

## **Defining *Tasawwuf* in the Writings of *Hazrat Nizam al-Din Awliya*: A Study of *Fawa'id al-Fawad* (Morals of the heart)**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses about the concept of Tasawwuf--- Islamic mysticism as defined and elaborated by Sufi saint Hazrat Nizam al- din Awliya (1238-1325) in his writings particularly in his discourses which he had given in different sittings (majalis) to his disciples. In Fawa'id al-Fawad (the masterpiece of Persian literature) shaikh Nizam al-din spoke not so much on the theoretical aspect of Tasawwuf rather on the necessity of practising what it aspire to preach. For this reason, he emphasised on values i.e., love, tolerance, forgiveness, patience, forbearance, sincerity in devotion to truth and generosity that were not merely to be believed in but was to be translated into action. In addition he was a view point that there was no conflict between the Shariah and Tariqah and the two instead of being at variance complemented each other in providing moral and spiritual strength in achieving the goal of being in proximity of reality (Haqiqah).*

*Fawai'd al-Fawad is a monumental work on Islamic mysticism by Amir Hassan 'Ala' Sijzi (1253-1337) a prominent scholar of Persian language who rendered a great effort in bringing out this volume. This book is a didactic classic in the form of a recorded conversation with his spiritual guide Hazrat Nizam al-din Awliya. Moreover, this work has been translated into English and several Urdu translations former by Zia ul- Hasan Faruqi and latter by Shams Barelwi which is a serious attempt and also enables to understand the mystic discourses of the great Sufi saint of the sub-continent.*

*This paper concludes that the biographies and other work done on shaikh Nizam al-din's Fawa'id al-Fawad which is a compilation of shaikh discourses occupies an unique position with regard to accuracy and authenticity.*

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## Introduction

The *Malfuz* writing is one of the most important literary inventions of medieval India. The word ‘*Malfuz*’ is a derivative of ‘*lafz*’ (‘word’), meaning uttered, spoken. The *Malfuz* writing is that branch of literature in which the utterances and teachings of eminent *sufis* are recorded, generally chronologically in book form, by one or more of their devotees (*Murids*/students), present at those talks<sup>1</sup> during different *sufi* orders—Chistiya, Suhrawardiya, Qadriya and Naqshbandiya had flourished and the saints orders produced considerable *Tazkirah* (memory/ commemoration text) and *Malfuz*. *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, a collection of *Shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya's* discourses (*malfuzat*), beside offering many insights into the true *sufi* way of life and explaining through symbolical utterances and anecdotes suited to the occasion as well as contain some basic principles of “Islamic mysticism”. For nearly seven hundred years<sup>2</sup>, *Fawa'id al-Fawad* by Amir Hassan ‘Ala’ Sijzi *Delhvi* (1253-1336 A.D) has been acknowledged as among the earliest examples of the genre of *Malfuzat*, which enjoy such a long afterlife in *sufi*-literature culture. It is also held that unlike many later *Malfuzat*, which establishes the value of the text as a reliable historical document from the Tughlaq *shahi* period of the medieval Indian history.

## Importance of *Fawa'id al-Fawad*

*Fawa'id al-Fawad* (morals of the heart) deserves to be classified as one of the classics in didactic literature on *Tasawwuf*. This book is of such splendour that Hasan’s contemporary poet, Amir Khusro *Dehlavi*, suggested exchanging all his works for Hassan’s book, *Fawa'id al-Fawad*. It highlights the importance and uniqueness of this work. It is a book in the form of the recorded conversations of *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* who had a very large circle of *murids*. But it was Amir Hasan Sijzi who was a distinguished disciple (*Murid*) of *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* who took up himself to record, select and compile the utterances of his great master in the *majalis* of his *jama'at khanqah* at Ghayathpur.

