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8. Epilogue

And hereby this memorial to ‘Allamah Tabataba’i and his discourses is concluded on 13 Rabi’ al-Thani 1402 (8 February 1982). To Allah is all praise and to Him is all gratitude. It is by Allah’s grace that I passed the best days of my life, the past two months and three days, in constant thought and remembrance of my superb teacher and master. And I have been supplicating and asking mercy for the luminous spirit of that honourable deceased in the Sanctified Threshold of Allah’s Eighth Proof. I want to put down this pen, but it is begging me, ‘Just a little more! Just a few more words!’

[‘Allamah’s endurance of allegations and difficulties in the way of Allah](#)

Let me finish this work by quoting what ‘Allamah told me one day when he had come to my house for lunch. After lunch he said,

One day in the noble city of Najaf, I was sitting in a state of attention and trance (*khalsah*) after the morning prayer, when I saw Hadrat ‘Ali ibn Ja’far, peace be upon him and his father. He approached me and came so close that it was as if I could feel his breath on my face. Thereupon he said, ‘The concept of unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) is amongst the certain principles of us Ahl al-Bayt.’¹

Then ‘Allamah continued, ‘So nice are these words of Sa’di:

The path of reason is but turns and twists;
In the world of gnosis, it’s only God that exists.
Well-understood by the people of the truth;
But deductive minds always resist:

‘So what is the sky, and the earth that’s so wide?
And men and animals, and all in the midst?’
Whatever they are, if He is a Being,

It's wrong to say that they too subsist.

The wave of the ocean is huge in thy eye,
The luminous sun penetrates the mist;
People of appearance do not understand,
The world of the gnostics, what does it consist:

The seven oceans are only a drop.
The sun is naught, but a mote in His fist.
Should the King of all raise His flag,
The world will fade, and nothing will persist.'

And added, 'So nice are these words of 'Abd al-Karim Jili in *al-Insan al-Kamil (The Perfect Man)*:[2](#)

Every being, you shall know, without confusion,
Is an illusion, in illusion, in illusion.

And no one is alert but the people of truth,
Who are with God, in old age and in youth.

At different levels, they are indeed;
The higher the perfection, the more is the heed.

Their exalted positions are known to all;
For them, and not others, greatness shall befall.

Indulged in His Essence, and Attributes of God;
Honoured by their Lord, as a noble squad.

At times they enjoy the beauty of their Lord;
At times they immerse, in His majesty and His sword.

The Divine Essence flows in their veins;
The joy of Essence is the final goal to attain.'

'Allamah's brilliant ode on loving Allah

As a memorable closing it is appropriate to mention an ode by our honourable teacher and master, and hope for the prayers of his spirit. 'Allamah composed this ode about taking the heart away from all other than God, and loving and showing affection for the Beauty and Majesty of Allah. In terms of similes, metaphors, and poetic devices, it is at the utmost degree of elegance and eloquence. It is unbelievable that this ode – with all its poetic subtleties – is by someone whose mother tongue was (Azeri) Turkish, such that his accent was noticeable when he used to speak, and for whom Arabic and Persian were

second languages. At the same time he was a man of asceticism, worship, and night vigils; and a perfect example of piety and world-renunciation.

I say as I've said again and again:

A religion of love, is that which I retain;

One's insobriety defines his prayer;

Those who're mindful are out of this affair.

The masters of the heart care not for food,

Or rest, or sleep, or a joyous mood.

The entrapped lover has only a share

Of a heart full of pain, and eyes full of tear.

The town of passion has a wall in between

One's desires, and the love of unseen.

So many Farhads, in mountains they died;

So many Hallajs, on gallows were tied.³

Except the heart, the love, and their fusion,

What's in the world, other than illusion?

But the free spirits of the divine choir,

In this carrion, showed no desire.

The liberated souls of lovers of God,

Removed the chains of whim and facade.

They freed themselves of this body of mud;

They coloured the roses, red with their blood.

