

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

<u>Home</u> > <u>Uswat Al-Aarifeen: A Look at the Life of Ayatullah Bahjat</u> > <u>Ethical and Gnostic Characteristics</u> of Grand Ayatullah Bahjat > 15. Indirect Cultivation

## Ethical and Gnostic Characteristics of Grand Ayatullah Bahjat

#### 1. His Piety and God-Fearing

We have already stated that the mentor made an effort to cultivate himself since his very young age. He was and still is affording the attainment of knowledge and purifying the soul a great deal of attention. He always insisted on continuous effort and inclusive conduct to strengthen man's moral building which enables him to continue the struggle and to achieve victory over immoralities and helps him in his "supreme *jihad*" against his own desires and inclinations.

He always believed in the need to always uphold knowledge and good manners, warning against the perils of abandoning them, believing the loss that can result from the uncultivated scholar and the science that is not purified is much, much greater than any other loss. The mentor is a sincere man, an eager one who always is keen to straightforwardness in all moments of his life along the path of Allah.

He endeavored to always be in contact with Allah, the most Praised One, the most Exalted. He looks upon everything and everyone through divine and godly eyes. One of the senior *mujtahids* says the following in this regard: "It is not right to say that the sheikh was only a pious man; rather, he was piety itself." Ayatullah Sheikh Jawad al–Karbalaai says, "One of the Sayyids who love the mentor and who are familiar with his condition told me that the mentor used to spend most of his time every night contemplating on the currents of the Gnostic branches of knowledge.

He never wasted his time, nor did he ever attend a gathering for fun. He always took precaution against idle talk. Whenever he went to the class or to visit the Commander of the Faithful, peace be with him, he used to place his mantle over his head and not turn to anybody as he was walking. He is a man who keeps secrets especially about explaining his Gnostic conditions. He was secretive in showing the particular divine niceties which Allah Almighty bestowed upon him."

#### 2. His Asceticism and Simplicity of Lifestyle

The friends of Allah do not look at the worldly appearances as ordinary people look at them. Rather, they look at the reality of life. They do not busy themselves except with securing their true future, always distancing themselves from the shackles of greed, living in the pure environment of content and humbleness. For this reason, they earn a soul from which the fragrance of spirituality and purity emanates. Ordinary people live in the darkness of ignorance, heedlessness and affluence. They indulge in ambitions and desires.

Mentor Ayatullah Bahjat is regarded as one of the righteous friends of Allah. He is an ascetic and Gnostic who always lived with humbleness, asceticism and renunciation of the world. He is one of the most outstanding ascetics in our time, for he realized the truth about the world and its implications and was attracted in all his existence towards the spiritual world. Materialism did not taint him; rather, he was liberated from all its shackles.

He did not only distance himself from the world and its appearances physically but made along this path broad practical strides in various fields of his daily life. His simple life, his residence at a small old house in the holy city of Qum, his lack of response to the demands of the scholars and ordinary people who continuously demanded him to change his residence are good evidences about his asceticism, humbleness and the greatness of his soul.

Sheikh Misbah Yazdi, pointing out to his asceticism and humbleness, says, "Ayatullah Bahjat had rented a house in the vicinity of the Hujjatiyya School, then he rented a small house in the beginning of Chahar Mardan Street, and that house did not have more than two rooms. He used to place a curtain in the middle of the room where we assembled while his family lived behind it as we were attending the class on the other side. It is a very simple life distant from affectation and luxury and full of light and spirituality. Till our day, the mentor does not own a house big enough for a large number of visitors. There are no more than two or three small rooms in his house furnished with their floor covered with the same covering which he placed more than forty years ago. He did not change his house after he had become a *mariji*` although it cannot accommodate the visitors and those who used to see him frequently and whose number was daily on the rise; therefore, the mentor used to sit during the feast or commemoration occasions at the Fatimiyya Mosque to receive people."

Ayatullah Mas'udi says, "Many people offered the mentor to buy him a house but he always rejected such offers. I said to him many times, 'Master! This house is old and not fit for living, and it may not be permissible to live in it from the Shari'a standpoint,' but he never listened to such talk nor give it any significance."

#### 3. His Adoration

Adoration and upholding rituals are regarded as a major element in one's success and perfection. The mentor had made long strides in this field that would place him to be a role model for others. The relationship and strong connection of Ayatullah Bahjat with his Lord, his continuous remembrance of Him, his diligence in performing optional rites and his amazing *tajahhud* all were amazing and noteworthy.

As regarding the congregational prayer which the mentor used to uphold, it was one of the most wonderful, the best and the most sincere of prayers held in Islamic Iran. In this service; virtuous scholars, pious students, brave *mujahids* and all other types of people. This service is adorned with complete spirituality, so much so that sometimes, especially during the eves preceding FRid'ay, there is a combination in it of the moaning of the mentor, the weeping of those praying, thus the souls ascend, the eyes weep and the hearts are polished.

Undoubtedly, there is no spiritual or angelic place such as this in any other congregational prayer service in our time. It is no wonder that the mosque used to be over–crowded with the faithful and the place too small most of the times, forcing many of them, including those who used to go there from distant places to earn the blessing of this service, to leave the mosque even before the service started. This prayer service has been the hope of Allah's servants. It used to be attended by Ayatullah Tabatabai, and Ayatullah Bahaa al–Dayni used to pay it his own special attention.

