

Khoja Ahmad Yasavi and the Evolution of Tasawwuf

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Abstract: The article tells that Khoja Ahmed Yassawi is a manifestation of Sufism and the founder of the Yassawi movement, gives a brief description of the work “Devoni Hikmat”, as well as the ideas of fidelity to religious and moral values that arose under his influence. , the continuation of the tradition of philosophical wisdom and the ideas of the teachings of Yassawi have a unique harmony in the world of Islam.

1 INTRODUCTION

If we delve into the annals of Sufism, it becomes evident that the most prolific hub of saints lies in Turkestan, with a significant concentration in modern Uzbekistan. The global renown of these saints is astonishing. Notable among them are Ahmad Yassawi, Abdulkhalik Gijduvani, Najmuddin Kubro, Pakhlavon Mahmud, Shahi Naqshband, Khoja Akhror Vali, and others, who stand as sources of immense pride for our people.


One would not be remiss in asserting that the history of Turkic peoples holds unparalleled significance on the world stage in terms of culture, spirituality, education, literature, art, music, and politics. This historical tapestry has woven together indelible contributions from great scholars, literary and artistic schools, righteous rulers, and patriotic heroes. Throughout the history of Turkic peoples, numerous luminaries have exerted profound spiritual influence and expanded the boundaries of thought. However, figures like Hajja Ahmad Yasawi, who have guided the spiritual, literary, cultural, and even political life of peoples for centuries, are rare.


His Holiness Ahmad Yasawi undertook a remarkable and unforgettable historical mission, not only as the founder of a new sect but also as the inaugural creator of Turkish mystical poetry.


The inception of mystical teachings in Central Asia can be traced back to Yusuf Hamadani (1048-1140). Hamadani established a monastery and madrasah in Marw and Bukhara, imparting education to many Turkic and Persian students. Notable among his pupils in Bukhara were Khasan Andoki, Abdullah Baraki, Akhmad Yassawi, and Abdulkhalik Gijduvani. These four adept students subsequently carried forward the Hamadani school with success.


Building upon Hamadani's teachings, the Yassawiyya and Naqshbandiya sects took shape. The founder of the first mystical sect that emerged in Central Asia in the 12th century was Sultan ul-Arifin Khoja Ahmed Yassawi.

"The role of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi in the history of Sufism was immensely significant, with his sphere of influence extending widely. The Yasawi tradition began to proliferate throughout Central Asia, reaching Great Turkestan, Ak-Edil, the Caucasus, Khorasan, Iran, Rum, Badakhshan, and East Turkestan. The Yassawi culture has endured and continues to thrive in a distinctive manner over the centuries."

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2 OBJECTIVE

The earliest recorded information about Ahmad Yasawi was documented by the eminent scholar of his time, Sufi Muhammad Donishmand, in the 12th century, and Muhiyuddin al-Arabi (died 638/1240). Manuscripts from various periods, authored by scholars such as Khoja Muhammad Porso, Alisher Navoi, Fakhruddin Ali Safi, Hassan Khoja Nisari, Sultan Ahmed Khazini, Muhammad Tahir Khorazmi, Ghulam Sarwar Lokhuri, and Hisamuddin Signoki, have preserved valuable information about Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. These authors bestowed upon him honorable titles such as "Sultan ul-orifin," "Piri Turkestan," and "Qibla prayer of the people of Turkestan."

Despite our awareness of sources praising the greatness of Ahmad Yasawi, the original manuscripts of his creative works remain largely unknown. Nevertheless, manuscripts detailing the genealogy, family tree, and pedigree of Ahmed Yasawi have survived. These historical sources are particularly significant as they also highlight notable individuals associated with Yasawi's family, revealing the spiritual closeness between Sahibgiron Amir Temur and Ahmed Yasawi. The manuscripts also indicate Saifuddin Orung Kvilaki's translation of Yasawi's genealogy into Turkish, Khoja Bayazid's connection with Amir Temur in the Yassawi family, and the presence of Turkish descendants of His Holiness Rasulullah in the Yasawi family.

