

# The Twelver Shi'a Imam; Ruler, Teacher and Spiritual Guide: Shi'ite Perspectives

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The present article examines the issue of the three-dimensional role of the Imam in the Twelver Shi'a namely the political leadership of the Shia's community, the teaching, function of the Islamic sciences and injunctions, and the innovative spiritual guidance of the community. In order to fully appreciate the multifaceted role of Imam in Shi's Islam, a prior reflection on Islamic anthropology, especially with regards to the position of the human person in the cosmos is essential. Thus, by alluding to the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet and also of the twelve Imam, this study begins by discussing the human equilibrium (the inseparability of form or body from the spirit) within the Islamic world-view.

## The Human Equilibrium

Based on theme of human equilibrium, the multifaceted function of the Imam can be interpreted by making an analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm.<sup>1</sup> As the human body is the receptacle of the spirit and inseparable from it, so the world as the vicinity of the divine message is not detached from the innovative guidance of spiritual teachings. Hence, one is able to discern the link between the exoteric<sup>2</sup> and the esoteric teachings of the Imams.

In order to examine why Islamic thought renders central and primacy role to human beings one will do well to turn to the revealed truths, namely the Qur'an. While the traditional teachings of Islam clearly suggest that many other creatures did precede human beings on earth, the common belief is that humans are first amongst all created beings. That is to say human existed even before they came to be on this earth. The Qur'an articulates this by speaking of the preexistent and eternal covenant of humanity with God. The explicit Qur'anic text is:

“And when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed and made them testify of themselves: Am I Not your Lord? They said: Yea, verily We testify. (Qur'an, VII 172).<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God is depicted as having created human beings and accorded them a unique and special status, even beyond the angles:

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- Zakariya of Multan" Journal of Pakistan Historical Society XVii, Pt. I Jan, 1969, PPI-2.
15. His mother was the daughter of Hisam al-Din Tirmizi (Siyar al-'Arifin P. 103, Ferishta, Nawal Kishor Press, (1864/1282) Vol: II, P. 404. His mother Fatima was the daughter of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, (Khulasat al-Arifin quoted by Nur Ahmed Khan Faridi in his book "Baha al-Din Zakariya, Qasra-e-Adeb Multan, (1954) P. 81.
  16. 565/1169, A'in-e-Akbari, Vol: II, Lucknow, 1869, P.20, Maqalat-e-Shafi': Vol:II Lahore, Ist edition, 1972 P. 32.  
566/1170 Dara Shikoh, Safinat-alAuliya (Urdu Nafis Academy, P. 152: Khul-sasat al-'Ariin quoted in "al-Aurad" ed. by Muhammad Mian Siddiqui, Islamic Book Foundation, Lahore, (1978/1390). P. 16.  
568/1172, Shaikh M. Ikram, Ab-e-Kausar, Feroz Sones, 5th ed. 1965, P. 225.  
578/1182, Ferishta, P.406: Ghulam Sarwar, Hadiqat al-Auilya (urdu) Islamic book Foundation, Lahore 1976, P. 148, Khazimat al Asfiya, p.19; E.I. I: 912.
  17. 661/1265, E.I. I: 912: Akhbar al-Akhyar P. 27.  
666/1267, Ferishta, P. 405, Safinat al-Awliya P. 152.
  18. Nur Ahmad Khan Faridi "Baha al-Din Zakariyya," Qasr-e-Adab, Multan, 1954.
  19. A certificate (-----) is the permission which a Shaikh grants to his pupil to Transmit book (s) of his own or other authorities or make novic.  
The certificate which was granted to Shaikh Baha al-Din by his Shaikh Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar Suhrawardi is preserved in Manuscript form as per details:-  
Universsitats biblotheck (University Library Tubingerr, Germany. Verzeich-nisder Arabischen Handschriften II ed. by Max Wisheikr, Leipzig, 1930, cat: 89:4, PP. 44-45.

him to wear the robe of the Suhrawardi Order (permit him) to initiate to the Order any person (willing to be initiated to the Order). I also grant him permission to transmit, on my authority, all that I have heard, all that I have been permitted to transmit (and permit him) to transmit all materials that I have collected; this (permission) includes my book "Awarif al- Ma'arif" (handed over to him on the basis of Munawila (20), which he may transmit after he had studied it by himself. May be the Blessing of Allah upon Muhammad the best of the people, and upon all his family members, This (the permission) took place on the night of 21st Zul Hijja of the year 626H, in Mecca (Allah may protect it) at Haram al-Sharif (Allah may exalt its distinction and honour).

In the light of the above it is clear that:

- (i) his initiation to the Order took place in 626/1228.
- (ii) it took place in Mecca and not in Baghdad.
- (iii) his return to Multan can be earliest in 627/1229 and not in 615/1218.

