

HAFIZ SHIRAZI AND BENGAL

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After Sa'di, the great moralist, Shiraz produced another literary genius in the person of Shams al-Din Muhammad better known as Hafiz. Hafiz Shirazi was a great personality of his time in the realm of Persian poetry. His verses are marked with freshness of thought, simplicity of diction, sweetness of language and beautiful ideas. His name and fame spread beyond the border of Iran and, as a result, he was introduced to the European world also through the translation of his Persian Ghazals. The historians are of the opinion that he was invited by different rulers of the Muslim world. His contemporary Sultan of Bengal, Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah (792-812/1389-1409)¹⁰ was also among those who appreciated his sweet and sonorous Persian verses. He was son of Sikandar Shah, an independent Sultan of Ilyas Shahi Dynasty of Bengal. He was not only a great lover of art and Persian Literature but also a patron of poets and scholars.

The circumstances leading to the correspondence of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah with Hafiz Shirazi are as follows:

“Once the king fell dangerously ill and his recovery from his ailment was very slow in spite of the best efforts of his court physicians. In despair, he desired that he should be bathed by his three favorite concubines, Sarv, Gul and Lala. Fortunately, it so happened that as a result of the bath the king actually recovered. Naturally enough, he began to love the slave girls more than he did ever before. At this, the ladies of the ‘Harem’ and the other concubines of the king grew jealous of the oforesaid three concubines and began to taunt them as ‘Ghassalah’ (the bath-women of the king). When the king heard of this taunting remark, he composed extempore and recited the

¹⁰. J.N. Sarkar (Ed.) History of Bengal, Vol. II (Dhaka University, 1972), p. 116. Ghulam Hussain Salim has wrongly mentioned that Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah ascended the throne in 768/1366-67 (Riyad al-Salatin, Calcutta, 1898), pp-105-106.

². Islamic Culture: Hyderabad Decan, Jan., 1953, pp. 15-16. In Prof. Mahfuz al-Haq's opinion the story is untrue, but the main fact of correspondence is probable. He points out the inaccuracy in the current translation. (Riyad al-Salatin, pp. 105-106, quoted in History of Bengal, op. cit., p. 117)

Tarikh-i-Al-i-Jalayer ff (Tehran University, Iran 1345 Shamsi), p.387

following hemistich: ساقیِ حدیثِ سرو و گل و لاله میروود O cup--bearer! there goes the talk of the Cypress, the Rose, and the Tulip). But when he tried to complete the couplet he failed. He, then, ordered his court poets to complete the verse. It so happened that they too did not succeed to his satisfaction. He, thereupon, sent his envoy with rich presents to Hafiz, the illustrious contemporary poet of Shiraz and invited him to come to his court and supply the second homistich. Hafiz, however, did not come to ‘Sunargaon’, but sent a ‘ghazal’ of which the opening verse contained the above homistich as its first part to which he added the following homistich as the second part.

وین بحث با ثلاثه غساله میروود

‘And this discussion concerns the three bath-women’.

The poet intuitively referred to the three flowers as “Thalatha-i Ghassala” (the three bath-women). This versified reply of Hafiz that miraculously enough echoed a real incident of which he was unaware, is considered by some as showing the spiritual attainment of the immortal mystic poet of Shiraz”¹¹.

To ascertain the truth about the story that Sultan Ghiyath al-Din had three good looking maids in his ‘Karam’ called سرو (Sarv), گل (Gul) and لاله (Lalah) is surely the function of a historian but the correspondence between Hafiz and the Sultan of Bengal is accepted as a strong probability by many well informed persons. The main object of this paper is to examine the authenticity of the statement of the author of ‘Riyad al-Salatin’ in the light of controversies among¹² the historians and scholars of Persian Literature whether Ghiyath al-Din A’zam Shah referred to in the couplet of Hafiz Shirazi, was actually the King of Bengal or a King or a Prince of Kirman bearing the same name.

Maulana Shibli Nu’mani, an eminent historian and critic of Persian poetry, writes:

¹² Shibli Na’mani Shir Ul-’Ajam, Vol.’ II (Taj Book Depot, Urdu Bazar, Lahore), p. 166. The date of succession is incorrect.