For a prolonged period, the scientific study of Yasawi's life and work faced obstacles, and his works were prohibited from publication. In the 1970s, attempts to assess Yasawi's contributions to national culture, language, and literature were met with condemnation. The period following Uzbekistan's independence marked a new era of legal research. Publications of Yasawi's work, particularly copies of *Devoni Hikmat*, appeared in newspapers and magazines, and in 1990-92, independent publications became available to readers. Scientific conferences dedicated to Yasawi were held in Uzbekistan in 1993, and the texts of the lectures were published in a separate collection. Articles on Yasawi's personality, sect, and poetry were also published in the press.

In the years of independence, a crucial task in the country was the in-depth study and promotion of the rare heritage, exemplary life, and social activities of great writers and thinkers. The mention of the great mystic and "excellent" guardian, Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, evokes pride among compatriots for the legacy and teachings of this Turkestan-born thinker. His greatness is underscored by UNESCO declaring

1993 as the "Year of Yasawi." Nearly eight centuries after his time, interest in Yasawi's teachings and wisdom continues to grow, symbolizing the enduring legacy of his name, teachings, and deeds.

3 MAIN PART

Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, the founder of the first mystical movement of Sufism in Central Asia in the 12th century, was born in Sairam (Yassi) in the second half of the 11th century, around 1103 according to some sources. Although the commonly accepted time of his death is 1167, there are conflicting stories suggesting he may have lived up to 130 years.

According to Professor Komiljon Khoshimov, Khoja Ahmad was born in the city of Sairam in 1041 into the Ona Khotun family, with Ibrahim as his father and Karasoch as his mother. Sairam was a thriving center of science and culture for the Turkic peoples, as evidenced by numerous mosques, madrassas, and intellectual figures like Kozi Bayzavi and Lutfullah Saremi.

Young Ahmad, raised by his mother Aisha Khotun after his father's death in 1048, demonstrated exceptional intelligence and memorization skills during his studies with teacher Shahabedin Isfijabi. An incident involving hiding a rooster to test the students' faith showcased Ahmad's strong religious convictions and earned him praise from his teacher.

After moving to Yassi with his sister, Ahmad met his first teacher, Arslan Bobo, and continued his education. He received teachings from Shahabdin Isfijabi in Yassid, and under the guidance of Arslan Baba, he mastered the secrets of internal science. Later, Ahmad traveled to Bukhara, where he studied Arabic, Persian, and mystical literature. He consulted with prominent scholars like Khoja Abdukholik Gijduvani and Sheikh Hamadani, becoming one of Hamadani's esteemed disciples.

Upon Hamadani's recommendation, Ahmad returned to his native Turkestan and became a respected spiritual leader. His students, including Mansur Baba and Abul Malik Oto Tosh Khoja, played crucial roles in spreading the Yassaviya sect in Turkestan.

In the Middle Ages, Ahmad Yassawi was revered as the "Feast of Turkestan" and "Khoja of Turkestan." Alisher Navoi acknowledged his greatness in *Nasaim ul-Mukhabbat*, and Abdurauf Fitrat praised Yassawi's literary contributions.

Muhammad Fuad Koprulizoda's work, "The First Mystics in Turkish Literature," provides significant insights into Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's life and sect. In the 20th century, Ergash Rustamov's article on

Yassawi contributed to a renewed interest in his work in Uzbekistan.

Ahmed Yassawi, known as the first Turkic-language mystical poet, wrote about 240 poems in his work "Hikmat," also known as "Devoni Hikmat." His teachings emphasize Sufism, truth, and the need to free the spirit from vices. Yassawi's poems, written in Turkish, quickly gained popularity due to their language and melodiousness.

Yassawi's wisdom addresses the importance of humility, renunciation of sensual pleasures, and the pursuit of knowledge. His teachings highlight the significance of education and denounce illiteracy, disbelief, and moral shortcomings.

In summary, Khoja Ahmed Yassawi's profound contributions to Sufism, literature, and education have left an enduring legacy in Central Asian culture and the hearts of Turkic peoples for centuries.

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Ahmed Yassawi, renowned as the inaugural mystical poet in the Turkic language, penned approximately 240 poems in his opus, "Hikmat," also recognized as "Devoni Hikmat." His teachings pivot around Sufism, veracity, and the imperative liberation of the soul from vices. Yassawi's poetic compositions, articulated in Turkish, swiftly garnered acclaim owing to their linguistic elegance and melodic cadence.

