

Akhund Abdul Ghaffur



On Ghaffur, a rebirth of Pope Sixtus V, of crafty and odious memory. And on prophecy about the downfall of those twin foes of truth, Christianity and Islam.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE AKHUND OF SWAT) I pp. 369-75.¹

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S DRAMATIC WORD-PAINTING AND GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF ABDUL GHAFFUR'S REMARKABLE AND EVENTFUL CAREER — ANTAGONISM OF THE SIKHS TO THE MODERN HIEROPHANT — ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS DEATHS OF THE POPES OF ROME AND SAIDU.

Of the many remarkable characters of this century, Ghaffūr was one of the most conspicuously so.²

If there be truth in the Eastern doctrine that souls, powerful whether for good or bad, who had not time in one existence to work out their plans, are reincarnated, the fierceness of their yearnings to continue on earth thrusting them back into the current of their attractions, then Ghaffūr was a re-birth of that Felice Peretti, who is known in history as Pope Sixtus V, of crafty and odious memory. Both were born in the lowest class of society, being ignorant peasant boys and beginning life as herdsmen. Both reached the apex of power through craft and stealth and by imposing upon the superstitions of the masses. Sixtus, author of mystical books and himself a practitioner of the forbidden sciences to satisfy his lust for power and ensure impunity, became Inquisitor-General. Made Pope, he hurled his anathemas alike against Elizabeth of England, the King of Navarre, and other important personages. Abdul Ghaffūr, endowed with an iron will, had educated himself without colleges or professors except through association with the “wise men” of Cuttack. He was as well versed in the Arabic and Persian literature of alchemy and astrology as Sixtus was in Aristotle, and like him knew how to fabricate mesmerized talismans and amulets containing either life or death for those to whom they were presented.³ Each held millions of devotees under the subjection of their psychological influence, though both were more dreaded than beloved.

¹ [This article appeared most likely in the first issue of the New York *Echo* which was started by Charles Sotheran. The cutting of it is pasted in H.P. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. VII, pp. 101-2. An introductory note written by the Editor is dated April 30th, 1878, which is the only clue as to the date of the article, although Col. Olcott states in his *Diaries* that the first issue of the *Echo* came out May 3rd. The journal is described as “The Only Secret Society Paper in the World.” It was short lived and its files have never been located.]

² [The inhabitants of Swat — a tract on the Peshawār border of the North-West Frontier Province of India — are a clan of Yusafzai Pathāns. They are Suni Mohammedans. As their religious leader, the Akhūnd of Swat, Abdul Ghaffūr, born in 1794, ruled the tribe for the last thirty years of his life, and died in 1877. He was succeeded by his son Mian Gul, who, however, never possessed the same influence as his father. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

Akhūnd Abdul Ghaffūr (عبدالغفور اخوند), today known as Saidu Baba (سید بابا), 1794–1878, prominent religious mullah or sage, from the Yusufzai Pashtun tribe in Bar Swat. Akhūnd Ghaffūr supported the Afghan Emir Dost Mohammad Khan, and opposed the Sikh and British forces. He was an influential mullah and his residence in Swat was the destination for numerous pilgrimages by his disciples to consult him. Akhūnd Ghaffūr was succeeded by a notable line of other mullahs and theologians. — Cf. Wikipedia]

³ [See *Isis Unveiled*, I pp. 617-18]

Ghaffūr had been a warrior and an ambitious leader of fanatics, but becoming a dervish and finally a Pope, so to say, his blessing or curse made him as effectually the master of the Amīrs and other Mussulmans as Sixtus was of the Catholic potentates of Europe.

Only the salient features of his career are known to Christendom. Watched, as he may have been, his private life, ambitions, aspirations for temporal as well as religious power, are almost a sealed book. But the one certain thing is, that he was the founder and chief of nearly every secret society worth speaking of among Mussulmans, and the dominant spirit in all the rest. His apparent antagonism to the Wahhabees was but a mask, and the murderous hand that struck Lord Mayo was certainly guided by the old Abdul. The Biktashee Dervishes¹ and the howling, dancing, and other Moslem religious mendicants recognize his supremacy as far above that of the Sheikh-ul-Islam of the faithful. Hardly a political order of any importance issued from Constantinople or Teheran — heretics though the Persians are — without his having a finger in the pie directly or indirectly. As fanatical as Sixtus, but more cunning yet, if possible, instead of giving direct orders for the extermination of the Huguenots of Islam, the Wahhabees, he directed his curses and pointed his finger only at those among them whom he found in his way, keeping on the best, though secret, terms with the rest.

