Chapter 6

IRANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF SHIISM IN INDIA

It is difficult to find any specific opinion expressed by Hazin about Shiism in India. Abd al Latif too described mourning ceremonies in India in general terms. But the most detailed reflection of Indian Shiism is available in Bihbahani’s work. His opinions were expressed at three levels; first he wrote about the Shiite mourning ceremonies; second he evaluated the scholarship of the Shiite ulama, and third he commented on ethics in Shiite society. Since Indian Shiism was in a great deal affected by Shiism in Iran, it is proper to offer an overview of the sect in Iran and India.

Shiism in Iran

After the victory in the battle of Qadisiya, when the Arab army conquered Iran, Kufa was established as a garrison city to house Arab soldiers.\(^{364}\) Iranian captives were also brought to Kufa. In the course of time Iranian set themselves free from the bondage of Arab slavery, and became clients (mawali of Arab chiefs). Balazuri states that at the time of Qadisiya war about four thousand Iranians joined Arab army on the condition that they would be set free when the war was over. They also put the condition that they should be allowed to be associated with the person or tribe of their choice and should get a share in the spoil of war.\(^{365}\) At the time when the seat of caliphate was transferred from Madina to Kufa by 'Ali bin Abi Talib, the Arabs who supported the cause of him mostly belonged to the Southern part of Arabia. Montgomery Watt and S.H.M. Jafari are of the opinion that


\(^{365}\) Ahmad bin Yahya bin Jabir Baladuri, *Futuh ul Buldan*, Beirut, 1987, p. 279
the Arabs of Southern region supported Shiism because they were familiar with the concept of hereditary succession. 366

In the beginning Shias were a group of the Arab supporters of 'Ali, particularly those of the Qahtani tribe. This fact negates the view of some of the Arab scholars who are of the opinion that Shiism is a creation of Iranian mind. Richard Frye argues that the concept of Shiism had come to the minds of Arabs before it reached Iranians. 367 The presence of Iranians in Kufa helped spread the tenets of Shiism.

Though the familiarity of the mawali with Shiism, goes back to the time when 'Ali was in power, we do not find any evidence that they participated in political activities at that time. In the event of Karbala that took place in the year 680 AD in which Husain son of 'Ali was martyred, we do not find any role of the Iranians there. Even in the proceedings of the Tawwabin Movement (repentence for the martyrdom of Husain to seek revenge) there were no Iranians. The active participation of the mawali was in the movement that Mukhtar launched against the Ummayads in 686 AD. The number of mawali was quite large in the army of Mukhtar because he promised them positions and honours. The mawali were attracted to his cause because they faced racial discrimination by the Arabs. According to Tabari many of Mukhtar's soldiers spoke Persian. 368 The racial discrimination and prejudice increased more during the caliphate of Usman and reached its peak during the rule of the Umayyads. During the rule of this dynasty, some of the Arabs considered that the mawali were not true Muslims. Some administrators like Hajjaj bin Yusuf al Saqafi (693-714 AD) imposed jizya (poll tax) upon Iranians even after they had adopted the Islamic faith.

Among all the cities of Iran, the city of Qum has had a longer association with Shiism than any other city of this country. The Arab tribe who followed the tenets of Shiism, had started to settle down in this region by the last quarter of the seventh century.\textsuperscript{369} Ash'arid tribe was a highly populated tribe of Southern Arabia and the members of this tribe were the first to settle down in Qum.\textsuperscript{370} The support that was given by the members of this tribe to 'Ali, in the battle of Siffin, and later their association with Mukhtar in his movement, shows that they belonged to the Shiite sect. Almost all the geographical records of the tenth century testify to the presence of Shiite population in Qum. Ibn-i-Hawqal writes that the whole population of Qum belonged to the Shiite sect. The majority of them were Arabs, but they spoke Persian.\textsuperscript{371} Maqdisi has written that the people of Qum are the extremist Shias.\textsuperscript{372}

Leaving aside the migration of the Arabs of Shiite sect, there were also other factors responsible for the spread of Shiism in Iran. During the rule of the Umayyads (661-750 A.D) and 'Abbasids (750-1258 A.D) the 'Alids were persecuted and Shiism was suppressed in certain areas. The interest of the Iranians in Shiism and the remoteness of cities of Iran from the capital city of the caliphate, Baghdad, made Iran a suitable place for the escape of the 'Alids from the tyranny of the caliphs of Baghdad, and taking their refuge in Iran, made the Shiite tenets widely spread in this country. A large number of the tombs of the descendents of 'Ali, in the cities of Reyy and Qum shows how many of them were living as refugees in this country.

\textsuperscript{369} Hasan ibn Muhammad Qumi, \textit{History of Qum}, Tehran, 1982, p. 260
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid
\textsuperscript{371} Abut Qasim ibn Hawqal, \textit{Soorat ul Arz}, Beirut, p. 315
\textsuperscript{372} Shams ud Din abi Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Maqdisi, \textit{Ahsan ut Taqasim}, Leiden, 1906, p.395
The'Abbasids started unofficially their activities from the year 727AD. They protested against the oppression that was done by the Umayyads, towards the descendents of the Prophet, in order to carry out their mission. But the leaders of this mission, after arousing the sentiments of the people against the Umayyads and removing them from the seat of caliphate, took power in their hands and got hold of the seat of the caliphate.373

The 'Abbasid caliph M'amun (813-833AD) invited 'Ali bin Musa al Reza (770-813AD) to co-operate with him to neutralize the opposition of the 'Alids against his caliphate. The presence of 'Ali bin Musa in Tus (later Mashhad) was also one of the factors for the spread of Shiism in Iran.

In the early centuries of the Islamic era, Shiism was a minority sect in Iran. The main population of most of the cities was followers of Sunni Islam. In the beginning of the ninth century, there came into being a number of semi-independent ruling dynasties. The Tahirids (820-872AD) were the first semi-independent Iranian dynasty, to lay down the foundation of their rule in Khurasan. Frye writes that the Tahrids were quite firm to follow the tenets of Sunni Islam. They attacked the followers of Shiism and other heretics with the support of those high officials who belonged to the caliphate of Baghdad."374

The Saffarids (868-903 AD) based their power in Sistan after defeating the Tahirids in the Year 868AD. Their political activities show that they were fickle in their policy. Sometimes they expressed their loyalty to the Sunni caliphs of Baghdad, and at other times, they were in favor of the kharijites, a minor sect opposing the 'Abbasids. It appears that for

373 Heinz Halm, Shiism, tr. Qum, 2005, p. 60.
374 Richard N. Frye, Bukhara the medieval achievement, tr., Tehran ,1988, p. 57
them political power was more important than any other thing and they did not feel it necessary to associate themselves with any of the sects.\textsuperscript{375}

In the tenth century, a Shiite rule was established in the region of Tabaristan or Daylam in the North of Iran. Those who established the Shiite state were called Zaidis. The Northern region of Iran was attacked by Muslim armies, but the inhabitants of this region resisted adopting Islamic faith. The Shiites, finding that the Daylamis and 'Abbasids do not have cordial relations, took advantage of the situation and took refuge in Daylam. Hasan bin Zaid (864-883AD) was one of the leaders of this group. He established the Zaidi state (864-1034 AD) in Tabaristan. This was the first state that was established in Iran independently of the 'Abbasid caliphate.

In tenth century itself a group of ambitious free-booters descended down Daylam and marched towards Baghdad. They were known as Buyids. The 'Abbasid caliphate had become weak and in 945 AD. Muizud Daula of the Buyid family became the virtual ruler of it. The Buyids did not depose the 'Abbasid but ruled in their name because while the Buyids were Shiites, their subjects and Daylami soldiers were Sunnis.

On the whole the tenth century could be called the century of Shiism. Beside the Buyids who ruled over Iraq and Iran, there were the Fatimids (909-1171 AD) in Egypt, the Hamdanid (906-1001 AD) in Syria and the Zaidis in Yemen. All of them were Shias.

Inspite of the fact that the Buyids were raised in an environment of Zaidi Shiism, they were themselves twelveer Shiites and promoted this brand of Shiism.\textsuperscript{376}

\textsuperscript{375} Rasul Jafaryan, \textit{History of Shiism in Iran}, Qum, 2006, p.282
\textsuperscript{376} Bertold Spuler, \textit{History of Iran in the early Islamic Centuries}, tr., Tehran, 1994, 1, p.329.
The rise of the Turkish Sultanates, Ghaznawid and Saljuqid in the 11th century revived the spirit of Sunni Islam and diminished the influence of Shiism. Shiism came under attack on several fronts and survived as a persecuted sect.

During the Mongol invasion of the Eastern Islamic lands, both Sunnis and Shias suffered badly.

Hulaque kept Nasirud Din Tusi, a Shiite scholar and an astronomer, in his council of advisors and built an observatory for him in Maragha. The Mongols were generally tolerant towards all religions and sects because they did not have a hide bound faith of their own.

Ghazan khan (1295-1304 AD) was the first Mongol who embraced Islam in 1295. He took a balanced view of Sunni and Shiite sects. Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda (Uljaytu) (1304-1316 AD) adopted Shiism and propagated the creed in Iran. Though the Safavid period is considered to be the glorious period of Shiism, this movement in fact had started during the time of Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda who had declared Shiism as the state religion. He wrote a small treatise, entitled *Fawa'id* (Morals). In that, he included his spiritual experience and mentioned his mental condition that caused him to embrace Shiism. A large part of the treatise is the hagiography of 'Ali bin abi Talib, which in fact was the reason for him to adopt Shiism. In this he was helped by Allama Hilli (d.676 / 1277) a Shiite scholar. The strong protest made by the religious scholars of the Sunni sect compelled Uljaytu to withdraw his declaration of Shiism as the creed of the state, but he personally followed the tenets Shiism.

