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## SUFI THOUGHTS AND PRACTICES OF IMAM ALI- ULHAQ (HAZRAT IMAM SAHIB) IN PUNJAB

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**Abstract**

The message of Islam was conveyed by the Muslim Saints in the subcontinent. Who inspired the local inhabitants by following the true teachings of Islam in their daily routine and urged them to abandon their ancestors' religions for the search of the right path mentioned in the Holy book and Prophet's sayings. For the expansion of this religious and spiritual message, a long chain of the Muslim Saints, Sufis, and Pirs, was posted at different places in the subcontinent. Hazrat Imam Ali Haq was one of those few preachers of Islam. The present study is in descriptive nature, evaluates the services of Hazrat Imam Ali Haq regarding the social and religious life of the people belong to the Sialkot region. He travelled to Punjab and encamped at Sialkot for preaching the teachings of Islam in a period when there was Hinduism all-around. He defeated them morally, politically, and spiritually by the true message of Allah (that is Oneness of Allah). This holy saint sacrificed his life in the expansion of Islam in the region of Sialkot. By demonstrating good moral and religious ethics, he succeeded to inspire the people who embraced Islam and proved helpful in his mission.

**Keywords:** Islam, Subcontinent, Saints, Punjab, Sialkot, Expansion, Spiritual.

**Sufism**

Various theories presented about the origin of the word, "Sufi". One conjecture is that the word is derived from (Suf) the name of a distinctive woollen robe worn by the early Sufis. Another point of

view is that the word, "Sufi" is derived from (Safa) meaning purity in Arabic. Sufis were religious guides who aimed to have a closer union with God. Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh of Lahore, Khwaja Moinuddin of Ajmer, Khwaja Bakhtiyar kaka Delhi, Baba Farid of Pakpattan, Sheikh Bahaudin Zakriya of Multan. Makhdoom Jahania Jangasht of Bahawalpur and Sheikh Nazimuddin of Delhi played an important role in spreading Islam in the whole of India. People were impressed by their teachings and simple characters. (Qadri, 2012).

### **Characteristics of the Sufism**

- a. The simple and pious life
- b. The mercy of God and to shun innovation (bid' a)
- c. Pleasures of honest dealing and to keep the heart free from hatred
- d. The nearness of God, to keep obligation according to the Quran and Sunnah
- e. Power of prayer and to always speak the truth
- f. Beauties of faith and avoid forbidden food (haram)

Sufism stressed leading a simple life. The Sufis abolished the caste system and promoted equality and the spirit of morality, brotherhood, and piety, unity of God, and removed mutual differences. Sufi saints also popularized devotional songs and music. They explained giving up sins and becoming a true Muslim. They also taught that freedom from immorality is very important for Muslims. To attain Knowledge means to know about God. Sufism emphasized the teachings and practices which elaborated in the Holy Quran and Sunnah of Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H). (Rizvi, 1978).

Sufis stressed piety, simplicity, lawful earning, and devotion to God and service to mankind. They explain, "The man who does these three things may consider himself a friend of Allah. Firstly, he should have generosity like a river, secondly, kindness like the Sun and thirdly, humility like earth." (Rizvi, 1978) Their teachings appealed to all.

### **The Sufi Orders**

There are four famous Sufi Orders in the Indian subcontinent.

1. KwajaMoin-Ud-Din Chishti implanted Chishtiya Order in India.
2. Sheikh Shahbudin Umar Suharwardi founded the Suharwardiyya

order in Baghdad.

3. By the efforts of the Khwaja, BaqiBillahNaqshbandiyya order was popularized in India.

4. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani founded Qadiriyya Order in Baghdad.

### **Significance of the Study**

The present work evaluates the influence of Imam Sahib over the social and religious life of the people of the Sialkot region. This study might be the 1<sup>st</sup> one in nature as nobody, to the best of our knowledge, has given a detailed note of his social and religious services towards the people of Sialkot. It deals with the relationship and involvement of the people with the shrine of the great saint, Imam Sahib of Sialkot.