In this regard, Ayatullah Muhammad Hasan al-Ahmadi, the *faqih* of Yazd, transmits to us an interesting incident as follows:

"Ayatullah Bahaa al-Dayni used to hold the congregational prayer service before Ayatullah Bahjat during the nights of the month of Ramadan. One day, he wanted to send one of his relatives somewhere for an errand, but the man refused to go there saying, 'If I go, I will be deprived of the prayer service and of following your lead.' Ayatullah Bahaa al-Dayni said to him, 'Go and take care of this errand for me then perform the prayer following the lead of Ayatullah Bahjat after eating your *iftar*."

Sheikh Misbah, commenting about the congregational prayer service held by the mentor and its precedents, says, "Ayatullah Bahjat used to follow a special program forty years ago. He used to take a walk before sunset to the Safaii Quarter which was then an agricultural area and having no construction in it. He would cross some farms then sit and perform the sunset and evening prayers in that place. Some brethren used to attend that prayer service, too."

One of those brethren says, "One night, Ayatullah Bahjat talked after the prayher service saying, 'Had the rulers of the world known the pleasure felt by one during his act of adoration, they would have abandoned their authority."

After the mentor had bought his house where he now lives, most brethren used to go to this house to perform the prayers because it is closer to them than the previous place. Then the mentor was called to the Fatimiyya Mosque, and that mosque became the place of meeting of all those who wished to perform the prayer service with him being the imam. More than forty years had passed since this prayer service was being performed three times a day in this mosque. The mentor, during the last days, moved the place where he held his class from home to this mosque where special feast and commemoration services were also held.

Ayatullah mentor Jawad al-Karbalaai, describing the *tahajjud* of the mentor and his weeping during the night says, "Ayatullah Bahjat was punctual in his prayers and nightly weeping especially during the nights preceding FRisays. One of the senior scholars said to me, 'I heard the mentor during one of the nights preceding FRisay weeping profusely, addressing his Lord repeatedly as he was prostrating, 'Lord! Who else besides You can I turn to in order to remove my harm and look into my affair..., etc.?"

#### 4. His Ziyara and Pleas

The mentor starts his daily program, despite his advanced age, by paying a visit to the shrine of Lady Fatima the Infallible, peace be with her. He daily is honored by performing the rites of the *ziyara* to Lady Masuma and stands before the sacred shrine with humility and full respect then recites the Ashura *ziyara*. The author of the book titled *Anwar al–Malakut* cites mentor Abbas al–Qawjani, trustee of the late Mirza Ali Agha the judge, the following interesting narrative:

"Quite often, Ayatullah Bahjat would go to the Sahla Mosque [in Kufa] and spends the night alone till the morning in that mosque. One night, when the mosque's lamp was not lit and it was quite dark, the mentor needed to renew his ablution in the middle of the night, so he needed to get out of the mosque and go to its eastern side where the toilets were. As he was walking in the dark, he felt a little bit scared. Suddenly, a light appeared before him and kept lighting the way for him like a lamp till the mentor completed his ablution and returned to the mosque. Once the mentor was inside the mosque, that light disappeared."

#### 5. His Humbleness

Among the other prominent dimensions in the spiritual personality of the mentor are humility, flight from fame and opposing inclinations. The mentor did not allow the publication of his edicts till after the demise of all past authorities who were older than him and even his fellows who used to study with him although he is considered as one of the famous men of *figh* and *ijtihad* and one of the prominent professors of holy Qum's theological seminary. Despite all of this, the mentor did not permit the publication of his edicts except after the scholars had insisted on it. He also did not permit the use of the ways allowed by the Shari'a for the publication of his scholarly dissertation (*risala*), always emphasizing to the orators at the *majalis* which he held that they should not mention his name. This indicates his God–fearing nature,

piety and the opposing of his desires.

The mentor Hajj Quds says the following about his humbleness: "One day, I and my guest, the late Hujjatul–Islam Nasr–Allah al–Lahuti, visited mentor Bahjat. My guest said to the mentor, 'I have heard someone criticizing you in the city of Mashhad during my visit of that city, and I felt very angry about it.' Mentor Bahjat said, 'It has been cited in our narratives the following: 'They charged a scholar who desired the world," so I was quite surprised at this answer, for if the life of this man was desirous of the world, what about us?!"

#### 6. His Life, Conduct and Spiritual Status

Past incidents relevant to mentor Bahjat's life story and moral conduct go back to scores of years. He is one of the students of the perfect Gnostic, Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Agha al-Qadi. He used to win the interest of that great theological scholar. The mentor won respected Gnostic stations even when he was in the prime of his youth, and many of those who were close to the late Ayatullah al-Qadi testified to it. They said, "We are familiar of his Gnostic stations and are acquainted with the phases of lifestyle and conduct which he undertook, but we maintain a pledge to him not to say a word in this regard." The mentor used to also earn the attention of Imam Khomeini who visited and met him in the city of Qum at the beginning of the revolution.

The author of the book titled *Anwar al–Malakut* writes the following in this regard: "Grand Ayatullah al–Hajj Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Bahjat al–Fomani is regarded as one of the students of the sign of the truth and the pillar of Gnosticism, the unique scholar, the late al–Hajj Mirza Ali Agha, the judge from Tabriz, may Allah Almighty be pleased with him, in the city of al–Najaf al–Ashraf. He used to have many revelations and divine *ghaibi* conditions during the time of the late Mirza Agha, and he earned a lofty status of behavior and distinction. This distinction was the reason which prompted the late judge to pay him his special attention."