The rule of Shah Ismail Safavi (1501-1523 AD) opened a new chapter in the history of Shiite Islam in Iran. The Safavids belonged to a Sunni Sufi order established by Shaikh
Safi (d.1334) in Ardebil, north-eastern Azerbaycain (Iran). The Sufi order traced its spiritual and genealogical lineage through 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, so that a turn towards Shiism, under favorable circumstances, was not unnatural.\textsuperscript{377}

According to Roemer after the domination of Mongols over Iran, the dispute between the Muslims of the Sunni and Shiite sects over the lawful ruler of the Islamic world had lost its significance. But there developed a new faith called folk religion. The followers of this faith strongly believed that saints and sages have miraculous powers. They also highly respected 'Ali bin Abi Talib, the son in law of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{378}

The Safavid Sufi order attracted tribes of Turkish origin from Anatolia called Qizilbash (the red head). Shah Ismail founded the Safavid State with the help of the Qizilbash and declared Shiism as the state religion. In one of the most remarkable blending of religion and politics, Shah Ismail converted his command over the spiritual allegiance of Qizilbash into a source of political and military power.\textsuperscript{379}

Shiism was consolidated during Shah Tahamasp's period who invited Shiite scholars to his court not only from Iran but also from Lebanon (Jabal Amil). In the Safavid period the challenge between two Shiite law school, Usulis and Akhbaris was intensified (see later).

The attitude of Akhbaris and Usulis towards the ruler was not similar. The Usulis approved of cooperating with the rulers in particular conditions, while the Akhbaris opposed. One of the Usulis in Safavid court was Shaykh 'Ali al-Karaki who had come from

\textsuperscript{377} Irfan Habib, 'Shiism in Iran', History of Civilization of Central Asia, V. UNESCO, p. 780.
\textsuperscript{378} 'The Safavid Period', The Cambridge History of Iran, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurance Lockhart, Cambridge University Press, 1986, VI, p.189
\textsuperscript{379} Halm, Shiism, tr. p. 156.
Jabal Amil. The rivalry between the Usulis and Akhbaris in Iran and Iraq influenced the Shiite society in India as well.

**Shiism in India**

The arrival of Shiism in India is not clearly documented. According to Ibn-i Asir, Shiism came to India at the time of the caliphate of Ali bin Abi Talib.\(^{380}\) During the reign of the Ummayads when Sind and Multan were annexed to the Islamic territory, the development of Shiism in India stagnated.

In the next few centuries the arrival of a considerable number of Sufis and Saiyyids from Iran caused the growth of Shiism in the subcontinent. In the reign of Qutb ud Din Hindal (1378-1393), the fourth ruler of the first Islamic dynasty in Kashmir, about 700 Saiyyids migrated to Kashmir under the leadership of Sayyid Ali Hamadani and spread Shiism there. Mir Sayyid Ali’s son, Mir Muhammad, too led a group of 300 men of Sadat origin to Kashmir and stayed for a long time there. The migration of Mir Shams ud Din Iraqi as a Nur Bakhshi Sufi to Kashmir in 1481AD played an important role in the conversion of Hindus and Buddhists to Shiism.\(^{381}\)

About the role of Sufi learning in the fifteenth century India, Rizvi writes that the devotion of Iranian Sufis to the twelve imams did not differ from those of the Shiis. Ali’s *futuwwa* and mystical discourse of his disciple Kumail ibn Ziyad, became the key stone of Iranian sufi teachings. The developments paved the way for the conversion of the Sunnis to Shiism, both in Iran and in India.\(^{382}\)

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\(^{382}\) Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, p.161
A great number of Sadat entered North India in the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq, who supported Sunni Islam. However, it seems that during the government of the Tughluq Sultan, Shiis were in a better condition and Muharram ceremonies were held openly. But in Firuzs Tughluq’s reign, a harsh policy was adopted towards the Shias whom the Sultan considered as rawafiz (apostates).383

The Mongol invasion of Iran increased Iranian migration to the Deccan, and later the establishment of independent dynasties in this region, caused more migrations. Since the rulers of these dynasties were interested in the enrichment of their culture, they encouraged Iranian migrations to the Deccan. The Bahmani Kingdom (1374-1526) was one of these dynasties. The Bahmanis encouraged foreigners, known as afaqis or gharibs to come to their territories. One of the elites in the court of Sultan Muhammad II (1378-1397) was Fazlullah Inju, from the vicinity of Shiraz in Iran, and the dicsiple of Sa’ad ud Din Taftazani, a famous scholar in the Timurid court.384 The Sultan appointed Inju as Sadr in his court. He invited many scholars from Iran to the Bahmani court. One of Inju's disciples, Tajud-din Firuz had an important role to play in the migration of Iranian elites to the Deccan in this period. According to Harun Khan Shirvani, Inju was the follower of the Shiite sect.385

Firuz accelerated the influx of foreign scholars. He sent royal vessels from Goa and Chaul to procure talented migrants from overseas and valued them as the choicest gifts

384 Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Firishta, Tarikh-i Firishta, Bombay, 1832, I ,p. 589.
from overseas. The scholars attended weekly seminars which the Sultan organized where the discussions were marked by a complete absence of inhibition.\textsuperscript{386}

The Bahmani kings were the followers of Sunni Islam, but the Qutb Shahi rulers (1512-1686) were Shiite. Sultan Quli Qutbud-din came from Hamadan, Iran, to the Deccan and established a dynastic regime. The rulers of this kingdom imitated the Safavids of Iran and mentioned the name of the Safavid king in Friday prayers.\textsuperscript{387}

The presence of Shah Tahir Ismail in the court of Burhan Nizam Shah (1503-1553) indicates the influence of Iranians on the Nizam Shahi kingdom of Ahmadnagar. Shah Tahir was an Iranian who had become a twelver Shia. He convinced Burhan Nizam Shah to adopt Shiism as his creed. Shah Tahir became a minister in Nizam Shah's administration.\textsuperscript{388}

The Adil Shahis of Bijapur were also Shiite. The founder of this kingdom was Yusuf Adil Shah, the son of the Ottoman Sultan of Turkey. According to Firishta, Yusuf Adil Shah was the first king in India who ordered that the \textit{khatba} (Friday sermon) be recited in the names of the Isna Ashari Imams; and under his influence many nobles accepted this creed.\textsuperscript{389}

The Mughal rule created a conducive environment for Shiism to flourish in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Babur 1526-1530 AD was a Timurid ruler who established the Mughal dynasty in India. When he succeeded his father in 1494 AD, he held control only over Farghana, but after a successful attack in 1504 he conquered Kabul,
Ghazna and Badakhshan. These events coincided with the beginning of the Safavid rule over Iran. Babur was a Sunni but decided to seek help from the Safavid king to recover Samarqand. Shah Ismail agreed to assist him on the condition that, Samarqand should remain under the dominion of the Safavids. In order to obtain his martial-political objects, Babur had coins issued and the *khutba* read in the name of Shiite Imams. When Babur seized North India in 1526 minted coins in the name of the four caliphs.

About Humayun’s attitude towards Shiism Rizvi writes that:

> It would seem that Humayun’s devotion to the descendants of the prophet Muhammad and the Imams had made the Shii and Sunni differences meaningless to him. He had earlier expressed his faith in his quatrains and verses and reiterated them to convince the Shah and his dignitaries of his devotion to Imam ‘Ali and his successors.

One Shiite Sayyid, Raju bin Sayyid Hamid, decided to abandon *taqiyya* in Humayun’s reign. He was of the opinion that *taqiyya* was responsible for the conversion of the sons and grandsons of Shiite parents to the Sunni sect. The act of abandoning *taqiyya* was a measure of the tolerant atmosphere during the Mughal rule which intensified during the reign of Abbas.

Rizvi has divided the history of Shiism in Akbar’s reign (1556-1605 AD) into three parts. First, Shiism during the regency of Bairam Khan, ending in March 1560. Second,

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391 Rizvi, *The History of Isna Ashari Shiis in India*, I, p. 195
393 Rizvi, *History of Isna Ahari Shiis in India*, I, p. 199
Shiism under the dominance of Makhdumul-Mulk, which ended in 1579. Third Shiism until the end of Akbar's reign.394

According to Mirat Ahmadi (a local history of Ahmadabad), Aurangzeb was more tolerant towards Iranian Shiis in comparison with Indian Shiis. He was opposed to taqiyya, and forced the Isma'ili bohras who posed as Sunnis, to break their fast in the Sunni tradition. He appointed Sunni Imams to lead the Ismaili congregational prayers.395

Aurangzeb's successor, Bahadur Shah 1707-1712 AD supported Shiism openly. He ordered the removal of Caliph Usman's titles from the khutba and addition of the title of (deputy) to Ali's name.396 This provoked the Sunni ulama and caused riots, especially in Lahore. The disturbance persuaded Bahadur Shah, to abandon this policy.

