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Sarmad: His Life and
Execution
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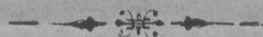


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BY MAULAVI 'ABDU'L WALI, M.R.A.S.

Reprinted from the "Indian Antiquary."



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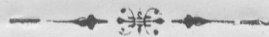
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SARMAD: HIS LIFE AND EXECUTION.

BY MAULAVI 'ABDU'L WALI, M.E.A.S.

Mirza Muhsin-i-Fāuī, author of the *Dābastān*, met Sarmad in 1057 A. H. (1647 A. D.) at Haidarabad (Deccan). Other facts about him can be gleaned from the chronicles of the reign of Āurangzīb and from tradition. Sa'īd, whose *takhallus* or *nom-de-plume* was Sarmad (*everlasting*), was born at Kāshān in Persia, of Jewish parents, and brought up as a Rabbi, but went over to Islam. He read science and metaphysics in Irān with Mullā Ṣadrā¹ and Mīrẓā Ābu'l Qāsim Fandarsaki¹ and other eminent scholars of the time, and came to India by sea as a trader. He set up in business at the town of Ṭhaṭh, (Tatta) in Sindh, where he contracted a close friendship with a Bania by name Abhai Chand, gave up all clothing and developed peculiar opinions. The following distich by Abhai Chand is quoted regarding the views of the two friends:—

هم مطيع فرقانم هم کشيش ورهبانم .: ربي يهودانم کافر م مسلمانم

“As I am a follower of the Forqān, so am I a priest and a monk. A Rabbi of the Jews an infidel and a Musalman.”

Sarmad and Abhai Chand came to Delhi, during the reign of Shāhjahān, and Prince Dārā Shikōh was one of their constant visitors.

It was Dārā Shikōh who brought to the notice of the Emperor the miraculous powers of the saint. The prudent Emperor deputed 'Ināyat Khān, one of the 'Omarā of his court, to ascertain the real facts. 'Ināyat Khān visited the naked saint, and while reporting, recited the following Persian distich to the Emperor by way of illustration:—

بر سر آمد برهنه کرامات تهمت است .: کشفی که ظاهرست ازو کشف عورت است

“To ascribe miracles to naked Sarmad is to accuse him. The only miracle (*kashf*) which is visible is the nudity (*kashf*) of his private person.”

When Āurangzīb-'Ālamgīr seized the reins of Government, and Dārā Shikōh was executed, he ordered Mullā Shaykh 'Abdu'l Qavī, a scholar holding the rank of Panj hazārī with the title of I'timād Khān, to direct Sarmad to cover his nakedness. The Mullā said to him “*Uryān chirā mibashi*? Why do you remain nude?” Sarmad gave a witty reply: “*Shaitān qavist*, Satan is powerful (*qavī*)” and recited the following *rubāi*:—

بالای خوشی کرده چندین پست مرا .: چشمی بدو جام برده از دست مرا

او در بغل من است و من در طلبش .: دزدی عجبی برهنه کرد دست مرا

A lovely height (figure) has made me so low.

A two-cupped eye has taken me out of hands.

He is at my armpit and I in quest of him.

A wondrous thief has made me naked.”

In order to understand Āurangzīb's conduct, one must go back to the time of his great grandfather. The religious toleration inaugurated by Akbar—call it by whatever name you please—was, according to the opinion of the public, quite antagonistic to the established church of Islam. Akbar's son and grandson did not pay any attention, while on the throne, to those questions; but their indifference produced very bad effects on the *morale* of their Courts and of the public. Prince Dārā Shikōh openly countenanced those beliefs. The fire of disgust and

dissatisfaction were smouldering in the breast of the Indian Muslims, when the 'great puritan of India' mounted the throne. A strong reaction set in over the empire, and the party of Shar encouraged by the Pādshāh, were bent upon wreaking their vengeance upon those who sided with Dārā in his godless beliefs.

