

## Sufi Literature in India with Reference to Akhbar-Al-Akhyar Fi-Asrar-Al-Abrar

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### 0 INTRODUCTION

The history of Sufi literature in India is long and very challenging. One can easily trace these details through the Hagiological works (TAZKIRAS) of Persian from 14th century A.D. onward. For the purpose of the life of these Sufis and their contributions to medieval Indian society, the authentic sources are the Persian hagiological works and Malfuz (Pronounced/ Table talks of Sufis) literature. In the general thoughts of an ordinary and less educated person there are two streams of Islam, one is called SHARIAT (Orthodoxy) and the other TARIQAT (Sufism). But if we closely and seriously analyze these two streams, we may come to a conclusion that: Sufis has never advocated either for or against of two elements i.e. Shariat and Tariqat (Normally this is not happened in ordinary situation), Sufis maintain a proper balance and adjustment between Shariat and Tariqat, because the mutual misgivings could lead to greater rivalry and enmity.” (Both these elements have been properly taken in a positive form.)

The author of the celebrated Hagiological work named Akhbar-al-Akhyar Fi-Asrar-al-Abrar was penned by a very renowned scholar of rational and traditional sciences, who was a poet, a historian and above all a famous Sufi. Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi was born on 9th Muharram 958A.H./17th January 1551 A.D. in the family of scholars and poets. He also composed Persian poetry with the pen name (Nome -de- Plume) HAQQI or HAQQA. His main contribution may be enumerated as the person, who played an important role in propagating and popularizing Hadis among the Muslims; through his efforts, he was successful in uniting the medieval Indian Muslim society. Shaikh has a special ability in translating Arabic text into simple Persian language, so he translated the Arabic Hadis Books into simple Persian language, through his translations the big number of Indian Muslims were able to understand Hadis books. After doing so much literary and fundamental Islamic service he left this world on 21st Rabiul Awwal 1052 A.H. 30<sup>th</sup> June 1641 A.D. at an old age of around 90 years. According to his wish (Wasiyat) he was buried near the famous Hauz-e-Shamsi in Mehrauli, Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

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Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis Dehlavi was a prolific writer who has written more than 60 books on different topics, he himself provided a list of his 49 publications in a separate book entitled: “Talif-e- Qalb-al- Laif -be- Zikr-e-Fahris - al- Tawaleef” and after this list, he has penned around 11 more books. So, the total number of his publication reached to 60 odd books.

His works can be divided in the following categories with their number, as:

- Tafsir (Commentary) 3 books
- Tajvid (Styles of recitation of Holy Quran) 1 book
- Hadis (Tradition) 13 books
- Aqaid (Doctrines) 1 book
- Fiqh (Jurisprudence) 3books
- Tasawuf (Sufism) 10 books
- Akhlaq (Ethics) 4 books
- A'mal -o- Aurad (Deeds and Prayers recited Mechanically)5 books
- Phalsapha and Mantiq (Philosophy and Logic) 3 books
- Tareekh (History) 3 books
- Siyar wa Tazkirah (Life and behavior and Biography) 7 books
- Ilm-e Nahv (Syntax) 2 books
- Zaati Halaat (Personal life) 4 books
- Khutbat (Sermons) 1 book
- Makateeb (Letters) 2 books
- Poetry (Miscellaneous couplets)

Some of his masterly rendered books are very famous like: Takmilul Iman wa taqviyatul Iqan,<sup>2</sup> Tareekh-e-Haqqi,<sup>3</sup> Jazbil-Qulub-Ila-Dayar-il-Mehboob,<sup>4</sup> Lam'at-al Tanqih-Fi-Sharh-e-Mishkat-al-Masabih,<sup>5</sup> Ashatul-Lamaat,<sup>6</sup> Marj-ul-Bahrain<sup>7</sup> and last but not the least Akhbar-al-Akhyar-fi-Asrar-al-Abrar.<sup>8</sup>

Akhbar- al-Akhyar contains the life accounts of 275 saints apart from Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, whose biography has been included in this Tazkira because of the profound regard and faith of the author in the said shaikh. All the remaining saints belonged to India. This Tazkira is divided into 3 Tabqas, in this form:

1. First Tabqa starts with the account of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Ajmeri and ends with the detail of Shaikh Fakhruddin (son of Shaikh Moinuddin Chishti Ajmeri) with 20 life accounts of the saints.
2. Second Tabqa starts with the biography of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-e – Shakar and comes down to Maulana Ahmad Hafiz and contains accounts of 43 saints.
3. Third Tabqa begins with the account of Shaikh Nasreedudin Mehmood chiragh-e- Dehli upto Shaikh Bahsi containing 192 biographies of saints.

