
Calm amid Choas: The Role of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in the Revival of Sufi Traditions in the 19th-century India and beyond

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The nineteenth century is considered to be one of the most eventful times in the history of the Indian Sub-continent. The latter half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century was the period that witnessed the process of transition from the centuries-old Mughal rule to the colonial domination of the British, extending over a period of almost a century. Marked by a gradual but cataclysmic shift in the political arrangements, the era holds historical significance since the political transformation taking place at the centre and elsewhere was heralding changes in varied spheres of society as well. However, the gradual erosion of the political power of the Mughals was not accompanied by a complete decline in the social, cultural and religious spheres of the polity. Historical evidence bears ample testimony to the fact that despite political chaos and decay, there were certain strikingly observable signs of growth and vitality in varied spheres of the Indian society. Though there emerged sectarian, communitarian and ideological conflicts between the Shias and the Sunnis, and the Hindus and the Muslims, many religious, social and cultural institutions generally retained their vitality.

One such sphere that vividly manifested exuberance was the religio-spiritual sphere, where the institution of the Sufi circles or Sufi *silsilahs* (literally meaning a connection, a link or a chain; a spiritual lineage or an initiatic genealogy) flourished in the *khanqahs* (Sufi dwellings). These *khanqahs* of the Sufi Shaykhs kept the torch of spiritual guidance, emotional solace and psychological consolation alight for the calamity-stricken people amid political upheaval and turmoil of the time. It is against this backdrop that the role of Sufism and its institutions like the Sufi Shaykh, Sufi *silsilahs* and *khanqahs* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Indian Sub-continent need to be assessed and interpreted. The present paper is a case study of an eminent Sufi Shaykh, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali (b. 1743-d. 1824)¹ of *Silsilah Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya*, who lived in that era. The paper analyzes the role Shah Ghulam ‘Ali played in the spiritual life of the people in India and beyond by analyzing his views and teachings, and the extent of his spiritual influence. But before we shed some light on the role of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in this regard, it is pertinent to briefly set the political and social context for the ensuing discussion.

State and Society in the Nineteenth-century India: The Context

The later half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a major power shift in the political arena in the Indian Sub-continent, when the political authority gradually slipped from the hands of the Mughal monarchs to the British Colonial masters. This era is also marked by the emergence of independent and semi-independent regional kingdoms in Bengal, Awadh, Hyderabad (Deccan), Sindh, and Punjab, etc. which largely undermined the Mughal authority in these regions as well as at the centre. In addition, the Mughal authority was also

challenged by the rise of non-Muslim communities such as the Marathas, Sikhs and Jats, etc. in various parts of India. In the process of transition from Mughal to Colonial rule during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the military victories of the British against the Indians greatly facilitated the establishment of effective colonial sway in India. The occupation of Delhi in 1803 by the British transformed the status of the Mughal Emperors into pensioners of the former, and reduced the authority of the latter in symbolic sense, whereas in territorial sense, the practical authority of the Mughals shrank from a vast Empire to a small principality extending from the Delhi's Red Fort to its neighborhood Palam. Thus, virtually, all political power was concentrated in the hands of the British.

The political disintegration and disarray was accompanied by social fragmentation, as in the social sphere the sectarian cleavage between the Shias and the Sunnis in the Muslim community was deepened, whereas communitarian and ideological conflicts between Hindus and Muslims also started increasing. The struggle between the decadent Mughal imperial authority and the regional non-Muslim powers such as the Maratha, Sikh and Jat, etc. was largely political in nature, but it significantly contributed to the religious polarization at social level. However, the decline of political institutions cannot be generalized to assume a total decline and collapse of the entire polity. In most of the historical accounts, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India has been portrayed as a period of chaos and anarchy, but recent research has proved it a delusion. The said era is not as dark as generally considered, rather it presents "a mixed scenario of shadow and light, with high points and low points", and one must not "confuse the erosion of the power of the Mughal court and army with a more general political, economic and societal decline".² In other words,

the weakening of the political authority of the Mughals was not accompanied by a total decline and collapse of other social, cultural and religious institutions. The decline and degradation in many social and cultural institutions was simultaneous with a strong and continuous urge to revive and rejuvenate these degenerating institutions as well.

One such sphere that did not show signs of complete collapse or break down in that era was the religio-spiritual sphere, which manifests vitality, along with the clearly discernible sparks of vitality, regeneration and revival. The writings of Shah Wali-Allah (b. 1703-d. 1762) suggest that decadent form of Sufi beliefs, rituals and practices had become vogue in the eighteenth century. Commenting on the contemporary Sufi practices, he remarked in his work *Wasiyat Namah* (The Will) that the Sufis of his age have been given to “a number of irregularities”.³ Therefore, Shah Wali-Allah had initiated a movement for the reformation of the Mughal State and the Muslim society, including the revival and regeneration of the Sufi institutions. Like Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, he tried to reform Sufism by cleansing it of what he perceived as un-Islamic Sufi beliefs and practices. The centre of this reformist movement was Delhi, which was not only the seat of a crumbling Empire, but also a seat of spiritual training and guidance as well as education and learning. Many of the eminent Sufis who came after Shah Wali-Allah associated themselves with the Wali-Allahi tradition of religio-spiritual reformation in one way or the other. In short, the institution of Sufism with the Sufi *silsilahs*, Sufi Shaykhs and their *khanqahs* was marked by vitality and growth, as a host of spiritual centres were mushrooming in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India.

However, it is important to note that for studying this revival and regeneration, one must not presume a total

decline of Sufism in the nineteenth-century India. The feelings of decline of Sufism can even be discerned in *Kashf al-Mahjub* (The Unveiling of the Veiled), a monumental work by the renowned eleventh-century Sufi-scholar ‘Ali ibn ‘Uthman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri (d. 1071 circa), popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh. There seems to be a constant and simultaneous urge among the Sufi Shaykhs of all the ages to revive and reinvigorate the Sufi traditions, and judge the practices of their contemporary Sufis according to the high ideals of Sufism.⁴ The gap or shortfall between the ideal and the actual has tended to generate feelings of decline and degeneration among the Sufi circles.

Coming back to the nineteenth-century India, the environment of political confusion and disarray had led people to seek solace in the fold of Sufism. The mushrooming of as many as twenty-two Sufi circles in Delhi alone speaks volumes of the growing inclination of the people towards Sufism in that era, which was pointed out by Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Muhaddith Dehlevi (d. 1824), the eldest son of Shah Wali-Allah, and one of the most renowned scholars of *hadith* in India, who was also a contemporary of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.⁵ The then Delhi housed two renowned centres of religious and spiritual learning: one was headed by Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and the other one was that of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali of Delhi. Both of these centres played a very crucial role in the religious and spiritual life of the people in India. Before we proceed to explore the contribution of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in this regard, here is his brief biographical sketch.

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali: A Brief Biographical Sketch

Though Shah Ghulam ‘Ali spent most of his life in Delhi, and was therefore, known as *Dehlevi* (of or belonging to Delhi), he originally belonged to the Punjab.

