

## 5. Mystical Discourses

### *In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate*

STUDENT. There are a few questions concerning the revelation of the Qur’an and Allah’s orders and prohibitions to His Messenger (peace be upon him and his family). It has been reported that when receiving revelation, the Prophet used to pale and turn yellow or white, and his body would become heavy, like an unconscious person. Did this always happen during revelations, or only sometimes?

Also, would he recite the verses for the people and the scribes who recorded the revelation in that very unnatural state, or would he wait to recover from that condition? And did the scribes accompany him all the time so as to write down the revelation, or would they write it down later? Moreover, did the Prophet receive revelation through Gabriel, or did the High Truth (*al-Haqq*, i.e. God) directly reveal to him with no veil or intermediary?

‘ALLAMAH. One cannot maintain that the condition of the Messenger of Allah always changed at the time of revelation. There is no evidence for such a claim. There were times when he had a change of condition, whereby he would faint like a dead person until later on when he would recover.

Also, it is not quite evident whether he used to recite the verses in that peculiar state or after recovery. It is inferred from some narrations that there were instances when he read them out before recovery. Then when he reverted from state of annihilation (*fana’*) to the state of subsistence (*baqa’*), he would check how his Companions had recorded the verses. This shows that he sometimes recited the verses in the state of annihilation and unconsciousness, and would recite them once again after returning to normal.

It is narrated that Imam Sadiq was asked, ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah! Did the Noble Messenger use to faint and lose consciousness because of not having the endurance and strength to meet and confront Gabriel?’ Imam Sadiq replied,

The fainting occurred when the Supreme Allah revealed, addressed, and spoke to His Messenger directly and with no intermediary. [1](#)

Otherwise, Gabriel used to stand by like a slave and serf before his master, ask for permission, and then convey the message. That was the case when revelation was conveyed by Gabriel. But those instances when the state and condition of the Prophet changed were when Allah Himself was revealing and speaking to him.

For example, it is narrated that Chapter 5 (al-Ma'idah) was revealed when the Noble Prophet was entering Medina. The revelation of this chapter was so weighty, tough, and intense that the camel on which the Prophet was mounted was about to sink down to the ground and lie down because of the pressure.<sup>2</sup>

## 'Unless through revelation or from behind a veil or by sending an emissary'

'ALLAMAH. There are different verses and narrations concerning how the chapters (sing. *surah*) of the Qur'an descended. Some imply that the Supreme Allah used to manifest and reveal with no intermediary, while it is inferred from others that the revelation was done through Gabriel. The whole story is summarised in a verse toward the end of Chapter 42 (al-Shura):

***And no human being is spoken to by Allah, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or that He sendeth a messenger who reveals what He wills by His leave. Truly He is All-High, All-Wise. (42:51)***

Here, Allah's revelation is mentioned in parallel to His sending of a messenger. That is, 'by revelation' (*wahyan*) is on a par with 'He sendeth a messenger' and also with 'from behind a veil.' It means that Gabriel (i.e. a messenger) was not involved in cases of [direct] revelation.

This verse clearly shows that when the Qur'an was sent down through revelation, it was a direct revelation by the Supreme Truth (i.e. God) unto the Noble Messenger, and not through Gabriel. And when the Qur'an was sent down through Gabriel, there was no direct manifestation of Allah to the Prophet. This is very clear and is deduced from having an affirmation after a negation (i.e. the verse first denies God's speaking to anyone, but then affirms it in three cases: by revelation, from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger). Thus whatever is sent down through Gabriel or his associates is distinct from [direct] 'revelation'.

## Revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet

'ALLAMAH. For example, the first verses of the Qur'an that were revealed are:

***In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All- Compassionate \* Read in the name of thy Lord Who created \* Created man from a blood-clot \* Read; and thy Lord is the Most Gracious \* [He is] Who taught by the pen \* He taught man what he knew not. (96: 1- 5)***

It seems that these verses were first revealed directly by Allah, Exalted is He. That means that the revelation of these verses by Gabriel occurred later on.

Three verses in the Qur'an say that the Qur'an has been sent down through Gabriel (Jabra'il), the 'Holy Spirit' (*Ruh al-Qudus*), and the 'Trustworthy Spirit' (*al-Ruh al-Amin*):

***Say: whoever is an enemy of Gabriel, [he must know that] indeed he hath sent it [the Qur'an] down upon thy heart, by Allah's leave.... (2:97)***

***Say: the Holy Spirit hath delivered it from thy Lord in truth, that it may confirm those who believe.... (16: 102)***

***The Trustworthy Spirit hath come down with it [the Qur'an] \* Upon thy heart, so that thou mayst be [one] of the warners \* In clear Arabic language. (26: 193-5)***

These verses apparently imply that it was Gabriel who brought down all of the Qur'an. I have come up with an explanation that clarifies the fact of the matter and takes into account all verses of the Qur'an concerning revelation. I do not know how plausible and graspable it is, but it goes like this:

There are three stages for the process of revelation. The first stage is Allah's direct revelation upon the Prophet, with no intermediate. The second stage, which is inferior to the first, is when the verses are not directly revealed by Allah, but are sent through Gabriel. That is, Gabriel is also involved in Allah's sending of revelation, and Allah reveals *by means of* Gabriel. The third stage, which is yet lower, is when revelation is not even directly carried out by Gabriel, but by his associates and agents. In this case, revelation descends from Allah by means of Gabriel, and then from Gabriel by means of his associates. Thus, Allah, Gabriel, and his associates are all involved in this type of revelation.

