

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

**Allāh exalts those of you who
believe and those who are given
knowledge to high ranks**

Holy Qur'ān (58 : 11)

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Aims and Objectives

1. To provide a forum for scholars to make analytical studies of Islamic topics and themes.
2. To advance the cause of better understanding of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) contribution to Islam.
3. To publish English translations of Arabic and Persian works of Muslim scholars.
4. To endeavour to find Islamic answers to questions relating to the social, political, and moral problems of today.

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Scholars and writers from all over the world are invited to contribute to this journal.

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References and notes should be listed at the end of the article and should contain complete bibliographical information.

Books and other items sent to the journal for review are welcomed.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

CONSONANTS:

ء	أ	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	s	ن	n
ث	th	ض	z	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	t	و	w
ح	h	ظ	z	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	‘	Persian Letters	
د	d	غ	gh	پ	p
ذ	dh	ف	f	چ	ch
ر	r	ق	q	ژ	zh
ز	z	ک	k	گ	g

VOWELS:

Long:	ا	ā	Short:	ـَ	a	Doubled	یـِـ	iy (final from i)
	و	ū		ـُ	u		وـِـ	uw (final from u)
	ی	i		ـِ	i		Diphthongs:	
						وـِـ	au or aw	
						یـِـ	ay or ai	

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Justice From the Viewpoint of Imam 'Alí ('a)

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Translated by: *Shahyār Sa'ādat*

Introduction

Values that weave together the fabric of our societies and play a significant role in our social existence are numerous and their closely-knit structure is apparent. However, delineating a system of social values and pinpointing the most significant value that should serve as the measure against which all other values are judged is a task both most difficult and most critical in the realm of culture, politics and society. For the wise have long been perplexed by the question as to what is the crowning jewel of all values. What is that single value the lack of which leads to social disharmony and chaos and the presence of which leads to social peace, harmony and advancement.

Justice

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says:

“Life has one difficult and thousands of easy paths. The difficult path is that of justice and the thousands of easy paths all deviate from the path of justice to one degree or another.”¹

Man usually chooses the easy paths, but if the difficult path did not exist the easy ones would not open to him either or would rapidly lead him to ruin.

Isaiah Berlin says that freedom is dear and equality, fairness, justice, culture, happiness and peace of mind are also other significant things. He feels if that his personal freedom or that of the class or nation to which he belongs leads to the misery and wretchedness of another group of human beings then the system that causes this condition is an order that contradicts justice and morality.²

It may well be that an individual's tendencies and desires do not harmonize with the interests and welfare of society and may lead to social chaos and disharmony. If an organizing and overriding principle does not exist to harmonize the differing values in a society, reduce disharmony and bring about concord, freedom, equality and security would be unattainable. The only solution, therefore, is the establishment of a just system so that all may enjoy both freedom and human rights.

Much has been written by both Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers concerning the supreme importance of justice as a value and its superiority to freedom. Just as the contemporary liberals maintain that we should not concern ourselves with justice but with freedom, for it is the base of all virtues, some Muslim thinkers declare:

How could freedom exist without justice? Man seeks freedom, and considers this to be a search for freedom, since he considers it necessitated by justice, for abandoning all laws and restraints and living at the mercy of whims and fancies is not freedom, and no social or political order can function without law and order.³

Concerning the meaning of justice, the great Shi'ite commentator Fayz Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH) states:

“Justice means that everyone should be benefited in proportion to his ability and aptitude. When this is the case then society will be well ordered.”⁴

Without justice it is neither possible to attain personal perfection or to organize efficient social organization. It is through the existence of justice that the material and intellectual rights of men are ensured. All obligations and rights become meaningful. It is for this reason that in Islam both rights and limitations are recognized. Muslims believe that all legitimate rights are limited by the boundaries of “illegitimate rights.” In all intellectual, ethical and social fields freedom is balanced and shaped by justice. The late Mutahhari says:

“For man, justice is the holiest of virtues. At least among the social ideals, such as freedom, democracy and equality it is the most holy since it gives birth to all of them.”⁵

The road to freedom and equality passes through the realm of justice, and modern man shall realize, sooner or later, that the only path to salvation is the establishment of true universal justice in the social, political and economic fields. Isaiah Berlin writes that in his opinion the belief that a particular prescription can be found to enable man to attain all his aims and objectives in a harmonious and comprehensive manner is completely mistaken...Perhaps someday a remedy may be found for this unsatisfactory situation.⁶

In response to this hope it may be said that the justice emphasized by Islam and proclaimed in its texts as the fundamental social value is the remedy for this ailment.

The Qur'an Presents Justice as the Greatest Virtue

The Qur'an upholds many social values as the most worthy. In some places learning and the learned are extolled:

Allah exalts those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to high ranks. (al-Mujādalah: 11)

In other places it extols those who fight for the sake of Islam:

And Allah has preferred those who struggle with their wealth and their lives by a degree over those who sit back. (al-Nisā': 95)

In the *Sūrah al-Hujurāt*, after stating that there are many kinds of human beings, tribes and social groups, the Qur'an declares that piety is the virtue held highest by God:

Indeed God holds in the greatest esteem those amongst you who are the most pious. (al-Hujurāt: 13)

It is clear, then, that from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, learning, striving in the way of God, and piety are superior and praiseworthy personal and social virtues. But despite this the Qur'an speaks of an even higher virtue that makes the ones mentioned above possible:

Act justly, for that is closer to piety. (al-Mā'idah: 8)

If justice prevails in a society, the effort to improve the life of all citizens is universally considered a public and social duty, it is believed to be a religious duty to fight the rich and the powerful for the sake of the poor and the oppressed and to give the right to those who are truly entitled to it, undoubtedly learning and wisdom shall flourish on the bedrock of faith, the readiness to fight for God will be strengthened and piety and abstinence shall be easier to attain. In a word, in an environment in which justice rules supreme other virtues will have a better chance to develop. It is for this reason that the Qur'an refers to justice as the 'scale':

And He raised the sky and set the scale, so that you may not transgress in scales, and maintain the measure with justice and do not cut short in the scale. (al-Rahmān: 7-10)

Measure is what is used to determine the reality and extent of both material and spiritual things. When dealing with material phenomena, meter and scale are used as measures, while in the spiritual realm divine revelation, reason and man's true nature

serve as the measuring gauge. Every phenomenon is judged by a criterion appropriate to itself. Thus, we see that on the Day of Judgement the Truth is the criterion: *والوزن يومئذ الحق* (*al-A'raf*: 8). In judging ideas and arguments logic is the arbitrator, while in social, economic and legal matters justice is the criterion.

In the verses mentioned above, the word 'measure' is used three times. In the first verse, reference is made to the measure and criterion that rules the whole universe. In a narration, this criterion is set forth in the following manner:

"By justice the skies and earth are raised."⁷

In the second verse, reference is made to fairness and justice and the fact that one should not violate the rights of others. The third verse discusses fairness in the conduct of commercial dealings. In the following verse God speaks of the measure He has sent down to this world:

Verily We have sent Our messengers with clear reasons and with them bestowed the Book and the Scale, so that people should become just. (al-Hadid: 25)

The scale referred to in the above verse is definitely not the physical one. What it refers to is a criterion by which the good and the bad, the worthy and the unworthy may be distinguished. This criterion is nothing other than divine decrees, laws and teachings. There is no doubt that the just laws sent down to us by God constitute a measure by which the true can be separated from the false and through the light of which we can walk upon the straight and narrow path of righteousness.

There are other verses in the Qur'ān in which the word *mitzān* (measure or scale) is not used, but in which we are called upon to be just, fair and good. One such verse is the following:

God commands us to be just and good. (al-Nahl: 90)

Commenting on the above verse, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i says:

The true meaning of justice is to have balance in all things, so that all may receive their rightful due. Thus, in the realm of beliefs justice means faith in the Truth. In one's actions, it means acting so as to attain felicity and to escape wretchedness. Justice in social affairs is that every person should occupy the position that reason, law and custom dictate, the good are rewarded and the bad are punished, those who have been wronged are avenged and all are equal before the law, etc. In any case, though justice can be divided into the individual and the social, the form and tone of the verse and circumstantial evidence concerning it indicates that it refers to social justice.⁸

In short, the Qur'an planted the seed of the idea of justice in the hearts of men and watered it well. To the same degree that it considers justice in man's personal life to be the soul, measure and cornerstone of all values, it also praises justice in the realms of nature, law, ethics and society, thus making it the spiritual criterion by which all human affairs are judged.

Mutahhari says:

Most of the Qur'anic verses dealing with justice concern social justice, whether in the family, in politics or in the judiciary. In the Qur'an, everything from monotheism to belief in Resurrection, from prophecy to the concept of the rule of the Imam, from personal ideals to social objectives, all are based on the concept of justice. In the Qur'an, justice enjoys the same importance as belief in the oneness of God, is the foundation of Resurrection, the aim of the prophetic mission, the philosophy of the rule of the Imam, the measure of the perfection of the individual and social health.⁹

Thus we come to the conclusion of our brief discussion of the position of justice in the Qur'an and its being the measure against which individual and social affairs are judged.

For Imam 'Alí ('a) Justice Is the Criterion

In Imam 'Ali's ('a) ethical, political and social school of thought, justice was the soul of all other principles and gave them direction. It brought harmony to disharmonious elements. It was as if justice was so intertwined with his nature that he was unwilling to sacrifice it even when his welfare depended on his doing so.

From Imam 'Ali's ('a) perspective divine decrees and commandments were like a body whose soul was justice: "*Justice is the spirit of laws*",¹⁰ Or it was a structure the cornerstone of which was justice: "*Justice is the firm foundation*".¹¹ He believed that in order to enjoy harmony and proper integration, individual and social affairs require an integrating principle which is none other than justice: "*Justice is the system of government*".¹² According to this exalted school of thought nothing may serve as a foundation for social order unless it is just: "*Justice is the criterion*".¹³ Indeed, 'Alí ('a), who is himself "the measure of all deeds"¹⁴ and the behaviour of all must be judged in the light of his actions, states:

"Justice and fairness is a measure established by God for human beings so that truth shall pervade in the society. Therefore, obey God and act according to this divinely ordained measure. Do not violate it."¹⁵

In Imam 'Ali's philosophy justice is the criterion by which policies, actions and the personalities and characters of men are judged. This viewpoint is well illustrated in the *Nahj al-Balaghah*. In this immortal book we read that a man of wisdom and intelligence once asked Imam 'Ali ('a) as to which is more worthy, justice or forgiveness. 'Ali ('a) answers:

"Justice puts things in their proper place while forgiveness brings them out. Justice benefits all while forgiveness benefits a

particular group. Thus, justice is more worthy and more superior.³¹⁶

These remarks by our Master contain a profound insight that deserves careful scrutiny. By its teachings, Islam not only transformed man's notions in such fields as culture, politics and society, but it also brought deep changes in the way men view and contemplate human and social affairs. By applying a scale of importance to values and designating those that are more significant, our whole system of thought and evaluation changes in a fundamental way. We emerge from a self-centered and superficial attitude and adopt a perspective that is deep and oriented toward the welfare of society as a whole.

In the comments quoted above, Imam 'Ali ('a) is pointing out that one should always evaluate social and contemporary issues from a comprehensive and general perspective, and not from a limited and personal one. To remedy the pains and sufferings of particular individuals, such virtues as charity and generosity may be helpful. However, from a social point of view, they cannot be compared to justice, for the latter investigates problems in a deep and exact manner and pinpoints needs and requirements. Then, on the basis of this analysis, it either removes these problems entirely, or, at least, alleviates them. In this manner, justice serves to bring about social and economic equality and remove class differences. In other words, such virtues as charity and generosity may help some segments of society but other segments may escape the attention of the generous and the charitable. Thus, society will resemble a body some organs of which are healthy and well-fed while other organs remain weak and malnourished. In a word, we shall have an unbalanced society. Justice, on the other hand, leads to social harmony and balance. It puts everything and everyone in their proper and rightful place. Everyone gets what he needs and deserves based on his abilities and efforts. Thus we shall have a harmonious society in which all segments are properly developed.

If we compare society to a building, justice is its foundation while generosity and other such virtues are its decorations and embellishments. It is clear that if the foundation is weak and unstable the owner will gain little by trying to decorate it:

“Justice is a comprehensive and all-encompassing law that applies to the entire society. It is a highway on which all must travel. Charity, however, is something exceptional and cannot be counted on.”¹⁷

It thus becomes clear how Imam ‘Ali (‘a), by the sentence: “*Justice benefits all while forgiveness benefits a particular group*”, sets forth the idea that justice is the criterion by which other social values are evaluated. It is indeed based on this viewpoint and reasoning, in addition to tangible objective reality, that he makes the following statement: “*Thus, justice is more worthy and more superior.*”

That justice is the measure of all social values is also supported by another statement by Imam ‘Ali (‘a):

“The worthiest of all traits is generosity, and the most useful trait is justice.”¹⁸

Social justice contains all other values as well. Therefore, by attaining it one attains all other values as well. It is for this reason that from Imam ‘Ali’s perspective justice has inclusiveness in its very essence:

“In justice there is much room, and he who cannot bear justice shall find injustice even harder to bear.”¹⁹

He who is unable to travel on the highway shall be bogged down on the byways and back roads. With this measure and criterion, then, society shall become oriented towards truth and righteousness and all other human virtues shall also blossom and flourish.

The Measure of Justice In Imam 'Ali's ('a) Government

Imam 'Ali ('a) established the philosophy of his government on the basis of his belief in the fundamental significance of justice. His method of government and administration was based on it. His insistence on uncompromising adherence to justice in all realms of government caused him great difficulties. He was faced with enemies on three fronts. He knew that assuming the responsibility of government after all the turbulence the Muslim community had experienced during the rule of his three predecessors required a comprehensive reassessment and a fundamental transformation in all its aspects.²⁰ And it was because he was cognizant of this fact that he said the last word at the very beginning of his caliphate. He uttered the above words in response to those who called on him to follow the ways of his immediate predecessors and not to return to the practices that prevailed during earlier times.

“Primordial Truth will, under no circumstances, become false.”²¹

With the start of 'Ali's caliphate people came to feel that the era of political horse-trading and nepotism had come to an end:

Now a man has taken over the helms of the ship of state that hates such devices and is determined to fight them. Naturally, from the very beginning members of the political elite are offended and this dissatisfaction leads to sabotage and causes difficulties....²²

It is interesting to note that Imam 'Ali ('a), who was the embodiment of justice and viewed all political actions and groupings from that perspective, treated his foes in the same manner and was not willing to violate the dictates of justice even in the slightest degree.

Justice in Friendship and Enmity

It is not easy to remain just when one's heart is being overwhelmed with waves of affection and love that tend to dim the light of fairness and impartiality. In the same way, one must possess great strength of character to be able to remain within the boundaries of justice when dealing with one's enemies and opponents. 'Alī ('a) proved in word and deed that he was the epitome of justice, that he accepted it as the very core of the universe and of divine revelation and could not be induced to leave its straight and narrow path by either enmities or friendships. He, who had been raised in the school of the Qur'an and the Prophet (S), made this holy verse the light of his path:

Do not allow the hostility of enemies to cause you to leave the path of justice. Act justly, for that is closer to piety. (al-Mā'idah:8)

On the basis of the same beliefs, he advises his son:

"You must be just to friend and foe alike."²³

Discussing the characteristics of godly individuals, he points out this important social principle:

"(A godly man is he who) does not treat his enemies unjustly because of enmity, and does not fall into sin because of his affections for his friends."²⁴

In Imam 'Alī's ('a) view, a perspective born out of Qur'ānic culture, all citizens of a land are children of God. They either share the same faith as the ruler or are human beings just as he is. In either case they are entitled to their human rights.²⁵ To sum up, then, his political philosophy dictates that all citizens be treated in a humane and Islamic manner and that the ruler should treat friend and foe alike with justice, fairness and impartiality.

It is revealing indeed that despite the fact that Imam 'Alī's ('a) enemies put him into very difficult social and political circumstances and under great psychological stress, he was not

frightened by these storms and hurricanes into deserting the path of justice and righteousness. The best evidence for this claim is the case of the Khawārij. As long as they had not taken concrete measures to threaten the state he treated them with leniency, though they openly cursed and insulted him. He addressed this group in the following manner:

You have three rights that I shall respect: First, I shall not stop you from praying in this mosque. Second, I shall pay your portion from the state treasury as long as you are with us and accept the legitimacy of the state in principle. Third, I shall not engage in hostilities with you unless you shall initiate them first.²⁶

The Khawārij, however, spread false rumors and engaged in psychological warfare to discredit Imam 'Alī's ('a) government. The true and faithful followers of the Imam ('a) could no longer tolerate the Khawārij and there was real danger of open conflict breaking out at any moment. The Imam ('a), however, in order to cool passions and prevent chaos and social turmoil, always gave the following advice to his followers:

"Be just in both happiness and anger."²⁷

Such advice served to preserve the peace and harmony of the state and lead to unity and security. It is undoubtedly true that if, in our own times, this approach is put into effect by the followers of Imam 'Alī ('a) in their treatment of opposing views, forces and groups and if they refrain from taking hasty and emotional positions and heed the commands of their religious leader when confronting social and political crises, there will be much less tension in the country and constructive criticism will not turn into destructive vengefulness. No doubt in such an atmosphere, it will be much easier for the public to comprehend the positions of the righteous and perceive the true nature of those who proclaim false views.²⁸

It is in such an atmosphere that we may claim to be emulating the City of the Prophet (S) (*Madīnah al-Nabi*) and to be moving towards the kind of edified and spiritual society aimed at by Imam 'Ali ('a), who, quoting the Prophet (S), exhorts the truly pious to have the following attitude:

If you encounter something good, rush to support it, and if you encounter something evil, go pass it and set it aside, for the Messenger of God (S) said: 'O man, do what is good and fly from evil, for in this manner you shall be a well-balanced traveller'.²⁹

If a person committed to divine values applies the measure of justice to political events, actions and positions, he shall take the side of whatever is good and right no matter who or what faction or party proposes it and reject what is evil and harmful even if it is supported by his friends and the members of his own party and faction. Consequently, his relationships with both friends and opponents shall always be based on justice and fairness.

Justice in Judgements and Evaluations

One of the ways in which justice leads to rational harmony and balance in a society and makes its citizens dynamic, creative, productive and committed is to evaluate the work of the citizens on the basis of just and fair standards. In such a society everyone gets precisely the reward he deserves. The government does not reward all equally, be they servants of the people or traitors and saboteurs, hard working or lazy, beneficial or harmful. Officials of the state are judged by just standards, and those who have performed well are praised and rewarded and those individuals whose performance has been deficient are reprimanded. This was the way Imam 'Ali ('a) governed. He insisted that just and objective criteria be applied to all officials and functionaries. The following is part of his famous epistle to the *Mālik al-Ashtar*:

Make sure that you do not treat the good and the bad the same way, for this would dampen the desire of the good to perform praiseworthy deeds while encouraging the bad to commit even more evil actions. Treat individuals according to their actions.³⁰

Officials and public administrators must be praised and rewarded on the basis of their good records and not because they are our friends or relatives or the fact that they belong to our party or political faction. The same principle also applies to reprimands, demotions and removals. These too must not be carried out on the basis of whims or subjective and arbitrary judgements, but rather on sound, objective and comprehensive examination of the record and overall performance of the official concerned. In this manner, then, the whole system of reward and punishment assumes a rational form, moves society as a whole toward the rule of law and away from arbitrariness, lawlessness and government based on factional and party loyalties and personal prejudices.

In other words, Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) considers the issue from a psychological and sociological point of view and thus underlines the significance of the rule of justice as the foundation of all judgements and evaluations:

Be aware of the work performed by each official and do not put the effort made by one official to the account of another. Do not fail to reward him according to the work he has done. Be on your guard against overvaluing the light labour of a person on account of his high standing and undervaluing the outstanding efforts of another individual because of his low position.³¹

The purport of the above command is that in judging and evaluating the performance of individuals one should not allow oneself to be influenced by their high political, social and scholarly station. The rights of those who are not privileged and do not have the social status to plead their case should not be violated. It is obvious that men of high standing can easily present their record

and their abilities in the best possible light and plead their cases in the most effective and articulate manner. The ruler must therefore be careful that this does not lead to injustice and that the rights of those lacking such privileged status are protected. It is obvious that in an atmosphere where the performance of individuals is judged in a just and fair fashion state officials will be highly motivated to serve and to excel. We shall therefore witness a creative and dynamic society in which talents and aptitudes find fertile ground in which to grow and flourish, and the prospect of a brighter future gives government officials the proper incentive to serve the people ever more efficiently.

In Imam 'Ali's ('a) life many examples showing the way he governed and the manner in which he evaluated the work of officials and appreciated their efforts may be found, examples that may serve to inspire the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He respected anyone who had spent his youth in service to society, and believed that such individuals must always occupy an honored position and live in a dignified fashion. It was because of this attitude that the pathetic sight of an elderly Christian begging in the streets so disturbed him. He asked, "why has he resorted to begging?" Someone answered, "he can no longer work on account of old age, so he has turned to begging." Hearing this the Imam ('a) said:

"You worked him until he became old and now you have abandoned him. Assist him from the public treasury."³²

Planning on the Basis of Justice

For proper and efficient administration of a country and its continuous growth and development, comprehensive, realistic and long-term planning is absolutely necessary. If justice is taken into consideration in drawing up the overall national plan, in distribution of the means of production, the allocation of posts and responsibilities, in promulgation and enforcement of laws, in

taxation, in budget allocation and in location of development projects to the various provinces, cities and counties, then a harmonious and fair society is created.

This is what Imam 'Ali ('a) has to say on this subject:

“In the execution of affairs you should prefer the policy that neither exceeds justice nor falls short of it. You should prefer that policy which advances justice the most and is most pleasing to your subjects.”³³

In the above statement Imam 'Ali ('a) stresses three points:

1. Plans and policies should always be based on truth and reality and the middle path of moderation should always be chosen. For example, the development model for the Islamic society should be one in which the technical knowledge and experiences of advanced industrial nations are made use of while national and religious values are also preserved. Development should take place in the context of our religious culture and in harmony with the beliefs advanced by the Islamic Revolution, so that it does not trigger either justified or unjustified, reaction from society. This position may be inspired by these words uttered by Imam 'Ali ('a), as we mentioned earlier.

2. In planning and execution, the policy makers of the Islamic State should endeavour to spread justice throughout the land. This statement made by Imam 'Ali ('a): “*You should prefer that policy which advances justice the most*” should be adopted by these officials as motto and model for their planning, lawmaking and provision of services, so that justice may manifest itself to all, whether they live in the capital or in remote areas of the country. The weather-beaten and sunburnt farmer toiling in his fields should benefit from public services as much as his big city cousin and taste the sweet nectar of justice. This is the measure and scale for the sake of which 'Ali ('a) sacrificed his life.

3. In every country a segment of society enjoys a more intimate relationship with the government. However, a

government committed to religious and spiritual values and following the path of Imam 'Ali ('a) must always remain focused on the needs of the masses and not serve the interest of a privileged elite. Thus, Amir al-Mu'minin's ('a) statement: "*and is most pleasing to your subjects*" points to a very profound social principle. He is warning the decision makers of the Islamic state that their laws and policies should be so designed as to benefit the masses and solve their problems, for these are the people who constitute the true foundations of the state. These are the people who shoulder the heavy load of maintaining the state and are first come to its defense when it is threatened.

If the ruler of the Islamic state and the officials serving under him demonstrate commitment to this principle, then they can claim to be followers of 'Ali's ('a) philosophy of government and trying to establish justice in the world:

"What gives the rulers the greatest joy is that justice should prevail in the land."³⁴

If the three principles mentioned above are adhered to in the Islamic state, then it can be maintained that the government is applying the measure and scale of justice and is preparing the ground for a government that shall:

"Fill the earth with justice and equity."³⁵

Justice in Judgement

One of the clearest and most familiar examples of justice is fair and impartial judgement handed down in a court of law. If we consider social justice as the measure and scale of all other social values, justice in judgement must be considered as its pointer. For this is the indicator of the existence of social, political and economic justice. A society in which verdicts handed down by its judiciary are based on the principles of justice, fairness and impartiality, there will be much less chance of hostility, conflict

and tension. If the people see that in the courts of law justice prevails, that decisions are made on the basis of laws and regulations and not cronyism, tampering and influence peddling, that all are equal before the law irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, strong or weak, famous or unknown, then much corruption, bribery and behind the scene attempts to influence judicial decisions will automatically stop.

In short, judicial justice is the foundation of social, political and economic justice. For this reason the Qur'an puts special emphases on the need for rulers and judges to adhere to it:

And when you judge between them, do it justly. (al-Nisā': 58)

On the other hand, the Qur'an labels those who do not adhere to this principle, 'unjust' (*al-Mā'idah: 45*), 'corrupt' (*al-Mā'idah: 44*), and 'infidel' (*al-Mā'idah: 47*). From 'Alī's ('a) perspective, judicial justice is the measure of all other values, gives rise to them and gives the people confidence in the Islamic state and its officials.

The way for those who occupy positions of power and authority to thank God for this blessing is to provide social security and prosperity for the people, who are, in fact, the real masters and proprietors of the country. The citizens may then concentrate their efforts on developing the country, materially, intellectually and spiritually.

The most important admonition 'Alī ('a) always gave the officials of his government was:

"When you are put in a position of authority judge justly."³⁶

In addition to this general exhortation, 'Alī ('a) addresses the details of court proceedings and tells Muhammad ibn Abī-Bakr to treat those who plead their cases before him in the following manner:

Treat them in a humble, kindly, flexible and warm fashion. Look upon all in the same manner, whether you glance at them from the corner of your eyes or you gaze upon them, so that the powerful do not imagine that you will help them oppress the weak, and the downtrodden do not lose hope in your impartiality, for the Almighty God shall hold you to account for all your deeds, both big and small, hidden and apparent. So, He shall punish you if you are oppressors and reward you if you are forgiving.³⁷

It is clear that if a person who has a complaint against another party enters a courtroom in which he knows that the judge regards both parties impartially, is careful in the use of titles when addressing the parties involved in the case, adheres to the standard of justice and fairness, does not differentiate between men of high position and the ordinary citizen, is not prejudiced on the side of his friends and kin and does not look with greed upon the wealth or position of anyone, even if the verdict goes against him he shall accept it with confidence and without the slightest doubt or reservation. It goes without saying that this unshakable faith serves to alleviate his pain and suffering.

If judges and officials of the judicial system first sit in judgement and resolve the opposing claims of ego and reason within their own consciousness, and, by judging justly, succeed in reining in their own selfishness, they can then very easily reach decisions on legal disputes and protect the people from criminals, for, in Imam 'Ali's ('a) words:

“They should take the first step in the path of justice by curbing their own selfish desires.”³⁸

In statements made by Imam 'Ali ('a) there are numerous instances where he stresses the importance of adherence to the principles of justice, fairness and impartiality in the judicial process, and what has been mentioned in this article constitutes

only a very small fraction thereof. Let us conclude with the following example from his life:

A complainant brought his case to 'Umar bin al-Khattāb, who was the caliph at that time. The parties to the case had to appear before the court and plead their case. 'Umar summoned them and sat on the seat of judgement. According to the decrees of Islam the opposing parties must sit beside each other so that the principle of equality before the law is maintained. The caliph called on the complainant by name and ordered him to stand on a certain spot facing him. Then he turned to 'Ali ('a) and said, 'O Abā al-Hasan, stand beside the man who has a complaint against you. Upon hearing these words signs of contrition appeared on the Imam's face. The caliph said, 'O 'Ali, you do not wish to stand beside the person who has complained against you?' 'Ali said, 'I am not upset because I have to stand beside him. On the contrary, I am upset because you did not adhere strictly to the principles of justice and impartiality, for you addressed me by a respectful title while you called the man who is complaining against me by his plain name.'³⁹

Notes:

1. *Andisheh-ye Hawzah*, sixth year, no. 5, p. 146.
2. Berlin, Isaiah, *Four Essays on Library (Chahār Maqālah Dar Bāreh-ye Azāli)*, tr. Muwahhid, Tehran, Khwārazmī, p. 242.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Fayz Kāshāni, Mullā Muhsin, *Tafsīr al-Sāfi*, Beirut, Mu'ssasah al-A'lamī, vol. 5, p. 107.
5. *Yāddāshthā-ye Ustād Mutahhari*, Sadrā, vol. 5, p. 53.
6. *Chahār Maqālah*, p. 300.
7. *Tafsīr al-Sāfi*, p. 107.
8. Tabātabā'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Beirut, vol. 12, p. 331.
9. Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Majmū'ah-ye Athār*, vol. 1, p. 61.

