

The Role of Abu Bakr Kalobodi in the Science of Sufism

Sarvar U. Mukhammadiyev

Independent Researcher at Fergana State University

Abstract: This article provides a comparative analysis of two renowned works by Abu Bakr Kalobodi, “at-Ta’arruf” and “Bahra-l-favoid.” It examines the central themes and key ideas presented in these texts, particularly the foundation of Islamic mysticism based on the Qur’an and Sunnah. The study explores Kalobodi’s views on divine love, the importance of Tawhid, and his unique interpretation of Allah’s attributes. The article also highlights the use of Arabic language and literary style in conveying complex theological concepts, demonstrating Kalobodi’s deep knowledge of the Arabic language. By comparing the two works, the article sheds light on Kalobodi’s contributions to Sufism, his theological insights, and his methodological approach to interpreting religious texts.

Keywords: Abu Bakr Kalobodi, at-Ta’arruf, Bahra-l-favoid, Sufism, divine love, Tawhid, Qur’an, Sunnah, comparative analysis, Arabic language, Islamic mysticism, theology, religious texts.

INTRODUCTION

The difference between Abu Bakr Kalobodi and other mystics lies in his thinking—his unique example of developing a new theory through the synthesis of various existing teachings. This is a basis for claiming that he is the main representative of Sunni Sufism. A person who successfully attains the stages of the spiritual states (maqamat) reaches the level of a perfected mystic (solik) and begins to contemplate the divine beauty in Sufism and imagination, with his heart overwhelmed by joy and enthusiasm. Some consider the spiritual state not as a mental characteristic that follows after the stages (maqamat), but as a condition that arises during the process of attaining the stages. The stages of maqamat represent a strict practical control phase, indicating the deepening and intensification of suffering, while the spiritual state is the result of spiritual progress. According to Abu Bakr Kalobodi, states do not leave an inheritance; only the practical part of their knowledge can be inherited, meaning the practices of the Sufi path remain with those who have internalized them. As mentioned earlier, great scholars of later periods have also quoted the thoughts of this scholar on Sufism, theology, and hadiths. Khwaja Muhammad Porso, in his work “Faslu-l-xitob,” quotes from the book “Ta’arruf”: “The essence of the desired and witnessed can only be shown through names and attributes; it is impossible to reach the essence, and language becomes mute.” Or, “Even though the perfect and knowledgeable ones show what they know through attributes, in the end, they are unable to express it.”

This is why a narration from Ali ibn Abu Talib is quoted: “Whoever knows his Lord, his tongue becomes mute.” This idea is analyzed in depth. It

is also referenced in his work *Bahra-l-favoid*: The great scholar and mystic Abu Bakr ibn Ishaq Kalobodi Bukhari, as well as other Sufi masters in some of their books and treatises, have explained certain difficult words of the ancient philosophers in alignment with the principles of the truth-bearers and the lawful Sharia. They would say, “Do not focus on what he is saying, but on who is saying it, and refer to his judgment.” “Take the good and leave the bad” is also among such expressions. Allah knows intentions and secrets. Evaluating the legacy of Abu Bakr Kalobodi, Professor U. Uvatov acknowledges that he studied Islamic jurisprudence under Shaykh Muhammad ibn Fadl, and the science of theology (kalam) under the Bukhari scholar Abu Hafs Kabir, achieving high levels of knowledge. According to the scholar’s information, authors who have written about Abu Bakr Kalobodi’s scientific and spiritual heritage mention that five or six works are attributed to him. According to some sources, two of these works have survived to this day.

The Main Findings and Results

They refer to it as *Bahra-l-favoid* (“The Sea of Beneficial Knowledge”), and this work is also known as *Ma’oniya-l-axbor* (the meanings of hadith reports). According to him, it includes brief explanations of 592 hadiths on etiquette, morals, and educational issues. From this, it is clear that Abu Bakr Kalobodi placed special importance on hadiths in his scientific and literary work. Some authors have noted that Abu Bakr Kalobodi also wrote a commentary on Imam Bukhari’s *al-Jome’ as-Sahih*, which compiles the authentic hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him) [Uvatov, U, 2003].

