

## Chapter 3: Let Us Learn from al-Mirza

Al-Mirza al-Qummi's life was replete with repercussions, full of glories, lessons and examples, and it is preponderant and necessary for the Islamic Ummah to take much advantage from the life of that great *marji'* (religious authority), from his illuminant standpoints and conduct (*sirah*), for the sake of building a bright future and an upright blessed society.

Many characteristics and merits have distinguished his splendid life, rendering him sublimity and high status, some of which we are going to expose in this chapter.

### His Forbearance and Uprightness

A unique impression was left on al-Mirza's life by forbearance and uprightness, as he kept on, throughout his life – replete with critical repercussions and troubles – being an ideal example for forbearance and steadfastness in staying to the course. Thus, he proved to be a steady mountain, never surrendering before misfortunes, passing all life trials successfully through his forbearance and endurance.

The biggest problem he faced was intense poverty and destitution, usually facing the scholars during their learning period. He could not get access to life necessities, to the extent leading his teacher the late a1-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Behbahani, who was aware of the extent of his poverty, to accept to perform *salat al- 'isti'jar* (hire prayers), transferring its payments to his disciple al-Mirza for managing his daily necessary affairs, and be able to dedicate his time for learning. Rather his poverty was so intense that entailed death for his wife.

The other problem that was faced by al-Mirza, causing him bitter feeling, was the environment he lived in. He lived among illiterate people plunged in their ignorance, depriving him his right, disregarding his high status, forcing him to depart his lodging, moving here and there through the towns.

Despite all those calamities and suffering, al-Mirza kept on withstanding, with endurance and high morale, all the difficulties facing him, taking into consideration the noble objective, for which he devoted

his life.

Verily, forbearance, endurance and resistance are the prerequisites for all successes achieved by man throughout his life, and every progress attained by man in the material and moral aspects. Allah the Glorious, the Exalted – said in His holy Book:

***“Lo! He who wardeth off (evil) and endureth (findeth favour); for lo! Allah loseth not the wages of the kindly.” (12:90)***

The Messenger of Allah said also: “Know that with every hardship there should be ease and with forbearance there is triumph, and relief comes after infliction.” Al ‘Imam Ali – the Master of patients said too: “That who forbears will verily be victorious.”

## **His Strival in Knowledge Seeking**

It may constitute the most remarkable characteristic that he exclusively owned. He kept, day and night and most of his time, on reading and investigation. In his knowledge-seeking he resembled a thirsty man trying to get access to water and he was known of sleeping only a bit at night.

## **His Academic Status**

Striving and perseverance are the prerequisites of every success that man can attain in all walks of life. Making a survey over the biography of those who are successful will verily reveal to us that the real factors behind every advancement achieved in the material or moral field, lie in the relentless strival and continuous labouring. Allah the Exalted said:

***“And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort” (53:39)***

One of the poets has also said: “Whoever seeking sublimity, nights should stay up.”

Al-Mirza al-Qummi was one among those very few men, who chose to tread the course of perseverance and continuous laboring for seeking and acquiring knowledge (*‘ilm*), challenging and withstanding on this way all the difficulties and hardships he faced. In this manner, he attained that lofty rank in knowledge and perfection, and after elapse of many years of suffering, he turned to be one of the renowned and distinguished *fuqaha*, being thus meritorious of admiration and appreciation on the part of his contemporary high-ranking world dignitaries.

His scholarly status and ability to deduce rules (*istinbat*) reached an extent that he someday invited al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Mujahid –the son of the author of *al-Riyad*, who came to Qum recently with a group of *‘ulama*, to his house, holding with them scientific debates and discussions. Then al-Mirza addressed his guests saying: That which I intend from inviting you, is to know how much old-age and physical weakness did affect my ability in inference, and power on *ijtihad*.

Thereat al –Sayyid Muhammad al–Majahid, with admiration, commented, saying: If you call this an ability for inference (*istinbat*) and *ijtihad*, then we are devoid of the talent of *ijtihad*.

The best evidence indicating the level of his scholarly status, can be sought in his voluminous compilations, that expose clearly his aptitude and command over numerous sciences.