10. *Fihrest-i Ghurar al-Hikam*, Tehran University, vol. 7, p. 236.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Bihār al-Anwār*, Mu'assasah al-Wafā', vol. 97, p. 287.
15. Reyshahri, Muhammd, *Mizān al-Hikmah*, Daftar-e Tablighāt-e Islāmī, vol. 6, p. 78.
16. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, edited by Subhī Salih, translated by Sayyid Ja'far Shahīdī, *hikmat* 437.
17. Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Sayrī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, Dār al-Tabligh, p. 112.
18. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 7, p. 156.
19. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 15.
20. *Ibid.*, sermon 16.
21. Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. 269.
22. Mutahhari, *Sayrī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, p. 116.
23. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 7, p. 238.
24. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, tr. Shahidi, sermon 193, p. 227.
25. *Ibid.*, letter 53.
26. Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarīr, *al-Umam Wa al-Mulūk*, Qum, Offset Urūmiyyeh'i, vol. 4, p. 54.
27. *Mizān al-Hikmah*, vol. 6, p. 88.
28. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, ed. Fayz al-Islam, sermon 50.
29. *Ibid.*, sermon 176.
30. *Ibid.*, letter 53.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, Beirut, vol. 11, p. 49.
33. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, letter 53.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 22, p. 503.

36. Harrāni, Hasan ibn Shu'bah, *Tuhaf al-'Uqūl*, Beirut, p. 102.
37. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, letter 27.
38. *Ibid.*, sermon 87.
39. Mutahharī, Murtazā, *Majmū'ah-ye Athār*, vol. 18, p. 246.

Causes of Enmity with Imam 'Alí ('a) in the Light of *Nahj al-Balāghah*

By: Sayyid 'Alí Rizā Wāsi'ī

Translated by Sayyid 'Alí Shabbāz

Much has been said and written about the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alí ibn Abī Tālib ('a). Throughout history, scholars, researchers, poets and others have focused through different angles in their efforts to fathom the multi-sided personality of the cousin, son-in-law and vicegerent of Prophet Muhammad (S). The different aspects presented by different writers speaks of the dynamic characteristics of the man who continues to shine like the resplendent sun despite the elaborate efforts made by his enemies, both in his lifetime and after his martyrdom, to belittle his merits and even to slander him.

In this article an attempt has been made to probe the current of enmity with Imam 'Alí ('a) and the different causes and motives behind it, by referring to the words of the Imam himself in the book *Nahj al-Balāghah*. The article will try to answer the questions as to what were the causes and the motivation for the opposition to and enmity with Imam 'Alí ('a) especially during his caliphate.

The writer states that he has approached the subject without any religious or sectarian bias to the best of his ability as readers

might judge, in order to have a clear and impartial picture of the reasons of enmity with Imam 'Ali ('a).

Although from the viewpoint of religious belief it could be summed up in one sentence that the reason for enmity with Imam 'Ali ('a) was because of the divine authority entrusted to him by the Prophet which some refused to acknowledge, this answer would discourage certain questions from being raised and might leave some people unsatisfied. Therefore, in order to probe the various causes behind the current of enmity, we intend to broadly focus on the following two points:

The motives for enmity with Imam 'Ali ('a): Here we will discuss what motivated certain people to become the enemies of Imam 'Ali ('a).

The various kinds of enmity with him: Here the types and degrees of enmity with Imam 'Ali ('a) and the methods used by the enemies will be scrutinised.

The Motives for Enmity with Imam 'Ali ('a)

Enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) started with the advent of Islam itself and lasted throughout his life. This sorrowful trend did not end with his martyrdom and continued even after that. By focusing on the events of the early period of Islam we will see what elements played the role in this enmity, especially during the brief caliphate of the Imam.

A. Tribal and Ethnic Motives

Although enmity based on tribal and ethnic motives might appear natural to some extent, it should be admitted that this trend neither camouflages the evilness of those who harbour rancour nor does it diminish in any way the greatness of Imam 'Ali ('a).

Imam 'Ali ('a) was a scion of the Bani Hāshim clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Qurayshites were considered noble and enjoyed a special esteem and privileged status among the Arab tribes. The

day the Ishmaelite leader Qusayy bin Kilāb, the 5th ancestor of Imam 'Ali ('a), became custodian of the holy *Ka'bah* and took charge of the administration of Mecca, his family came to enjoy a central and eminent position among not only the Quraysh but other Arab tribes as well. The nobility of the Quraysh was now concentrated in the House of Qusayy and the Banī Qusayy became a privileged group. Their prestige was further enhanced among the Arabs because of the custodianship of Abraham's ancient edifice of monotheism, the *Ka'bah*.

The sanctity of the *Ka'bah*, which since the beginning exercised a profound influence on public minds, gradually bestowed a halo on its custodians who came to be considered holy themselves. The wisdom and valour of Qusayy further increased the position of the custodian. Among the Arabs, blood and genealogy counted as marks of distinction and carried social prestige since members of each tribe felt proud of their descent from one chieftain and stood beside each other. Thus any member who in addition to a perfect pedigree and impeccable blood bond could boast of personal traits of nobility was undoubtedly regarded as the chieftain, whose authority was binding on the whole tribe. Any disobedience to his commands or instructions was tantamount to insubordination and challenge to the tribal system, and swiftly brought down the displeasure on the rebel who was excommunicated and expelled by the whole clan.

With the death of Qusayy, his elder son 'Abd-Manāf succeeded to his post and was followed by his own son 'Amr or Hāshim as the next custodian of the holy *Ka'bah* and the chief administrator of Mecca. It was during this time that a certain Umayyah claiming to be a son of Hāshim's younger brother 'Abd Shams,¹ made an unsuccessful attempt to seize the custodianship of the *Ka'bah*. This vain bid by Umayyah split the clan into two broad segments, the Banī Hāshim and the Banī Umayyah.

The custodianship then passed on to Hāshim's son 'Abd al-Mutallib and after him to his son Abi Tālib the father of Imam 'Ali ('a). It was during the time of Abi Tālib that the Hāshimites were faced with an internal crisis.² Abi Tālib lacked wealth which chieftains normally possess,³ and this made two of his brothers, 'Abbās and Abi Lahab, challenge his leadership. The descendants of Umayyah who nursed a deep hatred towards the House of Hāshim, saw it as their chance to renew a bid for leadership, especially since they regarded themselves as the military class of Mecca.

The emergence of Prophet Muhammad (S) from the Hāshimite clan made other Meccans jealous and they thought prophethood to be a trick by the Banī Hāshim to exalt themselves and continue their leadership. The following words of Abi Jahl to Akhnas bin Shurayq speaks of the inability of the infidel mind to understand God's revelations:

We and the sons of 'Abd Manāf vied with each other in nobility and greatness. Whatever they did we also did, so as to be their equals. Now suddenly they are saying that from us is a Prophet who receives revelation from heaven.⁴

Decades later in 61 AH when after the tragedy of Karbalā the severed head of the Prophet's grandson Imam Husayn ('a) was placed before the Umayyud scion Yazid who now ruled as caliph of Muslims, he recited the following couplet which are identical to Abi Jahl's words to Akhnas in the days of *jāhiliyyah*:

*La 'ibat Hāshim bi al-mulk falā; Khabar jā'a wa lā wahy nazal.*⁵

(The Hāshimites played the game of kingdom;
Neither any message came from heaven nor revelation.)

This is how retarded minds viewed the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (S). For them the growth and spread of Islam was the victory of the Banī Hāshim over the other Arab tribes and

clans. Although these short-sighted people may not have said this explicitly and with frequency – for the obvious fact they now called themselves Muslims and ruled over Muslims – deep down in their hearts and minds they harboured these thoughts which would at times come to their lips as is clear from Yazīd's recitation of the above couplet.⁶

In view of these facts, when the question of Imam 'Alī's ('a) caliphate was raised after the passing away of Prophet Muhammad (S), some pretending to be religious and claiming to be near to the Prophet, said: "Prophethood and caliphate cannot be combined in one family."⁷ These words are indicative of the mindset of most Qurayshites who were jealous of the Bani Hāshim.

This is the first open indication of enmity towards Imam 'Alī ('a), who was a Hāshimite, and for this reason those who had paled into insignificance against the glory of the Bani Hāshim and harboured rancour against them out of an inherent inferiority complex, were not ready to see him as their leader and ruler. Thus enmity towards Imam 'Alī ('a) was clear and deep rooted even at this stage and continued in the subsequent periods.⁸

Mu'āwiyah's letter to the Imam during the War of Siffin claiming equality with the Hāshimites on the basis of what he boasted as his genealogy, was given a fitting reply by Imam 'Alī ('a):⁹

...As for your saying that we are descendants of 'Abd Manāf it is true, but neither Umayyah was equal to Hāshim nor Harb could be likened to 'Abd al-Mutallib or for that matter Abi Sufyān to Abi Tālib. The *muhājir* (one who migrated to Medina with the Prophet) is superior to the *taliq* (freed slave - a reference to the Prophet's declaration of amnesty and emancipation of Abi Sufyān, his family and other Meccan infidels at the time of the surrender of Mecca in 8 AH). The one of clean descent cannot be compared to the one who is of doubtful lineage.¹⁰ There is no similarity between the pursuer of truth and the adherent of the wrong or a believer and a

hypocrite. How bad are the successors who go on following the predecessors who have fallen into hell...

This statement of Imam 'Alī ('a) has completely exposed Mu'āwiyah in his true heathen colours till eternity.

B. Religious Factors

The advent of Islam gradually shifted the power balance in Mecca to the other side and whatever was hitherto regarded as meritorious yielded its place to factors which were beyond the comprehension of the Arabs. The boastfulness of the days of *jāhiliyyah*, which was part of tribal life, was shattered and people were freed from the claws of idolatry. Now there were new life styles. Those who were of sincere heart and searched for truth and reality stepped into the vale of the faith of Islam and joined Prophet Muhammad (S).

The dividing line between the Hashimites and the Umayyuds was redefined, and the barometers of genealogy and tribalism gave way to Islam and *Kufr*. There were new values of assessment. In this changed circumstances we find the young son of Abi Tālib a frontrunner. Imam 'Alī ('a), a boy of not more than ten years, emerges as the first Muslim¹¹ and stands peerless above all and everybody else in characteristics which define a human being and are considered humanitarian. To quote his own words:

Allāhumma innī arwālu man anāba wa sami'a wa ajāba. lam yashiqū illā Rasūl-Allah bi ul-Sulāt (O Allah I am the first to come towards You by hearing Your call and responding to it. No one has precedence over me in performing the prayer except the Messenger of Allah.)¹²

He stands head and shoulders above all other Muslims and could rightly be called the personification of Islam and its values:

I discharged duties when others lost courage (to do so), and I came forward when others hid themselves. I spoke when others

remained mum. I strode with Divine Light when others remained standing. I was the quietest of them in voice but the highest in going forward. I cleaved to its rein and applied myself solely to its pledge like the mountain which neither sweeping wind could move nor storm could shake... By God, I am surely the first to testify him (the Prophet)...¹³

The seeds of enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) were actually sowed on the day he stood up at the gathering of Dhu al-'Ashirah to testify to the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (S) when the rest of the gathering mocked at the Messenger.¹⁴ This hatred among the Meccan infidels grew when they found the young lad always at the side of the Prophet ready to frustrate their sinister designs. The night Imam 'Ali ('a) slept on the Prophet's bed¹⁵ to allow him to migrate undetected to Medina, was the high point of frustration for the infidels who had planned to murder the Prophet. In Medina they found him an impregnable barrier to their military assaults which were always beaten back soundly with heavy losses. Imam 'Ali ('a) says in this regard:

By Allah, I was among their rear-guard till they turned back on their sides and were flocked in their rope. I never showed weakness or lack of courage, nor did I betray and become languid. By Allah, I shall split the wrong till I extract right from its wrongs.¹⁶

Never for a moment did he neglect the commands of God and His Prophet and when others fled the field of battle he stood firm like a mountain and shielded the Prophet with his life.¹⁷ No one was so close to the Prophet as he. His life started with a glance at the countenance of the Prophet¹⁸ and the two were not separated until the passing away of the Messenger of God.¹⁹ So firm was the bond between the two cousins that the Prophet said: *'Aliyun minni wa ana min 'Ali* ('Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali)²⁰. The affinity between the two, if it was a great blessing for Islam, it aroused jealousy and hatred among those whose hearts overflowed

with malice. In the lifetime of the Prophet these persons could not succeed in their malicious designs against Imam 'Alī ('a), but after his passing away they exploited every opportunity and used different pretexts to undermine his position and display their enmity towards him. The ignoring of his claims for the caliphate on three occasions are indicative of the enmity towards him. To Quote his own words:

By Allah the son of Abī Quhāfah (Abī Bakr) dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the handmill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me...²¹

The first ruler passed on the ball of caliphate to the person who had procured the vote for him at Saqīfah Banī Sa'īdah. Imam 'Alī ('a) says in this regard:

I watched the plundering of my inheritance till the first one went his way but handed over the caliphate to Ibn al-Khattāb after himself. It is strange that during lifetime he wished to get rid of the caliphate but cased its way for the other after his death... This one put the caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses. One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its rein the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown.²²

This state of steady deterioration continued for almost a decade and when the second stage of caliphate neared its end, it was again enmity which prevented the Prophet's cousin and heir from taking over his usurped right of political authority. He remained patient and turned down the conditional offer after finding himself named against his will in a strange council of five persons of whom the majority was against him such as Sa'd ibn

Abī Waqqās, Talhah ibn 'Abdullāh and 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf. The Imam says in this regard:

Nevertheless I remained patient despite the length of period of stiffness of trial, till when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of caliphate) in a group and regarded me to be one of them. But good heavens! What had I to do with this *shūrā* (consultative council)? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones... One of them turned against me because of his hatred and the other got inclined the other way due to his in-law relationship and this thing and that thing, till the third man of these people stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder. With him his cousins also stood up swallowing up Allah's wealth like a camel devouring the foliage of spring, till his rope broke down, his actions finished him and his gluttony brought him down prostate.²³

With the death of the third caliph matters stood at a chaotic stage and the people fed up with the anarchy and looting of the public resources, pleaded Imam 'Alī ('a) to take over the caliphate. He asked them to leave him alone and seek someone else since the matter was more complicated than it appeared.²⁴

When I took up the reins of government, one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allah saying: *That abode in the Hereafter We assign for it those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein); and the end (best) for the pious ones* (28:83). Yes by Allah they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them...If people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of oppressed I would have cast the rope of caliphate on its

own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one.²⁵

This turn of events was not unexpected for him since the Prophet had already told him all that would transpire. The main factor of enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) him was actually enmity with the laws and principles of Islam and lack of steadfast belief in his opponents, as is clear from his reply to his archenemy Mu'āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyān:

Certainly, we and you were on amiable terms as you say but difference arose between us and you the other day when we accepted the Belief and you rejected it. Today the position is that we are steadfast (in the Belief) but you are creating mischief. Those of you who accepted Islam did so reluctantly and that too when all the chief men had accepted Islam and joined the Prophet of Allah (S).²⁶

C. Political and Social Factors

Other causes of hatred towards Imam 'Ali ('a) were the political and social factors. Islam had unified the Arab tribes and in addition to making them a political power granted them a social status not imagined before. Although faith did bestow a selfless and egalitarian outlook to the faithful, wherever profound belief was found lacking, political and social ambitions raised their heads to the detriment of the greater interests of Islam. The criteria for authority were precedence in Islam as well as proximity to the Prophet and confirmation by him. But except for Imam 'Ali ('a) no one else was worthy of the caliphate on the basis of these barometers despite the fact that certain companions of the Prophet had managed to seize the political power of the Islamic state on this contention. When Mu'āwiyah, in view of the impression of these factors on public minds, tried to cause mischief by referring to the political and social role of certain companions of the Prophet, the

Imam gave him a fitting reply that would remove many doubts. Part of the answer of Imam 'Ali ('a) to Mu'awiyah reads:

...Our Islam is well known and our (greatness of) pre-Islamic period too cannot be denied. Whatever remains has been mentioned in the Qur'an It is: "*And blood relations have better claims in respect of one to the other according to the Book of God.*" (33:6) "*And verily of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muhammad) and those who believe; and verily God is the Guardian of the faithful.*" (3:68)

Thus firstly we are superior because of kinship and secondly because of obedience. When at Saqifah the *Muhājirs* contended kinship with the Prophet of Allah (S) they scored over them. If that success was based on kinship then the right would be ours better than yours otherwise the *Ansār's* contention stands...²⁷

The position of Imam 'Ali ('a) was well known to all, whether the *muhājir* or the *ansār*. However the pull of the mortal world was so strong that it made even people like Talhah and Zubayr make a bid for power against him. Enmity to him made them blind of the realities including their own fate. The Imam has said in this regard:

Both of these two (Talhah and Zubayr) wishes the caliphate for himself, and is drawing it towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Allah nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them bear malice against each other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. By Allah if they achieve what they aim at, one of them would kill the other and one will finish the other...²⁸

His keen insight laid bare the hidden intentions of Talhah and Zubayr by drawing attention to their real ambitions, which meant that they were ready to betray each other, let alone their disobedience to the Imam and the interests of the Muslims. Imam

'Ali's ('a) analysis of the people and what social and political factors are influential in moulding their personal traits, are worthy to note:

O people we have reached the stage of such a wrongful and thankless period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excesses. We do not make use of what we know and do not discover what we do not know. We do not fear calamity till it befalls. People are of four categories.

(1) Among them is he who is prevented from mischief only by his low position, lack of means and paucity of wealth. (2) Then there is he who has drawn his sword, openly commits mischief, has collected his horsemen and footmen and has devoted him to securing wealth, leading troops, rising on the pulpit and has allowed his faith to perish. How bad is the transaction that you allow (enjoyment of) this world to be a price of yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allah for you. (3) And among them is he who seeks (benefits of) this world through actions meant for the next world, but does not seek (good of) next world through actions of this world. He keeps his body calm (in dignity) raises small steps, holds up his clothes, embellishes his body for appearance of trust-worthiness and uses the position of Allah's connivance as a means of committing sins. (4) Then there is the one whose weakness and lack of means have held him back from conquest of lands. This keeps down his position and he has named it contentment and clothes himself with the robe of denunciation although he has never had any connection with these qualities.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to God on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of resurrection moves their tears. Some of them are scared away (from the world) and dispersed, some are frightened and subdued, some are quiet as if muzzled, some are praying sincerely, some are grief-stricken and pain-ridden whom fear has confined to namelessness and disgrace has shrouded them, so they are in (the

sea of) bitter water, their mouths are closed and their hearts are bruised....²⁹

D. Ethical Factors and Transcendental Values

It is in the nature of man to incline towards virtue and try to acquire values that are deemed lofty and transcendental. Not all are equal in this quest for moral perfection since abilities vary from person to person. However, when we look at Imam 'Ali ('a) we see him stand out as the model par excellence of all such ethical values. He strove selflessly and embodied the merits which rarely accumulate in one person. These matchless traits, if they earned admiration and praise from God and his Prophet, appeared unpleasant to some and were another cause of breeding enmity in sick and jealous hearts. Some of these dynamic qualities which aroused animosity towards him are as follows:

1. Worship of God and Obedience to the Prophet's *Sunnah*

Anyone who attempts to write something about Imam 'Ali ('a) will admit that he was a perfect man of God, obedient to the Creator in all aspects of life to the extent that he would not even entertain the idea of committing the most minute act of disobedience.

...By Allah even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me the world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it...³⁰

He was a paradigm of piety and excelled all others in the worship of God, as he himself says:

"O people I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not refrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before you."³¹

He lived according to the commandments of God and in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and because of his commitment to these factors he refused to accept the caliphate after the death of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb when the condition spelled by the 6-man *shūrā* was that the new caliph should be bound to the behaviour and patterns set by the Shaykhayn (first two caliphs).³²

2. Love for Justice & Practicing of Justice

Although justice is regarded as a much-cherished humanitarian principle there are very few who really adhere to justice and practice justice. History bears witness that persons in power show respect for justice and implement justice as long as it is in their interests. Justice in the lexicon of such persons has definite limits. But for Imam 'Ali ('a) justice had a transcendental meaning where self-interests cease to exist. He was the epitome of the just ruler and spared no effort for the implementation of justice. When he heard that the agents of the rebel Mu'āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyan had plundered the city of Anbār and snatched the jewelry from the women including those non-Muslims living under the protection of Islam, he said:

"If any Muslim dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before me."³³

In another place the Imam says:

By Allah, I would rather like to pass the night in wakefulness on the thorns of Sa'dān or to be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allah and His Prophet on the Day of Judgement as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of the worldly wealth. And how can I oppress anyone for (the sake of a life) what is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time.³⁴

This lofty sense of justice for restoring people their denied rights, if it endeared him to the oppressed masses it made the

oppressors his open enemies. The Commander of the Faithful was determined to restore to the public treasury the wealth of the Muslim that the third caliph 'Uthmān bin 'Affān had distributed among his supporters who were now the wealthiest people. He says in this regard:

By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.³⁵

This is how Imam 'Alī ('a) spelt out his state policy, but those who had prospered in earlier reigns due to rampant favouritism, nepotism and other forms of corruption, felt alarmed and became obstacles to the implementation of justice in the Islamic society.

3. Piety and Abstinence

It is in the nature of man to covet worldly positions and possessions. It would not be wrong to say that many people desire fame and publicity more than anything else and would resort to any method to achieve this since in their eyes the life of the mortal world is the ultimate goal. But Imam 'Alī ('a) considered the world like the intestines of a swine in the hands of a leper³⁶ or even worse than that. Addressing the world he says:

"O World! O World! Get away from me. Why do you present yourself to me? Or are you eager for me? You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other person. I have no concern with you..."³⁷

Despite being the ruler of a realm extending from Central Asia to North Africa he never forsook the company of the poor and the destitute and would even join them for meals at times. When he appointed governors and other officials for the far flung provinces,

his first and foremost instruction was to cater to the needs of the masses of common people³⁸ and to respect their rights. He reminded his officials:

“Certainly your assignment is not a morsel for you but it is a trust round your neck.”³⁹

He served as the model of emulation for his friends and urged them to acquire the qualities he possessed:

In the past I had a brother-in-faith and he was prestigious in my view because the world was humble in his eyes, the needs of the stomach did not have sway over him, he did not long for what he did not get. If he got a thing he would not ask for more. Most of his time he was silent but if he spoke he silenced the other speakers and he quenched the thirst of questioners. He was weak and feeble but at the time of fighting he was like the lion of the forest or the serpent of the valley. He would not put forth an argument unless it was decisive. He would not abuse anyone in an excusable matter unless he would have heard the excuse. He would not speak of any trouble except after its disappearance. He would say what he would do and would not say what he would not do. Even if he could not be exceeded in speaking he could be excelled in silence. He was more eager for keeping quiet than speaking and if two things confronted him he would see which was more akin to the longing of the heart and he would oppose it. These qualities are incumbent upon you. So you should acquire them and excel each other in them. Even if you cannot acquire them you should know that acquiring a part is better than giving up the whole.⁴⁰

The Commander of the Faithful strove to build persons who will determine their own destiny and will not be influenced by anyone even if it means that they will be boycotted by those trapped in the material life of the world. Elsewhere, while describing the qualities of the faithful, he says:

Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during nights (in devotion to Allah) and are minarets of guidance during the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Qur'ān, and revive the traditions of Allah and His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self-conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in paradise while their bodies (on earth) are busy in (good) acts.⁴¹

Those captivated by the glamour of world and greed for worldly possessions not even disliked the Imam but became his enemies.

4. Valour and Awe

It is normally seen that persons who possess sublime qualities and morals are not familiar with valour and hardships. Persons could either be polite or courteous or tough and hardened. It is said that piety and firm determination for solving the affairs of the material world, or tenderness of heart and courage in the battlefield are poles apart and do not combine in one person. But Imam 'Alī ('a) was the rare exception and combined himself these seemingly contrasting qualities to the extent that he is regarded as the perfect role model not only in the niche of prayer for the pious but in the battlefield for the warriors. He wielded the sword so gallantly in the way of truth following the Prophet's migration to Medina that the enemies were filled with awe and fear of his valour. In his letter to Mu'āwiyah, the Commander of the Faithful reminds:

I am Abū al-Hasan who killed your (maternal) grandfather, your (maternal) uncle and your brother by cutting them to pieces on the Day of Badr. The same sword is with me and I will meet my adversary with the same heart. I have not altered the religion nor put up any new Prophet. I am surely (treading) on that very highway which you had willingly forsaken (in the beginning) and adopted perforce.⁴²

His bravery and feats of valour during the battles fought in the time of the Prophet were crucial for Islam. At the same time his proverbial strength inspired awe among his adversaries, an awe that lingered on in their hearts even after renouncing idolatry and at times burst into open opposition to him albeit under the cover of Islam.⁴³

5. Knowledge and Cognizance

Throughout history the element of ignorance has always opposed knowledge and the ignorant person has been at war with the learned. Sheer ignorance of knowledge and the refusal to open up the windows of the mind to the light of learning, was one of the factors of the enmity of certain people towards Imam 'Alī ('a). The Imam classifying the types of people, says:

O Kumayl ... people are of three types. (1) One is the God-wary scholar. (2) Then the seeker of knowledge who is also on the path of salvation. (3) Then the common rot who run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the effulgence of knowledge and do not take protection of any reliable support.⁴⁴

He then explained to Kumayl in a lengthy discourse that knowledge is superior to wealth and that the hoarders of wealth in contrast to the seekers of knowledge are dead persons even though they may be physically alive for the moment. Parts of the Imam's words are:

"O Kumayl knowledge guards you while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending while knowledge multiplies by spending..."⁴⁵

What he advocated was knowledge with proper cognizance of God. As the divine scholar, Imam 'Alī ('a) enlightened all those who came to learn and encouraged them to ask questions with his famous words: *Salūni qabla 'an tafqidūni* (ask me before you lose

me). He knew the passages of the skies more than the passages of the earth⁴⁶ and to him the world of esoteric reality was as familiar as the world of physical appearance. How can such a person be loved and respected by the arrogantly ignorant who were sunk in disbelief and whose minds were unable to comprehend beyond what could fill their stomachs?

6. Truthfulness and Straightforwardness of Imam 'Alī ('a)

The world of politics is the world of deceit and ruse. Although we do not interpret politics in such negative terms, throughout history politicians and statesmen have stuck to lies, deceit and fraud to pursue their objectives. In contrast, Imam 'Alī ('a) in his administration of the state and society, followed a straightforward and honest policy and abhorred the very idea of lies and craftiness during his caliphate. It was obvious that he neither pursued worldly possessions nor power. He says in this regard:

“I have neither spoken a lie nor have been told a lie. I have neither deviated nor have I been made to deviate.”⁴⁷

Some naive or crooked-minded persons think that he was not a diplomat. But they fail to understand that in the lexicon of Imam 'Alī ('a) who was brought up by the Prophet, words such as lies and fraud did not exist. What he did was to lay the foundations of politics and state administration based on lofty humanitarian values.

By Allah, Mu'āwiyah is not more clever than I am but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have the most clever of all men. But the fact is that every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah) and every deceitful person would have a banner by which he would be recognized on the Day of Judgement. By Allah, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy nor can I be overpowered by hardships.⁴⁸

In the light of these words it is crystal clear that the one who deemed the world devoid of any value and whose entire existence was devoted to God and administration of mankind's affairs, will neither speak against truth and reality nor will resort to dubious and contradictory methods. However, for the evil-minded and those unable to properly comprehend the law of God, such a person would appear weak. This was another reason why some people turned into his enemies.

To quote the words of the Imam:

Certainly these people are agreed in disliking my authority. I would endure till I apprehend disunity among you; because if in spite of the unsoundness of their view they succeed, the whole system would be shattered. They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Allah has bestowed it.⁴⁹

These were some of the various reasons why certain people became his enemies and started the current of enmity towards the person who personified the virtues and merits of Prophet Muhammad (S).

