

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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“The *Message of Thaqalayn* feels responsible to present the teachings of Islam in general and the School of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) in particular with complete honesty and accuracy and at the same time to emphasise the common ground that binds all Muslims together. Strengthening ties of brotherhood amongst all Muslims, whatever school of Islam they may adhere to, and establishing genuine, enduring and intimate friendship between all those who believe in God are two of the main aims and tasks of the *Message of Thaqalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.”

Editor-in-Chief

Editorial

We are grateful to God and pleased to present yet another issue of the *Message of Thaḡalayn*. Publication of this issue has coincided with the last three months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar i.e. Shawwāl, Dhu'al-Qa'dah, and Dhu'l-Hijjah. One of the highlights of this season is hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). We discussed this in the Editorial of Issue 39. Other important occasions in this period include the anniversary of martyrdom of Imam Sadiq (A) on the 25th of Shawwāl, the birth of Imam Riḍā (A) on the 11th of Dhu'al-Qa'dah, the martyrdom of Imam Javad (A) on the 29th of Dhu'al-Qa'dah, the martyrdom of Imam Baqir (A) on the 7th of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the Day of 'Arafah on the 9th Dhu'l-Hijjah, the Eid of Sacrifice on the 10th of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the birth of Imam Naqī (A) on the 15th of Dhu'l-Hijjah, and Eid of Ghadir on the 18th of Dhu'l-Hijjah.

Similar to the previous issues, this issue also contains seven papers on various aspects of Islamic thought.

The first paper is entitled: "Outcomes of the Spiritual Journey." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the last five issues, in this paper Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali studies the approach of attaining nearness to God and reveals the spiritual advantages that are granted to those who embark on this journey. People who make an effort to live piously while maintaining a pure heart free of immorality are bound to reach proximity to God. Dr. Shomali derives the effects of living such a life from the holy Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Those who undertake this journey have the ability to achieve: 1) complete support from God, 2) perfect knowledge, 3)

devotion to God, 4) entrance into the realm of light, 5) immense love for God, 6) witnessing God in everything, and 7) internal peace. God-willing, this series of papers will continue in the forthcoming issues.

The second paper is entitled: “Duty of Acquiring Knowledge.” In this paper, Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari emphasizes on the importance of pursuing knowledge and its obligation upon all Muslim men and women. He presents four narrations by the Prophet Mohammad (S) on this topic which reveal that knowledge can be acquired by anyone, at any time and place. Though Islam historically made great contributions to science, Mutahhari attempts to provide answers as to why the Prophet’s commands have not been fully accomplished in the recent centuries. Nonetheless, he states that knowledge is dependent on the needs of a society to create an independent and unyielding Islamic civilization. This paper is based on a lecture delivered by Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari on the 29th Bahman, 1340 (18th of February, 1962) in Farsi, published in *Dah Goftār*. It has been translated into English for the *Message of Thaqaalayn* by Mohammad Reza Farajian. Where required changes have been made by the editing team of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*.

The third paper is entitled: “Determinism and Free Will in the Qur’an.” In this paper, Dr. Muhammad Mahdi Gorjian discusses the topic of determinism and free will (*al-jabr wa’l ikhtiyār*), a profound subject that continues to fascinate many scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. This resulted in one of the heated controversies that merged among the Muslims after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (S). Some Muslims supported the idea of determinism (*al-jabr*) and some supported the idea of delegation of all power over the voluntary actions to man (*al-tafwid*). Each group tried to argue for their position from the Qur’an. The adherents of the school of *Ahl al-Bayt* (A) have avoided extreme points of views. Following the Imams (A), they have insisted on

what is referred to as ‘a status between the two’ (*amrun bayn al-amrayn*). This paper has been translated from Farsi into English for the *Message of Thaqaalayn* by Mohammad Rassafi. Where required changes have been made by the editing team of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*.

The fourth paper is entitled: “Khums: A Support for the Financial Independence, Part I.” In this paper, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi examines the impact of khums on meeting the financial needs of the Muslim society. He tackles the arguments made by those who oppose khums as envisaged in Shi‘i jurisprudence. He studies the issue by 1) defining necessary terminology, 2) using Qur’anic verses, 3) quoting exegetes, and 4) referring to Sunni and Shi‘a narrations regarding *khums*. In doing so, *khums* is proven to refer to more than war booties in the Qur’an and that it has undeniably been collected by the Prophet (S), the Imams (A), and the Caliphs. The *Message of Thaqaalayn* has revised and summarised the English translation of this paper by Bahador Shirazian.

The fifth paper is entitled: “Shi‘ite Authorities in the Age of Minor Occultation.” In this paper, Huj. Ali Naghi Zabihzadeh studies the personality and role of one of the great Shi‘a jurists who led the community during the Age of Occultation (260 -329 A.H) i.e. Ali ibn Bābiwayh Qummī. This paper will be followed by another paper on Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb Kulayni. This paper is based on the second chapter of *Marja‘iyyat wa Siyāsāt*, vol. 1, published in Qum in 2005 by the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute. This paper is translated from Farsi into English for the *Message of Thaqaalayn* by Hamideh Farajian. When needed, changes are made by the editing team of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*.

The sixth paper is entitled: "Challenges and Dilemmas in Making Values and Ideals." In this paper, Huj. Dr Abbas Ali Shameli explores the term 'values', whether or not they are concrete or relative concepts, and the link between a values system and revelation. Shameli quotes the great Shi'a thinker Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's use of Qur'anic verses in determining a standard value-making. He calls attention to the role of the prophets in educating people and exchanging their gods for One God. Since gods lose their efficiency and society eventually overlooks them, society loses its ideal and individuals will ultimately look after their own interests. And as written in the holy Qur'an, the gods that people internalize and replace with God, the Almighty are but an illusion. In evaluating human values, Sadr proposes three ways in making values: contextualism, absolutization, and transcendental values-making. He concludes that according to the Qu'ran, values can only be made when we develop a worldview that links us to our Creator. Only with prophetic education can we come to create social justice and self-development.

The seventh paper is entitled: "Religion and Freedom." In this paper, Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali studies one of the important issues in contemporary thought. This paper studies different types of freedom and their relation with the religion of Islam. The Islamic position is presented with respect to philosophical freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of behaviour, social freedom, and spiritual freedom. This paper argues that Islam reveres those who think and reflect and that true freedom can be attained once a person defeats the inner and outer forces that confine his or her autonomy. It is only then that one can become closer to God. Thus, the paper ends with a brief discussion about piety (*taqwā*).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt (A) World Assembly and the Islamic Centre of England for their continued support and encouragement. And last but not the least, I thank God the Almighty for His guidance and favour upon us in the past and present and ask Him to help us all achieve a unified worldwide community.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

October 2010

Outcomes of the Spiritual Journey

Mohammad Ali Shomali

It is clear that the ultimate aim of the spiritual journey is to get as close to Allah (SWT) as much as possible. However, the notion of closeness (*qurb*) to God may appear to some as abstract, especially for those who are not trained in philosophy. This paper attempts to shed light on the notion of closeness to Allah (SWT) by describing what happens to those who are undergoing the spiritual journey towards Him. All the ideas mentioned henceforth are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah and therefore are hoped to be welcomed by all Muslims from different schools of Islam. Reflection on these outcomes can encourage everyone to embark on this journey and, if they have already done so, to continue following this luminous path. It can also serve as a test for the wayfarers to assess how much progress they have made. Insha-Allah, in an upcoming issue, we will study the notion of closeness to God as a subject on its own and explain what it means to become close to God (*qarib*) and who the *muqarrabin* (the people that are brought even closer) are.

Outcomes of the spiritual journey

1. Complete support: One of the outcomes of living a life of piety and having a pure and pious heart is that we will be given complete support by Allah (SWT). He will listen to us, will give us what we want, and will be our ears, eyes and hands. In the

well-known divine saying (*hadith-i qudis*) of *qurb-i nawāfil*, we read:

None of My servants can seek proximity to Me by that which is dearer to Me than things that I have made obligatory on him. Then, with the performance of *nawāfil* (the recommended acts), he continuously attains proximity to Me, so that I love him. When I love him, I will be the ear with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, and the hand with which he strikes. If he calls Me, I will answer his call, and if he makes a request, I will grant it.¹

2. Perfect knowledge: There are many hadiths which indicate that one of the results of having attained spiritual nearness to God is to be endowed with great knowledge of the realities of the world, including many mysteries that can never be known through ordinary methods of learning and teaching. On the topic of the servant who has attained proximity to God, Prophet Muhammad (S) reports Allah (SWT) as saying:

I will love him when he loves Me and I will make him loved by My creation, and I will open up his inward eyes to My glory and grandeur, and I will not hide from him [the knowledge of] the select of My creation. So in the darkness of night and in the light of day, I will tell him secrets, so that his conversations with creatures and with his companions will be cut off. I will make him hear My words and the words of My angels and I will reveal to him the secret I have hidden from My creation.²

3. Exclusive devotion to God: To be cut off from everything other than God (*tabattul* or *inqitā'*) means to be free from reliance on anything other than God, and to see everything as His

sign and as a manifestation of His power and grace. The true servants of God live within society while remaining totally mindful of God, and they remember Him continuously. The Qur'an praises a group of people "whom neither business nor trading distract from remembering God, keeping up prayer, and giving alms" (24:37). In the well-known Whisper of Sha'bān (*al-Mmunajāt al-Sha'bāniyyah*), Imam Ali (A) and other members of the household of the Prophet called upon God, saying:

My God! Make me completely cut off from all else but You, and enlighten the vision of our hearts with the radiance of looking at You, until the vision of our hearts penetrates the veils of light and reaches the Source of Grandeur and set our spirit to be suspended at the glory of Your sanctity.³

In this supplication, the Imam (A) is asking Allah (SWT) to enable him to be related only to Him and to be detached from anything that stops us from being in His presence.

Unfortunately there are many actions that can hinder our devotion, which could be apparently good or bad. Of course, bad actions and sins can keep us away from Allah's remembrance, but good actions can also become corrupted, for example, by arrogance and pride. Therefore, we should not let anything become a barrier or a veil between us and Allah (SWT), the Source of Light and Grandeur, whether it be our sins and attachment to the material life or our good actions and characteristics. If we are not careful, even good actions and qualities can preoccupy our mind and heart, therefore diverting our attention away from God. It is interesting that Imam Ali (A) asks to "penetrate the veils of light." According to Ayatollah Khomeini, "the veils of light" refers to those veils which are in and of themselves light, but prevent us from beholding the main

light, which is God. This is why knowledge, which is so highly regarded in Islam and everyone is required to seek it, can become “the greatest veil” (*al-hijāb al-akbar*). It is like someone who has a pair of glasses to help him read, but instead of using it to read, he simply holds it in his hand, enjoys looking at it, or plays with it. Of course, the knowledge which comes after the purification of one’s soul is different. According to hadiths, this type of knowledge is a light that God projects into the heart of the one with whom He is pleased (*a-‘ilm-u nur-un yaqdhif-uhu’llāh fi qalb-i man yashā*).

The following story, narrated in the biography of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba’i, relates to this point. Once Allamah was given an instruction for a specific practice by his spiritual teacher, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Qādi Tabataba’i, and was advised that “when you are doing this special practice you may start seeing angels, but you should continue with your practice and should not be distracted.” Once Allamah was conducting his worship and he saw an angel coming towards him. He immediately remembered what his teacher had told him and continued worshipping. Then the angel went around him as if he wanted to start a conversation with Allamah, but he did not pay any attention, so the angel sadly left him. Allamah remarked that he would never forget the sadness of that angel, but this is the way a true servant devotes himself to His Lord. We should not let anything get in the way of our focused devotion.

4. Entrance into the realm of light.

The above hadiths and many others refer to the fact that one of the results of progress on the spiritual journey is the elimination of darkness and entrance into the realm of light. The realm of light is a reality mentioned in the Qur’an and hadith:

Allah is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light (2:257)

With it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path. (5:16)

Light is also requested in many supplications, such as in the prayer which should be recited after the Ziyarah of Aal-i Yāsin:

O Allah, surely I ask You to send blessings upon Muhammad (S), the prophet of Your mercy and the word of Your light.

And fill my heart with the light of certainty

And my chest with light of faith.

And my thinking with the light of intentions.

And my determination with the light of knowledge.

And my power with the light of action.

And my tongue with the light of truthfulness.

And my religion with the light of understanding from You.

And my vision with brightness.

And my hearing with the light of wisdom.

And my love with the light of friendship for Muhammad (S) and his progeny. Peace be upon (all of) them!

Until I meet You, while certainly I discharged Your promise and Your covenant. So You cover me with Your mercy, O Master! O Praiseworthy.⁴

In the realm of light, everything is clear and the true reality of everything is known. One of the main challenges we face is to

understand everything the way it *really* is, and to treat each thing appropriately.

5. Immense love for God: One of the strongest ways to strengthen our relationship with Allah (SWT) is through love for Him. Once one has tasted this love, there is no other substitute. The Imams (A) were consumed with love for Allah (SWT). Imam Ali b. Husayn (A) says:

Nothing will cool my burning thirst but reaching You,
quench my ardour but meeting You, damp my yearning
but gazing upon Your face, settle my settling place
without closeness to you.⁵

The mystic is not the one who just loves God; rather he is the one who loves God alone, because his love or dislike for anything else is only for the sake of God. He wills and desires only what his Beloved wills and desires. He has no will or desire other than His. The mystic's love for God permeates his love for anything else.⁶ Imam Sadiq (A) says:

The pure heart is the one that meets the Lord while it is
free from anyone else.⁷

6. Witnessing God in everything: The real mystic is the one who witnesses God in everything. Allah (SWT) constantly shows Himself to us in different ways, and if our hearts are pure, we can witness Allah (SWT) through all things. In Duā of 'Arafah, Imam Husayn (A) says:

O my God! Through the variety of Your signs (in the world of being) and the changes in states and conditions, I realised that the purpose is to make Yourself known to me in everything, so that I would not ignore You in anything.⁸

Imam Ali (A) says:

I saw nothing except that I saw God before it, with it,
and after it.⁹

It is obvious that the vision in question, for God, the Almighty, is infinitely exalted beyond the range of the physical eye. God cannot be seen by the physical eye, neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

Being busy usually means that we forget Allah (SWT) and become consumed with our dealings. However, for Imam Ali (A), it meant that he remembered Allah (SWT) all the time: before, during and after each thing; as Allah (SWT) is the Creator, Preserver, and the one who will remain after all things.

One who has reached a high stage in the spiritual journey will find God in everything. For example, even if someone tells us something bad or our enemy tells us something, we can still manage to find a good message inside that which only we are able to de-code and understand. Other people may listen to the same thing but they do not get any message from it. However, we will understand the message from Allah (SWT) even in the words of our enemy.

7. Internal peace: Whenever a man gets close to Allah (SWT), all other things appear light and small to him. He feels that he is under Allah's protection, and nothing can harm him. He understands that he does not suffer any pain or difficulty except that they are to his own benefit, and that he will be rewarded by God "without measure" (39:10).

There are many people in the world who have comfortable lives, but they suffer from a lack of peace and tranquillity, to the extent that some of them resort to alcoholic drinks or narcotic drugs to

decrease their spiritual pain and self consciousness. However, nothing short of reaching God can satisfy human beings. The Qur'an says:

Surely! With the remembrance of God hearts come to rest. (13:28)

One reason why nothing can disturb people who are mindful of God is that they are not afraid of losing anything. Everything becomes easy for them, since they have appreciated Allah's (SWT) greatness, nothing else is important in their view. For example, if you are on a beach next to the ocean, you would not pay any attention to a small glass of water. Describing the pious (*al-muttaqin*), Imam Ali (A) says:

The greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts and so everything else appears small in their eyes.¹⁰

Conclusion

The outcomes of the spiritual journey are too many to describe in this short paper. The journey rewards those who travel on its path with exclusive devotion, entrance into the realm of light, immense love for Allah (SWT), being able to witness Allah (SWT) in everything, and internal peace. Once we take a step towards Allah (SWT), He will reward us with these invaluable blessings, which will make it easier for us to travel farther.

¹ *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, pp. 352 & 353.

² *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 77, pp. 28 & 29.

³ *Maḡāṭih al-Jinān*.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *The Psalms of Islam*, pp. 251 & 252.

⁶ For a detailed account of love, see *Love in Christianity and Islam* (2005, 2nd edition) by Mahnaz Heydarpoor.

⁷ *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 16.

⁸ *Mafātih al-Jinān*.

⁹ Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, *Al-Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 117, vol. 4, p. 479 and vol. 5, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 191.

Duty of Acquiring Knowledge

Murtada Mutahhari

“Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who do not know?’ Only those who possess intellect take admonition.” (39:9)

Our topic and its intended meaning are based on the famous hadith by the holy Prophet (S) agreed upon by both Shi‘ites and Sunnites:

Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim man and woman.

According to this hadith, one of the Islamic duties and obligations is acquiring knowledge. In Arabic, “*Fariḍah*” means obligation or duty and its origin is “*Faraḍa*” [a verb in Arabic] meaning “to be certain” or “to oblige”. What, we call today as a “*wājib*” or a “*mustaḥab*” act, were called in early Islamic era “*mafrūḍ*” [obligatory] and “*masnūn*” [recommended]. It must be mentioned that the words “*wājib*” and “*wujūb*” have been used in that era but not as frequent as “*fariḍat*”, “*mafrūḍ*”, and “*faraḍa*”; while the word “*mustaḥab*” with its current meaning seems to be coined by Islamic jurisprudents. The word “*mustaḥab*” is neither used in the holy Qur’an nor in any hadith and even the early Islamic jurisprudents did not include in their glossaries. In the past, they used the words “*masnūn*” and “*mandūb*” instead of

“mustahab”. Acquiring knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim and does not belong to a class or a subclass of people. In civilizations prior to Islam, knowledge was a privilege for the select few. In Islam, knowledge is an obligation and duty for everyone, just as performing the daily prayer, fasting, paying alms, going on pilgrimage to hajj, jihad, and promoting the good and prohibiting the bad. From the beginning of Islam until now, all Islamic sects and scholars have agreed upon this. There is normally a chapter in hadith references called “*Bāb-u Wujūb-i Talab-i al-‘Ilm*” (the Chapter on the Obligation of Acquiring Knowledge).

Thus, the above hadith is accepted by all and if there needs to be any discussion it will just be its interpretation and scope.

Conditions of Islamic nations

There is no need to discuss here surrounding issues like how Islam has urged people towards knowledge and mention verses from the Qur’an and quote some hadiths from religious leaders and point to parts of Islamic history related to our topic. I do not want to commend Islam and repeatedly attract your attention to how Islam has supported knowledge and has driven humanity towards it, because such things have been and are being said too much and I believe they do not have much fruits. These become fruitless when one takes a look at Islamic nations and finds that they are most illiterate and uneducated nations of the world. Such person would, at least, have one question and that would be: “why the furthest nations of the world from knowledge are the Muslims if such words are true and Islam has supported knowledge that much?”

I believe we must pay more attention to the problems in our society and think about the roots of our scientific backwardness and seek for a solution rather than such above-mentioned useless

propagandas whose ultimate effects are to temporarily make us feel happy. In his lecture here, Sayyid Mūsā Sadr (God bless him) mentioned some of Allamah Sharaf al-Dīn's activities and said that although Allamah Sharaf al-Dīn had many great books for introducing Shī'a and the Household (A); when he saw the Shī'a situation in Lebanon and that they were the poorest and were devoid of proper education and there were few teachers, doctors, or engineers among them and instead, all porters, bath-keepers and scavengers were Shī'ite, he thought to himself about the influence his books could have. He was worried that people might say that if Shi'i Islam were a good faith, Shī'ites' situation must have been better. That made him think about scientific activities and establish schools, institutes, and charitable groups to create a holy movement and promote the Shī'ite community in Lebanon. Muslims, in general, compared to other people of the world are like Lebanese Shī'ites in comparison with other Lebanese at the beginning of Allamah Sharaf al-Dīn's movement. Whatever we speak of Islam, its support of knowledge and its motivation towards acquiring knowledge would not have any effects upon the current situation of Islamic nations. The most this may do is just to raise a question for the listener why Muslims are suffering in this situation if those words are true. Let me tell you a story, and before that I am going to read four hadiths from the holy Prophet (S) about knowledge and explain them because they are related to this story and then I will tell you the story next.

Four hadiths

One is the above hadith which indicates that it is obligatory for every Muslim, male or female, to seek knowledge. It is for both men and women because the word "*muslim*" means Muslim, whether man or woman. Of course, the expression "*wa muslimah*" (and Muslim women) is added in some Shī'ite hadith

references like *Bihār al-Anwār*. According to this hadith, acquiring knowledge is a common obligation and is not gender or class-specific. There may be an obligatory duty for the youth instead of the elderly the old, or a task obligatory for the governor and not for the governed, or vice versa or something which is obligatory for men and not for women like jihād [war] and Friday congregational prayer which are obligatory for men and not for women, but the obligation of acquiring knowledge is mandatory for all Muslims and not specific to a select few.

Another hadith is:

Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.

This means that acquiring knowledge does not belong to a special period of time and it always must be pursued. Ferdowsi, the Iranian Poet, referring to this hadith says:

زگهواره تا گور دانش بجوي به گفتار پیغمبر راستگوي

As the first hadith removed the limits of gender and class and generalized the theory, this hadith generalizes the concept from the aspect of time. It is possible that an obligation is limited to a specific time and that makes it impossible to be done at any time. For example, obligatory daily fasting is limited to a specific time during the month of Ramadan. Daily prayers are also assigned to a specific time of the day and must be performed during specific hours. Hajj is also an obligation though it can only be done during the month of Dhi'l-Hajjah. But acquiring knowledge is not limited to time or age.

The third hadith:

Seek knowledge even if it is in China.¹

Apparently, China has been mentioned in the hadith because either it was the furthest place in the world that people could go that time or it was known as the cradle of science and industry. The mentioned hadith suggests that acquiring knowledge is not place and time-limited. It is possible that an obligation is limited to a place and is impossible to be done anywhere; for example, hajj rituals are both time and place-limited. Muslims are to perform hajj rituals in Mecca, in the land where Islam emerged and spread throughout the world, and it must be performed around the house built by the hands of Abraham and his noble son, Ishmael. Muslims cannot agree with each other and choose another place for performing hajj. Thus, this obligation is limited; however, to acquire knowledge, no special place is assigned and wherever there is knowledge it must be acquired, whether in Mecca, Medina, Egypt, Syria, Iraq or the furthest places in the world. We have a series of hadiths about the virtue of emigration and travel for acquiring knowledge to furthest places and even the following verse is interpreted accordingly: "...And whoever leaves his home migrating toward Allah and His Apostle, and is then overtaken by death, his reward shall certainly fall on Allah..." (4:100) and "migrating toward Allah and His Apostle" is interpreted as migrating and travelling for acquiring knowledge. It is mentioned in hadiths that "If you knew what successes you would achieve as a consequence of seeking and acquiring knowledge, you would go after knowledge even if your blood would spill in its path or [if it] required you to go into the seas and travel through the oceans."²

The fourth hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (S):

Wisdom is the missing property of the faithful, and one who has lost something would catch it wherever he finds it.

The word *wisdom* is a firm, sound and valid word that means to discover the truth. Any law that agrees with the truth and it is not made by mind is called wisdom. Imam Ali (A) states:

A wise saying is a lost article of the believer. Therefore, take advantage of wise sayings though it is from the hypocrites. You, the believers, are more deserving of acquiring it.³

The one condition in acquiring knowledge is that the knowledge to be acquired must agree with the truth and reality; and if so, you should not mind from whom you are learning knowledge and wisdom. Actually, there are certain conditions when one is doubtful about the truth of the issue. In such situations, those who cannot distinguish the truth from falsehood must not listen to those who are on the wrong path. They must be careful about whom they are under influence. If they do not care, they risk going astray. But there are times when it is certain that the word is true such as a discovery in medicine or in natural sciences. It is ordered that in such a situation, one must set out to learn. It is quoted in our hadiths from Jesus, son of Mary (A), that: "Achieve the truth and accept it, even if from the people of the falsehood, but do not take or accept falsehood, even if from the people of the truth."⁴ You must analyze what has been said.

