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# Replacing *Sharīʿa*, *Tarīqa* and *Ḥaqīqa* with *Fiqh*, *Akhlāq* and *Tawḥīd*

*Notes on Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī (d. 1325/1907) and His Sufi Affiliation*

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## Abstract

Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī (1265/1849–1325/1907), aside from being a Shīʿite cleric (*mujtahid*), was a scholar and follower of Sufism. He was a disciple of Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Hamadānī (1239/1824–1311/1894) in *ʿirfān* (gnosis) in the Shīʿi seminary. In his treatise on spiritual wayfaring, *Tadhkirat al-muttaqīn*, Bahārī represents a triad of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ethics (*akhlāq*) and monotheism (*tawḥīd*). In his terms, *fiqh* is an introduction to *ʿamal* (practice), practice is an introduction to the refinement of character (*tahdhīb akhlāq*), and *akhlāq* is an initial step to *tawḥīd* (the assertion of God’s unity). This paper examines the intersection of Shīʿi and Sufi spiritual movements within the Shīʿi seminary. It demonstrates that Bahārī sought to reframe mystical thought to present it as more acceptable to the Shīʿi seminary, which was characterized by rigid interpretations of Islamic law. This paper also studies the development of the Ṣahabiyya esoteric school within the Shīʿi seminary by tracing the Sufi chain of Bahārī and his masters.

## Keywords

Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī – Shīʿi seminary – Sufism – Shīʿism – Ṣahabiyya order

## 1 Introduction

The Shīʿi seminary is generally known as a religious institution with an emphasis on teaching the Islamic sciences and, in particular, Islamic law (*fiqh*). Within this scope, the seminary aims to prepare jurists (*mujtahids*). We also

know that the post-Safavid inclination of the Shī'ī seminaries has been officially dominated by opponents of Sufism. The accounts of these hostilities have been narrated and documented.<sup>1</sup> Yet, there were Sufi orders that continued to develop their ideas and practices in those seminaries. In what follows, the Sufi chain and teachings of Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī (1265/1849–1325/1907) will be studied.<sup>2</sup> Bahārī was a *mujtahid* (high-ranking Shī'ite cleric) and a Sufi master in the early-twentieth-century Shī'ī seminary. Very little is recorded about Bahārī's life and works. It is known that he was a disciple of Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī (1239/1824–1311/1894), himself a *mujtahid*, a philosopher, and an *'arif* (gnostic) as we will see.<sup>3</sup> He was born in Bahār in the vicinity of Hamadan in western Iran and completed his religious studies in his hometown and in the Burūjird seminary where he received his license in *ijtihād* (independent legal judgment based exclusively on the texts of revelation) at the age of thirty-two from Āyatullāh Maḥmūd Burūjirdī who was the uncle of the later, better-known Shī'a authority, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (1875–1961). Around 1880, he moved to the seminary in Najaf, where he became the disciple and companion of Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī.

Apart from a few sources, there is no clear indication of who his other masters in the Najaf seminary may have been. Yet we do know that he attended lectures by teachers in that seminary and was known among them as a pious scholar whose main interest was practical mysticism. The last three years of Bahārī's life coincided with the Constitutional Revolution of Iran (1905–1911). Muḥammad Husayn Nā'inī Gharavī (1860–1936), a Shī'ī authority of the time and a famous figure in the revolution, must have been in contact with Bahārī and his close companion Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā'ī (d. 1332/1914). We know this because Nā'inī eulogized the virtue and spiritual states of Bahārī after his death,

1 For more on the opposition to both Sufism and philosophy see Ata Anzali and S. M. Hadi Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy in Safavid Iran: Mulla Muḥammad-Ṭāhīr Qummi's Ḥikmat Al-'Arifīn* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). For a general discussion on this opposition, see Bernd Radtke, "Anti-Šūfī polemics," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Leiden, Brill, 2012). Rasūl Ja'farīyān gives a detailed historical narration of this challenge in his *Dīn va siyāsāt dar dawra-yi Šafavī*, Chāp-i 1. ed., vol. 2 (Qom: Anšāriyān, 1991); see also İlgar Baharlu, *Şah'ın bahçesinde: Şah İsmail öncesi ve sonrası Kızılbaşlık* (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2020).

2 He must not be mistaken with his fellow-citizen and schoolmate i.e., Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Bahārī (d. 1333/1915) who was active in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.