Kinds of Enmity

The enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a), whatever were the reasons behind it, manifested itself in different ways. The injustice done to him, whether during the 25-year rule of the three caliphs or whether in his own brief four-and-a-half year period of caliphate, was of the same magnitude. However, this enmity took different forms and could be broadly divided as follows:

A. Suppression of Social Rights

In the time of Prophet Muhammad (S) whatever attempts that were made to vilify Imam 'Ali ('a) were discouraged by the Prophet and rarely burst out into open enmity. It was after the passing away of the Prophet that the usurpation of his rights began. The Imam says in this regard:

“By Allah I have been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet (S) passed away till today.”⁵⁰

This violation and usurpation of his rights and authority was the result of the dangerous mixing of truth with falsehood to the extent that it was difficult to ascertain what was right and what was wrong. When the Prophet was alive, truth was evident and could not be tampered with by anybody. But after his passing away, falsehood by donning the robe of truth raised its head in the society to spread hypocrisy and pretensions all around. Truth was thus sacrificed on the altar of these evils. The Imam says in this regard:

The basis of the occurrence of evils is those desires, which are acted upon, and the orders that are innovated. They are against the Book of Allah. People cooperate with each other concerning them even though it is against the Religion of Allah. If wrong had been pure and unmixed with right it would have not be hidden from those who are in search of truth. And if right had been pure without admixture of wrong those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. What is, however, done is that something is taken from here and something from there and the two are mixed. At this stage Satan overpowers his friends, and only those for whom virtue has been apportioned by Allah from before, achieve salvation.⁵¹

Satan thus stepped into the Muslim society and Imam 'Ali ('a), whose rights were usurped, confined himself to his home. This behaviour with the Prophet's heir was not a spontaneous and sudden occurrence but was the outcome of a long-hatched plan. The first caliph was well aware that Imam 'Ali's ('a) position in relation to the caliphate was like that of the axis to the handmill, but he chose to deprive him. On several occasions Abu Bakr acknowledged that Imam 'Ali ('a) was the right person for the caliphate but he passed it on to 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb, who in turn resorted to a deceit to make 'Uthmān his successor.⁵²

The opposition and enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) was intended to belittle and undermine him as is evident by his inclusion against his wish in the 6-man *shūrā* (consultative council) that was set up by 'Umar on his deathbed to determine the next caliph. The Imam refers to this injustice with a heavy heart in the sermon, which is known as *Shishiyyah*:

But good heavens! What I had to do with this *shūrā*? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones. But (with reluctance) I remained low when they were low and flew high when they flew high...⁵³

After 'Uthmān when the Imam had to accept the caliphate because of the people's demand⁵⁴ and the chaotic conditions that the three previous rulers had created in the Muslim society, the enemies came out into open opposition to him. A party of them broke the pledge they had sworn to him, while a second group started throwing obstacles in his way and another resorted to various other ways to undermine his rule.⁵⁵

B. Vilification

Another form of enmity, which the vile enemies of the Imam practiced, was character assassination of the person who embodied the ultimate truth after the Prophet. As part of their vain attempts to distort his image they resorted to lies and allegations, which could be summed up as follows:

1. Attributing Lies

Enmity, it is said, often blinds the vision. Since the clouded minds of the enemies were unable to comprehend the wisdom and high eloquence of the words of Imam 'Ali ('a), they accused him of – God forbid– telling lies. The Imam says in this regard:

I have come to know that you say Ali speaks lie. Allah may ruin you. Against whom do I speak lie? Whether against Allah? But I am the first to believe in him. Whether against His Prophet (S)?

But I am the first to testify him (his Prophethood). Certainly not. By Allah it was a way of expression which you failed to appreciate and you were not capable of (comprehending) it. Woe to you.⁵⁶

This shows the great intellectual gap between the Imam and his enemies. This uncouth and uncultured lot could not or did not want to understand that whatever the man whose veracity the holy Qur'an vouches was saying, were the words of God Almighty and the Prophet.

2. Fear and Inefficiency

Another accusation labelled against him was fear and weak leadership. Fear was something unknown to the Imam who at every crucial turn, since the beginning of the Prophet's mission, had shown his courage and leadership prowess. It was these qualities which made him not to start any battle or a bout of single combat against any adversary till the argument was complete. In order to avert bloodshed and to keep the door of guidance open he would listen to what the opposing side had to say. These were the qualities of a wise and astute leader. Yet these ignorant elements whose hands were always on the hilt of their swords were accusing him of fear,⁵⁷ because he preferred to engage in dialogue before taking any action. These reluctant converts from idolatry were claiming that his leadership was weak and that he was afraid of death.⁵⁸ Imam 'Ali ('a) replied to them in the following words:

"Well, as for your idea whether this (delay) is due to my unwillingness for death, then by Allah I do not care whether I proceed towards death or death advances towards me."⁵⁹

In reply to those who alleged that his behaviour was suspicious against the Syrians, he said:

As for your impression that it may be due to my misgivings about the people of Syria, well, by Allah, I did not put off war even for a day except in the hope that some group may find guidance through me and see my light with their weak eyes. This is dearer to

me than to kill them in the state of their misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins.⁶⁰

On other occasions the enemies – some of whom were in the midst of his own forces – said that although he was brave he was a weak commander and does not know the technique of war. Imam ‘Alī has given them a fitting reply by exposing their own cowardice and fickleness and recounting his prowess in leading armies into the battlefield:

Jihād is one of the doors of paradise, which Allah has opened for His chosen servants. It is the dress of piety and the protective armour of Allah and His trustworthy shield. Whoever abandons it Allah covers him with the dress of disgrace and the clothes of distress...Beware! I called you to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly, and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you, because by Allah, no people have been attacked in the hearths of their homes but they suffered disgrace; but you put it off to others and forsook it till destruction befell you and your cities were occupied...You have become the target at which arrows are shot...You are being attacked but you do not attack. Allah is being disobeyed and you remain agreeable to it. When I ask you to move against them in summer you say ‘it is hot weather spare us till the heat subsides’. When I order you to march in winter you say ‘it is severely cold gives us some time till cold clears from us’. These are just excuses...You shattered my counsel by disobeying me and leaving me so much so that the Quraysh started saying that ‘Alī ibn Abi Tālib is brave but does not know (the tactics) of war. Allah blesses them. Is anyone of them braver in war and older in it than I am. I rose for it (battle) although yet within twenties, and here I am, having crossed sixty, but one who is not obeyed can have no opinion.⁶¹

3. Murder of 'Uthmān

'Uthmān who took over as the third caliph because of the choice of his kinsmen in the *shūrā*, proved a total failure. His inefficient advisors brought about the insurrection against him that ended in his killing. They could have helped him avert the crisis but they did not – as is the case of Mu'āwiyah.⁶² It was Imam 'Ali ('a) who tried to mediate between 'Uthmān and the insurrectionaries for the sake of protecting the Muslim dignity in the hope of resolving the crisis by pacifying the angry people and soothing the wounds of those who had suffered gross injustice at the hands of the caliph and his advisors.⁶³ And when the furious people were about to sweep away 'Uthmān and his house it was the Imam who risked his life in refraining them.⁶⁴

But when 'Uthmān finally paid for his policies with his life and when the people pressed the Imam to become the caliph, opportunists on the pretext of avenging the third caliph's blood, tried to blame Imam 'Ali ('a) for the assassination in spite of the fact they were well aware of the identity of the killers and the motives behind 'Uthmān's death.⁶⁵ This wild and mischievous allegation against the Imam, misled many unsuspecting people and created a crisis.

4. Greed for Power

As part of their mudslinging campaign another baseless accusation hurled against Imam 'Ali ('a) by his enemies was the greed for power despite the obvious fact that he never fits the description of a person thirsty for power. Power-mongers – whether in history or in our own times – are so obsessed with authority and the means to acquire it that they try to justify whatever methods that are used to reach their goals.

But Imam 'Ali ('a) offers the finest example of a person who did not pursue power even when he knew it to be his right (and was offered support to make a bid for it after the event of Saqifah Bani Sa'idah).⁶⁶ He had taken up the reins of caliphate because of the

acute necessity of the times and his own responsibility in this regard in view of his primordial position in Islam. If circumstances had not warranted it, he would never have agreed to become the caliph. This sense of responsibility of the Imam was misinterpreted by persons who were greedy for power themselves, as power mongering. In his own words it is clear how he viewed his commitment to the commandments of God and what he felt about merely clinging to power and leadership:

By Allah, I shall not be like the badger, which feigns sleep on continuous (sound of) stone-throwing till he who is in search of it finds it or he who is on the lookout for it overpowers it. Rather I shall ever strike the deviators from truth with the help of those who advance towards it, and the sinners and doubters with the help of those who listen to me and obey, till my day (of death) comes. By Allah I have been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet (S) passed away till today.⁶⁷

Unlike any politician he spelt out his policies in clear terms no matter what the outcome. As a matter of fact the real power-mongers were those companions of the Prophet who had prospered during 'Uthmān's rule and who thought that Imam 'Alī ('a) might continue the same policy of showing favours to them at the expense of the masses. But when they realised that he was committed to the letter and spirit of justice and truth, and on no account would yield to their demands, they turned into his enemies and labelled the wild accusation that he was thirsty for power. The Imam says about these persons:

They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Allah has bestowed it (authority). So they intend reverting the matters on their back, while on us it is obligatory, for your sake, to abide by the Qur'ān and the conduct of the Prophet of Allah (S), to stand by his rights and revival of his *Sunnah*.⁶⁸

Elsewhere he says:

"By Allah I had no liking for the caliphate nor any interest in government, but you yourself invited me to it and prepared me for it. When the caliphate came to me I kept the Book of Allah in my view and all that Allah had put therein for us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet (S) had laid down as *Sunnah*.⁶⁹

C. Wars and Battles

The most conspicuous enmity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) were the wars and battles imposed on him during his caliphate. We will briefly mention the three-armed uprisings against his rule.

1. Battle of Jamal

His caliphate had not yet taken roots when the fraudulent and the malicious in their greed for worldly power ganged up together to break the pledge of allegiance they had sworn to him. They incited a group of Muslims to fight him in the armed encounter known as the Battle of Jamal (Arabic for 'camel' since 'Ayishah, one of the wives of the Prophet, mounted a red-haired camel and led the conspirators). Imam 'Ali ('a) was not surprised at the behaviour of the two chief conspirators Talhah and Zubayr, and addressed them as follows:

"I always apprehended from you consequences of treachery and I had seen you through in the garb of the deceitful. The curtain of religion had kept me hidden from you but the truth of my intention disclosed you to me."⁷⁰

The flames of war, although they devoured the conspirators who had ignited them, were not something pleasant for the Imam who had tried his best to dissuade them from such an action. The Imam's army won the battle, but Jamal like all other civil strifes, caused cracks to appear in the system of caliphate and emboldened

Mu'awiyah to show his insolence towards Imam 'Ali ('a) in a more elaborate manner.

2. War of Siffin

Mu'awiyah, who had put roots in Syria because of his long rule over that province since his appointment as governor by 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb and the subsequent confirmation in that position during the 12-year rule of his kinsman 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, was not pleased with anything short of caliphate. The killing of 'Uthmān and the sedition of 'Ayishah, Talhah and Zubayr, gave him the desired pretext, and by raising the deceptive slogan of 'vengeance for the blood of 'Uthmān', he dared to confront Imam 'Ali ('a) in battle – after refusing to comply by the new caliph's order of his dismissal from the post of governor. The War of Siffin with all its ups and downs dragged on for several months before ending with a deceptive act by Mu'awiyah's forces who raised copies of the holy Qur'ān on spearpoints to avoid certain defeat. The forced arbitration which took place as a result did not end favourably for Imam 'Ali ('a) because of the duplicity of some of his followers.⁷¹

The consequences of Siffin made a group of nutwits – who had at first fell to Mu'awiyah's ruse of arbitration – to desert the rightful Imam and accuse him of deviation from faith. Imagine, to what extent enmity with the First Muslim had blinded those who had no clear idea of Islam but still called themselves Muslims!

3. Battle of Nahrawān

Imam 'Ali ('a) addressing these deviated elements who became popularly known as Khawārij (renegades) because of leaving the ranks of the Commander of the Faithful, says:

I had advised you against this arbitration but you rejected my advice like adversaries and opponents till I turned my ideas in the direction of your wishes. You are a group whose heads are devoid of wit and intelligence. Allah's woe be upon you, I had not put you in any calamity nor wished you harm.⁷²

Ignorance and blind prejudice had, however, clouded the brains of the Khawārij. So little was their acquaintance with Islam and so intensely did their hearts burn in the enmity of the Imam that they failed to heed the voice of reason and chose to fight. Imam 'Ali ('a) warned them of the consequences of battle⁷³ and the damage they were unwittingly doing to Islam. After victory in the Battle of Nahrawān he still pitied these hapless elements that were immersed in manifest error, and told his followers:

“Do not kill the Khawārij after me, because one who seeks right but does not find it is not like the one who seeks wrong and finds it (Mu'awiyah and his men).⁷⁴

This was in brief the trend of enmity with Imam 'Alī ('a) and the sinister motives behind them, which manifested on various occasions and in different forms for reasons that totally lack justification.⁷⁵

Notes:

1. Umayyah is said to have been a slave of 'Abd Shams rather than his son. 'Allāmah Majlisī has related in *Bihār al-Anwār* (vol. 8, 383) from 'Imād al-Dīn Tabari's *Kāmil Bahā'i* that Umayyah was a Byzantine slave of 'Abd Shams and when the latter found him intelligent he freed him and treated him as an adopted child. As was the custom among the pre-Islamic Arabs Umayyah became known as the son of 'Abd Shams similar to the case of Zayd bin Muhammad (S), until God revealed the ayah that the Prophet was not the father of any male Arab (33:40).

2. *Tārīkh-i Ya'qūbī*, vol. 2, p. 13.

3. *Sunan al-Nasā'i*, vol. 4, p. 3.

4. *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghāzī*, p. 210.

5. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram. *Maqatal al-Husayn*, p. 357, Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, Bayrut; *Tadhkirah al-Khawāss*, Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, p. 235, Mu'assasah Ahl al-Bayt, Bayrut.

6. *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 4, p. 240.

7. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 3, p. 107.

8. *Tashayyu' dar Masir-i Tārikh*, part 1.

9. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letter no. 17.

10. Imam 'Ali has used the word *lathiq* which means "one who is attributed to other than one's father". Apart from what I have cited in note no. 1, two other instances of doubtful parentage can be pointed out in Mu'āwiyah's lineage. The first concerns Harb who was said to be a slave of Umayyah. The Sunni scholar Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, has quoted from Abi al-Faraj Isfahani's (himself of Umayyud descent) book *al-Aghāni* that Mu'āwiyah enquired from the Arab genealogist Di'bil whether he had seen 'Abd al-Mutallib and he replied in the affirmative. He enquired about his personality and was told that 'Abd al-Mutallib was noble, handsome and a man of broad forehead with his face bearing the brightness of Prophethood. Then he enquired whether he had seen Umayyah and how was his appearance? Di'bil replied that when he saw him he was weak-bodied, bent in stature and blind in the eyes. He was always led by his slave. Mu'āwiyah said it was Umayyah's son Harb, to which Di'bil retorted: You say so, but the Quraysh only know that he (Harb) was his slave.

The second doubt concerns Mu'āwiyah himself, who to quote Ibn Abi al-Hadid, was the son of Hind, a woman notorious for her loose and immoral life. The Sunni scholar Zamakhshari in *Rabi' al-Abrār* does not believe that Mu'āwiyah was the son of Abi Sufyān and has attributed his parentage to four persons. God knows best.

11. *Al-Badā' wa al-Tārikh*, vol. 2, p. 145.

12. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 131.

13. *Ibid*, Sermon 37.

14. Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*.

15. *Hijrat*, the Holy Qur'ān, *al-Baqarah* 2:207.

16. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 104.

17. The Battle of Uhud.

18. The Prophet took the infant 'Ali (a) into his arms when his mother stepped out of the *Ka'bah* after his birth.

19. He performed the last rites of the Prophet.
20. Hākim Nayshabūri, *Mustadrak-al-Sahihayn*, vol. 2, p. 241.
21. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 3.
22. *Ibid.*, Sermon 3.
23. *Ibid.*, Sermon 3.
24. *Ibid.*, Sermon 92.
25. *Ibid.*, Sermon 3.
26. *Ibid.*, Letter 64.
27. *Ibid.*, Letter 28.
28. *Ibid.*, Sermon 146.
29. *Ibid.*, Sermon 32.
30. *Ibid.*, Sermon 224.
31. *Ibid.*, Sermon 175.
32. Al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far, *Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Rusul*, vol. 2, p. 580.
33. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 27.
34. *Ibid.*, Sermon 224.
35. *Ibid.*, Sermon 15.
36. *Ibid.*, Maxim no. 236.
37. *Ibid.*, Maxim no. 77.
38. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, for instance the epistle to Mālik al-Ashtar on his appointment as governor of Egypt.
39. *Ibid.*, Letter no. 5, to the governor of Azerbaijan, Ash'ath bin Qays.
40. *Ibid.*, Maxim no. 289.
41. *Ibid.*, Sermon 192.
42. *Ibid.*, Letter no. 10.
43. Many a roughneck infidel of Arabia including the kinsmen of Mu'awiyah fell to his flashing twin-bladed sword (*Dhu'l-Fiqār*). But the Imam's sword was not naked aggression against anyone who came against him. He did not kill those who sought clemency and repented of their error, neither did he pursue the fugitive, nor those who resorted to indecent acts during combat.

An example in this regard is the case of 'Amr ibn 'Abdawad who spat at him after being felled to the ground during the Battle of Khandaq. Imam 'Ali ('a) instantly withdrew and allowed his fallen opponent to get to his feet since he did not want his personal feelings to interfere with the course of selfless *jihād* in the way of Allah. When 'Amr refused to yield and renewed the combat the Imam made short work of him this time in equal combat. Another instance which stands out most vividly is the disrobing of 'Amr ibn 'As during Siffin out of fear of imminent death. The Imam turned his face away and allowed his shameless antagonist to flee the battlefield.

Another noteworthy point of Imam Ali's bravery is his conversation with his general Mālik al-Ashtar when the latter after the Battle of *Laylah al-Harir* during the Siffin War felt proud that he had equalled the Imam's art of swordsmanship. Mālik was reminded that he had killed whoever came in his way while the sword of the Imam had spared the life of those in whose seed true believers were to be born even seventy generations later.

44. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Maxim no. 147.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*, Sermon 189.

47. *Ibid.*, Sermon 185.

48. *Ibid.*, Sermon 200.

49. *Ibid.*, Sermon 169.

50. Sermon 6.

51. Sermon 50./

52. Sermon 3.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. Sermon 137.

56. Sermon 71.

57. A man fearful of battle would not have won single-handed such crucial encounters in the early days of Islam as the

Battles of Badr, Khandaq, Khaybar, Hunayn, etc. And he showed his valour in these combats after the antagonists had spurned his invitation to accept Islam.

58. If Imam 'Ali ('a) was scared of death as his opponents alleged, he would not have risked his life to sleep on the Prophet's bed on the night of Hijrah when would-be assassins had surrounded the abode of divine revelation. Neither would he have stood steadfast beside the Prophet during the Battle of Uhud when most of the companions of the Prophet (including those who became caliphs afterwards) fled the battlefield for their dear lives the moment a detachment of infidel forces under the command of Khālid ibn Walid launched a surprise attack on the Muslims.

59. Sermon 55.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Sermon 27.

62. Letter no. 28 (In answer to Mu'āwiyah's accusation Imam 'Ali ('a) says: "Then you have recalled my position vis-a-vis 'Uthmān and in this matter an answer is due to you because of your kinship with him. So (now tell me) who of us was more enmical towards 'Uthmān and who did more to bring about his killing? Who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him (from helping) or who was that whom he called for help but he turned his face from him and drew his death near him till his fate overtook him...")

63. Sermon 164.

64. Sermon 3.

65. Letter no. 10 (The Imam refuting Mu'awiyah's baseless accusation says: "...You think you have come out seeking to avenge 'Uthmān's blood. Certainly you know how 'Uthmān's blood was shed. If you want to really avenge it, avenge it there...")

66. Sermon 5, (When Abī Sufyān, hearing that Abī Bakr was chosen caliph, approached Imam 'Ali ('a) and offered the military services of his clan in order to make a bid for his usurped right, he

was told: "Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension...It (the aspiration for the caliphate) is like turbid water or like a morsel that would suffocate the person who swallows it...If I speak out they would call me greedy towards power but if I keep quiet they would say I was afraid of death...By Allah the son of Abī Talib is more familiar with death than an infant with the breast of its mother. I have hidden knowledge, if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells) Can such a person be power-thirsty?

67. Sermon 6.

68. Sermon 169.

69. Sermon 205.

70. Sermon 4.

71. Sermon 122.

72. Sermon 36.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Sermon 61.

75. It speaks of the radiant nature of Imam 'Alī ('a) that he continues to shine as a beacon of guidance for humanity despite the fact that his wretched enemies, particularly Mu'āwiyah and the Umayyuds, had spared no effort to taint his personality. For decades after his martyrdom the Umayyuds ordered the cursing of the Imam from pulpits throughout the Muslim lands, persecuted his followers and massacred his descendants, but it is the Prophet's cousin who continues to rule hearts while eternal shame is the lot of his opponents.

The Gospel of the Shí'ah of 'Alí ('a)

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There is a peculiarly close relation between Prophet Jesus ('a) and Imam 'Alī ('a). Prophet Muhammad ('a) himself is reported to have pointed this out:

It is reported that Imam 'Alī ('a) said, "The Messenger of Allah called me and said, 'O 'Alī! Verily, there is a similarity between you and Jesus the son of Mary ('a). The Christians love him so much that they put him in a position that was not for him; and the Jews hate him so much that they even slandered his mother.' And 'Alī ('a) said, 'Two [groups of] men will be ruined because of me, he who goes to extremes in love of me for what I do not have and he who hates me with a hatred that makes him slander me.'" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 35, pp. 318-319, no. 14)

In addition, Imam 'Alī ('a), like Prophet Muhammad (S), is reported to have referred to Jesus ('a) as "my brother Jesus".¹ Both Jesus ('a) and Imam 'Alī ('a) are the charismatic standard bearers for the esoteric dimension of religion, both were rejected by those who interpreted religion in a narrowly legalistic fashion, and both were deified by extremists among their would be supporters.

Those who would restrict religion to its outward expressions open the way to the exploitation of religion for worldly gain, because it is the spiritual dimension of religion that supports the kind of heartfelt dedication needed for the nourishment of moral fibre. This is a theme that figures prominently in the Christian gospels, particularly in the Messiah's condemnation of the scholars of Jewish law, the Pharisees, and it recurs in the conflict between Imam 'Alī ('a) and his opponents. Both Jesus ('a) and Imam 'Alī ('a) enjoin the proper observance of religious law while they reject empty literalism and the immorality it fosters. The condemnation of the misuse of religious knowledge for worldly gain is condemned by Imam 'Alī ('a) when he mentions how it was condemned by Jesus ('a):

It is reported that the Commander of the Faithful ('a) said, "Jesus the son of Mary ('a) said, 'The *dinar* is the illness of religion, and the scholar (*al-'ālim*) is the physician of religion. So if you see that the physician brings illness upon himself, distrust him, and know that he is not to advise others.'" (*Bihār* vol. 14, p. 319, no.14)

Another prominent feature of the esoteric dimension of religion is the emphasis on supererogatory devotions. The importance of spiritual discipline is emphasized by Imam 'Alī ('a) when he describes the austerities of Jesus ('a):

It is reported that Imam 'Alī ('a) said in one of his sermons: "If you like, I will tell you about Jesus the son of Mary ('a). He used a stone as his pillow, wore coarse clothing and ate rough food. His stew was hunger and his lamp in the night was the moon. His shade in the winter was the cast of the earth and its west. His fruit and his basil were what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to try him, and no son to grieve him. He had no wealth to distract him, nor greed to abase him. He had no mount to ride but his feet, and none were his servants but his own two hands." (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 158).

On the other hand, neither Jesus ('a) nor Imam 'Alī ('a) advocated a dower asceticism, as is indicated in the following narration:

Imam 'Alī ('a) said, "John the son of Zachariah ('a) cried and did not laugh, and Jesus the son of Mary ('a) laughed and cried; and what Jesus did was more excellent than what John did." (*al-Kāfi*, 2, 665, 20)

All of this is an indication of how narrations in Shī'i collections pertaining to the divine message given to Jesus ('a), the *Injīl* (Gospel), will also help us to understand Imam 'Alī ('a) and the special divine friendship, *walāyah*, bestowed upon him and Jesus ('a). What follows is the English translation of a selection of such narrations, beginning with a couple of reports attributed to Imam 'Alī ('a).

It is reported that Imam 'Alī ('a) said, "Jesus the son of Mary ('a) said, 'Blessed is he whose silence is contemplation (*fikr*), the sight of whom is an admonition, whose house suffices him, who cries over his mistakes, and from whose hand and tongue people are safe.'" (*Bihār* 14, 319, 23).

Sayings of the form, "Blessed is (are)....", said to have been spoken by Jesus ('a) are called beatitudes, and they form an important part of the Sermon on the Mount. More narrations from the Household of the Prophet (S) pertaining to this event will be found below, but note that in the following report, it is Imam 'Alī ('a) who teaches the importance of true spiritual devotion in the form of a beatitude.

It is reported that Nūf al-Bukālī said, "I spent a night with the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Talīb ('a). I saw that he often left his room to go outside and look at the sky. Once when he came back in, as usual, he said to me, 'Are you asleep or awake?' I said, 'I am indeed awake, O Commander of the Faithful! From the beginning of the night I have been watching you to see what you

are doing.' He said, 'O Nūf! Blessed are the ascetics in this world, those who yearn for the other world, the people who spread Allah's earth beneath them [to sleep on], who lean against its dust, whose motto is His book, whose maxim is supplicating Him, whose perfume is water, and who take the world on loan in the way of Christ. Verily, Allah, the Exalted, revealed to Jesus, "O Jesus! Keep to the first way, keep to the manner of the messengers, say to your people, O brother of the warners, 'Do not enter any of My houses except with pure hearts, clean hands and lowered eyes. I will not hear the prayer of any who supplicate Me if any of My servants is oppressed by him. And I will not answer the prayer of any who has not fulfilled any of My rights over him.'"" (Bihār, 70, 316, 22)

The exalted rank of Jesus ('a) is indicated in the following reports of the words of Imam 'Alī ('a).

Al-Shāmī asked the Commander of the Faithful ('a) "Which of the Prophets were created by Allah circumcised?" He said, "Allah created Adam ('a) circumcised, and Seth ('a) was born circumcised, and Enoch, Noah, Shem the son of Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Lot, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, may the blessings of Allah be with all of them." (Bihār, 15, 296, 32)

Among the questions of al-Shāmī is that he asked the Commander of the Faithful ('a) about the six Prophets who had [special] names. He said, "Yūshi' ibn Nūn was Dhū al-Kifl, Ya'qūb ibn Ishaq was Isrā'īl, Khizr was Hilqiyā, Yūnus was Dhū al-Nūn, Jesus was the Messiah and Muhammad was Ahmad, may the blessings of Allah be with all of them." (Bihār, 16, 90, 22)

Al-Shāmī asked the Commander of the Faithful ('a) about the six creatures that were never in a womb. He said, "Adam and Eve, the ram of Abraham, the snake of Moses, the she-camel of Sālih and the bat that Jesus the son of Mary made and then it flew by the permission of Allah. (Bihār, 11, 385, 9)

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is reported to narrate an *ayah* of the divine revelation given to Jesus (‘a) in the following:

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is reported to have said, "...O Allah! Verily I beseech You by the *ayah* by which You commanded your servant Jesus the son of Mary (‘a) to call You, then you answered him, and he revived the dead, cured the blind and the leper with Your permission, and by Your revelation he told of mysteries with Your grace, kindness and mercy. Praise be to You, Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the worlds. His is the dominion in the heavens and the earth. He is the Magnificent, the Wise. Come between us and our enemies and help us against them, O our Master and Lord." (*Bihār*, 87, 17)

Further information about the divine revelation given to Jesus is reported in Kulayni’s *al-Kāfi*,² where it is written that ‘Ali ibn Ashbāt narrated the following from the Household of the Prophet, peace be with them, from among the admonitions of Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, given to Jesus (‘a):

O Jesus! I am your Lord and the Lord of your father. My name is One and I am the One, the Unique in having created everything. All things have been made by Me and all return to Me.

O Jesus! You are the Messiah by My command, and you create from clay what has a shape like a bird by My permission, and you revive the dead by My word, so be one who beseeches Me and one who fears Me, and apart from Me seek no sanctuary except toward Me.

O Jesus! I charged you in tenderness to you through mercy until you became worthy of my friendship (*walāyah*) because you sought My pleasure and so you were blessed when old and you were blessed when young wherever you were. I bear witness that you are My servant, son of my handmaid. Let Me into your soul as your foremost regard, and make the remembrance of Me the means to your return, and draw near to Me through the supererogatory

deeds. And trust in Me that I may suffice for you and do not trust in any other than Me so that I abandon you.

O Jesus! Be patient with affliction and be content with destiny, and be as one with whom I have been pleased in the way I am pleased with you, because what pleases Me is obedience without sin.

