

Personalities >> Sheikh Shahabudin Umar Soharwardi

Sultan al-Suharward; Shahab ul-Din

Abu Hafs Umar Bin Muhammad Suhrawardi

The Founder of the famous Sufi Order, "Suhrawardi" is Shaykh al-Shayyukh Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umer Bin Muhammad al-Bakari Al-Suhrawardi, al-Shafi'i, Mohadith Baghdadi. He was born in "Suhraward" A town at that time situated near Zanzan in Iran, Unfortunately today it is impossible to even identify the site of this ancient town for certain. His date of birth is most probably at the end of "Rajab"(7th Islamic month) or the beginning of "Sha'ban" (8th month) in 539/1145.

His lineage starts from Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddique (the first caliph of Islam). According to "Munaqib-e-Ghawthia" his parents did not have a child. Disappointed enough one day his mother took an opportunity and reached the holy "khanaqah" (Sufi centre) of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani al-Hasani popularly known as Ghawth al-Azam (the founder of "Qadri" Sufi order D.561/1167), and requested him to pray to God for her to bear a child. At this the Shaykh made a prediction about a very special son for her. According to another assumption Shaykh also suggested the good name of the child as Shihab al-Din Umer.

Shihab al-Din Umer took his early education at home, Like his uncle Shaykh Dia al-Din Abu al-Najib Abd al-Qahir Bin Abdullah al-Bakari al-suhrawardi (D.563/1165), in his Child hood he traveled to Baghdad for studies. There he had an opportunity to study The Quran (The holy book of Islam), Hadith (sayings of Prophet), Fiqh (juridco-canonical system of Islam) and other on going subjects which were essential at that time, from famous, authentic, skillful and centrally figured teachers of that age, including his uncle. After the completion of his studies, he then came under his uncle's supervision for spiritual knowledge and the development of his inner-self. He also had Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani as his spiritual benefactor, and he wore the khirqah-e-khilafat (khirqa:a dervish's patched garment, symbol of his vows of obidience to the rule of his order, khilafa: vicarship) in Qadria, from shaykh Abd'al-Qadir al-Jilani in 560/1162. On the other hand According to "Qala 'd al-Jawahir" "He is one who has been approached by the Great Shaykh Jilani himself who said 'O, Omar! you will be well renowned in the later saints of Iraq.'

Apart from these two great sufis he also benefacted from many other "Musha'ikhs" (Sufis) of that certain age. For many days he spent his time with "Abdals" (a category of saints) in the island of 'Abbadan' (Persian Gulf). He also had the opportunity to accompany "Khidr". (a Prophet or saint immortalized by the fountain of life). He performed the "Hajj" (pilgrimage) on a number of occasions. And in 628/1231 he performed his last "Hajj", while in Mecca (the holy place of Muslims, situated in Saudi Arabia, where they perform Hajj) he met the great Egyptian poet and Sufi " Shaykh

Abu Hafs Umar bin ali known as Ibn al-Farid.D.632/1235. On that occasion the two sons of Ibn al-Farid "Shaykh Kamal al-Din Muhammad & Shaykh Abd al-Rehman", with the permission of their father, took "Bay'a" (oath of allegiance) and wore "Khirqa" (patched frock, sign of a dervish) from Shaykh al-Shayyukh.

After the sad demise of his uncle in 563/1165, he became his successor in his uncle's "khanaqah"(Sufi center). He established three more "Ribats"(religious hostel) (1) Ribat-e-Nasri, (2) Ribat-e-Bistami, (3) Ribat-e-Mamoonia, for the students.

His Bounty spread all over the world, due to his wide spread popularity, people across the globe came to benefit from his kind-self. A good story is told of the practical wisdom which lay underneath his spirituality light, a Sufi wrote to him, "I gave up working, I find my self inclined to a life of idleness, where as if I work I am overcome with pride: which had I better do?" He replied briefly and to the point " work and ask God's forgiveness for your pride". He spent most of his life in Baghdad where he enjoyed the favour of then caliph al-nasir: He was appointed "Shayakh al-Shayyukh" (master of masters) by the caliph. There he received visitors & letters from all parts of the Muslim world.

On many occasions he became the ambassador of peace between Muslim emperors. He was respected evenly throughout the Muslim world by each and everyone. Ibn-e-Khalikan [608-681H.D.] (The Historian of the time of Shaykh Suharawardi) wrote "In his last age no body was able to compete with him". Every day millions presented "Nazranas" (a gift by the wealthy people to their spiritual master) which was distributed among the poor and needy in the evening. He led an absolutely simple life, although millions came into his hand. Even when he died, there were no sufficient funds for his funeral.

