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Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki



Dargah of Saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki in Mehrauli, Delhi

Hazrat Khwaja Syed Muhammad Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki was a renowned Sufi saint and scholar of the Chishti Order from Delhi, India. Khwaja Qutbuddin's original name was Bakhtiar but his title was Qutbuddin. The additional suffix of 'Kaki' to his name was attributed to him by virtue of a miracle that emanated from him at a later stage of his life at Delhi. Popularly, he is also called Khwaja Kaki and Hazrat Qutub Saheb.

He was a born saint and had the honour of being the 'first' Spiritual Successor of Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. Forty days before the demise of his great Pir-o-Murshid, Khwaja Qutubuddin was appointed by him as his recognized Khalifa (spiritual successor) at a formal ceremony at Ajmer, and was deputed to carry on the mission of the Chishti Order of Sufis in India with his headquarters at Delhi. His dargah in Mehrauli, the oldest dargah in Delhi, is the venue of his annual Urs. His most famous disciple and spiritual successor was Fariduddin Ganjshakar, who in turn became the spiritual master of Delhi's noted Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya, who himself was the spiritual master of Amir Khusro and Nasiruddin Chirag-e-Delhi.

The influence of Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki on Sufism in India was immense. As he continued and developed the traditional ideas of universal brotherhood and charity within the Chisti order, a new dimension of Islam started opening up in India which had hitherto not been present. He forms an important part of the Sufi movement which attracted many people to Islam in India in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Family & Early life

Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki was born in 569 A.H. (1173 C.E.) in a small town called Aush (alternatively Awash or Ush) in the Fergana Valley (present Osh, part of historic Transoxiana). He was born in the middle of the night, brightness lighting up the whole house and a strange light being cast all around. After his birth it is reputed that he prostrated himself in adoration and uttered the words "Allah, Allah." After sometime he raised his head and the light disappeared.

Nobody knew that the son of Syed Kamaluddin who was himself a very pious gentleman, would one day play a most distinguished role in the development and history of Sufism in India. When Hazrat Qutbuddin was just eighteen months old, he lost his father. His mother, who was also a pious and very intelligent lady, however, made suitable arrangements for her dear child's education. At the tender age of 5, he was put under the loving care of a learned tutor, Maulana Abu Hafus, who started him with the teaching of both theological and spiritual sides of knowledge. Along with his early education, he was also devoted to mujahedas (devotional practices) for his spiritual training and when Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti visited Awash, during one of his travels, Khwaja Qutbuddin, who was then 17 years old, offered himself as a Mureed (disciple) to the great saint and sought his blessings for a spiritual career. The great Khwaja Saheb of Ajmer, who had already intuitively perceived the divine spark in the young aspirant, accepted him immediately.

Arrival in Delhi

It is reported that when Khwaja Qutbuddin arrived in Delhi from Ajmer, Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, who was the ruler of India at Delhi, went out of the city to welcome the Khwaja because he had very great respect for Sufi dervishes. He wanted to arrange for Qutub Saheb's stay in the city, but the latter preferred to stay at Kelu Kheri, a suburb of Delhi. The Sultan, however, used to wait upon him twice a week in order to receive his spiritual blessings and guidance. The Sultan, later on, became a regular and most dutiful disciple of Hazrat Qutbuddin. At this stage, he again requested his Pir to come and stay with him in the city because in attending upon him at Kelu Kheri, which he must do, he had to spend much of his time which he could save to attend to the affairs of his government. Hazrat Qutub Saheb agreed and shifted to the mosque of Malik Ainuddin in the city.

- [History](#)
- [Aims](#)
- [Concept](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Training Programmes](#)
 - October 11
 - December 09
- [Expansion](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Syllabus](#)
- [Bal Vikas Administration](#)
- [Past Students](#)
 - [June 2010](#)
 - [September](#)
- [Home](#)

Activities from States

[At the Lotus Feet](#)[Gurus Corner](#)[Children's Corner](#)[From the Annals of the World History](#)[Special Page](#)[Glory of Bharath](#)

Picture of forbearance

Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin was a picture of patience and forbearance. It is exemplified by the incidence of his young son's death. When the people returned after the child's burial, Hazrat Qutub Saheb's wife, overwhelmed by grief, began to wail and cry. When the Khwaja Saheb (who was not present at the time of the child) enquired the reason of this wailing, it was disclosed by his Mureeds that his little son had died. He said: "If I knew, I would have prayed to God for the child's long life. But now we must resign to the will of the Almighty."

Shaheed-e-Mohabbat (martyr of God's love)

Qazi Hamiduddin Nagauri and Sheikh Badruddin Ghuznavi helped to bring Khwaja Qutbuddin in his state of wajd to his home, where he remained in the same state for 3 consecutive days and nights and expired on the 4th day; his condition becoming worse with the passing of each day. This happened in 634 AH. or 1237 A.D. at Delhi and on account of this extraordinary death, Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin is known as "Shaheed-e-Mohabbat" (martyr of God's love). At the time of death, Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin's head was resting on the thigh of his beloved friend Qazi Hamiduddin Nagauri, while both of his hands were in the lap of Sheikh Badruddin Ghuznavi.