O Jesus! Enliven the remembrance of Me by your tongue, and let there be love for Me in your heart.

O Jesus! Wake up at the hours of neglecting and give your decisions for my sake with subtle wisdom.

O Jesus! Be one who beseeches and fears Me, and let your heart die of awe of Me.

O Jesus! Be vigilant through the night seeking My pleasure, and thirst through your day for the day when you are in need of Me.

O Jesus! Compete with others by doing good as hard as you can so that you will be well known for good wherever you go.

O Jesus! Judge among my servants through My counsel and establish My justice for I have brought down to you a cure for breasts against satanic disease.

O Jesus! Do not associate with anyone infatuated [with the world].

O Jesus! Indeed I say, no creature believed in Me without becoming humble to Me nor became humble to Me without seeking My requital; so bear witness that such a one is secure from My punishment unless he changes or alters my norm (*sunnah*).

O Jesus, son of the Virgin Lady! Weep for yourself with the weeping of one who bade goodbye to his home, deserted this world and left it to the worldly so that he became one beseeching what is with his God.

O Jesus! In addition to this, be someone who speaks mildly, who offers *salāms* vigorously, and who keeps awake while the eyes of the pious sleep in order to beware of the Day of the Return.

and severe earthquakes and the terrors of the Resurrection Day when neither household nor wealth nor offspring shall profit one.

O Jesus! Adorn your eyes with a touch of sadness when the vain (i.e., foolish) laugh.

O Jesus! Be one of those who humble themselves and are patient, for if you attain that of which the patient have been promised, you are most fortunate.

O Jesus! Day by day abandon this world and taste that which has lost its taste, for truly I tell you, you live to an appointed hour and an appointed day, so pass through this world by what is sufficient for your survival and be content with coarse food and rough dress after you have seen what your destiny is to be, and what you have spent and wasted is recorded.

O Jesus! You are responsible, so be merciful toward the weak, just as I am merciful toward you, and do not be cruel to the orphan.

O Jesus! Weep over yourself in seclusion; let your feet regularly make for the places where prayers are performed, and let me hear the sweetest melody of the words you say in remembrance of Me. Verily, what I have done for you is good.

O Jesus! How many nations I have caused to perish for the sins they had committed and from which I have preserved you.

O Jesus! Minister to the weak and turn your weary eyes toward the sky and ask your needs from Me, for I am near to you, and do not call upon Me except as one who pleads with Me and whose concern is a single concern. Then, when you call on Me in this way, I will answer you.

O Jesus! I am not content that the world should be the reward of those who were near you nor as a chastisement for those you would punish.

O Jesus! You perish and I remain, and your provision is from Me. The term appointed for you is with Me, and to Me is your return and with Me is your reckoning. So ask from me and do not

ask from any other, so that your supplication may be suitable and I will answer it.

O Jesus! How numerous are the people and how few is the number of the patient. The trees are numerous, but those that are good among them are few. Do not be deceived by the beauty of a tree until you taste its fruit.

O Jesus! Do not be deceived by he who rebels against me by sin. He eats what I have provided for him but he serves another. Then he calls on Me in his sorrow, and I answer him. Then he returns to what he had been doing. Does he rebel against Me or does he seek My wrath? By Me, I have sworn I will take him with a taking from which he cannot be delivered and other than Me he can find no shelter. Where will he escape from My heaven and earth?

O Jesus! Say to the unjust from the children of Israel, do not call upon Me while you are involved in unlawful dealings and there are idols in your houses, for I have resolved that I will respond to them who call upon Me, and my response to their calls will be curses upon them lasting until they disperse.

O Jesus! How long must I wait and hope for good from people while they are heedless and reluctant to return?

The words which emitted from their mouths do not do not correspond to what is in their hearts, they subject themselves to my loathing, while seeking the love of the believers by [feigning] drawing near to Me.

O Jesus! Let your tongue say the same in secret and in the open, and let your heart and your vision be in accord with that. Turn your heart and your tongue entirely away from the forbidden, and withhold your eyes from anything in which there is no good. How many a beholder there has been whose look planted in their hearts a lust and threw them into the pit of destruction.

O Jesus! Be merciful with great mercy, and behave in such a way that you wish others to treat you, and increase your

remembrance of death, and departing from your household, and avoid wasting your time, for wasting time corrupts one. and do not be heedless, for he who is heedless of Me is far away from Me. And remember Me by doing righteous acts so that I will remember you.

O Jesus! Turn toward Me after sinning, and remind those who are penitent of Me. Believe in Me and seek nearness to the believers by Me, and bid them to call upon Me with you, and beware of the call of the wronged one, for I have resolved to open a gate in the heavens to accept it and to answer him, even if later.

O Jesus! Know that evil ones infect others and the companions of evil cause others to perish, and know those to whom you are near, and choose for yourselves brothers from the believers.

O Jesus! Turn toward Me, for no sin is too great for Me to forgive, and I am the most Merciful of the Merciful. Work for yourself in the period before your death before your heirs may fail to do it for you, and worship Me for a day that is equal to a thousand years of what you reckon in which I repay for the good many times over, and evil deeds will corrupt one who performs them, so prepare the way for yourself throughout the period appointed for you, and compete with others to do whatever is righteous, for how many an assembly there have been from which people rose and were then granted sanctuary from the Fire.

O Jesus! Restrain yourself from being involved in this mortal life that comes to an end, and follow in the footsteps of those who have lived before you. Call them and speak to them in confidence. Do you feel their presence? Take your advice from them, and know that soon you will join them.

O Jesus! Tell him who rebels against Me by offense and who would compromise [his religion], that he should await My punishment and expect My destruction of him, soon he will be cut off with the destroyed ones. O son of Mary! Blessed are you, that you take your manners from your God, Who shows tenderness

toward you mercifully, Who first bestowed blessings from Him generously, and He aids you in difficulties. Do not offend, O Jesus! For offenses are not lawful for you. I have made a covenant with you as I made a covenant with those who were before you, and I am a witness of that.

O Jesus! I have honored no creature as I have My religion, and I have not blessed [any creature] with the like of My mercy [for My religion].

O Jesus! Cleanse with water of what is exterior to you, and cure by good deeds what is interior to you, for surely you are returning to Me.

O Jesus! That with which I have blessed you is by grace without pollution, but when I sought from you the loan of your soul, you were stingy, so you will be of those who are destroyed.

O Jesus! Adorn yourself with religion and love of the needy, and walk through the earth modestly. And perform the prayers at any place, for all of them are [ritually] clean.

O Jesus! Be prepared, for whatever is coming is near, and recite My book while you are [ritually] clean, and make Me hear from you a sad voice.

O Jesus! There is no good in pleasure that does not continue, and in a life, for the one who lives it, that fades away. O son of Mary! If only your eyes could see that which is furnished as a reward for My righteous friends, your heart would melt and your soul would depart longing for it, for there is no abode like that of the other world, where the good live as neighbors, and the cherubim enter it among them, and they are safe from the fear of the day of resurrection. It is an abode in which blessings do not change and they are not lost. O son of Mary! Vie with others for [that abode], for it is the hope of the hopeful, being such a good sight. Blessed are you, O son of Mary, if you work for it, and you are with your fathers, Adam and Abraham in the Garden and bliss,

you seek no alternative to it and no change in it. I do this for the God-way.

O Jesus! Flee toward Me with those who flee from a fair having a dreadful blaze and a fire having chains and shackles into which no gentle wind enters and from which no gloom ever goes, with sectors like those of the dark night, and he who is delivered from it will have attained a great achievement, and those who perish will never be delivered from it. It is the abode of tyrants, the wrongdoing oppressors, all who are rudely obstinate and all who are proud boasters.

O Jesus! It is an evil abode for those who rely on it, and evil place to stay, the abode of the oppressors. I warn you of yourself. So, be aware of Me.

O Jesus! Wherever you are, be observant of Me, and bear witness that it is I who created you, that you are My servant and that I formed you and conveyed you to the earth.

O Jesus! It is not proper for there to be two tongues in one mouth nor two hearts in one breast, and likewise for minds.

O Jesus! Do not be awake while sinning, do not be aware while wasting time. Wean yourself from destructive lusts and put away every lust that puts you far from Me. Know that to Me you are a trusted apostle, so be careful of Me. Know that your world will give you back to Me, and I will take you knowledgably, so abase yourself when you remember Me. Humble your heart when you remember Me. Be awake beside the sleep of the negligent.

O Jesus! This is My advice to you and My admonition to you, so take it from Me and I am the Lord of the worlds.

O Jesus! When My servant is patient for My sake, the reward for his work is from Me, and I am beside him when he calls on Me, and I am sufficient in avenging those who disobey Me. Where will the oppressors go to escape from Me?

O Jesus! Make your speech wholesome, and wherever you are, be both learned and a learner.

O Jesus! Send good deeds to Me, so that they will be remembered by Me for you, and grasp My advice. Verily, in it there is a cure for hearts.

O Jesus! Do not feel safe when you devise your plans from My plans, and do not forget, when alone in the world, the remembrance of Me.

O Jesus! By returning to Me, take account of yourself, so the reward may be deserved of those who work. They are given their compensation and I am the best of the givers.

O Jesus! You were created by My word, Mary gave birth to you at My command that I sent to her by My spirit, the trusted Gabriel of My angels, until you grew up as one alive and walking, and all of this was in My foreknowledge.

O Jesus! Zachariah is in the position of a father to you and as a guardian to your mother. When he went to her in the prayer niche then he found with her provisions. John is like you among My creatures. I granted him to his mother when she was old when she did not have the strength for it. By this, I wanted My sovereignty to appear to her, and My power to appear in you. The most beloved of you by Me is the most obedient to me and the most intense of you in fear of Me.

O Jesus! Wake up and do not despair of My mercy and glorify Me with those who glorify Me and with wholesome speech hallow Me.

O Jesus! How can the servants disbelieve in Me when their forelocks are in My fist and their changes take place on My earth? They are ignorant of My blessings and they are supporters of My enemy, and so the disbelievers are perishing.

O Jesus! Indeed, this world is a foul prison, and the fair seeming in it is, as you see, that over which the tyrants slaughter one another. Beware, the world and all of its blessings will come to an end, and it has but few blessings.

O Jesus! Seek Me when you go to bed, and you will find Me; and call upon me while you love Me, and I am the most hearing of the hearers; I answer the callers when they call upon Me.

O Jesus! Fear Me and make My servants fear Me. Happily the sinners may abstain from what they do because of it, so they do not perish unless they knowingly [do it].

O Jesus! Be afraid of Me as you fear predators and death you will meet. I have created all of them, so of Me alone, be afraid.

O Jesus! Verily, Mine is the kingdom and it is in My hand, and I am the King. If you obey Me, I will make you enter My Garden in the neighbourhood of the righteous.

O Jesus! If I am angry with you, the pleasure of those who are pleased with you will not benefit you, and if I am pleased with you, the anger of those who are angry with you will not harm you.

O Jesus! Remember Me to yourself, and I will remember you to Myself. Remember Me among your people, and I will remember you among a people better than the children of Adam.

O Jesus! Call upon Me with the call of one who is drowning, afflicted, for whom there is none to aid.

O Jesus! Do not swear by Me falsely, so that My Throne shakes with anger. The world is short lived, but is long on hope, and with Me is a realm better than what you gather.

O Jesus! What will you do when I take out for you a book that speaks in truth, while you witness it, of the secrets you have hidden, and the deeds you have done.

O Jesus! Say to the unjust of the Children of Israel: You wash your faces and soil your hearts. Are you deceived about me, or would you be audacious toward me. For the worldly you use perfumes, but to me your stomachs are like putrid corpse, as though you were a dead people.

O Jesus! Say to them: Draw back your hands³ from illicit gain, and stop your ears from listening to curses, and come near to me by your hearts for your appearance does not appeal to me.

O Jesus! Rejoice in the good deed, for it pleases Me, and weep over the evil deed, for it is a disgrace, and that which you do not like to be done unto you, do not do unto others, and if one slaps your right cheek, offer him the left one, and draw near to Me by your efforts through love, and ignore the ignorant.

O Jesus! Be humble toward the doers of good deeds and take part with them in such deeds, and be witnesses to them, and say to the unjust of the Children of Israel: O friends of evil, and those who keep company with it! If you do not comply with the prohibitions, I will transform you into apes and swine.

O Jesus! Say to the unjust of the Children of Israel that wisdom⁴ weeps in fear of Me, while you [Children of Israel] leave laughing. Has there come to you a reprieve, or is there with you a guarantee against My chastisement, or that you will not be subject to My punishment? I swear by Myself, that I will abandon you as an example for those who remain.

Thus I charge you, O son of Mary, that you bring news to the Children of Israel of the Master of the messengers and My beloved, who is Ahmad, having a red camel and a face like the moon, who is a shining light, a pure heart, courageous, venerably modest. Verily, he is a mercy to the worlds, and master of the children of Adam on the day of his meeting Me, the most honored of the foremost,⁵ and the last of the messengers from Me, an Arab, a trustworthy person, one committed to My religion, one patient for My sake and one who struggles by his hand against the idolaters for the defense of My religion. Order them to affirm him, believe in him, follow him and help him.

Jesus ('a) said: Who is it that I should please? Then, pleasure is for You. He said: He is Muhammad the Messenger of Allah (S) to the people, all of them. In station, he is nearer to Me than they; in intercession, he is more ready than they; blessed be he as Prophet, and blessed be his community (*ummah*) if they meet Me on his path. The inhabitants of the earth praise him, and the inhabitants of

the heavens ask for his forgiveness. He is the trustworthy, the blessed, the wholesome and salutary, better than others with Me. He will be at the end of time. When he arrives, the spouts of the heavens are loosed, and the earth puts forth its blossoms, so that they see the benediction. I will bless them by that upon which he puts his hand. He has many wives and few children. He is an inhabitant of Bakkah [Mecca] the place of the foundations of Abraham.

O Jesus! His religion is upright (*hanafyyah*), and his *qiblah* is Yemenite,⁶ and he is of My party, and I am with him, so blessed be he, then blessed be him. The *Kawthar*⁷ is for him, and the greatest position in the gardens of Eden. He lives most honoured of all who have ever lived, taken as a martyr, for whom is a fountain greater than the distance from Bakkah to the place of the rising of the sun, full of wine untouched, in which there are dishes like the constellations of the sky, and stars like the clods of the earth, agreeable, in which is every sort of wine and the flavours of every fruit in the Garden. Whoever drinks a drink from it will never thirst. It is apportioned for him, and I have preferred him by a period of time between you and him. His secrets agree with what is apparent from him, and his words with his actions. He does not command the people, unless he first begins to practice it. His religion is a struggle in hardship and in comfort. The cities will obey him, and the ruler of Rome will humble himself before him following the religion of Abraham. He will mention the Name of God at meals, and bid peace, and he will pray while the people sleep. For him each day there will be five prayers in succession. His call to prayer will be like the call to muster troops. He will open his prayer with '*Allahu Akbar* (God is the greatest)' and end it with salutations of peace. He will put his feet in line in prayer as the angels place their feet in line, and his heart and head will be humbled for Me. Light is in his breast and truth is on his tongue. And he is in the right, wherever he is. First an orphan, wandering

for a time regarding what He wills for him, his eyes sleep but his heart does not, interceding is only for him, and his community will reach the [Final] Hour,⁸ and My hand will be above their hands, whoever breaks [his pledge with the Prophet (S)], breaks [it] against himself, and whoever is loyal to his pledge, I will be loyal to him [awarding to him] the Garden. So command the oppressors of the Children of Israel not to obliterate his books and not to distort his tradition and to offer peace to him. Surely, there is a noble station for him.

O Jesus! Whatever brings you near to Me, I have guided you to it, and all that takes you far from Me, I have prohibited it for you. So, seek what is for your own sake.

O Jesus! Surely this world is sweet, and surely I have employed you in it, so keep aside from you all from which I have warned you, and take from it all that I have given to you in forgiveness.

O Jesus! Look into your deeds with the look of a mistaken sinful servant, and do not look into the works of others from the position of Lord. Be without attachment to [this world], and do not long for it so that it causes you hardship.

O Jesus! Reason about and contemplate and look into the regions of the earth as to what has been the outcome of the oppressors.

O Jesus! All of My attributes are counsel for you, and all of My speech to you is the Truth, and I am the plain Truth. So, in truth I say: If you disobey me after I informed you, there is no protector nor helper for you but Me.

O Jesus! Humble your heart in meekness and look at those who are lower than you and do not look at those who are above you. And know that at the head of every mistake and sin is the love of this world. So, do not love it, for I do not love it either.

O Jesus! Make wholesome your heart for Me and remember Me much in solitude, and know that My pleasure is in your fawning, love Me, in an animated and not in a lifeless manner.

O Jesus! Do not make anything My partner, and be wary on account of Me, and do not be deceived by health, so delight in yourself. Surely, this world is like a passing shadow, and what comes from it is like what goes from it. So compete in your struggle for righteousness, and be with truth wherever it is, even if you will be cut or burned by fire. So, do not deny me after knowledge. So, do not be of the ignorant. A thing is surely with things [of its own sort].

O Jesus! Pour forth tears from your eyes for Me, and humble your heart for Me.

O Jesus! Call on Me for help in hard conditions. I am He Who helps those who are upset, and Who answers the destitute. And I am the most merciful of the merciful.

Further reports about the divine revelation given to Jesus ('a) are as follows:

The Apostle of Allah (S) said, "Allah, the Exalted, may His greatness be glorified, revealed to Jesus ('a): 'Make a serious effort regarding My affairs, and do not give up. I made you without a male as a sign for the worlds. Tell the people to believe in Me and in My Apostle, the unschooled, whose ancestors are of *Mubārakah*, and she is with your mother in heaven. *Tūbā* is for he who hears his word and is contemporary with him.' Jesus said, 'O my Lord! What is *Tūbā*?' He said, 'It is a tree in heaven under which is a fountain from which those who drink will never again thirst.' Jesus said, 'Quench me with a drink of it.' He said, 'No, Jesus. It is forbidden to the Prophets until that Prophet drinks from it. And that heaven is forbidden to all communities until the community of that Prophet enters it.'" (*Bihār*, 14, 323, 34)

The Apostle of Allah (S) said, "...O Abū Dhar! Verily, Allah, the Exalted, revealed to my brother, Jesus, 'O Jesus! Do not love this world, for I do not love it. Love the other world, for it alone is the realm of the return.'" (*Mustadrak al-Wasā'ī*, 12, 39, 11)

Verily Jesus ('a) passed by a grave, and he saw the angels of punishment chastise a dead person. When Jesus ('a) had finished his business and passed by the grave [again], he saw the angels of mercy. Levels of light were with them. He was surprised at that, and called upon Allah about this. Allah revealed to him, "O Jesus! This servant was a sinner, and left his wife when she was pregnant. Then she bore and raised his child. When the child got older, she gave him to the charge of the scribes. They instructed him to say, 'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate,' so I was ashamed to chastise My servant with My fire in the bowels of the earth while his child was remembering my name on the surface of the earth." (*Majmū'ah al-Akhhbār fi Nafā'is al-Athār* 146)

With regard to the ministry and teachings of Jesus ('a) the narrations from the Household of the Prophet (S) are also copious. As in the Christian gospels, the Shi'i narrations make frequent mention of miraculous cures at the hands of Jesus ('a), such as the following:

It is reported that Jesus ('a) passed by a man who was blind, a leper, paralytic, both of whose sides were paralyzed, and whose flesh had fallen off from leprosy, and he was saying, "Praise be to Allah Who has preserved me from that with which He has tried many of His creatures." Jesus ('a) said to him, "O you! From what calamity have you been preserved?" He said, "O Spirit of Allah! I am better than one who has not been given what Allah has placed in my heart of His knowledge." Jesus ('a) said to him, "You speak truly. Reach out your hand." Then, when he took his hand, he came to have the most beautiful face of any of the people, and his form became better than the others. Allah took away all that had been [wrong] with him. Then he became the companion of Jesus ('a) and he worshipped with him. (*Bihār*, 82, 153-154)

There are also frequent references in the Shi'i narrations to the moral teachings of Jesus ('a), among which the following is a poignant rejection of racial and national bias:

A man asked Jesus the son of Mary ('a), "Which people is the best?" He took two handfuls of earth and said, "Which of these is the best? The people are created from earth, so the most honorable of them is the most God-wary." (*Majmū'ah al-Akhhbār fī Nafā'is al-Athār* 106)

The miracle of the loaves and fishes that is reported in the Christian gospels is also reported in Shi'i traditions to have been mentioned by the Prophet (S):

The Prophet (S) said, "Verily, Allah sent down a spread to Jesus ('a) and blessed him with a flat loaf of bread and fishes, so four thousand seven hundred people ate of it and were sated." (*Bihār*, 14, 249, 37)

The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "O servants of Allah! Verily, when the people of Jesus asked him to have Allah bring down a spread from heaven, Allah said, 'I will send it down to you, then whoever of you disbelieves after that, I will punish as I will not punish any other being.' Then He sent it down to them, and all of them who disbelieved after that, Allah transformed into a pig, monkey, bear, cat, or in the form of some birds, animals of the land or sea. So, they were transformed into four hundred forms." (*Bihār*, 14, 235, 8)

Here is a rather extended report given in the book *Tuhaf al-Uqūl*, although without any proper *isnād* (chain of narrators), that includes a large number of beatitudes:

Advice of the Messiah, peace be with him, in the gospel and other places:

Blessed are those who love and respect one another, for they shall receive mercy on the Resurrection Day.

Blessed are the peacemakers among the people, for they will be brought nigh unto Him on the Resurrection Day.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall meet Allah on the Resurrection Day.

Blessed are those who humble themselves in this world, for they shall inherit the thrones of sovereignty (*manābir al-mulk*).

Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be glad.

Blessed are they who bear hunger and thirst submissively, for their thirst will be quenched.

Blessed are they who do righteous deeds, for they shall be called the chosen of Allah.

Blessed are they who are abused for their purity, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you are envied and abused, and every evil and false word is told about you, then be glad and happy, for verily, your wage is plentiful in heaven.

And he [Jesus] said:

O bad servants! You blame the people on the basis of suspicion, and you do not blame yourself for what is certain!

O servants of the world! You love it when things are said about you which are not true of you, and when people point you out.

O servants of the world! You shave your heads and shorten your shirts and cast your heads down [to feign humility], but you do not pull out the hatred from your hearts.

O servants of the world! Your likeness is like that of the high tombs, their exteriors cause admiration in those who look at them, and their interiors are the bones of the dead, full of misdeeds.

O servants of the world! Your likeness is only like that of a lamp, which shines for the people and burns itself.

O Children of Israel! Fill the sessions of the scholars, even if you must go on your knees, Allah will enliven the dead hearts by the light of wisdom, as He enlivens the dead earth by the heavy downpour of rain.

O Children of Israel! Shortness of speech is a great wisdom, so you should be silent; verily it is a good meekness and a decrease of your burden and a lightening of your sins. So strengthen the door

of knowledge. Verily, its door is patience. Allah hates one who laughs too much at that which is not funny and who frequently goes to bad deeds. And He loves the governor who is like a shepherd who does not neglect his flocks. So beware of Allah in secret as you are aware of the people in public. And know the word of wisdom is that sought by the believer. So, go after it before it rises away, and its rising away is the passing away of its narrators.

O you who have knowledge! Pay homage to those of knowledge for their knowledge, and leave contention with them, and belittle the ignorant for their ignorance, but do not reject them, rather bring them near and teach them.

O you who have knowledge! Know that every blessing for which you fail to give thanks is like an evil deed for which you will be taken to task.

O you who have knowledge! There are worries about which you do not know when they will come over you, so prepare yourselves before they suddenly arrive.

Jesus ('a) said to his companions:

Tell me, if one passed by his brother and saw that his private parts were exposed from his clothing, would he further expose them or would he cover them again? They said: Yes, he would cover what had been exposed. He said: Not at all, you would remove the covering. Then they understood that it was an allegory he has given for them. They said: O Spirit of Allah! How is that? There is a man among you who has come to know of a private matter of his brother, but has not covered it.

In truth I say to you: I teach you that you may learn, and I do not teach you that you may be vain. You will never reach what you want, unless you abandon that which you desire. And you will not win what you wish, unless by patience with that which you dislike. Beware of looking! It sows desire in the heart, and suffices as a temptation. Blessed are those whose vision has been placed in their hearts, and whose hearts have not been placed in the vision of their

eyes. Do not look at the faults of the people as if you were their lord, but look at their faults as if you were their servant. There are two kinds of men among people: the afflicted and the healthy. So, care for the afflicted, and praise Allah for health.

O Children of Israel! Are you not ashamed before Allah? Not one of you would drink something until you made it free of any speck of dirt, but you are not disturbed at the acquisition of something prohibited though it be the size of an elephant. Have you not heard what has been said to you in the Torah? "Visit your relations and recompense them." And I say to you: "Visit those who have cut themselves off from you, and give to those who would not help you, and do good to those who have done evil to you, and offer greetings of peace to those who curse you. And be fair with those who have shown enmity to you. Forgive those who have oppressed you, as you like to be forgiven for your misdeeds. So, take admonition from Allah's forgiveness of you. Do you not see that His sun shines on the good and the bad among you and His rain falls on the righteous and the evil doer among you. If you do not like any but those who like you, and you do good to none but those who do good to you, and you recompense none but those who give to you, then what distinction do you have over others? Verily, this is what fools do, with whom there is no virtue and no intelligence. However, if you want to be loved by Allah, and chosen by Allah, then do good to those who do evil to you, forgive those who have oppressed you, and greet with peace those who have turned away from you. Listen to what I say, keep my testament and observe my covenant so that you may be learned and have understanding.

In truth I say to you verily your hearts are where your treasures are, because of this the people love their wealth, and they themselves long for it-so put your treasures in the sky, where moths will not eat it and thieves will not obtain it.

In truth I say to you, verily a servant is incapable of serving two lords. Inevitably he will prefer one of them to the other, no matter how he tries. Likewise, you cannot join together love for Allah and love for the world.

In truth I say to you, verily the worst of people is the man who is a scholar and prefers the world to his knowledge, then he loves it, pursues it and strives for it, to such an extent that, if he were able to put the people into a state of confusion, he would do it. What does the expanse of the light of the sun profit a blind man who does not see it. Likewise, the knowledge of that scholar is of no profit to him, for he does not put it into practice. How plentiful is the fruit of the tree, but not all of it is of benefit or eaten. And how plentiful are the scholars, but not all of them benefit from their knowledge. And how wide is the earth, but not all of it is inhabited. And how many speakers there are, but not all of what they say is acceptable as true. So, keep away from lying scholars, who wear woolen clothes, who bend their heads down toward the earth, and so belie their sins, they look from under their eyebrows, like wolves. Their speech is contrary to their deeds. Is the grape reaped from the thorn, or the fig from the bitter gourd? Likewise the speech of a lying scholar has no effect but vanity. Not all who speak are true.

In truth I say to you, the plant grows in soft ground, not in rock, and likewise wisdom thrives in the heart of the humble, and it does not thrive in the heart of the arrogant oppressor. Did you not know that whoever raises his head to the ceiling breaks it, and whoever lowers his head beneath the ceiling is shaded by it and it protects him, and likewise, whoever does not humble himself to Allah, He debases him, and whoever humbles himself to Allah, He elevates him. Indeed, it is not always the case that honey will be safe in any pouch (or hide), and likewise the hearts are not always such that wisdom thrives in them. While the skin is not torn, dried out nor has become malodorous, it may be a vessel for honey, and likewise

the hearts, while they are not torn by desires, fooled by greed nor hardened by pleasures, they may be vessels for wisdom.

In truth I say to you, surely fire does not occur in a single house, but it spreads from house to house, until many houses are burnt, unless the first house is reached and it is destroyed to its pillars. Then the fire finds no place to burn. Likewise the first oppressor, if his hand is stopped, no one will be found after him to be an unjust leader for others to follow, just as if the fire finds no wood or boards in the first house, it will not burn anything.

In truth I say to you, whoever looks at a snake that intends to strike his brother and does not warn him until it kills him, he will not be secure from partnership in his murder. Likewise, whoever looks at his brother doing something wrong, and does not warn him of its consequences until it encompasses him, he will not be secure from partnership in his sin. Whoever has the power to change an oppressor but does not change him, he is like an agent [of oppression]. How can the oppressor be frightened when he is safe among you and he is neither prohibited, nor changed, nor are his hands restrained? Why should the oppressors then give up? How should they not become arrogant? It is enough that one of you say, 'I shall not oppress, but whoever wants to oppress, go ahead,' and he sees oppression but does not change it. If it were as you say, why are you punished with the oppressors, though you do not commit their deeds, when the chastisement descends upon them in this world.

