

Selected Writings from Bahā' ud-Dīn Al-Āmilī

(Chronological Order)

It is related that a cat was wandering unintentionally until it reached a distant desert where it was surprised by a wild lion. The lion followed the cat, showed it great affection and rubbed its head and ears saying: Oh poor cat, you belong to our species, but you are weak and impotent while we are strong and courageous. What brought you to this state is the harm inflicted on you by the sons of Adam.

I swear the world is full of turbulence and evil as a result of the sons of Adam's cunning and depravity. Oh how pleasant it would be if one of the sons of Adam falls in my hands to take revenge from him for your sake.

And so it happened that a woodchopper was collecting wood in that place. As soon as the lion saw him, he precipitated towards him, spoke, scolded and reprimanded him immensely. The woodchopper was perplexed and started trembling. The axe fell from his hand and he remained in his place confused and disturbed.

The lion said: You sons of Adam. You exploited the world for your benefits. You became arrogant and oppressive to an extent that one of our species (meaning the cat) came to you and you made it reach this stage of weakness and skinniness.

I am going now to grind my claws and tear you into pieces and make your body the prey to straying foxes so that no one of your species dare to aggress any of our kind.

The poor woodchopper said, while trembling frightfully: you are the king of beasts and the master of courageous heroes, you will not be considered a hero if you treat me severely without giving me the opportunity to defend myself. Have you not heard the stories of heroes? If the adversary is petty, weak and servile, then forgiving him when you are stronger is considered manly and magnanimous. If the possibility of forgiving is weak, then manliness requires that he

be given time and be provided with weapons to prepare for the dueling. One of the conditions of heroism is not to kill an unprepared enemy.

The lion said: Oh son of Adam! It is not possible to free you from my hands, but I will give you a limited time to prepare the tools of war.

The woodchopper said: Oh lion, I do not have my weapons with me now, and where I would have them in this place. What I have is in my house.

The lion said: Go to your house and fetch your weapons.

On hearing these words, the woodchopper calmed down and started to find a way to save himself from this ferocious enemy. He then said to the lion: I fear that you will take advantage of my absence to escape. All my efforts and toil will then be in vain. The lion said: I swear by whatever belief you desire, that I will not leave my actual place until your return.

The woodchopper replied: Oh king! if you are truthful and you want me to go confidently, allow me to tie your hands and feet with a cord to the trunk of a tree to go and bring my weapons. I will free you when I return and then we will fight our duel.

Oh king! I apologize if my words imply insolence and lack of propriety, but I have the courage to ask because I know that the king is magnanimous and courageous. The king, however, is free at the end. The lion accepted the woodchopper's proposal despite his savagery and bestiality, and said: could it occur to you oh son of Adam that I am afraid of your weapons? Come and let me swear on what you desire, then go quickly and bring your weapons for the duel.

With utmost fear and panic, the woodchopper approached the lion and tied its hands and feet with the cord he was carrying to gather the wood. He then calmed down and his anxiety and fear faded away. He took the axe and started hitting the lion, not paying heed to the lion's roar until the lion said: All what I heard about the sons of Adam is less than what I endured from you. I know now that no one is able to defy man's power of mind that the sons of Adam possess.

You see oh cat: if the Sufis are proud of the dignity of their guides, the seekers of knowledge are proud of reason and religious law and the blessings of the Koranic verses and Hadith.

Could it be that you have not heard oh mouse about the discussion of the determinists with the jester of the world?

The mouse answered: It is preferable that you clarify what I ignore.

The cat said: It is recounted that one of the Abbasid caliphs allowed one of the scholars to daily lead the people in prayer. The scholar was a determinist believing that man is compelled and not free to choose. The jester was rational, knowledgeable, and close to the caliph, and was also an enemy of the determinists. This is why he used to go to the mosque and address harshly the one leading the prayer until he was forced to leave the mosque. He went once to the mosque carrying a piece of tile and hid secretly in a certain place. When the time of prayer started, the determinist scholar began his sermon. He said that suffering will not afflict the devil in the resurrection day because hell is fire and the devil is from fire also. A specie is not harmed by its kind.

He then read another word to mean that good and evil come from God. The jester wanted to leave, but he controlled himself until the man read another phrase meaning that God is seen in the day of Judgment.

On hearing this phrase, the jester's patience came to an end. He left his hiding, and threw a piece of the tile that he was carrying on the preacher's head. He cut his forehead, then went out.

The supporters of the preacher accused the jester, and the caliph was angry with the jester. While thinking of the kind of punishment to inflict on the jester, the latter entered bareheaded and barefooted, and without greeting anybody, approached and sat in front of the assembly.

When the caliph saw the jester, he blamed him incessantly saying: You fool and insolent, how are you permitted to disdain and aggress the Imam of our era?

The jester answered: Oh Caliph of the time. Do not tire yourself in discussing and searching the origin of things: this man expounded three questions and I solved these questions with a piece of clay.

If the Caliph permitted and listened to me, he will realize that what I did was only an answer to his questions.

The Caliph said: clarify so that we know?

The jester approached the preacher and said: Oh man, you mentioned that the devil does not suffer from fire in the resurrection day because the species is not harmed by its kind.

The man said: yes.

The jester said: what is the kind of tile that I hit you with?

The preacher said: it is from the soil.

The jester said: Why were you injured then when I threw it on you? The preacher kept silent.

The jester continued and said: Oh Imam of the Faithful. You also said that God is seen the day of resurrection.

He said: yes.

The jester said: show me the pain.

The preacher said: How can pain be seen?

The jester said: he who cannot see the pain, how can he see God?

The preacher kept silent without uttering a word.

The jester proceeded to say: Oh Imam. You yourself said that good and evil come from God.

He said: yes.

The jester said: since this is the matter, it is with God's consent that I threw the tile on you. Why then were you hurt and angry when I am obeying God's commands?

The preacher was ashamed and kept silent after this discussion. He gathered his gown and left the assembly, for sunshine causes blindness to a bat.

Oh mouse: do you have anything to say now?

The mouse said: oh cat! I have a lot to say, but time is tight. Let us postpone the conversation till another time.

The cat said: oh mouse! Why do you extend the conversation, if you have a word, say it, or let us believe religious scholars and be careful from the embellishment of pretenders of Sufism and their slips.

The mouse said: our condition together is similar to the condition of the thief and the merchant.

The cat said: and how is that?

The mouse said:

It was recounted that a merchant was walking solely in a desert after being outdistanced by the caravan. A highway man happened to be in that desert. Seeing him, the merchant was perplexed, disturbed and in great fear. The thief attacked the merchant screaming in his face: “what are you carrying”. Terrified, the merchant kept silent but the thief became furious, pulled out his weapon in the face of the merchant and caused him to fall from his horse. He then stole his clothes and money, mounted the horse and ordered the poor merchant to kiss his hands and feet and bless what he looted from him.

Bahā’-ud-Dīn Al-Āmilī,

“Reason is the Master of Judgment” in al-Tadayyun wal-Nifāq bi Lisān al-qitṭ wal-Fār [Piety and Lies on the Tongue of a Cat and a Mouse], translated and edited by Dalāl ‘Abbās (From Persian) first edition, London- Beirut, Riad al Rayyis, for books and publication, 1996, pp.101-107.

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The Souls are Four

From Kumail bin Ziad, he said: I asked my master the Prince of the Faithful Ali, peace be on him, saying: Oh Prince of the Faithful, I want you to introduce my soul to me, he said: oh Kumail and which soul do you want me to introduce. I said: Oh Master is it more than one soul? He said: oh Kumail, it is four: the thriving vegetative, the bestial sensual, the saintly articulate, and the divinely universal. Each has five potentials and two peculiarities. The five potentialities

of the thriving vegetative are: grasping, attracting, digesting, motivating, and organization. The two characteristics are growth/diminution, and emanating from the liver. The five potentialities of the bestial sensual are: hearing, vision, smell, taste, touch, and the two peculiarities are satisfaction /wrath, and emanation from the heart.

The saintly articulate has five potentialities: thought memory, knowledge, discernment, and has no emanation resembling mostly the kingly souls. Its two characteristics are fairness and wisdom. The Godly universal has five potentialities: existence with annihilation, happiness with wretchedness, power with servility, poverty with wealth, and patience in disaster with two peculiarities assent and surrender. The latter emanates from God and to Him it returns. God the Almighty said: (I breathed in him from my soul) He the Exalted said: “Go back to God content and satisfied oh peaceful soul.” Reason is central to all.

The Impression of the Images in the Senses

The enlightened researchers denied the absolute impress of the images in the senses because what is understood can double in magnitude what is known by the senses. They repeated what is usually believed, that the soul is directed by the image though it is smaller than what the visible appears to be. This is in itself null for understanding the value of a thing is in witnessing not in deduction. This is why it is impossible that the mirror conveys the correct impression due to the different positions of the viewers. The image is seen to be sunken in the depth behind the mirror depending on the distance one is from the picture and which could not be sufficient to the depth of the mirror. The truth for these in the imagined images and the images of the mirror is that there is a wedge suspended nowhere, but found in another world amidst complete detachment and perfect attachment called the ideal world, resembling a mirror and a phantom seen there by the soul. They denied preserving partial meanings in the memory, for a person might try hardly to remember part of it without avail, but might then remember it exactly in itself. He would have remembered it after strong examination if it were memorized in some of his faculties. The meanings for them are preserved in the heavenly imprinted soul, so are the universals kept in the abstracts. Yes they allowed its preservation in the memory to profit from its use later.

The reality of the discernment for them: The addition of the luminosity of the soul for the discerning, and this addition might depend on the use of the senses, or might actualize without it.

The souls stripped of bodies might be certain that what is witnessed is not engravings in certain bodily potentialities, and witnessing rests with the soul as long as it lasts.

Account on the Difference of People in their Delectations

Look at the boy in his first movement and discernment. In him appears love of playing to an extent that playing for him becomes the most delightful thing. Later on appears his love for entertainment, wearing colored clothes, riding fancy animals and playing is minimized and even disapproved. Later on appears in him enjoyment of women, having a house and servants and he despises what is not his. Later on still appears in him the last of the worlds' enjoyment: love of prestige and superiority, amassing money, pride in his collaborators, followers and children. To these categories God the Almighty pointed out saying glory in His words: "Life in this world is play, distractions, ornament and boasting". Later on the joy of knowing God the Almighty, approaching and loving Him, performing the duties of adoration, and the soul's appeasement in Him might appear. This will enable the person to despise all the previous interests and become surprised at those who are engulfed in it. As the seeker of prestige and money mocks at the interest of the boy in playing for example with the walnut, likewise the possessor of knowledge and love mocks at the seeker who feels accomplished in attaining prestige and money.

As Paradise is the abode of enjoyments, and pleasures differ according to the types of people, then, it follows without doubt, that if the delights of Paradise are varied as is mentioned in the Holy Books and uttered by the people of the Law, God's blessing be on them, then each kind will be granted what suits his nature. Every party is content in what it has and people are enemies of what they ignore.

Sadness and Anger

The reason of sadness is when the soul is attacked by what is above it. The reason of anger is when the soul is attacked by what is beneath it. Anger is an outward movement and sadness is an inward movement. Anger's appearance causes dominance and revenge while sadness leads to introvert sickness and frailty. This is why death is a cause of sadness and not anger.

Division of the Soul and its Specification

If the human soul tends towards animalism and the body, then it is the commanding soul that leads to sensual delights and desires and attracts the heart to the lower part which is the abode of

evil and the source of low character and bad deeds. God the Almighty said: “The soul is the source of evil”.

If it dominates the animal power, follows the kingly power, and is endowed with praiseworthy qualities, then it is the peaceful soul raised beside the Holy World free of all squalor, abiding by the devotions longing for the most exalted until he addresses her saying “Oh peaceful soul return to your lord satisfied and pleasing, enter into my worship and my paradise”.

And if she is devoid of good qualities or the destructive vices, but tends at times to what is good and at other times to what is evil, and appears when at fault to blame herself, then she is the blaming soul who reached the truth to the extent of her sense of awareness in the year of inattentiveness, and started to amend herself in godliness and truth. And whenever her original disposition failed to perceive the light of awakening, then God swore and said “I will not take oath in the blaming soul.”

