

“Significance of Didar in a mumin’s life”

§ Part -2

Al Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi:

Story of Al Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi's *Didar* Experience with Imam Mustunsirbillah (*alayhi-s-salaam*) from the book “*Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l Din al-Shirazi (Ismaili Heritage)*” by Naysaburi Verena Klemm.

When Al-Mu'ayyad fi-Din al-Shirazi, a 10th century Ismaili Dai, scholar, and poet, left Shiraz in Persia for Fatimid Egypt, was very hopeful that he would, one day, get the opportunity to see Imam Mustansir-bi-Allah (AS). Typifying his impatience to behold the face of the Imam and the urgency of this beyond any possible worldly consideration.

He wrote: *I swear, were you to crown me, and were you to grant me dominion over the world entire and say to me ‘Let our meeting be postponed but an hour’*

I would reply: ‘O my Mawla, let us meet instead! For your delay of but an hour has turned my hair gray.’”

Upon reaching Egypt, he was lodged in a small house and his visits with the Imam's courts were often limited with senior administrators such as Vaziers and other officials. Al-Mu'ayyad continued to pray, hoping that he would be able to see even a glimpse of the Imam before he left to return home. Fortunately, with the help of one of the Ministers, Al-Mu'ayyad was able to receive a Mulaqat with the Imam. Al-Mu'ayyad describes his *didar* experience as follows:

“I was taken near the place from where I saw the bright LIGHT of Prophethood – my eyes were dazzled by this LIGHT. I shed tears of joy and felt as if I was looking at the face of the Prophet of God and of the Commander of the Faithful, Hazrat ‘Ali. I submitted and prostrated myself before the one who is the fittest person to bow to – I wanted to say something, but I was awe-struck. I tried to speak but my tongue refused to move. People asked me to say what I wished to say, but I could say nothing. The Imam said, ‘Leave him. Let his fear and awe subside’. After this, I rose. I took the holy hand of the Imam, placed it on my eyes and on my chest and then kissed it. I left the place with immense joy.”

Al-Mu'ayyad's *didar* experience is but one example of the unique and personally transformative experience that strengthened the bond between a murid and his Imam.

In some sense, Al-Mu'ayyad's experience of *didar* echoes many of our own experiences during the Golden Jubilee. Even when we were counting down the days, celebrating, and preparing for *didar*, when we experienced the *didar* of our Imam, many of us (like Al-Mu'ayyad) were awe-struck. In those moments, we were overwhelmed with the Imam's blessings, his presence, his Nur. Many of us were overcome with an experience that simply cannot be described in words alone.

Malik al Ashtar: Malik al-Ashtar Chief General of Imam Ali's army and also one of his four closest companions, used to sweep outside Imam Ali's home – when he was asked why he sweeps as he is a rank general, "I do this because I get to see 'Ali in the morning"

Ja'far bin Mansur-al-Yaman:

Ja'far bin Mansur-al-Yaman, a high-ranking Isma'ili author who flourished during the reigns of the first four Fatimid caliphs, in his book 'Sara'ir al-Nutaqa' writes that *"His (Imam) face is the face of God and he is the manifestation of the absolute truth."* In another place, he addresses to the Imam, saying, *"I bear testimony to the fact that you are the face of God, which gives luster to the faces of believers. The faithful shall behold the God's face here and hereafter"*

Farman referring to Spiritual Didar:

" Je haqiqati didar chhe te tamaara dil ma chhe. AlHamdulillah, zaheri didar teme aaje karo chho." (The Haqiqati Didar occurs in your heart. Alhamdulillah, you are having the Zahiri Didar today).

Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Shah (AS) Mumbai, January 4th, 1911, Kalam-e-Imam-e-Mubin, Part 2, pg 1)

Pir Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi:

In one of the chapters from Pir Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi, Imam Mustansir Billah (*alayhi-s-salaam*) enumerates the importance of both the Zahiri and Batini aspects of the Imam's *didar*. He recognizes and acknowledges the sacrificing spirit of the Jamat, in serving him and in observing religious duties. He says:

"They (the Jamat) have given up their property, and even their lives. All of them have faithfully submitted their religious dues. Others have travelled long distances through arduous conditions by land and sea, braving storms and incurring great expense. Some attend religious assemblies to increase their knowledge while others, without any worldly motive, perform acts of charity to benefit the poor. Some have acted with noble actions in the cause of faith, including special devotions, worship and especially remembrance (Zikr), continually invoking the Lord throughout the night, never neglecting God for even a moment, and worshipping him out of passionate devotion. All believers are urged to come into the presence of the Imam and to see him with their own eyes. Thus, the esoteric (batini) vision, realized through pious works and the constant remembrance of God during the nightly vigil, as well as the exoteric (zahiri) vision, achieved by travelling to the Imam's residence and beholding the gateway of God's mercy, become the ultimate purpose of human life. Piety should be for the purpose of recognizing and beholding God, which is achieved through the recognition and vision of the Imam of one's time."

(Reading adapted from "The Ismailis in the Middle Ages", by Shafique N. Virani, and "Pir Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi", translated by Professor Vladimir Ivanow)