

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF ISLAMIC SUFI SHUYOOKH OF IHSAN

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Abstract

The lives of Islamic Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan is a phenomenon of Islamic virtue and simple living which shows about their struggles in teaching Muslims during lives. It is important that people know the importance of Sufi Shuyookh in Muslim Society. We have provided in this article the brief biography of 5 Shuyookh of Ihsan, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishtee, Shaikh Abul Hasan Shadhili, Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband and Shaikh Umar Suhawardi (رضى الله تعالى عنهم).

Keywords: Sufism, Ihsan, Islamic Shuyookh, Sufi Shaikhs, Qadri, Chisti, Naqshbandi, Shadhili, Suhawardi .

Introduction

The Arabic word 'Azam' (اعظم) is generally used to describe 'the greatness / importance of a person or group. Like Wazir al-Azam (وزير الاعظم), Imam al-Azam (امام الاعظم) or Ghawth al-Azam (غوث الاعظم), etc.

There is an authentic *Hadith* of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) saying, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) will never let my Ummah agree upon misguidance and the hand of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is over the (most important) group, so follow Sawad al-Azam (سواد الاعظم) (the most important group) and whoever dissents from them departs to Hell'. (*Tirmidhi 4/2167; Hakim 1/116 – Ad-Dhahabi agreed with him*)

The Quran identifies this group among Muslims.

It is in Quran - اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ - صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ [(O Our Lord) Lead us (help us walk) on the straight path. The path (of Sahih Iman), of those on whom You have awarded Your bestowal; not the path of those who have been subjected to Your Wrath, and the path of those who have gone astray.] (*Al-Fatiha – 6-7*)

Who are the people referred to as - صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ [the path of those on whom You have awarded your bestowal] in the above verse?

The Quran has replied to the question.

It is in Quran - فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا [These are the people upon whom Allah has bestowed favors. They are among the prophets, truthful people, the martyrs, and the righteous, and what a majestic company are they?] (*An-Nisa - 69*)

Who are the people who have been referred in verse - غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ [and not the path of those who are subjected to Your Wrath, and the path of those who have gone astray]?

The meanings of wrath (غَضَبٌ) is 'to punish and impose penalty on the wrongdoers'. The meaning of (الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ) is 'those who are rebels, sinful and guilty'. The meaning of (الضَّالِّينَ) is 'disbelievers and ignorant people'.

Among Muslims, there are some people who follow different sects and their beliefs come under the purview of apostasy / polytheism / hypocrisy / blasphemy, etc. These are faithless Muslims even though they recite Kalima Tayyiba verbally and claim themselves to be Muslims and act upon certain Islamic deeds.

It is in Hadith - Abu Said Al-Khudri (رضى الله تعالى عنه) narrated - Allah's Apostle (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said 'there will appear some people among you whose prayer will make you look down upon yours, and whose fasting will make you look down upon yours, and they will recite Qur'an (in melodious voices and memorize it) but Quran will not go down their throats (they will misunderstand

and misinterpret the meanings of Quran and mislead people) and will go out of Islam as the arrow goes out of the bow. (Bukhari)

The above people are not part of Swad al-Azam (سواد الاعظم).

It is in Quran - أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ - الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ - لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ بَلْ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [Behold the friends of Allah! On them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. These are they, who have believed in Allah and are mindful of Him (the feeling of closeness of Allah) and (have consequently abstained from everything evil). To them tidings come (from Allah) of a happy life both in this world and in Hereafter. The word of Allah is never revoked. This is a great felicity] (Younus - 62-64).

It is in Hadith - Whoever takes a Wali of mine (ولي) an enemy, I will wage a war on him (Bukhari, part of the Hadith).

The emphasis on ‘Wali of mine’ in the above Hadith shows that Awliya Allah (the people of Ihsan) are the chosen ones. Surely, they are the group of Swad al-Azam (سواد الاعظم).

Awliya Allah are the people of Ihsan among Muslims. Chiefs among them are the Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan who teach people ‘the purification of self’ (تزكية النفس) and help them walk on the right path of Islam. They teach people how to do Tauba (repentance), to follow the tenets of Islam, Salah, Zakat, Fasting and Hajj. Then they teach them to do zikr of Allah’s (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) epithets, Asma-e-Elahiyya daily under their supervision. They teach individual Murideen as per their capacity to learn and implement the intrinsic spirit of Islam. Every Sufi Shaikh has adopted certain ways to teach their Murideen. These ways are known as Tariqa. They teach them about Islamic Tauheed and cleanse their inner self (تزكية النفس) from their Tawajjoh (attention).

