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**'Maktubaat-e- Sadi' of Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya  
Maneri : A Study**

**INTRODUCTION:-**

Indian subcontinent has always been the epicentre of great Sufi, Saints and spiritual guides since time immemorial who have played an important role to show the right path of life to people and have contributed a lot to the development of composite culture in our country. Undoubtedly, Saints are our national heritage & culture who play an important role to promote human values and peaceful co-existence. Here it would not be inappropriate to take some name of the Sufis. They are Shaikh Abul Hasan Ali Hujwari, Khaja Moinuddin Chisti, Khaja Qutbuddin Bakhatiyar Kaki, Qazi Hamiduddin Nagori, Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria Sohrawardi, Shaikh Sadruddin Arif, Khaja Fariduddin Ganje Shakar, Shaikh Fakhraddin Araqi, Hazrat Khwaja Nazamuddin Auliya, Shaikh Buali Qalandar Panipati, Shaikh Abul Fatah Ruknuddin, Shaikh Burhanuddin, Moulana Ziyuddin

Nakhshabi, Shaikh Khwaja Nasiruddin Charagh Delhi, Shaikh Jalaluddin Bukhari, Sayed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani, Sayed Mohammad Gaisudaraz, Shaikh Ahmad Abdul Haque and Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri

**Makhdoom ul Mulk Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya  
Maneri**

Maktubaat-e- Sadi (The hundred letters) was written by the thirteenth century great Sufi and spritual guide Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri (1263 - 1381 A.D.), an apostle of human values and peaceful co-existence. Makhdoom ul Mulk (The spiritual master of the whole kingdom) Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri was one of the great sufi saints of medieval India whose forefathers (ancestors) had migrated from Makka Sharif to India in quest of propagating Islam in the Indian sub-continent and happened to settle down in Maner Sharif. His tomb in Bihar Sharif is a sacred visiting place of people from all walks of life. He was the righteous disciple of a little known sufi of Delhi named Najibuddin Firdosi. He is also Popularly known as Makhdoom ul Mulk (The spiritual master of the whole kingdom). He was born at Maner Sharif, a town about twenty miles West of Patna, India in 1263 A.D.(1). He left this material world for the eternal abode in 1381A.D. (2). His tomb is located at Bihar Sharif where he spent last forty years until his death which took place on 2nd January 1381A.D. People of Bihar

and his disciples simply refer to him as Makhdoom Saheb. Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq: The reigning Sultan of Delhi, Mohammad bin Tughlaq (1325 -1351 A.D.) gave him a land grant for his maintenance and ordered a centre to be constructed for him.

### **Letters : Spiritual correspondences**

The tradition of letter writing and delivering stirring discourses among Sufis has a long history in Asian countries in general and in the Indian subcontinent in particular. Sufis exercised their pens as well as their tongues in communicating spiritual insights to one another. Qazi Hamiduddin Nagori, a thirteenth century Sufi from Nagore, a city in present-day Rajasthan, has also written numerous letters to fellow North Indian Muslim Mystics. Among the major Sufis of Pre-Mughal India whose collections of letters have been partially or wholly preserved to the present day are Hazrat Khwaja Nazamuddin Auliya (d.1325 A.D.), Sayed Mohammad Husaini Gaisu Daraz (d.1422 A.D.), Sayed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani (d.1425 A.D.), Abdul Quddus Ganguhi (d.1422 A.D.) and Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri (1263 - 1381 A.D.)

### **Maktubaat-e- Sadi**

Makhdoom ul Mulk Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri corresponded with his disciples on a wide range of topics to communicate spiritual insights to them (his disciples). These letters under the title Maktubaat-e- Sadi were written during the



period from 1346-47 A.D. addressing his favourite disciple and governor of Chausa located in western Bihar. In the preface of Maktubaat-e- Sadi compiled by Zain Badr e Arabi itself it is clearly mentioned that Qazi Shamsuddin, the governor of Chausa in western Bihar had frequently requested his spiritual guide to send him written instructions for his spiritual advancement because his many responsibilities prevented him from attending the audiences regularly held in Bihar Sharif. The spiritual guide complied with the disciple's request, writing him a number of letters on various spiritual topics throughout the year 1346-47 A.D.(2b) .

Zain Badr e Arabi and others copied out these letters and made a collection of them which was subsequently arranged in the order now presented to the reader under the title Maktubaat-e- Sadi and edited by Zain Badr e Arabi, the chief disciple and the spiritual successor. Maktubaat-e- Sadi gained fame rapidly among people. Numerous manuscripts of Maktubaat-e- Sadi are preserved in various libraries in Asian countries, particularly in Indian subcontinent. These letters have been arranged and preserved as spiritual documents. They were edited and compiled by Zain Badr e Arab, closed disciple of the saint.

