Abdaliyeh Thesis by Molana Yaghoob Charkhi

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Abstract: Abdaliyeh Thesis is a prominent and original work of Molana Yaghoob Charkhi (died 851 AH). This is a theosophical thesis about properties of saintly individuals alluding to their high ranking and position. He mentioned Khajeh Bah-al-din Naghshband and Ala-ul-din Atar in this writing. Charkhi explained the position of saintly individuals in reference to theosophical works such as Kashfe al-Mahjub by Hajiri. He mentioned a narration left from Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi era to substantiate the high position of saintly individuals. Charkhi classified saintly individuals in his thesis by taking note from a narration from Prophet Mohammad (S). He provided a detailed account of the special properties of Qub and Abdal. Abdaliyeh Thesis was specifically written about the position, qualities, properties, and characteristics of Abdals. Before Charkhi, Esin Arabi wrote detailed accounts of Abdals and elaborated on their qualities. This article covers the life and works of Charkhi. It pays special attention to the significance and value of Abdaliyeh Thesis to reveal the significant literary and mystical position of Charkhi.

Keywords: Abdaliyeh Thesis, Molana Yaghoob Charkhi, Saintly Individuals, Abdal, Theoretical Theology, Naghshbandi Theosophy.

Introduction

His name was Yaghoob, son of Othman, son of Mahmud, son of Mohammad, son of Mahmud Ghaznavi Charkhi Sarrezi, as known as Molana Yaghoob Charkhi. He was one of mystics and leaders of Naghshbandi Sect. His birth date is unknown. He mentioned in his interpretation of Quran that he had a dream in Bokhara in 782 A.H. From narration of Charkhi’s dream, one can deduce that he was at least 20 years old at the time he went to Bokhara to study. Therefore, Charkhi’s estimated birth could be between 760 to 770 A.H. (Charkhi, 1331 A.H., p. 77).

Charkhi’s birthplace was the village of Charkh located now in Loger Province in Afghanistan (Jami, 1997, p. 398; Kashfei, 1977, v. 1, p. 116). His surname is also Sarrezi, which is a village near Charkh. His ancestors lived in village of Sarrezi. He also mentioned this name in his Na’ieh Thesis (Charkhi, 1973, p. 139). Charkhi’s father was Molana Othman Charkhi who was an Islamic clergyman and theologian. He was a devoted and Gnostic man who was mentioned for his asceticism (Charkhi, 1973, p. 93). Charkhi mentioned his father several times in his books and quoted a poem and prayer from him (Charkhi, 1331 A.H., pp: 115, 212, 240, and 332). Molana Othman Charkhi was buried in a mosque by the same name in Astrachan city (Uratappah) in Tajikistan (Karimi Sardashti, 2002, p. 146).

Charkhi received his basic education from his father in his birthplace, Charkh. He later travelled to Herat and Bokhara for further studies. His first schooling was in Herat (Kashefi, 1977, v. 1, pp. 119-120). He later went to Bokhara in 782 A.H. for further education (Charkhi, 1331 A.H., p. 148). Charkhi earned the position of jurisprudence leadership by religious elders and scholars (Kashefi, 1977, v. 1, p116).


Though some of these writings may have been attributed to Charkhi, nevertheless, he was a "Kathir al-Talii" scholar (a person who has written a lot). Some mystic words, statements, and recommendations have been quoted in historical-mystical books, texts, and biographies. They represent the evidences of his influence as a spiritual person (Mir Abd al-Aval Neishaboori, 2001, pp. 191-192, 264, 566-567, and 669; Jami, 1957, pp. 398-399; Kashefi, 1977, v. 1, pp. 116-121). Charkhi had many students whom he trained in Nashbandieh Sect. His notable student was Khajeh Obeidollah Abrar.

