

CHAPTER IV

OTHMAN BAYYUMI'S SACRED PATH

Every human being that is born in this world regardless of its individual or social circumstances, aspires to its own perfection in accordance with its innate nature and its inborn intellect. (Lari 83)

The citation from a Muslim scholar above is the stand point of the study. The study on a story about a man from a lower society in Cairo who has high aspiration to change his life from a cart driver's son to a respected government officer, a man who is pursuing career in his entire life and believes that he is on the right track of God's holy path.

The study is going to reveal the protagonist's view on man, life, and God --a philosophy of life-- through the intrinsic analysis of the novel based on the premise that man's attitude and action toward his environment are influenced by his philosophy of life, -conceptions about nature, self, and society (Geertz 127).

Othman Bayyumi--the protagonist--, pictures a character from muslim neighbourhood that does not

separate between religious life and profane life. Othman Bayyumi is like the people of his alley, he makes no distinction between religion and life. "Religion was for life and life for religion,..." (Mahfouz 33). Othman Bayyumi can be regarded as a character who has a certain view on life, a view that is based on his knowledge about his religion and his life experience. He extracts teachings of Islam into his own philosophy of life. The conversation between Othman and his colleague shows this:

"So what do you think the purpose of life is?"

"The sacred path," he answered proudly.

"And what's the sacred path?"

"It's the path of glory. Or the realization of the divine on earth ."

"Do you really aspire to dominate the world?"

Hamza asked in surprise.

"Not exactly that. But there's an element of divinity in every situation."

(Mahfouz 107).

The course of the story reveals the struggle of the protagonist in pursuing his dream, the journey

,"the path of glory ", of a man from nobody to be somebody.

IV.1. Othman Bayyumi's view about man, life, and God.

In the beginning of this chapter it is stated that Respected Sir is about a life "journey" of a man toward perfection. Thus, the plot of this novel is built from the sequence of significant events that show the development of the protagonist character. The story begins when Othman Bayyumi is accepted as a government employee. The significance of this event is, that it reveals Othman Bayyumi's mental state. It is opened by the narrator by describing what is in Othman Bayyumi's mind when he enters the room of the Director General for the first time.

The door opened to reveal an infinitely spacious room: a whole world of meanings and motivations, not just a limited space buried in a mass of detail. (23).

It shows that Othman Bayyumi is an optimistic person. The ordinary office room of the Director General is depicted in highly inflated prose which reflects the magnitude impression it makes on the protagonist. The emotive

description of the room builds the image of the protagonist's high ambition. It is an opening of infinite opportunity that raise his religious spirit and his quest of glory. Life is a grant from God. It is the opportunity given to man by the Lord of the universe to reach the glory with struggle and faith. Othman Bayyumi views that man is made for power and glory. Life, survival, and perseverance are the elements of power. And God's heaven could only be attained through power and struggle (Mahfouz 89). Abdalati in his Islam in Focus states that:

When God gives life to man, it is not vain that He endows him with unique qualities and great abilities. Nor it is in vain that He charges him with certain obligations, God means to help man to fulfill the purpose of life and realize the goal of existence (Abdalati 28).

Further, the occasion of the meeting with the Director General impresses Othman Bayyumi. He feels that he is standing before an altar and going to be sacrificed (Mahfouz 23). Within his heart, he feels that he becomes part of the history of government and that he stands in

the divine presence (Mahfouz 24). The event depicts not only a meeting of a new government employee with his Director General but more than that, it is a religious event. Charles Isawwi, an Egyptian economic historian said that "Total submission to the authority holder is the characteristic of this nation" (qtd. in El-Saadawy iv). The attitude of Othman Bayyumi toward the situation can be viewed from the argument. It depicts what is in Othman Bayyumi's mind. He regards that the government is very important to human life. The chance to give service in the governmental office is something holy, something religious, where man can achieve self fulfillment. For him, The Government or the State is the sacred apparatus of God on Earth (41). The meaning of the state for Othman Bayyumi is; that it is the temple of God on earth, and the position of man in this world and the next life is determined by the effort to which man exerts himself for its sake (Mahfouz 169). For the Egypt, the official occupation is a sacred occupation like religion. It is the ideal position for the Egypt. The Pharaohs themselves, in Othman Bayyumi's view were government officials appointed by the gods to rule the Nile Valley

by means of religious rituals and administrative, economic, and organizational regulations (Mahfouz 149). That is the typical view of Othman Bayyumi regarding the occupation in governmental office.

