

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Khatam Sharif

IN HONOUR OF THE VENERABLE

شیخ سید علی ہمدانی (امیر کبیر)

Shaykh Sayyid Ali Hamadani

[Amir e Zahir]

رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ

O Allah, there is no one to withhold, what You have granted, and no one to give You have withheld, and no one to stop from happening, what You have decreed, and no fortune benefit its owner – all fortune is from You.

(Awrad e Fathiyya)

That which was given...

In this day and age people are obsessed with accumulating or hoarding; be it wealth, items of jewellery or ornaments. Some hoard items which have no value to anyone but to that individual like they are the most valuable possessions in the entire world.

The mere fact that this item is in their possession gives them a sense of satisfaction irrespective of how they came to attain it. People use legal means and others take by force but the goal is the same, this is the way of the world. Mawlana Shaykh Nazim (Q) once explained that the nature of man is to have control over *dunya*. Nonetheless there are those who have unshackled themselves from this basic desire.

They spend their entire lives travelling, seeking and learning from others. And whatever they have acquired through interactions with others, they put to paper and collect in books. Once in written form they disseminate this to the masses so that they may partake in its blessings.

The greatest example of this is the Holy Qur'an. This is the leader of all holy books and was revealed by Sayyiduna Jibrail عليه السلام, to the leader of all, Sayyiduna Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. This was then safe guarded and preserved by the Sahaba and the generations to come after them. They possessed great character and followed it with noble actions in line with the Sunnah of RasulAllah صلى الله عليه وسلم in order for them to transmit this from generation to generation.

In the same way the Awliya Allah have been granted powerful secrets by safeguarding what was transcribed to them by their masters. However to be a bearer of secrets of these spiritual matters, one must have noble character and a great deal of knowledge which can take almost a lifetime to achieve. The Awliya Allah are trained and nurtured for this purpose from birth. It is not just the Awliya that safeguard and protect however but every human being to a certain degree does this role. Each person is given duties and responsibilities according to their threshold. One of the biggest responsibilities each Muslim is given is the duty to safeguard their Imaan (faith), as this is the biggest source of protection for them in this world and the hereafter. For people who are on the spiritual path however they must ensure they keep their faith protected by carrying out certain prayers and supplications which are

granted by the permission of the Shaykh. These special prayers that are given as a safeguarding and are only given to those who are worthy, trusted and able to carry them.

One such great example is Sayyid Ali Hamadani رحمته الله who is popularly known as Amir e Kabir in the Islamic world. He was given the honour to safeguard prayers and supplications which were granted to him by 1400 different masters during his travels around the known Muslim lands.

Early Life

Shaykh Sayyid Ali Hamadani رحمته الله was born in the city of Hamadan, Iran in the year 714 Hijri (1314AD) on the 12th of Rajab. His real name was Sayyid Ali رحمته الله and he was given the Laqab of Amir e Kabir رحمته الله (The Great Commander). Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله father occupied a very high position in the Iranian government as an official and was called Sayyid Shahab-Uddin Muhammad رحمته الله. This era in Iran was known as the Seljuk period and the rulers at the time were Mongols who had accepted Islam a few generations prior. Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله blessed mother was called Sayyidah Fatima رحمته الله and she was a great lady scholar and taught many of the local women in many Islamic sciences. Both Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله parents were from a noble lineage and were descendants from the family of RasulAllah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The household consisted of four sons and two daughters of whom Amir e Kabir رحمته الله was the eldest.

Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله father followed the Kubrawiyya silsala but he did not own a zawiyyah or take on murids as he was busy with his governmental post. The Kubrawiyya silsala is derived from the Suhrawardiyya silsala which is named after Shaykh Abu al-Najib Suhrawardī رحمته الله who was a contemporary of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani رحمته الله. The Kubrawiyya way of life encourages people to work and strive for a living rather than have lengthy daily practices and Awrads. Therefore Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله father would devote a few hours of the day in the morning and evening for spiritual matters.

One of the most influential people in Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله life was his uncle. This was none other than the renowned great Sufi Master Shaykh Ala Dawlah Simnani رحمته الله and he played a major role in Amir e Kabir's رحمته الله development and progress on the spiritual path in his early life. One of the many achievements of Shaykh Ala Dawlah Simnani رحمته الله was to set up an entire settlement called Sufiyabad, which was a village

built around the local madrasa with shops and local business supporting the area. This would help and aid the local people of the town and would also help the local murids and students who were poor. This settlement allowed people to fulfil their needs and also created a just and fair system so everyone would benefit equally and not favour one business more than the other. This is the calibre of the type of people Amir e Kabir رحمته الله would benefit and gain from throughout his life.

