

The Influence of Teaching methods of Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī on the Formation of Sufi Orders in Central Asia

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Abstract

This study investigates the teachings and influence of Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī who is a prominent Sufi of the 11-12th centuries on the subsequent formation of Sufi orders in Central Asia. The study mainly has three objectives that are firstly, to describe Hamadānī's life; secondly, to explore his teachings and finally, to highlight the role and influence of Yusuf Hamadānī in Sufism. As a dedicated work on the subject, the study is considered as one of the significant research works conducted on Sufism periods in Central Asia, since new information and conclusions have been proposed to the existing literature as a result of consideration on Hamadānī's life and influence. He has become one of the Sufi Masters with the most number of disciples and educated Sufi leaders such as Khawaja Abdulkhāliq Ghijduwānī and Khawaja Ahmad Yasawī who were the founders of important Sufi orders which are known as Khawajagan-Naqshbandiyya and Yasawiyya. Therefore, they have a significant role in bringing Sufism up to the present days.

1. Introduction

Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī, a prominent scholar and Sufi, played a significant role in the formation of Sufism that extends to our present time and nurturing great scholars of all time. He was a symbol of tolerance and compassion and always generous. He used to distribute when he gained something to poor and needy people and had no expectations from people. He never got tired or bored of tackling other's problems and would endeavour to help everyone regardless of their condition or race. His heart was full of love and compassion towards all creations. Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī used to visit non-Muslim houses and tell them about Islam. He would pay more attention and care to poor people than riches. He was patient and tolerant for everything, and show respect and love to everybody.

He was one of the mystic scholars and played a vital role in the development of the Sufi order in Central Asia. Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī's teaching

has been influenced by Muslim countries and it played a significant role in the formation and development in the Sufi orders. Despite this fact, it is clearly seen that, Hamadānī's life, works and contributions to Sufism has not been studied as much as other Sufi masters.

2. His Life

Details of Yusuf Hamadānī's life are scattered across a range of classical Sufi sources and biographies (Algar, 1985; Bennett, 1995; Khismatulin, 2001; Sam'ānī, 1999). However there are significant differences especially regarding his date and place of birth, death, tomb and several important events. In my opinion, the chief visible reasons for these differences are the mistakes made by historians, chroniclers, narrators, and scribes. From the available sources, perhaps the most reliable information about Hamadānī could be found in the book *Kitab al-Ansāb* by Sam'ānī. According to some sources, his full name is *Imam Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Husain ibn Vahra Buzanjirdī Hamadānī* (Sam'ānī, 1999). Although, there are people who claim that his patronymic name was Abu Yusuf. Knysh chose his rarely-mentioned patronymic name Abu Yusuf (Knysh, 2004). However, most of researchers, authors of historical and translated books reported his patronymic name as Abu Ya'qub.

Hamadānī was born in 440/1048 or 441/1049 in Buzanjird near Hamadan. Buzanjird was a village located in 30 km from Hamadan in present Iran (al-Bakrī, 2000). Yusuf Hamadānī acquired his primary education and learnt some fields of Islamic knowledge in Hamadan before the age of 19. Later he improved and sharpened his knowledge in the presence of Abu Ishaq Shirāzī in Baghdad. During the years he spent in Baghdad his tendency to Sufism perfected. After the death of Shirāzī he migrated to Hamadan. According to the available information, we may assert that the scholar spent his life in the cities such as Baghdad, Marv, Bukhara and Samarqand by narrating hadith and teaching Sufism. It should be stressed that he was renowned through the entire Muslim World as a grand scholar.

One of his disciples, the famous historian Abdul Karim ibn Muhammad al-Sam'ānī (d. 562/1167) recorded in his book "*al-Ansāb*" that he attended his classes and learnt from him in Marv. Consequently, Sam'ānī studied with him after 525/1132. In addition, Ibn Asākir (d. 571/1176) also listened to Hamadānī's lectures in 531/1137. Unfortunately, due to insufficient information recorded in these two famous historians' books about Hamadānī's life in Central Asia, the information given about this Sufi and religious scholar in other historical books is limited.

Yusuf Hamadānī who was creative and interested in debates on jurisprudential matters was influenced by these conditions and somehow involved in these incidents but later he started feeling displeased about this atmosphere. This condition could be considered as a chief reason for him to devote the rest of his entire life for Sufism. He migrated to Samarqand, the center of knowledge and wisdom of that time, with his 11 disciples after Baghdad. In sources, there is no statement or comment about why he came to Central Asia. However, it is more than likely that the chief reason of his migration to Bukhara was the strong tendency of Central Asia people to Sufism and keeping themselves out of disagreements between different doctrines (Bennett, 1995).

As most scholars agree, Abu Ali Farmadī was among the prominent Muslim scholars and great saints who lived in the 11th century. In some sources, his name is reported as Farmazī. Though, his name appears as "al-Farmadī" in the book of Sam'ānī named "*al-Ansāb*". He was born in the village of *Farmad* in Tus present Iran (Sam'ānī, 1999). Abu Ali Farmadī was a recognised and sophisticated figure among the Sufis. He focused on nurturing disciples and delivering preaches. He was famed and honoured as a preacher of Khorasan. Yusuf Hamadānī received training and knowledge of Sufism from him in Baghdad.

