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Sayyid Ali Qadhi Tabatabai (R.A.)

A great Scholar and ‘Arif, Teacher of Ayt. Khui, Ayt. Behjast, Allamah Tabatabai and many other Ulema

Marhum Qadhi was a scholar of the highest calibre in Najaf in the last century. He taught **akhlaq, aqaaid and 'irfan**, and was also well versed in **falsafah and fiqh**. Many great scholars of the previous generation were his students. He had a special status and piety, which enabled him to perform many miraculous acts, some of which his students have described. *One of the teachers at the Hawza in Najaf reports:*

“I had heard much about the wondrous abilities of Marhum Qadhi, but I doubted whether the stories were actually true or not, until one day, when I met him outside the mosque of Kufa. I greeted him and we spoke together for a few moments. When we reached the entrance of the mosque of Kufa, (which was facing the open desert), we sat outside facing the *qiblah* in the shade of one of the walls of the mosque, for some rest, before we entering the mosque.

We began a discussion and Marhum Qadhi related some matters about the secrets and signs of Allah swt, the definition of *tawhid*, the importance of pondering deeply on this subject and the fact that this is the true and the only purpose of man's creation. The talk continued until the call for prayers came.

As he spoke, I thought to myself, “Truly, we are all confused and totally unaware of the actual reality of our creation. How shameful will it be if our lives end in this manner? What he says is so true, and if we do not take benefit from it, then woe to us!”

Suddenly, I saw a large snake came out of its lair and began to slide next to the wall of the mosque, coming towards us. There were many snakes in that region, and people would often see them, but they did not usually attack anyone. However, this snake came right next to us, really frightening me. I noticed that immediately Marhum Qadhi pointed at it (the snake) and said, “*mut, bi idhnillah*” – i.e. “*die, by the permission of Allah!*” To my utter surprise, I saw that the snake immediately withered away and died. Then without even pausing for a moment, he concluded his comments and then we stood up to attend the prayers.

Marhum Qadhi recited his prayers in the mosque and then retired to a side room where he used to engage in worship. I also performed some *a'mal*, and then decided to return to Najaf. Before I left, a thought passed in my mind, "was the snake truly dead or had this man somehow tricked me, as some magicians do?" I decided to go and examine the snake to see if it was actually dead. I went out and saw that it was exactly in the same place, dead & dried up. I pushed it to check – it did not move. I became ashamed of my doubts and returned to the mosque to continue with prayers, but I could not concentrate.

Marhum Qadhi remained in his room for some time engrossed in his worship, and then came out and left the mosque. I also came out and we met again. As soon as he saw me, he turned to me and with a smile said, "Well sir, you tested me, you tested me!"

Allamah Tabatabai, the author of Tafsir al-Mizan, reports the following, about his teacher:

"My brother (Allamah Mohamed Hasan Ilahi) had sent a question to our teacher, Agha Qadhi through one of his students that, "The carpet of Prophet Sulayman (A.S.) on which he sat with his entire court and travelled from the east to the west; was it a physical thing, manufactured from some components, or was it a miracle of Allah that had nothing to do with any physical object?" Marhum Qadhi replied to the student, "I do not know the answer. However, one of the creatures who was alive at the time of Prophet Sulayman (A.S.), and who participated in these journeys, is still alive. I will go and ask him."

Marhum Qadhi set off for an area, which was mountainous. When he reached a particular mountain, a creature who resembled a human being came out, and they began to talk with one another. The student, who had accompanied Marhum Qadhi, could not understand anything of their conversation, but when Marhum Qadhi returned, he said, "He (the creature from the mountain) says that it was from the miracles of Allah swt, (through wind currents which Hazarat Sulayman (A.S.) was allowed to control) and there was no apparent physical apparatus involved at all."

This was Marhum Qadhi, who not only was able to perform miracles like Prophets, but was also able to communicate with ancient creatures in their own languages. May Allah swt's peace and blessings be on him and on all our Ulema, (Ameen).

Source: "**Karamat wa Hikayate Ashiqane Khuda**" – "**Miracles and Anecdotes of the Close Servants of Allah**", p40 & "**Mehr-e-Tabaan**" – "**The Radiant Sun**", p373. Translated AJ/301105.