### **Review of Literature**

The historians and other writers have debated on his biography. Niaz (2010) in his book, "Roshan Minar, the Shajra-e'Nasab' describes the events and circumstances which forced Hazrat Imam Ali-ul-Haq Shaheed to move to Sialkot. He also quoted the references from the book, "Events of Sialkot" by Muhammad Muqem bin Rehmat-to-Allah (1017), A short history of Sialkot" by Munshi Muhammad Din Four. Hazrat Imam Sahib came to Sialkot to fight against the ruler, Raja Saalban who martyred Pir Murad. According to another famous writer, Rasheed Niaz, Hazrat Imam Sahib was a general in the king Bulbans era.

Some historians explored that Hazrat Imam Sahib was the 14<sup>th</sup> Khalifa of great Sufi, Hazrat Fariduddin Ganj Shakar (R.A). Ikram also said that Hazrat Imam Sahib was a beautiful flower of Shajra-e-Fareed. Muqem, Four, and Ikram wrote the name of Hazrat Imam Sahib Ali-ul-Haq and some writers claimed that his name was Ali, al-Haq. So, there are many contradictions about Hazrat Imam Sahib's biography and exact name among the historians. All these writers missed his services and influence on society.

Islam has deep roots in the subcontinent since the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and the Muslims have ruled over India one-thousand years. During this long period, many great Muslim scholars also contributed along with the saints, Sufis, and Pirs in preaching the teachings of Islam through their literary works (books, magazines, etc).

### **Islamic thoughts in Subcontinent**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, A.D. with the arrival of Muhammad Bin Qasim Islam spread quickly by those people who settled in India. After his arrival, a long chain of Muslim warriors started invading India one after the other and laid the foundation of the permanent monarchy in India in different periods. Before the advent of Islam, India was divided into four social classes. The most important of the superstructure of the Hindu society was its class system and the existence of sub-castes. In the very beginning, there was so much rigidity in the system, that a man could not forsake his caste and join another. The caste system and sub-castes of a man were determined by his birth. With the passage of time after the advent of Islam in India, Buddhism was very famous but it slowly wiped out. People of the Indian subcontinent wanted to take opportunity or system which freed them from the chains of caste systems.

The expansion of Islam in the subcontinent is the dynamic story of many Sufis who devoted their lives to the services of mankind. During the Delhi Sultanate, the Sufis influenced India generally and Punjab particularly through their teachings. Therefore, the Sufis/saints selected the Punjab region for the teachings of Islam. Hazrat Ali-ul-Haq known as Imam Sahib dedicated his life to the expansion of Islam. He reached India during the year 1336 AD from Arabia. The only purpose of his arrival was preaching of Islam. He spread Islam in the Sialkot region. (Ashraf, 2015) These spiritual preachers of Islam in the subcontinent proved that Islam has not been spread in the world by the sword rather it has been spread in the consequence of good moral actions and deeds by the Sufis, Pirs, and saints whose lives are model of modesty, patience, and justice.

At that time Raja Saalban wanted to reconstruct the existing Fort of Sialkot. He employed many people to reconstruct the fort suffered from odd construction problems. Raja had a meeting with a group of his religious courtiers. After a deep concentration, they suggested that the foundation needed Muslim blood to support the structure. It was a Herculean task to search out a Muslim in this state. The subsequent consultations suggested that a Muslim can only be recognized from his routine of cleaning his teeth and nose as well as washing his hands, face, and feet, before offering prayer. The search for a Muslim was started accordingly. A person washing his hands

and face in his particular way, for the prayer, was located at the bank of NalaAik.