Muharram mourning in India

Shiite rituals, and among them Muharram mourning, had an effective role in propagating Shiism in India. The history of mourning for the third Shiite Imam, Husain bin Ali, goes back to the time of tawwabin; a group referred to earlier that held a formal ceremony at the burial place of the martyred Imam. When they determineded to fight the Syrian army in 684, they first went to Karbala and lamented the martyrdom of the Imam.397

During the Umayyad period, the mourning ceremony for the third Shiite Imam was held in secret. Very likely the tradition of commemorating Ashura (10th day of Muharram) was founded during this period.398

394 Ibid, p. 199
395 Ibid, II, p. 37
397 Jafarian, History of Shiism in Iran, pp. 22-23.
When the Ummayads declared *Ashura* as a mirth day and celebrated it, the Shiis reacted to reinforce its mournful status. Jafarian mentions on the authority of al-Biruni that the Umayyads, even after the decline of their rule, considered *Ashura* as a day of festival. They wore new dresses and jewellery and made merry. The Shiis recited mournful elegies and lamented.399

The region of Karkh in Baghdad, an important Shiite center in the tenth century, particularly in the reign of Buyids, witnessed organized Muharram ceremonies. Some times these rituals were a point of conflict between Shiis and Sunnis. During one of these conflicts, Abu Jafar Shaykh Tusi’s (d. 460/1067) home was attacked, and he was compelled to leave Baghdad, and migrate to Najaf, where he founded a Shiite scholarship center.400

In tenth century Baghdad, Cairo and Aleppo, there were some places known as “Husayniyyat” which were constructed exclusively for Muharram rituals.401

Apparently public mourning processions, which were the main part of Muharram rituals, appeared during the Buyid period in Baghdad, and from there spread to Iran. On the authority of Ibn Asir, Nakash writes that Muizz ud Dawla was the first Buyid ruler to order people to close their shops and take part in Muharram ceremonies.402

Against Halm who traces the root of Iranian mourning of Muharram to pre-Islamic traditions,403 Jafaryan believes that these ceremonies were effected by the mourning rituals of Iraq.404 Later, the Iranians transported the mourning ceremonies to India.

399 *Ibid*
402 *Ibid*
The Nimatullahi khanqahs at Bidar and in other Bahmanid towns must have introduced the Iranian model of 'ashura mourning into the Deccan. Although the Shii migrants from Iran to the Bahmanid Deccan observed taqiyya, they had no inhibitions in re-orientating the 'ashura mourning rituals. Many Bahmanid sultans and harem inmates were also deeply devoted to the Prophet's family. Consequently, long before the establishment of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, the 'ashura mourning rites were firmly established in the Deccan.405

Besides Iranians, travellers from other nations arrived in India in medieval times. Some wandering dervishes, who were known as qalandars, jawalisq and Haydaris, came from Turkey in the thirteenth century, and popularized the ritual of devotion to the family of the Prophet. The khanqahs of these dervishes in Sehwan [Sind] turned into one of the main centers of the devotees to Ahl-i Bayt. They recited mournful poetry collectively, and in this manner popularized the Muharram rituals among the people.406

The Sufis employed musical instruments in their Ashura ceremonies. An account of an assembly in the jamat khana of a renowned sufi, Khaja Banda Nawaz (d. 825/1422) attests to the prevalence of the practice as well as the objection raised against it. Rizvi has translated narrated this account from Jawami ul Kilam:

On Wednesday 10 Muharram 803, at breakfast a large crowd had assembeled at the jamat-khana of Khaja Banda Nawaz. The musicians had arrived and had started playing. Some of the Khaja's companions were listening to the music. The Khaja said, "Today everyone is observing the 'ashura rituals. Today sama' (sufi music) should be

405 Rizvi, History of the Isna Ashari Shis in India, II, p. 334.
406 Ibid., p. 292.
held for the souls of Imams Hasan and Husain and people should weep for them. This 
listening to sama' on 'ashura day in order to arouse ecstasy is a controversial topic for 
it makes the listeners forget Imams Hasan and Husain.” The Khaja added that on a 
previous 'ashura day, when he and Mawlana Alaud Din were listening to sama' in the 
grounds of Sher Khan's house in Delhi, they had soon realized that it should not be 
heared on that day. Khaja Banda Nawaz remarked that “in times of distress Sufis 
listened to sama'. In sama' the traditions of the pirs (sufi guides) had to be followed 
strictly. It was a disciple’s duty to follow his pir’s tradition.407

Despite objections, the Sufis played musical instruments even in Muharram rituals, 
and gradually other people also imitated them.

In India, the main places for mourning ceremonies of Muharram have been 
Imambaras. Vary likely Imambara have been influenced by Husayniyya, or Takiyya in 
Iran, and by Ashur-khana in the Deccan.408 Shirwani, the Iranian visitor to India in the 
early nineteenth century, wrote that Lucknow had one thousand Imambaras.409

Mrs. Hasan Ali, an English lady married to one Hasan Ali, has an interesting 
account of the Indian Shiite ladies expressing their sentiments during Muharram 
ceremonies in the nineteenth century. She writes:

In commemorating this remarkable event in Mussulmaun history, the expressions of 
grief, manifested by the ladies, are far greater, and appear to me more lasting than with 
the other sex; indeed, I never could have given credit to the extent of their bewailings, 
without witnessing, as I have done for many years, the season for tears and profound

407 Ibid
408 Cole, Roots, p. 95.
409 Shirwani, Bustan us Siyaha, p. 553.
grief return with the month of Mahurrum. In sorrowing for the martyred Emans, {Imams}, they seem to forget their private griefs; the bereavement of a beloved object even is almost overlooked in the dutiful remembrance of Hasan and Hosein at this period; and I have had opportunities of observing this triumph of religious feeling in women, who are remarkable for their affectionate attachment to their children, husbands and parents; - they tell me, “We must not indulge selfish sorrows of our own, whilst the Prophet’s family alone have a right to our tears...

“The religious zeal of these people is evinced, likewise, in a stern, systematic, line of privations, during the period of Mahurrum; no one is obliged, by any law, or command; it is voluntary abstinence, on the part of each individual – they impose it on themselves, out of pure pity and respect for their Emans’ well-remembered sufferings. Every thing which constitutes comfort, luxury, or even convenience at other times, on these occasions are rigidly laid aside. They pallungh and the charpoy (the two descriptions of bedsteads in general use), on which the females love to lounge for some hours in the day and night, are removed from their standings, and, in lieu of this comfort, they take their rest on a common date mat, on the floor. The musnud, and all its cushioned luxuries, give place, on this occasion, to the simply ma, Shiism in Medieval India tted floor. The indulgence in choice dainties, at other times so necessary to their happiness, is now forgone, and their meal limited, throughout Mahurrum to the coarsest food, such as barley bread, rice and peas boiled together (called ketcherie [khichrihi]), without even the usual additions to make is palatable ketcherie, as ghee, salt, pepper, and spices; these ingredients being considered by the zealous females too indulgent and luxurious humble a mourners during Mahurrum.410

The account of this English lady depicts a live scene from the Muharram ceremonies in India for the reader. While many European researchers have discussed Muharram mourning rituals, a few of them were able to sympathise with the Shias. Mrs Mir Hasan Ali appear to be close to the Indian Shiite sentiments, and record them as some kind of a participant observer.

The influence of Iran was only one strand in the observation of Muharram ceremonies. The proximity of Shiis of India to the followers of Hinduism influenced Muharram ceremonies and rituals. Hollister writes in this connection:

To such an extent have Sunnis and Hindus entered into the Muharram celebrations in parts of India that their form has been altered and the meaning corrupted. In South Gujarat, after the fourth day, mourning gives place to merriment until the tenth day. The only special activity in intervening days is the giving of sherbet on roadsides to children and travelers. In south India much of buffoonery is introduced by Muhammadan faqirs, especially on the fifth day, and to a lesser degree, on the second, sixth or seventh. This is also true in Bombay. In Surat, in fulfillment of a vow, children are dressed in green, and clothes are sent by them to relatives. In different sections of the country, boys and men dress as tigers and go about singing the Muharram dirges, and begging from spectators. This representation of tigers is thought to be a reminder of the lion which is said to have kept watch near the body of Husain after his burial.\(^{411}\)

The influence of Hinduism on the Muharram ceremonies in India becomes a matter also for Bihbahani to comment as will be examined below.

\(^{411}\) John Norman Hollister, *Islam and Shia's faith in India*, Delhi, 1988, p. 175.
Bihbahani's views of Shiite ceremonies in India

Bihbahani personally witnessed Muharram ceremonies in the towns of India and gave an account of them along with his critical remarks. For the first time he witnessed the rituals in the Muharram (March-April) of 1806 at Masulipatam. He was not able to identify the group involved in the ceremony. He did not use the term Shias or "believers", which he usually did for the participants in the ceremonies, but he mentioned that the "devotees of Ahl-i Bait" were engaged in the mourning ceremony.⁴¹² His statement might suggest that the majority of these people were not Shias or it was a mixed gathering. The account of Husaini (Sultan ul Waizin) who visited this port after 1806, suggests that the majority of its population were Hindus, a small number Sunnis, and Shis were fewer.⁴¹³ Bihbahani participated with them in the mourning and left the following account:

All lovers of the house of the Prophet, both Muslims and Hindus, engaged themselves in observing the (Muharram) mourning. The peculiarity of this port (town) is that during the ten days of Moharram, none wether a elite or commoner could pass through a bazar or street riding a carriage. If ever anyone was found riding, no matter whoever he might be, was made to alight most disgracefully by the Muslim and Hindu urchins and others.⁴¹⁴

Contrary to Masulipatnam, it seems that the account of Bihbahani of the mourning practices in Hydarabad was not an eye witness account there because he was not present during Muharram in any of the five years of his residence in India. However, this accout

⁴¹² Mirat ul Ahwal, p. 253.
⁴¹³ Tuhfat ul Khaganiyya, f. 63a.
too shows that the participants were not just Shiis. One of the reasons of the participation of Sunnis and Hindus in Muharram ceremonies in the Deccan was the policy of Qutb Shahi rulers to use these ceremonies as a means to create a common religion culture in which followers of different religious could participate without giving up their distinctive religious or sectarian beliefs.⁴¹⁵