Woe unto you, O servants of evil! How can you hope that Allah may secure you from the terror of the day of resurrection, when you are afraid to obey Allah because you fear people, and you obey them in disobedience to Him, and you keep your promises to them contrary to His covenant.

In truth I say to you: Allah will not make secure from the terror of that day those who take servants as lords aside from Him.

Woe unto you, O servants of evil! For the sake of this base world and ruinous lusts you give up the realm of heaven and you forget the horror of the day of resurrection.

Woe unto you, O servants of this world! For the sake of evanescent boons and life that will be cut off, you run away from Allah, and you dislike the encounter with Him. So how is Allah to love the encounter with you while you dislike the encounter with Him? Allah only loves the encounter with those who love the encounter with Him, and He dislikes the encounter of those who dislike the encounter with Him. How can you imagine that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people, while you run away from death and you take refuge in this world. Of what benefit to the dead are the good scent of camphor and the whiteness of his shroud, and all of them are in the earth. Likewise, the joy of this world that is adorned for you is of no benefit to you, and all of that is to pass away and cease. Of what benefit to you is the purity of your bodies and the cleanliness of your complexions when you are headed for death, and in the dust you will be forgotten, and you will be immersed in the darkness of the grave.

Woe unto you, servants of this world, you carry a lamp in the light of the sun while its light is enough for you. You have given up seeking illumination by it in the darkness, and it is for the sake of this that it has been made subservient to you. Likewise you seek illumination by the light of knowledge for the affairs of the world, while these have been guaranteed for you, and you have abandoned seeking illumination for the affairs of the other world, while it has been given to you for this. You say that the other world is real, while you prepare this world [for yourselves]. You say that death is real, but you run away from it. You say that Allah hears and sees, but you do not fear His reckoning of you. How can one who hears you trust you. One who unknowingly lies is more excused than one who knowingly lies, while lying is not excused at all.

In truth I say unto you, just as an animal which is not captured and tamed becomes hardened and its character is changed, so too when hearts are not softened by the remembrance of death and the effort of worship they become hard and tough. Of what benefit for a dark house is a lamp placed above its roof, while its interior is dismal and dark? Likewise, it is of no benefit to you that the light of knowledge be in your mouth while your interior is dismal and destitute. So, hurry to your dark houses and illuminate them. Likewise, hurry to your hard hearts with wisdom before errors overcome it, then they will be harder than stone. How can one carry a heavy load if he does not seek help with carrying it? Or how can the burdens of sin be put down by one who does not ask the pardon of Allah for them? Or how can clothes be purified by one who does not wash them? And how can one get clear of wrongs who does not bury them? Or how can one be saved from drowning in the sea if he crosses it without a ship? And how can one be saved from the trials of this world if he does not treat them with seriousness and struggle? And how can one reach one's destination if he travels without a guide? And how can one arrive at the Garden if he does not see the signs of religion? And how can one achieve the pleasure of Allah if he does not obey Him? And how can one see the flaw of one's face if he does not look in the mirror? And how can one perfect the love of his friend if he does not grant him some of what he has. And how can one perfect the love of his Lord if he does not lend Him some of that with which he has been provided?

In truth I say to you, verily just as the sea does not become any less if a ship sinks in it and the ship does not harm the sea at all, likewise you do not lessen Allah at all by your sins, and you do not harm Him, but you harm and lessen your own self; and just as the multitude of those who go about in the light of the sun does not lessen it, but they thrive and live, likewise, the multitude of what He gives you and provides for you does not lessen Him, but you

thrive by His providence and by Him you live. He increases [His providence] for those who thank Him, He is Grateful, All-knowing.¹⁰

Woe unto you, O evil paid labourer, you take the wage and eat what is provided for you, and you wear the clothing, and you build the houses, and you spoil the work of He who hired you. Soon the One who hired you for this work will call you, then He will look at the work that you spoiled, then He will bring down for you what humiliates you and He will order that your necks be pulled out from their roots, and He will order that your arms be cut off at their joints. Then He will order that your bodies be pulled along on your bellies to the middle of the road, so that you may be a lesson for the pious and a warning for the unjust.

Woe unto you, O evil scholars, do not tell yourselves that your appointed times will be delayed so that death will not come down upon you. Soon it will come down upon you, enter upon you and cause you to emigrate. Then, from now on put His call in your ears, and from now on grieve over yourselves, and from now on cry over your mistakes, and from now on make preparations and take your supplies¹¹ and hurry to the repentance of your Lord.

In truth I say to you, verily, just as the sick look at good food and are not pleased by it, due to the intensity of their pain, likewise the worldly person is not pleased with worship and he does not find its sweetness, due to his love of wealth. And just as the sick are pleased by the description of the medicine by the learned doctor in which there is hope of a cure, then when the doctor reminds them of the bitterness of the medicine and its taste, this clouds their view of the cure, likewise the worldly people are pleased with the delights of this world and the variety in it, then when they remember the suddenness of death, this clouds their view of these delights and spoils them.

In truth I say to you, verily all the people see the stars but the only ones who are guided by them are those who know their

courses and stations, and likewise, you learn wisdom, but only those who put it into practice are guided by it.

Woe unto you, O servants of this world! Thresh the wheat and make it good and grind it fine to savour its taste so the eating of it delights you. Likewise, purify your faith to savor its sweetness so its fruits may benefit you.

In truth I say to you, if you find a lamp that burns oil in a dark night, you seek light by it, and the smell of the oil does not prevent you from this. Likewise, it is suitable for you that you obtain wisdom from those in whom you find it, and his evil desires do not prevent you from this.

Woe unto you, O servants of this world! Your reasoning is not like that of the wise, your understanding is not like that of the patient, your knowing is not like that of the scholars; and you are not like the pious servants, and not like the noble free men. Soon this world will pull you out by your roots, and turn you on your faces, and cast you on your noses. Then your mistakes will take you by the forelocks, and your knowledge will push you from behind, until they surrender you to the King, the Reckoner, naked and alone, and He will punish you for your bad deeds.

Woe unto you, O servants of this world! You have not been given power over all people except by knowledge, then you threw it away and you did not put it into practice, and you turned toward the world, and by it you judge, and you prepare yourselves for it, and you prefer it and make it prosper, and how long will you last for this world? And for God you do not do anything in it.

In truth I say to you: you will not attain the dignity of the other world except by leaving what you love. So, do not wait until tomorrow for repentance. Before tomorrow there is a day and a night and during them the decree of Allah comes and goes.

In truth I say to you: Indeed you small wrongs and their being made to seem little are plots of *iblis*. He makes them seem little to

you and he makes them small in your eye; then they accumulate and increase and surround you.

In truth I say to you: To extol by lying and to boast of the purity of one's religiosity is at the head of notorious evil, and verily, love of this world is the head of every wrong.

In truth I say to you: there is nothing that does more to bring one to nobility in the other world and does more to help one with the occurrences of the world than constant prayer, and there is nothing nearer to the Merciful than it, so do this constantly and increase it. And every righteous work draws one nigh unto Allah, so prayer is the nearest to Him, and is most preferred by Him.

In truth I say to you; Surely, every work of an oppressed one who is not helped in word, in action, or in resentment, he is a great one in the kingdom of heaven. Who of you has seen light whose name is darkness or darkness whose name is light? Likewise being a believer and being an disbeliever cannot be gathered in a servant, and he cannot prefer this world while yearning for the other world. Does the sower of barley reap wheat, or does the sower of wheat reap barley? Likewise, every servant reaps in the other world what he has sown, and he will be compensated for what he has wrought.

In truth I say to you: Surely the people are two sorts with regard to wisdom. One makes it firm by his word, and spoils it by his bad work, and one makes it firm by his word and confirms it by his work. What a difference between them! Blessed are those who are scholars in their actions, and woe to those who are scholars [merely] in their words.

In truth I say to you: He who does not purify his sowings of weeds, they multiply in it until they take over and spoil them, and likewise he who does not expel the love for this world from his heart, it takes over his heart until he does not find the taste of love for the other world.

Woe unto you, O servants of this world! Take to the mosques of your Lord as prisons for your bodies, and make your hearts houses of piety, and do not make your heart a refuge for desires.

In truth I say to you: the most impatient of you with troubles, is he who has the most intense love of this world, and the most patient of you with troubles is the most disinterested with the world.

Woe unto you, O evil scholars! Were you not dead, then He revived you? Then when He revived you, you died.¹² Woe unto you! Were you not unlettered, then He taught you? Then when He taught you, you forgot. Woe unto you! Were you not empty, then Allah made you understand? Then when you were made to understand, you became ignorant. Woe unto you! Were you not astray, then He guided you? Then when He guided you, you went astray. Woe unto you! Were you not blind and He made you see? Then when He made you see, you became blind. Woe unto you! Were you not deaf, then He made you hear? Then when He made you hear, you became deaf. Woe unto you! Were you not dumb, then He made you speak? Then when He made you speak, you became dumb. Woe unto you! Did you not seek an opening, then when the opening was made for you, you retreated to [the ways of] your forefathers? Woe unto you! Were you not humbled and He made you honoured? Then when you were honoured you subjugated, transgressed and disobeyed. Woe unto you! Were you not oppressed in the earth, fearing that people would snatch you away, then He helped and supported you? Then when He helped you, you became arrogant and overbearing. Then alas to you because of your humiliation on the Day of Resurrection, how it will make you negligible and small.

Alas to you, O evil scholars! You do the deeds of infidels, and you have the hope of inheritors, and you have the assurance of the secure, but the order of Allah is not as you wish and choose, rather

you have children for death, and you build and make habitable for destruction, and you make preparations for your legacy.¹³

In truth I say to you: Verily Moses ('a) used to command you: Do not swear by Allah truly or falsely, but say no or yes.¹⁴

O children of Israel! For you are the vegetables of the fields and barley bread, and I prohibit wheat bread for you, for I fear you will not establish thanksgiving for it.

In truth I say to you, surely the people are well off or afflicted. So, praise Allah for being well off, and have mercy on those who are troubled.

In truth I say to you, for every bad word you say, you will be given its answer on the Day of Resurrection.

O evil servants! When one of you brings close a sacrificial [animal] to slaughter, then he is reminded that his brother has something against him, then he should leave his sacrifice and go to his brother and make him satisfied, then he should return to his sacrifice and slaughter it.

O evil servants! If a shirt is taken from one of you, then give your cloak with it. And whoever is slapped on his cheek, he should let his other cheek [be slapped]. And whoever is subjected to one mile, let him go another mile with him.

In truth I say to you, of what benefit is it for the body that its exterior is sound and its interior rotten. And of what benefit is it to you that your bodies be pleasing to you, while your hearts are rotten. And of what benefit is it to you if you purify your skins but your hearts are unclean.

In truth I say to you, do not be like a sieve that expels good flour and retains the waste. Likewise, you expel wisdom from your mouths, and hatred remains in your breasts.

In truth I say to you, begin with evil and abandon it, then seek good. It will benefit you. If you gather good with evil, the good will not benefit you.

mercy of Allah is the gate to every truth, and the keys to it are prayer and supplication and action. How can a gate be opened without a key.

In truth I say to you, a wise man does not plant a tree unless he is pleased with it, and he does not ride on a horse unless he is pleased with it; likewise, the knowing believer does not do a deed unless it is pleasing to his Lord.

In truth I say to you, verily, polishing makes a sword right and makes it shine; likewise wisdom in the heart polishes it and makes it shine, and in the heart of the wise it is like water in the dead earth. It revives his heart like water revives the dead earth, and in the heart of the wise it is like light in the darkness, he walks by it among the people.

In truth I say to you, carrying stones from the tops of mountains is better than saying something to someone who does not understand what you say, like one who puts a stone in water to soften it, like one who prepares food for the people of the graves.

Blessed is he who refrains from excessive speech, because he fears the wrath of His Lord. And he does not narrate a narration unless he understands it, and he does not envy someone for his speech until his action becomes clear for him.

Blessed is he who learns from the learned that of which he is ignorant, and who teaches the ignorant of what he knows.

Blessed is he who honours the scholars for their knowledge, and who abandons disputing with them, and who takes lightly the ignorant for their ignorance,¹⁵ and does not drive them away, but brings them close and teaches them.

In truth I say to you, O group of disciples, surely today, you are like the alive among the people who are dead, so do not die with the death of those alive.¹⁶ (*Tuhaf al-'Uqūl*, 501-513)

It is appropriate to conclude this selection with a prayer of Jesus ('a) said to have been narrated by the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the members of his household, peace be with them all.

Among the supplications mentioned are those of Jesus that we reported with our chain of narrators to Sa'id ibn Hibatullāh al-Rāwandī, may Allah have mercy on him, from the book, *Qasas al-Anbiyā'* (Stories of the Prophets), with a chain of narrators to Imam al-Sādiq ('a) from his forefathers, peace be with them, that the Prophet, may the blessings of Allah be with him, said, "When the Jews gathered before Jesus ('a) to kill him, as they imagined, Gabriel ('a) came to him and covered him with his wing. Then Jesus looked at him carefully. There was writing within Gabriel and it was: 'O Allah! I call You by Your most mighty name, *al-Wāhid* (the One), and I call You, O Allah, by Your name, *al-Samad* (the Everlasting Refuge), and I call You, O Allah, by Your single name, *al-'Azīm* (the Majestic), and I call You, O Allah, by Your exalted name, *al-Kabīr* (the Great), by which all Your pillars stand firm, remove the troubles I have morning and night.' When Jesus ('a) called him by this, Allah revealed to Gabriel, 'Raise him to Me.'" Then the Messenger of Allah, may the blessing of Allah be with him, said, "O Children of 'Abd al-Mutallib! Beseech your Lord by these words. By Allah, in Whose hand is my soul! No servant has called upon Him with these words without the throne being moved, and without Allah saying to the angels, 'Bear witness that I, verily, answered him for these words and gave him what he asked in the transient world and in the term of the hereafter.'" Then he said to his companions, "Beseech [Allah] by these words and do not delay [His] answer." (*Bihār* 95, 175)

Notes:

1. Imam 'Alī ('a) is reported to have referred to Jesus ('a) as "my brother" in *Bihār* vol. 14, p. 320, no. 26, and the Prophet (S) is reported to have referred to him ('a) in this way in *Bihār* 14, 321, 27 and *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 12, 39.
2. Kulaynī, Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, pp. 131-141.
3. Literally, "Clip your fingernails from illicit gain."

Compilation of Imam ‘Alí’s Words and the Classification of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

By: Muhammad Mahdi Mehrizi

Translated by Mahdi Chaman-zār

A. Compilation of Imam ‘Alí’s Words

Ever since the early years of Islam, the eloquent wordings of Imam ‘Alí (‘a), especially his unparalleled sermons, have attracted the attention of the literati as well as the common man. Those familiar with the intricate beauties of the Arabic language, had collected or compiled these precious bezels of wisdom, starting from the lifetime of the Commander of the Faithful. As the historian Abū al-Hasan Mas‘udī (d. 346 AH) says:

“What the people had memorised or preserved of (the sayings of) Imam ‘Alí (‘a) and according to which they acted in word and deed, were 400 sermons as well as 80-odd sermons which he had delivered extempore.”¹

According to the bibliographical works, centuries before Sayyid Razi compiled his magnum opus *Nahj al-Balāghah*, several scholars had collected in book-form the sayings and judgements of Imam ‘Alī (‘a). The list is long and is out of scope of this article. However, it would suffice to mention the names of some of the prominent persons whose collections were well known before Razi took up the task:

1. ‘Ubaydullah bin Abi Rāfi’: Shaykh Tūsi has stated in *al-Fihrist*: “‘Ubaydullāh bin Abi Rāfi’ is the author of the book *Qāzāyā Amīr al-Mu‘minīn*.”²

2. Zayd bin Wahab Juhani; Shaykh Tūsi in *al-Fihrist* states: “Zayd bin Wahab is the author a book on the sermons of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a), titled *Khutab Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a) ‘alā al-Manābir fī al-Jum‘ah wa al-A‘yād wa Ghayrihā*.”³

3. Muhammad bin Qays Bajalli; According to Shaykh Tūsi, he is the author of the book *Qazāyā Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a)*.⁴

4. Asbagh bin Nubatah; Shaykh has written in *al-Fihrist*: “Asbagh ibn Nubatah was one of the close companions of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a) who survived the Imam and has narrated the epistle which was written to Mālik al-Ashtar on being appointed the governor of Egypt. He is also the narrator of the Imam’s long *wasiyyah* (will) to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah.”⁵

5. Ismā‘il bin Mihrān; Shaykh Tūsi says about him: “He was a companion of Imam Rizā (‘a) and has narrated from him. He is the author of several books including the one titled *Kitāb Khutab Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a)*.”⁶

6. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm bin Hāshim al-Qummi; Shaykh Tūsi says about him: “He was a companion of Imam Rizā (‘a), and of the books which he wrote mention could be made of *al-Nawādir* and *Kitāb Qazāyā Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a)*.”⁷

7. Sālih bin Abi Hammād Rāzi; al-Najāshi in his *Rijāl* states: “He was a companion of Imam Hādī (‘a) and is the author of several books including *Kitāb Khutab Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a)*.”⁸

8. Hishām Kalbī (d. 206): al-Najāshī says about him: "He is the author of several books including *Kitāb Khutab Amīr al-Mu'minīn* ('a)."⁹

Ibn Nadīm also confirms this in his *al-Fihrist* that Hishām al-Kalbī was the compiler of the sermons of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a).¹⁰

9. Ibrāhīm bin Nahmī: Shaykh Tūsī and al-Najāshī say that he was the author of several books including *Kitāb al-Khutab*.¹¹

10. Abu al-Hasan 'Alī bin Muhammad al-Madā'īnī al-Akhbarī: Khawānsārī says that he was the author of as many as 200 books of *hadīth* and history including *Kitāb Khutab Amīr al-Mu'minīn* ('a).¹²

11. 'Abd al-'Azīz Jallūdī: al-Najāshī says in *al-Rijāl*: He is the author of several books. As related by scholars among his books (on the wordings of Imam 'Alī) are *Musnad Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, *Kitāb al-Khutab* (sermons), *Kitāb al-Shi'r* (poems), *Kitāb al-Qazā'* (judgements), *al-Rasā'il* (letters), *Maw'azah* (maxims) and *Du'ā'* (supplications).¹³

12. 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Hasanī: His tomb in Rayy is a site of pilgrimage revered as Shah 'Abd al-'Azīm, and according to al-Najāshī he compiled the book titled *Kitāb Khutab Amīr al-Mu'minīn* ('a).¹⁴

13. Ibrāhīm Thaqafī (d. 283): According to al-Najāshī he wrote several books including books on the *Rasā'il*, *Akhbār* and *Khutab* of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a).¹⁵

14. Muhammad bin Khālid al-Barqī: According to al-Najāshī he wrote several books including *Kitāb al-Khutab*.¹⁶

15. Muhammad bin Ahmad Kūfī Sābūnī: According to al-Najāshī he is the author of several books including *Kitāb al-Khutab*.¹⁷

16. Muhammad bin 'Isā Ash'arī: He was a companion of Imam Rizā and Imam Jawād ('a) and has related *hadīth* from them. He is the author of *Kitāb al-Khutab*.¹⁸

17. Jāhiz (d. 255): He has collected 100 of the short sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a) under the title "*Matlūb Kull Tālib min Kalām Amīr al-Mu'minin 'Alī bin Abī Tālib*". He says in the introduction to his work: "Every single word (of Imam 'Alī) is equal to 1000 words of wisdom expressed by the Arabs." Ibn Maytham Bahrānī, Rashīd al-Dīn Watwāt and 'Abd al-Wahhāb have written three famous commentaries on this collection.¹⁹

Furthermore, 'Allāmah Tehranī in *al-Dhari'ah* has listed a great number of the books titled '*Usūl*' which contained the sermons of Imam 'Alī ('a).²⁰

Nahj al-Balāghah was a high water mark in this regard and created a lively trend in the writing of commentaries on the sayings of the Commander of Faithful. But Razī, as he says in his introduction to *Nahj al-Balāghah*, had not collected all that was said by Imam 'Alī ('a), since it was difficult for him to have access to all that was related from Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a). Thus, scholars who came after Razī, continued this trend of collecting and selecting the sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a). Among them mention could be made of the following authors and their works:

1. 'Abd al-Wāhed bin Muḥammad Tamīmī Amudī (d. 510). He compiled the book *Ghurār al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim* in which he has collected 11,050 of short sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a), compared to 480 selected by Razī.

2. Abu 'Abdullāh Qazā'ī (d. 454): He has collected the sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a) spread over nine chapters in his book titled: *Ma'ālīm al-Hukamā' wa Mathūrah Makārim al-Shiyam*.²¹

3. Shaykh al-Tabrisī (d. 548): He has arranged the sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a) in alphabetical order in his book *Kitāb Nathr al-Liālī*.²²

4. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd Mu'tazilī (d: 655): In his voluminous commentary on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, he has selected 1,000 sayings of Imam 'Alī ('a) that were not mentioned by Sayyid Razī.²³

B. Classification of *Nahj al-Balāghah*

Nahj al-Balāghah is a vast and deep ocean of knowledge that cannot be fathomed easily. Although scholars and researchers have tried to delve into this ocean of wonder, they have not yet succeeded in fully locating or comprehending the pearls of knowledge that the words of Imam 'Ali contain. The topics or subjects of this immensely rich book are so broad and varied that they cannot be easily enumerated. Thus, those who have focused their research on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, have endeavoured to identify the subjects of this book to their best ability, yet it could be said that they have succeeded fully in their efforts. Some of the prominent efforts made in this field are as follows:

A. Martyr Murtazā Mutahhari says in his valuable book “*Sayri dar Nahj al-Balāghah*”, that there are quite many subjects and topics in this book which could be broadly defined as follows:²⁵

1. Theology and the Supranatural / *Ilāhiyyāt wa Māwarā' al-Tabī'ah*
2. Manners and Worship / *Sulūk wa 'Ibādat*
3. Government and Justice / *Hukūmat wa 'Idālat*
4. World and worldliness / *Dunyā wa Dunyā-Parasti*
5. Epic and Bravery / *Hamāsah wa Shajā'at*
6. Poetical Saga and Mysteries / *Malāhim wa Maghibāt*
7. Supplications / *Du'ā wa Munājāt*
8. Criticism of People's Behaviour
9. Social Principles
10. Islam and Qur'an
11. Ethics and Self-Reform
12. Personalities

B. The Syrian Researcher, Labīb Bayzūn in his book, *Tasnīf Nahj al-Balāghah*²⁶ has presented a more precise categorization in this regard. Actually he has categorized the contents of *Nahj al-*

Balāghah under nine general definitions, each of which consists of several subjects –49 in all– and each subject is made up of numerous specific topics numbering 376. His definitions are as follows:

1. Fundamentals of Religion / *Usūl al-Dīn*
2. Practical Laws of Religion / *Furū' al-Dīn*
3. Leadership and Leaders / *al-Imāmah wa al-A'immaḥ*
4. Lifestyle of Imam 'Alī ('a) / *Sīrah al-Imām*
5. Wars of the Imam during his caliphate / *Hurūb al-Imām*
6. State Policy / *Siyāsah al-Dawlah*
7. Social Affairs / *al-Shu'ūn al-Ijtimā'iyah*
8. Man and Personal Affairs / *al-Insān wa Shu'ūnuḥ*
9. Maxims and Advices / *al-Mawū'iz wa al-Irshādāt*

C. In the book *al-Dalīl 'alā al-Mawzū'āt Nahj al-Balāghah* ²⁷ *Nahj al-Balāghah* has been categorized into 7 broad definitions and 132 specific subjects. The definitions are as follows:

1. Divinity and Universe / *al-Ilāhiyyāt wa al-Kā'ināt*
2. Prophethood / *al-Nabuwwah*
3. Fundamentals of Religion and Practical Laws / *al-'Aqā'id wa al-Aḥkām*
4. Leadership and Government / *al-Imāmah wa al-Khilāfah*
5. History / *al-Tārikh*
6. Society, Politics and Economy / *al-Ijtimā' wa al-Siyāsah wa al-Iqtisād*
7. Ethics / *al-Aḥlāq*

D. Uways 'Abd al-Karīm Muhammad in his book *al-Mu'jam al-Mawzū'ī li Nahj al-Balāghah* is critical of the methods used by earlier scholars to classify *Nahj al-Balāghah*. He has pointed out the deficiency in their approach and has categorized *Nahj al-Balāghah* into 22 sections, each of which contains a number of subjects, which in turn cover many topics. He has listed 604 topics

in all.²⁸ The 22 sections in which he has divided the book are as follows:

1. Wisdom and Knowledge / *al-'Aql wa al-'Ilm*
2. Islam, Faith, Certainty, Disbelief, Polytheism and Doubt / *al-Islām wa al-Imān wa al-Yaqīn wa al-Kufr wa al-Shirk wa al-Shakk.*
3. The Qur'ān and the Prophet's *Sunnah* / *al-Qur'ān wa Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*
4. Fundamentals of Religion / *Usūl al-Dīn*
5. Worship, / *al-'Ibādāt*
6. Piety and the Pious / *al-Taghwā wa al-Muttaqīn*
7. Fear and Hope / *al-Khawf wa al-Rajā'*
8. Repentance, Forgiveness of Sins / *al-Tawbah wa Ghufrān al-Dhunūb*
9. Supplications / *al-Du'ā' wa al-Ad'iyah al-Ma'thurah 'anh*
10. Asceticism / *al-Zuhd*
11. Advices and Moral Lessons / *al-Maw'izah wa al-I'tibār*
12. Enjoining of Good and Forbidding of Evil / *al-Amr Bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar*
13. *Jihād*, Battle Technique and Martyrdom / *al-Jihād wa Fann al-Harb wa al-Shahādah*
14. Islamic Ruler and his Qualities / *al-Hākim al-Islāmī wa Khasā'isuh*
15. Economic issues in *Nahj al-Balāghah* / *al-Jānib al-Iqtisādī fi al-Nahj al-Balāghah*
16. The Greater Jihad or Self-Reform / *Jihād al-Akbar aw Tahdhīb al-Nafs*
17. Ethics / *al-Akhlāq*
18. Family, Kinsfolk, Spouse, Educating Children and Neighbours / *al-Urah wa al-Aqrabā' wa al-Mar'uh wa Tarbiyah al-Abnā' wa al-Jār*
19. Friendship and Friends / *Al-Sidāqah wa al-Asdiqā'*
20. Historical Issues / *al-Qazāyā al-Tārikhiyyah*

21. Judgement and Verdict/ *al-Qazā' wa al-Iftā'*
22. Miscellaneous Issues / *Mawāzi' Mutafarraḡah*

In addition to the above mentioned scholars and their definitions of the subjects found in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, several other researchers have listed their own categorization of the jewels of knowledge that this great book contains. Following are names of some of these works and their authors:

1. *Fahāris* (Indices) *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Subhī Sālih²⁹
2. *Al-Hādī ilā Mawzu'āt Nahj al-Balāghah*, 'Alī Meshkini³⁰
3. *Farhang-e Afiāb*, 'Abd al-Majid Mu'ādikhawah³¹
4. *Qāmūs Nahj al-Balāghah*,³² Muhammad 'Alī Sharqī³³

It is worth noting that in addition to the above-mentioned books and their authors, several researchers have written works on specific topics of *Nahj al-Balāghah*. The names of some of these books are mentioned below:

1. *Hikmat Nazarī wa 'Amali dar Nahj al-Balāghah* by 'Abdullāh Jawādī Amulī;³⁴
2. *Insān Kūmil dar Nahj al-Balāghah* by Hasan Hasanzādeh Amulī;³⁵
3. *Ilāhiyyāt dar Nahj al-Balāghah* by Lutfullāh Sāfi;³⁶
4. *Dunyā dar Nahj al-Balāghah* by Sayyid Mahdī Shams al-Dīn;³⁷
5. *Jāhiliyyat az Didgāh Qur'ān wa Nahj al-Balāghah* by Ahmad Sādiqī Ardestānī;³⁸
6. *Jihād az Didgāh Imam 'Alī dar Nahj al-Balāghah* by 'Abāss 'Alī 'Amid Zanjānī;³⁹
7. *Khawārij az Didgāh Nahj al-Balāghah* by Husayn Nūri;⁴⁰
8. *Jāmi'ah az Didgāh Nahj al-Balāghah* by Waliyyullāh Barzegar;⁴¹

9. *Hukūmat-i Islāmī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, produced by a team work,⁴²

Notes:

1. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 19.
2. Tusī, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, *al-Fihrist*, p. 107, No. 456.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 72, No. 291; al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 236.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 131, No. 579.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 11 & 32.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4, No. 3.
8. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 140.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
10. Ibn Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 108.
11. Tūsī, p. 6, No. 8; al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 14.
12. Khawānsārī, Muhammad Baqir Musawī, *Rawzāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 5, p. 199.
13. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, pp. 167-168
14. 'Allāmah Hillī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 130.
15. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, pp. 13-14.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
19. This collection was researched and edited by Muhaddith Urmawī and published by Tehran University, 1390 AH.
20. Tehranī, Aqā Buzurg, *al-Dhari'ah*, vol. 7, p. 187, vol. 14, pp. 111-112.
21. This is an offset version by Maktabah al-Mufid of the original edition published in Egypt.
22. *Al-Dhari'ah*, vol. 24, P. 53.
23. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 4, pp. 530-573.
24. The Introduction written by Sayyid Razi to *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

25. Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Sayri dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, pp. 30-31.