It is in Quran - لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ [Certainly, Allah has done a favor on the believers when He sent to them an Apostle from among them, who reads them the divine verses and who purifies

them and who teaches them the book and wisdom.] (Aal-e-Imraan - 164).

The above Quranic verse testifies that the purification of inner self (تزكية النفس) is, in addition to the teaching of Quran and Sunnah. What is the purification of inner self? It is the attention of the Shaikh towards the seeker (طالب - مرید).

Below, we have provided brief biographies of 5 famous Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan.

Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (رضي الله تعالى عنه)

Shaikh Mohiuddin Abu Mohammad Abdul Qadir al-Jilani al-Ghawth al-Azam (رضي الله تعالى عنه) was born in 470 AH (1077 AD). His lineage is known as Golden Chain, as both his parents were descendants of the Apostle Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). Shaikh's noble father, Abdullah Abu Saleh Jangidost (رضي الله تعالى عنه), traced his descent to Imam Hassan (رضي الله تعالى عنه), while his revered mother, Umm al-Khayr Fatimah (رضي الله تعالى عنها), traced hers to Imam Hussain (رضي الله تعالى عنه). It is reported that within a few years of his birth, his father died. He was looked after by his mother and his maternal grandfather. A few years later, his maternal Grand Father also died.

Shaikh spent his childhood in Na'if, the town of his birth in Jeelan. When he was about 5 years old, his mother enrolled him into a local Madrasa. He studied there for 5 years till he was 10 years old. At the age of 18 (488 AH - 1095 AD) Shaikh took permission from his mother to move to Baghdad for higher studies. Baghdad was then the capital of Abbasid caliphate and the hub of knowledge in the Islamic world. This was also a period of political upheaval, when the crusaders were active in Palestine, Syria, and Turkey.

In Baghdad, the Shaikh studied under many Shuyookh. After his formal education, Shaikh spent twenty-five years as a reclusive wanderer in the desert regions of Iraq where he hardly found anything to eat. After this extensive period in the way of Allah, he returned to Baghdad.

Shaikh Mubarak Ibn al-Mukharrimi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) was the Shaikh-e-Tariqat of Shaikh Abdul

Qadir (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ). Looking at the extraordinary abilities of Ghousul Azam, he made him In charge of his school located at Bab al-Azj.

Shaikh was 50 years old when he started teaching at this school. Shaikh's teaching was effective and miraculous which resulted in swelling of students.

The Madrasa became famous as 'Madrasa Qadriyya' and Shaikh's followers and Murideen were identified as followers of Tariqa Qadiriyya.

Shaikh's lectures were attended by thousands of people. The nobles, the rulers, scholars, and it is reported that even Jinn were the regular listeners of his sermons. He used to deliver public sermons three times a week. In addition, every day in the morning he used to give lessons in Quranic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, theology, religious law and Sufism. After midday prayer he will advise and provide consultation to people who used to gather at the Madrasa. Before sunset, he used to distribute food among the poor. It is reported that his servants used to stand at the door asking passers-by if they were hungry, so that they could share the Shaikh's table.

Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) died in 561 AH (1166 AD) at the age of 91 and was buried inside his Madrasa.

Shaikh wrote many books. His famous books are (i) al-Ghunia li-Ṭālibī Ṭarī al-Ḥaq, (ii) al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī wal-Faiḍ al-Raḥmānī, (iii) Futūḥ al-Ghaib, (iv) Jilā' al-Khāṭir, (v) Sir al-Asrār, (vi) Malfuzaat, etc. While he authored many books, some were compiled by his students who attended his lectures.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishtee (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ)

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) was born in 530 AH (1136 AD) in Sanjar which was part of Sistan (Sijistan) comprised of present day Eastern Iran, Baluchistan and Southern Afghanistan. He was direct descendant of Khalifat-e-Rasulullah, Amir-ul-Momineen, Hadhrat Ali Ibn Ali Talib (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) from both mother's and father's side. He

received early education, first at home then at a local Madrasa where he learned Hadith, Fiqh and other subjects. He memorized Quran when he was nine years old.

Gharib Nawaz's (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) father died in 1150 AD, when he was 15 years old. His mother Sayyeda Bibi Ummul-wara bint Syed Daud (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہا) had already died by then. In 1151 the Tartars attacked Sistan and thousands of people were killed. The destruction of the country and the loss of his parents had a profound effect on Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ).

