

# The Model of Virtue

## A Glance at Ethical and Social Characteristics of His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah<sup>1</sup>

Haj Dr. Noor-Ali Tabandeh

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

My heart's expanse was so filled by the Friend,  
That my picture was all lost from my ego

I, without considering myself as a knowledgeable person and immune from any fault, believe in the results of my contemplations and until there would be no rational reasoning to prove the opposite viewpoint, I will adhere to the obtained certain notion and I suppose that this practice is a moderate approach between capriciousness or self-weakness and obstinacy or pertinacity.

But throughout my life, I had only one exception to this approach, which was absolute and utter submission to the orders and instructions of my father, His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah; since primarily, I experienced and then sensed (in other words, progressed from certainty by thoughts to certainty by seeing), that “everything he (the Khosrow) does is sweet (Shirin)”<sup>2</sup> and I consider this sweetness because I heard from his inside with my heart ear that “I Know from Allah what you do not know”<sup>3</sup>.

I will disband the talk and sound and speech,  
Till without these three I may converse with you.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been selected and summarized from the book “Yaad-Nameye Saleh”, which had been published in 1987 on the occasion of the centennial birthday of the Qutb of “Nematollahi Gonabadi Order”, His Honorable Haj Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Bichareh Beydokhti (Saleh-Ali-Shah), with the collaboration of Saleh Library of Amir-Soleimani Hosseinieh in Tehran. This summarized paper was prepared to be published in Erfan-e-Iran journal in Iran on the anniversary of the death of this noble man (June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1966). It is worth mentioning that for this edition, some additions and amendments have been applied by the respected author.

<sup>2</sup> It is a Persian poem about the two lovers: Khosrow and Shirin.

<sup>3</sup> Quran, Surah Yusuf, Verse 96, “إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ”.

<sup>4</sup> Mathnavi, written in Persian by Jalal-e-Din Muhammad Balkhi, translated to English by Nicholson, Book One, verse: 1730.

Thus, I would claim that in front of him, the role of my existence and personality was lost from my ego, and I sensed his spiritual authority on myself and I was surrendered with the utmost spiritual pleasure.

I am writing this introduction rather than my own spiritual and gnostic memories of him, since in these notes; I have no intention to write any line about his spiritual standing due to various reasons, because:

How should I say, that not a vein of mine is sensible?  
Description of that Friend who has no peer.<sup>5</sup>

And I just suffice that he had emptied me from myself and filled my chest space, and this very sign was enough to me. Moreover, first, I have to mention that the spiritual and gnostic issues cannot be written down and uttered, and in fact, confining those high meanings with my poor description and pen, while does not add value to them, but may weaken them:

Whatsoever I say in exposition and explanation of love,  
When I return to love, I am ashamed of that.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, since I am at a lower level of episteme, I am not only able to perceive from his eminence whatever appropriate to this level. Hence, describing them would neither benefit the high level readers, nor can present higher levels more than my episteme and therefore, could only decline the position of the matter.

Thirdly, the spiritual subjects are the clear instances of this expression that: “the number of ways to God is equal to the number of breaths of the creatures”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, I do not aim to induce any special belief in another individual through expressing the level of my episteme and I abstain to be held responsible for inducing any belief in anyone else.

Therefore, I will write down some memories and notes related to the life in this world, his life style, morality, and in brief are the appearances of affairs, and the reader will feel the greatness and the spirituality of His Honorable according to his level of understanding.

### **Henry Corbin, French orientalist**

During the few trips to the Europe, either for continuing my studies in the Doctorate of Law in 1957 that I succeeded in it, or for using the one-and-half-a-year scholarship from the France government, or even for sightseeing, I was in contact with the French orientalist, Henry Corbin, and I offered him the books of the late His Honorable Haj Mulla Sultan Muhammad Gonabadi (Sultan-Ali-Shah) as well as his successors, which gained his attention and he particularly showed interest in the exegesis book of “Bayan al-Sa`ada”. Based on his recommendation and even insistence, I took enrolled for dissertation about the author of the exegesis under his supervision at the Institute of Advanced Researches. His interest to the issue

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<sup>5</sup> The Mathnavi, Book One, verse 130.

<sup>6</sup> The Mathnavi, Book One, verse 112.

<sup>7</sup> “الطَّرِيقُ إِلَى اللَّهِ بِعَدَدِ أَنْفَاسِ الْخَلَائِقِ”

was so keen that despite of expressing my difficulties for travelling to France and I stated that I am engaged with my judge career and implying that it is hardly possible to travel to France. He told me: but preparing the dissertation in Iran is feasible and would be even more suitable. So, you shall complete it there. Moreover, after preparing the dissertation, the opinion exchange between the author and supervisor (i.e., himself) can be done by post, and he promised that after completing and typing the dissertation, he will pursue the official formalities himself and following the determination of the appropriate time for dissertation defense, he would inform me and send the official invitation from the Institute (or the other relevant agencies of the France government) to me, which would grant me the payment to go to the Europe for completing and defending my dissertation at the cost of France government. Unfortunately, the dissertation was not prepared and these facilities were withdrawn, but I still have the miscellaneous notes. I provide some brief parts of those notes and I hope to God Almighty to grant success to collect and edit them, in order to present the concluding remarks as an independent book to those who are interested.

The dissertation topic was “Explanation of the Doctrine and Method of Haj Mulla Sultan Muhammad Gonabadi and His Century-Long Doctrine<sup>8</sup>”. The phrase “His Century-Long Doctrine” reflects the time interval between the guidance position of the late Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah and the death of the late Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah, which was a hundred solar years.

Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah appointed his clergy stepson, Mr. Haj Mulla Ali Noor-Ali-Shah, to his guidance position as his successor, and he also appointed his clergy stepson, Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah, to this position. Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah personally and directly educated his son and grandson under his spiritual discipline in order to achieve the guidance position.

Since I have spent my lifetime under the supervision and discipline of Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah until his death, I can state that his method was exactly the same as indicated in the books of his grandfather based on high teachings of Islam and gnostic disposition. According to the olds’ and elders’ speeches, his way was identically the same as his grandfather and he was the manifestation of this godly school. It can be declared that he had passed most of the progression levels during his honorable grandfather’s life, in a way that with a short period after his death, he possessed different positions as well as gradual guidance levels and in 1921, when he was only 22 years old and his father was still alive, his successorship was announced. In addition, when his father was still alive, he was involved and handled some issues as the successor; for instance, it is to the appointment of a position to Mr. Haj Mirza Habibollah Haeri Qazvini (Farhang) resident in Karbala, on behalf of his father<sup>9</sup>.

On the last trip of the late Mr. Noor-Ali-Shah, in which he traveled to Tehran and Kashan and was poisoned in Kashan, the late Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah did not accompany him and stayed in Gonabad. The enthusiasm to meet the father and Pir (sage), and also the difficulties in Gonabad’s environment caused him to request -by telegraph- to join him in Tehran or Kashan. Mr. Noor-Ali-Shah replied: “Cease your move, head back to Gonabad... your disposition and manner is identically like the late Mr. His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah” –without more or less. And it was the last instruction, which indicated the behavior of Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah similar to Mr. Sultan-

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<sup>8</sup> Hagiographie de Hadj Mulla Sultan Mohammad, Sultan Ali Shah et une Siècle de Son Ecole

<sup>9</sup> “Genius of Science and Gnosticism”, Haj Sultan Hossein Tabandeh, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 375

Ali-Shah and this instruction was precisely executed like the other instructions.

I am sorry that I talked a lot about myself (and this perhaps will be inevitably recited). My excuse is from this perspective that in the memories that I have seen and heard, I am expressing my personal impression. In fact, whoever is looking for flower, he has to bear the branches, leafs and probably the thorns as well. Therefore, whoever who reads this paper will keep everything related to the flower in his/her heart, and will throw away or tolerate the thorns.

### **The conduct and manner conveyance system**

Every human is educable, and training has a critical role in man and humankind community, the same as the nature, which plays a significant role.