¹³ سلطان غیاث الدین بن سلطان سکندر، فرمان روئے بنگلہ نے بھی حو ۷۶۸ھ میں تخت نشین ہوا تھا، خواجہ [حافظ] صاحب کے کلام سے مستفید ہونا چاہا، چنانچہ طرح کا یہ مصرع بھیجا

“ساقی حدیثِ سرووگل ولالہ میرود”
خواجہ صاحب نے یہ غزل لکھ کر بھیجی

(Sultan Ghiyath al-Din son of Sultan Sikandar, the King of Bengal who ascended the throne in 768 A.H., also wanted to enjoy and derive benefit from the poetry of Khwaja Sahib (Khwaja Hafiz). He, therefore, sent this verse ‘Saqi hadith-i Sarv-e-Gul-e Lala mirawad’ as a model and in reply to that Khwaja Hafiz composed and sent him this (‘ghazal’).

E.G. Browne, more or less, has accepted the views expressed by Maulana Shibli. He writes:

“Another Indian King, Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Ibn Sultan Sikandar of Bengal, stated by Shibli Nu’rmani (who is responsible for the story) to have ascended the throne in 768/1366, is said to have corresponded with Hafiz who wrote for him the ode beginning:

ساقی حدیثِ سرووگل ولالہ میرود
دین بحث با ثلاثہ غسالہ میرود¹⁴

(O cup-bearer! there is a talk about the Cypress, the Rose and the Tulip,

And this discussion is going on among the three washer-maids

(as to who is the most charming).

M.A.Ghani, in his book ‘A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court’, has also remarked that “Hafiz readily complied with his (Ghiyath al-Din’s) request and sent him the ode which not only was much appreciated by the Sultan but also considered as revelation. The lines bearing on the subject are as follows:

ساقی حدیثِ سرووگل ولالہ میرود
شکر شکن شوند ہمہ طوطیانِ ہند
دین بحث با ثلاثہ غسالہ میرود
زین قند پارسى کہ بنگالہ میرود

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A Literary History of Persia, Vol. III (Cambridge University Press), pp. 268-7

کین طفگ یکشبه ره یک ساله میرود

طیبی مکان به بین وزمان درسلوک شعر

خامش مشوکہ کار تو از ناله میرود¹⁵

حافظ زشوق مجلس سلطان غیاث دین

(O cup-bearer! there is a talk about the Cypress, the Rose and the Tulip;

And this discussion is going on among the three washer-maids

(as to who is the most charming.)

All the parrots (poets) of India will become sweet-tongued,

By virtue of this melodious Persian ode (Hafiz's ghazal) which is being sent to Bengal.

Behold; how fast travels poetry annihilating space and time,

That this infant, though but one-night old, is undertaking a year's journey.

O Hafiz! in the desire of (visiting) the court of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din

Be not silent, for your desire will be fulfilled by your lamentations and wailings.

Captain Charles Stewart in his 'History'¹⁶ of Bengal' and Dr. Zahur al-Ding¹⁷ Ahmad in his book entitled 'Persian Literature in Pakistan' have also reproduced similar views.

Now it may be accepted as a historical fact that Hafiz of Shiraz did really send the ode under discussion to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din of Bengal. We find in history some references regarding invitations extended to Khwaja Hafiz 9 by Mahmud Shah Bahmani (780-799/1378-1396) of Deccan¹⁸ and Sultan Ahmad Ibn-i-Uwys (784-813/1382-1410) of Baghdad.¹⁹ But due to his

¹⁵ M.A. Ghani A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court, Part-I (The Indian Press Ltd.,Allahabad,1929), pp.141-142.

¹⁶ Captain Charles Stewart: History. of Bengal (Calcutta, 1813), pp. 92-93

¹⁷ Zuhur al-Din Farsi Adab Pakistan Mein (Persian Literature in Pakistan), Vol. I, University Book Agency, Lahore, 1964, p. 610

¹⁸ E.G. Browne. op. cit. p.287 (Fn. I)

¹⁹ (i) Ibid.

sentimental attachment to Shiraz he could not accept the royal invitation as he himself observes:

نمی و بند اجازت مرا به سیروسفر
نسیم باد مصلی و آبِ رگنا باد

(The exhilarating breeze of ‘Musalla’ and singing rivulet of ‘Ruknabad’ do not permit me to wander far away from them.)

On the other hand, Qasim Ghani, a renowned Iranian scholar and specialist on Hafiz, has ruled out the theory of Shibli and other aforesaid writers. His arguments are based on the following facts:

(1) The name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din in the couplet of Hafiz actually refers to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad bin Sultan Imad al-Din Ahmed of Muzaffarid Dynasty. The word Sultan is the part of the name of Ghiyath al-Din and not his title as it was a custom during the reign of Muzaffarid Dynasty.