The Noble Qur'an mentions this last type, where revelation is carried out by Gabriel's associates, by saying that these divine verses are contained in certain 'tablets' carried by 'noble and righteous envoys'. That is how the verses were descended upon the Messenger of Allah:

***No indeed, it is a reminder \* And whoso willeth pay heed to it \* On high-honoured pages \* Elevated and purified \* By hands of envoys \* [Who are] noble and righteous. (80: 11-16)***

## **The different types and stages of revelation were due to the different states and circumstances**

'ALLAMA. In each of these three stages, the three agents of revelation – that is, God, Gabriel and the 'noble and righteous envoys' – were all present, and revelation in every stage was done by them all. However, in some cases, the main focus was on God Himself, such that Gabriel and the envoys were not seen. Those were the cases when the state and condition of the Messenger of Allah would change. These cases are referred to as 'by revelation' (*wahyan*) in verse 42:51 (mentioned above).

And in some instances, the main focus was on Gabriel, such that the envoys were not considered, and God was considered through the 'mirror' and means of Gabriel. And in other instances, the main focus was on Gabriel's agents and associate angels – the 'envoys'. There, Gabriel and the Supreme Truth were observed through the beings and determinations of the envoys. The part of the verse in Chapter 42 that says, 'or that He sendeth a messenger' corresponds to the two latter cases, where the messenger was sometimes Gabriel, and sometimes the noble and righteous envoys who are Gabriel's agents and associates.

So based on the verse **'And no human being is spoken to by Allah, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or that He sendeth a messenger,' (42:51)** Allah's revelation is when He speaks Himself and without employing any intermediary; that is, when God manifests and speaks directly to the His Messenger.

These stages are very comparable to death and the taking of spirits upon death. The Noble Qur'an mentions three stages for taking the spirits (*qabd al-ruh*):

***Allah captureth the souls at the time of their death, and that [soul] which hath not died [He captureth it] in its sleep.... (39:42)***

***Say: the angel of death, who hath been authorised over you, captureth you.... (32:11)***

***... Until when death cometh to one of you, Our emissaries capture him, and they neglect not. (6:61)***

There are also other verses in the Noble Qur'an similar to the last verse. Overall, it is deduced from these verses that at one stage, Allah directly seizes the spirit. At another stage, the act has been attributed to the Angel of Death (*malak al-mawt*), and at a lower stage it has been attributed to the angels and emissaries appointed to seize the spirits.

Allah – Exalted He is – the Angel of Death and the angels that seize the spirits are all involved in each of these three stages. The only difference is that in some cases, since the dying individual is inattentive of all but Allah, the Supreme High Truth seizes the spirit Himself, without any intermediary. That is, the dying individual does not see 'Izra'il (the Angel of Death) or any other angels, even though they may be involved in the process.

And in some cases, the dying person is not at such a rank to be able to totally immerse himself in the divine lights of the High One. Nevertheless he retains certain degrees of sincerity. Therefore the process of expiration is carried out directly by 'Izra'il. And in some cases it is done by 'Izra'il's agents and subordinate angels. In the second stage, the person does not observe God; and in the third stage, he observes neither God nor 'Izra'il. So the difference between these stages hinges on the degrees and stations at which the dying individuals are. And apparently the different stages at which the Qur'an was revealed had a similar story: the three stages were due to the different states, stations and

circumstances at which the verses were sent down.

## **‘And he speaketh not out of desire \* It is naught but a revelation that is revealed’**

***And he speaketh not out of desire \* It is naught but a revelation that is revealed \* The Intensely Powerful hath taught him. (53:3-4)***

STUDENT. Does this verse mean that everything that the Messenger of Allah said was a revelation? Or does the primary and apparent (*zahir*) sense of the verse imply that only what the Prophet recited as Qur’an were revelations?

Drawing on the above verses, some have argued that even the regular speeches of the Messenger of Allah were revelations from God. For instance, when speaking about the Prophet’s order regarding the dispatch of Usamah’s army,<sup>3</sup> or his request for some paper and an inkwell at the time of his death so that the Muslim community (*ummah*) may never go astray,<sup>4</sup> they make reference to these noble verses that **‘And he speaketh not out of desire \* It is naught but a revelation that is revealed.’** But is it true that what the Messenger of Allah said concerning personal, family and social matters was also revealed? Of course even his casual and everyday speeches were true and righteous, but is it correct to establish this by the above verses?