3 Manūchīhr Šadūqī Suhā, *Tārīkh-i ḥukamā' va 'urafā'-yi muta'akkkhir bar Šadr al-Muta'allihīn* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Islāmī-yi Ḥikmat va Falsafa-yi Īrān, 1981) and idem, *Tahrīr-i sānī-yi tārīkh-i ḥukamā' va 'urafā'-yi muta'akkkhir* (Tehran: Ḥikmat, 2002), 191.

saying, “Where Bahārī is buried is a real town.”<sup>4</sup> Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī called him *Ḥakīm-i aṣḥāb* “the wise among companions” which positions him in a high rank among his very close disciples. Further evidence of Bahārī’s high rank is an account narrated by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī in his *Tawḥid-i ‘ilmī va ‘aynī dar makātib-i ḥikamī va ‘irfānī* where he narrates from his master Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā’ī who in turn narrates from his master Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā’ī that “we always were in the service (*khidmat*) of the late Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī and he was completely supportive of us. But, as soon as Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī became his disciple (*irādat*) and a *murīd*, he stole Akhund from us.”<sup>5</sup>

The Shī’ī scholar and bibliographer Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī (1293/1876–1389/1970), in his *Ṭabaqāt a’lām al-Shī’a* indicates that Bahārī held the highest rank among the disciples of Akhund Hamadānī (*huwa ajallahum a’azamuhum*),<sup>6</sup> and Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn al-‘Amilī in his *A’yān al-Shī’a* mentions Bahārī as a spiritual figure among other scholarly characteristics.<sup>7</sup> Biographers often mention Bahārī and Karbalā’ī as two brilliant disciples of Akhund Hamadānī in line with Mīrzā Jawād Āqā Maliki Tabrizī (d. 1343/1924–25) and others.

## 2 Bahārī and His Sufi Affiliations

Contemporary biographers have been perplexed about the Sufi order to which Bahārī belonged. During the later period of Safavid Iran, scholars in the Shī’a seminary used the term *‘irfān* (gnosis) to protect themselves from a negative impugnation by the exoteric scholars and preserve Sufism, which faced strong opposition. In an attempt to describe the group of Shī’ī-Sufi scholars that Bahārī belongs to, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1919–1979) denies their connection to any Sufi order and instead calls them “scholars who were not members of any formal Sufi order” and who “began to show profound learning in the

4 The quote was orally transmitted by Āyatullāh Āqā Najafī Hamadānī (1322/1904–1417/1995), Nā’ini’s son in law and a disciple of Āyatullāh Kumpānī (d. 1361/1942). The quote is installed on the wall of Bahārī’s mausoleum. Āyatullāh Āqā Najafī Hamadānī is the author of *Anvār-i durakhshān dar tafsīr-i Qur’ān*.

5 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī, *Tawḥid-i ‘ilmī va ‘aynī dar makātib-i ḥikamī va ‘irfānī* (Tehran: Hikmat, 1410/1989), 17.

6 Muḥammad Muḥsin Āqā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī and Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā’ī Bihbihānī, *Ṭabaqāt a’lām al-Shī’a: Nuqabā’ al-bashar fi al-qarn al-rābi’ ‘ashar* (Tehran: Maktaba, Maṭḥaf wa-Markaz Wathā’iq Majlis al-Shūrā al-Islāmī; Mashhad: Majma’ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmīya al-Ṭabī‘ lil-Āstāna al-Raḍawīya al-Muqaddasa, 2017), 667.

7 Muḥsin al-Ḥusaynī ‘Āmilī, *A’yān al-Shī’a*, 4th ed., vol. 9 (Beirut: Maṭba‘at al-Inṣāf, 1960), 402.

theoretical *'irfān* of Ibn al-ʿArabī, such that none from amongst the Sufi orders could match them.”<sup>8</sup> He, moreover, in his *Khadamāt-i mutaḡābil*, indicates the importance of Akhund Hamadānī by referring to his (Hamadānī) years in the philosophical school of Sabzivārī (d. 1298/1880), saying “if all disciples of Sabzivārī were proud of being his students, the school of Sabzivārī is proud of the presence of such a disciple.”<sup>9</sup> He then points out to the Shīʿa seminary Sufis: “Since the 10th/16th century, there have been individuals and groups devoted to the spiritual methodology of practical *'irfān*.” Muṭahharī’s calling them both individuals and groups makes the reader confused about whether a group could be an organized order or not; moreover, he asserts their high spiritual standing with the repeated remark that they were “not members of any of the formal Sufi orders.”

It appears that these “gnostics” attempted to conceal their Sufi affiliation to protect both the continuity of their *ṭarīqa* and their mystical approach in the Shīʿa seminary. Historians and biographers almost stop discussing the origin of their Sufi order at Shūshtarī’s (d. 1281/1864) mysterious master, namely Mullā Qulī Jūlā. They also quote the masters of this order, asking that a *silsila* (chain) for them not be established. Tihṛānī, among others, in his *Kernel of the Kernel*, states that “our *ṭarīqah* [order] is that of the late Akhund [Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī], which does not end in any of these *silsilas* [chains of spiritual descent].”<sup>10</sup> Ṭabāṭabāī (1904–1981), Qāḏī (1866–1947), and others follow the same manner in discussing their own order.<sup>11</sup> In his introduction to the English translation of *Lubb al-lubāb (Kernel of the Kernel)*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr raises the question about the sources of the esoteric knowledge and practices of these individuals. He mentions his conversation with Henry Corbin on Mullā Ṣadrā. According to him, Corbin believed that they [Shīʿi gnostics] did not have [spiritual] teachers, while Nasr correctly stated that they did.