Such hadiths have removed the limits of knowledge with respect to the people from whom a Muslim gains his knowledge. That is because an obligation might be more limited from this view, i.e. congregational prayer must have an imam, but to become such imam has conditions which are being Muslim, faithful and just; but on the contrary, none of such conditions is specified in acquiring and imparting knowledge.

Now let us tell you the story, to which these hadth relate. Our knowledgeable friend, Mr. Sayyid Muhammad Farzan narrated

that in the past, at the beginning of Constitution revolution,⁵ Mr. Sayyid Hibat al-Ddin Shahrestani (may God bless him) published an Arabic journal in Iraq called “*Al-‘Ilm*” (or “Knowledge”) and it was published for two or three years. On the back cover of this journal, the word “*Al-‘Ilm*” was written in Nasta‘liq calligraphic style and on its four corners the above four hadiths were written. Once, it was written in that journal that once a German orientalist had gone to visit Mr. Shahrestani and saw the hadiths on the back cover. He had asked what was written and was told that they were the four commands on acquiring knowledge by our prophet (S). After asking them to translate the hadiths, the orientalist thought for a short while and showed his surprise over the hadiths that encouraged acquiring knowledge regardless of gender, time, place, and the type of teacher and asked how it comes that despite these hadiths, Muslims are so much backward in knowledge and the rate of illiterate people among them is very high.

Why this general rule has been ignored and not considered as an obligation and why the above commands have not been carried out continues to be a mystery. Of course, in the course of history Islam made a great scientific and cultural movement in the world and for centuries pioneered in knowledge, culture and civilization. Islam is a religion in which the first verses descended to its prophet began with:

Read in the Name of your Lord who created;
created man from a clinging mass. Read, and your
Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen,
taught man what he did not know. (96:1-5)

Thus, it is questionable as to how a religion whose first principle is Oneness and which does not allow any restriction in thinking and learning could fail to create a great civilization.

Why this Islamic duty was not fulfilled?

Certainly, one of its causes was the actions committed by caliphate governments which created problems in the Muslims' lives. It made a stratified society which was not in any agreement with Islamic laws. Then, the society was divided into a class of the underprivileged and a class of the prodigal, extravagant, and haughty ones who did not know what to do with their possessions. When people's condition becomes weakened, the situation will become difficult to observe such duties and even some issues will prohibit their accomplishment.

Another reason for the problem was that science was disregarded because the attention was shifted to something else; it is like a certain credit is transferred from one account to another, like for example, one opens an account in a bank with certain credits and then the authorities transfer the credits from that account to another. They claim that the reason why Islamic rules about science were disregarded was that all that Islam considered as motivation of people towards learning, literacy, and merits of knowledge were all taken as credits for Muslim scholars [‘Ulamā] like respecting them, and people instead of paying attention to their literacy and acquiring knowledge sought closeness to Islamic scholars and respected them and this all led to the current situation. The above claim is somehow correct, though Muslim scholars have not done such misleading acts. This was result of hearing from ordinary clergymen on the pulpits about the necessity of respect for the knowledgeable people than for the knowledge itself.

Another problem has been that sometimes scholars of certain field of Islamic knowledge insisted on the claim that the obligation [Fariḡah] mentioned in the hadith from the holy

Prophet (S) was only applicable to their discipline and not the rest.

What knowledge?

In the late Mullā Muhsin Fayḍ's *Al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā*, I came across a very good point which apparently he had taken from Ghazālī. He says that Islamic scholars have become divided into almost twenty groups based on their interpretation of the mentioned hadith and each of them – regardless of their professions – have insisted that the mentioned hadith referred only to their field of study. For example, theologians have said that by the mentioned hadith, the Prophet (S) meant Islamic theology because it is the science of religious principles. Ethicists have said that the aim has been ethics i.e. to study the deeds that lead to happiness and those that prevent from happiness. Jurists said that jurisprudence has been meant. Every person has to know his religious duties either by himself being a jurist [*mujtahid*] or by following the most qualified jurist. Exegetes said that Qur'anic exegesis has been meant because knowledge meant to be the book of God. Hadith scholars said that it meant to be the science of hadith because anything, even the Qur'an itself, must be interpreted accordingly. Sufis (Gnostics) said gnosis and the knowledge of spiritual stations has been meant. After explaining the reason of every group, Ghazālī gives a statement which is relatively comprehensive. And in brief, it is that the Prophet (S) did not mean any of the above mentioned sciences exclusively; and if he meant specifically one of them, he would have expressed it. What we need to do is to discover first what is necessary in Islam as an individual duty or a shared obligation, and then whatever knowledge is needed for carrying out those necessary responsibilities becomes obligatory.

Preparatory obligation

Muslim jurists consider the obligation of acquiring knowledge to be “preparatory” and “by itself.” This means that the obligation of acquiring knowledge is not only preparatory like those prerequisites for obligations which themselves are not obligatory; acquiring knowledge is obligatory by itself as well. Jurists say that this preparatory obligation is for learning the rulings, as if it is generally considered that carrying out Islamic duties is dependent on the fact that Muslims know their duties themselves and doing so, they will be able to automatically carry them out. Thus, the obligation of acquired knowledge is that a Muslim must be a scholar of jurisprudence or a follower of one. While it is obvious that as well as knowing duties and religious orders which are needed to be learned, many deeds which are obligatory in Islam require knowledge, lesson, and skill. For example, practicing medicine is a shared obligation which itself is impossible without acquiring medical knowledge and acquiring such knowledge is an obligation and it is the same for many other obligations.

One must see what the needs and obligations are in Islamic society and it cannot be carried out well without learning, so acquiring its knowledge is also obligatory. The obligation of acquiring knowledge is absolutely dependent on the measure of society’s needs. Once, farming, required industries, trading, and politics did not require knowledge. Once, people could become politician, craftsmen, or merchants by having a short training course or apprenticeship as an assistant the experts in these fields. But today none of the above-mentioned businesses is possible to be carried out without knowledge in a way that they are in harmony with today’s world and life. Even farming now must be based on scientific and technical principles. If a merchant does not study economics, he would not become a practical

businessman. The same rule is applied to a politician. Today, businesses have emerged which are impossible to be carried out without knowledge and profession. The kinds of jobs which could be learned with short courses of training as an assistant are now as much different that it makes them impossible to be learned without going to technical schools or colleges. Most jobs need technical experts and technicians.

First principle: independence and dignity of Islamic society

Here we need to pay attention to several principal points. First we should see what kind of society Islam is seeking? Islam is seeking a society which is esteemed, independent and self-relying and actually, Islam does not accept that a Muslim nation is subordinate to a non-Muslim nation: "...Allah will never provide the faithless any way [to prevail] over the faithful." (4:141) Also, Islam does not accept that a Muslim nation always asks another nation for gratuitous assistance. Moreover, it does not accept that the Islamic society does not have economic or social independence. Islam never accepts that Muslims have no doctor or medical care when they become terribly sick and they endure illness and go to non-Muslim people. And these all demonstrate a principle.

Second principle: Knowledge as the basis of all dignities and independence

Another principle is that there have broken out a revolution in the world so that all things are done based on knowledge and life is sustained upon knowledge. All aspects of human life depend on knowledge and none of them can be dealt with without the key of knowledge.

Third principle: Knowledge as the key to performing other obligations

Carrying out other obligations and individual and social Islamic duties are dependent on acquiring knowledge. Acquiring knowledge is known as a key to the fulfilment of other obligations and Islamic objectives which in jurisprudence is called a preparatory obligation. Thus, if Muslim affairs improve and benefit more from science acquiring knowledge becomes more important and expands more in its scope.

The issue of acquiring knowledge has been discussed in various places in jurisprudence and its principles. For example, in the principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) when discussing “the principle of exemption” (*al-barā’ah*) they study “necessity of examining [requirements of] reason”. Here they discuss knowledge. In jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) when discussing the issue of “recommendation or obligation of knowing practical rulings of Shari’ah with respect to business” the jurists study the significance of knowledge. The jurists also discuss knowledge when they study permissibility of being paid for performing obligatory acts.

Religious and secular sciences

It has become a habit for us to label some sciences as religious and some others as secular. Religious sciences are those which are directly related to theological, moral, or practical deeds or those which are prerequisite of learning Islamic sciences, obligations, and rulings such as Arabic literature and logics. Some people would think that other sciences are quite unrelated to religion and whatever Islam has instructed about the merits of knowledge and the reward of acquiring it, is exclusive to what is idiomatically called religious sciences and by “the obligation of

acquiring knowledge”, the Prophet (S) exclusively meant the sciences that are called religious sciences.

The fact is that that it is nothing but a label. In one view, religious sciences are exclusive to the primary texts i.e. the holy Qur’an and the original tradition of the Prophet (S) or his noble predecessors. In early Islam, when people were not familiar with it, it was obligatory for everyone to learn the mentioned primary texts before anything. There were no sciences of theology, logics, Islamic history or at that time. The holy Prophet (S) said: “Truly, knowledge is of three kinds: the firm verse, the just obligation, and the upright tradition.”⁶ This means that knowledge is exclusive to learning the Qur’anic verses, the Prophetic hadiths, and practical rulings. Later on, Muslims became familiar with those primary texts of the Qur’an and hadiths which are like the constitution of Islam and by their order, regarded acquiring knowledge as an absolute obligation and gradually some sciences were established.

Every knowledge which is beneficial to Muslims and solves Muslims’ problems is the knowledge which must be acquired according to religion and it is a religious science. Why do we recognize Arabic grammar and vocabulary as religious sciences? Is that save the fact that they benefit Islam’s objectives? Why do we learn romantic poems of Imra’ al-Qays and poems of drunk Abu Nuwās? Surely, because they help us understand Arabic, the language of the Qur’an.

Thus, any knowledge which is beneficial and necessary to Islam must be regarded as religious science, and if someone has pure intentions and acquires that science to serve Islam, he will be rewarded by those mentioned for acquiring knowledge in hadiths:: “surely, the angels spread their wings under [the feet] of

the seekers of the knowledge.”⁷ But without pure intentions, even learning the Qur’anic verses will earn no rewards.

Overall, it is incorrect that we divide all sciences into two: religious and secular sciences which makes some people think that those so-called secular sciences are alien to Islam. The fact that Islam is the comprehensive and final message of God requires that every beneficial and necessary science to Islamic society must be considered as religious knowledge.

Women’s education

As said above, acquiring knowledge is not exclusive to men. Since the Prophet (S) stated: “To seek knowledge is the duty of all Muslims” and the actual word which has been used is *muslim* with its masculine grammatical form, some have thought that acquiring knowledge is only men’s obligation.

Firstly, in some versions of this hadith which are available in Shi‘ite references, the phrase “*wa muslimah*” [“and women Muslims” in Arabic] is also added. Secondly, such expressions do not show preference to a specific gender. In Arabic, when “*muslim*” is used alone and not in contrast to “*muslimah*” it can refer to both a male or female Muslim. For example, in the hadith: “The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe,”⁸ certainly, it has not been meant that only male Muslims must be like that. Elsewhere, the Prophet (S) stated: “Muslims are brothers to one another.”⁹ Here, one cannot say that the hadith is only about men because he (S) has not said “Muslim women are sisters to one another.”

The term “*muslim*” [in Arabic] has two concepts: being a Muslim and being a man. Everyone knows that in such cases, gender is not important and only being Muslim is important. Even if instead of the word “*muslim*”, the word “*rajul*” [in Arabic means

“man”] was used, the gender side of it could be ignored. This is what jurists call, “*ilghā’ al-khususiyyah*” (disregarding the particularities). In some hadiths in jurisprudential issues, the hadith is addressing men; i.e. it has been asked from one of the Imams (A) that a man has dealt like that and such is happened, now what can he do? And Imam (A) has answered that question. Jurisprudents say that although the word “man” is mentioned in the hadith, but in such cases, the preference is ignored, because it is obvious that gender is not affecting the conclusion.

Moreover, in jurisprudence there is a rule that some generalities admit no restriction or modification. For example, a similar issue as what was mentioned about knowledge is brought in the Qur’an about *Taqwā* (God-fearing). About knowledge, it is stated: “...Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” Only those who possess intellect take admonition” (39:9). About *Taqwā*, it is stated: “Shall We treat those who have faith and do righteous deeds like those who cause corruption on the earth? Shall We treat the God-fearing like the vicious?” (38:28) and also it is stated: “...Indeed the noblest of in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing among you...” (49:13) and in all these examples, the prepositions are masculine and it is not said: “Shall We treat the God-fearing men and the God-fearing women” and it is not said: “the noblest of in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing among you women”. Can one claim that because of the masculine preposition, what is mentioned about *Taqwa* is specific to men and excludes women? Islam deems knowledge as light and ignorance as darkness as it is stated in the Qur’an that: “...Say, ‘Are the blind one and the seer equal? Or are the darkness and the light equal?’...” (13:16). Therefore, when the Prophet says: “To seek knowledge is duty of all Muslims”¹⁰ it must be an obligation for every Muslim. Can anyone assume that in Islam men are supposed to go out of darkness and come to light, but women still stay in darkness? And it is only men’s

obligation to come out of that blindness, but women still stay in such a blindness?

At the end of the verse, it is stated that: "...Only those who possess intellect take admonition." (39:9) meaning that those who possess intellect know such issues well. In fact, the Qur'an is going to state that such an issue is something obvious and everyone can understand it. It is stated about the Prophet (S) in another verse: "...to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom" (62:2). In this verse, purification and teaching are mentioned together and all of them in masculine form. If "to purify them" can be specific to men, "to teach them" can also be specific to men.

Whose fault is it?

Hearing these comments, some people would rush to say: "Come on! Are you saying that our daughters should go to the existing schools and learn this [antireligious] culture?" The answer is that: if there are any problems with these schools and culture it is people's fault because they have not reformed them. As well as obliging people to acquire knowledge, Islam has considered the preparations of reforming the society as obligatory and do not allow people to sit in the house and wait for when schools are a hundred percent good for their sons and daughters and then send their children to school. Islam does not allow people to criticize without doing anything to improve the existing conditions. We are obliged to build good schools with good culture. Basically, one who has not made the smallest step for culture, one who has not participated in establishing any cultural communities and has not made a single step to carry out the obligation of acquiring knowledge is not allowed to sit and criticize. Cultural problems were developed when such critics did not do their religious obligations about culture.

It should be noted that as far as specialization is concerned women should try to specialize in those disciplines that better match their abilities and talents and can better serve the society. Can one say that society does not need women doctors or surgeons, or midwives?

The strange thing is that when the issue is women's education, some people criticize and when the need arises, women are required to refer to male physicians or even unbelievers for medication or surgery

Holy struggle

The result of all above-mentioned is that today the most obligatory of all obligations is participating in public education. This obligation is not only the duty of those engaged in cultural activities, but the duty of everyone who is a Muslim and those who claim to be, whether a member of government or nation. Such a duty must be conducted as a holy struggle and in a religious manner. So religious scholars must take this honor and be the pioneers. The believers and religious people must not fear from schools and science and think that when science comes, religion will be gone. This idea shows lack of faith in Islam. Islam is a religion that grows in a scientific atmosphere better than ignorance. We would fear ignorance and illiteracy more than science and school if we knew what ignorance has done to us and to Islam.

When you acquired knowledge....

Sometimes, we see some people would use the poem of Sanā'ī to conceal their fear of knowledge; the poem that says:

When you acquired knowledge

then fear, for at night

If a thief comes with light

selects goods the better.

And then they say: “See! These schooled people’s harm for the country is a hundred times more than the illiterates’! Illiterate ones might, at maximum, steal unworthy things, but these schooled ones steal millions of Tomans!”

There is no doubt that science, by itself, is not the guarantee for having a prosperous society. A society needs religion and faith as well. However, if faith is not supported by knowledge it would not be useful; it will just be a burden. The holy Prophet stated: “Two kinds of people broke my back: learned people who have no piety and religious people who have no knowledge.”¹¹ Islam neither wants an impious scholar or a religious ignorant.

It is also a fallacy to use “If a thief comes with light * selects goods the better” as an example for the unfaithful educated ones and conclude that knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance. Because the thief who comes with light and steals selected goods, comes at night, not in the day. And he would come at night, when the house owner is asleep. But, he would not be able to steal during the day or when the households are awake. The faithless educated ones use others’ ignorance and sleepiness to steal. So, the common ignorance is influential in such an adversity. Light up your country with the light of knowledge, light up every house like the day, awaken everyone, illuminate everywhere and strengthen the pillars of faith and then that thief would not be able to steal. The causes that facilitated the theft have been the thief’s knowledge, faithlessness, and the common people’s ignorance. So, here ignorance is also responsible.

However, if we want to have a genuine religion, escape from poverty, overcome illness, establish justice among ourselves, bring democracy and freedom and our society becomes motivated towards engaging in social affairs, there would be one way and it is acquiring knowledge which must be inclusive and becomes a holy struggle through religion.

If we do not begin this holy struggle, the world will, and benefit from its fruits. Others will come to educate our nation and God knows what a damage our negligence would cause to Islam.

Men against ignorance

The book *Men Against Ignorance*¹² has reported UNESCO's activities for educating people in underdeveloped countries. Although it is good to see that there are means provided for promoting education among Muslims to gradually eliminate illiteracy from their communities, it is regretful that we Muslims neglect carrying out our duties and that others come from overseas and exert great efforts to fulfil our duty and not only promote general teachings, but establish additional cooperative and health organizations and help people in curing their illnesses, filling the swamps, eradicate malaria, and reform their cities and villages. They would go to places none of us have ever been to-far places in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan and provide extra services.

The statistics in that book show that 96 percent of some Islamic countries have been illiterate until few years ago. The situation has improved and the percentage of illiteracy has decreased. In the last two years, UNESCO's representatives in Asian countries held conferences in Karachi and outlined a twenty-year education plan in Asian countries. This plan which was designed to ensure accuracy based on reliable statistics and considering all possible

options and facilities. They have aroused delight and enthusiasm in the public.

Their intentions behind this act are irrelevant. Maybe a kind of colonial intention is behind the screen. Woe be to us! If the colonial power has entered through such activities, it will be all over with us! Though we do not know their true intentions, we must not put on a black cover over our faults by expressing pessimism. We have the bad habit of interpreting others' activities and intentions as malice in order to cover our faults. It was written in the same book published by the UNESCO that in one African country, a fanatical nationalist accused them that you Europeans have realized that your colonial power is weakened and your political power is being reduced therefore you hide your face under the cover of charity and serving society.

Whatever their intention is, it is irrelevant to us. What affects us is that we understand that if they are successful in educating Islamic countries in twenty years in making them literate and rescuing them from ignorance, poverty, and illnesses, what would the next generation feel towards Islam and being a Muslim? Would not they tell us that we were Muslim and followed the religion of Muhammad for fourteen centuries and were living in ignorance and misery until others stretched their hands from the other side of the world and rescued us? What reputation would then be remained for Islam? What answer should we give for the question of the Prophet (S) if he asks: Did you obey my order that said "To seek the knowledge is duty of all Muslims?"¹³

That is a natural and spiritual principle that "the man is indebted to the beneficence". The Prophet (S) also stated that: "If one revives and fertilizes a wasteland, it will be his." Although this is a legislative ruling about lands, it is true regarding matters in creation. Whoever came and revived a nation and rescued them

from misery, poverty, and ignorance, possessed their hearts, souls and beliefs. Thus, regarding the current situation, we can confidently predict that we are not the owners of future generations. One might say that a Muslim will not convert to other religions, especially if people are educated would never convert from monotheism to anything else. I am saying that it might be that way, but the certain point is that even if they do not convert to another faith, they would lose their interest in Islam and perhaps the communists would benefit from its fruit. If in Islamic countries religious interest of the youth is lost, only the communists will benefit from its fruits. Thus, we must avoid this danger. But how? Would it be through reacting negatively, like always and raise a tumult and shout that UNESCO does not have the right to teach Muslims, struggle, and spend money for this purpose? What does it have to do with them?

Do you think that such attitude is proper? Would we accept this today? Do the Muslim nations accept this from us? Or the solution is that we strive and begin a holy struggle and fulfill this duty ourselves? It was reported in the same book that in Indonesia, which is the most populated Islamic country, general education has become a holy struggle and people would pursue it like other religious duties. In Indonesia, whoever knows something about a job and has a job would consider it his duty to go to schools and teach, because the number of official schoolteachers is not enough for all schools.

This is Islam's command that makes it obligatory for everyone to acquire knowledge. The current form of that command is how in Indonesia, it is being obeyed.

Competing in offering service and in being good

In verse (5:48), after referring to the Qur'an and previous holy scriptures and divine religions, it is stated that:

For each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path, and had Allah wished He would have made you one community, but [His purposes required] that He should test you in respect to what He has given you. So take the lead in all good works. (5:48).

It seems that this verse considers it wise that nations differ from each other and maybe it means that different nations compete with each other to do more good and scientific deeds and are tried in this way in order that the competent nation wins the contest. And this verse orders Muslims to make efforts to take bigger steps and win the competition for the good.

So, the way of avoiding the mentioned danger is not avoiding UNESCO. The way of avoiding that danger is that we initiate the work and be the winner and I repeat that it would not work until that is considered a holy struggle and religious scholars pioneer it and consider it prior to all other issues...

I could assign all this discussion to what Islam says about the merits of knowledge and make some propaganda about Islam, but as I said at the beginning, I do not believe in such propaganda and I believe they do not work. I would rather talk about our current situation and mission instead. One can proudly say that Islam says: "To seek the knowledge is duty of all Muslims"¹⁴ only when we make considerable efforts and participate in this holy jihad and progress.

Few minutes after finishing the speech, a respectable audience whom I did not know, gave me a piece of paper on which he had written criticisms on this speech:

It is too general to talk about knowledge from the view of Islam. The obligation of a holy struggle which must begin from primary schools was introduced, but its simplest way to carry it out was not mentioned. Such a discussion can only result in our frustration that why nothing can be done. We believe that we must think about that but it is just a notice and our habit to regret and pass it by. That it was mentioned in the speech that a jihad has begun by many people (UNESCO) is something natural. It would happen, want it or not, with or without propagation. What is certain is that even if the prophets did not come, perhaps human beings would understand what they said and maybe would become believers, but religion came to accelerate his evolutionary progress. Our duty is to promote it from its sluggish state. Thus, an organization and proper practical way on a specific path is needed similar to Sayyid Jamal al-Ddin Asad Abadi's activities.

Grateful to this critic and confessing to the necessity of what he has mentioned, I must add and mention that the most important point in religious issues is to educate ordinary people about their religious obligation; if they are aware and convinced about it they will carry it out like other obligations.

About other religious obligations which people have come to such understanding and belief, we see how sincerely they struggle to perform them. About fifty years ago, for the lack of facilities and security, to perform Hajj was really a struggle. The pilgrims to hajj were not sure whether they would be able to return or not. We saw many people even among peasants who would fast in the burning heat of the summer and would go to harvest at the same time.

Apart from early history of Islam, we would not find that common people struggle so valiantly for knowledge. If there has been any struggle afterwards it was conducted by those who have already acquired some knowledge and started enjoying it. Now imagine what a great movement would happen if people consider this pleasurable activity as a religious obligation and the sentence: “To seek the knowledge is duty of all Muslims”¹⁵ instead of just decorating the notice boards of schools is followed as a serious religious obligation. The great task is that people become aware of this common religious obligation and consider it similar to other obligations.

¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, ‘Allamah Majlisi, vol. 1, p. 180.