It is reported that one day when Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) was watering the plants in his orchard, Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi (رحمة اللہ علیہ) entered. Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) did not know him but he gave him a lot of respect, brought him a chair to sit and offered him fresh grapes of his orchard. Shaikh Qandozi (رحمة اللہ علیہ) was moved by the respect and reception accorded to him. He saw the spark and potential in Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ). He took out a piece of bread from his bag and chewing a portion of it, gave the rest to Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) to eat. When he ate the piece of bread, he underwent a spiritual transformation never experienced before. He closed his eyes and sat on the ground. When he opened his eyes, Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi (رحمة اللہ علیہ) had already left. The meeting brought a profound change in Gharib Nawaz (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ). He lost interest in worldly things and sold all his inheritance and belongings and distributed the proceeds into the poor. In 1152 AD he left for Bukhara to seek Islamic education. In Bukhara, he was taught by numerous Ulema. He received Ijaza from Shaikh Hissamuddin Bukhari (رحمة اللہ علیہ) and Maulana Sharfuddin. From Bukhara, he went to Samarqand for higher studies. In 1156 he traveled to Baghdad in search of a Shaikh on whose hands he can take baya. On his way, he visited a place called 'Haroon' where he met Khwaja Uthman Harooni (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) who was a very famous Shaikh at that time. He took baya on the hand of Shaikh Uthman (رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ) and stayed in his company for the following 20 years and traveled to many places along with

him, mostly on foot carrying his bedding and tiffin on head. During these travels he had the opportunity to meet with many Shuyookh.

Gharib Nawaz received Khilafa from his Shaikh during his travel to Makka and Madina. After the Khilafa, his Shaikh parted from him. After parting with his Shaikh, Garib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) continued his travels and met with people. He visited Makka and Madina again. During one of his visits to Masjid-e-Nabawi, it is reported that he was commanded by Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) to go to Ajmer in Indian Subcontinent.

In 1191 CE Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti (رضى الله تعالى عنه) arrived in India along with his 40 Murideen and proceeded to Delhi via Fort Shaadman, Multan, Lahore and Samana. At Lahore he stayed for 40 days at the Maqam of Shaikh Abul Hassan Ali Hajveri (رحمة الله عليه), also known as Data Ganj Baksh.

In 1192, Shahabuddin Ghouri attacked Rajput State of Delhi. The opposing armies met in the famous battle of Tarain and Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated and was killed. The State of Rajputana came under Muslim rule.

When Shahabuddin Ghouri came to know about the presence of Gharib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) in Ajmer, he paid a visit to the Shaikh and requested him to pray for his success.

During his stay in Ajmer, Gharib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) continued his visits to other places. It is reported that he visited Baghdad in 1200 CE. He visited Delhi twice during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. He visited Delhi in 1214 CE again and stayed in the Khanqah of Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (رحمة الله عليه). It is reported that during his stay, he conferred a robe to Shaikh Fariduddin Ganjshakar (رحمة الله عليه), the Khalifa of Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki (رحمة الله عليه).

Shaikh Uthman Harooni (رضى الله تعالى عنه) visited Delhi around this time and stayed with Gharib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) for some time. Sheikh Sa'di (رحمة الله عليه), the renowned Sufi Shaikh of Shiraz, also visited Delhi and had the privilege of meeting both the Shuyookh.

Gharib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) was busy in Islamic propagation for a long time and had no time to marry and raise a family. However, in 1194, on the command of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), he married and had three Children, two sons; (i) Khwaja Fakhruddin (رحمة الله عليه), (ii) Khwaja Husamuddin (رحمة الله عليه), and (iii) a daughter Bibi Hafiza Jamal (رحمة الله عليها). Later he married again and had a son Khwaja Ziauddin (رحمة الله عليه) from his second marriage.

Gharib Nawaz died on Monday the 6th of Rajab, 627 AH (May 21, 1230 CE) and he was buried in Ajmer city. His Urs is celebrated annually in the month of Rajab.

Gharib Nawaz (رضى الله تعالى عنه) wrote many books in Persian; like (i) Anis-ul-Arwah, (ii) Risala Maujudia, (iii) Kanj-ul-Israr, (iv) Kashf-ul-Israr, (v) Afaaq-o-Anfas, (vi) Hadis-ul-Ma'arif, etc. He was also a great Sufi poet. Compilation of his poetry in Persian is available in print.

