

HONOUR AND DIGNITY IN ISLAM, PART I¹

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ABSTRACT: An analysis of Islamic traditions displays principles, ethics, and rules that aim to preserve the dignity of humankind. Among the list of ethical principles, dignity is one of the most—if not, the most—important concept in Islam. Using references from the Qur'an and hadith, this series offers the instructions God gave us to appreciate, safeguard, and add to the dignity we were initially given, and then how to extend this dignity to others. Moreover, the life during the time of Imam Mahdi (aj) will be studied, the life in which dignity and honour will be guaranteed for all humankind.

Outline of this discussion

Allah is the source and origin of dignity. Absolute dignity belongs to Him, and any other dignity that exists comes from Him. He is absolute dignity from whom every other form of dignity originates. In His act of creation, He has given us all dignity. The fact that we

¹ This series is based on a series of 12 lectures given by the author in the month of Ramadan 2015 at the Islamic Centre of England.

are created by Allah dignifies us, and this holds true for all creatures of God. When a celebrated artist paints a picture, the fact that the painting is produced by that specific artist gives significance to it. However, it is important to note that if that painter has hundreds of paintings, some might be considered as more outstanding. Nevertheless, even the least regarded one is given attention and respect. And all the artist's paintings would be on display in an exhibition, although some works would be regarded as masterpieces.

Hence, everything created by Allah has dignity, down to the smallest insect and plant. But then, among the creatures of Allah, some have more dignity, and this includes human beings.

We are all dignified from birth. Allah has given us some level of honour as our capital: "*Certainly We have honoured the Children of Adam*" (17:70). Our responsibility is to utilise our capital and add to it. If we do not add to it, and lose it instead, then this is a serious loss. We are to appreciate, safeguard, and add to it. We must also pass it in our own social circles. A dignified person treats others with dignity, and never humiliates them. Those who humiliate others lack dignity in themselves. People of dignity never use abusive words. A true believer never descends into dishonour.

Allah is the source of dignity and honour

The dignity of Allah is the source for any other kind of dignity. He is the absolute source of dignity just as He is the source of light:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ

And one whom Allah has not granted any light has no light. (24:40)

In the Qur'an, there are several terms and notions that refer to the dignity of Allah; perhaps the most obvious one is *'izzah*, which appears – along with the derivatives from its root – 119 times, mostly relating to Allah Himself.

When it comes to the terms al-'aziz or 'aziz (with and without alif and lam) then there are 99 instances of this, 92 as al-'aziz and 7 mentions of 'aziz. The very large majority of them are used for Allah, and very rarely these terms are used for others, for example the 'aziz of Egypt who purchased Prophet Yusuf, or in a somewhat humorous sense for those who will be thrown into hell. Therefore, while there are a few exceptions, most of them refer to Allah.

Verses of the Qur'an

I begin with relating some verses on al-'izzah, and the various attributes relating to Allah:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

Whoever seeks honour [should know that] honour entirely belongs to Allah. To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed elevates it. (35:10)

That dignity belongs entirely to Allah does not mean no one else can possess it; rather, it means that all 'izzah belongs to Allah as the source and then He gives to others. It is a gift from Him. Creatures do not really own it, but they receive it from Allah. Then the verse goes on saying: "*To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed elevates it.*"

Allah says if you want dignity, you must be aware that it belongs to Him. And the means of ascending to that source is by rising up. You cannot aspire to connect to Him and have 'izzah by being stagnant. You must move and ascend. This is done by having *al-kalim al-tayyib* which refers to proper beliefs ('*aqidah*), and a proper understanding of your position, where you come from, what your Creator expects of you, and what your future holds.

Afterwards, the verse mentions a very subtle point: when it comes to beliefs, Allah says that our '*aqidah* ascends. But when He then mentions righteous conduct (*al-'amal al-salih*) He says that good deeds help lift the '*aqidah* higher. '*Aqidah* rises up and then *al-'amal al-salih* acts like a lift, taking it to a high position. This is because we are our '*aqidah*. Our beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes – which are more important than our actions – are what shapes the way we understand God and the world. What is in our minds and hearts is crucial, and then our actions help us to move forward.

In a sense, every person is identical to his or her '*aqidah*, and the actions are helpers enabling one to move upwards. Like a person who lives in a building with 100 floors; to access the top floor he will go into the lift, press the button, and go up. What is rising is the person; it is the lift that helps him rise. His beliefs are the key to that rise, and righteous conduct help the beliefs rise further. We must therefore invest in our '*aqidah*, and then our *imaan* will produce righteous conduct.

Do not join the dishonourable

الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَيْنِئْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ
الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا

Those who take the faithless for allies instead of the faithful. Do they seek honour with them? [If so,] indeed all honour belongs to Allah. (4:139)

In this verse, Allah refers to people who associate themselves with those who are against the faith and the truth. In the Qur'an, the term *kafir* in most cases refers to those whom deliberately deny and reject the truth. Allāmah Tabatabai, in his *al-Mizan*, says there are different types of kufr, one of which is *kufr al-juhūd*, the most commonly-mentioned type in the Qur'an; such as the rejection of truth by people such as Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl, and Abu Lahab.² Therefore, *kafir* does not simply mean 'non-Muslim'. Those strong verses against the "kuffār" must be understood properly.

Allah says that some people try to associate themselves with those who deny and reject the truth. This does not mean simple friendship; rather, *wilayah* means to associate and belong to their

² Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 52, commentary on verses 2:6&7. The original text in Arabic reads as follows:

(بيان) قوله تعالى: إن الذين كفروا، هؤلاء قوم ثبتوا على الكفر وتمكن المجهود من قلوبهم، ويدل عليه وصف حالهم بمساواة الانتذار وعدمه فيهم، ولا يبعد أن يكون المراد من هؤلاء الذين كفروا هم الكفار من صناديد قريش وكبراء مكة الذين عانقوا ولجوا في أمر الدين ولم يألوا جهدا في ذلك ولم يؤمنوا حتى أفناهم الله عن آخرهم في بدر وغيره، ويؤيده أن هذا التعبير وهو قوله: سواء عليهم، أأنذرتهم أم لم تنذرهم لا يؤمنون، لا يمكن استطراده في حق جميع الكفار والا أقصد باب الهداية القرآن ينادي على خلافة، وأيضا هذا التعبير إنما وقع في سورة يس (وهي مكية) وفي هذه السورة (وهي سورة البقرة أول سورة نزلت في المدينة) نزلت ولم تقع غزوة بدر بعد، فالأشبه أن يكون المراد من الذين كفروا، ههنا وفي سائر الموارد من كلامه تعالى: كفار مكة في أول البعثة إلا أن تقوم قرينة على خلافة، فظير ما سيأتي أن المراد من قوله تعالى: الذين آمنوا، فيما أطلق في القرآن من غير قرينة هم السابقون الأولون من المسلمين، خصوصا بهذا الخطاب تشريفا.

camp, to join them and to work with them for the same aims and objectives. Allah asks: 'Do they seek honour and dignity?' It is a mistake for people to join gangs and suspicious groups because they are concerned with the low numbers in their own groups and feel a lack of a sense of belonging.

The kuffar who reject the truth deliberately may have many assets such as power and wealth, but they do not have dignity. Do not think that you will get dignity by joining them. Truly, dignity in totality belongs to Allah, and He is the ultimate source of it. Of course, He will give this to others as a gift, but no one owns dignity as He does.

Remain steadfast with honour

وَلَا يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّ الْوِثَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Do not grieve at their remarks; indeed all might belongs to Allah; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing. (10:65)

Sometimes people break our hearts, especially when they do not appreciate a great mission we seek to attain. Some show fervent interest and passion, and some ridicule instead. Allah tells us not to allow their words and mockery to affect us. They cannot reduce our honour, nor add to it. We must do our work, and if they do not appreciate it, or even abuse us, we must not worry, for all honour is with Allah.

The way the prophets were treated is very disturbing. They were ridiculed, tortured, exiled, and killed. But they maintained honour and sought it from its source. And today it is they who have honour.

Today no one respects the likes of Fir'awn and Namrud. Those who were ridiculed, tortured, and killed have honour today: Musa has honour, Ibrahim has honour, Nuh has honour. In the long-term, honour is only for those who perform good deeds, even if people of their time do not appreciate them and do not understand them and what they say. In the long-term, it is only truth that will prevail; only good intentions, actions, and beliefs will determine who has dignity.

The hypocrites

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ
وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

They say, "When we return to the city, the mighty will surely expel the abased from it." Yet all might belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and the faithful, but the hypocrites do not know.' (63:8)

This verse refers to the opinion of the hypocrites who were under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Ubayy. They would say to one another that there is no reason to fear the Prophet, as they regarded themselves as honourable, and their plan was to expel from the city of Medina those that they deemed to be devoid of dignity. They felt that Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims did not have honour. This verse makes it clear that the opposite is true. Honour and dignity belong to Allah, then to the Prophet, and then to the believers. Allah is the Source, and whoever is closer to the Source has more of it. Hence, Prophet Muhammad, being the closest to Allah, has a very high level of honour, and then the believers. Non-

believers also have honour, as they too are created by God, but the closer a person is to the source, the more they will have.

However, people like Abdullah ibn Ubayy did not understand this. Not only did they not have honour, they also suffered from ignorance (*jahl*). They wrongfully thought that they possessed honour and that the Holy Prophet lacked it.

The meaning of ‘aziz

Now we should delve further into the meaning of ‘*izzah* and as well as the characteristics of Allah considering His ‘*izzah*. We will also discuss how Allah has granted dignity to everything He created, especially human beings, and how we can preserve and even add to this dignity that we have received from Him. Furthermore, we will look at how we can interact with each other based on dignity and honour.

Regarding the definition of ‘*izzah* and its derivatives, we find a number of statements by renowned scholars in major sources of the Arabic language. For example, *Lisan al-‘Arab*, which is one of the most important and respected sources for linguistic matters and is frequently consulted and cited by scholars of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and exegesis (*tafsir*), quotes from Zajjaj: “Aziz is the one who refuses to be overcome.” According to this, ‘aziz is strong and admits no external pressure or influence.

Some have said that ‘aziz is the strong one, the one who can defeat everything, and nothing can defeat it and that the root *al-‘izz* means power, strength, and the ability to overcome. For example, in his *Mufradat*, another reliable source of Arabic language, Raghīb al-

Isfahani says that when 'izzah is used for a person, it refers to a "condition that prevents a person from being defeated."

Hence, it is a kind of internal strength. It comes from a term Arabs of the earlier times used for a specific type of soil. When they would describe a soil as 'azāz, they meant a soil that is solid and strong, into which nothing can penetrate. Then Raghīb says, "al-'Aziz can defeat but can never be defeated."

Fakhr al-Din ibn Muhammad Turayhi, in *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, says that 'aziz is one of the names of Allah, and that it has no similar, i.e. nothing resembles it. He dominates and overcomes other things, but nothing can overcome or defeat Him.

When we reflect on these authoritative opinions, we find a common denominator in all these statements: 'aziz is one that has internal, essential, and intrinsic strength, and this strength is not from any external source. At times, when a particular thing is weak, it requires something else to give it strength. For example, when a sapling is planted, it is often propped up and supported by sticks for it to be held upright and grow. This is a strength given to the sapling from an external source. But when a tree is well-rooted and grown, then even the strongest winds will not be able to move it. That tree is therefore 'aziz and strong. The sapling however was not 'aziz, as it required something external to give it strength.

Allah is 'aziz

Allah is 'aziz because He is self-subsistent. He has all the power, all the strength, all the might, and all the greatness. Everything else receives the strength and power from Him. He is the source; all else is given strength depending on how much He has given them.

When we compare them with one another, we see that some of them are stronger than others, but at the end of the day everything has some kind of strength to allow them to exist.