Aurangzib tried to reintroduce that Puritanism, which three of his immediate predecessors were instrumental in undermining. His whole energy was directed towards the eradication of those evils, which in the opinion of the orthodox, were eating into the vitals of the *Constitution*. While Aurangzib was tolerant to all in other respects, he was firm against the infringement of religious ordinances. In this he did not spare his relatives, or even care for those on whose countenance and support the empire rested. The stupendous fabric of the mighty empire of the Mughuls fell rapidly into pieces, after his death, not because of Aurangzib's intolerance, but because of his sons' and grandsons' impotency and inability to support it.

When Āurangzib seized the reins of Government, and Dārā Shikōh was executed, Sarmad was called before a council of 'Olamā,' who gave the opinion that he was worthy of death. This *fatwa* was ratified by Āurangzib and Sarmad was executed.

His nakedness, his refusal to utter any but the negative part of the Islamic creed, and his pantheistic view of the deity caused him to be regarded as a heretic, while his friendship for Dārā Shikōh, whose succession to the Empire he is said to have foretold, made him politically a suspect. Various quatrains are said to have been improvised by Sarmad when he was led out to execution. Of these the finest are:—

رسیده یارِ قریان نیک ایذم . . بهر رنگی که آئی می شناسم

"The Friend of the naked sword has now arrived.

In whatever disguise thou mayst come I recognise Thee."

And

شوری شد و از خوابِ عدم چشم گشودیم . . دیدیم که باقی است شبِ فتنه نمودیم

"There was an anduproar, I opened my eyes from the eternal sleep.

Saw that the night of wickedness remained, and slept again."

Sarmad died valiantly. The following epistle which Dārā Shikōh wrote to Sarmad and the latter's reply thereto have come down to us:—

Text.

نامه دارا شکوه به سارماد

پیرو مرشد من —

اگر من مذم اراده من کجاست — وگر من نیستم پس چه خطاست

رسولِ مختار بختگ کفار می رفت — شکست بر لشکرِ اسلام می افتاد — سبب چیست

جواب سارماد

هرچه خواندیم فراموش کردیم . . الا حدیثِ دوست که تکرار می کنیم

Translation.

Dārā Shikōh to Sarmad³.

My Pir and Guide, If I be I— where is my will? If not I— what is the fault? The powerful Prophet used to go to fight with the infidel, the soldiers of Islam were defeated. What's the cause?

Sarmad's reply.

"Whatever I have read, I have forgotten;

Except the word of the Friend I am repeating."

Sarmad was executed in 1071 H. (1661-1662 A.D.) and Dārā Shikōh in 1069 H. (1656 A.D.). Sarmad lies buried near the Delhi Jāmi' Masjid. His tomb is still visited and venerated by the public, who make offerings of flowers and light candles there.

Āurangzib, in this as in other matters, is to be looked upon as the leader of an orthodox Musalmān reaction against the laxity of Akbar and his successors.

Sarmad's poems consist, mostly, if not entirely, of quatrains, of which no complete collection has been published, though a few of them have been lithographed at Bombay and Delhi. A *fard* and a *ghazal* and a few *rubai'yāt* are given below. Rieu notes that more than 400 of his quatrains are preserved in MS. in the British Museum.

Text.

فرد

در کعبه و بتخانه سنگ اوشد و چوب اوشد .: یکجا حجر الاسود یکجا بت پندو شه

غزل

سوخت بی وجهم تماشا را به بین .: گشت بی جرمم مسیحا را به بین
 زنده کش جان نباشد دیده .: گر ندیدیستی بیا مارا به بین
 ای که از دیدار یوسف غافل .: داغ یعقوب وز لبت را به بین
 ای که از روز بدم در حیرتی .: یکزمان این روی زیبا را به بین
 شاه درویش و قلندر دیده .: سومد سرمست رسوا را به بین