Also, Sheikh Diya ad-Deen al-Amuli, son of Grand Ayatullah al-Hajj Sheikh Muhammad Taqi al-Amuli, conveyed to the attending students of the class of Ayatullah Bahjat and in the presence of the mentor that he saw with his own eyes the late Mirza Ali, the judge, following the mentor as he was leading the prayer service.

# 7. Acquaintance with the Unknown and Manifestation of Temporal Miracles

Ayatullah Bahjat is regarded as one of the righteous servants of Allah who earned, by permission of Allah, lofty stations that enabled them to witness worlds of the unknown (*ghaib*). Perhaps the repetition by the mentor of the plea "O One Who Veils!" whenever he was alone and in the presence of people, as he stood and sat, is the reason behind this fact.

Sheikh Misbah of Yazd says the following in this regard: "It seems the mentor earned a Gnostic station and moral perfections which enabled him to witness some unknown worlds. He would witness some realities such as those of individuals with his own subconscious sight, but he did not like people seeing him as such; therefore, he used to quite often repeat the plea "O One Who Veils!" and pleads to Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, to veil him and to veil whatever he saw."

In fact, the likes of these matters are regarded among the temporal miracles (*karamat*) which are not undertaken except by Allah's friends. The manifestation of these *karamat* is the fruit of continuous struggle against the self and of opposing inclinations. The mentor, Ayatullah Bahjat, is regarded as one of the prominent personalities that have taken care of cultivating the self and to belong exclusively to Allah, the most Exalted One, the most Great; therefore, it is not at all unlikely if he has such *karamat* and supernatural things. Rather, those who kept the mentor saw with their own eyes examples in support of this matter.

Pointing out to some evidences in this regard, Sheikh Misbah says the following: "The individuals who kept Ayatullah Bahjat's company for several years saw during these years matters which could not be termed except as karamat or supernatural things. Here below we would like to review some examples of these karamat: When Imam Khomeini was in exile (apparently in Turkey), many men of virtue and supporters used to be subjected to unfair measures by the security authorities at the time. If they articulated a word or behaved in a particular way, they would be banned from ascending the pulpit and be thrown in jail in unknown places and for long periods of time. Among the persons who were arrested by the security authority then is Sheikh Jannati. We were worried about him because all evidences pointed out to the security authority going to torture him. I remember that I went to mentor Bahjat, may Allah Almighty protect him, and told him about the matter. He contemplated for a short while then said, 'You will, by the will of Allah, bring me the good news of his release.' True, such a statement could have been made by anybody, but the statement of the mentor during those circumstances was like glad tidings to us because we were sure the mentor had *ghaibi* knowledge in this regard and that the problem would come to an end peacefully. This is too because there were other similar matters which we presented to the mentor (such as we would ask him to pray for a particular person), but he would never give us such an answer. Indeed, we would say that particular person staying in jail and not easily released."

Here is another sample about his *karamat*, may Allah protect him. One day, a family wanted to marry her daughter off. Both families of the bride and groom as well as the guests assembled on the wedding night. But the enemies of this family kidnapped the bride from her house before the ceremonies had started. This worried the members of the bride's family, and they kept looking for her wherever they thought it possible to find her but in vain. Anyway, this matter caused a great deal of confusion to the bride's parents because they were unable to do anything. One friend who was a neighbor of this family said, 'I thought a lot about the matter but I found no solution for this problem. Then it crossed my mind to go to the mentor Bahjat, perhaps he could find a solution for it. I went to him hastily and narrated the

incident to him. The mentor lowered his head as he contemplated. Then he simply said, 'Go to the holy precincts of Lady Fatima the Infallible, perhaps she went there.' I, therefore, returned, having been convinced to do just that. I told the bride's family what the mentor had said, so they went to the shrine of Lady Fatima the Infallible and actually found their daughter there. I do not remember precisely how the matter was, but I know that the bride's family never thought of finding the bride in a place such as that."

Here is another sample of the mentor's *karamat*: A friend says, "My wife was pregnant, and I was going to travel before the blessed month of Ramadan, so I went to the meeting place of mentor Bahjat to bid him farewell and to ask him to pray for me. He said to me, 'Allah will bless you with a son; so, name him Muhammad Hasan,' although he did not even know that my wife was pregnant, let alone knowing the gender of the fetus and the date of its birth. Sure enough, Allah blessed us with a son on the fifteenth of the blessed month of Ramadan, so we named him Muhammad Hasan."

Quite often, such matters would take place to the mentor, but he did not want to manifest them, so much so that he did not accept the transmission of this brief summary, but we transmitted it so the believers may get to know that Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, pays attention to some of His friends with His divine care even during our time. If the servants tread the straight path of adoration, Allah Almighty will lead them to the right guidance: "... And those who struggle on Our account, We shall guide them to Our path."

The path to perfection and humanity is not closed. Even in our time, anyone who wants to tread the path of nearness to Allah can reach lofty stations of perfection and nearness to Allah in the shade of care of the Imam of the Time, may Allah hasten his reappearance, and at the hands of servants who live among the people such as mentor Bahjat. All these matters can instill hope in the souls and increase our conviction.

These are fixed realities and not a mockery. They are visible realities in existence, and we can see them and realize their impacts, then we can liberate ourselves from the shackles of this world, its ornament and adornment and realize that pleasure is not confined to the animal or Satanic ones; rather, man is qualified to reach moral perfections and pleasures which cannot be compared with these material pleasures. But unfortunately, due to the weakness of knowledge and of conviction on one hand, and the assault of the internal and external satanic factors (from the jinns and mankind) on the other, has caused us to be unaware of such precious jewels.