Hence, everything receives some kind of 'izzah from Allah, and those who are closer to Him receive more:

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ
وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

They say, 'When we return to the city, the mighty will surely expel the abased from it.' Yet all might belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and the faithful, but the hypocrites do not know. (63:8)

This kind of strength is seen when a person perseveres and does not succumb to defeat. The Prophet started his mission while almost completely alone. Imam Ali believed in him, then Lady Khadijah, and then several other supporters. The group of the Prophet were few in number for thirteen years and were faced with immense trouble created by the Quraysh and their allies, who could not make the Prophet change, compromise, or withdraw. They attempted through various means such as luring with money, power, and material riches, as well as with threats, but they failed to change the Prophet's attitude as he remained strong. They sent a message with Abu Talib, who delivered it out of trust and not because he agreed with their ideas; the message was a promise to offer the Prophet an array of worldly riches if he agreed to abandon his message. He

replied that even if they were to put the Sun in his right hand and the Moon in his left, he would not abandon his message.³

Where does such inner strength come from? Such strength cannot be imitated. It must be cultivated and nurtured by internal power and strength, otherwise such external pressures can break a person to pieces. You must be connected with Allah in such a way that even if the whole world comes together, you will not compromise nor withdraw. According to a hadith from Imam Ali, a believer is “like a mountain, which even storms cannot move (affect).”⁴ Might, power, and strength belong to Allah, and He grants them to those close to Him.

Allah's attributes

In many verses that refer to Allah as ‘Aziz, the verse ends with the mention of one or more of His qualities. This is a very important Qur’anic point. As a kind of reference and support for what He says in the beginning and middle of the verse, Allah mentions two of His qualities. And when the name al-‘Aziz is mentioned with another name, al-‘Aziz is always mentioned first. The only exception is when the name al-Qawi is used.

al-‘Aziz and al-Hakim

In twenty-nine cases, the Qur’an mentions al-‘Aziz and then al-Hakim.

³ *Al-Tafsir* by Ali ibn Ibrahim, vol. 2, p. 228. The Prophet is quoted as saying:

لَوْ وَضَعُوا الشَّمْسُ فِي يَمِينِي وَالْقَمَرُ فِي شِمَالِي مَا أَرَدْتُهُ، وَلَكِنْ يَعْطُونِي كَلِمَةً يَتَلَكَّوْنَ بِهَا الْعَرَبُ
وَيَقْبَلُونَ لَهَا بِهَا الْقَجَمُ وَيَكُونُونَ مُلُوكًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

⁴ For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*. Vol. 39, p. 351.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Our Lord raise amongst them an apostle from among them, who should recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

(2:129)

This is the du'a of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Isma'il when they were building the Ka'bah. At the end of the verse, as a kind of reference and support for what they said and to show why they believe they can make this du'a, they say:

إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

These names of Allah are like a key or a password that can be used to open a gate and access many things. The mention of these names shows that we know Whom we are asking and why we are asking. Truly, He is All-mighty and All-wise and that is why we are asking Him to grant our request. In another verse, Allah says:

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُمْ بِهِ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ
اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

Allah did not appoint it but as a good news for you, and to reassure with it your hearts, and victory comes only from Allah, the All-mighty, the All-wise.

(3:126)

No one can force Him to withdraw from His plan. He is al-Hakim; He has plans and a purpose, and does not do things in vain.

Another example of when Allah mentions al-'Aziz and then al-Hakim is the following:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

The [gradual] sending down of the Book is from Allah, the All-mighty, the All-wise. (39:1)

Al-'Aziz and al-Rahim

Another combination of the names of Allah is the mention of al-'Aziz and al-Rahim together, of which there are thirteen instances in the Qur'an. The mention of al-Rahim, as with other names, is to suit the context of the verse. For example:

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلَى عَنْ مَوْلَى شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

The day when a friend will not avail a friend in any way, nor will they be helped, except for him on whom Allah has mercy. Indeed He is the All-mighty, the All-merciful. (44:41-42)

Because this verse speaks about people being unable to do anything without the mercy of Allah, the names of Allah that are mentioned at the end reflect this context, and hence both al-'Aziz and al-Rahim are mentioned.

Other combinations

Other examples where al-'aziz is mentioned alongside other attributes are as follows:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ

Indeed your Lord will decide between them by His judgement, and He is the All-mighty, the All-knowing. (27:78)

Here, Allah describes His role as a judge, who requires both power and knowledge; hence, the mention of the name al-'Alim.

تَدْعُونِي لِأَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَأُشْرِكَ بِهِ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَأَنَا أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى الْعَزِيزِ
الْقَهَّارِ

You invite me to defy Allah and to ascribe to Him partners of which I have no knowledge, while I call you to the All-mighty, the All-forgiver. (40:42)

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ أُخْذَ عَزِيزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

Who denied all of Our signs. So We seized them with the seizing of One [who is] all-mighty, Omnipotent. (54:42)

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ

Do they possess the treasures of the mercy of your Lord, the All-mighty, the All-munificent? (38:9)

As mentioned earlier, the only name mentioned before al-'Aziz is al-Qawi:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيِ
يَوْمِنَا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

So when Our edict came, We delivered Salih and the faithful who were with him by a mercy from Us, and from the [punishment and] disgrace of that day.

Your Lord is indeed the All-strong, the All-mighty.

(11:66)

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

Allah is all-attentive to His servants. He provides for whomever He wishes, and He is the All-strong, the All-mighty. (42:19)

Therefore, in tens of verses the stress is upon Allah as al-'Aziz, but then in some cases He adds another quality to show that His 'izzah strength is often accompanied by another quality, depending upon the context. If knowledge is a requirement, then al-'Aziz is accompanied by al-'Alim; if wisdom is required then al-Hakim is mentioned; if generosity is a requirement then al-Wahhab is used; if revenge suits the context, then Dhu Intiqam is found; all is dependent upon what best suits the context of the verse.

We can surmise that His strength is not merely brute force, but it is a wise, intelligent, and generous power, that which does not cause mischief or harm. Power in itself is positive, however there are times when – if power is not guided and steered properly – it can be destructive. A volcano has power, a nuclear bomb has power, tyrants also have power, but this is not necessarily good or productive. Allah is al-Ghaniy al-Hamid – He is self-sufficient and praiseworthy.

Allah's power is real power, and therefore it comes with mercy, wisdom, generosity, and knowledge. In the next article, inshallah we will discuss how Allah has extended 'izzah to His creation in His legislation, and how we can add to the 'izzah that we have already received.

PURPOSE OF CREATION

TAWUS RAJA

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the Qur'ānic verses that describe our purpose in life, the objective we should be seeking, and how we should attain it. The verses reveal that the purpose for which we were created is a benefit that accrues to us, and that, without a hereafter, our existence would be vain. Therefore, we are in a journey, destined for eternity, and our goal is to reach everlasting bliss. Obtaining such a goal requires training and self-realisation: These can be achieved by constant servitude toward God as we go through tests and trials in this life.

Whose purpose?

We sometimes ask ourselves, What was God's purpose in creation, and why did He create us and the universe? We ask these questions because of a latent assumption: rational beings seek goals for what they do; their voluntary actions are not without a purpose and objective. This assumption, however, is only applicable to limited beings. We are limited in two ways: 1. We have a limited share of resources, such as health, power, and wealth. 2. We have a shortage many goods, benefits, and pleasures that we desire. A necessary consequence of scarcity of resources is that anything that we do

becomes a sacrifice because it involves using limited resources that could have otherwise been retained or used for some other purpose (a.k.a 'opportunity cost'). Therefore, a wise person will not decide unless it has the greatest benefit for him or her when compared to other alternatives. The second aspect of limitation only reinforces this, because if we were perfect, infinite beings who did not lack anything and were not subject to any loss, then we would not have to worry about the loss or mismanagement of resources even if they were limited. Neither of the two kinds of limitations applies to God, however.

Because God is a perfect being (i.e. infinite, unlimited) it is not inconceivable to talk about Him acquiring any good or perfection since *He is* absolute good and ultimate perfection; He does not lack in good or perfection for Him to seek it through an action, such as creation. Therefore, His actions are not the *causes* of His perfections; rather, they are *effects* of His perfections. This idea is also found in other traditions such as Hinduism: "The Supreme has nothing to do, but because He is omnipotent, everything is performed by Him naturally, as if done automatically."¹

Other beings live to achieve perfection continue to pursue this path as long as they have not reached absolute perfection. God, however, does not seek to reach an objective through His creatures; rather, He is Himself the ultimate objective of all beings. To illustrate, consider the sun that shines, not to gain something, but rather, because it is in its nature to do so, or a spring that naturally gushes water and the ocean waves. (These examples are, of course, imperfect, as is every

¹ Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada, commentary under *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 1.3.35.

example for the Absolute.) Likewise, it is God's perfection that is the cause for His actions: His qualities and attributes necessitate the occurrence of certain events. This, however, does not contradict the fact that His actions have some purpose. God Himself is without purpose because He *is* the purpose; however, based on His wisdom, His actions follow a purpose according. Thus, if we define purpose to be the acquirement of some perfection that was not there before, then the 'purpose of creation' would not refer to any perfection to God; instead, it refers to a perfection that accrues to His creatures.²

A Qur'ānic synopsis

The following are verses in the Qur'ān that talk about the purpose of creation:

1. *It is Allah who has created seven heavens, and of the earth [a number] similar to them. The command gradually descends through them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends all things in knowledge (65:12).*
2. *He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct. And He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving (67:2).*
3. *I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may serve Me (51:56).*
4. *Had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community; but they continue to differ, except those on*

² Tasnīm, 28/244 and 28/318-319, with some elaboration.

whom your Lord has mercy – and that is why He created them – and the word of your Lord has been fulfilled: ‘I will surely fill hell with jinn and humans, all together!’ (11:118-119).

The first verse is about the creation and direction of the universe. The magnificent creation of the heavens and the earth, as well as the orderly direction of their affairs, is intended to raise our level of knowledge, awareness and consciousness about God’s absolute power and knowledge. The second verse – specifically concerning mankind – is about the temporary nature of our existence in this world and the vicissitudes that we go through in life, which are intended to test our faith and behaviour. This is an inseparable element of life in this world as repeatedly emphasised in the Qur’ān. See 2:155, 9:126, 18:7, 29:2-3, 47:31. The third verse is the most famous and the most commonly-quoted verse regarding the purpose of creation. It says that our role in creation is to serve and worship God. The fourth set of verses shows the result of this worship: qualifying for God’s mercy.

Worship and servitude

One subtlety found in 51:56 is that it does not say, ‘I created the jinn and the humans to serve Me’ but it says, ‘I *did not* create the jinn and humans *except* to serve Me.’ Had it been the former, it would have sufficed for us to serve God once, once a while, or overall in our life. However, the verse is more precise and can be broken down into two statements: (a) I created the jinn and the humans to serve Me; and (b) I did not create the jinn and the humans for anything else. In other words, we have been created to

worship and nothing else. It thus follows that every breath and every step that we take should be in God's service and worship. Otherwise we are not fulfilling the purpose for which we are created, thus failing to reach perfection.

This is why God says in the next verse, verse fifty-eight: "*I desire no provision from them, nor do I desire that they should feed Me.*" The first part of this verse is about seeking provision for oneself, and the second part about feeding God. This dichotomy is seen again and confirmed in the following verse: "*Indeed it is Allah who is the All-provider, Powerful, All-strong.*" What God means when He says, "*I desire no provision from them*" is that I have not charged them with providing for themselves; they have not been created for the objective of hunting for food, seeking sustenance, and earning a livelihood — that is not the purpose of their creation. Rather, "*Indeed it is Allah who is the All-provider.*" Furthermore, I have not created them so that they may benefit me in any way — "feeding" being a clear example for benefit — because I am the "*Powerful, All-strong*" (51:58). These two verses show that the desired worship mentioned in verse fifty-six is for our own good and not in any way for the benefit of God. He is independent of our worship, but we are in need of serving Him. As Rumi, the Persian poet, wrote, "My creation was a case / Of mercy and grace.

It was not to attain / Some benefit or gain.³

³ Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 2, line 1760.

Godwariness, felicity and mercy

The service and worship mentioned in these verses is not our ultimate goal but a means to something else. Worshipping God is an intermediate stage toward achieving Godwariness (*taqwā*): “*O mankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and those who were before you, so that you may be Godwary* (2:21).” Indeed, God’s most universal and fundamental covenant and injunction of God is “*so that you may be Godwary*” See 2:63, 6:153, 7:171, a specific case of which is seen in the verse about fasting (2:183) and an equivalent idea is mentioned about prayer (29:45). The Qur’ān identifies felicity to be the outcome of Godwariness: “*Be wary of Allah, so that you may be felicitous.*” See 2:189, 3:130, 3:200, 5:35, 5:100). Therefore, the ultimate objective in worshipping God is to achieve felicity and eternal happiness. This is seen more directly in the following verse: “*O you who have faith! Bow down and prostrate your-selves, and worship your Lord, and do good, so that you may be felicitous*” (22:77).