#### **Translation of Maktubaat-e- Sadi**

In view of its importance and relevance, it has been translated in to various languages. Baijnath Singh, a gentleman from Gaya, Bihar rendered some of these letters into English and got it

published under the title "letters from a sufi teacher" in 1908A.D. This is the first English translation of the treasure of knowledge of Islamic learning and wisdom. Samuel Waiser(4) of New York has reprinted the same book in its original format in 1974. Father S.J. Paul Jackson (5), an Australian orientalist, is the second person who translated the full text for the first time in to English and got it published under the title "the hundred letters" by the Paulist press, New York in 1980. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India brought this Indian edition of the same book in 2002. Paul Jackson was at home in English, the target language, and acquired the sufficient requisite knowledge of Persian, the source language, to complete the task of translation. Besides he had Sufistic bent of mind. Paul Jackson completed this uphill task of translation under the supervision and guidance of a renowned historian and a scholar of oriental studies named prof. Saiyad Hasan Askari(6) which itself is the testimony to the authenticity, value and worth of the translation. This is worth mentioning here that this translation by Paul Jackson gives us the full text of Maktubaat-e- Sadi in English for the first time.

#### **Importance and relevance of Maktubaat-e- Sadi :-**

Maktubaat-e- Sadi was a part of syllabus as a compulsory text in medieval Indian madrasas. According to Abul Fazal Allami(7) ,the author of Ain e Akbari, the Mughal king Akber the great was frequently reading Maktubaat-e- Sadi for obtaining spiritual insights and moral lessons. In addition to Maktubaat-e- Sadi the



Bihari saint Makhdoom ul Mulk Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri wrote a series of two hundred letters, many dealing with topics similar to those covered in the Maktubaat-e- Sadi. These two hundred letters were compiled and edited under the title "Maktubaat-e- do Sadi". He also wrote a small collection of twenty eight letters addressed to his beloved disciple, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi. These letters provide us with a consistently brilliant and magnificently systemic overview of mature sufi thought. Needless to say that "the Maktubaat-e- Sadi" consists of compilation of spiritual correspondences. Undoubtedly these letters are valuable documents of Islamic studies and medieval Indian history and culture. They are the treasure of knowledge of Islamic learning and wisdom. They are of great importance and very much relevant to the present day stress ridden twenty first century modern society. Dr. Ziyauddin Ansari, Director, Khuda Baksh Oriental Public library, Patna and the publisher of "The hundred letters", says, "These hundred letters, which have been written in chaste and delightful, but somewhat rhythmical Persian, contain very useful instructions for leading a religious and pious life in the light of teaching of Islam. They are in the real sense, a key to the enlightenment and advancement of spiritual life. These letters are a great source of inspiration dealing with a variety of spiritual topics. They were, no doubt, written to a single man, but the message of these letters has a global significance and is addressed to all those who wish to

mend and improve their spiritual existence"(3).

### **Content of Maktubaat-e- Sadi**

In the letter number thirty four Makhdoom ul Mulk Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri says that the practice of giving alms is a part of prayer. People should generously give alms to needy persons. In the letter number thirty six he says that one should pray to God wholeheartedly and honestly. Referring to Khawaja Hazim Araj he says, "Not being able to pray is harder for me than being deprived of the necessities of life"(8+9). He is of the opinion that at the time of prayer if one experiences hindrance and contradiction within his own heart, it would be better for him to abandon such prayer and remain quiet. In the letter number thirty eight he puts emphasis on service to human being and worship of God. Happiness of people lies in the service of human being. Heart is a treasure of mystical knowledge. In the letter number thirty nine addressing to his disciple he says that brother Shamsuddin take note and be convinced that one should taste the sorrow of service, and that service should be carried out correctly.

A seeker should become a servant. A slave cannot object his master. In the letter number fifty two Makhdoom ul Mulk Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri emphasises on good speech and descent behaviour. In the letter number seventy addressing his disciple Shamsuddin he highlights the etiquette of associating with others very nicely. He says, "The etiquette of associating



with others is to treat everyone in a manner that befits his position. A person should be respectful toward his elders, affable with his peers, and kindly disposed toward those who are younger than he is. He should consider his elders as his father, his peers as his brothers, and those juniors to him as his children. It is not proper for a young person to speak in presence of his elders, unless it is absolutely necessary. Even then he should pause for a while before speaking to enable his elders to finish what he has been saying. Then he should ask permission to speak, and, sitting down respectfully, say what has to be said" (10). Association with people makes a deep impression. Association effects temperament and habits of a person to such an extent that a Falcon, by associating with men, becomes wise, and a parrot learns to speak. There are many examples of this sort of things. Everybody has seen and witnessed the effect of association. Association overcomes not only innate habits but also one's created temperament. Further he says, "If his companions are good, then he himself, even though he is bad, will become good, because their magnanimity will effect a change in him. On the other hand, if he associates with bad companions, he, too, will become bad, because his situation encourages him to be satisfied with what is bad, and even though he was good, he will end up by becoming bad" (11)