In this regard, Sayyid Mas`udi says, "Anyone who visits the mentor realizes he talks about the particular things which he feels. I used to go in the company of Sheikh Musban to his class, and we (I and Sheikh Misbah) used to talk sometimes about the political and economic issues or about our livelihood matters because the students' living condition was bad then. But the mentor used to surprise us when he would start talking about the same topic about which we were talking, as if he was sitting with us, and we were sure the mentor knew all the subjects which we discussed. For example, when we talked with each other and complained about what to do, how bad our living condition was, how we had debts to repay while

not having food for one day, the mentor used to start, as soon as he arrived, with these words, 'Yes, the condition of the students was bad during our time, too. They did not have anything, and they were hungry and poor, but they persevered.' Then he would start narrating some incidents about the life of the scholars in the past. I was one day, I recall, talking with Sheikh Misbah. I said to him, 'We do not have anything, and we cannot live only on bread.' When mentor Bahjat came and sat on the pulpit, he said, 'One day, the late Sheikh Murta al-Ansari went to his father in the morning and said, 'We have nothing but the bread.' The Sheikh said, 'But we have freshly baked bread!' It seemed that Sheikh al-Ansari believed that the freshness of the bread compensated for eating anything else with it. These words lessened our pain because we used to eat the bread with the cheese."

Ayatullah Sheikh al-Karbalaai says, "The late Hajj Abbas al-Qojani, one of the students of the late Ayatullah Mirza Ali the judge, conveyed to me in a special meeting after having praised the status of Ayatullah Bahjat saying, 'I was going to perform the pilgrimage to Imam al-Ri®a in one of my travels to Iran, then I went to the meeting place of Sheikh Bahjat. In a special meeting, I very much insisted on him to talk to me about his personal conditions and the divine niceties which Allah bestowed upon him and about his Gnostic revelations. He conveyed to me more than twenty important matters and special divine niceties, then he took upon me a pledge not to inform anyone about them,' but I transmitted one of those matters to some friends and I (al-Karbalaai continued to say) insisted on him to talk to me about that matter. He said, 'The mentor told me he could see what is behind him if he so wished."

Sheikh Jawad al-Karbalaai adds saying, "After several years, I traveled to Iran and went to the meeting place of Sheikh Bahjat and said to him in a private meeting, 'Have the matters which you told me several years ago remain as they are till now?' The sheikh said, 'Yes'."

One of those close to the mentor says, "I went one day to the town of Foman. One day before my return, I visited Sayyid Areeb, one of the town's scholars, who gave me some bullions and asked me to give one of them to Sheikh Bahjat. After my return, I gave the sheikh one of those bullions. Some time after that, I wanted to return to Foman town, so Sheikh Bahjat gave me one thousand tomans and said, 'Give this money to Sayyid Areeb and do not tell him who sent it to him.' I sat in the shop of that merchant till he returned. I found him puzzled, so I asked him about what had happened. He said, 'When I gave the money to Sayyid Areeb, he said, 'Few days ago, a portion of our house collapsed, and the builder demanded one thousand tomans to rebuild it. I did not have much money, so I told the builder to be patient and not to start the work yet. As I was thus engaged, you brought me this sum which exactly equals the wage demanded by the builder."

A theologian friend said to me, "One day, one of our relative women was afflicted with cancer. The doctors were unanimous about having a surgery for her as soon as possible, saying if that surgery was not done, the cancer would spread to other parts of her body. We were hesitated about it. Should we do the surgery or not? We decided to go to Sheikh Ayatullah Bahjat and ask him to do the *istikhara* for us. I went to the mentor and told him about the matter, asking him to do the *istikhara* on our behalf. The

mentor did the istikhara and said, 'The surgery is not necessary,' giving me some money to spend it by way of charity on behalf of the patient, then he ordered me to dissolve a small piece of the soil of the Master of Martyrs, peace be with him, in Zamzam water so the patient could drink it every day seeking to recover. He also ordered me to feed a large number of the poor or offer them charity with some money and to ask them to supplicate for the patient to heal. We carried out the mentor's instructions to the letter, and our patient went to the shrine of Imam al-Risa, peace be with him, pleading to him. She remained in the sacred shrine for three days pleading and supplicating to Allah to heal her. During those three days, strange spiritual conditions happened to her, so much so that she did not feel any pain after she had returned home. I, therefore, went to the sheikh to tell him about it. He asked, 'How is the condition of your patient?' I said, 'Praise be to Allah!' and I narrated to him all what had happened in Mishhad city. The sheikh said, 'Follow the same past instructions and let the doctor examine her.' When the patient visited the doctor, he asked her with amazement, 'Have you done something, or did you go somewhere?!' The patient asked him, 'What do you mean?' The doctor said, 'The marks of sickness have shrunk from you in an incredible way; so, there is no need to have any surgery, and we will treat the remainder of the gland with medication. Now, after the passage of a long time since that incident, our patient enjoys very good health, and she has fully recovered from that ailment, praise be to Allah. What is noticeable in this issue is the istikhara which the sheikh did and his saying, 'The surgery is not necessary'."