Worship denotes the movement and advancement of the created toward the Creator.⁴ In other words, God has created the universe so that it may move toward absolute perfection, and absolute perfection is nothing but God Himself. This idea – that all beings are on a journey toward God – is found repeatedly in the Qur’ān: “*Toward Us is the destination*” (50:43). Among beings are those whose movement is through voluntary action and free will; they have such nature and structure that their growth lies in worship in a

⁴ Tasnīm, 28/321.

context of test and trial, the result of which will be felicity and God's mercy, as seen in the above-mentioned verses.

The Ḥadīth of Hidden Treasure

Many exegetes have interpreted the Qur'ānic phrase "*Except that they may serve Me*" (51:56) to mean 'that they may know Me' (*li-ya'rifūni*).⁵ There is a widely narrated sacred tradition (*al-ḥadīth al-qudsī*) in which God says, 'I was a hidden treasure. I liked to be known, so I created the creation so that I may be known.'⁶ A few notes about this hadith and discussion:

- The Qur'ānic equivalent of this idea is in 65:12: "*It is Allah who has created seven heavens, and of the earth [a number] similar to them. The command gradually descends through them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends all things in knowledge.*" Given this verse and our discussion above, God's love for being known is also a benefit, change, and perfection for His creatures, and not for Himself.
- What is reported above as a sacred tradition is not found in any Shi'a or Sunni authority of hadith. It can at best be taken as a result of some spiritual vision, unveiling or realisation by a mystic.
- Even though there is Qur'ānic evidence to support the meaning being conveyed in this narration, it does not justify

⁵ Ibn Kathīr, 7/396, narrated from Ibn Jurayj. Muḥīṭ, 9/562, narrated from Mujaḥid. Abū al-Sa'ūd, *Tafsīr Abī al-Sa'ūd*, 2/130.

⁶ Rāzī, 28/194. Abū al-Sa'ūd, *Tafsīr Abī al-Sa'ūd*, 2/130.

the forging of a narrations and its ascription to God under any circumstances. The Qur'ān has repeatedly emphasised: Who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah? (6:21, 6:93, 6:144, 7:37, 10:17, 11:18, 18:15, 29:68, 39:32, 61:7).

- The word for 'hidden' in this narration is *makhfi*, which is evidence to the fabrication of this narration. Given the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the word should have been *khafi*, not *makhfi*. The latter is used for 'hidden' in Persian, which can show the origin of the forger.
- Knowledge is both a prerequisite and consequence of worship. It is a prerequisite because of the central role of intention in acts of obedience; one essentially worships his or her own understanding and mental construct of God. However, an overall knowledge and belief in God is enough for one to begin worshipping God. Consequently, worshipping leads to a higher realisation and in-depth knowledge of God. This is particularly seen in hadith of 'Unwān al-Baṣrī where Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) advises Unwān: 'If you want knowledge you should first seek out the reality of servitude in yourself, and seek knowledge through practice.'⁷ It is also important to clarify what the term knowledge (*'ilm*) means in religious texts.

⁷ Tabrizi, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan, *Mishkāṭ al-Anwār*, 325-328. Biḥār, 1/224-226.

Summary

We were not created in vain, and our life in this world is one stage in our journey toward eternal life (3:191, 21:16, 23:115, 44:38-39, 75:36). *"We certainly created man in the best of forms (95:4) but then We relegated him to the lowest of the low" (95:5).* The reason for these ups and downs is *"We make such vicissitudes rotate among mankind, so that Allah may ascertain those who have faith, and that He may take martyrs [or witnesses] from among you, and Allah does not like the wrongdoers" (3:140).*

Sometimes You take me to a garden to rest; /
 Sometimes You burn me with Your trial and test;
 Either way You are leading me to light, / So that my
 eyes may open and attest.⁸

Free will and the dilemma that we face between good and evil are what distinguish us from other creatures. Because of this makeup, our perfection lies in building and training ourselves such that we choose that which is good and are not tempted by that which is evil. This world is a realm of constant change, and each of us experience a variety of events and conditions in life. The purpose of all of this is that we develop in ourselves the firmness and determination to continuously revolve around a single axis: our Lord. This is what is meant by the verse: *I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may serve Me (51:56).* This world is a paddock where we are trained for competition day. We have a long journey ahead of us

⁸ Rūmī, *Divān-i Kabīr*, ghazal 1786.

and the best provision that we can take with us on this journey is Godwariness – *taqwā* (2:197).

We are heading for the home of love with persistence; /
We've come from the border of nonbeing to existence.
We've left the green garden of Paradise to seek / The
green line that we saw on Thy Face and Cheek.⁹

We used to be with the angels in their dome; / We shall
go back to heaven for that is our home.

Rather we are beyond the angels and heaven; / His glory
is our home which is above the seven.

Your essence is pure, divine and mild; / But the realm of
dust is mixed and defiled;

So why did you settle somewhere so low? / What is this
place? Pack up and go!¹⁰

⁹ Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* 366.

¹⁰ Rūmī, *Divān-i Kabīr*, *ghazal* 463.

PROPHET ABRAHAM'S EARLY LIFE AND HIS MONOTHEISTIC MOVEMENT, PART I¹

SAYYID MAHDI AMIN

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Prophet Abraham is recognized as the patriarch of the three Abrahamic religions, as well as the prophet and messenger of God, and leader to all the nations of the world in Islam. This part of this series offers an account of Prophet Abraham's early life, specifically about his youth, his search for the truth, and his family and community. Despite the ongoing oppression towards him from his idolatrous father and idol-worshipping community, as well as the additional trials he faced, Prophet Abraham's unwavering faith earned himself the title of being one of the five Prophets of Determination.

¹ This article is the first chapter of Sayyid Mahdi Amin's book *The Thematic Commentary of the Qur'an Based on al-Mizan*. The 18th Booklet. Establishing a *Hanif* Nation: Prophet Abraham's Mission and Struggles. Section One: Prophet Abraham and his Monotheistic Movement. Source: The Qur'anic verses in the text and the historical discussion. *al-Mizan* Qur'anic commentary, vol. 14, p. 19.

Prophet Abraham in the Qur'an

What can be understood from the Qur'an is that Prophet Abraham lived in a hideout, away from his society from early infancy to his maturity. Afterwards, he moved to the tribe where his father lived, where he witnessed the society, including his father, worshipping idols. As Prophet Abraham had a pure innate disposition (*fitra*), God showed him the kingdom (*malakūt*) of everything; he reached the rank in which all his sayings and actions were in accordance with the truth. Thus, he did not approve of his tribe's actions and could not keep silent. He debated with his father,² prohibited him from worshipping idols, and invited him to monotheistic belief in God so that He may guide him to His right path and keep him away from Satan.

When his father saw that Abraham would not give up his beliefs, he banished him and threatened to stone him to death. In return for the harsh treatment, the well-mannered Abraham continued to treat his father affectionately, using kind and gentle speech. In response to his father, he first said "Salam" to him and promised him to seek God's forgiveness for him. Prophet Abraham also added that if the father did not tread the God's path, he would leave him and his tribe but would not give up worshipping God by any means.

² The Qur'an says, "Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: 'Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error.'" (6:74) According to Shi'a exegetes, Azar was the guardian of Abraham and his uncle or maternal grandfather and not his real father. This will be discussed in detail later.

Chapter Maryam, Verses 41-48

At this juncture, Prophet Abraham began debating with his tribe to negate the worship of idols.³ The next phase of his life is his debates with other tribes who worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. In such debates, he obliged them to accept the truth. During this time, the news of his turning away from the worship of idols was spread.⁴

One day, when all idol-worshippers went outside the town to perform their religious ceremony, Prophet Abraham refrained from accompanying them on the pretext of being sick and stayed in the town alone. When the city was deserted, he went to the idol-temple and broke all idols except the greatest idol so that people may turn to it. When people returned to the city and heard about this event, they sought to find its agent. After discovering it was done by a young man named Abraham, they summoned him:

Was it you who did this to our gods, O Abraham?

He said,

'Rather it was this biggest of them who did it!

[If you do not believe me,]

Ask them, if they can speak.'

³ A detailed account of his argumentation and debate can be found in the Qur'anic verses no. 51-56 in chapter al-Anbiya, no. 69-77 in chapter al-Shu'ara, and no. 83-88 in chapter al-Saffat.

⁴ The account of such debates can be found in the Qur'anic verses no. 74-82 in the chapter al-An'am.

[so that they tell you who changed them to this form!]

In so doing, Abraham had put the axe on the shoulder of the biggest idol to make a witness out of it. He knew they did not consider their idols as being alive and able to speak, but he intended to devise a plan to make people confess that idols lacked reason and life. Therefore, after hearing his response, people started to ponder on their misguidance, confessed to it, and said abjectly:

*'You certainly know that they cannot speak.'*⁶

Abraham, who did not have any objective but hearing them say so, said immediately:

Do you abandon Allah and worship these inanimate objects which cannot cause you any benefit or harm? Fie on you and what you worship besides Allah! Do you not apply reason?' [You worship what you have carved yourselves and are not willing to worship Allah has created you and whatever you make (your actions)]?

They said, "Burn him, and help your gods."⁸

They built a structure with a huge fire blazing in it, collaborating to do it to gain their gods' satisfaction, and then cast Abraham into the fire when it started blazing. However, the Almighty God made the

⁵ The Qur'an 21: 62-63. قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَشْعُرُونَ.

⁶ The Qur'an 21: 65. لَعَنَّا عَذَابَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْشَعُونَ.

⁷ The Qur'an 21: 66-67. قَالَ أَتَقْبَلُونِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ. وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ. أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ. وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ.

⁸ The Qur'an 21: 68. قَالُوا خُذُوهُ وَاصْرَبُوا عَلَيْهِمْ.

fire cool and safe for Abraham and kept him safe and sound in the fire, foiling the disbelievers' plot.⁹

In the meantime, Prophet Abraham addressed the king, Namrud, who claimed to be a god, saying:

My Lord is He who gives life and brings death.¹⁰

Using sophistry, Namrud said,

I [too] give life and bring death.¹¹ [I can either free or kill whoever I choose from among captives and prisoners.]

Prophet Abraham argued, saying, *"Indeed Allah brings the sun from the east; now if you tell the truth, bring it from the west."¹²*

Here, Namrud became astounded and bewildered.¹³

According to the Qur'an, after Prophet Abraham had been freed from the fire of Namrud, he pursued his sacred goal and started his call to Monotheism and the True (*Hanif*) Religion. At this time, very few people converted to this religion.

According to the Quran, Prophet Lut, his brother, and Prophet Abraham's wife were among the believers. His wife migrated along

⁹ The account of the discussion above can be found in Qur'anic verses no. 56-70 in chapter al-Anbiya, and no. 88-98 in chapter al-Saffat.

¹⁰ The Quran 2: 258. رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ

¹¹ The Quran 2: 258. قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ

¹² The Quran 2: 258. قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نَآتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأَبِ تُبَاهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ

¹³ These events and contentions are referred in the Qur'anic verse no. 258 of the chapter al-Baqarah.

with Prophet Abraham and had married him before leaving her homeland to the Holy Lands.¹⁴

Upon leaving their homeland, Prophet Abraham and his followers dissociated from their tribe and his step-father, Azar. He and his wife, along with Prophet Lut, set out for the Holy Land to worship God without being persecuted by their tribe.¹⁵

Prophet Abraham asked God for offspring, and after this prayer when he had reached old age, God gave him the glad tidings of Is-haaq and Isma'il, and Ya'qub, who descended from Is-haaq. Shortly after, first Isma'il and then Is-haaq were born. As God promised, He made Abraham and his offspring blessed.

On God's orders, Prophet Abraham went to Mecca – a deep, dry valley – left his beloved son, Isma'il in infancy in that frightening place, and returned to the Holy Land himself. Isma'il grew there, with the nomad Arabs gathered round him.

Afterwards, he was given the mission of building the House of Ka'bah in one of his visits, and set to construct it along with Isma'il.¹⁶ Both before and after building Ka'bah, Prophet Abraham occasionally went to Mecca to visit Isma'il.¹⁷

¹⁴ This part of his life is referred to in the Qur'anic verses no. 4 of chapter al-Mumtahanah and no. 100 of chapter al-Saffat.

¹⁵ The Qur'anic verses no. 4 of the chapter al-Mumtahanah and no. 71 of the chapter al-Anbiya refer to this historic migration.

