

Sayyidna Nasir'e Khusraw's Sabaq for Haj Zaireen

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Abstract: Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw occupies a distinguished place in the intellectual history of Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili thought and Persian literature. Writing during the final phase of the Fatimi Empire, he emerged as one of the most important Du'at to articulate Fatimi Ismaili doctrine in the Persian language. A poet, philosopher, traveler, and Hujjah, Nasir'e Khusraw combined mastery of the exoteric and esoteric sciences with a refined literary sensibility. Having turned away from the Seljuq environment and devoted himself to the Fatimi Imams, he spent the remainder of his life in the service of the Daw'ah, producing works of enduring religious, philosophical, and literary significance. This study examines his treatment of Hajj, particularly his esoteric interpretation of its rites, as reflected in his poetic discourse. For Nasir'e Khusraw, every ritual act of Hajj possesses both Zahir and Batini dimensions, each bearing physical as well as spiritual meaning. Ihr'am signifies detachment from all but Rabb; the Talbiyah evokes the intimate dialogue between the Creator and the devotee; sacrifice symbolizes the slaying of the lower self; Taw'af recalls the circumambulation of the divine Throne by the Malaek; Sa'y teaches purity and virtue; and the Zair's departure from Makkah mirrors the soul's return to the trials of worldly life. Through this symbolic reading, Nasir'e Khusraw insists that pilgrimage without Marifah remains an empty ceremonial performance. His well-known poem on Hajj dramatizes this argument by contrasting outward completion of the rites with inward ignorance of their deeper truths. The poem thus serves as both Hikmah and Waz, offering ethical admonition and spiritual instruction. Ultimately, Nasir'e Khusraw's interpretation of Hajj demonstrates his broader commitment to harmonizing Zahir and Tawil and confirms his lasting contribution to Islamic thought, Fatimi Ismaili theology, and Persian devotional literature.

Keywords: Nasir'e Khusraw; Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili thought; Persian literature; Hajj; Tawil; Zahir; Marifah; Dawah; esoteric interpretation

Introduction of the author of the poem:

Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw is an important intellectual Da'i who played a significant role in the development of Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili ideology in Persian language during the final phase of the Fatimi Empire. His poetry and prose both are valuable assets of Persian Literature. He was highly educated and had exemplary command over various branches of science. He left Seljuq for Fatimi Imams and spent the remaining period as their devoted Da'i. He created several master pieces of devotional literature dealing with esoteric sciences. The Da'i provided an esoteric interpretation of the Haj and guided on how to perform it in all Miq'at; for him, each ritual of the Haj has a Zahiri as well as Batini connotation and a physical as well as spiritual significance which is necessary to know. The philosophical Da'i expressed sorrow on the Haji who admits that he performed Haj without comprehending the Ma'arif.

History will always remember the meticulous contribution to the Sciences of Islam by Sayyiduna Hibatullah al-Muayyad al-Shirazi (d.470/1078 Al Qahirah, Misr) and his peerless student, Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw (d.481, A.H. Yamgan). The mentor and the disciple both have left a vast collection of divine wisdom for the benefit of the coming generations. After the demise of Sayyiduna Al Muayyad al-Shirazi, Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw's star of fortune glowed brightly as he achieved the highest position in the Shia Fatimi Ismaili Daw'ah hierarchy. Sayyiduna Al Muayyad spoke of his own rank in the following words:

Law kuntu 'aşirtu Nabiyyanā Muḥammadan,
mā kuntu aqşara 'an madā Salmānih.

If I had been present in the era of the Nabi Muhammad,
I would not have smaller than Salman in position.

Likewise, his pupil, Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw indicated his own standing as follows:

Mar mī-rā ān nihā dādand ke Salmān-rā;
nīstam man chu Sulaymān ke chu Salmānam.

They bestowed upon me the same hidden grace that was granted to Salman;
I may not be a Sulayman in majesty, but I am in no way beneath Salman.

Sayyiduna Nasir'e Khusraw held command and power over two Jazair simultaneously, viz Khurasan and Badakhshan, and was known as the "Ruby of Badakhshan." Bulkh was his hometown. He also looked after the affairs of Daw'ah in the Central Asian region at large. Originality, a thirst for learning, sincerity, unshakeable faith, fearlessness, contempt for time servers and flatterers, and courage hardly to be found in any other Persian poet - all of these can be used to describe Sayyiduna Nasir'e Khusraw, one of the leading dignitaries of the Fatemi Court during the era of the 18th Fatimi Imam al-Mustansir (d.487/1094, Al Qahirah, Misr). "Diw'an Nasir'e Khusraw" consists of thirty thousand verses and is a collection of the words of Hikmah (divine wisdom). He was highly knowledgeable not only in the various branches of Islamic Sciences (which were a necessity for a gentleman of a noble family during that period of

time) but also had excellent command over esoteric sciences. Nasir'e Khusraw was, as he repeatedly tells in his verses, highly respected for his command over numerous languages. This mastery is evident in his "Diw'an". Nasir'e Khusraw did not write prose and poetry in praise of monarchs, or verses to gain worldly rewards; rather, his wordings teach us the importance of Hikmah – of the right word and faith. Nasir's Diw'an is a treasure of Hikmah, even though one often feels sorry for the great intellectual who had no one to share his superior thoughts with.