*Fawa'id al-Fawad* compiled in a period of about fifteen years, consists of five parts and given the account of 188 *majalis* attended by Amir Hasan Sijzi after intervals of seven months. The *Fawa'id al-Fawad* has been planned and prepared in a very systematic manner. Every meeting (‘*majlis*’) has a date and the conversations are recorded in an exact, accurate and systematic manner. The *Fawa'id al-Fawad* begins with the conversation of *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* in his *majlis* on *sha'ban* 3, 707 AH/ January 28, 1308 A.D; the last assembly proceedings recorded by Amir Hasan in *sha'ban* 20, 722/Sep.2, 1322. It also covered a period

of roughly fifteen years with gaps and intervals. Nizam al-din *Awliya* lived in Delhi for more than half a century (1238-1325 A.D). Compared to that, the *Fawa'id al-Fawad* has a very limited record in number, but it has lot of depth and light on the moral and spiritual ideals of the *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* and his method of instruction and guidance<sup>3</sup>. It is because all the books compiled about the teachings of *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* with reference to his utterances in his *majalis* at his *khanqah*, *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, by all recognised norms of modern research, is the most authentic; it was accepted by all the *murids* and *khalifas* of the *shaikh* and then, after them, throughout the successive centuries, nobody has ever challenged its authenticity.

Besides, there are different reasons for the pre-eminence that *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, though not the first example of *malfuzat* literature in the South Asian Persian, nor the first Chishti mystical text, the chief claim to pre-eminence of *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is that it is the only accurate record of the conversations of Nizam al-din *Awliya*. While the first three masters of the Chishti *Silsila* in India did not leave behind any comparable record of their public discourses, *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, for the first time gave a coherent narrative form to the ideas and practices of the Chishtis, established their authority within a wider Islamic theological and ecumenical tradition, and marked the beginning of the transition from oral to literary transmission on South Asian *sufi* culture.

These achievements of *Fawa'id al-Fawad* were of course, timely. It was during Nizam al-din's lifetime and under his guidance that the Chishti network spread across Punjab, Awadh, Gujarat and Deccan, becoming in a short span of time the most popular *sufi* movement in South Asia. In such circumstances, a work like *Fawa'id al-Fawad* given its reputation for piety and accuracy, performed a para-scriptural function, disseminating the words of the last great master, as he uttered them in his *khanqah* in Ghayathpur, Delhi. In the manner of speaking, Hasan Sijzi became a companion, and *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, a modern *Hadith*<sup>4</sup>.

A second reason for the pre-eminence of *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is that it is still held as an exemplar of the genre of *Malfuzat* in South Asian Persian literature, which after its genesis in the Chishti fold, spread rapidly among the other *sufi* traditions of India, and continued well until the nineteenth century. Though primarily a religious text, *malfuzat* was from the outset a complex prose genre, negotiating between the voice of the *pir* and the mediating presence of the disciple-transcriber, using dialogue and proto-dramatic form to represent the utterances of the teacher, interpolating anecdotes and inset stories, and linking local and immediate events

and persons with the mainstream traditions of Islam. The original aim of *mal'uzat* was to render utterances with minimal distortion, but in its subsequent development, the genre acquired a more liberal and literary application with the proliferation of spurious *mal'uzat*; for it was in the invented discourses of historical saints – replete with legends and miracles- that the genre achieved its freedom from that regime of fact and very similitude which gave to a work like *Fawa'id al-Fawad* its original sanctity<sup>5</sup>.

One of the most intriguing aspects of *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, and one that distinguishes it sharply from earlier and later *mal'uzat*, is its use of the calendar to make the basic narrative unit of the *majlis*, instead of religious and moral topics, as in canonical text on *Tasawwuf*. In *Fawa'id al-Fawad* however, precise datelines distinguish one *majlis* from another, locating every *majlis* within an axis public, historical time, and giving to each a temporal situatedness that adds considerably to the aura of authenticity that the narrative possesses.

