

# The Marji`iyya of Grand Ayatullah Sheikh Bahjat, his Wisdom and Political Awareness

## [The Marji`iyya](#)

Sheikh Bahjat is regarded as one of the most famous *faqih*s (jurists) in our time. He taught the subjects of Kharij al-Fiqh and *Usul* for more than thirty years, but he, despite all of that, was always avoiding becoming a *marji` taqlid*.

Commenting about the reason why the mentor [finally] accepted to be a *marji`* and how his condition did not change following his acceptance of this responsibility, Sayyid Misbah says, "The house of Ayatullah Bahjat did not change after his acceptance of the *marji`iyya*. Since it was not possible the meetings and visits to be held at his house, these meetings took place at the Fatimiyya Mosque during the *Eid* (feast) days and on commemorative occasions. I think the acceptance of the mentor of the *marji`iyya* responsibility is one of his *karamat*, may Allah safeguard him. In other words, the circumstances of his life and age, which exceeded eighty years, did not require him to shoulder such a responsibility. The individuals who knew him closely could not believe that he would agree to bear the banner of the *marji`iyya* and accept its responsibility. There is no doubt that the acceptance of the Sheikh of this responsibility was only due to his deep feeling that accepting this matter was a specific obligation. We have to say that the conduct of the Sheikh in our time, despite all this piety and asceticism, had driven the argument home against others. One can be a religious authority (*marji`*) and at the same time live with simplicity and without changing the way he dressed himself, ate, resided and undertook his other matters of life."

After the demise of the late Ayatullah Sayyid Ahmad al-Khunsari, the Sheikh started correcting the first and second volumes of the book titled *Dhakirat al-`Ibad* which is now called *Jami` al-Masaail*. He ordered it to be distributed to only a select group from among his students. He also permitted the publication of his scholarly dissertation (the collection of his edicts, *fatawa*) prior to the demise of the able authority, Grand Ayatullah al-Araki.

Finally, when the teachers' university published an explanation introducing seven persons, including Grand Ayatullah Bahjat, with regard to the *marji`iyya*, and after notifying his *marji`iyya* by another number of scholars such as Ayatullah al-Mashkini, Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, etc., and after continuous insistence and persistence, the mentor agreed to get his practical dissertation (his *fatawa*) to be published and distributed in large numbers. But he did not agree to print his name on the book's cover. One of those connected with the Sheikh says the following in this regard, "The Sheikh sent a recommendation to the university of the teachers of the *hawza* (theological seminary) after having become familiar with the fact that this university wanted to know his name as a *marji` taqlid* in which he said, 'I do not accept to mention my name!'"

After the demise of the late Araki and a statement was issued by the university of the teachers of the *hawza*, and after the mentor saw that his name had been printed, he said, 'Do not permit my edicts to be given to anyone'. He was requested to explain what he had meant, so he said, 'Be patient till everyone publishes his edicts. After that, if there is someone who remains without emulating others and wanted to emulate us, it is then that you should print my edicts.' Several months (after this statement), the dissertation of the Sheikh was published by some Lebanese brothers.

## His Political Views

Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin Qadas wrote the following lines about the author: "Sheikh Bahjat, in the *khiraj* chapter, the distribution of prohibitive earnings, and before delving into the chapter about *wilayat al-faqih* and whether this *wilayat* is absolute, or whether it is restricted and limited by some *fiqh* chapters (quoting the gist here), 'We all know that the easy-to-practice Islamic faith is the last religion, and that the Islamic laws and rulings are the last laws and rulings put forth by Allah Almighty for people. No other prophet will come after the Seal of Prophets (P), nor will Allah send any book after the Holy Qur'an, this book has to remain as a book for law till the Judgment Day and the Purified Progeny (as) remains explaining this book. It is obvious the Islamic nation that follows Muhammad (P) during the time of the Infallible Imam (even if the Imam is jailed or exiled) can know its obligations even with a great difficulty through the path of the Infallible Imam (as)!'"

But the talk is about the time period of the great *ghaiba* (occultation) of the Imam of the Time, may Allah hasten his reappearance. There can be no more than three assumptions in this time: The first assumption is the idling of the Book, the rulings and the theological laws. The second assumption is to keep these rulings standing on their own, that is, they themselves become the means for self-sustenance. The third assumption is that these rulings need a manager, a ruler and someone who explains them who is the *waliyy al-amr* or the *mujtahid* who is qualified for this leadership.

As regarding the first assumption, it is false for reasons, rational and textual evidences, due to the Islamic creed, which is easy to practice, being the last and will remain dominant till the Resurrection Day.

As for the second assumption, it, too, is false because the law cannot be carried out and safeguarded

except by one person or persons. So, we have to accept the third assumption and say that *waliyy al-amr* is the one who must safeguard the Islamic community in all its affairs and dimensions.