رباعیات

۱ .: کردی تو علم بدلربائی خود را .: هم در فن مهرو آشنائی خود را
 این دیده که بینامست تماشائی تست .: هر لحظه به صد رنگ نمائی خود را
 ۲
 گر متقیم کار بیارست مرا .: با سبک و زنا چه کار است مرا
 این خرقه پشمینه که صد فتنه دروست .: بازش نکشم بدوش — عارست مرا
 ۳
 این فسق و فجور کار هر روز ما .: پر شد ز گناه گامه و کوزه ما
 میخندد روزگار و میگریه عمر .: بر طاعت و بر نماز و بر روز ما
 ۴
 سرمه جسمیست جانش در دست کسیست .: تیریست ولی کمانش در دست کسیست
 میخواست که آدم شده از دست جهد .: گوی شده و ریسمانش در دست کسیست
 ۵
 تنها نه همین دیو حرم خانم اوست .: این ارض و سما تمام کا شانم اوست
 عالم هم دیوانم افسانم اوست .: عاقل بود آنکسی که دیوانم اوست
 ۶
 این نفس ستمگار به بین شیطان است .: پیوسته عیان بود ولی پنهان است
 ابلیس خودی چرا به ابلیس بدی .: در پیش خیالات تو او چبران است

	۷		
سرمد اگرش وفاست خودمی آید	∴	گر آمدنش رواست خود می آید	
بپهوده چرا در پی او میگردی	∴	بنشین اگر او خداست خود می آید	
	۸		
سرمد غم عشق بوالهوس را ندیدند	∴	سوز دل پروانه مگس را ندیدند	
عمری باید که یار آید بکنار	∴	این دولت سرمد همه کس را ندیدند	
	۹		
هر چند که صد دوست بمن دشمن شد	∴	از دوستی یکی دلم ایمن شد	
وحدت بگزیدیم وز کثرت رستیم	∴	آخر من ازو شدم و او از من شد	
	۱۰		
انکس که ترا کار جهانبانی داد	∴	مارا همه اسباب پریشانی داد	
پوشاند لباس هر که را عیبی بود	∴	بی عیبان را لباس عربانی داد	
	۱۱		
سرمد گله اختصار می باید کرد	∴	یک کار ازین دو کار می باید کرد	
یا تن برضای دوست می باید داد	∴	یا جان برپیش نثار می باید کرد	
	۱۲		
از وهم و خیال و فکر دنیا بگذر	∴	چون باد صبا ز باغ صحترا بگذر	
دیوانه مشو برونک و بوی گل و مل	∴	پشیمار بشو ازین هراها بگذر	
	۱۳		
اعتبار و عهده های مردم دنیا غلط	∴	بان غلط آری غلط لامشب غلط فردا غلط	
نسخه بیخاکی دیوان عمر ما مپرس	∴	خط غلط معنی غلط انشا غلط امل غلط	
	۱۴		
با فکر و خیال کس نباشد کارم	∴	در طور غزل طریق حافظ دارم	
اما بر بوعی ام سرید ختام	∴	نه جرعه کشی با ده او بسپارم	
	۱۵		
سرمد تو حدیث کعبه و دیر مکن	∴	در وادئی شک چو گهریان سیر مکن	
روشیوه بندگی ز شیطان آموز	∴	یک قیله گزین سجده بهر فیور مکن	
	۱۶		
ناکرده گناه در جهان کیست بگو	∴	انکس که گنه نکرد چون زیست بگو	
من بد کنم و تو بد مکافات دهی	∴	بس فرق میان من و تو چیست بگو	
	۱۷		
گه سروگهی سنبل و گه یا سمنی	∴	گه کوه و بیابانی و گاهی چمنی	
گه نور چراغی و گهی بوی گلی	∴	گه در چمنی و گاه در انجمنی	
	۱۸		
سرمد در دین عجب شکستی کردی	∴	ایمان بفدای چشم مستی کردی	
با عجز و نیاز جهان نقد خود را	∴	رفتی و نثار بت پوستی کردی	

Translation.