### **Amir Hasan 'Ala Sijzi**

Amir Hassan 'Ala Sijzi was almost the first writer who compiled a cohesive book with a very simple and fluent prose form *Hazrat Nizam al-din Awliya's Mal'uzat*. Although he has a great collection of Persian *Ghazals*, Odes, *Mathnavi*, and Quatrains, his major significance lays upon this *mal'uzat*. First time he compiled *mal'uzat* in Delhi and Daulatabad (Deccan). Apart Persian *masnavi* (poem) in honour of Burhan al-din Gharib Khuldabadi Chishti and his disciples written by Amir Hasan Sijzi, which must have written not long after arriving in Daulatabad.

Hasan Sijzi has immortalised himself in the History of Persian literature in the sub-continent due to the aloofness and delicacy of rare ideas as well as sweetness of expression and beautiful craftsmanship in his Persian *Ghazals*. The emotional fervour and melody possessed of elegant manners in his lyrical verses he earned the title of “*Sa'di-e-Hind*”. In the world of Persian prose literature, on the other hand, he has left behind an imperishable delineation in the spiritual world, having composed or edited the utterances of *Hazrat Nizam al-din Awliya* entitled “*Fawa'id al-Fawad*”. This collection of *Mal'uzat* is regarded as the best account of the mystic thoughts and religious discourses of *Hazrat Nizam al-din Awliya*<sup>6</sup>.

The *sufi* text has been produced in medieval India has a great historical, social, mystical and literary importance. *Mal'uz* writing is one of the most important literary achievements of medieval India. In Indian subcontinent, the credit of giving this art a definite form goes to Amir Hasan 'Ala Sijzi, who decided to write a summary of what he heard from his spiritual

master (*murshid*), *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya*. The decision was very important, because it introduced a new type of mystic literature. Amir Hasan Sijzi's collection, the *Fawa'id al-Fawad* was welcomed in *sufi* mystic circle and it became a guide book ('*dastur*')<sup>7</sup> for mystics. "In many respects, *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is a literary work of great distinction. The *shaikh* and his *murid* had an innate aesthetic sense and a refined literary taste and that is beautifully reflected in a sweet and fluent Persian prose in a form so different from the flowery figurative and elegant style of the period. It also gives an idea of the conversational Persian in vogue among the educated Muslims in the thirteenth and fourteenth century India".<sup>8</sup> He recorded the sayings of his master *shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya Dehlvi*, to preserve his words for future generations. It contained the tales of the feasts, the daily life and the miracles of *sufi* saints and which, properly sifted, constitutes an important source for Indo-Muslim South Asian history or mystical Islam in Indian Subcontinent history. *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is devoid of narration of exaggerated *karamah* and super natural elements. It contains pleasing utterances of a great *sufi* and relations and moral teachings of high standard, stated in an effective style. The compiler, Amir Hasan 'Ala Sijzi was a contemporary of Amir Khusro and sultan Ghayath al-din Balban's eldest son, prince sultan Muhammad and received their education in the same academic and cultural milieu which had made Delhi as one of the foremost centres of Islamic learning and literary activities of the then world of Islam. Since this book of Amir Hasan Sijzi has been of great importance in the subcontinent, and especially among those writers in Persian and *sufis*.

### ***Hazrat Nizam al-din Awliya***

After leaving their homeland, the city of Bokhara, the paternal grandfather of *Hadrat* Nizam al-din *Awliya* -- Khawaja Ali -- and the maternal grandfather of *Hadrat* Nizam al-din *Awliya* -- Khawaja Arab -- along with their family, came to India. At first they lived in Lahore, but later they took up their residence in Badayun (East of Delhi). Khawaja Arab married his daughter Bibi Zulaikha to Khawaja Ali's son Khawaja Ahmad. The birth of *Hadrat* Nizam al-din *Awliya* took place on the last Wednesday of the month of *Safar*, i.e., the 27th of *Safar* 636 A.H. (1238 A.D) up to this day, his birthday celebration takes place.