After 3 Tabqas shaikh Abdul Haq provided the short biographies of 14 Majazeeb (Those completely attached to God), starting with Shah Abul Ghaib Bukhari and closing to Shaikh Sohan Majzoob. Shaikh has also given the biographies of 5 pious women including the life accounts of the mothers of Baba Fareeduddin and Nizamuddin Auliya. In the Appendix Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis Dehlavi deals with his own family which is very important historically to trace his family lineage.

As we had already discussed the introductory part of this Tazkirah, now there are some significant importance of this Sufi Tazkirah may also be taken into consideration. As we go through the preface, ShaikhComplaints about the limited authentic works on the life and works of Indian Sufis. According to him due to the limited authentic sources on the life, works and the contributions of these great Sufis, Shaikh planned to prepare an authentic Tazkirah on the subject, and after long struggle he was able to do the same.

Akhbar-al-Akhyar begins with the life account of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, as we are aware that Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani never visited India, but due to the profound regard his account is provided very lavishly. This account shows the labor and hard work of the writer's emotional and sentimental attachment to Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (Rahmatullah Alaih) as his spiritual guide. Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani's Assembly was well attended by Auliya, Ahibba and Kings. Akhbar-al Akhyar is not divide of historical information's which is useful to corroborate the respective events described in other earlier works. In the account of Moinuddin Hasan Sijzi. He writes that the ancient name of Nagaur<sup>9</sup> was Nava Nagar, which was changed to Nagaur by the Turks. He also informs us about the foundation of a new city Killokhari by Moizuddin Kaiqubad within the bounds of Ghayaspur.<sup>10</sup> Similarly he provides the short account of Mohammad bin Tughlaq for the transfer of his capital from Delhi to Deogeer and its effects on the society. Such socio- cultural and historical references in Akhbar-al Akhyar have made it an important source of its Kind. This is one of the most important works of Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi. In the appendix to this Tazkirah the Shaikh deals with his own family, which is very important historically to trace his family lineage. Shaikh Abd-al- Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi commenced this work in 999 A.H./1590 A.D. but subsequently, after making some additions he completed it in 1028A.H./1619A.D

The contents of the Tazkirah also suggest that the Shaikh made changes in his Tazkirah from 999A.H./1585A.D. to 1590 A.D. As a result, we find that there is difference in the readings of Akhbar-al-Akhyar in some of its manuscripts. The Shaikh however remained busy in completing this work for a long period and made additions to it at various times. He writes about his continuous additions to this work in his Fahris-al-Tawalif. It is again important to note that in the Takmilah

(Supplement) some points related to the period later than 999A.H./1590A.D. are also present. Emperor Nooruddin Mohammad Jahangir has also praised the work of Shaikh Abd-al-Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi in his Tuzuk, and also gave a village “BAKARWALA” to him. Some of the prominent intellectuals, Islamic Scholars, historians and the men of letters have also praised the work of Shaikh Abd-al-Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi. Like the author of the celebrated work Gulzar-e-Abrar, Ghausi Shattari, and Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni in his Muntakhab-al-Tawareekh has mentioned only two works of Shaikh Abd-al-Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi; Tareekh-e-Madina (Jazb-al-Qulub-Ila Dayar-il-Mehboob) and Akhbar-al-Akhyar Fi Asrar-al-Abrar.