Childhood

A person who is to be chosen to safeguard something must show potential to those guiding him and if he shows this potential at a young age then truly he can be entrusted with vast treasures. Shaykh Amir e Kabir رحمته الله showed this potential at a young age. Firstly he became a hafiz e Qur'an and soon after he was taught the Islamic Sciences. However most importantly having seen the great potential in him his uncle, Shaykh Ala Dawlah Simnani رحمته الله, appointed his own Khalifa Shaykh Ali Dosti رحمته الله to also begin spiritual training with Amir e Kabir رحمته الله. During this his mother and uncle kept a careful eye on his progression and assisted where necessary.

After some time Shaykh Ali Dosti رحمته الله passed away while in the presence of Amir e Kabir رحمته الله and he now travelled to be with Shaykh Sharafuddin Mahmud al-Miztiqani رحمته الله whom he had been introduced to by Shaykh Ali Dosti رحمته الله previously.

The other reason for Amir e Kabir رحمته الله to travel and train under Shaykh Sharafuddin Mahmud al-Miztiqani رحمته الله was that when he was 12 years of age he would practise Dhikr with Shaykh Ali Dosti رحمته الله. On one occasion whilst in Dhikr he had a vision of RasulAllah صلی الله علیه وسلم sitting on an elevated place. Young Amir e Kabir رحمته الله became extremely excited by this vision he tried reaching out to RasulAllah صلی الله علیه وسلم but he couldn't reach. Then he heard RasulAllah صلی الله علیه وسلم say to him, 'Go to Shaykh Mahmud Miztiqani رحمته الله, he will bring you here'.

Upon meeting him at the zawiyyah, Shaykh Sharafuddin Mahmud al-Miztiqani رحمته الله first of all treated Amir e Kabir as royalty because of his noble lineage. The reason for this was because Shaykh Sharafuddin رحمته الله was now assessing the progress that Amir e Kabir رحمته الله had made. The following story illustrates why a Shaykh analyses and assess a person in this way.

Once a soldier came to visit Hadrat Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ in Pindi and Hadrat Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ looked at him and gave him salaam. After a short while the soldier invited Hadrat Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ for a meal at his house. Hadrat Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ did not accept his invite; they simply looked at him and remained quiet. One day after asking them again and getting the same response he became annoyed and asked “I don’t understand you, why do you keep looking at me if you’re not going to accept my invitation”. Hadrat Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ replied “When a farmer wants to plant something, he checks the ground first”.

The Awliya Allah assess a person because they have to make sure the soil is good; otherwise what they plant in that soil will be pointless as nothing will be produced. The Awliya only gives to those people who are like fertile land. They will eventually bear crops and benefit themselves along with people around them. If someone is like barren land and full of stones and dry dirt then the awliya will not spend their time and energy training them as this can be better used in finding someone who *will* safeguard and honour what they want to pass on.

Amir e Kabir رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was taken aback by the treatment given to him by Shaykh Sharafuddin رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and his murids and simply said ‘I have only come for you to guide me, don’t treat me with such honour based on my lineage.’ The Shaykh replied ‘Young man know this, if you have come to be served like the noble son from a noble family then we will gladly serve you as such and we will not fail in this task. However, if you have come to follow the spiritual path, then your nobility has no value here. If you want to follow this path then rise and go clean the shoes of that person who has just entered the zawiyyah’.

A person can be proud of his lineage and think because of this he should be treated with respect and entrusted with secrets or treasures simply because of his lineage. So another thing Shaykh Sharafuddin رحمۃ اللہ علیہ were ascertaining was to see if Amir e Kabir رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was such a person.

Sayyiduna Ali رضی اللہ عنہ stated ‘Those people who are proud of their dead ancestors, are proud over their bones, it is like a dog who is proud of the bones he has collected.’

So if a person is truly noble then he should have acquired the noble characteristics and should be a living example for those noble ancestors. Amir e Kabir رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was such a person and he simply did as commanded and continued to clean the shoes of

the people of the zawiyyah alongside being given numerous *awrads* and readings. A year passed by in this role and one day Amir e Kabir رحمته الله asked Shaykh Sharrafuddin رحمته الله “please give me the duty to clean the whole of the zawiyyah.” The Shaykh said, “My son that old man who’s shoes you cleaned has the duty to clean the whole zawiyyah and does it excellently. However I cannot trust you to perform this duty to clean the zawiyyah since you can’t even clean yourself of your ego!” The awliya try to work on this aspect of a person because in order for them to achieve greatness, they must also be free from the clutches of the ego.