Place of burial

A few weeks before his death, Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin was returning home after the Idd prayer when he stayed at a place on the way and told his companions: "I feel the smell of love coming out of this place." The owner of the land was summoned immediately and it was purchased. This is the same place where the great saint was buried and where his illustrious Dargah stands upto this day. It is situated in Mahrauli, a small habitation in the suburbs of New Delhi. The famous "Qutub Minar" of Delhi stands near his Dargah.

Teachings & Publications

Hazrat Qutbuddin has written a masterpiece on Sufism in Persian, called, "Fawaid-us-Salikin." It contains his malfoozaat' (teachings and sayings) in 7 brief chapters and was compiled and arranged by his first spiritual successor, Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar, who carried on the distinguished work of the Chishtia Order, after Hazrat Qutbuddin's death. Fawaid-us-Salikin is not a voluminous publication and contains only 36 pages and but features all those delicate points, instructions and life-long experiences of the saint which are necessary for a Sufi dervish to achieve perfection in this divine creed. Here is a very brief but choice summary of them as described by Baba Fariduddin :-

The life of a Sufi

A Sufi must eat very little. If he eats full-belly, he is a slave of his Nafs. He must eat only to retain sufficient vitality to enable him to keep his body and soul together, so that he may be able to perform his devotional duties conveniently and successfully. A Sufi's dress must be very simple, free of all pomp and show. If he wears his dress for the sake of show, he is a dacoit in the path of renunciation.

A Sufi must talk and sleep as little as possible to avoid all sorts of worthless worldly entanglements.

A Sufi's love for God

"A Sufi must always remain deeply absorbed in the love of God so much so that if, in his state of sukr both the heaven and earth enter into his chest, he should not feel their presence. If a Sufi, in the path of his love and devotion to God, complains against the hardships and privations, he cannot claim himself to be a true lover and friend of God; he is only a hypocrite and liar. True divine friendship means that whatever, good or bad, he gets from the friend'(God) he must take it as a great boon and blessing from Him because even by any tortuous tests, his 'friend' at least remembered him.

Stages in Sufism

Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin says; "According to Mashaikh-e-Tariqat (great Sufis) there are 180 stages in the path of Sufism, but according to Junaidia silsila there are 100 stages; according to Zunnooni silsila there are 70 stages; according to Ibrahim Bashir Haafi, there are 50 stages; according to Khwaja Bayazid Bastami, Abdulla Mubarik and Khwaja Safyaan Soori, there are 45 stages in the path of Sufism. According to Shah Shuja Kirmani, Samnoon Hujjat and Khwaja Mar'Atish, there are 20 stages but according to the Chishtia silsila there are only 15 stages. All these various stages include a stage of miracles or karaamaat also. Among these different 'silsilas' serially, the stages of miracles stand at numbers 80, 50, 30, 25, 10 and 5 respectively. It is however, strictly warned that, after attaining the 'stage of miracles', a Sufi must never disclose it because by doing so, he would be deprived of all the other stages already attained by him, and all his hard earned and precious strivings and lifelong devotion and 'Mujahedas' would be lost."

Divine secrets must never be disclosed

Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin has strictly forbidden against the disclosure of the 'divine secrets' in Sufism. He says; "A Sufi must have a very strong courage, will-power and tolerance to resist the temptation of divulging divine secrets of his 'friend' (God)."

Adherence to Shariat

Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin advocates, and strongly recommends, strict adherence to the Laws of Shariat for a Sufi. In whatever condition he may be, particularly in the state of 'Sukr', none of his acts must exceed or trespass the limits of Shariat. Whenever he himself was in the state of 'Sukr', he used to regain normal stage to fulfil the conditions of Shariat to offer his Namaz.

Quotes & Sayings

- The enlightened is one who may experience strange conditions every moment and every hour, and he may be so absorbed that if at that moment the earth and every other thing enters his breast, he

may be quite unmindful of their so entering therein.

- For the enlightened, no curtain is greater than the world itself. The path of enlightenment requires courage of a very high order, so that the secrets may gain ground and may not be exposed, for the secret is the mystery of the Friend.
- The claimant of love who complains in time of trouble is not sincere in love, but on the contrary, is a pretender and a liar.
- He, who is perfect, does not expose the secret of the Friend.
- When the dervish becomes perfect, whatever he wills that happens.
- The dervish will never attain the position of nearness, unless and until, he becomes a stranger to all his friends and relatives and takes to renunciation and frees himself from the attachment of the world.
- The dervish who eats to his heart's content, out of desire of self, is a worshipper of the self and not a dervish at all.
- Sainthood is not a pleasure, but implies embroilment in the troubles of the world.
- The spiritual guide and teacher should possess so much power, that he is able to clean the darkness within the heart of his disciple by the dint of his inward power and may cause him to reach God.
- The spiritual disciple must remain the same in the presence and absence of his spiritual guide and teacher and after his passing away may show him greater respect.
- Whatever pleasure there is in music is not contained in any other thing and that such a condition cannot be attained without music.
- The manifestation of supernatural powers will deprive one of the remaining stages of life.