² *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 177. (With small changes in interpretation)

³ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, trans. by ‘Askari Ja‘fari, maxim no. 80

⁴ *Bihār al-Anwār*, ‘Allamah Majlisi, vol. 2, p.96

⁵ *Mashrutiyyat*

⁶ *Usūl al-Kāfī*, Sheykh Muhammad Kulaynī, vol. 1, p. 32.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 234

⁹ *Ibid.* p.166.

¹⁰ *Usūl al-Kāfī*, Sheykh Muhammad Kulaynī

¹¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, ‘Allamah Majlisi, vol. 2, p.111

¹² By Ritchie Calder, Paris : UNESCO (Soleure, printed by Gassmann), 1953.

¹³ *Usūl al-Kāfī*, Sheykh Muhammad Kulaynī

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Determinism and Free Will in the Qur'an

Mohammad Mihdi Gorjian

A Glance

The issue of determinism and free will (*al-jabr wa al-ikhtiār*) is among the very profound and subtle issues that has preoccupied the mind and heart of human beings, specially philosophers, from a long time ago. This issue holds significance among Muslims as well. To prove their beliefs, each of these groups resorted to some verses of the Qur'an about this issue and took the superficial meaning of these verses to prove their view. At this juncture, the adherents of the school of *Ahl al-Bayt* (A), the household of the prophet (S), have been protected from going to the extremes. Following their Imams, they have insisted on their view called "the way between two ways" (*Amron Bayn-a Amrayn*).

The Qur'anic perspective about this issue is higher than philosophical and theological views. No one knows the mystery of this subtle and vital view except for the immaculate Imams (A); thus, the several Muslim theologians who strode in this route without relying upon *Ahl al-Bayt* (A) have not been immune from making mistakes.

Introduction

The idea of free will as a human thought has no specific opening time because free will is an inward matter originated from within. From the beginning, man continuously pondered about free will.

In offering personal and social principles of life, philosophers have regarded the principle of free will. Without accepting free will, the ultimate aim of revealed religions, i.e. training and purification of human beings, would be absurd and therefore legislation, punishment, and reward would render useless.

Upon several years of reflection on this subject, I confess that such a deep and sophisticated issue, characterized by Imam Ali (A) as an ocean with strong waves, has yet a great deal of unsaid and non-obtained points. However it is possible to prove the idea of "a way between ways" as the highest thought by resorting to religious teachings even with admitting free will and human choice.

Incorrect interpretations of the Qur'an concerning determinism

By resorting to the superficial meaning of verses attributing everything to the will of God, some scholars think that this understanding of the Qur'an is not compatible with a world based on causes and effects, and with man's free will. Some Orientalists falsely introduce Islam as a religion in which determinism is one of its fundamental principles.

It is obvious that the aim of revealed religions is to train and purify the souls. Had all human affairs been predestined and decided, the appointment of prophets would be useless.

Although divine religions believe in comprehensive and eternal knowledge and will of God and in divine decree (*qadā*), they do not find these ideas in conflict with human flourishing; rather, they have regarded the human faculty of will and choice very efficient for choosing the way of perfection and happiness.

Concerning this issue, Ayatollah Mutahhari says:

Qur'an has offered the generality of divine providence and divine decree and destiny in such a way that it never contradicts with the free will and choice of human. One of the verses that has brought the human free will up seriously is this: "ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ" - That is because of what your hands have sent ahead (3:182).¹ God does not say that this chastisement was a result of your actions so that they could reply we were not free in our actions; rather he says that it was due to the actions that you did with your free will and your choice and without any compulsion. God created you free and with free choice: "فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفِرْ" (18:29) - [This is] the truth from your Lord: let anyone who wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it. Whoever please, i.e. with his free will, believe and whoever please disbelieve: "إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا" (76:3) - Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful.²

In the Chapter *The Family of Imran*, , God says:

ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ

This is for what your own hands have sent before and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants. (3:182)

That is, these actions have been done by ourselves, not by God. Were the actions done by God, the punishment would be unjust. This means that someone has committed a sin and instead, the punishment is imposed on someone else. God has done the actions/sins and yet he would impose the punishment on his

servants. This verse informs readers to know that God never oppresses His servants.

There are two subtle points here.: One is that God used the word "servant", a sign of His compassion. Thus, how God can oppress his servant? A servant due to his servitude deserves compassion. A needy and weak servant in regard to the Omnipotent God is so insignificant that is impossible to imagine God needs to oppress him.

The other point is that literary men say that the word "*zallam*" (most oppressing) is made for hyperbole. So this verse means that God is not too much of an oppressor. Someone may understand from this meaning that God is not very much oppressing but He might oppress a little. The usual answer is that here *zallām* (most oppressing) is equal to *zālim* (oppressor), i.e. God is not oppressive at all, not too much or too little. In some cases, *zallām* is used instead of *zālim* and it is not unusual.

Another answer is offered by the late Allāmah Tabātabāī in *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*. He holds that concerning God, to be oppressor is not imaginable. He is either too much of an oppressor or is not an oppressor at all. God is either righteous or He is most oppressing; because, if the world is based upon oppression and tyranny it encompasses everything. The action of God is comprehensive and unlimited: either the complete and absolute justice, as it is, or otherwise the most and maximum oppression, There is no middle case. So what is possible to say about God is that whether this system is just or unjust, whether God is the most oppressing or the most righteous. Righteous means that God is setting up the ideal and is perfectly Just.³

The other verse which has been invoked to support the idea of determinism is this verse:

كَذَّابِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَآخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Like the precedent of Pharaoh's clan and those who were before them, who denied the signs of their Lord; so We destroyed them for their sins, and We drowned Pharaoh's clan; and they were all wrongdoers. (8:54)

Imam Ali (A) in a sermon called al-Qāsi‘ah presents a detailed discussion about the honour and dishonour of nations. There he explains the verse under our discussion. In *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَعَثَ نَبِيًّا مِنْ أَنْبِيَائِهِ أَلِي قَوْمِهِ وَ أَوْحَى إِلَيْهِ أَنْ قُلْ
لِقَوْمِكَ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِ قَرْيَةٍ وَ لَا نَاسٍ كَانُوا عَلَي طَاعَتِي
فَأَصَابَهُمْ فِيهَا سَرَاءٌ فَتَحَوَّلُوا عَمَّا أَحَبُّ أَلِي مَا إِكْرَاهُ أَلَا
تَحَوَّلْتُ لَهُمْ عَمَّا يُحِبُّونَ أَلِي مَا يَكْرَهُونَ وَ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِ
قَرْيَةٍ وَ لَا أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ كَانُوا عَلَي مَعْصِيَتِي فَأَصَابَهُمْ فِيهَا
ضَرَاءٌ فَتَحَوَّلُوا عَمَّا أَكْرَهُ أَلِي مَا أَحَبُّ أَلَا تَحَوَّلْتُ لَهُمْ عَمَّا
يَكْرَهُونَ أَلِي مَا يُحِبُّونَ.

God sent one of the prophets towards his nation and inspired him to tell them: “There is no nation or a group of people that obey me and by virtue of this obedience they enjoy pleasure and comfort and easy life and then they misuse their easy life unless I will change their condition and take back what they love from them and give them instead what they dislike. And there is no nation or a group of people that commit sins and due to their committing sins they reach difficulties and misery and then they return from what I dislike to what I like, unless I will remove their misery and give them what they love.

In another hadith, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

كَانَ أَبِي يَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَضَى قَضَاءً حَتْمًا لَا يَنْعُمُ
عَلَى الْعَبْدِ بِنِعْمَةٍ لِيَسْلُبَهَا إِيَّاهَا حَتَّى يَحْدُثَ الْعَبْدُ ذَنْبًا يَسْتَحِقُّ
بِذَلِكَ التَّقْمَةَ

My father, Imam Baqir (A), used to say: “Verily, God the Almighty has made it necessary that He does not take blessing He has given to his servant, unless His servant commits a sin by which he deserves misery.⁴

The question arises: is there any relationship between sins and the blessings which are taken back? If man committed a sin, would God take all his blessings from him? Or there is a kind of relation between sin and its results, i.e. each kind of sin results in losing a pertinent blessing, as is the case in obedience; each kind of obedience results in obtaining a specific blessing and not all blessings. The latter seems to be the case. This can be understood from the supplication of *Kumayl*:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي الذَّنُوبَ الَّتِي تُغَيِّرُ النِّعَمَ. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي الذَّنُوبَ
الَّتِي تُنْزِلُ الْبَلَاءَ. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي الذَّنُوبَ الَّتِي تُحْبِسُ الدَّعَاءَ.⁵

Imam Ali (A) in this supplication divides the sins in some groups: the sins that cause blessings to be taken away, the sins that cause the calamities, and the sins that prevent God from answering prayers. Thus, each kind of sin leads to a specific result. Therefore, the holy Qur’an says:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِیُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلِهَا مُصْلِحُونَ

Your Lord would never destroy the townships unjustly while their inhabitants were bringing about reform. (11:117)

What does it mean that a nation is both unjust and reformer? Injustice here means the great injustice, polytheism (*shirk*), and the meaning of reform (*islāh*) is that social justice is established among them. So they are unjust by associating partners to God and they are good doers by establishing justice in their society. Therefore, the Qur'an says that if a nation is good in worldly actions but infidels and polytheists with regards to God, in other words, if the justice is established among them but they are infidel, God doesn't punish them in this world. So, it is clear that each kind of sin has a certain result. The Prophet (S) said:

الْمَلِكُ يَبْقَى مَعَ الْكُفْرِ وَ لَا يَبْقَى مَعَ الظُّلْمِ

A kingdom may endure even with infidelity, but would not survive with injustice.⁶

Both infidelity and tyranny are sins, but each of them will effect in a certain direction. The effect of infidelity in collapsing a social system is less than oppression and tyranny. We can compare two nations: one is Muslim in general, but in dealing with each other they have an oppressive manner, and one is pagan, but the social justice is established among them and equity is prevalent there. In this case, Muslims may have a better condition in the hereafter, but the pagan nation may be more prosperous and successful in this world.

Some verses and traditions from the Prophet Mohammad (S) and Imam Ali (A) confirm this claim. We will briefly mention some of them:

لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

so that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives may live on by a manifest

proof, and Allah is indeed all-hearing, all-knowing.
(8:42)

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا

Whoever is guided is guided only for] the good of
[his own soul, and whoever goes astray, goes astray
only to its detriment. (17:15)

أَنَا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Indeed, We have guided man to the way, be he
grateful or ungrateful. (76:3)

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ
فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ

Say, “Certainly insights have come to you from
your Lord. So whoever sees, it is to the benefit of
his own soul, and whoever remains blind, it is to its
detriment, and I am not a keeper over you”. (6:104)

إِنَّمَا تُجْرَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

You are only being required for what you used to
do. (52:16)

كُلُّ امْرِئٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِينٌ

Every man is a hostage to what he has earned. (52:21)

The late Majlisi narrated an expressive hadith from one of
infallible Imams (A) about the negation of both fatalism and
delegation of all power to man (*tafwid*):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَكْرَمُ مِنْ أَنْ يَكْفَى النَّاسَ بِمَا لَا يُطِيقُونَ وَاللَّهُ أَعَزُّ أَنْ
يَكُونَ فِي سُلْطَانِهِ مَا لَا يَرِيدُ

God is too noble to oblige people to do what they cannot, and God is too sovereign to let something happens in His kingdom that He does not want.⁷

In another hadith, the fatalism and delegation are rejected with reference to obedience and disobedience:

اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يُطَعْ بَاكِرًا هِ وَ لَمْ يَعْصَ بَغْلِبَةً

God is not obeyed by compulsion and not disobeyed by defeat.⁸

In another hadith, the infallible Imam (A) denies delegation since it shows a kind of weakness in divine power and also denies fatalism, because it implies that God is an oppressor. Then the late Majlisi quoted a hadith which explains the right meaning of "the way between two ways":

وُجُودُ السَّبِيلِ إِلَى إِيْتَانِ مَا أَمُرُوا بِهِ وَ تَرْكِ مَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ

The possibility of doing what is commanded and refraining from what is prohibited.⁹

Human freedom and denial of determinism according to the Qur'an and hadith

The Qur'an and hadith recognise man as free and independent against environment, historical determinism, economical determinism, political determinism, geographical determinism, etc. The Qur'an and hadith indicate that that God-given nature and conscience of man can survive under any circumstances and God's reward and punishment are based on this fact. This point is stated in the first hadith of *Usul al-Kafi* by a parable:

لَمَّا خَلَقَ اللهُ الْعَقْلَ اسْتَنْطَفَهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَقْبِلْ، فَأَقْبَلَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ
 لَهُ: أَدْبِرْ، فَأَدْبَرَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ ... مَا خَلَقْتُ خَلْقًا هُوَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْكَ
 ... إِلَيْكَ أُعَاقِبُ وَإِلَيْكَ أُثِيبُ

When God created the Intellect (*al-'Aql*), He examined it. Thereupon He said to it: “Come forward!” It went forward. Then He said: “Go back!” It went back. Thereupon He said: “By My power and majesty, I have not created any creature dearer to me than you! I will not perfect you except in one whom I love. Indeed, to you, My orders and prohibitions are addressed. And for you, My rewards and retributions are reserved.”¹⁰

Undoubtedly, those schools that take man bound to geographical, political, economical, and social conditions have disregarded human identity. However, the Qur’an believes in man's identity beyond these conditions.

One of its reasons is that human life, according to the Qur’an, has begun from Adam, a person who was taught all the names by God (2:31) and was chosen by God (3:33), Yet, he was free to disobey His Lord (20:121) and after that, again he was free to repent (2:37). This shows that before and more than anything else, man is a free being.

According to the Qur’an, man has to choose between good and evil. On one hand, Satan encourages and tempts man, (called *Taswīl* in Qur’anic expression), i.e. he displays sins as good actions. On the other hand, God-given nature and reason and also prophets, from the very outset, call man to goodness and righteousness. Man was told that he possesses full authority to choose one the two.

Therefore, according to the Qur'an, human life consists of a bitter struggle between lower desires on one hand, and higher desires and intellectual inspirations and prophetic directions on the other.

Free choice, a great human merit in the Qur'an

Many thinkers have introduced man as a social animal, i.e. he is a living creature that his life is bound to coexistence. Coexistence is not a simple and easy word to be understood. It entails and includes a world of meanings. Coexistence needs co-working shoulder to shoulder, and hence it needs thousands of rules, regulations, learning, industries, techniques, distribution of work, social moralities such as justice, fairness, sympathy, beneficence and etc. A bricklayer uses some brick, mud, iron, lime, gypsum, and cement to make a building. Consequently thousands of brick and tons of iron, mud, and gypsum stay with each other in one place for many years. Is co-working of a group of people like this example, simple and easy?

Higher than this, some creatures such as bees, termites and ants are social beings. Some of them distribute their duties in an exact manner and perform a kind of astonishing social activities. If someone studies their complicated and vast life he would think that they are more advanced in social life than human. But, yet the human life and their life are not comparable, why? Since, they just strive according to their instinct. Their activities are like natural activities of our body; like, regular functions of heart, lung, circulation of blood, and etc., i.e. a kind of determinism and coercion ruling over them.

Unlike animals, man enjoys freedom and free choice in his actions. He needs to divide the duties among people but he does this by free will and his choice. He needs order and discipline, though he can freely perform it by choice. The major difference between man and animal is that he always confronts more than

one option and constantly sees himself at the crossroads. But social animals like ant, bee, and termite are not the same as human beings. They merely have one way.. Hence, regarding humans, the Qur'an says:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ وَ هَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

Have We not made for him two eyes, a tongue, and two lips, and shown him the two paths [of good and evil]? (90:8-10)

أَنَا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا
بَصِيرًا أَنَا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Indeed We created man from the drop of a mixed fluid so that We may test him. So We made him endowed with hearing and sight. Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful. (76:2-3)

Allah (SWT) shows the way to man and created him in such a manner that he is not forced to follow nature or his instinct. He was created free and independent and he must choose his path by himself. Allah (SWT) shows him the way; whether he be thankful or unthankful.

This is the human free will that has created thousands of laws, regulations, learning, philosophies, moralities, contradictory customs, and has added thousands of fields to knowledge. If human social duties were like breathing, pulsation of heart, blood circulation and other organs and cells that function naturally and in a deterministic way, he would not need any more to establish regulations and rules, and reward and punishment, and the many orders, commands, books, speeches, and lectures. All these needs are due to the natural freedom of man, and yet this very freedom

is the basis of his likely excellence over the angels because the angels were created in a way that they do not know and move but in one direction, which is the way of sacredness, worship, and purity. However, man is capable of reaching to a supreme heavenly court as well as sinking into nature and falling into baseness. Now, if man goes towards perfection and promotion and severely struggles against his lower soul he will achieve more. Thus, he should select the right path by dynamism of his free will.

It should be noted that the way of perfection must be discovered, not to be invented. Man is equipped with natural talent, yet he needs a guide to make sure that he is on the right path, because he is radically different from all other beings. The difference is that the path of other beings is fixed, that is, they have but one way to pass. But man is not like them.

The freedom of man in setting his destination

God, the Exalted, has stated in two verses that He would never change the condition of people until they themselves change it. These verses are:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَى قَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا
مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

That is because Allah never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing. (8:35)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. (13:11)

According to these verses, God would never change the conditions of a people until they change what belongs to themselves, i.e. change what is relevant to their spirit, mind, thought, morality, and actions.

If God gives honour to a people or lowers them from the zenith of honour to the lowest point of wretchedness, it is due to the fact that those people have already changed their affairs. So there is no contradiction between these verses and those that attribute every thing to the divine will, such as:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ
مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُنْزِلُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say, " O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things. (3:26)

Everything is in the hand of God, but His actions are not arbitrary. He is the Wise and everything He does is based on reasons. He never acts in vein or by chance. All changes in the world are based on certain and regular orders and laws.

Human freedom and the universality of divine will

The universality of divine will can be seen throughout the Qur'an,:

وَمَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah.
(76:30)

وَمَا تَشَاؤُنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah, the
Lord of all the worlds. (81:29)

The Qur'an keeps always the polytheism away from man and never accepts the idea that an event occurs in the world independent from His power and will. Hence the expression such as "whatever God wills" is frequently seen in the Qur'an. This means that nothing occurs without His will or leave.

Those who believed in determinism like the Ash'arites deduce from this verse that it is only the divine will that works and His will is not based on anything that we may or may not do. Thus, if a group of people are granted honour or dishonour it is due to nothing other than the will of God. According to them, God may treat equals unequally. Therefore, there is no problem for God to send good and pious people to hell, and bad and sinful people to the paradise. Because he wills so and because nothing in the universe is bound to anything else save to the will of God. This group has supposed that if they say otherwise it will contradict with theism and general divine will.

This approach is wrong and undermines divine justice and wisdom. As we said, the Qur'an emphasises on the fact that nothing happens in this world independent from God and without His leave, but at the same time, the Qur'an emphasises on divine wisdom and justice and on human responsibilities.

Conclusion

The Qur'anic account of freewill is very impressive, especially for theologians. Following the Qur'an, the same attitude is adopted in hadiths of the Prophet (S), Imam Ali (A) and other infallible Imams (A). This account was far beyond any theological discourse of that age or even that of centuries later, when theology and philosophy pervaded. This logic is a higher and lofty one. A balance is stricken between two opposing poles of determinism and delegation. Neither man is forced to act nor does man have full control over everything. Neither God is retired and indifferent nor He forces us to act in a certain way.

¹ The verse before this verse says: "Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: surely Allah is poor and we are rich. I will record what they say, and their killing the prophets unjustly, and I will say: taste the chastisement of burning."

² Murtida mutahhari, *Acquaintance with Quran*, vol. 3, p. 121-123.

³ See: Tabatabaei, *Almizan*, vol. 4, p. 83 & vol. 9, p. 100-101.

⁴ Tabatabaei, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 9, p. 110. See also *Al-Safi fi Tafsir al-Quran*.

⁵ Shaikh 'Abbas qummi, *Mafatih al-Jinan*, Dua of Kumayl.

⁶ Kulayni, *'Usul al-Kafi*, Section: 'Iman and Kufr.'

⁷ Majlisi, *bihar al-Anvar*, vol. 5, p. 41.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Kulayni, *'Usul al-Kafi*, vol.1, Section: 'Aql and Jahl.'

Khums: A Support for Financial Independence

Part I

Nasir Makrem Shirazi

A brief study of Islam's history and teachings is enough to illustrate that it is not only a set of moral injunctions and theological doctrines about our origin and the afterlife. Islam planned a governing system to fully meet the needs of a pure and advanced society. One of the pillars of this government is the institution of the *Bayt al-Mal* (the Treasury House) to meet financial needs. The Islamic Bayt al-Mal, which had been founded upon the arrival of the Prophet (S) to Medina and his establishment of an Islamic government, consisted of funds such as *zakat*, *khums*, *anfal* (spoils and public resources), *kharaj* (Islamic tax on agricultural land) and *jizyah* (tax taken from religious minorities). This paper focuses on khums and is a response to those who make the following assumptions: 1) khums is stated in the holy Qur'an only for war booties and 2) we have no historic record in which the Prophet (S), Imam Ali (A), or the caliphs had collected khums from any source other than booties. In what follows, we will try to explain briefly why Shi'ite jurists insist that khums means one fifth of surplus of income and that it is not limited to booties of war but any income that can be made from agriculture or farming, industry or trade, working or any other source.

Why so much dispute over khums?

Some people make any effort to prove that *taqlid* (following most qualified jurists) and khums are unnecessary. We can clearly see that the matter has become more political than academic. It seems that two foundations of the spiritual leadership of Shi'ite marāji' (pl. of marji', person whom others follow in practical rulings) are targeted.

With respect to *taqlid*, we recognize that the issue of referring to knowledgeable people is self-evident in all aspects of life and people tend to refer to experts in medicine, architecture, pharmacy, and other matters in daily life. Similarly, if a person cannot independently understand Islamic matters from the Qur'an and traditions, he or she can refer to a scholar.

With respect to khums, we know that the share of Imam (A) (*sahm-e Imam*), which is half of khums, is the financial fund of Islamic seminaries, propagation, and cultural activities and, in general, any religious or scientific activity that requires money; if opponents of the Shi'a manage to prevent people from paying khums and in particular, the share of Imam then they can reach one of their goals which is weakening our seminaries or changing their path. The first condition of independence of any organization is its financial independence and this matter is executed well in the Shi'a world because of the Islamic duty of paying khums.¹

Is khums exclusive to spoils in the Qur'an?

Khums has been mentioned specifically only once in the holy Qur'an. However, there are other important rulings that have also been mentioned only once in the holy Qur'an. Therefore, a single reference is sufficient. Allah (SWT) states in the Qur'an:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمْسَهُ وَ لِلرَّسُولِ وَ
 لِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَ لِأَيِّمِي وَ الْمَسْكِينِ وَ ابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ التَّنْفَىٰ
 الْجَمْعَانِ وَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for God and the Apostle, for the relatives and the orphans, for the needy and the traveller, if you have faith in God and what We sent down to Our servant on the Day of Separation, the day when the two hosts met; and God has power over all things. (8:41)

What needs to be discussed in this verse is whether the term *ghanimah* consists only of spoils of war or extends to any kind of income. If *ghanimah* only consists of spoils of war the verse for khums of other things we should refer to hadiths. Of course, there is no problem in this. There are cases that the Qur'an points to a ruling in one verse and the details are learned from hadiths. For example, the daily prayers are mentioned in the Qur'an as well as the prayer of *tawāf* (circumambulating the Ka'ba) which is an obligatory prayer, though nothing has been mentioned about, for example, the *Qadā* prayers and the *Ayāt* (signs) prayer which is agreed upon by all Muslims, Shi'ites and Sunnites. Because the *Ayāt* prayer has not been mentioned in the Qur'an and it is only available in hadiths of the Prophet (S), it does not mean this prayer should not be performed. Or because the Qur'an only points to some *ghusls* (full ablution) and nothing has been said about other *ghusls*, it does not mean we should abstain from them. This is a logic which is shared by Muslims alike.