### **Role of saints in religious contributions**

Islam reached South Asia in two ways. Firstly, through warriors like Muhammad Bin Qasim, Mahmud Ghazni, etc. Secondly, by the Sufis through their teachings. The saints dedicated their lives to the teaching of Islam in the subcontinent without force. (Hussain, 2010)

The Arabs, under Muhammad bin Qasim, had overrun the whole of the Indus valley and conquered Sindh and Multan early in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. An uncertain number of the conquered Indians are said to have been converted to Islam. But the Arab conquest of Sindh did not last long and Islam does not seem to have made any headway in India till the twelfth century. When Mahmud of Ghazni opened the north-western gates of India, the Muslim missionaries began to pour in Punjab. The political conquest was followed by religious and cultural crusades against the vanquished. The conquerors must have easily used their power to convert the conquered folk. (Dowson, 1981)

A Qazi's advice to Sultan Alau-ud-Din Khilji is well known, to kill or convert the unbelievers, he said, is "especially a religious duty". Timur, in his autobiography, declares that his "mission is to spread the Islam". (Dowson, 1981)

The Muslims, who came from beyond the borders and settled in Punjab and the adjoining territories, must have been a few. Their numerical strength grew largely through the Indian converts. Islam became established state religion in India with the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. (Majumdar, 1960). But Punjab had been growing with Muslim influence right from that time. Yet, because of the reasons indicated above, Islam grew in India slowly but surely. (Singh, 1972)

### **Imam Sahib's teachings at Sialkot**

Imam Sahib started his mission of teachings of Islam in the region of Sialkot. Raja's companions were extremely jealous of Imam Sahib. They were waiting for a suitable time to kill him. One day Imam Sahib was praying and there was no defendant or guard around him.

The enemy stabbed him when his head had been touching the ground in prayer. The attack proved fatal and Imam expired at the spot. The burial was managed exactly at the place of the fatal attack. This is the history of a man who entered India as a preacher but an incidence of sheer cruelty of murder of local citizens forced him to be a warrior for putting an end to the suppressive use of the authority that gave every indication of continued injustice against numerous peaceful citizens in future.

Hazrat Imam Sahib succeeded in his mission because he had the strength of character and the power of motivation. He had the practice of Islamic teaching and dislike formalities. It would have been very difficult to change Hindus into a Muslim civilization in this region where they live in a long time.

### **Miracles of Hazrat Imam Sahib**

It is the law of nature that whenever there is cruelty, Allah Almighty sends His respectable (Holy) men to help the downtrodden and undermining. This chain is continued from the beginning and will be inviolate till eternity.

Syed Maqbool Shah, the ancestor of Hazrat Imam Sahib, said that he arrived in Sialkot from Medina on the request of the mother of Murad Ali (MaeeRasti). At that time Sialkot was ruled by Raja Sahanpul. For the protection from attackers, Raja started reconstruction of the Fort. When the wall of the fort was constructed in the day time, it fell in the evening. This happened again and again. At last, Raja called Pandits, astrologers for solving that problem. They asked Raja to shed the blood of any Muslim in the wall. That is the only way to save it from falling. So, they started looking for Muslims. After a long search, courtiers caught Murad Ali when he was on the bank of Nalaaik. He was presented to Raja's court. He ordered Murad's head cut. It was graved under the castle and walls remained safe and construction was completed.

Murad Ali's mother Maee (mother) Rasti was resentful in front of Hazrat Malik Shah Wali (R.A). He asked her to go to Madina. Maee Rasti replied, "Sir I have nothing. How can I reach Madina? Hazrat Shah Wali said, "Close your eyes, you have reached Madina". She cried and told the whole story of his son. Allah Almighty bestowed him to go with her. Hazrat Imam Sahib followed this advice and arrived at the land of Hind for preaching Islam. After the death of

Hazrat Ali-ul-Haq, the city of Sialkot endowed with divine favour and protection. The tomb of Imam Sahib will continue to be as a centre of holiness, valour, harmony, and trust in God among the Muslims.(Shah, S.M, personal communication, October 2, 2016).

