

Shaikh Ahmad Khattu and his malfuz Tohfatul Majalis

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कॉपीराइट सूचना-

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Abstract: Malfuz writing is one of the most important literary innovations of medieval India. Through this type of literature, we can get a glimpse of the medieval society, particularly the moods and tensions of the the common man, the inner yearnings of their soul, the religious thought at its higher and lower levels, the popular customs and manners and above all the problems of the people. Malfuz literature is one of the important treasures of Prsian literature of medieval India. It records the teachings of mystic or sufi saints. It can be defined as discourses, conversations and sermons delivered by the Sufis in the assemblies of learned persons and recorded by their disciples. These soures are of great importance for the reconstruction of medieval Indian history. Malfuz is an Arabic word meaning ' what has been said'. The term 'malfuzat' is the plural form of malfuz, a passive participial noun meaning 'uttered' or 'utterences'. Malfuzat are an independent genre in itself, each text focusing on a particular sufi whose teachings were recorded by one of his close and trusted murids or disciples. This genre was given a definite shape by Amir Hasan Sijzi who has compiled the sermons, narrations and teachings of Nizamuddin Auliya who was a chishti sufi saint of a highest order of late twelfth and early thirteenth century A.D. This text serves more as a guide than as a metaphysical and theosophical aspects. The saint's teachings were

disseminated through anecdotes. The devout murid tries to pen down the whole experience with the sheikh. It portrays shaikh's conducts and beliefs and practices. Besides their culinary practices, leisure activities, to-pography, these malfuzat also highlights social, economic and political conditions.

Amir Hasan Sijzi, a scholar in Persian and Arabic languages decided in his life to compile a summary of what he heard from his murshid, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The book Fawaid ul Fawad is the record of the conversations of his murshid, which is a didactic classic in the form of recorded conversations. Devoid of supernatural elements, it provides useful information about a large number of sufi saints and Ulamas. The historiography of medieval India was confined to political history or biographical memoirs and the social life of the populace which is an important aspect of historiography was either sidelined or ignored. The non-political features of the time was documented as an alternative reinterpretation of political and social history through malfuzat. This genre of literature is idiosyncratic in spirit and treatment as they were confined to an individual. The devout murid, because of their close attachment with the sufi, has penned down what murshid has uttered. These utterances has become valuable sources know the socio-cultural aspects of the populace. Moved by Hasan Sijzi, devout followers of myriads of silsilas also started such practice. Mention

may be made of Ain-i- Malfuzat by Allama Akhlaq Hussain Dehlavi, Qiwan ul Aqaid by Shaikh Qiwanuddin, Durar-i- Nizami by Maulana Ali bin Mahmud Jandar, Anees ul Arwah by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Serul Auliya by Syed Md Kirmani, Lataif-i- Ashrafi by Mir Syed Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, Khairul Majalis by Hamid Qalandar etc and this genre which has a beginning in the Indian sub-continent still holds its importance though Urdu has replaced Persian as a source of medium.

In this article, an attempt is made to briefly present the importance of Tohfatul Majalis and the circumstances which led one of his dedicated disciples to compile this malfuz. The credit of compiling the sayings, narrations and sermons goes to Mahmood Irjee, a native of Iran. Tohfatul Majalis narrates the interesting incidence of Taimur's attack on India and its devastating impact. He says the utter failure of Sultan Mahmood's vision and lack of his leadership provided a great fillip to Taimur to attack and plunder India. Despite being a great and contemporary source of Taimur's invasion and its ramifications on Indian soil, not much attention has been paid by the Persian and Historical scholars to this literary piece. The reader of this malfuz will come across his life trek, beginning from Delhi, where he was born and his disappearance from his brothers in the storm befallen Delhi and his reaching to Deendawaaneh and finally settling at Khattoo, it really seems a live narration wherein the devoted disciple painfully covers every aspects of his shaikh. Tohfatul Majalis also highlights the instances how a dervish, endowed with miracle powers, is able to foresee the onslaught of Amir Timur in the city of Delhi. As a result, he goaded his devout adherent to move to a safer place to escape from the wrath of Timur. Held in captive by Timur's soldier, Shaikh Kahttoo was not only released but had developed a band of ardent followers. After a strenuous sufi practice, he gained immense popularity. Rulers and amirs were also amongst his ardent followers who were very close to him and had great respect for the shaikh. Mohd. bin Tughlaq, Firuz shah Tughlaq and Sultan Mohd. bin Ahmad Shah were frequent visitors to his hospice. When Sultan Ahmad (846 A.H to 855 A.H), intended to lay the foundation of a capital city in 813 A.H/ 1410 A.D besides Sultan Ahmad, Shaikh Ahmad, Qazi Ahmad and Ahmad Patni were present and Shaikh Ahmad emphasised this place to be the capital city because of its vibrant and strategic location.