Othman Bayyumi starts his work in eight grade as an archives clerk in Archives Section of the department. This position is the lowest grade of the department. That start does not make Othman pessimist for the long quest he has to face.

It did not matter how he started; life itself evolved from a single cell or perhaps from something even less. (Mahfouz 26)

It shows Othman Bayyumi's view that regards life as a sacred path of glory. Everything that is given by God as a start is a blessing for him. He is aware that only the one who is well prepared will pass through the journey of life with success. Based on this view Othman Bayyumi has already prepared a fixed plan for his career in life. He will not stop his pursuit unless he get the position of His Excellency the Director General in the first grade (Mahfouz 28). "Life may be likened to a journey starting from a certain point and ending at a certain destination" (Abdalati 29). The Director General

is the one who sets the entire administration in motion from behind a screen--in precise order and perfect sequence, "resembling" the ruler of the stars courses and the wisdom of heaven (Mahfouz 41). The description and analysis of the character's attitude and thought above show a mixture between an indigenous Egyptian's view and Islamic view about life, and the state, and God.

Othman Bayyumi regards the beginning of his career as the beginning of his challenging life. He is the first white-collar worker of al-Husayn Alley,--a place for cart and donkey--and no one has ever left it for good unless to the cemetery for burial. All his friends watch him with admiration and envy and regard what he has achieved as a great success. Sayyida, Othman Bayyumi's girl friend, as the representation of the native of al-Husayn Alley, shows her naiveness. Sayyida has the view of common people in al-Husayn Alley, a simple view -a man gets a job, get married, having children, get old, and die, while Othman Bayyumi has his own view. He must carry on his education and get the university degree to get the promotion. Othman Bayyumi regards that marriage will become an obstacle for his career. She will not understand why Othman Bayyumi has not proposed her yet.

Othman Bayyumi knows that his neighbourhood will never give him back up for his quest.

He lives with his senses always on the alert and with heightened awareness, constantly seeking to provide himself with every possible weapon. (Mahfouz 30)

He has a good appearance, a dark longish face with a high clear forehead and well trimmed hair. He thinks that his physical quality will make him suitable for any kind of position, no matter how important.

He had very unpleasant childhood, nevertheless he is very confident with himself. Othman Bayyumi, a son of a cart driver, who was raised in oppression of poverty and sadness. His father died because of hardwork and poor nourishment when he was still in secondary school. His mother, a washer-woman who wished that God would make a great man of her son, died because of appendicitis. His brother who was lucky to be a policeman died in the hands of demonstrators, another brother died in prison and his sister died of typhoid fever in the hospital. "His family was singularly victimized by death." (Mahfouz 30). He never blames his fate but he becomes a religious person instead. His sad childhood experience

has made him a strong and confident person. He thinks that everything is based on God's will, and realizes that he can not do anything without His Blessing. For these reason he never misses a prayer at least the Friday service at al Husayn Mosque (33). His brothers' death on the hand of the demonstrators has created his own view about politics and the mass. He is always confused at the way groups of eminent statesmen and their supporters fight each other. He thinks that they are wasting their true potentiality which God has given to them. (Mahfouz 46). For Othman Bayyumi the true life is the inner life which govern every heartbeat and which calls for toil, dedication and enterprise (Mahfouz 41). The description shows Othman Bayyumi's view that man has to accept everything which has happened in his life with all his heart. It is God who decides what is good and bad for man. Everything must be thanked. Man has to improve and develop his potentiality in order to struggle to reach the glory in this world on his own account.