¹⁶ The Qur'anic verses no. 127-129 of the chapter al-Baqarah and no. 96-97 of the chapter Al-Imran refer to these historical realities.

¹⁷ The Qur'anic verses no. 126 of the chapter al-Baqarah and no. 35-41 of the chapter Abraham recount how Ka'bah was built.

The last recount of Abraham's life in the Qur'an is his prayer in several of his journeys to Mecca. His last request from God was:²⁵

*Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and all the faithful, on the day when the reckoning is held.*²⁶

The birth of Abraham, the Friend of Allah

According to hadiths on the birth of Prophet Abraham, Abi-Basir quoted from Imam al-Sadiq:

Abraham's father was the astrologer in the court of "Namrud ibn Kan'an," and Namrud did not embark on any course of action without consulting him. One night, he looked up at the stars and told Namrud in the morning:

I saw something strange last night.

He asked: What?

Abraham replied: From the position of stars, I understood a boy will be born in our land soon, and we will be ruined by him, whose mother will become pregnant with him in the very near future.

Namrud was surprised and asked, "Has the conception already occurred?"

He answered, "Not yet."

Upon hearing this news, Namrud ordered all men to avoid marital relations with their wives. At this time, Abraham's mother became pregnant with Abraham.

²⁴ The Qur'an 37: 107. وَ قَدَرْنَاهُ بِذُرِّيَّتِهِ عَظِيمٍ

²⁵ This prayer is referred to in the verses no. 35-41 of the chapter Abraham.

²⁶ The Qur'an 14: 41. رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

When Abraham's father found out, he guessed this was the very child who would overthrow Namrud.

His wife said, "To hide this from Namrud and not to trouble you, I will hide this child in a cave."

Hence, Abraham grew up there, until he left the cave.

Hadith scholars agreed that in his early life, Abraham lived alone for fear of Namrud. After this period of his life ended, he appeared and debated with his father and tribe over the deity of idols, the stars, the moon, and the sun. He contradicted the claim of his contemporary king, Namrud, to be a deity. This is inferred from the style of the related Qur'anic verses.

Abraham's father²⁷

Non-Shi'a historians claim that Abraham's father was "Tarukh" and his title "Azar". According to them, the polytheist who the Qur'an referred to as Abraham's father and whom Abraham debated with in the Qur'an was Tarukh, the biological father of Abraham. Some Sunni Hadith scholars and theologians also agree.

Several others, as well as all Shi'a scholars, disagreed with this account. Only few Shi'a hadith narrators recounted the narrations on the first account. Shi'a scholars and several Sunni scholars maintain that the Messenger of Allah's forefathers were all monotheists; none was a polytheist.

²⁷ Source: the Qur'anic verse no. 69-104 of chapter al-Shu'ara "Relate to them the account of Abraham..."²⁷ Al-Mizan, vol. 30, p.137.

Overall, this is a point of contention for both Shi'a and Sunni scholars. However, this is an unnecessary discussion because the Qur'an itself points out that polytheist Azar referred to in Chapter al-An'am was not Abraham's real father. Thus, narrations indicating he was the biological father of Abraham are opposed to the Qur'an.²⁸

There is also a narration that considers Azar as Abraham's uncle and astrologer in Namrud's court, and Tarukh as his biological father.

Abraham's first advent and call²⁹

These verses indicate the most important news on Abraham, who with a healthy and pure innate disposition, rose against his idol-worshipping tribe and stood up for the monotheistic religion and worship of God. He dissociated himself from his people, defended the truth, and underwent challenging events for God's sake. All were His miracles and signs, but most people did not believe in him.

In these verses, God wanted Prophet Muhammad to narrate the life-story of Abraham to his people because He wanted the Arab polytheists, who were mostly Qurayshites, to become familiar with Abraham as their forefather to know that Prophet Muhammad had risen up to disseminate the religion of monotheism and truth like his forefather, Abraham.

In those days when nobody would say "There is god but Allah", God was Abraham's aid to confirm monotheism to disseminate in

²⁸ This issue is discussed in the commentary on the verses no. 74-83 of the chapter al-An'am

²⁹ Source: the verses no. 41-50 of the Qur'anic chapter Maryam, *And mention in the Book Abraham. Indeed he was a very truthful one, a prophet.*²⁹ Al-Mizan, vol. 27, p. 83.

the Sacred Lands of Palestine and Hijaz. This was because there already is a caller to monotheism in men's innate disposition (*fitra*), the disposition God created in all people. There is a sign of God in this from which one should learn a lesson and, as a result, dissociate from idolatry as Prophet Abraham did; he dissociated from that religion and those who advocated it, such as his father and tribe:

Relate to them the account of Abraham

When he said to his father and his people: What is it that you are worshipping?

They said, We worship idols, and we constantly worship them

He said, Do they hear you when you call them?

Or do they bring you any benefit, or cause you any harm?

They said, Rather we found our fathers acting likewise.

He said, Do you know what you and your ancestors have been worshipping are indeed my enemies?

but the Lord of all the worlds, who created me, it is He who guides me,

and provides me with food and drink,

and when I get sick, it is He who cures me;

who will make me die, then He will bring me to life,

and who, I hope, will forgive me my sins on the Day of Resurrection.

'My Lord! Grant me judgement, and unite me with the Righteous.

*Confer on me a worthy repute among the posterity,
and make me one of the heirs to the paradise of bliss.
Forgive my father, for he is one of those who are
astray.
Do not disgrace me on the day that they will be
resurrected,
the day when neither wealth nor children will avail,
except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart,
and Paradise will be brought near for the Godwary,
and hell will be brought into view for the perverse,
and.....!*³⁰

This was Abraham's debate on the first day he came out of his cave and joined the society of his father – without any experience; his argument stemmed from a pure heart and innate disposition. His father and tribe did not have any reason for their idolatry except imitating their forefathers. Abraham expressed his dissociation from their gods, themselves, and their forefathers.

Then he began to introduce “*Lord of all the worlds*” and the blessings God bestowed upon him. He mentioned the attributes of God through which he gave them his most convincing proof (i.e.,

³⁰ The Qur'an 26: 69-91

وَإِذْ عَلَّمْنَا نَبِيَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَتِلْكَ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ؛ قَالُوا تَقْبِضُ أَصْنَامًا تَتَّخِذُ لَهَا عَاقِبِينَ قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكَ إِذْ تَدْعُوهُمْ أَوْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ أَوْ يَنْصَرُّونَ، قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ؛ قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ، أَنْتُمْ وَ آبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ، فَإِنَّمَا عُدُّوْا لِي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ؛ الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ خَدِينٌ، وَ الَّذِي هُوَ يَخْلُقَنِي وَ يَشْفِينِي؛ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي، وَ الَّذِي يُعِيشُنِي ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُنِي، وَ الَّذِي أَطْعَمُنِي أَن يُغَيِّرَ لِي خَلِيقَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ، رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَ أَلْجِئَنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ، وَ اجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ، وَ اجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ، وَ اخْزِزْ لِي إِثْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ، وَ اجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ الصَّالِحِينَ، وَ لَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ الْمَالُ وَ لَا تُثَوِّنِي، إِلَّا مَنْ إِلَى اللَّهِ يُلَاقِ سَلَامًا، وَ أَرْزُقِ الْجَنَّةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ، وَ تَزِدْ الْجَحِيمَ لِلْغَاوِينَ؛

“He is a compassionate Lord, who is kind to me, paying attention to me. He has given me all blessings and wards off all evils”).

He referred to the first blessing as being created by God, because creation is based on God; the management of the universe relies on Him. God, the Almighty, is a Guide, Who is also a Creator:

*God, the Almighty, is the One, Who created me,
And guides me eternally,
And since the day He created me,
He has guided me toward salvation,
And guides me eternally!*

The reason why he chose foods, drinks, and recovery from diseases over other blessings is that they are the most important ones.

“Making people die” i.e., death is ordained by Him for everybody, as He said, *“Every soul shall taste death.”*³¹ This death does not mean annihilation and destruction; rather, it is a general management technique in the universe. Likewise, “bringing to life” refers to the life in the hereafter.

Prophet Abraham did not God’s forgiveness on the Day of Judgment as a definite occurrence; rather, he said, *“And the One who I hope will forgive me!”*³² Because being forgiven does not depend on one’s entitlement to it: it is God’s grace on us, and generally God owes nothing to anyone. It is true that He has obliged Himself to guide people, provide them with sustenance, make them

³¹ The Qur’an 3: 185. كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ.

³² The Qur’an 26: 82. وَ الَّذِي أَلْطَمْتُ أَن يُفْخِرَ لِي

die, and bring them to life [in the hereafter], but He has not obliged himself to forgive every sinner.

Abraham, a truthful prophet

These verses refer to part of Prophet Abraham's life-story when he debated with his father about idols using proof, innate guidance, and his certitude-based knowledge, all of which were granted to him by God. It is also about his retreating from his father, the people, and his two sons Is-haaq and Ya'qub. He placed a lasting word – 'There is no god except Allah,' the monotheistic creed of Abraham – for generations to come, and gave him and his ancestors a good reputation among all people who would highly revere him: *"And mention in the Book Abraham. Indeed he was a very truthful one, a prophet."*

The one who is very committed to telling the truth is called "*very truthful*". In other words, he says what he does and does what he says, and there is no contradiction between his sayings and actions.

Abraham was so because he spoke of monotheism in a place where everyone was an idolater. He clashed with his father, his contemporaries, and the king of Babylon; broke false gods, and did not give up what he said until he was thrown into the fire. Finally, as he promised to his father, he retreated from everyone in seclusion. As a reward for this persistence, God granted him Is-haaq and Ya'qub and fulfilled other promises He had given him.

Abraham's call to his family

When Abraham told his father,
O' Father! Why do you worship idols?

O' Father! Indeed a knowledge has already come to me which has not come to you.

So follow me that I may guide you to a right path.

O' Father! Do not worship Satan.

Indeed Satan is disobedient to the All-beneficent.

O' Father! I am indeed afraid that a punishment from the All-beneficent will befall you, and you will become Satan's accomplice!³³

In the above verses, Prophet Abraham pointed out two issues:

1. His father's ideology to worship idols was invalid and false.
2. He had some knowledge that his father lacked, and it is incumbent on the father to follow Abraham so that he may be guided to the right path as his father was at the risk of the wilāyah of Satan.

(Note: As mentioned above, the one who was called "O' Father!" by Abraham was not his real, biological father; rather, he was his paternal uncle, maternal grandfather, or his stepfather.)

Abraham's knowledge before the start of his religious call

Because Abraham spoke with his father in his early life at the start of his religious call, and said, "*Indeed a knowledge has already come to me*"³⁴ one can conclude that Abraham had knowledge of the right

³³ The Qur'an 19: 42- 45. إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُسَلِّكَ عَذَابَ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا

³⁴ The Quran 19: 43. قَدْ جَاءَنِي الْعِلْمُ

path before his religious call and arguments. Years before meeting and debating with his father and tribe, he had certitude-based knowledge of God and saw the kingdom (*malakūt*) of heaven and the earth.

When he said, *"That I may guide you to a right path,"*³⁵ he meant showing it rather than him taking them towards it because it is not the duty of a prophet to take his Ummah to the right path: his duty is merely to *show* it to them. It is the duty of "Imam" to *take* people to the right path, and those days Abraham had not reached the rank of "Imamate" yet. He reached this rank in his old age and after years of prophethood.³⁶

Prohibiting one's family from Satan's wilāyah

By prohibiting his father from worshipping Satan, Abraham forbade him from obeying Satan. If a person – through Satanic deceits and ornaments – worships Satan and seeks proximity to him, he will be deprived of God's mercy (which is the very guiding of people to salvation) and will be punished since Divine help will no longer be given. God will no longer be his guardian; instead, Satan will be his master, and he will be Satan's friend. All in all, this is tantamount to annihilation. Hence, Abraham told his father:

O' father! Do not obey what Satan orders you to do,
including idols-worship, because Satan itself
disobeyed God and insists on disobedience to God,
Who is the source of all mercy and blessings.

³⁵ The Quran 19: 43. أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا شَوْيًا

³⁶ Baqarah: 119

Thus, if someone disobeys God, Who is the source of all blessings, he will be deprived of God's mercy. Abraham told his father, "I forbid you from worshipping Satan because I am afraid that you are punished by God and deprived of His mercy. Then you will have nothing but Wilayah of Satan, and inevitably you will be Satan's friend, and Satan will be your master."

