

Life

The pious man of God, Rajab Ali Nikuguyan known as the Reverend Shaykh and Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat was born in Tehran in 1262 S.H./1883 CE.¹ His father, Mashhadi Baqir was an ordinary worker. When Rajab Ali was 12, his father passed away and left Rajab Ali alone with no full-blooded brothers and sisters. There is no more knowledge at hand about the Shaykh's childhood. However, he quoted his mother himself as saying:

"One night when I was pregnant with you your father –who was then working in a restaurant –brought home some wholesome Kebabs. When I proceeded to eat, I found that you began to stir and beat my belly with your feet. I felt I should not eat from this food. I refrained from eating and asked your father why he had brought wholesome Kebabs that night, whereas the other nights he used to bring the customers' leftovers. He said he had actually brought these Kebabs without permission! So, I did not eat from that food."

This story indicates that the Shaykh's father did not have worth mentioning features. The Shaykh himself is quoted as saying:

"Doing good to and feeding a love of God by my father caused that God Almighty brought me to this world through his loins."

The Shaykh had five sons and four daughters. One of his daughters died in childhood.

The Shaykh's House

His simple brick house that was bequeathed to him from his father was located on Mawlawi Avenue, Siyah ha (presently Shahid Muntazari) Alley. He lived in this small house the rest of his life. His son says:

'Whenever it rained, the ceiling began to drip. One day, an army general, along with some other governmental officials, came to our house. We had placed some basins and bowls under the rain dripping from the ceiling. Having seen our condition of living, he bought two pieces of land and showed them to my father, and said he had bought one for himself and one for him. My father replied: What we

have is sufficient for us.'

Another of his sons says: 'When my life condition changed for the better I said to my father: 'Dear father! I have got four *tomans* and this brick house can be sold for sixteen *tomans*. So let me buy a new house on Shahbaz Avenue.'

The Shaykh said: "Whenever you wish go and buy one for yourself; for me, this one is good enough!"

He goes on to say: 'After my marriage, we prepared the two rooms upstairs and said to our father: 'High-ranking people come to visit you; so, please arrange for your meetings in these two rooms.' He replied:

"No way! Whoever wants to see me, let him come to sit in this dilapidated room."

The room he was talking about was a small one carpeted with a simple coarse mat made of cotton with a table for tailoring.

Interestingly enough, several years later, the reverend Shaykh let one of his rooms to a taxi driver named "Mashdi Yadullah" for twenty *tomans* a month. Later on, when the latter's wife gave birth to a daughter, the late Shaykh gave the name "Ma'suma" to her. When he recited *adhan* and *aqama* into the baby's ears, he placed a two *toman* bank-note in the corner of her swaddling clothes, and said:

"Aqha Yadullah! Now your expenses have increased; from this month instead of twenty *tomans* pay only eighteen *tomans* (for rent)."

The Shaykh's Clothing

The reverend Shaykh's clothing was very simple and neat. The type of clothing he used to wear was a set of clothes like that of Ulama including a cloak, a skullcap, and a robe.

What was interesting about him was that even in his dressing too, his intention was to attain God's pleasure. The only time he put on a robe to please others; he was reproached for that in his spiritual state.

His account of this event is as follows: "*Nafs* (carnal desire) is a strange thing; one night I found I was veiled (in darkness) and was unable to achieve divine grace, like I attained before. I probed into the matter, and upon humble requesting, I found out that the previous afternoon, when one of the nobles of Tehran came to visit me, he said that he liked to perform the evening and the night prayers with me (as prayer leader). So, in order to please him, I put on my robe while performing prayers. ...!"

The Shaykh's Food

His reverence never cared for delicious meals. Most often, he used such simple foods as potatoes and puddings. At the tablecloth, he would kneel down facing the *qibla* and kind of bending over the food.

Sometimes he would also hold up the plate in his hands while eating. He would always eat with full appetite. Sometimes he would put some of his food in the plate of a friend that he could reach out (as a sign of respect). While eating, he would not talk, and the others would also keep silent out of respect for him. If someone invited him to a feast, he would accept or reject it with some deliberation. Nevertheless, he would most often accept his friends' invitations.

He would not mind eating out; however, he was conscious of the effect of food on one's soul, and regarded some spiritual changes as a consequence of eating certain foods. Once, while he was traveling to Mashhad by train, he felt some spiritual contraction. He made an appeal (to Ahlul Bayt (a)), then after a while he was informed by intuition that the spiritual contraction had been the consequence of drinking of the tea served by the train's restaurant.²

1. S.H. Solar Hijra, the Iranian Solar Calendar that began at Prophet's (s) Hijra to Medina

2. See "Threatened to a destiny like that of Balaam of Boer", Chapter Two, Part 2.

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