Othman Bayyumi's aspiration is high, but he knows his capacity. He relies absolutely on his capability and hard works under the guidance of Almighty God. To realize his dream Othman Bayyumi works very hard with a strict

living program. He always gives his best effort in doing his job and shows his care and honesty. He studies the Financial with his whole heart as if it is the Holy book. He knows that the position as the Director General needs a general knowledge about official services, and for this reason he enrolls a university as an external student, learns foreign languages such as French and English as well as his own language Arabic. To maintain his relationship with his colleagues he always shows his friendship, piety, and helpfulness (33). His efforts to improve his knowledge, his hardwork, and his social credibility he tries to create, show that Othman Bayyumi has already prepared a fixed life plan and follows it with dicipline for the single goal in his life. He knows that God created man to fulfill the purpose of life and realize the goal of existence. For Othman Bayyumi the goal is reaching his dream as the Director General. Sayyid Mujtaba Musawi Lari in his article in A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture: At-Tauhid states that "In order to adopt a well-defined approach it is essential to select a single goal and move in a single direction" (Lari 85).

Othman Bayyumi works very hard and carries on his program strictly. He goes to work at day light and studies his lesson as an outside student at night. He learns everything that has connection with his work and tries to make a good relation with his colleagues. He makes himself an important person that his help is needed. The attitude can be explained by the concept of working--righteous work-- in Al Qur'an:

Say: Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, And His Apostle, and the Believers... (Al Qur'an 9:105).

The next significant event is when Othman Bayyumi has finished his university education. He sends a promotion request to the Director General. He believes that his university degree will be useful for the promotion. But nothing happens. Othman Bayyumi alone has entered the world where wealth, connection and relation are more important than one's capability. He does not possess the wealth which can buy the position, nor privileges which belong to important family and no political power that will back him up. Othman Bayyumi does not like to be someone's clown or servant (63-64).

In the condition like this, Othman Bayyumi does not fail his faith. He is a kind of person who believes in the power of hard work and knowledge and the most important thing is the belief in the grace of God.

He was one of the wretched people who had to arm themselves with every weapon available, seize every chance, rely on God and seek His eternal wisdom which ordained that man should fall on earth in order to rise again, through sweat and blood, to heaven. (Mahfouz 64).

He has a view that man is better to rely on his own capability and God's mercy than to attack society. Man is born in this earth alone and he will come back to his Creator alone and will face the Supreme Judge on his own account (Mahfouz 104).

His prayer is answered. Sa'fan Basyuni the Head of Archives Section who is impressed with his work promotes him to a vacant post in grade seven. This new position gives him a chance to show his capability to other senior officers. When the work in the department during the preparation of the budget is intensified and the department needs additional officers from section other

than Budget Department, Othman Bayyumi is seconded from the Archives Section. This time, Othman works with the important officers; the auditors, deputy directors and the Director of Administration. He shows his full capacity. This is the kind of work where nepotism is useless. In this job, no one with no exceptional capability is valued. The job is very important, it is connected with the Director General, the Under Secretary of State, the Minister and the press (Mahfouz 65). Beside doing his formal duties, Othman with his special capacity of knowledge in finance, laws and regulation, has secretly done the draft of the budget statement which is usually written by the Director of Administration and shows the draft to him. The Director is impressed by Othman Bayyumi's work and accepts the papers. That is the start of success (65-66). He is very happy about that, and he keeps it as a secret for himself. Because of that he is transferred to the Budget Department. This event strengthens his belief in God's will since his effort has given him proof.

He lifted his eyes to the sky and the wakeful stars. They looked motionless. But there was nothing static in the universe. (Mahfouz 67).

The quotation shows a view that everything has already set up by God, the Ruler of the universe.

Life is a brilliant demonstration of God's wisdom and knowledge, a vivid reflection of His arts and power. He is the Giver and Creator of life. Nothing comes to existence by chance, and nobody creates himself or anybody else.

(Abdalati 28)

Othman Bayyumi soon forgets his promotion and works as usual. The atmosphere of nepotism around him makes his view about marriage is slightly shifted. He is now looking a wife that somehow can support his career. He is affected by the rumours that His Excellency the Director General has the high position because of his wife or more precisely his wife family. For Othman Bayyumi, who does not have a respectable family background, that kind of effort is almost impossible (69). It shows that Othman Bayyumi does not see marriage as a barrier for his career anymore but as a short cut to reach the success instead.