He had love and affection for Sufis of other "Tariqahs" (Sufi orders) and was well respected by those Sufis as well, like Hadrat Mu'in al-Din Hasan Sijzi Chishti [D.633/1235] (the founder of Chishti Sufi order in the subcontinent), Shaykh Abu al-Janab Najm al-Din Ahmed Bin Omar al-Kubra entitled as Shaykh-e-Wali Trash (D.618/1221)[the founder of kubraviyyah, Firdawsiyyah Sufi order], Shaykh Baha al-Din Walad [D.628/1231.(Father of famous Persian Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi) and many others. Hadrat Farid al-Din Masood Gunj-e-kkar[D.664/1265] (famous Chishti Sufi of the subcontinent). traveled to Baghdad for Shaykh al-Suhrawardi and lived many days in his khanaqah, and gained sacred fortunes through his personality.

Imam Yafi'i (D.678/1367) has written in his book that Ibn 'Arabi (D.638/1240) accidentally met with Shaykh al-Suharwardi, they had eye contact with each other and separated with out uttering a single word. Later somebody enquired about Skaykh Suhrawardi from Ibn 'Arabi, answering he said "he (Shaykh Surawardi) is a person who, from top to toe is filled with SUNNA (traditions, customs) of the

Holy Prophet". And, when Shaykh Suhrawardi was asked about his opinion of Ibn 'Arabi, he replied, " He is an ocean of realities". In "Risala Iqbaia" it is stated that people asked Shaykh Sa'd al-Din Hamuya (D.650/1252), how he describes Ibn 'Arabi in his words, at this his answer was that " He can be compared with a stormy ocean with who's area is infinite". Then again was asked about Shaykh Suhrawardi, he replied, "The noor (light) of Prophets Following on his forehead is in such a manner which is quite a different thing".

Due to his motivation many great mystics merged on the scene. Sufi's from all over the world flocked to his Khanaqah to obtain initiation from him. He sent his vicegerents to all parts of the world. In "Akhbar al-Akhiyar-Fi-Asrar al-Ibrar" it happened to be Shaykh Suhrawardi's statement that 'In the subcontinent I have many vicegerents'. According to my latest research he sent approximately 20 vicegerents in the subcontinent. Some of his renowned vicegerents in the Subcontinent are "Sheykh al-Islam Sayyid Nur al-Din Mubarak bin Abd 'Allah bin Sharf al-Hussaini al-Ghaznavi, entitled as Mir-e-Dehli (D.632/1234) who was shaykh al-Islam of Dehli in the period of Sultan al-Tutmish (D.633/1236), Shaykh al-Islam Baha al-Din Abu Mohammad Zakaria Multani (D.661/1262), Shaykh Qadi Hamid al-Din Muhammad Bin Atta Al-Faruqi Nagauri (D.643/1274), Shaykh Jalal al-Din Muhammad Tabrazi (D.642/1244), Shaykh Nuh Bhakari sindhi, Shaykh sayyid Ahmad known as Sultan Sakhi Sarwar (D.577/1181), Shaykh Dia al-D in Rumi(D.721/1323), shaykh Majd al-Din Muhammad Haji Jajermi (D.623/1226), Shams al-Aarfeen Shah Turkaman Bia'bani Dehli, Shaykh sayyid Qadi Shihab al-Din bin Muhammad al-Hussaini known as "Jagjote"(nur.e.alam, light of world, D.666/1267-68, he is the maternal grand father of shaykh Sharf al-Din Ahmed bin yahya Munyari.D.872/1380 ), Shaykh sayyid mo'iz al-Din sandailvi "Abdal", Shaykh Mir sayyid Ila al-Din jawarri, Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Iraqi, Shaykh Muhammad Ibrahim Ansari, Shaykh Ahmad Bin Zain Multani, Shaykh Sulaman Bin Abd 'allah Al-abasi Al-Hashmi etc. He also sent his vicegerents in other parts of the world. Few of his vicegerents are: The famous persian poet Shaykh Muslihuddin Sa'di of Shiraz (D.691/1292) (sheraz-Iran), Shaykh Najib al-Din Ali Bin Buzghush Sherazi (D.678/1279) (sheraz-Iran)

