir Kashani Huldabadi, who lived in the first half of 15th century, in his valuable work *Shemalul-Atkiya* provides such lines like "From *Risalayi arbagyn* of Muhammad Avfi".³³

As we can see, works created by Avfi are multifaceted; the author's desire to educate the younger generation on spiritual values and to lay in youth high standards of morality, love to science and literature is clearly traceable in them. In addition to reliable information received by him during private meetings with scholars and thinkers, the author used in his works the information from 141 sources in respect of history, geography, literature, politics, science, religion, ethnology, philosophy, logic, oratory, and even astrology. Many of these sources have not survived to our days. Avfi was considered as a great scholar, which also indicates the high value of his work. Besides, the scholar used morality and didactic theme that were recognized by the valuable writers of theology, literature and art. Avfi was also a poet, a skilled orator, calligraphist and a very competent person. He had multifaceted creativity of an outstanding scholar and was originally from Merv. His broader vision made us to have a deep and comprehensive study.

To know the cultural and literary Islamic heritage of our people we need to learn both their written literature and folklore. For creating of more complete picture of the literary life of our nations in the middle ages, we need to study the works of our writers who lived in that era and wrote in other languages, than their native ones.

Islamic literature of the middle ages is a rich creative legacy that was produced in Turkish, Persian and Arabic. In any era the Muslim scientists, including writers, were always keeping their pace with the achievements of the era and produced works in widespread in both prose and poetry expressing their noble feelings and thoughts, attracting a wide global audience. In the middle Ages in the Muslim world, the literary language was Persian. Our writers along with other

Muslim nations have made a significant contribution to the development of this widespread language and in producing significant literary and spiritual works that remained for centuries. Muhammad Avfi's Persian works are illustrious of this literary heritage that depicts his real mine of knowledge of history, culture and art distinctively.

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