

Shaikh Y'aqub Sarfi

(928/1521¹-1003/1595²)

*Manzoor Ahmad Bhat**

Ancestors of the Shaikh got settled in Kashmir during Muslim Sultanate period (1339-1586)³. One of his ancestors, Bāyazīd won the title of *Ra'isu'l- Qawm* (leader of the nation) from Sultan Zainu'l 'Ābidīn (1420-70 C.E) of Kashmir. On account of being well versed in religious knowledge his ancestors were also called as *Ganāis*.⁴ They were also known as 'Āšimīes as they derived their genealogy from 'Āšim the son of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, the second caliph (634-44 C.E). Ṣarfi's father, Mīr Hasan besides being an 'Ābid (sincere worshipper) was a scholar of repute as well. Ṣarfi got his early education partly from his father and partly from Mulla Mīr Raziud-Dīn (d. 956/1549)⁵ and Ḥāfīz Baṣīr of Khandabawan (d. 946/1539).⁶ At the age of seven years he committed the holy Qur'an to his memory.⁷ At the age of nineteen Ṣarfi perfected himself in the disciplines of grammar, medicine, logic, astronomy, philosophy and mathematics, besides religious knowledge, under the supervision of these two teachers.⁸ After completing his elementary education, Sarfi went to Herat Afghanistan where he studied under the guidance of Mullā Ānī, the disciple of celebrated poet-philosopher

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Nurud-Din ‘Abdul Rahman Jāmī.⁹ Ṣarfi was quick in grasping the intricate and difficult rules of Arabic grammar and thus won the surname, Ṣarfi.¹⁰ Under Mullā Ānī Ṣarfi learnt Arabic grammar, history, Arabic and Persian literature, jurisprudence, Ḥadīth and Tafsīr in a good deal.

Ṣarfi’s quest for knowledge, however, became more profound and he left for Khwārazam¹¹ where he adopted Shaikh Hussain Khwārazamī as his spiritual guide.¹² Khwārazamī was pleased with the submission and absolute devotion of the Ṣarfi and initiated him to his order.¹³ In a short period Ṣarfi accomplished the stages of *Salūk* and Khwārazamī bestowed upon him the *khilāfat nāma* and *khirqā*.¹⁴ On his way to Khwārazam he came into contact with famous saints and learned men of his times. After his return from Khwārazam he was held by all to be an accomplished scholar. Ṣarfi then set for holy pilgrimage to Mecca. On his way to Mecca he visited various Muslim countries and centres of learning including Lahore, Kabul¹⁵, Badakhshān, Balkh, Ghur¹⁶ and Samarqand¹⁷. On his return he attended the seminary of Shaikh Kamāl Khwārazamī.

During his second pilgrimage, Ṣarfi attended the lessons on Hadith under Shaikh Ibn Hajr Makkī (d.974/1567) and got a certificate from him.¹⁸ He also studied under Shaikh Muahmmad Shaf’i and attended the lessons from Tirmidhī under Shaikh ‘Abdul Aziz.¹⁹ On his way to home he visited Iran and held discourses with Iranian scholars.¹² Afterwards he went to Baghdād, Tabrez, and Rome. On his way to Kashmīr he stayed for some time in India where he delivered lessons on Ḥadīth at Gujrat. It was during this sojourn that besides many other great scholars Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī popularly known as *Mujadid-i-Alfi Thanī* received education in Ḥadīth and Sufism from Ṣarfi.²¹ He also visited places of learning like Lahore, Panipat, Thānesar and Thāth.

