



CRAZY HUSSAIN & THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM



Part 2

Once Hussain had agreed to stay with the villager for an entire year in order to learn the beginning of wisdom, the next morning the villager told him, "Come along, put your boots on and pick up the shovel; off to the field to work." He laboured there until evening and the villager gave him such hard tasks to perform that Hussain came home exhausted, ready for bed as soon as he had performed his prayer. Early in the morning, he would be on his way to work in the fields once again. He went through a year of real suffering with the object of learning the beginning of wisdom. In fact, Hussain had never had such a hard time in his entire life. Whenever he said, "Why don't you just tell me what the beginning of wisdom is?" the villager would reply, "All in good time." And so a whole year went by. Hussain then approached the villager saying, "Come now, tell me the beginning of wisdom; the year is up this evening." When the villager replied, "I shall tell you tomorrow morning as you are leaving," Hussain replied, "For the love of Allah, is it so short?" "Yes," he replied, "It is quite short, or rather it is short as far as the telling is concerned, but from the point of the meaning, it is very long indeed." Morning came, they performed the prayer, supplications were offered and they had breakfast. Then the villager called to his wife, "Hey there, we are sending Hussain on his way. Make him something for his journey. Give him some of your dried curds and flour to take to his family." Hussain could not restrain himself any longer and he cried, "Never mind the dried curds and flour, teach me what the beginning of wisdom is supposed to be!" The villager became serious as he told Hussain, "The beginning of wisdom is patience. Yes, patience is the beginning of wisdom and that is all I have to say."

Hussain lost his temper and felt really annoyed. He knew such beautiful Ahadith and many Qur'anic verses on the subject of patience. How many times had he counselled patience in his sermon and advice. Now to his extreme annoyance, he found that he had wasted a whole year of his life for nothing but these three words. He had put up with all kinds of suffering, supposing that he was going to learn something really important. Turning to the villager, he said, "I just don't know what to say to you! You have kept me here for the whole year for the sake of these few words. Have you no conscience, religion, faith or fairness? May Allah Ta'ala give you what you deserve! I know these things at the highest level." He simply could not stomach the joke the villager had played on him.

At this the villager said, "My son, why are you angry with me? When I asked you a year ago, "What is the beginning of wisdom?" were you able to tell me that the answer was patience? You could not. You said: "Teach me." I told you my condition and you accepted it. Do not imagine that I was in a position to tell you then and there that patience was the beginning of wisdom. On the contrary, I began to teach you this a year ago. Throughout the whole year I have been teaching you at every moment what the thing called patience is and how one must be patient in order to learn anything. I actually made you experience patience. Then at the end of your year I told you in words that the thing called patience is the prerequisite for all knowledge. The contempt you offer me in return proves that the knowledge you acquired in thirty years was nothing but words. It seems that you have not applied your knowledge to yourself. You tell me that you know many Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions about patience and that you have given countless sermons on the subject, yet it appears you do not really know what the thing called patience is. If you did know, you would not behave like this towards someone who has really made you taste and experience knowledge in action. You would not speak to me like this. Do you know what harm can result if a person acquires knowledge merely on his tongue without

taking it to heart? One can derive no profit from knowledge acquired in this manner. For instance, if a person studies and learns that telling lies is far worse than many bad deeds and yet continues to tell lies himself, he demonstrates that he has not benefited from what he has learnt. If you preach against lying, quoting Qur'anic verses and frightening traditions about the terrible punishment it will lead to, and yet tell lies yourself, the people will start to question whether there is any basis to the verses and traditions you have quoted to them. Allah forbid that their faith should descend to such doubt and suspicion. They will think that if the punishments really existed, surely the learned scholar would try to protect himself first before them and would keep himself away from falsehood, even before attempting to turn them away from it. They are bound to come to the conclusion that no such punishment exists and they will get into a condition of faithlessness. Can you imagine the retribution in the sight of Allah Ta'ala awaiting a man who poses as a scholar yet causes the people to become unbelievers?

This is what patience is all about. If you really wish to be scholar, you must first of all apply everything you learn to yourself. Only then should you preach to the people on the subject. Come then, I forgive you for the things you have said to me. There are also many things for which I must ask you pardon. So go back to your village and teach the people. Let your knowledge not be wasted." The villager appeared to be nothing more than a simple villager, but in reality he was a spiritual guide. He was one of the saints of Allah Ta'ala. In the guise of a villager, he was showing people the way of truth. Hussain had been destined to study for thirty years before meeting this spiritual guide only one day's distance from his village. Only after spending another year under the direction of this guide had he been able to digest the knowledge he had acquired during those thirty years. Thanks to him, he had learned that verbal knowledge must be converted into practical knowledge, otherwise there is no difference between a scholar and an animal loaded with a pile of books. And so he finally returned to his own village.