On the other hand, the Islamic community needs several institutions such as the army, education and culture, justice courts, etc. The hand of the juristic *waliyy*, therefore, has to remain spread out in all moral and financial affairs and the faqih remains explaining and clarifying the rulings of the Shari'a, a guide for people and one who solves their problems. We conclude from this that the juristic *waliyy* must enjoy all the affairs of the Infallible Imam (as) save being the Imam himself so he may be able to implement the legislative code of Islam; otherwise, in the case there are no official governmental institutions, the enemies of Islam will not invite him to implement the codes with ease and convenience. We can also use evidence from the posterity and say that no society, nor any state, can endure when chaos and anarchy prevail; therefore, there has to be a law and a government. It is obvious the government of apostasy and oppression in the Islamic community will eradicate the Islamic creed, and this violates our first assumption in which we said the Islamic creed must endure till Judgment Day via rational and cited evidences. Allah Almighty has said the following in His Book:

***“If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), it will never be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will rank among those who have lost (all spiritual good)” (Qur’an, 3:85).***

Then Sheikh Bahjat tackles, after this introduction, the limitation of the privileges of the *faqih waliyy*.

## Wisdom and Political Awareness

In the beginning, we will present the views of two of the mentor's students in this field:

Sheikh Misbah Yazdi says, “Allah blessed the mentor with unique attributes and self abilities that are not acquired. He enjoys particular brilliance and discretion, has a clear and precise vision in individual, social and political issues, something which wins him one's admiration; so, how can a man who has so deeply delved into the practical and worship issues realize matters as precise as these?”

People who see the Sheikh from a distance as he prays or teaches may think he does not care about political and social issues. But I tell you that the Sheikh encouraged me the most to intervene in political and social issues. He used to admonish his friends and students to care about these issues, and he used to think that the non-interference of the adhering believers would let those who are not qualified take control of them and be in charge of political and social issues, and the Islamic community will then swerve from the straight path. When the Sheikh was teaching us *fiqh* or ethics, he used to emphasize we should not remain distant from the political and social issues.

He always used to admonish us to carry out activities in these fields, especially in the field of cultural work, so much so that he used to dispatch special recommendations to Imam Khomeini about some

political issues, and I and one of the brothers carried one of these recommendations to the Imam once.

Ayatullah al-Mas`udi used to say this: “The enemies of Islam, since the inception of Islam and till our day, have been able to harm Islam as much as they were able to.” He used to sometimes talk about what he used to say to the shah saying, “These folks have destroyed everything; they want to finish Islam.” I remember (in 1963 or 1964), when the imam started his struggle against the shah, how the mentor was asked this question: “Do you not think that Sayyid Khomeini is moving faster than he is asked?” The mentor answered, “Do you not think he is moving at a pace less than what is required of him?!”

It seems what is meant by the slow pace here is the belief of the mentor that the imam had to declare *jihad*. Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin Fiqhi says the following in this regard: “When the imam [Khomeini] was banished to Turkey, Sheikh Bahjat said once during his class, ‘Is there anyone who would kill some traitor leaders in this state?’”

Quite often, individuals affiliated with various political sides used to go to the sheikh and talk about their opposition to some political issues, but the sheikh was not impressed by their statements. Rather, he always treaded the straight path, maintaining his independence and personal norm of conduct. He never defended those with vested interests or the dissidents; rather, as one of the prominent scholars says (and he is one of the top officials in the system of the sacred Islamic Republic and a student of Sheikh Bahjat), “Many prominent men of virtue in the theological seminary enlisted in the political activity and the struggle against the buried Pahlevi regime with encouragement and assertion from the sheikh.”

Yes, the sheikh referring to political issues in his class, his dispatching recommendations to Imam Khomeini, his receiving revolutionaries and *mujahids*, his assistance for them during the days of the Islamic Revolution and holy defense, imam Khomeini and Sayyid Ali Khamenei visiting him at his house and their continuous link with this in-depth *faqih*... indicate the awareness of the sheikh and his interest in political issues.

We must also point out to the releases of the sheikh on the occasion of the elections after his becoming the *marji` taqlid*, may Allah safeguard him. The sheikh explained in these releases the conditions of the voter and the candidate for the post of President of the republic, the Islamic Shura council and the command council of experts. Following is the full text of the two releases which were issued by the office of the sheikh on the occasion of the elections:

## First Call

***In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful.***

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and blessings unto the master of prophets and unto his progeny, the pure, the custodian masters. I have repeatedly been asked about the ruling of attending elections,

and following is the answer to this question:

I will in my answer deal with the negative and positive aspects. Anyone who wants to attend the elections has to remember that those who deserve to be the protectors of the creed of the believers and their lives, their representatives in dealing with their affairs, have to be believing men who enjoy full and sufficient reason and not fear anyone while obeying Allah. They must also be distant completely from bribes, intimidations and the like. They must not look at matters as they were but as they should be and how they should not be, and they must be pious, God-fearing, preferring to please Allah rather than anything else.

