

Foreword

The first question that may occur to the reader as to the reason the author (of the present book) has undertaken writing a commemorative volume about the perfect Gnostic, the pious servant, and the reverend "Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat"—particularly if the reader has been one of his disciples, would probably be: Why has a writer, who has never met with the Shaykh and whose field of work and research is not writing commemorative biographies, made such an attempt like this?

The Charisma of the Shaykh's Sayings

Imam Ali (a) has been quoted as saying:

ان على كلّ حقّ حقيقة، وعلى كل صواب نوراً

"Together with every righteous affair there is a truth, and with every correct matter, a light"¹

Once at early youth when I accidentally encountered in Masjid-i Jamkaran in Qum with one of the devotees of Shaykh Rajab Ali, I became devotedly attached to the latter despite having never met him in person. I found in his words such truthfulness, radiance and charisma that scented of the fragrance of the friends of God.

For years, I eagerly longed for the life-story and words of that "unschooled beloved" and instructor of ethics at whose feet many professors from Universities and Hawza (Islamic Seminaries) had knelt in devotion, to be compiled, published and presented to the public, especially the youth—who are in dire need of it at the outset of their life.

If one of disciples of the Shaykh, who is given to writing, had made this valuable and instructive endeavor, there would have undoubtedly been compiled a more comprehensive collection than the present volume. For some reason, however, this was not accomplished, mainly due to the fact that most of the Shaykh's disciples and companions, who potentially could have played a helpful part in compilation of such work, have already departed from this world.

Several years ago I began to feel that the chance for accomplishing this task was gradually being lost, and if the memories of those devotees of the Shaykh who are still alive were not compiled by now, perhaps it would never be possible to write his didactic biography, and truth-seekers would be deprived for ever of knowing the truths that this man of God had been able to discover. Thus, I brought up the issue with a brother-in-faith and asked him to arrange interviews with the Shaykh's devotees and record their memories on the basis of the topics that I had gathered about him.

This was carried out and the memories were written down. It was, then, prepared and edited by The Islamic Research Foundation and in June, 1997 was published by Dar al-Hadith Publication by the name of Tandi-i Ikhlas (A Figure of Sincerity).

In spite of all its inefficiencies, the book was highly acclaimed by the readers, especially the young generation, to the extent that in a short while it sold out over a hundred thousand copies in eleven reprints.

By further research, more valuable points about the Shaykh's spiritual wayfaring and self-enrichment were revealed. This time, despite all my busy occupations, for some reasons I decided to reorganize the book in a way that the spiritual character of that devoted gnostic, secrets of his spiritual achievements, and his method of self-improvement can be rewritten. The present book is, by Grace of Allah, the product of that decision. In this new edition, renamed 'The Elixir of Love', some considerable remarks have been made.

The Style of Writing

In authoring this book, all the interviews made with Shaykh Rajab Ali's devotees were revised and catalogued. Afterwards, the significant and instructive points were extracted from among the dialogues and categorized in four parts: Traits, A Leap Forward, Self-Building; and Passing Away. In the end, the main task of chaptering and editing began. The significant distinction between the biography of the reverend Shaykh and other biographies is the utilization of Islamic texts to authenticate his guidelines or some of his miraculous acts. Remarks on some relevant prophecies and miracles that occurred to other friends of God were also included.

Another point is that, brief quotations from Islamic texts brought up on each topic are referred to more as examples. For further details, however, the interested reader may refer to the newly published Persian translation of Mizan al-Hikmah by the same author as specified at the footnotes.

Beyond a Commemorative Volume

This way, the volume on the late Shaykh turned out to go beyond a mere commemoration. It not only indicates the path to the sublime destination for humanity, but also serves as an impetus to self-improvement, guiding the spiritual seeker toward the status of the righteous and the truth-seekers by

means of the Holy Qur'an and traditions of the Infallible Imams (a). In an introduction to his commentary on the Hadith of the Armies of Intellect and Ignorance, Imam Khomeini (ra) asserts the inefficiency of books written about ethics from scientific and philosophical points of view, and emphasizes the society's need for books on ethics such as the present one. He further comments:

"To my humble opinion, scientific and historical ethics as well as literal and scientific interpretation (of the Qur'an) and commentary on *hadiths* in like manner, divert one from their destination and goal and is distancing rather than approximating. It is my contention that in ethics and commentary on the related *hadiths* or interpretation of the noble verses referring to it (ethics), it is important that the writer should instill his purposes in the souls (of his audience) by means of warning and giving glad tidings, preaching and admonishing, and reminding.

In other words, a book on ethics should be of a practical preaching nature, curing maladies and defects by itself, rather than showing how to cure.

Explaining the roots of morals and indicating the way to remedy (of immorality) does not drive one near to destination, does not enlighten a darkened heart, and does not rectify a corrupt disposition. A book on ethics is one that by reading it a hard (and unfeeling) soul turns tender, the impure becomes purified, and the darkened gets radiant; and that is achievable only if the scholar (preacher) is a leader while instructing, a therapist while presenting (ways of) therapy, and if his book itself is the medicine for the ailment rather than a prescription exposing medications. The words of a spiritual physician should serve as medicine, not prescriptions; and the above mentioned books are prescriptions rather than medications; though if I dared I would say that some of them (even) seem doubtful to be (considered as) prescriptions –this topic, however had better be dispensed with."

The reader will find out by experience that the present Commemorative Volume is not prescription revealing medications; rather, it is indeed a medicine that heals diseases of the heart, makes the hearts tender and radiant, and takes the spiritual seeker closer to his destination and goal.