When Hazrat Imam Ali Sahib decided to help MaieeRasti and spread the name of Allah in that region. He immediately formed an adequate Lashker (army) of Islam. He came from the way of Khyber and started Jihad against Raja on the way to Jalandhar. After that, he entered Gujrat and fought against Raja Qunj. Hazrat Imam Sahib's Brother Imam Nasir suddenly died and was buried there. Imam Sahib again started his Journey. His army, when entered the boundary of Sialkot at the location of JugatPur (Pasrur), started the first battle with the non-believers. On this same location, Imam Sahib's companion MeeranBarkhurdar killed many non-believers, and then he was himself martyred. (Niaz, 2010)

Raja Sahanpul got fear and ran away from the ground of war when the forces arrived at the Aiman Abad road. Imam's army fought against Raja's army vigorously. Imam Sahib's companion, Imam Galib while showing un-exemplified moxie gallantry, devoted his life. Raja's army was limited to the Fort. Imam Sahib ordered his nephew to associate with the army. He said, "Maghrib prayer will be offered inside the Fort". Therefore, they should enter the Fort with the Slogans of "Allah Akbar" and fix the flags of conquering. (Shah, 1964).

Imam Ali-ul-Haq arrived at Sialkot for preaching Islam. He spent many years in Sialkot; non-Muslims were inspired by his teachings as well as his simplicity. Consequently, thousands of non-Muslims entered the circle of Islam with high spirits. He dedicated his life to the expansion of Islam in the city of Sialkot. His followers increased day by day (Sultan, 2010).

### **Attack on Sialkot**

The gentleman was captured and presented before Raja. During interrogations, the gentleman confessed that he was a Muslim and that his name was Murad. Getting acquainted with the reason of his arrest, Murad tried to convince Raja that if at all the foundation of the fort could only stand by Muslim's blood, according to their belief, he could provide it by serving a cut on his finger. He stressed that there was no justification for killing him for that purpose but Raja

did not agree to that. After that, the innocent Murad lost his life. He was buried in the foundation of the north wall of the fort and the construction work was resumed. That time, of course, the wall did not collapse and construction work continued without a problem. Hazrat Imam Sahib came to know the story of the construction. He prepared himself for an attack on Sialkot. He managed a small army of volunteers for the cause of eliminating suppression and started confronting Raja Saalban.

The first resistance from Raja's forces came when Imam Sahib's army reached a village, Jugatpur (Pasrur). A fierce battle was fought here. Many volunteers of the army martyred in this attack and it continued for a few days. As a result of strong pressure from Imam Sahib, the defending forces were shattered and Raja himself fled towards Jammu, outside the state of Sialkot. (Niaz, 2009).

There were considerable casualties from both sides. Even today anybody can see the scattered graves of volunteers on top of the fort. Many graves might have vanished altogether with the passage of time. It is said that there was a tunnel starting from the fort and ending near the borders of Jammu. Raja's army might have used that tunnel to escape.

## **Death**

Hazrat Ali-ul-Haq known as Imam Sahib was martyred by a non-Muslim when he was offering Fajar payer in 686 Hijri. The great Saint started his journey towards Heaven.

The place where his Shrine is, there is also his chamber (closet). He died there and was buried there. The people from the city and remote areas gather and recite Holy Quran daily. King Akber came to Sialkot after attending the court of Hazrat Ghous. He also arrived at Imam Ali-ul-Haq. In the region of Sikhs, Sardar Ganda Singh and Janda Singh ruled over Sialkot by turn and Sikhs disgraced the shrine and used it as a stable. Ranjit Singh met Baba Farid Ganj Shakar in the dream and said "o' presumptuous (audacious) in Sialkot your dominator is disgracing our beloved's grave. If you will not settle it God's torment will descend upon you because He never bears the disgrace of His custodians (Auliya). (Niaz, 2009)