*Hadrat* Nizam al-din *Awliya's* father expired when *Hadrat* Nizam al-Din *Awliya* was five years old. It is his mother Bibi Zulaikha, a lady of fervent piety, brought him up and moulded his thought and character<sup>9</sup>. She brought him to a school where he learned to recite the noble Qur'an. In a short time he mastered the seven ways of recitation of the noble

Qur'ān. Then he studied Arabic grammar, *ahadith* (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed), commentary of the Qur'ān and logic. At the age of twelve, he received the "turban of excellence." He was so sharp-witted, wise and understanding that he was given the title "Debater, capable of defeating the congregation." He became distinguished in the science of *Tafsir* (commentary on the Qur'ān), in the knowledge of *ahadith*, in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), mathematics and astronomy. Khawaja Shamsul Malik was among his most learned teachers. He received a testimony of knowledge of *ahadith* from Maulana Kamal al-din. At the age of twenty, on Wednesday the 11th of Rajab 655 A.H. (1257 A.D), he reached Ajodhan. Coming before *Hadrat* Baba Farid, he unsuccessfully tried to summon up courage to tell in detail how eager he was to see him.

Then *Hadrat* Nizam al-din Awliya was honoured to be accepted as the *murid* (spiritual disciple) of Baba Farid. Then Baba Sahib remarked: "O, Nizam al-Din! I wanted to entrust the domain of Delhi to someone else. When you were on the way I heard a voice to the effect that I should wait as Nizam al-Din is coming. He is fit for this domain. It should be entrusted to him. So stay in our company so that after completing your inner training, we will appoint you as our caliph and as the *Wali-e-Hindustan* (the saint of India)<sup>10</sup>."

*Hadrat* Nizam al-din lived in the company of his *Pir-o-murshid* (spiritual guide) for seven months and a few days. In this short period, he became deserving of the *khilafat* of the great mystic Baba Farid. On the second of *Rabi'ul Awwal* 656 A.H. (1258 A.D), Baba Farid bestowed *khilafat* and *wilayat* to *Hadrat* Nizam al-Din Awliya by giving him the special turban, which came to Baba Sahib from Chisht (Afghanistan). After coming to Delhi, *Hadrat* Nizam al-Din Awliya ascended the throne of *khilafat-e-piran-e-Chisht*, i.e., he became a caliph of the Chishti shaikhs. *Hadrat* Nizam al-din Awliya came ten times to Ajodhan: three times in the life of Baba Farid and seven times after his death.

After residing in Delhi for a few days, he disdained the crowds of people and desired to withdraw himself to the desert. He then received a Divine inspiration that his place of residence should be Ghiyaspur, a small village outside the city of Delhi. First he had raised a temporary shed with a straw roof for himself and all his companions. After some time, a better place was constructed for him by one of his disciples, Zia al-din Wakil Mulk. *Hadrat* Nizam al-din Awliya lived here for more than sixty years and never changed his place of residence. The *khanaqah* is still there and is visited by many people up to this day.

*Hazrat* Nizam al-din Awliya represents in many ways the pinnacle of the Chishti order of the *sufis*. Many of his disciples achieved spiritual height, including, *Shaikh* Nasir al-din

Muhammad Chiragh-e- Dehli and Amir Khusro noted scholar/musician, and the royal poet of the Delhi Sultanate.

After an illness of about four months *Hazrat* Nizam al-din *Awliya* expired in 725 A.H. (1325 A.D.) and realized seclusion (i.e., was buried) in Ghaythpur. The area where the tomb stands is known as Basti Nizam al-din.

### Concept of Tasawwuf / Islamic mysticism

*Tasawwuf* or Islamic mysticism along with its various forms was one of the main components of the Muslim culture that the Turks brought to India. Institutional *Tasawwuf* as developed with its metaphysics, ethics, precepts, organisational institutions and in short, with its whole tradition came to India in the wake of the establishment of the Muslim rule in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The stream of *Tasawwuf* also flowed into Hindustan through the same routes. And therefore, Chishti and Suhrawardi *sufi* saints like khwaja Moin al-din Chishti (d.1236 A.D.) and *shaikh* Baha al-din Zakariya (1182-1236) settled respectively in Ajmer and Multan in the wake of the establishment of the Muslim rule and served as the main links “between the *sufis* of Iran, Khurasan, Turkistan and India”. Their immediate successor in India continued the tradition and played the same historic role in maintaining the spiritual link with the outside world.