Therefore, it is not an issue even if we suppose that the Qur'an has expressed only a selection of rulings that pertains to khums and reserve the rest for hadiths. There are many similar issues in

Islamic jurisprudence. In any case, let us see what *ghanimah* in the verse really means. Is it exclusive to spoils of war or does it include all types of income?

The definition which derives from dictionaries is that in the literal root of this word there is nothing about war or that which is gained from the enemy, but it consists of any kind of income. Let us refer to some of the most famous Arabic dictionaries. We read in the book *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 12:

و الغنم: الفوز بالشئ من غير مشقة و... الغنم، الغنيمة و
المغنم، الفىء... و فى الحديث الرهن لمن رهنه له غنمه
و عليه غرمه، غنمه زيادته و نمائه و فاضل قيمته... و
غنم الشئ غنما: فاز به

“*Ghanam*” means gaining a thing without any hardship. “*Ghanam*,” “*ghanimah*” and “*maghnam*” are all in the meaning of “*fay*” (*fay*’ also literally means the things which reach a person without labour). It has been said in hadiths that pawn (*rahn*) is for the person who takes it and its advantage and benefit (*ghunm*) is for him, and also its loss (*ghurm*) is for him. And “*ghunm*” means the excess, growth and surplus of the price. “*Ghanam*” means “gained.”

And we read in the book *Tāj āl-‘Arūs*, vol. 9:

والغنم الفوز بالشئ بلا مشقة

Advantage (*ghunm*) is that which a person gains without hardship.

The same is mentioned in *Al-Qāmūs*. Raghīb Isfahani in his *Al-Mufradat* says that *ghanimah* is derived from the root *ghanam*, which means ‘sheep.’ He says,

ثم استعمل في كل مظفور به من جهة العدى و غيرهم

Then it has been used for everything a person gains from an enemy or a non-enemy.

Even those who restrict khums of *ghanimah* to spoils of war do not deny that its lexical meaning is broad and includes all things that a person can gain without hardship. In its common use, *ghanimah* is the opposite of *gharāmah*, and since *gharāmah* is broad in its meaning and refers to any kind of penalty and fine, *ghanimah* must also refer to any kind of notable income. This word has been used in many cases in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. For example, we read in sermon 76:

إِغْتَنِمِ الْمَهْلَ

Take advantage of opportunities.

And we read in sermon 120:

مَنْ أَخَذَ بِهَا لِحِقَ وَ غَنِمَ

A person who acts according to [the religion of Allah] finds happiness and benefits from it.

And he says in letter 53 to Malik Ashtar:

وَ لَا تُكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعاً ضَارِياً تَعْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ

Do not act towards them [the people of Egypt] like a wild animal that tries to benefit by eating people (*ghanimah*).

And he says in letter 45 to ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf:

فَوَ اللَّهُ مَا كَنْزَتْ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ تَبْرَأُ وَلَا ادَّخَرَتْ مِنْ غَنَائِمِهَا وَفُرَاً

I swear to Allah that I did not hoard any gold from your world, and I did not save anything from its gains.

And it is in the Wise Saying 331:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ جَعَلَ الطَّاعَةَ غَنِيمَةً الْأَكْيَاسِ

Indeed God, may He be glorified, has made obedience an advantage and a benefit (*ghanimah*) for the clever.

And we read in letter 31:

وَ اغْتَنِمْ مَنْ اسْتَفْرَضَكَ فِي حَالِ غِنَاكَ

If a person asks you for a loan while you are rich, consider this as an advantage (*ghanimah*).

There are many similar expressions in addition to the above.

Opinion of exegetes

Many exegetes of the Qur'an have explicitly indicated that *ghanimah* (the root of the verb "*ghanimtum*") in this verse has a broad meaning and consists of spoils of war and everything else that one can gain without hardship. Even those who restrict this verse to spoils of war admit that there is no such limitation in its literal meaning and therefore try to find other reasons. Commenting on this verse, Qurtabi – a famous Sunni exegete – writes:

Literally, *ghanimah* is that which a person or a group of people gain without endeavour ... and know that the consensus (of Sunni scholars) is that *ghanimah* in verse 8:41 refers to what Muslims gain

via battle and victory over infidels, but it should be considered that this limitation is not in its literal meaning as we said before; it is only in religious context that this limitation exists.

In his commentary, Fakhr al-Din Razi asserts:

الغنم الفوز بالشيء

Ghunm is to gain something.

He continues to say: “The religious meaning of *ghanimah* (according to Sunni jurists) is spoils of war.”²

In *Al-Manār*, *ghanimah* is taken to mean all that is gained, whether it is spoils of war or other gains, although the author believes that religiously it should be limited to spoils of war.³

In *Rūh al-Ma‘āni*, Alusi – a famous Sunni commentator – says:

Originally, *ghanimah* signifies any kind of profit and benefit.⁴

In *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, *ghanimah* was initially interpreted as spoils of war, but when explaining the meaning of the verse, the author says:

قال اصحابنا انّ الخمس واجب في كلّ فائدة تحصل
للانسان من المكاسب و ارباح التّجارات، و في الكنوز و
المعادن و الغوص و غير ذلك ممّا هو مذكور في الكتب،
و يمكن ان يستدلّ على ذلك بهذه الاية فانّ في عرف اللّغة
يطلق على جميع ذلك اسم الغنم و الغنيمة

Our (Shi‘ite) scholars believe that khums is obligatory in any profit that a person would make, including profits from business and trade, from

treasures or mines, from sea by diving, etc. that are mentioned in (jurisprudential) books. This can be argued from verse 8:41, because all the above-mentioned types of profit fall under *ghunm* and *ghanimah*, based on the common sense view of the Arabic language.⁵

It is interesting that some have mentioned the first part in support of the idea that *ghanimah* may refer to spoils of war, but they have completely ignored the author's explanation about the generality of the literal meaning of the word and the meaning of the verse in the same place and have ascribed a false matter to him.

Allamah Tabataba'i in *Al-Mizān* refers to the words of linguists indicating the generality of the meaning of *ghanimah*, even though the verse was revealed in a particular case, i.e. spoils of war. As we know, the criterion is the generality of the meaning of the verse and not the particularity of the case, in which the verse was initially revealed (*al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-wārid lā bi khusus al-mawrid*).⁶

In brief, we can make the following points:

1. Verse 8:41 has a broad meaning and includes any kind of income, benefit, and profit because the lexical meaning of the word *ghanimtum* is comprehensive and there is no reason to restrict it to spoils of war.
2. The only thing that some Sunni commentators refer to is that the verses before and after verse 8:41 are about *jihād* and this shows that this verse must also point to spoils of war. However, we know that the sequence in which the verses were revealed or compiled never restrict their meaning and they can forever be our guidelines in all aspects of our lives. The only thing we need to

do is make sure that the verses are by themselves general in their meaning. For example, we read:

مَا آتَيْكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you, and be wary of God. (59:7)

This verse involves a general command about the necessity of obeying the prophet (S), while the instance in which the verse was revealed was related to properties taken by Muslims from enemies without war (*fiy*).

We also read:

لَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. (2:233)

The above phrase is mentioned as a general rule while the case in which the verse was revealed was in reference to paying women who fed their babies and it has been ordered to the father of the infant to pay according to his ability. Can the reference of the verse to this special matter prevent the generality of this rule?

Thus, while verse 8:41 is located among the verses of *jihād*, it indicates a general ruling: Pay one fifth (*khums*) of any income that you gain from any source (one of which is spoils of war). The words '*mā*' (whatever) and '*shay*' (thing) are two general expressions that confirm the generality of the verse.

Khums in Sunni hadiths

Some argue that *khums* has not been mentioned in any Islamic hadiths except in reference to spoils of war. This claim is clearly

baseless. As a matter of fact, khums has been mentioned in Sunni and Shi‘a hadiths in cases other than spoils of war. Of course, in Sunni hadiths some items are mentioned, and in Shi‘a hadiths all items are mentioned.

First, we refer to some hadiths from major Sunni collections of hadith which explicitly prove the validity of khums on things other than spoils of war.

1. In *Sunan* of Beyhaqi, Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet (S) as saying:

في الرِّكَّازِ الخَمْسِ قِيلَ و ما الرِّكَّازِ يا رَسولَ اللَّهِ؟ قال
الذَّهَبُ و الفِضَّةُ الَّتِي خَلَقَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الارضِ يَوْمَ خَلَقْتَ

“There is khums in *rikāz*.” Someone asked: “What is *rikāz*?” The prophet (S) answered: “Mines of gold and silver which Allah has created in earth on the day it was created.”⁷

It should be noted that *rikāz* (pronounced like Kitāb) literally means any property which is placed in earth; and accordingly all mines are called *rikāz*. Moreover, all treasures and assets which have remained in earth from previous generations of humans are called *rikāz*. Mines of gold and silver which are mentioned in the above hadiths are some of the obvious examples of *rikāz*.

2. Anas ibn Mālik reports that a group was travelling with the Prophet (S). On the way, one companion entered the ruins and found a treasure of gold. They weighed it and found that it was worth nearly two hundred dirhams. The Prophet (S) said that it is *rikāz* and it is obligatory to pay its khums.⁸

3. It has been quoted in *Sahih* of Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (S) said:

في الرِّكَازِ خمس

There is khums in *rikāz*.

The same matter has been also mentioned in *Sahih* of Bukhari.⁹

Thus, it can be understood from Sunni hadiths that khums is not restricted to spoils of war. This is in compliance with what is understood from the root *gh-n-m* and is documented in famous Arabic dictionaries such as *Qāmus*. According to these dictionaries, *rikāz* also has a vast meaning and includes any kind of asset that is placed and saved in earth, such as mines and buried treasures; and accordingly, some Sunni jurists like Abu Hanifah affirm that khums is obligatory in mines and that there is no *nisāb* (minimum amount) for mines.¹⁰

According to *Kanz Al-'Ummāl*, vol. 7, page 65, the Prophet (S) said:

ان لكم بطون الارض و سهولها و تلاع الاودية و
ظهورها، على ان ترعوا نباتها و تشربوا مائها على ان
تؤدّوا الخمس

Deep inside the earth, fields, and inner and outer parts of the valleys are all in your hands in order to use their plants and drink their water under the condition that you pay khums.¹¹

There is no doubt that here, the purpose of khums is not zakat of sheep, because zakat of sheep is not one fifth. Therefore, the purpose is to use these lands and pay the khums of its income.

There is a hadith in *Usd al-Ghābah* that Masrūq ibn Wā'il went to the Prophet (S) and embraced Islam. He then asked the Prophet (S) to send some people to his tribe in order to invite them to

Islam and to write them a letter so that Allah (SWT) may guide them all. Prophet Mohammad (S) ordered to write the following letter:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مِنْ مُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ إِلَى الْأَقْيَالِ
 مِنْ حَضْرَمَوْتِ بِأَقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَ إِيْتَاءِ الزُّكُوتِ وَ الصَّدَقَةِ
 عَلَيِ التَّبِيعَةِ وَ لِصَاحِبِهَا التَّيْمَةَ وَ فِي السِّيُوبِ الْخُمْسَ وَ فِي
 الْبَعْلِ الْعَشْرَ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From Mohammad, Prophet of Allah to the chieftains of Haḍramut: Advise them to perform prayer and pay zakat. Zakat is for animals that pasture in the fields, and the animal that is taken in house for the need of its owner has no zakat and khums is obligatory in “Soyūb”...¹²

We will soon discuss *Soyūb* for which khums is obligatory. We read in another hadith in *Al-‘Iqd al-Farid* that the Prophet (S) wrote a letter to Wā’il ibn Hijr Haḍrami: “From Mohammad, the Prophet of Allah, to the chieftains of Abahela [...] and there is khums in Soyūb.”¹³

We read in a footnote of *Al-‘Iqd al-Farid* after quoting the above hadith that ‘*soyūb*’ is the plural form of ‘*sayb*’, which refers to assets that had remained as treasures from the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyya*) or mines, because they are considered to be divine gifts. But we read in *Qāmūs*, which is a famous Arabic dictionary, that: “Mainly ‘*sayb*’ means any kind of gift and benefaction, and ‘*soyūb*’ holds the meaning of ‘*rikāz*’ (treasures and mines).

If we consider ‘*sayb*’ to mean any kind of gift and benefaction and the purpose is divine gift and benefaction, it consists of all incomes and accordingly khums should be paid on all of them;

and if we take it to be exclusive to mines and treasures, it also proves that khums is obligatory for other than spoils of war and it is not exclusive to it.

Khums in hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt (A)

It is beyond the constraints of this paper to list the numerous hadiths located in famous Shi'a texts about khums, the way to spend it, and the things to which khums applies. Approximately eighty hadiths in fifteen chapters on khums are collected from famous Shi'ite books into the well-known book *Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*:

Chapter one is about the principle of necessity of khums.

Chapter two is about the necessity of khums in spoils of war.

Chapter three is about mines.

Chapter four is on the nisāb (minimum amount) of mines to which khums applies.

Chapters five and six are discusse the necessity of khums in treasure.

Chapter seven is about the necessity of khums in things which are gained from the sea by diving.

Chapter eight is about the necessity of khums in benefits of business, industries, agriculture and situations such as these.

And other chapters are about how to distribute khums, those who can receive khums and some other cases of necessity of khums.

There are ten hadiths in chapter eight which is one of the most important chapters about profits that are made from any kind of

business or industry. Most of our jurists have issued fatwās according to them. According to these hadiths, if after one year a person has been able to save money from any kind of income in that year, he should pay one fifth of this saving to the Imam (A) or his representative after subtracting all costs of the year in order to be spent on the above-mentioned cases. There are so many of these hadiths that there is no reason to doubt their authenticity. It has been proven in the science of *usul al-fiqh* that when issuing a fatwā according to some hadiths which are known to be very famous among the jurists – especially those who lived close to the time of the Imams (A) – those hadiths can be relied on even if we ourselves do not have direct ways to verify them. This standard is completely achievable for the above hadiths.

Moreover, there are some authentic narrations among these hadiths, such as the hadith of Mohammad ibn Al-Hassan al-Ash‘ari (the first hadith of chapter eight of *Wasā’il al-Shi‘ah*), hadith of Abu Ali ibn Rashid (the third hadith), hadith of Ibrahim ibn Mohammad al-Hamdani (fourth hadith), hadith of Ali ibn Mahzyar (fifth hadith), and hadith of Samā‘ah (sixth hadith). We have enough information and date to verify these hadiths by ourselves.

Unfortunately some people who do not have enough knowledge about the science of *rijāl* (biographies of narrators of hadith) have questioned the trustworthiness of some of the great personalities. For example, someone has introduced Sa‘d ibn Abdullah Ash‘ari Qummi as an “unreliable person” and that “none of the superiors of the science of *rijāl* have confirmed his reliability.” This is baseless. Sa‘d ibn Abdullah Ash‘ari Qummi was one of the outstanding Shi‘a figures and an eminent *faqih*, as confirmed by great scholars of the science of *rijāl* like Najashi, Shaykh Tusi, and ‘Allamah Hilli.

Another narrator who has been questioned is Ali ibn Mahzyār. However, all great masters of the science of *rijāl* acknowledge his greatness and reliability. He was a close companion of the ninth Imam (A). According to Najashi and ‘Allamah Hilli, there is no place for disputing his narrations.

And yet another person whose narrations have been questioned is Abu Ali ibn Rashid. His name was Hasan and he too was one of the companions of the ninth and tenth Imams (A). Both Shaykh Tusi and Allamah Hilli have verified his reliability.

A fourth person who has been questioned is Rayyān ibn Salt. The person who has questioned his hadith has argued that he has narrated from Imam Jawad (A), but it is unlikely that he had lived before Imam Askari (A) (without proving why) and that he worked in the Abbasid administration; therefore, he could not be a reliable Shi‘a. However, we know that there were people like Ali ibn Yaqtin who worked in their system under the instructions of the Imams (A) in order to help the oppressed or save the lives of innocent people. In any case, reliability of Rayyān ibn Salt has been confirmed by Najashi, Allamah Hilli, and Shaykh Tusi.

Most surprising of all is that the same person has rejected the seventh hadith using the excuse that Kulayni has quoted that from “some of our companions.” He assumed that these persons are unknown, while anyone who has the least knowledge about *Al-Kāfi* knows that Kulayni means by “some of our companions” his own masters of hadiths i.e. Mohammad ibn Yahyā, Ali ibn Musā Kumidani, Ali ibn Ibrāhim ibn Hāshim, Ahmad ibn Idris and Dāwūd ibn Kore. He does not mention their name each time in order to avoid repetitions.

Insha-Allah, in the next issue, we will study in more detail khums according to the hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt (A).

¹ Once a great Sunni scholar from Syria who had visited the Islamic seminaries of Qom and other different religious institutions in other cities, was amazed at how the costs of these programs were funded, and he learnt that the programs were due to khums and the share of Imam (A). He was so impressed that after his return he advised his friends to pay khums. It is wonderful that others wish to execute these programs and achieve this great privilege which is complete independence in religious programs, though some insist on taking this privilege away from us.

² *Al-Kabir*, vol. 15, p. 164.

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 10, pp. 3-7.

⁴ *Ruh al-Ma'āni*, vol. 10, p. 2.

⁵ *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. 4, pp. 543 & 544.

⁶ *Al-Mizān*, vol. 9, p. 89.

⁷ *Sunan* of Beyhaqi, vol. 4, p. 152.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 155.

⁹ *Sahih* of Bukhari, Kitab of Zakat, Bāb 67:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، وَعَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: " الْعَجْمَاءُ جُبَارٌ، وَالْبُنُرُ جُبَارٌ، وَالْمَعْدِنُ جُبَارٌ، وَفِي الرَّكَازِ الْخُمْسُ " ..

See also Volume 2, Book 24, Number 575:

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "There is no compensation for one killed or wounded by an animal or by falling in a well, or because of working in mines; but Khumus is compulsory on Rikaz."

Similar hadith is cited in *Volume 9, Book 83, Numbers 47 and 48.*

¹⁰ *Al-Mughni* by Ibn Qudāmah, vol. 2, p. 580, printed in Beirut.

¹¹ Cited in *Makātib Al-Rasūl*, vol. 2, p. 365.

¹² *Usd al-Ghābah*, vol. 3, p. 38.

¹³ *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, vol. 2, p. 48, printed by Isma'liyan.

Shi'ite Authorities in the Age of Minor Occultation

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During the minor occultation, several Shi'ite scholars engaged in religious, political, and cultural activities. For example, Abu Sahl Nawbakhti wrote thirty seven books and treatises and had debates with opponents of Shi'a Islam.¹ Also, some of the Four Specifically Appointed Deputies (*al-Nuwwāb al-Khāssah*) of the Imam Mahdi (aj) were among the scholars and the narrators of hadiths. However, amongst the numerous Shi'a scholars, only some held the position of religious authorities. Others were not referred to as religious authorities and in the case of the Four Specifically Appointed Deputies, they more often acted as intermediaries between the people and the Twelfth Imam (A). This means that they did not answer people's letters personally, but they received the responses from Imam (A) and passed them on to the people.² Therefore, in what follows, we will study the life and socio-political role of two well-known Shi'ite jurists i.e. Ibn Bābiwayh Qumī and Mohammad ibn Ya'aqub Kulayni who were referred to by the people in the age of occultation and resolved people's religious problems according to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The socio-political situation during the Minor Occultation

I The caliphate of Abu al-'Abbās Ahmad al-Mu'tamid Billāh (256-279 A.H):

After Al-Muhtadi, the 'Abbasid caliph, was killed in 256 A.H., Mu'tamid, the son of Mutawakkil, succeeded him. Al-Mu'tamid

changed the capital of Iraq from Samarra to Baghdad.³ Historians report that al-Mu‘tamid spent much of his time in chasing after pleasure.⁴ Therefore, his brother Talha, known as al-Muwaffaq, took control of the affairs. With Muwaffaq’s assistance, the caliph cruelly established his power. With the rebellion of the dark-skinned people in Basra, ‘Ali ibn Muhammad, known as Sāhib al-Zanj, claimed descent from Zaid ibn ‘Ali (A), assembled the slaves of Basra, led a rebellion against the caliph in 225 A.H, and took control over the southern part of Iraq, including Basra. In this invasion, they killed many people and robbed their properties. They were also at war with the rulers and generals of the caliphs for 15 years. They defeated the caliphs' armies several times and killed and pillaged the Muslims. Finally, Al-Muwaffaq heavily defeated Sāhib al-Zanj in a place near Ahwaz. He was killed while escaping.

At this time, the Sogdiana region was captured by the Samanids, Egypt by Tulunids, Hyrcania by ‘Alawis, and Sistan, Khorasan, Kerman, and Fars were captured by Saffarids.⁵ Accordingly, all the mentioned regions were no longer under the control of the ‘Abbasid caliphs.

The Karmathians, as a branch of Isma‘ilite sect, also emerged from the second half of the third century A.H to the late fourth century. They killed and plundered with great brutality.⁶ Their wrongful acts led the caliphate government to arrest the Shi‘ites and torture them on the charge of being like the Karmathians.

Like his father Al-Mutawakkil, Al-Mu‘tamid was hard-hearted. According to Suyūṭī in *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*, Al-Mu‘tamid killed three hundred thousand people in one day.⁷ Among those he murdered was Imam Hasan ‘Askarī (A).⁸ Ibn Bābiwayh and Kulayni lived during this time period. After murdering Imam ‘Askarī (A), he ordered that the properties of Imam's (A)

inheritors be inspected and any pregnancy in Imam's house to be checked. All such measures portrayed his fear of the Imam (A) since he shuddered to think of the existence of Imam Mahdi (A).⁹

During this time, since the caliphate government was actively investigating to find out about the birth of Imam Mahdi (A), the Shi'ites and the Network of the Agents (*wakils*) kept his birth hidden and the Imam's (A) representative would even prevent Shi'ites from asking about his name, so that the government would suppose Imam 'Askarī (A) left no successor.¹⁰

During his twenty-three-year caliphate, Al-Mu'tamid continued his pleasure-seeking habits until he died in 279 AH as a result of excessive wine drinking.¹¹

II The caliphate of the 'Abbasid Al-Mu'taḍid (279- 289 AH):

After Al-Mu'tamid's death, his nephew Al-Mu'taḍid succeeded to the throne. At the beginning of his caliphate, a messenger came to the caliph with some gifts from 'Amr ibn Layth. Consequently, his emirate of Khorasan was reinforced.¹² 'Amr then asked the caliph for the ruling of Sogdiana and the deposal of Samanid Amīr Ismā'īl. Out of fear, the caliph accepted though he secretly intrigued Amīr Ismā'īl against him so that in 287 AH, a bloody war broke out between them. 'Amr was defeated, sent to the caliph in captivity, and died in the caliph's prison.¹³

Al-Mu'taḍid brought the oppositions and the Turks under his control with a better policy. The caliph had a slave named Badr who helped him suppress the rebellions. Rulers obeyed him, though his only problem was the disobedience of the Karmathians who had intensified activities. Even Abu Sa'īd Janābi threatened Kufa and Basra in 286 AH after forming the first Ismā'īlī government in Bahrain.¹⁴ During the second deputy's time, the Twelver Shi'ites lived in fear and taqiyyah.¹⁵

According to *Tārīkh-e Tabarī*, the caliph, unlike his predecessors, expressed his interest in the descendants of ‘Ali (A) and ordered that Mu‘āwīyah be cursed. He drafted a charter about it based on a version that Ma‘mūn had written in his time on the legitimacy of the immediate caliphate of ‘Ali ibn Abi Tālib (A) and ordered that it must be read, the Umayyad family must be cursed, and the virtues of the Household of the Prophet (A) must be mentioned on the pulpits.¹⁶

This action was the result of activities done in taqiyya by the Network of Agents to convince the caliph that Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (A) had passed away leaving no successor for himself, in a manner that this belief was spread among the Sunnite scholars like Abu al-Qāsim Balkhī d. 300 AH. In a report on his doctrine of Imamate, he wrote:

In our time, Hasan ibn ‘Ali (A) passed away and he had no son.¹⁷

In such a situation, the caliph adopted Ma‘mūn's policy of expressing devotion to the Household of the Prophet (S) in order to gain the trust of the Shi‘ites and the followers of the Household (A), and he pretended to be devoted towards the Household (A). Mu‘taḡid's amiability towards the ‘Alawites did not last long because the ill-intentioned companions had him worried that the Sunnis might revolt against him and the ‘Alawites might take the reins of government from his hand. Therefore, his pretense was over after a while.¹⁸

III The caliphate of Muktafī Billah (289 - 295 AH):

After the death of Mu‘taḡid, the prime minister secured allegiance for his son, Muktafī. At the beginning of his government, Muktafī ordered that all prisons be destroyed and some mosques be constructed in their places. During Muktafī's

time, the Karmatians¹⁹ rebelled in Syria and captured some parts of it. Then, they went to Hejaz, killed many of the pilgrims (*hāajjis*)²⁰ on the Day of 'Arafah, and plundered their properties. They also blocked the route to the Kaaba in order to prevent the pilgrims from going there, but ultimately they were defeated and killed by the caliph's army.²¹

At this time, Shi'ite movement had great power and influence. The Fātimids²² took the political leadership role of the Shi'ites and the Hamdānids disobeyed them in Mosul.