The next significant even for his career is when there is a vacancy in the ministry for translator who has the mastery in English and French. Othman Bayyumi gives a unique proposal to the Director of Administration. He



proposes that the job is given to him, and for this his grade is promoted to grade six. This will save the budget. His proposal is accepted, he is promoted to grade six (73). His career is sure but slow. Soon after the Head of Archives is pensioned off, Othman Bayyumi is promoted to the vacant position in the grade five. His next promotion to grade three then to grade four is just a matter of time.

Now, Othman Bayyumi is worried about his age and faith. He is faced by his own dilemma about marriage and career.

When was he going to fulfill the requirements of his faith? Before achieving his life's ambition or after? He must have a family and father children or else he would be damned.

(Mahfouz 74)

He knows that life is short, time is like a sword, it will cut anyone who carelessly uses it. He knows that he can not live as a bachelor forever. As a normal man he needs affection from a woman. The affection must come from a legal marriage. It is the requirements of his faith. He realizes that what he has done by visiting prostitute is wrong. Up to now, Othman Bayyumi always

visits Qaddriya in a prostitute quarter to release his tension but actually he knows that what he has done is intensifying his guilt. Those visits are usually followed by a wholehearted plea for forgiveness and prolonged resort to prayer and worship (Mahfouz 45). The reason to get married is countless. Marriage is a consolation to the lonely heart and the agonies of solitude. Marriage also satisfy that religious aspect of his soul which regarded celibacy as a sin. Marriage will give a man feeling of loving kindness, tenderness, and human understanding (Mahfouz 96). This shows the development of Othman Bayyumi's view about one of the aspects of life-- marriage-- . He asks Omm Husni to find a suitable wife for him. But none of the candidates who are offered by her fit his qualification yet. The thought and attitude of Othman Bayyumi toward marriage shows a development of a view that based on his belief as a muslim, though as not the good one.

Now Othman Bayyumi is in the grade three as the second deputy director eventhough he feels more superior than the first deputy even the new Director of Administrator Isma'il Fayiq who is in the grade two. This is because he is an ignorant and lazy official thus

actually Othman Bayyumi who does all the responsibility. Othman Bayyumi thinks that he is more appropriate to be the Director of Administrative. Nobody in the office has a doubt about his efficiency and honesty. Unfortunately the fact is far from ideal, the new Director of Administrator gets his position because he is a relative of Under Secretary (142-144). Isma'il Fayiq is not long in the position of Director of Administration, he died because of heart attack. Othman Bayyumi has great expectation of the new vacant position. He has been waiting for this promotion for almost a half of his life. But the new Director is appointed from other ministry, the Ministry of Transport. Again Othman Bayyumi is disappointed by the nepotism. The new Director is a relative of the Minister. This is the significant events which make him almost in despair. A turning point of his view. Othman Bayyumi starts to doubt his ambition for the first time. His hard work and his patience seem useless. He feels that no one cares about his service. This time the needs to have a wife and to built a family is a must. It can not be postponed anymore.

A new idea possessed him with a force he had not experience before: marriage. He should not

procrastinate any longer; procrastination would serve no purpose. It was enough time that the best time of life for love and marriage was gone. How he yearned for a wife, for genuine affection, for an honest partnership, a warm house, children, a human relationship, a loving heart, a kind of touch, conversation, a refuge from torment, a shield against death, a savior from loss, a prayer niche worthy of true faith, a resting place secure from foolish dreams, a truce with frugality and deprivation and loneliness. (Mahfouz 154)

The quotation shows how the Othman Bayyumi has shifted his view about marriage. In the beginning of his career he sees it as a barrier for his career then as a short cut to reach it. Now it seems that he has misled himself. Marriage is one of the ways to become a perfect man of faith. And for the dreamed position as the Director General has move aside though it is not forgotten. Career is not the main target anymore. Then Othman Bayyumi takes Qaddriya, his prostitute companion to be his wife. This is because he does not know anyone else better than he knows her. By marrying Qaddriya,

Othman Bayyumi saves two souls and starts his new life as a clean muslim. Now, he can perform his prayer with a clean conscience (161-162). The marriage has changed Othman Bayyumi a little bit calm. Now he realizes that he is near his end. For this event he prepares a beautiful tomb.

