

Shahabuddin Suhurwardi: A Story Of A Young Philosopher Who Had The World Of Capabilities

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

There was a small town near Zanzan. Shahabuddin Yahya ibn Habash Suhurwardi, known as Shaykh Ishraq was an inhabitant of this town. He was born there and became famous for his knowledge and intelligence. It is said that he was born before 550 A.H.

When he had entered his youth he traveled to Muragha and there he studied medicine and science of principles under Majduddin Habili. In that same period he visited Isfahan and studied the best books of philosophy under Zahiruddin Fari or Farsi. After that he met all the great personalities of the area and visited and toured many places. First he toured the various cities of Iran and met the great intellectuals and scholars of the time, held discussions with them and impressed them by his knowledge.

During the time he was studying in Muragha under Majduddin, Fakhruddin Razi was his class fellow. Fakhruddin also obtained many sciences from Majduddin.

Ibn Khallikan writes in his book Wafayatul Ayan: Suhurwardi was unique in his command on sciences and arts. He had comprehensive knowledge about philosophy and medicine and in jurisprudence he possessed an astonishing capability. He had great intellect and insight." Then he writes: He was killed in the last part of 576 A.H. At the time of his death he was thirty-six years old.^[1]

Ibn Hajar Asqalani, who was a great scholar of his time, writes in his book Lisanul Mizan: He never held discussions with anyone but that he had the upper hand. Then he says: It is related from Fakhruddin Mardini that he said: I am fearful of this young man that his intelligence and sagacity would destroy others.

It is narrated from Sifr Halabi that he said: Suhurwardi arrived in Aleppo in 573 A.H. and lodged at Madrasa Halawiyah. He secured the permission to enter the gathering of Iftikhar Halabi who was the teacher there. There he entered into a very prolonged discussion.

Ibn Abi Asiba says: Shaykh Ishraqi did not have any desire for any material thing.^[2] Yafai also writes in Miratul Jinan: He was an expert in medicine, philosophy, principles of jurisprudence and theology. He was endowed with great intelligence and sagacity. He was an eloquent speaker and very good at debates. It is said that he was even conversant with alchemy.

In such a short period of life, that is less than 36 years, Suhurwardi wrote more or less 50

books, most of whom are present with me. He writes in a very engaging way and his writings are very fine from the literary point of view. And whatever he wrote in Persian, the prose of it is a masterpiece of that age because later the same text became a story of a philosopher whom a community began to follow.[3]

During the fourth century of Hijrah, the power of the Abbaside caliph had become very restricted and the provincial rulers were mostly Shias. And they had great expertise in rational sciences, traditions and narrative reports. Hence they commanded great influence in the Islamic lands. Thus this age is known as the golden age of philosophy.

From the aspects of his subjects and conditions Suhurwardi continued to lay the standards of discussions for two centuries after that though all his life he was also involved in teaching, writing and compilation. As a result of his innovative theories he left a great legacy for the people of later times, due to which he would be remembered forever.

His writings are either in Arabic or Persian, and in both the languages his style is very engaging and lucid, which shows his intellectual capabilities and high thinking that the Almighty had bestowed to this young man.

The following books of Suhurwardi were collected by the author of Hikmatul Ishraq: Matarahat, Talwihat, Hikmatul Ishraq, Alwahul Amadiya, Ilaihakul Nuriya, Al-Maqalat, Bistanul Quloob, Al-Bariqatul Ilahiya, Lawame-ul-Anwar, Itiqatadatul Hikma, Risalatul Ishq, Risala-fi-Jalatul Tafwiliya, Risale Aqle Surkh, Rozi ba Jamat-e-Sufiya, Aawaz Pare Jibraeel, Partu Nama Yazdan Shinakht, Safir Simurgh, Bakht-e-Moran, Risalatul Tayr, Dawatul Kawakib, Alwahul Farsiya, Ilaihakul Farsiya, Al-Wardatul Ilahiya, Tauraqul Anwar, Al-Naghmatul Samawiya etc.

A noteworthy matter is that Suhurwardi says in his book, Hikmatul Ishraq: There are many treatises that I have written in my boyhood. Qutubuddin, the commentator of Hikmatul Ishraq says: By treatises he means the books of Alwah, Hiyakul Anwar and other many treatises.

The most important books of Suhurwardi are: Hikmatul Ishraq, Hiyakul Anwar, Risalatul Ishq, Mataharat and Talwihat.

Suhurwardi wrote Hikmatul Ishraq in Arabic. Qutubuddin Shirazi wrote the commentary of this book in Arabic. He was a great scholar of his time. Dr. Ja'far Sajjadi, a professor at Tehran University has translated this book into Persian.

Among the commentators on the books of Suhurwardi are the names of those who are highly respected scholars. In the seventh and eighth century Ibn Kamuna Shaharzori and Allamah Hilli wrote glosses on Talwihat. In the ninth century Jalaluddin Dawani wrote a gloss on Hiyakul Anwar. In the ninth and tenth century respectively Jalaluddin Dawani and Abdur Razzaq Lahiji wrote glosses on Hiyakul Anwar. Many other scholars have also passed who have written

much on Suhurwardi. They include Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi the famous philosopher of the seventh century. He has written extensively on the philosophy of Suhurwardi and defended him against the philosophy of Ibn Sina.

After Iran other countries of Asia like India benefited a great deal by the philosophy of Suhurwardi and during the Safavid rule in Iran the Ishraqi philosophy exercised great influence on the Islamic thinking.

In India many books of Suhurwardi were translated into Sanskrit at the behest of the Mughal kings. These books were also translated into Hebrew. Thus his thoughts were spreading to people of other faiths like the Hindus and Jews.

Qutubuddin Shirazi says that the book of Hikmatul Ishraq is full of wisdom and learning though small in size.

In Itiqadatul Hikma, Suhurwardi writes: Some people say philosophers and thinkers do not have faith in Allah and the Last Day: Thus I have compiled in this book the sayings of great philosophers about their beliefs."

It is very interesting to note that though Fakhruddin Razi was a staunch opponent of philosophy he was a classmate of Suhurwardi and after Suhurwardi was murdered, when once Fakhruddin Razi was given a copy of Talwihat he first kissed the book then remembering his student days wept in nostalgia.

In the final years of his life Suhurwardi traveled to Syria and stayed in Damascus for sometime. He met the scholars there and engaged them in debates and discussions. Then he went to Aleppo and repeated his methods. In Aleppo, Malik Zahir was ruling in place of his father, Salauddin Ayyubi who was in Egypt. Though initially Malik Zahir accorded welcome to Suhurwardi and gave him a place of honor in his court, later when the Sunni scholars defeated by him in debates complained to Salauddin Ayyubi, Malik Zahir was compelled to have him imprisoned. Later he was given a choice to choose death by starvation or execution. It is said that Suhurwardi chose the former as he was much in favor of penance. However some people say that he was finally executed.

Thus this young philosopher became a target of religious bigotry.

References

[1] Wafayatul Ayan Vol. 5 pg. 314

[2] Ibn Hajar Asqalani, LisanulMizan Vol. 3, pg. 157

[3] Hikmatul Ishraq Suhurwardi, Dr. SayyidJa'far Sajjadi pg. 68