

## **El-khidr miniatures at the Mughal Indian School from the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 12<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> century**

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### **Summary**

The Character of the khidr is mentioned with Prophet Moses (Peace be upon them) in the Holy Quran in surat al Kahf, without mentioning his name.

Muslim saint El Khidr, Servant of God "Peace be upon him", he is known as Khwaja Khidr and he occupies a role of special distinction, Khidr has been associated in Persia and India with water. The blessed Sufi path, and eternity, his personality was appreciated by some Mughal emperors, especially those who were interested in Sufi ideas. This had an effect on Islamic Paintings, especially the Mughal Indian school. The images of Khwaja Khidr had religious symbolism at times and political symbolism at other times, he was depicted as a vision or a dream preaching the Mughal emperors and what they wished, Al-Khidr was previously depicted in Islamic painting, particularly Persian manuscripts, but with different symbolism. His miniatures with Alexander, the source of life, or his appearance while praying with Elias, or in manuscripts of the Qissas al'anbia' "stories of prophets", and he was a companion to God's Prophet Moses.

Popular concepts and perceptions in Persia and Southeast Asian countries are different from the rest of the Islamic world.

The Persians combined the personality of Abd al-Saleh al-Khidr, peace be upon him, with spiritual features, knowledge and divine wisdom with the popular imaginations of al-Khidr - peace be upon him - as a mythical figure since he is the only one who discovered and drank from the water of the source of life, al khidr was known in the same way in India, and the personality of al-khidr in the cities located in northern India witnessed reverence amounting to giving him the character of reverence and deification, this is in addition to the role of folklore in India, which had a great impact on the look of al-khidr that appeared in the Miniatures of the subject of study.

There have been many studies on the name of al-khidr, peace be upon him, his best-known name, which is most commonly agreed upon, is Bliya bin Malakan. There are two reasons why he is being called al khidr in the sources of explanation of hadith and history for calling him al-khidr.

The first: What Al-Bukhari, Ahmad, Al-Tirmidhi and others narrated from a hadith on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may God be pleased with him, who said: "It is al-Khidr, because it sits on a white scalp, so it is shaking green behind it." And the second: Al-Khattabi said: "It is called al-Khidr as green for his goodness and radiance.

Interpreters and historians with regard to al Khidr - peace be upon him - have disagreed on three well-known statements; the first saying is, "he's an angel king depicted in human images", the second saying, the Sufi illusion, is that he is Wally Saleh (good worshiper), and the third saying that he is a prophet, and it is the seer that was adopted by the majority of

investigative scholars, such as al-Tha`labi, in Sufism they believe he dies only at the end of time when Quran is raised. When his name is mentioned, Muslims add the phrase "peace be upon him", they also argued about his time of appearance and the myth of his immortality.

Popular perceptions in Persia and Southeast Asian countries are different from those in the rest of the Muslim world, Persians incorporated the character of the righteous servant Al-Khidr, peace be upon him, spiritual traits, science and divine wisdom, along with the popular imaginations of al-Khidr, peace be upon him, as a mystic figure, since he is the only one to discover and drink the water of the fountain of life. That is why he was known for his immortality in life, according to their belief. Persian Sufi writings abounded about al-Khidr, and they fabricated legendary stories about his miracles, his appearance and disappearance for many of the leaders of Sufism, this perception was transmitted to India by Persian culture in the court of the Mughal emperors.

The study is important because no specialized study has been devoted for studying the importance and status of greens (khidrs) - peace be upon them. The study aims at shedding light on the depictions of religious figures with mythical proportions that were frequently depicted in the pictures of the Mughal Indian school.

Most of these miniatures were confined to the period of the 11th century AH / 17th CE and the first years of the 12th AH / 18th century AD.

In addition to explaining some of the technical features found in these pictures, and trying to search for the ideological and political dimensions of the emergence of the personality of Al-Khidr in the pictures of this school, and for that the study relied on the descriptive approach of these miniatures, and the analytical method for trying to explain some of the symbols that came with these miniatures.