Fard.

In the Ka'ba and the idol temple He became the stone, and He became the wood.
In one place He became the Hajru'l Āswad, and in the other a Hindu idol.⁴

Ghazal.

He burnt me without cause, behold the spectacle.
He slew me without guilt, behold the Messiah.
A living being who has no soul, thou hast seen ;
If thou hast not seen, come and see me.
Ye, who care not to have sight of Joseph,
Behold the agony of Jacob and Zulaikhā !
Ye, who wonder at my hapless days,
Behold for a moment this charming face.
Thou hast seen a *Shāh*, a *darwīsh* and a *qalandar*.
Behold Sarmad, the drunken and dishonoured.

Ruba'iyāt (Quatrains).

1

Thou hast made thyself famous in winning hearts,
Also in the art of friendship and affection.
These eyes which are vigilant are observant of thyself ;
Every moment thou showest thyself in a hundred colours.

2

If I am a devotee, my object is the Friend,
What have I to do with the rosary and the (sacerdotal) thread !
This woollen garment wherein lie a hundred evils
Never shall I put on my shoulder : it is disgusting to me.

3

Our every-day avocation is villainy and wickedness.
Our platters and vessels have been filled with sins.
Creation is laughing and life is wailing
At our prayers, genuflexions and fastings.

4

Sarmad is a body, his soul is in the hand of another :
An arrow, but its bow is in the hand of another.
He wished to be a man in order to jump out of the net :
He became a cow whose tether is in the hand of another .

5

Not only are these temples and sanctuaries His house,
This earth and this sky are entirely His abode.
The whole world is mad about His fictions.
He is truly wise who is mad about Him.

6

This tyrannous passion, lo ! is Satan :—
Always visible, yet hidden.
Thou art thyself the Devil, why art thou ill-disposed to the Devil ?
Before thy thoughts, he is bewildered.

7

Sarmad ! if He is true to his word, He Himself will come :
 If His coming is permissible, He Himself will come.
 Why shouldst thou wander aimlessly after Him ?
 Sit down : if He be the Khud-ā, He Himself will come.

8

Sarmad ! the pang of Love is not given to the self-seeking :
 The fire in the heart of the moth, is not given to the fly.
 It takes a life-time for the beloved to come to the lap :
 This everlasting wealth is not given to every One.

9

Although a hundred friends have turned mine enemies,
 Owing to the friendship of the One, my mind has become contented.
 I have accepted Unity and been freed from multiplicity.
 At last I became of Him, and He of me.

10

He who gave thee the sovereignty of the world,
 Gave me all the causes of anxiety.
 He covered with a garment those with whom He found fault.
 To the faultless He gave the robe of nudity.

11

Sarmad ! thou shouldst shorten thy murmurings.
 Thou shouldst adopt one course out of these two courses—
 Either, thou shouldst give thy body for the pleasure of the Friend ;
 Or, thou shouldst sacrifice thy life in His way.

12

Pass on from the worldly fancy, thought, and care.
 Like the breeze of morn pass on from the garden and field.
 Be not mad on the colour and smell of the rose and wine.
 Be wise, pass on from these hallucinations.

13

To put trust in the promises of the men of the world is wrong :—
 Yea wrong, verily wrong, to-night wrong, to-morrow wrong.
 Of the copy of the inquiry of our Book of life do not ask.
 Its transcriptions are wrong, meaning wrong, composition wrong, and spellings wrong.

14

I have no business with the fancy and thought of others.
 In composing a *ghazal* I adopt the manner of Hāfiẓ.
 But in a *rubā'i* I am the disciple of *Khayyām*,
 But do not quaff much of his wine.

15

Sarmad ! speak not of the Ka'ba and of the temple.
 In the valley of doubt do not wander like the strayed wayfarer.
 Go and learn from Satan how to worship.
 Accept one Qebla and do not bow before every stranger.