Yassawi's sagacity underscores the paramountcy of humility, renouncement of sensual gratifications, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge. His doctrines accentuate the value of education while vehemently condemning illiteracy, incredulity, and moral deficiencies.

In synopsis, Khoja Ahmed Yassawi's profound impact on Sufism, literature, and education has bequeathed an indelible legacy in Central Asian culture and the hearts of Turkic communities for centuries.



Figure 1: The work "Hikmat".

The work "Hikmat" advocates universal human values such as purity, honesty, correctness, kindness, self-sufficiency, hard work, and honest labor. It emphasizes the holistic improvement of an individual internally and externally in the pursuit of fulfilling the will of God, as expressed in the works of Yassawi. There is some discrepancy regarding the number of wise words attributed to Ahmed Yassawi, with some sources claiming 4,400 words and others stating 9,900 words. The poet himself, on his sofa, asserts, "I have spoken four thousand four hundred wise words; this is a decree." However, some scholars, including Kamil Erarlon, view this numerical discrepancy as

symbolic, with the emphasis placed on the content of the poet's words rather than the specific count.



Figure 2: The grave of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi.

Between 1395 and 1397, Amir Temur ordered the construction of a grand mausoleum at the site of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi's grave, the founder of the Yassawi order in Turkestan. Additionally, a substantial stone cauldron, weighing 2 tons and made from a blend of seven metals, was crafted by the master blacksmith Abdul Aziz ibn Sharafuddin of Tabriz and his students. This cauldron, unique in the world, held 60 buckets of water for dervishes and pilgrims, providing a source of purification and healing during Eid celebrations.

Khoja Ahmed Yassawi's legacy holds a significant place in spiritual development, with his teachings spreading throughout Central Asia. The Sharif family gained prominence through this lineage, and numerous works were written about his contributions over centuries. "Mirror of Hearts" by Sufi Mohammad Donishmand, housed in the Hamid Suleiman Complex, is one such work praising Ahmed Yassawi's elevated status as the Sultan of the learned and the leader of the pious.

The Yassawi lineage extended across Central Asia, drawing murids from various regions. Sufi Muhammad Donishmand's work emphasizes Yassawi's profound thoughts on Sufi education, making it a crucial written heritage of the Yassawi period. Alisher Navoi, in his tazkir "Nasoim ul-muhabbat" (1495-1496), lauds Khoja Ahmed Yassawi as the highest sheikh of Turkestan, highlighting his fame and greatness.

Notable figures like Abdurauf Fitrat and Abdurrahman Saadi further attest to Yassawi's literary and poetic significance. Fitrat likens Yassawi's literary path to that of simple folk poets, emphasizing his equal weight, rhyme, and style. Saadi describes Yassawi as a true and sensitive poet, whose heart burns with spiritual love throughout his life.

Numerous scientific works, such as Fakhruddin Ali Safi's "Rashahot" and Ghulam Sarwar Lokhuri's "Hasinat ul-Asfiya," delve into Ahmed Yassawi's life, work, order, genealogy, and spiritual legacy. The wealth of writings underscores the enduring impact of

Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, revered as a great saint and poet for centuries.



Figure 3: The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi.

It's important to note that for a significant period, the life and work of Yassawi couldn't be scientifically studied as his works were prohibited from publication. However, in the 1970s, there was a commendable effort to evaluate the historical and cultural significance of his contributions, including language and literature. With the onset of independence, a new era in legal research emerged in Uzbekistan. The original copy of Devoni Hikmat was published in various newspapers and magazines and gained independent publication between 1990 and 1992.

The release of "The Year of Ahmad Yasawi" in 1993 generated considerable interest, not only in Uzbekistan but also in other Turkish countries, particularly Turkey. This publication was significant for its literary and moral details, and it garnered attention from various quarters. In the same year, scientific conferences dedicated to Yassawi were conducted in both Uzbekistan and Turkey, and the lecture texts were published in a separate collection. Numerous articles about Yassawi's personality, sect, and poetry were published in the press. The Uzbekiton Writers' Union established a special prize in the name of Akhmad Yasawi.