This education, which in the spiritual and transcendental realms of Gnosticism is particularly interpreted as “conduct”, is the necessary condition for spiritual evolution. In contrast, the role of nature in progressing toward God appears as “attraction”, which can be explained in this way that the nature of an individual, on account of congruity with the spiritual realms and the divine love, draws him/her to the destination, even without having a complete understanding about travelling in the path, which is the same as iron that is attracted to the magnet. The attracted person can be resembled as a passenger that reaches the destination with an airplane, but s/he is not aware of the path difficulties, whereas the seeker is resembled as someone, who is headed toward the destination on foot.

A person, who is merely either attracted or seeker (although the attracted person has always a bit of conduct and similarly, the seeker person would not start to move on the way until s/he has a bit of attraction), cannot guide others. It is only an attracted seeker or a seeking attracted, who if achieves his/her high capacity, can help and guide others in their ways according to his/her level of perfection. This is what the educational psychologists say that if the education and nature are well coordinated, the individual will reach his/her highest aptitude.

Hence, it is highly essential to pay ample attention to the living environment, educations, and observations of each person. It is important to note that a person’s training and observations (especially in the family atmosphere) are effective on the future thoughts and methods of every individual -and even a spiritual person- and believing in this fact will not diminish their dignities. Along with the above-mentioned facts, someone learns from well-behaved individuals and someone from the rude people, and the third from the both groups. The greats and even the Immaculates grew their divine natures with the manners and conducts and reached their own perfections.

The Prophet (PBUH) by observing the behavior of Mecca’s pagans, Quraysh’s cruelty and oppression, and discourteous people, learned manners, and the divine hand that created his own essence, ordered him to announce: “Say: I am a man like yourselves, but the inspiration comes to me, that your God is the one God”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, after passing humanistic ordinary course and his divine evolution, the God made him prophet at the age of 40. Ali (AS), who was educated in the

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<sup>10</sup> Quran, Surah Al-Kahf, Verse 110, “قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ”.

Prophet's school, learned from unmannered people. Similarly, Fatima (SA) and Hassanein (Hassan and Hussein) (AS) learned from the school of prophecy and wilayah.

In fact, the human need to education would not lower the dignity of Prophets and Saints, since the God says: "And He taught Adam the names"<sup>11</sup>, and the Prophet was missioned to announce that he is a human like the others, as well as thousands of other examples. Therefore, whatever was necessary for the human being nature were existed in them and all the natural necessities were true for them. The need for learning is a part of the human being nature, that naturally he tends to evolve.

His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah was trained a great part of his life directly under the guidance and training of his late grandfather and his father. Similarly, the late Sultan-Ali-Shah from his early youth, and especially after entering the gnostic disposition, benefited from the presence of Haj Mulla Ali, his wife's father (the maternal grandfather of the late Haj Mulla Ali, the Second Noor-Ali-Shah). Hence, he learned the conduct and educational levels from him. Therefore, in many affairs and social impressions, some similarities and unities are observed and since stating all of them may lead to prolongation, I express three instances of the approaches of His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah, His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah, and the late Haj Mulla Ali in the field of social and economic issues in the following:

### **Simplicity and plainness in life**

The late Haj Mulla Ali, who was among the great religious jurisprudents and a pious, was the community prayer imam of the Beydokht mosque. He entered the world of Gnosticism and had gnostic disposition and was trusted and respected by all the local people, so that his tomb is still blessed and visited by the residents. Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah after obtaining the *Ijtihad* degree in jurisprudence in narrational sciences and was specialist in rational sciences, entered the world of Gnosticism and started his spiritual journey. In these days, when the late Haj Mulla Ali saw Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah as his kinsman a very talented and capable individual, while valuing his entrance to the realm of Gnosticism and feeling spiritual congruence, chose him to marry her daughter and brought him from the city of Nodeh of Gonabad to Beydokht and took him under his own training in order to make him known to the community and also closely supervise his conduct. The late Zahra Beygum, the daughter of His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah and the maternal grandmother of the author, after expressing this matter, quoted a story as provided in the below:

The late Haj Mulla Ali, similar to the tradition of the majority of people in that time, used to serve boiled green cumin (*Kerabih*) instead of tea, and raisins instead of sugar cubes, for the guests. From a coffee pot, which was boiling in his own room, he poured *Kerabih* in the ceramic bowls and served to the guests personally. Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah, who was young and newlywed in those days, used to help him in serving.

The government officials (including the governor) and vicegerents, in the beginning of their service periods in the region, used to visit Haj Mulla Ali. Once a new ruler had come to

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<sup>11</sup> Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 31, "وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ".

meet the late Haj Mulla Ali, after the end of the meeting and when he left the place, Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah addressed Haj Mulla Ali in this way: “Uncle! It would be better to have a kettle and some glasses (instead of bowls) and make the tea in another room and bring them with glasses and sugar cubes for the guests such as the ruler or other similar guests”. He replied “No nephew! For me, this way is good enough”.

The late Haj Muhammad Sadiq Saeidi Moein-ol-Ashraf (the husband of His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah’s sister) quoted a story from Sultan-Ali-Shah during his guidance, as follows:

A poor man from Tehran or one of the other towns came to visit His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah in Beydokht. Since he was a mason and was interested to serve in some way through his profession, asked him to plaster the outer yard rooms, which were the place for men reception and all were covered with straw-clay. He did not agree. The aforesaid repeated his request several times, but he (maybe with gratitude for his kindness) didn’t permit.

One day, for checking purposes, he went to his farms, located outside of his home town, Beydokht. The mentioned worker, who knew the long distance and expected him not to come back before the sunset, had prepared some plaster and started to whiten the walls with this hope to make him happy when he returned. He had not entirely completed one room that he came back (maybe in the middle of the way, he had changed his mind and returned). When he entered and saw that one room is almost done, told the mason harshly: “who has given you the permission to do this? Immediately, undo whatever you have already done and scratch the walls plaster”. The dervish, with great sadness and regret, was surprised to see such a behavior in contrast to his expectation and started to scratch the plaster. After returning the room back into its primary state (or maybe on the next day), His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah praised him with smile and cordiality and told him: “If I have the intention to plaster the walls (it is worthwhile to note that whitening rooms in those days was a luxurious act), I can afford it; but if I plaster this one room today, some days later, Mulla Ali (or Haj Mulla Ali, his son who was later appointed as his successor in the guidance position) will plaster two rooms, and then, the community prayer imam (Mr. Mulla Muhammad Sadr-ol-Ulama, who was his son-in-law and my maternal great grandfather) will plaster three rooms. Consequently, there will be a race in the family and then, among the Beydokht and Gonabad local people and probably between all the dervishes and therefore, it would be better for our house to be straw-clay”.

Now, I have to express an introduction in order to mention another memory. In Beydokht, there were many visits to our house (i.e., His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah’s house). And often, some people used to come to our house, among which, some were peasants. Without any necessity for their work, they interestedly used to help out with the house chores like washing dishes and clothes, answering the doorbell, etc., and as a result, there were always some people like them in our house.

One day in summer holidays, I was at my father’s service in our house veranda in Gonabad. We were talking about different issues. I suggested buying a large washing machine based on our requirements. He replied: “washing machine (like many other recent inventions) is a very good and useful thing, but if it is really required and does not harm others. Currently, we do not need any washing machine and if we buy it, she (referring to one of the peasants who was

washing the clothes) will get hurt”. Then, he continued and explained: “At the present time, the general condition of the society has led to the situation that this woman is unemployed. She knows that in our house, due to the great number of children and visits, there are always some jobs to be done. Although there is no need for her work, she still considers here as her home and comes here without any humiliation and indignity. She works here and even eats what we ourselves eat at lunch and when she gets paid, she considers it as the wage. Thus, in such circumstances and because of the abundance of un-employed workers, using a washing machine for me has no necessity and becomes to be luxurious”.