He was born in a town named Watala (Batala) in District Gurdaspur (East Punjab), situated near the city of Amritsar,⁶ most probably in the year 1156 AH/1743 AD.⁷ By lineage, he descended from the Alvi branch of the Saiyyids.⁸ At his birth, he was variously been christened by his relatives. He was named Nasir 'Ali by his father, whereas his mother named him 'Abd al-Qadir. In addition, his uncle gave him the name of 'Abd-Allah when the latter saw Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his dream, advising him to name the child as mentioned. However, after having grown up, he chose the name of Ghulam 'Ali for himself.⁹ His father Saiyyid 'Abd al-Latif 'Alvi was also a Sufi, having been initiated at the hands of Shah Nasir al-Din Qadiri (d. 1761) of *Silsilah* Qadiriyya.¹⁰ Though primarily initiated in *Silsilah* Qadiriyya, he also got himself enrolled in *Silsilahs* Chishtiyya and Shattariyya.¹¹ Shah 'Abd al-Latif wanted his son to perform *bayt* (oath of allegiance performed at the hand of a Sufi Shaykh whereby a person enters the discipleship of a Sufi Shaykh) at the hands of Shah Nasir al-Din Qadiri, and therefore, called his son to Delhi. However, Shah Nasir al-Din Qadiri passed away before Shah Ghulam 'Ali could reach Delhi, and so the wish of his father remained unfulfilled.¹²

After spending the early sixteen years of his life in his native town Batala in the Punjab, Shah Ghulam 'Ali finally came to Delhi where he joined the company of celebrated Sufis such as Shah Zia-Allah and Shah 'Abd al-'Adl Zubayri—the two *khulafa* (pl. *khalifah*; spiritual successor or disciple who is authorized by his preceptor to enroll disciples and impart spiritual training and instruction to the people) of Khwaja Muhammad Zubayr Sirhindi (d. 1739/40), Khwaja Mir Dard (d. 1785), Shah Fakhr al-Din of Delhi (d. 1785), Shah Nanu and Shah Ghulam Sadaat Chishti, which tremendously contributed to his knowledge and experience of Sufism.¹³ Shah Ghulam 'Ali enjoyed

very cordial relations with Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and his brother Shah Rafi al-Din (d. 1833), the renowned sons of Shah Wali-Allah. During his stay in Delhi, he received his formal education in *hadith* (Prophetic traditions) from Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz,¹⁴ and whenever he faced any problem of academic nature, he used to consult the former.¹⁵ In addition, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali obtained the certificate (*sanad*) of *hadith* from Imam Al-Muhadithin Haji Muhammad Afzal (d. 1733).¹⁶ So he equipped himself with the exoteric knowledge before formally entering the realm of esoteric experience.

In 1776, at the age of twenty-two, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali finally decided to join the fold of *Silsilah* Shamsiyya-Mahzariyya, a branch of Naqshbandi-Mujadiddi *Silsilah*,¹⁷ and performed *bayt* at the hands of a celebrated Naqshbandi-Mujadiddi Shaykh, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (d. 1780).¹⁸ Shams al-Din Habib-Allah, popularly known as Mirza Mazhar was the *khalifah* of Shaykh Saiyyid Nur Muhammad Badayuni (d. 1722).¹⁹ *Silsilah* Shamsiyya-Mahzariyya was named after Mirza Mazhar.

It is interesting to note that Shah Ghulam ‘Ali had very cordial relations with the family of the famous educationist and reformer, Sir Saiyyid Ahmad Khan (b. 1817-d. 1898). Sir Saiyyid himself informs about the closeness of his family members with him.²⁰ Since Shah Ghulam ‘Ali observed celibacy throughout his life, and remained issueless, he had adopted Sir Saiyyid’s father, Mir Muttaqi as his son. On the birth of Sir Saiyyid, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali delivered the call for prayer (*azan*) in the ears of the new born, and christened him Ahmad after the name of the great Naqshbandi Sufi, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid Alf Thani (b.1564-d.1624). In addition, the *tasmia* ceremony to initiate the recitation of Quran by Sir Saiyyid at the age of four was also conducted by him.²¹ Shah Ghulam ‘Ali not

only gave Sir Saiyyid his first lessons in Arabic, the former also imparted an insight into the essence of religion: “he [Sir Saiyyid] saw it being lived before his eyes from day to day in its pristine purity”²² in the life of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.

It was owing to the personality of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali that there was a deep-rooted respect for the Sufis in the heart of Sir Saiyyid, who was otherwise a rationally-inclined scholar. Eulogizing Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in his work *Tazkirah-i Ahl-i Dehli*, Sir Saiyyid writes that such a Sufi has never been seen again who held the practices of *shariah* in high esteem, and always acted according to *shariah*.²³ However, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali passed away when he was barely seven years.

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali spent nearly fifteen years in the company of his mentor, Mirza Mazhar in his *khanqah* at Delhi. After his brutal assassination in 1780, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali succeeded him as his spiritual successor, and for the next forty-four years of his life till his death in 1824, remained in the same *khanqah*. After spending the last days of his life in serious illness, he ultimately breathed his last on Safar 22, 1240 AH, i.e. Saturday, October 16, 1824 AD.²⁴ His funeral prayer was led by his principal *khalifah* and successor, Shah Abu Said Mujadiddi (d. 1835) in the Jami‘ (Central) Mosque of Delhi. He was buried near the grave of his mentor, Mirza Mazhar in the courtyard of his *khanqah*.²⁵ Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was a contemporary of Mughal Emperors, ‘Ali Gauhar Shah Alam II (r. 1737-1806) and Akbar Shah II (r. 1806-1837). His other contemporary Sufis included the following:²⁶ Shah Muhammad Afaq (d. 1251/1835),²⁷ his *khalifah* Haji ‘Ala al-Din Ahmad, Mawlana Shah Qutb al-Din (d. 1785)²⁸, Qazi Thana-Allah of Panipat (d. 1810),²⁹ and the two eminent sons of Shah Wali-Allah, Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and Shah Rafi al-Din.

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali and the Revival of Sufi Traditions

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali has been hailed by his disciples and devotees as the reformer of the thirteenth century Hijrah.³⁰ He tried his utmost to revive the spiritual traditions of the great Sufis of the past in an era when Sufism was degenerating and some decadent forms of Sufi rituals, practices and beliefs had become prevalent in the Indian society. This revival of spiritual traditions can be assessed from his personal disposition, views and teachings, which are reflected from his works and books on him, as well as from the extent of his spiritual influence, which are discussed here under:

1. Disposition, Views and Teachings of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali

The personal qualities, views and teachings of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali amply reflect that he tried to revive the spiritual traditions of the illustrious and eminent Sufis of the past. The qualities he possessed distinguish him from his contemporary Sufis. He was known for simplicity of his manners and life style. So great was his austerity that according to hagiographical records, he used to take jute cloth as a sheet while sleeping and a brick for his pillow.³¹ Despite having enormous fame and popularity among the masses, he was an epitome of humility and humbleness, and he used to write the words *kumtarin-i dervishan* (the lowest of all the dervishes) or *khakpae ishan* (the dust of their feet) with his name.³²

A Sufi of great spiritual caliber, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was richly endowed with contentment with whatever he had along with trust in God. He never used to accept any precious gift or offering from a king or a noble. Once the governor of Tonk, Nawab Amir al-Daula Amir Muhammad Khan wanted to grant a stipend for his *khanqah* in Delhi,

but he refused to take it.³³ Moreover, there were more than five hundred *dervishes* in his *khanqah*,³⁴ and he used to manage for their clothes and food, despite the fact that there was no permanent source of income for this purpose, but he never got worried for it. He used to eat whatever the *dervishes* used to eat, and wear whatever was available for the *dervishes* to wear.³⁵ He strictly followed *shariah*, and took special care to avoid unlawful (*haram*) food.³⁶ Moreover, he observed celibacy and remained single throughout his life.

His biographer Shah Rauf Ahmad maintains that Shah Ghulam ‘Ali spent nearly fifty years of his life in a small chamber (*hujra*) in almost seclusion,³⁷ which suggests that he did not meet people altogether. But it seems to be a hyperbolic statement. Other sources reveal that Shah Ghulam ‘Ali used to spend time with his devotees, students and disciples daily in the evening.³⁸ In fact, he had not only maintained a good balance of prayers and meditation for his spiritual life, and acquisition of knowledge for external observance of *shariah*, he had also balanced his duties towards his self, and towards his fellow human beings. The plenty of time that he spent daily in prayers and meditation had not made him oblivious of his duty to train and instruct the masses in their journey towards spiritual development and realization.

