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The Akbarian-Amulian School of North India

There is no doubt in the claim that the foremost interpreter of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240) within Twelver Shi'ism is Sayyid Haydar al-Amuli (d. 787/1385), who in his *Jami' al-Asrar* thoroughly filtered the Akbarian doctrine in such a way that it emerged in accordance with the theological demands of the Twelver tradition. While Amuli's accomplishments in these regards are acknowledged, it is not known whether any schools arose within the intellectual centers of Iran and Iraq loyal specifically to his ideology; it is instead in the Islamic periphery of India, where demonstrable evidence exists to indicate the existence of such a school therein. Sayyid Nur Allah Shushtari (d. 1019/1620), the martyred Mughal chief justice, quite openly aligns with Amuli in his *Majalis al-Mu'minin* (Gathering of the Believers), labeling him as Sayyid al-Muti'allihin (Lord of the heavenly ones) whilst openly appropriating ideas from Amuli's *Jami' al-Asrar* to develop the thesis of his *majlis-i shishum* (sixth gathering) on Sufi believers. Shushtari argues that in essence Sufism and Shi'ism are one and the same, one is an inward expression whereas the other is outward. Furthermore, in his *Majalis al-Mu'minin*, Shushtari includes a lengthy entry on Ibn 'Arabi, providing illumination on his supposed hidden Shi'ism, as well as a defense of Akbarian monism. Shushtari's views have routinely been categorised as aberrational by mainstream Usulis, like al-Wahid al-Bihbahani (d. 1205/1791), who decried him as a Shi'ah-tarash (Shi'ah fabricator); it is thus of great intrigue that when Bihbahani's student, Sayyid Dildar 'Ali Naqawi Nasirabadi (d. 1235/1820), returned to North India in 1781 with the aim of spreading Usulism, he met stiff resistance by Twelver Chishtis (Sufis), who claimed to follow a supposed ideological school of Haydar al-Amuli linked with Shushtari. This occurs more than 150 years after the execution of Shushtari, indicating that such an Akbarian-Amulian lineage potentially existed in North India; also giving credence to the Sufi-Shi'i nexus claims of *majlis-i shishum*. In order to delve further into this matter, Nasirabadi's polemic against this group, titled *al-Shihab al-Thaqib*, and the rejoinder prepared by this Akbarian-Amulian group, *Radd-i al-Shihab al-Thaqib*, will be analysed and expounded upon in this paper.

Keywords: Twelver Shi'ism, Twelver Sufism, Akbarian Monism, North India, Polemics



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