Ranjit Singh got up and barefooted rode upon a horse. Till the morning, he reached the Sialkot court (Darbar). He gathered all the members and dropped off all the contamination, washed the whole

court (Darbar) with rose water and zibet, etc, filled with aroma cascades oblate over the court every Thursday. A festival was organized during the day in Imam Sahib's ground. A well-organized trade maila is also held and hundreds of people attend it. (Niaz, 2009)

### **Hazrat Imam Sahib's devotions for Islam**

Hazrat Ali Haq spread Tawhid (oneness of Allah) and Tasawwaf (Mysticism in Islam) and broke the vident (Hinduism mysticism) to a great extent that the strength of his followers gave the title "Imam Sahib" (Reverend Pir). Imam Sahib dedicated his life to the teachings of Islam in the city of Sialkot. He taught the lesson of simplicity, equality, brotherhood, and justice. He also taught about Tawba, freedom from immorality, to attain the knowledge meant to know about God. He also said that you did not attach the importance of worldly power and wealth, he emphasized only on piety, lawful earning, devotion to God, and leading a pious and simple life. He promoted equality and abolished the caste system, spirit of morality, unity of God, and removed mutual differences. Non-Muslims very much impressed by his teachings and simple character and several non-believers embraced Islam. He gave the lesson of Ruhaniat (spiritualism) to his followers. He prepared great strength of his Murid (Initiated pupil) for his mission of preaching Islam.

Hazrat Imam Sahib has uncountable miracles. Syed Javed Ali Shah, a distinguished Sanakhan Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) of the city Sialkot, has stated his wonders in a very beautiful way. If any person with much grief, distress, and tension visits the Khanqah of Hazrat Imam Sahib, comes back with richness and blessings of tranquility.

The reality is that no one returns from his court in frustration. Thus the creation of Allah receives the blessings of God from the Mazar-e-Noor forever. The Astana Hazrat Imam Sahib is a blessed place for helpless and needy people. There is another Imam Sahib's miracle that there is a white line at the front portion of the court. A blessed person has seen a very bright light coming from this line. In the period of the British Empire before the birth of Pakistan, many attempts were made to erase the very white line. With the passage of time, many chemicals and colors were used to eradicate the white line but it shines with full brilliance today. Many locals and foreigners come here to see this line. (Niaz, 2010,)

Many pious people have seen Imam Sahib in their dreams several times. Presidential winner award artist, Mr. Bashir Kanwer said that one of his relatives continued to attend the shrine of Imam Sahib for a long time. As a result, his wishes were not fulfilled. At that time a very bad idea came in his mind and he went outside the shrine with anger. A bright luminescent faced rider came in front of him and masked himself away from his face. He holds a red bag of rupees. He said, "Your words have already been heard. I heard your recitation every day. I intentionally delayed your desires, but I did not accept your anger in any case. Now take this bag and fulfill your need". The man opened the bag. It was full of rupees. He awoke and the bright-faced man disappeared from that place, surely he was the Imam Sahib. (Kanwar. M.B, personal communication, July 25, 2016)

There is another incident, an elderly man who has been living there for many years. He said that in the last hour of every night, a personality with brightness entered the Shrine through Eastern gate but did not see him come out till today. (M.Adil, personal communication, July 26, 2016).

The local people attend the shrine every Thursday and fulfill their spiritual desires. They stay there till after the prayer of Jumma-tul-Mubarak. They say that their wishes and desires are fulfilled in a very short time. So, these wonders and miracles have been engraved in the hearts of believers. After hearing Saints' miracles the faith gets stronger.

