

His Scholarly Status and Particular Teaching Method

He has many works some of which are:

1. his commentary on *Al-Kifaya*
2. his commentary on *Al-Nihaya* by Sheikh al-Tusi
3. A dissertation in *Mustamsak al-Saheefa al-Sajjadiyya*
4. *Mustamsak al-Tahdheeb*
5. *Mustamsak Rijal al-Kashi*
6. *Tajrid Rijal al-Nejashi*

He left behind him many perpetual relics, including the grand mosque and its library in the holy city of Qum and the large mosque in the city of Hamburg in Germany.

He passed away on a Thursday, the 13th of the holy month of Shawwal of 1380 at an age exceeding eighty-eight years. His sacred body received an awesome sending away amidst crowds, and he was buried beside the resting place of Lady Fatima, the infallible one, peace be with her.

In this chapter, we will cast a quick look at the scholarly status of Grand Ayatullah Bahjat, his genius and precision, and we will talk about his own method in teaching, then we will talk about his works and students.

Scholarly Status

Ayatullah Bahjat enjoys precision, genius and a lofty scholarly status. His professors, classmates and the most prominent of his students testified to it. Among these testimonials we would like to state the

following interesting anecdote:

Once the mentor objected to one of his students, the late Akhund, when the latter was teaching the requirements of the book *Kifayat* due to his being imprecise in determining these requirements, but he was faced in the next session anger and a great deal of objection from the students prior to the attendance of the professor due to his young age compared to them. As they were thus, the professor entered the class and saw how they were. He, therefore, addressed them saying, "Leave the mentor Bahjat alone and do not pay attention to him." Everyone became silent, and they turned to the professor who said to them, "I reviewed yesterday the reports of the late Akhund and realized that the mentor, Bahjat, was quite right in his objection." He, then, started lauding the brilliance of the mentor, his genius and seriousness.

One of the scholars of al-Najaf al-Ashraf says that the mentor was one of those who asked the most complex questions and was a major critic during the class of the late Kampani. The late Ayatullah Sheikh Murtaḥa al-Haeri says, "Sheikh Bahjat attracted the attention of the professor through his precise theories and important queries, so much so that I remember the class went out of its normalcy once and this continued for several days. As for us, we benefited from these criticisms and queries, but the mentor did not continue to criticize fleeing away from fame. Had he continued, he would have proven that he was not less qualified than the others if not the best among them."

The late *'allama* Muhammad Taqi al-Ja'fari says, "When we were being taught the *makasib* by the late Sheikh Kadhimi al-Shirazi, the mentor, Bahjat, who now is residing in Qum, used to attend his class, too. I very well remember that the late Sheikh Kadhimi al-Shirazi used to listen and often verifies when faced by a confusing question by mentor Bahjat. Since then, Sheikh Bahjat became famous for his distinction and Gnosticism in the city of al-Najaf al-Ashraf."

Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tahrani says the following in his book *Anwar al-Malakut*: "Ayatullah al-Hajj Sheikh Abbas al-Qochani had willed to Sayyid Ali al-Qadi to say that Grand Ayatullah Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Bahjat used to attend the *fiqh* and *Usul* classes of the late Grand Ayatullah al-Hajj Sheikh Muhammad Husayn al-Gharawi al-Isfahani, who is famous as al-Kampani. When he returns to his chamber in the school of the late Sayyid, some students go to him and ask him to explain to them what they could not understand from their lesson. Quite often, they would find him asleep, so they would still ask him even as he was asleep, and he would provide them with a sufficient and satisfactory answer. When he would wake up and they would talk with him about what they had asked him and his answers, he would say he had no idea at all about the whole thing."

Ayatullah al-Mashkini says, "The sheikh whose biography is discussed occupies a prominent status among the *faqih*s of the Shiites from the scholarly standpoint (with regard to *fiqh* and *Usul*). Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin Amjad sayd, "The scholarly status of the mentor is very lofty. He is a great jurist, and I think the *mujtahids* have to sit in his class to learn the particulars of the sciences and what is interesting about them. In fact, the *Kharij* researches have to be taught by men of virtue such as Ayatullah Bahjat,

rather than individuals who contend themselves with just relaying statements."

Scholars Urge Students to Attend his Classes

Sheikh Misbah Yazdi says, "The moral and spiritual attractiveness of the mentor was the main reason which attracted me to his class in the beginning. But I realized, as time went by, that the mentor was distinguished by a prominent scholarly and juristic status; therefore, I tried to attend one of his classes so the class may be a medium to benefit from his knowledge and means to benefit from his perfections and moral accomplishments. I, therefore, started studying the book of *tahara* (the cleansing methods) in his presence.