## His Tireless Labouring

The characteristics distinguishing this grand *marji'* included his tireless labouring, persevering work and continuous activity, as he could not let fatigue overcome him throughout his life, He used to spend most of his time in studying, reading and investigation, so he is counted among the very few *maraji'* (religious authorities), who have devoted their lives completely for continuous labouring. He never gave up to rest, but only when observing complete inability of his body for undertaking his responsibilities.

He dedicated all his time for certain acts, like; leading the worshippers (in prayers), preaching people at the mosques, teaching his disciples, educating his followers, beside reading and investigation. On fulfilling a significant task, he would embark soon on undertaking another one. Taking into consideration his shouldering the burden of *marji'iyyah* for the Ummah –being in itself a heavy responsibility –this great man will prove to be a giant in thought and leadership.

## His Curiosity for Knowledge

Al–Mirza al–Qummi used to be encyclopedic in the sciences that interested him and were of his concern, being characterized with accuracy in opinions and theories. He would not be satisfied with superficialities, but used to go deep into the matters, seeking the hidden facts through investigation, till quenching his thirst from them. Hence, he became known among the '*ulama'* with the name al Muhaqqiq al–Qummi (al–Qummi the Investigator). The best evidence for Ibis can be seen in his valuable book "Qawanin al–usul' beside his other books.

## His Poeticalness

Al–Mirza is one among very few '*ulama'*, who have given great attention and concern to the literary field – especially poetry – dedicating this to serve knowledge, religion and literature. Al–Mirza has a collection of poems (*diwan*) containing five thousand Lines of Arabic and Persian poetry, beside his two *manzumahs* in rhetoric, *ma'ani* (denotations) and bayan, which verily indicating his skill and command over this art.

## His Fine Handwriting

Al–Mirza al–Qummi has also proved his excellency in the field of hand writing (khatt), in its two kinds: *al–Nuskh* and the Persian one, which requires extraordinary skill and accuracy:

A reference to this respect in al-Qummi's character was made by the author of *Rawdat al-jannat*, by saying: "The late al-Mirza's handwriting was so fine, and he showed excellency in both its styles known at that time: *al-Nuskh* and the Persian style.<sup>1</sup> His Arabic and Persian manuscripts still represent a vivid evidence indicating the fineness of his handwriting and his proficiency in these arts."

He has written numerous academic compilations with a fine handwriting, the foremost of which is *Sharh al Wafiyah* of the late al-Sayyid Sadr al-Din al-Qummi, and al-Fawa'id al-Ha'iriyah of his teacher al-Wahid al Behbahani. Moreover, he has written his *ijtihad* license granted to him by his teacher al-Sayyid Husayn alKhunsari <sup>2</sup> in 1177 (H), during the latter's presence at the holy city of Najaf en route to perform the rituals of *hajj* (pilgrimage).

## His Comprehensiveness

As previously exposed, al-Mirza al-Qummi was following an encyclopedic method in science, as his genius was not confined within a specific field, but he has plunged and gone deeply into all branches of knowledge, having his own opinion and viewpoint regarding all of them.

He studied profoundly the sciences of *hadith*, *rijal*, history and *kalam*, reaching the apex in the sciences and principles (*usul*) of fiqh and rhetoric, leaving behind a large number of compilations in all of these sciences, being of a versatile character. Beside all these talents, he used to be a merciful leader for the Ummah, a proficient master for his *hawzah* (theological school) and a kind father for his disciples and followers.

Al-Mirza was a proficient teacher, an eloquent orator, a flowing pen, a gentle poet and a great author.