Consequently:

1. Worship of Satan means obeying him.
2. The use of the word "*All-beneficent*" instead of "*Allah*" is to point out that He is the source of all mercy and blessings so that one will not be deprived of his mercy and become wretched.
3. Here, punishment means being deprived of God's assistance and the like such as God's not having mercy on him and leaving him alone.

AN INQUIRY INTO IMAM HADI'S POLITICAL VIEWS¹

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ABSTRACT: Imam Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi was the tenth Shi'a Imam, known for his immaculate conduct, vast knowledge, and keen perception. Under the rule of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, Imam al-Hadi struggled with the ongoing oppression under a tyrannical government. Using the Imam's letters, supplications, debates, and salutations, this paper offers an account of the Imam's political leadership and his impact in both the social and educational arena.

Introduction

It is necessary to address the Imams' teachings, particularly their political views, to better understand politics from the perspective of Shi'i Islam. On the other hand, nowadays there are numerous political theories, and naturally each has its own followers. Thus, it

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is necessary for the Shi'a to address political theories from their own perspective and to involve Muslim thinkers and intellectuals in these discussions.

In this article, Imam al-Hadi's political views inferred from his debates, correspondence, supplications (*duas*), salutations (*ziyarahs*) and narrations, bearing in mind both the difficult socio-political conditions in the time of Imam al-Hadi⁴ while under house arrest,⁵ and the sensitivity of his era as close to the birth of Imam al-Mahdi. Naturally, the necessity of the dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) gave little opportunity to express his political views. To discuss his political ideas, some of his general ideas, which can be applied to both politics and other areas, are analysed. For example, generally addressing people, God said in the Quran, "*O you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do?*"^{6 7} although from a political

⁴ Since the very difficult conditions during the Imamate of Imam Hadi were not directly related to this article, it was not discussed in detail. For more information, see Ya'qubi History, vol. 2, p. 484, and ibn Khallakan, Wafiyat-ul-'Ayan and Anba' Abna a-Zaman, vol. 5, p. 102 which depict the Abbasid rulers' extreme brutality and cruelty. Also see Khazaz Qummi, Kifaya-tal-Athar fi Nass ala A'immah al-Ithna 'Ashar, p. 290, according to which in order to put the Imam under pressure, they dug a grave besides the Imam's worship place. In addition, see Qutb Rawandi, al-Khara'ij wal-Jawarih, vol. 1, p. 419 which states that due to severe repression, the answer to letters sent to the Imam should be given miraculously. Moreover, see ibn Shahr Ashub, the Virtues of Al-e Abi-Talib, vol. 4, p. 433 which portrays the intense pressure on Shi'ites and Imam Hadi's deputies. Furthermore, see ibn Qulwayh, Kamil-u-Ziyarat, p. 273, according to which Imam Hadi was under so much pressure that he could not even visit Imam Hussein' holy shrine. See also Arbeli, Kashf-ul-Ghummah fi Ma'rafah al-A'immah, vol. 2, p. 385 which states that there was so extreme repression that the Imam sometimes prohibited his followers from asking him questions. Likewise, see Abu-Ghalib Zarari, Abu-Ghalib Zarari's Letter to his Son on Ale A'yun, p. 117, according to which the Imam sometimes chose an appellation for his companions out of dissimulation.

⁵ That is why the Imam and his son, Imam Hassan, were called "Askari" (ibn Bab-e Wayh, 'Ilal-u-Sharayi', vol. 1, p. 241). Inattention to this issue sometimes leads to attributing some of Imam Hadi's Hadiths to Imam Hassan Askari and vice versa.

⁶ Saff, ٢، *يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ*

perspective, this verse takes a meaning different from its denotative meaning, and addresses government officials first,⁸ though it can be applied to ordinary people as well. Accordingly, to delineate Imam al-Hadi's political views, it is necessary to address his sayings from a socio-political perspective.

Another noteworthy point that will not be addressed in the body of this article as it is more of a theological point rather than a political one, is that due to the necessity of dissimulation and the people's lack of access to the Imam, he was concerned about what would happen to the concept of Imamate after his demise, as he had a son older than Imam Hasan 'Askari named Abu-Ja'far, many of whom presumed he would be the next Imam, and so their misguidance was probable.⁹ Imam al-Hadi clearly referred to the Imamate of Imam Hasan al-'Askari to prevent a large group of Shi'as from this misguidance.¹⁰

⁷ (Saff, 2). *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَعْمَلُونَ*

⁸ Rujhan, 1389 solar, p.16.

⁹ The Imam's sensitivity to this issue was because this event was not unprecedented in Shi'a history. For example, after the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq, some Shi'ites accepted Abdullah Aftah, who was the eldest son of the 6th Imam, as the Imam and the successor to the 6th Imam. Fathiyyah's pretext was narrations according to which Imamate should go to the eldest son of any Imam (Kushahi, Rijal Kushahi, vol. 2, p. 525; Mufid, al-Fosul al-Mukhtarah, p. 306). At first, many Shi'ites accepted Abdullah as the Imam (ibn Bab-e Wayh, Kamal-u-Din, vol. 1, p. 74; Ash'ari, al-Maqalat and al-Firaq, p. 87), but Abdullah could not answer the questions posed to assess his Imamate (Nowbakhti, Firaq-u-Shi'a, p. 78), so many denied his Imamate and turned to Imamate of Imam Musa al-Kadim (Khajeh Nasir, Rules of Aqayid, p. 113). Also, his death seventy days of the martyrdom of his father (Nowbakhti, Firaq-u-Shi'a, p. 78) and his not having any children as his successor were two other important factors in the weakness of this sect (Ash'ari, al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq, p. 87; ibn 'Anbah, 'Umdat-u-Taleb, p. 195).

¹⁰ For example, see Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 328.

His major approach to politics

1. The Shi'a Imams: political models

As seen in the Salutations or Ziyarah al-Jami'a al-Kabeerah and Ziyarah of Imam Ali on the day of Ghadir,¹¹ Imam al-Hadi delineated the characteristics of a qualified and just Imam, and invited people to follow him. In Ziyarah al-Jami'a, he introduced the Imams as those who are truly entitled to positions in government as they knew the essence of politics,¹² and considered them as the pivot of the truth.¹³ Another subset of the truth and legitimacy in Shi'a political discussion that receives attention is his debates with the tyrant rulers on wilayah and rulership. In these debates, the Imam spoke of the right to wilayah and government as that which is exclusive to the Infallibles.

In an excerpt of this Ziyarah, Imam al-Hadi regarded the people's turning to the Imams as their way to salvation.¹⁴ Naturally, the first and most important epitome of turning to Shi'a Imams is to obey their political and social instructions and conduct. Attaining otherworldly and worldly salvation and establishing justice – referred to as the objectives of the prophets' mission in the Quran¹⁵ should be the goal of any religious government, and this goal can be achieved through Imamate of the infallible leaders as the system of

¹¹ ibn Mashhadi, 1419 AH, p. 268.

¹² ساسه العباد (ibn Bab-e Wayh, Man la Yahzuruh-ul-Faqih, vol. 2, p. 610).

¹³ الحق معكم وفيكم ومنكم و اليكم و اتم اهل و معدنه (ibid.)

¹⁴ من اتاكم نجي ومن لم ياتكم هلك (ibid., p.613)

¹⁵ لقد ارسلنا رسلنا بالبينات و انزلنا معهم الكتاب و الميزان ليقيموا الناس بالقسط (Hadid, 25)

"Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice."

Imamate is the only perfect embodiment of the Divine government and the prophetic conduct.^{16 17} According to Imam al-Hadi, parallel with the caliphate of the Infallibles, in the age of Occultation there are jurists and religious scholars who are protectors and pioneers of the path of truth and justice to save society from deviation. As for the importance of the role of jurists and religious scholars, Imam al-Hadi believed that in the age of Occultation, people would turn away from Islam if there were no religious scholars to invite people to it:¹⁸ to guide them to God, defend Islam with compelling reasons, save people with weaker faith from Satan's traps, and protect the people's heart from deviation – like a captain who prevents a ship from capsizing to the right or the left. To God, these religious scholars are superior others.^{19 20}

2. His views of political power

One of important features of any political approach or ideology on which the subsequent policies are based is its worldview, as well as its political power and governance. In the Islamic worldview, this world and all that is related to it, including the political power and government, are ephemeral; They are only valuable when used to

¹⁶ Jawadi Amuli, 1391 solar, vol. 8, p. 173.

¹⁷ In a Hadith to delineate Imamate, Imam Riḍa said, "Surely Imamate is the caliphate of God and caliphate of the Prophet" (ibn Bab-e Wahy, p. 676).

¹⁸ Of course, considering the reference of the pronoun in *والباعين اليه* which may be "Imam Mahdi al-Qa'im", this meaning may change, but the overall meaning is the same.

ولا من بقي بعد غيبة قائمكم من العلماء الناصين اليه و الدالين عليه و النابين عن دينه بحجج الله و المتقين لضعفاء عباده من شباهك إبليس و مردته و من فحاش النواصب لما بقي احد إلا ارتد عن دين الله و لكنهم الذين يسكنون أزمة قلوب

¹⁹ Hassan ibn Ali, 1409 A.H., p. 345; Tabarsi, 1403 A.H., vol. 1, p. 18.

²⁰ ضعفاء الشيعة كما يسلك صاحب السفينة سكانها أولئك هم الأفضلون عند الله عز وجل

establish rights, administer justice, and eradicate falsehood.²¹ Imam al-Hadi described the past tyrant rulers as follows:

The arrogant and defiant people and powerful kings spent nights on the summits of mountains [at the heights of government] while strong men were guarding them, but the summits could not save from their death. After living gloriously for a while, they were pulled down from the safe places and placed in the holes [graves]. What a disagreeable abode. After they had been buried, a caller called out, "Where are those expensive and fancy bracelets, crowns, and clothes? Where are those faces grown affluently and respected by being kept behind curtains? The grave answered instead of them, "Now worms are fighting over eating their faces. They ate and drank for a long time in this world, but now they are being eaten after that luxurious life."^{22 23}

²¹ As Imam Ali said, "والله، انما احب إلي من امركم هذا، إلا أن اقيم حقا او ادفع باطلا" (al-Madani, Waq't-ul-Jamal, p.112; Hashemi Khu'i, Minhaj-ul-Bara'ah fi Sharh al-Nahj-ul-Balagha, vol. 4, p. 68, slightly different)

²² Mas'udi, 1385 A.H., vol. 4, p. 94.

²³

عَلِبَ الرِّجَالُ فَلَمْ تَنْفَعَهُمُ الْقُلُوبُ	بَاتُوا عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْأَجْبَالِ تَحْرِشُهُمْ
وَأَسْكَنُوا خُفْرًا لَا يُلْتَمَسُ مَا تَزَلُّوا	وَأَسْتَنْزَلُوا بَغْدَ عَيْرٍ عَنْ مَعْقِلِهِمْ
أَيْنَ الْأَسَاوِرُ وَالْتِيَجَانُ وَالْخُلُوبُ	نَادَاهُمْ صَارِحٌ مِنْ بَغْدِ دَفْتِنِهِمْ
مِنْ دُونِهَا تُضْرِبُ الْأَسْتَارَ وَالْكُلُوبُ	أَيْنَ الْوُجُوهُ الَّتِي كَانَتْ مُنْعَمَةً
بِلَاكِ الْوُجُوهِ عَلَيْهَا الدُّودُ يُتَمِيلُ	فَتَأْفَضُّعُ الْعَبْرَ عَنْهُمْ حِينَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ
وَأَصْبَحُوا بَغْدَ طُولِ الْأَكْلِ قَدْ أَكَلُوا	قَدْ طَالَ مَا أَكَلُوا دَهْرًا وَ مَا شَرَبُوا

Government and the political power are valueless when the intention is to enjoy worldly pleasures and control others, and their end is regret and loss in the hereafter; unless within the comprehensive framework of "This world resembles a farm for the hereafter," one can serve people by establishing rights and upholding justice.