IV The caliphate of the 'Abbasid Muqtadir (295-320 A.H)

At the time of his role as the prime minister, Mūnis was considerably influential. During the caliphate of Muqtadir, the country was completely chaotic because of interference of his mother, wife, and servants in affairs of the state while all affairs of the caliphate were managed by the same people. Their influence increased to the extent that a lady-in-waiting of the caliph's mother, known as Athmal Qahramāna, was appointed as the head of court of justice.²³ Incapability of state officials gave rise to the people's discontent. In 316 A.H, a conflict arose between Hārūn ibn Gharīb, Muqtadir's famous commander and the head of police officers of caliph's palace in Baghdad and many followers of the head police officer were killed. The servant Mūnis entered Baghdad from Syria and in 317 AH, expelled Muqtadir from the caliphate and chose one of Mu'taḍid's sons, nicknamed al-Qāhir Billah, as the caliph. His caliphate lasted two days and he was confronted with the uprising of the people. However, the hostility between Mūnis and the caliph increased, and in 320 A.H, Mūnis and a group of army generals went to Mosul out of his fear of the caliph and after reinforcement returned to Baghdad where the caliph was killed in a war.²⁴

The Karmatians took advantage of the political crisis and in 318 A.H, they entered Mecca on the Day of Tarviyah, killed many pilgrims, plundered their properties, threw the dead into the Zamzam well, took the Black Stone of the Ka‘bah to their territory in Bahrain and kept it for longer than twenty years until the caliphate of al-Muti‘u li’llāh in the year 339 A.H, they returned the stone to Mecca²⁵. Then it was put in its place by the very respectable Shaykh Ibn Qulawayh Qummī, Shaykh Mufīd’s teacher, who was making pilgrimage to Mecca that year.

These actions of the Karmatians led the ‘Abbasid caliphs to be more sensitive toward the activities of the Network of Agents and led the Twelvers' leaders to face some difficulties in their activities.

Political hardships of the network of Agents in the age of minor occultation

The ‘Abbasids were informed of the existence and the activities of Imam Mahdi (A). They intended to find his place by discovering the contacts between him and the Shi‘ites and martyr him. Therefore, the Twelvers were subject to attacks by the ‘Abbasids. It was among the duties of Imam ‘Askari’s (A) agents to conceal the name and residence of Imam Mahdi (A) not only from the enemies, but also from the Shi‘ites. However, it was the representatives’ duty to prove the blessed presence of the Imam (A) to his true followers, who were trustworthy. Kulayni narrated that one day ‘Abdullah ibn Ja‘far Himyari asked the first agent whether he had seen the successor of the eleventh Imam (A) or not. ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd ‘Amri confirmed that he had seen him (A). But he added that people are prohibited from inquiring about his name for if the regime discovered his name, they will certainly try to arrest him (A).²⁶

The second specific agent of Imam Mahdi (A) was Muhammad ibn ‘Uthmān, to whom the Imam offered his condolences for the death of his father, through a letter in which Imam expressed his good wishes for him and entrusted all responsibilities of the agency to him. Like his father, he was among the trustworthy ones and intimate companions of Imam al-‘Askarī (A). It is narrated from Imam ‘Askarī (A):

Amri and his son both are trustworthy and reliable. So whatever they conduct is on my behalf and whatever they say is my word. Listen to them and follow them, since they are the trustworthy and loyal ones of mine.²⁷

Studying the life of the second agent shows that there has been an atmosphere of terror created against the Twelvers, and the second deputy was trying to keep the blessed existence of Imam Mahdi (A) hidden from the ‘Abbasids until the early years of Mu‘taḍid's government. Like his father, he also pretended to be an oil salesman and was called Sammān [oil salesman].²⁸ “Samman” conducted intense activities in secret through his agents and visited them in different villages of Baghdad. During the caliphate of Mu‘taḍid, the agents from remote provinces such as Qum got in contact with the second deputy and sent him money and goods through merchants who knew nothing about what relation existed between the senders and Abu Ja‘far, the second deputy of Imam (A). So they transported the goods to Abu Ja‘far from Qum.²⁹ The second deputy was very careful about his contacts with his agents not to give government officials any clue and in order to guard his and the Imam's life against danger. Abu Ja‘far did not have direct contact with the agents from the remote provinces. He ordered those who brought him goods and money to put them in a particular place and did not give them any receipt in return.³⁰ Within the complicated system of the agency between

him and other agents from the Shi'ite regions, he communicated by symbols and secret codes in a way that even the messengers were not aware of its content.³¹

According to Shaykh Tūsī, Abu Ja'far had some pieces of writing on hadiths which were received by Husayn ibn Rūh and later by Abu al-Hasan Saymurī.³²

The role of other Shi'ite groups during the Minor Occultation

During the Zanj rebellion between 225 and 270 AH, the condition of the Twelvers deteriorated. The rebellion leader, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, descended from Zaid ibn 'Ali, the brother of Imam Bāqir (A). A large number of 'Alawids joined him in his rebellion in 257 AH.³³ Officials of the government considered this rebellion linked to the 'Alawids as a whole, and according to Tabarī, the suppression of the Zanj rebellion³⁴ in 270 AH was followed by government propaganda against the 'Alawids.

The other factor in the straining relations between the Twelvers and the 'Abbasids was discovering subversive activities of the two Isma'ilite parties³⁵ - the original Isma'ilites and the Karmatians.

Like the Twelvers, Isma'ilites narrated some hadiths from the Holy Prophet (S) as:

Mahdi (A), the Upriser, will hide to be prepared for the uprising.

However, they gave an explanation for some hadiths so that they could confirm their attempts of gaining immediate access to positions in Morocco. They also applied other Twelvers' hadiths about Imam Mahdi (A) to their hidden leader who had organized

his followers in an effective hidden movement and ordered them to extend their activities to new regions by means of military forces to prepare for the rising of the Mahdi (A).

On the other hand, according to Sa'd Ash'arī's report, the number of Karmatians was increasing in the villages adjacent to Kufa. According to Nawbakhti, they recruited around a hundred thousand partisans in those villages. After using their propaganda in the western coasts of the Gulf and in Yemen, a large number of Arabs responded to their invitation and consequently their uprising occurred in Kufa villages in 278 A.H.³⁶

The Karmatians allowed their followers to kill their opponents and to confiscate their properties.³⁷ Since the Twelvers and the Karmatians both were counted as Shi'a from the 'Abbasids' point of view, and both expected the advent of Imam Mahdi (A), then it was likely that the Bani 'Abbās accused the Twelvers of the manner of Karmatian and simply eliminated them. The Twelfth Imam (A) intended to keep the Shi'ites away from the Karmatians' influence and to impel the government to distinguish between the Karmatians and his adherents. Perhaps for this reason he (A) cursed Muhammad ibn Abi Zaynab and his followers in a letter to his second agent. The second agent spread the Imam's letter among the Twelvers through his agent, Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb.³⁸ Kulayni also wrote *Refutation of the Karmatians*.³⁹

Mu'taḍid carefully inspected the Shi'ites' hidden meetings and in 282 A.H discovered that Muhammad ibn Zayd, the head of the Zaydi government of Tabaristan, annually sent 320,000 dinars to Muhammad ibn Ward al-'Attār to distribute among the 'Alawids of Baghdad, Kufa, and Medina.⁴⁰ Mu'taḍid's constant inspections led to the arrest and assassination of many 'Alawids. According to Abu al-Faraj Isfahāni, they were not at all Karmatians, though they were wrongly convicted for this claim. As the result of these

actions, the governmental authorities ascertained that the Twelvers had an organization of their own. According to Kulayni, the spies who worked for ‘Ubaydullah ibn Sulaymān, the prime minister, discovered that the Twelvers still had an Imam who led their activities in secret. Kulayni narrates:

Husayn ibn Hasan ‘Alawi says: “The two intimate friends of Badr Hasani (the caliph's courtier) were speaking with each other and one of them said: Why does he (the Twelfth Imam) collect money and have agents? Then they mentioned names of all agents and submitted this information to ‘Ubaydullah ibn Sulaymān, the anti-Shi‘a prime minister, who was attempting to arrest Imam (A). But Mu‘taḡid told them that they must search for his (Imam’s) place, because it is an important issue. ‘Ubaydullah ibn Sulaymān said: “Let the agents be arrested! But the caliph said: No, send some secret spies among them in order to give money to the agents; then arrest whoever would accept the money.” After his failure in obtaining information from the spies, the caliph inquired the pilgrims of the shrines of Imam Husayn (A) and the other Imams (A) in order to determine the place of the Imam of the time (A) through them.⁴¹

The ‘Abbasids' hostile attitude towards the agents of the second deputy of Imam continued after the death of ‘Ubaydullah ibn Sulaymān in 288 AH. His responsibility was entrusted to his son Qāsim. Qāsim was well-known for his hostility towards the Twelvers and towards Shi‘ites in general. During his office, he followed his father's policy and showed even more hostility

towards them. According to a story narrated by Shaykh Tūsī, Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah Qummī, who had an inclination towards the Shi‘a and had visited the hidden Imam (A), was sued by Qāsim and fled to Egypt.⁴²

Because of the influence of his family, Bani Nawbakht, in the ‘Abbasid government, Ibn Rūh (the third deputy of the Imam) gained popularity. However, armed conflicts of other so-called Shi‘a groups, especially the Karmatians, put him in a critical situation. His opponents linked these actions in order to arrest him. In 311 A.H, after the Karmatians attacked the pilgrims’ caravan, in which a few relatives of the caliph existed Shi‘a enemies such as Nasr Hājib linked this action with the Shi‘a and used it as a powerful weapon against the Shi‘a prime minister, Ibn Furāt. In 312 A.H, Ibn Furāt and his son Muhsin were disposed and killed on the charge of provoking the Karmatians into that attack.⁴³ In 312 A.H, Ibn Rūh was arrested on the charge of conspiring with the Karmatians in their attempt to occupy Baghdad. He spent five years in Muqtadir’s prison and was released in 317 AH.⁴⁴

Kulayni and his pupil Nu‘māni narrated some signs for the rising of the Mahdi (A). These signs led to the denial of claims of an Isma‘ilite leader who called himself Mahdi after the revolt in 296 AH. These signs also led the Twelvers to avoid engaging in those activities in which the network of Agents was not involved.⁴⁵

‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh Qummī

I His scientific status and social services:

Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn Mūsā ibn Bābiwayh Qummī (d. 329 AH) was a Shi‘ite jurist, a narrator of hadith, and a religious authority leading the people of Qum.⁴⁶ It is quoted from Abu ‘Ali, son of Shaykh Tūsī, that:

His [ibn Bābiwayh] status in jurisprudence and narrating hadiths was so high that Shi'ite scholars referred to his opinion in the Sharāyi'e book (religious laws) when there was no associating hadith available or there were doubts in the text of hadith.⁴⁷

Some scholars considered his opinion as authentic as the text of traditions themselves, and presupposed that he must have had a hadith which has been the source of his opinion.

There is no information about Ibn Bābiwayh's life except but a few cases. Other than those cases, the information about his life is limited to Imam Hasan 'Askari's (A) letter to him, Ibn Bābiwayh's meeting with Husayn ibn Mansūr Hallāj (d. 309 A.H), and his travels to Baghdad.

To find out about his social position, it would be enough to know that when he met Hallāj in Qum, Hallāj introduced himself as the agent and deputy of the promised Imam Mahdi (A) and claimed that he has special dignities and marvels. This angered Ibn Bābiwayh and since he was not truthful by his claim, Ibn Bābiwayh banished him from Qum.⁴⁸

At least three of his journeys to Iraq have been reported. The first journey was apparently shortly after the death of Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān (304 or 305 A.H). As reported by Tal'ukbari, his second journey was in 326 AH. In his last journey to Baghdad in 328 AH, he gave permission to Abu al-Hasan 'Abbās Kluzāni to narrate from all of his books.⁴⁹

When the Abbasid dynasty sought to block the Twelfth Imam (A), Ibn Bābiwayh held discussions on the wilayah of the infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A) and tried to promote Shi'a education. Reliable authorities have narrated a treatise from him in which he

debates Muhammad ibn Muqātil al-Rāzī in Rey over proving the Imamate of Imam Ali (A). ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh established the facts for him in this debates, and this discussion led Muhammad ibn Muqātil to convert to Shi‘i Islam.⁵⁰

II ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh's writings

Ibn Bābiwayh was a scholar who had many written works. Ibn Nadīm has seen a manuscript of Shaykh Sadūq (Ibn Bābiwayh’s son) in which he had granted permission to someone to quote a hundred pieces of his father’s books.⁵¹ Najāshī mentioned his books like: *Al-Wūḍū’*, *Al-Salāt*, *Al-Janā’iz*, *Nawādir Kitāb al-Mantiq*, *Kitāb al-Ikhwān*, *Kitāb al-Nisā’ wa al-Wildān*, *Kitāb al-Sharāi’* which he sent to his son, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, *Kitāb al-Nikāh*, *Kitāb Manāsik al-Hajj*, *Kitāb Qurb al-Asnād*, *Kitāb al-Taslīm*, *Kitāb al-Tib*, *Kitāb al-Mawārīth* and *Kitāb al-Mi‘raj*.⁵²

In the book *Al-Fihrist*, Shaykh Tūsī wrote about ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh:

... He was a great and trustworthy jurist and compiled many books... Muhammad ibn ‘Ali (Shaykh Sadūq) narrated all his books and his traditions to me, Shaykh Mufīd, Husayn ibn ‘Ubaydullah al-Ghaḍā’irī from his father.⁵³

‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh was in the same position as Shaykh Kulayni, Safwāni, Tal‘ukbari, and Muhammad ibn Quluwayh. He quoted from Shaykh Kulayni’s teachers such as Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-‘Attār, ‘Ali ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, Ahmad ibn Idrīs al-Ash‘arī, and from other individuals such as ‘Abdullah ibn Ja‘far al-Humayrī, the author of *Qurb al-Asnād* and Sa‘d ibn ‘Abdullah al-Qumī et al.⁵⁴

III His spiritual qualities

Before the age of occultation, ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh lived in the age of Imam Hasan ‘Askarī (A) for a while and had a high position before the Imam (A). One of his received honours was a letter that Imam Hasan ‘Askarī (A) wrote to him and honored him with some advice. The letter is as follows:

Bimillah. O’ The honorable and my trustworthy one! Oh jurist. Oh Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Qummī! May God bless you to do praiseworthy deeds in his sight and may God generate from you – out of His mercy - pious children.

I advise you to be wary for sake of God, pray, and give alms –since prayer is not accepted from those who do not give alms.

I also advise you to overlook the others' sins, control your anger, observe bonds of relationship, sympathize with your brothers and to fulfill their needs, either in difficulties or at ease, acquire knowledge, think deeply and understand religion and learn it, and be determined in your duties, take an oath to the Qur’an, be open-hearted, and enjoin the good and to prohibit the evil, because God, the Exalted states: “There is no good in much of their secret talks, except him who enjoins charity or what is right or reconciliation between people...” (4:114) and to avoid all the evil. You should perform the midnight prayer, as the Holy Prophet (S) advised Imam ‘Ali (A), saying: "Oh ‘Ali! You should practice the midnight prayer! You should practice the midnight prayer! And you should practice the midnight prayer! Those who consider

the midnight prayer trivial are not among us. So put my advice into practice and direct all my Shi‘ites to act accordingly.

You should have patience and expect the deliverance (*faraj*) [of the Imam (A)] because the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The most preferable deed of my Umma is the expectation of the deliverance.” My Shi‘ites will constantly be in sorrow and grief until my son who the Prophet (S) has promised about, returns, where he said: “He (A) will fill the earth with justice and equity, as it is full of injustice and cruelty.”

Then, Oh great [scholar]! Be patient and direct all of my Shi‘ites to have patience: “The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favor of the Godway” (7: 128).

May God’s hail, mercy, and blessings be upon you and upon all our Shi‘ites! God is sufficient for us. He is an excellent help, the best master, and the best helper...⁵⁵

‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh had a special position before Imam Mahdi (A). He got in contact with Husayn ibn Rūh Nawbakhti, the third deputy of Imam, in Iraq and wrote a letter to Imam Mahdi (A) asking him to pray to grant ibn Bābiwayh children. The Imam (A) responded, saying: “I asked God and He shall give you two sons.” After a while, God granted ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh two sons who became great jurists. One of them was Shaykh Sadūq. Thus, Shaykh Sadūq felt proud of the grace of his birth and used to say: “I was born by blessings of Imam of the age (A).”⁵⁶

The day when ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh passed away in Qum in 329 A.H, ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Saymurī, the fourth deputy of Imam (A), was sitting with a group of people in a meeting in Iraq. Then he suddenly turned to them and informed them of the passing of ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh. They recorded the time of his passing and 17 or 18 days later, they received news from Qum that he had passed away right in the recorded time.⁵⁷

Ibn Bābiwayh originated a lineage of scholars whose members were well-known until the late six century, and the last scholar of this family, Muntakhab al-Dīn had the same nickname and name of Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Bābiwayh. Bahrāni has written biographies of the members of this family in *Fihrist of the Būyid wa ‘Ulamā al-Bahrain*.⁵⁸

¹ Cf. Iqbāl, ‘Abbās, *Nawbakhtī Dynasty*, pp. 116-123.

² Cf. Muhammad Sadr, *Tārīkh Al-Ghaybah al-Ṣuḡhrā*, p. 372.

³ Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Husayn Mas‘ūdi, *Al-Tanbīh wal Ishrāf*, pp. 317- 318.

⁴ Mas‘ūdi, *Murawwij al-Dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 126; *Al-Tanbīh wal Ishrāf*, p. 318.

⁵ Muhammad Javād Mashkūr, *Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami*, pp. 292- 294; cf. Sayyid Ahmad Khezri, *History of ‘Abbasids Caliphate from the Beginning to the End of Buyid Dynasty*, p. 115.

⁶ Muhammad Javād Mashkūr, *ibid.* p. 358; cf. Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūti, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*, p. 416.

⁷ Suyūti, *op cit.* p. 413; actually this number seems to be exaggerated.

⁸ Cf. Abu al-Qāsim Sahāb, *The Lives of ‘Askariyayn (A): Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (A) and Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A)*, p. 101; and Sayyid Ahmad Reza Khedri, *op cit.* p. 115.

⁹ Muhammad Sadr, *A Research in the life of Imam Mahdi (AJ) and an Approach to the History of Minor Occultation*, pp. 202-203.

¹⁰ Jasim Husayn, *ibid.* p. 145.

¹¹ To know more about the events of Mu‘tamid's time, refer to *Tabarī's History*, vol. 9, continue after page 474; ‘Iz al-Din ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil [fī Tārīkh]*, vol. 4, pp. 429- 559; Mas‘ūdi, *Murawwij al-Dhahab*, vol. 5, pp. 107-

136; *Ya'qūbi History*, vol. 2, pp. 541- 546; 'Aziz al-Allah Bayāt, *History of Iran from the Advent of Islam to Deylamites' time*, p. 134; 'Ali Akbar Fayyāz, *History of Islam*, pp. 229- 230.

¹² *Tārīkh-e Tabarī*, vol. 10, p. 30.

¹³ Hasan Pīrniya, 'Abbās Iqbāl, *History of Iran*, the chapter(s) of History of Islam, p. 211.

¹⁴ *Al-Kāmil [fi Tārīkh]*, vol. 4, pp. 592-594.

¹⁵ Dissimulation of one's belief in the event of danger.

¹⁶ *Tārīkh-e Tabarī*, vol. 10, pp. 54- 62.

¹⁷ Cited from Jāsim Husayn, *ibid.* p. 146.

¹⁸ Cf. Tabarsī, *op cit.* p. 63; and Fayyāz, *op cit.* p. 231.

¹⁹ Qarmatah, the founder of the Karmatians, whose name and origin were matters of dispute is mostly known as Hamdān al-Ash'ath. It is said that he was nicknamed by the mentioned name because he was short and walked stepping his feet near each other. This sect is a branch of the Isma'ilites which emerged around 280 AH. Among the Dā'īs or missionaries of this sect are Zakariyah ibn Mahrūyah and Abu Sa'īd Janābī. The Karmatians believed that Muhammad ibn Ismā'il was the seventh Imam and the Lord of the Time. They believed in rising with swords and killing their opponents from other Islamic sects. To go on pilgrimage, to kiss the stone of the Kaaba, and to have faith in the external aspects of religion were prohibited in their sect. As for religious law, they believed in special type of interpretation and their motto (like the Isma'ilites) was the white flag (On this subject, refer to Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-'Ibar Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 3, p. 14.).

When the first Isma'ilite Dā'īs settled in Ahwaz and began their Isma'ilite mission (eg. da'wa or invitation) to summon for the Imamate of Muhammad ibn Ismā'il and his descendants, they sent one of their missionaries, named Husayn Ahwazī, to the rural district of Kufa. There, he met a man named Hamdān ibn al-Ash'ath known as Qarmat. Hamdān soon responded to the Bātinīs' invitation and helped him with this cause. He put such an effort into this work that Husayn Ahwazī left his da'wah activities to him in the rural district of Kufa. Then he chose "Kilwāzā", a suburb in Baghdad, as the centre of his da'wah which was spread and responded in 276 AH so quickly that he engaged in buying weapons and forming an army. They soon began bloodshed and killing of their opponents, and struck utter terror in the hearts of Iraqi Muslims. Fearing their lives, many people responded to their call. In 277 AH, Iraqi Karmatians built a great castle named "Dār al-Hijrah" for their own in the suburb of Kufa. Thereafter, Hamdān proceeded to make financial regulations and social rules expedient on his citizens and obligated everyone to buy their own weapons. Hamdān's son-in-law, named 'Abdān Kātib, was one of his adroit dā'īs. In around 280 AH, a disagreement occurred between Hamdān and 'Abdān with the Isma'ilite centre of mission in Ahwaz. Consequently, a new sect by the name of Karmatian was formed (cf. *Mo'īn Dictionary*, vols. 5 and

6, proper names and places section, under the title of Karmatians and Hamdān al-Ash‘ath; and *Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami* by Muhammad Javād Mashkūr, p. 358).

