

Kaaba is holier and greater than we imagine. In reality, such things do not increase the dignity and majesty of the Kaaba, nor does the absence of such things decrease it. Hence, the gold tombs, gates made of gold and silver and the embellishments on the graves of the divine saints such as the shrines of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husain and Imam Reza (a.s.) have to be considered as such. Their ranks are neither elevated with these things nor are they lowered in the absence of them. For example, Imam Hasan's grave which is exposed to sunshine and is without a shrine and tomb is not superior to and worthier than the majestic shrine of Imam Husain which is bedecked with pure gold and other ornaments.

Nevertheless, we celebrate their position and respect their shrines by gifting valuable stones to them and gilding their tombs.

Sabir: Do such things make the divine saints look great in the eye people?

Baqir: Yes, of course. Let me make it further clear for you. If you go the Jews' cemeteries, you will see that the graves of their scholars are ruined with no rooms or tombs over them but if you go to Christians' cemeteries, the situation is quite different over there; on the graves there are buildings with gold and silver decorations. Now you being a Muslim who is rejecting both religions, if you compare between the two cemeteries, which one of them looks grander to you, the Jewish cemetery or the Christian one?

Sabir: Naturally, by seeing the two cemeteries, I will have a majestic picture of Christian scholars and a poor image of the Jewish scholars in my mind.

Baqir: That is why I say that the buildings and tombs made by Shiites and Sunnis on the graves of Imams and prophets and the decorations are simply to honor and sanctify their positions.

Sabir: Yes, you are utterly right. However, this motive can abolish the lavishness of these acts.

Baqir: Yes, not only it would not be lavishness then but such acts of sanctifying and honoring the divine saints eventually lead to appreciation and sanctification of Islam because whatever upholds and glorifies Islam, it is considered to be a sign of God. The Holy Quran says:

و من يعظم شعائر الله فانها من تقوى القلوب

And whoever respecteth the signs of God verily it is (the reflection) of the piety of the hearts<sup>5</sup>.

For this reason, decorating the graves and shrines of the great and pious servants of God is considered to be a sign of God. Whoever upholds it will indeed be given a lot of reward.

Sabir: I really thank you for your time and for enlightening me about decorating shrines. I used to think a lot about it before this but I could not make me believe that such acts are valid at all. Certainly, you helped me find what I had lost.

Baqir: I hope you do not maintain doubt about decorating and embellishing these places, do you?

Sabir: No, I have no doubt and I am now pretty sure that this act is recommended and based on the verse of the Holy Quran.

Baqir: Anyhow, I am ready to have a dialogue with you about any such topics in order to throw light on the ambiguities you have in your mind.

Sabir: Thank you very much and may God grant you success.

1. Isra (17): 26-27

2. Ibn-e Khaldun, Abdul Rahman bin Khaldun Hazrami, was born in the year 732 of the Islamic calendar in Tunisia. He is originally from Andalusia (Spain). In his book "Al-Ehata fi Akhbar Gharnata" Ibn-e Al-Khatib describes him as under: "He (Ibn-e Khaldun) is from Tunisia. He has explained "Burdah" in such an innovative and beautiful manner that it stands a proof of his strong memory and comprehension power. He summarized many of Averroes [Ibn-e Rushd]'s books. He wrote a useful expository book on intellectual sciences (philosophy and such likes) for Sultan Abu Salim.

He died in the year 808 A.H. in Egypt. One of his most celebrated works is the famous "History of Ibn-e Khaldun". (Vide History of Ibn-e Khaldun , p. 1, p.353, printed and published by Al-Turath Al-Arabi Publishers', Beirut, Lebanon).

3. This book is the first volume of his history book which consists of six different chapters the first of which deals with the impact of environment on behavior, suburban life, victories, dealings, industry, sciences, etc.

4. Ibn-e Khaldun, History of Ibn-e Khaldun, vol.1 p. 353 first book, chapter 6 part 4 "The Great Mosques and Buildings in the World".

5. Al-Hajj (22), verse 32



## Decorating Shrines

Sabir: Salamun alaikum  
Baqir: Alaikum-ussalam warahmatullah

Sabir: Welcome to our city.

Baqir: Well, Sabir, I am here to visit my cousin.

Sabir: You have honored us by your coming; we will be further honored, if you would stay with us for today.

Baqir: I am overwhelmingly preoccupied with a lot of work. I have come here simply to visit my close relatives and I apologize you for not being able to come with you.

Sabir: How come! We are seeing each other after a decade and you are telling me that you do not have time to sit with me for an hour. I believe I have brotherhood right on you. What is more, I have been having a discussion with a Shia brother about a Sunni –Shia topic. Since I believe you are a reliable person, I would be more than willing to talk to you in this regard. Hopefully, you will help clarify things for me. That is why; I want you not to decline my invitation.

Baqir: If that is the case, I will come with you.

The two friends then moved to Sabir's house. After exchanging a few words, Baqir asked: What were you and that Shia brother talking about?

Sabir: Well, we were talking about the permissibility of decorating and embellishing the graves of prophets, Imams, saints and scholars with silver, gold and other decorative objects.

Baqir: What is the problem with it?

Sabir: Isn't it haram?

Baqir: Why should it be haram?

Sabir: Do the dead people in the graves benefit from these decorations?

Baqir: No.

Sabir: That is why I say it is extravagance, squandering and wastefulness. God says in this regard:

«ولاتبذّر تبذيرا\* إن المبذّرین كانوا إخوان الشياطين...»

And squander not (thy earnings) wastefully. Verily the squanders are the brethren of the satans<sup>1</sup>.

Baqir: What do you say about the decorations of the Kaaba, the gold and silver that are used to decorate it?

Sabir: I do not have anything to say, I do not know anything about it actually?

Baqir: Ever since the period of ignorance up until today a lot of decorative and gold objects have been dedicated to the Kaaba. Ibn-e Khaldun<sup>2</sup> writes in the "Introduction"<sup>3</sup> to his book that, "nations have been sanctifying the Ka'bah since the time of ignorance. Kings such as Kasra used to send a lot of valuable gifts to and for Kab'ah. The story of the swords and the two gold dares which Abdul Mutalib found while digging the Zamzam well is famous. When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) conquered Makkah, he found two million gold dinars in the well within the Kaaba sanctuary. The gold which weighed two hundred quintals was gifts from the kings to Ka'bah. Ali Ibn-e Abi Talib (a.s.) asked the Holy Prophet (pbuh) if they could use the wealth to finance the war against the pagans. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) did not allow the money to be used for such a purpose.

Abu Bakr also did not the gold objects.

Ibn-e Khaldun continues by saying: "Abu Wail narrates from Sheibah bin Uthman who said: "I was in the company of Umar and I heard him say: I am planning to distribute all the existing gold and silver among the Muslims.

I said: What do you want to do!?" [you do not have the right to do so.]

He said: Why?

I said: The Prophet (pbuh) and Abu Bakr who were Muslims' rulers before you did not do so.

Umar said: [If so,] we should follow them."<sup>4</sup>

Now I ask you Sabir, was the Ka'bah using the huge quantity of gold and silver? Or was Almighty God – Glory be to Him – benefiting from it?

Sabir: No, never.

Baqir: Despite that, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) did not touch the enormous wealth nor did he make use of it. It was at a time when Islam was in dire need of such a wealth to spread itself across the world.

One might ask as to why the Holy Prophet (pbuh) did not use the wealth to help his divine mission succeed. The answer is clear; the existence of this great amount of wealth in the Kaaba would further increase the glory and magnificence of the Kaaba in the eye of the people. Of course, we should not forget the point that the