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Brief Biography

Ayatullah Sayyid Mirza Ali Tabatabai, famously known as **Qadhi** (1285 – 1366 AH) was born in Tabriz in Iran. He completed his basic *hawza* studies in his hometown, and then at the age of 28, migrated to Najaf to learn from the great masters who taught him in the shadow of the *haram* of Imam Ali (A.S.).

In time, Sayyid Qadhi excelled in **fiqh**, **usul**, **hadith**, **tafsir** and **akhlaq** and distinguished himself as one of the most sought-after instructors in Najaf, especially in the fields of **akhlaq** and **'irfan**. He wrote several books, including a partially completed *tafsir* of the Qur'an, which is a commentary up to verse 91 of Surah al-An'am. Several of the top ranking *'ulama* and *maraje* of the last generation were his students, including: **Grand Ayatullah Behjat** (may Allah prolong his life), **Grand Ayatullah Zanjani** (may Allah prolong his life), **Grand Ayatullah Khui** (R.A.), **Grand Ayatullah Najafi Mar'ashi** (R.A.), **Grand Ayatullah Hadi Milani** (R.A.), **Allamah Tabatabai** (R.A.), **Shahide Mehrab Ayatullah Dasteghayb** (R.A.), **Sayyid Hashim Haddad** (R.A.) and many others.

His Extraordinary Abilities

Marhum Qadhi was a man of exceptional abilities – many times his illustrious students would describe their memories of the wondrous acts they witnessed in his blessed presence. The contemporary scholar and student of Ayatullah Khui, **Ustad Fatimi Niya**, relates the following incident:

In the days when Ayatullah Qadhi was in Najaf, Ayatullah Khui came to him and requested, *“I would like you to instruct me in some matters.”* He (Ayt. Khui) probably meant **'irfan** and **Divine gnosis** and **Spiritual Exercises**. Agha Qadhi gave him some special spiritual instructions which Ayatullah Khui faithfully followed.

Then one night in the blessed Month of Ramadhan, Ayt. Khui visited his illustrious teacher, Ayt. Qadhi, who showed him (Ayt. Khui) a vision of his future. Suddenly, Ayt. Khui saw a man who resembled himself, appear in front of him; the man slowly began to age until his beard turned white. He saw the man teaching students of *hawza* at the highest level in the Masjid-e Hindi in Najaf. He saw him beginning to issue edicts (*fatawa*) and then saw that his treatise of fiqh (*risalaye amaliyyah*) was printed. After a long time he heard the loudspeakers in the mosque of Kufa announce, “The grand Ayatullah al-Khui has passed away”.¹ When the vision was over, Ayt. Qadhi turned to Ayt. Khui and said, **“This was your life, from now till your death. You have a good future; now you may go.”**

Ayatullah Nasiri Dawlat Abadi ² relates that his teacher, Marhum **Ayatullah Shaykh Abbas Quchani** narrated the following incident to him:

In Najaf al-Ashraf, we used to have special sittings with Marhum Qadhi. Usually the participants would inform each other about the gatherings and we all used to know one another. In one such gathering, I suddenly saw a young Sayyid enter the room. Marhum Qadhi interrupted his discussion with us and

showed great respect to the young Sayyid who had just entered and then said to him, **“Agha Sayyid Ruhullah! Do not hesitate to stand firm against the tyrant rulers and unjust governments. You must resist them, you must oppose their ignorance!”**

This was a time when there was not even a whisper about any revolution in Iran. Marhum Quchani used to say, **“We were all very surprised that day at this conversation, but after many years, when the Islamic revolution happened, we understood what Marhum Qadhi had been referring to on that day and why he had shown such great respect to Ayatullah Khumayni.”**

Ayatullah Khumayni would often remember this great scholar. He once said, “When it came to (understanding) the deep and lofty meanings of *tawhid*, Qadhi was a mountain.”

Source: **“Karamaat-e Ma'nawī” – “Spiritual Miracles”** p9 & 10. Translated AJ/071205.

1. Interestingly, Ayatullah al-Khui was in Kufa when he passed away.

2. This elderly scholar still leads prayer at the Kamar zarrin mosque in Isfahan, and conducts akhlaq classes at this mosque on Sundays.

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