Some Shaykhs of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya had enjoyed friendly relationship with the state and political authorities. Particularly, under Khwaja Nasir al-Din Ubayd Allah Ahrar (d. 1490), the Shaykhs of the *Silsilah* developed close connection with the rulers. Contrarily, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali generally did not personally approve of, and thus deliberately avoided, the company of the so-called ‘people of the world’ including the rulers and the ruling elite. For instance, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali disliked Nawab Muhammad

Mir Khan visiting his *khanqah*, and also conveyed his displeasure verbally to the latter.³⁹

Nonetheless, evidence suggests that despite that, he maintained good relations with a few select nobles. There is evidence of one of his letters addressed to his contemporary Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II (r. 1806-37). According to it, Shah Ghulam 'Ali was informed by one of his disciples named Saiyyid Isma'il of Madinah that the pictures or images of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) along with those of his Companions and eminent Sufis of the past had been displayed in the *Jami'* Mosque of Delhi. Therefore, Shah Ghulam 'Ali wrote this letter to the reigning Emperor, and demanded the removal of these images from the Mosque, as he disapproved of it.⁴⁰ Similarly, one of his letters is addressed to Prince Mirza Jehangir, which was a reply to Mirza's letter about dream interpretation, in which Shah Ghulam 'Ali advised him to accomplish good deeds.⁴¹

It is significant to point out that the medium of correspondence or the practice of writing letters for the moral instruction of the people was systematically initiated for the first time in India by Shaykh Sharaf al-Din bin Yahya (d. 1381) of Manyer in Bihar, a renowned Sufi of Firdawsiyya branch of *Silsilah* Suhrawardiyya.⁴² Later, this tradition was continued and popularized by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi⁴³ and Shah Wali-Allah of Delhi.⁴⁴

Many studies on Islam and Sufism presume the '*ulama*'⁴⁵ and the Sufis as two mutually exclusive categories representing two distinct and often opposed groups of people. This '*ulama*'-Sufi dichotomy in literature⁴⁶ has created much conceptual ambiguity rather than clarity. None the less, a clear line of demarcation is not easy to be drawn between them, since the two categories at times overlap.⁴⁷ Not only some of the '*ulama*'

were critical of some of the Sufi doctrines and practices, some of them were recognized as eminent Sufis. Similarly, some of the practicing Sufis were distinguished scholars of their times. The blurring of the two ill-conceived categories is easily discernable in case of the Sufi-scholar Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, who used to deliver lectures on *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sunan-i al-Tirmidhi* (the canonical *hadith* compilations of Sunni Islam), in addition to the monumental works on Sufism such as *Mathnavi Ma‘anvi* by Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) to his students.⁴⁸ He also used to deliver lectures on the correspondence of Shaykh Ahmad, better known as *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani* as well as the letters of his own preceptor, Mirza Mazhar.⁴⁹ He had great fascination for Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid Alf Thani, and he responded to the latter’s critics with vigour and vehemence. He was a very well-read scholar, and fond of reading books. On one occasion, he wrote to his disciple Rauf Ahmad to send him some books including *Tafsir-i Bayzawi* (a work on Quranic exegesis) by ‘Abd-Allah ibn Umar al-Bayzawi (d. 1286), *Hidaya* (the famous Hanafi juridical work by Burhan al-Din ‘Ali al-Marghinani (d. 1197), *Sahih Muslim* (one of the six canonical works on *ahadith*) by Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 874/5), *Kanz al-‘Amal* (a collection of *ahadith*) by Shaykh Ala al-Din ‘Ali Al-Muttaqi (d. 1567), renowned works on Sufism such as *Awarif al-Ma‘arif* by Shaykh Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234), and *Risala Qushayriyya* by Abu’l Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 1072 circa), and *Al-Bidaya wa’l Nihaya* (a historical work by Ibn Kathir; d. 1373).⁵⁰ It is evident that he had not given himself completely to prayers and meditation, rather the acquisition of knowledge to him was a noble task.

In addition to his *bayt* in *Silsilah Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya*, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was also enrolled in

Silsilah Qadiriyya. However, he adopted the method of *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *ashghal* (spiritual-meditational exercises and other practices) of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya.⁵¹ Therefore, he was permitted to enroll disciples in all the major *silsilahs*,⁵² like his preceptor Mirza Mazhar, who also initiated disciples in the four *silsilahs*, i.e. the Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya. This practice of multiple initiation or *bayt* has its own significance. In addition to receiving the spiritual blessings (*fayz*) from other *silsilahs*, this practice also helped eliminate conflict within the Muslim society in general, and mitigate the feelings of competitiveness among the adherents of various Sufi *silsilahs* in particular. In fact, in the Islamicate⁵³ during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the practice of multiple initiation or simultaneous membership in more than one Sufi *silsilah* emerged.⁵⁴ The crystallization of *silsilahs* during these centuries did not imply that these *silsilahs* were exclusive in their membership. As a matter of fact, the Sufi initiates could get initiated in multiple *silsilahs* in order to get spiritual benefit from multiple sources. However, the practice of multiple initiation was fully developed at a later stage, and it is reported that a sixteenth-century Egyptian Sufi of Shadhili *Silsilah* named Shaykh Sha‘rani (d. 1565) was formally initiated in twenty-five *silsilahs*, other than his own.⁵⁵

The Naqshbandi Sufis are known for their strict compliance with the rules of *shariah*. Once Shah Ghulam ‘Ali pointed out that Shah Baha al-Din Naqshband had laid the foundation of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya on two things: love of God and conformity with *shariah*.⁵⁶ So keeping in view the traditions of his *Silsilah*, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali tried to act in complete conformity with *shariah*, and avoided even the doubtful things. Similarly, conforming to the traditions of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya which does not permit

the use of devotional music (*sama*‘) and ecstatic dancing (*raqs*) for spiritual realization and enlightenment, he never indulged in the practices of Sufi devotional music or ecstatic dancing. As mentioned earlier, when Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was informed about the images or pictures of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and others on display in the Central Mosque of Delhi, he wrote a letter to the Mughal Emperor for their removal. Moreover, like his mentor, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was quite strict and careful in enrolling disciples.

The philosophy of Wahdat al-Wujud⁵⁷ has always been quite popular among the Sufis. During his lectures, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali used to quote the poetic verses of renowned Sufi poets such as Jalal al-Din Rumi, Ibn al-‘Arabi, ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami, Shaykh Maghrabi and Ahmad Jam pertaining to Wahdat al-Wujud.⁵⁸ None the less, he preferred Wahdat al-Shahud⁵⁹ to Wahdat al-Wujud, without altogether rejecting the latter. He argued that subsistence (*baqa*) in Wahdat al-Shahud is better than union with God and self-annihilation (*fana*) in Wahdat al-Wujud.⁶⁰ He often used to quote the saying of the renowned Naqshbandi Sufi, Khwaja Ubayd Allah Ahrar (d. 1490): “It is easy to utter ‘I’m the Truth’, but it is difficult to suppress one’s ego”.⁶¹

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali respected the four Sunni schools of *fiqh* and revered their respective founders and leaders. Once he said to his disciples that all the four schools of *fiqh* have some distinctions: Hanafites have a monumental book like *Hidaya* which others do not have, Shafites have a scholar like Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali (b. 1058-d. 1111), Hanbalis have a Sufi like Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166) and Malikis have a luminary like Imam Malik (d. 796), who was one of the signs of God.⁶² Personally, he followed the Hanafite School of *fiqh*, and considered it the best among the four major Schools of

Sunni *fiqh* but at the same time he preferred to act on *ahadith*.⁶³ He used to visit the shrines of Shaykh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235), Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya (d. 1325) and Khwaja Baqi Bi-Allah (d. 1603) in Delhi, and distribute food among the poor and the needy on the death anniversaries of eminent Sufi Shaykhs.⁶⁴

His preceptor Mirza Mazhar, having a conciliatory approach towards Hinduism, believed that the sacred scriptures of the Hindus were of revelational origin, and contained *ma'arif* (points of gnosis) in them. However, unlike his preceptor, Shah Ghulam 'Ali denied the revelation origin of these scriptures. While delivering lecture to his students and disciples, he once refuted his preceptor, and argued that there were no points of gnosis in these works.⁶⁵ It clearly reveals that Shah Ghulam 'Ali had a stern attitude towards the Hindus in contrast to the views of his preceptor. In addition, Shah Ghulam 'Ali had adopted an isolationist approach towards the Europeans⁶⁶, and refrained from any kind of interaction with them. His encounter with Charles Metcalfe (1785-1846), the Resident at Delhi, is suggestive of it.⁶⁷ When the ruler of Bundailkhand Nawab Shamsheer Bahadur visited Shah Ghulam 'Ali's *khanqah* wearing an English hat, the latter refused to see him.⁶⁸