### **Mazar Pur Anwar Hazrat Ali-Ul-Haq**

The Mazar Pur Anwar Hazrat Ali-Ul-Haq is situated on the top place near Nala Aik. The population in the surrounding areas is much increased. The roads and streets are very wide around the Shrine and that place is known as Muhallah Imam Sahib. There is a dome on the Shrine, this is the sign of Islamic civilization, culture, Islamic architecture, and bright past. There are four small pillars constructed around the dome. A very long and wide paved courtyard has been constructed in the Shrine. It is the sign of development and growth of the present era. The entrance gate is in the East and floor of the Shrine made of marble. (Niaz, 2010)

A mosque has been built in the South near the entrance gate. It is full of pious people every time. There are arrangements of residence and

meals for the passengers and students. There are also the graves of Allama Iqbal's mother, father, and a daughter in the West of the Mazar. (Niaz, 2010)

### **Custodians of Shrine**

Different people are responsible for the custody and supervision of the Shrine of Hazrat Imam Sahib. The caretaker of Shrine called himself "Imami". President of Pakistan Muhammad Ayub Khan established the department of Endowment. So, now all shrines and Khanqahs are under the Government. The department played a very good role in the administration of Khanqahs with high dedication. The income of Shrines is used in those places e.g. construction, for arrangements of annual *urses*, etc.

### **Annual *Urses***

Under these circumstances, Sufis and Pirs continued their mission in different areas in different periods as their goal was the same. One of the saints, Hazrat Ali Haq is commonly known as Imam Sahib (Reverend Pir) took the responsibility of preaching Islam in Sialkot and its suburbs when Salateen (Delhi) ruled over India. His biography shows that he had to fight a few wars in this context. He did Chilla Kishi. He gave the lesson of Ruhaniat (spiritualism) to his followers. Annual *urse* of Hazrat Imam Sahib is held every year dated on 6, 7, and 8 of Muharram of the Islamic year. The Mazar is well decorated with electric lights on that occasion. The devotees come every Thursday at that Shrine to look at the sloppy Shrine in the morning and recite the Holy Quran till overnight. The lights are brightened around the beautiful elegance dome. He prepared great strength of his Murid (Initiated pupil) for his mission of preaching Islam. Being a Salik (A seeker of Knowledge) he kept on *wird* (repetition of verses of Quran) for hours, prayed for the needy and hopeless people, and gave amulutes (charms) to heal them. Besides this, he had some Kashf (inspiration) granted by God that is called Ilham. For qualities of piety and virtues, his shrine is the house of blessings for all.

### **CONCLUSION**

The light of Islam reached in subcontinent through the Arabs who had trading links with the native whom they impressed by their good moral and social character and were succeeded to prove that the message of Islam is universal and it can be applied in any part of the world regardless of caste, creed, and colour. In this context, the role of spiritual personalities in preaching Islam in India can never be denied. They burnt the midnight oil to achieve the noblest task assigned to them. The Sufis/saints studied the religion thoroughly, followed their ancestors' way of preaching and in its consequence religion, Islam and its teachings forced the natives to abandon their evil practices and idol worshipping for the cause of Islam. The teachings of these Pirs (religious guide) and Sufis (Muslim mystic) overcame Hinduism steadily. These spiritual people went too far off areas to preach Tawhid (Oneness of Allah). In this context, they did ChillaKishi (Forty days worship in a mosque) kept fast with five-time prayers and content with simple food. To increase the number of their followers, they took Bait (An oath taken by an individual) from the people whom they found on the straight path (Sirat-e-Mustaqeem). Thus their orthodox style of preaching worked for the conversion of Hindus to Islam. Thus Hindu began to embrace Islam in the subcontinent in the hands of Sufis and Pirs who belonged to different Silsilah (school of thoughts) but they all had a sole object that was spreading Allah's message to the infidels. Therefore, the emergence of Islam in the subcontinent is associated with Sufis, Pirs, and saints. It is true that today more than 50 crore Muslims belong to this part of the world that we call subcontinent. As Islam means peace, it does not preach violence rather it has always preferred peace to violence. Above all, Islam does not need any geographical limits for its expansion. We see that in many parts of the world Muslims are in a minority which shows that Islam never used aggression for its illegal occupation in any part of the world.

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