

Introduction to the Sect of Noor Bakhshia and the Intellectual Analysis of Their Fundamental Islamic Beliefs

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ABSTRACT

The Noor Bakhshiasect lives in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, especially in Gilgit and Skardo. They are the followers of Mir Sayyed Noor Bakhsh. His compilation kitab-ul-Iteqaadiyya is effectual in the basic fundamental Islamic beliefs whereas his second compilation Alfeq-ul-Ahwat is acted upon/ followed in the practical life. Besides, there is the practice of sunnahism in these beliefs but in terms of purpose and reverence towards the priests, they exilohitshia, ism. It has a separate school of understanding. This sect has specific fourteen slogans. They believe in Allah, the almighty along with all his qualities. They also have faith in all messengers, holy Books, angles and the day of judgment. They believe in the existence of heaven and hell. Currently there are three sects of this school of thought Imamia, Sophia and Hamdania. Mukhtar Hussain is the spiritual leader of the last sects, Hamdania which is out of Islam.

KEY WORDS: (*Sect, Noor Bakhshia, Islamic beliefs, Imamia, Suphia, Hamdania, conservative*)

INTRODUCTION TO SECT OF NOOR BAKHSHIA

The founder of the Noor Bakhshia sect was Sayeed Noor who was born on 15 Shaban 690 hijri in a city known Qain Saojan in the province of Qahqhestan. According to some other traditions, he was born on 28, muharram-ul-harram, 690 hijri. According to Imam Mussa Kazim his position in the family is traced back to Imam Jafar Sadiq being the sixth imam of shiaism.

His original name was Said Muhammad. Among his loved ones he was known as “MIR”. His father name was Muhammad and his grandfather name was Abdullah. So his complete name became like “Mir Sayeed Muhammad Noor Bakhsh Ibne Abdullah Leshawi”.

The reason to write “Noor Bakhshia” is that a friend of him saw in his dream that there is some light falling on Mir Bakhshia from the sky and then other people get enlightened through him. The second reason that his spiritual teacher Khwaja Ishaq Khatlani bestowed upon him the nickname “NOOR BAKHSHIA”.

Education:

Mir Sayyed got his early education in a village. He learnt the holy quran by heart at the age of seven years, and in a short time he received the Islamic disciplines of knowledge from Sheikh Ahmad Bin Fahad Ali. After getting the religious and worldly knowledge at the age of seventeen. He focused his attention to the spiritual side of the knowledge. He successfully travelled through the realm of reality and understanding and stood in the line of the acknowledge saints.

The genealogical table of Mir Sahib goes like this:

Sayyed Muhammad Noor Bakhsh

Khwaja Ishaq Khatlani

Khwaja Ishaq Khatlani

Ameer Kabeer Sayyed Ali Hamdani

Sheikh Mahmood Mirzdiqani

Sheikh Alla-ud-din Samnani

Sheikh Ali Lala

Sheikh Najam-ud-din Kubri

Sheikh Ammar Yasir

Sheikh abuNajeeb Seherwardhi

Sheikh Ahmad Ghazzali
Sheikh Abubakkar Nissaji
Sheikh abu Usman Maghrabi
Sheikh abu Ali Kaayee
Sheikh abu Ali dodhbari
Sayed-al-tayefa Sheikh Junaid Bughdadi
Sheikh Sari Saqtui
Sheikh Maroof Kerkhi
Sheikh Hazrat Immam Ali Razza
Immam Mussa Kazim
Immam Jafir Sadiq
Immam Muhammad Baqir
Immam Zain-ul-Abideen

Imam Zain-ul-abideen had got permission from Hazrat Hussain, and Hazrat Hussain from Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Ali from Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W). Due to natural talent Noor Bakhsh quickly overcome all the hardships in the way of knowledge, and he earned the NOOR BAKHSH title from Khwaja Ishaq Khatlani at the age of twentyfour. He gave his teachers gown to Noor Bakhsh and appointed him to all other disciples around there. At the age of thirty one, KhwajaIshaq Khatlani himself gave him permission on 19 rabi-us-sani 865 at his worship place and assign him the responsibility to teach other disciples.

When the teacher and the disciples focused on the spiritual development of people , the ruler got frightened and revolted against them. It must be remembered that Shah Rukh Bin Taimour, the descendent off his reigned the zammam kingdom those days. He took it a revolt against his kingdom and a serious clash between the opponent's development.