There were many pictures of al-Khidr - peace be upon him - in the Mughal Indian School, the topics most frequently featured were; The subject of individual portrayals of greens standing on fish or accompanied by their owner, the second is that the Mongol emperors imagined meeting al khidr - peace be upon him-.

Analytical study:

The analytical study is about studying pictures of Khawaja al-Khidr through several main points, which are confined to the following:

- 1-Al-Khidr - peace be upon him - according to Sufism.
- 2- The Character of Al-Khidr in Persian Literature.
- 3- Al-Khidr among Muslim Indians.
- 4- Al- Khidr - peace be upon him - through the Islamic Painting.
- 5- The popular ideological and political legacies in the Miniatures of al-Khidr - peace be upon him.
- 6- Symbolic connotations in the Miniatures of Al-Khidr - peace be upon him.

1-Al-Khidr - peace be upon him - according to Sufism:

The personality of Abd al-Saleh al-Khader - peace be upon him - has a great position among Sufis, as in their thoughts, he is a personality with mythical proportions, the writings of the leaders of the Sufis about al-Khidr and his immortality, many mystical weave stories and myths around al Khidr, including that al Khidr answer all those asking for help, and they also believe that al-Khidr can appear anywhere and at any time, perhaps this belief may have led to depictions of Mongol emperors meeting with al Khidr.

## 2- The Character of Al-Khidr in Persian Literature:

The character of Al-Khidr has attracted the attention of Persian writers, including the historian and poet Nizami, in his poem on Iskandar Namah, many researchers have mentioned that the character of Al-Khader and his story with Alexander in the system of the poet Nizami Iskandar Namah is inspired by the character of the immortal sage Otto-Nabeshtam who lives on an island in the middle of the waters with the Sumerian king Gilgamesh, in the Sumerian epic folk, the Gilgamesh.

## 3- Al-Khidr among Muslim Indians:

The veneration of the Khidr - peace be upon him - moved from Persia to India, especially in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, including Sindh and Punjab. The Khidr is associated with Persian literature and its role in the story of Alexander the Great at Nizam and Ferdowsi, even (the greens) are believed to be the protector and guardian of life's eye, and are linked to water, rivers and the sea. Celebrations as there are offering sacrifices at the wells in his name and directed to him regarding the time when he intended to travel by boat, to avoid the drought or flood of the river, and some of them considered him as a god of water. Regarding the beginning of his fame in India, it is noticeable that the sources are prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH / 9<sup>th</sup> AD that spoke about India, its seas and rivers, did not indicate the existence of the personality of al-Khidr or its relationship with rivers.

## 4- Al- Khidr - peace be upon him - through the Islamic Painting:

The beginning of the emergence of the figure of Al-Khidr - peace be upon him - in the Islamic art of photography in Persian manuscripts, especially the manuscripts dealing with the story of Alexander the Great with al Khidr, peace be upon him, then pictures appeared representing Alexander and Al-Khidr as he searched for the source of life, as well as pictures representing Al-Khidr performing the Hajj or prayer with despair, peace be upon them both.

The perception of al Khidr has differed according to the cultural traditions of the country, so the perception of al Khidr in the imagination of the Iranians differs from the imagination of the Indian Muslims.

## 5- The popular ideological and political legacies in the Miniatures of al-Khidr - peace be upon him:

The perception of al-Khidr standing on a fish that we did not find when the Persians portrayed the character of al-Khidr. Therefore, there must be a trace of the cultural and ideological heritage of the Indians, perhaps this perception of the character of Khawaja Al-Khidr standing on a fish in the middle of the water came from the conversion of many Hindus to Islam, and their ancient culture had influenced this perception, and that some of them kept venerating their ancient idol.

## 6- Symbolic connotations in the Miniatures of Al-Khidr - peace be upon him:

The figure of Al-Khidr appeared in some of the photographs in which his presence seems to have ideological and political symbolic dimensions, as it is noticed that the figure of al-Khidr appears in the pictures of the Mughal school in the same form as previously mentioned, and he carries something to offer to the Mughal emperor, such as the globe or a cup of water of life or the insignia of the Sultanate.

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