‘ALLAMAH. The first verse – ‘And he speaketh not out of desire’ – is absolute and unconditional (*mutlaq*). That is, it applies not only to the verses of the Qur’an, but also to the other words of the Prophet. So one can claim that the Messenger of Allah did not speak out of desire or personal proclivity. However, the verses **‘It is naught but a revelation that is revealed \* The Intensely Powerful hath taught him’** are about the Noble Qur’an in particular. They do not refer to the everyday speeches of the Prophet and his orders concerning personal affairs.

STUDENT. Some people refrain from using the pronoun ‘I’ when they talk. Instead of saying, ‘I did such and such,’ ‘I went,’ ‘I said,’ and so on, they use the third person pronoun, ‘he’ (*huwa*). They say, ‘he did so,’ ‘he went,’ and ‘he ate.’ Is this out of self-discipline – so as to not get accustomed to saying ‘I’ and to refrain from egocentricity and ascribing actions to one’s self? Or do they mean to ascribe actions to the Truth (*al-Haqq*), and want to not bring in themselves as a being alongside God? Of course such an approach would not be absolute *tawhid* (unity), because in absolute *tawhid* nothing is seen other than the High Truth, and so even if one attributes an action to himself it would be identical to attributing it to the Truth, Exalted and Bounteous is He.

‘ALLAMAH. Apparently for some people it is for the purpose of self-discipline. They do not want to get accustomed to saying ‘I’ here and there, as a preparation for the station of *tawhid*.

And concerning *tawhid*, there is a narration from Imam Sadiq in which he shows a particular inclination

and preference to identifying the term *huwa* (he) with Allah, i.e. God's Essence.<sup>5</sup> In that case, there is no 'he' (*huwa*) but Allah, and that settles the case for everyone else.

**Say: He, Allah is One. (112:1)**

***Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, thou wouldst have verily seen it humbled and cleaved asunder out of fear of Allah; and such parables We propound for mankind, haply they may reflect. \* He is Allah but Whom there is no deity, the Knower of the invisible and the visible; He is All-Merciful, All- Compassionate. [‘ Allamah added: ‘There is no deity but *Huwa* [He].’] \* He is Allah but Whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Sacrosanct, the Peaceable, the Trusty, the Predominant, the All-Mighty, the Irresistible, the Grandiose; Glorified be Allah from what they associate [with Him]. (59:21-3)***

All this is about the *Huwa* and describes the *Huwa*.

## **Imam ‘Ali’s dream of Hadrat Khidr and his teaching of the Greatest Name**

‘ALLAMAH. It is reported that on the night before the battle of Badr, Imam ‘Ali dreamt of Hadrat Khidr and told him, ‘Teach me an invocation (*dhikr*) that I may recite and thus defeat the enemy!’ Hadrat Khidr told him,

Say: O He! O Who there is no he but Him.

Next morning Imam ‘Ali narrated his dream for the Messenger of Allah, who told him, ‘O ‘Ali! Thou hast been taught the Greatest Name (*al-Isim al-A'zam*).’<sup>6</sup>

And truly such a meaningful expression it is: ‘O He! O Who there is no he but Him’ (*ya Huwa ya man la huwa illa Hu*). This finishes the story of *tawhid*; ‘O He! O Who is He! O Who He is He! O Who there is no he but Him.’

So Imam ‘Ali recited this invocation as he fought the next day, ‘I was engaged in this invocation through the battle of Badr.’ And *Huwa* (He) was indeed showing some of His manifestations! That is right, all these things around us are His manifestations. People look with blind eyes, but Imam ‘Ali looks with a different pair of eyes. All these things around us are different forms and types of manifestations of the Truth, Majestic and Exalted is He.

## **The late Qadi and tawhid**

STUDENT. The late Qadi was a very strange man. He was like a mountain: solid, vigorous, resourceful and talented. Yet some of his students did not learn about *tawhid* even after ten or twelve years of

meeting with him, and had no share of the unity of the Supreme Truth.<sup>7</sup> Maybe this was because he used to walk at their pace. At any rate they just got engaged in the realm of multiplicity until the late Qadi passed away. But some of his other students were very quick in acquiring divine knowledge, like learning about God's Names and Attributes, and His unity of Essence. Did the late Qadi, with whom may Allah be pleased, ever discuss and speak about subtle topics of *tawhid* (monotheism, unity) in the meetings he had with his select friends and students?

'ALLAMAH. Yes, the late Qadi used to speak of these topics with some of his students who were quite trustworthy. The late Qadi was certainly a strange man. He treated each student in accordance to his states and aptitude. And his students were also very different. Some of them used to prosper sooner, but others had a slower progress.