#### Notes and References

1. E.I. iii, 506.
2. Ibid.
3. Abd al-Haq, Akhbar al-Akhyar, Mujtabayi Press Delhi, (1332) p. 36: Shaikh Jamali, Siyar al- Arifin, Rizwi Pass, Delhi (1311) p. 140.
4. Amir Hasan Sijzi, Fuwaid al-Fuwad, Lahore (1966) P.303: Siyar-al- 'Arifin' P. 164, Akhbar al-Akhyar P. 43.
5. Akhbar al-Akhyar, P.47.
6. Akhbar al al-akhyar, Ibid, P.28. Ghulam Sarwar, Khazinat al-Aulliya, Nawil, Kishore, (1290) P.17.
7. Akhbar al-Akhyar, P. 72.
8. Ibid P. 49.
9. Ibid, P. 47, Fawaid al-Fawad P. 303.
10. Siyar al-Arifin, P.115, Ferishta P. 379, 407.
11. Amir Hasan Sijzi, the author of Fawa'id Fuwad died in 736/1356 (TadhiKarai- ulama-i-Hind by Rahman Ali (Urdu Translation) Pakistan Historical Society. 1961. P.163.
12. Shaikh Jamali died in 942/1535, (Akhbar-al-Akhyar), P. 222, Tadkara-i-Ulama'i Hind P. 153.
13. For a chronological order of such books see: Khaliq Ahmed Nizami's book "The life and Times of Shaikh Farid al-Din Gang-e- Shakar, P 5-9 (introduction) Universal Press, Lahore, 1976.
14. This has been discussed by Dr. M. Salim in his article "Shaikh Baha al-Din

Though, as a matter of fact, the latter books seem to be merely repetition and elaboration of the early two books, it is to be noted that in respect of certain accounts they differ from each other. The following different statements, for example, relating to Baha al-Din Zakariyya may be cited. They relate to (i) the identification of Baha al-Din Zakariyya's ancestor who had emigrated to Multan,<sup>14</sup> (ii) the identification of his maternal grand-father,<sup>15</sup> (iii) the year in which he was born,<sup>16</sup> and (iv) the year in which he died.<sup>17</sup>

These different statements, notwithstanding, the authorities seem to be unanimous on the points that Baha al-Din Zakariyya on reaching Baghdad was initiated to the order, by his Shaikh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi in about 17 days. and that he was asked to proceed to Multan. In addition to this, in a recently published book (in Urdu) exclusively dealing with the life and works of Baha al-Din Zakariyya of Multan, these two points have, however been fully discussed and the conclusion arrived at is that the initiation of Baha al-Din Zakariyya took place in 614/1217 and (as he left Baghdad soon after this event) the probable year of his arrival in Multan therefore was 615/1218.<sup>18</sup>

The two points of the book are not supported by the certificate,<sup>19</sup> translation of which is as under:-

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. May the blessing of Allah be upon His Prophet Muhammad and upon all his family members. The bestowal of Allah on Baha, al-Din Zakariyya al-Alim (the master of exoteric) and al-Arif (the master of esoteric) has spread widely; Allah may increase His very Bestowal on him. To me has reached all about (good) influence created by him (Baha, al- Din Zakariyya) on the life of people of the neighboring countries (of his native home) who keep the good companionship of Baha, al- Din Zakariyya.

On account of his being talented, Baha al-Din Zakariyya, by the grace of Allah, was able to grasp wide share (of knowledge) possessed by me, within a very short period of association (with me).

Allah proved this (short association) beneficial to him.

I beseech Allah to augment his diligence and (share of) such knowledge which may be useful (to him) and instrumental in proving his stead-fastness on the path of suluk (Sufism). I permit

## Analysis of the Ijazah (Certificate) awarded to Shaikh Baha-al-Din Zakariya of Multan

Prof. Dr. M. Tahir Mallick\*

The Suhrawardi Order is the offshoot of the early Junaidi school of Sufism. The Order is so called not after the name of its Founder, Ziya al-Din-Abu Najib 'Abd al-Qahir (d. 563/1167) but it is called after the place of origin to which the founder belonged i.e. Surhaward.<sup>1</sup>

It was through some of Abu Najib's leading disciples that the Suhrawardi Order gained in reputation and influence. Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs Umar (539/1145-632/1234)<sup>2</sup> the nephew of the founder was one of his eminent disciples destined to organise the Order so much so that he is regarded as the second founder of the Order. He sent his disciples to various places and Indo-Pakistan sub-continent was not an exception to this.

Among his disciples who came to Indo-Pakistan sub-continent were (i) Hamid al-Din Nagori,<sup>3</sup> (ii) Jalal al-Din Tabraizi,<sup>4</sup> (iii) Shaikh Turk Bayani better known as Shah Turkaman,<sup>5</sup> (iv) Syed Nur al-Din Mubarak Ghaznawi,<sup>6</sup> (v) Shaikh Ziya al-Din al-Rumi,<sup>7</sup> and (vi) Maulana Majd al-Din Hajji.<sup>8</sup>