In the historic city of Yassi, Ahmad Yassawi University was established, bearing witness to the sovereignty of the state and commemorating Sultan ul-Arifin. In the years 1395-1397, the grand mausoleum of Amira Temura, the mausoleum of Khodji Akhmeda Yasavi, was commissioned in Turkestan as per the order of Yassaviya.



Figure 4: The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi.

4 CONCLUSION

The history of the Turkic peoples is particularly noteworthy and deserving of global attention in terms of culture, spirituality, education, literature, art, music, and politics. Throughout their history, the Turkic peoples have produced remarkable scholars, literary and artistic schools, just rulers, and patriotic heroes. Numerous influential figures, such as Haja Ahmed Yassawi, have played a significant role in shaping the spiritual and cultural life of Turkish nations over the centuries, influencing Sufism, literature, culture, spirituality, and even politics.

His Holiness Ahmad Yasawi achieved a distinctive and memorable historical feat, not only as the founder of a new sect but also as the pioneer of Turkish mystical poetry. Turkish, being a beautiful, powerful, impressive, and generous language, was historically used for translating texts related to Buddhism and monism. However, Ahmad Yassawi elevated his native language to the status of a sect language, placing it alongside Arabic and Persian as a mystical language. Thus, every word and phrase in the poems of Piri Turkestan became as holy, bright, and divine as the truths of Islam, as illustrated in Alisher Navoi's work "Nasaim ul-Mukhabbat": "Khoja Ahmed Yassawi - Sheikh of the Turkestan estate."

Eminent Turkish scholars, such as Fuad Kupriliyade, Professor Abdurauf Fitrat, and V. Zokhidov, as well as N. Mallaev, Ergash Rustamov, S. Erkinov, B. Kosimov, and M. Mirkholdorov, have made significant contributions to the study of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's life and work.

The literary legacy left by the poet under the pseudonym Yassawi primarily comprises quatrains, along with ghazals and masnavi. The exact extent of Ahmed Yasawi's literary legacy remains unknown, but his works, which include over four thousand words of wisdom, are intended to encourage people to live pure, honest, and compassionate lives. The ideological direction of his poems is mystical, urging individuals to restrain the ego and embrace kindness towards orphans and the poor.

In one of his poems, Khoja Ahmad attributes the source of his wisdom to hadith, emphasizing the content of his wisdom as consisting of verses and good thoughts. His numerous statements advocate for kindness towards orphans and strangers, promoting a compassionate and virtuous way of life.

Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's benevolence towards strangers and orphans, as some argue, goes beyond being a poet of the "elite" and reflects a poet calling upon the soul and heart to purity, akin to a great representative of Sufism. His wisdom not only illuminates the hearts of common people but also

serves as a source of inspiration for writers among the Turkic-speaking peoples for many centuries.

According to Professor Farid Hakimjon, the works of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi and his follower Suleiman Bakirgani are widely known in the Bulgarian region, with their language adopted as a model for education and artistic creation. The dissemination of Yassawi's wisdom in the Idylls, according to him, not only set an example for poets and writers but also contributed to the acceptance of new mystical feelings and thoughts.

Alfina Sigbatullina suggests that the Idil tributary served as a major trade route to Movarunnahr, and the Wisdom of Ahmad Yasawi gained fame in the Bulgarian state near Idyll through Central Asian merchants during Hazrat Sultan's lifetime. The influence of Yasawi's works is evident in the works of Mahmud Bulgari, Qutb, Khusom Kotiba, Ali, and Saifi Saraya during the Golden Horde Khanate era.

The views of Turkmen scientist Kurbanturdi Geldiev align with these confessions, noting that Ahmad Yassawi's creative experience strongly influenced poets such as Sayidnazar Saidi, Talyby, Kotibi, Zinkhari, Mullanafas, Miskinkilich, and the great Turkmen poet Magtymguly.

In conclusion, understanding Yasawi is synonymous with comprehending Sharia, Tariqa, Enlightenment, and Truth. To know Yasawi is to grasp perfection by delving into the mysteries of the human mind, heart, and soul.

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