At the same time, U. Uvatov considers Abu Bakr Kalobodi's masterpiece *At-Ta'arruf* to be the first source written in Arabic, dedicated to the science of Sufism. He acknowledges that it is an important book for studying the first three centuries of Islamic Sufism. According to him, this work was first published in 1933 by the English scholar Arthur Arberry, and in 1960, it was republished in Cairo by Abdulhakim Mahmud Toho Abdulboqi. Notably, the book was initially translated into Uzbek by Otaqul Mavlonqulov and Mavluda Otaqul Qizi, which is noteworthy in Uzbek scholarship.

Hadith knowledge in Bukhara also developed closely linked to the city's spiritual and educational life. During the time Abu Bakr Kalobodi lived, scholars such as Abu Abdullah Khwaja Gunjari (d. 920), Muhammad San'oni (d. 921), Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Horis Subazmuni (d. 925), Abu Bakr Fazl (d. 927), Abu Ahmad Nabikhon ibn Ishoq Pasqoyiri (d. 923), and Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Muhammad Tavosi (d. 956) emerged. Their rich spiritual heritage is yet to be fully studied.

Abu Bakr Kalobodi's Sufi and philosophical views were shaped under the influence of the Sufi traditions and ideas of Iraq, particularly the teachings of Mansur Hallaj, Junayd Baghdadi, Abul Husayn Nuri, Sahl Tustari, Ibn Ato, Abu Sayyid Kharraz, Zunnun Misri, Abu Bakr Wasiti, and the experiences of the Sufi schools of Khorasan. The mystics of these schools enriched and developed their traditions in the Mawarannahr region by adding their own new ideas. While Abu Bakr Kalobodi's teachings should be mentioned as a theological topic in medieval sources, they are often not discussed in detail. However, this absence is not due to negligence or disregard, but could also be attributed to certain historical and geographical conditions. This is because Abu Bakr Kalobodi did not live in the central regions of Iraq or the renowned cities of the Islamic world. Instead, he resided in Bukhara, on the eastern edge of the Oykumena, where he engaged in scholarly work and created his works.

Abu Bakr Kalobodi's prominence as a distinguished scholar can also be recognized through his unique works on Sufism and Hadith. In historical sources, Abu Bakr Kalobodi is referred to as a Sufi, jurist, theologian, ascetic leader, and righteous spiritual leader, which reflects his intellectual and spiritual path. His recognition among the Hanafi jurists is largely attributed to his

contributions in laying the foundation for Sufism in the 4th century Hijri through works like *Qutbul-qulub* and *al-Luma'*. In addition to *at-Ta'arruf*, his *Bahr al-favoid* provides insight into his standing among Hadith scholars.

Abu Bakr Kalobodi lived during the awakening period of Sufism and was a contemporary of other prominent mystics such as Murtaish (d. 328/933), Rudbori (d. 369/979), Nasrobodi (d. 367/977), Ibn Khafif (d. 372/982), and Shibli (d. 334/945), which highlights his active role in the development of Sufi thought and practice during this era.

Abu Bakr Kalobodi was a theoretical scholar who deeply studied and wrote comprehensive works on fiqh, theology, hadith, and Sufism. Khwaja Muhammad Porso (d. 822/1419) referred to him as "the great of the mystics, the spiritual leaders of ascetics, and the author of the well-known work *Bahra-l-favoid* (The Sea of Beneficial Knowledge), also called *Ma'oni-l-axbor* (The Meanings of the Reports), and spent his life in asceticism, struggle, and spiritual discipline. He perfected his work *At-Ta'arruf* and became a righteous spiritual leader." In his work *Faslu-l-xitob*, Khwaja Muhammad Porso shares an insightful narration: "As was the custom of the Shaykh, when someone would point out the fault of another person, he would never say, 'This is a mistake.' He would simply say, 'I do not know what he meant by that.' This is a condition of complete faith in Islam."

