

Chapter 4: The Religious Authority

The Return

Finally, Al-Khonsari returned to his homeland...to his birthplace, in Khonsar.

When he breathes the gentle breeze of Khonsar air, and smells the land where he was born, he sinks to the ground, prostrating in front of Allah, thanking him he is still alive, and the happiness tears gathered in his eyes as bright as the spring rain.

He remained in Khonsar for many months, which were enough to relieve his wounded soul completely, and now he freely is breathing a fresh air, mixed with freedom.

Later, he hears that a centre of religious teaching is being constructed in Arak, so he again thinks of emigrating towards the real homeland, the land that cuddles knowledge and science, the suitable land for the thirsty for four years. Al-Khonsari who was eager to quench his ardent passion and thirst

The Theological Centre of Arak

The late Sheikh Abdul Kareem Al-Ha'iri's hard work in Sultan Abad was the corner-stone of his success in opening a theological centre in Arak, in 1293 S.H.(1875 A.D.), and it was not long until it developed increasingly, and numerous 'Alims and scholars were visiting it yearly from all over Iran, among of whom Ayatullah Al-Khonsari was one who has visited it to attend the lessons of Al-Ha'iri and other lessons as well.

Anyhow, the new student drew the attention of his master, and soon was regarded as one of his nearest student and his counselor in (The Board of Giving Decrees).

The Theological Centre of Qom

The centre of religious teaching in Arak proved its worthiness and began to compete with other centres for the mastery, while the Iranians were going across hundred miles in the past to continue their study in the Iraqi theological centres.

Through about eight years then, the theological centres of Arak could make good progress and advance to quench the scholars' thirst, warding them off from estrangement, emigration and the travelling difficulties.

In the year 1301 S.H. (1922 A.D.), Al-Ha'iri who formerly made a vow to pilgrim the Holy Shrine of Hazrat Alawiyyah Fatima Al-Ma'asoomah daughter of Imam Moosa ibn Ja'afar (a.s.), arrived the holy city of Qom in the company of Ayatullah Al-Khonsari and others, and it lasted for two days. ¹ The whole in habitants of the city Qom came out to receive them especially Ayatullah Al-Ha'iri, and the guests were hosted by Ayatullah Hajj Sheikh Mehdi for several Days.

The long-time thought of originating a theological centre in Qom was hovering inside the heads of 'Ulama of Qom, yet the sudden visit of Ayatullah Al-Ha'iri to Qom seemed to be a unique opportunity which will soon become a reality. Al-Khonsari got main role to incite Ayatullah Ha'iri to establishing the theological centre in Qom.

Sayyid Danesh Aashtiyani, a student of (Al-Khonsari), relates:

"I can hardly pretend that Ayatullah Al-Khonsari was a partner of Ayatullah Al-Ha'iri in constructing the theological centre in Qom. The only thing I can confess is that Ayatullah Al-Khonsari as far as I know, was the very encouraging one of Ayatullah Ha'iri and could convince him to immigrate to Qom and establish the Hawzah Ilmiyyah there."

It wasn't so easy to Ayatullah Ha'iri to leave the recently established Theological Centre of Arak, but in consequence of the constant urging of many requesters, Al-Ha'iri inevitably opened the Holy Qur'an and had God's consultant through a bibliomancy on beginning this hard task so the Holy verse or Surah of Yousuf came into sight which says:

"... Then bring me your family all together"(12:93)

So, Al-Ha'iri declared officially his conveyance to Qom and gradually the Hawzah of Qom which later became the pioneer in the field of religious studies in the whole Islamic world was formed.

The Beginning of the Religious Authority

In the wake of Al-Ha'iri's decease, a great sorrow permeated the whole city of Qom and thus the Hawzah Ilmiyyah was in mourning because of the departure of its grand founder Ayatullah Sheikh Abdul Kareem Al-Ha'iri.

Reza Khan tried till he was tired to prevent the funeral ceremony to be set up, aiming the end of the Hawzah existence in Qom.