Shaikh Abul Hasan Shadhili (رضى الله تعالى عنه)

Shaikh Abul Hasan Shadhili (رضى الله تعالى عنه) was born in Bani Yafrah village in the region of Ghumara (Western Rif), near Tétouan (تطوان), in northern Morocco, in 1196 CE (593 AH). He was direct descendant of Khalifat-e-Rasulullah, Amir-ul-Momineen, Hadhrat Ali Ibn Ali Talib (رضى الله تعالى عنه) from both mother's and father's side.

He received education in his hometown and memorized Quran at an early age. Later he studied at Al-Quaraouiyine university (جامعة القرويين) of Fez, Morocco. It is reported that as a young man, he was famous for his ability to engage in religious debates with scholars on fiqh and other religious subjects.

Shaikh Shadhli (رضى الله تعالى عنه) had taken baya on the hands of Shaikh Mohammed Ibn Harazem (d.1218) when he was studying at Quaraouiyine University. Shaikh Harazem (رضى الله تعالى عنه) was his teacher at the University. He was instrumental in changing the orientation of Shaikh Shadhili (رضى الله تعالى عنه).

After completion of his studies at Quaraouiyine University, Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) traveled to the East that took him to Tunis, and Iraq, etc. He returned to Maghrib (Morocco) and found the Ghouse of that time Shaikh Mohammad Abdul Salam Ibn Mashish (رضي الله تعالى عنه). He took baya on the hand of Shaikh Mashish (رضي الله تعالى عنه). Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) spent some time in the company of his Shaikh at his abode on top of Mount Alam. Later his Shaikh asked him to go to Afriqiya (Tunis) to teach people there.

After departing from Shaikh's abode, Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) traveled towards Tunis, and as directed by his Shaikh, stayed in Shadhila village which was on the way at some distance from Tunis.

Shaikh Shadhili's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) stay in Shadhila village was the time of asceticism, seclusion and spiritual development during which the depth of his self-denial was accompanied by the manifestation of marvels (karamaat) that were witnessed by people. Some of these episodes were recorded by his Murid and companion Shaikh Abu Muhammad al-Habibi (رحمة الله عليه).

In Tunis, Shaikh Shadhili spent some time in the company of Shaikh Abu Sa'id al-Baji (رضي الله تعالى عنه). Around 1243 CE, he began calling people to Allah (رُؤُوسُ الْجَلَلِ). He started giving sermons in al-Balat Mosque. His sermons were effective and soon people started gathering in great numbers. This news reached local ruler Sultan Abu Zakariyya. He was also impressed by Shaikh's lectures. It is reported that 40 people took baya on the hand of Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) in the beginning that marked the beginning of Shadhiliyya Sufi order.

Shaikh Shadhili's (رضي الله تعالى عنه) popularity in Tunis had its implications as well as the scholars of the city became envious and created a lot of trouble for him.

It is reported that in 1246, Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) was commanded by Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) to go to Egypt to guide people there. The Prophet's (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم)

(آله وسلم) commandment came during peak summer and it was difficult to travel in the desert under scorching sun. He proceeded as per the command ignoring the heat of the desert. It is said that Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) was made Ghouse of his time during this travel. In Egypt, he made Alexandria his abode where he established his residence and his Institution (zawiya) in a large building gifted to him by the Egyptian Ruler. He lived with his family on the top floor; a floor was converted into a mosque where he gave public sermons; and another floor was converted into a great Zawiya for his disciples with cells for meditational retreat.

Soon, Shadhili order became very popular in Egypt, drawing into its ranks many court officials, religious scholars like Shaikh Izzuddin Ibn Abdus Salam (d. 1262), Shaikh al-Mundhiri (d.1258), and people from different segments of society. Alexandria was a distinguished city and a place of learning those days. Shaikh remained in Alexandria for the following 12 years till his death in 1258.

It is reported that the Battle of Mansurah was fought during February 8-11, 1250, between Crusaders led by Louis IX, the King of France and Egyptian's Ayyubid forces led by Emir Fakhrudin Yusuf. Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) participated in this battle along with hundreds of his Murideen. The battle was won by the Egyptians and King Louis IX and many French generals were captured.