We can deduce two conclusions from this memory: firstly, his theory and method for offering financial aids to the poor (I will separately and completely describe this topic by addressing few other memories) and secondly, his recognition between the necessary and luxurious goods, and his avoidance from the consumption economy, for which, I will mention two other stories followed by some statements in this subject.

If you gather these three cases together, a series of a kind of social and economic understanding can be reached and also the way to convey manners, beliefs, and morality can be exposed.

Today’s world has become the world of materialism and consumption economy. The human being is going after higher welfare and gradually will turn out the things currently considered as luxurious or unnecessary, to become requirements. Every day, he adds something to his demands and when alongside these increasing needs, the mankind is unable to provide the means to fulfill the needs of all people, there will be social revolts, revolutions, moral decline of the human societies, and cruelty and oppression, or the materialistic economy will cause a great gap between the social classes. The Prophet Muhammad says: “it is highly likely that poverty leads to infidelity<sup>12</sup>” and similarly Quran addressing: “Nay, but man does transgress all bounds, in that he looks upon himself as self-sufficient<sup>13</sup>”, both consider the two ends of this story dangerous and a divergence from the social balance, in which the materialistic doctrines, revolutions, and tremors are born:

Tapster! Give wine in the cup of justice, so that the beggar  
Gather not jealousy that, the world full of calamity, he makes<sup>14</sup>.

It is the obligation of the leaders of the folks to get the people used to decrease their ceremonial materialistic needs and also themselves be good examples for their people. They must also live in a way to relieve the minds of the poor and not to make them humiliated because of their financial condition. In a famous quote from Ali (AS), he says to Abdullah Omar: “Since you are rich, eat yourself and also feed people”. And when in response, he preferred piety and referred to the approach of that holiness; he replied: “I am the Leader of the Devotees and all eyes are on me; if a widow, owing to her poverty, puts only bread and salt in front of her children, she tells them: eat it, since this is the meal of the Caliph”.

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<sup>12</sup> “كاد الفقر أن يكون كفرا” (Prophetic hadith)

<sup>13</sup> Quran, Surah Al-`Alaq, Verses 6 and 7, “كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظِرٌ، أَن رَّأَهُ اسْتَعْتَضَى،”

<sup>14</sup> Divan-e Hafez

In today's world, racing in consumption, advertising to make new needs, and encouraging to consume more, especially in the countries like ours, which need foreign countries to meet their needs (even for food and consuming goods), will lead to colonialism and dependency. Nonetheless, discussing about the implications and results are beyond the scope of this brief text, but the reader can think him/herself and clearly realize many of the impacts.

In such a society, where the consumption economy is dominated and affects all morals, manners and customs, avoiding luxurious behaviors becomes significantly indispensable and advertising for such an avoidance approach is among the social responsibilities of social leaders. Especially predicting this fact that this avoidance will someday become a necessity, and it is the task of leaders and guides. Great Gnostics such as Haj Mulla Ali, due to their prominence, have acknowledged this leadership task and handed it over to the future generations.

The late Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah in an instruction on November 26, 1955 addressed an issue to "dear Haj Sultan Hossein Tabandeh (god keep him healthy)", and in the end, commanded: "Do not go for luxurious things, especially at the beginning".

### **Helping the poor**

His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah had a particular interest and care in helping and assisting the needy, and in doing that through *Wajibat* (compulsory instructions), *Mustahabbat* (recommended advices), or via the Sharia funds at his disposal, he made careful and special efforts to firstly make the payments in a hidden and unexpected way, where in some occasions, the receiver did not even become aware of the origin. Secondly, these aids were given with different justifications so that the person could not probably become aware of its nature. Thirdly, it was tried to preserve the person's dignity and avoid making him/her humiliated and hurting his/her personality.

Muhammad Hossein Salmani<sup>15</sup>, who was his trusted and reliable worker, narrated: in my early youth when I had started serving him, one night (few hours after the sunset), he called me and another worker named Karbalaei Muhammad Deh-Marde (known as Khan, who was died almost forty and some years ago-at the time of narrating this story), and handed us a large container of sap and another large container of oil, and said: "Take them to somebody's house and leave them in front of the door. Knock on the door, and as soon as they answered, leave the place so that they could not see you when opening the door, but could see the dishes of sap and oil and take them". We set off and as usual, the alleys at night were dark, uncrowded, and without any passerby, since the local people used to sleep early at the night. When we reached the destination, we placed the containers in front of the door and knocked. As soon as we heard the owner's voice, which showed that he is coming to open the door, we left the place. But we told each other that it would be better to stay hidden somewhere to see what his reaction will be when he notices the dishes. The owner opened the door and looked around, but did not see anyone. Then, he noticed the containers in front of himself and realized that they are for him. He opened the containers and when saw the content, said to himself with a loud voice: "Thanks God! In this winter's night that I have nothing at home, I asked you for oil and sap to make

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<sup>15</sup> In 1987, he was about 81 years old.



*Changal*<sup>16</sup>, and thank you for sending them”.

In fact, the poor, who had no power to directly, openly or secretly, do anything, were aided. But there were some other needy, who either did not have the ability to do something to make ends meet, or despite their working ability, because of the unemployment social crisis, were unemployed and in need of assistance. These people and their needs were treated differently.

There was an old man who was a few years older than him (or it seemed so), and he was unable to do any effective work. I saw him sitting in the stream of water and washing a plume of sands. Then, he heaped the sand to be used by the construction workers and at the end of the day, he was paid 3 Rials (which was the common wage of workers at the time), despite the fact that his entire work was worth not more than half a Rial. In addition, I saw many times that His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah, when visiting the works, stopped by him and talked about the distant past, memories of the dead, youth memories, and the old days that they had spent together. In this way, he became happy and felt the character of a gentleman as he and Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah had been playmates and they are still with each other.

For this person, the 3 Rials he made was not his wage, but was an assistance he received. But, in this way, he believed that he is doing some job and earns the money in return, and did not feel like a burden on others. Also, this behavior was a practical lesson for him and others, including all the residents of Beydokht, or the passengers and pilgrims who were always there; to not to be idle and as long as everyone has the ability, it is required to work. Added to them, if the authorities were passionate to learn, he taught them that in a society, “everyone has to work according to his/her ability and receives based on his/her demand from the community”, and in such a way that no one would remain unemployed or needy.

In some cases, instead of giving charity to the patients and bad-habiting them, he provided some works and also the related wages for them, even though their work was ineffective. For example, it happened a lot that he made a fuss about the cobblestone of the alley or the house, and then, they removed the entire cobblestone and put it back again and in this way, he got a number of people to work; or for example, he ordered to destroy a wall and then, re-build it.

Thus, in the small environment of Beydokht, no by-hand-beggar would be seen, and if there was one, he was not from Beydokht, but a passenger or an immigrant who was begging.

### **Paying attention to culture, education, and training**

He was interested and believed in teaching of maidens, and considered this verse “against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power<sup>17</sup>” as a general instruction, which involves all the physical and spiritual forces. Nevertheless, he was a pioneer in establishing new schools and encouraging literacy, and believed that in the school of old sciences, some new sciences even very briefly and at least European languages must be taught, so that everyone

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<sup>16</sup> A traditional local food in Gonabad, which is made with oil and sap.

<sup>17</sup> Quran, Surah Al-`Anfal, Verse 60, “وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ”.

could complete them later.

He himself had learned the Latin alphabet and the brief reading, which had made him to be able to read brochures. He also believed that every science and technology must be learned since any knowledge is better than ignorance. For example, he said: “From driving a car, I just theoretically knew the steering wheel, and the break and gas pedals. One day, the driver stopped the car at the col and got out of the car. Methinks that the hand brake was not pulled up correctly or it did not work well; so the car started to move down the ramp. I jumped and put my foot on the brake pedal and pulled up the hand brake. In fact, the little things I knew about driving could save the passengers’ lives”.

