

## Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia, r.a.



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

### Introduction

*"In Allah's garden you gather roses,  
Being drunk with divine mysteries:  
Hazrat Mehboob-e-Elahi -- the beloved of Allah,  
O, how I long for the attar of your company*

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia (d. 1325 A.D.) represents in many ways the pinnacle of the Chishti Order of the Sufis. Hazrat Baba Farid, his spiritual guide, said to him on appointing him as his successor: "Be like a big tree, so that Allah's creation, the human beings in their vast multitudes, may find rest and solace under your shadow." This partly explains why he admitted so many (according to some, including Barani, too many) men into the Chishti order as his disciples. Another reason has been clearly formulated in this way: "History, nonetheless, bears out the wisdom of his open-ended policy . . . To far-flung areas of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia sent able

disciples well versed in the Chishti practices, yet sensitive to the needs of the local populace."

With regard to the Sufi path, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia taught the following: "For a dervish, three things are necessary. They all begin with an 'ain' (an Arabic letter), i.e., *Ishq* (love), *Aql* (intelligence) and *Ilm* (knowledge). Let us discuss these three qualities one by one.

Sufism is, in its essence, the way of love. Love is considered to be a spiritual alchemy by means of which the baser qualities of a human being are transformed into higher ones. In this respect it suffices to say that Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia is known as Mehboob-e-Elahi, the beloved of Allah. Of course the spiritual status of a beloved is much higher than that of a lover.

'Intelligence' changed in the hands of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia into wisdom. His wisdom manifested itself in the shape of service to humanity. About him it has been said: "He was not a miracle-monger of the ordinary sort. He never flew in the air or walked on water with dry and motionless feet. His greatness was the greatness of a loving heart; his miracles were the miracles of a deeply sympathetic soul. He could read a man's inner heart by a glance at his face and spoke the words that brought consolation to a tortured heart."

About 'knowledge', the third faculty of a dervish, it can be said that Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was one of the

greatest scholars of his day. He wanted to become a *Qazi*, but gave it all up in his pursuit of inner knowledge. After becoming a Mureed (spiritual disciple) of Hazrat Baba Farid, he lived in extremely poor circumstances. Seeing him, a former friend expressed great surprise as he remembered Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia as one who had begun a very promising career as a scholar. When Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia told all of this to Hazrat Baba Farid, his murshid (spiritual guide) suggested that he should recite the following couplet to his friend:

*You are not my fellow traveller,  
Tread your own path  
May you be affluent.  
And I downtrodden.*

Then Hazrat Baba Farid ordered him to take a tray of food from the kitchen and carry it on his head to his friend. After doing so, he recited the verse. This deeply moved his friend.

One day, someone told a story of a certain saint who expired while slowly repeating the name of Allah. The eyes of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia, who was listening to this story, filled with tears and he recited this quatrain:

*I come running to the end of Your street,  
Tears are washing and washing my cheek.  
Union with You -- what else can I seek?  
My soul I surrender as Your name I repeat.*

## 1. Early Years

After leaving their homeland the city of Bokhara, the paternal grandfather of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia -- Khwaja Ali -- and the maternal grandfather of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia -- Khwaja Arab -- along with their family, came to India. At first they lived in Lahore, but later they took up their residence in Badayun (East of Delhi). Khwaja Arab married his daughter Bibi Zulaitaikha to Khwaja Ali's son Khwaja Ahmad.