Shaykh Shams al-Din Safi Sherazi (sheraz-Iran), Shaykh sayyid Muhammad Shujah Mashadi (Mashhad-Iran), Shaykh shah Sharf al-Din Mehmood Bin Husain Tustri (shoukara-Iran). Shaykh Muhammad Yemni (yeman), Shaykh Ahmed of Damascus(Damascus-Syria), Shaykh Najam al-Din al-tafliissi(baghdad-Iraq), Shaykh sayyid Muhammad Baghdadi (Baghdad-Iraq), Shaykh Rasheed al-Din Abu abd Allah Muhammad bin Abu al-Qasim Al-Maqri al-Sufi al-Baghdadi (baghdad-Iraq), Shaykh Ahmed al-Faruqi al-Kabuli (Kabul, Afghanistan), Shaykh Izz 'al-Din Abu al-Abass Ahmed Faruqi etc. According to some books, famous Persian Poet Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafiz of Sheraz(D.791-92/1389) (if this date of death is correct then it is not possible) and Shaykh Ahmed Al-alvi Al-Yassvi (D.562/1166)(founder of Yasviyya Sufi order) are also the vicegerents of Shaykh Suhrawardi. Till now through latest research only the names of his three sons have been discovered. One of them is Shaykh Zain al-Din, second is shaykh Imad al-Din Mohammad (D.655/1257), he became his successor after him, he was his companion in his last pilgrimage in 628/1231 and third is Shaykh jamal al-Din.

He wrote several books on different topics in his life. The famous German Orientalist Brockelmann in his book "Geschichte der arabischen literature" tells us about the 21 books written by the Shaykh. One of them is "Awa'rif al-Ma'arif" (Bounties of divine knowledge) which for centuries has been very popular amongst the Sufi's. And taught it to their disciples. It was written in Mecca, Shaykh narrates that whenever he faced any difficulty in writing, he turned towards Allah, had "Tawaf" (circumambulation around the Ka'ba) of the "Bait Ullah". The book is written in Arabic, and in every period it was translated in different languages. Famous Suhrawardi Sufi Shaykh Sayyid Jalal al-Din Hussain bin Ahmad Kabir known as Makhdum-i-Jahaniyan Jahan gusht (D.785/1384) spoke many times about this book "if somebody does not have a "Murshid" (Spiritual Master) and if he reads this book "Awa'rif al-Ma'arif" carefully and abides by it, he will become a perfect Sufi."

According to some books, in his last age he became blind and he passed away in 1st Muharam 632/1234 in Baghdad. The Imam of his Janaza prayer was Hadrat ohd al-Din Hamid bin abu al-Fakher kimani(D.635/1238), and he gave him last Ghussal (bath), clothed him "Ka'fan (shroud)" also according to some books Hadrat kirmani also benificted from Hadrat suhrawardi and vicegerent of Hadrat suhrawardi in suhrawardi sufi order.

He is burried in the grave yard of "Vardia". His shrine is situated near Bab-e-Wustani. This tomb is one of the oldest in Vardia and is surrounded by graves. In 1273/1856 Ismael Pasha, Governor of Shehroze modernized the tomb and decorated it. In 1320/1902 some parts of the tomb which were damaged were renovated. On his grave there stands a tomb build by the "Salguuk" style of construction.

Note: It is to be noted that there are two different personalities by the names of Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi. One of them is he who is described above and is the founder of the "Surawardi Sufi Taraqah" and the other one named Shaykh Shihab al-Din Abu 'al-Futuh Ahmad (Or Yahya) Ibn Habaish (or Ya'ish) Ibn Amirak called al-Maqtul (D, 578/1191). Also called Shaykh Al-Ishraq. He was one of the greatest master and presenter of the philosophy of "Illumination". According to Some books he (Shaykh Suhrawardi Maqtul) was the nephew of the great Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, but it is doubted that this is correct.

Golden Lineage

Hadrat Syyidna Imam al-Anbia MUHAMMAD Ibn Abd Allah

Hadrat Syyidna Imam al-A'ima, Ali al-Murtada

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Hussain bin Ali al-Murtada

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Zayn al-Abidin Ali bin Imam Hussain

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Mohammad al-Baqir

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Musa al-Kazim

Hadrat Syyidna Imam Ali al-Rida

Hadrat Syyidna Abu al-Mehfooz Asad al-Din Ma'ruf al-Karkhi

Hadrat Syyidna Abu al-Hasan Sari bin Mughalas al-Saqti

Hadrat Syyid al-Taifa Abu al-Qasim Junaid bin Mohammad al-Khurraz al-Baghdadi

Hadrat Syyidna Abu Bakr Jahfar bin Yunas al-Shibbli

Hadrat Syyidna Rahim al-Din Ayad

Hadrat Syyidna Abd al-Aziz bin Harith bin Asad al-Yemani al-Tamimi

Hadrat Syyidna Abu al-Farah Mohammad Yusaf bin

Abd Allah bin Yunas al-Tartusi

Hadrat Syyidna Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Ahmad

Hadrat Syyidna Abu Sa'id Mubarak bin Ali al-Mukharrimih

Hadrat Syyidna Muhyi al-Din Shaykh Abd al-Qadir bin Mosa al-Gilani al-Hasani

Hadrat Syyidna Shaykh al-Shayyukh Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs Umar bin Mohammad al-Bakri al-Suhrawardi

[Sallallahu Alaihi wa Aalihi wa Sallam / Radi ALLAHu Ta'ala Anho]