He was a protagonist in establishing new schools and he, himself, gradually instituted the elementary school and after that, the male and female high schools in Beydokht. He was pioneer in encouraging those people, who did not intend to welcome the new educational system due to ethnicity biases or enmity to the government.

He used to go to the school with some of his relatives for enrolling his children. At the end of each academic year, he used to organize a party in the school and give some presents, at his own expense, to the privileged students of different classes.

That is how all of his children have passed through the highest degrees of education. While they remained bound to his morality and were influenced by his religious moral and spiritual education; the children, themselves, made great efforts in the field of new sciences, and regardless of their paternal property and financial inheritance of father, they lived with the help of their thoughts and performance. These kinds of self-confidence and intellectual independency are their best heritage. These characteristics, whether hereditary or acquisitive, are due to that Holiness.

In this regard, he particularly paid a great attention to the education of girls and in addition to holding religious lectures with the presence of women in the adjacent hall, he used to organize some special meetings for interpretation of Quran and other programs, which were specifically held for women only.

Here, I narrate a story, which shows his attention to the future of country and next generation’s education:

The late Ayatollah Haj Seyyed Reza Zanjani (may god bless him) was living in Farhang street of Tehran and was the neighbor of Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah. I knew him and had a friendly relationship with him for years. This familiarity caused that when Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah had traveled to Tehran, Mr. Zanjani expressed his interest to meet him. According to Mr. Zanjani’s quote, it was their first meeting. A certain time was appointed and they met each other, and a revisiting session occurred later. After that, meeting and greeting relationships were started. The Ayatollah mentioned a story to me, which is informative and interesting. He stated:

“During the time that I was at the late Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Abdolkarim Yazdi’s<sup>18</sup> service

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<sup>18</sup> A religious jurist; lived in Qom, died in 1939.

and worked as the assistant, consultant and manager of his affairs, your father (he implied to me and meant Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah) was coming back from the Holy Shrines in Iraq and the late Haj Sheikh Abdollah Haeri had come to the city of Qom to welcome him. Whenever Mr. Haj Sheikh Abdollah came to Qom, I used to visit him, but during that trip, I did not do so. He sent a message that “why you did not come to meet me?” I responded that “due to the fact that you are meeting that man (i.e., Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah), I do not visit you”. In an afternoon, he sent a message and stated that “now, that man is not here, you can come to meet me”. I went to meet him. Our discussion and conversation lasted so long until that man came back home. It was opposite to Islamic ethics to leave the house immediately, so I inevitably stayed for some more times. Mr. Haj Sheikh Abdollah introduced me and said that “he is a jack of all trade for Mr. Haj Sheikh Abdolkarim”. He asked me to say his regards to Mr. Haj Sheikh Abdolkarim and send his message to him. His message was as follows: “They (he meant the government at that time, in 1933) have intended to establish female schools, and the world requirements as well as the human beings and Iranian societies’ demands are also moving towards facilitating such an action. On the other hand, girls of today are mothers of tomorrow and also trainers of the future generation and nation of Iran. God forbid, if they are trained with pessimism, immorality, or corruption, our future community will be degenerated. Whether we desire it or not, the government will do so and we cannot stop them. So, it would be better that ourselves do something and establish female schools according to the Sharia and ethical principles and take the mothers of tomorrow away from the government’s control. In this regard, I would personally follow what he rules as the most knowledgeable and absolute religious authority of Islam, and would also advise everyone to do so and help in order to make this happens under his order”.

When I delivered the message to Mr. Haj Sheikh Abdolkarim, he who was to some extent conservative, smiled and said: “maybe I have become too old and do not see this ability in myself to do so, or that man is too young and sensational that he has offered such a suggestion. Due to the same fact and desire that they want to establish female schools in order to capture the mothers of tomorrow, they will prevent us from any kind of interference as well”.

Given his deep and special interest in the Iranian-Islamic culture, he was distressed by the fact that the lessons of new schools were gradually creating a gap between students and their Islamic and national cultural background, or at least were making the students unaware of their background.

He was caring about paying special attention to Quran exegesis courses in Islamic seminaries and also about teaching and reviving Quran in everywhere else, in order to flourish this divine book as the base for this culture. He believed that new sciences and foreign languages must be considered important in seminaries. In his opinion, new schools should deeply pay attention to ancient culture and teach old sciences at least as the history of science.

In this regard, in summer or yearly holidays during which his children were under his direct supervision, he encouraged them to learn about those old and ancient sciences related to their specific interests, thoughts, and lessons. For example, he himself taught Avicenna’s medical book, The Canon of Medicine, to his children, Dr. Mohebbollah Azadeh, and Dr. Nematollah Tabandeh. He also taught astronomy to the author of this manuscript. Moreover, due to his encouragements, some of his children benefited from some course sessions of other professors

addressing ancient sciences.

He was totally interested in protection and preservation of handicrafts and local arts, and believed that these arts, apart from their economic and development aspects at least show the identity of the Iranian nation and are representatives of civilization of this country and Islam. Formerly, some beautiful porcelain dishes were customarily used in Gonabad, which gradually became obsolete. He expressed that: “before the last experts die and their arts are destroyed and lost, these arts must be revitalized”. Hence, with his financial and spiritual contributions, the experts re-launched the furnaces, and after long times, through receiving budgets from the government and exporting their products, the workshops could once again stand on their own feet”.

### **Munificence and good morality**

His Honorable attracted and enticed all clients and guests with amiability. A guest was respected and tendered, regardless of whoever s/he was. He did not consider the guest’s religion and faith, and frequently reminded us the story of His Honorable Khalilullah (AS), who forced his guest to say “In the Name of Allah”. The guest refused, left the food table, and went out of His Honorable Ibrahim’s house. The God called him: “we gave him food for all years of his life and did not ask for anything in exchange. But you offended him for a course of meal?” His Honorable Khalil Allah ran out for the guest and returned him back home by imploring and urging. When the guest became aware of God’s expostulation with Khalil Allah, expressed his thralldom and got fascinated in him.

Dr. Pezeshkpour Mostashfi, who was one of the medical scientists and researchers, in one of his lectures, talked about the issues, which were expressed with regard to the extraordinary practices of ascetics, and stated that: “if I had not seen them with my own eyes, I could not believe. Now that I have seen their practices and believe in them, I should say that the reason behind these practices is unknown and our science has not succeeded in discovering these kinds of affairs”. At the end of the lecture, I asked him a question: “Have you ever heard the stories and tales narrated about mystics? What do you know about them?” He replied: “Our knowledge and understanding are insufficient to realize and perceive these things; I will narrate a story about my encounter with your father, Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah”:

“In 1954, I was studying my doctorate course in Geneva. On the Eid of Fitr day, my Iranian friends and students told me that one of the Iranian clergymen has been hospitalized in the nearby hospital. They suggested that since he is our compatriot and also a clergy, it would be appreciated to meet him for greeting the Eid”. We went to the room where he was hospitalized. When we entered, we all shook hands with him and introduced ourselves. After greeting, we enjoyed and benefited from his saying and remarks. Then, one by one, we shook hands again and bade farewell, and left the room. I was the last person exiting the room. He held my hand for some seconds and asked: “What is your name?” I said my name. He responded: “I will meet you in Beydokht”. I hesitated for a while and thought about the meaning of the word “Beydokht”. Since I did not know that “Beydokht” is the name of a village, I could not completely understand the meaning of that sentence and thus, forgot it. Some time later, when I came back to Iran and started to work, a mission was assigned to me in the southern regions of the state of Khorasan,

near the city of Zahedan. We traveled by car. About 120 km after the city of Torbat Heydariyeh, at an early night, the car got broken down in a village. The driver said: “We desperately need to stay here, tonight”. I asked for the name of the village and he replied: “Beydokht”. Since there was no hotel or rest-house in that village and the only teashop did not have any clean and neat room, we got depressed and worried about what we should do. We inquired if there was any other place to go and spend the night there. They guided us to go to the outside part of “The Master’s” house. We were not satisfied with this suggestion at first, because we did not want to disturb someone we did not know. But as we had not any other choice and due to the fact that they assured us that the door of “The Master’s” house is open to everyone, we moved towards the place and knocked on the door. The servants admitted us and informed The Master about the entrance of guests. Just a few minutes later, he came out and I realized that he is the man I met in the hospital in Geneva. While shaking hands, he said: “I had told you that we will meet each other in Beydokht”. Suddenly, I remembered that sentence, which I had forgotten because I had not understood its meaning and implication.”