8 Murtaḡā Muṭahharī, *Majmūʿa-yi ashʿār-i Shahīd Mutahharī*, 23 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ṣadrā, 1377/1999), 23:528.

9 See Murtaḡā Muṭahharī, *Khadamāt-i mutaḡābil-i Islam va Iran* (Tehran: Intishar, 1970), 521–22.

10 See Muḡammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭihṛānī, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect: A Shīʿi Approach to Sufism (Risāla-yi lubb al-lubāb dar sayr wa sulūk-i uluʿl-albāb)*, ed. Muḡammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāī and Mohammad Hassan Faghfoory (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003). Qāḏī’s initiation into mysticism was through his father and the Ṣahabī shaykh Imām-Qulī Nakhjavānī. See Muḡammad Ḥasan Qāḏī, *Āyat al-ḡaqq: sharḡ-i aḡvālāt-i ... Ḥāḡ Sayyid ʿAlī Āqā Qāḏī*, Chāp-i 1. ed., vol. 2 (Tehran: Ḥikmat, 2004), 247.

11 For a discussion on Qāḏī Ṭabāṭabāī, see Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari, “Qāḏī Ṭabāṭabāī as a (Hidden) Sufi Master in the Shiʿa Seminary,” presentation at *Middle Eastern Studies Association MESA* (New Orleans, LA, 2019).

Although followers tried to conceal the Sufi connection, as we show here, this order belongs to the Ṣahabiyya order in the Shī'ī seminary.

Akhund Mullā Ḥusaynqulī Shavandī Hamadānī, who was Bahārī's master, was a *mujtahid*, a philosopher, and a gnostic. He studied Islamic philosophy with the renowned philosopher Mullā Hādī Sabzivārī in Sabzivār. He then moved to Najaf and completed his studies in *fiqh* and *uṣūl* with Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī (1214/1799–1281/1864). In Najaf he was initiated into *irfān* by Sayyid 'Alī Shūshtarī. He then became the spiritual master of many Shī'ī scholars in the Najaf seminary.<sup>12</sup> Tihirānī, in his *Risāla-yi lubb al-lubāb*, mentions that his position in the seminary was such that he inherited Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī's position as head of Shī'a community. His spiritual master, Sayyid 'Alī Shūshtarī, wanted him to concentrate on educating his disciples in spirituality and Divine love rather than acting as a *mujtahid*.<sup>13</sup>

In a manuscript of *Rashaḥāt nūrīyya* written by Sayyid Ḥusayn Ṣahīr al-Islām (1274/1858–1337/1919), a scholar, member of the order, and relative of Ṣadr al-Dīn Kāshif al-Dizfūlī, it becomes clear that Sayyid 'Alī Shūshtarī was a disciple of Ṣadr al-Dīn Kāshif al-Dizfūlī (1174/1760–1258/1842) who was, in turn, a master of the Ṣahabiyya order.<sup>14</sup> Dizfūlī along with Mullā 'Alī Nūrī were disciples of Āqā Muḥammad Bīdābādī (d. 1197/1783). Bīdābādī is known for being an outstanding member of the Ṣahabiyya order at his time.<sup>15</sup> This chain

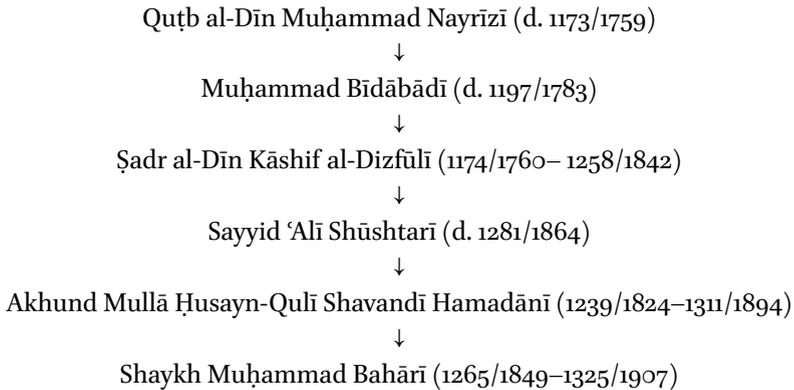
12 Fatemeh Fana, "Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī," in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. Reza Pourjavady (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 191.