(2) While referring to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din as one of the kings of India in the couplet of Hafiz, Shibli Nu'mani could not quote any authority to support his contention. It is believed that Shibli was misguided by the following couplet of Hafiz:

شکر شکن شومد طوطیانِ بند
زین قند پارسی که به بنگاله میرود

(All the parrots (poets) of India will become sweet-tongued, by virtue of this melodious Persian Ode which is being sent to Bengal.)

(3) E.G. Browne has also quoted this story in his ‘Literary History of Persia’ on the authority of Shibli but no reference to this is found anywhere.²⁰

(ii) Shirin Bayani p. 284

²⁰ Qasim Ghani

Late Pir Husam al-Din Rashidi has added a few more points in support of Qasim Ghani's statement, He says:

(4) Sultan Ghiyath al-Din of Bengal ascended the throne in the year 792/1389, whereas Hafiz Shirazi expired in the year 791/1388. Under the circumstances there is no probability that Hafiz might have sent his ode to the Sultan of Bengal.

(5) The name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din does not appear in any manuscript of 'Raudat al-Salatin' except in one which is found in Leningrad²¹.

(6) On the basis of an article written by Dr. M.A. Ghafur, Professor, Department of Arabic & Persian, University of Chittagong, Pir Husam al-Din Rashidi expresses far-fetched meaning that the word 'Bangala' in the ode of Hafiz refers to trade relation that existed between Persia and India and that the Sugar-Candy referred to in the verse actually means 'Sugar' which was one of the main commodities of trade.²²

خواجہ حافظ غزل مزبوراً بمناسبت سلطان غیاث الدین محمد بن سلطان غیاث الدین محمد بن سلطان عمادالدین احمد سروده است و کلمه، "سلطان" جزو اسم او [سلطان غیاث الدین محمد] است کہ در زمان آن مظفر شائع بوده و بسیاری از شاپزادگان این خانواده کلمه "سلطان" ضمیمه اسم آنها بوده است۔
شبلی نعمانی و از قول او آنجہانی 'او وارد بدن' نوشته اند کہ مقصود از این "سلطان غیاث الدین" مذکور در غزل خواجہ حافظ یکی از ملوک ہند است۔ شہلی نعمانی ہیچ ماخذی بدست نمی وحدو تصور می رود کہ اشتباہ او ناشتی از این بیت باشد کہ:

شکر شکن شوند ہمہ طوطیان ہند
زین قندِ پارسی کہ بہ بنگالہ می رود

آنجہانی' او اوروبرون' باکمال احتیاط و بامسئولیت خود شبلی این قصہ را نقل میکند زیرا در ہیچ جائی دیگر صحبتی از این موضوع نیست۔

²¹ Pir Husam al-Din Rashidi (Ed.): Raudat al-Salatin by Sultan Muhammad Fakhri, Karachi, 1961, Appendix, p. 373 (Quoted in Iqbal Review, Jan. 1969, pp. 98-110)

²² Pars (Quarterly journal), Karachi. Oct. 1967, p. 27 .

Now I would like to examine critically the views expressed by Qasim Ghani and his advocates in the light of recent researches and documentary evidences:

(1) Hafiz Shirazi has mentioned in his poetry the names of Shah Shuja, Imad al-Din Ahmed, Nusrat al-Din, Shah Yahya and Shah Mansur from among the rulers of Muzaffarid Dynasty.²³ These king ruled in 'Pars, Kirman, Yazd and Isphahan' respectively and were surely in a position to patronise the poet. But there had been no king in Muzaffarid Dynasty by the name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din as mentioned by Shibli,²⁴ Browne,²⁵ C.E. Bosworth²⁶ 'Muhammad Lane-poole,²⁷ Dr. Shirin Bayani²⁸ and Encyclopedia²⁹ of Islam. So the question of his patronage to Hafiz does not arise.

(2) The name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din has been mentioned only once in Diwan-i-Hafiz. So it may, of certain, he referred to the king of Bengal. Had it any reference to the prince of Kirman whose name was Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad, it might have been, as a matter of fact, mentioned in the verses of Hafiz, more than once.

(3) Whether during the rule of Imad al-Din Ahmad his son Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad had attained such an age, literary ability and poetical understanding that he could appreciate the gazals of Hafiz and patronize him, is a matter of doubt.

