

## Have You Considered the Lovers in the Cave?

Sometimes the Beloved invites His lovers to a banquet and hosts them for a very long duration in the state of 'union' in which state, nothing is beheld save the Beloved. The self also subsides. According to some leading mystics like the late Ayatullah Shāh ḥabībuddīn – the mentor of Imām Khumaynī in mysticism, the companions of the cave were privileged with such union. In volume 2 of his *Rashahat al-Ma'rif*, a collection of transcripts of his lessons, while describing a group of the *muqarrabīn* (those near to Allāh) he says:

یک دسته از سلسله بشر که مقربین اند لباس بقاء در دار فناء پوشیده، برای تکمیل مردم زندگی می کنند لکن دسته دیگر از همین سلسله در ریاضات و مجاهده حالشان حال جذبه می شود ومثل اصحاب کهف، گمان کنند که مردگانند، نه، بلکه از شدت عشق مجذوب حق شده و از خود خبری ندارند از شدت عشق مدت سیصد و نه سال به آن حال باقیمانده اند و پروردگار بدن آنها را حفظ مینمود تا اینکه مشیت حق تعلق گرفت که از آن حالشان برگردند این مقام ولایت و قرب تام است...

“A group among the human beings who are the near ones of God, clad in the attire of subsistence through God (*baqī' bi Allāh*) in the world of annihilation (*fanā'*), live to perfect other human beings; another faction among the same group (of human beings), however, in their spiritual struggle and exercises are overtaken by the state of Divine Attraction<sup>1</sup> (*jadhbah*), and like the companions of the cave, are thought by people to be dead; no; rather, out of intense love for God they have been overtaken by Divine attraction and are unaware of themselves; out of extreme Divine love they remain for three hundred and nine years in that state; and the Lord protected their bodies, until He wanted them to come back to their previous state of attention. This is the state of *wilāyah* (*nearness to God*) and complete

proximity to God...”<sup>2</sup>

These men despite being politically aware and active, were so spiritually elevated, that they were overtaken by Allāh’s (SwT) attraction for more than three hundred years, in which state they saw nothing but Allāh (SwT). They were oblivious of themselves too.

Some authoritative mystics like Imām Khumaynī opine that this state is no more ‘a banquet’. Here there is no more guest, host and a banquet. Only the Host remains. Rather, the Host who only was, “is”. In one of his sermons Imām Khumaynī says:

“Right from the Holy Prophet (s) until the Imām of time (upon whom be Allāh’s peace) all were afraid of sinning. Their sin was not what you and I possess. They comprehended such greatness that paying attention to the world of plurality was deemed as a major sin to them. Hadrat Sajjād (‘a), as has been narrated, would recite the following supplication until morning:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي التَّجَافِيَّ عَنْ دَارِ الْغُرُورِ، وَالْإِنَابَةَ إِلَى دَارِ الْخُلُودِ، وَالْإِسْتِعْدَادَ  
لِلْمَوْتِ قَبْلَ حُلُولِ الْفَوْتِ.

“O Allāh I implore Thee to save me from the house of deception and help me return to the abode of joy and provide me with readiness for death before the soul is taken.”<sup>3</sup>

This indeed is a great issue. When they consider themselves in front of the Greatness of God, they behold that they are nothing and have nothing. So is the reality. Other than Him there is no one and nothing. When they focus their attention to the realm of plurality, even if that is by Divine command [they consider themselves at fault]. This is the reason why the following saying is attributed to the Holy Prophet (s):

إِنَّهُ لِيُغَانُ عَلَى قَلْبِي، وَإِنِّي لَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً.

“In order that my heart should not gather rust, I seek the forgiveness of God seventy times a day.”<sup>4</sup>

He enjoyed a different station from that which we possess. They benefited from the Divine Banquet, and soared beyond that too. They were in the Divine Banquet and because they would comprehend their presence before God and at the same time call the people to the truth, they would sense turbidity in the heart. Paying attention to the manifestations of God, switching the attention from the Unseen to the

visible world – i.e. to the Divine manifestations, despite their divine nature, [for they perceive the entities as Divine manifestations] is a great sin [for them].

This is because since the unseen (*ghayb*) that they seek is ‘The perfect connection to God’ (*kamāl al-inqitā’ ilayk*), when they pay attention to the manifestations, it is a great sin... This is an abode of deception for Imām al-Sajjīd A. Paying attention to the celestial realm [too] is the abode of deception. Paying attention to the realm beyond *malakūt* also is *dār al-ghurūr* (the abode of deception). Attention to Almighty God, such that there is no more any banquet comprehensible is specific to the perfect friends of God. In that realm, there is no Divine Banquet any more.<sup>5</sup>

Then Imām Khumaynī pointing to a significant reality says:

“May God make us such that we do not deny these issues. Among the impediments of the path of humanness is to deny the stations of the wayfarers and confine everything to what we commonly comprehend.<sup>6</sup>”

*And All Praises belong to Allāh, the Lord of the Universe.*

*Holy Month of Ramadān 1425 AH [lunar]*

*Holy Proximity of Bibi Ma’sūmah (‘a)*

*Qum al-Muqaddasah*

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1. Some of the Muslim mystic saints would fall into such a swoon for a long duration of many days and would then come into realization and attention to this world of plurality. Such a state is narrated about the Egyptian mystic poet Ibn al-Farid.
  2. Haydar Tahrānī (mu’jizah), *Lessons of Ayatullāh Marzī Māhammad ‘Alī Shāhābādī*, *Rashahāt al-Ma’arīf*, vol. 2, pp. 9–10, published by Intishārāt-e-Payāme Azād, first print.
  3. *Mafātīh al-Jinn*, pg. 236.
  4. *Chehel Hadīth*, pg. 342.
  5. *Sahīfeye Imām*, vol. 20, pp. 267–269.
  6. *Sahīfeye Imām*, vol. 20, pg.269.

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