...he bought a plot in al-Khafir Cemetery, after consulting people who new such things, and made preparations for the buildings of a suitable tomb. (Mahfouz 163)

The event of buying spot for burial and building tomb shows a typical Egyptian's view about life after death. The view that regards a tomb especially a beautiful and strong ones represents eternity, is inherited from Pharaohs' view about eternity.

Again a regular promotion takes place. Othman Bayyumi is now the Director of Administration, the one next to his dreamed position the Director General.

He pledged before God to make history during his directorship of administration and to create a unmatched record full of expert and ingenious administrative practices that would last forever. He was going to demonstrated to

everybody that a government post was something sacred, a duty to humanity and a form of worship in the full sense of the word.

(Mahfouz 168)

The quotation emphasizes Othman Bayyumi's view about life. Man's attitude and action in this world is worth as a prayer to God, and act of worship. The service to the Creator is not only done by visiting the mosque or any other place for prayer but it can be realized with hard working and good deeds.

Meanwhile Othman Bayyumi does not enjoy his marriage with Qaddriyya for a long time. Qaddriyya becomes an alcoholic even takes drugs. She is in despair because she can not give a child to Othman Bayyumi. Othman Bayyumi is upset for her condition and try to help her by sending her to a rehabilitation center. His beliefs in God is still stronger. "God, I'm trying to guide her. In your mercy, grant me the strength" (Mahfouz 173).

At the office Othman Bayyumi gets a new secretary, her name is Radiya Abd al-Khaliq. Othman Bayyumi who is now upset about his marriage proposes her as his second wife. She accepts it. But her aunt gives Othman Bayyumi one condition; divorce Qaddriyya. Othman Bayyumi refuses

the condition. At last they are married with Radiya's aunt objection because of their marriage is closed from the public (183). Day passes, Othman Bayyumi now is an old man with a new young pretty wife. His ambition is still strong but deeply hidden within his heart. Once again the regular promotion takes place. Othman Bayyumi with his seniority in the office feels that the time is come when God will grant him at last. But for sometime nothing happens. The position of the Director General is still a vacant post. Othman Bayyumi waits for the news with his heart wondering. He is in despair waiting for the good news. In the mean time he decides to open his marriage with Raddiya Abd al-Khaliq to public. Destiny can not be forecasted. Othman Bayyumi gets a heart attack. He is taken to the hospital. Meanwhile during his treatment in the hospital the decision has taken that he is appointed as the Director General. He savored his success tranquilly.

He was now 'His Excellency,' the occupant of the Blue Room, the authority on legal rulings and administrative directives, the inspiration behind perceptive instruction, and the efficient manipulation of people interest, one

. of God's faithful empowered to do good and prevent evil. (Mahfouz 199)

The quotation shows that Bayyumi is very happy about it. He swears to God that when he is recover he will do his job as well as he can. It shows that Othman Bayyumi always regards every event is the grace of God. He is the Loving and the Provider, the Generous and the Benevolent, the Rich and the Independent, the Forgiving and the Clement, the Patient and the Appreciative, the Unique and the Protector, the Judge and the Peace. (Al Qur'an 3:31; 11:6; 35:15; 65:2-3). In short, there is no event in this world that beyond His Knowledge and Power.

"My cup shall be full, O Lord," he addressed himself to God, "the day I am enabled by Your gracious mercy to get up and exercise power and exalt Your word on earth." (Mahfouz 199)

But his condition is very bad. Even his doctor ask him to make a letter of resignation. Othman Bayyumi is very depressed for a while. Then he decides to come back to his own solitude. He asks a private room in the hospital and let no one to visit him but his wife, Radiya. He does not want to bother anyone as usual. He keeps his sorrows

to himself, but the fire to catch the glory is still strong within his heart.

His staunch faith in the sanctity of his convictions, in the harshness and holiness of life, the struggle and the agony, and the faraway and exalted hope, all remain unshaken. And he said to himself that occasional failure to achieve one's aspiration did not undermine one's belief in them. Not even illness or death could do so; for all that was noble and meaningful in life came from one's determination to pursue them. (Mahfouz 200)

Othman Bayyumi is waiting for another glory in his life; death.