(4) Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad was neither a famous political figure nor a literary personality of the Muzaffarid period and as such no historian has, at all, attached any importance to him.

²³ (i) Shibli Nu'mani

(ii) Shirin Bayani op.cit, pp.162-64, 169 and 171. op. cit., p.386.

حافظ که در دربار مظفریان می زیست و اشعار خود ابتداً ابو اسحق اینجوسیس شاه شجاع، شاه منصور و شاه

مظفر را مدح گفته است-

²⁴ Shibli Nu'mani op cit., pp.162-171

²⁵ E.G. Browne op. cit., 161-170

²⁶ C.E. Bosworth The Islamic Dynasties, Vol. V (University Press, Edinburgh, 1967), p.161

²⁷ Lane Poole The Muhammadan Dynasties (Fredrick Unger Publishing Co., New York, 1965). pp. 249-250

²⁸ Shirin Bayani op. cit., pp. 385-387.

²⁹ Encyclopaedia of Islam, pp. 798-800.

(5) Dr. Qasim Ghani has failed to cite an example from any authentic source that the word Sultan was used, in general or particular cases, for the princes during the time of the Muzaffarid Dynasty.

(6) With the reign of Imad al-Din Ahmad (father of Prince Ghiyath al-Din) the Muzaffarid Dynasty came to an end (in 795/1393) and all the princes belonging to this dynasty were killed by Timur,³⁰ so the question of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad of this house ruling over Kirman and his relation with Hafiz can not be accepted.

(7) Even though the particular verse in the name of Ghiyath al-Din used by Hafiz is missing in the manuscripts of 'Raudat al-Salatin' other than the one preserved . in Leningrad, the words 'Hind (ہند) and 'Bangala' (بنگالہ) in another verse of the same ode in the same manuscript do indicate the fact that this ode was composed for Sultan Ghiyath al-Din of Bengal.

(8) The mention of the names of three beautiful girls namely Sarv (سرو) Gul (گل) and Lala (لالہ) in the 'harm' of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din by the author of 'Riyad. al-Salatin" also proves the fact that this ode was composed for Sultan Ghiyath al-Din of Bengal.

(9) Admitted that Shibli could not quote any authority while referring to the name of the Sultan of Bengal, similar is the case with Qasim Ghani. He also fails to cite any authentic source in support of his arguments. Moreover, he does not give any satisfactory explanation as to why Hafiz has used the word (ہند) (Hind) and (بنگالہ) (Bangala) in his couplet addressed to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad of Kirman (Iran).

(10) Apart from Shibli and Browne, we find the name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din (of Bengal), to whom Hafiz has made a reference in his couplet, in 'Riyad al-Salatin' and 'History of Bengal' of Ghulam Hussain Salim and Captain Charles Stewart respectively. It may be noted here that these two works were compiled in 1788 A.D. and 1813 A.D. long before Shibli's ' Shi'r

³⁰ E.G. Browne op. cit, p. 169.

al-Ajam', and Qasim Ghani is not correct in saying that Shibli was the first author to point out the above fact.

(11) There have been discrepancies regarding the exact year in which Hafiz died. The contemporary and near-contemporary biographers and chroniclers of Hafiz such as Abdur Rahman Jami,³¹ Khund Mir³² Fasih Ahmad Khwafi,³³ Sudi³⁴ and Allama Qazvini³⁵ have accepted the date of death of Hafiz in the year 792/1389, whereas Pir Husam al-Din. Rashidi. has quoted the later sources in support of his statement that Hafiz died in 791/1388, the authenticity of which is open to doubt.

(12) Sayyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani (d.808) who was a contemporary of Hafiz Shirazi and met him at Shiraz, while giving the description of the poets of that period in his book 'Lataif-i-Ashrafi', Vol. II (p.370) writes:

“His poetry was considered as the ‘Voice of God (. V) and that he expired in the year 792 A.H.,”³⁶

(13) Another contemporary evidence in this connection is the writing of Gul Andam, a learned personality of the 8th century. He was not only a friend but also a class-fellow of Hafiz Shirazi who had first compiled Diwan-

³¹ Abdur Rahman Jami Nafahat al-Uns (Ed. Mandi Tauhidi pur Tehran, Iran, 1330 sh), p.614

وفات وی در سنه اثنین و تسعین و سبعاته بوده است-

³² Khund Mir Habib al-Siyar, Vol. III (Tehran, Iran, 1333 Shams), p.316.