It was a critical juncture of Kashmir history. The ruler of Kashmir, Ya‘qub Khan

was addicted to *bung* (charas). Misrule and oppression were rampant. Sectarian quarrels and high handedness were the order of the day. Most of the 'ulama' were compelled to migrate from Kashmir on account of hostile circumstances prevailing there. Those who were unable to migrate were compelled to live an underground life and many others were poisoned to death. Under such intimidating circumstances some of the 'ulama' approached Jalāl-ud-Dīn Akbar, the Mughal emperor of India, who was eager to extend his empire to Kashmir. Şarfi was the prominent figure in this deputation.²²

Şarfi travelled extensively. His tours in the lands of Central Asia, Iran and India helped him to confide in the leading luminaries. He came in close contact with literary figures in India and developed great intimacy with Faizī, the elder brother of Abu'l Faḍal, the great statesman and Prime Minister of Akbar. He was also on good terms with Mulla 'Abdul Qādir of Badāyūn, the author of *Muntakhabut Tawārīkh*. There is a letter in this *Tawārīkh* addressed to Şarfi, wherein he hails him with these words "... His books indeed are too numerous to be recapitulated. He was illustrious and much relied upon as an authority on all branches of learning, which are treated in Arabic, such as Quranic commentary, *Aḥādīth* and Sufism and was a genuine religious leader."²³

Khawāja Habībullah Naushehri (d.1026 A.H.) Maulāna Hasan Āfāqī and Shah Qasim Haqāni were among the prominent disciples of Şarfi.²⁴ Şarfi passed away in 1003/1595).²⁵ He was mourned by the great personalities of his times and was buried near Zainakadal, Srinagar.

Şarfi was a scholar, mystic, poet, statesman and traveller besides being a *mufasir* and *muḥadith*. He made commendable contribution to the development of Arabic and Persian literature. His poetic diction especially his *mathnavi* and *ghazal* ranks him with Niẓāmī and Jāmī. He was widely respected by the top ranking Indian statesmen and men of letters of his times and had an enormous influence on the people of Kashmir on

account of his eminent scholarship and political foresight. As a multidimensional personality Şarfi developed contacts with all classes of people. He commanded respect equally from royalty, nobility, 'ulamā, sufīs, saints and the masses.

He is the author of several books on *Tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth* and sufism. His *tafsīr* of the holy Qur'an entitled *Mutalabūl Ṭalībīn fī tafsīr-i Kalām-i Rubil 'Ālimīn*²⁶ found appreciation, besides other scholars, from Shaikh's contemporary and friend Mulla 'Abdul Qādir of Badāyūn. An incomplete manuscript version of it is available in manuscript section of research library, Kashmir University.²⁷ He has developed his commentary by referring to *Sihāh-i-Sita*, *Mishkātul Masābih*, *Kitāb us Sanan of Imām Baihaqī*, *Sharh-i Muslim* of Tibrānī. In his *tafsīr* he has also referred to *tafsīrul kabir* of Imam Fakhrud-Din Rāzī, *al-kashshaf* of Zamakhshari and *Anwār-ul Tanzīl wa Asrār-ul Tawīl* of Qadi Baydawi. In the Fiq literature he has mostly relied upon *kitābul umm* of Imām Shafi. Besides his Arabic *tafsīr*, şarfi has also translated *parāh 'Amm* (30th chapter) of holy Quran and *Sura Mulk* into Persian. So far as his contribution to Hadith literature is concerned he has written an annotation of *Şahīh Bukhārī* entitled *sharh-i Şahīh Bukhārī*²⁸, *Sharh-i Thalāthayat-i Bukhārī*²⁹ and two *Arba'eyn*.³⁰

Şarfi's *Khamsa* or Five Treasures are regarded as master pieces in the Persian literature. Among these *Maslak-ul Akhyār* (comparable to Nizami's *Makhzani Asrār*) contains 4050 couplets. It was completed in 993A.H. *Wāmiq-u Azrā* (comparable to Nizāmi's *Shirin-o Khusrū*) was completed in 993A.H. *Maghazi un Nabī* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) which deals with life and *Ghuzwas* (battles against infidels) of prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) was completed by Şarfi in 1000A.H. *Muqāmat-i Murshid*, on the life and miracles of his spiritual guide Shaikh Hasan of Khwārazam was completed in 1000A.H. and contains 3000 couplets. *Laila Majnun*, a mathnawi in Persian and comparable to those of Nizami's and Jāmi's books of the same title was composed in 998A.H.

