

Selected Tributes on Bahā' -ud-Dīn 'Āmilī

(Chronological Order)

He was exceedingly praised by Al Muḥibbī and others, and mentioned by 'Alī bin Ma'sūm, who said: he was born in B'albak in 943/1546, and on Abī al Ma'ālī that he was born in Qazwin. According to the first author, al 'Āmilī was taken by his father to Bilād al 'Ajam. When he grew up, he started travelling. He toured for thirty years and met a number of renowned men, and then he entered Egypt and wrote a book entitled *al Kashkūl* where he collected every original event from different sciences. He later came to Jerusalem avoiding the company of people, but his virtues were not hidden. Al-Raḍī al-Qudsī was his student in geometry and astronomy. He then went to ash-Shām and arrived in Damascus and met al-Burīnī without recognizing him. The latter did not appreciate him as he deserves, but when they conversed, al-Burīnī stood up and said: “You must be al-Bahā' al-Ḥarithī”, and two embraced. Al-Bahā' asked that his presence be kept secret and then departed for Aleppo disguised as a dervish.

He has a long renowned mystery. Al Muḥibbī mentioned him in his autobiography. He wrote a collection of classical poetry where he assembled creativity, accuracy and delicacy.

Archbishop Yusuf ad-Dibs,

Fi al-Mashahīr al Suriyyīn fi Hādha al-Qarn: 6, al-Bahā' al-'Āmilī” in *Tārikh Suryah [The History of Syria]*, vol 4, book 7, *fi Tarikh Suryah fi Ayyam al-Salātīn al-Uthmanyīn al-Izhām*, Beirut, al-Maṭba'ah al-'Umumiyah, 1903, pp. 230-231.

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Bahā' -ud-Dīn surpassed his father ash-Shaykh Hussein Bin 'Abd-as-Ṣamad al-'Āmilī, 918-984/1512-1576, in his knowledge and reputation. The Persians knew him as “Shaykhū Baha'ī” and he was promoted to the rank of Shaykh al-Islam in Isfahan where he was one of the most

brilliant personalities in the court of Shah ‘Abbās. Returning from the pilgrimage, he passed by Jabal ‘Amil , his first hometown, disguised as a dervish. Among the books that he was known among people for was one containing fatwa and legal proceedings. Beside this book, he wrote *al Kashkūl*, a comprehensive book, including information, anecdotes and literature, similar to a literary memoir. It was published in Egypt. There is a copy engraved on stone published in Bilad Faris.

Philip Hitti,

“Al-Matāwila” in *Lubnan fit-Tārikh mundu Aqdam al- ‘Usur at-Tarikhyyah Ḥatta Yawmina Hādha [Lebanon in History from the earliest eras till our today]*, trans. by Dr Anis Frayḥa, reviewed by Dr. Niqula Ziade, Beirut, New York, Mu’assasat Franklin al-Musahimah lit-tiba‘ah wan- nashr, 1959, p. 499.

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The exceptional mind that al-Bahā’ī was endowed with, and the intellect that wandered in all horizons, firmly establishing him in the sciences of his time and the heritage of the ancients, produced and abundantly. The big number of his compilations is a proof of his sublime determination and striving for knowledge. His writings brought what is new and original in every science and art (...) and constituted an encyclopedia reflecting the different learnings of his age (...). The sources relate that the number of his writings exceed seventy seven books apart from his poems and – Argos-metered-poems (arājīz) , explanations and references on his writings and the writing of contemporary other scholars and his students.¹

His writings were significant in the learning of his age. It was not merely a specific information on the different studies, but it polarized a general intellectual movement arousing around it several explanations and comments even three centuries after his death, for what it contained was the summit of production.

¹ Al Ghadīr, 11/260-262.

His explanations on Algebra were the best of what the scholars or those working on Algebra in Arabic could come to.¹

The explication on his books exceeded those works, and the notes on his writings surpassed double their number. These books were also translated into Persian and some were translated from Persian into Arabic for he excelled and composed in Persian, and his poetry in Persian was more than his poetry in Arabic². Besides, some of his writings were translated into European languages, among them his famous book *Khulāṣt al-Ḥisāb wal-Handasah*, translated into German by Professor Nesselman in Berlin in 1843 and published there.³ This book was translated into many Eastern languages, Persian for example, and considering its importance, it was also translated into French in 1864⁴. There are several explanations on the book not published in Arabic and Persian, and other published footnotes approximating forty.⁵

Muḥammad Kāzīm Makkī,

Al-Ḥarakāt al Fikriyyah wal-‘Adabiyah fī Jabal ‘Āmil, [Intellectual and Literary movements in Mount ‘Āmil] al Tab‘ah al Ūla, Beirut: Dar al Andalus, 1963, pp.100-101.

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Al Baha’i was endowed with a brilliant mind and creative thinking. He was able while roaming in Arabic and Islamic countries to acquire a general culture and wide knowledge that helped him to write a number of religious, literary and scientific works.

His writings constituted an encyclopedia grouping the different learnings of his age (...). It was the center of gravity in the sciences of his epoch not simply as specific information on the different studies, but as a general intellectual movement assembling around it many explications

¹ *Da‘irat al-Ma‘arif al-Lubnanyyah*, 6,274.

² Al malouf, al ‘Irfan, 23/54.

³ Sarkis, Mu‘jam a Matbu‘at. 1363.

⁴ Zaydān, Tarikh Adab al Lughat al ‘Arabiya, 3,353.

⁵ Al Ghadir, 11/265-267.

and comments even for more than three centuries after his death as it included the summit of production.

The explications on his books are triple of what he composed and wrote. His books were so renowned that they were translated into Persian. Also, the books that he wrote in Persian were translated into Arabic and to many other European languages among them his famous book *Khulāṣat al-Ḥisāb wal-Handasah*.

‘Abd-ul Majīd al-Ḥurr,

Ma ‘ālim al-‘Adab al-‘Āmilī. Min Bidayat al Qarn al Rabi ‘ ‘al-Hijrī / al Thāmin ‘Ashar al- Milādī, [The Literature of Mount ‘Āmil from the beginning of the fourth century AH/seventeenth century AD] Beirut, Jami‘at al Qidīs Yusuf, Kullyyat al-‘Adāb wal ‘Ulum al-Insaniyyah, Far‘ al-‘Ādāb a ‘Arabiyyah, Uṭruḥah U‘iddat li-Nayl Shahādāt al Doctorat (Ḥalaqat-Thalithat) fil-Lughat al-‘Arabiyyah wa Adābuha, Ishraf ad-Doctor Aḥmad Makki, 1981. P.244.

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Al-Bahā’ī lived in an age loaded with extremism in all aspects. Wise men, scholars, men of Ḥadīth, Dervish, puritans, worshippers and Sufis lived beside thousands of crooks, conjurers and licentious, and between them all complete rupture and deep rooted enmity. The philosophers were divided into peripatetic and illuminists and the jurists into interpreters and narrators (...) each party fought the other in word and deed, and accused the other of foolishness, apostasy or hypocrisy. This is apart from the belief in astrology, superstitions, delusions, and magic.

(...) In this turbulent age when people departed from the limits of moderation, Al-Bahā’ī rose above fanaticism and criticized the mistakes of others without distinction. In his Arabic and Persian poems he criticized the legalists who ruminate the opinion of others taking advantage of their religious status to deceive the common people, or approach the Sultans. He also accused the Sufis who overpowered the *Ṭarīqah*, the way, over the Truth, and the commoners who believe every whooper. Also, his Sufi and Gnostic tendencies permeated all his Persian poetry.

The summary of what he intends to say is that man cannot reach the truth except through solitude, away from gossip and from treacherous people. Solitude, however, is not solitude if it is not covered with the garment of asceticism, and asceticism is not genuine if it is not linked with true knowledge that lead to the truth which is molded with fear and awe.¹

Al Shaykh Al-Bahā'ī pursued, while in Iran, a different life from his contemporaries amongst the scholars who had the same or a lower status than his. They exaggerated their self-glorification, not going out except with escorts resembling the parade of kings.² He, on the other hand, used to visit the districts of poor people, enter their huts, sit with them, and enquire about them. It was recounted that Shah 'Abbās wanted to draw his attention in a kind manner that these visits do not fit the status of Sheikh al-Islam, so one day he told him: “ I heard that one of the great scholars is frequenting the huts of the poor and the vile and this is not appropriate”. The Sheik replied: “This is not true for I am often in these places and it never happened that I saw any of the big scholars there”.³

Dalal 'Abbās,

“Al Muqaddimah” *al Tadayyun wal-Nifāq bi Lisan al-Qiṭṭ wal-Fār* (trans. from Persian, and edited, by Bahā'ī-ad-Dīn al 'Āmilī, 1st edition, London-Beirut, Riad ar-Rayyes, lil Kutub wan- Nashr, 1996. pp. 15-16, 18,21-22.

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Considering his works, he is counted in the eleventh century Hegira one of the most brilliant, renowned and influential scholars. Apart from his high Islamic culture and his mastery of jurisprudence and religious studies, he was knowledgeable in Literature, Geometry, Arithmetic, Algebra, Astronomy, wisdom , 'Ilm al-Kalām and other sciences that were not hovered by others as it was said. His fame in religious studies prevailed and in spite of this he was known to have used the atomic energy and to discover some of the laws in sound reflections [...] and that he used this discovery in some of the mosques in Isfahan where you were able to hear the voice of

¹Al-Qasīdah al-Khamisah min Mathnawi al -Khuz wal-Ḥalwa, Tarjamat Nafsi, p.122

²A^cyan ash-Shi^ca, vol 7, p. 145 Namadhij li-Mithli Ha'ula' al-'Ulama'

³ A^cyan ash-Shi^ca,, vol.9. p.236 and Mustadrak al-Wasa'il. Vol. 3, p.440.

the Imam wherever you were in the Mosque. If the Imam, however, moved one step from his place then nobody will hear him except those around him. He also set rules for the plain geometrical and dimensional patterns [...] it is also said that he made a watch with continual movement not needing to be rounded , apart from several other matters that we select from due to its peculiarity and because it made the man a legendary figure.

Muḥammad ‘Abd ul-Karīm an-Numayrī,

“Tarjamat al-Mu’allif” inl *Mikkhlāt*, by al Sheikh al ‘Alīm Bahā’-ud-Dīn, Muḥammad bin al- Ḥusayn al-‘Āmilī who died in 1031 AH¹, published, corrected and footnoted by Muḥammad ‘Ab- ul Karīm aa-Numayrī, vol 1, Beirut, Lebanon, Manshurāt Muḥammad ‘Ali Beydoun, Dar-al Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997, pp. 4-5.

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Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Ḥussayn bin ‘Abd as-Ṣamad bin ‘Iz-id-Din al-Ḥarīthi al-‘Āmilī al-Ḥamadani surnamed Baha’ud-Din known as Al-Baha’ al-‘Āmilī and Munla Baha’-ud-Din, the most known of the surnamed ‘Āmilī. Ibn Ma’ṣūm wrote his biography as well as ash-Shihab al-Khafagi, Abu-l-Ma’ālī al-Talūbī, al-Badī‘ and al-Muḥibbi .They elaborated in praising him and describing his knowledge, virtues, kindness, poems and prose (... and in his writings) what attests to his intelligence and high spirit and abundance of merits (...) His reputation spread in the different districts so students and scholars came to him. He was admired and approached by ‘Abbās Shah who did not separate from him, took along in his travels and acknowledged him as chief of scholars. His conditions improved so he took a vast abode which became a refuge for orphans, widows, students, poor people and the needy. He was in spite of his affluent circumstances pious and indifferent to the world, desiring to concentrate on travelling, teaching and writing. He was not able at the beginning to leave the Shah, so he started composing the magnificent works (...).

Al-Mu’allim Butrus al-Bustani,

“‘Amilī” in *Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif*, vol. 11, *Min-al Alif ila Abu-l ‘Amlāk*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah, (n.d.), p. 462.

¹It is indicated that the book of *al Mikhlat* that is published is attributed wrongly to al ‘Amilī , consult in this matter Dalal ‘Abbas in her book *Baha’ al Din al ‘Amili adiban wa faqihan wa ‘aliman*, vol 1, Beirut, Dar al Mu’arikh al ‘Arabi, 2010, pp277-288.

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As for Philosophy, al Bahā'ī embarked in all its spheres. We mention the most important: *Al-Jiz'ul ladhī lā Yatajazza', Imtina' 'alā Mutanāhī, Al Aqalim 'ind al*

Masihiyyīn, Ash-Shu'ūr wa Ma'tāh, Al- 'ululiyah, al Nafs al-Insaniah., Al Sa'ādah, al-Wajib al-Wujūd wal-Mawjūd, al-Ma'rifah.[the indivisible, the finite, Regions for the Christians, the human soul, happiness, the given and the known]

We summarize his opinion in some of these works:

The human Spirit

Al Bahā'ī's opinion on the human soul is that of the Sufis. It is kind and Godly, spiritual, and far from corporeality. Its relation to the body is that of devising and leadership. He saw it in three parts: the leading soul, the peaceful soul and the blaming soul.

If it is subdued to the animal instinct and the nature of the body, it will be the ordering spirit commanding pleasures and sensual desires. It is the abode of evil. It is the source of low morals and the source of evil actions.

If it commands the animal spirit and is subject to the Divine spirit, implanted with satisfactory virtues, it is the assured spirit expecting in front of Jerusalem, free from abomination persisting in obedience longing for exalted degrees.

If it does not possess any of the virtuous morals, nor the destructive vices, but tends towards the good at times and to what is evil at other times, and if she blames herself if something emanates from her, then it is the blaming soul, enlightened to the degree of her awareness in the moments of inattentiveness.

Duty

Ash-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī believes that it is our duty to thank God. It is, in fact, the perfect duty. The mind has no choice but to realize this fact, for whoever looks at himself and the hidden and apparent potentials that he is endowed with, and the strange composition and several elements that encompasses his making, acknowledges the inevitability of the existence of a Necessary

Being because he is the origin of this subtle constitution and its cause. Thanking Reason for the kindness of the necessary existence is a duty. Doing the contrary is contention and fallacy which deserve punishment, for the responsibility resides in reason.

The duty that al-Bahā'ī is mentioning the duty of reason and not that of law. He linked morals with duty of reason. He believed that good action is beautiful in itself, while bad action is detestable in itself for reason orders and asserts it apart from the rules of the law and religion. This is why al-Bahā'ī showed indignation towards the people of the Law because they constructed weak proofs to negate the rational in beauty and hideousness.

Kamal Yusuf el Hage,

“Imam Shi'ī min Lubnan: al-Bahā'ī (1547-1622/ 953-1053)” in *Mu'allafāt al-Kāmilah*, vol. eleven in *Falsafah al-Lubnanyyah [The Complete Works: vol. 11: the Lebanese Philosophy]*, first publication, Jūniyah, Bayt al-Fikr, Kamal Yūsuf el Haj Foundation, 2014, pp.824-825, 829-832, 840-841.

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