One of the students of the *hawza* (theological seminary) wrote me once saying, "I was studying in Tehran and periodically visited Qum. I was also acting upon the will of my father who had told me to visit Sheikh Bahjat whenever I visited Qum. So, I used to visit the sheikh whenever I visited this city. One day, my father disclosed the secret behind his will to me saying, 'My eyes were cooled one day when I saw the beauty of the Imam of the Time (al–Mahdi), may Allah hasten his reappearance, at the Palasar Mosque located in the shrine of Lady Fatima the Infallible, peace be with her, but my shyness and the greatness of the Imam prevented me from embracing the Imam like a lover who reached his beloved one after a long time of separation, but I saw after moment Ayatullah Bahjat sitting in the same place where I had seen the Imam.' My late father used to think that this meeting indicated the greatness of the sheikh and his connection with the Imam of the Time, may Allah hasten his reappearance."

This man added saying, "After the death of my father, I saw that he had written in his will the following statement: 'Give the books which I bought to the Imam of the Time, may Allah hasten his reappearance, even though it may be through someone who can see him. And Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Bahjat, may Allah resurrect me and gather me in his company and from him I plead for supplications, *may* be the sought person.' The word "may" was placed between two parentheses in the will. I took my late father's will and gave it to Sheikh Bahjat to read. The Sheikh said, 'He has written the word MAY in the will. Go and give the books to someone who you are sure is in contact with the Imam of the Time, may my soul be his sacrifice."

`Allama al-Tehrani says the following in this regard: "One of the greatest scholars, Ayatullah Hajj Sheikh

Muhammad Taqi Fomani Rashti, may his high shade endure, visited me in the holy city of Mashhad. He pointed out in his speech to something which cannot be interpreted except his own acquaintance with the secrets and with the Utopian *ghaibi* matters. I had a heart stroke in the month of Shawwal of 1413 A.H. and slept four nights in the intensive care unit and nine nights in the general disease unit in al-Qaim Hospital in the holy city of Mashhad. Then I was released by the hospital after my health, praise to Allah, had improved, so I returned home and started my studies and scholarly investigation. One day, I was visited by the Sheikh with one of the students, and there was nobody in our house except myself and my oldest son, Haji Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq. Allah had enabled me to perform the tahajjud and the giyam of the night before being afflicted with this ailment, but I had ceased doing so during my sickness. After my return home, I stopped performing this act due to laziness or indifference or absence of determination although I used to stay awake for long hours in the night for emergency reasons. When the Sheikh came to visit me, and after the greeting and usual formalities, he said to me without any introduction, The *giyam* during the night or the night prayer (and I do not remember the exact wording) is the conveyance of the night.' I remained silent and said nothing, as if I was not admonished by such guidance and did not decide to resume the night prayer. The talk dealt with other matters, but the Sheikh returned to the previous talk and said, 'I saw in Bihar al-Anwar this tradition: Allah Almighty has written this in His perfect Book:

'Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul) and most suitable for (framing) the speech (in prayer and praise)' (Qur'an, 73:6).

Since I knew that my oldest son, Muhammad Sadiq, was one of those who observed the *tahajjud*, I realized that the pursuits submitted by the Sheikh without any introduction were meant to attract my attention and to wake me up from my indifference so I may not abandon this important matter even in the case of my sickness."

Sayyid Quds says the following: "One of the theologians of Mazandaran, who occupied the post of head of the justice directorate in one of the governorates in Iran, conveyed to me that when Ayatullah Kohastani Mazandarani went to join his Lord, his son went to Grand Ayatullah Sheikh Bahjat. The Sheikh said to him, 'When your father departed, a great commotion took place in the hereafter world."

Sayyid Khosro–Shahi says the following in this regard: "I heard one of the students saying, 'After my marriage, I rented a house in the city of Qum. Having settled in the house, I suffered from an unbelievable financial crisis, so much so that I could no longer buy a dinner meal. Our conditions did not permit borrowing a sum of money from someone, so I got out of the house and was honored by visiting the Infallible Lady, peace be with her. After the *ziyara* and during my performing of the formal farewell of the shrine, I felt that someone was putting some money in my hand after having approached me from the back. He said, 'This money is for you.' I turned my head to the back, and it was Ayatullah Bahjat. He did so although I did not inform him of my need for the cash."

A student narrated to me an incident similar to this. I remember a statement by Ayatullah Bahjat. He

used to say, "Is it possible the Lord ignores us or leaves us to look after our own selves?! Therefore, the students must not worry about anything as long as they perform their duties because the Lord is their Protector and never ignores them."

Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin, the flag of guidance, says, "One of the students conveyed this to me: 'I wanted to go to Gailan for religious propagation one day, so I brought my family's expenses, but I did not have the expense of the trip; therefore, I went to perform the ziyara of the daughter of Ahl al-Bayt, peace be with them, to whom I complained and remonstrated saying, 'My Lady! We have dedicated ourselves to your service, you Ahl al-Bayt, and we want to convey the religion of your grandfather, but we do not have even the expense of the trip, and the matter is entrusted to you.' Then I went out and intended to perform the congregational prayer under the leadership of Ayatullah Bahjat. I performed the noon and afternoon rites. After the prayer, the Sheikh looked behind him and beckoned to me, and I was in the second row, so I thought he meant someone else. But he again beckoned to me and said, 'I mean you!' I stood up from my place and got close to him. He told me to accompany him. I went with the Sheikh, and there were other people with us. When we reached the house of the Sheikh, he said to me, 'Wait here till I return.' He entered the house, and few moments later he returned and in his hand there were two hundred tomans, and this sum was at the time a small fortune. He gave me the cash, so I said, 'What should I do with this money?' He said, 'Did you not ask for the money?' I then remembered the issue and said to the Sheikh, 'But this is a lot of money!' He said, 'No it is not because there are those who need this money, and you will be able to take care of their needs, too. Anyway, I bade the Sheikh farewell and went to Tehran. There, I saw some friends in Charagh-Gaz Street, and they wanted to go to Gailan also for religious propagation and they did not have money to pay the fare for the trip. I said to them, 'Do not think about it, the money has arrived. We went together and had our lunch then rode the bus and went to Gailan. When we arrived there, all the money had gone."