Sarfi's other writings include *Risāla-i Dhikriyya*, (Persian Prose), *Rawaih*, composed in the year 1568, *Manāsiku'l Ḥaj*, (Arabic), *Sharh-i Rubā'yāt*, *Hashia Tauzeeh*, *Rasā'il-i Mui'mma*, *Risāla-i Kanzul Jawāhar* (Persian Prose), Notes on *Tawziḥ-u Talwiḥ* (Arabic), *Taqrīzāt* and *Awrād-i Ṣarfi*. A collection of Sarfi's Persian lyrics, *Ruba'is* and *Qaṣidās* under the title *Dīwān-i Ṣarfi* in three volumes is preserved in the J&K Research and Publications Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar.

REFERENCES AND FOOT NOTES:

1. Muhammad A'zam Didamari; *Waq'at-i Kashmir*, p. 110
Abdul Wahab Nuri; Futuhat-i Kubrawiyya (Ms.) f. 117 a.
Hasan Shah; *Tarikh-i Hasan*; Vol. III, p. 232
2. Mulla 'Abdul Qadir Badayuni; *Muntakhabat-Tawarikh*; Vol. III, p. 148.
Didamari; *loc. cit.*
3. After thousand years of Budhist and Hindu rule in Kashmir one of its rulers, Rinching originally a Budhist who was a prince from Ladakh region got settled in Kashmir during the reign of Suhadeva (1301-20 C.E). During the period of turmoil in 1320 C.E. he ascended the throne of Kashmir. Just after his accession he became anxious to understand the reality of life and world. He held discussions with Hindu Sadhus but was not convinced. Eventually, he approached a Muslim Sufi saint and preacher, Sayyid Sharafud-Din 'Abdul Rahaman who had come to Kashmir from Turkistan and was himself a disciple of Shah N'amatullah Wali Suhrawardi. Rinchin was impressed by the piety and arguments of the saint and embraced Islam and got Sadrud-Din as Muslim name. After Sadrud-Din Kashmir was again ruled by a Hindu ruler Udyanadeva for a period of 15 years (1323-38). It was in 1339 C.E. that Shahmir, an adventurer from Swat who got settled in Kashmir during Suhadeva's rule (1301-20), ascended the throne of Kashmir under the title Sultan Shamsud-Din (1339-42). With this he laid the foundatin of Muslim rule in Kashmir that lasted up to 1586 C.E. when Kashmir was annexed to Mughal India during Akbar's reign. This period from 1339 to 1586 during which Shahmir dynasty and Chak dynasty ruled over Kashmir is termed as Muslim Sultanate period in the history of Kashmir.
4. Didamari; *Ibid.*, p. 66
5. Mulla Mir Raziud-Din was a great scholar of Kashmir. He was regarded as an authority on Hadith and Fiq. Durng the reign of Mirza Haidar Dughlat (947-58 A.H.) he was appointed as Head Master in the reputed Shahi Madrasa. His graveyard is said to be located in a village Sarai Dangarpora in Srinagar district.
6. Mulk Hafiz Basir was a native of village Krank Shaiwan, in the vicinity of Sopore, Kashmir. He studied *tafsir, Hadith, Fiq, 'Ilmu'l Kalam* and mathematics in Srinagar. He established a madrasa at Khand Bhawan Srinagar and spent his all life there. He lies burried ner his madrasa. Sarfi pays his homage to him in this couplet.

آن حافظ علم و ادب بوده بصیر از فضل رب
تاریخ قوتش زان سبب شد "عالم تفسیر دان"
7. Didamari; *Ibid.*, p. 110;

Abdul Wahab Nuri; *Ibid.*, f. 117. a
 Hasan Shah; *Ibid.*, p. 232.