²⁰ The pilgrims of Mecca.

²¹ Cf. Bayāt, op cit. p. 135. On this subject, cf. Khezri, op cit. p.123. Cited from Petroshevski, et al. *Islam in Iran*, p. 311.

²² The Fātimid caliphs, the ‘Ubaydi caliphs, the ‘Ubaydite and the ‘Alawi caliphs (from 297/909 to 567/1171 AH/AD), were a great dynasty which founded a powerful empire in Egypt, and subsequently expanded it in Syria and a part of Africa. This dynasty was called Fātimid, because its caliphs traced their ancestry to Lady Fātima (A), the daughter of the Prophet (S). The Idrisids, who also claimed descent from Lady Fātima (A), paved the way for the Fātimids to advance their cause because during their time, numerous dā‘is influenced the Barbarians (residents of North Africa) and spread Shi‘a doctrines among them. When ‘Ubaydallah called himself "Mahdi" and gave himself the title of Caliph and Amīr al-Mu‘minin, these earlier actions facilitated his advance. In 297 AH/ 909 AD, he eliminated the last vestiges of the Aghlabid rulers and quickly took possession of North Africa except the regions possessed by the Idrisid rulers in Morocco. The Fātimid caliphs are called ‘Ubaydid’, because of their family relationship to ‘Ubaydallah. The son of ‘Ubaydallah, named Muhammad ibn ‘Ubaydallah, who the Sunnites know as a descendant of ‘Ubaydallah ibn Meymūn Qaddāh and the followers of the Isma‘ilites know him as a descendant of Ismā‘il ibn Ja‘far al-Sādiq (A). He is considered to be the original founder of the above-mentioned dynasty. Half a century later, the Fātimids annexed Egypt and Syria to their territory. In 356 AH/ 969 AD, Jawhar, their commander, took the reign of Egypt from Amir Saghīr Akhshīdī’s hand and built Al-Qāhira castle in the Nile valley. This castle became the origin for the present-day city of Cairo. At the same time, South Syria was also conquered and Aleppo was annexed to the Fātimid dominions in 381AH/ 991 AD. During this time, their state was extended from the Syria Desert and Al-‘Ās River to the coasts of Morocco. The Fātimid capital first was Mahdia city near Tunisia, and was then transferred to Cairo. Though this resulted in losing possession of their western dominions, the Fātimids held the power in Egypt and Syria for years and extended their range of wealth and trade to domains on the sides of Mediterranean Sea. The Fātimid dynasty of Egypt was overthrown by Salāh-al-Din Ayyūbi in 567 AH/ 1171 AD (*Mo‘īn Dictionary*, vol. 6, p. 1298, the entry of the Fātimids in proper names and places section).

²³ Mas‘ūdi, *Al-Tanbih wal Ishrāf*, p. 328.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.* p. 327, and ‘Azizullah Bayāt, *ibid.* p. 135- 136 and 137; cf. Fayyāz, *ibid.* p. 232. Banī Hamdān, the family of Hamdān, belonged to the Taghlab tribe, who lived in some region neighboring Mosul. In 260 AH/ 873 AD, Hamdān ibn Hamdūn, their grandfather was greatly influential in political

events that occurred in Mosul, in 281 AH/ 894 AD. Muhammad ibn Hamdān took possession of the city of Mārdian though he was exiled by Mu'taḍid . In 292 AH, Abu al-Hayjā Abdullah ibn Hamdān was appointed to rule Mosul and its suburbs. From this date on, the Hamdānids had a great period of prosperity. The Hamdānid rulers were Shi'ite and respected Sayf al-Dawla, the Egyptian Fātimid caliph. They ruled until 369 AH/ 979 AD (*Mo'īn Dictionary*, vol. 5, under the entry Hamdānids). It is said that in 234 AH/ 935 AD after a long period of conflict with his paternal uncles, Abu al-Hayjā's son named Hasan ibn Abdullah ibn Hamdān (Nāsir al-Dawla) was issued to the ruling on Mosul and Jazira (the Bakr, Rābi'a, and Muḍir territories) by the order of the caliph al-Rādī and his brother 'Ali (Sayf al-Dawla) also assisted him in protecting these territories. Taking his seat of power in Jazira, Nāsir al-Dawla rose to support Amīr al-Umarā Ibn Rā'iq and the caliph al-Muttaqī in opposition to Baridids of Basra. He finally killed Ibn Rā'iq, and in 330 AH/ 942 AD, seized his office. He ruled for **about a year**, until a man named Tūzūn raised in rebellion. Nāsir al-Dawla withdrew to his capital in Mosul and attempted to support al-Muttaqī, but after a while submitted to it. Mu'iz al-Dawla imposed his power on the Hamdānids who were insubordinate peasants. Finally, Nāsir al-Dawla was withdrawn from the caliphate by his sons and two years later died (Joel, Corms, *Cultural Revival in the time of Būyid Family*, p. 138).

²⁵ Fayyāz, *ibid.* p. 233.

²⁶ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Ghayba*, p. 244; cf. *Tarjumat ul-Ghayba*, Muhammad Rāzī, "The Blessed Gift in the Signs of the Promised Mahdi (A)", p. 283.

²⁷ Shaykh Tūsī, *ibid.* p. 243; and Shaykh Hūr 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 18, ch. 11, sections on The Attributes of Judges, hadith no. 4.

²⁸ Abu al-Fida', 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl, *Al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbār al-Bashar*, vol. 2, p. 69; and Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Ghayba*, p. 192.

²⁹ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Ghayba*, pp. 294- 296.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Cf. Shaykh Sadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'ma*, p. 498; Jāsim Husayn, *ibid.* p. 175.

³² Cf. Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 189; his biography, cf. Mamaqānī, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl*, vol. 3, p. 149.

³³ Tabarī, vol. 3, pp. 57, 18, 1857, 2024 and 2109; cited from Jāsim Husayn, *op cit.* p. 175.

³⁴ The rebellion of Zanzibari slaves occurred between 255 and 270 AH. An Iranian man named 'Ali ibn Muhammad from Warzanayn led this sedition. He claimed descent from 'Ali (A) and at the beginning introduced himself as the spiritual leader and officially declared his Azāriqites belief (a branch of Khārijites). Soon he sought protection from the slaves and promised them freedom, plunder, and robbery. He occupied the outskirts of Basra, including the lower grounds of the Karun valley. Thousands of African slaves and a large number of the Bedouins joined together under his flag. The caliphate

armies were defeated many times by him, until Basra was conquered by the Zanzibaris. They plundered and massacred until they left Basra and scattered along the Persian Gulf on the north and the south coasts and after occupying Wāsīt, pillaged Ahwaz. The caliph Muwaffaq could not invest in all his efforts to suppress this rebellion until the death of Ya'qūb. But he finally gathered a huge army and dispatched to repel the Zanzibaris. Consequently, these rebels surrendered in the swamp area and their leader was killed after fifteen years of bloodshed and the rebellion was put down (*Mu'īn Dictionary*, vol. 5, under the entry of Zanj).

³⁵ Isma'ilite is a sect of Twelver Shi'ism, which branched as a result of a difference over the imamate of Ismā'il ibn Ja'far al-Sādiq (A) and his brother Mūsā ibn Ja'far (A). Those who maintain that imamate must be kept in the family of Ismā'il are known as Isma'ilites or Bātinīs. They believe that after the departure of Imam Ja'far (A), since his son Ismā'il died before his father, the imamate was passed to Muhammad ibn Ismā'il, who is (ending to seven) and seventh era ends at him and after him, imamate remains in his family; the succeeding imams after Muhammad split into two groups: one group were hidden imams who went undercover around the city, while their dā'īs were openly promoting their invitations. After the hidden imams, it was the time of 'Ubaydullah Mahdi, who manifested his invitation and after him. His descendants were imams, one by one and [they believed] everyone who dies while he is in opposition to them, "has died in ignorance of being like pre-Islamic atheists". Among the dā'īs who were actively promoting the Ismā'ili faith and establishing the foundations of this sect during the Imam's (A) occultation, there was Maymūn ibn Daysān known as Qaddāh. He and his descendants engaged in activities in Khuzestan, Iraq, and Syria for a while and their dā'īs were active in extending the Ismā'ili invitation. Among these dā'īs, was Abu 'Abdullah Hasan ibn Ahmad, known as Abu 'Abdullah Shī'ī who gained great power in the western cities and overthrew the Aghlabid government in that region. In doing so, he freed 'Ubaydullah Mahdi, who was imprisoned in Saljamāsa and believed that he is the same anticipated Mahdi from the family of 'Ali (A), and that the Imamate belongs to him. Accordingly, the Fātimid government was formed in North Africa (297 AH).

The Fātimid invitation was quickly extended to Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Palestine, Iran, and North Africa (on this subject, cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-'Ibar, Ibn Khaldūn History*, vol. 3, p. 13).

The Isma'ilites observed some stages in their mission and their dā'īs were entitled based on their ranks. The highest rank of the believers of this sect was known as "Hujjat". Only a limited number of dā'īs from among them could hold this rank. Among Iranian dā'īs, Nāsir Khusrow and Hasan Sabbāh had this rank. For each of their imams, Isma'ilite dā'īs assigned twelve Hujjats who were spreading the invitation in twelve districts and in their invitation, they believed the numbers of seven and twelve to be important. For all of the

dā'īs, there was a head named dā'ī-al-du'āt who had office in the caliphate government. The Isma'ilites believed that there are hidden aspects behind superficial appearance, of which only imams are aware, and one must learn them through him or through those who have been taught by him. This led this group to direct their attention from outward aspects of religion to inward and esoteric aspects. (*Mu'īn Dictionary*, vol. 5, under the entry of Isma'ilite, and for further information: cf. *Farhang-e Feraq-e Islami*, p. 47).

³⁶ Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 8, p. 159; cf. Jāsim Husayn, *ibid.* p. 177.

³⁷ 'Alī ibn Ismā'il Ash'ari, *Maqālāt Islāmiyayn*, p. 85; cited from Jāsim Husayn, *ibid.*

³⁸ Cf. Shaykh Sadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, pp. 483- 485; cf. Jāsim Husayn, *op cit.* p. 178.

³⁹ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 327.

⁴⁰ Ibn Athir, *Al-Kāmil*, Beirut, vol. 4, p. 577.

⁴¹ Cf. Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb Kulayni, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 525; Jāsim Husayn, *op cite.* p. 179.

⁴² Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Ghayba*, p. 255.

⁴³ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Maskūya, *Tajārib al-Umam*, vol. 1 (from four volumes), p. 137; Jāsim Husayn, p. 199.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Al-Ghayba*, p. 200; Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthmān Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Mashāhīr al-A'lām*, vols. 1- 4, footnote 132a, cited *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Jāsim Husayn, *ibid.* p. 182.

⁴⁶ Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 261; Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 219.

⁴⁷ Mīrzā Muhammad Bāqir Mūsavī Khunsārī, *Rawzāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 4, p. 275.

⁴⁸ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Ghayba*, p. 318.

⁴⁹ *The Encyclopedia of Islamica* (Farsi version), vol. 3, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Khunsārī, *Rawzāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 4, p. 274.

⁵¹ *The Grand Islamic Encyclopedia*, *ibid.*

⁵² Rijāl Najāshī, p. 261; cf. Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 219.

⁵³ Shaykh Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ Khunsārī, *ibid.* vol. 4, p. 278.

⁵⁵ Mīrzā 'Abdullah Afandī Isfihāni, *Riyāz al-'Ulamā' wa Hiyāz al-Fuḍalā'*, vol. 4, pp. 7, 10 and 11.

⁵⁶ *Op cit.* cf. *Tohfih Qudsī*, (translation of *Al-Ghayba*), p. 255.

⁵⁷ *The Encyclopedia of Islamica* (Farsi version), vol. 3, p. 61.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Challenges and Dilemmas in Making Values & Ideals

Abbas Ali Shameli

Introduction

Several questions and dilemmas emerge when we discuss values education. What do we mean by the term ‘values’? Are values private or public? Are they built subjectively or do they exist objectively? Furthermore, do we recognize values as absolute concepts or do they change relative to various circumstances, cultures, ages, nations, or other variables? The widely divergent answers to these questions reflect the fundamental philosophies, schools of thought, and worldviews of the men and women who author them. In “Values and Values Education in Schools”, J.M. Halstead argues that Western societies, mainly influenced by individualism and positivism, often side with subjectivity and relativism.¹

It is, nonetheless, vital to note that the Western approach is not a single coherent school of thought. Numerous approaches have emerged in the West to deal with values education. It is even difficult to find an inclusive list of these approaches. The liberal democratic model², Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development,³ character education,⁴ the post-modern approach⁵ and religious moral education⁶ are only a few examples of theories in values education. Superka and his colleagues in an older study have provided another list of other approaches in

values education. Their typology includes inculcation, analysis, clarification, and action learning as the current approaches in values education.⁷ Even a brief discussion of these varying approaches requires an independent study, and clearly falls beyond the present one. These approaches are presented to show the difficulty of entering the domain of values education as an avenue for self-development.

Societies with idealistic or realistic, secular or religious approaches follow other perspectives. Answers then are not formulated in an either/or dichotomy. They depend on our philosophy of life and the way we view the world of human beings and how they relate to the universe.

Despite the explicit disagreement of scholars over the definition of the term “values”, I prefer to quote Halstead. His definition, I suppose, is closer to what Ayatollah Sadr has envisaged in his values discussion. Halstead states:

“Values refer to principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or actions and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity”.⁸

Sadr also refers to values⁹ as directing ideals which derive from our worldviews and influence our life’s goals through their impact on our thinking and decision-making discourses.¹⁰ Values in this view are regarded as the criteria of our entity both in the present and future. This is, as Desaulniers states, because values are ontological in their nature. They refer to “what one will be, instead of merely what one will have”.¹¹

Regardless of differences in the domain of values, societies more or less follow a common pattern of values and standards of behaviour. Values education can be described, in my understanding, as a way to help individuals explore common standards and internalize them. Secularity and religiosity play an important role in determining common values. The former simply prepares individuals for proper citizenship and active participation,¹² while the latter advocates religious standards and ideals to facilitate self-construction. The result will influence people both in this life and the hereafter.¹³ Sadr takes a religious approach in his discussion of values. He discovers a Qur'anic set of common values as a necessary requirement for self-development. He consults various Qur'anic verses to elaborate on the typology and formation of a human value system.

Ayatollah Sadr emphasizes that values education and individual self-development will lead to social change if they encompass the majority of the population in a given society. Their impact on only a few people is insufficient as a means of creating social change.¹⁴

Values education then should play the central role in educating people overall. Education, of course, has a wider meaning than schooling. Various social elements must participate in values education. To bring about any significant change, educators must begin by identifying appropriate values and changing those that have become pathologically fixed. Sadr maintains that self-development begins with values and ideals change.¹⁵

Values,¹⁶ ideals,¹⁷ myths,¹⁸ or gods and goddesses¹⁹ are just some of the themes proposed by various thinkers in an attempt to show the inner influencing elements. Sam Keen asserts that the impact of unconscious myths in shaping our recent history is as important as the impact of conscious science. Sigmund Freud's

theory of mythic struggles between the Ego and the Id within the individual psyche as well as racial, national, religious, and political myths had tremendous impacts in creating sacred “isms” both in the East and in the West. Witnessing these values struggles as a part of the politics of modernity, humankind has become frustrated by the fear that history may end either with a bang or with a whimper.²⁰ Therefore it is crucial that we take a step backwards and try to include self-development in the process of social and economic development.

Values and ideals formation: a forgotten crucial task

Sometimes internalized myths and gods unconsciously influence our thinking and direct our behaviour. Sam Keen assigns an effective credit to living myths. He observes:

“The dominant myth that informs a person or a culture is like the “information” contained in DNA or the program in the system disk of a computer. Myth is the software, the cultural DNA, the unconscious information, the metaprogramme that governs the way we see “reality” and the way we behave”.²¹

This is why Sadr asserts that any self-development must begin with values and ideals; what Keen calls myths.²² Myths and values can be creative or destructive, healthy or unhealthy. People need to be educated to handle them constructively. The challenge of matching gods and ideals with the ever-changing realities of life is another story. We invest our myths with a sacred character, giving them the same unquestioning credit we offer to the seasons of the year. This allows them to perform the same functions as gods.

If the root of inner change is values and ideals, then we must examine the ways in which these ideals are formed and how they

change. Values and ideals, as Sadr points out, depend on our worldviews. They are, indeed, the outcome of our philosophy of life. This philosophy fashions the way we give meaning to life, ourselves, society, and the universe. The amount and the quality of psychological energy that pulls us towards the objectives of our lives result from our ideals and values.²³ As well as one's worldview, the pattern of "humanology" that each person follows influences the values system and ideals.

By humanology I mean a selected pattern by which each person explains his/her humanity, included potentialities and the way to actualize them.²⁴ Our values system influences the goals of our lives and the methods that we choose to obtain them. The Qur'an calls these ideals and values "god/*ilāh* or gods/*ālihah*." People can choose various gods. The impact of gods and ideals in human life is so influential that like God they may direct our behaviour. Each of us may decide to follow God, a god, or gods.²⁵ The most important task is to consciously examine both gods and values. We must choose our myths if we are going to behave autonomously.

Quoting Santayana, Keen pushes us to compose a conscious, active feedback to our myths: "Those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it." Even though this statement originally referred to culture, Keen utilizes it to provoke awareness about choosing myths. Keen states:

"If we do not make the effort to become conscious of our personal myths gradually, we become dominated by what psychologists have variously called repetition compulsion, autonomous complexes, engrams routines, scripts, games ...".²⁶

To go through this process, we should re-examine both our worldview and the specific elements that have motivated us to

choose certain values and myths. At this point people may build their relationship with God. Other myths and gods function limitedly. They urge us to engage in a continuous revision. I argue that even personal, consciously selected myths, as Keen proposes, are not good tools for building co-existence. We need commonalities and common values if we are to get rid of personalism and relativism.

However, Postman holds that when choosing gods, we choose them as metanarratives that convey sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable us to organize our lives around them. We have all witnessed, heard or read narratives about communism, fascism, and Nazism in modern life as gods and myths which have called their adherents to fight for the establishment of a heaven on earth. Several other gods have captured the hearts and minds of many other people.²⁷ Interestingly, Postman introduces us as the god-making species.²⁸ At this point we should note that the Qur'an warns us not to be too caught up in the gods we produce ourselves.²⁹ Innately we look for gods and metanarratives that give meaning to our lives and guide us to a more prosperous future. This process must be accomplished through an explanatory method, but we build our gods all the same. God, the Creator, can be the true ideal in our lives though we choose to follow the created god or gods.

Although the production of gods happens inside us, it reflects the realities of the concrete life represented to us by major thinkers. In the age of the discovery of inductive science, figures such as Descartes, Bacon, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton pioneered ideas that transformed human perceptions of God from a sacred religious God to a scientist God. This narrative was then replaced by the science-god which proved to be more beneficial, as it gave people a measure of power and control over their lives. It was nevertheless revealed as inadequate to explain any knowledge

other than that of the present. It does not provide satisfactory answers for the beginning and the end of our existence. Science gave birth to a supposedly paradise-making son known as technology.³⁰

Science and technology promised human progress if we proved to be a technological species. The problem then was that science and technology, produced to serve people, enslaved them instead. The result of this frustration was a psychological polytheism. One god is not and cannot be enough. We then look for multiple gods. Democracy, cultural pluralism, and multiculturalism are other solutions which attempt to resolve the problem of the present generation of Western intellectuals.³¹ Yet the question remains: In a non-melting-pot society which provokes the co-existence of people with various cultures, myths and gods, what will give meaning to life and motivate people towards a promising future? The cultural and values borderlines that divide us will continue to do so unless human beings arrive at one God, the unifying and absolute ideal. This is what Sadr calls it *al-mathal al-a'lā* (the highest ideal) in comparison with other invented ideals.³² The following section describes his explanation about human values and ideals making. He aims at providing two lines of pathological and normal ideal making.

Sadr's typology of human values & ideals-making

Human beings are values and ideals makers.³³ They never stop making values. They cannot live without values. Sadr argues that we have to learn to qualitatively deal with values. He provides his own typology of human values-making in a tripartite model. For him, the provisions of this typology of values-making helps people know how they choose values and how they can recognize its vulnerable points. Sadr's model functions as a pathological instrument in the process of values and ideals formation.

Values are the most meaningful and the most effective ideals of our past. Values are metacognitions which are consciously constructed by us. They give meaning to our present lives and influence our goals in the future. In his evaluation of the quality of human values and ideals, Sadr attempts to go deeply into the roots of this process. He proposes the three possible ways that people follow in making values and ideals: contextualism, absolutization, and transcendental values-making. He then emphasizes the role of prophets in educating people to create healthy and stable ideals.

Contextualism

According to Sadr, some people choose their values from the existing context of their lives. The Qur'an narrates examples of this values selection. The reaction of most people in past generations to the invitations of the prophets has been: Let us follow what our ancestors have done.³⁴

In his analysis of this type of ideals-making, Sadr concludes that people usually follow this model when they tend to be sense-centred and pragmatic. This values-making process happens through a pragmatality. People are happy with a values system that helps them enjoy the present situation. They are reluctant to change values supporting the existing social pattern. These people are stuck with their present context and cannot get rid of it. They find it difficult to think of another situation and therefore do not see beyond the present context. These values and ideals are extracted from the existing social context and are returned to it to direct their followers to the future. Therefore, they are repeated ideals. The future here is nothing more than a repetition of the present and past.³⁵ This repetitious process of values making will lead to a pathological values system and brings about values disease.

Roots of contextuality in values-making

An important task of prophetic education is to educate people to exchange their gods for one God. Two main parameters, psychological and political, usually intervene in this process. When society becomes accustomed to ideals and values that they have lived with, they internalize those values, which then become a part of their personality. The difficulty to change intensifies if they are formed within a luxurious and pleasing environment.³⁶ People think that chosen gods and values are effective. There is no reason to change effective gods. Moreover, values which are derived from a god or gods make human life repetitious. In this case, certain gods may wish to appear with absoluteness. Since gods have a limited capacity to attract people, they are finite in nature. People must change to give them newness and maintain their permanent effectiveness. People must then change the form of values and repeatedly follow them. New cycles will lead people to the same starting point. Despite the apparent newness of gods and ideals, a single essence is repeated through various forms.

Sadr also holds that social forces and the impact of power holders is another element in refuting prophetic values instruction. To keep the top-down pattern of social structure, the power holders create gods and ideals. They attempt to impose decisions on people or sometimes make decisions for them, both actions that shape their value system. Sometimes power holders themselves become the god and ideal of a society. The Qur'an uses Pharaoh as an example of someone who claims godliness.³⁷ Sadr calls this a political element which influences the social values system. Besides these two psychological and political elements there are other factors. Socio-political forces are not, I believe, limited to political elements. Propaganda, mass media, written culture, social celebrations, and above all, the formal educational system

in each society are among the other influential factors. They tend to be misused by power holders to foster a preferred type of values system.

Sadr observes that gods and ideals may play the role of religion and claim for themselves some kind of sacredness, as the Qur'an calls them gods (*ālihah*).³⁸ Because of their sacredness, people are reluctant to set them aside. The sacred ideals are usually taken as gods and are worshipped. To Sadr, religion is nothing more than the relationship between a worshiper and the worshipped. In addition to revealed religions, there are also man-made religions. These religions are elaborated from internalized gods and ideals. Since these gods and ideals are not absolute or self-generating, they do not last for ever. They are, in fact, expressions of the realities in human life and cannot direct him/her towards horizons beyond. To show the difference between these two types of religions, Sadr maintains that monotheistic religions are a uniting force since they direct people towards one absolute ideal. Those religions, which are elaborated from the created gods, are disintegrative.

