

PROF HAMID NASEEM RAFIABADI

REMEMBRING LATE PROF SHAMSUDDIN THE MAN OF LETTERS

(A revised version of the lecture delivered by the author at the condolence meeting of the University on July 3, 2008)

Respected Vice Chancellor Prof Reyaz Punjabi and esteemed colleagues of the almatamater. It is a day of mourning for all of us as one of our illustrious scholars of literature history and Persian language is no more with us. He passed away on July 2, Wednesday 2008 after a brief illness. It is a saying in Arabic that the death of a scholar is the death of the world. But since we are not respecting our scholars and their scholarship we may not value the greatness of our erudite scholars like late Prof. Shamusuddin, who has single handedly rendered commendable research work on the dormant and less explored areas of Kashmir history, which could not be performed even by full-fledged institutions set up for this purpose. Strange enough he has done most remarkable work after his retirement while as we have a culture of establishing B.ed Colleges or running tuition shops after retirement or if nothing works we resort to journalistic adventures and run the shots which we were never interested in while being in the profession of education or for that matter we start profitable business of establishing colleges and schools for boys and girls. We have not nurtured the tradition and culture of knowledge and scholarship which could make us to shun the craving for name and fame after we are tuned to the ecstasies of gnosis. We revere rich people, politicians and diplomats much more than the erudite specialists in various realms of penmanship. Jammaluddin Afghani has put it as the people of the Orient don't respect the knowledge and the

knowelgible a penny rather they keep on piling the dead and dry bones of the rich on their shoulders and here lies their wretchedness and doom.

I had the first acquaintance with Prof Shamsuddin Ahmad in late eighties in J.N.U New Delhi when he used to accompany personally the bands of students of department of Persian to Delhi to facilitate their training in the well advanced language labs of J N U New Delhi.

When I went to see him first time I was taken aback by seeing his ostensibly very stringent demeanor and grandeur which he wore on his face and personality .But after getting intimacy with him by and by, I found him a great soul and a man of letters with fullest regard for scholarly penchant. From that day onwards there was hardly any day when I would not meet him and discuss with him the serious issues of religion Sufism and Kashmîrî literature .He would encourage me by different ways and but due to the encouragement of three persons I would have never thought of coming back to Kashmir once I had ventured out from the vale of sluggishness, one of them being the departed soul.

Shamsuddin Ahmad, Muhammad Zaman Azurda and Prof Muhammad Ishaq Khan who frequented J N U New Delhi almost every year, were always there to encourage me to return back to Kashmir once I complete my education at J N U. He was always deeply immersed in a conspicuous intellectual slumbers and his radiant face emitting the rays of intellectual glow when he would speak on any subject of academic nature.

His books on the history of Kashmir are unique in the sense that he has relied on the original Persian sources which is a distinction only of few historians of Kashmir including late Prof Farooq Bukhari who was confident in handling both Arabic and Persian sources of Kashmir History while as most of the historians rely on the second hand knowledge and mostly confine to the secondary sources .He was fond of *Shah-i -Hamadan* and Ghazzali, both of whom were my heart throbs also. However I would like to mention only one of his scholarly works on *Shah-i- Hamadan*.

To start with some new books on Syed Ali Hamadani have been published in Pakistan, Iran and Kashmir apart from the special issues of various journals on the life and achievements of Syed Ali Hamadani. A recent publication by a Pakistani scholar, Muhammad Reyaz, (*Ahwal u Athar wa 'Ash'ar Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani*, Islamabad, Pakistan, Lahore 1982, 1985,) extensively deals with the works of Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani written in a lucid style and simple Persian, the work also contains a useful discussion on some works of Sayyid Ali Hamadani. However, Prof. Ishaq, says that Reyaz's description of Sayyid 'Ali's role does not contain any fresh insight. In the same way Sayyida Ashraf Zafar has presented a systematic and detailed account of Sayyids' Ali's life, teachings and works (*Sayyid Mir 'Ali Hamadani*, Delhi 1987, Lahore, Srinagar, 1991); Sayyed Husain Shah Hamadani, *Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani* Persian Translation by Dr. Mohammad Riaz, Iran Pakistan, Islamabad, 1995, has elaborated the arrival of Syed Ali in Kashmir and his moral, political and literary works and teachings in a comprehensive manner. Dr. Parvez Azkai, *Murawaj-I-Islam Dar. Iran-I-Sagheer, Ahwal wa Athar Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani*, (Danish Kadeh Bu Ali Sina, Hamadan, Iran, 1990,) has discussed in detail the factors which led to the arrival of Syed Ali Hamadani to Kashmir. However, the author has tried to show that Syed Ali Hamadani has traveled Kashmir only twice.