13 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Tihirānī, *Risāla-yi lubb al-lubāb* (Qom: Mu'assasa-yi Bustān-i Kitāb, 2010), 157. For more on Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī see Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari, "Gar nabūdi bi-zamīn khāk nishīnāni chand (sayrī dar āthār-i Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī)," *Keyhān Farhangī* 112 (1994): 22–25. He spent his time mostly with his disciples, therefore most of the works attributed to him are recordings of his lectures by his disciples. Nevertheless, his editorial commentaries (*taqrīrāt*) on Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī's lectures on *fiqh* and *uṣūl* and his *taqrīr* on Sayyid 'Alī Shūshtarī's teachings were compiled by himself. A copy of both manuscripts is preserved at Ḥusayniyya Shūshtariyya in Najaf. For more information, see Mahmud Sheikh, "Hamadānī, Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī," in *Dānishnāma-yi jahān-i Islam*, ed. Ghulam 'Alī Ḥaddād 'Adil (Tehran: Bunyād-i Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif-i Islāmī, 2012).

14 Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Rizā Ṣahīr al-Islām Dizfūlī, *Rashaḥāt-i nūrīyya*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣīr Bāghbān Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥikmat'far (Dizfūl: Dār al-Mu'minīn, 2016). A manuscript copy of which is preserved in *Majlis* library in Tehran (no. 492629).

15 For the rise of the Ṣahabiyya in Iran during the Safavid era, see Ata Anzali, "The Emergence of the Ṣahabiyya in Safavid Iran," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2.2 (2013): 149–75. And generally on the Kubrawiyya and the Ṣahabiyya, see Devin A. DeWeese, *Studies on Sufism in Central Asia*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2012); Asadallāh

is also mentioned in the writings of Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kumaylī (b. 1360/1941), a disciple of Sayyid Hāshim Ḥaddād (1318/1901–1404/1984).<sup>16</sup> Sadūqī Suhā in his *Tahrīr-i ṣānī-yi tārikh-i ḥukamā' va 'urafā'-yi muta'akhhir* connects Shushtarī to Muḥammad Riḍā Dizfūlī, then Ṣadr al-Dīn Dizfūlī, and from them to Muḥammad Bīdābādī and then Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī (d. 1173/1759). This lineage clearly indicates a connection to the Ṣahabiyya order, although in its own form and with elite characteristics. There are some connections as well with the Ni'matullāhī Sufi order.<sup>17</sup> The Ṣahabiyya chain is, therefore, as follows:



Khāvarī, *Ṣahabiyya: taṣavvuf-i 'ilmī, āthār-i adabī*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān, 1362 sh./1983); also Leonard Lewisohn, "An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II: A Socio-Cultural Profile of Sufism, from the Dhahabī Revival to the Present Day," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62.1 (1999): 36–59.

16 Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kumaylī, *al-Maṭālib al-sulūkīyya Fārsī-'Arabī* (Tehran: Āyat-i Ishrāq, 1396/2017), 5, and *Rasā'il-i Kāshif Dizfūlī* (Dizfūl: Armaghān-i Tārikh, 2019).

17 For more on the connection to the Ni'matullāhī order see Gary (Muhammad) Legenhausen's introduction to Muḥammad Mahdī ibn Murtaḍā Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Tīhrānī, and Tawus Raja, *Treatise on Spiritual Journeying and Wayfaring* ([Chicago]: Great Books of the Islamic World, distributed by Kazi Publications, Inc., 2013). See also Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Shirāzī Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanā'ī, 1960), 3:199–200; 'Abd-al-Ḥujjat Balāghī, *Maqālāt al-ḥunafā' fi maqāmāt Shams-al-'urafā' ya zindaqānī-yi Shams-al-'urafā'* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Muḥāhirī, 1949), 1:12. For more on Bīdābādī and the typology of his letters see Muḥammad Bīdābādī and 'Alī Ṣadrā'ī Khū'ī, *Tadhkirat al-sālikīn: nāmahā-yi 'irfānī-yi Āqā Muḥammad Bīdābādī* (Qom: Intishārāt-i Khū'ī, 2011). In his *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 350, Henry Corbin mentions Bīdābādī and his role in the continuation of Islamic philosophy.