The title of Nasr-ed-Dīn (defender of the faith) he impartially applied to both the Sultan and the Shah, though one is a Sunnite and the other a Shiah. He sweetened the stronger religious intolerance of the Osman dynasty by adding to the old title of Nasr-ed-Dīn those of Saif-ed-Dīn (Scimitar of Faith) and Amīr-al-mu'minīn (Prince of the Faithful). Every Amīr-al-Sūrī, or leader of the sacred caravan of pilgrims to Mecca, brought or sent messages to, and received advice and instructions from, Abdul, the latter in the shape of mysterious oracles, for which was left the full equivalent in money, presents and other offerings, as the Catholic pilgrims have recently done at Rome.

In 1847–48 the Prince Mirza, uncle of the young Shah and ex-governor of a great province in Persia, appeared in Tiflis, seeking Russian protection at the hands of Prince Vorontzov, Viceroy of the Caucasus.² Having helped himself to the crown jewels and ready money in the treasury, he had run away from the jurisdiction of his loving nephew, who was anxious to put out his eyes. Popular rumour asserted that his reason for what he had done was that the great dervish, Akhūnd, had thrice appeared to him in dreams, prompting him to take what he had and share his booty with the protectors of the faith of his principal wife (he brought twelve with him to Tiflis), a native of Kabul. The secret, though, perhaps, indirect influence he exercised on the Begum of Bhopal, during the Sepoy rebellion of 1857, was a mystery only to the English, whom the old schemer knew so well how to hoodwink. During his long career of Machiavellism friendly with the British, and yet striking them constantly in secret; venerated as a new prophet by millions of orthodox, as well as heretic Mussulmans; managing to preserve his influence over friend and foe, the old “Teacher”

¹ To this day no Biktashee would be recognized as such unless he could claim possession of a certain medal with the seal of this “high-pontiff” of all the Dervishes, whether they belong to one sect or the other.

² [Prince Mihail Semyonovich Vorontzov, 1782–1856. Viceroy of the Caucasus, 1844–56. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

had one enemy whom he feared, for he knew that no amount of craft would ever win it over to his side. This enemy was the once mighty nation of the Sikhs, ex-sovereign rulers of the Punjab and masters of the Peshawar Valley. Reduced from their high estate, this warrior people are now under the rule of a single Mahārāja — of Patiala — who is himself the helpless vassal of the British. From the beginning the Akhūnd had continually encountered the Sikhs in his path. Scarce would he feel himself conqueror over one obstacle, before his hereditary enemy would appear between him and the realization of his hopes. If the Sikhs remained faithful to the British in 1875, it was not through hearty loyalty or political convictions, so much as through sheer opposition to the Mohammedans, whom they knew to be secretly prompted by the Akhūnd.