Down there, he could hear the cries of hawkers announcing the approach of winter. May be it was as well that the new tomb out there in the sunlight had given him such pleasure. (Mahfouz 200)

The end of Othman Bayyumi's life shows that his faith to God is never failed although it is not always at the highest peak. Othman Bayyumi believes that he has finished his duty in this life with the struggle to reach

the glory. Although he does not get the chance to "enjoy" his Director General-ship, seems that it is not really matter to him.

"Our real happiness," he told himself, "is that God exists," and he then added with determination, "Either we live or we die!" (Mahfouz 98).

IV.2.The Influence of Othman Bayyumi's Philosophy toward His Life

The description and analysis of the character in sub chapter IV.1 has revealed main character's view. Othman Bayyumi has a philosophy of life that becomes his system of belief, value and categories that is used as the standard in understanding and answering his life problem.

There are three important elements within Othman Bayyumi's view. Firstly is his view about man. Man is created by God alone in this world. He will return to his Creator to be judged for what he has done in his life on his own account. This view has made Othman Bayyumi separates himself from the society around him. He is busy with himself. As an official of government and educated man he knows about the Great War, revolution,

and politics which are become his country's--Egypt-- problem. Nevertheless all these events have never been his concern. He always tells himself that man's true life is his inner life (Mahfouz 41). Man is valued from the struggle he has done to achieve the glory of life by hard work and faith. Based on this, Othman Bayyumi works very hard for his career. He does not have wealth and and relation to support his career. He relies absolutly on his capability and his faith that God will answer his prayer. He complains on his failure but he recovers from despair in a short time. It is because his faith that everything comes from God's will. The only thing man can do is accept what has happened and fights again. In order to reach the glory of life man has to have a single goal in his life (Mahfouz 41). Othman Bayyumi's goal is the position as a Director General. The analysis reveals that he sets too high on his goal. He supersedes all other interests that normal for human being. At the beginning of his career he even refuses to have a legal relation with a woman in a married bond, afraid that it may bother his career. To release his tension he goes to a prostitute quarter although he knows that it is contrary to his faith. But as time passing by he realizes his

wrong doing. He stops doing that and get married. Then he feels more comfortable.

Secondly, is his view about life. Life is a grant given by God to man. It is a sacred path of glory. Its start is deficiency and its end is perfectness. Based on this view he is never upset about his sad childhood experience. Othman Bayyumi is never fail his faith and dedication to work hard to achieve his dream. He regards his job as a government officer is a sacred duty from God. That makes he always tries to show his best effort in doing his office job. "...he had never been unfaithful to the duties of his office." (Mahfouz 168). In this aspects Othman Bayyumi's view is common among conscious muslims. They do their job as good as possible as if God Himself watches them. It based on The Messenger of God words:

As to the embellishment (ihsan) of conduct, so render thy service unto God as if thou seest seeth thee. (qtd. in Hamidullah 80)

Thirdly is his view about God. God is the source of everything. He is the Ruler of the universe. Othman Bayyumi's high value of government official position is based on this belief. The government or the State is the

shadow of God's Kingdom on Earth. Othman Bayyumi regards that working as a government officer is another way of worship.

...an official occupation was a sacred occupation like religion,...Even the Pharaohs themselves, he thought, were but officials appointed by gods of heaven to rule the Nile Valley by means of religious rituals and administrative...(Mahfouz 149)

The view influences his work performance. Although sometimes he is disappointed with the unjust situation-- nepotism-- he soon recovers his disappointment with the belief that his work is a kind of worship activity.

His quest for glory to reach the highest administrative position is inspired by the God's position as the One who governs and rules the course of universe. The Director General acts in the "similar" way in the matter of governmental affairs. The quotation below explains this.

He was now "His Excellency," the occupant of the Blue Room, the authority on legal rulings and administrative directives, the inspiration behind perceptive instruction, and the

efficient manipulation of people interest, one of God's faithful empowered to do good and prevent evil. (Mahfouz 199)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION