

Bahmanyār was a Persian Zoroastrian among the students and attendants of that preeminent philosopher, Avicenna. He had taken to asking the Shaykh, with subtle but insinuating persistence, why he had not yet advanced a claim to a divine mission and established a new religious law. Avicenna, in response, would observe silence, neither affirming nor denying such ultimate ambitions. Thus the matter stood until 'Alā'-al-Din Kākuya was defeated by Mas'ud Ġaznavi and made to flee from Isfahan to Hamadan. In order to execute his charge of managing 'Alā'-al-Din's administration, Avicenna was thus obliged to travel, being attended by Bahmanyār.

One night in the course of their journey, Avicenna having set up their camp, the weather was particularly cold. Vexed as they were by the chill winds of Autumn, Avicenna proved unable to sleep through the night. To pass the time, he and Bahmanyār discussed matters of philosophic import, wrapped up snugly in their bedclothes. At some point in their conversation, Avicenna grew thirsty and asked Bahmanyār to bring him a drink of water. Loath to expose himself to the cold, Bahmanyār brought up another topic to distract him from his thirst. He asked Bahmanyār several other times for water over the course of the night, each time Bahmanyār diverting him with yet another question—until morning dawned and the cry of the muezzin resounded from every side.

Avicenna then rose from his bedroll and bade Bahmanyār to get up also, adding that he would, at long last after several years, answer his question. Why had he not, as Bahmanyār so desired, declared himself divinely commissioned and empowered to

بهمن یارِ پارسی زردشتی که از حُدام و شاگردان رئیس
الحکماء، ابوعلی حسین بن عبدالله بن سینا البخاری
بود، پیوسته شیخ را اشارت نمودی که مدعی مقام
رسالت گردد و شریعتی جدید تشریح نماید، و شیخ در
پاسخ او سکوت فرمودی و از لا و نعم هیچ نگفتی.
تا آنکه علاءالدوله کاکویه از مسعود غزنوی بشکست و
از اصفهان به همدان فرار نمود. در این حال شیخ را
قیام به اصلاح امور علاءالدوله مقتضی سفر شد و
بهمن یار نیز در خدمت او بود.

در اثنای مسافرت، شبی شیخ در بلدی فرود آمد، و
آن هنگام، اواخر فصل خزان و اوان هبوب بادهای
خنک بود، و شیخ را از طول لیل خواب نمی‌بود و
همچنان در بستر، خفته، با بهمن یار در مسائل علمیه
صحبت می‌فرمود. در اثنای سخن شیخ را عطش فرو
گرفت و از بهمن یار شربتی آب طلب نمود. وی را
برودت هوا مانع از اجابت آمد، و مسأله‌ء دیگر در
میان آورد تا شیخ را تشنگی فراموش شود. و بدینگونه
چند بار شیخ آب طلبید و او در هر بار سؤالی دیگر
نمود و شیخ را به سخن مشغول داشت، تا آن که شب
به پایان آمد و سپیدی صبح بدمید و صوت مؤذنان از
هر طرف بلند شد.

شیخ از بستر برخاست و بهمن یار را فرمود برخیز تا
جواب چندین ساله‌ء ترا بگویم که پیوسته مرا میگفتی
ادعای رسالت کن و شریعتی تشریح نما. همانا از عصر

establish a new religion? Avicenna thus explained:

More than four hundred years have now elapsed since the Founder of the Islamic dispensation fulfilled His mission. Not one person among this people has ever attained the honor of His presence; nonetheless, even though the Prophet did not include the call to prayer in the obligatory precepts of His law, these people have forsaken their slumber on this night, braving the depredations of the cold, to observe this custom: They ascend the minarets before the time of dawn prayer, ready to intone the verses of the call to its observance so soon as its moment should come.

How different is the case with me! As your teacher and master, I am owed your obedience. Yet, despite my firm request that you bring me water several times last night, you failed to heed me. Some chilly weather prevented you. Unwillingness to bear minor inconvenience and discomfort was the occasion of your disobedience and sufficient cause of your defiance. Now, do you truly suppose that just anybody—merely on the strength of acquired knowledge or temporal power—could lay rightful and compelling claim to a divine dispensation, and inaugurate a new religion, without, that is, the express permission of God?

صاحب شریعت اسلام زیاده از چهارصد سال گذشته و کسی از این مردم به شرف لقای او مشرف نگشته است، و هم آن حضرت بانگ نماز را از فروض دینیه مقرر نداشته؛ معذک، این خلق، در این شب سرد و صولت برد، خواب خویش را ترک کرده و قبل از وقت به گلدستهها برآمده، به تلاوت آیات مشغولند که چون وقت فرا رسد، سنت اذان را بجا آرند. و من، با این که به سبب تعلیم و مخدومیت بر تو حقّ وجوب اطاعت دارم و در این شب چند بار بر سبیل حتم شریتی آب طلب نمودم، برودت هوا تو را مانع از اجابت شد و تحمل زحمتی اندک موجب عصیان و مخالفت آمد. چنین نیست که هر کس علمی تحصیل نمود و یا بر خلق، امارتی یافت، تواند به قوت علم و یا قدرت ریاست، مدعی مقام رسالت گردد و دینی و آئینی بدون اذن خداوند تشریح نماید.

(فصل الخطاب، ص ۸۹-۸۸)