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### Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti

HAZRAT KHAWAJA MOINUDEEN HASSAN CHISHTI AJMERI (RAHMATULLAHI ALAIHI)



The chieftain and founder of the Chishtiyya silsila, one of the four great orders that radiate throughout the world, Khwaja Gharibun-Nawaaz (radiallahu anhu) is one of the most respected and universally recognized figures in Sufism and Islam. He stands tall as a great spiritual leader; a reformer and purifier of hearts at the most turbulent of times. Most of the saints before his time had been concentrated around the lands of the Middle East, but he was a pioneer, a missionary who was responsible for spreading the Sufi and Islamic sphere of influence to the remotest regions of polytheistic India.

His pious character was a true picture of Islam; his practice exactly in accordance with the dictates of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, and his teachings beautiful lessons in godliness, truthfulness, and equality which enlightened the hearts of multitudes. Authentic estimates place the number of people he guided to the path of Islam at nine million. It is a historical fact that his Chishtiyya silsila wielded a direct and crucial influence on the course of Indian history, the development of the embryonic Bhakti Consciousness Movement of Hinduism, and modern (pantheistic) Buddhism.

Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) was born in the year 536 AH in Sijistan, the son of Khwaja Ghyasuddin Chishti, a pious and influential man of what is now Iran. He was a direct descendant through both his parents of Hazrat Ali (radiallahu anhu). It was a time of chaos and great upheavals in both India and the Muslim Empire as a whole. In the year of his birth, Sultan Sanjari was finally defeated before the implacable advance of the Mughals, spelling the beginning of the end of the Sultanate; and in Khurasan, where he was brought up, religious sects and barbarism had lain waste a once civilized country. He was orphaned at the tender age of fourteen, and was thus raised in the same condition as Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).

But social evils, moral degradations and personal tragedy stirred something deep within the young man, and he began to turn towards the spiritual life. Once when watering his father's garden, he came across a dervish, Hazrat Ibrahim Qanduzi (radiallahu anhu). He was deeply affected by the saint's holy manner, and Hazrat Ibrahim (radiallahu anhu) for his part transformed Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu)'s inner being. His eyes became opened to the ultimate realities of the spiritual world. Renouncing all material things, he sold his father's garden, all his possessions and distributed the money among the poor.

Still at a young age, he arrived at the great centres of learning in Samarkand and Bokhara, where he swiftly became a hafiz and distinguished alim, fully conversant in all aspects of Islamic thought. Unsatisfied with this, he began a strict regime of prayers, meditations, fasting and self-renunciation which continued for years and grew more intense and vigorous until Allah granted him the exalted rank of sainthood. He used to fast for seven days and nights, breaking fast on the eighth with a small crust of bread soaked in water. At this point, he felt the need for a shaykh, or spiritual guide, feeling the truth of the Qur'anic injunction,

He himself used to state, "success is not possible without a guide." He travelled extensively throughout the near East, finally finding a spiritual guide in Hazrat Khwaja Uthman Haruni (radiallahu anhu). In twenty years he spent under his murshid's guidance, he attained perfection in tasawwuf and was awarded the khilafat-e-azam by Khwaja Uthman (radiallahu anhu). He offered many pilgrimages both with his murshid and alone. It was during one of these, while in Madinah Sharif, that he was directed spiritually by Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) to go to India and spread Islam there. He left immediately with 40 of his disciples, on the long and arduous journey.

Along the way, he stopped in several places including Baghdad, Isfahan and Balkh. In Baghdad Sharif, he was the guest of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (radiallahu anhu), the greatest of saints and founder of the Qadriyya silsila. Hazrat Ghaus-ul Azam (radiallahu anhu) organised a qawwali in his own house for the visitors, and he himself stood outside that night, with eyes closed and his staff tightly held against the ground. When asked the reason for his actions, he replied, "I needed to stop the ground shaking, such was the power of Khawja's wajid."

In Sabzwari, he came across a ruler of such corruption that he would not even hesitate to denigrate the holy sabaabi of the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Yet one glance from the great saint sufficed to

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sanctuary of the Holy Prophet (salallahu alaihi wasallam). Yet one glance from the great saint sufficed to render the man unconscious. When he awoke, his personality had changed completely; he gave up his kingdom, renounced all his possessions and became a mureed of Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu).

Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) and his disciples were in a cave in the mountains of the Hindu Kush when one of the most famous events in sufi history occurred. Hundreds of miles away, in Baghdad Sharif, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (radiallahu anhu) pronounced his chieftainship of all auliya-allah by saying, "My foot is on the neck of all walis." Spiritually hearing the great saint's statement, Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) immediately threw himself down and stretched his neck against the floor, signifying his submission to that truth.

It was because of this type of humble obedience that Allah granted him the title, "Sultan-e-Hind", for he is the leader and spiritual head to all the hundreds of walis that have blessed India in after-times. So it was that Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) arrived in India at a time of tremendous upheaval and moral decay.

Yet India is not named for no reason, "the land of saints and sufis"; its people had inherited a wealth of spirituality that yearned for expression. It was into such an arena that Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) stepped, a torch to India's tinder. First he went to Lahore, a centre of learning where a great number of Muslim theologians, philosophers and sufis resided. Yet he soon left this place, for his divinely guided mission was not to men such as these, but rather to those who were deprived of the light of Islam.

Thus he arrived in Delhi, which was to become the seat of his most famous successors. At the time, the city was a place of much fear and mutual hatred between Hindus and Muslims, but Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) began delivering his sermons in a soft tongue, dipped in honey. As a result of this kindness and forbearance, both Hindus and Muslims were turned towards the path of truth. The great wali was revered and loved by those of both religions, a trend which, was to be the hallmark of Sufism in India. Soon, however, he left Delhi too, heading instead for the remote city of Ajmer, deep within the kingdom of the most powerful Rajput prince in Northern India, Raj Prithviraj.

This city was completely alien to Islam; no muslims at all lived within its bounds. It was in this hostile environment that Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) and his forty disciples settled and began the bulk of his teaching. Very soon, however, he changed the entire civic atmosphere, gathering people of all races, castes and stations to the shining truth of Islam. His high morals and frugal lifestyle deeply impressed the Hindus and all the while, the beautiful messages of the Qur'an and Sunnah entered deep into their hearts.

Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti (radiallahu anhu) carried on his work in Ajmer for 45 years, and millions entered Islam through his spiritual light and endeavours. Besides this great service, he also established permanent sufi centres which were run by such mighty disciples as Khwaja Qutbudeen Khaki, Hazrat Nizamudeen Auliya, Hazrat Baba Farid Ganj Shakar and Khwaja Nasiruddeen Chiragh Delhawi (rahmatullahi ta'aala ajmaeen).

On the 29th Jamaad-us-Saani, before entering his bare cell for his usual meditations, he advised his attendants that he should not be disturbed until his khalifa-e-azam, Khwaja Qutbuddeen Khaki (radiallahu anhu), arrived from Delhi. On the 6th Rajab, 633 AH, his khalifa arrived and, receiving no answer to his polite knocking, the mureeds broke down the door. There they found that their beloved murshid had already left the world, at the ripe old age of ninety-six. To the wonder and amazement of all, upon his forehead was inscribed in letters of light: He was a lover of Allah, and he died in the love of Allah.