This same person conveys this incident, too: "I heard someone saying, 'I wanted to go for the pilgrimage, so I went to Ayatullah Bahjat and said to him, 'Allah prevented a big catastrophe from happening to us when our car turned upside down as it was speeding, but none of us was hurt, praise to Allah.' The Sheikh said, 'A similar incident had taken place to you twenty or twenty–five years ago, and you also were not harmed.' I remembered the incident, and the Sheikh was guite right in his statement."

Hujjatul-Islam wal Muslimin Sheikh Shushtari says, "A man went to Ayatullah Sheikh Bahjat and said, 'O, Sheikh! I do not wake up for the night prayer; so, what should I do? Please supplicate for me so I may wake up at the right time.' The Sheikh asked him, 'What time you want to wake up?' The man said, 'At three o'clock after midnight.' The Sheikh said, 'Go, for you will wake up at this hour by the will of Allah."

Sheikh Shushtari goes on to say, "Many years have passed since this incident. The man said to me, 'Since then, I have been waking up at the determined hour; therefore, I never abandoned the night prayer for a single day, and this is one of the *karamat* of Ayatullah Bahiat."

#### 8. His Special Care for Shari'a Matters

One of the important characteristics whereby Sheikh Bahjat is distinguished and which can be witnessed at the first look is his special care for observing the norms of conduct according to the Shari'a (Islamic legislative system) and the tradition of Ahl al–Bayt, peace be with them. Sheikh Misbah says the following in this regard, "Shiite scholars of etiquette, all of them save those who are deviated in their way of thinking and conduct, agree that the right path to perfection is the path of adoration, that man cannot reach any moral station via obedience to Allah, the most Exalted and Great, and acting upon His commandments.

But the attention paid by the scholars to observing the Shari'a etiquettes and the tradition of Ahl al-Bayt, peace be with them, is not equal. Sheikh Bahjat, may Allah protect him, is regarded as one of the most distinguished [theologians] for observing these norms. He observes in his conduct particularly interesting behavioral habits which cannot be easily described. I am going to mention this incident which I remember, perhaps it will remain in history so those who wish to act upon the commandments of the Shari'a may get to know to what extent one must observe the commandments of the Shari'a:

"The Sheikh inherited from his father a small plot of land suitable for planting rice. It was financing some of his domestic expenses. The Sheikh used to give a measure of rice, though it could be a few kilo grams of it, to his friends and neighbors when they brought the crop to his house. Once, I left Qum city for some time during the days of struggle. Nobody knew anything about my place of residence, not even our close relatives. During that period, the Sheikh had sent our house a sack of rice once and a good sum of money some other time. What was noticeable is that he sent us the money in the hand of his wife and son Ali. His wife brought the money and gave it to my wife as his son, Ali, was standing before the alley.

"When I returned home, I kept thinking about the secret that prompted the Sheikh to send his wife to our house, but I soon realized that this was one of the etiquettes of the Islamic Shari'a. According to Islamic ethics, if the husband is traveling, nobody should go to his house. If it is necessary to go to his house, a woman has to go. There are minutely interesting statements articulated by the friends of Allah, their conducts, the way they stood up or sat down, which cannot be comprehended except through the study of a complete branch of knowledge, let alone undertaking them and acting upon them. These maters are the ones that raise the servant in his adoration and endear him to his Lord, granting him a lofty status. The Sheikh used to advise anyone seeking his advice to observe what is taken for granted by the Shari'a. He always emphasized observing what the Shari'a regards as taken for granted, believing that the matters where doubt is entertained or confusing matters fall in the second degree of importance."

The Sheikh derives useful evidence in this field which I learned from him and which I sometimes used in my sermons and in other places. He says that Allah Almighty wants to guide His servants to perfection; therefore, He guite often mentions the things which have the greatest impact on man's happiness and on

determining his fate. So, if we want to know the matters that cause man's happiness, we have to know the matters which Allah, Praise and Exaltation belong to Him, emphasizes more than others. This is so because any pursuit more stressed in the Qur'an, traditions and statements of Ahl al–Bayt, peace be with them, will have a role in perfecting man and determining his fate in a greater way. Observing the prayers is one of the most important of these matters because we may not find in any chapter of *fiqh* the like of all these Qur'anic verses which call for upholding the prayers and all these narratives which are cited about observing its timing, etiquette and the necessity of performing them with full attention of the heart.

Sometimes the Sheikh used to say the following by way of jesting: "We look for something for our own perfection which neither Allah nor His Messenger nor any Imam has sanctioned."

Ayatullah Sheikh Jawad al-Karbalaai says the following in this regard: "Ayatullah Bahjat used to say this to me in a specialy tone: 'Whenever you get to know what the Shari'a holds as taken for granted, such as abandoning sins, observing what is obligatory and what is highly commendable, the recitation of the Qur'an during solitude, earning the qualifications of health, the acceptance of your adoration and its inclusion of secrets such as prayers and other rituals, so you may get to know their results..., do not come to me to ask me instructions leading you to the right conduct and to the path to Allah Almighty, as though a mentor from the unknown comes to you and guides you to the path! Are these matters that are taken for granted and are issued by the most pure Shari'a not sufficient for you to act upon as they should be acted upon so you may reach the anticipated goal?' I came to know from the statement of the mentor that one who is seeking the path must safeguard the manifestations of the holy Shari'a, must keep things to himself with regard to spiritual conditions and not manifest them except to those who are worthy of them, and the latter are indeed few. The mentor also said this to me when I was studying ethics in Qum city: "Tell the scholars issues which they understand and do not tell them things over their level of comprehension."