Shah Ghulam 'Ali authored some seventeen books, treatises and monographs on Sufism for the moral and spiritual guidance of the people. His major works include the following:

(i) *Maqamat-i Mazhari*

This is a biography of Shah Ghulam 'Ali's spiritual mentor Shaykh Shams al-Din Habib-Allah Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan. In this book, Shah Ghulam 'Ali has shed light on *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya and the life and

works of other Sufis such as Saiyyid Nur Muhammad Badayuni, Haji Muhammad Afzal, Hafiz Sa'ad Allah and Muhammad Abid. He has also collected in this book the *malfuzat* (Sufi discourses) and the letters of Mirza Mazhar. This book also reveals that there existed sectarian conflict between the Shias and the Sunnis in the eighteenth-century north Indian society. The work has been translated into Urdu by Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi, published from Urdu Science Board, Lahore, in 1983.

(ii) *Halat wa Maqamat-i Mirza Mazhar*

This is another biography of Shaykh Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan, the preceptor of Shah Ghulam 'Ali, written in Persian language.

(iii) *Izah al-Tariqah*

Composed by Shah Ghulam 'Ali in 1212/1799, it is a collection of selected sayings of the Sufis of the *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya. It also describes some of the methods of worship and *zikr* prevalent in the *Silsilah*. It was published in 1284 AH from Matba' Naqshbandi and again from Lahore in 1376/1963.

(iv) *Risala-i Muraqabat*

One of the rare works of Shah Ghulam 'Ali is this monograph, which pertains to *muraqabat* (Sufi meditational exercises).⁶⁹

In addition to the above, the letters and *malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam 'Ali have also been collected and compiled by his disciples, which include the following:

(v) *Makatib-i Sharifah*

This is a collection of the letters of Shah Ghulam 'Ali in Persian, which have been compiled by Shah Rauf Ahmad. The volume contains 125 letters addressed to his

various disciples for their instruction. These letters were compiled by Shah Rauf Ahmad and later by Hakim ‘Abd al-Majid Ahmad Sayfi of Lahore.

(vi) *Durr al-Ma‘arif*

This is a collection of the *malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, which were compiled by his disciple Shah Rauf Ahmad around 1818 when the former was seventy-five years of age. It throws light on the spiritual exercises and practices (*mashaghil*) of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in a comprehensive manner, and is not fraught with anecdotes unlike the early Chishti *malfuzat*.

In addition, Shah ‘Abd al-Ghani (d. 1880), the son of Shah Abu Said, has also collected some *malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.

2. Extent of Spiritual Influence

The Mujadiddiyya branch of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya was reformist and revivalist in its character. It superseded other branches of the Naqshbandi *Silsilah* in India and in the Ottoman Turkey owing to the efforts of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali. During his life-time, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali had reached the zenith of his popularity and fame not only in India but also in other parts of the Islamicate, which attracted a large number of people belonging to far-flung areas to the Mujadiddiyya-Shamsiyya-Mazhariyya *Khanqah* in Delhi. These people hailed from regions and areas like Turkey (referred to as Rome in the nineteenth-century works), Syria, Baghdad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Central Asian regions including Samarqand, Bokhara and Tashqand, China, and Afghanistan, especially from Ghazni, Qandhar and Kabul, etc. As far as his disciples and devotees from India were concerned, they came from many diverse places including

Peshawar, Kashmir, Multan, Lahore, Sirhind, Amroha, Sambhal, Bareilly, Rampur, Ja'is, Bahraich, Gorakhpur, Azimabad (Patna), Dhaka, Bengal, Hyderabad and Poona. Sir Saiyyid writes that he had seen with his own eyes the people from Rome (Turkey), Syria, Baghdad, Egypt, China and Ethiopia in Shah Ghulam 'Ali's *khanqah*, whereas Indians and the people of the Punjab and Afghanistan swarmed his *khanqah* like locusts.⁷⁰

The spiritual influence of Shah Ghulam 'Ali can well be assessed by an incident narrated by A. F. Buehler who writes that Shah Wali-Allah set the seven criteria for a spiritual guide. According to one of these, the company of a Sufi mentor "should affect others in such a way as to make their heart cold to the world and instill a love of God, the Prophet, and intimates of God (*awliya*)".⁷¹ Buehler adds further: "This combination of qualifications in a spiritual guide is rare enough; rarer still is the ability of a seeker to recognize it. A minority of especially sensitive seekers involuntarily react to a shaykh's spiritual power (*tawajjuh*).” Then Buehler goes on to narrate the incident as such: "Dost Muhammad (d. 1284/1868), for example, first met Ghulam 'Ali Shah in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. Ghulam 'Ali's *fiyd* (spiritual blessings and benefit to others) was so strong that it caused Dost Muhammad to become restless and disturbed (*be-qarar*), so that he could hardly move from one corner of the mosque to the other for an entire day.” However, Shah Ghulam 'Ali passed away before he could become his disciple, and consequently, he became the disciple of Shah Ahmad Said, who was the son of Shah Abu Said, the principal *khalifah* or spiritual successor of Shah Ghulam 'Ali.⁷²

Evidence suggests that Shah Ghulam 'Ali had granted *khilafat* (authorization by a preceptor to enroll disciples and guide the people on the path of Sufism) to a number of his

disciples. However, his biographies record the names of thirty-eight of his eminent *khulafa*.⁷³ The following are some of the eminent *khulafa* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.

Shah Abu Said Mujadiddi of Delhi (b. 1196/1782-d. 1250/1835) was the *khalifa-i azam* (the principal spiritual successor, or head of all the *khulafa* or designated deputies) of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, who succeeded his preceptor’s Shamsiyya-Mazhariyya *Khanqah* at Delhi. A descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, Shah Abu Said received his academic training from Shah Rafi al-Din, the celebrated son of Shah Wali-Allah. He became a disciple of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in 1225/1812.⁷⁴ He was the author of a work titled *Hidayat al-Talibin* (Instruction for the Seekers).⁷⁵

Shah Rauf Ahmad of Mustafabad (b. 1201/1786-d. 1253/1837) was another renowned Sufi Shaykh who was granted *khilafat* by Shah Ghulam ‘Ali. His actual name was Rahman Bakhsh, and was a descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid Alf Thani. He belonged to Mustafabad (Rampur, U.P.), and was an eminent jurist, traditionist (*muhaddith*) and commentator on Quran (*muffassir*) of the Wali-Allahi Tradition. He combined in himself the Rahimiyya Tradition of education and the Mujaddidi Tradition of reformed Sufism. He acquired formal education at *Madrassah* Rahimiyya (established by the father of Shah Wali-Allah named Shah ‘Abd al-Rahim) under the guidance of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, whereas in spiritual affairs, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was his mentor. After receiving *khilafat* from his preceptor, Shah Rauf Ahmad was sent to Bhopal by Shah Ghulam ‘Ali for the propagation of the teachings of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya. He was the author of some treatises in Urdu and Persian including the famous works like *Jawahir-i Alviyya* and *Maratib al-Wusul*.⁷⁶ He also compiled *Durr al-*

Ma 'arif (the *malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam 'Ali) and *Makatib-i Sharifah* (the epistles or letters of Shah Ghulam 'Ali).