A special issue of a Persian Magazine *Darya* was published in 1994, (from *Khiyaban-I-Sa'idi Shirazi*, Iran,) in which details about the birth place of Syed Ali and his death and account of his views on self-realization, *Futut*, etc., have been given in a very artistic manner.

Dr. Hayat Amir, (*The religious thought of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani*, Al-Hamra publishers, Kashmir, 1992,) has dealt with the Sufistic, ethical and political thought of Sayyed Ali Hamadani in a very lucid but detailed manner. The writer has made a comparative study of Ghazzali, Ibn Arabi Ibn Taimiayh, Al-Jili and that of Sayyid Ali Hamadani in his book. He has pursued the thought of Sayyed Ali from the scholastic and Philosophical point of view and he has worked under a renowned Muslim scholar for

this doctorate thesis late Dr Nooru Nabi.

Dr. S. Mohammad Farooq Bukhari, (In *Kashmir Main Islam, Manzar our Pas-I-Manzar*, Srinagar 1998,) has devoted two lengthy chapters to the life and works of Sayyid Ali Hamadani and Mir Mohammad Hamadani. The learned Arabic and Islamic scholar has utilized here- to- fore neglected Arabic sources and English chronicles to explore new dimensions of research on Kashmir history in general and Sayyed Ali Hamadani in particular. He has categorically denied the theory that Sayyid Ali Hamadani left Iran for the fear of persecution at the hands of Timur. Rather the author has shown on the basis of unflinching evidences the respectful attitude of the Timur towards the *Sadat*. Moreover, the writer has proved with ample evidence the fact that Timurs' expeditions started much after the arrival of Sayyid Ali to Professor Shamsuddin has unique Kashmir has unique scholars distiction of being a cholara of Persian and havinf access to rare He wrote a marvelous book on Syed Ali .obn the subject.sources Hamadani and I testify that there is not such a book found in any language Persian, Arabic or English as he utilized all the extant sources on the subject apart from the rare manuscripts available at Iran and Kashmir .His book on *Shah Hamadan* is a masterpiece of research and covers all the glowing dimensions of the eventful life of Syed Ali in most elaborate artistic flowery language with much ambience of Persian and Arabic parlance. As said already Muhammad Reyaz of Pakistan has written a very good book on Shahi Hamadan but it cannot match the depth and research of Shamsuddin. There are nine chapters of the book. More than 116 pages are devoted by the author only to mention the various details about the educational career of *Shah-i-Hamadan* and has also given the travel accounts of *Shah-e-Hamadan* in this first chapter. Second chapter is devoted to the details relating to his entry into Kashmir. In the footnote of this chapter Dr. Shamsuddin has opined that the details about all the travels made by the Shah and mentioned by writers are not complete because no systematic work has taken place on Shah i-Hamadan and if some people have no doubt written on this aspect but due to scarcity of materials on the

subject and lack of authentic books, no research is taken to logical conclusion. Especially in the Kashmir context it is very regrettable that due to unavailability of authenticated materials on the Shah no worth mentioning work has been brought to forth so far (.p-188) The third chapter of the book deals with the influence of Iran and Central Asia on Kashmir .

4th chapter concentrates on *Shah-i-Hamadan*, Ghani Kashmiri and Allama Iqbal

5th chapter discusses *Ilm wa Iran* and Teachings of *Shah -i-Hamadan*

6th Chapter is devoted to the books and compilations of the Shah.

7th Chapter deals with the details about the caravan of light, i.e., the illustrious entourage which accompanied Shah to this happy valley from Iran and Central Asia.