Authenticity of the Sources

As mentioned before, the sources of the Shaykh's Commemorative Volume comprises interviews made with his disciples and devotees; and except in few cases, all narrations are directly quoted from the Shaykh. And all the narrators –both the ones whose names are given and those who for some reason preferred not to be named—are reliable and I am confident that what they have said is nothing but truth.

What is remarkable is that all the things said about the reverend Shaykh here is what his disciples have said about him without referring to them in details.

Another point worth mentioning is that in quoting from the interviews great care has been taken to mention the exact words and make the least literal and editorial corrections as far as possible.

Stations of the People possessing Divine Knowledge

The greatest art of the reverend Shaykh is his attaining the elixir of love of God. He was actually an expert in such alchemy²; and the book was, accordingly, named, The Elixir of Love. Exploiting this elixir, the reverend Shaykh attained the truth of Unity (of God). In chapter three of part three of the present volume you will read the Shaykh's words in this respect:

"The truth of elixir (alchemy) is to attain God Himself.... Love of God is the final station of servitude. ...The standard for evaluation of deeds is the standard by which the doer loves God Almighty."

I presume whoever reads the Shaykh's biography, they will confirm that he had perceived the truth of the elixir of loving God; that through loving his Creator he had attained such perfection and high stations that is so baffling—if not impossible—for us even to imagine.

Many a time it happens that some ignorant individuals will deny the high stations of those possessed of Divine knowledge, merely out of their own disability and failure in comprehending those stations. That was why the late Imam Khomeini (ra)—the founder of The Islamic Revolution, strongly cautioned his beloved son, Haj Ahmad Agha, of such attitude. He wrote:

"My son! What I first and foremost recommend to you is not to deny the stations of those endowed with Divine knowledge, which is the manner of the ignorant; and beware of those denying the status of the friends of God, as they are highway robbers of Truth."³

And in his advice to Haj Ahmad Agha's wife, he states: "I would not like to exonerate the pretenders; 'for many a cloak deserve to be burnt'. Rather I want you not to negate the essence of spirituality, which the book (the Qur'an) and the *Sunnah* (of Rasul Allah (s)) have alluded to and its opponents have either ignored it or have engaged themselves in the monotheism of the masses. I enjoin you (to know) that the first step is to get out of the thick veil of negation, which is an obstacle to any development and any positive step. This (first) step is not perfection (in itself); rather it opens up the path to perfection."

"In any case, one cannot find a way toward Divine knowledge with a negating attitude. As being selfish and egotistic, those who negate the stations of the gnostics and the positions of spiritual seekers would not attribute to their own ignorance whatever they do not comprehend, and negate it lest their selfishness and egotism would not be marred."⁴

The Human Beings who cannot be perceived

The stations of those endowed with Divine Knowledge are virtues that cannot be explained and described to most of the people. In this respect, a beautiful *hadith* is quoted from Imam al-Sadiq (a) as follows:

لايقدر الخلائق على كنه صفة الله عز وجل، فكما لا يُقدر على كنه صفة الله عز وجل فكذلك لايقدر على كنه صفة رسول الله -صلى الله عليه وآله- وكما لايقدر على كنه صفة الرسول -ص- فكذلك لايقدر على كنه صفة الامام -عليه السلام- وكما لايقدر على كنه صفة الامام -ع- كذلك لايقدر على كنه صفة المؤمن

"Masses are unable of perceiving the innermost core of Almighty Allah's (s) Attributes, and as they are unable of accessing the essence of Allah's (s) Attributes, they are likewise unable to perceive the depth of the attributes of His Apostle (s); and as they are unable to find out about the innermost attributes of his Apostle, they are likewise unable to fathom the attributes of the Imams (a); and as they cannot know the Imams as they should be known, they are likewise unable to recognize the truth of the faithful as they should."⁵

When reached the stage of annihilation in Allah, man becomes His vicegerent and representative in the world of existence. It is at this stage that analysis and description of his virtues, like that of God Almighty, would be impossible for the ordinary people. In this, characteristic, as it was noticed in the words of Imam al-Sadiq (a), there is no difference between the Prophet (s), the Imam (a), and the Faithful. Thus, it is not surprising to say that the spiritual stations and virtues of individuals like the reverend Shaykh are indescribable.

A disciple of the Shaykh, to whom the present author has for years been devoted and quoted various accounts on the Shaykh's spiritual stations from, said that Once the Shaykh had told him:

"O such and such! No one knew me in the world, but I will be known on two occasions; once when the twelfth Imam (aj) will have returned, and once on the Resurrection Day."

Accordingly, introducing the spiritual virtues and perfection of the reverend Shaykh in itself is a task that cannot be carried out by such books as the present volume and the like. The deepest impact that writing his radiant biography can leave would be by illuminating the general features of the reverend Shaykh's life, secret of his attaining the high spiritual stations of those endowed with Divine Knowledge, and his way in education and self-building. This, in itself, is a great and valuable task that has, by the Grace of Bounteous Allah, been undertaken. We are grateful to Him for such great achievement. Perhaps this writing is going to be a beginning step toward the actualization of the Shaykh's prophecy of his being briefly known after his death. As his son has quoted him saying: "No one gets to know me and after my death, I will be known."

Muhammadi Rayshahri April 1, 1999

¹. Al-Kafi, II, 54: 4; Mizan al-Hikmah, XIII, 6520: 20838

². See "The Shaykh's Greatest Art", chapter three, part three.

³. Sahifeh Noor, XXII, 371.

⁴. Ibid, XXII, 348.

⁵. Mizan al-Hikmah, I, 390: 1400.

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