Molana Charkhi died on Saturday 5th of Safar 851 A.H. or April 22, 1447 A.D. after a long and productive life (Lahori, 1312 A.H., v.1, pp. 566-567, Charkhi, 1973, p. 99). Kashefi reported that his burial place is in Halafu one of villages of Hesar. Tavakoli has mentioned the same place in his book Tazkeh Mashayekh Naghsbandieh (Kashefi, 1977, v.1, p. 116, Tavakoli, p. 142). His tomb is now located 5 km outside Dushanbe (Capital of Tajikistan). This place is known as "Hazarat Molana" and is a holy shrine with the highest frequency of visitors in that country.

Research Significance
Mystical theses have distinct significance and value specially those written in mystical theorem. These theses have played important role in providing information about mystical schools of thinking starting from third century A.H. (ninth century A.D.). One notable one that made significant contribution to theoretical theology was Abduliah Thesis written by Molana Yaghoob Charkhi in ninth century A.H. (15-16th Centuries). This thesis is an important heritage of Naghsbandieh mystical thinking. Studying Abduliah Thesis is valuable for understanding the history of certain mystical subjects of interest, such as Abdalii, spiritual status of saintly individuals (Ola Allah), and the pure followers of Naghshbandieh Sect.

Research Objectives
The objective of this study was to research the historical development of mystical and theological thinking in Khorasan and Transoxiana (Mawra al-Nahr) (generally, East Asia) to identify the major historical resources. The study and identification of this valuable heritage can help us discover how philosophical and mystical ideas leaped through the history. Another objective of this study was to identify various lines of thinking during a certain period of mystical and theological history (ninth century A.H.). Well-known leaders of Naghsbandieh Sect played a significant role during this period by writing various mystical theses.

Research Questions
The main questions of this study were:

1) To what extent Iranian scholars played a role in the development, compilation, and writing of Farsi thesis in theoretical mysticism and mystical thinking;
2) To what extent Iranians scholar played a role in promotion of mystical theorems and Islamic theological thinking;
3) What was the status of Iranian scholarly works during the period under study; and
4) To what extent mystical scholars used Farsi language in the development of their knowledge base after the time of Mohyeddin Ibn Arabi (as a yardstick for writing and compiling books and thesis in the field of theoretical mysticism).

We attempted to find the proper answers to these questions by conducting this research with the intention to introduce the notable heritage of the period under study, i.e. Abduliah Thesis.

Research Methodology
Research methodology included library research and field study. This study used available resources in Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan for library research. Travelling to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and India helped us compile handwritten copies of Abduliah Thesis. Some scripts of Abduliah Thesis were obtained through scholarly contacts.

Background Literature
The first person to work on Abduliah Thesis was a Pakistani scholar by the name of Mohammad Nazir Ranja. He collected several handwritten copies of Abduliah Thesis in 1978, made correction to them, wrote a preface and several addendums, and published it. This was the first official publication of Abduliah Thesis. There were no mention of Abduliah Thesis in any of the major books and thesis published before Ranja article.

Epistemology of Abduliah Thesis
Background
Abduliah Thesis is one of the most outstanding and significant works of Charkhi in the collection of mystical thesis. Abduliah Thesis is basically about the properties of saintly individuals and their status in mysticism hierarchy. There are mentions of Khajeh Baha al-din Naghsbandi and Khajeh Ala-al-din Atar. Available written resources indicate that Charkhi did not choose a title for this thesis. Writers and transcribers called it Abduliah. None of the Charkhi works mentioned this thesis by name (Ranja, 1978, p. 26).

When writing Abduliah Thesis, Charkhi imitated his friend and fellow believer, Salaheddin Ibn Mobarak Bokhari, the author of Anis al-Talebin va Ghodheh al-

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Salekin. Charkhi wrote this thesis about the eminence and marvels of Qubl al-Aqtah Baha al-Din Naghbandiye that Charkhi had personally witnessed (during 785 A.H. and after) or heard from the fellow mystics who were associated with Naghshbandiye Sect.