### 3 Between Bahārī's *Tadhkirat al-Muttaqīn* and Shī'ī Sufism

The *Tadhkirat al-muttaqīn* is the only extant work of Bahārī, although there is an Arabic letter attributed to him in a separate book.<sup>18</sup> The *Tadhkirat* first appeared in a lithographic printing in 1329/1911, four years after the author's death. It is composed of several short treatises in Persian and Arabic prose which discuss different spiritual manuals. There is an appendix to the book that includes a general *Dastūr al-'amal* (Letters to followers indicating the path to spiritual perfection). The *Tadhkirat* is written in the Persian Sufi prose style. Bahārī does not refer to any sources. Nevertheless, his writing style is notably similar to the work of people like Bīdābādī in his letters to his followers and disciples. The first part includes seven short chapters on the esoteric and spiritual meanings of religious concepts. The first chapter, "Tawba-yi ḥaqīqī" ("Real repentance"), seeks to elaborate the esoteric definition and practical methods of repentance as the first step towards human perfection. The following sections of this part cover topics such as "Ādāb-i murāqaba" ("Manual of vigilance"), "Ādāb-i rifāqat," ("Manual of companionship"), "Ādāb-i sulūk bā zan va 'ayāl" ("Manual of behaving with spouse and children"), "Ādāb-i tarbiyat-i awlād" ("Manual of educating children"), "Ādāb-i ziyārat" ("Manual of visitation to shrines"), "Ādāb-i Ḥajj" ("Manual of performing pilgrimage to Mecca"). These chapters represent their subject in a way that is applicable to 'irfān and, as Bahārī puts it, helps the wayfarer on his spiritual journey.

The second section of the book – the focus of this paper – entitled "Including four parts in revealing some realities to awaken the wayfarers" ("Shāmil-i chahār bakhsh dar ifshā'-yi pāra-yi ḥaqā'iq barā-yi tanabbuh-i sālik") – assembles a treatise on the characteristics of real scholars (*dar ṣifāt-i 'ulamā-yi ḥaqiqih*), and a piece on the varieties of "deluded" scholars (*dar aṣnāf-i al-maghrūrīn*). The second section follows with "Dastūr al-'amal," his advice to wayfarers who want to practice Sufism. The last part in the second section is a collection of sixteen letters by Bahārī to his followers or those who were seeking ethical or practical advice. These letters, again in Persian prose sometimes mixed with Arabic quotations, address the necessity of divine love and awakening his readers to the importance of *sulūk* (wayfaring) in the path of God.

These letters inform us about how he devoted his life to 'irfān and spirituality. Here, between the lines, he demonstrates his own spiritual states and Sufi tastes. Moreover, there is a note at the beginning of this section in the early lithographic printing of this book (*chāp-i sangī*) of 1329/1911, which was

18 Ḥusaynī Ṭīhrānī Muḥammad Ḥusayn and Ḥusaynī Ṭīhrānī Muḥammad Muḥsin, *Maṭla'ī amār*, 3 vols. (Tehran: Maktab-i Waḥy, 2009), 3:57–60.

removed from later editions. The note, added by the editor, tells us that this section contains letters that Bahārī wrote to his disciples or his master. It is composed of sixteen letters, half of which are addressed to “us” [probably disciples] and a half to “him” [his master]. The note adds that his master’s name is not revealed, for he may not be happy by revealing his name.<sup>19</sup>

If this book was indeed first published in 1911, which seems to be true, then it is fair to assume that the master about whom it speaks must still have been alive at the time. He thus cannot be identified with Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī, the master that we know Bahārī spent time with and who passed away in 1894. The only name that might fit is Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā’ī, a close friend of Bahārī and companion of Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī who passed away in 1914. Nevertheless, their relationship was not as master and disciple; rather they had been close friends. We do not know if there was any other Sufi master with whom Bahārī had a relation. In addition, Bahārī himself had disciples in mysticism.

The third and final section, which is the shortest part of the *Tadhkirat*, includes three short treatises by others in the Shī’a seminary. Authors in this section include Sayyid Aḥmad Mūsavī Ḥā’irī (also known as the above-mentioned Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā’ī), Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī, and Āqā Muḥammad Bīdābādī (d. 1197/1783). The manner in which Tihrānī and other scholars discussed this order raises the question why Bīdābādī’s treatise would be placed as an appendix to Bahārī’s book. As we discussed, Bīdābādī is the figure that connects this order to the Zahabiyya. Sajjad Rizvi, in his piece on Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī, indicates that Bīdābādī was a philosopher inclining to theosis (*Ḥakīm-i muta’allih*), and adds that he was famed as a mystic (*Ahl-i sayr u sulūk*).<sup>20</sup>

As mentioned, the *Tadhkirat* was first published in 1911, four years after Bahārī’s death. The contents of the book, however, were collected by Ismā’īl Tabrizī (1287/1870–1374/1955), whose pen name was Tā’ib.<sup>21</sup> He was a disciple of

19 Shaykh Muḥammad Bahārī, *Tadhkirat al-muttaqīn* (Qom: Markaz-i Iḥyā’-yi Mirāth-i Islāmī, 1329/1911).

20 See Sajjad Rizvi, “Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī,” in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, 126.