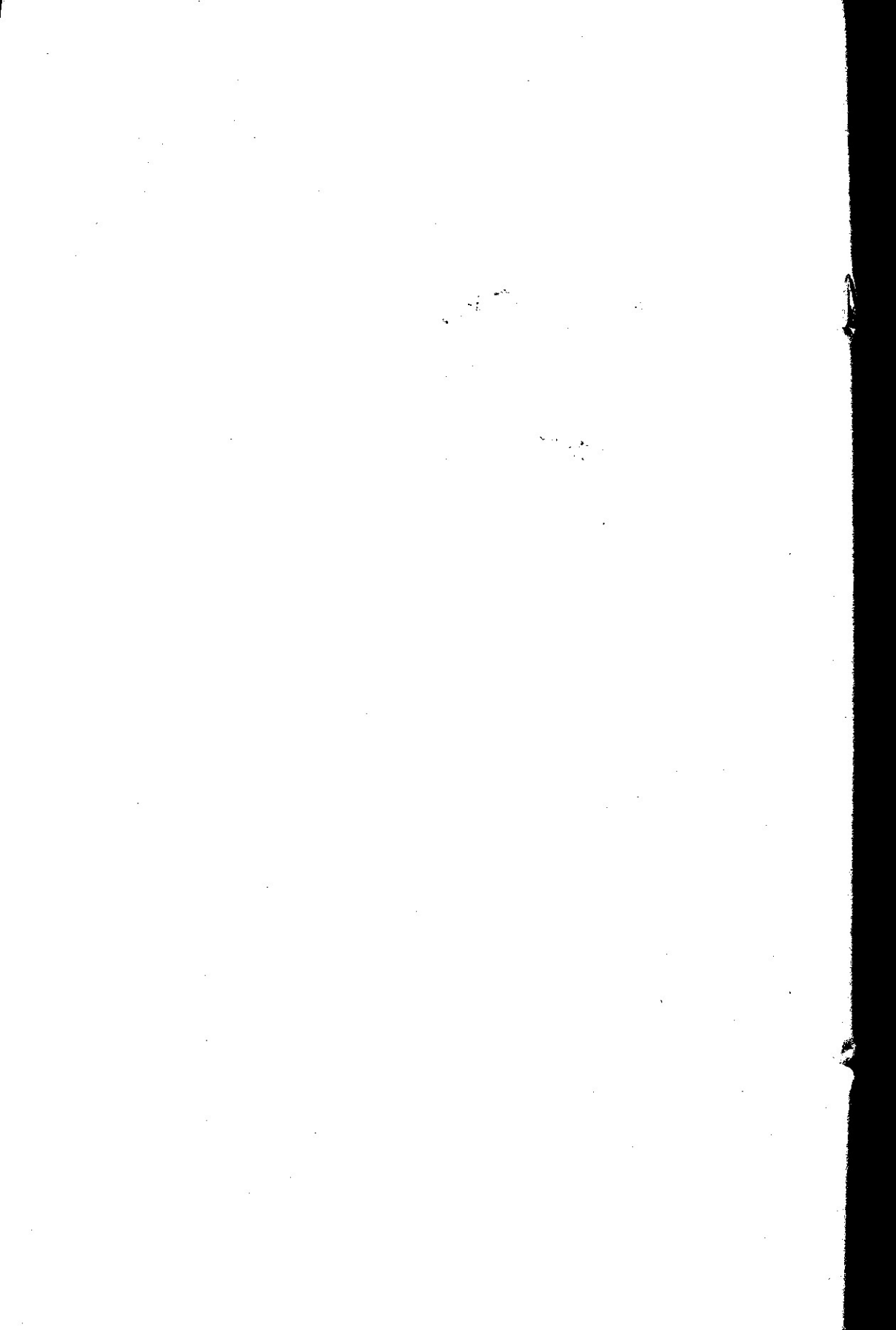
Of these, Hamid al-Din Nagori and Jalal al-Din Tabraizi were the important disciples of Shaikh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi but were influenced by the Chishti saints so much so that they are now counted among the Chishtis.<sup>9</sup> Winning over these two important disciples of Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi by the Chishti saints was perhaps out of the fear of the popularity to be gained by the Suhrawardi Order, which has even been acknowledged by the Chishtis.<sup>10</sup>

However, the man who undoubtedly was the real founder of the Suhrawardi order in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent and who did the most to spread the influence of the Order was Baha, al-Din Zakariya of Multan.

Though some accounts of his life were reported first of all about seventy years after his death,<sup>11</sup> no detailed accounts of Baha, al-Din Zakariya were available till about 275 years later. It was in the beginning of the 10th/16th century when a detailed account of his life were reported by Shaikh Jamali<sup>12</sup> in his book Siyar al-'Arifin: after which various authors gave him a place in their writings.<sup>13</sup>

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# Prelude

With the publication of *Karachi University Journal of Islamic Studies*, a dream has met its destined fulfillment.

I have a long association with the Faculty of Islamic Studies, first as a student, then as teacher, subsequently as Departmental Chairperson and now as the Dean.

When I assumed charge as Dean, I called a meeting of my academic associates—the first in three decades—to discuss and decide our academic program. The item, which was unanimously given top priority, was the publication of this journal.

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In the end I gratefully acknowledge the patronage and encouragement given by the Governor / Chancellor of this University and its Vice Chancellor. I am also vastly indebted to my associates and to the learned contributors to this journal.



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*Sept.30, 1999*

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KARACHI UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF  
**ISLAMIC STUDIES**

*Vol. I(1), 1999*

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