Abdalieh Thesis is written about religious leadership and the quality of a person who deserves to become the religious leader. It has four chapters. Chapter one defines religious leadership and leader. Chapter two covers the early period of Khajeh and Khajegan Sect. Chapter three gives an account of Khajeh beliefs and his approach to religious contemplation. Chapter four is a tribute to Khajeh's properties, emanations, status, and works (Salah Bokhari, 1992, p. 69).

Charkhi met Salah Bokhari to acquire the necessary information to write about Khajeh Naghshband. Salah Bokhari had personally met Baha al-din Naghshband in 785 A.H. with the mediation of Khajeh Ala al-din Atar. Salah Bokhari was later dressed as a mystic by Khajeh Ala al-din Atar in 791 A.H. after Khajeh Naghshband passed away. The same happened to Molana Yaghoob Charkhi.

Alameh Abdul Rahman Syoti (849-911 A.H.) wrote a short thesis in Arabic language about Abdals after Charkhi. He was a sheikh scholar and wrote his valuable thesis in response to those who denied the existence of the classification strongly advocated by Sufis including Abdal, noghaba, nogaba, owtad, and aqtab. He quoted from top Sufi scholars to prove the existence of Abdals.

Abdalieh Thesis was written in Farsi language and starts with a eulogy in Arabic language praising God, saluting Prophet Mohammad, his companions and followers. He continues by asking mercy for his teachers, sheikhs, ancestors, descendants, colleagues, and all believers. Charkhi introduced himself and his ancestry as Yaghoob ibn Othman ibn Mahmod ibn Mahmod ibn Mahmud Ghznavi Charkhi Sarrazi (Charkhi, 1978, p. 1-2). This thesis is written about the position of the saintly individuals or Abdals. He proclaimed at the beginning of his thesis that saintly individuals are religious leaders after messengers and prophets (Charkhi, 1978, pp.1-2).

Sura Nahl (verse 125) states that the guiding approach of saintly individuals should include wisdom, preaching, rapprochement, and contention in the best way possible. Charkhi believed that saintly personalities are compassionate toward Gens, Ens, Muslims, and impious. He made a reference to Mathnavi Motlavi in the third chapter to support his argument (Charkhi, 1978, p. 1-2). He referred to Sura Yonos (verse 63). Sura Forgan (verse 63). and Sura Aghshaf to proclaim that according to explicit expression of Quran saintly individuals have existed, exist, and will exist (ibid, p. 3).

Charkhi declared the objective of his writing Abdalieh Thesis in these words: “I wanted to provide an account of the properties of saintly individuals as are applicable today” (ibid, p. 4). He devoted the entire writing of this thesis to explain its main objective, i.e. the properties of saintly individuals. A more detailed account of the writing of this thesis will come later.

**Handwritten and Printed Copies of Abdalieh Thesis**

There is only one handwritten copy of Abdalieh Thesis in Iran (Monzavi, Fehestvar, v. 7, p. 36). There are more copies of this thesis in Indian Subcontinent (Monzavi, Mooshtarek, v. 3, p. 1225). European and Central Asian libraries also have copies of this thesis (Monzavi, Fehestvar, v. 7, p. 36). The following is the list of Abdalieh Thesis found through field studies and library search looking for handwritten copies there are available outside of Iran in countries like Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.


This copy starts with:

جنا، خلیفه ای، ای بنا می‌گیریم به‌نام صاحب ملکه‌ی‌الزلزله... و لیم و لیموی صاحب بالست، پس از رسال و دستورالعملیات این... که کرم....

And ends with:

کتیبه‌ی کربلایی که مرسال بر حکم بود به‌زوجه‌ی که به یکی به‌نام مصدق بود بکه علیه و نسبت به‌نام را بر حکم بود. با حرکت مشترک بود.

This copy is written by an unknown author in Nastaligh handwriting in twelfth century A.H. in 12 pages of 11 x 17.5 cm (Ghasemloo, 2008, v. 3, p. 2).