Hence, 'Ulama were seriously tasked with guarding and keeping the entity of the Hawzah, and thus the masses longed for three important students of Ha'iri to lead the Hawzah. They were: Ayatullah Sadr, Ayatullah Hujjat and Ayatullah Al-Khonsari (who constantly preferred to be aloof from the religious leadership).

Anyhow, those critical attitude didn't last very long, as Sheikh Muhammad As-Sadooq in collaboration with Sheikh Mujtaba Al-'Iraqi and others could put an end to that seclusion, so they all agreed to ask Al-Khonsari carrying on with Al-Ha'iri's lessons. Thus the remarkable characteristic of Al-Khonsari obviously appeared for the multitude, and how quickly he then became a higher source of imitation.

Worth mentioning, the fatwa issued by the late Sayyid Abul Hasan Isfahani in reply to a question by Hajj Muhammad (Chai Foroosh) regarding a permission to return to Al-Khonsari in the precautionary cases of law, which was distributed among different classes of the Iranians has consolidated Al-Khonsari's Position as the leading source of imitation in Iran.

The Professorship

As a matter of fact, Al-Khonsari's lectures were distinguished by capacity of comprehension, accuracy of research and precision of analysis. Al-Khonsari used to answer the question with deep respect for other, in spite of some weak and poor subjects. So, he always tried to give many simple examples in order to approximate the facts to the askers, and thus be kept the personality of them in the presence of the others.

He followed a particular methodology for teaching *Fiqh* and *Usul* (major sources of law), distinguished with simplicity and plainness, though some subjects were sometimes, so complicated, the matter which caused his students to listen carefully and interact with his lectures.

Al-Khonsari continued his lessons even during holidays, though he was almost exhausted in his captivity, nevertheless he remained teaching from morning to afternoon with complete activity and vigor.

Al-Khonsari in the Opinion of Others

Some religious scholars set forth the character of Al-Khonsari's method of teaching as follows:

“When he appears on the mimbar (pulpit), one may remember his (Al-Khonsari's) master Sayyid Dhia-ul-Din Al-'Iraqi, or sometimes the other of his, Al-Aakhond Al-Khorasani. He used to mould his opinions in a scientific accurate form, which have a considerable difficulty and of such perplexity that it was impossible for anyone to understand, except those who have accustomed to his new way of teaching, or those who are well-drilled so they may be deduce and presume.”

Some others say:

“Everyone recognize his (Al-Khonsari's) lessons to be rigorous and profound, not easily apprehended by anyone but the well-versed”.

Another scholar commented, saying:

"Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Al-Khosari is indisputably the one who is distinguished with accuracy, since he dives into the essence of a legal issue, crystallizing his sagacious ideas to deduce that issue".

Al-Khonsari's Students

Since he was in Najaf, Al-Khonsari started to lecture there, thus he owned a lot of students for a long time. Ayatullah Al-Araki, a student of his, narrates in his book titled as *Al-'Ulama Al-Mu'asiroon*, The Contemporary Learned:

“Most of honourable students of Hawzah, whether those who dispersed in different cities and became religious leaders, or those who are still dwelling Qom, are all his (Al-Khonsari's) students in Fiqh, major sources of law, logic and theology. In fact, he was like a flowing river one can taste its freshness through his remarkable talent”.

Briefly, most of the late Al-Ha'iri' students joined the lectures of Al-Khonsari and (Hujjat) following the death of the founder of Hawzah of Qom.

Below is a summary of some of Al-Khonsari's students, not to mention those who were both Al-Khonsari's and (Hujjat's) students:

1. Sheikh Muhammad 'Ali Al-'Iraqi (Araki).
2. Sheikh Abdul Jawad Al-Isfahani.
3. Sheikh Mirza Radhi Al-Tabrizi.

* the above have got the exertion degree by Al-Khonsari *

4. Mirza Abul Qasim Danesh Ashtiyani.
5. Sheikh Abul Makarim Rashti.
6. Sayyid Ahmad Khosroshahi
7. Sayyid Ahmad Khurram Aabadi.
8. Sayyid Jalal Mahallati.