3. Cooperation or non-cooperation with the government

Imam al-Hadi underlined the importance of strengthening the rule of a just ruler and undermining the government of a tyrannical ruler. In a letter he received, one of his companions asked him about working for the Abbasid caliphate. The Imam replied, "If one is forced to work for them, there is no problem: under such circumstances, he is excused by God. Otherwise, it is reprehensible; when one is forced to do so, the little, the better." The companion asked, "What if my goal is to find a way to give them a blow and to take revenge?" The Imam answered, "If so, it not only is permissible but also will be rewarded."^{24,25} Whatever strengthened the oppressors is prohibited.²⁶ It is noteworthy to mention that: first, the kings and

²⁴ ibn Idris, 1410 A.H., vol. 3, pp. 583-584; Hurr Ameli, 1409 A.H., vol. 17, p. 190.

²⁵ وكتبته إليه أسأله عن العمل لبني العباس و أخذ ما أتمكن من أمواهم هل فيه رخصة وكيف المذهب في ذلك فقال ما كان المدخل فيه بالجبر و القهر فأنه قابل العذر و ما خلا ذلك فمكروه و لا محالة قليله خير من كثيره و ما يكفر به ما يلزمه فيه من برزقه و يسبب علي يديه ما يشرك فينا و في موالينا قال فكتبته إليه في جواب ذلك أعلمه ان مذهبي في الدخول في أمرهم وجود السبيل الي ادخال المكروه علي عدوه و انبساط اليد في التشقي منهم بشيء ان يقرب به إليهم فاجاب من فعل ذلك فليس مدخله في العمل حراماً بل اجراً و ثواباً

²⁶ As for the importance of the just Imam in "society", Imam Bāqir raised a subtle point, saying, "God has sworn to punish all people or nations that accept the Imamate of the tyrannical leader even though they are righteous and pious individually, but to forgive the sins of the nation who follow the just Imam appointed by God even though they are evil-doer individually (Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 376). In another Hadith by Imam Sadiq, those who disobey the Imam appointed by God or obey the Imam appointed by others deserve the severest punishment (ibn Shu'abah Harrani, Tuhaf-ul-Oqul, p.329).

their household were in power, and the political system was regarded as personal; second, governments had a limited dominance over people's lives; third, they were not sophisticated and extensive governments. Nowadays, the situation is different, and some sophisticated governments are formed on a social level, while managing people's lives. Although the ruler is unjust, non-cooperation with the political regime might be harmful because cooperation with any government is considered as serving the whole society. Hence, this word of the Imam should be considered in political situation of his era. The essence of his word is that one should avoid strengthening any tyrannical rule as much as possible.

According to Imam al-Hadi, if qualified people who are the true owners of wilāyah come into power, wherein justice will be served, even though there is oppression in a few places, if one is not certain about this oppression, he should have a good opinion of all people. However, in the rule of tyrants, the opposite is the case: the Imam said, "When there more justice than oppression, people must not have a bad and poor opinion of others until their evil is proven; and when there is more oppression than justice, one should not have a good opinion of others unless the opposite is proved."^{27 28}

Characteristics of political rulers

Political activists and elites either as rulers and managers or as political parties and media must have socio-political concerns and

²⁷ Halwani, 1408 A.H., p. 142; Deilami, 1408 A.H., p. 312.

²⁸ إذا كان زمان العدل فيه اغلب [من الجور] فحرام أن تظن بأحد سوءاً حتى تعلم ذلك منه و إذا كان زمان الجور فيه اغلب من العدل، فليس لأحد أن يظن بأحد خيراً حتى يبدو ذلك منه

attempt to impact political trends. According to Imam al-Hadi, political activists and elites are to have the following features:

1. God-wariness (*taqwa*)

In the Islamic political doctrine, God-wariness or piety (*taqwa*) is a significant factor in the social and political arenas, with several functions. As for its role in people's obedience to a pious person, Imam al-Hadi believed that if one reveres God, others will revere him, and if one obeys God, others will obey him. And the obedient person to God does not fear the creatures' wrath, but the one who enrages the Creator will incur the creatures' rage.^{29 30} This is important for the rulers who seek people's obedience to strengthen their government. God-wariness causes man to take God into account in all issues, and to not forget the dignity granted to him by God; because one who forgets Divine dignity will easily oppress others. According to Imam al-Hadi, "The one who considers himself as abject, others will not be immune from his evil."³¹³² Likewise, to make God-wariness easy for people, he said, "Always remember when you are on your deathbed; your friends nor your doctor can

²⁹ Mas'udi, 1426 A.H., p. 235; Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, 1404 A.H., p. 482.

³⁰ *من اتقى الله يمتن و من أطاع الله بطاع*, then the Hadith narrator added,

فلم أزل أدلف حتى قرئت منه و دنوت فسلمت عليه و رد علي السلام فأول ما ابتدأني أن قال لي:
يا فصح من أطاع الخالق لم يزال بسخط المخلوقين و من أسخط الخالق فليوقن أن يحل به سخط
المخلوقين

³¹³¹ *من هانت عليه نفسه فلا تأمن شره* Differently, this Hadith was reported from Imam al-Baqir or Imam al-Jawad because in the Hadith the name of Imam was referred to as "Muhammad ibn Ali". From this Hadith, the origin of the excessive oppression can be discovered. According to Imam Hadi, one's meanness leads to considering this world too much important and valuable (Sha'iri, Jami'-al-Akhbar, p. 109). Accordingly, the effects of the above-mentioned word of the 10th Imam can be found in this Hadith, that is, others are not immune from his evil.

³² Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, 1404 A.H., p. 482

prevent death.”³³ If a politician constantly remembers this, he most likely will not take measures out of his whims.

2. Honesty and integrity with the masses

Islamic political thought includes features that differ fundamentally from common western political views. One of these elements is honesty. According to Imam al-Hadi, a main element in governance is the emotional connection between rulers and the masses through honesty, because it causes wholehearted loyalty to the ruler. The Infallible Imams considered themselves first as the Imam of the people's hearts, then as the Imam of their body,³⁴ and this means that the ruler should consider his emotional connection with people as crucial and always seek to strengthen it. Imam al-Hadi told an Abbasid caliph contemporary with him, Mutawakkil:

Do not expect the one whom you have resented to be honest and truthful, the one whom you have betrayed to be loyal, and the one whom you think badly of to be benevolent, because others' feelings toward you are the same as yours toward them.^{35,36}

If the rulers have ill feelings toward people even when they do not show their negative feelings, the behaviour will be reciprocated by the people. Rulers cannot expect people to be honest and loyal when they were not truthful themselves.

³³ Halwani, 1408 A.H., p. 141; Shami, 1420 A.H., p. 730.

³⁴ Bahrani, 1413 A.H., vol. 21, p. 242.

³⁵ Halwani, 1408 A.H., p. 142.

³⁶ لا تطلب الصفا من كدرك عليه [و لا الوفاء من غدرك به] و لا التصح من صرفت سوء ظنك اليه، فانما قلب غيرك لك كقلبك له

3. Competence and qualifications

According to Imam Hadi, a person should not seek a position if he is not qualified for it; a person has a right only to what he or she is qualified for. And if one seeks something beyond his qualification, he will gain nothing. From a political perspective, this means people should know their limits and not desire anything beyond their competence because "Anybody who seeks what he is not entitled to should be deprived of it."^{37 38}

One might ask: If somebody sought something beyond his competence and then gained it, would it refute the Imam's word? First, when a person seeks something he is not entitled to, although he attains it on the surface, it is illegitimate because it was not his right, and it is as if he was deprived of it. Second, such a person usurps and violates others' rights, and they always try to get their rights back, and when they succeed to do so, they will probably deprive him of all that he has, even the that which he is entitled to.

4. Acceptance and patience

In Islamic political thought, acceptance and patience are necessary qualities for the political elite. Acceptance indicates an esteemed personality, one who is not irritated by trivial things and can listen to and digest various and opposing views. These characteristics are so vital it may save even a tyrant; his patience may lead to his being forgiven.^{39 40} The ruler tolerates their words patiently and does not

³⁷ Shami, 1420 A.H., p. 729.

³⁸ من سأل فوق قدر الحق كان أولى بالحرمان

³⁹ Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, 1404 A.H., p. 483; Fa'id, 1406 A.H., vol. 26, p. 284.

⁴⁰ ان الظالم الخاتم يكاد أن يعني على ظلمه مجمله وإن الحق السفية يكاد أن يطلق نور حقه بسفوه

react although he can [as a reprimand]. Thus, there is hope that his oppressive acts may be forgiven by the people. According to the Imam, the epitome of acceptance is self-control and the ability to suppress one's anger while in a seat of power.⁴¹ In contrast, he considered the subordinates' anger as resulting from their inferiority.⁴² Accepting others makes the ruler able to bear the ups and downs in government easily and manage the country with wisdom and far-sightedness; like the Prophet Moses, who asked God for these qualities at the beginning of his prophetic mission.⁴³ Moreover, God referred to "broadmindedness" as a blessing He granted to Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁴

5. Accepting advice and constructive criticism⁴⁵

The complexity of political systems and the difficulty of managing the country's affairs require various people to constantly offer one another constructive criticism to realise their mistakes and choose the wisest approach. Imam al-Hadi warned us about the quality of smugness, of deeming oneself as independent of criticism and advice which leads to denying one's flaws: "Whoever is self-satisfied, there

⁴¹ Shami, 1420 A.H., p. 729.

⁴² Majlisi, 1403 A.H., vol. 75, p. 370.

⁴³ He said, 'My Lord! Open my breast for me. قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي (Taha, 25).

⁴⁴ Did We not open your breast for you اَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (Inshirah, 1).

⁴⁵ The benevolent advice to others is so significant that it was a pillar of allegiance in the early Islam. According to the Prophet, benevolence towards the Muslim leader is one of three issues that a Muslims should never give up (Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 403). In the second supplication of Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, Imam Sajjad also referred to one of the Prophet's qualities as giving benevolent advice to others (Ali ibn Husayn, Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, the second supplication). Likewise, Imam Ali believed that a right of the ruler on people is that they act benevolently toward him in both his presence and his absence (Sayyid Radi, Nahj ul-Balaghah, the sermon no. 34).

will be many who are dissatisfied with him.”⁴⁶ ⁴⁷ In an Islamic country, the rulers should pave the ground for people advising the rulers.⁴⁸ Rulers should not prevent others from offering constructive criticism. Of course, it is noteworthy to add that according to Imam al-Hadi, wisdom, advice, and benevolence do not influence the ill-natured one.⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ The ruler should have a healthy personality so that others' advice influences them.

6. Avoiding unnecessary disputation

Unnecessary disputation that arise from an irrationality has damaging social and political consequences. They harm and lead to underdevelopment. Imam al-Hadi regarded it as the factor in severed relationships. He stated that the goal in these types of disputes is to overcome the opposing side, and that this has negative consequences.⁵¹

The people's role in the government

Imam al-Hadi's views in this regard are summarised as follows:

⁴⁶ Halwani, 1408 A.H., p. 138.

⁴⁷ Of course, ibn Abi-l-Hadid also narrated this hadith in his book without referring to its name (ibn Abi-l-Hadid, the Commentary on Nahj-ul-Balaghah, v. 7, p. 109).

⁴⁸ For more information see the section “The people's role in the government” in this article.

⁴⁹ Shami, 1420 A.H., p. 733.

⁵⁰ الحكمة لا تنجح في الطباع الفاسدة

⁵¹ المرء يفسد الصداقة القديمة و يحل العقدة الوثيقة و اقل ما فيه ان تكون المغالبة امن اسباب القطيعة

Argument destroys old friendships and breaks close ties, at least in an argument one tries to overcome another person which is a reason behind separation (Halwani, Nuzha-tu-Nazir wa Tanbih-ul-Khatir, p.139).

1. Obedience in accordance with Islamic Law (*shari'ah*)

To Imam al-Hadi, only the willing obedience to the ruler who treats people honestly and kindly is mandatory. He said, "The one who grants you all his affection and attention, you should obey him wholeheartedly."^{52 53 54}

Obedience towards the social and political system is a necessary quality, because if in a community everyone follows his or her own ideas or every group obeys various people, there will be no social order. However, according to the Imam, there are conditions for the people's obedience to the rulers that depend on the people and the rulers' mutual rights and duties.

2. Avoiding blind obedience

The same way we are advised to obey the rulers knowingly and based on rules that are in line with socio-political goals, we are also

⁵² ibn Shu'bah Harrani, 1404 A.H., p. 483.

