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Question 20: During ziyarah, why do the Shi'ah kiss the doors and walls of the shrines of awliya' and seek blessings {tabarruk} whereby?

Reply: Seeking blessings {*tabarruk*} through the remnants (and symbols) of the saints {*awliya'*} of God is not a new phenomenon among Muslims; rather, this behavior can be traced back to the Prophet's life account and to the life of his Companions.

Not only the Holy Prophet (S) and his Companions did this act but also past prophets (*'a*) used to do it. Below are the proofs provided by the Qur'an and *Sunnah* concerning the legitimacy of seeking blessings through the remnants (and symbols) of the *awliya'*.

1. In the Holy Qur'an we read that when Yusuf (Joseph) the Truthful (*'a*) introduced himself to his brothers and forgave them, he said:

"اذهبوا بقميصي هذا فألقوه على وجه أبي يأتي بصيراً."

"Take this shirt of mine, and cast it upon my father's face; he will regain his sight."[1]

Then, the Qur'an recounts:

"فلما أن جاء البشير ألقه على وجهه فارتدّ بصيراً."

"When the bearer of good news arrived, he cast it on his face, and he regained his sight."[2]

The expressive content of these Qur'anic words proves clearly how a prophet of God (Hadrat Ya'qub (*'a*)) seeks blessings through the shirt of another prophet (Hadrat Yusuf (*'a*)). Furthermore, it indicates

that the said shirt caused Hadrat Ya'qub (*'a*) to regain his sight.

Now, can we say that this act of the two holy prophets (*'a*) is not within the ambit of monotheism and worship of God?!

2. No one doubts that while circumambulating the House of God {*tawaf*}, the Holy Prophet of Islam (S) used to touch or kiss the Black Stone {*Hajar al-Aswad*}.
Bukhari in his *Sahih* says:

"رأيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وأله وسلم يستلمه ويقبّله."

"I saw the Messenger of Allah (S) touch and kiss it (*Hajar al-Aswad*)."[3]
So, if touching or kissing a stone was an act of associating partner with God, how would the Prophet who called for monotheism do it?

3. In the *Sahih*s, *Musnad*s and books of history and traditions, there are plentiful *hadith*s regarding the Prophet's Companions' seeking blessings through the Prophet's (S) belongings such as garment, water of *wudu'* {ablution}, water vessel, etc. These *hadith*s remove any doubt about the legitimacy and wholesomeness of this practice.

We cannot cite all the *hadith*s related to this issue in this volume, and we shall mention only some of them:

a. In his *Sahih*, Bukhari narrates a long tradition which contains a description of some of the features of the Prophet (S) and his Companions, and says:

"وإذا كادوا توضأ يقتتلون على وضوئه."

"When he (Prophet) performed *wudu'*, they (Muslims) would seemingly fight with one another (in order to get some of the water the Prophet (S) used in *wudu'*)."[4]

b. Ibn Hajar says:

"إن النبيّ صلى الله عليه وأله وسلم كان يؤتي بالصبيان فيبرك عليهم."

"They brought children to the Prophet (S) and he blessed them."[5]

c. Muhammad Tahir al-Makki says:
"Umm Thabit is reported to have said: 'Once the Messenger of Allah (S) called on me and while standing drank water from the mouth of a waterskin, which was suspended. So I rose up and cut off the

mouth of the waterskin'."

He then adds:
"Tirmidhi narrates this *hadith*, too and says: 'It is an authentic {*sahih*} and sound {*hasan*} *hadith*', and the commentator of this *hadith* says in the book, *Riyad as-Salihin*: 'Umm Thabit cut off the mouth of the waterskin so as to keep for herself the place of the Prophet's mouth whereby she sought blessing {*tabarruk*}. Similarly, the Companions would drink water from where the Prophet used to drink'."[6]

"كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وأله وسلم إذا صلى الغداة جاء خدم المدينة بأنيتهم فيها الماء فما يؤتي بإناء إلا غمس يده فيه فربما جاؤوه في الغداة الباردة فيغمس يده فيها."

"The servants of Medina used to go to the Messenger of Allah (S) after morning {*subh*} prayer with vessels full of water and he would place his hand into each vessel. Sometimes they would go to him in cold mornings and he would place his hand into them (vessels)."[7]

This shows clearly that seeking blessings through the belongings of *awliya'* of God is not a problem. It also shows that those who accuse the Shi'ah of polytheism and associating partners with Allah on account of this practice have no clear idea of the meaning of monotheism {*tawhid*}.

Polytheism or worshipping other than Allah means to have one of the creatures as a god along with Allah or to attribute to that creature some divine acts by considering him as independent and needless of God in the essence of creation or power. This is while the Shi'ah regard the belongings of *awliya'* of God, just like theirs owners, as things that are made by God and these things are in need of Him both in the essence of existence and in power.

The Shi'ah seek blessings through these symbols only to show respect to their leaders and forerunners of the religion of God and to express their sincere love for them.

When the Shi'ah kiss part of the shrine or its doors or walls during their visitation to the holy shrine of the Prophet (S) and his *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*), it is only because they love the Holy Prophet (S) and his progeny, and this is an issue of human emotion, which manifests itself in the person in love. A sweet-tongued man of letter says:

"أمر على الديار ديار سلمى أقبل ذا الجدار و ذا الجدار و ما حب الديار شغفن قلبي ولكن حب من سكن الديار."

By Layla's residence I pass; I kiss this wall and that wall.
It is not the love of residence that gladdens my heart; rather, the love of its dweller.

1. Surah Yusuf 12:93.
2. Surah Yusuf 12:96.
3. Sahih al-Bukhari (Egypt), vol. 2, "Kitab al-Hajj," "Bab Taqbil al-Hajar," pp. 151-152.

4. Sahih al-Bukhari (Egypt), vol. 3, “Kitab ma Yajuz min ash-Shurut fi’l-Islam,” “Bab ash-Shurut fi’l-Jihad wa’l-Masalahah,” p. 195.

5. Al-Isabah (Egypt), vol. 1, “Khutbah al-Kitab,” p. 7.

6. Muhammad Tahir al-Makki, Tabarruk as-Sahabah, trans. Ansari, chap. 1, p. 29.

7. Sahih Muslim, vol. 7, “Kitab al-Fada’il,” “Bab Qurb an-Nabi (S) min an-Nas wa Tabarrukihim bihi,” p. 79. For more information, refer to the following references:

Sahih al-Bukhari, “Kitab al-Ashribah”;

Malik, Al-Muwatta’, vol. 1, the section on invoking blessings to the Prophet (S), p. 138;

Asad al-Ghabah, vol. 5, p. 90;

Musnab Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 4, p. 32;

Al-Isti‘ab, vol. 3, at the margin of “al-Isabah,” p. 631;

Fath al-Bari, vol. 1, pp. 281-282.

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