Shah Ahmad Said (b. 1217/1802-3-d. 1277/1860) was the son of Shah Abu Said, the *khalifa-i azam* of Shah Ghulam 'Ali. He had received *khilafat* from both his father Shah Abu Said, and Shah Ghulam 'Ali. He was an expert in *hadith*, *tafsir* and *fiqh*. In knowledge, faith and piety, he was equal to his father. He was the author of *Al-Fawaid al-Zabita fi Asbat al-Rabita*, *Tashih al-Masail fil rad ala Maita Masail*, and *Al-Anhar al-Arbae*.⁷⁷

Shah 'Abd al-Ghani (d. 1296/1880) was another son of Shah Abu Said and the brother of Shah Ahmad Said. He got spiritual guidance from Shah Ghulam 'Ali when he was still an adolescent, and later performed *bayt* at his father's hand.⁷⁸ On the death of his brother (Shah Ahmad Said), he succeeded the spiritual seat of Shah Ghulam 'Ali. He was the author of *Injah al-Hajah*, which is a commentary on *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, one of the six canonical compilations of *ahadith*. He was a well-known teacher of *hadith* in his times, who lectured in Delhi. His eminent pupils include Mawlana Muhammad Mamluk 'Ali (d. 1850) and Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905). After the War of 1857-58, he migrated to the Hijaz, where he spent the next three decades of his life.⁷⁹

Shah Ghulam 'Ali deputed his eminent *khulafa* in various cities and/or regions in India and beyond in order to popularize the teachings of his *Silsilah*. The ensuing discussion briefly sheds light on the popularization of his *Silsilah* by his *khulafa* or deputies.

(i) Popularization of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya in India

Shah ‘Abd al-Ghani in his *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam ‘Ali Dehlevi* records some details about the eminent *khulafa* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, and their efforts in propagating the *Silsilah* in various regions or parts of India as such:

Mawlvi Muhammad Sharif of Rampur popularized the *Silsilah* in the Punjab and Kashmir.⁸⁰ Mulla ‘Ala al-Din went to Peshawar to disseminate the teachings of his preceptor.⁸¹ Shah Sa‘ad-Allah established his *khanqah* in Hyderabad, Deccan, where he trained his disciples.⁸² Mulla Ghulam Muhammad of Attock came to Delhi for guidance, and after getting *khilafat* from Shah Ghulam ‘Ali went back to his native town for further guiding the people.⁸³ Mirza ‘Abd al-Ghafur of Khurja (a town in UP) trained a number of people.⁸⁴ Shah Rauf Ahmad along with his son Shah Khatib Ahmad popularized the *Silsilah* in Bhopal.⁸⁵

Similarly, Shah ‘Abd al-Rahman Mujaddidi of Jallandhar (d. 1258/1842) disseminated the teachings of the *Silsilah* in the Punjab, particularly around Jallandhar.⁸⁶ Due to the efforts of Mawlvi ‘Abd al-Rahman of Shahjahanpur, the *Silsilah* became very popular in the districts of Farrukhabad and Shahjahanpur.⁸⁷ Mulla Pir Muhammad popularized the *Silsilah* in Kashmir.⁸⁸ Mir Naqsh-i ‘Ali disseminated the teachings of the *Silsilah* in Lucknow.⁸⁹ Mian Qamar al-Din popularized the teachings of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali and his *Silsilah* in Peshawar.⁹⁰

(ii) Popularization of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya beyond India

Shah ‘Abd al-Ghani also records some details about the eminent non-Indian *khulafa* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, and their efforts in propagating the *Silsilah* outside India as such:

Mulla Khudaburdi was a native of Turkistan, where he popularized the teachings of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya in general, and the teachings of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in particular.⁹¹ Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim of Turkistan established his *khanqah* at Shahr-i Sabz (previously known as Kesh),⁹² where it attracted the attention of a large number of people.⁹³ Mir Talib ‘Ali, popularly known as Mawlvi ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, was an Arab, who went to Yemen (Arabia) after getting *khilafat* from Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, and popularized *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya in the town or region called Zubayd.⁹⁴ Saiyyid Ism‘ail was a native of Madinah, who came to Delhi to become a disciple of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali. After getting *khilafat*, he returned to Madinah to continue the mission of his preceptor.⁹⁵ Mirza Rahim-Allah Beg (d. 1844), alias Muhammad Darwesh was a native of Azimabad (Patna). After getting *khilafat* from Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, he went to Afghanistan and then to Central Asia but could not permanently settle at one place for some time. At last, he was assassinated in 1844 at Shahr-i Sabz. Due to his efforts, the teachings of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya were propagated in various parts of the Central Asia.⁹⁶

Mawlana Muhammad Jan (d. 1849) was another *khalifah* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali who went to Makkah and spread the teachings of his preceptor there. His *khulafa* settled in Turkey and established *khanqahs* as well to further disseminate the teachings of the *Silsilah*.⁹⁷ Saiyyid Ahmad Kurdi was another non-Indian *khalifah* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.⁹⁸ Mulla Gul Muhammad was a native of Ghazni, who went back to his native town in order to popularize the teachings of his mentor after getting *khilafat* from him in Delhi.⁹⁹ Mawlvi Herati, popularly known as Mawlvi Jan Muhammad, propagated the *Silsilah* in

Qandhar (Afghanistan).¹⁰⁰ Muhammad Sher Khan propagated the *Silsilah* in the territory of the Afghans.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless, the most prominent non-Indian *khalifah* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, according to Alvi, was Shaykh Khalid Kurdi (b. 1193/1779-d. 1242/1827), also known as Khalid Rumi or Khalid Baghdadi. He was born in Qaradagh in District Shahrazur¹⁰² in Kurdistan.¹⁰³ His complete name was Abul Baha’ Zia al-Din Khalid. He was most probably a Kurd, or of Kurdish origin. Accounts relate that Shaykh Khalid Kurdi visited India in 1809, and came to Delhi from Makkah in order to see Shah Ghulam ‘Ali when the former heard of the latter’s piety and holiness. Shaykh Khalid Kurdi eventually got himself enrolled as his disciple, and lived in the company of his preceptor for nine months.¹⁰⁴ Shaykh Kurdi was so much inspired by the piety and knowledge of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali that he also composed odes in Arabic and Persian in praise of the latter.¹⁰⁵ After getting *khilafat* from Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, he left India and went to Kurdistan on the orders of his preceptor.

Shaykh Khalid Kurdi is credited with reinvigorating the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi *Silsilah* in Turkey, Syria and Iraq.¹⁰⁶ After returning to Kurdistan, he began preaching the teachings of the *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Empire. Owing to his efforts, the *Silsilah* became quite popular in Turkey. Almost one century later, when Mustafa Kamal Atatürk abolished the *khanqahs* of Sufis in modern Turkey, there were twenty-seven *khanqahs* of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in Istanbul alone.¹⁰⁷ The *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya had originated from Central Asia and spread to other parts of the Islamicate including India. Interestingly, its sub-branch *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujadiddiyya originated in India and was later introduced in Central Asia by Shaykh Khalid Kurdi.

The branch of the *Silsilah* introduced by him came to be referred to as *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya.¹⁰⁸

Concluding Remarks

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali of Delhi stands out conspicuously as a celebrated Sufi Shaykh who lived in turbulent times of the latter half of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It was the period when the Mughal Empire was declining and the political authority and power was gradually being shifted to the hands of the British. The old system was crumbling and giving way to new and innovative ideas and practices. People were unable to cope with the changing political and social realities of the time. In such a social climate of confusion and chaos, people found solace in the garb of Sufism. Delhi had still preserved the spiritual traditions of the past. It was considered to be an important spiritual centre where a number of *khanqahs* of the Sufi Shaykhs flourished. The *khanqah* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali of Delhi was one of the foremost *khanqahs* of Delhi, which played a key role in spiritual revival and regeneration. This revival of spiritual traditions by Shah Ghulam ‘Ali has been assessed from his personal disposition, views and teachings, and the extent of his spiritual influence in India and beyond.

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali had reached the zenith of his popularity and fame during his life time. His disciples not only came from various parts of the Indian Subcontinent but also from other far flung regions of the Islamicate. These non-Indian disciples and *khulafa* spread the teachings of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali and his *Silsilah* beyond India in other parts of the Islamicate. Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was a Sufi Shaykh or Sufi teacher and guide of very high spiritual caliber. He translated the high ethical ideals of Sufism into practice, and showed to the common people that they were very much practicable. He was a living

exemplar not only for his disciples but also for others. Being an epitome of piety and goodness, he raised the ethical standard of the then society.