In the beginning, I used to attend the class with some of my brethren in the chamber in the Faydi School. One year later, we moved to one of the chambers of the Khan School (the school of the late Ayatullah Burujardi), and we used to study in that chamber for one or almost two years. After that we used to go to his house to benefit from his lecture because of his weakness. I finished a course in *tahara* in his presence then I learned a course in *makasib* (profit means) and options, and these researches exhausted more than fifteen years. We used to attain pursuits in his presence which were not submitted in many classes."

The mentor professor Mutahhari used to often advise us to attend the classes of Ayatullah Bahjat saying, "You must attend his classes, especially the *Usul* class, because the mentor was one of the students of the late Muhammad Husayn al-Isfahani al-Kampani."

Professor Khosro-Hahi says, "I used to attend the 'kharij al-khayarat' class in fiqh taught by the late Grand Ayatullah Sheikh Murtaḥḥa al-Haeri, but his health deteriorated during the last days of his holy life; therefore, most of his classes were suspended because he could not continue them. One day I found him getting out of the sacred precincts of Lady Fatima the Infallible, peace be with her, so I went to him, greeted him then said, 'Are you going to continue the class, professor?' He said, 'No.' Then he added saying, 'You are an ambitious young man, and I wish to teach you this criterion in choosing the suitable professor.' He went on to say, 'I advise you to attend the classes of professors who do not contend themselves with just relaying statements. Rather, you ought to attend classes of one who helps the student transform the *ijtihad* ability from the strength phase to the phase of action.' I said to him, 'Whose classes do you suggest I should attend.' He said, 'Excuse me from having to answer this question.' I said to him, 'I am now attending the class of Grand Ayatullah Bahjat.' It is then that indications of pleasure appeared on his face, and he said with a smile, 'The class of Ayatullah Bahjat, as far as precision and context are concerned, meets this criterion. You must continue attending, for it is a useful class and constructive from the scholarly as well as the ethically standpoint.'"

Mentor's Teaching Method

Sheikh Misbah says the following about the mentor's teaching method: "The mentor used to try to submit a query in the beginning from the book by Sheikh Ansari, then he would transmit what he sees as important from among the views of others, especially the author *Al-Jawahir* and the late Hajj Riḍā al-Hamadani. After that, he would start explaining his own viewpoint if he had an opinion about that query.

"On one hand, this method helped the student to be familiar with the views of senior professors. On the other, it would save them a lot of time. Of course there is another teaching method which some professors may adopt. In it, the professor submits each query independently, stating the viewpoint of each professor about it. This method may be more useful for the beginner student, but it takes a lot of his time due to the repetition of pursuits and views in its regard.

"Through our review of classes by the mentor, we were able to earn many pursuits, important and minute points, most of which the mentor had orally obtained from his great professors."

Ayatullah al-Mas`udi, who attended classes by Ayatullah Bahjat for many years, becoming acquainted with the teaching method of his professor, says, "Mentor Bahjat has his own teaching method. What is common among the scholars and religious authorities is that they submit a query in the Kharij topic and transmit the viewpoints of others in its regard. Then they reject some of these views and support the others. In the conclusion, they accept one of these viewpoints or adopt another.

But the sheikh did not follow this method. Rather, he would first submit a query then explain the sequence of deriving the conclusion for that query. If the student is familiar with the views of the scholars, acquainted with their theories, before attending the class, he will know the person who adopts the viewpoint submitted by the professor in his class, and he will also realize that the professor critiques any viewpoints and supports any of them. So, one who wants to attend the classes of the mentor is supposed to review the scholarly principles and should familiarize himself with the viewpoints of others prior to attending the classes."

Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn al-Ahmadi, the Yazdi *faqih*, says the following about the professor's teaching method: "When the professor starts submitting some queries or sub-queries, he compares the topic of the research with the other alike researches, taking into consideration the particulars of the tradition, narrative or sacred verse which leads to the topic.

The professor does so with particular rational and intellectual mentality, then he earns the result in the research which is often a new scholarly outcome. In fact, the pursuits submitted result from the greatness of his intellect and the soundness of his view which he earned from Islam and from the Imams, peace be with them, and this is the correct meaning of *ijtihad*."