8th chapter focuses on death of Syed Ali Hamadani while as the 9th chapter is shedding light on Khânqâh -i-Muallah. In the end there is a detailed bibliography. Shamsuddin wrote this book after his translation of *Zakhirat-ul -Malook*, which is one of the important writings of *Shah-i-Hamadan* on the state craft on the pattern of the renowned book of Ghazzali *Nasihah-ul -al- Malook*. The author complains in the foreword of the book that Kashmiris are ignorant about the works and achievements of *Shah-i-Hamadan* and his multi dimensional activities as a Sufi, scholar preacher of Islam, promoter of *Shariah* in Kashmir. Thus the writing on the multi dimensional versatile personality of Sayyid Ali Hamadani is a work of immense magnitude and cannot be performed by just expressing some views in some lines according to Shamsuddin. (P-7) Lamenting about the casual treatment of Kashmiris towards their spiritual and religious mentor, *Shah-i-Hamadan*, Shamsuddin says: "After the elapse of more than six hundred years from the arrival of *Shah-i-Hamadan* to Kashmir, Kashmiris are not still aware of

the real events of his life ,his scholarly achievements, his religious accomplishments and services, his colleagues ,his world tours, his Sadat colleagues ,who accompanied with him, their practical strivings in the way of preaching of Islam, their trials and tribulations .The reason for this general ignorance and apathy on their part is due to the fact that no authentic book has been written on those aspects of Sayyid Ali which could be substantiated on the whetstone of research and if anything has been at all written somewhere that has not reached to Kashmir . There are not even detailed books on his life either while as scribing such kind of books should have been the priority of the Muslim writers and historians of valley.

According to Prof Shamsuddin the Muslims of Kashmir owed this responsibility as it was "*farz* and *qaraz*" on them. While defining the objectives of his book the late scholar says:- "I have written this book as a response to this duty," (p-9) One of the very unique features of the book under review is that the author has availed books found in the libraries of Tehran, Russia, and Central Asia. He visited those places of Central Asia and Afghanistan where *Shah-i-Hamadan* might have gone and the preachers belonging to those places had accompanied Syed Ali to Kashmir. He saw in this connection places like Farghanah, Badakhshan, Khajan, Marw, Hasar, Ghujdwan, Khatlan, Bukhara, Tashkent, Samarqand Dushanbe, Gulistn, Azerbaijan and the capital of Turkmenistan Ishqabad.etc. (P-11) Expressing the regrets on the present intellectual doom of the Kashmiri Muslims Shamsuddin says: "I am hopeful that our future will be full of scholarly and intellectual adventures so that we may usher into a period of enlightenment. How sad once upon Kashmir scholars would inspire the scholars of other countries with their erudition and today we are not able to enlighten ourselves with our own light of knowledge. If we persist in this condition of intellectual bankruptcy our days will be rendered as dark as our nights". (P-13) Since there are several matters where Kashmiri scholarship is divided ,like the supposed persecution of Sadat by Timur and Syed

Ali's tours to Kashmir. Prof Shamsuddin has dealt in details with these issues and has provided unflinching proofs in favour of his well researched conclusions unlike the speculative mode of our so called historians of modern Kashmir, most of whom are not well versed with Persian and Arabic language which is otherwise a prerequisite for doing any worth while research on such subjects of delicate nature

Shamsuddin is also of the view that Timur was not responsible for the migration of Syed Ali Hamadani or the *Sadat* to Kashmir. He says that *Khulasat-ul-ul -Manaqib* which is one of the most authentic and reliable sources on which we can lay our hands there is not even a single episode mentioned about Timur nor is there any mention of name of Taimur. On the contrary Timur has fought several wars in order to release several *Sadat* from the clutches of many an oppressor rulers. It was because of this fact that many a *Sadat* were impressed by his kind treatment to them that they entered into his army and fought shoulder to shoulder with Timur against his enemies...Moreover the presence of many Sayyids, Mashaikh, Sufis and Gnostics in the period of Timur is a glaring proof that Amir Timur was having highest regard for the saintly class of people. P-121-122. There has been a great difference of opinion on the subject of Sayyid Ali Hamadani's travels and his visits to Kashmir. There are some modern scholars who have taken cue from a researcher Mr. Ghulam Rasool Bhat and they have repeated mostly his views without expressing their own opinion and have insisted unnecessarily that Shahi-I-Hamadan has visited Kashmir only once. But they don't have any rational or historical evidence at their back which could decide upon the matter in a categorical manner. While as more serious and erudite historians who have command on Persian and Arabic language or are rooted in the original and firsthand knowledge of the Kashmiris Islamic heritage past are of the considered opinion that the Shah-i-Hamadan has made three visits to Kashmir. Prof Shamsuddin is one important researcher who subscribes to this view and presents strong and astute arguments in its favour. He says for example:

"Sayyid might have not stayed in Kashmir for one time for five or six years therefore it seems rational that he might have arrived to Kashmir several times. According to new saying he had made his journey to 1/4th of earth. This view also supports our view point on the subject and Qazi Ibrahim son of Hamiduddin who was very close to the period has supported it too".(p-194)
Thus *Shah-i-Hamadan* has graced Kashmir thrice by making separate visits after intervals.

First visit he made to Kashmir in the reign of Sultan Shabuddin in 774 A. H, but Shamsuddin prefers 780 A.H on the instance of Deedah Mari,(p-218, see also foot note 220,) and stayed at Shabuddin Pora and this time Syed spent about four months in the journey in Kashmir. And afterwards left for pilgrimage to two sanctuaries from the route of India. It was in the early 781 A H that the *Shah-i-Hamadan* came to Kashmir accompanied by seven hundred *Sadat*. It is said that stayed at Muhallah Allaudin Pora mosque adjacent to *Khânqâh Mullah* .It was in 783 AH that he went from here to Tibet and Turkistan for travel and preached Islam there .He came to Kashmir third time in 785 A.H and it is said that he made the sayings of the Prophet prevalent and encouraged every person to follow Shariah in letter and spirit and established Islamic norms in Kashmir and allowed loud recital of *Awrad-i-Fatihya*. In 786 A.H he went to Pakhli and expired there on 6th of Dhil Hijjah in 786 A.H (.pp-196-199)

Providing a rational and logical justification to his research that the *Shah-i-Hamadan* had visited Kashmir thrice Shamsuddin says:
"He had not come alone to this part of the world from his country but with 700 *Sadat* and colleagues and he was a leader of this great contingent also and as is evident the establishing this contingent in Kashmir needed time and caution as well. Therefore it could not be carried away in haste not in an ordinary manner since Amir nowhere had left any religious assignment incomplete how come he could do so in Kashmir which was the most important but complicated religious assignment of his life. complicated in the sense that he had to depute his collogues at various strategic places of Kashmir to the villages and towns for religious preaching and

men to keep a close watch on their all activities .He needed to go himself to take stock of things and to establish Khânqâh and mosques under personal guidance and to establish libraries for books on religion and then to return back to capital Srinagar to keep eye on the same mission day in and day out and to fulfill stupendous religious duties in the fields of *tabligh* and religious promotion in such times when there was no well knit communication possible .Therefore these expediencies also demanded concentration therefore for taking all these matters to logical perfection .This fact also suggests that there could be no way out other than his coming to Kashmir three times. Thus he came to Kashmir in 780 A.H than in 783 A.H and lastly in the end of 785 A.H and beginning of 786 A.H .At every turn he spent at least one year or more to guide these all activities under his personal supervision.(pp-225-226)

Thus when all of these features are taken together with its other research based facets this is a marvelous book on Syed Ali Hamadani and I testify that there is not such a book found in any languages Persian, Arabic or English on this subject .What makes it more commendable a work is that the author has utilized all the extant sources apart from the rare manuscripts available at Iran Central Asia and Kashmir .The book is a masterpiece of research and covers all the glowing dimensions of the eventful life of Syed Ali in most elaborate artistic flowery language with the fullest and liberal use of Persianised and Arabicised Urdu parlance. Muhammad Reyaz of Pakistan has written a very good book on Shahi Hamadan but it cannot match the depth and research of Shamsuddin. The mediocrity found in the other works on the subject can thus be easily exposed by relying on this highly researched book on this most rewarding subject which was otherwise relegated to the oblivion by our fortune seeking and award craving literati who are more interested in publicity than genuine erudition