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Home > Then I was Guided > Abdul Qadir al-Jilani and Musa al-Kazim

## Abdul Qadir al-Jilani and Musa al-Kazim

After breakfast we went to Bab al-Shaykh and saw the place that I had always wished to visit. I ran to enter the place like a man who was eager to see him and to throw myself on his lap.

I mixed with the multitude of visitors who were gathering around the place like the pilgrims in the House of Allah. Some of the visitors were throwing sweets, so I quickly picked up two. I ate one for blessing and kept the other in my pocket as a souvenir. I prayed there, recited some supplications and drank water as if I was drinking from Zamzam.

I asked my friend to wait for me until I wrote a few postcards to my friends in Tunisia to show them the picture of the place of Shaykh Abdul Qadir with its green dome. I wanted to prove to my friends and relatives in Tunisia my high state which brought me to this place that they have never been able to reach.

We had our lunch in a popular restaurant in the middle of the capital, and then I was taken by my friend to a place called al– Kazimiyyah. I only got to know that name through him mentioning it to the taxi driver who took us there.

When we arrived in al-Kazimiyyah we joined a multitude of people, children, men and women walking in the same direction. Everyone was carrying something with him or her, which reminded me of the time of the pilgrimage. I did not know where they were going until I noticed a glittering coming from golden domes and minarets. I understood that it was a Shi'a mosque, because I knew before that they decorate their mosques with gold and silver; something Islam has prohibited. I did not feel at ease when we entered the mosque, but I had to respect my friend's feelings and follow him without choice.

When we entered the first door I noticed that some old people were touching it and kissing it, so I engaged myself with reading a plaque saying: "Unveiled Ladies are not allowed to enter", with a saying by Imam 'Ali: "A day will come when women are seen wearing transparent clothes or even naked...etc."

When we reached the shrines, my friend started reading the permission to enter, while I occupied myself by looking at the gate and I was astonished by all the gold and engravings of the Qur'anic verses which covered that gate. My friend entered first then I followed him, and my mind was full of the legends and fables which I had read in books which condemn the Shi'a. Inside the shrine I saw engravings and decorations that I have never seen before, and I was surprised by them and felt as if I was in an unknown and unfamiliar world.

From time to time I looked with disgust at those people who were going around the grave, crying and kissing its bars and corners, while others were praying near the grave. At that moment a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) came to my mind, which states: "Allah cursed the Jews and Christians for making mosques of the graves of their saints." I walked away from my friend, who, as soon as he entered, started crying, and left him to do his prayers.

I approached the plaque which was written especially for the visitors and read it but could not understand most of it because it contained strange names that I did not know. I went to a corner and read the Opening Surah of the Qur'an (al-Fatiha) and asked Allah for mercy on the person who is inside the grave saying: "O Allah if this dead person is a Muslim then have mercy on him for You know him better than I do."

My friend came near me and whispered in my ears, "If you want anything you better ask Allah in this place because we call it the gate of requests." I did not pay much attention to what he said. God forgive me, rather, I was looking at the old men with black or white turbans on their heads and the signs of prostration on their foreheads, with their long perfumed beards, which added to their dignity alongside their awesome looks.

I noticed that as soon as one of them entered the shrine, he started crying, and I asked myself, "Is it possible that all these tears are false? Is it possible that all these old people are wrong?"

I came out perplexed and astonished about what I had seen, while my friend walked backwards, as a sign of respect, so that he did not turn his back to the shrine.

I asked him, "Whose shrine is that?" He said, "Imam Musa al-Kazim." I asked, "Who is Musa al-Kazim?" He said, "Praise Allah! You, our brothers, of the Sunni sect ignored the essence and kept the shell." I answered him angrily, "What do you mean we ignored the essence and kept the shell?" He calmed me down and said, "My brother, since you came to Iraq you never stopped talking about Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, but who is Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, and why should he attract all your attention?"

I immediately replied proudly, "He is one of the descendants of the Prophet. And had there been a prophet after Muhammad it would have been Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, may Allah be pleased with him." He said, "Brother al-Samawi, do you know Islamic history?"

I answered without hesitation, "Yes." In fact what I knew of Islamic history was very little because our teachers prevented us from learning it, for they claimed that it was a black history, and not worth reading. I remember, for example, when our Arabic Rhetoric teacher was teaching the Shaqshaqiyyah oration from the book "Nahj al-Balaghah" by Imam 'Ali, that I was puzzled, as were many other students,

when we read it, but I dared to ask the following question: "Are these truly the words of Imam 'Ali?"

He answered: "Definitely, who would have had this eloquence apart from him. If it were not his saying, why should the Muslim scholars like Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, the Mufti of Egypt, concern themselves with its interpretation?" Then I said, "Imam 'Ali accuses Abu Bakr and Umar that they robbed him of his right to succeed as Caliph."

The teacher was outraged and he rebuked me very strongly and threatened to expel me from the class, and added, "We teach Arabic Rhetoric and not history. We are not concerned with the dark episodes of history and its bloody wars between Muslims, and in as much as Allah has cleaned our swords from their blood; let us clean our tongues by not condemning them."

