

The Ways of Self-Building

The reverend Shaykh was highly capable of influencing talented souls with his charismatic power in training and self-building them. One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'Once I was accompanying the Shaykh and the late Ayatollah Muhammad Shahabadi (ra)¹ in Tajrish square. The Shaykh was very fond of Ayatollah Shahabadi; someone came to us and asked the latter.

"Do you say the truth or this man (pointing to the Shaykh)?"

The late Shahabadi (ra) replied: "What truth are you talking about?"

What do you mean?"

The man said again: "Which one of you say the right thing?"

Ayatollah Shahabadi said: "I teach and they (the students) learn; he (meaning the Shaykh) constructs and builds human beings."

Although this suggested how extremely humble and self-negating this divine man and ascetic was, it represented the efficacy of the Shaykh's speech and his enriching and training power as well.

"For Sixty Years I Treaded the Wrong Path"

Dr. Hamid Farzam describes the Shaykh's charisma and verbal influence as follows: 'Professor Jalaluddin Huma'i, a leading Professor of literature at Tehran University, was a renowned expert in *ma'arif* (Divine knowledge), Persian literature, and Islamic Mysticism, and was my own professor. He had audience with the reverend Shaykh at the age of sixty.

When I was at the age of seventeen, studying with the Prof. Huma'i, he had already edited Abu Rihan al-Biruni's *Al-Tafhimu li Awa'il Sana'at al-Tanjim* and 'Izzuddin Mahmud Kashani's *Misbba al-Hidaya wa Miftahu'l Kifaya*. He had also authored very scholarly such volumes as *Ghazali Namah*, a collection on Imam Muhammad Ghazali's life and works. His comprehensive introduction on *Misbba al-Hidaya* is by itself a perfect course of theoretical and practical mysticism.

Anyway, this mystic was my teacher in his early sixties. One day, as usual, when I went to have an audience with the Shaykh, he said:

"Your professor Mr. Jalaluddin Huma'i came to me. I said some sentences to him; he was so deeply touched that he struck his forehead (as a sign of deep regret and repentance) and said: Strange!! I have fared the wrong path for sixty years!!"

It was actually the impact of the reverend Shaykh's words and personality that so deeply moved Professor Huma'i with such high scholarly and mystical status. May God bless their souls.

In some sessions of supplication and prayer, when the Shaykh began to talk in his absorption, he would say:

"Friends! Such words that I tell you are of the final class (advanced level) of mysticism."

And it was indeed so.

Another disciple of the Shaykh said: 'The Shaykh's lessons would transform copper into gold. Thus, the prime point in expounding the Shaykh's self-building power is the secret of his efficacy on the audience and his style of teaching and training as well as the method of (moral and spiritual) construction this divine man applied to his disciples.

Self-Building by One's Manners

From the viewpoint of Islamic traditions, the major condition for the efficacy of teaching and training by instructors of ethics is their obligation to act according to their own teachings and guidelines. In this respect Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) said:

"من نصبَ نفسه للناس إماماً فعليه أن يبدأ بتعليم نفسه قبل تعليم غيره، وليكن تأديبه بسيرته، قبل تأديبه بلسانه"

"Whoever undertakes leading people should, before teaching others, attempt to teach himself (sufficiently) and before training others for good manners by speech should do the same by his own good manners."²

The most outstanding feature of the Shaykh's efficacy of discourse and his enriching power was his application of the above instruction of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) and calling people to God by means of his good manner prior to his (use of) speech and preaching.

If the Shaykh called people to monotheism, he had already shattered (أرباب متفرقون) (Many lords differing

among themselves) (Yusuf: 39) and on top of all his idol of *nafs* (carnal desire). If he called people to sincerity in all deeds, his deeds and gestures were all sincerely for God. If he ever fell negligent, God's Grace would come to his aid, in such a manner that he once said:

"Every needle that I drive in the cloth for the sake of other than God, it would stick into my finger."

And if he called others to love of God, he himself was burning fervently in the fire of love of God. If he called people to benevolence and self-sacrifice to others and serving them, he was himself a pioneer in this way. When he referred to the "world" as "the hag" and bewared others of liking it, his own ascetic life was clear evidence of his unwillingness to such "hag". And finally, if he called others to struggle against whims of *nafs* for the sake of God, he was himself on the forefront of this struggle and was triumphant like Yusuf (a) from a hard trial.