## His Loyalty

One of the moral characteristics enjoyed by him being his loyalty to his teachers and shaykhs. He used to remember them with veneration when alive, and appraise them after their demise. Whenever he met them, he would show them humbleness and respect, as can be seen through the following examples:

1. His faithfulness and appreciation to his great teacher Ayatullah al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Behbahani (may Allah sanctify his soul), as al-Mirza felt indebted to his teacher, who never spared any knowledge and favour. He could never forget his stances during the hard times, as it is reported from him, that during his visit to Karbala' he used to pay homage to the tomb of his big tutor, kissing it out of appreciation for the services rendered to him by his teacher.
2. His appreciating the efforts of his other teacher, al Sayyid Husayn al-Khunsari. Throughout his stay at Karbala', he kept on corresponding with his teacher, yearning for the days where he (al-Mirza) was his disciple. He used to address him with expressions showing reverence and veneration, like al Sayyid al-Muhaqqiq or al-Habr al Mudaqqiq, and alike.

3. His expressing loyalty to his teachers and guides was not exclusively confined to their persons, but exceeded that limit to include everyone having uterine kinship to them from among men of knowledge and honour. This is indicated through his much patronage for the two grandsons of his teacher al-Sayyid Husayn al-Khunsari, who were al-Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi al-Khunsari and his nephew al-Sayyid 'Ali al-Khunsari, exaggerating in venerating them with preferring them over his other disciples. He very often travelled to their hometown with extolling them.

## His Moral Traits

Al-Qummi's unique character was truly a bright star throughout history. Beside his academic (*'ilmi*) superiority to most of the fields and branches of knowledge, he enjoyed a high Lofty morality. The more knowledgeable he became the more modest and noble he turned to be. Knowledge has burnished him, and life experiments have rendered him experienced, so he emerged as a great giant whom men of knowledge stood in awe of, and the masses held in reverence and veneration.

In one word, he was an ideal in knowledge, strive, doctrine, *taqwa* (piety), forbearance, uprightness and a hermit forsaking worldly pleasures and temptations, of sweet talk and nice company. His eyes used to be immersed in tears out of God-fearing, being a true heir to the prophets and an example for the *awliya'* (Allah's friends). Those who were contemporaneous with him among the scholars and high-ranking dignitaries held him in reverence, as seen in the following examples:

## Scholars' Views Regarding al-Mirza

1. The revered scholar al-Sayyid Shafi' al-Chablaqi, who was a disciple of al- 'Allamah al-Faqih al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Mujahid, is reported to have said in his book *al-Rawdah al-bahiyyah* in his regard: The late (al Mirza) was one of the leaders of religion and world, excelling all scholars of his time in respect of asceticism (*zuhd*), righteousness (*wara'*) and knowledge, being venerated by the upper class and common people.

2. The author of *Rawdat al- Jannat*, al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Khunsari, said in his regard: The position of our mater al-Mirza (may Allah elevate his status) is too far to be described by a word or saying. This great man was a pious man of noble rank, attaining a sublime degree of perfection and sagacity. He was an able *ustadh* (teacher), a grand leader (*imam*), a skillful literary man, an eloquent orator, and a personage of profound goodness, humanity and mercy, and of a solemn complexion with tearful eyes.

3. The great '*alim* al-Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr referred to him thus: He possessed extensive knowledge and meritorious rank, being of good taste and noble conduct. He went deep into the sciences of *fiqh* and *usul*, getting to their bottom through analyzing and investigating, being profound in the sciences of *hadith*, *rijal*, history, wisdom and *kalam*. His numerous valuable compilations being enough for him to boast of, and moreover he was an ascetic, pious, *mutahajjid* (sleepless) and upright man.

4. The late al-Mirza Husayn al-Nuri writes about him saying: The earlier and latter '*ulama*' acknowledged his virtue, testifying his proficiency and accuracy in investigation. He was a great, successful and subtle man, caring only for the Hereafter, fearing Allah, contradicting his desire (*hawa*), and being competent for religious leadership. Despite this fact, he was never beguiled by the submission of his time monarch, or the welcome rendered by his foes, showing them disregard and complete neglect.

The same statements were written in his regard by his disciple the late al-Shaykh al-Hajj 'Abbas al-Qummi.