As for as the list of sources used for the preparation of Akhbar-al-Akhyar is concerned, Shaikh did not provide any list of the sources, but somehow these were the authentic Malfuz literature present while compiling his Akhbar, to whom he collected his material as:

“Fawaid-al-Fowad of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Khair-al-Majalis of Shaikh Naseer-al-Din Mehmood Chiragh-e-Delhi, Siyar-al-Auliya of Ameer Khurd Kirmani, Daleel-al-Arifeen of Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, Jawame-al-Kalim of Sayyed Gesu daraz, Kanuz-al-Fawaid of Shaikh sadruddin, Molhemat of Shaikh Jamaluddin hansavi, Surur-al-Sudur of Shaikh Hameedudin Nagauri, Nisab-al-Ehtesab of Khawajah Ziauddin Sunami, Bahr-al-Maani, Daqaiq-al-Maani, Haqaiq-al-Maani, Risala panj Nukat, Risalah dar bayan -e-Ruh and Risalah Bahr-al-Nisab all by Sayyed Mohammad Bin Jafar, Khzanah-e-Jalali by sayyed jalaluddin, Sharh-e-Shamsia by Maulana Qutbuddin Raazi, Minhaj-al-Abideen of Imam Ghazali, Tohfah-al-Majalis by Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, Risalah Adaab-al-Salikeen by Shaikh Qasim Oudhi Dehlavi, Miraat-al-Arifeen by Masood Bak, Risalah Manaqib-al-Saadat by Qazi Shahabuddin Daulatabadi, Anwar-al-Uyoon by Shaikh Abdulquddus, Fasoos-al-Hikam and Risalah Miftah-al-Faiz both by Hasan Tahir, Risalah-e-Shattaria by Shaikh Bahauddin, Sharh-e-Gulistan-e-Raaz by Shah Jalal Shirazi, Risalah Meraj namah by Shaikh Haji Hameed, Nuzhat-al-Arwaah and lumat by Shaikh Fareedudin Iraqi, Siyar-al-arifeen of Jamali Dehlavi, Some histories of Medieval India like Tareekh-e-Firuz Shahi and Tabaqat-e-Nasiri were also used as his source and these may be traced as the shortest list of sources of Shaikh Abd-Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi while preparing Akhbar-al-Akhyar Fi asrar-al-Abrar.”

A perusal of the Tazkirah proves that the Shaikh has been very cautious in selecting his material for Tazkirah. He has avoided the controversial materials in his Tazkirah. It is interesting to note that The Shaikh was attached to Qaderi Silsilah (Qaderi Order) but his elegance to one Silsilah never compel him to say anything unworthy of a Scholar for the Sufis of the other Silsilah included in his Tazkirah. The

Shaikh, whenever it was possible has recorded the date and year of death of the Sufis. Usually, the dates mentioned by the Shaikh are correct. It shows that the sources were authentic and he himself had a critical attitude to ascertain the correct date about the death of some of the Sufis, the account of who have been included in the Tazkirah. The dates of their death have not been given. It means that Shaikh could not trace their date of death by the available sources.

There are few examples where Shaikh has recorded the places of burial of most of the Sufis whose accounts are present in the Tazkirah. Since he give the contemporary names of the Villages, Cities, Districts and the areas in the cities or the villages, they are historically important today. Most of such names as of Streets, Areas, Alleys and sights have been dropped today and therefore no one knows the earlier names of the places.<sup>11</sup>

These ancient names can be found in this Tazkirah and located at present if the grave or the Tomb of Shaikh exists today. Shaikh Abdul Haq had gone through each and every minute detail regarding the information on the life, works and the contributions of these Sufis in the said Tazkirah. As a matter of fact, that Shaikh has recorded the names of a good number of works of the scholars and the Sufis.<sup>12</sup>

When Shaikh gives some comments on the works of these Sufis, certainly he has read their works thoroughly and then after he has opined on the works and critically evaluated each work. Likewise, Shaikh himself was a poet and on the basis of his own experience, he opined about the poetry of Jamali Dehlavi as: “Jamali has composed Masnavis, Qasidas and Ghazals, but his Qasidas are better than his Ghazals.”<sup>13</sup>