21 Several of Tā’ib’s manuscripts are preserved in Qom, Markaz-i Iḥyā’-yi Mirāth-i Islāmī, n° 1150 and 1703. He was imprisoned during Reza Shah’s era (15 December 1925–16 September 1941) as a result of his disagreement with Shah’s order forcefully removing women’s veil. For more on his life and works see Riḍā Mukhtārī, *Simā-yi farzānagān* (Qom: Daftar-i Tablighāt-i Islāmī-yi Ḥawza-yi ‘Ilmiyya-yi Qum, 1369/1990); Muḥammad Muḥsin Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī and Aḥmad Ḥusaynī, *al-Dharī’a ilā taṣānīf al-Shī’a*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1986); Mīr-Ḥusayn Deldār Bunāb, *Barrasī-yi afkār va andīshahā-yi Shaykh Ismā’īl Tā’ib* (Qom: Rāh-i Sabz, 2009); and Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari, “Insān-i modern va ‘irfān-i nāb,” *Payām* 98.1 (2009): 8–21. His other important contribution in the field of

both Mirzā Jawād Āqā Malikī Tabrīzī (d. 1343/1924–25) and Bahārī in his *sulūk*. Tā'ib was a poet and, at the same time, a scholar of religion. In a short introduction to the *Tadhkirat*, he mentions that as Bahārī had no male inheritor, he published this collection in his honor.

Bahārī was a member of a Sufi order within the Shī'a seminary known today in Iran by multiple titles such as *Maktab-i ma'rifat al-naḥs* (the School of intimate knowledge of the inner self). This order, as explained above, is a seminary/elite version of the Zahabiyya order within the Shī'a seminary.<sup>22</sup> Figures such as Quṭb al-Dīn Nayrīzī, Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, who led a revival of Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendent philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-muta'aliyya*), and Bīdabādī are perhaps its best-known members. Ata Anzali, in his *Mysticism in Iran*,<sup>23</sup> has discussed the historical disagreement with and probably enmity towards Sufi orders among some of the religious scholars. Bahārī, as a member of an esoteric order, needed to step very carefully in his writings to avoid attacks by exoteric scholars. There had been many attempts in the seminary to associate his masters

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Islamic philosophy and Sufism is that he was the questioner who first asked Kumpānī (1296/1878–1361/1942) (as a philosopher) and Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā'ī (d. 1332/1914) (as a Sufi) about the meaning of the following couplet by the Sufi poet Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (c. 540–618/1145–1221):

“He reigns in undisturbed omnipotence,  
Bathed in the light of His magnificence –  
No mind, no intellect can penetrate  
The mystery of His unending state”

Each master replied to the question based on his own philosophic or Sufi inclinations. Tā'ib acted as a mediator who then asked them to elaborate. Each of them wrote seven responses. Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1904–1981) and his disciple Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Tīhrānī (1925–1995) also commented on those initial correspondences. It was finally Tīhrānī who published all of the letters and commentaries. This collection provides the interpretations and meanings of the concept of God, the Divine, and Divine Unity in both philosophic and Sufi traditions in Shī'a Islam. For more see Aḥmad Karbalā'ī et al., *Tawḥīd-i 'ilmī va 'aynī dar makātīb-i ḥikamī va 'irfānī* (Mashhad: Intishārāt-i 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1998).

22 Different authors have given this order different titles. Some call it Shūshṭariyya for Shūshṭarī's important role in it. However, others entitle it *Maktab-i akhlāq-i Najaf* or *Maktab-i ma'rifat al-naḥs* or the School of self-knowledge. I call it *Maktab-i ma'rifat al-naḥs*. This is the title used by Mirzā Jawād Āqā Malikī Tabrīzī (d. 1343/1924–25), a disciple of Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī; in his letter to Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kumpānī, while describing his master's approach, he adds that “They said that the desired method for this path is self-knowledge.” There are other titles, such as *ṭarīqa* of Julā. None of these titles are definitive.

23 Ata Anzali, *Mysticism in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2017).

with Sufism.<sup>24</sup> Like his predecessors, one of his concerns in the seminary was the lack of attention paid to ethics, self-knowledge, self-purification, and other Sufi values. He understood that in the seminary environment, if a *mujtahid* like him used the terminology used by Sufis, as others had, he would come under attack as well. Keeping this in mind gives the reader a better understanding of why he delicately and conscientiously introduces Sufi wayfaring in a short treatise in the second chapter on the varieties of “deluded” scholars (*dar aṣnāf-i al-maghrūrīn*), doing his best to avoid offending people in the seminary. In this treatise, Bahārī introduces the triad of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ethics or refinement of character (*tahdhīb akhlāq*), and the oneness of God (*tawhīd*), which triad was probably chosen specifically by him to replace the famous Sufi triad of *sharī'a*, *ṭarīqa*, and *ḥaqīqa*. In his writing, he targets those who spend their time merely on the official religious sciences (*'ulūm-i rasmī*) and describes them as those who never fulfill their purpose in life, namely, to adopt Godly virtues or *imitatio dei* (*al-takhalluq bi akhlāq Allāh*). Because of their misunderstanding of the purpose of revelation and religion, Bahārī calls them the “deluded ones” (*maghrūrīn*). He then categorizes them into groups and mentions each one's shortcomings on the path to spiritual perfection:

Some famous scholars are among the *maghrūrīn* (deluded/deceived), and their delusion is in part caused by their knowledge and in part by their *'amal* (practice/living morally/self-purification). There are different categories of the first group of deluded ones. Some of them are merely satisfied with a handful of disputes that helps them in conversations. They do not have any share of the real doctrines and matters that pertain to *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *'amal*. Those [scholars] are like a thread hanging on the air. They move in the direction the wind blows. Their state is known. There are other groups that are satisfied with language, arts, grammar, and literature, assuming those subjects to be introductory to the religious sciences. They waste their life on them. They have absolutely no share of the knowledge for which they were created.<sup>25</sup>

24 While they criticized the Sufis for not following *sharī'a*, there were accusations of following Sufism made against Bahārī's masters such as Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandi Hamadānī and Shūshtarī. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭīhrānī and Tawus Raja, *Shining Sun: In Memory of 'Allamah Tabataba'i: A Translation of Mihr-i Taban* (London: ICAS Press, 2011), 255–56. These sorts of accusations have played the role of providing an excuse to attack rivals. See Reza Tabandeh and Leonard Lewisohn, ed., *Sufis and Their Opponents in the Persianate World* (Irvine, Ca: UCI, Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2020).

25 Bahārī, *Tadhkirat al-muttaqīn*, 108. All translations from the *Tadhkirat* are mine unless otherwise noted.

In another instance, he even condemns mere engagement in *fiqh* rather than truly understanding it as a primary step for the refinement of character. With this, he reveals the very essence of his view of religious studies in the seminary:

There is still another group that waste their life merely in *fiqh* or its introductory courses such as *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Yet, they have not recognized that *fiqh* is an introduction to *ʿamal* (practice), and practice is an introduction to the refinement of character (*tahdhīb akhlāq*) and *akhlāq* is an initial step to *tawḥīd* (the assertion of God's unity). This poor man is entangled in the introduction of the initial step, and there will be further introductory steps for him to take up to the end of his life until he reaches a conclusion ... Another group is not satisfied with this [introductory discipline]; they speculate and think deeply about all knowledge in a discursive analytical way. They, nevertheless, ignore the practical faculty and the necessity of refinement of character (*tahdhīb akhlāq*).<sup>26</sup>

It is of utmost importance for Bahārī and the Sufi order to which he belongs to establish a religious study in the Shīʿa seminary (*al-ḥawza al-ilmīyya*), which does not exclude spiritual wayfaring. It is not only theoretical speculation that should take place in the seminary but rather *ʿamal*, which must form an integral part of the seminary's curricula. The same attitude exists in Bidābādī's writings. For instance, in his letter to ʿAbdallāh Bidgūlī Kāshānī, Bidābādī refers to the study of *ʿulūm-i rasmī* – whether it is language, *ḥadīth*, Qurʾanic exegesis, or even philosophy – as not moving one toward perfection. Both transmitted and intellectual sciences, according to him, have “no impact except causing distance from the final goal.”<sup>27</sup> He then explains that the only way to eternal salvation is nothing other than full agreement in expression (*qawl*), action (*fiʿl*), and state (*ḥāl*) with the Prophet. This is in full agreement with the Islamic Sufi tradition. Bidābādī, moreover, refers to a Prophetic *ḥadīth* in which he states that “the *sharīʿa* is my words (*aqwālī*), the *ṭarīqa* my actions [*aʿmālī*], and the *ḥaqīqa* my states.”<sup>28</sup>

In Bahārī's view, if there is no engagement with the Sufi path, the official curriculum of *al-ḥawza al-ilmīyya* will be no different from the secular study of religious or civil law. Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Bidābādī, Nūrī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (c. 979–80/1571–2–1050/1640) share the same notion.<sup>29</sup>

26 Ibid., 109.

27 Bidābādī and Khūī, *Tadhkirat al-sālikīn*, 53–4.

28 Ibid., 57.

29 Ṣadrā, in his *Breaking the Idols of Ignorance*, writes: “In the earlier time, in the age of the Prophet and the purified Imams, peace be upon all of them, jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) was totally limited to the knowledge of the First Real, and the knowledge of the path of the