This copy starts like copy number 1.

The end of this copy is missing.

This copy is written by an unknown author in Nastaligh handwriting with no date in 41 pages of 11 x 18 centimeters (ibid, p. 3).


This copy starts like copy number 1.

This copy ends like copy number 1.
This copy is written by an unknown author in Nastalgah handwriting in 1254 A.H. in 11 pages (ibid, pp. 3-4).

This copy starts like copy number 1.
This copy ends like copy number 1.
This copy is written by an unknown author in Nastalgah handwriting in 1275 A.H. in 7 pages of 15 x 25 centimeters (ibid, p. 4).

5) Ganj Library, Islam Abad Branch – No. 395
9) Puhentou University Library, Kabul, Afghanistan, No. 16679.
This copy of Abdalieh Thesis was printed in 1978 in Islamabad with amendments, preface, and addendum made by Mohammad Nazir Ranjha. It was translated in Urdu and published by Ranjha in Lahore in 1398 A.H. Mohammad Nazir Ranjha had this to say about the printing of Abdalieh Thesis: “I found the text historic and valuable. So, I undertook to amend and print it. I translated it into Urdu for the first time. It was printed in April 1978 by Islamic Publications Institute of Suman Abad, Lahore.” (Charkhi, Ranjha Reface, 1978, p. 26).
This copy starts with:

الحمد لله الذي بين خلقه في المرائب ... و بعد فقد يقضى عن بعض من عهد الأثرب على من أشهر من السادات الإلزهود...

And ends with:

و هو هنالكما يا سربعصببا يا شديد الطف ... إلى آخره

**Chapter and Subjects of Abdalieh Thesis**
The main subject of discussion in Abdalieh Thesis is the explanation of the properties of saintly individuals. There are other subjects of discussion that are secondary to the main subject as listed below.

1. Using Quran verses, Prophet Narraions, and Mathnawi Molavi as evidences to prove the subject of interest (Charkhi, 1978, pp. 2-4).
2. Quoting from high ranking mystic, Sheikh Abu Saiedi Ali al-Khei (ibid, pp. 5-6).
3. Proving extraordinary dispositions and marvels of saintly individuals (ibid, pp. 7-8).
4. Explaining views of Molavi by making references to Mathnawi Molavi as evidence (ibid, pp. 7-8).
5. Telling the story of Hakim Hendi and Sheikh Abu al-Hassan Ghaznavi to prove extraordinary acts of saintly individuals (ibid, pp. 8-11).
6. Telling the story about the extraordinary act of Khaja Baha al-Din Naghabband regarding to Molana Hamid al-Din Shashi (ibid, pp. 11-12).
7. Quoting the story about the extraordinary acts of Khaja Aledin Attar and encouragement of Mo'tazeli to join Sunni sect (ibid, p. 12).
8. A section to prove the effects of saintly individuals on universes and to explain their various status (ibid, pp.12-13).
9. A section about a narration by Abdullah Ibn Masood quoting from the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) about saintly individuals, their mannerism and properties (ibid, pp. 13-17).
10. A section about theosophy hierarchy and introduction of Qub al-Ershad and Qub al-Abdal with explanations about Eshratian and Ozalti Sufis (ibid, pp. 17-19).
11. A section about the position of the high ranking religious individual, Qub, from Molavi’s point of view by making evidences from Molavi poems. Explaining the distinction between Ozlaitan and Eshratian, plus clarifying the positions and properties of Eshratian Qub and Ozalti Qub (ibid, pp.19-26).
12. A section to explain and prove Qub al-Abdal and Qub al-Ershad plus explanation about the status of E'tesam Ghari (Ovai Ghari’s uncle) as Qub al-Abdal when Mohammad (peace be upon him) appointed as Prophet (ibid, pp. 26-28).
13. A section about the lives and properties of Khaja Khezz and Khaja Elyas (peace be upon them) and their meetings with mystics and Sufis (ibid, pp. 28-30).
14. Mentions of poems by Hazrat Khezz (peace be upon him) about Tabook conflict (ibid, pp. 30-31).
15. Explanation of the position and properties of Hazrat Khezz (peace be upon him) including
The Main Subjects in Abdallah Thesis