8. Sarfi himself records;

شدم در علوم دگر بهره گیر ز ملا رضی و ز حافظ بصیر
 رضی آن بستی شان فہمیش شگرف مرافقہ آموخت و نحو و صرف
 ہی گفت دریں جمیع علوم چه طرز خصوص و چه طرز عموم
 بہر فن جزویش ہم صد ضبط ز شعر و معما و انشا و خط
 چه گویم ز حافظ بصیری کہ بود خبردار ز اسرار کشف و شہود
 از و علم صوفیہ اندوختہم دقیقات عقلیہ اندوختہم
 فن منطق و اصطلاح کلام بدلیج و بیان و معانی تمام

Sarfi; *Maghāzi-un-Nabi*, Ms J&K Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar.

9. Nuri; f. 117 a.
 10. Biographer of Sarfi comments in this context in these words;

عاقبت آن محمد آنی کہ نمود است جای ثانی
 شیخ را گفت واسع النظرنی زان تخلص ترا سرزد صرنی

Habibullah Naushahri; *Ahwāl wa Maqāmāt-i Ḥadrat Ieshān*. (MS), Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar.

Sarfi himself comments;

برسم تخلص بہ نظم کلام مرا صرتی آن نامور ماند نام

See, Sarfi; *Maghāzi-un-Nabi* (MS) Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar

11. Khiva in Russian Turkestan.
 12. Shaikh Hussain had seven reputed disciples in his *Khanqah* at that time. All of them were eager to guide the new enterant, but the Shaikh anticipating Sarfi's future placed him under his direct tutorage.

بار چوں در خدمت او یافتم روی دل از غیر خدا تا فتم
چون نظری کرد باین خاکسار ز درقم آمد محیط از کنار

See, *Maslaku'l Akhyār*, MS ff. 15-16 Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar

13. تعجب مکن گر مرا نیز پیر در اندک زماں ساخت روشن ضمیر
چو روشن ضمیرے کز روی زمین شده از پر تو م روشنائی گزین
چو شمع هدایت برا فرو ختم بسی را بپیر داگی سو ختم

Sa, Sarfi; *Maghazi-un-Nabi*, Ms. f. 10, J&K Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar

14. عاقبت داد خط ارشادم آنکه کرد بدست خویش رقم
حرقه ای ہم مرا عنایت کرد شکر آں بنده ہم بجا آورد

See Naushahri; *Maqāmāt-i Ḥadrat-i Ieshān*, f 157(b), Ms. J&K Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar.

15. While at Kabul, Sarfi developed contacts with men of literature, 'Ulama', Sufis and saints of that place including 'Alāma Jalālū'd-Din Dawāni, Mir Muhammad Majzūb, Sayyid Abdullah, Qāḍi Abdul Mālī and 'Allaud-Din Lārī.

It is worth to be noted that the above mentioned Dawāni is not the one who authored *Ikhlāq-i Jalālī*, but some other person of the same name. For his historical records see *Tarikh-i Adabiyat-i Iran* by Reza Zedeh Shafaq, Urdu tr., pp. 445-46, Hyderabad and *Literary History of Persia* by Prof. E.G. Brown, Vol. II p. 444, London.

16. In Balkh Sarfi confided in the leading figures like Muhammad Zahid Balkhi, Haji Dost Muhammad Khan, Khwaja Dard and Shaikh Abdul Khair.

17. At Samarqand, Sarfi attended the sermons of Ahmad Junaid and Shaikh Darwish and was initiated there to the Naqashbandi *Silsila* by Khwaja Mukangi, Haji Muhammad Panbaduz; Sarfi comments:

شد از نقشند یہ ام دل فروز نور خدا جامی پنبہ دوز
شد از خوابی ہم دلم بہرہ مند کہ او نیز بود از صف نقشند

Sarfi, *Maghāzi-un-Nabi*, f.11, Ms. J&K Research Library, Kashmir University, Srinagar.

18. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Hajar Shihabud-Din was a famous theologian born in 909/1504 at Mahallat in Egypt. At twenty years of age he began to issue *fatwas* (decrees) and to teach. On his third visit to Mecca (944/1537-8) he settled down there permanently. He authored *Tuhfatul Muhtaj li-Sharhal-Minhāj*, which became the text book for jurists of Shaf'i school (Encyclopaedia of Islam. p.147)

19. پیش آں شیخ دین امام بشر سند اندر حدیث ابن حجر
جامع ترمذی بکردم حل پیش عبدالعزیز اعزا ازل
حل نمودم ہمہزکات فصوص از حسن نام شیخ دین مخصوص
ہم مشائخ دگر بی دیدم فیض ہائے زہر کسی دیدم

(Habibullah Naushahri; *Ahwāl wa Maqāmāt-i Ḥadrat-i Ileshān*)

20. There was a warm discussion on this Ḥadith in the court of Shah-i Iran, when Sarfi visited there;

انت منی بمنزلہ ہارون من موسیٰ الا انه لا نبی بعدی

Prophet (SAW) addressed Ḥadrat-i 'Ali (Rad.A) in these words when the latter was deputed to look after the affairs of Madina while Prophet (SAW) with his *Sahaba* set for *Ghuzwah Tabūk* in 9 A.H. Shaikh presented the view of '*Ulama-i ahl-i Sunnah wa-Jama't*'.

21. نقل دارم کہ شیخ در گجرات شدہ مشغول در حدیث وراة
Navshahri; *Ibid.*,
22. Sayyid Farooq Bukhari; *Kashmir Main 'Arbi' Ulūm oor Islami Thaqāfat ki Isha'at*; p. 236
Tahir, Baharistān-i Shah-i f. 182b

The deputation entered into the following covenant with the Mughal Emperor Akbar;

1. That the ruling prince shall not interfere with the religious affairs, the purchase and sale of commodities and the rates of the cereals.
2. That the dignitaries and officials (deputed by Mughal ruler) of Kashmir shall have no Kashmir male or female as a slave.
3. That the inhabitants of the country shall not be molested or oppressed in any way.
4. That the nobles of Kashmir having been a source of mischief shall have at present no role in the administration of their country (Kashmir).

(G.M.D. Suti, *Islamic Culture in Kashmir*, p. 115)

- Abu'l Fazal; *Akbar Nama*; Vol. III p. 752.
23. Mulla 'Abdul Qādir Badāyūni; *Muntakhabat Tawārikh*, Vol. III, pp. 200-201.
24. Muhammad Mir Khalifa (d. 1015 A.H.), Mir Sayyid Hamza Kriri (d. 1028 A.H.) and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1034 A.H.) are also counted among the prominent disciples of Şarfi.
25. Badāyūni, *Ibid.*, p. 148.
26. It is written in Arabic language. One complete copy of this *tafsīr* is available in the central library of Punjab University, Lahore (Pakistan). *Kātib* of this copy is Ruhullah Ibn Nazir Beig; It was completed in 1071/1661 after the death of Şarfi.
For further reference see the Urdu Journal *Taḥqiqāt-i-Pakistan*, (April and June 1967)
27. This copy comprises of 380 pages (medium size). There is commentary on *Surah Fātiḥ* and major portion of *Surah al-Baqarah*.
28. It is an annotation of *Şaḥiḥ Bukhāri*. It has been praised by 'Umer Rada (Mu'ajam-ul-Mu'liffin; Vol. 13, p. 247) Damascus 1961 C.E)
But this Sharh is not available today.
29. In *Saḥiḥ Bukhari* there are certain Aḥādīth having only three *Rawis* (narrators). These are called *Ṭhalāthayāt-i Bukhāri*; According to *Shaikhul Hadith*, Maulana Dhakariyya the number of such *Aḥādīth* is about twenty two (22). (*La Ma'u-ud-Duradi*, Muqadimma p.30). This work of Şarfi is an annotation of these *Aḥādīth*.
Also see Mufti Muhammad Shah S'adat; *Ḥayāt-i Şarafi*; p. 70.
S. Farooq Bukhari; *Idem*
30. According to the biographer of Sarfi, he has compiled two Arba'eyn, one in the praise of Ḥaḍrat-i 'Ali (Raḍ. 'A) and other in the praise of *ahl-i Bai'at* in the light of Aḥādīth. These were completed in 972 A.H.

در مدح اہل بیت بودایں دو چہل حدیث

(S'adat; *Idem*)