

Hadrat Sultan Bahu

Through the mists of legend surrounding the life of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, it is possible to discern the outlines of the following biographical sketch:

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdaad, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in the world of Islaam. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Hanbalii jurist [faqiih], Abuu Sa'd 'Alii al-Mukharrimii, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Abu'l-Khair Hammaad ad-Dabbaas.

Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of 'Iraaq. He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdaad, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society. He moved into the school [madrasa] belonging to his old teacher al-Mukharrimii, but the premises eventually proved inadequate.

In A.H. 528, pious donations were applied to the construction of a residence and guesthouse [ribaat], capable of housing the Shaikh and his large family, as well as providing accommodation for his pupils and space for those who came from far and wide to attend his regular sessions [majaalis].

He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to Revelations of the Unseen.

In the words of Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi: "The venerable 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani passed on to the Realm of Divine Beauty in A.H. 561/1166 C.E., and his blessed mausoleum in Baghdaad is still a place of pious visitation. He is noted for his extraordinary spiritual experiences and exploits, as well as his memorable sayings and wise teachings. It is rightly said of him that 'he was born in love, grew in perfection, and met his Lord in the perfection of love.' May the All-Glorious Lord bring us in contact with his lofty spiritual influence!"

Hadrat Sultan Bahu is one of the most renowned sufi saints of the later

Mughal Period in the history of Indo Pakistan subcontinent. He is often called Sultanul Arifin (the Sultan of gnostics) in the Sufi circles. His ancestors belonging to the tribe of Alvids called Awan and coming from Arabia via Hirat (Afghanistan) had settled in the soon Sakesar Valley of Khushab District in Punjab. His Father, Sultan Bazid, had served in the army of the Emperor Shah Jehan as a high ranking officer and so in recognition to his services he had been awarded a jagir in the shorkot area. The family migrated to the place and settled at Qalai Shorkot, a settlement at the bank of River Chenab (now in District Jhang, Punjab). Hadrat Sultan Bahu was born there, probably in 1628 A.D.

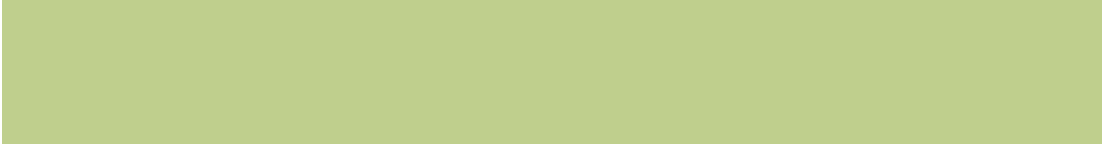
Even in the early childhood, it was perceived by all those around him that a strange light shone upon his face which compelled even the Hindus to utter Kalima Tayyiba (there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger) in his presence. His father died when he was just a child but his mother Bibi Rasti, remained alive till he was forty years old.

His mother supervised his education but it must have been irregular because he was often found under the influence of ecstatic states. It seemed that his education remained informal to the end. Whatever he expressed or wrote after-words, it was in the light of his own spiritual vision and Knowledge.

His mother taught him the essential sufi exercises of dhikr (invocation of Allah and His Names) and he probably needed no more guidance after that. He was initiated to walk the path of Sufis intuitively. His spiritual experiences and vision enriched his mind and spirit with so much knowledge that he far excelled his contemporary Sufi masters and sufi poets in Tasawwuf (Sufism) and Suluk (all about the Sufi Way and its stations and states). In a book he remarks: Though we have little of formal learning, / Yet the spirit has been blessed with holiness by esoteric knowledge. In fact he may be called a born saint.

He got married in his early youth and twice or thrice afterwards and had sons and daughters but all this did not deter him from his dervish wanderings, to visit the sacred places and look for the spiritual company of his fellow sufis.

At the age of thirty he had an extraordinary vision in which he saw Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) through the spiritual recommendations and support of Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. The prophet himself took his bay'ah and allowed him to pass on the Sufi teachings. He often mentions in his books about his presence in the spiritual meetings presided by the Prophet himself. However, in the treatise " Of the Spirit " he calls Hadrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani his Murshid (spiritual director). He is always lavish in the praise of Hadrat Shaikh and calls himself Qadiri. In his eyes the teachings of the Qadiriya order were most effective for the spiritual development of the disciples. But at the same time it is evidently clear that by the Qadiriya order he means the one that he himself represented.



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