To limit the scope of research and discussions, this article focused on the main points and evaluated them based on their standing in the history of Islamic Mysticism and Sufism:

1) Abdal and Abdalian: Perhaps, the most important subject of discussion in Charkhi’s thesis, as known as Abdallah Thesis, is the position of Abdals in the hierarchy of saintly individuals. The word Abdal is the same as “Badal/Badeel” meaning those who get replaced. Abdal is one of the six classes of saintly individuals in Sufi terminology. The general public does not know them and therefore, they are known as Rejal al-Qub, meaning invisible distinguished men.

God saves the seven territories because of them.

Each one has one territory to rule. These seven individuals plus other saintly individuals are the source of strength of the universe. Mercy and blessing befall on Earth in cause of them and calamity is removed from people in cause of them (Charkhi, 1978, p. 12).

The reason they are called Abdal is that, as Shah Nemat-ul-Lah Vahi put it, “when one of them traverses, he leaves his body in such a way that no one thinks he is absent.” (Shah Nemat-ul-Lah Vahi, Rasaal, v. 1, p. 16). Or, as Ibn Arabi put it: “when one of them dies, Holy God substitutes another to complete their number.” Or in another saying: “each one of them represents the others. Everyone who is present represents the others when they are absent.” (Ibn Arabi, Al-Maftoohat al-Moosieeh, section 73).

Abdal ranks in the 4th position, after Arafad and Owbad in the descending order of the saintly individuals starting from Qub. They reside in Sham (Syria) area where they stay most of the time. Their number is seven as mentioned by most narrators quoting from Abdallah Ibn Massood, who was one of saintly individuals. This narration is as follows:

Ezzeddin Nasafi in his book A Perfect Human (pp. 317-323), Abdorrazagh Kashani in Sufi Terms (p. 36), Mir Seyyed Sharif Jorjani in Definitions (p. 19), and Ibn Arabi in Sufi Terms (p. 116) have provided an accurate and detailed description about Abdal and Abdalian.

2) Saintly Individual Ranking: In mystical and Sufi culture, Qub has a very important and high position. Qub is always the focus of God’s attention and the great magic is given to him. He flows through what is apparent and hidden. He is the mediator of God’s grace to people. He is the mediator of life from the highest to lowest universe (Jorjani, Definitions, Under Qub, p. 189). He is the only perfect human who, as Sufis believe, has dominance over every human. He knows everything about Sufism. He is the mind of the universe and Sufis strongly believe that he occupies the mind of every human (Attar Nayshaboori, Asrar Nameh, p. 257).

Hujwiri in Kashf-ul-Mahjoob had said the same before Charkhi: “There are three hundred God’s high ranking officers called Akhyar’s who resolve the issues of universe, there are forty other called Abdal’s. Then, there are seven called Owbad’s, and there are three others called Nasib’s, and there is one called Qub or Ghanw (Hujwiri, 1926, p. 299). Ibn Arabi also mentioned Qub as equivalent to Ghanw and it was so intended by God for all times (Ibn Arabi, 1948, p. 4).
In Sharh-e Golshan-e Raz, the number of Abdal's was mentioned seven named Omana-ul-Lah. The position of Qub or Qub-ul-Aqtab and Gohram Azam is higher than all other saintly individuals. This position is presented as the manifestation of the essence of prophethood for Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him (Lahiji, Sharh-e Golshan-e Raz, p. 282).

Shah Nemat-ul-Lah Vali has written a lot about Abdal's and considered them as perfect human.

