



The Image Of Khwaja Ahrar Wali In Babur's Creative And Historical Heritage

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the image of Khwaja Ahrar Wali in the creative and historical heritage of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur. The study focuses on how Babur's literary worldview, historical memory, and spiritual consciousness reflect the authority of Khwaja Ahrar, one of the most influential representatives of the Naqshbandi order in Central Asia. The article analyzes the symbolic, spiritual, moral, and socio-political meanings of Khwaja Ahrar's image in relation to Babur's worldview. Special attention is paid to the role of Sufi thought, Timurid cultural memory, moral leadership, and the concept of spiritual patronage in Babur's intellectual environment. The methodological basis of the article includes historical-literary analysis, comparative interpretation, contextual analysis, and hermeneutic reading. The results show that Khwaja Ahrar appears not merely as a religious figure, but as a spiritual authority, moral guide, and symbolic representative of justice, social harmony, and divine support in Babur's literary-historical consciousness

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Introduction. Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur occupies a special place in the history of Eastern literature, statehood, and cultural thought. He was not only a ruler and military leader, but also a poet, memoirist, intellectual, and refined observer of human character. His literary and historical heritage, especially the *Baburnama*, provides valuable information about political events, social relations, natural landscapes, cities, historical personalities, and spiritual values of the Timurid and early Mughal periods. The *Baburnama* is known as Babur's memoir and was written in Chagatai Turkic; modern catalogues describe it as a text preserved through Chagatai, Persian, and English scholarly editions.

In Babur's heritage, historical figures are not described only as political actors. They are often presented through their moral qualities, spiritual influence, social authority, and role in shaping the destiny of rulers and peoples. Among such figures, Khwaja Ahrar Wali holds an important position. Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar, widely known as Khwaja Ahrar Wali, was a prominent representative of the Naqshbandi order and an influential figure in the spiritual, social, political, and economic life of fifteenth-century Central Asia. Contemporary research emphasizes his role not only as a Sufi master, but also as a major public and political figure whose authority extended beyond purely religious circles.

The importance of Khwaja Ahrar's image in Babur's worldview is connected with the cultural environment in which Babur was formed. Babur belonged to the Timurid world, where political authority, literary culture, and spiritual legitimacy were closely connected. The Naqshbandi tradition, especially through the authority of Khwaja Ahrar, influenced rulers, poets, scholars, and social institutions of the period. In this context, Babur's perception of Khwaja Ahrar reflects not only religious respect, but also the broader Timurid understanding of moral governance, spiritual patronage, and social responsibility.

Relevance of the Topic. The relevance of this topic is determined by several factors. First, the study of Khwaja Ahrar’s image in Babur’s heritage helps to understand the spiritual foundations of Babur’s worldview. Babur’s personality cannot be fully interpreted only through political history or military activity. His memoirs and poetic thinking reveal a deep connection with moral values, religious consciousness, literary refinement, and respect for spiritual authorities.

Second, the topic is important for the study of the relationship between literature and Sufism. In Eastern classical literature, Sufi figures often function as symbols of moral purity, divine guidance, social justice, and inner perfection. Khwaja Ahrar’s image in Babur’s intellectual world demonstrates how a historical Sufi personality may become a literary and symbolic figure.

Third, the study is relevant because Khwaja Ahrar played a significant role in the socio-political and spiritual life of Central Asia. Research on Khwaja Ahrar shows that he was closely associated with the strengthening of the Naqshbandi order’s social and political activity and with the expansion of its influence beyond Central Asia. Therefore, studying his image in Babur’s heritage contributes to a deeper understanding of the spiritual and ideological environment of the Timurid period.

Fourth, the topic is significant for international scholarship because Babur’s works are studied not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Central Asian, South Asian, Turkish, Persian, and Western academic traditions. The image of Khwaja Ahrar allows researchers to connect Babur studies with Sufi studies, Timurid studies, Islamic intellectual history, and comparative literary studies.