He was a faithful custodian of the traditions of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya. He was known for his strict conformity to *shariah* which is the characteristic feature of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya. He tried to reform Sufism by bringing it within the fold of *shariah*. By doing this, he tried to bridge the gulf between the esoteric and the exoteric dimensions of Islamic faith by striking a balance between them. In addition to being a Sufi Shaykh, he was a scholar as well, with an extensive knowledge of Quran, *hadith*, *tafsir* and *fiqh*. He lectured on *Quran*, *hadith* and Sufism to his disciples and pupils in his *khanqah* in Delhi. In a sense, his *khanqah* was also a *madrassah* where students were instructed in various subjects related to Islamic studies. Therefore, like the earlier Shaykhs of *Silsilah* Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya, the spiritual descendents of Ghulam ‘Ali were also scholars, in addition to being practicing Sufis, and had considerably contributed to literature on Islam and Sufism.

Appendix

Spiritual Lineage of Naqashbandi and Naqashbandi-Mujadiddi Sufis

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Hazrat Abu Bakr

Hazrat Salman Farsi

Hazrat Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr

Imam Jafar Sadiq

Shaykh Bayazid Bistami

Shaykh Abul Hasan Kharqani

Shaykh Abu ‘Ali Farmadi

Khwaja Yusuf Hamdani

Khwaja ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Ghujdawani

Shaykh Khwaja Arif

Shaykh Mahmud al-Khayr

Shaykh ‘Ali Ramitani

Shaykh Baba Muhammad Samasi

Shaykh Amir Kulal

Shaykh Baha al-Din Naqshband

Shaykh Ala al-Din Attar¹⁰⁹

Shaykh Yaqub ibn Uthman Charkhi

Shaykh Nasir al-Din Ubayd Allah Ahrar

Shaykh Muhammad Zahid Wakhshi

Shaykh Darweish Muhammad

Shaykh Muhammad Muqtada Amkangi

Khwaja Muhammad Baqi Bi-Allah

Shaykh Ahmad Farooq Kabuli Sirhindi (Mujaddid Alf Thani) ¹¹⁰

Khwaja Muhammad Masum Sirhindi

Shaykh Sayf al-Din Sirhindi

Shaykh Saiyyid Nur Muhammad Badayuni

Shaykh Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan

Shah Ghulam ‘Ali ¹¹¹

Shah Abu Said

Notes and References

- 1 All the dates mentioned in the paper are according to the Christian Era, but where two dates are mentioned, the first date indicates the Hijrah (AH) while the second date denotes the Christian Era (AD).
- 2 Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1998), p. 48.
- 3 Shah Wali-Allah, *Wasiyat Namah*, as cited in S. M. Ikram, “Shah Waliullah (I)” in *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. 1: 1707-1831 (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1957), p. 497.
- 4 Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 7.

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- 5 Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, *Malfuzat-i Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Muhaddith Dehlevi*, Urdu tr. Mawlvi Muhammad ‘Ali Lutfi and Mufti Intizam-Allah Shahabi (Karachi: Pakistan Educational Publishers, 1960), p. 198.
 - 6 Shah Rauf Ahmad, *Jawahir-i Alviyya*, Urdu tr. Malik Fazl al-Din (Lahore: Allah Walay ki Quami Dukan, 1919), p. 140. the author Shah Rauf Ahmad being a *khalifah* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali furnishes first hand information about his mentor’s life.
 - 7 The year of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali’s birth is not confirmed. Most of his contemporaries record 1156 as the year of his birth. See, for instance, Sir Saiyyid Ahmad Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1966 rpt., first published from Delhi: Matba’-i Saiyyid al-Akhbar, 1263/1846), p. 208; and Ahmad, *Jawahir-i Alviyya*, p. 139. The date has been accepted by many latter-day historians, such as S. A. A. Rizvi in *A History of Sufism in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983, rpt. 1992), vol. II, p. 248; and Muhammad Iqbal Mujadiddi’s biographical sketch of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali in Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, *Maqamat-i Mazhari*, Urdu tr. Muhammad Iqbal Mujadiddi (Lahore: Urdu Science Board, 1983), pp. 217, n. 564, 626, n. 10. Those who argue that his birth took place in 1158 AH/1745AD include the following: Allama Muhammad Nur Bakhsh Tawakkali, *Tazkirah-i Mashaikh-i Naqshbandiyya* (Chak Sadah Sharif, Gujrat: Fazl Nur Academy, n.d.), p. 319; Muhammad Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahammiyyat* (Lahore: Idara-i Tahqiqat-i Pakistan, University of the Punjab, 1995), p. 493; and

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- Muhammad Umar, *Islam in Northern India during the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), p. 87.
- 8 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 208, and Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 139. The 'Alvi branch of the Saiyyids is said to have descended from Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his wife Umm-i Banin.
 - 9 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 208, and Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 140.
 - 10 Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 139.
 - 11 Ibid. Silsilah Shattariyya was introduced in India by Shaykh 'Abd-Allah Shattari (d. 1485). Later, it was propagated in India by Shaykh Zahur Haji Hasur, but his *khalifah* Shaykh Muhammad Ghaus (d. 1563) of Gwalior popularized it. Another renowned Shattari Sufi is Shaykh Wajih al-Din Ahmad (d. 1589) of Gujarat.
 - 12 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 208.
 - 13 Shah 'Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam 'Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 571.
 - 14 Saiyyid 'Abd al-Haiyy Barelvi, *Nuzhat al-Khawatir*, vol. 7 (Hyderabad, Deccan: Matba' Da'irat al-Ma'arif al-'Uthmaniyya, 1959), p. 356.
 - 15 Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahammiyyat*, p. 511. Reportedly, when the students of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz used to complete their education, he used to send them to Shah Ghulam 'Ali for spiritual and moral training and guidance.
 - 16 Haji Muhammad Afzal, a *khalifah* of Hujjat-Allah Naqshband (the son of Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum) was also the teacher of his preceptor,

Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan as well. K. A. Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Musannifin, 1966), p. 217.

- 17 Silsilah Naqshbandiyya (also known as Silsilah-i Khwajagan) is initially attributed to Shaykh Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 1143) and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Ghujdawani (d. 1179). Later, it came to be identified with Shaykh Muhammad Baha al-Din of Naqshband (d. 1389). Therefore, the Silsilah was named after the town of Naqshband, situated near Bukhara in Central Asia. Under Khwaja Ubayd Allah Ahrar (d. 1490), it emerged as an influential Silsilah in Central Asia and Afghanistan, having close connection of its Shaykhs with the rulers. The Silsilah was introduced in India by Khwaja Baqi Bi-Allah (b. 1564-d. 1603) in the fifteenth century, but it was Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, titled Mujaddid Alf Thani, who popularized it, and hence, the branch came to be referred to as Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya after him. His disciples and spiritual descendents popularized Silsilah Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in India as well as in Indonesia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkey and Africa. The Naqshbandi Sufis are known for their strict outward conformity with *shariah*, and the Silsilah is considered to be less difficult in spiritual exercises, as well as less ascetic as compared to many others. Moreover, the Naqshbandi Sufis have always discouraged heretical views and extremist ideas of some of the Sufis.
- 18 Shah Ghulam ‘Ali performed the *bayt* while reciting the following famous Persian verse:

az baraey sajda-i ishq astaney yaftum

sar zaminey bud manzur asmaney yaftum

I have found the threshold of a Sufi for prostration of love/devotion

I have placed my forehead on the ground but I have been accepted by the heavens.

Saiyyid Ahmad Khan, *Tazkirah-i Ahl-i Dehli* (Karachi: Anjuman Taraqi-i Urdu, 1965), p. 25. See also Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 208; and Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 141.