9. Sayyid Husayn Rasooli.
10. Sayyid Shafee' Waheedi.
11. Sheikh Abdul Rahman Gharnaqi.
12. Mirza Abdul Raheem Mudarris.
13. Sheikh 'Ata-ullah Ashrafi Isfahani (the fifth martyr of mihrab Prayer niche of the Islamic Revolution [2](#))
14. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Tabataba-i Sultani.
15. Sheikh Ghulam Redha Faqeehi.
16. Sheikh Mahroomi Harisani.
17. Sheikh Muhammad Sadooq (shaheed-e-mihrab).
18. Sayyid Mustafa Al-Khonsari.
19. Sheikh Mehdi Sadiqi.
20. Sayyid Hadi Roohani.
21. Sheikh Mujtaba 'Iraqi

Al-Khonsari's Works

His done books are divided into two sorts: the first kind, Treatises concerned with *Fiqh* issues or annotation in the margins of some books, such as:

- a) An annotation on the treatise titled *Thakheeratul 'Ibad Liyawmil Ma'ad'* by Mirza Muhammad Taqi Shirazi, in Persian, arranged in the form of a question and answer.
- b) An annotation on the treatise titled "*Muntakhabul Ahkam*".
- c) An annotation on the almanac of Prayers.
- d) An annotation on the pilgrimage rites, by Sheikh Murtadha Al-Ansari, in Persian.
- e) *Mukhtasaral Ahkam* (summary of religious injunctions).
- f) An annotation on "*Al-'Urwatul Wuthqa*" by Ayatullah Sayyid Kadhim Al-Yazdi.
- g) An annotation on "*Wasilatun Nejat*" by Ayatullah Abul Hasan Isfahani.

[all the above books have been published, except the latter].

While the second sort of Al-Khonsari's book are likely accounts or exposition of his lectures that have been collected by his students, such as:

- a) Lectures in Taharat (ritual purity) arranged by his intelligent student Ayatullah Sheikh Muhammad 'Ali Al-Iraqi
- b) Lectures in Prayers, which are continual series of his master Al-Ha'iri through (he says and I say) method, classified by his student the researcher Mujtaba Al-Iraqi

With Boroojerdi

Soon after the demise of the Hawzah founder in Qom, Ayatullah Al-Hia-iri, his genius students Al-Khonsari, Hujjat and Sadr, seemed to get the admiration of everyone. Aiming to extirpate the hopes adopted by the ruling regime then who suffered to demolish the Hawzah structure, the three said 'Alims have agreed to nominate the religious chief of the Muslims, Ayatollah Boroojerdi, who already known for his avoiding reputation or leadership.

Subsequently, Boroojerdi agreed to come to Qom in 1323 S.R. (1944 AD.) after continuous insistence. Thus the three Marjjs' seceded from their positions expressing their renunciation and self-denial towards any kind of reputation or fame. So, Ayatullah Sadr gave up leading the prayer in Masjid Ja'mi', while Al-Khonsari and Hujjat have declared their complete support for the leadership of Boroojerdi.

From that time, the Hawzah of Qom witnessed a great flourish in the preference of Boroojerdi, and his wise managing the nation's affairs, which has established an obligatory respect by the government towards Qom as a religious centre earns the nation's loyalty.

¹. The same distance can be covered today within two hours by a car.

². Five of the great mujtahids were martyred in Iran through assassination by the Munafeqeen (hypocrites) band, and they are: martyr Ayatullah Tabataba-i (Tabriz), martyr Ayatullah Madani (Tabriz.), martyr Ayatullah Destgheyb (Shiraz.), martyr Ayatullah Sadooqi (Yazd), and martyr Ayatullah Ashrafi Isfahani (Kermanshah).

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