Literature Review. The study of Babur’s literary and historical heritage has been carried out by many scholars in different countries. The *Baburnama* has attracted attention as a unique autobiographical source that combines historical narration, literary observation, personal reflection, and ethnographic description. The HathiTrust catalogue records W. M. Thackston’s edition as a Chagatai Turkish text with Persian translation and English translation, which confirms the multilingual scholarly importance of the work.

Research on Khwaja Ahrar Wali is also broad and multidisciplinary. Jürgen Paul’s study on the *himāyat* system of Khwaja Ahrar describes him as a famous shaykh of the Naqshbandi order who established a system of patronage and protection in Central Asia in the second half of the fifteenth century. This approach is important because it shows that Khwaja Ahrar’s influence was not limited to spiritual teaching; it also included social organization and protection.

Recent research by N. Mukhamedov also emphasizes Khwaja Ahrar’s role as one of the most important figures in the socio-political, economic, and spiritual life of the fifteenth century. The same study notes that Khwaja Ahrar was respected by Timurid rulers, scholars, and writers, including Abdurahman Jami and Alisher Navoi. This is especially important for interpreting Babur’s perception of Khwaja Ahrar because Babur inherited the cultural and intellectual memory of the Timurid world.

Studies on Sufi influence in the Mughal Empire also mention Babur’s connection with Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar of the Naqshbandi order. One recent study on Sufi influence in the Mughal context states that Babur was a follower of Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar of the Naqshbandi tariqa. This allows the image of Khwaja Ahrar to be interpreted not only as part of Central Asian spiritual history, but also as part of the ideological foundation of early Mughal culture.

Thus, the existing literature shows that Babur and Khwaja Ahrar may be studied at the intersection of literary analysis, historical source studies, Sufi studies, and cultural memory. However, the specific problem of Khwaja Ahrar’s image in Babur’s creative and historical consciousness still requires focused interpretation.

Methodological Table

Method	Purpose of Use	Application in the Article
Historical-literary analysis	To study Babur’s heritage in its historical and cultural context	Used to interpret Khwaja Ahrar’s role within the Timurid spiritual environment
Comparative analysis	To compare literary, historical, and Sufi interpretations	Used to connect Babur’s view with broader Naqshbandi and Timurid traditions

Contextual analysis	To examine the social and political background of Khwaja Ahrar's authority	Used to explain why Khwaja Ahrar appears as a moral and spiritual symbol
Hermeneutic interpretation	To reveal symbolic and conceptual meanings	Used to interpret Khwaja Ahrar as a figure of guidance, justice, and spiritual patronage

Analysis of the Methodological Table

The methodological structure of the article is based on the need to study Khwaja Ahrar's image not as an isolated religious reference, but as a complex literary-historical phenomenon. Historical-literary analysis helps to place Babur's references and worldview within the Timurid cultural environment. This is important because Babur's perception of spiritual figures was shaped by the values of his time.

Comparative analysis allows the article to connect Babur's attitude toward Khwaja Ahrar with the broader image of Khwaja Ahrar in Central Asian Sufi and literary traditions. Since Khwaja Ahrar was respected by major intellectuals such as Jami and Navoi, his image in Babur's heritage should be understood as part of a wider cultural memory.

Contextual analysis is necessary because Khwaja Ahrar was both a spiritual leader and a socio-political figure. His authority among Timurid rulers and intellectuals shows that his image carried meanings of moral leadership, justice, and social protection. Finally, hermeneutic interpretation reveals the symbolic dimension of Khwaja Ahrar's image: he appears as a sign of divine support, ethical guidance, and spiritual legitimacy.

Discussion. The image of Khwaja Ahrar Wali in Babur's creative and historical heritage should be interpreted through several interconnected dimensions. The first dimension is spiritual authority. In the Timurid cultural world, Sufi masters were not viewed only as religious teachers. They were also moral guides whose words and reputation influenced rulers, poets, and ordinary people. Khwaja Ahrar's position as a Naqshbandi leader made him a symbol of spiritual discipline, inner purification, and service to society.