3) Qub-ul-Abdal and Qub-ul-Ershad (Ozlatian and Ershatian): Molana Charkhi in Abdalieh Thesis divided Qub into two groups, namely, Qub-ul-Abdal and Qub-ul-Ershad. He ranked Qub-ul-Ershad at higher position than Qub-ul-Abdal. Charkhi called the two groups as Ozlatian (Qub-ul-Abdal group) and Ershatian (Qub-ul-Ershad group).

Yaghoob Charkhi wrote under Qub-ul-Abdal and Qub-ul-Ershad: "the first group is called Ozlatian and the second one Ershatian. Qub-ul-Ershad is from Ershatian who have higher ranking than Qub-ul-Abdal.

In Ayn-ul-Ma'ani interpretation, Shams-ul-Arefin al-Ghaznavi al-Sajavandi, God bless him, author of Yaghoof-e Quran, stated that Ozlatian are higher than Ershatian in one respect and Ershatian are higher than Ozlatian in another respect. That means in general aspects they are the same and in special aspects they are different. Ozlatian are companions and Ershatian are ministers. They are human in appearance and God's soul in essence. When one of Ozlatian commits a sin, Qube-Ershat can ask God for forgiveness ... and Ozlatian have existed, exist, and will exist ... (Charkhi, Abdalieh Thesis, 1978, pp. 20-24 and 26-28).

Khaje Mohammad Parsa in his Ghodsieh Thesis (Baha-ul-Din Naghsbandi words) explained Ozlatian and Ershatian the same as Charkhi did. He stated: "as they resembled Ahl-e Talvin and Ahl-e Taskin to Nodama (companions) and Vozara (ministers). They considered Vali-e Ozlat (Ozlatian Saint) and Vali-e Ershat (Ershatian Saint) to resemble Nadim (companion) and Vazir (minister). Vali-e Ozlat is nobler in cause of his nature, but Vali-e Ershat is superior in cause of his perfection. With the same line of argument, Archangel is nobler than the perfect human, and the perfect human has higher perfection and is more virtuous than Archangel." (Parsa, 1975, p. 47). Charkhi in Ney Nameh (Na'ieh Thesis) mentioned about Qub ranking (Charkhi, Ney Nameh, 1973, pp. 41-44).

4) Khajeh Khuzr and Khajeh Elyas (Elia): These two prophets have special status in mysticism and Sufism, especially in mystic teachings. Molana Charkhi has written about their lives and their spiritual and physical properties. Charkhi also mentioned how wayfarers and mystics can visit them and learn from them. Mystic tradition puts these two individuals at the highest positions among saintly individuals. Mohye-Din Ibn Arabi sometimes put Elyas (a.s.) and Khuzr (a.s.) next to Hazrat Masih (Jesus Christ) (a.s.) and Hazrat Edris (a.s.) who were among Owatd. They are present in their earthly body. Both of them are Imams and one is Qub (Ibn Arabi, 1410 A.H., pp. 268-270).

Conclusion

One of the most important and basic area of discussion in Islamic Mysticism is Velayat (leadership). Vali (leader) is a perfect human who manifest self in various rankings. This person is sometimes called Gohram-e Azam, Qub, or Qub-ul-Aqtab. Molana Charkhi adapted the traditional views of Sufis in ranking saintly individuals:

Qub or Gohram, Noghieh (plural:Noghaba). Owatd, Abrar, Abdal, and Akhnyar. Qub-ul-Ershad and Qub-ul-Abdal have special position because they are human leaders (Morsheedan) with certain God's properties.

Therefore, wayfaring through practical mysticism and Divine wisdom requires Vali and saintly individuals. Abdalieh Thesis elaborates on certain criteria that are required when one desires to follow the path of saintly individuals. This thesis discusses the nature, identity, and position of saintly individuals. It makes references to Quran verses, narrations, and Sufi beliefs to explain and extend the properties of saintly individuals.

References


57. Qumi, Gh. S., al-Arba’een.