To Sadr it is impossible for human beings to create a god that directs them to a horizon beyond the limitation of their understanding.³⁹ People replace them with new gods to provide meaning to their lives. Despite this continuous ideal renewal, the gods will lose their effectiveness at some point, and society will have to put them aside. It means that the society will lose its integrative ideal. When there is no such ideal, each individual concentrates on his or her own interest instead of concern for the greater society.⁴⁰

A society with this type of problem in its ideals is vulnerable to one of the three following crises. The first crisis, Sadr indicates, is that society at this level is ideally diseased from within. He

believes that society in this situation is not real; rather, it is merely a shadow of society. Social disintegration is the first crisis that threatens a society with contextual values-making. If, for instance, the society faces an external threat, it will easily disintegrate and lose its integrity because such a society is not more than a combination of citizens, each striving for his/her own interests. The disintegration of Islamic civilization in the middle of the seventh century of the Islamic era, when Muslims interfaced the Mongol invasion, is an example. A similar disintegration happened at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Ottoman Empire could not guarantee the continuity of the Islamic civilization.

The second crisis could be a complete assimilation into a non-Islamic ideal when the society has lost its own identity. The third crisis is an inner attempt from those Muslim thinkers who still feel strongly about the effectiveness of Islam during various ages. They unsuccessfully attempted to renew those ideals. Many Muslim thinkers and reformists attempt to discover a version of Islamic ideals which can remain effective in the face of tremendous social changes. Explaining the second and the third possibilities, Sadr observes:

When Muslims confronted the age of colonialism, they reacted through two different ways. One avenue directed Muslim nations to assimilate themselves to a foreign (Western) ideal. Some of the Muslim rulers applied this policy in their countries. Reza Khan in Iran and Kemal Ataturk in Turkey attempted to apply the ideal and values of Europeans which had wined the campaigns in many aspects. When the Islamic ideals could not attract Muslims they applied an ideal which has proved to be effective. Muslim thinkers at the beginning of the colonial age and at the end of the disintegrating age (*awākhir al-fatrah*) which was prior to the age of colonialism strove to apply the third alternative. They wanted

to give a new life to Islam. They attempted to provide the Islamic ideals in a new language and to renew Islamic ideals in a way that could meet the new needs of Islamic societies. A shadowy nation interfaces one of these three alternatives.⁴¹

Absolutization

Sadr then proposes the second possible way people follow in making values and ideals. For some people, values-making is a process which must fit in with their future needs. Such people are able to see beyond their existing circumstances, and choose ideals and values which can direct them to a better, more promising future. They can foretell future needs, and are not overwhelmed by their existing context. The problem, nonetheless, is that human cognition is limited. People cannot foresee all aspects of their future and are unable to conceive of the absolute ideal. We usually perceive a dimension of that absolute ideal. A hidden vulnerability in human cognition is the fact that people never consider a limited fact as limited. They attribute absoluteness to what they have perceived. Generalization and absolutization⁴² are psychological mechanisms that people use to enlarge the limited gods and ideals. These mechanisms are nonetheless psychological and only realities can challenge them. As a result, the absolutized gods will become inadequate in practice. Since people constantly moving towards a true type of perfection and these limited ideals cannot provide that answer, these ideals will become an obstacle. They will become the ideals of the first type when they lose their functionality for the future.⁴³

Sadr asserts that two kinds of invalid generalizations usually take place when people choose the second type of values or ideals. People who are concerned about their future usually form ideals that meet future needs. Since these ideals are related to the future, they are more inclusive than those ideals which are taken from

existing situations. They nonetheless convey only some aspects of the values people look for. Overwhelmed by the Church authorities' insistence on certain religious and erroneous scientific ideas and exhausted by an oppressive economic system that had stratified society into the elite and workers, Westerners, for instance, chose to follow the ideal of freedom and democracy. This ideal selection was partly the result of the religious Reformation which took place in the Western Church in the sixteenth century. Although the Reformation began as a religious movement, it had political, social, and economic overtones as well.⁴⁴ People who were tired of the intolerable pressures of the owners of wealth, power, and authority refused to follow the authoritative patterns of social order. Sadr describes this situation as follows:

Europeans who pioneered the age of the Renaissance and Reformation wanted to be free from all traps, including those of Church and of feudalism. They wanted to be free to do what they wished. They wanted to think with their own minds and not with the minds of others. They wanted to have their own concerns. They did not want to have stereotypes that others produced for them.⁴⁵

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment were especially associated with ideals and values which included a recrediting of human individual freedom.⁴⁶ People could no longer tolerate the existing socio-political and economic context of that period. Freedom was a value that promised a better future for all citizens. However, Sadr states that the problem was that they took the instrument as their goal. Democracy and freedom can create an environment where people have a voice. But freedom is not the ultimate end; it must be used to go further. Although recognising

individual freedom is one step towards the future after having been stuck with present and past burdens, it is not the ultimate ideal. The future is more extensive even than this ideal. Sadr calls this “horizontal generalization.” By this, he means that people may choose freedom or other ideals to rid themselves of oppressing and unsatisfactory existing circumstances.

Freedom however cannot be the absolute ideal. Although freedom is undoubtedly a prerequisite for human development, it is not the whole story. Freedom is without any content or ultimate ideal. To develop themselves, people need not only freedom, but a goal, an ideal, and a safe path toward that absolute ideal. If people cannot choose an everlasting ideal, they will be self-alienated. Freedom provides a good context, but people need a motivating goal and a meaningful content. This goal cannot be something limited as people innately look for everlasting absolute ideals.

Sadr contests that the problem in Western values selection is that people who favour it have forgotten the needed goal and content in their free and democratic context.⁴⁷ Islamic societies therefore should enjoy freedom and democracy, but they should treat them as a means not as an end, that is they should move towards their sacred ideals.

The above-mentioned pathological generalization has occasionally happened in all nations. Sadr alludes to another type of generalization which may be traced from the beginning of human history right up to the present time. This invalid generalization that has affected people throughout history is to base ideals on humanity as a whole. Sadr maintains that human social life began with the nuclear family. It has been extended to tribes, clans, groups, and nations. During each period, people have sided with a particular ideal related to that specific stage.

Those living at a certain period make and accept values and ideals that are from that period. Tribalism, racism, fascism, and belligerent nationalism are examples of this type of values-making which have taken place in various periods of human history. These ideals were then passed on to subsequent generations.⁴⁸

Sadr believes that the major problem in our values-making is that we are usually narrow-sighted. It is therefore incorrect for us to form values and ideals that are disintegrated from prophetic education. If we stand in a vast field or desert and try to see the farthest horizons, we achieve only a limited view. We must not forget that what we actually see is not the end of the world. The same problem overwhelms us when we try to choose values and ideals. Values and ideals are the horizons of human life. By choosing a limited ideal, we assume that this will be an everlasting and ever-motivating one. Sadr argues that seemingly everlasting horizons cannot be values and ideals; they are only finite horizons.⁴⁹

Considering this limitation, Misbah Yazdi provides a supporting argument. He states that because of the complexity and multidimensionality of human potentialities, the deep interactions between these potentialities, and above all else (since life in this world is an introduction to a person's permanent life in the hereafter), Muslim moral educators must insist on the necessity of using the content of revelation as another tool in understanding and determining a values system.⁵⁰ Revelation is a complementary tool when people are ambiguous about the impact of their behaviour in this world and in the hereafter. A believer is assured that the revealed religions provide him/her with a secure lifestyle which will lead to the development of a perfect person (*insān-i kāmīl*). This is because the content of revelation is from God, the creator of humankind.

If a reader approaches the Qur'an from this angle, he or she will find out that the Qur'an warns us that all the gods we internalize and replace with the True God are only empty names. These created gods are nothing but figments of our imaginations. Although both God and gods are known to us through mental forms, the former represents a real being. Created gods are nothing but mental forms. They do not convey a true meaning but rather encourage humankind to chase after a mirage. When we reach it we find it is a nonentity.⁵¹ Other verses provide other metaphors. They warn us that submission to gods and ideals other than God is like dwelling in a spider's web. This is undoubtedly a pleasing dwelling for a spider but a dangerous one for human beings.⁵² The resemblance is because gods and man-made values cannot give a reliable lasting meaning to human life.

The Qur'an considers ideals and values replaced by God as mirages, erroneous perceptions of reality, and as spiders' webs if people take refuge in them.⁵³ Usually these ideals develop into the first type, contextual ideals, when they are interrelated with a positive, easy-going lifestyle. They will become an enjoyable part of real life.⁵⁴ At this stage people again go back to the present and past and keep the associated ideals and values.

Transcendental ideals and values-making

The third type of ideals and values-making is what Sadr calls transcendental. This type is centred around a core element: Allah. Values and ideals must be unlimited and everlasting. What we create inside us is overwhelmed by the limitations which govern our existence and our cognitive narrowness. The Islamic values system is based on a worldview which relates human beings to an absolute ideal: Allah. People relate their limited being to an unlimited ideal if they choose Allah as their final ideal. Allah is not the product of our minds. He is an absolute being outside of

us but related to us. He is introduced by the monotheist religions as the source of absolute power, knowledge, justice, and beauty.⁵⁵

An essential conflict will be resolved if we decide to follow this absolute ideal. Although as Muslims we always create ideals in our minds, what we worship and take as the highest ideal is Allah. Allah is an independent ideal beyond our conception. Worship and self-development is towards Allah, not towards what we create in ourselves. Personal self-conception is a tool to direct us toward a real independent God. There is a difference between a humanely invented name, a mental form, or an image that we create as an ideal in our mind and an ideal which exists beyond us. In Islamic ideology, we are encouraged to distinguish between our mental form of God and the real independent God.⁵⁶

The Qur'an warns us not to choose names as values and ideals.⁵⁷ Submission must be directed to the real God. Among ourselves, we have a name (in Arabic, *ism*) and a named (in Arabic, *musammā*). Our mental forms ascribed to God are nothing more than names. Names and imaginations always represent an external reality. God's names and the named (god) are characterized by two attributes. Names are limited but the named is absolute. This absolute being is our ultimate ideal.⁵⁸

Conscious or unconscious inevitable journey

Human beings are willingly and unwillingly moving towards God. The Qur'an says: "O you humankind! Verily you are ever toiling on toward your Lord - painfully toiling, - and you shall meet Him (84:6)." Sadr comments that this verse informs us of an inevitable, exhausting progress towards God with no respite from humankind. This journey is both continuous and infinite. People, nonetheless, proceed along this road differently. Some are conscious of the progress and undertakes their journey responsibly. Believers and worshipers of God are among this

group.⁵⁹ They try to get close to God. Believers behave in their lives as God's responsible vicegerents on earth. Muslim moral educators believe that nearness is the ultimate goal of prophetic values education. The universe, including human beings, is ontologically related to God. Human beings exist because God has given them the light of existence. This nearness is the result of a divine conscious intuition of this link and can be obtained through faith and corresponding religious actions.⁶⁰

Unbelievers are negligent or pretend to be so. They feel no responsibility towards God, even though they are also proceeding towards Him. Sadr notes that this process is not a geographical or a physical journey towards God. It is an ontological journey. Nor is Allah, like a geographical goal, a final point at the end of that voyage. When we travel, we aim to reach a specific point. This is because we are performing a geographical journey. However, Allah is with us at all times during our spiritual journey. This is because He is absolute and our journey is existential. In this journey we strengthen our being. Although He is the aim and the final ideal, He is with us at every stage of our lives.⁶¹

Sadr maintains that an important difference between a person who chooses God as an ideal and the one who submits to other values and ideals is that the former choice changes our movements and behaviours both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative consequence makes our journey infinite. While our ultimate ideal is Allah, we never reach a stopping point. Sadr maintains that the continuous challenge between monotheistic religions and other gods and ideals is an expression of humankind's attempts at relating to an absolute ideal.

Qualitative change is identical with a feeling of responsibility if the absolute ideal is consciously chosen. Due to a bipolar construction, namely the soul and the body, human beings are all

involved in an inner conflict. Our bodies direct us toward earthly desires but our souls invite us to reach for heavenly attributes, such as absolute knowledge, power, justice, compassion, generosity, and revenge. This conflict will be resolved only when human beings feel responsible before God.⁶² Responsibility is real only when we have to bear it before someone who has the right to ask us about our behaviour. God is an ideal beyond us who has created us and has sent prophets to teach us the true way of life. We therefore feel responsible towards an independent ideal who can ask us about His gifts. The ideals and values which we create inside us do not have the same impact. We consciously or unconsciously know that they are our products. People avoid self-invented values if they can find ways to escape them. Evidence for this distinction is to be found in the sacrifices recorded in the history of prophecy. In this history, we never find a single example of a prophet who felt weary or doubtful of his mission. This is because the impact of an absolute external ideal directed them in their purpose.⁶³

The link between values systems and Islamic worldviews

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, a values system, according to Sadr, is influenced by one's worldview. In the above section he distinguished between two ways of proceeding in an inevitable journey. For him a conscious and responsible journey is possible when we are equipped with a clear and energetic worldview. A worldview is a pattern that people use to give a specific meaning to what they perceive. Sadr makes a distinction between God and other ideals based on the feeling of responsibility. Here, he verifies the link between the values system and worldview. He points out that choosing Allah as an ideal implies belief in a monotheistic ideology. This ideology is comprised of three main elements. Muslims have chosen Allah as the highest ideal if they rise from a cognitive stage to a belief in

one God. The latter is the result of cooperation between the mind and heart.⁶⁴

There is a difference between knowing God and having faith in Him. The latter is a choice that happens both in mind and heart. Faith in God implies faith in His attributes. Since God is chosen as the highest ideal, believers attempt to proceed towards Him. This means that they attempt to become conscious of their inevitable ontological journey towards Him. Nearness (*Qurb*) to God requires a process of self-development from us which makes us resemble Him in terms of our own characteristics. Belief in God and His attributes within Islamic ideology is completely different from the worldview found in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophers view God's attributes and more precisely the world of ideas⁶⁵ as independent facts lying beyond us in the metaphysical world.⁶⁶ Islamic ideology has an educational message when it invites us to resemble God.⁶⁷ Belief in God and our conscious efforts helps us overcome the inner conflict inside us.

Yet we need a certain psychological energy and a sense of responsibility. Belief in the hereafter is the second element of the Islamic worldview which produces this energy. If we believe in the day of resurrection, we have realized that our lifespan is not limited to this world. We are creating a new life in the hereafter by behaving either correctly or incorrectly in this world. This realization links our life in this world to the permanent life in the hereafter. Belief in the hereafter functions as a supporting and guaranteeing element. People therefore behave, as they are responsible for their behaviour. This is because they have realized that they are not entitled to behave as they wish.

Prophethood is the third functioning element which facilitates our divine education. Prophets teach us to know God (the absolute

ideal), our inevitable journey, and our destiny. They watch out for us and direct us so that we do not lose our way by teaching us to choose correct and ever-lasting ideals and values. Prophets function as mediators between belief in God and belief in the hereafter as the final destiny.⁶⁸ As history reveals,⁶⁹ prophets were never entirely successful in directing their followers to the absolute ideal. There were challenges and conflicts between prophets and those who supported other misleading ideals. Prophets were often forced to act as imams as well and to lead campaigns against oppressors. For Sadr, the prophets were always both prophets and imams from the time of the Prophet Noah onwards. . Imamate, in Sadr's view, stands for leading a prophetic campaign for the establishment of social justice. After the Prophet Muhammad, according to Shi'i Imāmi belief, this institution was looked after by the twelve imams.

Then there is the attribute of justice, an attribute emphasized in Shi'i ideology. Although justice is included in God's attributes, it is of particular importance in Shi'i thought since it carries a tremendous social impact. Social development is in need of social justice. Belief in justice, Sadr argues, implies an important educational message. If the society is proceeding towards a just ideal, this ontological nearness necessitates the application of social justice in a Muslim society. God's attributes, including justice, must not be viewed only as a handful of metaphysical facts which are disconnected from human life.⁷⁰

This explanation could be what Sadr means when he speaks about the assumed relationship between values systems and worldviews. In this way Sadr attempts to correlate the five principles of the Islamic (Shi'i) worldview with the selection of an absolute ideal. Misbah Yazdi maintains that the main difference between an Islamic moral values system and a non-Islamic moral system is that the former depends on its worldview

in determining them. The belief in one God as the only creator, owner, and educator, and belief in the hereafter and its impact on our present life, direct us to have a distinctive religious values system.⁷¹ It may also be the reason why Muslims believe in an ideology that consists of three pillars⁷²: belief in the unity of God, belief in the day of resurrection, and belief in prophecy. In a Muslim society, Allah is elevated to the centre of all ideals.

Sadr asserts that throughout history, secular ideals and values has led to striking calamities. Although people may make their values individually, this affects their social life as well. The emergence of Hitler and the Nazi movement and the consequent problems of modern times reflect the results of a values system derived from a god or gods. These ideals disconnected human beings from the one absolute God. A more recent example is reflected in the experiences recorded in the former Soviet Union. Marxism and communism ruled the country for decades. The disintegration of the USSR indicates the end of one ideology and one god. Other countries that have believed in this god are also looking for an alternative. This is the reason why prophets throughout history attempted to replace gods with the true God. The centre point in Islamic values system is God. Values beneath or around that core are formed through prophetic values education. Prophets educate people to learn to relate to God, to themselves, to nature, and to society. These relationships are influenced by internalized values. These values are all God-centered. Sadr maintains that God is absolute and that values related to Him create new horizons for human life. These values direct human behaviour to resemble God's attributes as much as possible.⁷³

Concluding Remarks

Inspired by certain Qur'anic verses⁷⁴ which discuss the roots of social change, Sadr invites us to see the existing link between

social- and self-development. As in the natural and physical domain, the socio-historical aspects of human life are normative. The more we are familiar with societal norms, the easier and more active our treatment of a particular domain will be. The Qur'an teaches us the norms which govern our social and individual lives in order to facilitate a conscious and active way of living.

Ayatollah Sadr points out that social reconstruction in each society begins with the development of values.. Values and ideals are inner elements that influence our consciously selected goals. Our values system will have an impact on the goals we aim at and on the amount of psychological energy which motivates us to attain those goals. According to the Qur'an, values will be more effective and more sufficient only when they derive from a worldview which links us, in heart, to our Creator. Self-alienation, pathological and repetitious ideal-making, compulsory absolutisation, and social disintegration are a few examples of how people fail to construct a divine worldview and a reliable values system.

Sadr examines the false process of values-making which has engaged minds and hearts throughout history. He concludes that prophetic education is a way to help people construct a functioning values system. Sadr provides a theory of inner conflict as the foundation of human values-making. This theory suggests that unless we overcome our inner conflict, we will project it at the social level in forms of unjust oppressive social patterns. Prophetic teachings play a complementary role in helping people solve their inner conflicts. Class tensions, national and international clashes, gender conflicts, and other types of social dilemmas are expressions of an unresolved inner conflict. Prophetic education simultaneously aims at the establishment of social justice and self-development. The roots, however, extend

towards individual purification. This is derived from the prophetic teachings which are contained in the Holy Scripture. Despite this theoretical values and ideals discussion, Sadr speaks of the failure of those who followed the Islamic model. Among the three types of ideal-making, only the transcendental type, according to Sadr, can foster social and self- development. He nonetheless maintains that there are historical examples of Muslim collapse. This aspect goes back to the choices made by Muslims and do not contradict what Sadr attempts to propose at the theoretical level. When Muslims distance themselves from the absolute ideal and its implications or they side with other ideals and gods, they become disintegrated. As Sadr puts it, at this moment they are but a shadow of a Muslim nation.

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¹ Halstead 1996, pp. 4-6.

² Halstead 1996.

³ Morris 1994.

⁴ Lickona 1993a.

⁵ Tappan & Brown 1996.

⁶ Moran 1989.

⁷ Superka et al., 1975.

⁸ Halstead 1996, 5.

⁹ Although Sadr prefers to use the term ideals (*al-muthul*) instead of values (*al-qiyam*), his explanation and the characteristics he attributes to ideals approach (see the previous footnote) Halstead's definition of values. Therefore in my opinion the discussion of ideals in Sadr's theory is identical with the discussion of values. This understanding is supported by Sadr's intermingling of ideals to values in his discussion of typology of ideals. (See Sadr 1979, p. 166).

¹⁰ Sadr 1979, 146.

¹¹ Morris 1994, p. xix, quoting from Desaulniers 1982.

¹² Halstead 1996, pp. 8-9.

¹³ Misbah Yazdī 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100-2.

¹⁴ Sadr 1979, pp. 141-42.

¹⁵ Sadr 1979, 145.

¹⁶ Halstead 1996.

¹⁷ Sadr 1979.

¹⁸ Keen & Valley-Fox 1989.

¹⁹ Keen 1989 & Postman 1995.

²⁰ Keen 1989, p. x.

²¹ Keen 1989, p. xii.

²² It seems that Keen attributes an unconscious role to myths. This role distances myths from ideals and values which are usually conscious. The significant impact of myths, nonetheless, motivated me to place them in the same basket where values and ideals are found. My major concern in this discussion is to review those influencing inner elements.

²³ Sadr 1979, pp. 145-46.

²⁴ SAMT 1995, p. 518.

²⁵ Sadr 1979, pp. 147.

²⁶ Keen 1989, p. xiv.

²⁷ Postman 1995, p. 6.

²⁸ Postman 1995, p. 7.

²⁹ See Q. 37:95 & 7:71.

³⁰ Postman 1995, pp. 8-10.

³¹ Postman 1995, pp. 13-17.

³² 1979, pp. 145-7.

³³ I have already mentioned that in Sadr's theory ideals are almost identical with values. In this section these two terms have been used interchangeably.

³⁴ Sadr 1979, 148-9. See, e. g., Q. 2:170, 5:104, 10:78, 11:62, 14:10 and 43:22.

³⁵ Sadr 1979, pp. 148-50.

³⁶ Sadr 1979, pp. 148-9.

³⁷ See Q. 28:30. Sadr 1979, pp. 151-52.

³⁸ See e.g., Q. 18:15.

³⁹ Sadr 1979, pp. 155-59.

⁴⁰ Sadr 1979, pp. 158-61.

⁴¹ 1979, p. 163.

⁴² Absolutization is my proposed translation for Sadr's explanation of a process of false generalization. As I have discussed in this section, people sometimes consider a limited ideal as absolute. A limited value or ideal may be deemed as something absolute and self-generating. Sadr argues that this psychological willingness to derive absolute ideals from a limited fact could be a type of false generalization. Absolutization and generalization, in my view, are interchangeable in this context. They represent a process in which we consider a limited fact as an absolute or general.

⁴³ Sadr 1979, pp. 164-6.

⁴⁴ Enc. Britannica, vol. 19, 1970, p. 37.

⁴⁵ 1979, p. 167.

⁴⁶ Schaeffer 1968, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Sadr 1979, pp. 166-68.

⁴⁸ Sadr 1979, pp. 168-9.

⁴⁹ Sadr 1979, pp. 168-70.

⁵⁰ Misbah 1997, vol. 1, p. 105.

⁵¹ See, Q. 53:23 & 24:39.

⁵² See Q. 29:41.

⁵³ See Q. 24:39 & 29:41.

⁵⁴ Sadr 1979, p. 171.

⁵⁵ Sadr 1979, p. 176.

⁵⁶ Sadr 1979, pp. 176-7.

⁵⁷ See Q. 53:23.

⁵⁸ Sadr 1979, p. 177.

⁵⁹ Worshipping God in Islamic jurisprudence is indeed a responsible and conscious process of this path when the believers are consciously related to the absolute ideal (Sadr 1979, 181).

⁶⁰ SAMT 1995, p. 519.

⁶¹ Sadr 1979, pp. 181-83.

⁶² Sadr 1979, pp. 184-9.

⁶³ Sadr 1979, pp. 186-88.

⁶⁴ Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 171-2.

⁶⁵ Augustine, one of the fathers of Roman Catholic Church called Plato's notion about the world of ideas as the World of God. (See Ozmon & Craver 1995, 5).