The "Ruby of Badakhshan", Nasir alludes to Tawil in scattered verses in his Diw'an, on numerous Aqa'id of Islam. We find in his poetic collection a beautiful poem on the topic of Haj. Like all divine doctors, Sayyiduna Nasir'e Khusraw laid great stress on the significance of balancing the Zahir and Batin. This is evident in his writing, and readers have endorsed that he expresses Muaml'at of life in such a manner that one can understand the difference in attitude of a Mumin and Munafiq.

The Da'i has composed the following poem on the topic of Haj. He leads his readers slowly into the secrets of spiritual Haj: When one puts on the Ihr'am, the garment made of two white unstitched pieces of fabric, one should prohibit for himself everything, except the thought of Allah. The Call of the Haj, Labbayka, should remind of the meeting between Allah and His devotee - that is the mysterious dialogue of love. The slaughtering of the sacrificial lamb in memory of Nabi Ibrahim's sacrifice - in Nasir's interpretation - the slaughtering of the Nafs, the lower soul, the overcoming of one's worldly lusts. Maqam'e Ibrahim (as) should remind the Za'ir of the supreme surrender, which Nabi Ibrahim (as) performed by willingly agreeing to sacrifice his son.

Only by following his example one can be called a true Muslim. The seven Tawaf (circles) around Kabah should bring to the Zair's mind how hosts of Malaek constantly offer Taw'af of the Arsh'e 'ilahi, while the Saa'e (effort) should free the heart from every thought of the other world, and teach Safa (purity) and Marwa (true virtue). Finally, the farewell from Makkah should be like death because it symbolizes return from the Haj to the deserts and jungles of daily life. Unless one has understood these inner aspects of the rites, it only becomes a ceremonial act. Dr. Alice C. Hansberger, the celebrated writer of "Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan" has also translated the following poem.

Prof. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel, renowned German Scholar of Oriental Studies has penned down only the four beginning verses of the following poem of Sayyiduna Nasir'e Khusraw, while I have tried to translate the remaining which is as follows:

The Za'ir returned with reverence;
He was thankful to the Merciful Allah.

On his way to Makkah from Arafah, he repeatedly said;
Labbayka with great respect.

Although tired of experiencing the hardships of Hijaz;
They rejoiced that they are saved from the torture of fire.

*He has performed the Haj and completed the Umrah;
Now, he safely returns to his homeland.*

*I took time to go and welcome him back;
Even though a person of my rank did not normally do this.*

*However, among the crowd of this caravan;
I had a dear and very sincere friend.*

*I asked him how he accomplished;
This very difficult trip.*

*I informed him that since he had departed and left me alone;
All I could feel was regret and sadness.*

*Congratulations, I am happy that you performed the Haj;
And you are the only Haji in our province.*

*Now, tell me, how was your performance?
How did you respect those Mashhahid?*

*When you were removing your clothes and wearing the Ihr'am;
What was your intention during those exciting moments?*

*Did you absolutely avoid all the things which are prohibited?
And whatever is inferior to Allah? He replied: No!*

*I asked him: If he said Labbayka;
With complete understanding and respect?*

*If he heard the command of Allah?
Or, if he obeyed as Ibrahim did? He replied: No!*

*I asked him, while he was in Arafah;
While he stood so close to Allah.*

*Did he have a chance to know Him?
Was he not eager to attain Knowledge? He replied, No!*

*I asked him: When he entered the Kabah;
Did he deny his self-centeredness?*

*Did he fear the punishment of the Hereafter?
He replied: No!*

*I asked him: When he hit three Shait'an with stones;
Did he think to avoid wrong deeds? He replied: No!*

*I asked him: When he offered the sacrifice;
To feed a hungry person or an orphan.*

*Did he first think of Allah?
And, did he then kill his selfishness? He replied: No!*

*I asked him when he stood in Maq'am Ibrahim.
Did he rely absolutely on Allah? He replied: No!*

*I asked him: When he made the Taw'af of Kabah;
Was he reminded constantly of the circumambulation of Malaek? He replied: No!*

*I asked him: During his Saa'e; between Safa and Marwa,
Was he sanctified and purified? He replied: No!*

*I asked him, now at the time of departure from Kabah;
Did he bury his Nafs there? He replied: No!*

*"Of whatever you have asked me so far;
I have understood nothing!"*

*I said: Friend, you have not performed the Haj!
And, you have not obeyed Allah!*

*You went to Makkah and visited the Kabah!
You spent your money to buy the hardships of the desert!*

*If you do decide to go to Haj again;
Try to perform Haj as I have instructed you!*

The above poetry is a reflection of Hikmah and Muaizah. The intellect of the great Da'i is widely acknowledged in both the areas of poetry and philosophical prose by the people of East and West. Today, due attention is finally paid to the contribution and legacy of Nasir Khusraw. Central Asian scholars and Orientals both have and continue to study the philosophical themes in his poetic collection which reflects Persian and Islamic thought.

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- iv). *Hujjah Jazirah Khurasan & Badakhshan*, Sayyiduna Abu Muin Hamiduddin Nasir'e Khusraw, a prince among the galaxy of scholars was highly inspired by the Talim of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Imam, so he had composed the above episode in Persian poem which is available in his Diw'an.

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