On rajjab 12, 869 hijri, on Friday he dressed in black, wore a black turban and order his followers to fight resultantly left so suphies martyred in the city of Khatlan. Two sons of IshaqKhatlani were also included in the martyrs. Mir Noor Bakhsh and his companions were arrested. Being in chains they were taken to Harat city. After imprisonment of 18 days in utter darkness, they were exiled and sent to shiraz and from there they transferred to Khuzistan. After six months imprisonment and physical hardships they were freed by the order of Governor of sheraz. After freedom from jail they travelled to Basra but was again arrested in Kurdistan. Mir sahib traveled far and wide including many countries like Iraq, Kurdistan, Koristan and Gillan. A huge crowd in these countries took oath on his hands, and many a people turned his lovers.

While living in Kurdistan for few days,the king came to know about him and issued order for arresting him. The king got so much angry at him that he wished to kill him. He made a plan to escape. He fled from Kurdistan and reached Khalkhal in three days with much hunger and fatigue. The ruler of Khalkhal arrested him and once again handed him over to Shahrukh khan. Later on, he was set forth to Gillan.

Mir sahib got some leisure time in Gillan and the reasons were the death of Shahrukh khan on one hand and the internal agitation and revolt against him on the other hand. he had also started writing correspondents with Taimouri rulers. After living in Gillan for few years he shifted to Solighan and preached his disciples. He made his son shah qasimfaiz bakhsh his own decedent.

Death:

Eventually he passed away on 15 Rabi-ul-Awal 899 Hijri on the day of Thursday at the age of 37 years and was buried in his own garden.

Before the start of Noor Bahkshia it is essential to know about the religious state of affairs in Baltistan, before the arrival of Islam the people of Baltistan were fire worshipers. It is worth mentioning that the origin centre of this religion was in Iran. The forefathers of the people of Baltistan had migrated from Iran that's why Iranian culture and civilization is dominant in Baltistan.

The second religion which had been prevalent in this region was Chospon which is still there. The followers of this religion believed in superstitions and Gods. The believers of this religion maintained that it is a separate creature in this world beside human beings and Jinn. They believe that they have been created neither from clay like human, nor from light like angels, nor from fire like Jinn, rather they are composed of strange and different components. They neither drink nor eat that's why they perform acts of wisdom and sagacity. The regions where they live are blessed with good things. They are extremely fond of music and dance and travel far and wide for this purpose. One kind of this creature is Hala or Halano and many believers claim that they have their powers too. Besides Hala or Halano there is another creature called "Mini Jam" which means (jinn of the

mosques).The believers have a strange belief in this creature that they kicked the dirty people at night. Another creature called “Chin Chinfu” which shouts at children.

The third religion which existed before islam was Buddhism Baltistan having convents places all over the province and some of them are still found in Skardu, Shagar and Khaploo. The monks used to live in these convents and would preach the teachings of bhudda. Soon after people starting worshipping the monks with a mixed religion of Chin Chin Fu and Chospon. This religion could be found even today in Tibet and occupied Kashmir.

It is important to mention that the whole Baltistan remained deprived of Islam till 8th Hijri/ 14th centuries. The Islamic preachers and saints started coming to Baltistan in the last decade of this century. History mention the names of these preachers like Sayyed Ali Hamdani, Mir sayyed Noor Bakhsh and Syeed Shams-ud-din Iraqui. Due to these people Islam got introduced not only in Baltistan but also in the adjacent areas.

A brief mentioning of three preachers is as follows Mir sayyed Ali Hamdani came to Baltistan in 1381. He preached Islam and many people embraced Islam. He also built two mosques, one at Gamba and the other at Skarduthy still exist there and people also pray therein. Mir sayeed Noor Bakhsh came to Baltistan, first in 1381 and second in 1383. He spent few years here and preached Islam to the people and they became muslims. Sayyed Ali Hamdani and Noor Bakhsh sahib tried their level best to convert people to Islam and they succeeded to a great extent but they both belonged to different school of thoughts as evident from their books.

There are three different opinions about Sayyed Ali Hamdani and Sayyed Noor Bakhsh. The first one is that they were sunni, the second is that they were shia, and the third one put them into separate religious sect. The reason is that they choose the most acceptable method leaving out difference found in both the religion of Sunni and Shia and compiled them in the two books *Alfiqa-al-Ahwat* and *Kitab-ul-Itiqadia*. He founded a separate school of thoughts in the religion. As it is doubtful that Noor Bakhsh was either Sunni or Shia, similarly is the doubtful approach of the people towards Noor Bakhshia. The Sunni think that he was a Sunni and Shia Believe that he was a Shia.