It is a known fact that Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi was a poet, and used Haqqi or Haqqa as his Takhallus (Nome de-Plume). His poetic talent was exceptional, but due to his Scholarly engagements he could not had a time to write poetry nevertheless, his poetic talent can be enumerated in the higher sphere of Persian poetry. He does not have any complete Diwan of his poetry but his couplets as well as his Qasida is present in the Akhbar-al- Akhyar which shows that he was a good poet as well. Shaikh Abd-al Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi has composed verses, those present in Akhbar-al-Akhyar Fi Asrar -al-Abrar. Though a very few in number yet these verses prove the talent and genius of Muhaddis Dehlavi in Persian poetry. Most of them are fluent in style. Similarly, the language of them is simple. We also find a Hindi “DOHRA” quoted in Akhbar-al-Akhyar under the account of Shaikh Ali Bin Husam-al-Din. This Dohra should be regarded as one of the early traces of Urdu poetry and similarly, it also shows that Muhaddis Dehlavi was not ignorant of the language. Moreover, he wanted to give prominence to the local languages in India, The Dohra is as follows:

*SUN SAHELI PAREM KE BATA*  
*YUN MIL RAHIYE JIWAN DOODH NABATA*<sup>14</sup>

Meaning: *(Listen! my friend, the Talks of Love, you must live like Milk and candy in a cup)*

It is one of the qualities of Shaikh that he was a good Scholar of traditional sciences (Hadis) and prolific writer with a positive attitude towards history and himself was a renowned Sufi as well. His attitude towards writing is scholarly, as it is known to us, scholarship makes a person conscious of avoiding such writings and believes the authenticity of which is controversial. Shaikh has shown utmost care in selecting his material from his works. Particularly in Akhbar-al- Akhyar this aptitude of Shaikh is, to the large extent, the result of his training in Hadees. His deep study of Asma-al-Rijaal (Biography), Usul-e-Asnad (rules for selecting sources etc.) induced in him the inclination towards research. His works show that he has not written any sentence with doubt without being completely satisfied of its authenticity. Shaikh has evaluated every Sufi or Scholar in the correct perspective of his social position. He has strictly avoided including Kashf and Karamat of Sufis in Akhbar-al-Akhyar.

The style of the Shaikh in his works particularly in Akhbar-al- Akhyar is a convincing proof of his scholarship. His sentences are eloquent because of his academic mind; he selects his words according to the contents. He gives more emphasis on collecting facts but never avoids the beauty and sobriety of the language. He uses Arabic words profusely in his Persian works, but they do not appear to be strange in the language or for the readers. Sometimes it appears that if he has added to the dignity of Persian language by using Arabic words in it. Invariably the language of the Shaikh is almost simple though in account of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani and Shaikh Musa have been written in labored language but here the flowery style of Shaikh has not created hindrance in understanding his substance.

One of the prominent features of the style of Shaikh is “JAAZ” (Conciseness), he tries to convey his objective in few words. Some of the contemporary authors and Scholars have also appreciated this effort of Shaikh like Mohammad Gausi Shattari, who himself was a Scholar and Sufi of eminence of this period who wrote Gulzar-e-Abrar, a Tazkirah of the Sufis, has paid glowing tributes to the Scholarly attitude of Shaikh in this Tazkirah. (Gulzar-e-Abrar;) this reference can be traced in the famous book Hayat-e-Shaikh Abd-al- Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi.<sup>15</sup>

There are a few instances related to the life accounts of some Sufis where one can find that the information provided for some Shaikhs are not accepted logically. For instance, he says that Sayyed Tajuuddin Sher Sawar, a lover of the

animals, once proceeded to see his Murshid (Guide or Mentor) on the back of a Lion with a Snake in his hand.<sup>16</sup>

It is to be noted that there are number of Manuscripts of Akhbar -al- Akhyar preserved in different libraries of India and abroad. A good number of available manuscripts show that it was a source studied and consulted by various scholars; as a result, it was copied many a times. Similarly, Akhbar-al-Akhyar was published many times for the benefit of the scholars and the interested readers. Akhbar-al-Akhyar was published three times from Mujtabai press in the years 1892, 1910, and 1914 A.D. and 1283 A.D. from Mohammadi press. It was also translated into Urdu language by Hafiz Sayyed Yaseen Ali and published in 1328 A.H.

It is to be mentioned that Akhbar-al-Akhyar Fi Asrar-al-Abrar was scientifically edited by the writer for the degree of Ph.D. in Persian from University of Delhi and later it was Published by “The Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries”, Tehran, Iran in 2005.