16

Say; who is in the world that has not committed a sin?
 He who has sinned not: say; how could he live?
 I do evil and thou requitest with evil:
 Then say; what is the difference between me and thee?P

17

Sometimes thou art a cypress, sometimes a hyacinth and sometimes a jasmine,
 Now a mountain, a wilderness, and at another time a flower-garden,
 Now thou art the light of a candle, now the scent of the rose,
 Sometimes thou art in a garden, and sometimes in an assembly.

18

Sarmad! thou hast done strange injury to the religion.
 Thou hast bartered thy faith for one with an intoxicating eye.
 With supplication and belief—thy entire wealth—
 Thou didst go and squander on an idol-worshipper.

Notes.

1. Mullā Ṣadru'ddīn Shīrāzī was a great scholar, who flourished during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās I. His books are still taught to advanced Arabic students. Mīrzā 'Abū'l Qāsim was of Fandarsak in Astarabad, in Persia. He, too, flourished at the time of 'Abbās I. He travelled extensively in India. He was asked why he did not go on pilgrimage to Mecca. He replied that there goats were sacrificed, and he did not like to take the life of a living being. It would be interesting to study the life and teachings of these two scholars, which exerted, no doubt, powerful influences in moulding the future character of their pupil, Sarmad.

2. Cf. S'ādi—

ندانی که چون من رسیدم بدوست . . . که هرکس که پیش آمدم گفتم اوست

“ Do you not know that when I reached the Friend,
 Of anyone that came before me, I said ' It is He. ' ? ”

3. I have not seen this letter in any book, but it is remembered for the beauty of its style. I am afraid that some passages of the letter have escaped my memory.

Cf. the following in Jāmi's *Satāmān and Absāl* in Fitz-Gerald's translation:—

If I — this Dignity and Wisdom whence?
 If thou — then what this abject Impotence?

Also—

Whether I be I or no:
 If I — the pumpkin why on you?
 If you — then where am I, and who?

4. *Ka'ba*—the inner part of the temple at Mecca. *Hajru'l Aswad*, or the black stone, has come down from the time of heathenism, and is venerated by the Mecca pilgrims.

Quatrain 7. *Khuda* is used in a double sense. *Kkuda* = God, and *Khud-ā* = self-comer.

Quatrain 10. Sarmad's '*Sartor resartus*', or clothes philosophy, has been very beautifully expressed in this quatrain.

Quatrain 14. Sarmad, who was himself a great poet, pays a well-deserved compliment to two of the greatest poets of Irān — *Khawāja Hāfiẓ* of Shirāz, a master of the *ghazal*, and *Hakīm 'Omar-al-Khayyām* of Nishāpūr, whose quatrains are the delight of both East and West.

Quatrain 15. The Devil fell for refusing to pay homage to Adam at the command of God.

Quatrain 18. In this, Sarmad apparently mentions his prosperous days at Tatta, his love for *Abhai Chand*, his neglect of business, and his renunciation of the exoteric religion of Islām.



General.

Sarmad composed the following verse in praise of Abhai Chand:—

نمیدانم درین چرخ کهن دیر . . . خدائی من ابهی چندست یا غیر

“ I do not know if, in the whole universe,
My God is Abhai Chand or any other beside him.”

Cf. the following verses quoted by Prince Dārā Shikōh in the *Risala-i-Haqnūma*, the first from the *Lam'āt*.

معشوق و عشق و عاشق هر سه یکی است اینجا . . . چون وصل در ننگند، هران چه کار دارد

“ The Beloved, the Love, and the Lover all three are One here.

When there can be no union, what is the use of separation?”

ای آنکه خدای را بجزئی هر جا . . . تو عین خدائی نه جدائی بخدا

این جستنی تو همین بآن می ماند . . . قطره به بیان آب و جوید دریا

“ Thou who seekest God everywhere :

Thou art the very God, not apart from God, by God.

This thy search is just like that

(When) the drop is in the water and is seeking the river.”

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