

Hazrat Bishr al-Hafi (R.A.)

From Dissipation to Sainthood: A Journey of Repentance

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Preface

This eBook, presented by Barkateraza.in, chronicles the transformative journey of Hazrat Bishr al-Hafi (R.A.), a Sufi saint who transitioned from a life of indulgence to one of profound piety. Known as "Bishr the Barefoot" for his ascetic practice of walking unshod, he became a leading figure in early Sufism and a teacher to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. His life exemplifies repentance, zuhd, and devotion to Allah. His mazaar in Baghdad remains a symbol of his enduring legacy.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Hazrat Abu Nasr Bishr ibn Harith al-Marwzi (R.A.) (150 A.H./767 C.E. – 227 A.H./841 C.E.), known as Bishr al-Hafi, was a prominent Sufi ascetic and hadith scholar. Born near Merv, he lived a dissolute life before repenting, influenced by Imam Musa al-Kazim (A.S.) and a divine dream. A disciple of Hazrat Fuzail bin Ayaz, he settled in Baghdad, teaching zuhd and tawakkul. His barefoot lifestyle symbolized his humility, and his teachings impacted luminaries like Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal.

Chapter 2

Early Life and Dissipation

Born in a village near Merv to Harith ibn Abdur Rahman, a government official, Bishr was of Arab descent, possibly linked to Ba'bur (Abdullah), a convert under Imam Ali (A.S.). Raised in affluence, he indulged in extravagance in Baghdad, hosting gatherings with music and wine. His early life contrasted sharply with his later asceticism, setting the stage for a profound spiritual transformation triggered by divine intervention.

Chapter 3

Spiritual Transformation

Bishr's repentance was sparked by two key events. While drunk, he found a paper with "Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim" in the mud, perfumed it with his last dirham, and placed it respectfully in a wall. That night, a divine voice promised to make his name fragrant, confirmed thrice in a neighbor's dreams, prompting Bishr to abandon his past life. Additionally, Imam Musa al-Kazim (A.S.) questioned if Bishr was a "free man or slave," shaming him for his lack of fear of Allah, leading to immediate repentance. He ran barefoot after the Imam, vowing never to wear shoes again.

Chapter 4

Miracles and Karamaat

1. Divine Voice for Reverence: After perfuming the paper with Allah's name, Bishr heard a divine voice promising to exalt his name, a vision confirmed by a pious neighbor's dreams, marking his transformation.
2. Animals' Respect: During his lifetime, no animal in Baghdad dropped dung on roads out of respect for Bishr's barefoot piety. On the day of his death, dung appeared, signaling his passing.
3. Forgiveness in Death: After his demise, Qasim bin Munabbih saw Bishr in a dream, where Allah declared forgiveness for Bishr, his funeral attendees, and all who love him until Qiyamah.

Chapter 5

Ascetic Life in Baghdad

Settling in Baghdad, Bishr embraced extreme asceticism, isolating himself for worship and avoiding worldly attachments. He ceased transmitting hadiths, burying his collections to focus on devotion. Known for walking barefoot, he explained it as respect for his repentance meeting with Imam Musa al-Kazim (A.S.) and humility on Allah's earth. He earned a living through minimal means, emphasizing halaal sustenance and zuhd.

Chapter 6

Teachings and Aphorisms

Bishr's teachings centered on zuhd, tawakkul, and sincerity. His notable sayings include:

1. "Renunciation is a king who dwells only in a free and empty heart."
2. "Sadness is a ruler; when it settles, it allows no others to reside."
3. "None criticizes Abu Hanifah except an envier or an ignoramus."
4. "One who claims trust in Allah but is discontent with His decree lies."

He emphasized halaal rizq and warned against fame, praying for its removal if it risked humiliation in the hereafter.

Chapter 7

Interaction with Contemporaries

Bishr studied under Hazrat Fuzail bin Ayaz, Ali bin Khushram, and scholars like Malik bin Anas and Sufyan al-Thawri, compiling a Musnad of hadiths. His disciples included Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, who sought his spiritual guidance, stating, “He knows Allah better than I do.” Bishr’s influence extended to figures like Sirri al-Saqati, and he was revered in Baghdad as a prophet-like figure.

Chapter 8

Barefoot Asceticism

Bishr's barefoot lifestyle was a hallmark of his piety. He explained it as reverence for his repentance with Imam Musa al-Kazim (A.S.) and respect for Allah's earth. When a shoemaker reluctantly repaired his shoes, Bishr discarded them, vowing never to wear shoes again, symbolizing his detachment from worldly comforts and commitment to humility.

Chapter 9

Legacy and Influence

Bishr's khulafa, including Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, propagated his teachings in the Hanbali and Sufi traditions. His Adhamiya silsila, linked to Hazrat Fuzail bin Ayaz, emphasized zuhd and divine love. His fame, which he feared, was divinely ordained for his reverence for Allah's name, ensuring his legacy endured among Sufis and scholars.

Chapter 10

Passing and Mausoleum

Hazrat Bishr passed away on 10 Muharram 227 A.H. (30 October 841 C.E.) in Baghdad. His mazaar is located near Bab al-Harb in Baghdad, though some sources mention Merv or tombs in Iran (Anar, Bijar, Gotvand). His death was marked by animals soiling Baghdad's streets, signaling his departure from the world.

Multimedia References

1. [Life and Repentance of Bishr al-Hafi](#)
2. [Teachings of Hazrat Bishr al-Hafi](#)

Bibliography

1. Tazkira-e-Aulia, Pages 42–45, by Traditional Sources.
2. Tadhkirat al-Awliya by Farid ad-Din Attar.
3. Hilyat al-Awliya and Tabaqat al-Sufiyya.
4. Oral Traditions of Baghdad and Merv.

Closing Prayer

May Allah, through the blessings of His Beloved Prophet (PBUH), Hazrat Bishr al-Hafi, the Sahaba, Ahl al-Bayt, and all Awliya Allah, grant us complete love for the Prophet, protect our faith, inspire righteous deeds, and fulfill our noble desires in this world and the hereafter. Ameen.