But if they lack some of these attributes, they cannot be relied upon and electing them will be false (having no positive effect). Nay! It is not permissible, and anything doubtful must be avoided. The investigation (into the suitability of the individuals) must be full and distant from love and hatred and psychological matters, for Allah witnesses and sees how you fare in the elections and nominations.

As regarding those who are characterized by these merits and their election is permissible, to elect them will be a duty on anyone who is able and capable if it is possible the candidates who lack such attributes would win enough votes. Look at the countries of disbelief how they elect and how they get elected, who the voters are, what ways were there through which they were elected, what views they submitted in their meetings, what deeds their countries do on the basis of their man-made laws and in violation of the laws of reason and creed, even contrarily to the laws of their man-made creeds, for any sound mind realizes the extent of corruption of these matters and how much corruption they can incur.

You must oppose these corrupt deeds, their causes and outcomes the origins of which do not agree with the principles of any genuine creed or any law accepted by reason. May Allah protect you and our own selves from all slips through Muhammad and his pure progeny, peace and blessings of Allah be with them all, and peace be with you, the mercy of Allah and His blessings.

(Signed) the servant of Allah Muhammad Taqi Bahjat.

## **Second Call**

***In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful.***

Praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, peace and blessings with the Master of Prophets, Muhammad, and with his progeny, the masters, the custodians, the purified ones.

In answer to a repeated question about the subject of elections, and while taking into consideration the reminders to which we pointed out last year and which were not relevant to any particular time or place, we pointed out in it at the time the necessary attributes with which the voters and the candidates should be adorned, and this method is the best, the most general, the most complete and the most enduring in pointing out individuals by name, I say the following: It is narrated about Hudhaifah, Allah be pleased

with him, that he said, “They used to ask the Messenger of Allah (P) about goodness, and I used to ask him about evil.”

We must know what evil is and who are the evil ones so we may avoid them, and we must know what goodness is and who are those who act upon it so we may embrace them. The voters and the candidates must work with awareness and caution while applying major things in minor things, whole things in particularities, and they have to prefer the Pleasure of Allah over pleasing others. They must also examine the matter from the religious and righteous wise persons and not stop in the light while continuing their movement in the dark.

They must be fully distant from paying bribes or accepting them, for it is the method of the unbelieving states, and they must not befriend anyone other than the wise religious persons who are familiar with the matters related to the Shari’a, the faithful in their ideology and practice, the God-fearing, the good managers, the courageous ones, the moderates in ideology and in direction, and they must not create problems for the Muslims which cannot be solved with regret.

They must be fully distant from selling the country and from those who sell their country and who are embraced by the states of apostasy. Notice the final ends of those who sell their country. We saw in the past, and we now see, that the states of apostasy have no mercy towards even those who used to serve them. Nothing, hence, remains except regret and the evil outcome for those who follow them. You must know that all shortcomings in existence in the Islamic states originate from the states of apostasy. As regarding the shortcomings of the self, they originate from shortage in belief and shortcoming from applying Islam.

Nobody except the Infallible Ones (as) can say this: “I know” or “I see everything”. Also, nobody can say, “I do not know, nor do I see anything”. Rather, every ordinary worker knows some matters and he has to move and not stop in the way but deduct what is unknown from what is known as much as possible, and he has to take precaution and stop and examine the matters which he does not know till he feels comfortable about them and not regret having done them.

These pursuits are in answer to questions by the faithful which they submitted in this field and to drive the evidence home against them so they may not themselves stay nor cause the other believers to stay.

As regarding the individuals who are undecided, I said to them in the past and I now say again: See which party is closer to the *wilaya* of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (as), which is more firm in its practical belief in Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), which of them is more waiting for him and wants to change the religious issues and which of them does not want it, which one is moderate in its way of thinking, which changes color in belief or in action, which one enjoys piety, truthfulness and trustworthiness, which is more in its attributes like apostasy and hypocrisy and which is distant from that. Finally, they must know which of them is closer to Allah Almighty and to the Seal of Messengers and of the *wasīs*, blessings of Allah be upon them all, and may Allah hasten their ease.

I plead to Allah, the Great, to grant success to the faithful to act upon whatever pleases Him and to avoid whatever He detests in every place and time, and peace be with you, the blessings of Allah and His peace.

(Signed) the most insignificant one, Muhammad Taqi Bahjat

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