⁶⁶ See Ozmon & Craver 1995, chapter 1 "Idealism and Education".

⁶⁷ Sadr 1979, pp. 192-3.

⁶⁸ Sadr 1979, pp. 194-5.

⁶⁹ Periodizing human history from a Qur'anic point of view, Sadr divides it into three major periods: the Custodial period (*dawr al-hidānah*), when Adam and Eve were in heaven under the special care of angels; the period of unity and integration (*dawr al-wahdah*), when the early generations of human beings

were living cooperatively; and the period of disintegration and conflict (*dawr al-tashatut wa al-ikhtilāf*), when they contested on earth for obtaining more benefits. From this period which, according to Sadr, must have begun from the time of the Prophet Noah when human co-existence was jeopardized. The conflict was so harsh that humanity needed a social leader who could resolve conflicts even by leading huge campaigns. Sadr proposes an Islamic theory which explains the formation and the characteristics of each of these periods. The Imamate is accordingly a position that belongs to the third period of human history when there have been unsolved conflicts (Sadr 1979, 241 & 1982a, 151-80).

⁷⁰ Sadr 1979, pp. 195-7.

⁷¹ Misbah 1997, vol. 1, pp. 100-2.

⁷² The two other pillars, namely, justice and imamate, are only ascribed to by the Shi'a.

⁷³ Sadr 1979, pp. 148-9.

⁷⁴ E.g., 8:53 & 12:11.

Religion and Freedom

Mohammad Ali Shomali

Despite the evolution of renaissance that led to the processes referred to as 'liberalisation', 'consumer lifestyle' and 'gross materialism', mankind still faces a kind of dichotomy. Humanity is yet to embark upon the search for inner peace, truth, freedom, and way of life. In this paper, we will try to study one of the important topics of the modern age i.e. the relation between religion and freedom. We will endeavour to seek a way and a method to acquire knowledge of the true spirit of religion. We will also tackle tangible methodologies to recognise the 'true spirit of religion', the definition of freedom and the approach that will lead one to know the splendid reality of 'true freedom'. Consider the following questions: how does the world view freedom? Are there any misconceptions regarding the essence of 'true freedom'? We will attempt to analyse such polemical issues that relate to the topic under discussion, and to seek an understanding that would nurture the innate nature of human beings.

Conceptualising freedom

Let us start by briefly enlightening ourselves regarding the concept of freedom. How do people view *religion* and *freedom*? This is one of the most pertinent issues in philosophy and the social sciences. In the current age it is paramount for one to be able to empower one's self with a true understanding of the concept of *freedom* from the Islamic perspective. There are certain 'modes of understanding' that define *freedom*.

Furthermore, there are different types of *freedom*. One type of *freedom*, known as ‘philosophical and metaphysical freedom,’ is the subject of study by philosophers and theologians who aim to establish whether or not human beings can choose their path and the nature of the actions they perform as well as those actions which they do not perform (this is generally referred to as ‘free will’). Does a human being possess a free will, or are his actions pre-ordained? In order to tackle these complex matters with a degree of clarity, one must first grasp a thorough understanding of ‘free will’. For example, if a person was to perform an action or travel to a specific place would the said individual decide his own actions or would this act be caused by factors that are not under his control? Did the Sublime God create the action in the individual, or does he possess the free will to perform an act of his choosing? In the Holy Qur’an, God says:

Indeed, we have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful. (73:3)

What does this verse tell us about mankind with regard to free will? How can this verse be interpreted? People from different walks of life may interpret the above verse in different ways. After investing much thought in this matter, one comes to the conclusion that Allah (s.w.t.) is stating that mankind has been provided with the guidance that he requires to continue on the virtuous path. However, it is for the individual to accept this guidance and be thankful because of it or to reject it and be ungrateful. Whatever decision the individual makes is his choice and he is responsible for that.

There are different ways to discuss this issue, but perhaps the clearest way is to refer to ourselves and reflect on the process of decision making. In the following couplet, Jalaludin Rumi¹ reminds one of the perception of freedom that is innate to human nature:

این که گویی این کنم یا آن کنم

اختيار است اختيار است اي صنم

Here, Rumi so magnificently proves that when making a decision a man asks himself whether I should do this or that, this in itself is a proof that human beings are 'free'.

When we make decisions our condition is completely different from that of someone who is falling off a building, because in this case the individual has the will to prevent himself from falling, but has no choice and is forced to fall. Those who are interested to know more about this type of freedom should refer to philosophical discussions.

Other types of freedom include freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom in political matters and so on. All of these types of freedom are based on acceptance of metaphysical and philosophical freedom. In fact, if philosophical and metaphysical freedom did not exist then one would not be able to engage in the philosophical and metaphysical disciplines. Therefore, one must accept that the foundation of all freedom is philosophical and metaphysical freedom, so that one may proceed onto the next step in order to appreciate the diverse expressions of freedom.

Islam and freedom of thought

Does Islam encourage or even allow individuals to think and reflect? Let us explain what we mean by this statement. The freedom to think and reflect allows a person to engage in a search for the truth regarding the affairs of humanity. Some people think that this contradicts any religious conviction. To them, you have to be either a freethinker or a religious person. Of course, this problem does not stop with religions. It extends to any philosophical, spiritual and ideological convictions that one may have.

To have a more objective understanding of the question we need to distinguish between two types of convictions. Sometimes people have convictions without them being the result of a rational process of reasoning and arguing; they just accept certain things emotionally or because of the influence of the peers, elders, society, media, etc. Surely these types of convictions represent great obstacles to freethinking. In contrast, there are people who have convictions and firm beliefs which result from an earlier process of freethinking and rational decision-making. They have made sure that the only reason for accepting and upholding these positions is that they are backed up by safe and sound arguments. In such cases, there is no conflict between freedom of thought and upholding those positions. Indeed, this is the only way forward. In science, philosophy and any other discipline we need to build upon our findings; we cannot always start from scratch. Therefore, instead of dismissing all types of convictions and affiliations, we need to investigate them and check on which basis they rely.

In any case, as far as Islam is concerned, its adherents are bound to accept only those things that are rational and decisive, including Islam itself. The religion of Islam encourages human beings to reflect and ponder. In fact, Islam makes cognizance and vigilance incumbent on all people. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an where Allah (SWT.) commands human beings to think and to ponder. One must realise that when a person thinks and reflects, this increases his or her knowledge and understanding. Through this process, humans can find new ways in which to conduct their lives. Furthermore, one has ample facility to benefit from the vast experiences of those people who are among the wise and knowledgeable people within society. In this way, individuals are able to reach their own conclusions and apply them in their daily lives.

Islam holds in great esteem those people who learn by engaging in thought and reflection, and who correct themselves accordingly. The late prominent scholar, Martyr Murtada

Mutahhari, held a beautiful discussion on this subject, where he reflected upon the golden era in Islamic history. Islam has always made progress when the common people, clergymen, scholars and scientists have exercised freedom of thought. The sixth infallible Imam Sadiq (A) used to spend a considerable length of time in complex philosophical and theological debates and discussions with people of different faiths, and also with those individuals who did not adhere to any religious beliefs. Atheists would deliberate with the Holy Imam on issues that were of immense scholastic value, and they would ask difficult and challenging questions. Yet, one finds that during such debates our Holy Imam would maintain his composure and he would graciously quench the thirst for knowledge in each and every questioner by answering their questions comprehensively. As an example, one may refer to the well-known book size answer that Imam gave to Mufaddal about the existence of God when he was challenged by the atheists.

Islam places a great deal of emphasis on creating avenues whereby people may ask questions and receive answers to these questions. There are two underlying issues to consider:

- a. According to Islam, people should be able to create scientific and academic ideas and their intellectual needs should be fulfilled.
- b. Even if people are very critical or ask very rational or deeply philosophical questions, this poses no threat to Islam. Islam can withstand any type of critique. Indeed, Islamic thought has always been strengthened and refreshed after critiques.

Islam triumphed when the masses evolved by acquiring the freedom to think, and that period was known as the 'golden age in the history of Islam' whereby civilisation reached its pinnacle. According to the school of Ahlul Bayt (A), people should adopt religion only after adequately uncovering the truth, with the

support of intellect, the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Blind faith, or religion through 'inheritance', does not cause a Muslim to be a 'true Muslim'. When one studies books dealing with Islamic jurisprudence, one will find that the first part in the *Risālah* of any renowned Marāji of Taqlid will make it clear that following a Marji' is only for practical rulings of Islam; one cannot follow a Marji' in the fundamental beliefs (*Usul-e Din*). Each and every individual must exercise reason and reflection and develop his or her own arguments with regards to the truth of religion or existence of God and the like.

There is a famous story from the time of the Holy Prophet (S), about an elderly woman who was working with her simple machine that produced thread from wool. The Holy Prophet (S) asked her why she believed in the Creator. She answered "*I know that my machine only works when I put my hand on it and stops when I stop, so how can this awesome world with its amazing creations move without a mover. It is impossible*". This was an argument put forward by an old lady to answer the Holy Prophet (S), for which the Prophet (S) exclaimed to the people: "*Alaykum bidān al-Ajā'iz*" (You must have a faith like such elderly women).

Ijtihād or independent study of a qualified scholar

The other dynamic and prominent issue in Islam, especially in the school of Ahlul Bayt, is that it allows and indeed insists on independent study and thought of a qualified jurist, known as *ijtihād*.

The door of *ijtihād* has always been open in the School of the Ahlul Bayt. To make this concept clearer, we deem it necessary to explain it further. Every qualified jurist (*faqih; mujtahid; ayatollah*) in order to draw and infer Islamic rulings has to refer directly to the Qur'anic injunctions and the *Sunnah*. Although such a jurist is always in need of consulting works and reasoning of the peers and predecessors, he cannot follow any of them, regardless of how learned they may be, and must make his own

judgements. Such approach to jurisprudence has provided certain vitality and dynamism in the Ja'fari school of thought.

Another aspect of this vitality is that according to this school of thought, when a Marji' passes away all his followers have to refer to the most knowledgeable among the living ones and it is only when he permits that they can keep following the late Marji'. Of course, even in this case, with respect to new issues which arise by the passage of time, they need to refer to the living one.

Islam does not impede anyone in any way, as long as one abides by its divine principles. In fact, Islam encourages us to be creative, to initiate new ideas, innovate and direct new efforts and fresh thinking so that we are able to meet the challenges and requirements of the present time.

On visiting an Islamic seminary or an Islamic theological centre, one begins to appreciate that hundreds and thousands of students, teachers and scholars engaged in profound and thought-provoking discussions. Teachers at these institutions become very sad when students do not indulge in rigorous questioning and intellectually challenging scientific dialogue. Teachers at the Islamic centres believe in asking their students questions and allowing them ask any question they like, thus creating room for dialogue and rational thinking, as well as encouraging the development of logical reasoning that will satisfy the human mind.

Freedom of belief

The third type of freedom is somewhat controversial. It is the freedom of belief, which constitutes a great part of what is known as 'religious freedom'. This point is very important to discuss, particularly when some individuals ask questions such as "*Can we encourage people to believe in whatever they want?*" and "*Should we allow people to worship idols, cows and other such things?*"

How does Islam view this concept? From an Islamic perspective, people are free to choose their own religion and no one should force them to adhere to any particular religion. Faith can only come when people voluntarily choose to be faithful. Force is not accepted. Nor does it work. Of course, this does not mean that whatever people choose will make no difference and all will bear the same fruits. Ultimately, some may have good results and while others may suffer horrible consequences for himself and possibly others.

Thus, everyone must make their choices with the utmost care that he may ever exercise in any of his decisions that he makes in his life. It may prove to be of far more importance than choosing a spouse or a career. Thus, it becomes necessary to use rational arguments and exercise logical reasoning to reach the ultimate truth. One cannot simply say *“I am an idol worshipper just because my parents were idol worshippers”* or *“I am a Muslim just because my parents were Muslims”* or *“I am an atheist because it is more convenient and easier”*. Blind faith in its entirety is unacceptable in Islam, and one cannot be termed as a real Muslim if one has merely ‘inherited’ Islam. Of course, to be born into a religious family can be very helpful in having an objective and first hand experience of religious life in general and the religion at issue in particular, but this is not enough.

Islam encourages and indeed urges everyone to make his own enquiry about which religion to choose, while simultaneously it does not hold all choices equally sound. This is a matter of truth regardless of whether one discovers it, denies it, or ignores it altogether. For such a choice is not something subjective like the colour of one’s dress or the cuisine that one enjoys; rather, the belief in baseless myths and superstitions is undoubtedly perilous to human honour and dignity.

What about an Islamic government? Should an Islamic government impose Islamic belief system on its citizens? Imposition of Islamic beliefs on others is not something that one

would expect from an Islamic government. An Islamic government treats its citizens with respect and dignity and tries to create a peaceful and moral environment in which people exercise their intellectual power and make responsible and serious decisions independent from the pressure of immoral factors and powers. Islam's certainty regarding its truth, clarity and compatibility with human nature is such that it finds itself to be pleasing to any freethinking person or society. Of course, an Islamic government should feel responsible to help its Muslim majority in upholding human divine values, practising their faith and upbringing their children spiritually.

In any case, the maximum a Muslim individual, party or government can do is to encourage their nation into believing something that is genuine and would ensure eternal happiness in this world and the Hereafter. Of course, religious people must be honest in preaching their faith and should represent such honesty in action, and not only in words, if they are to convince others of the beauty of such a faith.

Therefore, despite the fact that we are not relativists and we do believe in certain standards, we should let people decide which creed they are to follow. Let us say, for example, that in an Islamic state there are atheists who do not believe in the monotheistic ideology (which is to believe in the Absolute One God). Here, it would not be the Islamic government's responsibility to force them to believe. The unprecedented truth is that Islam is not intolerant to other people's faiths. Rather, Islam aims to propagate individuals to take responsibility of their faith. Islam encourages them to follow logical arguments, to ponder and avoid blindly following one's lowly desires and whims.

Social freedom

Another type of freedom is referred to as 'social freedom'. Among other things, this implies that we as individuals have the

choice of the type of rule, government and policies we are governed by. No one can force another person to obey a given rule. It is important to note that the Islamic point of view in this matter is that freedom of the people must be safeguarded.

Advising his son, Imam Hasan (A), Imam Ali (A) states:

أَكْرِمْ نَفْسَكَ عَنْ كُلِّ دَنِيَّةٍ وَإِنْ سَأَفْتَكَ إِلَى الرَّغَائِبِ
فَأَنَّكَ لَنْ تُعْتَاضَ بِمَا تَبْدُلُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ عَوْضًا وَلَا تَكُنْ عَبْدًا
غَيْرِكَ وَقَدْ جَعَلَكَ اللَّهُ حُرًّا

Safeguard yourself from everything that is mean, because you do not gain any replacement for what you lose from yourself [when you perform something mean]. And do not be a slave of any one, because God has created you free.²

When God has created us free, why should one human being serve another? Is it because the person being served is the head of a tribe, a head of state, a highly influential individual or that he is supported by the affluent people, such that this in turn causes one to sacrifice one's freedom? The right of obedience belongs solely to God, and those whom have been granted rights from God, such as the Prophets, parents, and the like. Even if someone is more pious he does not have the right to claim our obedience for his own sake. Thus, if one studies the mission of the divine Prophets, one will come to realise that even the Prophets did not ask us to obey them for their own sake or independent of God. They acted as spokesmen of religion to tell us what God wants from both us and them in order to secure our interests. This is comparable to a scenario where a physician or a doctor prescribes a particular medicine to his patient. The very fact that the patient trusts the doctor means that the patient will accept the doctor's medical treatment (for his own sake). Similarly, when a teacher sets an assignment for a student, the student will complete the assignment for his own sake and not for the teacher. When one

obeys the Prophets, the infallible Imams and the like, one is inclined to become a better human being.

Hence, obedience to other individuals is not acceptable. Being a free person, one should only conform to other people's wishes so long as it is in one's interest to do so! For example, a citizen of a particular country cannot be forced to become a subject of a country by anyone. Rather, he can choose to remain in a country and commit himself to it. At this juncture we will not dwell on the concept of authority in Islam (i.e. politics and democracy) as this is not the subject under discussion. The core issue is this: every human being is free and equal, and he or she can decide to agree upon and commit to the constitution of a particular country.

To conclude this part, let us remind ourselves of a story that originates from the early days of Islam, when the army of Islam (headed by Zahrat b. Abdullah) encountered one of the chief commanders of the Iranian army, Rustam. The chief of the Iranian army asked his Muslim counterpart "*what is your religion all about?*" The Muslim commander answered with confidence, saying "*we believe in Allah as our Creator and Muhammad as his last Messenger*". The Iranian commander in chief replied "*this is not a problem. What else do you believe in?*" Zahrat b. Abdullah replied "*human beings are free and God has created human being free*". At this stage, Rustam encountered great difficulty, because in Persian society at that time, monarchy and class system were so strong that there was no way to talk about people being equally free.

Freedom of behaviour

What do we mean by freedom of behaviour, or 'individual freedom'? The question is: whether one, *per se*, is free to do whatever one wishes. This is a notion of the so-called 'secular liberal culture'. This concept can be explained as follows: let people do what they want as long as they do not violate other people's rights and freedoms. To illustrate this point in more

simple terms, we will provide some examples. A person can increase the volume of his television to the highest setting, as long as he does not annoy or irritate his neighbours. Similarly, one may choose to drink alcohol and become intoxicated, but may not drive a vehicle in this state, because he may hit other cars or innocent people. This attitude is merely concerned with preventing harm to other individuals in society. This culture does not permit one to question an individual as to why he or she consumes alcohol. If a person wishes to drink alcohol, he cannot drive; otherwise he can drink as much as he wishes even if this leads to a fatal illness. The only time such a “liberal society” may again be concerned about this person is when his illness places a burden on the public fund.

The Islamic doctrine is diametrically opposed to the above concept. Ayatollah Mutahhari makes a very interesting point here. To understand it better we should bear in mind that there are three types or dimensions of the human soul: vegetative soul, animalistic soul (i.e. a soul with the desire for food, shelter and sexual fulfilment) and the rational soul. There are no limits with regards to the extent of animalistic desires in a human being. However, the ‘rational soul’ directs one’s desires towards perfection. Nobility of man depends on his purity and self-control, the urge for him to seek knowledge and to help others, and these desires direct man towards divinity. These desires and their like are ‘human’ and ‘moral’ in nature. The desire for food, power, fame and knowledge can be moral or immoral. This depends on the individual’s attitude and state of mind. An individual who exercises self-restraint can think aright and make the correct decision. He does not succumb to agitated emotions and transitory passions, thus enabling him to save himself from all types of troubles and worldly whims.

When we say that ‘human beings are free’ this means that real freedom comes from within. This concept is vital. What does it mean ‘to be free’? Does this involve following one’s lower desires and being free to amass wealth, acquire power, indulge in

sexual gratification and so on? Or does this mean that a human being must be free to follow the real human desires, i.e., to attain moral excellence, benevolence and, ultimately, perfection? It is from this idea that the Islamic understanding of 'real freedom' stems. One must be capable of succumbing to whatever is 'moral' and 'human'. Neither the internal forces (i.e. our nature) nor the external forces (i.e. the environment and people around us) should prevent one from becoming moral human beings.

If one contemplates more deeply, one will come to realise the fact that the internal forces (i.e. our nature) is more severe and dangerous compared to the external forces, so much so that this can weaken the values and principles of an individual who succumbs to an external force and gives in to his or her animalistic desires. To illustrate this point, consider the example of a person who wishes to perform a good act (e.g. a person who is a great philanthropist), but he is chained from within and cannot liberate himself in order to be able to give charity. There is an internal force that prevents this individual from performing such a noble act. Another example is one where an individual takes pleasure from a deep sleep during the night, but there is no determination from within this person to wake up for prayers at the time of fajr. Reflection upon these points will make one realise the extent to which an individual can be chained within himself, thus preventing him from being liberated from the prison within.

As Muslims, we must liberate ourselves from both the external and internal forces. The internal enemy is more dangerous than the external enemy. The Prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying:

أَعْدَىٰ عَدُوِّكَ نَفْسُكَ الَّتِي بَيْنَ جَنْبَيْكَ

Your most hostile enemy is your own soul.³

Spiritual freedom

‘Spiritual freedom’ is the core ingredient of Islam. It refers to a state where a person is socially and spiritually free, allowing him to prosper both materially and spiritually. For such a person, there remains salvation in this world and in the Hereafter. On the other hand, if people do not have real freedom then their inner potential will be wasted. As long as such people keep their spiritual facet chained, they will regress and be hindered from progress. We need to be free in every sense of the word (i.e. freedom from within, freedom from satanic powers and freedom from man-made forces). One of the tasks entrusted to the Prophets from the very beginning was to liberate people from their internal locks. We need to free our eyes, tongues, ears and minds from satanic thoughts and actions. In the contemporary age, human beings live in total confusion and bewilderment. Do you think that we are truly free to think, decide, choose and vote? Given the extent and overwhelming nature of the external propaganda and pressure of our own lusts and lower desires which are heavily expanded in the culture of materialism, we have more or less lost the essence of true liberation within and without. It is the power of a true religion that can liberate us.

The concept of piety (*taqwā*)

What is meant by the term ‘taqwā’? Is it a form of restriction? Does taqwā restrict human freedom? Are religious values a type of restriction? Of course, not. On the contrary, by becoming a committed follower and a true servant of God, an individual also becomes a liberated force. This is the true essence of taqwā. As followers of truth, we ought to be confident and not be afraid of those who combat the truth. We are called upon to do what is right and leave the rest to God. However, if we are timid, fearful and afraid to perform an act that is righteous, because we are in danger of tarnishing our reputation in this world, or afraid of losing friends, relatives and money, we would forever be trying to please others and never satisfying them. The reason for this is that

people in this world are never satisfied with the things they possess, and they are continuously seeking more. More is always less to such people. On a positive note, God is the One, the Absolute. He only demands good and what is possible and rational. He never wants anything from us for His benefit. Pleasing Him is far easier than pleasing thousands of people with different sorts of demands that they have. Moreover, pleasing God by itself pleases one's self, and provides one with a sense of fulfilment. Taqwā is a protection and a strong shield of human freedom.

Conclusion

The concept of freedom possesses several facets. These include freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of expression, spiritual freedom and philosophical freedom. The latter type of freedom forms the basis of each of the other freedoms and God has given us the free will. Without contemplating and deliberating on a matter freely, one cannot be free to form a particular train of thought or express an opinion. Whilst contemporary society lays much emphasis on the physical aspects of freedom (i.e. the tangible and worldly freedoms), the spiritual aspect is almost totally ignored.

One observes that some individuals are significantly lacking in exercising self-control. A stark example of this is that some people will 'give in' to their desires, whether it is a sexual desire or the desire to drink alcohol and so on. Furthermore, there is a tendency for people to be influenced by ideas that are prevalent in society without scrutiny or any consideration as to whether such ideas are correct. These tendencies occur because such individuals lack spiritual freedom. They are bound by 'internal shackles' that do not allow them to exercise their spirituality without hindrance. This imprisonment may occur when one is subject to one's animalistic instincts, when the provisions of reason and intellect are forgotten. Such people cannot be 'free' in the true sense of the word, as the opinions they express and the

contemplation they pursue will not be governed by them, but by those forces which bind them. Once the internal forces are defeated, one has to contend with restrictions over the physical aspects of freedom. Man will not enjoy eternal bliss and peace until and unless he frees himself from the inner chains that bind him as well as the external forces that hinder his freedom, allowing him to become nearer to God and resemble Him in his qualities and actions.

¹ Jalal-ad-Din Mohammad Balkhi-Rumi was a 13th century Persian poet, Islamic jurist and theologian.

² *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Letter 31.

³ *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 67, p. 64