The spring is a time of prizes and gain,

The flowers obtain showers of rain;

A green garment, on meadow and plain;

The blossoms fill up the garden's domain.

The flowers reflect on the nearby stream,

Their forms and patterns, are all like a dream.

The flowers blend in, with the lily,

The blossoms are dancing graciously.

The buds are opened with the morning breeze;
The nightingale sings its chants with ease.

The cypress plays and the jasmine leads;
The tunes of the harp, and the song of the reeds.

The beautiful face, its brow, and its line,
As you remember, have a drink of wine.

Thus you will find the problems have shrunk,
The mysteries are revealed, when one goes drunk.

The world is nothing but illusion in a night
That shut the eyes of the kings to the light.

Do not give in to the future's concern,
It's a dream like the past, and that you should learn.

Be not deceived by the world! Beware!
A field of flowers, with thorns everywhere.

Goblets of wine, is all that you need,
If they want to catch you, pay them no heed.

O Allah, effuse Thy continued peace and blessing upon the first determination of Lordly diffusions and the last one who descended from Thee toward humankind; about whom Thou hast said, '**And We have not sent thee save as a mercy for everyone' (21: 107)**'; as long as the heavens and the earths stand, by the rank of Muhammad and his pure and noble progeny, Thy peace and mercy be upon them all.

Written in the sanctified city of Imam Rida, Mashhad, and by his grace, peace be upon him, 13 Rabi' al-Thani 1402 (8 February 1982).

By the transient hands of the powerless, humble, poor, nondescript Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani.

¹. In his conversations, 'Allamah often invoked the verse, 'And that the final end is truly unto thy Lord' (53:42). And at times of difficulty and hardship he used to say, 'And Allah it is Whose help is to be sought' (12: 18).

If he ever came to know that someone had maligned him, made false allegations about him, or said exaggerated and extreme accusations against him in order to thrash his mystical approach and philosophical style, he would never retaliate whatsoever. He would not seek to respond or counteract in any way. And obviously such allegations were made quite often in the dogmatic seminaries (hawzahs) that were devoid of the Qur'an, exegesis (tafsir), narrations, ethics, mysticism, philosophy, and the intellectual sciences. They were rather a bunch of people sitting around a table of darkness, busy with fighting over the petty commodities of this world and rivalling over worldly fame and recognition.

But 'Allamah migrated from Tabriz and settled in the precinct of Hadrat Ma'sumah (Imam Rida's sister, may God's mercy be

upon them) in order to put an end to such views and attitudes, and in order to enlighten the young students about the divine mysteries, realities, and spiritualities of Islam. Of course some people did not approve of his way and approach, so they tried to put out his light by deceitful and demagogic ascriptions. They employed the special cunning and tricks with which they had lived all their lives in order to render the sacred hawzah clear of philosophy and mysticism. Whenever the news of these actions and ruses reached him, 'Allamah used to say, 'But the evil plot befalleth only on its people [who make it]' (35:43). Their actions were exactly demonstrative of this verse of the Qur'an: 'They want to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah perfects His light, though the disbelievers are averse' (61:8).

'Allamah used to receive a lot of unsigned letters full of swearing, nonsense, false allegations, cursing, and vain, made-up and pointless words. They were so many that I came to think – and also heard from others – that he did not read the unsigned letters anymore. So one day I told him, 'It has been said that the matter has gone so far that when you open the envelopes, you first look at the place of signature, and put the unsigned letters aside right away without reading them!' He smiled gracefully, 'I read all of the letters. Regrettably I also read the unsigned ones!'

[2.](#) Abd al-Karim Jili, *al-Insan al-Kamil* (Misr, 1981), 2:42.

[3.](#) [Translator's note. Farhad is a legendary lover in Nizami's *Khusraw wa Shirin*; a stonecutter who rolled himself down the mountain in suicide when he heard the false news of the death of his beloved, Shirin. Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309/922) is a famous Sufi who was hanged because of claiming, 'I am the Truth' (ana al-Haqq).]

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