⁵³ من جمع لك وده و رأيه فاجمع له طاعتك

⁵⁴ In this regard, there are other words by other infallibles. For example, in order to highlight the significance of Imam Hadi's words, some of them are referred to in brief. Ibn Abbas quoted the Prophet as saying, "O' people! Obey the one whom Allah has made Wali because this obedience makes Islam lasting" "اسمعوا وأطيعوا لمن ولّاه الله الأمر فإنه نظام الإسلام" (Mufid, al-Amali, p.14). If majority of people disobey the ruler, he will have a hard time managing the society. That is why Imam Ali regarded people's disobedience as a factor in social disorder and anarchy (Sayyid Radi, Nahj-ul-Balaghah, the sermon no. 27). Imam Bāqir quoted the Prophet as saying, "Allah (the Glorious, the Majestic) will not look at His friend who has risked his life for obeying His Imam and benevolence to him, but when he accompanies him in the Highest Place," ما نظر الله عز وجل إلى ولي له يجهد نفسه بالطاعة لإمامه و النصيحة إلا كان معنا في الرفيق الأعلى (Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 404). In Sahih Muslim, the obedience was referred to as a pillar of paying allegiance to Prophet Muhammad in the early Islam. According to Jarīr, "I told the Prophet: 'I am paying allegiance to you to obey you.' The Prophet also taught me other conditions including doing my duties as much as I can and treating all Muslims benevolently, عن جرير قال: بايعت النبي علي السمع والطاعة فلقني: فيما استطعت و النصح لكل مسلم (a-Nishapur, Sahih Muslim, vols. 1-2, pp.40-41).

prohibited from several kinds of obedience. One of these is blind obedience. Imam al-Hadi said people should ponder on the words and path of a group and should not obey it blindly; rather, people should willingly choose the way of those who sincerely worship God.^{55 56}

3. Avoiding flattery

Adulation has adverse political and social consequences for both the flatterer and the flattered. In the Islamic texts and the Islamic leaders' words,⁵⁷ flattery is greatly prohibited. Reprimanding the one who praised him excessively, Imam al-Hadi prohibited him from it and considered it as a factor in suspicion. He advised us to have good will toward the one we trust rather than flattery.^{58 59}

4. How to evaluate the government

To understand phenomena in a way that is close to the truth and useful for achieving one's goals requires reflection, knowledge, and expertise. To take a path or to set a goal arbitrarily or emotionally does not take one to the truth. In the same line, Imam al-Hadi advised people against taking a path without any good reason; the one who inclines to illogically giving up his path when that event

⁵⁵ Warram, 1410 A.H., vol. 2, p. 109.

⁵⁶ و سلك الناس وادياً و شعباً لسلكت وادي رجل عبد الله وحده خالصاً

⁵⁷ The one whom people bow before- In fact, people give him poison.

When these people turn away from him- He will know this bow was, in fact, poison and bad for him.

(Mulawi, Mathnawi Ma'nawi, p. 759).

⁵⁸ Shahid Awwal, 1379 solar, p.43.

⁵⁹ قال لبعض و قد أكثر من إفراط الثناء عليه: أقبل على شأنك؛ فإن كثرة الثناء تمجهم على الظنّة و إذا حلت من أخيك في محلّ النّمة فاعدل عن الملق إلى حسن التّية

loses its significance.⁶⁰ ⁶¹ Someone had asked him, "Sometimes an issue makes me doubtful, what should I do?" He replied, "If you consider it more carefully, it will not be difficult for you [to distinguish between the truth and falsehood]." The man asked again, "How should I consider it more carefully?" The Imam replied, "The one who looks for the way of careful consideration and seeks it really will find it unless he wants to acquire it in an incorrect way."⁶²

⁶³

Conclusion

Imam al-Hadi's political views can be classified into three areas: 1) his view of the government itself and of this world and political power; 2) the characteristics of the political elite and activists; and 3) the people's role in the government and their duties towards it.

The Imam considered political power and government as valuable only when the rulers do not care about this world's transient affairs, their personal benefits, and the interests of their party or group; rather, their main concern is their mental and spiritual development while give priority to the hereafter. As for the qualities necessary for the politicians, the following can be referred to:

1. The political elite must always pay special attention to God-wariness (taqwa) as a key quality and consider God as observing their actions. Otherwise, they will forget the Divine blessing granted

⁶⁰ Halwani, 1408 A.H., p. 139.

⁶¹ من اقبل مع امر، ولي مع انقضائه

⁶² al-Ameli, no date, p. 732.

⁶³ قال الحميري: كتبت إليه يختلف إلينا أخباركم فكيف العمل بها؟ قال: فكتب إلي: من لزم رأس العين لم يختلف عليه أمره، إنما تخرج من مخزنها و هي بضاء صافية نقية فتخالطها الأكنار في طريقها. قال: فكتبت إليه: كيف لنا برأس العين وقد حيل بيننا وبينه؟ قال: فكتب إلي هي مبدولة لمن طلبها إلا لمن أرادها بإلحاد

to them due to their servitude to God, and people will not be immune from their oppression.

2. They should treat people with honesty so that people can advise them in a spirit of goodwill and compassion.

3. They should not cross the limits by being despotic and self-satisfied. They should patiently face hardships – which sometimes may be caused by them – take their qualifications into account, and ultimately pave the way for others' kind advice. All of these are key qualities which the statesmen should have.

As for the role of people in the government, they are required to obey the rulers completely; of course, those rulers who sincerely endeavour for people's welfare and salvation. The masses should avoid blind obedience and should not withhold their advice to the rulers. They should consider themselves responsible for their rulers' actions because if benevolent advice is the rulers' right, people are required to give them advice, and people are hold accountable in this regard.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF IMAM AL-HADI¹

ABDUL-KARIM PAKNIA

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Imam Ali ibn Muhammad, known as "al-Hadi" or "the one who guides" was the tenth of the 12 Imams in Shi'a Islam. After his father's assassination at the will of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim, Imam al-Hadi assumed the official role of his father. Known for his knowledge and wisdom, he instructed a vast number of students, predominantly from Egypt, Persia, and Iraq. In the meantime, the new caliph, al-Mutawakkil, kept a close eye on the new leader. The following paper offers a brief account of Imam al-Hadi's exceptional leadership, including his influence in the social spheres given his knowledge and nobility, as well as his struggles against the Abbasids.

Introduction

Imam al-Hadi was born on the 15th of Dhul-Hijjah, 212 A. H. in a place near Medina called Seria². His father was the 9th Imam, Imam

¹ Muballighan

al-Jawad, and his mother was “Samanah al-Maghribiyyah”, a virtuous and pious woman who kept vigil, worshipping God. He became Imam in the year 220 A.H. at the age of 8 after martyrdom of his father. During his 33 years of Imamate, he was contemporary with several Abbasid caliphs: 1. Mu’tasim, Ma’mun’s brother (217-227); 2. Wathiq, Mu’tasim’s son (227-232); 3. Mutawakkil, Wathiq’s brother (232-248); 4. Mustansir, Mutawakkil’s son (for six months); 5. Mu’tasim, Mustansir’s cousin (248-252); 6. Mu’taz, Mustansir’s other son (252-255).

In the rule of the last above-mentioned Abbasid caliph, Imam al-Hadi was poisoned and martyred by his agents. He was buried in the city of Samarra, in his own house.

In this article, his style of leadership in the dark age of the above-mentioned tyrant Abbasid caliphs is reviewed, as well as the measures he took during his Imamate are investigated. Using historical sources and evidence, his decisions and wise stances in illuminating Shi’a thought against deviant domestic groups will be identified as well.

Imam al-Hadi’s struggle against the Abbasids

1. His influence in court circles

Imam al-Hadi’s wise methods and scientific and spiritual virtues were widespread among governmental agents and politicians of his time. For example, when Harthamah took him to Baghdad, Is-haaq ibn Ibrahim Tahiri, who was Baghdad governor, told him, “You

² Seria is a village located near Medina (about 6 kilometers off) and established by Imam al-Kazim.

know Mutawakkil (i.e., he is mean and malicious). If you provoke him to kill Ali ibn Muhammad, he will do so, and the Prophet will be your enemy on the Day of Judgement." And he said in response, "By God, I have not seen him doing anything but showing good behaviours and doing good deeds."³

A great Turk emir at the service of the Abbasid Caliphate, Wasif Turki, also threatened that if the Imam is harmed in the slightest, Harthamah would be responsible for it.

Imam al-Hadi was also revered by court men, and the workers were sincerely devoted to him. Upon his arrival in various Islamic countries, slaves and workers in their courts respected the Imam so much that it aroused jealousy in some of the court men.

a. The problem-solver

When the Abbasid caliph, Mutawakkil, was on his deathbed due to an abscess on his skin, no doctor dared to perform surgery on him. His mother then made a vow to grant a large sum of her money to Imam al-Hadi if her son were cured.

The Abbasid vizier, Fat-h ibn Khaqan, then suggested Mutawakkil to send someone to the Imam and ask him about the cure, and Mutawakkil agreed. Mutawakkil's messenger went to the Imam and brought back his response: "Crush the excrement of a sheep excrement under your feet and mix it with rosewater, then put the ointment on the abscess. By God's will, it will work." Upon hearing this, some people started laughing, but Fat-h was adamant about trying the Imam's recommendation. After doing so, and the abscess

³ Anwar-ul-Bahiyyah, pp.449-450.

broke open and the pus in it came out. Mutawakkil's mother became delighted and sent 10,000 dinars sealed with her signature to the Imam.⁴

b. His vast knowledge

According to Yahya ibn Harthamah, "One day in the spring when it was sunny, we were surprised when we saw Imam al-Hadi come out wearing a raincoat. However, when we arrived in the plains, it became cloudy and then heavily rainy, rendering Imam Hadi the only one immune to it. He turned to me and said, "I know that you were surprised and assumed I predicted the rain based on my Imamate knowledge, but I have lived in the plains and am aware about the rain clouds. This morning, there blew a gust of wind which I could smell rain from, so I came out prepared for it."⁵

His infinite knowledge was known to society and government officials. The Imam took this opportunity to invite people to the divine path when the Abbasid repressed any activity that could be seen by them as a challenge or threat. Of course, this was only possible through his wisdom, persistence, and patience in the way of God.

c. His noble conduct

Once Abu-'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Qasim Batha'i, a descendant of Abu-Talib but a follower of Abbasids, badmouthed the Imam to Mutawakkil, saying, "You can find a lot of money and weapons in the Ali ibn Muhammad's house." So Mutawakkil ordered Sa'id

⁴ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, p. 198.

⁵ Anwar-ul-Bahiyyah, pp.288-289.

Hajib to raid his house at night and bring him all the money and weapons he could find. Ibrahim ibn Muhammad told about this event, quoting Hajib: "We went to the Imam's house at night. Climbing a ladder, I went up to the roof and into the yard when suddenly, the Imam called me from a room, saying: "Stay there until they bring you a candle!"⁶ Soon after they brought me one, and I went to his room. He was sitting on his prayer mat wearing a coarse cloak and facing the qiblah. He told me, "These are the rooms, go and search them." I did not find anything in the rooms, but the bags of gold coins sealed with the name of Mutawakkil's mother and some other bags with the same seal. Imam al-Hadi said, "And this is the prayer mat." I unrolled it and found a sword without a sheath. I took that sword and those bags to Mutawakkil. Seeing his mother's seal on the bags, Muttawakkil sent for his mother and asked her about those bags. She said, "When you were sick, I made a vow to give 10,000 dinars to him; these bags are those coins. The Imam did not even open the bags!" Mutawakkil opened the last bag which contained 400 dinars. Then he ordered to take back the bags and the sword to the Imam.