26. Labīb Bayzūn, *Tasnīf Nahj al-Balāghah*, pp. 9-26.

27. Ansāriyān, 'Alī, *al-Dalīl 'alā al-Mawzū'āt Nahj al-Balāghah*, pp. 9-15.

28. *Al-Mu'jam al-Mawzū'i li Nahj al-Balāghah*, pp. 464-500.

29. Lebanese researcher Subhī Sālih has provided a list of indices at the end of *Nahj al-Balāghah* and arranged in alphabetical order the subjects he has derived from the book. Under each subject he has referred to the relevant text in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. There is also a subject-wise list of sermons and letters, while a third list classifies such subjects as matters related to faith, *Shari'ah* laws, philosophy, theology and social Issues.

30. The author has arranged the topics in *Nahj al-Balāghah* in alphabetical order, and under each topic, he has presented the relevant text from the book.

31. This is a 10-volume work is a lexicon in alphabetical order on the concepts mentioned in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Under each entry, the relevant text from *Nahj al-Balāghah* together along its Persian translation has been given.

32. Although, this 4-volume book deals with definitions and interpretations of the words of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, it could also be called a subject-wise classification, since under each phrase, the relevant text is given.

33. There are other classifications, which are under process and have not yet been completed. Refer to "What do we know about Islam?" *Nahj al-Balāghah*, pp. 105-108 & pp. 111-114.

34. Jawādī Amulī, 'Abdullāh, *Hikmat Nazarī wa 'Amālī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, Qum, Daftar-i Intishārāt Islāmī, 1362 S, 168 pages.

35. Hasanzādah Amulī, Hasan, *Insān Kāmil dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, 3rd edition, Nashr-i Roshangar, 1365 S, p. 176 pages. This book has been translated into Arabic by 'Abd al-Razzāq

Iftikhāri under the title "*al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Nahj al-Balāghah*", and published by Mu'assasah al-Ma'arif al-Islāmiyyah, 1416 AH, 229 pages.

36. Sāfi Gulpayegāni, Lutfullāh, *Ilāhiyyāt dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, first edition, Bonyād-i Nahj al-Balāghah, 1361 S, 343 pages.

37. Shams al-Dīn, Mahdī, *Dunyā dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, first edition, Ministry of Islamic Culture & Guidance, Tehran, 1365 S, 147 pages.

38. Sādiqī Ardestāni, Ahmad, *Jāhiliyyat az Didgāh-i Qur'ān wa Nahj al-Balāghah*, Nashr-i Muhammad, Qum, 1362 S, 112 pages.

39. 'Amīd Zanjāni, 'Abass 'Alī, *Jihād az Didgāh-i Imam 'Alī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, 5th edition, Ministry of Islamic Culture & Guidance, Tehran, 1366 S, 174 pages.

40. Nūri, Husayn, *Khawārij az Didgāh-i Nahj al-Balāghah*, Daftar-i Intishārāt-i Islāmi, Qum, 1361 S, 175 pages.

41. Barzegar, Waliyullāh, *Jāmi'ah az Didgāh Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sāzmān-i Tablighāt-i Islāmi, Tehran, 1372 S, 447 pages.

42. *Hukūmat-i Islāmi dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, by a group of researchers, Bonyād Nahj al-Balāghah, Tehran, 1368 S, 216 pages.

Sayyid Razí: Life and Works

By: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Mahdí Ja'farí
Translated by Mahdí Chaman-zār

Life

Abū al-Hasan Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Mūsawī, popularly known as Sayyid or Sharif Razí, lived a brief but highly fruitful life. So great has been his contribution to Islamic sciences that a study of his life and works requires an analysis of almost all works on history, biographies and literature written since the 5th century AH.

The life of Sayyid Razí who was born in 359 AH/970 CE in Baghdad and died in the year 406/1015 in his hometown, coincided with the era of the Buyid dynasty (334-447/946-1056) which had reduced the Abbasid caliphs to mere nominal rulers. It was the golden age of Arabic literature and among his contemporaries mention could be made of the great poets al-Mutinabbi and Abū al-'Alā' Mu'arri.

Sayyid Razí was born in a prominent household directly descended from the Prophet, as is clear from the epithets of 'Sayyid' and 'Sharif' by which he was referred. His father Abū Ahmad Husayn bin Mūsā was fifth in line of descent from the 7th

Imam, Musā al-Kāzim ('a), and held the prestigious position of the *Naqīb al-Nuqabā'* of Iraq, a responsibility which required the managing of affairs of the *Sādāts* (Prophet's descendants). He was given the title of 'Tāhir Awhad Dhū al-Manāqīb' and died in 396 and was buried in the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) in Karbalā'. At his death, Sayyid Razi, who had been acting as his father's deputy since 381, officially became the *Naqīb al-Nuqabā'* and held the position till his own death in 406/1015. His father's genealogy reads: Husayn bin Musā bin Muhammad bin Mūsā bin Ibrāhīm Mujāb bin Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim ('a).

Sayyid Razi's mother Fātimah also traced her lineage to the Prophet and was the daughter of Husayn bin Abū Muhammad al-Hasan al-Utrūsh bin 'Alī bin Hasan bin 'Umar al-Ashraf the son of the 4th Infallible Imam, 'Alī ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a). She was a pious and noble lady, and was held in high esteem by scholars and other notables. At her request, the great scholar Shaykh Mufīd compiled the book *Ahkām al-Nisā'* which contains the *fiqhī* rules for women. Her family had carved out an independent principality in Tabaristān on the southern coasts of the Caspian Sea. She died in Baghdad in 385 AH.

There is an interesting story how Sayyid Razi and his elder brother 'Alī Abu al-Qasim Sayyid Murtazā started their formal Islamic education.

According to Ibn Abi al-Hadīd in *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, Shaykh Mufīd saw a dream that a lady appearing to be the Prophet's daughter Hazrat Fātimah Zahrā' ('a) entered his mosque in the Karkh locality of Baghdad with two small boys and asked him to teach them *fiqh*. The Shaykh woke up in a rather perplexed state of mind in view of his own paucity of knowledge when compared to Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a). But the next day when Fātimah, the wife of the *Naqīb al-Nuqabā'*, entered the mosque with her two sons and requested him to teach them Islamic

sciences, he understood the purport of his dream and accepted her request with great honour.¹

The two brothers together soon mastered different branches of Islamic sciences under Shaykh Mufid and other leading scholars of Baghdad, but unlike Sayyid Razi who was more inclined towards politics and literature, Sayyid Mortazā was deeply interested in *fiqh*.

Sayyid Murtazā, who acquired the epithet of 'Alam al-Hudā, was four years older than his brother and died at the age of 81 years in 436/ 1044. He served as *Naqīb al-Nuqabā'* after the death of Sayyid Razi and was considered a master of *kalām*, *fiqh*, *usūl al-fiqh*, literature, grammar, poetry and other fields of knowledge. His divan or poetical composition runs into more than 20,000 verses. He authored several books such as *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah*, *al-Dhakhīrah fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, *al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, and *al-Tanzīh*.²

All Shi'ite and Sunni scholars acknowledge that Sayyid Murtazā was the greatest scholar of his era and groomed many outstanding '*ulamā'*' including the famous Shaykh al-Tā'ifah Abū Ja'far al-Tusi, the founder of the celebrated theological Centre of Najaf.

Sayyid Razi's only son Abu Ahmad 'Adnān was also a prominent scholar of his time and after the death of his uncle Sayyid Murtazā, he was entrusted with the post of *Naqīb al-Nuqabā'*. He was given the title of his grandfather 'Tāher Dhu al-Manaqeb' by the Buyid ruler and was highly respected for his knowledge and nobility of character. 'Adnān died issueless in 449 and with his death the physical line of Sayyid Razi came to an end. However, Sayyid Razi was destined for lasting fame in view of his valuable works, especially the compilation of the sermons, letters, and maxims of Imam 'Alī ('a) under the title *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

Teachers and Students

Sayyid Rāzī's genius flowered in early youth under the celebrated Abī 'Abdullāh Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Nu'mān known popularly as Shaykh Mufīd. Among his other teachers, mention could be made of the Malikite jurist Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm bin Ahmad Tabarī, the grammarian Abū 'Alī Hasan bin Ahmad 'Abd al-Ghaffār al-Fārsī, Abū Sa'id Hasan bin 'Abdullāh bin Marzbān al-Baghdadī who was known as Qāzī Sīrāfī, the Mu'tazalite scholar Abū al-Hasan Qāzī 'Abd al-Jabbār bin Ahmad al-Baghdadī, the preacher Abū Yahyā 'Abd al-Rahīm bin Muhammad Fāriqī known as Khatīb al-Misrī, the Qāzī of Baghdad Abū Muhammad 'Abdullāh bin Muhammad al-Asadī al-Akfānī, Abū al-Fath 'Uthmān ibn al-Jinnī al-Mūsīlī al-Baghdadī (d. 392/1002), Abū al-Hasan 'Alī bin 'Isā Raba'ī al-Baghdadī al-Shirāzī (d. 420/1029), Abū al-Qāsim 'Isā bin 'Alī bin 'Isā Dāwūd bin Jarrāh al-Baghdadī, Abū Bakr Muhammad bin Mūsā al-Khawārazmī al-Baghdadī, the Hanafite scholar Muhammad bin Yahyā bin Mahdī Abū 'Abdullāh al-Jurjānī and Abū Muhammad Sahl bin Ahmad bin 'Abdullāh bin Sahl al-Dibajī.

As is evident Sayyid Rāzī studied under scholars of different religious persuasions in order to master the various branches of the sciences and to state with authority his own views and beliefs. Sayyid Rāzī started holding his own classes at a very young age, by setting up a school near his house in the Karkh locality and named it Dār al-'Ilm. It was a large school consisting of several buildings and halls for convening classes, presenting speeches and holding meetings and academic debates with researchers. It also had resident quarters for eligible students and was equipped with a large library filled with important Arabic and Islamic reference books and sources.

Sayyid Rāzī, personally administered the school, student affairs and the library. He constantly sought to meet the welfare needs of the students, so that they could go about their studies with

a clear mind. As a result, a great number of intellectuals graduated from his school, which had become popular throughout the Islamic lands including Iran and Egypt. Needless to say, these graduates in turn taught and transferred their knowledge acquired through Sayyid Razi to other generations.

Among the students of Sayyid Razi who became outstanding scholars mention could be made of:

1. Abū Zayd Sayyid ‘Abdullāh al-Kabāyiki al-Husayni al-Jurjāni.
2. Abū ‘Abdullāh Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Alī Hulwāni.
3. Abū ‘Abdullāh Shaykh Ja‘far bin Muhammad bin Ahmad Dūryastī ‘Abasi, (d. 473).
4. Abū al-Hasan Sayyid ‘Alī bin Bindār bin Muhammad Qāzi Hāshimī.
5. Hāfiz Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin Abī Bakr Khuzā‘ī Nayshābūrī, (d. 445).
6. Abū Bakr Nayshābūrī Ahmad bin Husayn bin Ahmad Khuzā‘ī, (d. 480).
7. Abū al-Hasan Mahyār Daylamī bin Marzawayh (d. 428).
8. Qāzi Abū Mansūr Muhammad bin Abī Nasr ‘Ukbarī Mu‘addil Baghdādī, (d. 472).

Works

Sayyid Razi was an outstanding Arabic poet and a literary genius, and his aesthetic taste could be evinced from his works. ‘Abd al-Latif Sharārah says of him:

This great man in his relatively short life as compared to Abū al-‘Alā al-Mu‘arri, besides keeping pace with important events and political developments, was engrossed in literature, literary research, and the study of rhetorical aspects and *fiqh*. As the *Naqīb*, he assumed responsibility of the affairs of the Tālībiyyin (descendants of Abū Tālib) and led the *Hajj* pilgrimage. At the

same time he established the Dār al-'Ilm Academy and wrote a number of books.

His most famous work for which he made great efforts and named it *Nahj al-Balāghah*, is a collection of the sermons, letters and maxims of Imam 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib ('a). Ibn Abī al-Hadīd has written a commentary on this book in 20 volumes while Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh has made it available to the common man in a summarised interpretation. Sharif Rāzī also devoted himself to research on the rhetorical and linguistic aspects of Arabic, and the fruit of his efforts is the book *Talkhīs al-Bayān fī Majāzāt al-Qur'ān*, which has been researched and published in 464 pages by Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghanī Hasan.⁴

1. *Talkhīs al-Bayān fī Majāzāt al-Qur'ān*

Sayyid Rāzī had referred to this work many times in his other book *Majāzāt al-Athār al-Nabawīyyah* but it was given up for lost for several centuries until the accidental discovery of its manuscript by Sayyid Muhammad Mishkat who published it as a photostat edition in 1950. It is a detailed study on the metaphorical aspects of the *sūrah*s and *ayah*s of the Holy Qur'ān and is considered among the greatest literary treasures of Islam. In the words of the author: "Before me, no one has dealt with this subject so exclusively." According to Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghanī Hasan who researched and published this invaluable work from Cairo in 1955, whatever Abū 'Ubaydah Mu'ammār ibn al-Muthannā⁵ (*Majāz al-Qur'ān* in the last part of the 2nd century AH), al-Jāhiz (in *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* and *al-Hayawān*) and his student Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) had written on the subject of *majāz* (metaphor) in the holy Qur'ān was in a very limited sense and was confined to interpretation of certain *ayah*s, but *Talkhīs al-Bayān* is the first exclusive work with the specific aim of studying the metaphorical aspects and different meanings of the Qur'ānic vocabulary as found in the *sūrah*s and *ayah*s of the Book of God. However, Rāzī's work is not an exegesis

of the holy Qur'an and deals with only those *ayahs* which have a metaphorical import.

2. *Majāzāt al-Athār al-Nabawiyyah*

Prophet Muhammad (S) is considered the most fluent of the Arabs and his speech and words are the most eloquent form and style of Arabic after the Revealed Word of Almighty Allah, the Holy Qur'an.

Since the time of the Prophet, several scholars have diligently recorded, compiled, quoted and written commentaries on his sayings, to the extent that numerous collections, which could fill up libraries, have been published. However, what Sayyid Razi, the literary genius has been able to accomplish in this respect, in the same manner as his unique compilation of Imam 'Ali's ('a) literary output under the title of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, is quite different. It is clear that this work was undertaken after completing *Nahj al-Balāghah*, since he often refers to *Nahj* in *Majāzāt al-Athār al-Nabawiyyah*. Sayyid Razi selected 361 sayings of the Prophet which have a metaphorical import, and explained the meaning of each one of them. This book was written before *Talkhis al-Bayān* and has been published several times in Egypt, Iraq and Iran.

3. *Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl fī Mutashābih al-Tanzīl*

Ahmad ibn 'Ali Dāwūdī in his book *'Umdah al-Tālib* quotes Abu al-Hasan 'Umari as saying:

"I have seen an excellent exegesis of the holy Qur'an, considered to be Razi's work, which is as voluminous or even larger than the exegesis of Abū Ja'far Tabarī (or Abū Ja'far Tūsī)."⁵

'Allāmah Amīnī in *al-Ghadir* has stated that *Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, as mentioned in *Majāzāt Athār al-Nabawiyyah*, is an exegesis of the holy Qur'an compiled by Sayyid Razi, who in another place has referred to it as 'the great book on *Mutashābihāt*

al-Qur'ān. Abu al-'Abbās al-Najāshī in his *al-Fihrist* has referred to it as *Haḡā'iq al-Tanzīl*, while the author of *'Umdah al-Tālib* has called it *al-Mutashābih fi al-Qur'ān*.⁷

Ibn al-Jinnī, the teacher of Sayyid Rāzī, in his introduction to this book has stated: "Rāzī has written a book on the interpretation of the Qur'ān which has no parallel."⁸ Khatīb Baghdādī in his book *Tārīkh al-Baghdād* has quoted his teacher, Ahmad ibn Muhammad (d. 445) as saying: "Rāzī's book of interpretation of the Qur'ān is unique and unparalleled."⁹ The purport of writing this exegesis was to prove with convincing argument that the holy Qur'ān contains nothing superfluous and every letter has its own place and meaning.

4. *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*

This is another work on the holy Qur'ān ascribed to Sayyid Rāzī. Abū al-Hasan al-'Umārī (Nassābah) in his book *al-Mujdī* says that he saw a part of the exegesis of the holy Qur'ān ascribed to Rāzī and found it is as great as Abu Ja'far Tabarī's work.

Ibn Shahr Ashūb in his *Ma'ālim al-'Ulamā'*, has termed it a unique work as mentioned by al-'Umārī, while Ibn Khallikān in his *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, is of the opinion that Sayyid Rāzī in view of his versatility in Arabic literature cannot be equalled in the interpretation of the holy Qur'ān.¹⁰

5. *Khasā'is al-A'immaḡ 'Alayhim al-Salām*

In his introduction to *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sayyid Rāzī says:

In my youth, I resolved to write a book on the distinguishing qualities of the Twelve Imams ('a), their history, their exemplary way of life and their wise sayings. I completed a book on the merits and qualities of Amīr al-Mu'minīn Imam 'Alī ('a), but unfortunately, the countless complexities of daily life and other obstacles prevented me from continuing the work.¹¹

This work has been published several times in Iran and Iraq under the title of *Khasā'is Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib*

'Alayh al-Salām. The edition published by the Islamic Research Centre of the holy shrine of Imam Riza in Mashhad in 1406/1986 is considered the most authoritative and has been edited by Dr. Muhammad Hādī Amīnī with valuable footnotes on the basis of an old manuscript which was confirmed by Sayyid al-Imām al-Faqīh Ibn Rāwandī (d. 570 AH) and passed down to his student, Fakhr al-'Ulāmā' Abū 'Alī 'Ubaydullāh Ibn al-Husayn.

6. *Akhbār Quzāt Baghdād*

According to Qāzī Safī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Sālih Yamānī Zaydī's *Matla' al-Budūr* vol. 2, this is an account by Sayyid Razī of the judges (*Quzāt* pl. of *Qāzī*) of Baghdād.

7. *Dīwān al-Shi'r*

The poetical talents of Sayyid Razī blossomed while he was a mere lad of 10 years, and the first *qasidah* (panegyric) composed by him made the literati of Baghdād spellbound.

Since his days, efforts were made to collect his poems and the last one to compile them as a book was Abū Hakīm al-Mu'allim 'Abdullāh al-Khayrī (d. 476). The *dīwān* of Sayyid Razī consists of 16,300 verses and has been popular since his lifetime. The Buyid *Wazīr* of Iran, Sāhib ibn 'Abbād, who was a prominent writer and bibliophile, was so deeply touched on hearing a poem of Razī, that he sent an emissary to Baghdād to procure a copy of the whole *dīwān*. Interestingly, this happened in 385 when Razī was only 26 years old, and he was so pleased that he composed a *qasidah* in praise of Sāhib ibn 'Abbād and sent it along with the *dīwān*. Another instance of Razī's popularity as a poet is the incident in 399 when Taqīyyah the daughter of the Hamdanid Amir of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawlah, sent a special messenger to Baghdād to get a copy of his *dīwān*. Although Razī's *dīwān* is a literary masterpiece containing valuable historical, social, scientific and cultural information and has been published several times, it is yet to be

examined in an academic manner in order to realise its proper worth.

8. *Inshirāh al-Sadr fī Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r*

According to Ḥajī Khalifah in *Kashf al-Zunūn* (vol. 1 p. 513) this is a selection and compilation of Sayyid Rāzī's poems by a contemporary scholar.

9. *Al-Ḥasan min Shi'r al-Ḥusayn*

This work is a selection from the bulky 10-volume *diwān* titled *Durrah al-Tāj fī Shi'r Abī al-Ḥajjāj* of the versatile Shi'ite poet Abū 'Abdullāh Ḥusayn ibn Ahmad Ḥajjāj al-Baghdādī (d. 391). Sayyid Rāzī arranged his selection of al-Ḥajjāj's poetry in alphabetical order during the poet's lifetime. According to another account, Rāzī named his work *al-Nazif min al-Sakhīf*.

10. *Al-Ziyādāt fī Shi'r Ibn al-Ḥajjāj*

Sayyid Rāzī after compiling *al-Ḥasan min Shi'r al-Ḥusayn/ al-Nazif min al-Sakhīf*, selected some other excellent poems of Abū 'Abdullāh Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ḥajjāj and gave it the title *al-Ziyādāt fī Shi'r Ibn al-Ḥajjāj*.

11. *Al-Ziyādāt fī Shi'r Abī Tammām*

Abū Tammām Ḥabīb Ibn Aws al-Tā'i (d. 230), the leading poet at the Abbasid court, who was known for his humour, witticism and good manners, is said to have memorized 14,000 verses of Arabic poetry in addition to panegyrics and couplets. He had mastery over all styles of poetry but excelled all others in composing elegies, many of which he wrote in the form of moving odes on the blessed Household of Prophet Muhammad (S).

Sayyid Rāzī edited Abī Tammām's poems, and whatever verses he had deleted as redundant, he compiled them in a separate book, and named it *al-Ziyādāt fī Shi'r Abī Tammām*.

12. *Al-Mukhtār min Shi'r Abī Ishāq*

According to *al-Dhari'ah* (vol. 20, p. 168), this work is a selection of the poetry of Abū Ishāq al-Sābi by Sayyid Razī.

13. *Ta'liqah Khilāf al-Fuqahā'*

According to Shaykh Tūsī in *al-Fihrist*, this a commentary by Sayyid Razī on his brother Sayyid Murtazā's book *Masā'il al-Khilāf fī al-Fiqh*. But al-Najāshī in his *al-Fihrist* has ascribed *Masā'il al-Khilāf fī al-Fiqh* to Razī, adding that *Ta'liqah Khilāf al-Fuqahā'* is an annotation of his own work.

14. *Ta'liqah 'alā al-Izāh*

According to Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūti, *al-Izāh fī al-Nahw* was written by the Persian grammarian Abū 'Alī Hasan ibn 'Alī ibn Ahmad Fasawī (d. 377), and Razī while learning or teaching the book, added important footnotes to it.

15. *Sirah Wālidih al-Tāhir*

This is a biography of his father Abū Ahmad Husayn ibn Mūsā who was held in high esteem by the Buyids and given the title of Tāhir al-Awhad Dhū al-Manāqib. He was appointed *Naqib al-Nuqabā'* five times and held the office intermittently for almost 40 years. Sayyid wrote this work in 379/980-90 when he his age was 20 years.

16. *Mā Dāra Baynahu wa Bayna Abī Ishāq*

Abū Ishāq al-Sābi, the writer of popular treatises and the official scribe at the court of the caliph, was a very close and intimate friend of Sayyid Razī. They carried on a correspondence in both prose and poetry. Some of these letters were gathered in a book and given the above title.

17. *Al-Rasā'il*

Sayyid Razī used to exchange scholarly and literary views with poets and the literati through letters, which have been

collected and published in 3 volumes.

18. *Nahj al-Balāghah*

The masterpiece of Sayyid Razī, not as a writer but as an aesthetic literary compiler, is of course *Nahj al-Balāghah*, which has ensured lasting fame for him. It is a selection of sermons, decrees, letters, maxims and counsels of Amir al-Mu'minin Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a).

Sayyid Razī in his introduction to *Nahj al-Balāghah* writes:

In my early age at the dawn of youth I commenced writing a book on the characteristics of the Infallible Imams ('a) covering the account of their virtues and masterpieces of their expression of words. The purpose of the compilation has been stated by me in the beginning of the book. Therein I completed the portion dealing with the account of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) but I could not finish that part concerning other Imams due to the impediments of the time and obstacles of the days. I divided it into several chapters and sections. Thus its last section comprised whatever had been related from Imam 'Alī ('a) out of his short sayings such as counsels, maxims and proverbs but not long lectures and detailed discourses. A number of my friends and brothers-in-faith, while wondering at its delicate and blossoming expressions, admired the contents of this particular section, and urged me to complete a book which should cover all the forms of the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) and their diverse forms such as lectures, letters, counsels, aphorisms, etc., as they were convinced that it would comprise wonders of eloquence and rhetoric, brilliant jewels of Arabic language and shining expressions of faith, and this had not been collected in any other work, nor found together in any other book, because Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) was the fountain of eloquence and (his expressions) the source of rhetoric. Through him hidden delicacies of eloquence and rhetoric came to light, and from him were learnt its principles and rules. Every speaker and orator had to tread on his footprints and every eloquent preacher

availed of his sayings. Even then they could not equal him so that the credit for being the first and foremost remains with him, because his words are those that carry the reflection of divine knowledge and savour of the Prophet's words. Accordingly I acceded to their request as I knew that it meant a great reward, a handsome reputation and a treasure of recompense. The object of this compilation is that I should focus on Amir al-Mu'minin's ('a) greatness and superiority in the art of rhetoric, which is in addition to his countless qualities and innumerable distinctions, and to show that he was at the highest pinnacle of this attainment, is singular among all those predecessors whose sayings are quoted here and there. His words are an onrushing and irresistible and such a treasure of subtleties in language that it cannot be matched...

In my view Amir al-Mu'minin's ('a) sayings may be divided into three categories; firstly Sermons and Decrees, secondly Letters and Communications, and thirdly Maxims and Counsels. Allah-willing I have decided to compile first the Sermons, then Letters, and then the Maxims and Counsels and have chosen a separate section for each category, leaving blank pages in between each so that if anything has been left out and becomes available afterwards it may be inserted therein, whereas any expression which is routine or in reply to some question or has some other aim and does not fit in any of my divisions should be included in the category for which it is most suitable or to which its subject matter is most akin. In this compilation of mine in some places there is repetition of words or subject matter. The explanation for this is that Amir al-Mu'minin's ('a) wordings have been related in numerous forms. Sometimes it happened that a particularly saying was found in a particular form in a narration and was taken down in that very form. Thereafter the same wordings were found in some other narration either with acceptable addition or in a better style of expression. In such a case with a view to further the subject of compilation and to present a beautiful expression from being lost it

was decided to repeat it. It has also happened that a particular wording had appeared earlier but due to remoteness it has been entered again. This is through omission, not by intent. In spite of all this I do not claim that I have collected Amir al-Mu'minin's ('a) wordings from everywhere and that no single sentence of any type or construction has been left out. In fact I do not rule out the possibility that whatever has been left out might be more than what has been collected and what has been in my knowledge unused is far less than what has remained beyond my reach. My task was to strive to the best of my capacity and it was Allah's part to make the way easy and guide me to the goal...¹²

And, at the end of the book, Sayyid Razi concludes:

This is the end of our selection of the wordings of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a), and now, it is time to conclude the selected words of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a). We are grateful to Allah the Glorified for having enabled us to collect the scattered sayings and wordings from various sources and to bring together from different places the material that was lying far away... This book has been completed in the month of Rajab in the year 400 AH. May Allah send His blessings on our Master Muhammad, the Last of Messengers and the Guide to the best path, and on his infallible progeny, and his companions who are the stars of conviction.¹³

As its title suggests, *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Highway of Eloquence) remains an unmatched book in terms of eloquence. It is a treasure trove of wisdom. According to Sayyid Razi, he compiled the sermons, letters and sayings of Imam 'Ali ('a) in order to serve as a model for the literati, to embellish the speeches of orators, and to guide the seekers of knowledge. The book proved an instant success and was welcomed by scholars of various religious persuasions. For more than two centuries after its compilation, both Shi'ites and Sunnis wrote elucidative commentaries on the wordings of Imam 'Ali ('a) as compiled by Razi. The famous

Sunni scholar of Abbasid Baghdad, 'Allāmah Ibn Abi al-Hadid Mu'tazili (d. 655) in his renowned commentary on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, says:

His (Imam 'Ali's) eloquence is such that he is the Leader of the Eloquent and the Chief of Rhetoricians. It is said about his wordings that it is below the Word of the Creator but above the word of all creatures...And this very book whose commentary we are writing is enough to prove that (Imam) 'Ali ('a) occupied such a high position that no one can keep pace with him, nor can he be paralleled in rhetoric... Numerous portions of this book can be termed miracles of the Prophet (S) because they cover assertions about the unknown, and beyond human capacity.¹⁴

Over a millennium has passed but unlike the books authored by Sayyid Razi *Nahj al-Balāghah* has remained a living miracle despite the attempts of certain sceptics to cast doubts over the authenticity of its contents. The first one to question the authenticity of the contents of this book was Ibn Khallikān Irbili (d. 681/1282), the author of *Wafayāt al-A'yān*. In his book written more than 250 years after *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ibn Khallikān without referring to any author or source, says out of prejudice:

People have different opinions about the compiler of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, a collection of the wordings of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Tālib ('a). There is difference as to whether it was compiled by Sharīf al-Murtazā or his brother al-Razi. It is also said that it is not at all the composition of (Imam) 'Ali ('a) and that the one who compiled it and attributed it to him made it himself; but Allah knows the truth.¹⁵

Ibn Khallikān's unsubstantiated claims were later picked up by like-minded scholars, who repeated without citing any proofs, whether documented evidence from earlier traditionalists or the subtleties of Arabic language, when Sayyid Razi's own style be compared to what he had collected of the unsurpassed eloquence of

Imam 'Ali's ('a) wordings. These sceptics were Ibn Athir Jazarī (d. 739) in *Mukhtasar al-Wafayāt*; Abū Bakr Dhahabi (d. 748) in *Mizān al-I'tidāl*; Salāh al-Dīn Safdī (d. 764) in *al-Wāfi fī al-Wafayāt*; Yāfi'ī (d. 768) in *Mir'ūt al Jinān*; Ibn Hajar 'Asqalānī (d. 852) in *Lisān al-Mizān*; Ibn al-'Imād Dhahabi Hanbali (d.1089) in *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, and some modern scholars such as the Egyptian writer Ahmad Amin; Khayr al-Dīn Ziriklī, the author of *al-A'lām*; the Lebanese Christian scholar Jurjī Zaydan and the orientalist Brockleman.