With regard to respecting guests and their religious beliefs and practices, I narrate a story in which I was a witness in:

### **Negotiation with a Christian priest**

Usually, after the commemoration and memorial ceremony, which was held every Friday morning at the tomb of His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah and took about one or two hours, Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah used to return home and relax for about half an hour or more at home. During this time, the women who had come for pilgrimage came to visit him. Then, he used to go out to the yard and visit the followers and guests, especially Gonabadis who had come from other villages or henchmen from other towns. During the time, a book was read or some statements were expressed by him.

On a Friday, when I was in Beydokht, a mission of three or four priests stayed in Beydokht during their trip and asked to meet him. He allowed them to come over and they attended the same public session. After ordinary statements and greeting, he recited this verse: “Say: O people of the Book! Come to the common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him”<sup>19</sup>, and said that: “We have commonalities in this way to invite people to worship the God”. Then, he recited some verses from Quran regarding His Honorable Jesus (AS) and discussed about him and the belief of Shia in infallibility of the prophets, and stated: “We know Jesus (AS) better than you do and in the way that Quran has introduced him to us; the greatness of his position is far more than what you assert. We believe in the prophecy of that Jesus (AS) who has been introduced and made known to us by Quran. We believe that Muhammad (PBUH) is Jesus’s complement and supplement and we express that God has completed the divine religions by sending Muhammad (PBUH). We know Jesus (AS) according to the statements of Muhammad (PBUH) and the divine afflatus”.

A priest, who was in front of the others and was the head of the mission, responded: “we also consider Muhammad a great person and a prophet, but believe that Jesus is the complement

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<sup>19</sup> Quran, Surah `Ali-`Imran, Verse 64, “قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا”.

of all prophets, through which the humankind will be saved by following him”.

His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah said: “I did not want to make any comparison between these two prophets, but as you brought up this issue, I briefly give a few words of explanation: the most perfect of leaders and the most absolute guide is someone that if his followers keep to his footsteps, would reach salvation. Jesus (AS) said: “If someone slapped on one side of your face, bring forward the other side to be slapped, too. And if someone stole your cassock, give him your robe, too”. In the current world and given the fact that God has given time till doomsday to Satan to deceive people, can one observe this principle at anytime and anywhere? And would not such a situation cause the oppressors and tyrants to keep tyrannizing and dominating the oppressed? But our prophet expressed: “In the law of retaliation there is (saving of) life to you O ypu men of understanding!”<sup>20</sup> This is a social rule to organize the society and for the oppressors to fear from the punishment. But he addressed the Muslims once more: “who restrain anger and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good”<sup>21</sup>. He orders the faithful people to bridle their anger and restraint their fury, and whenever they have a higher spiritual power, they should not only bridle the anger, but also eliminate it from the heart and forgive the blameworthy; and whenever they have more spiritual power, they are ordered to be kind with the guilty person. If we decide to impose the last stage of spiritual eminence according to the statement of His Honorable Jesus (AS) to everyone, since they cannot tolerate such principles, they will consequently disobey the rules, behave in contrast to the instructions, and gradually get accustomed to rebel against God’s orders. O, with regard to this matter that Jesus (AS) did not marry anyone, would it be beneficial for the society that if all the followers pursue the same behavior or not?!

As the discussion finished, the session also reached the end and the priest asked for allowance to say a prayer. He allowed the priest to do so and the priest recited some verses from the Bible. He and other attendance participated in saying the prayer.

### **Munificence and richness**

The late Mostafa Amir Soleimani Moshir-ol-Saltaneh was the son of Alireza Azad-ol-Molk Nayeb-ol-Saltaneh. When he was young, he turned into one of the disciples of Haj Sheikh Ismaeil Dezfouli Sheikh-ol-Mashayekh, who was the chairman of the Royal Library in the Qajar era and one of the advocates of Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah. The below-mentioned events are their own direct words or some quotes from the other audience:

The late Azad-ol-Molk was upset that his son had become a dervish and blamed him all the times, and as a result, the son was living like a rejected man. Given the respect and interest he had towards his father, he was very saddened and worried about this situation and for sometimes, he could not even eat and sleep easily. His heart was scratched and considering a verse of Quran stating “but to satisfy my own understanding”<sup>22</sup>, he asked God to give his heart a true confidence and to direct his father about this matter. One night, he saw His Honorable Sultan-Ali-Shah in his dreams, who ordered him: “go and tell your father that the sign of verity of your way is that forty

<sup>20</sup> Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 179, “وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ”.

<sup>21</sup> Quran, Surah `Ali-`Imran, Verse 134, “وَالكَافِرِينَ الْغَائِبِينَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ”.

<sup>22</sup> Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 260, “لِيُطْمَئِنِّ قَلْبِي”.

nights later from now, Shah will rage against ... and when the dawn comes up, they will call you. You have to go and intercede. If you will be late, he will miss his life". He woke up after this dream and saw that it is azan time for praying. As he knew that Azad-ol-Molk is an early riser, he immediately went to his father's house and asked for permission to enter. Azad-ol-Molk gave him permission, but got surprised by his sudden coming. Moshir-ol-Saltaneh described his dream. After that, Azad-ol-Molk passed days in a waiting position and his behavior towards the son remained constant at such a state. On the fortieth night, Moshir-ol-Saltaneh was passing the night waiting and worrying, and without a second of sleep, while praying before God. When the dawn came up, he heard someone knocking on the door severely. He did not wait for the servant to open the door, and ran quickly to the door and opened it. A man says that I have an immediate message for Azad-ol-Molk. The son guided the man to Azad-ol-Molk's private room and apprehensively waited at the door. After a while, Azad-ol-Molk seeming that he had worn his clothes hastily came out of the room. He looked at Moshir-ol-Saltaneh deeply and exited. Near sun rise, Azad-ol-Molk came back home and sent someone to bring Moshir-ol-Saltaneh. Unlike any other time, he behaved kindly and with respect and said to his son: "your dream truly and exactly occurred"<sup>23</sup>.

From then on, Azad-ol-Molk expressed his devotion towards his son and even, provided the royal carriage to him for visiting The Pir (sage) along with Haj Sheikh Abdollah Haeri and Haj Sheikh-ol-Mashayekh<sup>24</sup>.

By observing these behaviors, the late Moshir-ol-Saltaneh had been disinterested in worldly possessions and according to what I heard from His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah, Moshir-ol-Saltaneh had frequently asked and requested His Honorable to accept his holdings in the village of Douneh-Sar (near the city of Babol), which were quite valuable. But His Honorable had responded that: "I do not need these holdings and God has given me what I deserve for my normal family life". Thereupon, the insistence of Moshir-ol-Saltaneh were inconclusive.

This magnanimity and satiety, and also satisfaction with a simple rural life free of any luxury, not only have given some power through the spiritual and divine aspect, but also informed the advocates that their services are not for meeting personal needs and if they are accepted by God, it is due to the kindness and affection and therefore, they will be awarded by God.

The late Moshir-ol-Saltaneh had asked for a permission to decorate the inside part of Sultan-Ali-Shah's shrine with mirror. Despite his full interest in the shrine and notwithstanding that he considered himself as a servant of his shrine, he did not approve to do so and said: "We currently do not have enough budgets for maintenance costs". After several years, when the problem was resolved, due to his son's repeated requests, he permitted for decoration. Also, the same process took place for tiling the dome of Beydokht shrine.