The birth of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia took place on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar, i.e., the 27th of Safar 636 A.H. (1238 A.D.) Up to this day, his birthday celebration takes place. His shrine is bathed and the water thereof is distributed among the visitors.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia's father expired when Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was five years old. His mother brought him to a school where he learned to recite the holy Qur'an. In a short time he mastered the seven ways of recitation of the holy Qur'an. Then he studied Arabic

grammar, Ahadith (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him), commentary of the Qur'an and logic. At the age of twelve, he received the "turban of excellency." He was so sharp-witted, wise and understanding that he was given the title "Debater, capable of defeating the congregation." He became distinguished in the science of Tafsir (commentary on the Qur'an), in the knowledge of Ahadith, in Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), mathematics and astronomy. Khwaja Shamsul Malik was among his most learned teachers. He received a testimony of knowledge of Ahadith from Maulana Kamaluddin. (2)

Although in that period, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia used to sit among the ulama (the scholars of Islam), he was more interested in the inner life. He often used to say: "In the days of youth, I used to live in the company of the ulama, but in my heart the thought used to come that I should go away from their company and turn my face to the Divine Teacher." (3)

## II. Baba Farid

One day a certain Qawwal (Sufi musician), with the name of Abu Bakr, came from Multan (Pakistan) to Hazrat Nizamuddin's teacher. The teacher asked for information about the Sufi Sheikhs of Multan. Abu Bakr answered thus: "I have lived in the company of Hazrat Sheikh Bahauddin Zakaria of Multan and I have sung mystical couplets for him. In his Khanqah (Sufi monastery) the worship of Allah is very devoted, so much so that even the girls who knead the flour, while doing so, are occupied with the Zikr (remembrance of Allah). From there I went to Ajodhan (the present Pak Pattan in Pakistan). There I got the privilege of meeting Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Gang-e-Shakar," That sovereign of love of God has conquered the world and the light of his moon has illuminated that area."

"When I heard these words of praise in regard to Baba Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar," Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia says, I developed a sudden and intense love for him and I began to repeat his name after every Namaz (prayer)."

The Qawwal had started his concert with this line: "The living serpent of love has bitten my heart." But then Abu Bakr could not recollect the second line. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia helped him to do so, and seeing this, the Qawwal became very attentive towards him. From that day, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia became very much attached to Bab Farid.

## III. Coming to Delhi

"When my eighteenth year began," Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia tells, "I travelled from Badayun to Delhi." Musamma Ayuz accompanied him in this journey. Ayuz was a staunch believer in the spiritual greatness of Baba Farid. Whenever he saw the slightest danger because of robbers or wild beasts, he would cry out: "O, Pir! Come! I need your protection." "I asked him the name of that Pir and Ayuz said: "It is the one who has caught your heart and got you enamoured," meaning Baba Farid. Thus from that day my faith in the Sheikh increased."

"When in Delhi, I stayed by chance near Hazrat Baba Fariduddin's brother and caliph Hazrat Sheikh Najibuddin Mutawakkil. My mother and sister were also with me. We rented a house in the neighbourhood of the great Sheikh, whose company was very valuable to me. In his presence, the qualities of Baba Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar used to be described. On hearing them, I felt the desire of kissing his feet. For approximately three years I stayed in Delhi." (4)

#### IV. Meeting Baba Farid

One day Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia said to Sheikh Najibuddin Mutawakkil that he should pray to God, so that he (Nizamuddin) might become a Qazi. Then he would be able to spread justice among the creatures of God. The Sheikh remained silent. When Hazrat Nizamuddin repeated his question, he answered thus: "God forbid that you be a Qazi; be something else!"

In those days, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia used to spend the nights at the Jama Masjid. One morning, the muezzin (the one who calls to the prayer) recited the following verse from the minaret:

*"Has not the time come  
For the faithful  
That their hearts should bend  
For the remembrance of Allah" [Qur'an 57:16]*

Hearing this, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia's condition changed. It was as if he received spiritual illumination from every direction. And, without any food, he left Delhi in order to present himself to Baba Farid. At the age of twenty, on Wednesday the 11th of Rajab 655 A.H. (1257 A.D.), he reached Ajodhan. Coming before Hazrat Baba Farid, he unsuccessfully tried to summon up courage to tell in detail how eager he was to see him. He could not do so, because of awe. Baba Farid then said: "Every newcomer is nervous." Thereafter Baba Farid recited this verse:

*"O, the fire of separation of Thee,  
Has made the hearts like roasted meat;  
The flood of the fondness of Thee,  
Has made the lives morose."*

Then Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was honoured to be accepted as the mureed (spiritual disciple) of Baba Farid. Then Baba Sahib remarked: "O, Nizamuddin! I wanted to entrust the domain of Delhi to someone else. When you were on the way I heard a voice to the effect that I should wait as Nizamuddin is coming. He is fit for this domain. It should be entrusted to him. So stay in our company so that after completing your inner training, we will appoint you as our caliph and as the Wali-e-Hindustan (the saint of India)."

Hazrat Nizamuddin lived in the company of his Pir-o-murshid (spiritual guide) for seven months and a few days. In this short period, he became deserving of the khilafat of the great mystic Baba Farid. On the second of Rabi'ul Awwal 656 A.H. (1258 A.D.), Baba Farid bestowed khilafat and wilayat to Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia by giving him the special turban, which came to Baba Sahib from Chisht (Afghanistan). After coming to Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia ascended the throne of khilafat-e-piran-e-Chisht (5), i.e., he became a caliph of the Chishti Sheikhs. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia came ten times to Ajodhan: three times in the life of Baba Farid and seven times after his death (6).

After residing in Delhi for a few days, he disdained the crowds of people and desired to withdraw himself to the desert. He then received a Divine inspiration that his place of residence should be Ghiyaspur, a small village outside the city of Delhi. First he had raised a temporary shed with a straw roof for himself and all his companions. After some time, a better place was constructed for him by one of his disciples, Ziauddin Wakil Mulk. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia lived here for more than sixty years and never changed his place of residence. The khanqah is still there and is visited by many people up to this day.

#### V. Death

After an illness of about four months he expired in 725 A.H. (1324 A.D.) and realized seclusion (i.e., was buried) in Ghiyaspur. The locality is named after him today.

#### VI. Nature

After passing the spiritual status of ghousiat and farwaniyat, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia reached the status of Mehboob (beloved). His personality was the container

of divine secrets and his intentions were in harmony with those of Allah. He spread a very fine fragrance. Qazi Hamiduddin Kashani also became fragrant with this scent and unsuccessfully tried to wash it away. He narrated the incident to Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia, who explained it thus: "Qazi, this fragrance is of the love of Allah, which He gives to His lovers."

In the early period of his life he experienced great poverty. Although in Sultan Ghyasuddin Balban's time one could buy melons for very little money, the greater part of the season would pass without Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia eating a single slice. One day a pious woman brought some barley flour and presented it to him. He asked Sheikh Kamaluddin Yaqub to boil it in a cauldron. At that moment a faqir with a patched frock arrived and with a loud voice said: "O, Nizamuddin! bring whatever is present." Then Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia gave all the food to him. The faqir ate it all and then broke the cauldron. Hereafter he said: "O, Nizamuddin! You have received the bounties of the invisible world from Baba Farid and the bowl of visible poverty I have broken. Now you have become the sultan of both the visible and invisible world." From that day on, countless gifts started coming and free food was distributed to hundreds of visitors every day.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was very generous as can be seen in the following narration, which can be found in Jami's "Nafhatul Uns". A merchant of Multan lost all his possessions to a band of thieves. He told Sheikh Sadruddin, the son of the famous Suhrawardy saint (Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria of Multan), that he intended to go to Delhi and asked for a letter of recommendation to Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia. Then he was told by the great saint that he would receive all the gifts that would be given from the morning to the chasht (forenoon) prayers. About 12,000 golden and silver coins were received. All these were given to the merchant.

Every day large numbers of gifts used to be received, but they were distributed before the evening. More than three thousand needy people used to live on the langar (tree feeding).