However, a glance at the list of these sceptics, reveals two flawed concepts in their arguments against the genuineness of *Nahj al-Balāghah*. First they claim that Sayyid Murtazā is its author, and second they allege that most of the contents of this unique book are forged and falsely attributed to Imam 'Ali ('a). On closer scrutiny, these accusations turn out to be wild imaginations of their own clouded minds. The first point raised by them betrays their ignorance and is disproved by Sayyid Razi's introduction to *Nahj al-Balāghah*, where he mentions in clear terms that a chapter at the end of his own work *Khasā'is* provided the incentive for him to embark on collecting and selecting the wordings of Imam 'Ali ('a). Moreover, in his later works such as *Majāzāt al-Athār al-Nabawiyah* (p. 41 and four other instances) and *Haqā'iq al-Ta'wil*, he has referred to his compilation titled *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Thus in view of these clear references, any attribution of this book to Sayyid Murtazā is a big question mark on claims to scholarship of these sceptics who did not bother to differentiate between Razi and Murtazā.

The second accusation that the work is a forgery attributed to Imam 'Ali ('a) also goes widely off the mark, when a study of *Nahj al-Balāghah* and the explanatory notes written by Sayyid Razi on some of the sermons, letters and sayings, reveals the sources from where he had copied the wordings of Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a). Many of the books to which Sayyid Razi refers were compiled centuries

before his birth. It would be too exhaustive and beyond the scope of this article to provide a list of all those who had compiled the wordings of Imam 'Ali ('a). It would be sufficient to say that according to existing documentary evidence, starting from Zayd ibn Wahab al-Juhani (d. 96/715) who wrote *Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin 'alā al-Manūbir fī al-Jumu'ah wa al-'Ayād wa Ghayrih*, till the time of Razi's own teacher Shaykh Mufid whose book *Kitāb al-Irshād* contains selected sermons and sayings of Imam 'Ali ('a), almost 100 scholars (perhaps more are waiting to be discovered) had exclusive books to their credit or wrote exclusive chapters in their works on this subject including Jāhiz (d. 255/869) and the historian Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/922). An Indian Sunni scholar, the late Intiyāz 'Ali Khān 'Arshī, has succeeded in tracing the sources of 106 of the sermons in *Nahj al-Balāghah* as well as 37 letters and 79 sayings.¹⁶ 'Azizullāh 'Utārudī of Iran in his recent research has mentioned the names and works of many predecessors of Sayyid Razi including the Imam's companions Hārith al-A'war al-Hamdānī and Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhān, who had compiled the sermons, letters and sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a).¹⁷

In view of these undeniable facts, was it really possible for Sayyid Razi to employ two different styles of writing, one for his own works and one – a highly eloquent one – for *Nahj al-Balāghah*, a book which after the holy Qur'ān, stands out unrivalled in the history of Arabic literature?

Notes:

1. Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. 41.
2. Tūsi, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 98-99, Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Razī, Qum.
3. Amīnī, Muhammad Hādī, *al-Sharīf al-Razī*, p.25.
4. Sharārah, 'Abd al-Latif, *al-Sharīf al-Razī*, p. 9.

5. Muhammad 'Alawī Muqaddam, *Muqāyasah-ye Majāz al-Qur'ān Abū 'Ubaydah wa Talkhis al-Bayān Sayyid Razī* (presented at the 6th *Nahj al-Balāghah* Conference held in March 1986 in Tehran).

6. Dāwūdi, Ahmad bin 'Alī, *'Umdah al-Tālib*, p. 170.

7. Amīnī, 'Abd al-Husayn, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 4, p. 198.

8. Excerpts from the article *Sayyid Razī, the Compiler of Nahj al-Balāghah* by Hujjat al-Islām 'Alī Dawwānī, printed in the book *Nahj al-Balāghah and its Compiler*, pp. 112-113. This book is published by Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation.

9. Amīnī, Muhammad Hādī, *al-Sharīf al-Razī*, p. 129.

10. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 4, p. 416.

11. Ja'fari, Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī, *Partovī az Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. 73.

12. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, English translation, Sayyid 'Alī Rizā, pp. 113-114, published by Centre of Islamic Studies, Qum

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

14. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. .

15. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 4, p. 414.

16. *Istinād Nahj al-Balāghah*, Imtiyaz 'Alī Khān 'Arshī.

17. *Gerdāwarandegān-e Sokhanān-e Imam Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a) Qabl az Sharīf Razī*, Souvenir on the occasion of *Nahj al-Balāghah* Millennium Congress 1401 AH/1981, Tehran, Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation, pp. 291-320

For more information, refer to the following books: *al-Bayān wa al-Tahyīn*, Jāhiz; *'Abqariyyah al-Imām 'Alī*, Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād; *Sayrī dar Nahj al-Balāghah*, Murtazā Mutahhari; *Pazhuheshī dar Asnād wa Madārik Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ashnā'ī bā *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Partovī az *Nahj al-Balāghah*, and *Amuzesh Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī Ja'fari; *Masādir Nahj al-Balāghah wa Asānīduh*, Sayyid 'Abd al-Zahrā' Husaynī; *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 'Alī bin al-Husayn Mas'ūdī; *Tadhkirah al-Khawāss*, Ibn al-Jawzi.

A Glance at Historiography in Shi'ite Culture

(Part 1)

By: Rasūl Ja'fariyān

Translated by Dr. Delārām Furādi

Beginning of Historiography Among the Shi'ites

The Shi'ites began their work in the field of Islamic sciences concurrent with other Muslims. One of these branches of knowledge was history. Alongside the historiography movement in Iraq, the Shi'ites also began their activities and cooperated in the writing and compilation of books on history. Apart from the Iraqi Shi'ites¹ such as Abu Mikhnaf, Hishām Kalbi, or persons like Ibn Ishāq who were influenced by the Shi'ite current of Iraq, others belonging to the Imāmī Shi'ite group also cooperated in the task of Islamic historiography.

Different issues related to the biography of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the history of the developments that had taken place in Iraq, were among the issues in which the Shi'ites were truly interested, and by no means did they consider themselves separate from these developments. It was natural that in such a

situation, Shi'ite movements and movements inclined toward Tashayyu' or even those movements opposed to the Umayyuds were sometimes even more important for these historians than the biography of the Prophet (S), for they were witness to the fact that the account of the life of the Prophet (S) was at any rate being recorded by scholars of various other persuasions. What was more important for them were the news related to the Alawis and the Shi'ite movements which could be distorted or lost if not recorded. Other developments, such as discussions concerning the history of the caliphs did not attract the attention of the Shi'ites, since they did not see any link between their own history and the history of the caliphs, except of course, from a negative angle.

During the first centuries after the advent of Islam, historiography among both the Shi'ites and Sunnis was confined to a specific event. But the important point is that, from among the Sunnis, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari took an innovative step by collecting in his encyclopaedic history most of the treatises whether big or small, which were available to him as the cultural heritage (of his sect). Such a project was not carried out by the Shi'ites, and with the loss of the treatises dealing with specific aspects of the Islamic civilisation, an important part of the Shi'ite historical heritage disappeared. Only a few samples survive, such as *Waq'at al-Siffin* by Nasr bin Muzāham and Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad al-Thaqafi's *al-Ghārāt*, both written in the 3rd century. This extant material is indicative of the great importance for recording of historical developments.

After this initial period, Shi'ite historiography became limited to a brief discussion on the biography and conduct of the Infallible Imams ('a) as well as issues related to the Imamate. This situation continued until the re-establishment of a Shi'ite government and the start of a new phase in the historiography of that government.

Shi'ite Works on the Prophet's Biography During the First Centuries

As far as the biography of Prophet Muhammad (S) is concerned, it should be said that accounts of the *maghāzī* (campaigns in which the Prophet took part) were also taught by the Imams. The main testimony in this regard is a narration by Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin ('a), who said: "*Kunnā na'lām maghāzī Rasūlullāh kamā na'lām al-sūrah min al-Qur'ān*" (we teach the campaigns of the Messenger of Allah as we teach the *sūrah* of the Holy Qur'ān).²

In the *ahādīth* related on the authority of Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir and Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a), several narrations could be found on the Prophet's *sīrah*, many of which have been recorded. For example, Ibn Ishāq and later Ibn Sa'd in their biographies of the Prophet, have quoted some narrations on the authority of Imam Bāqir ('a). Among the Shi'ite works, about one-fourth of 'Ali Ibn Ibrāhīm Qummī's exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān deals with the accounts and history of the Prophets. This book which was completed by referring to several other works, has made use of several written accounts that were available during the third and fourth centuries AH.

For example, the book *al-Mab'ath wa al-Maghāzī* by Abān bin 'Uthmān has been used by 'Ali bin Ibrāhīm Qummī in his *tafsīr* (exegesis). Qummī's *tafsīr* is among the works whose section on the Prophet's biography almost exclusively quotes narrations from Imam Bāqir and Imam Sādiq ('a). One of the reasons for this is the inclusion in it of *Tafsīr Abī al-Jarūd*, which is entirely based on the narrations of Imam Bāqir ('a) and gives an account of the Prophet according to the revelation of the *ayahs*. The narrations of Abī al-Jarūd are distinct from the other sections, and 'Allamah Majlisi has mentioned all the narrations of this book in the volumes of *Bihār al-Anwār* under the title *Tārīkh Nabīyyinā* (History of Our Prophet).

Another book is *Mab'ath al-Nabī wa Akhbāruh*, by 'Abdullāh bin Maymūn al-Qaddāh, who was a narrator of *hadīth* from Imam Bāqir and Imam Sādiq ('a).³ At any rate, these are firm proofs of the attention paid by the Infallible Imams ('a) and the Shi'ites to accounts of the Prophet's *sīrah*.

The history of Islam in general was also a matter of interest for the Shi'ites. Asbagh bin Nubātah is among the earliest Shi'ite authors who has a book on martyrdom (*maqṭal*) of Imam Husayn ('a).⁴ Ahmad bin 'Ubaydullāh Thaqafi is another one and the titles of two of his books are: *Kitāb al-Mubayyazah fī Akhbār Maqātil Al-i Abī Tālib*, and *Kitāb fī Tafzīl Banī Hāshim wa Zamm Banī Umayyah wa Atbā'ihim*.⁵ Muhammad Bin Zakariyyā bin Dinār is also among the early Shi'ite authors and according to al-Najāshī some of his books are: *al-Jamal al-Kabīr*, *al-Jamal al-Mukhtasar*, *Siffīn al-Kabīr*, *Maqṭal al-Husayn*,⁶ *Kitāb al-Nahr(awān)*, *Maqṭal Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, *Akhbār Zayd* and *Akhbār Fātimah*.⁷

Another example is Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad al-Thaqafi, who was at first a Zaydī and then became an Imāmi. He has written historical works such as: *Kitāb al-Mubtada' wa al-Maghāzī wa al-Riddah*, *Akhbār 'Umar*, *Akhbār 'Uthmān*, *Kitāb al-Dār*, *al-Ghūrāt* (a work that has survived), *Akhbār Zayd*, *Akhbār Muhammad* (Nafs Zakiyyah) *wa* (his brother) *Ibrāhīm*.⁸

The books which Jabir bin Yazīd al-Ju'fī wrote also deal with similar topics and are titled: *Kitāb al-Jamal*, *Kitāb al-Siffīn*, *Kitāb al-Nahr awān*, *Kitāb Maqṭal Amīr al-Mu'minīn* and *Kitāb Maqṭal al-Husayn*.⁹

'Alī bin Hasan bin 'Alī bin Fazzāl was also a prominent Shi'ite author, and among his works mention could be made of: *al-Dalā'il*, *al-Anbiā'*, *al-Bashārāt* and *al-Kūfah*.¹⁰

Among the renowned Shi'ite scholars of Basrah was 'Abd al-'Azīz Jallūdi bin Yahyā al-'Azdi who was a prolific writer. Some of the historical books which he wrote are: *Kitāb al-Jamal*, *Kitāb al-Siffīn*,¹¹ *Kitāb al-Hakamayn*, *Kitāb al-Ghārāt*, *Kitāb al-*

Khawārij, *Kitāb Zikr 'Alī fī Hurūb al-Nabī*, *Kitāb Ma'āl al-Shi'ah ba'd 'Alī ('a)*, *Akhbār al-Tawwābīn wa 'Ayn al-Wardah*, *Akhbār man 'Ashqa min al-Shu'arā'*, *Akhbār Quraysh wa al-Asnām*, *Kitāb Tabaqāt al-'Arab wa al-Shu'arā'*, *Kitāb Khutab al-Nabī*, *Kitāb Khutab 'Uthmān*, *Kitāb Rasā'il 'Umar*, *Kitāb Rāyāt al-Azd*, and *Kitāb Munāzarāt 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Rizā ('a)*.¹²

The Shi'ites of Qum also contributed to the early historiographical works. Ahmad bin Ismā'il bin 'Abdullāh Bajallī was one of them, and among his most important works is: *Kūūb al-'Abbāsī*, about which al-Najāshī writes: "*wa huwa kitāb 'azīm nahw min 'ashrah ālāf waraqah min akhbār al-khulafā' wa al-dawlah al-'Abbāsiyyah. Ra'aytu minhu akhbār al-Amin*" (It is a voluminous book of 10,000 pages dealing with the accounts of the caliphs and the Abbasid State. I have seen from it the account of al-Amin).¹³ Muhammad bin Hasan al-Qummī had access to this book and he has quoted four instances from it in his History of Qum (refer to *Bibliography of Works Related to Qum*, p. 19. In History of Qum, the events on pp. 145, 200, 236 & 237 have been quoted from *Tārīkh 'Abbāsī*).

Another early historian was 'Alī bin Ahmad Jawwānī who wrote *Akhbār Sāhib Fakhkh* and *Akhbār Yahyā bin 'Abdullāh bin Hasan*.¹⁴ Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khālid al-Barqī who was a renowned traditionist (*muhaddith*) from Qum, has a book entitled *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* on the Prophet's *sīrah*. He is the author of several other works such as *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'*, *Kitāb al-Buldān wa al-Musāhah*, *Kitāb al-Tārīkh* and *Kitāb al-Ansāb*.¹⁵

One of the renowned historians during the era of the Infallible Imams ('a) was Abān bin 'Uthmān Ahmar Bajallī. He authored a valuable book on the accounts of the previous Prophets and the biography of Prophet Muhammad (S), of which, unfortunately, only a few parts are extant. Shaykh Tūsī says about this book:

“We have no information of his works except the book in which he has collected from the beginning the account of Prophet (Muhammad [S]), the start of his mission (*mab'ath*), his military campaigns (*maghāzī*), his passing away as well as the happenings at Saqifah (Banī Sā'idah) and the *riddah*. There is another copy from which the scholars of Qum have related.”¹⁶

This book was available to 'Alī bin Ibrāhīm Qummi and he has extensively quoted from it in his *tafsir*. The bibliographer al-Najāshī was also aware of this book, and he writes: “He has an excellent and voluminous book in which he has collected accounts (of Prophet Muhammad [S]) from the beginning till his passing away including the military campaigns.”¹⁷ This work was available to many 'ulamā' of the following centuries, but the most detailed quotations from it are found in Shaykh Tabrisī's *I'lām al-Warā*. We (the author of this article Rasūl Ja'fariyān) have published the extant portions of this book under the title *Kitāb al-Mab'ath wa al-Maghāzī* and talked about him and his book in detail in the introduction.

Here we will point out a number of works that have been written on Prophet Muhammad (S) by early Shi'ite scholars. We have mostly arranged the list according the subject:

Kitāb Sifāt al-Nabī (S): Wahab bin Wahab (*Rijāl al-Najāshī*, p. 430);

Kitāb Wufūd al-'Arab ilā al-Nabī (S): Munzir bin Muhammad bin Munzir. Some of his other works are *Kitāb al-Jamal*, *Kitāb al-Siffīn*, *Kitāb al-Nahrawān*, *Kitāb al-Ghārāt* (al-Najāshī, p. 418);

Mas'alah fī Imān Abā'a al-Nabī (S): Abī Ya'lā Muhammad bin Hasan bin Hamzah Ja'farī (al-Najāshī, p. 404);

Kitāb Mas'alah fī Ma'rifah al-Nabī: Shaykh Mufid (al-Najāshī, p. 402);

Kitāb Zuhd al-Nabī (S), *Kitāb Awsāf al-Nabī (S)*, *Kitāb fī Ma'rifah Fazl al-Nabī (S)* wa *Amīr al-Mu'minin wa al-Hasan wa al-Husayn 'Alayhim al-Salām*: Shaykh Sadūq (al-Najāshī, p. 390). He also wrote *Kitāb fī 'Abd al-Mutallib wa 'Abdullāh wa Abī Tālib* (al-Najāshī, p. 390);

Kitāb al-Bayān 'an Khayrah al-Rahmān fī Imān Abī Tālib wa Abū' al-Nabī (S): 'Alī bin Bilāl al-Mahllabī al-Azdi (al-Najāshī, p. 265);

Kitāb Mah'ath al-Nabī (S) wa *Akhhāruh*: 'Abdullāh bin Maymūn al-Qaddāh (al-Najāshī, p. 213);

Kitāb Wafāt al-Nabī (S): Salamah bin al-Khattāb Berāwastāni Azdurqāni (al-Najāshī, p. 187);

Kitāb al-Radd 'alā Man Za'ama al-Nabī (S) Kāna 'alā Dīn Qawmih Qabl al-Nubuwwah; Ja'far bin Ahmad bin Ayyūb Samarqandī (al-Najāshī, p. 21);

Kitāb al-Radd 'alā Man Za'ama al-Nabī (S) Kāna 'alā Dīn Qawmih: Husayn bin Ashkib Khurāsāni (al-Najāshī, p. 44);

Kitāb Akhhār al-Nabī (S): Abī 'Alī Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Ammār al-Kufī. He also wrote the book *Kitāb Imān Abī Tālib* (al-Najāshī, p. 95);

Kitāb Zikr al-Nabī (S) wa *al-Sakhrāh wa al-Rāhib wa Turuq Dhālik*: Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Sa'id Sabī'i Hamdāni (al-Najāshī, p. 94);

Kitāb Fazl al-Nabī (S): Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Isā Ash'arī (al-Najāshī page 81).

Kitāb Sīrat al-Nabī (S) wa *al-A'immah 'Aalayhim al-Salām fī al-Mushrikān*: Husayn bin 'Alī bin Sufyān Bezufari (al-Najāshī, p. 68);

Kitāb al-Wufūd 'alā al-Nabī: Husayn bin Muhammad bin 'Alī al-'Azdi (al-Najāshī, p. 65);

Kitāb Nasab al-Nabī (S), *Kitāb Kutub al-Nabī (S)*, *Kitāb Akhhār al-Wufūd 'alā al-Nabī (S)*, 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Yahyā al-Jallūdi al-'Azdi (al-Najāshī, pp. 241-244);

Kitāb Asmā' Alāt Rasūlullāh wa Asmā' Silāhih wa Kitāb Wafāt al-Nabī (S): 'Alī bin Hasan bin 'Alī bin Fazl (al-Najāshī, p. 258);

Kitāb al-Maghāzī: Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khālid al-Barqī (al-Najāshī, p.76);

Al-Munbi' 'an Zuhd al-Nabī (S): Abī Muhammad Ja'far bin Muhammad bin 'Alī Qummi ibn al-Rāzi. Ibn Tāwūs has quoted this in several of his works.¹⁸

Kitāb Asmā' Rasūlullāh (S): Hasan bin Khorzād (al-Najāshī, p. 44).

On biographical works concerning the Prophet, there is a marked difference between the approach of the Sunnis and Shi'ites. The Shi'ite writers regarded Prophet Muhammad (S) more holier than their Sunni counterparts and based their works on his infallibility.

It is important to note that in Sunni historiography, although the feeling of admiration toward the Prophet's life is clearly visible, his infallibility in all aspects has been ignored. An example in this regard is the writing of the book *Zallah al-Anbiyā'* by Abū al-'azl Mashshāt¹⁹ in response to Sharif Murtazā's *Tanzih al-Anbiyā'*.²⁰ Earlier during the 3rd century AH, a Sunni 'ālim had written a book titled *Mu'āsī al-Anbiā'*, which was refuted by the renowned *mutakallim* of Samarqand, Abū Mansūr Mātiridī.²¹

Books on the History of the Prophets

Accounts of the divine Prophets were carried out as part of Islamic historiography by various scholars in books entitled *al-Mubtada'* which means the beginning or the origin. These works deal with the history of mankind since the beginning or the creation of Adam till the time of the last divine messenger, Prophet Muhammad (S). In this field also the Shi'ites did not lag behind. Part of the book *al-Mubtada' wa al-Mah'ath wa al-Maghāzī* by Abān bin 'Uthmān Ahmar Bajallī, the extant portions of which we

have published as mentioned earlier in this article, indicates that the recording of such traditions also existed among the Shi'ites, although, as we have said in the introduction to this book, it contains certain narrations from Israelite sources, which are of course not acceptable.

Among Shi'ite sources, the section dedicated to the history of the Prophets is found scattered and sometimes in detail. 'Allāmah Majlisī has mentioned these narrations in volumes 11 to 14 of *Bihār al-Anwār*. Most of these are found in the works Shaykh Saduq, in *Tafsīr 'Alī bin Ibrāhīm Qummī*, in *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān* and similar books, and as we said, these narrations have been borrowed from the Sunnis who related from such persons as *Ka'b al-Ahbār*, 'Abdullāh bin Salām, and especially Wahab bin Minbah. Ibn Tāwus has quoted an excerpt in *Faraj al Mahmūm* from a book entitled *Qasas al-Anbiyā'* which he considers was written by Muhammad bin Khālid bin 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Barqī.²² But apparently, no one else among the Imāmi bibliographers have mentioned this book. However, from among the books exclusively written on the history of Prophets, reference can be made to the *Qasas al-Anbiyā'* of Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī, which has been published by the Foundation for Islamic Research by Professor Ghulam Rizā 'Irfāniyān. This work, in addition to being the history of Prophets, has a section that includes their miracles (chapter 19, p. 280 onwards), while chapter 20 deals in brief with the life of Prophet Muhammad (S). The author has not mentioned his sources for the accounts of the Prophets and most of the chain of narrators which he has mentioned do not clearly indicate the source. It is likely that a major part of Chapter 20 is based on *Tafsīr 'Alī bin Ibrāhīm Qummī*.

After al-Rāwandī's work, the book *al-Nūr al-Mubin fī Qasas al-Anbiyā'* by Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'iri (d. 1112 AH) deals elaborately with the history of Prophets.

Part of the historical books of the Shi'ites is those which have been written to record the miracles performed by the Infallible Imams ('a) in proof of their Imamate. Naturally in these works different aspects of the lives of the Imams ('a) have also been recorded. Among the most ancient books in this regard is the *Dalā'il al-A'imma* by Muhammad bin Mas'ūd 'Ayyāshī the Shi'ite scholar of the late 3rd and early 4th centuries who lived in Samarqand. His works, including this one, have been mentioned by Ibn Nadīm.²³ This book however has not survived and is presumed to be lost. Another work in this field is *al-Dalā'il wa al-Mu'jizāt* by Abī al-Qāsim Kufī who is accused of exaggeration. He has also written a book on this subject titled *Tathbūt Nubuwwah al-Anbiyā'*.²⁴

Here, mention could also be made of *Dalā'il al-Nabī* (S) written by Ahmad bin Yahya bin Hakīm 'Uday Sūfi al-Kufī,²⁵ and *al-Ihtijāj li Nubuwwah al-Nabī* (S) by Ismā'il bin 'Alī bin Ishāq bin Abī Sahl bin Nawbakht.²⁶ Two books with the same title *Kitāb al-Dalā'il*, have also been written by Abu al-'Abbās 'Abdullah bin Ja'far Himyari and Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ibrāhim bin Ja'far al-Nu'māni.²⁷

Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Bāqī bin Muhammad al-Basrī, a Shi'ite 'ālim of the 6th century is the author of the book entitled *Dalā'il*, and another book entitled *al-Hujaj wa al-Barāhīn fī Imāmah Amīr al-Mu'minīn wa Awlādih al-Ahad 'Ashar A'imma al-Dīn Salawāt Allah wa Salāmuhu 'Alayhim Ajma'in*.²⁸ Another book that has been published is *Dalā'il al-Imāmah* by Muhammad bin Jarir Tabarī, a contemporary of Shaykh Tūsī. Although *al-Kharā'ij wa al-Jarā'ih* by Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāwandi elaborates in detail on the miracles of the Prophet and Imams, the author has unfortunately not mentioned his sources. This book has been summarised and translated under the title *Kifāyah al-Mu'minin*. The Arabic version of *al-Kharā'ij* has been published in 3 volumes with the efforts of the Imam al-Mahdi ('a) Foundation.

Another early Shi'ite work at hand is the book *al-Thāqib fi al-Manāqib* by Abū Ja'far Muhammad bin 'Alī, known as Ibn Hamzah (d. after 552). This book contains narrations on the miracles of several Prophets, including Prophet Muhammad (S), as well as the miracles of Hazrat Fatimah and the Imams ('a). One of the sources of this work is *Mafākhir al-Rizā* ('a) by Hakim Nayshābūrī.

Sunni scholars have also written books on this subject such as *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* which is the title used by both Bayhaqi and Abu Na'im Isfahani for their works. The book *Tathbit Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* by Qazi 'Abd al-Jabbar Hamdāni also follows this method, except that it has presented the discussion in *kalāmī* or theological form.

Kalāmī-Historical Books

Part of the Shi'ite *kalāmī* works have extended the discussion to history in proportion with its importance to the issue of Imamate. The discussions on the Imamate could generally be divided into two sections. A rational discussion to prove the necessity for the existence of the Imam, and a historical discussion to prove existence of divine designation (*nass*) and the reason for lack of attention to *nass* by others as well as criticism of the actions of certain companions of the Prophet in this regard. The historical part of these works mainly contains strong criticism of the caliphate and the caliphs, a subject that is referred to as *matā'in*. The noteworthy point in this regard is that some of these works are *kalāmī*-historical and some are historical-*kalāmī*, the latter being presented mainly in the framework of *hadith*.

