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# Occupation

Tailoring is one of the praiseworthy professions in Islam. "Luqman the Sage" had chosen this as his occupation1. It is quoted from the Holy Prophet (s) who said:

عمل الابرار من الرجال الخياطة، وعمل الأبرار من النساء الغزل

"The job of the righteous men is tailoring and the job of the pious women is spinning."2

The reverend Shaykh had chosen this job as a means of livelihood. Hence, he was known as Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat (the tailor). Interestingly, his simple small house, as described before, was his tailoring workshop, too.

In this respect one of his children says: 'At first, my father had a room in a Caravanserai, where he pursued his tailoring profession. One day the landlord came to him and asked him to leave the place. The next day and without any arguing or demanding any due rights, my father packed up his sewing machine and sewing table, brought them home, and gave the room back to the landlord. Ever since, he worked at home in a room near the entrance as his tailoring workshop.

## Perseverance in his Work

The reverend Shaykh was extremely serious and persevering in his work. He worked hard to the last days of his life to earn his living through his own endeavors. Although his devotees were whole-heartedly ready to provide for his simple livelihood, he would never accept.

The Holy Prophet (s) said in a *Hadith:*

من أكل من كد يده، كان يوم القيامة في عداد الأنبياء ويأخذ ثواب الأنبياء

"Whoever earns one's own living, they will be ranked among the Prophets and rewarded as Prophets."3

And in another *hadith,* he said:

العبادة عشر أجزاءٍ تسعة أجزاء في طلب الحلال

"

Divine worship has ten parts, nine of which comprises earning lawful daily sustenance."[4]

One of Shaykh's friends says: I never forget the day I saw the reverend Shaykh in the market who was pale in the countenance out of fatigue. He was going home carrying some tailoring tools and material that he had bought. I told him: 'Agha have some rest, you are not feeling well.' He replied:

"What should I do with the wife and the children then?!"

The Holy Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

ان الله تعالى يحب أن يرى عبده تعباً في طلب الحلال

"God likes to see his servant tired out in the way of earning his lawful sustenance." [5]

ملعون ملعون من ضيع من يعول

"Cursed is the one, cursed is the one who does not provide for his family's sustenance."[6]

## Equity in Receiving Wages

The Shaykh received very equitable wages for sewing clothes. He used to get wages for exactly the amount of stitching he had done and just for as much time as he had spent working on the clothes. By no means he would accept to be paid more than what he had worked for. Thus, if someone would say: 'Reverend Shaykh! Let me pay a higher wage.' He would reject.

The reverend Shaykh charged his customers on the basis of *ij'ara* (contract on hire and lease) according to Islamic law.[7] But since he never tended to receive more than what he had worked for the customers, in case after finishing the work if he found that he had done less work than predicted, he would give back the money that he thought was extra to his real wages! One of the Ulama said: 'I took some cloth to the Shaykh to make a robe, a cloak, and a quilted cloak. I asked him how much I should pay.' "It needs two days work, so the wage will be forty *tomans."* He said.

A couple of days later when I went for the clothes, he said: "The wage is only twenty tomans."

I inquired: 'You said forty *tomans?'* He replied: "First I thought they needed two days work, but it just took

one day to complete!"

Someone else also said: 'I took some cloth to him to make a pair of trousers. I asked him how much it will come to. He said: 'Ten tomans.' I paid him right away. When some time later I went to pick up the trousers, he placed a *two-toman* note on it and said: "The fee came to eight *tomans."*

The Shaykh's son said: 'Once he settled with a customer to make a robe for 35 Rials. Some days later the customer came for the robe. No sooner had he walked away with the robe than my father ran after him and gave him five Rials back, saying: "I thought it would take me longer time to make this robe, but it did not!"

## A Reward for Equity

Equity in all tasks, especially in transactions is an important issue that has been highly stressed in Islam. Imam Ali (a) said:

الإنصاف أفضل الفضائل

"Equity is the best of virtues."8

And he further said.

ان أعظم المثوبة مثوبة الأنصاف

"The greatest reward is one granted for equity:' 9

Just to know how equity in transoctions is effective in self-building, and that God's favor with the reverend Shaykh is not exaggerated on, it will be worthwhile to deliberate on the following account:

## Equity Toward People and Meeting with Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj)

A man of knowledge was longing for meeting with Hazrat Baqiyyat Allah Imam Mahdi (aj), and he suffered agonies of not being granted the chance and for a long time he underwent severe austerity and pursued spiritual seeking.