خواجه حافظ در سنه اثنی و تسعین و سبعاته بریاض رضوان شتافت-

³³ Fasih Ahmad Khwafi: Mujmal-i Fasihi (Ed. Mahmud Farrukh, Mashhad. 1339 sh), p.132.

سنه اثنین و تسعین و سبعاته [۷۹۲] وفات مولانا اعظم، افتخار الافاضل، شمس الملتة والدین، محمد الحافظ

الشیرازی الشاعر بشیراز مدفوناً-

³⁴ Muhammad Afindi Sudi: Sharh-i Sudi Bar Hafiz (Tr. Ismat Sattar Zadeh, Arzang Press, Tehran, Iran, 1347 sh) p.s.

³⁵ Allama Qazvini Please see (Fn.3 of S1. No 24) P.13/2.

مرحوم علامه قزوینی ورمقدمه دیوان حافظ میں تاریخ ۷۹۲ را تائید و ۷۹۴ و ۷۹۱ مؤرخین بعدی زور فرموده

است-

³⁶ Nazir Ahmad Two earliest sources of Hafiz Shirazi (Fikr-o-Nazar, quarterly journal, Aligrah, January, 1980), pp. 64-85.

i-Hafiz wherein he composed the following Qatah which gives the exact date of the death of Hafiz:

بسال	با	و	صاد	و	زال	ابجد
۲۰۷۰	۰۹۰					
زروز	پجرت		میمون			احمد
بسوی	جنت		اعلی		روان	شد
فرید	عصر،		شمس		العین	محمد ³⁷

(14) According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, a noted historian, coins prove that Ghiyath al-Din A' zam Shah revolted against his father in 1388 A.D./790 A.H. and proclaimed himself as an independent ruler of Sonargaon. Subsequently, after the death of his father he finally succeeded him as the Sultan of the whole of Bengal in 1389 A.D. /791 A.H.³⁸

In the face of the aforesaid historical fact, the invitation of Ghiyath al-Din A' zam Shah to Hafiz Shirazi can not be ruled out as improbable.

(15) It may be pointed out that Sugar Candy in Persian is called (قندِ پارس) (Qand-i-Pars) and not (قندِ پارسی) (Qand-i-Parsi). Qand-i-Parsi must, therefore, necessarily mean Sweet Persian ode. Moreover, the stress on the words زین قند (from this very sweet Persian Ode) is quite significant. It indicates that:

شکر شکن شوند همه طوطیانِ هند
 زین قندِ پارسی که به بنگاله میروند

(All the parrots (poets) of India will become sweet tongued. By virtue of this very sweet Persian Ode (Qand-i-Parsi) which is being sent to Bengal.)

³⁷ Syed Abul Qasim Anjvi Sirazi: Preface of Diwan-i Hafiz Anjvi Shirazi Tehran, 1346, p. 128.

³⁸ J.N. Sarkar (Ed.): op. cit., p.114.

Hafiz Shirazi being a poet is hardly supposed to be so commercially-minded as to be interested to such a degree in the trade and commerce as to mention sugar in his verses.

(16) Another internal evidence from the same ode of Hafiz is the following couplet:

طَبِی مَکَان بَہ بَیْن و زَمَان و رَسَلوْکِ شَعْر
کَیْن طَفِیْل یَکْشَته رَہ یَک سَالَه مَیروْد

(Behold ! how fast travels poetry annihilating space and time, that this infant, though but one-night old is undertaking a year's journey.)

In this couplet “طفیل یکشبه” (infant of one-night old) and (distance of a year's journey) refer to the ‘ode composed in one night’ and ‘distance from Shiraz to Bengal’ which may be covered in one year's journey. If Qasim Ghani's view is accepted that Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad referred to in the . couplet of Hafiz, was the Ruler or Prince of Kirman and not of Bengal, the question arises: Is Kirman so far from Shiraz that it might take one year to cover the distance? Decidedly not.

The evidences produced above leave no doubt, whatsoever, that Sultan Ghiyath al-Din of Hafiz-i Shirazi was the same Sultan Ghiyath al-Din who ruled over Bengal (792-812 /1389-1409). In the face of these conclusive evidences, both internal and external, I do not see any reason why a controversy should at all arise regarding the identity of Ghiyath al -Din, and why he should be mixed up with another person bearing the same name whose rule over Kirman is not proved.