In that city, there is a horse- shoe which people believe to be that of Zuljinah (the horse of Imam Husain). It is fixed on a plank of wood and is called Nal-sahib. In the night of ⁹th of Muharram, it is brought out with all pomp and grandeur, and the people holding it on their shoulder, take it to the place of its consignment. About four or five lacs of people, high and low with a number of torch-lights accompany it to its destination. After having deposited it in a closet, they take rest for sometime, and lie in wait around it to hear the snoring sound which they believe emanates from it. According to them, all hear the sound except those who sinned.⁴¹⁶

Bihbahani believed that the strange practices of these people emanated from their devotion to the Shiite Imams, and further, wrote that people in India have constructed domes in more than hundred places with a box in each which contains the holy hair of the Prophet’s beard. With a suspicious tone he stated that while in Madina there is not even a single hair of the Prophet’s beard, in India it is so abundant that in every place it can be found. He concluded his account of the Muharram ceremony in Hydarabad in this manner:

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⁴¹⁶ *India in the Early 19th Century*, p. 94.
Stranger still is that during the ten days of Muharram, the Muslims as well as the Hindus design images resembling the holy tomb (of Hazrat Imam Husain) with paper and twigs. They prostrate themselves before these (images), and pray for the fulfillment of their wants. After the ten days of Muharram come to an end, these images are carried outside the town with due rituals, and either immersed in a river or buried at a place which they call Karbala.  

In his view the actions of these people, like refraining from taking food on ashura, excessive devotion to alam, minbar (pulpit) and zarih (models of Shiite Imam’s tombs), not entering taziya khana with the shoes on, were uncalled for and excessive. He argued with disapproval that they paid less attention to their primary religious obligations (prayer, fasting, etc.) and gave greater preference to the sectarian Rituals.

The issue of the use of musical instruments also caught Bihbahani’s attention. Bihbabani encountered in two places processions in which drums were played along with the flute. When he was at Faizabad in Muharram 1808, he observed this ceremony and opposed it. He succeeded with support from the widow of Shujaud Dawla to put a stop to the practice of playing musical instruments.

Then commenced the revered month of Muharram of the year A. H. 1223 (A.D. 1808) and all, old and young engaged themselves in commemorating the mourning events. There was a custom in those regions that at the time of beating breast, drums were

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417 *India in the Early 19th Century*, pp. 94-95.
418 *Mirat ul Ahwal*, p. 246.
beaten and flutes played, which I prohibited. This practice was abandoned by Her Highness and other devout.\(^{419}\)

The second time he witnessed the beating of drums and “rejoicing instruments” in Muharram 1225/February 18010 was at Azimabad (Patna). He again objected to it. “Those persons who feared God and the Prophet and performed mourning events for the sake of gaining God’s nearness” listened to him but “those who were after seeking name and fame among the masses and wavered in between belief and unbelief” resisted his prohibition and told that this practice has been usual from ancient time and to abandon it would be innovation (\(\text{bid’ah}\)). This group added that Akhund Majlisi too opposed it first, but then he dreamt the Prophet who reproached him on account of his opposition. When the Akhund woke up he still had the dream hanging around his neck and went to the \(\text{taziya khana}\) and himself participated in the ritual he was initially opposed to. This story angered Bihbahani and he decided to declare the prohibition from the pulpit.\(^{420}\) The Indian scholar Nasirabadi too did not approve of the beating of drums during the Muharram rituals. When a Shiite asked him regarding two contentions issues; first the beating of the drum on the tenth day of Muharram, and the second, carrying a symbolic horse and a camel in ceremonies, he rejected the first, but gave his approval to the second.\(^{421}\) Next year some jurists, like Maulavi Abul Hasan Kashmiri, approved even the beating of drums during the mourning.\(^{422}\)

\(^{420}\) *Mirat ul Ahwal*, p. 379.
\(^{421}\) Cole, *Roots*, pp. 112-113.
\(^{422}\) *Ibid*, p. 114.
There was yet another ritual which requires discussion. In Fath Ali Shah’s (1797-1834) reign, from the Qajar dynasty, a type of passion play under the title of taziyah appeared in Iran, which was favoured by the Shah and the notables. In spite of the opposition of “jurists in the upper echelons of the hierocracy” this type of ceremony, turned customary in Iran. But it was not prevalent in Lucknow on account of the rule of ulama against “use of tableaux or religious paintings as backdrops during mourning sessions”.

Looking for a reason for Bihbahani’s objection to Indian Shiis, Muzaffar Alam wrote that, those Iranians who came to India before 1700 did not criticize their fellow twelver Shiis at least. He mentioned Bihbahani’s Usulism as the main reason of his criticism of Indian Shiis.

Bihbahani was to some extent effective in the promotion of Shiism in northern India. This becomes clear, when we notice that his travel was some years after the compilation of Tuhfa-i Ithna Ashariyya by Shah Abd ul Aziz, a Sunni theologian of Delhi in 1789-90 in order to induce people to become either indifferent to Shiism or to abandon it altogether, as can be seen from the Shah’s remark:

> In the region (bilad) where we live the Isna Ashariyya faith has become so popular that there can be no house where one or two men have not adopted this vicious faith or are not inclined to the Shii beliefs. The majority of these are wanting in a knowledge of history and hadis and are unaware and ignorant of the principles of their ancestral (Sunni) faith. Whenever the Shiis discuss their faith in Sunni assemblies, they distort

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the facts and talk nonsense. I have written this book only to please the God and to prevent the Sunnis from straying from their faith in polemics with the Shiis and to make them steadfast in their basic principals.\textsuperscript{426}

This remark indicates inclination of Sunnis towards Shiism at the end of the eighteenth century. It seems that there were efforts on the part of the Shiite scholars to neutralize the effects of anti-shia polemics:

The \textit{alim} who brought new life to the scholarly traditions of the Majlisi family in Azimabad and Murshidabad, was Ahmad bin Muhammad Ali bin Baqir al-Isfahani known as Bihbahani.\textsuperscript{427}

\textbf{Bihbahani’s perception of the Shiite Ulama of India}

During the rule of the first three Nawabs of Awadh, i.e. Saadat Khan (1722-1739), Mansur Ali Khan, entitled Safdar Jang (1739-1753) and Shuja ud Daula (1753-1775) the travel of the inhabitants of the shrine cities to Lucknow was not so usual, particularly since these Nawabs were not so generous towards those coming from Iraq. When Asaf ud Daula (1775-1797) occupied the post of Nawab, his generosity motivated many people from Iraq, especially the close relatives of the \textit{mujtahids}, to travel to the capital of Awadh. Bihbahani had words of praise for the generosity of the Nawab:

Though the deceased (Nawab) lacked administrative capability and political wisdom, nevertheless, in munificence and manliness, generosity and liberality, he was the

\textsuperscript{426} Rizvi, \textit{History of the Isna Ashari Shiis in India}, II, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid. p. 121.
Hatim Tai of his time. He was madly after doing liberally and bestowing favour on all, wether a plebian or a noble.\textsuperscript{428}

According to Bihbahani, due to Asaf ud Dawal's zeal for Shiism, his realm became the Sabzawar of Hind:

He had built a very magnificent carvansarai, which always remained crowded with a large number of visitors and inhabitants of the heaven-like Holy Shrines; and for the expense of each and every of them, he had fixed a certain amount of money according to his position and status which was paid to him from the very day of his arrival. On the eve of departure, too, he was presented with some sort of gift according to his lot.\textsuperscript{429}

The city of Najaf always suffered from the lack of water and the efforts of the first two Safavid kings to supply water to this town was not so effective. Asaf ud Daula's action to supply water to this town was considered very precious. Although the Nawab himself could not complete the project of carrying water to Najaf, it was later implemented by other Indian Shiite dignitaries with the construction of a canal known as Hindayya. Nakash writes about the advantages of this canal:

The Hindiyya gave a great push to the socioeconomic welfare of Najaf; it provided the water needed to sustain massive numbers of pilgrims and helped the city's mujtahids to establish Najaf as the major academic center from the 1840 at the expense of

\textsuperscript{428} \textit{India in the Early 19th Century}, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{429} \textit{Ibid.}
Karbala, which decreased in importance...the Hindiyya also had a great impact on the socioeconomic and religious contacts between Najaf and the surrounding tribes, thereby accelerating their conversion to Shiism.\textsuperscript{430}

The generosity of Asaf ud Dawla and, imitating him some dignitaries of Awadh, was only part of the reason for the frequent travel of the people of the holy shrines to this region. The other reason was the efforts of a great scholar of Lucknow, Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi, who turned the region into an Usuli Shiite realm.

Sayyid Dildar Ali (1753-1820) was the son of Sayyid Muhammad Mu’in whose fifteenth grandfather, Sayyid Najm ud Din, came to India from Sabzwar along with the army of Mahmud Ghaznavi, and then settled in a place known as Ja’is. \textsuperscript{431} This Shiite scholar obtained a part of his education in India, professed Akhbarism and proceeded to Iraq in 1779 in order to complete his study under Shiite mujtahids. When he came back after one and a half years, he had become a serious Usuli. As a Shiite jurist he started preaching the tenets Shiism. At that time Mulla Muhammad Ali Kashmiri, known as Mulla Padshah wrote a treatise on the merits of congregational prayers, and dedicated it to Asaf ud Dawla. The writer introduced some worthy persons as the leader of the congregational prayers, and among them was Nasiarbadi. Nawab’s minister, Hasan Raza Khan too supported the holding of congregational prayers, and finally according to the decision of Nasirabadi, the first Friday congregational prayer was held in the minister’s palace on 12 May 1785 (13 Rajab 1200), which was the birth anniversary of Imam Ali.\textsuperscript{432}

\textsuperscript{430} Nakash, \textit{The Shiis of Iraq}, p. 19,20.
\textsuperscript{432} \textit{Aina-i Haq numa} , f. 83b.
Piety and Avarice

The organization of Friday prayer in Lucknow, encouraged the relatives of the mujtahids to travel there because this practice indicated the domination of Usulis in that town. As the final point of his travel, Bihbahani went in the early 1807 to Lucknow and what happened there made him criticize the Indian Shiite ulama.