Shortly before his death, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia called Khadim Iqbal and said: "Whatever cash is present, bring it so that I may distribute it to the deserving." Iqbal replied: "Whatever gifts come, they are spent on the same day. But there are a few thousand tons of grain in our storeroom." Bring it out and distribute it to the deserving," said Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia had great love of sama (Sufi music). His friends, disciples and students used to perform such Qawwali (music) in his presence, that even

animals used to stop and listen to it (7). One day he was out for a walk, when he saw a person who was pulling water out of a well and was saying in a loud voice to his companions: "Remain outside today, brother!" Hazrat Nizamuddin, after hearing this, started weeping, and his khuddam (servants) repeated that line until they reached home again.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia remained a bachelor all his life. Once his kamarband (a rope used to fasten a pair of trousers) got away from his hand. Baba Farid then said: "Tighten the kamarband properly." Hazrat Nizamuddin asked: "How should I do it? Baba Sahib answered: "Tighten it in such a way that except the houris of heaven, nobody is capable of opening it." Hearing that Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia put his head on the floor and did not marry. (8)

## VII. Writing and sayings

Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia collected the discourses of his Pir-o-murshid in a book called "*Rahat-ul-Qulodo*." Some of the sayings of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia:

1. *The wilayat (domain) of gnosis and faith can suffer decay. The wilayat of compassion can not.*
2. *The love of Awlia (saints) is stronger than their reason.*
3. *The lock of spiritual perfection has very many keys. All those keys are to be possessed. If one does not open it, others can.*
4. *He who has knowledge, reason, and love, is deserving to become a caliph of the Sufi sheikhs.*
5. *So long as is possible, give relief to your heart, because the heart of a good Muslim is the palace of the manifestations of Allah.*

## VIII. Miracles

Once Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah asked Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia to come to him on the last day of every month. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia responded: "It is against the tradition of my sheikhs. I will never go to meet the king." His friends advised him to turn for help to his Sheikh Baba Farid, so that the problem would be solved. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia refused to do so, saying: "The tasks of religion alone are many. I feel ashamed to give pain to the Sheikh for a worldly affair." He then said: "The king will not be victorious over me for I have had a certain dream. I saw that an animal with horns was attacking me. Upon it coming closer, I took hold of its horns and threw the animal on the earth in such a way

that it was killed." That day, after the noon prayers, he declined to visit the king. When two hours of the day remained, he was asked again to visit the king. He gave no reply. But it so happened that upon that very night, the king was murdered by a certain Khusru Khan. (9)

Another Sultan by the name of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, wanted Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia to leave Ghiyaspur before the Sultan's visit to Delhi. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia, was saddened by this and remarked: "Delhi is still far away." Then just before the arrival of the king in Delhi, the palace of Tughlaqabad fell upon him and he was killed. (10)

Sultan Alauddin had the fear in his heart that Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia wished to rule the kingdom himself and that he was only waiting for the proper time and chance to overthrow him. As a test, he sent some complicated matters related to state affairs to Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia and asked for its solution. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia reacted thus: "What have the dervishes, seated on rugs, to do with the affairs of kings seated on thrones? It is better that the time of the dervish is not wasted and conscience of the faqura is not put to test." When the king respectfully invited Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia to visit him, the latter answered thus: "The affections of a dervish should be seen as a bird to which distress is caused by the hawk of kingly shows. It is better and enough to keep acquaintance through greetings."