## His Refusal to King's Affinity

This being one of the prides of the Shi'ah *maraji'* as none of them showed covetousness for a temporal world (*dunya*), never adulating any sultan (monarch). Their most concern was concentrated on their ummah. Even when meeting any king or sultan, it was only for the interest of religion as observed in the case of some '*ulama*' like Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, al-'Allamah al-Hilli, al-'Allamah al-Majlisi and al-Shaykh al-Baha'i. None of them used to be among courtly hirelings, hut they all have taken this as a means for reinforcing the religion, through employing the authorities and urging them toward enjoining to good and forbidding evil.

Nevertheless, al-Mirza was fully aware of his huge responsibility, never being deceived by the sultan's artifices, or heeding to his honeyed offers that harboring the opposite of what exposing. The sovereign's taking one step to approach al-Mirza, would be followed by al-Mirza's distancing himself ten steps.

He was frequently visited by the Qajari king, but he never embarked on travelling to the capital with the intention of meeting the king at his palace. Al-Mirza al-Qummi was aware of the extent of the inconvenient consequences, entailed through his relations with the king, for Islam and Muslims. Hence we can realize al-Mirza's abstaining from meeting the desire of Fath 'Ali Shah in marrying his only daughter to al-Mirza's only son. During one of his meetings with al-Mirza, the king expressed his wish to strengthen their ties through marrying his daughter, the princess, to al-Mirza's son, but his demand was met with al-Mirza's disapproval.

The monarchical proposal made al-Mirza restless, causing him to feel worried when facing the king's pressure and insistence on realizing his desire and will. Thereat al-Mirza was obliged to implore Allah to deliver him from that dilemma, as his stale speaking for itself saying:

***"O my Lord! Prison is more dear than that unto which they urge me..." (12:33)***

He also used to reiterate the supplication: "O my God! Take away my son near You and rescue me from fire torment."

Then Allah granted his supplication, as someone came to him telling him the news of his son's death

through drowning.

Another time Fath 'Ali Shah tried to approach him using a new means, by inviting al-Mirza to lead the worshippers at a mosque he built in Tehran. On al-Mirza's refusing his demand, the king conceded asking him to delegate one from among his disciples to deputize him in this regard. Then al-Mirza offered al-Hajj al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Hujjat al-Islam; who rejected this request too.

Thus, the monarch could never escape any chance for the sake of sycophancy near al-Mirza, but was faced every time with al-Mirza's precaution, that entailed the king's losing those chances.

## A Grace for al-Mirza

Al-Hajj al-Shaykh Murtada al-'Ashtiyani is reported to have said: When visiting the grand al-Mirza's tomb I saw an old man reciting the Qur'an and weeping. On questioning the reason of his weeping and affection, the old man, sighingly, replied: As soon as I became acquainted with him suffered his loss. I asked him: When and how were you acquainted with him?

He replied: I am from the people of Qazwin<sup>3</sup>, and was owning abundant wealth. I intended to make a pilgrimage to the House of Allah, two years before the demise of al-Mirza al-Qummi. So, I navigated toward Makkah, and when the ship reached Oman Sea, I inspected my waistband<sup>4</sup> to check how much money left with me. Suddenly I saw a man in the upper floor watching me. Then I kept the purse (*himyan*) under my clothes. Within one hour a clamour was raised in the upper floor. Asking about its cause, I was told that a man was claiming to the captain of the ship that he lost his purse containing all his money, with giving its description. Thereat, the captain gave his orders to inspect all the passengers one by one, with threatening that the penalty of the stealer being death, through throwing him into the sea. I felt so straitened since the purse specifications were identical to those of mine, and the man claiming his purse being robbed, was the same one watching me in whose heart the Satan whispered. Meanwhile no choice was left before me but to get rid of my purse and rescue myself. So, I took it out, standing at the verge of the ship, saying while throwing it in the sea: O Amir al-Mu'minin, you are Allah's trustee (*amin*), and I deposit my purse with you as a trust.

I did this so fast and returned to my place, feeling sad, contemplating what to do after being bankrupt with no little money.

In the meantime, the ship captain with the older crew broke into our floor, for inspecting the travelers, accompanied by the claimant. When it was my turn, they embarked on turning my luggage upside down, but their inspection ended without finding anything. Thereat, the captain got enraged, and scolded the claimant for accusing the pilgrims of Allah's House. Consequently his (claimant's) complexion changed, becoming tongue tied, and being known for all, to be no more than a trickster, claiming what is not belonging to him. After that, the captain ordered to throw him into the sea.