It was getting dark when Hussain finally reached his village. The village had changed. New houses had been built. A lot of things were different. He had difficulty in recognizing his own house. Who was living there now? he wondered. Let me first peep in at the window, he thought. If I cannot see Fatima in the house, I shall go to the Masjid for the night prayer and find out who is there. He went up to the window and peeped inside. His wife Fatima was sitting beside the stove. He recognized her all right, but there was a man beside her. Who might he be? He took another careful look. Yes, he definitely recognized his wife Fatima, but she had a young man resting on her knee and was caressing his hair. They were talking and laughing together. The blood rushed to his head. This must mean that his Fatima had formed a relationship with another man when he went off to study; either that or she had married this man bigamously. Now they were enjoying the ownership of his goods. He said to himself, "This cannot be, I must protect my good name by taking my revenge." He took out a gun he had brought with him for shooting pigs and pests, pointed the barrel through the window and took aim. It was as if he had forgotten everything he had learnt in thirty years and gained nothing for himself. But just as he was about to shoot, he remembered that for twelve months he had suffered for the sake of patience. He stopped himself saying, "What are you doing? You went through all that suffering for twelve months for the sake of patience. Have a little patience now."

He then went to the village inn opposite the Masjid where the people were chatting, waiting for the night prayer. He went up to them and gave a greeting. They saw from his clothes that he was a religious scholar and stood up in respect. They asked where he had come from and where he was going. He replied that he was a traveller and asked the names of some of the villagers and old people to find out who was still alive. Then he turned the conversation to himself, saying, "There

used to be a Crazy Hussain here. He went off to Istanbul to acquire knowledge, I believe.” “Yes,” they said, “we did hear something of the kind, but there has been no news of him for thirty years.” “Did he have a wife?” he asked. “Of course,” they said, “She is alive. What that poor woman has not been through! The day after he married her and entered the bridal chamber, that fellow took off, saying that he wanted to study. He left the poor woman pregnant and she had such a difficult time bringing up that little child of his. She used to tell the boy, “Mehmet, your father went away to study and never came back; perhaps he died, may his soul be happy.” She had the boy memorize the Qur’an and she got him educated and married. Now Mehmet Efendi is our village Imam. He should be along shortly to lead the prayers.” One can imagine the thoughts and feelings of Hussain when he heard all this. Tears suddenly welled from his eyes. The villagers were surprised to see the man weeping, but just then they saw the Imam. Crazy Hussain’s son, Mehmet Effendi had arrived. Hussain noticed that this was the same radiant young man who had shortly before been resting on the lap of his beloved Fatima. What a handsome, sturdy fellow he was and how right he looked in the outfit of an Imam.

He could not restrain himself any longer and turning in the direction of the village where the true guide had taught him through experience the meaning of patience, he called out, “Long life to you Sultan, long may you live you blessed man. The villagers were quite bewildered and thought that Hussain must surely be a crazy man. Hussain turned and embraced his son. As he held him to his chest, he turned to the villagers and told them that he was Crazy Hussain. The villagers asked him a number of questions to verify that he really was Crazy Hussain. One of the villagers then asked, “What made you shout, ‘Long life to you Sultan’ just now? It has really bewildered us.” Hussain then related all that had happened to him with the spiritual guide in that village, and how the lesson in patience he had learned from that teacher had saved him from causing a tragedy in his own home. He was so overjoyed that he spontaneously voiced his gratitude to the teacher and saint of Allah, and gave a thousand thanks to Allah Ta’ala for putting such a guide in his path and so preventing him from becoming the murderer of both his son and his wife. All of those present were amazed to hear Hussain’s story and once again they testified to the greatness of Allah Ta’ala. Most astonished of all was the son who had not seen his father from the day he was born. When he heard with the ear of his soul the story of this very important life experience, undergone at the end of so many long years by this man whom he now knew to be his father, he regarded it as an instructive lesson for himself.

At last the call to the night prayer was heard and they all went into the Masjid and performed the night prayer. On his first day back in the village after so many years, it had been Crazy Hussain’s fate to deliver a sermon far more moving and effective than any other he could have delivered from the pulpit. Allah Ta’ala had used His servant, Hussain, to teach all the people of the village an instructive lesson, as well as saving him from a calamity that would have destroyed him both in this world as well as the hereafter, granting him this great favour in return for his keenness and determination in seeking knowledge.

There are certain people to whom we attach no importance, yet they are hidden treasures. They are the kings of the hereafter, the saviours of mankind. They are the true guides, who strive to illuminate our hearts and bring us closer to Allah Ta’ala, even though sometimes we might not immediately comprehend the wisdom with which they guide us.

May Allah Ta’ala also enable us to become attached to one of His beloved friends and to experience the thing called patience, Allahumma Ameen.

[Compiled from *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master by Shaikh Muzaffer Al Jerrahi*]