During his stay in Egypt, Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه) did Hajj every year along with his Murideen. In 1258, Genghis Khan attacked Baghdad and ransacked the city. That did not deter the Shaikh from going for Hajj. He asked his Murideen to prepare for Hajj travel. This time he asked that a pickaxe, shovel, and a shroud to be added to his baggage. As was his custom he set out on the southern route, known as the spice route, overland to Damanhur, via Qahira (Cairo), up the Nile to Idfu desert in Upper Egypt. From there he would cross the Red Sea to reach Jeddah in Arabian Peninsula. From Jeddah he would take the two-day camel ride to reach Makka al-Mukaramma.

Soon after entering the desert, Aydhab, Shaikh fell ill. Since it was a vast desert, they had no choice but to continue travel on camels. When they reached 'Humaythira', a place deep into the desert, Shaikh's condition deteriorated. Shaikh called his companions and advised them to continue to act upon his teachings even when he is not there among them.

In the evening, he appointed Shaikh Abul Abbas al - Mursi (رحمة الله عليه) as successor. Then he called for a jar of water to be filled from the well at Humaythira. When he was told that water of the well was not safe to drink as it was salty, he asked them to bring it anyway. When the water was brought, he took some water into his mouth, and spat back into the jar and asked to pour the water back into the well. No sooner the jar water was poured into the well, the water of the well became sweet and fresh. The well water was enough for the entire caravan traveling with the Shaikh at that time. Later that night Shaikh passed away. He was buried in the middle of a vast desert at Humaythira.

After the death of Shaikh Shadhili (رضي الله تعالى عنه), successive scholars, have written books about his deeds and sayings. These include, (i) Hikam al Ataiyya (The book of Wisdom) (ii) Miftah al-Falah wa Misbah al-Arwah (the Key to Salvation); (iii) Kitab at-Tanwir fi Isqat al-Tadbir (the Book of Illumination); (iv) Lataif al-Minan fi Manaqib Abul Abbas al-Mursi wa Shaikhihi Abul Hassan Ash-Shadhili (the Subtle Blessings in the Sainly Lives of Abul Abbas al-Mursi and his Shaikh Abul Hassan Shadhili); (v) 'Tayid al-Haqiqah al-Aliya wa Tashyid al-Tariqa Shadhiliya' (The Sublime Truths of The Shadhili Path), etc.

Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه)

Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) was born in 718 AH (1318 CE) in a rural area called Qasr-e-Hinduwan, which was later renamed as Qasr-e-Arifan, located near Bukhara, Uzbekistan. He was direct descendant of Khalifat-e-Rasulullah, Amir-ul-Momineen, Hadhrat Ali Ibn Ali Talib (رضي الله تعالى عنه) from father's side.

When he was born, Shaikh as-Sammaasi, (رضي الله تعالى عنه), who lived in their town, visited his house and made him Murid and declared him as his son. Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) used to say, 'it is Allah's (رَبِّ وَجَلَّ عِزُّهُ) special beneficence on me that I was honored as son and Murid by Shaikh as-Sammaasi, (رضي الله تعالى عنه) right after my birth'.

Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) completed his religious education and studied all Sharia sciences by the time he was 18 years old. Probably he had memorized the holy Quran during that time. After completion of his education, he went back to Shaikh as-Sammaasi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) again.

Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) remained in the Company of Shaikh as-Sammaasi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) for a few years. After the death of Shaikh as-Sammaasi (رضي الله تعالى عنه), Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) moved to Samarkhand. After some time, he went to Bukhara. In both the places he spent time in the company of famous Shuyookh. In Bukhara he got married. When he was in Bukhara, he was given Khilafah by Shaikh Azizan Ali Ramitani (رضي الله تعالى عنه) who was his Grand Shaikh in Naqshbandi Silsila, died a few years earlier. Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) received training from Khwaja Abdul Khaliq Ghujdawani (رضي الله تعالى عنه) as well, who was Grand Shaikh of his Silsila, died 200 years ago in 575 AH (1180 CE). He mentioned about this training to his Murideen.

A few months later Shaikh Syed Amir Kulal, the Khalifa and Successor of Shaikh as-Sammaasi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) met Khwaja Naqshband and informed him that at the time of death, Shaikh as-Sammaasi (رضي الله تعالى عنه) had advised him to take care of him.