## REFERENCES

1. Hauz-e Shamsi is a famous Pond of Water in the vicinity of Qutb Minar , in Mehrauli area of Delhi and very popular for its Hindu Muslim unity on the eve of annual festival of “ PHOOL WALON KI SAIR”.
2. This book is based on the topic of Aqaid and its good manuscripts are found in British museum (Serial No. 827), Asifya, Hyderabad (Serial No.1336), Asiatic Society of Bengal (Serial No. 9 A.D.), India office, London (Catalogue Serial No. 2583-2585), Bankipore, Patna (Sr.No. 1283 & 1284), Rampur Raza Library has 3 manuscripts (i.e. Serial No. 61 & 62 With 409 F).
3. This book is also known as Zikr-e Muluk, as well. Shaikh Abdul haq started this history from the formation of Muslim rule in India (i.e. 1206 A.D.) and completed the period up to the 40<sup>th</sup> regional year of Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar (1004 A.H.) There are more than 3 Manuscripts are available in Indian oriental libraries and Museums.
4. This is a book on the history of Madina Munawwarah, Shaikh Abdul Haq Extensively used the famous book “ Wafa ul wafa Be Akhbar –e Darul Mustafa” of Sayyed Nooruddin Ali.
5. This book is the explanation of the Arabic book in Arabic in two volumes. The translation of this book was done by Shaikh Ilahi Baksh Bihari and Khwaja Mohammad Ali Fazil Saharanpuri. There are More than 7 Manuscripts available in India and abroad.
6. Ashatul Lamaat fi SharahAl Mishkaat is an Explanation of Famous Book “ Mishkat Shareef” in Persian language ,which was completed in 1610 A.D. By Shaikh Abdul haq Muhaddis Dehlavi. This book was published by Munshi Naval

Kishore in Four volumes. More than 6 Manuscripts are available in Indian oriental libraries.

7. Marajul Bahrain fil Jame Bain uttariqain is also a famous book of Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis , This book has many a times published in Persian and with Urdu translation as well. Abdur Rehman press has printed this book in 1265 A.H. Matba-e Mohammadi Calcutta Printed in 1274 A.H. Naami Press published its Urdu translation in 1314 A.H. ( Maulvi Ghaus Mohammad Farukhabadi has translated it with the name “ Visal us saadain” in Urdu), lastly Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Academy also Published it with Urdu translation in 1991 A.D.
8. Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi- Asrar-al Abrar (Hagiological work / Tazkira) is the real monumental work of this famous Islamic Scholar. This book was published more than Four times as: Mohammadi Press, 1866, 2-Mujtabai Press, 1892. 3-Muslim Press, 1892, 4- Mujtabai press, 1914, 5- Kutub Khana Raheemia, Deoband, 1972, This book was two time translated into Urdu language, 1-In the 1980 By Mohammad Yaseen (Abridge Version) from Karach, Pakistan & 2- In the year 1993 it was also completely translated by Mohammad Fazil and Subhan Mehmood and was published by Madina Publishing house, Karachi. More than 6 (Six) Manuscripts are available in Indian oriental libraries and museum s. This was scientifically edited by the writer of this paper and Published by the Society for the appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, Tehran (IRAN) in the year 2005.
9. Nagaur is a city in the state of Rajasthan. It is located at 27.2 Degrees North and 73.73 Degrees East. It is a historical town that houses ancient sand stone fort of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. It lies between Jodhpur and Bikaner .It is around 135 Kilometers away from Jodhpur. It is a famous Tourist City and famous for red chilies and Oxen.
10. Ghayaspur is situated just adjacent to Humayun’s tomb in South Delhi.
11. For details in this regard please see Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi Asrar -al- Abrar, Page no. 156.
12. For details in this regard please see Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi Asrar -al- Abrar, Page no. 215.
13. For details in this regard please see Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi Asrar -al- Abrar, Page no. 228.
14. For details in this regard please see Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi Asrar -al- Abrar, Page no. 265.
15. See Gulzar-e Abrar of Gauthi shattari, Page No.204
16. For details in this regard please see Akhbar-al- Akhyar Fi Asrar -al- Abrar, Page no. 149.