Considering the broader meaning of *fiqh*, Bahārī and his predecessors argue that the Shī'ī seminary stands more in need of the knowledge of the First Real (*tawḥīd* or unity) and spiritual perfection (in this case, Sufism). They reach this conclusion because they maintain that the first order of revelation is to bring about in human beings change, to elevate them, and to facilitate the soul's transcendence in its return to the eternal abode. Bahārī's approach is similar to those who walk the same path as that of Sayyid Ḥaydar Amulī (719/1319 or 720/1320—after 787/1385), Ibn Mi'mār (fl. 707/1307–8) and many others in the history of Shī'ī Islam.<sup>30</sup> The *Maktab-i ma'rifat al-naḥs* is a recent example of this approach within the Shī'a seminary. Their most vigorous opponents are the followers of the *Maktab-i tafkīk* (School of separation) and other traditionalists within the Shī'a seminary.

#### 4 Conclusion

Shaykh Muhammad Bahārī was a *faqīh* and member of the esoteric order in the Shī'ī seminary of Najaf in the nineteenth century. He was a disciple of Akhund Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Shavandī Hamadānī who through Sayyid 'Alī Shūshtarī was connected to Ṣadr al-Dīn Kāshif al-Dizfūlī. The latter is among the known Ṣahabī shaykhs of a branch that was called Ṣahabiyya Kāshifiyya. We know that the Ṣahabiyya order originated in Central Asia as Kubrawiyya and continued as a Shī'ī order called Ṣahabiyya. The current form in the Shī'ī seminary, however, is not referred to as Ṣahabiyya, though it originates from

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hereafter and the blights of the soul and the states of the heart, and the way of refining the temper, and changing the evil deeds into good ones. It was not the knowledge of contracts for delivery with prepayment, mortgages, financial interests, divorce, repudiation within marriage, division of inheritance of the dead, learning jurisprudential loopholes, the way of escaping of legal pursuits, and the way of keeping some of the illegal issues. Sometimes man's life ends without ever needing any of them. These issues are necessary to the limit that there should be in every age some people that adopt them in their responsibility, whereas jurisprudence in the former meaning is an individual's duty or an indubitable obligation for every wise person." Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Breaking the Idols of Ignorance: Admonition of the Soi-disant Sufi*, trans. M. Dasht Bozorgi and F. Asadi Amjad (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies, 2008), 39. For Ṣadrā's understanding and exegesis of the *ḥadīth* tradition in the Shī'ī Islam, see Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari, "Ontology and Cosmology of the 'aql in Ṣadrā's Commentary on Uṣūl al-Kāfi," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 10. 2 (2017): 157–82. <https://doi.org/10.1353/isl.2017.0011>.

30 For more on Shī'ī scholars' understanding of the relationship of Shī'ism and Sufism, see Hassan Ansari and Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari, "Extremism (*ghuluww*) as a Philosophical School: Studies on Shī'ī-Sufi and the Nuṣayrī's Relationships during the 6th/12th–8th/14th Centuries" (forthcoming).

the teachings of Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Nayrīzī and Bīdābādī, among others. Some have tried to conceal the Sufi origin of this order. Confronting hostility toward the Sufi path in the seminary, Bahārī applies common religious terminology to argue that the goal of Sufism is nothing but the goal of religion itself. Members of the *Maktab-i maʿrifat al-naḥs* (the title that is given to the order in the seminary), just as philosophers and other Sufis, carefully tried to reconcile *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) with the Sufi path by ascending from the minor *fiqh* (*fiqh aṣghar*) to the greater *fiqh* (*fiqh akbar*) which is seen in the Bahārī pattern. That is why Bahārī draws a progressive relationship between *fiqh* and *ʿamal* (practice), between *ʿamal* and the refinement of character (*tahdhīb akhlāq*), and between *akhlāq* and *tawḥīd* (the assertion of God's unity): these are the steps one should ascend in order to reach to the First Real or *tawḥīd*.

Masters of this order tried to establish their interpretation of revelation and faith in the Shīʿī seminary by recruiting or initiating qualified individuals from those who had already studied Islamic sciences, or in religious terms, those at the level of *ijtihād*. Despite what the official curriculum of the *al-ḥawza al-ʿilmiyya* offered, they struggled to suggest what they identified as a more authentic method of understanding revelation by paying attention both to the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) and the philosophical dimensions of Islamic revelation without ignoring the practical necessities. They, however, encountered very vigorous opposition from the exoteric scholars, both in the past and the present; nevertheless, their school is still an ongoing and a living movement within the Shīʿa seminary. Bahārī and his masters should be placed among those scholars who genuinely believe and practice the Shīʿī-Sufi interrelation in the Shīʿa seminary.

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