Educational Methods

The method used by the reverend Shaykh in self-building and training his disciples can be divided into two parts: 1) his educational method in public sessions and 2) His educational method in his private encounters.

1. Public Sessions

The Shaykh's public sessions were usually held in his house once a week. Similarly, in most occasions such as Islamic festive days, birth and martyrdom anniversaries of the Infallible Imams (a), he would hold sessions in his own house. In the months of Muharram and Safar³ and the holy month of Ramadhan, he would also hold preaching sessions. These sessions that were occasionally held in his friend's houses on a regular basis would last for two years.

Weekly sessions were usually held after performing evening and night prayers on Thursday nights with the Shaykh as prayer leader. After prayers, he would recite some couplets of the late Fayz⁴ containing *istighfir* (asking Allah's forgiveness with an attractive and impressive voice:

'I seek Allah's forgiveness for whatever (I have done for) other than the Beloved,

I seek Allah's forgiveness for my fictitious existence.

If a moment elapses without remembering his (beautiful) countenance,

I seek Allah's forgiveness myriad of times for that moment.

The tongue that is not engaged in remembering the Friend,

Beware of its evil and seek Allah's forgiveness. Life came to its end and due to negligence

I was not conscious for a single hour, I seek Allah's forgiveness (for that negligence).

The youth gone by and the old age drawn near to its end,

I did nothing (worthwhile), I seek Allah's forgiveness.'

One of the Shaykh's disciples says: 'He would sing these poems in a way that we could not help crying. In the end he would read in an indescribably charming spiritual state one of the fifteen whispered prayers⁵ attributed to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a).'

Another disciple said: 'In his supplication sessions I did not see anybody else shedding tears like him; his weeping was really heart- rending.

At the end of the supplication and serving tea, the reverend Shaykh would begin to talk and preach. He was very eloquent; in his lectures he would try to impart to others what he had found through the Qur'an and the Islamic traditions as well as the facts about which he had himself attained certitude.

The keyword he frequently used when addressing those present in his session was *rufaqa* (friends); and the main topics of his lectures included: monotheism, sincerity, love of God, consistent presence of heart, proximity to God, rendering service to people, pleading with the Ahl al-Bayt (a), awaiting *faraj*, warning against love of *dunya* (worldly-mindedness), egotism, and whims of carnal soul (*nafs*). In the next chapters the above topics will be discussed in details.

Dr. Thubati said about the beginning of his acquaintance with the reverend Shaykh and what his sessions were like: 'In the last years of high school, I was introduced to the reverend Shaykh by the late Dr. Abdul 'Ali Goya—holding Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics from France —and attended his sessions around ten years. His sessions were brief and private, attended by very few people. Whenever the sessions got too crowded and some strangers attended, he would temporarily call the sessions off. That means he was not after (attracting many) followers.

Except for a few words, some advice, and preaching, which ended in a *dua* (supplication), nothing else would be brought up in his sessions. Although the talks were rather repeated, the sessions were so spiritually attractive that whatever repeated talks we heard they would not make us tired or bored at all. Like the Qur'anic verses that whatever much you recite they are still fresh and pleasant, his talks too were similarly always fresh and pleasant.

The sessions were so spiritual (and otherworldly) that nobody tended to bring up the material and worldly issues, and if by any chance someone would talk of the material things, the people around would ignore them with contempt or even disgust. The reverend Shaykh's talks mainly concerned "proximity to God", "love of God", and "journey toward God". He would epitomize "proximity to God" in the following brief words:

"You should change your *ussa* (i.e., *ustad* or master); that is, you have been doing for yourself whatever

you did so far. From now on, whatever you do, do it for God and (know that) this is the nearest way to God. 'Step on your own self, embrace the Beloved.'⁷

All human selfishness is due to one's self-love; you will not attain anything (make no spiritual achievements) unless you turn to be a lover of God:

'If you get rid of your self, you will join the Beloved; Otherwise, keep burning eternally, your state of affairs being unripe'.

You should do things out of love for Him; that is, love Him and do things for the sake of His love. Loving Him and doing things for Him is the secret of all spiritual advances that mankind can make, and this will be possible. Thus, all human advancements are attainable by opposing carnal desires; you will not attain it unless you wrestle with your *nafs* (carnal desire) and knock it down."

He said about egotism:

"Here, a fatigued body and a broken heart is worth buying, the self-selling market is far away from this market place."