Bihbahani's principal criticism of the Indian Shiite ulama was on account of their greed. He believed that they took undue advantage of the judicial office they held and prayer leadership. Comparing Shiite ulama in Iraq and India, Bihbahani mentioned the case of his cousin, Aqa Abdul Husain, a pious clergy man whom the ulama of Karbala requested to lead the prayers. According to Bihbahani he accepted the leadership for only two months, and then resigned. He held that the leadership of prayer was too high a position for him to accept. Bihbahani then commented:

How much difference there is between the [two] natures. He (Aqa Abdul Husain) with his great piety did not accept the leadership, and I have seen some in India who are wishing always God to grant them the sheriffdom of the British, or the leadership of prayer, in order to obtain a livelihood.

The comment called for a suitable rejoinder. Najaf Ali, replying to Bihbahani's criticisms of Indian Shiite Ulama, censured him for his desire to be the leader of congregational prayer in India and matched his statement with a satire:

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433 Ibid
How much there is difference between his excellency (Bihbahani) and his ancestors; While his uncle who was famous for piety, according to his own account, refrained from the leadership of congregational prayer, he occupied it eagerly, both here (Lucknow) and in Azimabad.435

Moreover the author of Aina-i-Haq Nama rejected Bihbahani’s claim about Indian Shiite ulama’s desire to be the sheriff of the British. According to him this statement was a false accusation and showed Bihbahani’s impiety. In order to acquit the Indian ulama from the charge of greed, Najaf Ali mentioned that their financial condition was such that they were not able to pay even khums and zakat.436

Knowledge of Jurisprudence

Bihbahani’s second criticism of the Indian Shiite Ulama was about their inadequate knowledge of jurisprudence, as can be seen from the passage quoted below:

I also beheld there people strutting in false religious learning simply for the sake of the loaves and fishes whereas they are flagranty ignorant of the very word of (Islamic) jurisprudence, much less capable of deducing arguments therefrom. Just to deceive the people, they have learnt something of the pithy and witty sayings committed to memory some of the Arabic and Persian verses and a few sentences from the Nahjul-Balagha to memory to serve them as the nucleus for an exposition of the (Islamic)

435 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 190a.
436 Ibid.
laws and the tenets of the religion. If I were to reduce to writing the religious verdicts pronounced by them, every (Quranic) verses would swell to a volume.437

Bihbahani wrote that he made public the ignorance of this group, hence they were hostile towards him, and alleged that they even made an attempt on his life.438 Afterwards when he was in Faizabad, he had another occasion to comment on the congregational prayer of this town and the sermon reader, Mir Abdul Ali.

(He) was incapable of delivering the Friday sermons. It did not matter much if he could not recite the sermons prepared by others correctly, but it was most surprising that even after being prompted by some of the students possessing little knowledge, he recited them incorrectly.439

While Bihbahani condemned Mir Abdul Ali of ignorance, at the same time he wrote that there was a perfectly pious scholar in Faizabad, named Mir Najaf Ali (not the writer of Aina-i Haq numa) who was capable of leading congregational prayers, but on account of the jealousy of his colleagues he was stopped. In addition, he was accused of Sufism.440

Joining Bihbahani's attack on Mir Abdu Ali, Najaf Ali did not present any proof of his high education, but gave a rather general description of his faith, piety and learning. The main claim of Najaf Ali was his Siyadat. Since he was a Sayyid, Najaf Ali blamed Bihbahani on account of objection towards him.441

437 India in the Early 19th century, p. 117.
438 Mirat ul Ahwal, pp. 267-268.
440 Mirat ul Ahwal, p. 306.
441 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 188a.
Sufism and Shiism

Bihbahani’s third criticism was about sufism. He wrote that some scholars like Shaykh Maysam Bahrani (d. 1238), Bahaud Din Amili known as Shaykh Bahai (d.1620) Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani (d.1680) and Muhammad Ali Hazin Lahiji were condemned by the ulama of Lucknow as Sufis and believers in the doctrine of Wahdat ul Wujud (Unity of Existence). When Bihbahani was writing his travelogue in Banaras, he had mentioned Hazin as one of the greatest Shiite scholars who lived a life of solitude in Banaras and whose colleagues criticized him for believing in Wahdat ul Wujud.442

What Bihbahani was discussing the charge of sufism in Lucknow, it happened after the return of Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi from Iraq in 1881. In one of the chapters of his book, Najaf Ali described the attendances of his master, Nasirabadi, after returning from the Shrine cities. He wrote that when the Sayyid came back three corrupted groups dominated the town, and one of them were Sufis. According to Najaf Ali, they believed in Wahdat ul Wujud, and had rejoicing meeting every week.443

Since the position of the Shiite Ulama of Lucknow was greatly affected by the Iranian Shiite Ulama, it is not out of place if we look at the state of Sufism in Iran.

Sufism in Iran

Sufism was more oriented towards the Sunni sect, when it appeared in the Iranian public sphere in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Many sufi hospice (khanqahs) were established in different parts of Iran and people came from every region to meet the Shakhys of khanqahs, and to renew homage (bay’ah) with them. One of the most popular

442 Mirat ul Ahwal, p. 289.
443 Aina-i Haq numa, ff. 49b.
khanqahs in the fourteenth century belonged to Shaykh Safi ud Din Ardabili (d. 1334). The reputation of this great sufi lasted to the formation of the Shiite kingdom of Safavids in Iran in the early sixteenth century.

The Shiite jurists, both before the appearance of the Safavid dynasty and after it, were opponents of the sufis. This opposition was mainly due to the difference between the methods of learning among the sufis and the jurists. Moreover the manner of worship of the two groups were different, and this issue too, separated them from each other.

The domination of Shiism in Safarid Iran provided the jurists a greater opportunity to excersise their opposition towards leaders of the orders (silsila) Sufis. Shah Ismail I ordered the leaders of sufi orders to be suppressed, and the graves of their ancestors were destroyed.444

Besides, the appearance of a popular brand of Sufism (bazari) caused confrontation between the jurists and the Sufis. This type of Sufism included antinomianism which was totally unacceptable to the jurists. “The ecstatic and antinomian Sufism of the hirsute Qalandars (roaming dervishes) and the quasi-heremitical Sufism of the ascetic virtuosi are polar opposites from the viewpoint of religious discipline”.445

Some Shiite ulama however had interest in gnostic Shiism (irfan). A few of them had blended jurisprudence and philosophy with mysticism. Shaykh Bahaud Din Amili was one such alim whose work under the title of Masnawi Nan-o- Halwa illustrates his mystical thoughts. At the same time he was the author of a book of jurisprudence, Jami Abbasi, and was the Shaykh ul Islam during the reign of the most famous Safavid king, Shah Abbas I.

444 Arjomand, The Shadow of God, p. 112.
445 Ibid., p. 118.
Mulla Sadra Shirazi (1562-1640), Shaykh Bahai’s pupil, created a structure of knowledge under the title of *Hikmat-i Muta’aliyya* which combined philosophy with *irfan* and *hadith*. As a staunch supporter of *irfan*, he was critical of popular sufism. His work *Kasr ul Asnam il Jahiliyya (Breaking the Idols of the Period of ignorance)* is a proof of his hostility towards those who wore cloak (*jobba*), had *kashkul* in their hands, and cried *ya hu*.

Muhammad Taqi Majlisi was Shaykh Bahai’s pupil, and under the influence of his teacher had acquired mystical (*irfani*) tendencies. According to Ahmad Bihbahani, this tendency led him to pass his time in asceticism in Najaf, on account of which he was accused of Sufism.\(^{446}\) The *Tashwiq us Salikin (Encouragement of Devotees)* of Majlisi depicts the mystical inclination of this Shiite traditionist (*akhbari*). He writes in his book:

> Now a group has appeared which is ignorant towards both *shariat* and *tariqat* and deny this right path due to their ignorance and non attention to the Quranic verses and the traditions of the infallible Shiite Imams, and also on account of following carnal desires which is the fruit of jealousy, grudge and prejudice.\(^{447}\)

At this juncture, there was a scholar Mulla Muhsin Faiz Kashani who was an *akhbari* and was interested in both philosophy and mysticism (*irfan*). Since he was more inclined towards *irfan* compared to philosophy, he tried to look for *irfan* in the context of traditions (*akhbar*).\(^{448}\) Faiz’s mystical inclination caused some of his contemporaries to describe him as a follower of the thoughts of Imam Muhammad Ghazzali (d. 1011) and

\(^{446}\) *Mirat ul Ahwal*, pp. 69-70.
Ibn-al Arabi (d. 1240) the proponent of the idea of *Wahdat ul Wujud*. On the practices of the Sufis, he rejected every violation of the traditional form of worship.449

Bihbahani took a position in Lucknow against the condemnation of Faiz and Hazin for their belief in Sufism by the Shiite *ulama* of this town. In response Najaf Ali, Nasirabadi’s pupil argued that the Lucknow *ulama* followed the Shiite scholars in Iraq and Iran in condemning Faiz and Hazin of Sufism. He wrote that one of these scholars was Shaykh Yusuf Bahrani who considered Faiz as a sufi. Another person, according to Najaf Ali was Mirza Haidar Ali Isfahani, one of the descendants of Allama Majlisi. Afterwards Najaf Ali narrated the statements of Bahrani in his book, *Durar un Najafiyya*, condemning Faiz as a sufi. Bihbahani was particularly questioned as to why he ignored the condemnation of the Shiite *ulama* of Iraq and Iran.450 Finally Najaf Ali mentioned Faiz’s views on the temporary abode of the dwellers of hell, which according to him, proved the influence of Ibn-al Arabi on Faiz.451

According to Bihbahani, the Shiite *ulama* of Lucknow, condemned Hazin’s Sufism as well and also believed that he did not pray. Further in spite of the fact that Hazin wrote a treatise on *Ma’ad*, they accused him of rejecting resurrection. In Bihbahani’s view these accusations were largely aimed towards undermining the high position of Hazin, because according to his experience, of the rank of a person was higher he was more exposed to accusations in India.