Khwaja Naqshband (رضي الله تعالى عنه) mentioned several incidents that occurred when he was in the company of Shaikh Kulal (رضي الله تعالى عنه). He said, when he was in the company of Shaikh Kulal (رضي الله تعالى عنه), he was often overwhelmed with 'Jazb' (nearness to Allah) and used to wander around secluded places. Shaikh Amir

Kulal (رضى الله تعالى عنه) died in 1363 when Khwaja Naqshband (رضى الله تعالى عنه) was 35 years old. After his death he was in the company of Shaikh Arifuddin Karani (رضى الله تعالى عنه) for some time. Later he spent some time in the company of Shaikh Kuthum. He spent 7 years in the company of Shaikh Khaleel Ghirani (رضى الله تعالى عنه) as well.

Khwaja Naqshband (رضى الله تعالى عنه) died on Monday, 3rd Rabi'a I, 791 AH (March 3, 1389 AD). As per his instructions, he was buried in the Garden within his school. His grave is visited by thousands of Muslims every year.

Many scholars have written books about his deeds and sayings. These include, (i) Awrad an-Naqshbandiyyah, (ii) Tanbih al - Ghafilin, (iii) Maslakul-Anwar, (iv) Hadiyyatus Salikan wa Tuhfatut Talibin, etc.

Shaikh Shahabuddin Umar Suharwardi (رضى الله تعالى عنه)

Shaikh Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs Umer Bin Muhammad al-Bakari Al-Suhrawardi, al-Shafi'i, was born in 'Suhraward' town near Zanjan, Iran, in 1145 CE (539 AH). His lineage meets with Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique (رضى الله تعالى عنه) from his father's side.

It is reported that his parents did not have children for a long time. Gowth al-Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (رضى الله تعالى عنه) was very famous in Baghdad those days. His mother went to his audience and requested him to pray Allah for a child. The shaikh prayed and told her that In Sha Allah she will bear a very special son.

Shaikh Shahabuddin was initially taught at home. Then he was admitted to a Madrasa in Baghdad where he learnt the Quran, Ahadith, Fiqh and other Islamic subjects. Later, he came under the supervision of his uncle and Shaikh-e-Tareeqat, Abu al-Najib Abdul Qadir Suhrawardi (1097–1168).

It is reported that he also had the opportunity to learn Islamic subjects under Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (رضى الله تعالى عنه) in 1162 CE (560 AH) as well.

Shaikh Abu al-Najib Abdul Qadir Suhrawardi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) founded the Suharwardiyya Sufi order. After the death of his uncle in 1165 CE, Shaikh Umar Suharwardi became the successor and head of his uncle's Khanqah. He spent a lot of time at this Khanqah in teaching the students. Soon crowds started to gather which led him to establish three more Khanqahs, (i) Ribat-e-Nasri, (ii) Ribat-e-Bistami, and (iii) Ribat-e-Mamoonia, in nearby areas where students lodging, food and education was provided by the Shaikh.

In view of his popularity, many people of the neighboring towns and nearby countries benefited. Once a Sufi wrote to him that he gave up working and feels inclined to a life of seclusion and idleness. He wrote, 'If I work, I start feeling pride for my earnings. What should I do in these circumstances?' The Shaikh replied, 'work and pray both and ask Allah for His forgiveness for your pride'.

The Abbasid Caliph Al-Nasir used to respect the Shaikh and appointed him as Shaikh of Baghdad. On various occasions he was appointed as the ambassador of peace between Muslim rulers.

Ibn Khalikhan, a Muslim historian wrote that 'whatever contributions were received by his Khanqas, every penny was distributed among the poor and the needy. The Shaikh led a very simple life. When he died, there was no money at his home for his funeral'.

Shaikh Suharwardi wrote many books, including his magnum opus 'Awarif al-Ma'arif' (Bounties of the divine knowledge).

It is reported that in his last days, the Shaikh had become blind. He died in the month of Muharram, 1234 CE (632 AH).

He was buried in 'Vardia grave- yard. His shrine is situated near Bab-e-Wustani. This tomb is one of the oldest in Vardia and is surrounded by other graves. In 1856 CE (1273 AH) Ismail Pasha, Governor of Shehroze built a tomb. In 1902 CE (1320 AH) some parts of the tomb were renovated.

Conclusion

Some Muslim sects like Salafi's, Ahle Hadith and their likeminded groups do not accept the importance of Sufi Shuyookh in Islam. They make fun of them and claim that the people who visit their graves for baraka are grave worshipers. They are the Shuyookh of Sawad Al-Azam who are to be followed by all Muslims of the world. This article provides the importance of the Sufi Shuyookh in Muslim Society as their lives provide an example of piety and virtue. People can learn from their teachings which helps them to walk on the right path of Islam.

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