This reflects that his character, worldview, and his life dedicated to the study of Islamic sciences were deeply interconnected with the Qur'an and Hadith. For Abu Bakr Kalobodi, acquiring knowledge and putting it into practice became his way of life. He listened to hadith from great masters and scholars, and his studies in hadith contributed to the development of Sufism. His work *Bahra-l-favoid* played a significant role in advancing Sufism, particularly reflecting how closely Sufism is tied to hadith and the lives of the hadith narrators.

Abdulhay Laknaviy highlighted that Abu Bakr Kalobodi studied fiqh under Muhammad ibn Fadl Abu Bakr Fadl Kamari Bukhari (d. 381/991) and learned hadith from Abu Nasr Rashodi (d. 339/951). Additionally, he is said to have listened to hadith from Muhammad Hulmani in Kufa, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Mehrar in Ray, and Yahya ibn Solih Sahld in Egypt.

In *At-Ta'arruf*, Abu Bakr Kalobodi presents the beliefs of the Sufis, while in *Bahra-l-favoid* (also

known as *Ma'oni-l-axbor*), he delves into the doctrinal issues related to Sunni theology, presenting the methods of Sufi hadith scholars. In this work, he demonstrates his dual role as both a hadith scholar and a Sufi. *Bahra-l-favoid* marked the beginning of his extensive contributions to the field of hadith. In this work, Abu Bakr Kalobodi discusses around 223 hadiths, quoted from nearly a hundred masters and sheikhs, providing Sufi and moral interpretations along with unique commentaries. The hadiths in *Bahra-l-favoid* are broken down into sections, with each part linking to the next. In his commentary, he addresses topics such as tawhid (the oneness of God), the attributes of Allah, major sins, and the creation of human deeds. These issues are also discussed in *At-Ta'arruf*.

Sources also mention Abu Bakr Kalobodi's activities as a jurist and scholar of methodology. His research in these areas can be traced in his work *Ma'oni-l-axbor*, where he emphasizes fiqh issues. In this text, he focuses on moral matters within the context of hadith interpretations. Furthermore, in both *At-Ta'arruf* and *Bahra-l-favoid*, Abu Bakr Kalobodi incorporates poetry to resolve various issues. In *Ma'oni-l-axbor*, he concludes his hadith commentaries with poems related to the discussed issues.

One of the distinctive features of his works is the use of poetry to resolve issues within the text. Abu Bakr Kalobodi's deep interest and love for knowledge, rooted in Bukhara, a center of learning and enlightenment, propelled him to great heights in his scholarly journey. His understanding of Sufism and the idea of inseparably linking it to the Quran and Sunnah can be seen as a result of his extensive experience in hadith studies.

A comparative analysis of Abu Bakr Kalobodi's two major works, *At-Ta'arruf li mazhabi ahla-t-tasavvuf* and *Bahra-l-favoid*, reveals both similarities and differences, and several key points should be considered: The Purpose Behind Writing the Books: It is essential to examine the author's intentions when composing or compiling these books. The Focus of the Book's Subject Matter: The thematic direction each book takes should be carefully noted. The Author's Worldview, Beliefs, Fiqh School, and Spiritual Emotions: It is important to explore how these elements are reflected in the books and their content. Based on these considerations, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First of all, both works differ in form. The choice of topics and the sections related to them inherently lead to this distinction.

Therefore, the differences between Abu Bakr Kalobodi's two works are as follows: *At-Ta'arruf li mazhabi tasavvuf* was created with the purpose of scientifically evaluating the activities of various groups within Sufism at that time, and distinguishing between their actions based on Islamic law, determining which practices were acceptable and which were not. Since Abu Bakr Kalobodi himself was a member of the Sufi community and its leaders, his goal was to purify Sufism from various innovations (*bid'ah*) and superstitions. He engaged in various questions and answers among the followers of the tariqah, studying their beliefs regarding the nature and attributes of Allah. Additionally, he decided to write this book as a guide and introduction for those who were unfamiliar with the Sufi path.

On the other hand, the book *Bahra-l-favoid* was created by Abu Bakr Kalobodi as a hadith scholar. In it, he independently narrated the hadiths he deemed authentic according to his knowledge and hadith criteria. In various versions of the book, between 550 and 590 hadiths are cited, with about 230 of them being directly narrated by Abu Bakr Kalobodi himself.