Najaf Ali’s statements about Hazin are very detailed, but before we examine then, it is proper to summarise the opinion of other persons on Hazin’s Sufism.

449 Ibid, p. 541.
450 *Aina-i Haq numa*, ff. 167b, 168a.
451 Ibid, f. 172a.
Abul Hasan Qazwini, the author of *Fawaid us Safawiyya* (1796) wrote an account of the exile of Hazin’s teacher, Muhammad Sadiq Ardistani from Isfahan, and this report became one of the reasons of Hazin’s reputation as a sufi. The report also gives a glimpse of the generally hostile atmosphere against the Sufis in Safavid Iran under the influence of theologian:

Muhammad Baqir Majlisi was his (Sultan Husain’s) instructor, and every thing he said, the Shah approved. Majlisi acted in the most of the royal and financial affairs according to the advice of the ulama. He abolished Sufism which was the manner of the respectful dynasty of Safavids. He suspended *tawhid khana* which was in the palace of his excellency (the Shah), near ‘Ali Qapu, and the elders of sufis were rejoicing there, along with the *khulafa* and *umara* every Friday night, and cried *ya hu* there. All chiefs (*mashaikh*) of Sufis were exiled from Isfahan, and among them the great scholar of the time, Mulla Sadiq Ardistani, along with twenty persons of his valid students. One of his students is Muhammad Ali Hazin Lahiji, was also exiled from Isfahan.\(^{452}\)

According to this account, Hazin’s banishment from Isfahan happened along with the exile of his master. Hazin had mentioned in his travelogue that he started learning philosophy under the “reviver of philosophy, the perfect philosopher”, Mawłana Muhammad Sadiq Ardistani and benefited from the instruction of his master until his death which happened during the siege of Isfahan by Afghans in 1722.\(^{453}\) He did not give any indication to the banishment of his master from Isfahan.

\(^{452}\) Abul Hasan Qazwini, *Fawaid us Safawiyya*, Tehran, 1988, p. 78.

\(^{453}\) *Tazkirat ul Ahwal*, pp. 191-192.
Arjomand has also discussed this event in his work, and strangely he mentions Tazkirat ul Ahwal by Hazin as his evidence.\textsuperscript{454} Jafarian however, he writes that at the time of Muhammad Baqir Majlisi’s death (1698) Hazin was just seven years old, so how could he be exiled along with his master?\textsuperscript{455}

**Sufism in India**

In order to examine the circumstances of the charage of Hazin’s orientation towards Sufism, it is proper first to review the history of Sufism in India.

Along with the annexation of North and northwest of India to the world of Islam, Sufism penetrated gradually into this region. The full influence of Sufism on this region started from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{456} The most prominent representative of Sufism in this period was Khaja Muin ud Din Chishti, who came to India from Sistan in 1193.\textsuperscript{457} The Chishtiyya order was strengthened in India by the leadership and popularity of renowned saints such as Shaikh Nizam ud Din Auliya.

The popularity of Sufism in India caused Sufi orders to multiply, as in the Muhammad Shah’s reign twenty two sufi silsilas were present in India.\textsuperscript{458} Some Sufi orders were present in Lucknow as well in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The sufis of Lucknow presented themselves as the followers of Shiism. Nasirabadi, however, rejected their confession and claimed that the Sufis called themselves Shiis in order to gain advantage from the court.\textsuperscript{459} Nevertheless, one of the Lucknow Sufi leaders,

\textsuperscript{454} Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{455} Jafarian, *Safavids in the Arenas of Religion, Culture and Politics*, p. 588
\textsuperscript{457} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{459} Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi, *Zulfaqar*, Persian MS, A.M.U, Farsiya 46, copy in Noor Microfilm Center, f. 4b
Shah Ali Akbar Maududi, succeeded to attract the favour of Nawab Hasan Riza Khan, the minister of Asaf ud Daula. Maududi and his devotees held their sama meetings (singing and dancing) in the wazir's palace, and Hasan Riza Khan himself took part in their assemblies. The wazir's palace was also the place where congregational prayers were held, Maududi himself was one of the first persons who suggested the wazir to establish congregational prayers in Lucknow.

Due to the devotion of Hasan Riza Khan to Maududi and Sufism, he attempted to strike a compromise between Usulism and Sufism. To this end, he invited Nasirabadi to meet Shah Ali Akbar. Nasirabadi decisively rejected to meet the sufi and made strong remarks against Sufism:

> I curse the sufis from the pulpit. Now if I meet them what would the Shiites think of me? If the Shah is looking for to satisfy his followers first, I too wish to gain first the satisfaction of the Shiite Imams and the followers of Amir ul Muminin.  

At the same time, the request by Hasan Riza Khan to the Sufi to take part in the congregational prayer under the leadership of Nasirabadi was ineffectual.

In Nasirabadi’s opinion, all Sufis were believers in the doctrine of Wadat ul Wujud, and this belief led to some absurd implications like the manifestation of God in pigs and dogs. Hence he found it fit to curse Ibn-al Arabi. Citing Shiite traditions (ahadith), the theologian presented sufis as enemies of the Shiite Imams.

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460 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 49b.
461 Ibid., f. 35a.
462 Ibid., f. 36a.
463 Nasirabadi, Zulfaqar, f. 5a.
464 Ibid., f. 6b.

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Bihbahani, whose father Muhammad Ali, was a staunch opponent of the sufis of his time, explicitly argued the matter of condemnation among the ulama of Lucknow. He told that Mulla Muhammad Amin Astarabadi was the first person among the Shiite ulama who cursed others (*mujtahidins*) and before him there was no such tradition among the *ulama*. He gave the verdict that although a *mujtahid* can curse someone; others are not allowed to follow him in this specific matter.\(^\text{465}\)

**Hazin’s Sufism**

Considering Nasirabadi’s views, the branding of Hazin as a sufi by him and his pupils was not so striking, particularly when some of Hazin’s verses were imbued with the sense of *Wahdat ul Wujud*. A case was presented by Najaf Ali adducing material derived from Hazin’s works to prove his attachment to Sufism.

As the first proof, Najaf Ali scrutinised a part of Hazin’s book, *Ma’ad*. In this section, without mentioning the name of the person under scanner, Hazin calls him one of the marginal persons (*yeki az hashwiya*) who is renowned in *fiqh* and *hadith*, and also has a reputation with the rulers. Hazin continues that this person and his partisans, announce themselves as the followers of God and the Prophet, and look to others as the followers of fancies. Reproducing Hazin’s statements, Najaf Ali obtains two conclusions; first, it was certain that Hazin was talking about Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, and second, the accusations indicate Hazin’s Sufism.\(^\text{466}\) Najaf Ali makes another conclusion; he says that if Hazin’s of


\(^{466}\) Aina-i Haq numa, ff. 203a-b.
the pointed person would not be Majlisi, according to the similarity between him (Majlisi) and the pointed person, this blaming includes Majlisi also. 467

Hazin has a short notice of Muhammad Baqir Majlisi in his travelogue, and respectfully remembers him as a famous traditionist and Imami jurist. He says that he has also met this scholar. 468

In the next stage, Najaf Ali cites Hazin’s statements, both poetry and prose, to prove his belief in *Wadat ul Wujud*. He writes:

Now a part of the said Shaykh’s poetry and prose is written here in order to make clear if the Shaykh has been a real Sufi or the Excellency Sayyedana (Nasirabadi) and other believers charged him unjustly. 469

Even Hazin’s explanation of the adventure of his adoration in his youth was taken as proof of being always in love. This has been the only reference in the sole case in Hazin’s notes about his love for a woman. 470 Moreover, Najaf Ali brings in Hazin’s listening to the singing of Ali Kuhsari Isfahani as a proof of listening to music (*Ghana*). 471

Najaf Ali adduces in yet another proof of Hazin’s inclination towards Sufism, and that is his residence in Banaras. He wrote in this regard:

And an indication to this point (Hazin’s Sufism) is his residing in Banaras; he left the shrine cities, and saw his walefare in this world and the next, in staying in Banaras, as

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467 *Ibid*
468 *Tazkirat ul Ahwal*, p. 159.
469 *Aina-i Haq numa*, f. 204b.
471 *Aina-i Haq numa*, f. 205b.
he or another poet composed: I would not leave Banaras, because it is a public temple, 
every Brahman boy is a descendant of Lakshmana and Rama here.472

It seems that Najaf Ali was unaware of Hazin's verses indicating his ardent desire 
to be in the shrines. In his Diwan there is just one couplet praising Banaras, and it seems he 
composed this couplet in order to as much praise Banaras as to show his reluctance to go to 
other towns in India; as Ghulam Husain Tabatabai wrote:

[Hazin] came to Azimabad several times, in order go out of the dark land (khak-i 
siyah) of India, but was not destined. Mahabat Jang, Shahamat Jang and Sawlat Jang 
wrote him letters, and requested him to visit them. He was not satisfied to stay with 
them, returned to Banaras and remained there for some reasons, until he became 
disabled and provided a grave for himself.473

The above discussion leads us to the question whether Hazin really was a Sufi? 
What is certain about him is that he was an arif. It means that in his view the status of love 
was superior to that of intellect and the religious law (sharia). The verse below is a proof 
of his view regarding love:

Hazin! I speak about a secret of love that is not known to the intellect. 
I give my cup of wine to the pious man to test his manliness. 
_Hazin az ishq mi guyam bi aql-i bi khabar ramzi, _
_Bi zahid mi daham mard azma peymanay-i khud ra._

472 Ibid, f. 206b. 
473 Siyarul Mutaakhirin, p. 615.
In the above mentioned verse Hazin says that the men of intellect and also pious people are lower in their grade as compared to the sage who sings the songs of the Divine love.