Since Noor Bakhshia is a spiritual sect and its spiritual leader is Noor Bakhsh that’s why it is called Noor Bakhshia. From scholastic point of view it is a separate school of spiritual thoughts. Noor Bakhshia could not spread as much in his lifetime as after his death, though it remained prevalent in these regions but it received huge appreciation in the 9th Hijri in Iraq and other adjacent areas. The followers and disciples led this movement ahead and it successfully succeeded. The number of followers increased to thousands in a district called “Baltistan” and is located in the northern areas of Pakistan.

During his lifetime he had appointed many of his disciples for different places in order to preach his beliefs and convictions to people. After his death all his disciples unanimously choose his son Shah Qasim Faiz Bakhsh as their spiritual leader and took oath on his hand. Shah Qasim Faiz Bakhsh taught and preached the fundamental 14 slogans called “Mirror of Noor Bakhshia” or “14 spiritual slogans” which are as follow:

- 1 Banda khuda
- 2 Zurriyat-e-Adam
- 3 Millat-e-Ibraheem
- 4 Ummat-e-Muhammad
- 5 Deen Islam
- 6 Kitab-e-Quran
- 7 Kabba Qibla
- 8 Mutabiyat Sunnat
- 9 Muhib-e-Ali
- 10 Silsila-e-Zahab
- 11 Mazhab-e-Suphiya
- 12 mashrab Hamdaniya
- 13 Rawish-e-Noor Bakhshiya
- 14 Mureed-e-Murshad

After this Sayyed Ali Kuraisy appeared in the history of Noor Bakhshiaa strikingly different person who not only eclipsed all previous leading figures in Noor Bakhshia sect but also laid the foundation of hatred and division. He compelled so many followers of this sect to leave Islam disintegrated their beliefs making them religiously biased, disunited and sceptical. Sayyed Ali Kuraisy was born in1309. He was the son of sayyed Ghoon Ali and the grandson of Peer khan uloom. First of all he publicly announced that Mir Sahib was a Shiaand he proved this by referring to some of his books.

Due to this Sayyed Ali Kuraisi tried to get the Noot Bakhshian on board in order to make them celebrate the Shiate's Custom and traditions like sitting in Shia councils following the imams and celebrating the days of birth and death. The region of Kuraisy which was the centre of Noor Bakhshia became the central point of Shiaism. Slowly clash of ideas developed and Sayyed Ali kuraisy openly criticised the book of Al-Akhwat written by Mir sahib. He changed people's mind about the spiritual weightage of Mir Sahib's beliefs and conceptions. It was like attacking Noor Bakhshia and uprooting altogether.

The second reason was Ali Khuraisi's book called Kashaf-ul-Haqaiq in which he had criticized the book of Dawat-us-suphia written by Noor Bakhsh. He mentioned that the book was against Islam and Shariyat. The chasm of differences got so widened that the Noor Bakhshia sect got divided into two sects.

1: Imamia 2: Suphia

The sect of Imamia was the outcome of Syeed Ali Khuraisi's modern beliefs while the suphia was the old conservative sect practising the Noor Bakhshia's original spiritual beliefs and practices. Historical studies reveal that these differences developed between 1920 to 1953. Many efforts were made to bridge this gap but failed. In 1957 a delegation of Noor Bakhshia scholars met at the late PirSyeed Ali Shah's residence. In this meeting the scholars from both the sects swore to Allah that they would never level allegations against each other and that each sect would be free to promote and preach its teachings. But on contrary to the expectations the difference and clashes between the two sects increased. Later some sympathetic arbitrator came in and held a convention in 1982 which was headed by Sayyed Noon Ali shah Almosavi. It was sort of a pact. He swore to god that he would never go against Noor Bakhshia and in case of violation he would be held responsible for any punishment.

This pact remained effectual till 1991 and both the sects made progress and development in many fields of life. However when Sayyed Noon Ali Shah Almosai passed away in 1991 his elder son Sayyed Muhammad Shah Noorani had to be as per family tradition the Pir of Noor Bakhsh school of thought which again caused differences between two sects. When the state of affairs got deteriorated, arbitrators were appointed through youth federation at Chaq Chan Mosque. Each sect forwarded their own point of views. The Sophia sect maintained that they follow their ancestors method of spiritual life and are called Sophia Noor Bakhshia. The Imamia sect asserted that they followed their 12 Imams along with Sophism and Noor Bakhshia as their spiritual leaders.

This meeting could not reach any conclusion till morning. Eventually a written pact was forwarded through N.Y.F application in which both the sects put their signatures. "We- the twelve members committee hereby declared that no speaker from Noor Bakhshia sect will everspeak against Sophia. No written or spoken preaching will be allowed henceforth. Rather the books of their ancestors will be followed in letter and spirit. According to "SURMO" rules no materials on differences will be extreme violation of the pact in case it is done so. This pact could not work it remained effectually only in written form. Rather it added fire and the opponents began collecting written materials against each other. This widened the gap between the two sects.

