



JELWA, ABU'L-ḤASAN

JELWA, ABU'L-ḤASAN b. Moḥammad Ṭabā-ṭabā'i (b. Aḥmadābād, Gujarat, July 1823; d. Tehran, April 1897), a leading Shi'ite scholar of the 19th century and master teacher of philosophy and mathematics, as well as a poet. Jelwa, the name by which he is best known, was the pen name he used in his poetry.

His father, Sayyed Moḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'i "Maḏhar," a physician by profession, left Isfahan at young age for Kandahar and Kabul, eventually reaching Hyderabad in Sind. There he married the daughter of Mirzā Ebrāhimšāh, the vizier of Mir Ġolām-'Ali Khan. This marriage raised his social status and brought him close to court circles, particularly Mir Ġolām-'Ali Khan, who sent him as his envoy to the court of India in Calcutta. After his return to Hyderabad, he became the target of some unfounded accusations. Noticing that he was losing Ġolām-'Ali Khan's favor, he left Hyderabad for Aḥmadābād in Gujarat, leaving behind the house he owned (Jelwa, in *Nāma-ye dānešvarān*, p. 32). There Jelwa was born. Sayyed Moḥammad returned to Isfahan when Jelwa was seven years old. He died about seven years later leaving Jelwa in poverty and a target of ridicule by people around him, which eventually forced him to leave Isfahan for Tehran.

Jelwa received his first formal education at the Kāsagarān School in Isfahan and studied Arabic literature, natural sciences, mathematics, and theology. He seems to have studied rational disciplines (logic, philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences) mostly on his own without a teacher. Jelwa has not named his teachers in his autobiography, but his biographers have mentioned Sayyed Raḏi Lārijāni (d. 1854), Mollā Moḥammad-Ja'far Lāhiji (d. before 1877), Mirzā



Ḥasan Čini (d. 1848), and Mollā 'Abd-al-Jawād Tuni Ḳorāsāni (d. 1877) as his teachers. None of his teachers had the fame of Jelwa as an outstanding philosopher and scholar.

Jelwa began teaching rational disciplines first in Isfahan and then at the Dār-al-Šefā' school in Tehran. The best known among his students are Mirzā Ḥasan Kermānšāhi (d. 1918), Mirzā Šehāb-al-Din Nirizi Širāzi (d. 1921), Mirzā Moḥammad Tonekāboni (d. 1941), Āḳund Mollā Moḥammad Hidaji (d. 1921), Āqā Sayyed Ḥosayn Bād-kubi (d. 1939), Mirzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādi (d. 1939, q.v.), Āḳund Mollā Moḥammad-Kāzem Ḳorāsāni (d. 1911, q.v.), and Mirzā Moḥammad-'Ali Šāhābādi (d. 1950). Jelwa and two of his contemporaries, Āqā Moḥammad-Rezā Qomša'i and Āqā 'Ali Modarres, are the outstanding representatives of the philosophical school of Tehran in the 19th century.

Jelwa is best known as a teacher, not as a philosopher with original philosophical concepts of his own. As a philosopher, he subscribed to the Aristotelian (*maššā'i*) school and criticized the philosophical views of Šadr-al-Din Širāzi (Mollā Šadrā), although he regarded his philosophy quite highly and used to teach it. He also wrote a detailed commentary on Mollā Šadrā's *al-Asfār al-arba'a*. He seems to have considered this commentary as his most significant work, since it is the only one among his works that he mentions in his autobiography (p. 34). Jelwa, following Avicenna, was against the theory of the union of the intellect (*'āqel*) and the intelligible (*ma'qul*), and criticized Mollā Šadrā's views in this regard in a brief treatise called *Fā'da fi etteḥād al-'āqel wa al-ma'qul* and in his commentary on Mollā Šadrā. Also, following Avicenna and the illuminationist philosophers (see [ILLUMINATIONISM](#)), he disagreed with Mollā Šadrā's philosophical idea known as substantial motion (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariya*) and rejected it in a treatise he wrote on the subject. Sayyed Jalāl Āštiāni, a follower of Mollā Šadrā's school of thought, in his edition of Dāwud Qayšari's *Šarḥ-e Foṣuṣ al-ḥekam*, attributed Jelwa's criticism of Mollā Šadrā's ideas to his inability to understand them, because, according to Āštiāni, he had no comprehension of theosophy (*'erfān*).

Jelwa was never married. He lost his eyesight towards the end of his life and died in Tehran in 1897 and was buried in the tomb of Ebn Bābuya (Bābawayh) near Tehran.

Works. Jelwa remarked in his autobiography that “[since] composing a new original work is very difficult, rather impossible, I did not write anything original.” Concerning poetry, he noted: “Once I could distinguish between good



and bad poetry, I noticed that composing good poems, despite being difficult, is of no use, so I gave up the idea” (Jelwa, in *Nāma-ye dānešvarān*, p. 34). He left twenty-five works. They include his commentaries on the works of others, short treatises, and a *divān* of poetry. A memorial ceremony was held for him in Qom and Zavāra in 1994 and a collection of articles were published in a memorial volume. The complete set of his works have been recently published in Tehran. After his death, his entire library was purchased by the Majles Library. He had asked that the proceeds be distributed among the poor.

His major works are: *al-Ḥaraka al-jawhariya*, Arabic, supporting Avicenna’s view and criticizing those of Mollā Ṣadrā; *Rabṭ al-ḥādeṭ be’l-qadīm*, Arabic, criticizing Mollā Ṣadrā; *Fi etteḥād al-‘aqel be’l-ma’qul*, Arabic; *Kolli wa aqsām-e ān*, Arabic, lecture notes taken by one of his students; commentary on Avicenna’s *al-Šefā’*; commentary of *Šarḥ-e Ešārāt* by K̄vāja Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi and by Faḵr-al-Din Moḥammad Rāzi; commentary on *Šarḥ-e Foṣuṣ al-ḥekam* by Dāwud Qayṣari; and commentaries on Mollā Ṣadrā’s *Mabda’ wa ma’ād*, *Šarḥ-e al-hedāya al-aṭiriya*, *al-Mašā’er*, and *al-Asfar al-arba’a*.

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