The Truth of the Soul

The beliefs in the truth of the soul, meaning what is indicated in the word I, are many. What is known and mentioned in the famous books are fourteen beliefs: first: this concrete temple expressed as body; second is the heart meaning the specific pine flesh organ ... the third is the brain... the fourth are parts not separated in the heart which is the belief of the regulation and its followers. The fifth are the original members generating from disease. Sixth is the temperament. Seventh is the animal spirit. Similar to it is what is said that a gentle mass circulating in the body as water in roses and fat in sesame. The eighth is water. The ninth is fire and instinctive heat. The tenth is the soul. The eleventh is the duty which, as they say, is almighty and greatly elevated. The twelfth are the four pillars. The thirteenth is a special image dwelling in the body, the belief in the two natures. The fourteenth is an independent body devoid of bodily elements and accidents, directing and managing the body and death is the end of this connection. This is the belief of the Divine prophets, the great Sufis and the illuminationists and what the *Mutakallimūn* agreed upon such as al-Imam ar-Razi, al-Ghazali, and al-Muḥaqqiq at-Tūṣī and other scholars. This is also what the Heavenly Books and the tales of the prophets mentioned and what the sensory gestures and the revealed inclinations led to.

Bahā'ud-Dīn Al-Āmilī

“The soul and some of its actions” in *al-Kashkoul*, Tome 2, Volume 3, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, Dar al-Kutub al-Īlmiyyah, Muḥammad Ālī Baydūn Publication, 1998, p.5-6, 154-155,162-163,199; Vol. 5, p.306-307, 309-310.

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(From Greek Philosophers)

(Socrates the wise)

Socrates the wise ate slightly and wore harsh garments. One of the philosophers wrote to him: you consider mercy to be necessary for all who possess a soul, and you do not have compassion on your own soul by your eating and dressing. Answering back Socrates wrote: you blamed me for dressing harshly and one could love the ugly and leave the beautiful, and you blamed me for eating scarcely, but I eat to live, and you live to eat, Peace be with you. The philosopher wrote: I know the reason for your scanty eating but what is the reason for your rare talking? He answered: what I need to say or leave to people is not for you, and occupying yourself with what does not concern you is useless, and the glorious Truth endowed you with two ears and a tongue to hear double of what you mention, not to say more than you hear.

Obedience and Adoration in Plato

Plato's Divine adoration was the following: Oh cause of causes, ancient and is still the origin of first principles, who does what he wills, preserve in me healthy soul as long as I am in the world of nature.

Pythagoras's Invocation

Pythagoras's invocation was: Donator of life save me from the filth of nature and lead me to you directly for no end to what is distorted.

Socrates' Monotheism

The most special feature that the Almighty can be described by is in being existent and everlasting because knowledge and potency, generosity and wisdom are part of His existence. Life is a general attribute for all and eternity and perpetuity is in being everlasting and eternity is a general attribute for all. He believed that human souls existed prior to the bodies and it joined the bodies to complete it so when the bodies cease, the souls return to their fullness.

And he told the king when the latter wanted to kill him. Socrates is in love and the king is capable solely to break love, love can be broken and water will go back to the sea.

From Socrates' sayings

Socrates the wise Pythagoras's disciple said: If wisdom approaches, desires obey reason, and if wisdom turns away, reason serves the desires.

And he said: Do not oblige your children to follow you for they are born in an age different from yours.

And he said: you have to cherish death and despise life, for we live to die and we die to live.

And he said the hearts of those who recognize knowledge are the stages of angels, and the bellies of the lustful are tombs of perishable animals.

And he said: life has two borders, the first is hope, and the second is death. The first is its survival and the second is its annihilation.

Bahā'ud-Dīn Al-Āmilī,

“From Greek philosophers| in *Kashkāl*, part 1, vol. 2, first publication, Beirut, Lebanon, Dar al-Kutub al-Ālmiyyah, Muḥammad ‘Alī Bayḍūn Publication, 1998, p.176; part 2, vol . 3, first publication, Beirut, Lebanon, Dar al-Kutub al-Ālmiyyah, Muḥammad ‘Alī Bayḍūn Publication, 1998, pp. 94-95, 195, 198.