Keyword: Malfuzat, Sufism, Pir, Amir Hasan Sijzi, Nizamuddin Auliya

Tohfatul Majalis or the Gift of Majalis(sessions) is an interesting and important malfuz source of late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries A.D wherein he tries to highlight the socio-economic and political conditions of the said times. This piece contains the utterances of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu who was a sincere disciple of Shaikh Babu Ishaq, who in turn was the dedicated disciple of Abu Abdullah Shamsuddin shaikh Mohammad Maghribi(1). Shamsuddin Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah was a great sufi personality who choose shaikh Ishaq as his calipha. Shaikh Ishaq traces his lineage from Junaid Baghdadi, was born in Delhi in 660 A.H/1261 A.D.(2) was a great advocate of Maghribi silsila who took upon himself the task of spreading this silsila in India. He remained bachelor throughout his life but he adopted a son, named Ahmad later became popular as shaikh Ahmad Khattu. Shaikh Ahmad's family members were from Delhi and mostly indulged in the profession of military service. Shaikh Ahmad was born in 738 A.H./ 1337 A.D. in Delhi(3). As his family was affluent and highly influential, Shaikh Ahmad was good taken care of by providing all comforts but an intense storm which has struck Delhi badly in 742 A.H./1341 A.D. led to his drifting away from family and this young Shaikh Ahmad accompanied a caravan who ultimately led him to Deedwaana(4). From there he was ultimately adopted by Shaikh Ishaq who was settled in Khattu, an area known for this great shaikh Ishaq Maghribi and later by his own sincere disciple Shaikh Ahmad Khattu (d. 1449 A.D.). Infact Khattu(5) is a region lying on the way from Gujarat to Delhi and because of its location, there was also a sarai(halting place)(6) Shaikh Ahmad Added Khattu with his name as title because origin where he was settled and spread love, affection amongst his adherents. He was buried and his tomb can still be traced there as one of the magnificent centre of sufi's Maghribi order.

After he was adopted by Shaikh Ishaq, since beginning great emphasis was on his moral and spiritual teachings so that once this young grows up, he could also trek the same spiritual path. Besides inculcating spiritual teachings, he was well adept in music, astronomy and other related influential disciplines. He was well versed in Persian, Arabic(7) which he testified on many occasions. Shaikh Ahmad Khattu was also expert in Hindi language as exemplified by him in Dohas composed in Tohfatul Majalis. He had keen interest in both Persian prose and poetry. He had

composed verses with Ahmad as title or on occasions he skipped without using any title which will be clear from the following verses.

گذشتم من ازین دنیا چه طرفه کارها کردم ندانم
ناقصان ننگه ازین میدان چه گو بردم

The last couplet (مقطع) of this poetry is as follows:

فراغت نیست ازین بهتر که احمد شکر کو کردم

As he was very much acquainted with multiple languages and had affinity in composing verses, besides Tohfatul Majalis, another piece left behind by him is in sufism to his credit which was dedicated to the founder of Ahmadabad city, Sultan Ahmad. The sharh of the said literary piece has been written by Abu Hamid Ismail bin Ibrahim(8). Abdullah Asafi has mentioned about this malfuz literature which was available in the library of Hazrat Pir Mohammad Shah.

Tohfatul Majalis is a malfuz which is compiled by Mahmood Irjee(9), an Iranian from Iraj, who on a mission to perform Haj, took a voyage and oneday he reached Ahmadabad where he stayed few days. During his stay there, he came to know about Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, a disciple of Ishaq. He wished to meet him. Gradually Mahmood Irjee was so impressed by him that when he insisted that he should shift to Ahmadabad, he could not resist and finally settled there permanently. No much information is available about his arrival and his birth but Miraat Ahmadi mentioned only 10th Rajab about his birth.