Training to achieve excellence

Over time however the Shaykh was pleased by Amir e Kabir’s رحمته الله progress and development and prepared him for the next stages of the spiritual journey which is to strive and struggle even further in order to reach closeness to Allah Almighty. So he can be entrusted with what he is to safeguard. As a result he was ordered to go into seclusion which lasted six years. The seclusion that Amir e Kabir رحمته الله took part in is called *Khalwat*, this is a training the majority of masters go through.

This stage of the training is when the masters assess how well you have been trained by your parents, family and teachers. The Awliya possess great insight and know when a person is ready to carry something, similarly they also know when someone thinks they are ready and needs a subtle reminder that the master knows best not the disciple.

So Amir e Kabir رحمته الله sat in *khalwat* with the permission of Shaykh Sharafuddin رحمته الله. He was to stay in this dark place, which is like a grave without any luxuries of the world. He was given *awrads* and *azkaar* to be read during this *khalwat*. These are to assist in the opening of one’s spiritual experiences. However, before this, a person will look at themselves and all their faults and vices will become clear and any attachment to their ego will be sternly tested. In this process any remaining association Amir e Kabir رحمته الله had about being from nobility, broke.

As a person is going through this process they also become humble since he realises how weak he is and, how many faults he has. There is no one else to blame for his weakness apart from himself. This reflection opens up a new kind of focus

which will allow him to become empty of his ego and truly be open to accepting what will be passed on to him.

The wisdom behind Khalwat can be explained by looking at a certain Japanese tree. This tree is allowed to suffocate and dry out and not given any water so that it starts dying and then it withers and starts to lose its leaves and starts to become yellow. All the signs are there that it is dying until it comes to the point where the tree starts to produce water within itself, it no longer requires to be watered. It is able to regenerate itself.

This is the aim of khalwat. Like the tree, a person is not denying his body all the luxuries and sustenance, but he is denying his ego. The tree has the capacity to regenerate and produce its own water but it doesn't until it is severely tested. Similarly a person in khalwat is not able to let go of their ego until they have also been severely tested.

Mawlana Shaykh Nazim رحمته الله would explain that when Khalwat has been done properly a person will never ever really feel hungry or thirsty as before. This is because, to be thirsty and hungry as a 'normal' person is a sign of weakness. Like the tree becomes self-sufficient, a person will also become self-sufficient and will not be weak for things like food, lust, anger etc. For a person to be capable of safeguarding something they cannot afford to be weak as then they would not be entrusted with anything.

There was a *murid* of Zinda Pir رحمته الله in Birmingham who would work a night shift. He had been given a *wird* which he would pray at the foundry. The night shift foreman was always stopping him and telling him "Come on, stop doing that, get back to the machine!" The murid was doing his job but he was also consistent in his prayer so he would go and pray. The foreman continued to bother him so he then used the *wird* against his foreman and subsequently the foreman became ill. The very next day Zinda Pir رحمته الله came to him in a dream and said, "*Khuda ki makhlook ko tang karta hai?* you are making Allah's creation suffer?! Give it (the *wird*) back!" and so he was no longer able to read the *wird*.

This shows that a person can be overtaken by his ego unless he is fully ready to be given something to safeguard.

Safeguarding that which has been given to you

So once a person has been put through all these trials and tribulations they are finally ready to be entrusted with something. However it must be noted that all the experiences faced so far by the person will be part of that which they will safeguard and pass on. A person's character has now developed immensely to pick up traits which had not existed prior to their training.

The best example of this is the *al-Khulafa' u ar-Rashidun*. They all ruled as khalifa for different periods after the passing of RasulAllah ﷺ. Prior to this they all spent an immense amount of time with RasulAllah ﷺ. This time was not spent needlessly since every moment they were learning, experiencing, training from the Greatest in Creation ﷺ. As a result of this the Prophet ﷺ helped them to build their character so well and entrusted them with such secrets that even after their demise their actions would be included as if RasulAllah ﷺ had done them. It is now considered that any action taken by these four Khalifas and Imam Hassan ؓ would be considered a Sunnah. This is because everything they learned from or experienced with RasulAllah ﷺ they safeguarded, implemented and passed on. They did this so well and so precisely that it is like RasulAllah ﷺ themselves were the ones who were still alive and watching over the Muslims.

This is what the awliya try and emulate when they take a murid and asses his potential, train him and then pass on and entrust him with that which he will be expected to safeguard.

However even after an Awliya does grant his murid something he will not leave them to his own devices but will constantly orchestrate trials and tribulations for that person to examine whether they will safeguard what has been given to them or whether they will abuse that trust.