It is worth recollecting that one of the earlier tutors was Shaikh Khalilullah Talqani, whom he called "one of the big saint among the sages, who had accommodated in his person the speculative and esoteric sciences"\(^\text{474}\). In the same manner he says that when he was at the prime of his youth, he benefited by the lectures of Mulla Sadiq Ardastani, who gave much worth and value to gnostic Shiism. But, this does not mean that Hazin followed the tenets of some particular order of mysticism. He, like many thinkers of the Islamic world had acquired knowledge related to philosophy, jurisprudence and Gnosticism, but among them he was deeply interested in mysticism. Nevertheless he was well versed in the science of jurisprudence and authorized to define judgements.

Some tazkiras mention that Hazin had a hospice (khanqah). The compiler of the Maqalat ush shu'ara writes that the Mughal emperor Mohammad Shah, out of great devotion for him, fixed one thousand rupees per month to be paid to meet the expenses of his monastery.\(^\text{475}\) Khushgu another biographer wrote that at present the people of Iran have great reverence for him as their spiritual leader.\(^\text{476}\) In the same manner, the compiler of the Murraqa-i Delhi wrote:

He is paid high regard wherever he goes. His step that is moderate in its gate is considered highly valuable in every assembly where he goes; he is traveling from footed on the path firmness and seclusion.\(^\text{477}\)

\(^{474}\) Tazkirat ul Ahwal, pp. 153, 154.
\(^{475}\) Maqalat ush Shu'ara, p. 169.
\(^{476}\) Safina-i Khushgu, p. 291.
\(^{477}\) Dargah Quli Khan, Murraqa-i Delhi, New Delhi, 1993, p. 80.
The compiler of *Makhzan ul Gharaih* another book on the biographies of poets also wrote that Hazin was equally popular in Banaras among his Muslim as well as Hindus devotees. He continued that they used the dust of his feet as collyrim and applied that in their eyes. The people came from far and near to pay him their respect and felt themselves honoured to be in his company.\(^{478}\)

We gather a similar impression in other sources written during this period. All of them agree that Hazin was greatly popular and highly respected at Banaras. The popularity that he had gained was not based on any particular school or order that he had adopted or followed. He had gained this popularity for being upright in his conduct, detached with the world and immersed in mysticism. None of the biography writers, other than, the compiler of *Maqalat ush Shuara* has spoken about the monastery of Hazin. We know that he had built two mosques at Banaras; one of them was a small place in which he prayed, there was also a big enclosure, which was probably used for the stay of the persons who paid him visit. If he had a monastery, this would have been certainly mentioned by his biographers.

**Bihbahani and Nasirabadi**

It is necessary to examine Bihbahani’s views of the great jurist of Lucknow, Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi, and the response of Najaf Ali. Indeed Bihbahani reached Lucknow relying on the familiarity of Nasirabadi with his grand father, Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani. Bihbahani was aware of his influence in Lucknow and was hopeful of achieving his objectives with his support.

Bihbahani first wanted to establisshed himself in the eyes of the ruler of Awadh as a *mujtahid* who had come from the shrine cities. He was also interested in getting the

\(^{478}\) *Makhzan ul Gharaih*, pp. 803-804.
leadership of the Friday congregational prayers in Lucknow. Generally, he wanted to enjoy the favours of the Nawab, Nasirabadi and other dignitaries.

Since the policy of the new Nawab of Awadh, Saadat Ali Khan, differed entirely from that of the previous Nawab, Asafud Dawla in so far as he was indifferent to the travellers of the shrine cities to Lucknow, Bihbahani was worried about the Nawab’s indifferent attitude towards with him. As the grandson of Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani he regarded the Nawab’s indifference disappointing. He sent repeated letters to Nasirabadi since arriving in India to use his agency for drawing the Nawab’s attention and get his favour.

Since none of the descendants of the late, dwelling in the paradise, the last of the mujtahids (Aqa Muhammad Baqir) made this mistake (of coming to Lucknow), provide a condition in order to preserve my status, because in the case of disdain, its harm includes that master (Nasirabdi) and other Shiis.479

Bihbahani requested Nasirabadi to correspond with him in secret, and emphasised that nobody should get the knowledge of their secret correspondence.

Many Iranian dwellers of the shrine cities, among them some relatives of the mujtahids of Iraq, had travelled to Lucknow before Bihbahani, and had enjoyed the financial support of the Awadh Nawabs. During the residence of these persons in Lucknow, some unimportant contacts took place between the travellers and the residents of the town.

479 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 212.
Nasirbadi was known among his pupils as the reviver of Shiism in Lucknow. They believed that their master through his books and sermons in Friday congregational prayers had eliminated corruption. According to Najaf Ali there were three groups which dominated the social scene of Lucknow at that time. The first group was of Sufis, who believed in *Wahdat ul Wujud* and held Sufic gatherings and musical-spiritual concerts every week. The second was of Hanafi Sunnis who were in big number and had the patronage of the Mughal king. There was inter-marriage between Shias and Hanafi Sunnis, and the former followed the latter in rituals as well. The third group was of *Akhbaris* who claimed to act according to traditions and rejected *mujtahids* on account of practicing *qiyaṣ* as a legal method. Najaf Ali explained how Nasirabadi with his preaching and writings compelled these groups to retreat. So the partisans of Nasirabadi looked at Bihbahani as a newly arrived cleric who was at the same time pretentious.

Nasirabadi did not reply to the letters of Bihbahani which were sent from Hydarabad, Murshidabad and Azimabad. When Bihbahani came closer to Lucknow, in Banaras, Nasirabadi replied to his fourth letter and advised him not travel to that town due to the possibility. That he may not receive the right hospitality. Bihbahani nevertheless continued his journey to Lucknow. Meanwhile directly wrote a letter to Nawab Saadat Ali Khan, asking for his permission to visit Lucknow. It seems that Bihbahani refrained from using flattering words in his address to the Nawab and his words were seen as signs of his independence. Hence the letter offended the vanity of the Nawab and he was not pleased.

When Bihbahani arrived in Lucknow, Nasirabadi along with his eldest son and a group local people of the town welcomed him. But in spite of Bihbahani’s enthusiasm, the

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480 *Aina-i Haq numa*, ff. 49b-54a.
482 *Aina-i Haq numa*, f. 146b
Nawab was indifferent towards him. It is not unlikely that the disciples of Nasirabadi had a role in fostering the Nawab’s aversion towards Bihbahani.

For quite sometime rivalries had begun to shape up at Lucknow between the Indian Shiite ulama and those from Iraq. It was similar to the rivalry between the Indian and Iranian Persian poets. Since the Nawab was not so much interested in the presence of foreign ulama in his territory, the Indian Shiite ulama had greater weightage and importance before the Nawab.

The Nawab was not inured to ask religious questions from the new comer Shiite ulama, especially from him (Bihbahani). 483

Cole also discusses this matter, but contrary to his note, the Iranian travellers from the shrine cities were not so qualified and Bihbahani was an exception.

In Awadh the ruling elite appointed mostly Indians to religious posts despite the large number of qualified Iranian immigrants. The Indian better acquainted with local protocol excluded Iranian competitors. 484

However unlike Faizabad, Bihbahani did not succeed to gain a proper position before the Nawab. He was yet in Lucknow when the issue of sighting the crescent of Shawwal gave him an opportunity to criticise Nasirabadi.

According to Bihbahani, the testimony of some Shiis of sighting the new moon in the evening of the twenty ninth day of Ramazan ended the month of fasting. He considered

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483 Ibid, f. 151b.  
484 Cole, Roots, p. 137.
himself to be qualified, and issued his decree indicating that tomorrow would be the Id of Ramazan.