After performing *hajj* rituals, I betook myself to visit the tomb of the Prophet (S) and those of Ahl al-Bayt Imams (A), at the Baqi'. Then I made my way toward Iraq. On reaching Najaf and being honored with visiting the shrine of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A). I was inspired by Allah to demand from him my trust and purse. At the first night there, I saw in dream Amir al-Mu'minin saying to me: Go to Qum and take your trust from al-Mirza Abu al-Qasim al-Qummi. I got up in wonder, asking myself: How can I find my belt at Qum while it was (thrown) in Oman Sea?!Where is Qum and where is Oman Sea? At the second night I saw Amir al-Mu'minin again reiterating the same saying. At the third night Amir al-Mu'minin addressed me (in dream) repeating his former utterance: Go to Qum and retain your belt from Abu al-Qasim al Qummi. I asked him: Who is Abu al-Qasim al-Qummi? He replied: He is a *mujtahid* and a religions authority (*marji' taqlid*). I said to him: How can I go there while not having one dirham even! Amir al-Mu'minin said: Go to the bazaar and ask that money-changer (by name) to give you 20 liras.

I woke up from sleep, and with the advent of morning, I betook myself to the bazaar looking for that money changer. Finding him I stood perplexed, daring not to speak, but after a long period he turned his face at me asking: Do you need anything? I said: Yes.an oral remittance. He asked: How much? I replied: Twenty liras.

The money-changer said then: You said the truth, asking then: Are you from Qazwin? When answering him positively, he took out 20 liras from the safe. I bought with them some travel necessities, making my way toward Qum. On reaching it. I inquired about (the address of) al-Qummi's house, to which people guided me. I found him busy in teaching his students, so I waited till the end of his class. I went then toward him, and told him all the details of my story. Thereat he stood up and said: Your belt is with me. Then he took it out from among the books, handed it to me and said: Count your money and check carefully.

I became so delighted, kissing al-Mirza's band, bidding him farewell and returned to my family. Then I recited to them whatever I faced, totally. They could not believe anything but only after making a strong oath, whereat they became so astonished. My wife said to me: If it be so, how would you appeal to yourself and leave him. You would rather commit yourself to be at his service, hoping that Allah may render your well end. I found that quite correct, so I sold all my properties, and migrated with all my family to Qum. On reaching it, we witnessed people crying everywhere, as if it were the Day of 'Ashura' of al Husayn (A), with mourning and sadness prevailing everywhere. I inquired about the reason, and was told: Al Mirza al-Qummi has passed away. I was shocked at this sad news, making a covenant with myself to recite the Qur'an beside his grave every day.

## [Al-Mulla 'Ali al-Nuri's Meeting with al-Mirza](#)

The philosopher al-Mulla 'Ali al-Nuri was among those harbouring sincerity and veneration for al-Mirza, corresponding with him, and referring to him concerning the critical and significant issues. Al-Mirza has referred to him at the end of the book *Jami' al-shatat* Once this philosopher heard that al-Mirza has

given a verdict (*fatwa*) charging him with impiety, due to some of his beliefs. Thereat he stood in awe of that, departed Tehran and rushed toward Qum where he met al-Mirza al-Qummi. During that meeting he introduced to him his thoughts and beliefs, being at the disposal of al-Mirza. When al-Mirza asked him the reason that pushed him to do so, al Mulla replied: Haven't you charged me with disbelief before?

Al-Mirza replied: I have never charged anyone with impiety, and what you heard is but a sheer lie, with no basis.

- [1.](#) In Iran it is known as 'al-Nasta'liq" or "half broken".
- [2.](#) Today it is found with al-Shaykh Hasan Nasir al-Shari'ah, the author of Ta'rikh Qum.
- [3.](#) Another narration states him to be from the people of Shirwan in the Land of Caucas.
- [4.](#) It is a purse in which money is kept, and is tied to the belt.

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