An example of the extant works that have been published is the book *al-Istighāthah fi Bida' al-Thalāthah* by Abī al-Qāsim al-Kūfī who is accused of exaggeration. Another is a book written by Sulaym bin al-Qays, which apart from ambiguities with regard to certain narrations, is an early text on the historical defense of the

kalāmī beliefs of the Shi'ites within the framework of *hadīth* on the issue of Imamate. Mas'ūdi's *Ithbāt al-Wasiyyah*, which should definitely be attributed to someone besides the author of *Murūj al-Dhahab* could also be placed among the *hadīthi*-historical-*kalāmī* works. Among the earliest such works is the brief book *al-Muqni' fī al-Imāmah* by al-Sudābādī (belonging to the village of Sudābād near Rayy) published by Intishārāt-i Islāmī, Qum. A famous work of this kind is *Kitāb al-Shāfi* of Sayyid Murtazā which has been published. Shaykh Tūsi wrote a new edition of his teacher's book under the title *Talkhīs al-Shāfi*, which has also been published. Several works of Shaykh Mufid also contain numerous historical issues especially concerning the *hadīth al-Ghadīr* and the meaning of *wilāyah* and related words spoken by the Prophet on the occasion. Shaykh Mufid's *al-Jamal* should be considered a historical- *kalāmī* work rather than a *kalāmī*-historical one. This book is part of the purely historical works written by the Shi'ites during the 4th century AH. They form part of the historiographical works concerning a single specific event written by the Shi'ites of Iraq to record subjects in view. The historical nature of this work cannot be disputed. In fact that Shaykh Mufid has used his knowledge of history as an instrument to prove the viewpoints of the Shi'ites in his debates with the 'Uthmānis and Mu'tazalites, and thus made pioneering efforts in combining the school of history with the science of *kalām*.

Books that have been written on the history of the Shi'ites contain *kalāmī*-historical discussions. Two works that are quite similar to each other in this regard are *Firaq al-Shū'ah* by Nowbakhti and *al-Muqālāt wa al-Firaq* by Sa'ad bin 'Abdullāh al-Ash'ari. These two works contain valuable information on Shi'ite history. The book *al-Ihtijāj* by Tabrisi could be placed in the same category. It is a work, which in addition to the debates and argumentations, provides valuable accounts of the life of the Imams ('a). The book *al-Turā'if fī Ma'rifah Mazāhib al-Tawā'if* also

contains historical information and *hadith* in criticism of the rival sects.

Hadithī-Historical Books

Undoubtedly *hadith* and history are closely intertwined in Islam. Some times more emphasis has been laid on history and at other times more on *hadith*. Many historical issues are found in the book *al-kāfi*. Among the Shi'ite *hadith* works of the 3rd and 4th centuries AH, as is the case with Sunni books of *hadith*, plenty of historical material is found. In *al-kāfi*, the section dedicated to discussion of the Imamate, also includes historical issues about the lives of the Imams' (‘a). Unfortunately, no other early Shi'ite book like *al-kāfi* has remained extant to throw more light on such issues. Perhaps one can point to *Basā'ir al-Darajāt* which contains some historical material.

The most outstanding work concerning the life of Imam Rizā (‘a) is Shaykh Sadūq's masterpiece *Uyūn Akhbār al-Rizā*. The life of the 8th Imam (‘a) and the situation of the Shi'ites of that period has been fully reflected in this book. Sadūq's other works also contain more or less historical *ahādith*. His book *Ḥal al-Sharā'ī* is among the most outstanding in this regard. One can also find similar narrations in Sadūq's *Amālī*. Since Sadūq lived at a time when the great literary current for compiling voluminous books was about to start, and used in his books most of the early heritage of the Shi'ites – part of which was on the point of being lost forever to posterity – his works are considered quite valuable from an historical point of view.

Three valuable books remain with regard to the *ghaybah* (occultation) of Imam Mahdī (‘a), each of which reflects an important part of the Shi'ite history during the third century. The books *Kamāl al-Dīn* by Sadūq, *al-Ghaybah* by Shaykh Tūsī and *al-Ghaybah* by Nu'mānī are the most important works in this connection. Shi'ite history in this period is based on these few

works since many other similar works are not extant today. Two examples are the works of the third century scholar Muhammad bin Bahr Rahmi, part of which is mentioned in *Kamāl al-Dīn*.

Among the *hadith* corpus, mention should be made of the *manāqib* books. Such works also constitute a kind of historiography. Among the earliest books in this regard is *Manāqib al-Imam Amīr al-Mu'minin* ('a) by Muhammad bin Sulaymān Qāzī al-Kūfī who lived in the third century.²⁹ This book is full of historical information on the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the life of Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a). Despite the fact that its compiler is a Zaydi Shi'ite the book contains many narrations from Imam Baqir ('a).

Like the above mentioned work, among the Ismā'īlī Shi'ites one can point to the valuable book *Sharh al-Akhhār* by Qāzī Nu'mān bin Muḥammad Tamīmī Maghribī (d. 363) who compiled many books and was the most outstanding Ismā'īlī scholar during the Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa. This book which has recently been published³⁰ deals with the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and is also very rich in historical information. For example the first, second and third sections describe Imam 'Alī's ('a) merits in the words of Prophet Muhammad (S), his companionship of the Prophet and his participation in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and other expeditions. The fourth section of the book is on the Battle of Jamal and the War of Siffīn. The fifth section is continuation of the narrations on Siffīn. The sixth section deals with the filthy characteristics of the enemies of Imam 'Alī ('a) especially Mu'āwiyah and his killing of Hujr bin 'Adī. The seventh to tenth sections describe the virtues of Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a). The eleventh section is the continuation of the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt, especially Hadhrat Fātimah ('a). The twelfth section discusses the merits of Imam Hasan ('a), his life and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a). The thirteenth section is continuation of the sufferings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and also talks about other

outstanding members of the Bani Hāshim such as Ja'far ibn Abi Tālib and other descendants of the Prophet's grandfather 'Abd al-Mutallib. This section also focuses on the merits of Imam Zayn al-Abidin ('a) and Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a). The fourteenth section is on Imam Sādiq ('a), the history of Shi'ite sects till the time of Mu'tazid al-'Abbasi, and the appearance of the Fatimid Mahdī. The fifteenth section is one the characteristics of the promised Mahdī and the sixteenth and last section on the characteristics of the Shi'ites. Although it has distinctive Ismā'ili tendencies, the book is a valuable, comprehensive and accredited work on the history of the Ahl al Bayt ('a), and in view of its antiquity it is considered unique within its own time frame.

If we take into account that Qāzī Nu'mān has relied on al-Tabari's lost work *al-Wilāyah* for the event of Ghadir, then we will come to know the importance of this work and its contents in view of the books and treatises that were available to him and which are not extant today, although, unfortunately, he does not always mention the sources of his quotations. *al-'Umdah* by Ibn Bitriq is also considered among these works.

Rijālī-Historical Books

The Science of *rijāl* is one of the important branches of Islamic history. The Shi'ites have given much attention to this particular field by meticulously recording the names of the companions of the Prophet and the Imams ('a), as well as the chains of narrations. Although most of the early Shi'ite works of *rijāl* have not survived, the most important of the extant works is the book *al-Ikhtiyār Ma'irifah al-Rijāl* or *Rijāl al-Kashshī* as it is also known. It should be considered important from every aspect. Another important work is *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, which apart from its *rijālī* details, is a mine of information on Shi'ite books of the early centuries of Islam as well as Shi'ite cultural history. During the later eras, such works were not compiled as much as before, but

every work compiled in this regard is important from the historical point of view. Among them are such books as *al-Fihrist* and *al-Rijāl* by Shaykh Tusi and also the *al-Rijāl* by 'Allamah Hilli. The valuable book *al-Fihrist* by Ibn Nadīm should also be considered a fully Shi'ite work, something that has been duly proved. Ibn Abī Tayy, the Shi'ite scholar of the seventh century AH (d. 630) wrote a book entitled *Tabaqat al-Imāmiyyah* which has unfortunately been lost. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalāni has quoted from it in his *al-Isābah* on Yaghus Sahabi. Ibn Abī Tayy also wrote a history which was in chronological order. This work has also been given up for lost. A few quotations from it are found in Safdī's *Nukat al-Hamiyān* on prominent blind figures.³¹

We should not overlook the books of *ansab* or genealogy which are also in a way related to history. This science was prevalent among the Shi'ite and two of the earliest books in this field are *al-Mujdī* and *Sirr al-Silsilah*. This branch in the history of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) cannot be overlooked. A list of the scholars related to the late Ayatullāh Sayyid Shihab al-Dīn Mar'ashī Najafi has been mentioned in the introduction to *Lubāb al-Ansāb*. In addition to elaborating on the geneologies these books also mention historical issues.

During the Safawid and Qajarid eras several encyclopaedic *rijālī* works such as *Riyāz al-'Ulamā'* and *Rawzāt al-Jannāt* were written, giving us more detailed historical information especially in the field of the history of culture.

History of the Twelve Imams ('a) from the 5th to 8th Centuries

A very early work entitled *Tārīkh al-A'immah* or *Tārīkh al-Mawālid wa Wafayāt Ahl al-Bayt ('a)* is available. It mentions the dates of birth and martyrdom of the Infallible Imams ('a) on the authority of Imam Baqir ('a), Imam Sādiq ('a), Imam Rizā ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). This book is variously attributed to Ibn

Khashshāb, Nasr bin 'Alī Jahzamī, Ahmad bin Muhammad Faryābī and Ibn Abī al-Thalj. Whoever happens to be its author it should be considered among the oldest books in this field that has survived from the 3rd century AH.³² Another book entitled *Zuhrat al-Muhaj wa Tawārikh al-Hujaj* on the lives of the Imams ('a) has been referred to by Ibn Tāwūs, but there is no further information on this book at hand.³³

Exclusive books were written on the life of the Twelve Infallible Imams ('a). The earliest surviving work in this field that has discussed this issue in detail is *al-Irshād fi Ma'rifah Hujaj-Allāh 'alā al-'Ibād* by Shaykh Mufīd. The author has dedicated the first part of his book to a detailed account of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) and has practically dealt with the life and qualities of Prophet Muhammad (S) by emphasising on the prime position of Imam 'Alī ('a) right from the beginning of the Prophetic mission. The second part of *al-Irshād* deals with the life of the other eleven Imams and mainly contains historical and *kalāmī* discussions. Although Shaykh Mufīd has not mentioned his sources in every case, it is evident that he has used credible and important sources. Basically the major characteristic of Shaykh Mufīd in this regard is that he was well acquainted with books available in Iraq which were compiled by Iraqi historians. *Masār al-Shī'ah* by Shaykh Mufīd also gives us information on the life of the Imams ('a).

The next important work in this field is the book *I'lām al-Warā bi A'lām al-Hudā*, on the characteristics of the Prophet and his infallible progeny ('a). In its section on the Imams ('a) the book contains historical-*kalāmī* issues proving their Imamate, as is the case in *al-Irshād*. The author Abī 'Alī Fazl ibn Hasan al-Tabrisi has accurately recorded his sources and in this way added to the book's value. He has also incorporated important parts from Abān ibn 'Uthmān's biography of the Prophet, a valuable Shi'ite work which is not extant today.

Another immortal book is *Manāqib Al-i Abī Tālib* by Muhammad bin 'Alī Ibn Shahr Ashūb al-Sarvī al-Māzandarānī. This important and detailed work has been compiled with reference to hundreds of books and the author has given the work special value by quoting different sources and mentioning their names. The greater part of the book includes the life of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) and his merits as found in Sunni sources. But before that Ibn Shahr Ashūb has dwelt in detail on the life of the Prophet and after the account of Imam 'Alī ('a) has focused on merits of the other Imams.

The book *Rawzah al-Wā'izīn* by Fattāl Nayshābūrī (d. 508) is also an important work which without mentioning its sources has dealt with the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a). Another remaining work from the seventh century is *Mukhtasar Ahwāl al-Nabī wa al-A'imma al-Thānī 'Ashar* ('a) by Shaykh Rashīd bin Ibrāhīm bin Ishāq Bahrānī. The only extant copy of this book is being kept at the Markaz Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Islāmī (Center for Revival of the Islamic Heritage) in Qum. Muntajab al-Dīn al-Babawayh in his *al-Fihrist* has also referred to a book entitled *Sirah al-Anbiyā' wa al-A'imma* by Shams al-Islam Hasan bin Husayn bin Babawayh al-Qummī who lived in Rayy, but there is no trace of this book today.³⁴ He has also mentioned another book named *al-Maghāzī wa al-Siyar* by Sayyid Abī al-Qāsim Zayd bin Ishāq Ja'farī which shows the Shi'ite community's interest in this particular field. Shaykh Abī al-Hasan bin 'Alī bin Hibatullāh bin 'Uthmān Musilī wrote a book named *al-Anwār fī Tārīkh al-A'imma al-Abrār*.³⁵

Another important work of the seventh century is *Kashf al-Ghummah fī Ma'rifa al-A'imma* by 'Alī bin 'Isā Arbīlī. This book which has been compiled from diverse Shi'ite and Sunni sources, and has been written in an extremely moderate style, played a very important role in spreading Shi'ism in the world of Islam and has been translated into Persian several times. This book

describes the lives of the 14 Infallibles (‘a). We have elaborated on this work and its sources in an exclusive book.

During the 7th century several books were written on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a) and the tragedy of Karbala’. Ibn Tāwūs (d. 664) has written two books entitled *Kitāb al-Luhūf ‘alā Qatl al-Tufūf* and *al-Masra’ al-Shayn fi Qatl al-Husayn*. A common book named *Maqatal*, Abu Mikhnaf is also believed to probably the work of Ibn Tāwūs (Eitan Kohlberg: *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs and his Library*, pp. 42, 43).

Regional Histories from the 4th to 8th Centuries AH

The Shi’ites have also had a share in regional historiography. Among the earliest work in this field, which predates all other books is *Nihl al-‘Arab* by Muhammad bin Bahr Rahni.³⁶ Yāqūt al-Hamawī, commenting on this book and its author, writes:

He has written many works including the one titled *Kitāb Nihl al-‘Arab*, in which he has mentioned the dispersion of Arabs in the lands of Islam, noting whether they were Shi’ite, Kharijite or Sunni, but he had good words for the Shi’ites as well as for others. I know about the part of the book which deals with the people of the east, especially of Kirmān, Sistān, Khurāsān and Tabaristan.

Nothing remains of this book except what Yāqūt al-Hamawī has written in *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*.

The book *al-Buldān wa al-Masāhah* or *al-Tibyān fi Ahwāl al-Buldān* as it is also known, was written by Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khālid al-Barqī. The author of *Tārīkh al-Qum* used this work in the fourth century as a source for his history of Qum (Mudarrisi has pointed out the quotations from *al-Tibyān* in *Tārīkh al-Qum*; refer to *Bibliography of Works related to Qum*, p. 18. Rāfi‘ī has also quoted some passages from it in *al-Tadwīn*, pp. 44-48). In the printed edition of *Tārīkh al-Qum*, al-Barqī has been quoted extensively, and in one instance, it says: “In the book *al-Bunyān al-*

Barqī thus writes...".³⁷ It is possible that *al-Bunyān* is the misspelling of *al-Buldān*. Another possibility is that the author of the bibliographical work *Kashf al-Zunūn* has misspelled the book whose actual title is *Kitāb al-Tibyān fī Ahwāl al-Buldān*.³⁸ Muhammad bin Khalid al-Barqī, the father of Ahmad al-Barqī has also been named as the author of *al-Buldān wa al-Masāhah*.³⁹ Another book of the same name *al-Buldān wa al-Masāhah* was written in the third century by Abī Ja'far Muhammad bin 'Abdullāh bin Ja'far bin Husayn bin Jami' al-Himyari. When he failed in his efforts to get a copy of Ahmad al-Barqī's book in Baghdad, Rayy and Qum, he decided to write a new book in this connection under the same title.⁴⁰

Another important book on the history of Qum is the one written in 378 AH by Hasan bin Muhammad bin Hasan al-Qummi. It is one of the most interesting and academic books of the early period of Islamic civilization. In contrast to the regional historiography of this period which mainly concerns the life of the notables of the cities, this particular work is a scholarly account of the various issues, including civic affairs, related to the city's history. In the introduction, the compiler has divided the book into twenty chapters but unfortunately the Persian translation of only the fifth chapter is extant. There is no information either on the Arabic version or the rest of the translation. The Persian translation was completed in 805 AH by Hasan bin 'Alī bin Hasan bin 'Abd al-Malik Qummi. Apart from the information given on the city of Qum, the book mentions valuable details concerning the collecting of taxes in those days. In addition the author has elaborated in detail on the Ash'ari tribe of the city beginning with its place of origin in Yemen and the meeting with Prophet Muhammad (S) in Medina on the advent of Islam till its migration to Iraq and then to Qum. He has also focused on the role of Ash'arite tribesmen in the early Islamic conquests especially the conquest of parts of Iran.

Another valuable but lost book is the *Tārikh Rayy* by Muntajab al-Dīn Ibn Babawayh the author of *al-Fihrist* who lived in the sixth century. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalānī in his *Lisān al-Mizān* has quoted accounts of several Shi'ite and Sunni notables from this book, of which 47 have been mentioned by the late Urmawī in his introduction to the edition of *al-Fihrist* published by the Ayatullāh Mar'ashī Najafī Library, Qum (pp. 11-16). *Tārikh Rayy* was also the title of a historical book written by Abu Sa'id Mansūr bin Husayn Abī the author of the valuable book *Nathr al-Dur*.⁴¹ Another important book is the *Tārikh Tabaristan* of Ibn Isfandiyyār who lived in the 6th century AH. It is considered the most important work on the history of Tabaristān by a Shi'ite historian. Mention should also be made of the *Tārikh Rūyān* of Mawlānā Awliyā' Allah Amuli. It is a precious work on regional history in which the author has mentioned part of the historical viewpoints of the Shi'ites in the days of the Imams ('a).

Notes:

1. This particular group of Shi'ites preferred Imam 'Alī ('a) to caliph 'Uthmān and held the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) as sanctified, but they did not believe in the principle of *nass* (divine-designation) concerning the Imamate. Though they narrated the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), they accepted the first and second caliphs. They were neither Imāmīs nor Zaydīs. The historian 'Alī ibn al-Husayn al-Mas'ūdī and the scholar Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī belonged to this group.

2. *Al-Jāmi' li Akhlāq al-Rāwī*, vol. 2, p. 288; *al-Badāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. 3, p. 242; *Subul al-Hudā wa al-Rashad*, vol. 4, p. 20.

3. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 213.

4. Māmaqānī, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl*, vol. 1, p. 150.

5. Ibn Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 166.

6. This book, according to Muhammad bin Sulayman Kufi was popular among the Zaydis. Refer to *Muqaddamah Manāqib al-Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, vol. 1, p. 12. In this book *Manāqib* (vol. 3, p 177) Kūfi has also mentioned fifty instances of the outstanding merits of Imam 'Alī ('a), most of which are historical, on the authority of Muhammad bin Zakariyyā Dīnār.

7. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 347.

8. *Ibid*, p. 18. Also refer to *Lisān al-Mizān*, vol. 1, p. 102-103; *Mu'jam al-Udahā*, vol. 1, p. 223.

9. *Ibid*, p. 129.

10. *Ibid*, p. 258 & p. 676.

11. Ibn Tāwūs in *Muhaj al-Da'awāt* has quoted from his *Kitāb Siffīn* two supplications recited by Imam 'Alī ('a) before going to battle during the War of *Siffīn*, refer to Etan Kohlberg's *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs & his Library*, p. 333.

12. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, pp. 241 & 244.

13. *Ibid*, pp. 97 & 242.

14. *Ibid*, p. 263.

15. *Ibid*, pp. 76 & 182.

16. Shaykh Tūsī, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 18,19.

17. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p.13.

18. Kohlberg, Etan, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs & his Library*, pp. 283-284).

19. *Kitāb al-Naqz*, p. 244.

20. *Ibid*, p. 11.

21. Storey, *Persian Literature*, p. 725.

22. Kohlberg, Etan, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs & his Library*, pp. 308, 309.

23. Ibn Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 245.

24. Al-Najāshī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 266.

25. *Ibid*, p. 81.

26. *Ibid*, p. 32.

27. Kohlberg, Etan, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs & His Library*, pp. 138, 139; Arbili has also quoted extensively from Himyari's *Dalā'il*, refer to 'Alī bin 'Isā Arbili and *Kashf al-Ghummah*, p. 109.

28. Muntajab al-Dīn, *al-Fihrist*, p. 76.

29. Refer to *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī, al-Tadwīn al-Tārīkhī*, pp. 208, 209. This book has been researched by 'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Mahmūdī and published in three volumes by Majma' al-Ihyā' al-Thiqāfah al-Islamiyyah.

30. This book has been published in both Lebanon and Iran. Dār al-Thaqalayn Publishers, Beirut; The Intishārāt-e Islamiyyah edition has been researched by Sayyid Muhammad Husaynī Jalālī.

31. Refer to *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 3, page 219.

32. This book has been researched by Sayyid Muhammad Husaynī Jalālī and published under the title *Tārīkh Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) by the Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt li Ihyā' al-Turāth, Qum. The introduction discusses in detail the name of the book, the name of its author and other issues related to the book.

33. Kohlberg, Etan, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work – Ibn Tāwūs and his Library*, p. 386.

34. Muntajab al-Dīn, *al-Fihrist*, p. 47.

35. *Ibid*, p. 76.

36. *Mu'jam al-Udabā*, vol. 18, p. 31 *al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*, vol. 2, p. 244; *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 24, p. 82.

37. *Tārīkh Qum*, p. 56.

38. Refer to *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 3, pp. 145 under the letter *Shīn* 497.

39. *Ibid*.

40. *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, p. 355.

41. *Al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 3, p. 254.

Introduction to the Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation

The Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation, as a centre for research and study of the principles of the invaluable book *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Highway of Eloquence), began its activities in 1976, at the proposal of 'Allāmah 'Abd al-Husayn Amīnī (author of the monumental work *al-Ghadīr*), with the aim of carrying out research on the narrations, history and life of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Tālib ('a). In view of the society's strong necessity for Islamic culture and education, and the tendency of the young generation during that decade to get acquainted with Islamic teachings and religious sources, the Foundation began its cultural and scientific programs with the efforts of Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin Din-parvar and the cooperation of personalities such as martyr Ayatullāh Murtazā Mutahhari, martyr Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Beheshti, and the late 'Allāmah Muhammad Taqī Ja'fari.

However, compared to the situation in the initial years of its establishment, the activities of the Foundation considerably

improved after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and today it covers many related fields. The Foundation's scientific activities have been mainly carried out in the fields of publishing books, holding annual seminars, establishing the Nahj al-Balāghah Correspondence School, preparing the 'Alawī Encyclopaedia, founding the Nahj al-Balāghah Specialised Library, publishing thesis written by university students, and the inauguration of the Academy of Nahj al-Balāghah Sciences.

Publication of Books

The Foundation, with the cooperation of researchers and scholars of theology schools and universities, has published more than 140 book titles in connection with different issues related to the personality and characteristics of Imam 'Alī ('a) and *Nahj al-Balāghah*, in line with introducing the Imam's personality. These books are mainly in the Persian, Arabic, and Urdu languages.

1. Books in Persian that have been written and compiled by the Foundation's writers and editors.

2. Books in Arabic, including the publication of *Bahj al-Sabāghah fī Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, written by 'Allāmah Shaykh Muhammad Taqī Shūshtari. This book has been researched and published in fourteen volumes by the Foundation's scientific board.

3. Books in English, including the translation of Imam 'Alī's ('a) famous epistle to his governor of Egypt, Mālik Ashtar.

4. Books in Urdu, including a series of twelve book that are being taught as part of the correspondence course.

In addition, the Foundation has translated and published the Maxims of Imam 'Alī ('a) in 14 of the world's prominent languages.

Scientific Congresses

The holding of scientific and research congresses in different fields related to *Nahj al-Balāghah* and the personality of Imam 'Alī

(‘a), are among the most important achievements of the Foundation. Up to now, fourteen congresses have been held, the first one being the World *Nahj al-Balāghah* Millennium Congress held in the year 1981/1401. In these congresses, domestic and foreign professors and researchers present articles and deliver speeches, introducing the teachings of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), the results of which, in addition to all the discussions brought up in the specialised commissions, have been compiled in a book.

It is noteworthy that at the beginning of each congress, different subjects related to *Nahj al-Balāghah* and Imam ‘Alī’s (‘a) personality are brought up and discussed. However, from the 6th Congress onwards, a specific issue has been designated as the main topic of the congress. The congress is held each year on the 13th of Rajab, marking the auspicious birth anniversary of the Epitome of Justice and Piety, Imam ‘Alī (‘a). The titles and years in which these congresses were held are as follows:

1. The World Millennium Congress on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1401/1981.
2. The World Congress on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1402/1982.
3. The Congress on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1403/1983.
4. The Congress on Principles and Modes of Islamic Government in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1404/1984.
5. The World Congress on Principles and Modes of Islamic Government in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1405/1985.
6. The World Congress on Sharif Razi, 1406/1986.
7. The Congress on Islamic Administration, 1407/1987
8. The Congress on Islamic Administration, 1408/1988
9. The Congress on Islamic Leadership in *Nahj al-Balāghah*
10. The Congress on Islamic Government in *Nahj al-Balāghah*
11. The Congress on *Nahj al-Balāghah*
12. The Congress on Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Gnosis and Justice, 1419/1998

13. The Congress on Youth and *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1420/1999.

14. The Congress on the Image of Governors in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 1421/2000.

The Nahj al-Balāghah Correspondence School

Since its establishment in the year 1987, the Nahj al-Balāghah Correspondence School has up to now taught four thousand students the teachings of this unique book. In line with helping the young generation to benefit the utmost from religious and ideological teachings, this section has compiled twelve discussions, within the framework of simple and eloquent texts from *Nahj al-Balāghah*, for the convenience of students, researchers and all others who are interested. At the end of each course an examination is held through correspondence and a certificate is given to the students who participate. The series of discussions which have been prepared exclusively from *Nahj al-Balāghah*, have up to now been translated into Persian and Urdu. The topics of this series are as follows:

1. The Source of Existence (Theology – the Need for Intellectual Development)
2. The Source of Existence (A Correct Understanding of the Meaning of Existence)
3. The Source of Existence (Love and the Worship of Allah)
4. The Source of Existence (The Proper Political System)
5. *Bi'that* and Prophethood (The Grounds of *Bi'that*)
6. *Bi'that* and Prophethood (*Bi'that* and the Healthy System)
7. *Bi'that* and Prophethood (Revelation on the Source of Thought and Legislation)
8. Ethics and the Prophet's *Sirah*
9. The Need for Leadership
10. The Imamate of Imam 'Ali ('a)
11. The Day of Resurrection

12. The Social Effects of Belief in the Resurrection

The 'Alawi Encyclopaedia and *Nahj al-Balāghah*

The compilation of the 'Alawi Encyclopaedia is one of most valuable activities that are being carried out by Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation. It is the result of years of efforts and research in the field of collecting and compiling the narrations of the Infallible Imams ('a) and the sources of *Nahj al-Balāghah*. The compilation of these narrations, the greater part of which has been accomplished, is being continuously followed up. But, due to its wide scope, the project has not yet been finished. It is hoped that this encyclopaedia, whose narrations and topics have been classified according to the issues they deal with, would soon be placed at the disposal of all those interested, both in the form of a book and CD.

The Nahj al-Balāghah Specialised Library

This specialised library with more than four thousand book titles relating to *Nahj al-Balāghah*, narrations and books written about Imam 'Ali ('a), is considered one of the most important libraries in connection with Imam 'Ali ('a) and *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Mainly university students and all other interested persons use this library.

Publication of University Students' Theses

Another one of the Foundation's activities is giving support and guiding the university students whose theses at the end of their studies to obtain their Masters' degree were related to *Nahj al-Balāghah*. The Foundation has formed a scientific board, with whom the students can consult, and obtain their sources; in addition, the board introduces consultants and guide professors to the students. Those theses with high scientific qualities are then

published at the Foundations' expenses and put at the disposal of those interested in acquiring knowledge.

Academy of Nahj al-Balāghah Sciences

One of the basic measures being followed up by the Foundation is the establishment of an academy of Sciences as mentioned in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. The Foundation's officials believe that, wider and deeper research should be carried out on the eloquence and wisdom of this unique book which has unanimously been hailed as above the words of man and next only to the Revealed Word of Allah, the Holy Qur'an, so as to properly respond to the society's ideological and spiritual demands. In this direction, the proposal to establish such a faculty and accept students for Masters Degree, was presented to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatullāh Sayyid 'Alī Khāmene'ī, who approved the project. He suggested that the Academy carry out its activities as an institution affiliated to the University of the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (AWA).

Thus, the preliminaries were carried out and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology issued the required authorisation. The compilation of the books and subjects to be studied is going through the final stages and it is hoped that students will be accepted at the beginning of the next academic year. It seems that with the beginning of the Academy's activities, fundamental steps have been taken in line with broadening the scope of research about *Nahj al-Balāghah*. It is sincerely hoped that the Nahj al-Balāghah Foundation will succeed in reaching its main objective in introducing to the world the ideological and scientific legacy of the Commander of the Faithful and Leader of the Pious, Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ('a).