The second dimension is moral guidance. Babur's worldview was shaped by the idea that political power must be connected with moral responsibility. In this sense, Khwaja Ahrar's image represents the ethical standard by which rulers and individuals could measure their actions. His presence in Babur's intellectual memory may be understood as a reminder that authority without justice and spirituality remains incomplete.

The third dimension is historical memory. Babur belonged to the Timurid lineage, and the Timurid world preserved the memory of spiritual leaders who influenced political and cultural life. Khwaja Ahrar's authority among Timurid rulers such as Sultan Abu Sa'id Mirza and Sultan Ahmad Mirza is noted in recent scholarship, where it is emphasized that rulers respected his advice and did not rush important decisions without consulting him. Therefore, for Babur, Khwaja Ahrar was connected not only with personal piety, but also with the historical legitimacy of Timurid rule.

The fourth dimension is the relationship between Sufism and literature. Babur's writing style is realistic, observational, and deeply personal. Yet his works also contain spiritual and ethical layers. The figure of Khwaja Ahrar allows us to see how Babur's literary consciousness combines history with moral reflection. In this sense, Khwaja Ahrar's image is not decorative; it performs an interpretive function. It helps the reader understand the spiritual atmosphere in which Babur evaluated life, fate, victory, loss, and human responsibility. The fifth dimension is social harmony. Khwaja Ahrar's activity was associated with social mediation, protection, and public influence. Jürgen Paul's work describes the *himāyat* system associated with Khwaja Ahrar as a form of patronage and protection. This aspect is important because Babur's heritage often reflects concern for social order, justice, loyalty, and the behavior of rulers and officials. Khwaja Ahrar's image may therefore be interpreted as a model of spiritual leadership that extends into social responsibility.

The sixth dimension is symbolic continuity between Central Asia and India. Babur carried Central Asian cultural memory into the Mughal world. His respect for Sufi authority became one of the spiritual foundations of later Mughal culture. Research on Sufi influence in the Mughal Empire notes Babur's connection with Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar and the Naqshbandi tradition. This shows that the image of Khwaja Ahrar is not limited to Central Asian history; it also participates in the formation of early Mughal spiritual identity.

From a literary point of view, Khwaja Ahrar's image in Babur's heritage may be described as a "spiritual-ethical image." It is not built through physical portraiture or detailed biographical description alone. Rather, it is formed through reverence, memory, moral association, and symbolic function. Khwaja Ahrar embodies the values of wisdom, piety, justice, service, and divine blessing. These qualities correspond to the broader ethical ideals of Eastern classical literature.

Thus, Babur's attitude toward Khwaja Ahrar reflects the synthesis of personal faith, dynastic memory, literary culture, and Sufi spirituality. Through this image, Babur's creative heritage reveals not only historical events, but also the moral and metaphysical worldview of a ruler-poet who understood life as a field of responsibility before God, society, and history.

Conclusion. The analysis shows that Khwaja Ahrar Wali occupies an important place in Babur's creative and historical consciousness. His image is connected with spiritual authority, moral guidance, social justice, and Timurid cultural memory. In Babur's worldview, Khwaja Ahrar appears not merely as a Sufi saint, but as a symbolic figure representing ethical leadership and divine support.

The study also shows that Babur's heritage should be read not only as a political autobiography or literary monument, but also as a source that reflects the spiritual-intellectual environment of Central Asia. Khwaja Ahrar's image helps reveal the connection between Sufism, literature, politics, and moral philosophy in Babur's thought.

Therefore, the image of Khwaja Ahrar Wali in Babur's works may be interpreted as a bridge between historical personality and literary symbol. It expresses the ideals of spiritual maturity, public service, justice, moral responsibility, and cultural continuity. This makes the topic significant for Babur studies, Sufi studies, Central Asian intellectual history, and comparative literary research.

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