Shailh Mahmood Irjee, a great advocate of Maghribi silsila has composed this masterpiece in seventy five sessions (Majlis) in which he has dealt not only the typical Murid's sermons, moral teachings and sayings but it bears historical incidences of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also. Shaikh Ahmad lucidly narrates the social, economic and political conditions of the period. He blames the lack of visionary leadership of Sultan Mahmood and his indulge in debauchery and seduction from duty which made possible for Taimur to attack and plunder and wreck havoc in Delhi. Sultan Mahmood's indulgence in debauchery has weakened Delhi empire, as a result provincial authorities became more powerful and tried to establish autonomy. The nobles, amirs were concerned more about their self-aggrandisement rather for strengthening the Delhi sultanate. Provinces like Jaunpur, Bengal, Kashmir, Multan, Sindh, Gujarat, Khandish and Malwa became independent from Delhi sultanate. Shaikh Ahmad had the premonition of these developments and through the divine power, he prophesied about the impending Delhi attack of

Taimur. Sensing this danger, he had asked his closed ones to shift to safer areas. As a result large number of masses shifted to Jaunpur, Malwa, Khandish, Gujarat and other safer locations. After conquering Delhi, Taimur ordered his forces to arrest the masses, in which Shaikh Ahmad was also imprisoned. When Shaikh Ahmad was brought before Taimur, he came to know about the special divine power of Shaikh which moved him deeply and ordered not only to set him free but also commaded them to respect his recommendations. Malik Saifullah who was a court amir of Taimur helped him in setting free all his acquaintances.

When the situation in and around Delhi was not conducive, he planned to shift his base from Delhi to Gujarat. Muzaffar Khan, then governor of Gujarat and his elder son Tatar Khan were the frequent visitors of his monastery (خانقا). Seeing the disturbance of Delhi, Shaikh Ahmad Khattu moved to Patan of Gujarat in 1399 A.D. Tatar Khan, the elder son of Muzaffar Khan wanted to take advantage of this disturbance and capture Delhi. He fought against Iqbal Khan but was defeated so retreated back to Patan. Muzaffar Khan made him his successor but he died shortly because of intoxication. When Muzaffar Khan died in 813 A.H./ 1410 A.D., the son of Tatar Khan, Ahmad Khan was made the independent ruler of Gujarat.

Ahmad Khan, the ruler of Gujarat wanted to found a capital city which should be in equal distance of Deccan, Malwa, Kathiawar and Gujarat and should be very closer to the sea. When the foundation of Ahmadabad city was laid in 1410 A.D. four Ahmads played a prominent role in choosing the capital city. They were Sultan Ahmad, Shaikh Ahmad, Qazi Ahmad and Ahmad Patni.

Conclusion: Tohfatul Majalis is an important source of 14th and 15th centuries. Besides narrating the discourses of a sufi of highest order of the period, he also goes on to describe various palces and group of people across places he visited. Shaikh Ahmad has travellet to mecca, during which he visited many places abroad and mingled with people and it alsportrays the prevailing socio- economic and political condition. Late 14th centuries in the aftermath of the demise Mohammad bin Tughlaq and Firuz Shah Tughlaq, Delhi did not remain as a strong kingdom. Provincial kingdms started asserting tjemselves and made an independent kingdom from Delhi which paved the way for a great warrior like Taimur to attack and plunder India. Shaikh Ahmad was also made captive by the forces of Taimur who was eyewitness to what happened in Delhi. Thus We get the



glimpses of all these historical incidences through this literary piece which unfortunately has not been given due attention.

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2. majmoa'l Abrar, Page.61
3. Ain-i Akbari p. 226
4. Deendawaana is a region near Sambhar lake of Nagaur region
5. Majlis 7 Tohfatul Majalis
6. Majlis 9 Tohfatul Majalis
7. Majlis 44, 55 ibid
8. Zafarul wala vol. 1, London
9. Majlis 35

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