Generally speaking, the late Qadi was usually accessible for ten to twenty days, during which his friends used to drop by and have conversations and discussions. Then he used to disappear all of a sudden, and was not found at all for a few days – not at home, not at school, not at the mosque, not in the Mosque of Kufa and not in the Mosque of Sahlah. There was absolutely no trace of him. Even his wives had no idea where he had gone and what he was doing; nobody knew! During these days, his friends used to search for him everywhere that they could think of, but could not find him. He was totally gone. Then he used to reemerge after some days and resume his lessons and private sessions at home and school. Likewise he had many other peculiarities and wonders, and many strange and unfamiliar states.

## **Monotheistic states of the late Qadi**

'ALLAMAH. There was an account of him that I heard from quite a few scholars in Najaf. I later asked him myself and he confirmed it.

At the time, the late Qadi was ill, with an aching leg that he could not bend or move. One day he was sitting in the terrace of his house, and it was during the days when the two tribes of Dhikurt and Shimirt were fighting in the noble city of Najaf. One side of the city was fighting against the other. They had taken the rooftops of the city buildings as barricades and were firing at each other on top of the buildings.

Eventually the Dhikurts overcame the Shimirts and drove them back. Thus, the Dhikurts were advancing and taking over the rooftops house by house. Incidentally, the late Qadi's rooftop was occupied by the Shimirts, who were firing at the Dhikurts. As the Dhikurts advanced and took over his rooftop, they killed two of the Shimirts who were on his rooftop. This was while the late Qadi was sitting in the terrace watching. As the Dhikurts captured the roof, the Shimirts retreated and the fight was carried to the courtyard. So two of the Shimirts were killed on the terrace and another two in the courtyard, for a total of six.

'When they killed those two people on the roof,' the late Qadi narrated, 'blood flowed down the

waterspout like rainwater. And I was just sitting there where I was and not moving at all.’ After all that, which was quite a scene, the Dhikurts raided into the rooms despoiling and taking anything of their interest.

Of course, the flavour and subtlety of the story was that, as the late Qadi said, ‘I did not move. I kept sitting where I had sat, and watched.’ ‘There was blood coming down the waterspout, there were two dead bodies lying on the terrace and another two in the yard; and [yet] I was [just] watching.’ Such states and dispositions are called annihilation (*fana’*) in *tawhid*, where the wayfarer (*salik*) does not see anything other than Allah. He perceives every act and movement as a manifestation of the Truth.

There was another account of the late Qadi which I myself observed. A friend of the late Qadi had a room in the well-known Hindi Bukhara’i School of Najaf. As he was leaving for a journey, he left the room to the late Qadi so that he could use it for sleeping, holding gatherings, or any other needs and activities. The late Qadi used to go there everyday near sunset, and his intimate students used to join him for congregational prayer. They were about seven to ten students in total. After prayer, the late Qadi used to hold a discussion session until two hours after sunset, and the students used to ask him questions and benefit from his speeches.

One night, we were sitting in the room with the late Qadi, who started lecturing about God’s Unity of Actions (*al-tawhid al-af’ali*). He was quite into explaining and expanding on the unity of actions when suddenly it was as if the ceiling was coming down. There was a stovepipe at one side of the room, which began to make a plunking sound, as if something was falling, and the room was filled with noise and dust. All my fellow students and I got to our feet and rushed to the door, pushing and shoving each other in order to exit.

In the meantime, it became evident that the ceiling was not damaged, and therefore we came back and sat down where we were sitting. But our late master (Mr Qadi) had not moved a bit. He had been sitting right where he was, even though the damage in the ceiling had started from above his head. ‘Come! O you believers of the unity of actions!’ he told us as we came back and sat down. Yes, that is right! All of the students were stunned, not knowing what to reply. Then he continued and finished his speech about the unity of actions.

That was a trial for us, because our late master was speaking about such matters and this relevant incident came up. That is why he said, ‘Come! O you believers of the unity of actions!’

Later on we came to know that the school was connected to another school, such that the rooms of the two schools were almost side by side and the replica of one another. Only a wall separated the two schools. So, on that occasion, the ceiling in the twin room had come down, and the noise and dust was from the other room, as the two rooms were connected through the heater duct. Yes, that is how we were tested.

## God's Unity of Actions

STUDENT. There are those who argue that if a person is offered a present, he should accept it on the account of God's Unity of Actions (*al-tawhid al-af 'ali*), because according to the unity of actions, the [real] donor is Allah and it is not appropriate to reject a present and favour from Allah. One should choose God's favour over his own dignity and nobility of soul (*'izzat al-nafs*), and open a path for himself toward God's unity of actions by accepting the gift as a present from Allah.