A. Khismatulīn reports the following excerpt concerning the statement mentioned above:

Sheikh Abu Ali Farmadī was not only the Master of Yusuf Hamadānī, but he was the Master of Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī as well. The authors who do not belong to the lineage of *Khawajagan* also asserted in their books that Imam Ghazālī and Yusuf Hamadānī were the disciples of Sheikh Abu Ali Farmadī with the time difference of 10-15 years (Khismatulīn, 2001).

Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī's works on Sufism are considered a core factor in understanding of his views. Yusuf Hamadānī's works are written in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunna and mainly cover the principals of Sufism and are explained in simple language. Yusuf Hamadānī's literary work consists of complete Sufism, good conduct and Islamic knowledge, and they are written in a concise and compact way. He devoted most of his time to

nurturing his students' education and he did not attempt to author books on a large-scale. Yusuf Hamadānī's scientific and literary heritage comprises small-scale works and articles dedicated to Sufism. Among them, his book "*Rutbah al-Hayāt*" (Degrees of Life) is worth special attention and gives detailed information relating to his views about Sufism and illuminates his approaches to this path.

Consequently, it helped the nations converting to Islam in Central Asia to understand the religion. Yusuf Hamadānī carried out his educational activities in the main centres of knowledge at that time such as Iraq, Khorasan, Baghdad, Nishapur, and Samarqand. He delivered his teachings in Bukhara as well, one of the centre of Islamic knowledge.

Khawaja Yusuf spent the last years of his life in Marv (present Turkmenistan), one of the big cities of Khorasan at that time. The people of Marv requested him to return to their city when he made his last journey to Herat. They admired Yusuf Hamadānī excessively. The reason of their admiration might be that Hamadānī built his Sufi lodge and religious school in Marv. Most probably, because of this reason, he set out from Herat to Marv during the last moments of his life to spend the rest of it there. It was the year of 535/1140. While Hamadānī, was coming back to Marv, he fell sick on the way in Bamiyan, a town which is located between Herat and Khorasan, and he told his disciples to stop there. And the lifetime granted to him came to an end and it was the time to leave for eternal life and meet The Great Beloved One. He was buried there after his demise. However, later his corpse was transferred to Mary by one of his disciples named Ibn al-Najjār and built a tomb in his name (al-Safī, 1977). His shrine, remaining within the perimeter of present Turkmenistan, is considered to be one of the most significant places to be visited in Central Asia and Muslim World.

3. His Influence

This age played a key role in the process of "formalisation" of Sufism. The Sufis who lived during that age developed and reinforced the concepts, views and other aspects of Sufism that had reached them from the past and endeavoured to defend it from various external criticisms. It should be noted that the political situation in the Muslim World bolstered the development process.

At the end of the 12th century and in the 13th century was a fertile and productive period in Sufism history. Sufism from the scientific/theoretical view and from a practical movement reached its peak at this time. Sufi literature also reached its peak and fruitful period. Especially, reflective and thinking scholars such as Abu Hamid Ghazali (d. 1111), Khawaja Yusuf

Hamadānī (d. 1140), Abd al-Qādir Gilānī (d. 1166), Khawaja Ahmad Yasawī (d. 1166), Abd al-Khāliq Ghijduwānī (d. 1179), Fariduddin Attār (d. 1220), Najmuddin Kubrā (d. 1221), Muhyiddin Arabī (d. 1240), and Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273) expanded the science of Sufism and enriched it with philosophy and wisdom.

Historically, a few Sufi orders had a significant presence in the region. The *Kubrawiyyah*, *Yasawiyyah*, and *Khawajagan-Naqshbandiyyah* orders originated in Central Asia. Their histories are interwoven with that of Central Asia. One of the important figures who played a key role in the establishment of the above Sufi orders in the Central Asia was Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī. His teaching has been influenced by Muslim countries and it played a significant role in the formation and development in the Sufi orders.

His Sufistic view was principally different from his predecessor. As we discussed in earlier chapters, before Hamadānī's period, Sufi teachings were built on *khalwah* (spiritual retreat), in another words, they propagated ascetical lifestyle. However, Hamadānī was one of the first scholars of Sufism who applied the teaching "*Khalwah dar Anjuman*" (outwardly to be with people, inwardly to be with God), submitting to Allah through the mass/people. Thus, as an advice of Yusuf Hamadānī to his disciple Abdukhāliq Ghijduwānī: "*O my son! Close two doors, and open two doors! Close the door of being Sheikh, open the door of service; close the door of privacy, open the door of preach and intercourse!*" (Tosun, 2002), we can say that publics who engaged the Sufi lifestyle nowadays emphasise the same things strongly and discourages heading/facing to the world. Accordingly, this is one of the founding views of the *Khawajagan-Naqshbandiyyah* order.