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<sup>23</sup> I have heard the above story with some little differences as well, but considering the fact that these insignificant differences may have been because of the memories of narrators and did not affect the main subject, I narrated the story as stated above.

<sup>24</sup> Mr. Haj Sheikh Ismaeil Amir Moezzi Dezfouli, known as "Sheikh-ol-Mashayekh", was one of the scientists, who was well-informed about the rational and traditional sciences, expert in painting and bookbinding, and unique in writing with Naskh and Nastaliq scripts, and also used to write elegant and nice poetries. He died on the 1st of Muharram, 1360 AH, coinciding with January 29, 1941 (The book Genius of Science and Gnosticism, p. 412).

This magnanimity and refusing the presents even for the tomb of his ancestor (though he frequently had expressed himself as the “shrine servant”) had given power to his soul and strengthened his spiritual dominance, despite the fact that he was completely sure about pure intentions of the requesters. Whenever a requester presented a gift and he accepted that, the requester felt really happy and was proud that his gift has been accepted.

### **Confrontation with social difficulties**

In the confrontation with social difficulties, which were always imposed by the people against Sufism, he used to adopt a very gentle approach and he avoided aggressiveness and retaliation, for the benefit of the religion and Gnosticism. He did not want that such conflicts turn out to be some tools in hands of the enemies of the religion and country, and avoided to create sequesters and intensify instabilities. I have heard the following story from him regarding this issue:

In 1920, His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah went to the Holy Shrines pilgrimage in Iraq. In Karbala, due to the incitements of populace, one of the clergymen did not authorize his entry to the shrine and ordered the shrine servants to not let him to get inside. One day after the issuance of this order, when he went for pilgrimage, the servants prevented him to enter. He only stayed at the door and prayed, and then came back. After that, he did the same thing every time he went to the shrine. At that night, the British Consul General sent a message stating that if he desires, he can provide the arrangements, by which despite of the clergyman’s order, Shrine servants would not prohibit his entrance. He replied that due to the fact that a clergyman and Sharia scholar has ordered such a verdict, he does not allow himself to disobey that. If my pilgrimage is about to be admitted, it would not make any difference in front of the shrine or at the door”.

Along with the above story, or in a separate narrative, he mentioned me another tale with regard to the late Mirza Shirazi (may god bless him), as follows:

Due to impercipient fanaticism, some of Sunni Muslims insulted the late Mirza Shirazi and allegedly robbed his house. At that night, the British Consul General sent a message to the Sheikh and stated his apology and regret about this event, and promised to make it up and punish the criminals (at those times, Atabat in Iraq was under control of England). The late Sheikh replied that there has been a conflict and argument between two brothers and they, themselves, can resolve the problem. Thus, it is not allowed for foreigners to intervene in the dispute between two brothers and the Council is not required to intercede.

Similarly, in the social difficulties occurred for devotees, he recommended them to have patience and moral contrivance, and always prevented them to struggle and retaliate. The memory below is a representation of this point:

He considered all the letters as a greeting, either contained questions or were only for expressing the devotion, and therefore, according to the verse “When a greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous or at least of equal courtesy”<sup>25</sup>, assumed himself

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<sup>25</sup> Quran, Surah An-Nisa`, Verse 86, “وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا”.



committed to answer them personally and with his own handwriting. In addition, due to the fact that his audience would count on each word of his letters and paid attention to the words based on their devotion, criticism, or enmity, the complication of this task becomes clearly obvious.

Other people could only help in writing the addresses on the envelopes. Habitually, early at night after praying, we helped him with this little job at his presence at home. One night, I was doing this job, he gave me an envelope and said: “bring out the letter and read it”. The letter had come from the city of Malayer, or Boroujerd ... (I do not remember the city). One of his advocates had written that a preacher has recently sat on the pulpit and is attempting hard to attack and criticize Sufism and Mysticism, and has aggravated people against dervishes, so that as he has ordered, people do not allow dervishes to enter the bathroom and also tradesmen do not desire to deal with them. At the end of the letter, he had complained about the situation and asked for doing something to summon the preacher by the government center office and expel him from that city.

After reading the letter, he asked me: “what do you think; what should I reply?” I said: “in my opinion, Sufism and Mysticism have been suffered more by friends than enemies, because friends sometimes, while claiming that they are relying on Imam Ali’s (AS) teachings, become aggressive by not paying attention to Sharia customs and doctrine and they forget this verse that: “O man! What has seduced you from your Lord Most Beneficent” or they express their assumptions as (in Dervishhood, it is believed that ...) and mislead others. Enemies (due to any reason, either based on their unawareness or enmity) consider such believes and actions as a standpoint to judge and criticize, and consequently attack Sufism. Because of their attack, the negative and deviated points are attended and it is tried to resolve the issue and correct the person, but in this way, the result of friend’s action is loss and the result of enemy’s action is benefit. Hence, I believe that you would answer as below:

“You try to continue correcting your doings in your city. If his criticisms and objections regarding your acts are wrong, people will gradually understand the issue, and not only the negative impacts of his promulgations will fade away, but also the public will hate this preacher and their reaction will be benevolent with you, even more than before. But if his criticisms are right and some of you do not observe the determined trainings and behavioral orders, you should become aware of your faults by his statements, try hard to remove the flaws, and gain benefit from your enemies in this way. This is the true solution, not expelling or punishing the preacher, because expelling or punishing such a person will have an adverse influence and will make people hate you and love the preacher”.

When the addresses were completely written on the envelopes and letters were put inside, once it was the mentioned letter’s turn, he confirmed my viewpoint and stated that I have written the same answer as you stated.

### **Precision in accounts and subsistence**

He was outstanding in livelihood affairs, so that the hostile’s critics who interpreted everything according to their own opinions introduced him as someone who pays a lot of attention to the worldly affairs, whereas in reality, everyone could observe that his immaculate

intention and services towards the society, hometown, and his birthplace have made his doings into a kind of devoutness as the verse “Those who remain steadfast to their prayer”<sup>26</sup>. He eluded from effortless and windfall money and did not take the fund, which was dubious, albeit it was his right.

The late Mr. Hadi Haeri narrated: “During one of my late father’s trips, in which we were with Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah in Gonabad for several months, one day, he went to the farm to check the fields. I and the late Salih-Ali-Shah, (which were both children at that time), went together with him.

In the middle of the way, when he went from one farming plot to another, he took off his shoes and shook them in order to empty the soils of dusted shoes in the first plot, and then put them on again. Then, he implied to me and said: “Hadi! Do you know why I shook my shoes?” I did not have any answer, and then he added: “because the first farm was an endowment land and the second one was a proprietary one. I did not want that just a little bit of the appropriative soil comes into the proprietary land by my shoes, because it will remove blessing from the owner and will bring me misery and adversity”.

This statement was stuck in Mr. Haeri’s mind so that when, due to the request of the late Dr. Mosaddeq (the Prime Minister of Iran at that time), he accepted the position of Supervisor of Endowments Organization, he did not even drink a cup of tea in the office and did not accept even a Dinar as salary, overtime remuneration, or such other things. He sufficed to the pension he was receiving from the Department of Culture.

This kind of upbringing was also influential on His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah. When he became a trainer, he taught the same behavior as well. He allocated a great attention and accuracy to endowments affairs and kept their calculations apart from other issues, which was evident in his works.

## **Upbringing the children**

He devoted enough attention to the training and upbringing of the children. Under his supervision and without any force on the children, they seemed to be completely free in selecting their life style. But under a perfect supervision, he guided them in all fields of life. Especially, in the areas of religious affairs, praying, fasting, and other worship rituals, he presented a great interest to children, but not with any compulsion.

For example, our mother also had the same interest and repeatedly asked us that: “Did you pray? Go and pray now”. I remember that one day; she asked this question at the presence of my father. I answered: “Why do you ask me such questions? If I have not prayed, I will either tell you a lie, or will tell you the truth that will make you upset”. The reply of mine was accompanied with my father’s approving smile. He followed the instruction of the verse “Enjoin prayer on your family, and be constant therein”<sup>27</sup> in his performances, through praying at early of

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<sup>26</sup> Quran, Surah Al-Ma`arij, Verse 6, “الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَانُونَ”.