But others have different considerations like the nobility of one's soul, and so they do not accept all that they are offered. In order to reach and realise *tawhid*, what should a wayfarer of the path of Allah do in this regard? Which one is more important: the preservation of one's nobility of soul, or the view of God's unity of actions?

In many cases, the donor offers the present as an aid or charity, with some sort of inner sense of pity. Or the gift may be a 'semi-bribe', so as to prepare the grounds for acceptance of a future request – whether legitimate or not. And in many cases, acceptance of gifts results in some right and entitlement for the donor, whereby he would expect and demand some attention and right in return, which could be harmful for a wayfarer's progress. And the least is that accepting a gift involves some obligation (*minnah*). So on one hand it is not apt for a wayfarer to be indebted to others, but on the other hand it is also harmful for his spiritual journey if he detaches himself from others, disregards Allah's creatures and rejects their requests.

'ALLAMAH. It is necessary to accept a gift, on the condition that it does not entail humiliation or illegitimate consequences. Rejecting a present is not commendable. It is reported from Imam 'Ali that 'Only a donkey rejects favours.'<sup>8</sup> And there are other narrations that only a hard rock or a disturbed and aberrant person rejects a favour. Of course, it seems better not to accept a present if it involves negative consequences such as humiliation, obligation, or the like. And a wayfarer in the path of Allah should take these aspects into account. But as a general rule, it should be held that accepting a gift is mandatory, for 'only a donkey rejects favours.' This is a general rule of thumb. But when it involves humiliation, obligation or other improper implications, then ethical considerations overrule the acceptance principle. That is because the very acquiescence of humiliation or obligation impedes a wayfarer's progress.

'ALLAMAH. The late Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli Hamadani truly had an astonishing character. He trained about three hundred students, including his direct students and his students' students. Some of them were more or less perfect individuals, like the late Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i, the late Shaykh Muhammad Bihari, Sayyid Muhammad Sa'id Habbubi, and Mirza Jawad Aqa Maliki Tabrizi (may Allah be pleased with them).

It is reported that once, certain individuals (jurist scholars) conspired against the late Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli, and wrote a petition against his mystic, esoteric, and monotheistic practice, which they submitted to the late Ayatollah Sharabyani. (That was when the late Sharabyani held the authority of

[Shi'a] Muslims and was recognised as the absolute Source of Emulation.) Their objection was that Akhund Mulla Husayn–Quli was following the Sufis.

The late Sharabyani read their letter, picked up a pen and wrote underneath their letter, 'I wish Allah would make me a Sufi like the Akhund.' And with this statement, Sharabyani put an end to the matter, and all their plots fell flat.

Our late master, Mirza 'Ali Qadi, narrated that his master, the late Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i, said, 'We continually used to be at the service of Akhund Mulla Husayn–Quli Hamadani and he was totally ours (may Allah be pleased with him). But as soon as Shaykh Muhammad Bihari became acquainted with the Akhund and joined the circle of his students, he started attending his service all the time and "stole" the Akhund from us.'

The late Qadi also told us this story about his master, the late Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i: while on a journey, Aqa Sayyid Ahmad came across an illuminated and bright-hearted dervish. 'I have been ordered to let you in on two things,' the dervish told Sayyid Ahmad. 'The first is alchemy, and the second is that I will die tomorrow, and you should undertake my funeral and bury me!' The late Sayyid Ahmad replied, 'As with the first matter, I have no need for alchemy. But I will carry out your funeral.' So the dervish passed away the next day, and Sayyid Ahmad took care of his funeral, shrouding, and burial.

One of the individuals with whom the late Qadi was closely associated for many years was the late Sayyid Murtada Kashmiri, who was among the well-known ascetics and saints of the time. He was a man of clairvoyance and unique states and stations, and was a truly courteous, moral, and noble scholar. However, his field was not that of the late Akhund Mulla Husayn–Quli – i.e. the field of *tawhid* and gnosis. Nevertheless he was a very treasured and honourable character in terms of his spiritual states and conditions.

The late Qadi told us:

One day I and Aqa Sayyid Murtada Kashmiri went from the noble city of Najaf to the holy city of Karbala' to pay a visit to the tomb of Imam Husayn. As we arrived there, we headed for a room located in the school in the bazaar between the two shrines (*bayn al-haramayn*). The room was at the end of a set of stairs, which the late Sayyid Murtada started climbing, and I followed him behind. We finished climbing the stairs, only to find out that the door of the room was locked. The late Kashmiri glanced at me and said, 'It is narrated that a closed lock can be opened if one utters the name of Prophet Moses' mother. And my mother is no lower than Prophet Moses' mother.' So he took hold of the lock and said, 'O Fatimah!' He put aside the opened lock as we entered the room.