19 Mirza Mazhar was a Sufi-poet, who composed a *diwan* (a collection of poetic works) in Persian, though he also infrequently wrote *ghazals* (a form of verse which is highly rhythmic) in Urdu as well. He was assassinated in 1780 at the age of seventy-three.

20 Saiyyid Ahmad Khan writes that his whole family, especially his father, Mir Mutaqqi, was a devotee of Shah Ghulam 'Ali. His father and elder brother, Ehtisham al-Daula Saiyyid Muhammad Khan Bahadur, had also performed *bayt* at his hands. Shah Ghulam 'Ali loved his family, and treated his father like his own son. Sir Saiyyid himself used to visit his *khanqah* to see him everyday, and Shah Ghulam 'Ali used to treat him with love and affection. Sir Saiyyid further adds that he used to be very naughty in his childhood, but Shah Ghulam 'Ali never snubbed him. Moreover, since Sir Saiyyid's grandfather had passed away, he used to address him as *Dada Hazrat* (paternal grandfather). *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 211.

21 Altaf Hussain Hali, *Hayat-i Javid* (Aligarh: Muslim University Institute, 1922), p. 28.

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- 22 M. Hadi Hussain, *Syed Ahmed Khan: Pioneer of Muslim Resurgence* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1970), p. 2.
 - 23 Khan, *Tazkirah-i Ahl-i Dehli*, pp. 28-29. However, later when Sir Saiyyid got disillusioned from his contemporary decadent Sufi rituals and beliefs, and his views underwent a metamorphic change, he authored a treatise titled *Kalimat al-Haq* in condemnation of the Sufi practice of discipleship (*piri-muridi*).
 - 24 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 211.
 - 25 Ibid.
 - 26 Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, pp. 224-25.
 - 27 He was a famous Naqshbandi Sufi Shaykh, and a direct descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. He was the *khalifah* of Khwaja Zia al-Din.
 - 28 He was the son and *khalifah* of Shah Fakhr al-Din of Delhi.
 - 29 He was the *khalifah* of Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan, and thus a *pir bhai* (two disciples of a same mentor) of Shah Ghulam 'Ali.
 - 30 S. M. Ikram, *Rud-i Kauthar* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1958), p. 643.
 - 31 Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 141.
 - 32 Ibid., p. 143.
 - 33 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 209.
 - 34 Ibid.
 - 35 Ibid.
 - 36 Ibid., p. 211.

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- 37 Ahmad, *Jawahir-i Alviyya*, p. 141.
- 38 This is evident from his daily routine, as recorded by Sir Saiyyid: after *fajr* (early morning) prayers, Shah Ghulam ‘Ali used to recite ten chapters (*siparabs*) of the Holy Quran, which he had learnt by heart. Till the *ishraq* prayers, he used to meditate along with his disciples. After *ishraq* (midday) prayers, he used to deliver lecture on *hadith* and *tafsir*. After lunch, he used to have a siesta and then after *zuhr* prayers, he read books of *fiqh* (Muslim jurisprudence), *tafsir*, *hadith* and *tassawwuf* (Sufism). From *asr* (evening) to *maghrib* (after sunset) prayers, he spent time with his devotees, students and disciples. He usually kept himself awake at night in order to pray, but sometimes slept for a while as well. Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 210.
- 39 ‘Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam ‘Ali Dehlevi* in *Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 573.
- 40 ‘Abd al-Majid Ahmad Sayfi, ed. *Makatib-i Sharifah* (the letters of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali), (Istanbul: Maktaba al-Haqiqat, 1992), letter no. 60, p. 65. This compilation was first published from Lahore, which was not dated. The letters of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali titled *Makatib-i Sharifah* have also been compiled by Shah Rauf Ahmad, published from Lahore in 1371 AH.
- 41 Ibid., letter no. 12, pp. 27-30.
- 42 Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 183. For details, see Sharaf al-Din Ahmad Yahya Maneri, *In Quest of God: Maneri’s*

Second Collection of 150 Letters, translation, introduction, and notes by Paul Jackson (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2004); and *Sharafuddin Maneri: The Hundred Letters*, translation, introduction and notes by Paul Jackson (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

- 43 Nasim Ahad Faridi, ed. *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani* (The Letters of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi), 2 vols. (Lucknow: Newal Kishore Press, 1906). This collection of letters in Arabic is considered to be one of the most important classics of religious literature in India.
- 44 K. A. Nizami, ed. *Shah Wali Allah kay siyasi maktubat* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Musannifin, 1969).
- 45 The ‘*ulama*’ had traditionally come to represent the religious authority and leadership in Islam. As a general term, the word ‘*ulama*’ (plural of Arabic word ‘*alim*, derived from ‘*ilm* or knowledge, which literally means a knowledgeable person) came to refer to the learned Muslims or religious scholars during the early Islamic era, which included, more specifically, the *muhaddithin* (traditionists; experts of *ahadith*), *fuqaha*’ (jurists, or experts of Islamic law), *muftis* (expounders of Islamic law) and *qazis* (the judges). According to Roy Mottahedeh, in the early Islamic era, the ‘*ulama*’ formed a vaguely defined category, having a least restrictive meaning as it overlapped with a number of other categories. Moreover, it was not a distinct group, but the ‘*ulama*’ were a category with a self-conscious identity. Idem, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 140, 142-43. Thus, the category

of ‘*ulama*’ is not without conceptual problems; and particularly after al-Ghazzali, the differentiation between the ‘*ulama*’ and the Sufis became blurred.

- 46 The dichotomy between ‘doctor’ or legist, and ‘saint’ or sufi, that is, the ‘*ulama*’ and the Sufis, was first referred to by Jacques Berques, and later by Ernest Gellner. Jacques Berques, *Structures sociales du Haut-Atlas* (Social Structure of the High Atlas) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), pp. 315-22, and Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), p. 8.
- 47 Regarding the leadership of the ‘*ulama*’, Mottahedeh identifies three distinct but overlapping categories, and maintains that some of the ‘*ulama*’ were respected as leaders by all three categories: the categories defined by religious knowledge, by Sufism, and by non-Sufi pietism. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, p. 148.
- 48 Shah Rauf Ahmad, *Durr al-Ma‘arif* (The *Malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali), (Lucknow: Nami Press, n.d.), pp. 123, 153-54. It has also been published from Bareilly in 1304 AH.
- 49 Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahammiyyat*, pp. 505, 503.
- 50 Saiyyida Anjum, “*Shah Ghulam ‘Ali kay Ahwal wa Athar*”, Unpublished M.A. diss. (Department of History, University of the Punjab, 1973), p. 106.

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- 51 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 209. Silsilah Naqshbandiyya emphasizes silent *dhikr* in contrast to loud *dhikr*.
 - 52 Ibid.
 - 53 The term 'Islamicate' was coined by Marshall G. S. Hodgson to refer to the vast territories in Asia, Africa and Europe influenced by Muslim rulers. The usage of the term is not restricted to the practice of Islam as a religion. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 57-60.
 - 54 Fritz Meier, "The Mystic Path", in *The World of Islam*, ed. Bernard Lewis (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980 rpt., first published 1976), p. 125. In South Asia, for instance, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi had performed *bayt* in Silsilahs Chishtiyya, Qadiriyya, Kubrawiyya and Naqshbandiyya.
 - 55 Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982), p. 90.
 - 56 Ahmad, *Durr al-Ma'arif*, p. 40.
 - 57 The philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Being) was clearly articulated by Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi (b. 1165-d. 1240), the famous Spanish philosopher and author of *Fusus al-Hikm* and *Futuhāt-i Makkiyyah*, for the first time. Ibn al-'Arabi argues that Allah is the Only Being. All is the One, and the One is all. He is Essence, and the rest is His manifestation or His attributes. In other words, the creation is the manifestation of

His attributes. The basic presumption of this philosophy is that 'everything is God' and the ultimate goal of believer is union with God and self-annihilation. It is a spiritual state/stage in which one feels or experiences unity with God, and sees God in everything. Husayn ibn Mansur Hallaj (executed 922), who had raised the slogan of *Ana-al Haq* (I'm the Truth), is considered to have said this in a state of ecstasy. The term *Wahdat al-Wujud* was gradually adopted by the followers of Ibn al-'Arabi to designate his position. The first philosopher to employ the term in a technical sense is Said al-Din Farghani (d. 1296). For a detailed discussion see, S. A. Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn al-'Arabi* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1992 rpt., first published 1970) and William C. Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000).