Exhortation in Class

Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin, the FRid'ay imam in the city of Kalajay, who attended classes of Ayatullah Bahjat for many years, says, "It was customary for Ayatullah Bahjat to admonish the students for almost ten minutes before starting the class. The admonishment itself was not his goal; rather, he wanted to remind us of the conditions of the past scholars. It was obvious the goal of the attendance by Sheikh Misbah of the classes of *Kharij al-Fiqh* presented by the mentor for more than fifteen years was to benefit from the morale of the mentor and his angelic spirit in addition to the scholarly benefit from the pursuits submitted by the mentor in his class."

Sheikh Misbah says the following in this regard: "Quite often, Ayatullah Bahjat would transmit to us a story or tradition which stirred our amazement, for we did not realize his insistence on explaining some obvious matters. One of the matters which he insisted on tackling prior to starting his class is the issue of the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful (as). We used to be stunned about this matter, not comprehending its philosophy and wonder with ourselves: Does any of us doubt the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful (as) so the mentor should make a reference to the evidences regarding his Imamate?!

Is it not better that he submits to us other ethical and moral pursuits so we may benefit from them? But after we were fifty or sixty of age, we realized the benefit of those pursuits which he was dictating to us more than forty years ago. It is as though he knew that there were matters which will be doubted or bypassed in the future. Had it not been for taking a special interest in these topics, we would not have had the sufficient catalyst to review these matters. I benefit even nowadays from my own works relevant to the doctrinal issues or to other issues relevant to the queries which the mentor used to dictate to us more than forty years ago."

Mentor's Works

The Sheikh (mentor) wrote many books in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *Usul* (basic principles), but he did not publish most of them, so much so that he did not sometimes allow some people to publish these books at their own personal expenses without benefiting from the ways derived from the Shari'a which make such publication possible [a reference to the *khums* tax some of which goes to the promotion of the creed via the publication of quality Islamic literature]. He used to refuse their request saying, 'The books of many great scholars have not yet been published. You, therefore, must publish their books. As for these, their turn is yet to come to be published.'

As regarding the list of his works some of which were published through the insistence and follow-up of his students, they include:

Published Works

1. A dissertation in explaining queries (in Arabic and Persian),
2. Rituals of the pilgrimage. Some men of virtue wrote both these books based on the verdicts of Sheikh Bahjat and were published after earning his support, may Allah safeguard him,
3. *Waseelat al-Najat* (salvation method). This book contains the mentor's jurisdic views in most chapters of jurisprudence listed in *Waseelat al-Najat* by Abul-Hasan al-Isfahani the first volume of which was published after obtaining the support of the mentor,
4. *Jaami` al-Masaail* (collection of queries). This book contains a group of commentaries by the mentor about the book titled *Dhakheerat al-Ibaad* by the late Ayatullah al-Gharawi al-Isfahani who is known as al-Kampani. It also contains the rest of that book to the end of *fiqh*. This book was first published with bad typesetting and in few copies, and it was distributed to his students and close friends. Then the first volume of it was published and was given the title *Jaami` al-Masaail* due to the abundance of branches of *fiqh* added to the original book and to their inclusion, and this book is supposed to be published in five volumes.

Author's Ready-to-print Works

1. The first volume of the book on prayers. The mentor presented in this book in his own way his new views, organizing the chapters and researches according to the order in existence in the book titled *Jawahir al-Kalaam*,
2. The first volume of the collection of the science of *Usul*. This book was written according to the order employed in the book titled *Kifayat al-Usul* and was reviewed by the professor several times. This book contains the new views of the mentor about many researches of the science of *Usul*,
3. his commentaries on the *Manaasik* [rites] book by Sheikh al-Ansari. This book contains the views of the mentor about the pilgrimage rites,

Works yet to be Published

1. the remaining volumes of the group on the science of *Usul*,
2. his commentary on the *Makaasib* of Sheikh al-Ansari. The mentor commented in this book about this work by al-Ansari from the beginning to the end, then he submitted the researches which were not stated in it on the basis of the text of the book titled *Sharaai` al-Islam*. The mentor also submits in this group his new viewpoints in the juristic researches,
3. the collection of *Kitaab al-Tahara* (book on cleansing). The sheikh submits in this book his ideas in an

innovative way and in brief according to the order of the topics in the book titled *Jawahir al-Kalam*,

4. the remaining volumes of the collection on *Kitab al-Salat* (the book on prayers).

The mentor also collaborated with the late al-Hajj Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi in writing the book titled *Safeenat al-Bihar*. A large portion of this book was written by the hand of Ayatullah mentor Bahjat.

His Students

Although the mentor was teaching at his house in order to shun fame, many students benefited and are still benefiting from his company, and many of them earned the degree of *ijtihād*.

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