

In Egypt

I stayed in Tripoli, the Libyan Capital, long enough to obtain an entry visa from the Egyptian Embassy to enter the land of Kinana i.e. Egypt. I met a few friends who helped me in this matter, so may Allah reward them for their effort. The road to Cairo is a long one, it took us three days and nights, during which I shared a taxi with four other Egyptians working in Libya who were on their way home.

Throughout the journey I chatted too them and read the Qur'an for them, so they liked me and asked me to be their guest in Egypt. I chose one of them, Ahmed. I felt very fond of him for he was a pious man and he gave me the highest level of hospitality. I stayed in Cairo twenty days during which I visited the singer Farid al-Atrash in his flat overlooking the Nile. I liked him for what I had read about his modesty in the Egyptian press, but I only managed to meet him for twenty minutes because he was on his way to fly to Lebanon.

I visited Shaykh Abdul Basit Muhammad Abdul Samad, the famous reciter of the Qur'an, whose voice I liked very much. I stayed with him for three days, and during that time I discussed with his friends and relatives many issues and they liked me for my enthusiasm, frankness and knowledge. If they talked about art, I sang; and if they spoke about asceticism and Sufism, I told them that I followed the Tijani order as well as the Medani; and if they spoke about the West I told them about Paris, London, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Spain which I visited during the summer holidays; and if they spoke about the pilgrimage, I told them that I had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and that I was on my way to perform the Umrah.

I told them about places which were not known to people who had been on pilgrimage seven times such as the caves of Hira and Thawr and the Altar of Ismail. If they spoke about sciences and technology I gave them all the figures and the scientific names; and if they spoke about politics, I told them my views saying, "May Allah bless the soul of al-Nasir Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi who deprived himself from smiling, and when some of his closest friends criticized him by saying: "The great Prophet (s.a.w.) was often seen smiling," he answered: "How do you want me to smile when the al-Aqsa Mosque is occupied by the enemies of Allah. Nay, by the name of Allah I will never smile until I liberate it or die."

Some of al-Azhar's Shaykhs used to come to these meetings and liked what I recited from the Qur'anic

verses and the sayings of the Great Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), besides they were impressed by my strong arguments and asked me from which university I had graduated. I used to answer them proudly that I graduated from al-Zaituna University which was established before al-Azhar, and added, that the Fatimids – who established al-Azhar – started from the town of al-Mahdiah in Tunis.

I met many learned people in al-Azhar, and some of them presented me with a few books.

One day while I was at the office of an official responsible for the al-Azhar affairs, a member of the Egyptian Revolutionary Command Council came to attend a mass meeting for the Muslim and Coptic Communities in one of the biggest Railway Companies in Cairo. The mass meeting was held in protest against Sabotage activities in the aftermath of the June war. The member of the Command Council insisted on my accompanying him to the meeting, so I accepted the invitation, and sat on the VIP rostrum between father Shnoodah and the Azhari Shaykh. I was also asked to address the meeting, which I did with ease due to my experience in giving lectures in Mosques and Cultural Committees in Tunis.

The main point which I have mentioned in this chapter is that I started feeling big and somehow over confident, and I thought I had actually become learned. Why should I not feel so when there were a number of Ulama from al-Azhar who attested for me, some of them even told me that my place was there, i.e. at al-Azhar. What really made me proud of myself was the fact that I was allowed to see some of the Great Prophet's (s.a.w.) relics.

An official from Sidi al-Husayn Mosque in Cairo took me to a room which could only be opened by himself. After we entered he locked it behind us, then he opened a chest and got the Great Prophet's (s.a.w.) shirt and showed it to me. I kissed the shirt, then he showed me other relics which belonged to the Prophet (s.a.w.), and when I came out of the room I cried and was touched by that personal gesture, especially when the official did not request any money from me, in fact he refused to take it when I offered it to him. In the end, and only after my insistence, he took a small amount and then he congratulated me for being one of those who have been honored by the grace of the Great Prophet (s.a.w.).

Perhaps that visit left a deep impression on me, and I thought for a few nights about what the Wahabis say regarding the Great Prophet (s.a.w.), and how he died and passed away like any other dead person.

I did not like that idea and became convinced of its falsity, for if the Martyr who gets killed fighting in the name of Allah is not dead but alive (by his God), then how about the master of the first and last. My feelings became clearer and stronger due to my early encounters with the teachings of the Sufis who give their Shaykhs and Saints full power to see to their affairs. They believe that only Allah could give them this power because they obeyed Him and accepted willingly what He offered them. Did He not state in the sacred saying: "My servant ... Obey me, then you will be like me, you order the thing to be, and it will be."

The struggle within me started to have its effect on me. By then I had come to the end of my stay in Egypt, but not before visiting, in the last few days, a number of mosques and I prayed in all of them. I visited the mosques of Malik, Abu Hanifah, al-Shafii, Ahmed ibn Hanbal, al-Sayyidah Zaynab and Sidi al-Husayn; I also visited the Zawiah of al-Tijani Sufi order, and I have many stories about the visits, some of them are long, but I prefer to be brief.

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