## **The Prophet's station of subsistence after annihilation**

STUDENT. The Messenger of Allah had certain states and characteristics that are absolutely

astonishing. On one hand, we know that he was aware of the secrets, intentions, and the plots made against him. He had full knowledge of all the things that happened inside and outside his house. His knowledge also included the events that would occur after his death: the afflictions that would happen to his dear daughter, Fatimah Zahra', and the battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan.<sup>9</sup> For example one day he told his wives:

I wish I knew which one of you will be riding the hairy camel, barked at by the dogs of Haw'ab?<sup>10</sup>

He also spoke about the deserters of Usamah's army,<sup>11</sup> and the oppression that Imam 'Ali would face.<sup>12</sup> He was well-aware of what was going on when he requested paper and an inkwell in order to write something so that the Muslim nation may never go astray – which was prevented by some of the Companions, who said that the Messenger of Allah was hallucinating and talking nonsense.<sup>13</sup>

And on the other hand he put up with them (the hypocrites) a lot. He used to treat them leniently, did not change his manners and conduct (in response to all their mischief), and did not exhibit any violence or harshness. Instead, he was all tolerance, patience, and endurance, from head to toe. Was this behaviour and tolerance of the Messenger of Allah because he used to see these events with a view of unity of actions (*al-tawhid al-af'ali*), that all these events are from the Supreme Truth? That is, was it similar to what you narrated of the late Qadi in the case of Dhikurts and Shimirts, or the breakdown of the heater in the neighbouring room?

'ALLAMAH. No! The condition of the Messenger of Allah was far superior and more advanced than that of the late Qadi. The Messenger of Allah had reached the station of subsistence (*baqa'*) after annihilation (*fana'*). In that station, the properties and features of the world of multiplicity – such as feeling pain, disease, grief, and emotional distress – are all present. The Honourable Messenger fully displayed every aspect of the realm of plurality, and at the same time he was at the state of unity, with the signs and properties of *tawhid*. That is why when his son Ibrahim died, his eyes were shedding tears, and he described it as a sign of Allah's mercy. But at the same time he did not say anything but the truth, for the event was from Allah. He had submitted to Allah, and was pleased with His pleasure:

The heart grieves, and the eyes weep, yet we say not but the truth, and we are certainly sorrowful because of thee, O Ibrahim.<sup>14</sup>

These incidents (the mischief and conspiracies) were harder and more pressing on him as he knew what was going on. He fully realised the details and consequences of these affairs, but he was the man of **'And certainly thou art of a tremendous conduct' (68:4)**. So he used to tolerate and forbear, and his patience and endurance never ran out. There is a famous narration from him:

No prophet was ever bothered as I was.<sup>15</sup>

I reckon that this narration was concerning this very issue of hypocrites within the community of the Muslims, not the infidels and polytheists on the outside. No words can describe the troubles and

difficulties that the Messenger of Allah incurred because of the hypocrites, both from inside and outside his house. They were those who had apparently joined Islam even though they had no inclination toward Islam or the Messenger of Allah. Save for the troubles caused by the hypocrites, the calamities of the Noble Messenger were insignificant compared to those of the previous prophets. The afflictions that the previous prophets had to face were seemingly more intense and more severe. For example, some of them were thrown into boiling cauldrons, but the Messenger of Allah was never tortured like that. Yet he says, 'No prophet was ever bothered as much as I was.' So it must have been the selfsame issue of the hypocrites. In this regard, the annoyance and trouble that the hypocrites caused for the Messenger of Allah is truly beyond our comprehension and description.

## The marvels (irhas) of the Imams

STUDENT. Did the Pure Imams achieve the unveiling of *tawhid* (the reality of God's unity) by going through the path of perfection, taking on efforts, and finally realising their talents, or was it something inborn in them? For example, how was it that Imam Muhammad Taqi Jawad became an Imam in childhood?

'ALLAMAH. This is known as *irhas* ('marvel'). *Irhas* is a supernatural act that occurs before its maturity and usual time. For example, it is reported that when Hadrat Fatimah bint al-Asad gave birth to her son, Imam 'Ali, and came out of the Holy House of Allah, the Noble Messenger came forward and received the newborn. There, Imam 'Ali started reading Chapter 23 (al-Mu'minun) for the Messenger of Allah, from the beginning to the end. This was while he was an infant and was only a few hours old. That was a case of *irhas*.<sup>16</sup>

Other sorts of supernatural acts are either called *karamah* ('charismatic power') or *mu'jizah* ('miracle'). But if it occurs prior to its time, it is called *irhas*. Our Imams had several cases of *irhas*. For instance, Hadrat Fatimah Zahra' used to talk (to her mother) in her mother's womb.<sup>17</sup> That is *irhas*, not *mu'jizah* (a prophetic miracle). And so is the case with Imam Jawad and many other Imams. In fact, it has more or less been with all the Imams.