#### 9. Personified Practical Emulation

One of the distinctions that set Ayatullah Bahjat apart from the rest of scholars and *mujtahids* is his practical emulation of the Infallible Ones, peace be with them. You see this clearly from his statements and actions, his standing and sitting, his speech and silence, during his acts of adoration, when he supplicates, and when he interacts with people. This distinction makes everyone, even when one is unaware, heading in the direction of Allah, the most Praised One, the most Exalted.

Sheikh Misbah says the following in this regard: "I came to know the Sheikh in 1373 A.H. when I went to Qum city. His house was in the neighborhood of the Hujjati School, and I used to see him on my way or in the shrine almost every day. His shining face, when he moved or was still, when he stood or sat down, he attracted attention to him and gave the impression that this man was living in a special spiritual atmosphere. His interests in other matters surpassed the interests of individuals in some matters.

He tied himself to adoration, to standing for the prayers during the *sahar* (pre-dawn) times, his pilgrimage to the shrine of the Infallible Lady Fatima, peace be with her, and by other programs which he did every day. These matters used to attract the attention of everyone especially those who were looking for a practical role model to emulate. His personal actions and piercing looks intensified the effect of these factors. His impact on some individuals was spiritual, making them get attracted to him in an amazing way. Anyway, such characteristics are the catalyst that prompted me to get to know the mentor, to know what sets him apart, what distinguishes him.

It is for the above reasons that I kept asking friends and other individuals whom I thought might be familiar with the Sheikh and his spiritual conditions and scholarly status. From my research, I came to know that the mentor enjoyed an excellent status from both scholarly and spiritual standpoints. Thereafter, the Sheikh gradually permitted me to be present at his house and to benefit from his admonitions.

#### 10. Urging Others to Seek Perfection and Spirituality

Ayatullah Hajj Jawad al-Karbalaai wrote me saying, "Several years ago, I heard from Grand Ayatullah Hajj Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i and before that from Grand Ayatullah Bahjat (may Allah expand his shade) that Sayyid al-Khu'i said in the research of using a word in more than one meaning the following: 'Such use for the word is impossible because it requires the "existence" of both observations: what is spontaneous and what is independent in the same usage."

But Ayatullah Bahjat said to Sayyid al-Khu'i at the time, "It is possible one's soul reaches a stage of power which enables it to combine both."

In fact, the Sheikh utilized this pursuit to attract the attention of Ayatullah Sayyid al–Khu'i to the need to attain divine branches of knowledge and to be adorned with the attributes of the friends of Allah, so Ayatullah al–Khu'i asked him about the reason why he presented this pursuit, then he asked him, after hearing his answer for the first question, 'Who should I refer to?' Ayatullah Bahjat said, 'You should refer to Ayatullah Sayyid Ali al–Qadi.' Then Ayatullah Bahjat intervened to arrange a meeting between Ayatullah al–Qadi and Sayyid al–Khu'i in the courtyard of our master, Abu al–Fadl al–Abbas, peace be with him, and the meeting lasted for more than one hour and a half. After that Sayyid al–Khu'i said to me (al–Karbalaai went on), 'I surrendered to them and accepted their statement. Sayyid Ali al–Qadi dictated to me a special program to follow in all its conditions (in special clothes and *dhikr* which must be repeated in certain installments). I brought all the conditions and decided to start the *'amal* (highly recommended religious practice) at 2:00 pm in a suitable and quiet spot in the sacred Alawi shrine. But unfortunately, when I brought everything and wanted to start reciting the *dhikr*, I forgot its wording and kept trying to remember it, but it was in vain, so I lost hope and said to myself: 'O father of Qasim! You were not sought to do this!' The statement was: 'There is no god but He, and those who seek reliance should rely on Allah."

Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Abdul–Kareem al–Kashmiri, one of the students of the unique Gnostic Sayyid Ali Agha al–Qadi, says, "I was sitting with some friends and talking with them at the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful, peace be with him, in al–Najaf al–Ashraf because I was exhausted by the study and research. As we were thus, Ayatullah Bahjat entered. I waited for a short while till I was distant from my friends. He whispered in my ears saying, 'We were not created for sporting!' This statement ignited fire in my heart and caused a coup in my existence, intensified my puzzlement and caused me to look for the truth. Thereafter, Allah Almighty enabled me to be present in the meeting place of the late al–Qadi."

Sayyid Mas`udi says the following in this regard: "The mentor used to take care of culturing others by advising them to this and not that, or it is better it should be done this way and not that, etc. One day, I came to his meeting place and said, 'O Sheikh! Our living condition has become quite harsh, and we have no money; what should we do?' The Sheikh taught me a *dhikr* which I kept repeating all my life. Since that day, I never suffered any financial hardship. The mentor advised me to keep the *dhikr* for myself."

#### 11. Systems, Programming Actions

One of the mentor's students writes the following: "The mentor adheres to precision and systems in his actions, so much so that he has programmed himself to articulate a particular *dhikr* after he leaves home till he reaches the mosque. Thereafter he articulates another *dhikr*, and so on, in order he may not waste his time. He also put a program for daily optional acts of adoration (*nawafil*) in this same way."

