

Acts of Selfless Devotion

The reverend Shaykh's spiritual seeking and devotion was principally different from that of pretenders of Sufi paths. He did not approve of any of the Sufi orders. His spiritual procedure was that of pure devotion to the guidelines by Ahl al-Bayt (a), hence he would not only take heed of the obligations, but also followed recommended practices.

At dawns he would stay up, and after sunrise he would go to sleep for about a half or a whole hour. Sometimes he would take a short rest in the afternoon.

Although being a spiritual seeker himself, he would say: "Do not trust in mystical intuitions and never rely on them. We should always follow our Imams (a) in deeds and words, as our paradigms."

In public sessions, the reverend Shaykh would always resort to the holy verse:

(ان تنصروا الله ينصركم ويثبت أقدامكم)

(...If you make effort in Allah's Way, He will help you and make your feet firm and secures you from being Shaykh along His Path), (Sura Muhammad, 47: 7) ¹ and he would say:

"God has no needs. Make attempts in Allah's way by acting according to His commandments and resorting to His Prophet's (s) tradition."

And he said:

"Nothing like acting according to the commandments causes man's prosperity and sublimation."

The Shaykh used to say time and again:

"The religion of Truth is the one preached on *Minbars* (pulpits), but it is lacking in two entities: Sincerity and love of God Almighty; these must be added in the preaching."

He said:

"The righteous are all doing well, but they should replace their 'egos' with 'God'."

And he said:

"If the believers give up the egotism, they will achieve something (i.e., high status)."

He also used to say:

"If man surrenders to God, abandons his own (biased) opinions and bigotry, and trust whole-heartedly in God, God will teach and guide him onto His own Path."

Taqlid

***Taqlid* (following the outstanding jurisprudents in Islamic laws)**

According to the principle of practical devotion, the Shaykh was a *Muqallid* (follower) in religious ordinances, and followed one of his contemporary *Marja' i.e.*, Ayatollah Hujjat. He says the way he chose this scholarly figure as his *Marja'* authority of imitation:

"I went to Qum, visited all *Maraji'*, and I found no one as self-less as Agha Hujjat."

He is also quoted as saying somewhere else:

"I found his heart was devoid of ambitions and love of positions."

The reverend Shaykh bewared his friends of the "orders" and circles that had deviated from the above undertaking. A friend of Shaykh says: 'I asked the Shaykh about one of these orders². The Shaykh replied:

"I was in Karbala, I saw a group passing by, with the Satan holding the reins of the one who was leading the rest. I asked who they are. They said:..... "

The reverend Shaykh believed that those who keep themselves at a distance from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) in their spiritual seeking, the gates to real Divine knowledge will be closed to them.

One of the Shaykh's sons relates: 'My father and I had gone to the "Bibi Shahrbanu" Mountain.³ On the way we encountered a so-called practicing ascetic who had some boisterous claims. My father asked him:

"What has come out of your ascetic practices so far?"

That person bent down, picked up a piece of stone from the ground, transformed it into a pear, and offered it to my father, saying: 'Here you are, have it!

My father said:

"Well-done, you did it for me; now tell me what do you have for God? What did you do for Him?!"

Upon hearing this, the ascetic (recluse) burst into tears.

Dedicating the Work for God

One of the Shaykh's friends quotes him as saying: "In the evenings, I used to sit in Masjid-i Jum'a of Tehran correcting peoples' recitation of Sura *al-Hamd* and Sura *al-Tawhid*. Once, two kids were quarrelling, one beating the other. The latter came sat next to me to evade being beaten any more. I took the chance and asked him to recite his *Al-Hamd* and Sura *al-Tawhid* and helped him to correct them. This took all my time that night. The next night, a dervish came to me and said: I know the science of *kimiya* (alchemy), *simiya* (the producing of vision), *himiya* (the subjugating of souls), and *limiya* (magic) and came here to impart them to you, in exchange for the reward of what you did last night.'

I answered to him: No! If these were of any use, you would have kept them for yourself !"

Refuting un-Islamic Mortification

The Shaykh believed that if someone really acts according to the explicit Islamic ordinances, they will achieve all perfection and spiritual stations. He was strongly opposed to all kinds of extreme asceticism and self-mortification that are contrary to the traditions and practices of religious creeds. One of his devotees related: 'For a while I was engaged in self-mortification, living in seclusion away from my *Alawiyya* (descendant of Imam Ali (a)) wife in a separate room where I did my supplications and *dhikr* and slept there too. After four or five months, a friend of mine took me to see the reverend Shaykh. At his doorstep, and as soon as the Shaykh saw me, he said to me outright:

"Would you like me to tell... ?"

I bowed my head in shame. Then the Shaykh continued:

"Why are you treating your wife like that and have abandoned her? ...Do away with these self-mortification and *adhkar* and recitals!

Go get a box of sweets and go back to your wife. Say your prayers on due time with the common *ta'qibat* (the supererogatory supplications after each prayer)."

Then the Shaykh stressed on the narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) asserting that if a person acts sincerely and purely for forty days, the fountainheads of wisdom will spring up from his heart⁴, and pointed out:

"According to these traditions if a person fulfills his religious obligations, they will definitely acquire certain illumination."

Acting according to the Shaykh's recommendation, that person gave up self-mortification and returned to his normal life.

First Payoff Your Khums

Dr. Hamid Farzam⁵ –a disciple of the Shaykh–describes the Shaykh in his devotedness in religious matters as follows: 'The Shaykh was equally dedicated to Shari'a (religious practice), tariqa (spiritual wayfaring), and haqiqa (the Divine Truth); unlike the Sufis who somehow reject the Shari'a. The first thing he said to me was: "Go and payoff your *Khums!*" He, then, sent me to the late Ayatollah Agha Shaykh Ahmad Ashtiyani (ra) for this purpose. And what a person he was! A true man of God from whom I acquired so many blessings and saw so many wonders in...! Anyway, I went to him as the Shaykh had instructed and paid off my *Khums* for the mediocre house I had.

^{1.} Translations of the Qur'anic verses are adopted from the English translation of "The Holy Qur'an" by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, revised edition, 1989.

^{2.} The narrator has advised not to mention the name of the order.

^{3.} A mountain near Shahr-i Ray, in which Bibi Shahr-bano is said to be buried.

^{4.} See Mizan al-Hikmah, III, 1436: 1040; and "Al-'Ilm wal-Hikmah fil-Kitab", Ch. IV, Part III: 4, 2, "al-Ikhlās".

^{5.} He is now a member of Academy of Persian Language and Literature and was introduced by his late friend Dr. Abdul 'Ali Goya to the Shaykh in mid-1333 S.H./1954 CE. He got deeply fascinated by the Shaykh's speech, and the same day of their meeting he was initiated among his disciples through being instructed a special dhikr by him. Dr. Goya believed the Shaykh specially favored Dr. Farzam and found him capable and talented.

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