## The Imams' playing games in childhood

STUDENT. Did the Imams play games in their childhood? And did they use to play the same kind of games as other children? Has this been reported in reliable narrations and valid histories and hagiographies?

'ALLAMAH. There is nothing wrong with their playing games *per se*. And there are two stories that are reported regarding Imam Jawad. The first one is that he was playing with the kids in the street, when Ma'mun (the Abbasid caliph) passed by. There, Ma'mun asked him some questions and Imam Jawad answered them.<sup>18</sup>

The second one is narrated by the Sufis. They mention that Imam Jawad was once playing hide-and-seek with Bayazid Bastami. They decided that Imam Jawad would hide and Bayazid would go and find him. So Imam Jawad hid, but Bayazid could not find him in spite of searching everywhere in the world. This story is narrated as a *karamah* of Imam Jawad. Then apparently Imam Jawad called Bayazid from deep in his heart, 'I am here! Where are you searching?'<sup>19</sup>

I do not exactly remember where I saw this account. It could have been one of two books: Ma'sum 'Ali Shah's *Tara'iq al-Haqa'iq (The Paths of Realities)* or 'Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Nafahat al-Uns (The Breaths of Intimacy)*. That is narrated by the Sufis, and of course it would make sense that Bayazid could not find Imam Jawad.<sup>20</sup>

We have two Jamis: 'Abd al-Rahman and Ahmad. 'Abd al-Rahman was more in-depth than Ahmad, and has some good books and nice discussions and poetry.

## The rise of Imam Mahdi

STUDENT. Do you remember anything from the late Qadi regarding the emergence of Imam al-Hujjat ibn al-Hasan (may our spirits be sacrificed for him)?

'ALLAMAH. Based on the narrations, once Imam Mahdi appears, he will start his call from Mecca, where he will stand between the *ruk'n* and *maqam*, with his back to the Ka'bah.<sup>21</sup> He will make his proclamation, and three hundred and sixty of his elect companions will congregate before him.<sup>22</sup> According to our master, the late Qadi, Imam Mahdi will give them certain instructions whereby they will all split up and spread out around the horizons of the world. And since they will all be capable of *tayy al-ard* (instantaneous self-transportation), they will search the entire world and realise that, apart from Imam Mahdi, no one else possesses the status of Unconditional Divine Guardianship (*al-wilayat al-mutlaqah al-ilahiyyah*), no one else owns the treasures of Divine Secrets, no one else is the Director of God's Command (*sahib al-amr*), and no one else has been ordered to emerge and rise. Then they (the Imam's companions) will all return to Mecca, submit to the Imam and pledge allegiance (*bay'ah*) to him.

The late Qadi (may Allah be pleased with him) once told us, 'I know the word which Imam Mahdi will tell his companions when they all spread around the world.' I saw the same thing in a narration from Imam Sadiq – that he said, 'I know that word.'<sup>23</sup>

The late Qadi told us that some of the people of our time have certainly had the honour of meeting and attending the presence of Imam Mahdi. One of these cases occurred in the Mosque of Sahlah, in the Station of Imam Mahdi, known as *Maqam Sahib al-Zaman*. The person was engaged in supplication and invocation, when he suddenly saw the Imam approaching him in the midst of a very intense light. The splendour and magnificence of the light was such that he was about to die. He had one or two remaining breaths and before dying and adjured the Imam by the Majestic Names of Allah to not come any closer. And two weeks later, the same person was engaged in invocation (*dhikr*) in the Mosque of

Kufa, when the Imam appeared to him, whereby he attained what he wanted: the honour of meeting.

The late Qadi revealed the identity of that person: Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amuli.

[1.](#) See Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* (Beirut, 1983), 18: 256; from Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (Shaykh al-Saduq), *al-Tawhid* (Qum, 1416/1995): 115, with minor differences.

[2.](#) Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur* (Beirut, 197?), 2:252.

[3.](#) See Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 27:334 and 30:432-3.

[4.](#) See note 32 on Chapter 2.

[5.](#) See Kulayni, *al-Kafi (al-Usul)* (Tehran, 1388/1968), 1: 91.

[6.](#) The narration, reported from Imam Muhammad Baqir, continues:

And he [Imam 'Ali] – peace be upon him – also recited Chapter 112 (*al-Ikhlās*) in the battle of Badr. When he was done with the battle, he said, 'O He, O Who there is no he but Him, forgive me and help me against the disbelievers.' And he used to say the same thing in the battle of Siffin as he attacked. Then 'Ammar ibn Yasir asked him, 'O Commander of the Faithful, what are these intimations?'

'It is the Greatest Name of Allah' he replied, 'and the pillar for Allah's unity. There is no he but Him.' Then he recited the verse, 'Allah, [while] standing on justice, bears witness that there is no deity save Him, and the angels and the people of knowledge [also bear witness]; there is no deity but Him, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise' [3:18] and also the last [four] verses of Chapter 59 (*al-Hashr*). Then he performed four units (*rak'ah*) of prayer before noontime.

Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan* (Beirut, 1995), 10:486, in exegesis of Chapter 112; originally reported by Shaykh al-Saduq in *al-Tawhid*: 89. It is narrated with a complete line of transmission, from Abi al-Bakhtari Wahab ibn Wahab, from Imam Sadiq, from Imam Baqir, who reports the above narration as he comments on the verse 112:1. The Imam narrates from his father, from his grandfather (Imam Husayn), from Imam 'Ali.

[7.](#) [Translator's note. In gnostic discussions, what the author intends when he speaks of God's unity (*tawhid*) should not be confused with the ordinary sense of the term. In these contexts, *tawhid* refers to the deep and subtle levels of one's gnosis of Allah's unity. It is not a matter of pure knowledge any more, but is a status of vision and unveiling of the limitlessness of God's knowledge, power, and life.]

[8.](#) Kulayni, *al-Kafi (al-Usul)*, 2:659, with minor differences.

[9.](#) [Translator's note. These were the three internal battles that Imam 'Ali fought during the first three years of his caliphate (35-40/656-661).]

[10.](#) Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo, 1959-), 9:311; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 32:163.

[11.](#) See note 171 above.

[12.](#) See *Kitab of Sulaym ibn Qays*, no. 6 and no. 66; Muhammad Rayshahri, *Mawsu'ah al-Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib* (2nd ed., Qum, 1425/2004), 9:408-15; Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo, 1959-), 4:106-8.

[13.](#) See Chapter 2, note 32.

[14.](#) See Chapter 3, note 105.

[15.](#) See *al-Mizan* (Beirut, 1970), 6:53; Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib-i Al-i Abi Talib* (Najaf, 1956), 3:42.

[16.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib-i Al-i Abi Talib*, 2:23; Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Tusi, *al-Amali* (Qum, 1414/1995): 708.

'Allamah Majlisi has reported from both sources in *Bihar al-Anwar*, 35:18 and 35:35 respectively.

[17.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib-i Al-i Abi Talib*, 3:118; Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (Shaykh al-Saduq), *al-Amali* (Qum, 1417/1996): 690; *al-Qunduzi, Yanabi' al-Mawaddah* (Tehran, 1416/1995), 2:134.

[18.](#) Baha' al-Din Muhammad ibn Husayn al-'Amili (Shaykh al-Baha'i), *Miftah al-Falah* (Beirut, 1324/1906): 171;

Muhammad ibn Talhah al-Shafi'i, *Matalib al-Sa'ul fi Manaqib-i Al-i Rasul* (Beirut, 1420/1999), 2:141. [Translator's note.

Note that the narration in *Miftah al-Falah* does not explicitly say that Imam Jawad was playing with the children, and based on *Matalib al-Sa'ul* the children were playing and the Imam was standing there.]

[19.](#) [Translator's note. There seems to be a confusion concerning the figures known as Bayazid Bastami, as there have been other Sufis with that name besides the famous Bayazid. And due to his legendary character, various unauthentic

stories and anecdotes have been reported about him, which at many times contradict one another. The most famous year reported for Bayazid's death is 261/874, which actually complies with the possibility of his having met Imam Jawad (195–220/811–35). It might have been a different Bayazid who is reported to have served Imam Sadiq (80–148/699–765). See Sami'i's introduction on Lahiji, *Mafatih al-I'jaz fi Sharh-i Gulshan-i Raz* (Tehran, 1958): 48; and Baha' al-Din al-'Amili (Shaykh al-Baha'i), *Kashkul* (Qum, 1957–), 1:112–13.]

[20.](#) [Translator's note. After his migration to Medina, in one occasion the Prophet recalled and described for his companions where he used to play with the kids in his trip to Medina with his mother when he was six. See Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* (Beirut, 1376/1958), 1:116. No doubt the way and manner that a child plays differs across children based on their talents and mentalities, and one who watches them can realise these differences. The playings of the Prophet and the Imams were certainly not vain and childish acts for the sake of enjoying the game. These acts were rather manifestations of the realities and perfections within them at the minor and lower level of children. They were normal human beings whose attainment of the higher perfections did not prevent them from undertaking regular human affairs. Nevertheless their higher level of maturity and mindset were certainly evident to the other children and could be seen by anyone who observed them.]

[21.](#) [Translator's note. Rukn here is referring to the southeastern corner of the Ka'bah, where the Black Stone (al-hajar al-aswad) is situated. Maqam Ibrahim is a stone on the east side of the Ka'bah, on which Prophet Abraham stood as he was rebuilding the Ka'bah, and which bears his footprint.]

[22.](#) See Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (Shaykh al-Saduq), *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah* (Qum, 1405/1984): 331, with minor differences.

[23.](#) [Translator's note. The reference was not found.]

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