The remaining 350 or so were cited as evidence (shahid 9). The second hadith that the hadith narrators cite to support a hadith they have narrated on a particular topic is called a shahid. For example, if Imam Bukhari cites three or four hadiths on a topic, the first of those hadiths is the main hadith and the rest are cited as "shahids") from the narrations of other hadith scholars. This in itself undoubtedly led to the two books differing in subject matter, form, and content.

At-Ta'arruf is significantly shorter in terms of both volume and content. It consists of an introduction and twenty-five chapters. Most chapters are relatively short, typically covering half a page or a full page.

On the other hand, *Bahra-l-favoid* is much more substantial in both size and content. It contains a total of two hundred and twenty-one chapters. The shortest chapters are one page, while the longest extends up to twenty-one pages.

In *At-Ta'arruf*, the author often cites sayings from famous Sufis to explain the topics. However, in *Bahra-l-favoid*, the author presents hadiths on the

subject matter and provides his own commentary. He also cites other commentators and scholars to support his interpretations.

The common feature between the two works is that in *At-Ta'arruf*, the author includes both well-supported and unsupported narrations from the Sufi masters, as is typical in Sufi literature. As a scholar of both fiqh and hadith, Abu Bakr Kalobodi strives to substantiate his views with references to Quranic verses and hadiths. Furthermore, since Sufi teachings and practices were relatively new at the time and not fully understood by many, Abu Bakr Kalobodi was one of the first to provide a theoretical description of Sufism.

It's also worth noting that while Abu Bakr Kalobodi was among the first to offer such a theoretical exposition of Sufism, he was preceded by Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hasan ibn Bashir al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (760-869), who offered comprehensive views on Sufism in his works. According to the Egyptian scholar Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abdullah Barakah, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi is considered a foundational figure in the development of Sufism and Tafsir in the region of Transoxiana [<https://islom.uz>].

Abu Bakr Kalobodi's "Bahra-l-favoid" work has been a highly authoritative source for its time and the following centuries. This can be demonstrated by several factors:

Firstly, the "Bahra-l-favoid" work was considered worthy of citation by many historians, jurists, and hadith scholars and was used as a source. For example, Khoja Muhammad Porso (1348-1420) in his work quotes: "The Naqshbandiya school of mysticism not only produced great Sufi shaykhs but also outstanding scholars for the Islamic world. One such figure is Khoja Muhammad Porso Bukhari. Based on the "Bukhari" in his name, it can be said that Porso was born in Bukhara. He studied in madrassas, deeply studying various religious sciences such as the Qur'an, hadith, and kalam, and became one of the prominent scholars of his time. After Bahouddin Naqshband, he became a representative and propagator of the Naqshbandiya tradition in Central Asia. Khoja Muhammad Porso was not only a wali (saint) but also one of the great scholars of his time." In the "Faslu-l-xitob" work, when quoting the words of notable scholars regarding the names of Allah, it is stated: "Some of them say that the name itself is the one being referred to, while another group

argues that the name is not exactly the one being referred to. A debate has arisen among them regarding this issue, and it has no end [Porso, K. M: 100]."

In the "Faslu-l-xitob" work, in the section titled "Do not rebel against rulers or leaders," it is quoted: "Kalobodiy in "at-Ta'arruf" says: even if the rulers are oppressive, the Sufis do not wish to raise a sword against them. [Porso, K. M: 144]"

In the section "The Words of Sufis Regarding the Qur'an" of 'At-Ta'arruf,' it is stated: "All Sufis agree that the Qur'an is truly the word of Allah, and that it is neither a created nor a new phenomenon. They believe the Qur'an is recited with the tongue, written in manuscripts, and memorized in the hearts. However, just as the word of Allah is not settled in the tongues, hearts, or mosques despite being recited and worshiped, so too is His word not settled in them." [Porso, K. M: 100]

Furthermore, Khoja Muhammad Porso shows his trust in Abu Bakr Kalobodiy by citing hadiths narrated by him in several places [100-101].