Since the days of the great Nanak, of the Kshatriya caste, founder of the Sikh Brotherhood in the second half of the fifteenth century, these brave and warlike tribes have ever been the thorn in the side of the Mogul dynasty, the terror of the Moslems of India. Originating, as we may say, in a religious Brotherhood, whose object was to make away alike with Islamism, Brāhmanism, and other *-isms*, including later Christianity, this sect evolved a pure monotheism in the abstract idea of an ever-unknown Principle, and elaborated it into the doctrine of the “Brotherhood of Man.” In their view, we have but one Father-Mother Principle, with “neither form, shape, nor colour,” and we ought all to be, if we are not, brothers irrespective of distinctions of race or colour. The sacerdotal Brāhman, fanatical in his observance of dead-letter forms, thus became in the opinion of the Sikh as much the enemy of truth as the Mussulman wallowing in a sensual heaven with his houris, the joss-worshipping Buddhist grinding out prayers at his wheel, or yet the Roman Catholic adoring his jewelled Madonnas, whose complexion the priests change from white to brown and black to suit climates and prejudices. Later on, Arjan, son of Ramdas, the fourth in the succession after Nanak, gathering together the doctrines of the founder and his successor Angad, brought out a sacred volume, called *Adi-Granth*, and largely supplemented it with selections from forty-five Sūtras of the Jainas. While adopting equally the religious figures of the *Vedas* and *Koran*, after sifting them and explaining their symbolism, the *Adi-Granth* yet presents a greater similarity of ideas respecting the most elaborate metaphysical conceptions with those of the Jaina school of Gurus. The notions of Astrology, or the influence of the starry spheres upon ourselves, were evidently adopted from that most prominent school of antiquity. This will be readily ascertained by comparing the commentaries of Abhāyādeva Sūrī upon the original forty-five Sūtras in the Magadhi or Balabasha language¹ with the *Adi-Granth*. An old Jaina Guru, who is said to have drawn the horoscope of Ranjit Singh, at the time of his greatest power, had foretold the downfall of the kingdom of Lahore. It was the learned Arjan who retired into Amritsar, changed the sect into a politico-religious community, and instituted within the same another and more esoteric body of Gurus, scholars and metaphysicians, of which he became sole chief. He died in prison, under torture, by the order of Aurungzeb, into whose hands he had fallen, at the be-

¹ This valuable work is now being republished by Ookerdhaboy Shewjee, and has been received by the Theosophical Society from the Editor through the President of the Bombay branch. When finished it will be the first edition of the Jaina Bible. *Sūtra-Sangraha* or *Vihva Pūnnūtee Sūtra*, in existence, as all their sacred books are kept in secret by the Jainas.

ginning of the seventeenth century. His son Govinda, a Guru (religious teacher) of great renown, vowed revenge against the race of his father's murderers, and after various changes of fortune the Afghans were finally driven from the Puñjāb by the Sikhs in 1767. This triumph only made their hatred more bitter still, and from that moment until the death of Ranjit Singh, in 1839, we find them constantly aiming their blows at the Moslems. Mahan Singh, the father of Ranjit, had set off the Sikhs into twelve *misls* or divisions, each having its own chief (Sirdar), whose secret Council of State consisted of learned Gurus. Among these were Masters in spiritual Science, and they might, if they had had a mind, have exhibited as astonishing "miracles" and divine legerdemain as the old Mussulman Akhūnd. He knew it well, and for this reason dreaded them even more than he hated them for his defeat and that of his Amīr by Ranjit Singh.

One highly dramatic incident in the life of the "Pope of Saidu" is the following well-authenticated case, which was much commented upon in his part of India about twenty years ago. One day, in 1858, when the Akhūnd, squatting on his carpet, was distributing amulets, blessings and prophecies among his pious congregation of pilgrims, a tall Hindu, who had silently approached and mingled in the crowd without having been noticed, suddenly addressed him thus:

Tell me, prophet, thou who prophesiest so well for others, whether thou knowest what will be thine own fate, and that of the "Defender of the Faith," thy Sultan of Stamboul, twenty years hence?

The old Ghaffūr, overcome with violent surprise, stared at his interlocutor, but no answer came. In recognizing the Sikh he seemed to have lost all power of speech, and the crowd was under a spell. Continued the intruder:

If not, then I will tell thee. Twenty years more and your "Prince of the Faithful" will fall by the hand of an assassin of his own house. Two old men, one the Dalai Lama of the Christians, the other the great prophet of the Moslems — thyself — will be simultaneously crushed under the heel of death. Then, the first hour will strike of the downfall of those twin foes of truth — Christianity and Islam. The first, as the more powerful, will survive the second, but both will soon crumble into fragmentary sects, which will mutually exterminate each other's faith. See, thy followers are powerless, and I might kill thee now, but thou art in the hands of Destiny, and that knows its own hour.

Before a hand could be lifted the speaker had disappeared. This incident of itself sufficiently proves that the Sikhs might have assassinated Abdul Ghaffūr at any time had they chosen so to do, and it may be that *The Mayfair Gazette*, which in June 1877, prophetically observed that the rival pontiffs of Rome and Swat might die simultaneously, had heard from some "old Indian" this story, which the writer also heard from an informant at Lahore.