In 1999 N.Y.F called a meeting of ten Noor Bakhshia scholars in which the scholars presented their own point of views and appointed two arbitrators on their mutual consent. The arbitrators were given absolute power to decide the differences they collectively named the sect as "Suphia Noor Bakhshia" the remaining portion of the pact was the same" old Song" consequently the Noor Bakhshia sect got divided into two sects. One Noor Bakhshia Imamia and the second Noor Bakhshia Sophiya.

Introduction to ImamiaSophiya:

The literal meaning of imam is the one who is followed and obeyed. This word can be used for the head of many institution, no matter he is concerned with Islam/religion or world. Religiously, the most upright imam is Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W),the most authentic interpreter of Holy Quran is Hazrat Abdullah Bin Abbas, the most veracious compiler of Ahadith is the Imam Muhammad Ismail Bukhari etc. Similarly it is applicable for worldly leaders like Imam-ul-Hind, Imam Raghil-ul-Asfahani.....

Metaphorically, Imamia is meant the group of shiates who think of HazratAli(R.A)as their imam after the Holy prophet (S.A.W).Except those 12 imams,they only follow them and believe non.

Introduction to Suphiya Noor Bakhshia Sect:

The singulars of suphies is suphie literally suphie means the one who spiritually worships and getrid of all which is not spiritually clean and clear. Suphie stands for spiritual purity of heart and mind. According to suphies, no one can be an imman in the presence of ahli-e-baith. Imamia has a particular class of 12 imams who follow none but them. Basically there is no striking difference between imamia and Sophia both believe and followed their fundamental code of principles being derived from the books called "Al-ahwat and Aitiqadiya" there are only a few points where they differ, especially the spiritual leader and disciple the bone of contention

is that Imamia considered it hereditary and familial, whereas the Sophiya advocates the spiritual leadership to be given to the most upright and righteous. The second this is the Aitikaf (seclusion for worship) which goes from three days to 40 days while the imamia don't believe in it

The number of Sophia Noor Bakhshia is greater from imamia Noor Bakhshia and they have occupied most of the mosques and convents in Baltistan. The majority of Sophia is in Skardu, Khaplo, Ladakh, Kargil, Gilgit and Karachi. While the Imamia are in majority in Krais.

Recently a lower sect of Noor Bakhshia has come into being called (Hamdania) led by Manzoor Hussain he is actually a resident of Sargodha and has written a separate book called "Mushaf-e-Muhammad Mustafia". They mention his name in azan. They don't face to Kaa'ba while saying their pray these sects has been Islamic multified and is found mostly in shagar.

The sect of Noor Bakhshia believes that Allah is omnipresent and omniscient; he is all knowing and all powerful. They equally believe in the qualities of Allah. They maintain that Allah have the power being the most ancient and omnipresence. Allah is one. Allah has no partner no son no father. There is nothing before Allah.

Their belief in celestial books like Torah, Zaboor, Bible, and other booklets is that these books have been revealed on different prophets and messengers at different periods of time. To have belief in them is an integral part of faith. The holiest book "THE QURAN" is superior to all other celestial books in every respect. To have faith in these books is included in the 14 slogans of Noor Bakhshia.

As far as the prophethood is concerned with the Noor Bakhshai sect believe that the prophet and messenger was a source and bridge between Allah and Human beings. all prophets are being sent by Allah.

They also believe in the finality of the prophet hood of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W). it is obviously clear they believe that hazrat Adam(AS) was the first and Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W) is the last messenger sent by Allah.

The belief in Angels is Noor Bakhshia sect is the same as it is in Islam. Angels have been created from light. There is no gender in them. They perform different functions. They are always ready to obey Allah's commands.

Noor Bakhshiasect also believe in the "Resurrection" or "the Final day" or the day of judgement". Good deeds will be rewarded and bad deeds will be rewarded with punishment. Since, it is a spiritual sect, the killing of one's bad self is tantamount to "small Doomsday". Devouring one's heart from all worldliness and focusing on life hereafter in the main object of this spiritual sect.

Conclusively speaking, the Noor Bakhshiasect believes in Islam like the followers of sunnah-wl-jammah. However, they believe in the piousness of Immams, that they are free from sins like prophets, believe in the glory of Hazrat Ali, Muta'aa, and also add some phrases in Azan. These acts resemble Shiaism to large extent.

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