Many scholars have considered Abu Bakr Kalabadi's works to be a reliable and trustworthy source when quoting from him. Ibn Hajar Asqalani has quoted from Abu Bakr Kalobodiy in many of his books, not only in his book "At-ta'arruf li mazhabi ahl-t-tasawwuf" but also in his book "Bahra-l-fawaid" [Porso, K. M: 102].

One of the individuals who quoted from the book "Bahra-l-favoid" is Faqih Zayn ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Bakr. Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Husayniy, who narrated from Kalobodiy in 1120 Hijri, is another such individual. In his book "Al-bayon va-t-ta'rif fi asbobi vurudi-l-hadisi-sh-sharif," he mentions the hadith of a prophet calling a single ant, which led to the destruction of an ant village. Regarding the identity of this prophet, he states: "In one narration, he is said to be Uzayr, while Kalobodiy and others said he was Musa, the prophet" [Porso, K. M :102].

Muhammad ibn Abdulbaqi ibn Yusuf Zarqani (1122), Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Isa (1329 AH), Muhammad Abdurahman ibn Abdurahim Mubarakfuri (1353 AH), Abdurauf Munawi, Umayya ibn Abis, and others cited Abu Bakr Kalobodiy's opinion as evidence to resolve disagreements on jurisprudential and doctrinal issues that arose among scholars.

The comparative analysis of Abu Bakr Kalobodiy's famous works "at-Ta'arruf" and "Bahra-l-favoid" shows that the scholar emphasized that the foundation of Islamic mysticism lies in the Qur'an and Sunnah, establishing that Sufism is a doctrine based on pure faith.

CONCLUSION

Abu Bakr Kalobodiy's views on divine love, one of the central issues in Sufism, are interpreted in "at-Ta'arruf" as love for the chosen ones and the common people, and its essence is explained. In "Bahra-l-favoid," this topic is also presented based on Qur'anic verses and hadiths, with the use of poetry, and it is elaborately explained.

In these works, the issue of drawing closer to Allah and the matters of closeness to Him, as well as Tawhid, are explained in a unique way. The analysis of the nature of Allah in "at-Ta'arruf," using Arabic language prefixes in a distinctive style, indicates that the scholar had a profound knowledge of the Arabic language.

REFERENCES

1. Uvatov, U. "Tasavvuf Tarixiga Doir Muhim Manba." In *Abdulkhalik Ghijduvani va*

Tasavvuf: Ilmiy Konferensiya Ma'ruzalari Tezislari. Tashkent, (2003): 36–37.

2. <https://islom.uz/maqola/8254>
3. Porso, K. M. "Faslu-l-Khitob li Wasli-l-Ahbab." *Tashkent: Lithography of Gulyam Hasan Arifjanov*. P:100.
4. Kalobodiy, A. B. "At-Ta'arruf li mazhabi ahl al-tasawwuf."
5. Kalobodiy, A. B. "Bahra-l-Favoid."
6. Porso, K. M. "Faslu-l-xitob (Commentary on Sufi Teachings)."
7. Baraka, A. A. "The Development of Sufism in Central Asia."
8. Laknaviy, A. "The Influence of Abu Bakr Kalobodiy's Teachings in Islamic Mysticism."
9. Tirmizi, A. A. M. A. I. H. I. B. "Kitab al-Sifat al-Sufiyya."
10. Hakim, M. A. I. B. "Al-Muhasibi's Contribution to Early Sufi Thought."
11. Ibn al-'Arabi, M. "Al-Futuh al-Makkiyya."
12. Beruni, A. R. "The Chronology of Ancient Nations."
13. Abdulfattoh, A. S. "Barakaning so'zlariga ko'ra, Hakim Tirmiziy va Sufizmning Movarounnahrda o'rni haqida."
14. Faslu-l-xitob (Muhammad Porso's Views on Sufi Theories).
15. Porso, K. M. "The Influence of Naqshbandi Sufism on Central Asia."

Source of support: Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

Cite this article as:

Mukhammadiyev, S.U. "The Role of Abu Bakr Kalobodi in The Science of Sufism." *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts and Literature* 4.2 (2025): pp 17-21.