One of the virtuous men in the city of Qum writes the following: "One day, I stood before the alley where the house of Ayatullah Bahjat lived so I may accompany him on his way to the mosque, but I stayed till the dark without seeing the mentor coming out of his house. I, therefore, thought he had already left for the mosque before my arrival at the alley, so I went to the mosque, but I did not find him there. I bade a friend with me farewell then returned to take advantage of the opportunity to ask the mentor a question as he was on his way to the mosque. I kept thinking as I was walking along the way of a question to ask him, but I did not have a question in advance. In fact, my goal behind intruding on the mentor and asking him a question was to get some words out of him, to urge him to speak, because I believe the words of these servants of Allah and their spirituality bear an impact on the souls. You may find in their speech a word or an interesting point that stimulates one and wakes him up from indifference. Anyhow, I brought this question for the mentor: 'There is a verse in the Holy Qur'an that says that Allah Almighty replaces bad deeds with good ones; what does it mean? How can a bad deed be replaced with a good deed?' When the mentor came close, I greeted him then said to him, 'O Sheikh! I have a question. Do you allow me to submit it?' He raised his hand in objection and firmly said, 'No, not at all, I have neither time nor temper for it; the time for prayers has already passed and people are waiting. As for your, you must not ask such questions!' Then he looked at the mausoleum of the Infallible Lady Masuma, peace be with her, greeted her, bowed, then entered the mosque.

"In fact, I was surprised by this strict answer, and my senses trembled. I retreated for a few steps backwards then entered the mosque behind the mentor for the prayers. I kept thinking about the mentor's answer, what he meant by it and what prompted him to thus answer me. This thinking continued after the prayers, too. I was sure the stand of the Sheikh was for my own good, and that there were three possibilities which justified it: The first: The Sheikh wanted to let me understand that one must prepare himself for the prayers beforehand. He must direct himself to Allah Almighty with dhikr and supplication so his soul will be ready for the prayer service, for speaking with Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great. He, too, was busy with the dhikr when he came to the mosque, and he was thus preparing himself for the prayer. The other (second) possibility is that the Sheikh saw me when I came and tried to ask him as soon as he arrived, and he wanted to let me understand that what I did was not right. But I was simply returning from the mosque and wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to benefit from him on the way. The third possibility was the Sheikh knowing what I had on my mind and realizing my objective behind asking him the question, for my question was only an excuse and a way to get the Sheikh to say something, so the Sheikh informed me of what I had on my mind. No wonder, the Sheikh himself had told some friends that in the past, in the city of al-Najaf al-Ashraf, the students [of theology] used to go from one point of the earth to the other without leaving their place [what is called "tayy alard", folding the distances of the earth]. Any student who could not do so was singled out thus from among the students. In other words, these matters should be ordinary for the students and the scholars."

#### 12. Continual Dhikr practice

Hujjatul–Islam wal Muslimin Khosro–Shahi says this: "One of the distinctive characteristics of Ayatullah Bahjat is his continuously articulating *dhikr*. One day, when the Sheikh was returning from the mosque home following the congregational prayer service, he turned to the students who were following him on the way and asked them, 'Do you have any business with me?' They said they did not but wanted to walk with him to earn the honor of his company. The Sheikh said, 'I have a private program; it is a *dhikr* which I articulate on my way to the mosque and back home, but when I see you, I think you have some business with me, so I stop the *dhikr*. When I reach home, I see that my program was not completed and I feel angry with myself about that."

### 13. Thinking before Speaking

Sayyid Khosro-Shahi also says the following: "One of the distinctive characteristics of the Sheikh is that whenever he wanted to say something, he would first think about his statement before articulating it. He even thinks of how to explain what he is seeking, how to coin the sentences and the words so his statement may be brief on one hand, clear and indicative of his objective on the other."

#### 14. Keeping Spiritual Conditions Secret

Sayyid Misbah says the following in this regard: "Among the distinctive attributes whereby the Sheikh is characterized is his keeping to himself his spiritual stations. Seldom does he say anything or behaves in any way which gives one the impression that he undertook something supernatural or has supernatural knowledge. But the individuals who are familiar with his life and who lived and befriended him for a long time used to sometimes see certain things which could not be understood except due to his supernatural ability and lofty spiritual status; the mentor does have super spiritual abilities.

#### 15. Indirect Cultivation

In this regard, Sayyid Misbah also says, "We used to attend the class of the Sheikh before he started it in few minutes so we could benefit from his moral lessons. The Sheikh, too, used to be present before the class and sit in the room where the class is held. He would start his talk by offering advice indirectly and in various ways. In other words, as soon as he sat, he would mention a tradition or a historical incident which suited our behavior the day before, as if he was criticizing our conditions and reminding us of the shortcomings in our norms of conduct through the medium of mentioning this tradition or that incident. This is accepted by all the brothers. Everyone says that the Sheikh talks about matters which fully applied to our life. He solves the problems of our lives, reminding us of our shortcoming and errors by mentioning this tradition or that incident. Anyhow, his cultivating method in dealing with others was indirect. He never told us to do this or not to do that, or that we made this particular wrongdoing. Rather, he would remind us of our mistakes and shortcomings of deeds by mentioning a suitable tradition, a historical incident or an expressive story and make us consider correcting our mistakes.

#### **Source URL:**

https://www.al-islam.org/uswat-al-aarifeen-look-life-ayatullah-bahjat-yasin-t-al-jibouri/ethical-and-gn ostic-characteristics#comment-0