It is well-known among the *tullab* (Islamic seminary students) of *Hawza* in Najaf-i Ashraf and the scholars of the holy shrine of Imam Ali (a) that every one who finds the honor to go the Masjid-i Sahla to perform the evening and night prayers every Tuesday uninterruptedly for forty nights, they will be graced with meeting the Imam al-'Asr (aj) For a while, he struggled to this end but to no effect. Then he resorted to the occult sciences and numerical symbolism and started self-discipline and other ascetic and

rigorous practices in seclusion, anxiously seeking to meet the Hidden Imam (aj) but all in vain. However, as a consequence of his nightly vigilance and lamenting and wailing at dawns, he had developed some kind of insight and intuition, and occasionally some illuminating flash would be graced on him. He would fall in ecstasy and rapture, often having certain visions and hearing some subtleties.

In one of these mystical states, he was told: "Your seeing and being granted an audience with Imam al-'Asr (aj) will not be possible, unless you make a trip to such and such a city. Quite difficult as it sounded at first, but for that sacred purpose, it appeared to be so convenient.

## Imam al- 'Asr (aj) in the Blacksmiths' Bazaar

After several days the above-mentioned man arrived in that city and yet even there he carried on his self-discipline and ascetic practices in seclusion that intended to last forty days long. On the thirty seventh day, he was told: "Right now Hazrat Baqiyyat Allah, Imam al-'Asr (aj) is in the blacksmiths' bazaar, in a shop belonging to an old locksmith; so, be quick to go now and seek his audience.

He stood up and, as he had already seen in his ecstatic vision, rushed the way down to the old man's shop where he saw the Holy Imam (aj) sitting there and talking amiably with the locksmith. When he greeted, the holy Imam responded and beckoned to keep silent, (implying) watching for a wonderful scene.

## The Equity of the Old Locksmith

At this moment I saw a bent, fragile, old woman with a walking stick who showed us a lock with her shaking hand and said: "Will you, for God's sake, buy this lock from me for "three *shahis*"[10] I need three *shahis?*

The old locksmith took a look at the lock and found it intact, and then said: "My sister! This lock costs "Two *abbasis*"[11] because its key will cost no more than "ten *dinars"*[12]; so if you give me ten *dinars,* I will make a key to this lock and then it will cost ten *shahis."*

The old woman answered: "No, I do not need that, I only need the money; if you buy this lock from me for three *shahis,* I will pray for you."

The old man said with utmost naivety: "My sister! You are a Muslim, and I too claim to be a Muslim. So why should I buy a Muslim's property for a low price and deny someone's right? This lock already costs eight *shahis;* if I want to benefit from it, I'll buy it for seven *shahis,* for it is unfair to make more that a *shahi* profit in a deal of only two *abbasis.* If you are sure you want to sell it, I'll buy it for seven *shahis,* and I repeat again, the real price is two *abbasis.* Since I am a businessman I buy it for one *shahi* less.

The old woman perhaps would not believe what the man said. She was upset and complained that nobody had been willing to buy that price. She said she begged them to buy it for three *shahis,* because

ten dinars would not have sufficed her. The old man paid seven *shahis* to the old woman and purchased it from her.

## I will Visit him!

When the woman turned back to leave, the Imam (aj) said to me:

"My Dear! Did you watch the wonderful scene? You do likewise too, and become like that, then I will come to see you. There is no need for ascetic seclusion and resorting to *Jafr* (numerical symbolism). Self-discipline and various travels will not be required; instead show good action and be a Muslim so that I can interact with you. Of all people of this city, I picked out this old man, since this man is religious and knows God. And you observed the trial he went through: This old woman requested all in the bazaar, to fulfill her need and since they found her desperate and needy, they were all seeking to buy (her lock) cheap; and nobody bought it even for three *shahis.* This old man, however, bought it for its real price, i. e., seven *shahis.* Thus, every week I pay a visit to him and show kindness and amiability to him."13

1. Rabi' al-Abrar, II : 535.
2. Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1628 : 5478.
3. Ibid., V, 2058: 7209.
4. Ibid., V, 2060: 7223.
5. Mizan al-Hikmah, V, 2060: 7218.
6. Ibid., V, 2058: 7202.
7. See Mizan al-Hikmah, 1, 40: 16.
8. Ibid. XIII, 6306: 20191.
9. Ibid. XIII, 63O6 20l94.
10. A shahi equals around a penny.
11. An abbasi equals four shahis
12. A dinar equals one-fifth of a shahi
13. "Sarmaye Sokhan" (The capital of speech), I, 611-613, slightly abridged.

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