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**THE WAY OF THE SUFIS**  
**A review of the book entitled**  
**"Haft Ganj-i-Sultani"**

**by**

**Muhammad Sidiq Niazmand**

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Haft Ganj-i-Sultani is a book on Sufism in Urdu consisting of a scholarly forword by Professor Ghulam Rasool malik; a preface by the author and eight full length chapters on Sufis; their life and teachings. The first chapter deals with the life and achievements of the patron saint of Kashmir Hazrat Sultanul Arifeen Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom and the following seven chapters pertain to his devotees or successor's life and works. Thus, the book under review is aptly entitled "Haft Ganj-i-Sultani".

Niazmand has given a graphic picture of Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom in the aforesaid book. He has made the best use of the primary sources, mostly Persian manuscripts in order to delineate the life of the saint. The Sheikh Makhdoom was borwn in 1495 A.D. to a learned learnt family in sopore. The quest of learning brought him to Srinagar where he learnt Islamic sciences and literature. A rich man had once, invited the saint to his residence and offered him food and four paisas and besought him to pray for his prosperity. The young saint became happy to receive four paisas and decided to buy books and pen out of the money. On his return to his seminary, he fell in a manhole and lost the money. Suddenly he heard a devine voice which admonished him not to receive a farthing from rich

man's end and instead look to God for any favour or help. This is a message in the life of Sheikh Makhdoom to the custodians of holy shrines who flock to the residence of ministers for petty favours. His predecessor, too, Hazrat Niazmand-ud-Din Awlia never called upon any king or minister for worldly gains and upheld the Sufi dignity. Indeed, this is the way of the Sufis.

The young saint came in contact with Syed Jamal-ud-Din Bokhari. The meeting was a turning point in the former's life. Syed Jamal-ud-Din Bokhari infused spiritualism in Sheikh Makhdoom Hamza Kashmiri and in course of six months training made a Sufi out of him who was destined to preach Sufi teachings in the valley of Kashmir. Sheikh Makhdoom Hamza Kashmiri believed in the principle of work is worship and simultaneously devotion to God (Dast be kar wa dil be yar). He toiled on a few acres of land to make both the ends meet and devoted all his life and money to the construction of mosques and extermination of superstitions in Kashmir. Besides literary works of rich spiritual values, he has left behind seven successors to continue to preach, love and humanity in the land plagued by sectarian strife, superstitions' political unrest and evil practices. The followers rightly adorned him as "Sultanul Arifeen" as he was a true Sufi and trained people on Sufi lines. Niazmand has dexteriously given every details of the life, works and teachings of Sheikh Makhdoom Hamzah and presented a complete biography of the saint in the book on the anvil. The author has also beautifully brought out the poet in the saint.

Besides, the book also contains historical growth of Sufism in the valley. Sufism and Islam are inter changeable terms in the context of Kashmir. The author has more often than not shown the concern of the Sufis for Islamic teachings of the Quran and Sunnah and the Sufis discarded even music as non Islamic practice. The book at hand reveals the Sultani Order as an off-shoot of the Soharwardia. The

mantle of Sheikh Hamzah fell on his true successors who were seven in number namely; Hazrat Baba Dawood Khaki; Hazrat Ahmad Chaghi; Hazrat Khwaja Hassan Qari; Hazrat Khawaja Ishaq Qari Haleem; Hazrat Mir Sheikh Syed Haider Tulmulla; Hazrat Baba Muhammad Ali Raina and Hazrat Khwaja Miram Bazaz Sikanderpuri. These Sultani Sufis were: erudite scholars; authors of books; poets of the beautiful language Persian and Islamic thinkers in their own right. Each one of them has commendable contribution to the growth of Sufi way of life in the valley of Kashmir. The age of Hazrat Baba Dawood Khaki was marked by Shia-Sunni strife. Baba Dawood Khaki, who according to Muhammad Sidiq Niazmand, was an embodiment of humbleness and preached to his sunni followers: "Sunni is he who does not declare the followers of other sects in Islam as infidels or speak ill of them". Thus the saint mellowed the strife and attempted to bring the dissenting followers of Islam under one umbrella. Indeed, this is the way of the Sufis.

Muhammad Sidiq Niazmand has painstakingly penned the book "Haft Ganj-i-Sultani" and embellished his work with a rich reference, annotation and bibliography. The book is indispensable for those who are interested in the study of Sufism in Kashmir and scholarly addition to the corpus of Sufi literature produced in the Indian sub-continent.