Bruce B. Lawrence writes that “In many ways *shaikh* Nizam al-din represents the pinnacle of the early chishti *silsila*”. He outshone all the luminaries that shone under the discipleship of Baba Farid: “in humour, in pathos, in love and in poetry he was an exemplary whom many reckon as the greatest Indo- Muslim saint of all time”.<sup>11</sup>

### Some Key Concepts of *Tasawwuf*

- **Rizq Halal (Means of Sustenance):** Nizam al-din *Awliya* mentions that means of sustenance are of four kinds—*Rizq-i-madmun*, *Rizq-i-maqsun*, *Rizq-i-mamluk* and *Rizq-i-mau’ad*. *Rizq-i-madmun* consists of what one gets in the form of food and drink, which is sufficient for one’s sustenance. It means that God has taken it upon Himself to provide it. Qur’ān says:

“There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on God”.<sup>12</sup>

Rizq-i-maqsum is that which has been earmarked for one from eternity and is recorded on the Preserved Tablet (*luh-e-mahfuz*), *Rizq-i-mamluk* is one's own store of money, clothes and other belongings, and *Rizq-i-mau'ad* is the sustenance promised by God particularly for the righteous and His devotees

“And for him who fears God, He ever prepares a way out, and He provide for him from sources he never could imagine.”<sup>13</sup>

- **Tawakkul (Full Trust in God):** He stated on this subject that one should always repose full trust in God and should never look expectantly towards others. Moreover, he said that *tawakkul* was related to *Rizq-i-madmun*, i.e., having full trust in God that what was sufficient for the sustenance of life would certainly reach one only, and it had nothing to do with any other kind of *rizq*.<sup>14</sup>
- **Tark-e-duniya (Renunciation of the world):** Nizam al-din *Awliya* said : “This is no renunciation that one strips himself to the skin, ties the *langota* around his waist and retires to a corner. The true renunciation is in that one puts on proper clothes and takes his food as usual, while he is contented with whatever reaches him, has no inclination to accumulate that and refuses to be attached to anything. This is renunciation<sup>15</sup>.”At another place he spoke of renunciation that “whosoever gave up a mean thing would be certainly rewarded with a noble one”.<sup>16</sup>
- **Tawbah (Penitence):** When a repentant (*ta'ib*) “would become completely a changed person and there would be an aversion in his heart to all indecent things, he would never be remembered as a sinner of the past. These were the points leading to one's firmness in one's *tawbah*. That is, so long as the repentant were firm and steadfast in his *tawbah*, he would not be known as one who was previously associated with sins and debauchery”.<sup>17</sup>
- **Sabr Jameel (Patience Par Excellence):** He defines this patience par excellence that people, “instead of mourning the death of their kith and kin ought to show utmost restraint and forbearance. And that is liked by God. Weeping and crying and loud lamentations are not good”. He told a story that Hippocrates had twenty sons. One day, as they were all sitting under one roof, it is so happened that the structure caved in and all the twenty were killed. When the news was brought to Hippocrates, he displayed unusual restraint and perseverance and none could find out from his face that such a calamity had befallen him.<sup>18</sup>