At the same time, Yusuf Hamadānī has shown the path to be "*Insan Kāmil*" (real/complete human) for the modern man who approves every way permissible to reach and satisfy the desires of the ego, and get confused under the pressure of never ending desires and wishes. When we go through the lives of these people who live Sufism, we see that they neither split from the world nor worshipping days and nights by shutting themselves in a place. What is only seen in their life is giving priority to servant hood, giving more importance than other people to supplementary prayers, practicing solidarity among each other more than other people and continue their daily lives. It means they give importance to what is written in these books and at the same time strive to lift their life standards, provide better facilities to families, and mobilise their financial facilities to make Islam practiced in wider geographies. It is known that many high-level businessmen, bureaucrat, engineer, and doctors have adopted Sufi principles as their lifestyle.

4. Sufism in Contemporary Times

Sufism aims to nourish the metaphysical side of a human being. Therefore, the most crucial purpose of Sufism is to provide the flourish of faith in the hearts in terms of the key principles of the Qur'an and Sunna. In other words, the most attractive, brilliant and wealthy way of sainthood is adhering to Sunna that is following the Prophet (pbuh) by concentrating on the prototypical personality of the Prophet of Islam. Hence, Sunna is very significant in Sufism. Whereas, Sufism is the purification of the heart from immoral habits in accordance with the will to reach eternal happiness and peace, to reach out to the level of maturation in morality through saving the heart from negative things, recognition of own and self thoroughly. The Sufi orders can be defined simply as the systematic form of Sufism. In addition to this perspective, in order to be away from sins, to practice with one's knowledge, and to adjust one's heart and intention, practicing becomes more significant notion as much as preaching. Undeniably, practicing in Islam is an essential stage as much as faith due to the faith may be revealed by practice.

Hence, both notions are inseparable concept of Sufism. In contrary to conventional understanding of asceticism, the one of great contribution of Sufism for understanding the Qur'an and Sunna in nowadays is providing to involve religious deeds continuously as an active participant of the contemporary community in the direct light of Qur'an and Sunna. Thus, Muslims who live according to Sufi principles, may join community actively, share their experience and knowledge, help the others and to encourage for establishing the peace in the society. In order to demystifying individuals who are internalizing the regulations of Sufism, should be concentrate on the style of living of the Muslim in the contemporary society in the World. The Muslims have been discussing this understanding what is related to the inner life of believers.

Therefore, divine imperatives, as deeply presented in the Qur'an, constitute the main pillar of this aspect. The Muslim is someone who trusts, a candidate of trust worthy future, promises safety to his surrounding, and who has interrelated colourful differences in harmony. The Muslim is an exemplary person, who opens his/her heart to everyone. She/he loves everyone and everything for God's sake, breathes love, and creates an aura of love always around him/her. They evaluate him/her based on contributions to the well beings of others. The concentration of them is always on 'We' rather than 'I.' Therefore, the Muslims are not selfish, but someone who thinks of others. In this description, the Muslims become a negotiator of 'positive action' and nothing can prevent him/her from acting and contributing to the community positively. As

highlighted earlier, Sufism in general has a direct relationship with everyday life. Therefore, clashes, conflicts and complications in contemporary times may be reduced and the World becomes more peaceful and habitable place for human beings. On the other hand, unfortunately there are misunderstandings in the society regarding micro level difficulties such as individual experiences on Sufism.

5. Conclusion

Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī was a consistent follower of Sunni scholars, attached himself to the Qur'an and Sunna and dedicated his entire life to knowledge, education and enlightening people. He would teach the secrets of knowledge and spiritual knowledge of Allah to every level of people and always recommend asceticism and piety to his disciples besides acquiring knowledge. Moreover, he would always attempt to practice his religion completely and never neglect any laws of Islam, and he held such thoughts and feelings that did not approve of being drunk spiritually and miracles which are experienced by some other saints. Yusuf Hamadānī taught his views and visions in Sufism to

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his disciples during the time where Sufism was flourishing and welcomed. His teachings were welcomed with great enthusiasm in Central Asia and explained the religious of Islam and illuminated teachings through the light of Sufism.

During the lifetime of Khawaja Yusuf Hamadānī, Sufism and its orders were widely spread and popular throughout the Islamic world. Till this time, Sufism had undertook several stages and initially, it played a vital role in spreading the lifestyle of Muslims, their purpose in this world, being pleased and content with their fate and piety.

As a result, during his entire lifetime of enlightenment and guidance, Yusuf Hamadānī held a thought of always remaining with people and serve them and recommended others this path to follow. This thought was boosted by Ghjduwānī and became the basic principle of *Khawajagan* order and reached the peak point during the time of Bahauddin Naqshband. Therewithal, he has educated many scholars and thinkers. The really eminent scholars who played a significant role in the history of Sufism by educating many scholars laid the groundwork for orders which is considered important until present days like *Khawajagan-Naqshbandiyyah* and *Yasawiyyah*.

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