- 58 Ahmad, *Durr al-Ma'arif*, pp. 49, 55.
- 59 The philosophy of *Wahdat al-Shahud* (Unity of Phenomena) is attributed to Shaykh 'Ala al-Daula Simnani (d. 1336) of Khurasan. Its basic presumption is that 'everything is from God.' The ultimate goal of its believer is submission and servanthood and craving or desire. This idea was essentially put forward in reaction to the idea of *Wahdat al-Wajud* in order to counter it. It was popularized by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi in India. For a detailed discussion see, Abdul Haq Ansari, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Doctrine of Wahdat al-Shuhud* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 1999), pp. 1-37; and Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God:*

The Life and Thought of 'Alā' ad-Dawla as-Simnānī (New York: Albany State University of New York, 1995).

- 60 Ahmad, *Durr al-Ma'arif*, p. 65.
- 61 *Ana al-Haq guftan asan sat wa ana ra shikistan mushkil ast*. Ibid., p. 180.
- 62 Ibid., p. 178.
- 63 Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, p. 147.
- 64 Ahmad, *Durr al-Ma'arif*, pp. 71, 55, 57 and 227.
- 65 Ibid., p. 65.
- 66 W. E. Fusfeld, "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750 to 1920". Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981, p. 166, as cited in Jamal Malik, *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History, 1760-1860* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), p. 325, n. 33.
- 67 Ghulam Muhyi al-Din Qasuri, *Malfuzat-i Sharifah* (the *malfuzat* of Shah Ghulam 'Ali), composed in 1818, Urdu trans. Iqbal Ahmad Faruqi, Introduction and notes Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi (Lahore: Maktabah Nabwiyya, 1978), pp. 84-85. Mujaddidi, who informs that Metcalfe was appointed the Resident of Delhi for three times, infers that the said incident took place between the years 1811-19. See Mujaddidi's biographical sketch of Shah Ghulam 'Ali in his Urdu translation of *Maqamat-i Mazhari*, pp. 163, 218, n. 576.
- 68 Ahmad, *Jawahir-i-Alviyya*, pp. 144-45, 146.

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- 69 Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahammiyyat*, p. 512.
 - 70 Khan, *Tazkirah-i Ahl-i Dehli*, p. 26; and Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 209.
 - 71 Shah Wali-Allah, *Al-Qawl al-Jamil*, quoted in Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya, and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 152.
 - 72 Ibid., pp. 152-53.
 - 73 Mujaddidi's biographical sketch of Shah Ghulam 'Ali in his Urdu translation of *Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 165.
 - 74 See some details in Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, pp. 213-14.
 - 75 For details see Rahman 'Ali, *Tazkirah-i Ulama-i Hind*, Urdu tr. and ed. Muhammad Ayyub Qadiri (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), pp. 75-76; Faqir Muhammad Jehlami, *Hadaiq al-Hanafiiyyah* (Lucknow: Newal Kishore, 1308 AH), pp. 471-72; Ahmad, *Waqiat-i Dar al-Hakumat Dehli*, pp. 393-94; Ghulam Sarwar Lahori, *Khazinat al-Asfiya* (Lahore: 1283 AH), vol. 1, pp. 701-3; Bareilvi, *Nuzhat al-Khawatir*, vol. 7, pp. 13-14; and Shah Abul Hasan Zayd Faruqi, *Maqamat-i Khayr* (Delhi: Dargah Hazrat Shah Abul Khayr, 1392 A.H.), pp. 70-72.
 - 76 For details see 'Ali, *Tazkirah-i Ulama-i Hind*, pp. 198-99; Jehlami, *Hadaiq al-Hanafiiyyah*, pp. 472-73; and Lahori, *Khazinat al-Asfiya*, vol. 1, pp. 703-4.
 - 77 Bareilvi, *Nuzhat al-Khawatir*, vol. 7, p. 42.

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- 78 Khan, *Athar al-Sanadid*, p. 216.
- 79 For details see ‘Ali, *Tazkirah-i Ulama-i Hind*, p. 310; Jehlami, *Hadaiq al-Hanafiyah*, pp. 490-91; and Bareilvi, *Nuzhat al-Khawatir*, vol. 7, pp. 289-90.
- 80 ‘Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam ‘Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 611.
- 81 Ibid., p. 612.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid., pp. 612-13.
- 85 Ibid., pp. 613-14.
- 86 Ibid., p. 614.
- 87 Ibid., p. 618.
- 88 Ibid. p. 621.
- 89 Ibid., p. 623.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 611-12.
- 92 Shahr-i Sabz (also written as Shahrisabz) is a city situated in the south of Samarqand in present day Uzbekistan (Central Asia).
- 93 ‘Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam ‘Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 612. Umar mistakenly assumes that Shahr-i Sabz is Sabzwar (a city situated near Nishapur in north Persia; also spelled as Sabzevar). See Umar, *Islam in Northern India during the Eighteenth Century*, p. 148, n. 381.

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- 94 'Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam 'Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 618. Umar, however, writes the name of the town as Zahid, and not Zubayd. See Umar, *Islam in Northern India during the Eighteenth Century*, p. 148, n. 390.
 - 95 'Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam 'Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, pp. 618-19.
 - 96 Ibid., p. 619. Umar again mistakenly assumes Shahr-i Sabz to be Sabzwar (a city situated near Nishapur in north Persia). See Umar, *Islam in Northern India during the Eighteenth Century*, p. 148, n. 392.
 - 97 'Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam 'Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, pp. 620-21.
 - 98 Ibid., p. 621.
 - 99 Ibid.
 - 100 Ibid., p. 622.
 - 101 Ibid., p. 623.
 - 102 According to Strange, Shahrazur was a town north of Halwan on the border between Iraq and Iran. Now it is the name of a district. Guy Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem Conquest to the time of Timur* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1930, pp. 190-91. Umar spells the name of the town as Shahrzore, and locates it in Gurjistan, and spells the name as Kardi, and not as Kurdi. See Umar, *Islam in*

Northern India during the Eighteenth Century, pp. 148, n. 388, 87.

- 103 Sajida S. Alvi, "The Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Sufi Order's Ascendancy in Central Asia through the Eyes of its Masters and Disciples (1010s-1200s/1600s-1800s)", in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Musticism in Muslim Thought; Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt*, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 424.
- 104 'Abd al-Ghani, *Zamima dar halat-i Hazrat Shah Ghulam Ali Dehlevi in Maqamat-i Mazhari*, p. 615.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Alvi, "The Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Sufi Order's Ascendancy in Central Asia through the Eyes of its Masters and Disciples (1010s-1200s/1600s-1800s)", p. 424.
- 107 Anjum, "*Shah Ghulam 'Ali kay Ahwal wa Athar*", p. 253.
- 108 Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London: Hurst, 2001), p. 235. For details, see Farhad Shakely, "The Naqshbandi Shaikhs of Hawraman and the Heritage of Khalidiyya-Mujaddidiyya in Kurdistan", *International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, January 2005.
- 109 The author of *Hazrat al-Qudas* has not mentioned the name of Shaykh Ala al-Din Attar, but it is mentioned in the spiritual lineage of the Naqshbandis given by Abul Fazl Muhammad Ehsan Allah in *Sawanih Umri-i Hazrat Mujaddid*

Alf Thani (Rampur: 1926), p. 53; and Muhammad Sadiq Qasuri, *Tazkirah-i Naqshbandiyya Khayriyya* (Lahore: Zia al-Quran Publications, 1988), pp. 6, 525.

- 110 Allama Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *Hazrat al-Qudas* (Lahore: Mahakma-i Auqaf Punjab, 1971), pp. 30-31.
- 111 Faruqi, *Maqamat-i Khayr*, p. 72.