I was not satisfied with the reasoning, and remained indignant towards that teacher who was teaching us Arabic Rhetoric without meaning. I tried on many occasions to study Islamic history but I did not have enough references nor the ability to buy books. Also I did not find any of our learned people to be interested in the subject, and it seemed to me as if all of them had agreed to forget all about it and not to look into the matter. Therefore, there was no one who had a complete history book

When my friend asked me about my knowledge in history, I just wanted to oppose him, so I answered him positively, but it was as if I was saying, "It is a dark history, full of civil strives, intrigues and contradictions." He said, "Do you know when Abdul Qadir al–Jilani was born?" I answered, "Approximately between the sixth and the seventh century."

He said, "How many centuries then have elapsed between him and the Messenger of Allah?" I said, "six centuries." He said, "If there are two generations in a century then there were at least twelve generations between Abdul Qadir al-Jilani and the Messenger."

I agreed. Then he said, "This is Musa ibn Jafar ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Fatima al-Zahra, between him and his great-great-great grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, there were only four generations. In fact he was born in the second Hijra century, so, who is nearer to the Messenger of Allah, Musa or Abdul Qadir?"

Without thinking I said, "Him of course. But why don't we know him or hear people refer to him?" He said, "This is the point, and that is why I said, and allow me to repeat it, that you have ignored the essence and kept the shell, so please do not blame me and I beg your pardon."

We talked and talked, and from time to time we stopped until we reached a learning place where there were teachers and students discussing ideas and theories. As we sat there I noticed my friend started looking for somebody, as if he had prior appointment.

A man came towards us and greeted us then started talking with my friend, and from the conversation I understood that they were colleagues at the university, and that another colleague was coming to the

place soon. My friend said to me, "I brought you to this place to introduce you to a historian scholar, who is a professor of history at the University of Baghdad, and his Ph.D. thesis was about Abdul Qadir al–Jilani and he will be of use to you, with the help of Allah, because I am not a specialist in history."

We drank some cold juice until the historian arrived, and I was introduced to him, then my friend asked him to give me a brief historical view on Abdul Qadir al– Jilani. After we had more cold drinks, the historian asked me questions about myself, my country and my job and asked me to talk to him about the reputation of Abdul Qadir al–Jilani in Tunis.

I gave him plenty of information in this field and told him that people think that Abdul Qadir carried the Messenger of Allah on his neck during the night of Mi'raj (the night of the prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w.) ascension to the seven heavens) when Gabriel was late for fear of getting burnt. The Messenger of Allah told him then, "My foot is on your neck and your foot will be on the neck of all the saints until the Day of Judgment."

The historian laughed when he heard what I said, but I did not know whether he laughed at those stories or at the Tunisian teacher standing in front of him!

After a short discussion about the saints and the pious people, he told me that he had researched for seven years, during which he traveled to Lahore in Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Britain and to all the places where there are manuscripts attributed to Abdul Qadir al–Jilani and he scrutinized them and photographed them but could not find any proof indicating that Abdul Qadir al–Jilani was a descendant of the Messenger. All what he found was a verse attributed to one of his offspring in which he says, "...and my forefather was the Messenger of Allah:"

It was perhaps the interpretation of some of the learned people of the saying of the Prophet "I am the grandfather (forefather) of every pious person." He also informed me that recent historical research proved that Abdul Qadir al–Jilani was not an Arab but of a Persian origin, and came from a small town in Iran called Jilan, and he moved to Baghdad where he studied and then taught at a time when there was a moral decay. He was a God–fearing man and people liked him, so when he died they established the Qadiriyyah sufi order in his memory, as was the case with the followers of any Sufi teacher. He added, "Truly, the Arabs are in a lamentable state with regard to this situation."

A Wahabi rage stormed in my mind and I said, "Therefore, Doctor, you are a Wahabi in ideology, for they believe in what you are saying, there are no saints." He said, "No, I am not a follower of the Wahabi ideology. It is regretful that the Muslims tend to exaggerate and take extreme views. They either believe in all the legends and fables which are not based on logic or canonical law, or they deny everything, even the miracles of our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his sayings because they do not suit their way of thinking."

For example, the Sufis believe in the possibility of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani being present in, let us say, Baghdad and Tunis at the same time; he could cure a sick man in Tunis and simultaneously rescue

a drowning man in the River Tigris in Baghdad. This is an exaggeration. As a reaction to the Sufi thinking, the Wahabis denied everything, and they said that even the pleading to the Prophet is polytheism, and this is negligence. No my brother! We are as Allah said in His Glorious Book:

"And thus we have made you a medium (just) nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people." (Holy Qur'an 2:143)

I liked what he had said very much, and thanked him for it. I also expressed some conviction in his argument. He opened his briefcase and got his book on Abdul Qadir al– Jilani and gave it to me as a present. He then invited me to his house but I excused myself, so we talked about Tunis and North Africa until my friend came back and then we returned home after having spent the whole day visiting friends and holding discussions.

I felt tired and exhausted, so I went to sleep. I got up early in the morning and started reading the book which dealt with the life of Abdul Qadir, and by the time my friend got up I had finished half of the book. He asked me several times to have my breakfast, but I refused until I had finished the book. I became attached to the book which put me in a state of skepticism which lasted until just before I left Iraq.

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