Khwaja Hasan, who had lived in the company of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia when he was much younger, along with all his friends, was involved in the drinking of wine. One day, near the mausoleum of Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki, they met again. Khwaja Hasan then recited this verse:

*"For years we have been in each others'  
company,  
But your company did me no good.  
Your piety could not correct my sinful life.  
My sinful life is therefore stronger than your  
piety."*

After hearing this verse, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia simply said: "There are different effects of company on different men." At once, Khwaja Hasan fell down at the feet of Hazrat Nizamuddin and along with his friends became mureed (spiritual disciples) of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia. Hazrat Sheikh Naseeruddin of Oudh related that he used to receive worldly knowledge from Qazi Muhiddin Kashani. He suddenly became ill and no hope of life remained. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia visited Sheikh

Naseeruddin when he was unconscious. Then Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia rubbed his hand over his face. Immediately Sheikh Naseeruddin regained consciousness and put his head on the feet of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia. One day a mureed of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia prepared a feast for his Sheikh. Qawwals were also called and food was prepared. But when the same (music) started, thousands of people joined in. The host became worried because of the shortage of food. Feeling this, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia said to his khadim (servant): "Wash the hands of the people and let ten people sit at one place. Start giving the food after saying 'Bismillah' (In the Name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful)." It so happened that everyone had enough food and there was a great deal of food left over. (11)

It is narrated that a certain Shamsuddin was a very rich man and had no faith in the spirituality of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia. Instead he used to speak ill of him in his absence. One day, he was drinking wine with his friends and suddenly he saw Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia appear in front of him, who made a prohibiting sign with his finger. Shamsuddin then threw the wine in the water and started towards the house of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia after performing the ritual ablutions. Seeing him, Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia said: "Whoever is blessed by Allah, he abstains from sins like this." Hearing this, Shamsuddin became very astonished and with complete faith became his mureed. He distributed all his money to the dervishes and in a short time became a Wali (saint) himself.

## IX. A story

One day Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was listening to Qawwali and in ecstasy, waving his handkerchief, said: "We regret, we have not become equal to the washermans' son even." At that moment no one dared to ask what he meant, but some days afterwards he was asked about it by Hazrat Amir Khusru. The explanation of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia was like this: "The son of the washerman of the king, without seeing the princess, was in love with her. He used to wash her clothes with utmost care, and even mended and improved them by various means. Without seeing her, he used to moan and weep in the memory of her beauty. His parents became very worried. To speak about it is a problem and not to speak about it is a problem. We are washers and she is a princess. How can the dust of the earth be compared with the sky?

So they tricked him in order to try and change their son's ideas. One day his mother came to him with a

grief-stricken face. He asked what was the matter with her. Then she explained "Today was the soyam (the third day after the death) of the princess whose clothes you used to wash. The boy three times asked: "Has she died?" -- and then with a shriek died.

On the fourth day, the washerwoman brought the clothes back to the princess. She asked: "Who has washed these clothes today? They do not look as clean as they used to be. Their neatness used to look as if love has been involved." Hearing this, the washerwoman became sad and started weeping. On being forced by the princess, she explained everything. The princess then wished to visit his grave. At once, when she was there, the grave cracked and the princess said: "It cracked at places. Ah! Whose grave is this? Probably a restless heart is buried in it." Then the princess fell down and expired. (12)

## X. Poetry

The following is a translation of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awlia's famous poem in honour of the Prophet:

*O breeze! turn towards Medina (and) from this well-wisher  
recite the Salaam.  
Turn round the king of the prophets (and) with the utmost  
humility recite the Salaam.  
Sometimes pass the gate of mercy (and) with the gate of Gabriel  
rule the forehead.  
Salaam to the prophet of God (and) sometimes recite Salaam at  
the gate of peace.  
Put with all respect the head of faith on the dust there.  
Be one with the sweet melody of David and be acquainted with  
the cry of anguish.  
In the assembly of the prophets recite verses from the humble  
being 'Nizam'.*

## Notes :

1. Astrabadi, Mohammed Qasim Hindu Shah: "Tarikh-e-Farishtha."
2. Sijzi, Amir Hasan: "Fawwai 'du'l-Fu'ad."
3. Khrd, Amier: "Siyaru 'l-Auliya."
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Bulaq, Mohammed: "Roza-e-Aqtab."
7. Ibid.
8. Same as note 1.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Translated from the "Tazkara-e-Ghousiya."