<sup>27</sup> Quran, Surah Taha, Verse 132, “وَ أْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَ اصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا”.

the time, occasionally stating the advantages of worshipping God, and so forth, via indirect ways. For instance, he never commanded us to say “In the Name of Allah” before eating food, but whenever we sat at the table, he said “In the Name of Allah” with a relatively loud voice and then took his food. Because in the family, especially when kindness and sympathy are valued, the parents’ behaviors will become a pattern for children. In fact, he used to imply thoughts and trainings rather than commanding directly.

In addition, he always attempted to keep his children away from any kind of pride and arrogance, which might deviate them due to the “noblesse oblige” and cause them to consider themselves superior than others. Therefore, our clothes in the elementary school were very normal and similar to those of the other children and we were not different from the others in terms of appearance. He did not let our teachers and principal to pay more attention to us because of our “noblesse oblige” credit. But fortunately, all of us were the top students at the school, in a way that there was no need to rely on our noblesse oblige. Thanks God that in all stages of our life, we did not need to do so. His way of children upbringing had made his children faithful, believing, and active, so that all of them rely on God and had self-confidence in their professions.

He expressed his respect and great kindness towards our mother (because of the way of training children by her) and also advised everyone and especially us to obey and love the parents. In addition, in his remaining will, he has noted these issues as well.

### **Avoiding ceremonial formalities**

He avoided formalities and jollity, and kept us away from such things as well. He said: “in addition to limitation, formalities may bring losses as well”.

His Honorable Salih-Ali-Shah did not fundamentally like welcoming and escorting and avoided the apparent effects of such glorifications. Due to this reason, in a travel from Mashhad to Tehran, because people had been informed about his coming, he chose bus for transportation so that no one would come to welcome him. This also happened in another trip as well. He wrote a message to Mr. Vafa-Ali stating that “no one should not come to come welcome”. We, as his children, were enthusiastic to meet him at the soonest possible. Thus, we went to welcome alongside Mr. Vafa-Ali. When we reached there and got out of the cars, we went for kissing his hands. He stated to Mr. Vafa-Ali: “Why have you come for welcoming? I have told you that nobody shall come for this”. He replied: “they have not come for welcoming... I am your servant”.

His simple and unaffected life not only was a representative of his inattentiveness towards worldly fineries, but also a lesson for others; the spirituality of his life was reflected by his performances and states. He devoted himself to serve people and guide them. In a trip to Tehran, he felt ill and after the Morning Prayer, he had lied down for sometimes in his private room. A physician was also at his service. Then, he got informed that some people have come from Kashan (or another city) to meet him. He immediately rose up and got prepared to meet them. The physician asked him to continue reposing and when he did not accept, the physician insisted on his request. He replied: “I am devoted to these people and have come to Tehran to meet the

dervishes. These people have tried hard to arrive here from long distances. Is it deserving for me not to take just a few steps and go out to meet them?!” In addition, he often used to travel by car and stay at any place possible on the way and always expressed his pleasure to meet the dervishes. Once a time, one of his sheikhs had traveled from Tehran to Mashhad (or vice versa) with plane. He wrote a letter to him somehow admonitory and stated: “if you can, it is on you to travel on your feet, in order for yourself to meet people and especially for people to meet you”.

He paid a great attention to the spiritual needs of dervishes and stated: “God pays attention to these needs”. He valued any word come out of a dervish’s mouth and considered it effective. As an example (not as a metaphor), he reminded us the dream seen by two prisoners, which was afterward narrated by them to the Prophet Yusuf (AS). Then, he stated the prophet’s interpretation of the dream and said: “after hearing the interpretation, one of the prisoners claimed: I told you a lie and have not seen such a dream. He (the prophet Yusuf (AS)) responded: the influence does not come from your dream, but from the words revealed by my tongue: “has been decreed that matter whereof you twain do enquire”<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, through some potent, he considered the influence as pure in the speaker’s statement, not in the basis of the issue.

For example, once he intended to travel somewhere, in a public meeting he said: “I have planned to travel. Please do not say anything, because I will move off on Monday and before Safar 13<sup>th</sup> (i.e., the two dates, which were allegedly unsuitable for traveling)”. Then, he narrated a story, in which methinks in one of the trips, the dervishes of a city in the middle of the way had insisted him to give up moving for some days and stay; but he had refused. During that trip, the car had got broken down unexpectedly and made a long delay. He had said: “this was their hearty request that was manifested in their words”.

In this way, during the moral trainings, he considered a faithful personality for advocates and therefore, respected the faith and immaculate hearts of everyone. In his opinion, every person must appreciate the existence of these things in him/herself and does not ignore their great value, because his/her hearty requests would turn out to be the God’s intentions.

### **Salih Advice<sup>29</sup>**

The only edited written book by him, which has been reprinted many times, is the book of “Salih (righteous) advice”. This small book or booklet is a collection of the instructions for heart and body. This book has been apparently written in such a way that one can consider it as a professional physician’s prescription, prescribed for purity and improvement of all organs, in a way that if somebody follows the orders, s/he will be protected against any disease. While not as much of argument and reasoning is observed in the prescriptions and they are merely instructions, any physician who sees it will perceive the high position of the author and would benefit from the instructions. A specialist would take it as a lesson and a non-specialist would consider the prescription for blessing. In this way, such a prescription is beneficial for all social classes.

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<sup>28</sup> Quran, Surah Yusuf, Verse 41, “فُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ”.

<sup>29</sup> The book of Salih Advice (Pand-e-Saleh).

If an interpreter of Quran studies the book “Salih advice”, s/he will understand that the contents have been documented based on the Quran verses. Similarly, if an ethics scientist reads the book, s/he will consider it the best ethics book ever; a religious jurist and narrator will see the religious narratives and principles inside it; and a mystic will find the highest gnostic position in it, or in other words, will find a collection of attraction and conducts in this brief phrase that “engaged hands with working, but the heart with the Beloved”<sup>30</sup>. This book is a masterpiece in gathering excellent meanings in brief words.

The situation and atmosphere of that time of writing this book was such that the king of Iran, Reza Shah, was repressing all local and public powers and attacking in any way possible against dominant religious groups. By distorting the subject, some people had made him scared of the quantitative and qualitative influences of the dervishes and had told him: “These people consider themselves as kings and add the word “Shah (King)” at the end of their names. At the present time, they know “Salih-Ali-Shah” as a king and if they can, they will rebel against you”. In addition, publication of some books of the late Haj Sheikh Abbas-Ali Keyvan Qazvini, who had turned out from being dervish and was writing some texts against dervishes, had also made his mind more chaotic.

Following these events, in 1937, one of his advocates was framed to be accused by the government for opium trafficking and got arrested. Framing continued until proving that there would be a trafficking gang in Beydokht. Fortunately, in the Misdemeanor Court, the judge issued an exoneration verdict, which made Reza Shah angry and he ordered, the judge was suspended by the Minister of Justice and was accused of receiving bribes. Then, they pursued their previous intention, this time for giving bribes, and summoned some people even from Tabriz, Tehran and Gonabad to the court. During these events, Salih-Ali-Shah traveled to Tehran twice: one took place in the winter of 1938 and the other one in the winter of 1939. In the second trip, hallucination was removed from Reza Shah’s mind and at the same time, Salih-Ali-Shah wrote the book “Salih advice” in the spring of 1939 in order to state the general instructions and allegedly, Reza Shah understood his mistake with regard to its content.

With such a high spiritual position, he was never ignorant of his regular life and, himself, was a true representation of the phrase in “Salih advice”: “and of course, the most influential “enjoining the good and forbidding the evil” are those implemented by our own conduct”<sup>31</sup>.

Such a form along with such a deep meaning,  
Can belong to no one but a prodigious potentate

### **Activity and skill in agriculture**

As an example, his performance in different branches of agriculture was unique and one can say that he was a model for all residents of the region and also the advocates. I remember that when I was a child, we went to the preliminary wells (the source well) of his own-built aqueducts, called “Salih Abad”. He, himself, instructed the pitman on how to continue digging

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<sup>30</sup> The book “Salih Advice”, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, page 51.

<sup>31</sup> The book “Salih Advice”, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, page 86.

the aqueduct and the man who was prominent in his job, accepted his superiority in this field. Sometimes later, some of the pitmen came and reported about the situation of water streaks, the water spurt direction and so on, and consulted with him on how to proceed the job. Furthermore, in an Agricultural Product Exhibition held in the state of Khorasan, his grown pomegranate (as well as another fruit, I do not remember it), received the exhibition award.

His skills and performances in all branches of agriculture and aqueduct affairs were at such a level that if they became operationalized in appropriate environments such as the states of Mazandaran and Guilan, multi thousand times more earning and possession could be achieved. But his concentration was on reclamation of Beydokht and Gonabad, which were the place of the tomb of Sultan-Ali-Shah, his ancestor and first teacher. He said several times: “I am servant of this tomb”, and later was buried at the same site. He desired to demonstrate an exemplar model of performance to the hard-working and contented residents of Gonabad.

In a trip to Mazandaran (in 1948, if I am not mistaken), he was the guest of Moshir-ol-Saltaneh Amir Soleimani and stayed in his proprietary garden, located in the village of Douneh-Sar (near the city of Babol). According to his habit, every morning, he walked in the garden and instructed the gardeners. One morning, while walking on the path of the garden, Moshir-ol-Saltaneh talked about drought and shortage of water in the wells and explained about people complains. Having listened to Moshir-ol-Saltaneh, he suddenly stopped and commanded to dig a well just right there. Pitmen did so and an artesian well with a large amount of high-pressure water was resulted. In line with the first one, two other wells were also drilled and all the three were artesian. Later on, I personally visited them between 1964 and 1965.

With such an accuracy and caution, careful auditing, inattention the windfall possessions and so forth, and expecting the fact that every human being may be fallible, fundamentally he would not be immune of them and regarding the fact that the number of Immaculates is restricted to fourteen and no more, lawfulness and unlawfulness in his actions were such shown that in my opinion, his doings could be a criterion for determining the lawfulness or unlawfulness of affairs.

## **Judgment in social and political affairs**

### **Land reform in 1963**

When the issue of land reform came up in 1963, he considered it opposite to the Sharia law and consequently, did not consent to it. He did not endorse the papers related to his properties granted to others (it can be even claimed that they forced buyers to make the purchases), and did not also receive the installments. Such a practical declaration of his viewpoint had various impressions on different people. He said: “I regard this act as an opposite to Sharia and do not endorse the document, and do not receive the installments, but have no authority or power to withstand against the government”. This was in fact some levels of enjoining good and forbidding evil, which could be done at that time, and were considered under the concept of avoiding oppressed. He adopted the same approach for the social and political issues as well. Deep reading of the book “Salih advice” can clarify the situation of that era to some extent and also the intention of writing that book.

In the book “Salih advice”<sup>32</sup>, a clear and explicit instruction has been written, that states: “Learning the customs of war at any time is necessary for the Muslims in general, and for the Shia in particular, who are expecting the Imam in order to crusade alongside him”. This kind of explicitness and command was not stated by any of the claimants of campaign at that time. But, in such circumstances, in order to moderate the command and calm down the excitement that may rise due to personal emotions, he also says in an other place in the book that: “The country’s laws and obeying should be respected and not to violate personal duties as possible, but to do what has been assigned to do and do not interfere in politics! Lest becomes a tool for implementation of others’ intentions”<sup>33</sup>.

In fact, he prohibited people from interfering in politics in order for them not to become a tool for others; otherwise, in all periods, dervishes have been present in different political parties and groups. For instance, during the constitutional revolution (*Mashrooteh*), the late Motamed-ol-Tolieh and Etemad-ol-Tolieh were two brothers, but one was with and the other was against the constitutionalism. The correspondences and manifests sent at the beginning of the constitutional revolution from Mr. Sultan-Ali-Shah, and then from Mr. Noor-Ali-Shah and Mr. Salih-Ali-Shah, were basically to advise them to pure intentions, brotherhood, and giving service to people. They did not prohibit anyone from the beliefs (even wrong beliefs) that had been resulted from their purity of intentions. Additionally, they certainly accorded their sermons with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who said: “Differences in my nation are a mercy”<sup>34</sup>. In addition, another point is related to the fact that dervishes, according their personal credits, were free to perform social practices with the sincerity and intention to serve people, but they were banned to attribute themselves or their opinions to Sufism or Dervishhood. He, himself, also did not state such issues as commands and expressed that these subjects are not related to Dervishhood.

Their statements showed that the mystic doctrine is the nest of heart, emotions, and pure intentions, whose external appearance might be diverse. Abazar used not to store anything at home and said: “I do trust in God”. Salman warily used to store enough amount of food for a certain amount of time (I think for a year) in order for his concentration not to be distracted while praying because of thinking about food. These two high-level men were both at the highest stages of mysticism.

In the book “Salih advice”, the same issue is expressed: “However, while worldly movements and revolutions which are obvious in every matter should also influence us, wake us up, and exploit the time. Although the title such as political parties, convening, and interfering in worldly affairs are not proposed in thralldom and Dervishhood, but faithful people should be smart and operative, appreciate peace, and thank for it. In addition, it is required that whenever the obstacles are mild, (faithful people) attempt to consider and act, and strive to remove the religious doubts and conflicts”<sup>35</sup>. However, the “exploitation of time”, as previously indicated, should come along with obeying laws and avoiding becoming a tool at the others’ hand.

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<sup>32</sup> The book “Salih Advice”, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, page 84.

<sup>33</sup> The book “Salih Advice”, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, page 105.

<sup>34</sup> “إِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِي رَحْمَةٌ”

<sup>35</sup> The book “Salih Advice”, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, page 5.

But, he, himself, did not comment on serious and mere political issues and stated that “we live in a village and do not have enough information”. Through this way, he aimed not to block the way of contemplation and thinking of his advocates and followers, since his honest followers were known themselves as committed to his thoughts and actions.

In answering some of the questions related to life issues, he referred to the quotes attributed to the Immaculates: “You are aware of your worldly deeds more than I am<sup>36</sup>”, and therefore, he could encourage people to think and ponder on affairs. The social and political issues were sometimes related to this case, which were placed in the scope of personal thoughts and decisions. Some other issues were positioned in the scope of Sharia, for which he stated: “in the scope of Sharia, follow your knowledgeable religious authority”.

### **The last meeting**

In these last lines, I would like to mention something about the last meeting. As I wrote above, he had a great kindness and interest towards the late Mr. Hadi Haeri and they were comrades. At the beginning of 1966, Mr. Haeri suggested me to go to Gonabad to meet him. I could not accept his suggestion, because I was busy. After a short while, I do not know how, but a thought reached my mind that I can use the religious holidays of Tasua and Ashura of 1386 (lunar calendar) travel to Gonabad. Hence, after talking to Mr. Haeri, I purchased two return tickets for a flight to the city of Mashhad. After pilgrimage in Mashhad, we immediately went to Gonabad. When we entered, he was praying at a commemoration ceremony. When we went to his home, he greeted with us and initially asked that by what vehicle you have come and who has paid for the tickets. I replied: “I bought two plane tickets”. He said: “Do not take any money from Mr. Haeri. I will pay for both tickets. I have called you...” My heart shook in those two days. Two months later (Rabi-o-thani) , when he died, we realized that he had considered the tickets costs in religious calculations. Unfortunately, his death was so sudden that we arrived in Gonabad the day after the funeral.

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<sup>36</sup> انتم با امور دُنْيَاكُمْ اَعْلَمُ مِنِّي