- **Adab-e-Tilawat (Manners of Reciting the Qur'ān):** The discourse began with the subject of reading (*tilawat*) the Qur'ān and reciting it in the manner as described in *ahadith*. He said “When the reader feels delight and pleasure in reciting a particular verse, he should repeat it again and again in order to be (spiritually) delighted and comforted”.<sup>19</sup>
- **Sadaqah (Charity):** About charity he said “for a true and acceptable *sadaqah*, five conditions had to be fulfilled; two of them before it was given, two in the process of being given and one after it had been given. The first two consisted of 1) legitimate earning, and 2) the intention of giving it to a man of good character so that it might not be spent wrongly. The next two, to be taken care of, are 1) cheerfulness, humility and open-heartedness, and 2) complete secrecy in giving it. And the condition to be observed after the *sadaqah* had been given was that it was never to be talked or revealed to anybody else”.<sup>20</sup>
- **Du‘a (invocation):** He remarked that one should invoke God for said something in Arabic, meaning that when a misfortune started descending from above, *du‘a* rose from below. They collided in the air. If the *du‘a* was stronger it forced the misfortune back, otherwise the latter came down straight upon the object concerned.<sup>21</sup>
- **Aludgi-e-Duniya (Impurities of the world):** He remarked that one, who kept oneself away from the impurities of the world, was a man of excellence and piety. And if one was pious and excellent along with the impurities of the world, one’s piety and excellence would not be enduring. This was followed by the verse he recited:  
 “The flame of love is not kindled in your heart unless it is purged of all impurities”  
 And then  
 “Your soil of hope is not watered unless you become as humble as earth”.<sup>22</sup>
- **Khidmat-e-Khalq (Serving others):** He spoke on the subject of serving others and mentioned the prophetic tradition which means that “One who served as a water-carrier for a group of people, should drink water after everyone has quenched his thirst. He also remarked this rule was also to be observed while serving meals. It was not proper for one to eat before others have done it.”<sup>23</sup>
- **Love and Sympathy:** He said love and sympathy among co-believers, and that fraternity was of two kinds: 1) fraternity based on lineage, and 2) fraternity based on faith. Of these two fraternities the latter was stronger because if there were two brothers, one of whom was a

believer and the other a non-believer, the former was not allowed to inherit anything from the latter and vice-versa. Thus he considered this kind of fraternity as weak and feeble. But fraternity based on faith was strong as the relationship that existed between the two believers remained firm in this world as well as in the world hereafter. In support of this observation he quoted the Qur'ānic verse:

“Friend on that Day will be foes, one to another, except the righteous,”

And said that friends in disobedience to God will be foes to each other on the Day of Judgement and recited the following verse:

“These friends of yours

Who enjoys drink with you in beautiful

Gardens are in fact your enemies”.

- **Devotion:** He said “devotion is transitive as well as intransitive. The intransitive devotion is that by which only the devotee gets benefited, and that consists of prayer, *hajj*, fasting, the repetition of litanies (*award wa tasbihat*) and other similar things. But the transitive devotion is that which comes forth in the form of, for example, expending on and being helpful to others out of sheer love for their good and comfort; and the reward of this transitive devotion is immense and immeasurable. In intransitive devotion sincerity is the first pre-requisite so that it may be like and favourably accepted by the Almighty, while the act of transitive devotion are acceptable (to God) and would be rewarded in whatever form they are performed”.<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

The Chishti text of *malfuzat* is highlighted clearly that in the mystic world there was no distinction of slave and master. The *Fawa'id al-Fawad* supplies important information about Chishti *silsila* in India. *Shaikh* Nizam al-din *Awliya* threw light on the very aspect of *Tasawwuf* and its many key concepts. So far as the style of the *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is concerned, it is evident that it is written in very comprehensive language as well as expressed his master's views in an admirably simple and plain way so that the general masses may be highly benefited out of it.

Though *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is not the first book written in the genre of *malfuzat*, there are a number of reasons that make this book unique and exemplary. *Fawa'id al-Fawad* is a valuable and authentic source for modern researchers and scholars.

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<sup>12</sup> The Holy Qur'an, Surah (XI : 6).

<sup>13</sup> The Holy Qur'an, Surah (LXV: 2-3).

<sup>14</sup> Faruqi, *Fawa'id al-Fawad*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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