The following story by Sayyid Idris Shah illustrates this point.

A man was claiming in public that if he was the khalifa of a certain Muslim land; he would rule it better than the current one. He was saying "If I was Khalifa I would put so many things right. I would sort out the roads; I would lower the crime rate. This Khalifa is not doing a good job!"

So this Khalifa heard the man's claims and felt in his heart, maybe this man is right. He then rushed back home and talked to his advisors pacing up and down in his court yard then suddenly said "This person in the market shall we give him a chance?" The advisor remarked, "Your majesty, people have big mouths they talk all the time! They can't be trusted with the responsibility; they don't understand what you do!" The Khalifa said, "Well we won't know until we give him a chance, how can we judge him before he has been put in that position?"

Going against the advisors suggestion the king went ahead and devised a plan to drug this man from the market place. He then got his men to place him in the king's bed. The man suddenly wakes up and he sees everyone treating him as the acting ruler. At first he is puzzled but then he is overjoyed by this and so he decides to host parties, spend money on lavish clothes and buy materialistic goods. Not a single act of his was done for the benefit of people. The real king observing him then remarks to his advisor "This one is a waste of time. Drug him again and take him back to the market place where you found him!" So the man was drugged and placed back where he was found. Moments later when he wakes up he looks around in disbelief and exclaims "I was the king! Why am I here?" People just walk right past him ignoring him. He then convinces himself it was just a dream and goes about his daily routine never claiming to be a better king. So the awliya will always have the ability to see whether a person can be entrusted with what they have been given and as soon as they show they are not worthy of it, it will be taken away from them. They may do this by giving someone a taste of power and responsibility in order to see how they use it. This then determines whether that person is worth giving more to safeguard or if that is all he can carry. Sometimes whatever is given may also be taken away if a person shows themselves to be incapable.

Kashmir

Shortly after their seclusion Amir e Kabir ﷺ was advised to travel. This was done in order to reach people that were unable to come to them so they could spread their teaching and knowledge which they had gained. At this point they were a master and had murids that would always accompany them.

Their journey to Kashmir was on the order of RasulAllah ﷺ. RasulAllah ﷺ had said ' Go my son, go to Kashmir and bring those people to Islam'. Although there were a few Muslims already present in the area, they did not abide by the Sharia and had lost the true teachings of Islam. The ruler of Kashmir at the time was called Ala Uddin who had foreseen in a dream that the sun had risen from the west. This dream occurred a number of times. So out of curiosity he had the dream interpreted by a Buddhist monk who said “from my knowledge this dream indicates that a man will come from central Asia and he will convert you to the religion of Islam.”

Shaykh Amir e Kabirs ﷺ journeys were gruelling and in areas where no man had been for centuries. He had many encounters with Jinn's and other creatures from different realms as they had begun to occupy these mountainous areas. When Amir e Kabir travelled towards Kashmir in India, one of the very first places he visited was the blessed footprint of Prophet Adam ﷺ in Sarandeeep. On the way there he came across a python which was in his path of travel, he was unarmed at this point and had no weapon or stick but he stood firm and just stared at the snake which caused it to burst. This shows the spiritual advancement of Amir e Kabir ﷺ where no creature was allowed to harm him.

Before Amir e Kabir ventured into the actual Kashmir region he sent his khalifa Sayyid Hassan Simnani ﷺ to scout the area and to learn of all their customs and practices and report this information back to him. At this point Amir e Kabir ﷺ had travelled throughout many Muslim lands already and through his training and experiences knew that this was a good way to know what to expect before his arrival. Sayyid Hassan ﷺ was a very knowledgeable and charismatic murid who had learned and adopted his masters teaching so well that he was able to turn the king into a murid of Shaykh Amir e Kabir ﷺ. So when it was time for Amir e Kabir ﷺ to arrive in Kashmir, a royal invite was sent from the ruler which automatically

made the people draw closer to him. Each place where he stopped and addressed the people in the area became captivated by the Shaykh.

When Amir e Kabir رحمته الله had reached Kashmir he had learned from Sayyid Hassan رحمته الله that this area was very advanced in spiritual practices as the area contained numerous Hindus and Buddhists who were already familiar with the vices of the ego and carnal desires, however they were weak in the practical aspects of controlling the ego. Sayyid Hassan رحمته الله also made him aware that the area lacked people of skilled professions and trade. Therefore before Amir e Kabir travelled to Kashmir he gathered together some of his most skilled murids in architecture, carpentry, weaving and other skills to teach these people in order for them to become self sufficient. This is how he won the hearts of the people in this area and therefore the people accepted Islam through him. He showed them how to live a life of spirituality along with the practical skills required to survive. Everything that he had learned he used for the benefit of these people and in turn they not only accepted Islam but became his devout followers.