And he also said:

"Your price is as high as you demand; if you demand God, your price is infinite and if you demand the world (material possessions); your price is as low as what you have desired.

Do not ever say I wish this I wish that, (rather) see what God wishes. When you give a feast see if you invite whomever *you* desire or whomever that Allah wants you to invite. As long as you are following the footsteps of your carnal wishes, you will reach nowhere. The heart is God's Abode; do not let anybody else in; only God must be residing and presiding in your heart. Imam Ali (a) was asked how he attained such high station. 'I sat (watchful) at the gate of my heart and let no one except God in. He replied."

After his short talks, light refreshments would be served and then *munajat* (whispered prayer) would start. His *munajat* was really pleasant to hear and his spiritual state was very fascinating. He would not recite supplications plainly and formally; rather they were performed as whispering love songs to a sweetheart. While reciting *munajat*, he would so deeply get absorbed in the Beloved that it sounded as if a mother was seeking her lost child, weeping whole-heartedly lamenting and talking to the Beloved Friend in His Holy Presence.

Sometimes it seemed that amid the supplication, he would have received mystical intuitions, so that the signs and effects would then be revealed in his talks and manners. He deeply regretted that his "friends" did not make the advance that he had expected of them. He wished his friends opened up their eyes soon enough to see the angels and the Holy Imams (a).

When someone returned from a *Ziyarat* (of the Holy Imams' (a) shrines), he would ask him:

"Did you see that blessed Entity?"

Of course some were successful in this respect, too, and had found good spiritual states and even had some spiritual intuition. Others, however, were dragging behind.

Anyway, his munajat was highly enchanting so that it would enliven the others too. He knew the meanings of the supplications and stressed on some phrases in the supplication, repeating or explaining them sometimes. He would recite the supplication of *Yastashir* and *Munajat-i Khamsa 'Ashar* very often. He believed that the supplication of *Yastashir*⁸ was expressing love to the Beloved.

During the month of Muharram, he would talk very little; he would, instead recite some poems from the book *Taqdis* on the afflictions of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and would weep and then recite the munajat.

Emphasis on Obeying God and Refraining from Carnal Desires

The reverend Shaykh believed that the wisdom behind creating man is his Divine vicegerency, representing God (on earth)⁹ Once man attains this station, he can carry out Divine acts. The way to reach this place is through obeying God and opposing the carnal desires. In this respect, he said:

"It is quoted in a Divine (*Qudsi*) *hadith*:

"يا ابن آدم! خلقت الأشياء لأجلك وخلقتك لأجلي"

'O son of Adam! I created everything for you and created you for Myself.'¹⁰

"عبي أطعني حتى أجعلك مثلي أو مثلي"

'My servant! Obey me, so that I make you like Myself or an example of Myself.'¹¹

Dear friends! According to these *ahadith*, you are vicegerents of Allah; you are like pears, king of the fruits! Appreciate your value, do not follow whims of your carnal soul, and obey God so that you can achieve a place that enables you to perform divine things. God has created the entire universe for you, and has created you for Himself. See how high a station He has granted to you!"

The Shaykh believed that one would be ranked among the human beings unless he attains the status of Divine vicegerency. He would say:

"As spoons are for eating food and cups are for drinking tea, so also men are for turning into humans"

He would repeatedly say: "God has graced me with *karamat*; you too perform Godly work, He will grant you the same. O person whose profession is brick laying! O person whose work is tailoring! When you lay the brick or stitch with the needle, do it with love of God and be conscious of God! When you are wearing clothes .that cost one hundred *tomans* 12 a meter, do not say I have bought this one hundred *tomans* a meter; say, in stead, God has bestowed this on me. Represent God! Do not represent yourself!"

Recognition of Internal States

The Shaykh would recognize inner states of the audience through his intuitive faculty. However, he would never point out the weak points of any person in public, unless of course in a way that the person himself would understand the admonition and would endeavor to rectify himself. Two examples of such a case are briefly stated as follows:

Putting the Shaykh to Test

One of the eminent and upright preachers said: 'One afternoon in 1956, I was in the *Madrassa* of Haj Shaykh Abdul Husayn in the Tehran's Bazaar—next to Masjid of Shaykh Abdul Husayn. The late Shaykh Abdul Karim Hamid—an eminent disciple of the late Shaykh Rajab Ali—came to me and talked about his *ustad* (master), Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, and his status of sincerity and spirituality and finally asked me 'to accompany to the Shaykh's Thursday evening session with him. I accompanied him to the Shaykh's session. When we arrived in, I saw the Shaykh was sitting facing the *qibla* and engaged in reciting the *munajat* of Arnir al-Mu'minin Ali (a):

"اللهم اني أسالك الأمان يوم لا ينفع مال ولا بنون .."

"O Lord! I seek Your security on the Day that neither property nor children are of any benefit."

At the same time some of his devotees were sitting behind him, chanting the *munajat* along with him. I, too sat behind the crowd in the last row, saying to myself: O God! If he is one of Your *awliya*, may You make my preaching sessions thrive so that I can get a good material benefit!

As soon as this idea crossed my mind, the Shaykh said in the middle of his supplication:

"I say forget about money, but he has come here to test me with money!"

He said this in Persian and then went on reciting the *munajat* (in Arabic):

"وأَسألك الأمان يوم لا ينفع مال و..."

"I seek Your security on the Day that neither property....."

The Presence of an Informer

Gradually, high-ranking government officials and famous personalities were also attending the Shaykh's sessions. According to the reverend Shaykh, they would come (to attend his sessions) for solving their own problems and looked for the "hag world" in the Shaykh's house. Nevertheless, there were some among them who benefited from the Shaykh's, sermons as much as their capacity. Due to the presence of such individuals, the Intelligence Service of the Shah's regime become suspicious toward the sessions held by the Shaykh, and commissioned a major called Hasan al-Baygi to attend – incognito the Shaykh's sessions together with another agent in order to report the reason for the presence of the government officials in those sessions.

When the Intelligence Service agent entered the session, the Shaykh said while preaching and giving advice to the audience:

"Focus your attention to God and do not let no one but God in your heart, as heart is (like a) mirror and if it gets the slightest stain, it will show itself up very quickly. Now, some look like informers and come in with a nickname; for instance his name is Hasan but he feigns to be such and such.

These words impressed and amazed the Intelligence Service agent, Major Hasan al-Baygi, whose real name was not known to anybody, so deeply that he was said to have resigned from SAVAK (the then Intelligence Service in Iran).

"First Please your Father!"

Sometimes the reverend Shaykh did not admit some people in his sessions or he would impose a condition on them. One of the Shaykh's disciples who had been with him for about twenty years describes how his relation with the Shaykh first began:

"At first, whatever I tried to attend his sessions, he would not allow me; Until one day I saw him in Masjid-i Jamah, and after greeting asked him why he does not let me in his sessions. He said:

"First, please your father, then I will talk to you!"

That night I went home and fell at my father's feet, imploring him to forgive me. Having gotten very surprised, my father asked: What has happened? I said: Do not ask anything, just forgive me, I know I did not know what I was doing. ...And finally my father forgave me.

The next morning I went to the Shaykh's house. As soon as he saw me, he said:

"Well done! Now come and sit next to me."

Since then, right after the Second World War, I remained in his company until his death.'

2. Special Guidelines

One of the most outstanding features of a perfect *ustad* (master) and instructor on the path toward God Almighty is that his guidelines are given according to the needs of a spiritual seeker in his different stages of truth-seeking. This undertaking is, of course, not possible in public and in the presence of others.

A physician, however expert and experienced cannot treat all the patients visiting him by a single prescription and a single drug. Each patient needs a specific medication. It is even probable that for some reasons two different types of medicine are prescribed for two patients suffering from a same illness. This is also true for the illnesses of the soul.

An ethics instructor is indeed a physician of man's soul. He can cure the ethical maladies only if he identifies first and foremost the origin of the illness, and has the suitable medicine at his disposal as well.

Great Messengers of God (a) who are the main instructors and trainers of the souls were generally possessed of this characteristic. They not only realized the general requirements of the human society in various ways, but they were perfectly aware of personal needs of each members of their community.

Imam Ali (a) comments on this feature of the Holy Prophet (s) as follows: "He was a physician who, with his knowledge, wandered about seeking his patients, while his medicines and medical instruments were prepared by all means. They were used on demand and healed the souls which were suffering (ailments such as) blindness, deafness, and dumbness. With his medicine, he looked for the houses of negligence and stations of bewilderment."¹³

Scholars of Divinity, who are true successors to the prophets and to their vicegerents, enjoy such characteristic too. They are the ones who according to Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a):

"هجم بهم العلم على حقيقة البصيرة، وباشروا روح اليقين"

"Knowledge based on true insight have reached them and they have attained the spirit of certitude!"¹⁴

Of course, as stated in the holy Imam's (a) words:

"أولئك والله الأقلون عدداً، والأعظمون عند الله قدراً"

"The number of those scholars of Divinity, who enjoy the highest status with their God Almighty, are very few in number..."¹⁵

The Importance of a Perfect Instructor

The late Ayatollah Mirza Ali Qazi (ra) is quoted as saying: 'The most important requirement in this path is having a knowledgeable, selfless perfected master. When a person is a seeker on the path to Allah, if they spend half of their lives looking for a master (*ustad*), it is worth it. The one who has found a master, they have traversed half the way.'

Careful study of the Shaykh's special guidelines to his disciples reveals that he had through self-negation, sincerity, and assistance from the unseen attained such a high status of spiritual perfection that he was able to diagnose the spiritual maladies and problematic situations arising in the lives of others, and to cure and resolve them with the proper prescription. This reality is clearly evident to those who are familiar with the Shaykh's life.

Sins and Calamities in Life

From the Islamic viewpoint, man's improper deeds play a basic role in the predicaments and misfortunes that befall him. The Holy Qur'an asserts accordingly:

(وما أصابكم من مصيبة فبما كسبت أيديكم)

(Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought,..) (al-Shura: 30)

Interpreting and explaining the above verse, Imam Ali (a) said: "Beware of sins, as all calamities and shortcomings in livelihood, even the scratch on the body or falling down to the ground are due to committing sins because God Almighty says: (Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought.) (al-Shura: 30)."¹⁶

If a person really believes that his improper deeds will not only cause agonies in his life after death but also entangles his worldly life in various predicaments, then he would avoid committing vileness and does not even think of them. The more this belief is strengthened, the more the ground for fostering pious human beings will be prepared.

With his Divine intuition and spiritual vision, the reverend Shaykh would literally notice the relation of vileness to the plights and predicaments of human life, and by stating them he would resolve peoples' problems and difficulties. Employing this method of self-building, he would direct them toward human perfection.

"We Sell on Credit even to you!"

One of the Shaykh's children said: 'One day the late famous Murshid Chilow¹⁷, went to the Shaykh complained of his (catering) business being sluggish, saying: '*Dadash* (colloquial way of addressing a friend)! What is this situation we are stuck in?! For a long time we had prosperous position, we sold 3–4 large pots of *chelow* (cooked rice) to plenty of customers. But all of a sudden the table turned and the customers abandoned one after another, the sale turned sluggish and we now hardly sell a large pot each day. The Shaykh pondered for while and then said: ' It is your own fault; you reject the customers!'

Murshid said: 'I did not reject anyone; I even serve the children and give them half a kebab.'

The Shaykh responded:

"Who was that Sayyid who ate (in your restaurant) for three days on credit and the last time you pushed him out of your shop?"

Having gotten very embarrassed, Murshid left the Shaykh and hastened to look for that Sayyid. When he found him, he apologized him and then put up a sign on the window of his restaurant that read:

"We sell on credit, even to you; cash will also be lent as much as we can afford!"

Annoying the Child

One of the noble disciples of the reverend Shaykh said: 'My two year old child, who is now forty years old, had wetted his bed and his mother had beaten him so hard that he fell almost dead. An hour later, my wife came down with a high fever so that we rushed her to a doctor, spending sixty *tomans* for the medication, but the fever did not subside, and even worsened: We visited the doctor again, spending another forty *tomans* that was exorbitant for us those days.

Anyway, in the evening of the same day I picked up the Shaykh to accompany him to the session. My wife was also present in the car. When the Shaykh got in the car, I introduced my wife to the Shaykh and said: "This is my children's mother, she's got a fever; I took her to the doctor but her fever has not come down yet. The Shaykh looked at us and said to my wife:

"A child is not to be beaten like that; ask Allah's forgiveness for that, go appease him and buy something for him; she will recover from the illness."

We did so, and her fever subsided!

Annoying the Wife

The same person relates: One day the Shaykh and I were in Agha Radmanish's house. I said to him (the Shaykh): 'My father¹⁸ died around the year 1352 A.H. 11933 CE. I would like to see how he is doing now (in the purgatory world). The Shaykh said:

"Recite (the Surah) al-Fatiha!"

Then he deliberated and paused for a while, and said:

"They do not let him come, he is encumbered due to his wife!"

I said: 'Please talk to his wife if possible.' He said: "Your stepmother is coming."

'She was a villager who was my father's wife, and since my father got married to several other women, so she was not on talking terms with my father to the end of her life. Whenever my father entered through a door, she would leave the room from another door.

I said to the Shaykh: 'Ask her what I should do to make her pleased with my father'. The Shaykh replied: "He (i.e., me) should feed the hungry." 'How many?' I asked. He said one hundred people. I said: 'I could not afford so many; and he finally lowered the number down to forty people. Upon accepting, the Shaykh said: "Your father's voice is heard now. As that woman became pleased, your father was liberated. He says tell my son why he has married two women. See what affliction I am encumbered in! Now take care to treat [your wives] justly." Another friend of the Shaykh said: 'I asked him of my father's condition in barzakh (purgatory world). The Shaykh answered: "He is encumbered by your mother!" I found he was right; My father had married another woman and my mother was upset in this regard. So I went to my mother and made her pleased. The next time that I visited the Shaykh, he said as soon as I arrived in:

"How nice it is to reconcile two people; your father is at ease now!"

Annoying the Husband

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'There was a woman whose husband was a Sayyid and a friend of the reverend Shaykh. She would irritate her husband a lot. After some time, she died. At her funeral the Shaykh was present. Later on he said:

"This woman's spirit was disputing while she was being buried, saying well! Now I am dead, so what happened?! When she was being placed in the grave her deeds materialized into a black fiend dog. As the woman noticed the dog was (as torture in her grave) being buried with her, she found out what misery she had piled up for herself in the course of her life. She began to lament and implore and yell! I saw

she was too distraught, so I asked this Sayyid to forgive her; he forgave her for my sake. The dog went away and she was buried!"

The Displeased Sister

One of the Shaykh's sons narrated: 'There was an architect whose job was constructing houses for selling. He had constructed one hundred units, but due to excessive indebtedness he was in a terrible financial situation and was about to be arrested and jailed. He came to my father and said he could not go home, and that he had to hide himself from the public. After a short deliberation, the Shaykh said: "Go and please your sister!" The architect said: 'My sister is pleased.' The Shaykh said she was not. The architect pondered for a while and then said: 'Yes, when my father died, he bequeathed us some money. My sister's share amounted to fifteen hundred *tomans* that I remember I did not give her. Then he went away and returned some time later and said: 'I gave my sister five thousand *tomans* and secured her consent.

My father kept silent for a moment and after a short deliberation said:

"She says she is not satisfied. Does she have a house?"

The architect said: 'No, she is a tenant.' The Shaykh said:

"Go and transfer the ownership of one of your best houses to her, and then return to me to see what can be done for you."

The architect said: 'Reverend Shaykh! There are two of us sharing the buildings, how can I do that?' The Shaykh said:

"I am at my wit's end; this servant of God is not yet satisfied."

At last, he went away again, finally transferred one of the houses to the ownership of her sister, and helped her move her household furniture to that house. When he returned the Shaykh told him: "Now it is solved!"

The next day he managed to sell three of the houses and relieved from the predicament.

Unkindness toward the Sister

One of the merchants of (Tehran) Bazaar went bankrupt. While he was complaining and telling his grief to his friend, the Shaykh passed by his shop. Upon seeing him, his friend advised him to tell his problem to the Shaykh. The merchant said: 'I do not know him.' He finally agreed to consult the Shaykh, at his friend's insistence. He went to the Shaykh and after greeting, narrated his problem to him. When he ended his explanation, the Shaykh said with lowered head:

"You are a cruel person; it has been four months since your brother-in-law has died and you have not called on your sister and his (orphaned) children. This is the source of your problem."

The merchant said: 'We have a dispute.' The Shaykh said:

"Your problem is rooted there, but you do not know it yourself."

The merchant went back to his friend and told him what the Shaykh revealed to him. Then he bought some household articles, took them to his sister, reconciled with her, and his problem was resolved.

The Displeased Mother

Several people, including a young man, were sentenced to death. His relatives went to the Shaykh and asked him imploringly for a solution. The Shaykh told them that he was encumbered by his mother. They went to his mother and she said whatever she prayed it was to no effect. They told her: 'The reverend Shaykh says you are displeased with him (her son). She answered: 'That is right; my son had newly married when some day after eating lunch I cleaned the table cloth, put the tableware on a tray, and held it to my daughter-in-law to take it to the kitchen. My son took the tray from me and said to me: 'I have not brought you a handmaid!

Finally his mother was pleased with him and prayed for his son. The next day, it was announced that there has been a mistake and the young man was released.

The Broken-Hearted Aunt

One of the Shaykh's friends related: 'My father was suffering a serious illness that whatever they did for his cure was to no effect. I told the Shaykh that my father had been sick and bed-ridden for a year. The Shaykh asked me if I had an aunt. The answer was, yes. The Shaykh said:

"Your father is encumbered by your aunt, and if she prays he would recover."

'I requested my aunt to pray for my father; she prayed but my father did not get well. I went to the Shaykh again and said my father did not get well despite my aunt being pleased. The Shaykh gave me some instruction for doing favor to my aunt's four orphaned children and told me to ask them to pray.

I did as the Shaykh had instructed and then asked my aunt what the reason for her discontent with my father was. She said: 'After my husband died, your father took me and my four children to his own house to live with them. Until one day that I was quarrelling with your mother when your father arrived and dislodged my children and me from his house. My heart was broken at that moment.

At last, with aunt being pleased, my father got better but did not regain perfect health. Once again I went to visit the Shaykh and told him the story. This time he instructed me to do favors to a Sayyid that he introduced, and after I did so my father got perfectly well.

Annoying the Employer's Son

One of the Shaykh's disciples quoted him as saying: "You are never unduly afflicted."

Once I broke my head in an accident. Along with some friends I went to see the Shaykh. My friend asked the Shaykh: 'See what he had done to have broken his head!' The reverend Shaykh deliberated for a while and then said:

"He has annoyed a child in the factory."

I found he was right. I was an operator of a bending device, which was a rare profession in those days. Such professionals were typically dear to their employers. Once my employer's son found a fault with me and it was irrelevant to him; so I had a row with him to the extent that he burst into tears.

The Shaykh said:

"If you do not satisfy him, your problem will continue." I went (to that child) and apologized.

Annoying the Employee

Several officials from the finance department went to see the Shaykh in one of his disciples' house. One of them said, my body is itching and it does not get cured. The Shaykh said after a little deliberation:

"You have annoyed a Sayyid woman."

That person said: 'These (ladies) have come (to the office) to sit at their desks but they do not perform their duty; and as you say something to them, they burst into tears!' It turned out that a Sayyid woman had been employed in their office and he had annoyed her with his remarks. The Shaykh said:

"You are not going to recover from the itching unless you ask her forgiveness."

Another of the Shaykh's disciples told a similar story as follows: We were sitting in the presence of the Shaykh in the courtyard of one of his friends' house. There was also present in the meeting a high ranking official who regularly attended the Shaykh's sessions. Having stretched his legs due to some ailment, he said to the Shaykh: Your reverence! I am suffering this pain in my legs for the last three years. Whatever I do, I get no results and the medication is not effective. As it was his usual custom, the Sheikh asked the people present to recite the Sura al-Fatiha, then deliberated for a while, and said:

"The pain in your legs started since the day you reprimanded the typist lady because of her mistakes in typing and shouted at her. She was a Sayyid woman whose heart broke and cried. Now you should find her and beg her for pardon so that the pain disappears."

The man said: 'You are right, she was the typist in our office and I shouted at her, making her cry.'

Usurping the Old Woman's Right

One of the Shaykh's disciples, who had lost his spiritual state after having eaten certain food, asked the Shaykh for help. The Shaykh suggested:

"The kebab that you ate was paid by such and such a merchant who had usurped the old woman's right."

Offending others (with foul language)

One of the Shaykh's disciples narrated: One day the Shaykh and I along with some others were passing through Imam Zadeh Yahya (s). Street when a bicycle rider hit a passer-by. The latter offended the rider by calling him an ass!

The Shaykh, hearing this, said:

"His interior turned into an ass right away!"

Another of his disciples quoted him as saying: "Once I was passing through the bazaar when I saw a cart moving by, with a man holding the bridle of the horse that was pulling the cart. All of a sudden a passer-by jumped before the horse to cross the bazaar. The carter shouted at him: 'You hackney!' I saw that the carter also turned into a horse, and the bridle split into two.

Cruelty to Animals

According to the Islamic laws, cruelty to animals is a reprehensible deed. A Muslim is not allowed to annoy or even imprecate animals.¹⁹

Thus, the Holy Prophet (s) is quoted as saying: --

لو غُفِرَ لَكُمْ ما تَأْتُونَ الى البهائم لَغُفِرَ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا

"If the cruelty you do to animals is forgiven, many of your sins are forgiven!"²⁰

Although the slaughter of *halal* meat animals is allowed as lawful in Islam, the slaughter itself involves rules that cause the animal suffer as less pain as possible. One rule is that the animal must not be slaughtered before the eyes of other animals of the same species.²¹

As Imam Ali (a) has stated:

"لاتذبح الشاة عند الشاة ولا الجزور عند الجزور وهو ينظر اليه"

"Do not slaughter a sheep in the presence of another sheep and a camel in the presence of another camel while they are looking at the animals' being slaughtered.²²

So, beheading an animal's offspring before its mother's eyes is strongly reprimanded, as it represents utmost cruelty and ferocity, leaving detrimental impacts on the perpetrator,

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'A slaughterer came to the Shaykh and said: "My child is dying; what shall I do?'

The Shaykh said:

"You have slaughtered a calf before its mother's eyes."

The slaughterer implored the Shaykh to do something for him. The Shaykh said:

"It says: no way, he has slaughtered my baby, so his baby must die!"²³

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1. Imam Khomeini's (ra) teacher in science of irfan. Imam Khomeini (ra) always mentioned his name with high respect mentioning him as 'perfect arif'.
 2. Mizan al-Hikmah, I, 222: 850.
 3. He advised his son: "Make sure to attend the mourning gatherings (rawda) always on the last day, since Hadrat Fatima Zahra (a) is present there.
 4. The late Muammad Mohsin Fayz renowned as Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani (1595–1680 CE. / 1006–1091 A.H.) ranked among the leading scholars, philosophers, mystics, exegetists, and poets of the 11th century A.H.
 5. Munajat khamsa asharah includes 15 tersely state whispered prayers attributed to Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a). See The Psalms of Islam, translated by William Chittick, London, 1988.
 6. The suffering by love is no more than a single story, and it is so amazing that from whomever you hear it, it sounds untold. (Hafiz)
 7. Step on your own self, embrace the Beloved One (instead), up to His ka'bah of union with Him, you are just one step away
 8. See "Recite the supplication of Yastashir", Chapter Six, Part 3.
 9. It is narrated that the Shaykh said: "I asked a number of scholars and people of spirituality why God has created man. I did not get convincing answers until I asked the same from Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Shahabadi (ra). He said: God has created man as His vicegerent: (I will create a vicegerent on earth.) (al-Baqarah: 30)"
 10. Sharh-i Asma-i Husna, I, 139: 202; Rasa'il-i Karaki, III, 962
 11. Bihar al-Anwar, CV, 165; "Maqam-i Imam Ali (a), III; 185, with a slight difference
 12. One hundred tomans per meter cloth was very costly at the time of the Shaykh.
 13. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon: 108, with some comment by the author.
 14. Nahjul-Balagha, Maxim: 147.
 15. Ibid.
 16. Khisal, 616:10; Bihar al-Anwar, LXX, 350: 47.
 17. The father of Heydar 'Ali Tehrani, the poet nicknamed "Mu'jjiza". (His story related to the Shaykh are given in, "Humility";

and "Your Father should not Turn into an Idol for you" Chapter five, Part I, and Chapter Two, Part 3, respectively.).

18. Akhund Mulla Muhammad Baqir, son of Akhund Mirza Jani Qazvini, was among the pious and combatant scholars of Qazvin, born in 1290 AH./ 1873 CE, and a student of Grand Ayatollah Akhund Khurasani (the author of al-Kifaya), Haj Shaykh Mulla Fatullah Khurasani, and Haj Muammad Hadi Tehrani in Najaf-i Ashraf. Also see: Ganjinay-i Danishmandan, IX, 219.

19. Mizan al-Hikmah, III, 1343.

20. Ibid. III, 1344: 4520.

21. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, XXIV, 16; Tahrir al-Wasila, P. 151, issue no. 20.

22. Al-Kafi, VI, 229: 7; Tahdhib al-Ahkam, IX, 80: 341.

23. Ayatollah Fahri quotes Agha Sayyid Muammad Reza Kashfi as saying: 'There was a butcher living in our neighborhood whose son came down with a severe stomachache. He appealed to Agha Kashfi, who in turn referred him to the reverend Shaykh. He told him: "You have slaughtered a calf before its mother's eyes, so this son of yours will not be cured."

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