In the seventy second letter he throws light on the importance of purification of habits. One should be very cautious about his



behaviour. People should change their qualities and habits to attain this goal (12). In the seventy fourth letter he gives lesson on service to man. Service to man is service to God. Bringing comfort to hearts of people is also a kind of pray to God. He says, "Pride and haughtiness are removed from his countenance and, in their place, humility and submission appear. A person becomes well mannered, and his behaviour improves considerably. He learns both the theory and the practice of the group. Gloom and heaviness are removed from his soul. He becomes gentle, light hearted, and radiant, both internally and externally"(13). Further he says, "Numerous are the benefits that accrue to the person engaged in service. A wise man was asked how many paths there were that led to God. He replied that every particle of existence was a path that led to God, but there was no other path that could lead a person in a better fashion, or closer to God, than that of bringing comfort to hearts"(13). In the seventy second letter he throws light on the importance of purification of habits. One should be very cautious about his behaviour. People should change their qualities and habits to attain this goal (14).

### **Conclusion**

To sum up it can be said that even in the 21st century modern world of science and technology we need to revisit Maktubaat-e-Sadi' of Shaiksh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, the treasure of spiritual knowledge and wisdom, again and again for the

betterment of the society. In this context it would not be inappropriate here to quote few couplets of a 20th century great poet of Persian and Urdu language along with their meaning which give the whole world lessons of human values and peaceful coexistence.

### **Couplets**

Har subah uth ke gain mantar woh mithe mithe

Sare pujariyoun ko main peet ki pila dain

Shakti bhi shanti bhi bhakton ke geet mein hai

Dharti ke basiyoun ki mukti preet mein hai (15)

(Each morning when we arise Let us sing the mantras of sweet melodies. And make all pujaries sip the wine of bliss. The bhaktas song contains Shakhty and shanty, power and peace.

And the salvation of humanity lies only in love.)



## Notes & References

1. Paul Jackson, S.J: Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, the hundred letters, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India, 2002, P.1
- 2 A. ibid, P.2
- 2 B. ibid, P.3
3. ibid, P. i
4. ibid, P. vii
5. Father S.J. Paul Jackson was born in Australia in 1937. He came to India in 1960. He has also translated Khwan-e-pur Na'mat (A dining table laden with good things) of Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri in to English.
6. Prof. Saiyad Hasan Askari is the author of preface of the translated version of Maktubaat-e- Sadi under the title "Sharafuddin Maneri, the hundred letters" by Paul Jackson. Prof. Askari was born in Bihar, India in 1901 and obtained higher education from Patna University. He was great Indian scholar of cultural, literary and religious history of India.
7. Paul Jackson, S.J: Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, the hundred letters, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India, 2002, P. viii 8+9. Ibid, P.137
10. Paul Jackson, S.J: Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, the hundred letters, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India, 2002, P. 291
11. Nayeem Nadvi, Maktubaat-e- Sadi, (Vol.I & II

complete), Translated by Syed Shah Najmuddin Ahmad Firdosi and Syed Shah Ilyas Firdosi, Frid book depot, Delhi, 2003, P.445.

12. Ibid, P.450

13. Paul Jackson, S.J: Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, the hundred letters, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India, 2002, P.297 14. Ibid, P.297

15. Iqbal, Kulliyat e Iqbal, Urdu, educational book house, Muslim University, Aligarh, U.P. India, 2001, P.88

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9. AbulFazal, Allami: Aaene Akbari, Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2005.

10. Nabi Hadi: Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts Abhinav Publication, 1995.

11. Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri, Maktubaat-e- Sadi, Nuskha e 'Ahd e musannif, (contemporaneous to the Majhdoom), 'Aksi edition (facsimile edition of 8th century A.H.= 14th century A.D. manuscript), 1995.

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**Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan: A Persian Poet**  
Abdur Rahim Khan-i- Khanan, a soldier, administrator, linguistic and literary personality, all rolled into one was born on 17th December, 1556 at Lahore. He was the worthy son of Bairam Khan-i-Khanan an able administrator, warrior and guardian of Mughal King Akbar. His Mother Raj Gusain, was the younger daughter of the Jamal Khan Mewati. His ancestors were from the Baharlu tribe of the Black Sheep Turkmens at Present this tribe is in Turkmenistan. Baharlu was the name of the principle clan of the 'Black Sheep' or 'Kara Quinlu Turks. His ancestors migrated from Turkmenistan to India. In Indian history, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan usually remembered as an eminent commanders and Subedars of Mughal Period. But he was also a man of letters and one of the greatest patrons of Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, Turkish and Sanskrit poetry. He was a versatile poet, prolific writer, consummate scholar and greatest linguist of his time. Shah Abbas, the monarch of Persia said often about him 'oh I wish I would have this type of the Khan-i-Khanan and Sipahsalar, if I had got one, I would have left to him entire authority & choice in all affairs of suzerainty and would have passed by time in enjoyment and pleasure . Emperor Jahangir himself once paid