Final Destination

Amir e Kabir رحمته الله had migrated from Hamadan to Khatlan Kulaab in Tajikistan. He travelled to Kashmir on three occasions altogether and would stay there for long periods. On his final travels to the area he was about 71 years old and he had made an intention to perform Hajj again. At this point he had performed 14 Hajj already but expressed this wish to his murids. He set off on this journey and had reached an area called Pakhli. While crossing this area the ruler of the time expressed great pleasure in hosting the dear Shaykh to which he did not refuse. During his stay with the ruler many people came to visit and seek help from him. Due to these circumstances he was unable to continue with the journey for Hajj as the month Dhul Hajj had begun. After his dealings with people he underwent Khalwat again and would associate very little with people and increased his supplications.

He began to fall ill and would not eat or drink much because of it and on the 6th of Dhul Hajj he gathered his murids and gave them what seemed to be a farewell speech. That same night he welcomed the angel of death and left this world. He was neither in Hamadan nor in Khatlan. This had lead to a dispute amongst his followers to where he should be buried as people from all three areas were trying to bury the

Shaykh in their own respected land. During this dispute a senior murid received inspiration and informed the people to group together from their respected areas and try to attempt to carry the body of the Shaykh. Whichever area was successful in doing so will be granted the honour of burying the Shaykh in that area. People from all three areas tried to lift the body of the Shaykh but only the people of Khatlan were successful in doing this and therefore it was decided that they take the body back to their home. During this journey people reported that a beautiful fragrance emitted from the Shaykh's body constantly despite the fact the journey took 6 months back to Khatlan.

A khanaqah was built in the local area while the Shaykh was still alive along with a Madrasa. He himself chose where he would want to be buried within his lifetime and this explains the inspiration which had occurred with his murid when Amir e Kabir رحمته الله had passed away. This is because the awliya don't truly die but transcend death and become more powerful as they can still communicate with people after their physical departure from this world.

Legacy

Amir e Kabir رحمته الله was not just a Sufi master but also a scholar too as it was seen in his childhood and in his strict practices of the Shari'a Law throughout his lifetime. He had written many books ranging from Islamic jurisprudence to herbal medicine; the number is roughly estimated to be around 170 books.

As well as these many works and compilations which he had compiled and written the prize possession of Amir e Kabir رحمته الله was collecting and compiling the Awwad e Fathiyya. He was given this as mentioned earlier by 1400 different masters while on his travels to and from different areas of the world. They all saw he had great potential and bestowed him with these powerful litanies which he then compiled. Some people would consider themselves lucky if they inherited one quality or something from a single master but to inherit from 1400 different awliya shows the capacity and rank of Amir e Kabir رحمته الله. Each of those masters will have their own chain which is linking back to RasulAllah صلى الله عليه وسلم. So by reciting Awwad e Fathiyya the person reading is not just accessing RasulAllah صلى الله عليه وسلم through Amir e Kabir but

through each one of those masters that passed a certain part of this great *awrad* on to Amir e Kabir رحمته الله. Each one of the couplets of the *awrad* is like a *wird* on its own.

Added to this his influence on Kashmir and the way in which he spread Islam is one of his greatest legacies. He assisted the people in their *dunya* by providing them with the necessary skills to become self-reliant and he assisted their *akhirah* by making them his *murids*. He brought peace and spirituality to the people of Kashmir and shaped the culture of this land for the better and in such a way that it has never been the same ever since. This is what he has passed on and which has been safeguarded by that area to this day.

In order for knowledge and litanies to be transmitted a person has to have noble characteristic in line with the *Sunnah* and this is what Amir e Kabir رحمته الله possessed in abundance. This is the key that the *Awliya Allah* tries to look for in a seeker. One can possess a degree of some knowledge but without the adopting of prophetic characteristics they will be stuck and therefore it will hinder their spiritual development. There is a saying of the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which states that during the time of *Rasul Allah* صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم if the companions were to *leave* one tenth of what is an obligation then they would be ruined. However they then said there will also be a time in the their *Ummah*, whereby if the people carry out *only* one tenth of the obligatory actions then those people will still be absolved.

It is with this hope that we should try to safeguard one characteristic, one good habit or even a small *wird*. If we are steadfast upon even the smallest of good deeds/actions, then we hope to be of those who are absolved.

Al-Fatiha.