I issued a decree that tomorrow is Id of Ramazan and the first day of Shawwal. The harkara brought this report to his Excellency (the Nawab). He first approved of my view, but after a short delay stated that our Id would be the day after tomorrow. The respectful Sayyid (Nasirabadi) also agreed with me... but he went to the gardens out of the town and did not openly declare that day as Id. Some of my friends told me that since the Nawab did not declare that day as Id, it is better for you too to follow the Nawab. I told in public that in these issues we lead and not follow.485

In Bihbahani’s view, since Nasirabadi followed the Nawab on a religious issue he was at fault. The Indian mujtahid explained that it was a sensitive issue, so he dissimulated (taqaiyya). This response made Bihbahani angrier, and he questioned the interpretation placed on the concept of taqaiyya:

By no means it could it be termed taqaiyya. It was simple and pure worldliness and it tantamounts to adulatory and flattering to men in power.486

These were harsh words and Najaf Ali tried to exonerate his master from them. He described two events indicating the independence of Nasirabadi from the Nawab. The first event occurred some years ago, when the Nawab decided to abandon drinking, and in the presence of Nasirabadi repented in the shrine of Abbas. After sometimes the Nawab

485 Mirat ul Ahwal p. 314.
486 India in the Early 19th Centuries, p. 170
became ill and some of his Christian friends advised him to drink wine as medicine. He asked Nasirabadi concerning the legitimacy of drinking as a cure, and the latter openly declared it prohibited. 487

In the second event the Nawab inquierd Nasirabadi about the sighting of the new moon of Muharram in order to start the mourning ceremony. While Nasirabadi gave his opinion, the Nawab did not approve and said:

I wish to see that in spite of the Maulawi Sahib's (Nasirabadi) decree, who follows me, and who is disobedient.488

Najaf Ali continued that even some dignitaries who had British friends to support them did not dare to oppose the Nawab.489 For the followers of Nasirabadi, Bihbahani was a passer by who was immune from risks and dangers to which the locals were exposed.

After these controversial episodes, Bihbahani broke his friendship with Nasirabadi, and wrote a treatise under the title Tanbih ul Ghafilin (Admonition to Negligents). He explained the purpose of writing this book as follows:

The slandering and abusing of the distinguished and universally acclaimed like Akhund Mulla Mohsin Kashani and of his sorts was the fashion of the day in that city. The people in general, and I myself knew fully well the worth of the religious status the ulama accord to each other. Compiling of a treatise comprising a few pages and that too by altering the form and contents of the writings of others was regarded as the highest degree of proficiency in the knowledge of divine law. Some people in this wat

487 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 161b.
488 Ibid, f. 163b
489 Ibid
were, thus wiled into acquiescing in the authority of such persons in theological matters. So on the request of those gentlemen, I wrote a book entitled *Tanbih ul-Ghafilin* (an Admonition to Negligents) in which I have explained the facts at length.\(^{490}\)

Bihbahany stated the reasons of writing *Tanbih ul Ghafilin* at the outset of his controversial treatise too:

> When I arrived in this town (Lucknow) due to the bad manner of the ill set destiny... some told (me) that many persons claim to be *mujtahid* in this region; and the way of obtaining *ijtihad* has been very easy. Some are graduated by translation some books or by writing some papers; tell us how we could recognize the right from the false.\(^{491}\)

Since at that time there was no Shiite *mujtahid* in India except Nasirabadi, it was understood that the reference was to him, but the Iranian scholar showed concordance with his colleague and stated:

> I deem Syed Dildar Ali [Narisabadi] as the Lord of the species of *ulama* in the whole of India, right from Dakhan to Awadh, and have not come across a scholar of his standard.\(^{492}\)

The content of *Tanbih ul Ghafilin*, along with of Bihbahani’s other scattered remarks, indicating the poverty of knowledge among the Indian Scholars motivated Najaf Ali to respond. He doubted Bihbahani’s qualification as a *mujtahid*, and cited his different

\(^{490}\) *India in the Early 19th Century*, p. 170.  
\(^{491}\) Bihbahani, *Tanbih ul Ghafilin*, ff. 1a-1b.  
\(^{492}\) *Tanbih ul Ghafilin*, ff.1a-1b.
decrees on a single issue. Najaf Ali claimed that Bihbahani had issued on a single subject discrepant verdicts which in some cases were contradictory. To this accusation Bihbahani replied as follows:

And also to prove their point they cite a case in which I had revoked my earlier legal pronouncement (jatwa). Leaving aside the commoners, anyone who possesses a knowledge of the Arabic language and had studied the books of great scholars, would at once perceive that this type of accusation proclaims either their utter ignorance or pretending ignorance. Reviewing or revising of religious decrees does not amount to any deficiency in the status of a mujtahid or rather it is what is truly called a review. 493

Besides the rejection of Bihbahani’s abilities in jurisprudence, Najaf Ali charged him with lack of originality. 494 He mentioned that the Iranian jurist satisfied the querry of the Nawab about the legal rate of the bride money in India by studying the commentary of Nasirabadi on Hadiqat ul Muttaqin (Garden of Uprights). 495

Further, Najaf Ali wrote a rejoinder to Tanbih ul Ghafilin entitled Aina-i Haq Numa (Truth Showing Mirror). This book, which was in fact a restatement of Nasirabadi’s position, was presented six years after Mirat ul Ahwal (1816), and this point shows that the author was busy collecting enough evidence against Bihbahani.

The claim of Bihbahani that his grandfather, Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani was the benefactor of Nasirabadi was rejected by Najaf Ali. He argued that if by that Bihbahani means the spiritual support given by Aqa Muhammad Baqir to Nasirabadi, there is always

493 India in the Early 19th Centuries, p. 218.
494 Aina-i Haq numa, f. 130a.
495 Ibid, ff. 151b - 152a.
such a relationship between teachers and their students. But if this means material assistance, then the case was the opposite. The people of India by their dedications to the dwellers of the shrine cities actually supported them financially.\footnote{Ibid, f. 195a.}

**Nasirabadi and Bihbahani in the Pair of Balances**

Bihbahani's scepticism about the ability of Nasirabadi's jurisprudence (ijtihad), and mutually the suspicion of Najaf Ali about Bihbahani's knowledge in jurisprudence calls for a discussion of *ijtihad* and the qualifications and status of the *mujtahid*, especially the two theologians. *Ijtihad* is the process under discussion framing laws from the Quran and *hadith* using specific methods. A person who applies *ijtihad* is called a *mujtahid*, and traditionally he has to be a scholar of Islamic law (*faqih*). Generally a *mujtahid* is an educated Muslim who makes up his own ruling on the permissibility of an Islamic law. *Ijtihad* is mainly associated with the Isna Ashari Shiite jurisprudence.

A person who wishes to do *Ijtihad* requires gaining many types of knowledge, such as them: Arabic literature, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Usuli fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), *Kalam* (dialectical Theology) *Hadith* (the tradition of the Prophet and Shiite Imams) *tafsir* (Quran Commentary), and other auxillary sciences.

Najaf Ali annexed in his book, the opinion of Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Tabatabai (d.1797) entitled *Bahr ul Ulum (The ocean of knowledge)* a prominent *Mujtahid* of Najaf, on “who is a *mujtahid*”. According to Tabatabai, the title of *Mujtahid* is not valid for any person who could narrate the traditions of the Shiite Imamas. In order but to be a *Mujtahid* needs a scholar the confirmation of this status by the leading *Mujtahids*.\footnote{Aina-i Haq numa , f. 15b.}

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496 Ibid, f. 195a.
497 Aina-i Haq numa , f. 15b.
Najaf Ali mentioned the above description in his book deliberately, because his great teacher, Nasirabadi was certified by one of the leading Mujtahids of Iraq, Sayyid Ali Tabatabi, while Bihbahani lacked this type of certification.

Although Bihbahani left for Iraq sixteen years after Nasirabadi, they had some common teachers; one of them was Sayyid Ali Tabatabai, Aqa Muhammad Baqir Bihbahani’s nephew and also his son in law. Fortunately the texts of certificates granted by Tabatabai to his students are available. In Nasirabidi’s certificate, Tabatabai describes him as a scholar who has the proficiency to legislate from specific sources (*al mutarashshih li-istinbat il- Fur’u min al-Usul*).\(^{498}\) But Bihbahani’s certificate from the very teacher lacks any such description. Tabatabai just permitted Bihbahani to narrate the traditions of the Shiite Imams preserved in the four canonical books (*Kutub ul Arba’a*) and also permitted him to narrate the words and writings of his teacher (Tabatabai). Although Shaikh Muhammad Jafar Najafi, another of Bihbahani’s teacher praised him in his certificate highly, and called him the fruit of the great scholars and the son of renowned Mujtahids, did not testify to his qualification as a Mujtahid.\(^ {499}\)

The books written by these two Shiite scholars (Nasirabadi and Bihbahani) could be another standard to judge their scholarship and legal status. Rizvi devided Nasirabadi’s writings into six categories as follows:

1. Books relating to the refutation of the Akhbaris, such as: *Asas ul Usul*.
2. Works discussing the basic principles of the Shi'i faith and fiqh, such as: *Imad ul Islam* and *Muntahal Afkar*.

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\(^{499}\) *Mirat ul Ahwal*, p. 383.
3. Books relating to the history of the Imams and promotion of the ceremonies of Muharram, such as: *Ithart ul Ahzan*.

4. Glosses and commentaries on classical text books, such as: an explanation on the *Sharh-i Hidayat ul Hikma* by Mulla Sadrud Din Shirazi.

5. Anti Sufi Literature, such as: *Shahab-i Saqib* and *Zulfiqar*.

6. A refutation of the Sunni condemnations of the Shiis aroused by the *Tuhfa-i Isna Ashariyya* by Shah Abdul Aziz, such as *Sawarim ul Ilahiyyat*, *Hisam ul Islam*, *Ihya us Suna*, *Risala-i Ghiba*.

Bihbahani’s works can be divided into five categories:

1. Commentary on Quran, such as *Risala Nur ul Anwar*.

2. Works on principals of jurisprudence, such as *Durar ul Ghurawiyya*.

3. Books relating to the jurisprudence, such as *Sharh-i Mukhtasar un Naf'i* and *Risala-i Qut-i Layamut*.

4. Works on the life of the infallible Imamas, such as *Tuhfat ul Muhibbin*.

5. Historical accounts such as *Mirat ul Ahwa-i jahan numal*.