I did so but was ashamed of my behaviour, so I told the Imam, "O' My master! I was very ashamed to enter your house without your permission, but I was ordered to do so. The Imam said, "And the wrongdoers will soon know at what goal they will end up."⁷

On the surface, Mutawakkil treated the Imam politely, but he constantly watched Imam al-Hadi and could not bear his approval

يا سعيذ مكاتك حتى ياتوك بشنقة⁶

⁷ al-Shu'ar, 277. وَ سَتَفْعَلُمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيْ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ. Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, pp. 199-200.

and fame in society. At times ordered his men to imprison the Imam, confiscate his property, and search his house, while plotting to make the Imam decline in popularity. For example, when Mutawakil forcefully brought the Imam to Samarra, he did not go to the Imam and instead ordered Imam al-Hadi to come him, after the Imam was kept for a while in "Khan al-Sa'alik", a gathering place of beggars. A follower of Imam al-Hadi, Salih ibn Sa'id, went to the Imam and told him, "May I be sacrificed for you! They wanted to turn off your light and steal your majesty by keeping you in this inappropriate place." Using his miraculous power, Imam al-Hadi drew Salih ibn Sa'id's attention to his holy hand, where Salih saw green gardens and magnificent palaces. He could not believe his eyes at the wondrous scenery. Then Imam al-Hadi told him, "Wherever we are, these places are prepared for us. We are not in the dwelling of poor."⁸

This way, Mutawakkil's plots were foiled one after another. Every day new divine and spiritual aspects of Imam's personality were revealed to all people, including the elite. Thus, Mutawakkil's anger and resentment increased to the extent that he could not tolerate any more decided to kill the Imam.⁹

2. Responses to legal and intellectual questions

Another way in which Imam al-Hadi led the Islamic Ummah was his answers to legal and scientific questions. Two instances are referred to below:

⁸ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, pp. 132-133. *حيث كنا فهذا لنا يا ابن سعيد لئلا في خان الصعاليك*

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

A. In the rule of Mutawakkil, a Christian man committed adultery with a Muslim woman although he accepted Islam and uttered the shahadatayn¹⁰ afterwards. When he was arrested and taken to Mutawakkil, the prominent scholar Yahya ibn Aktham gave a judgement as follows: "His becoming Muslim cleansed him of the evilness of his disbelief and illegal deed, and it is not necessary to punish him legally." Other jurists said that he should be punished legally three times, while other jurists gave different judgements. Mutawakkil was puzzled and asked the Imam for the correct verdict. Imam al-Hadi said, "He should be whipped to death."¹¹ Yahya ibn Aktham and other jurists protested, saying, "O' emir! There is no such judgment in the Qur'an and Sunnah; ask him for the reasons and evidence for this fatwa." Imam al-Hadi referred to verses 84 and 85 of the chapter al-Ghafir.

B. According to Abu-'Abdullah Ziyadi, when Mutawakkil was poisoned, he made a vow that if he recovered, he would give a large sum of money in charity. He became well and asked the jurists about the amount of "a lot of money", which they disagreed on. Hasan, who was the guard of Mutawakkil, told him, "O' Amir-al-Mu'minin! What reward will I receive for answering this question?" Mutawakkil said, "If you give the correct answer, I will grant you 10,000 dirhams; otherwise, I will whip you one hundred times." Hasan accepted this, went to Imam al-Hadi, and asked about the amount of "a lot of money." The Imam replied, "He should give 80 dirhams in charity."¹² Mutawakkil asked, "Why?" Hasan went to

¹⁰ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

¹¹ يُضْرَبُ حَتَّى يَمُوتَ

¹² يَتَصَدَّقُ بِثَمَانِينَ دِرْهَمًا

Imam al-Hadi again, and the Imam said, "Because God told His Prophet: Allah has certainly helped you in many situations, [and you triumphed over enemies];¹³ and God helped His Prophet on eighty occasions."

Hasan told this Qur'anic reason to Mutawakkil, who accepted it and gave him 10,000 dirhams.¹⁴

3. Secret struggles

A measure of Imam al-Hadi as the leader was to manage secret struggles against the then dictatorial and totalitarian government.

a. Muhammad ibn Dawood Qummi and Muhammad Talhi related: From Qum and some areas around it, we were taking some properties including gifts, religious taxes, money vowed to be given to the Imams (*nothoorat*), and jewellery to Imam al-Hadi. On our way, the Imam's messenger met and told us to go back because it was not an appropriate time to hand them in. Hence, we returned and kept those properties. Then the Imam ordered us to send him the properties on the camels he had dispatched to us without a cameleer, and we did so. After a while, when we went to the Imam, he told us, "Look at the properties you have sent me!" We found them intact in the Imam's house.¹⁵

b. According to Muhammad ibn Sharaf: I was walking with Imam al-Hadi in Medina. The Imam asked me, "Are you Sharaf's son?" I said, "Yes." Then I was going to ask him a question, but he said,

¹³ Tawbah, 25. لَقَدْ فَصَّرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ

¹⁴ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, pp. 162-163.

¹⁵ ibid., vol.50. p.185.

"We are walking in the main road and it is not appropriate to raise a question here."¹⁶

On numerous similar occasions, the Imam hid his activities and took measures in a way that government agents could notice them.

4. His struggle against the deviant thoughts

a. Opposing extremists (*Ghullat*)

In the time of Imam al-Hadi, the Ghullat went to extremes about the 14 infallibles who considered them having a status as high as God Himself, and misguided others through their false ideologies. Through his wise sayings, strategic behaviours, and insightful letters, the Imam distinguished between the truth and extremism. He warned the true friends of the Ahlul-Bayt not to incline to these false ideas. Among these deviated people were Ali ibn Hasakah Qummi, Qasim Yaqtini, Hassan ibn Muhammad Babaye Qummi, Muhammad ibn Nasir, Fars ibn Hatam Qazwini, etc, all of whom Imam al-Hadi was opposed to.

b. His sayings and letters

A companion of Imam al-Hadi wrote a letter to him about the false and deviated beliefs of Ali ibn Hasakah: "May I be sacrificed for you, O' my master! Ali in Hasakah believes that you are the eternal God and considered himself a prophet sent by you to invite people towards you." Imam al-Hadi wrote in response, "Ibn Hasakah is a liar; I do not consider him a friend of mine. By God, He did not send Prophet Muhammad and the other prophets before him but to

¹⁶ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, p. 176. تَحْنُ عَلَى قَارِعَةِ الطَّرِيقِ وَ لَيْسَ هَذَا مَوْضِعَ الْأَسْئَالَةِ.

propagate monotheism, prayer, zakat, hajj, and wilāyah. Prophet Muhammad only invited people to One God, and we – his successors – are God's servants who do not associate anyone with Him. If we obey God, we will be covered by His mercy, and if we disobey His orders, we will be punished. We do not have any authority (*hujjat*) on God; it is He who *hujjat* over us and His creatures. I dissociate from the one who said such words and seek refuge in God from him. You should also keep away from such people, put them under pressure, and refute their views. If you have access to such a person, throw a stone at him and break his head.”¹⁷

c. His measures

At first, Fars ibn Maḥooyeh Qazwini was a close companion and deputy of Imam al-Hadi, but then he was deviated from the path of Islam and Imamate, and then deviated people from Islam and invited them to innovations in it by expressing blasphemous beliefs. He who was known as Imam al-Hadi's deputy by people received religious taxes and spent them contrary to the interests of Islam and Imam al-Hadi's ideas. A reason for his deviation was his love for this world and high positions. Fars ibn Hatam went to such great extremes in treading the path of falsehood, preaching seditions, and disuniting the Shi'as to the point where Imam al-Hadi issued a fatwa of his apostasy and heresy: “Fars, may Allah curse him! Call himself my deputy while he is an agitator and mischief-maker, and he calls people to innovations in Islam. It is obligatory to kill him, and whoever kills him, he saves me from Fars' evil, and I will guarantee

¹⁷ *ibid.*, vol. 25, p.317; Rijal Kushshi, p. 518.

the killer the heaven.”¹⁸ After a while, because no one killed him, Imam al-Hadi assigned a brave, devoted, and reliable Shi'a, Junayd, to this task, and he killed Fars as soon as he found the opportunity.¹⁹

His struggles against Sufism

According to Muhammad ibn Abi-Khattab: “I was at Imam al-Hadi's presence in Masjid al-Nabi along with a group of his companions. Suddenly, several Sufis came in, made a circle, and chanted “There is no god but Allah.”²⁰ Imam al-Hadi told us, “Do not pay attention to these hypocrite imposters. They are the allies of Satan who ruin the fundamentals of Islam. They pretend to have piety and yet run after worldly comfort and keep a vigil to have access to delicious foods.”²¹ Then he added, “The one who visits them, dead or alive, it is as if he met Satan and the idolaters.”²²

At this time, a Shi'a asked, “Even if they believe in your Imamate and rights?” Imam al-Hadi firmly looked at him and said, “Give up these incorrect assumptions; the one who has accepted our Imamate does not act contrary to our conduct and satisfaction. Don't you know that these are from the most abject Sufi group?” Then he said, “All Sufis are considered our enemies, and their conduct and ways are different from ours. They are magus and Christian, and they try

¹⁸ Mu'jam Rijal-al-Hadith, vol.14, p.259.

هذا فارس - أعتقه الله - بفعل من قبل فكانا داعيا إلى البندقة، و دمه هذر لكل من قتله، فمن هذا الذي يرضى منه يمثله و أنا ضامن له على الله الجنة

¹⁹ ibid., p.260; Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 50, p.205.

²⁰ لا اله الا الله

²¹ لا تلتفتوا إلى هؤلاء الخداعين، فإنهم خلفاء الشياطين و مخترعوا قواعد الدين يترهبون لراحة الأجسام و يتجهدون لتعبيد

الاعتنام
²² فمن ذهب إلى ريادة أحد منهم حيا و ميتا فكأنما ذهب إلى ريادة الشيطان و حبة الأوثان

to turn off the light of God: *"They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah shall perfect His light though the faithless should be averse."*²³

Imam al-Hadi and the Waqifiyyah

The Waqifiyya was a deviant group who stood against the Imam, as they believed Imam al-Kazim was the last Imam, the promised Mahdi. Imam al-Hadi took a firm stance against them. Once a Shi'a wrote in a letter, "May I be sacrificed for you! Do you know these people? Should we curse them in qunoot (supplication) of our daily prayers?" Imam al-Hadi wrote in response, "Yes, curse them in qunoot."²⁴

5. His reviving Ghadir and Imamate

Imam al-Hadi's also disseminated the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt teachings during that dark age. When Mu'tasim called Imam al-Hadi to his court on the day of Ghadir, the Imam rushed to the shrine of his forefather, Imam Ali, and revived his virtues by giving an eloquent speech in the form of a ziyarah (salutation) about Ghadir and Imam Ali's life. Imam al-Hadi emphasised many important points in the Ghadir Ziyarah:

Imam Ali's virtues in the Qur'an, including the verses of wilayah, the night Imam Ali slept in the Prophet's room when the Prophet he migrated from Mecca to Medina), invitation (*balagh*), and jihad (greater struggle) as well as other verses were referred to in this

²³ Sa'fi, 8; Safina-tul-Bihar, vol. 2, p.58; the new ed., vol. 5, pp.199-200.

وَالصُّوْفِيَّةُ كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ مُخَالِفِينَ، وَطَرِيقَتُهُمْ مُعَايِرَةٌ لِمَطَرِيقَتِنَا، وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا عَصَايَ وَمَجُوشُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَمِ
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَنْجِئُونَ فِي إطفاءِ نُورِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمِثْقَلِ ذَرَّةٍ شَاوِرٌ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ

²⁴ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 203; Rijal Kushshi, p.391. نَقِمْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي صَلَاتِكَ

ziyarah. Above all, there is a reference to the historic event of Ghadir which is the main concept in Imam al-Hadi's words. In an excerpt from this ziyarah, Imam al-Hadi told his forefather, Imam Ali:

"O Amir-al-Mu'minin! I testify that whoever has doubt about you has not believed in the Prophet, who is considered trustworthy by God. And the one who backtracks from your wilayah has backtracked from the religion that God - the Lord of worlds - has chosen for us and has completed with your wilayah on Ghadir. I also testify that you are the meaning of this verse: '*This indeed is my straight path, so follow it, and do not follow [other] ways.*'"²⁵

Ziyarah al-Jami'a or the charter of Imamate

In addition to ziyarah of Ghadir, Imam al-Hadi presented his lasting work, Ziyarah al-Jami'a, a salutation like a complete course of Imam studies, to the seekers of the Ahlul Bayt to delineate the high status of the infallible Imams. Regarding this ziyarah, Allamah Majlisi said, "This ziyarah has the most authentic authority and the most comprehensive content about the Imams. It is also the most eloquent and the most important of ziyarahs."²⁶

6. Taking opportunities

When the spiteful talked behind the Imam's back to Mutawakkil, telling him that there were weapons, letters, and money sent from

²⁵ An'am, 153; Hediyaat-u-Za'irin, p.176.

أشهد يا أمير المؤمنين أن الشاك فيك ما آمن بالرسول الأمين و أن العادل بك خيرك عائد عن
السنن القويم الذي ارتضاه لنا رب العالمين و أهله يولاتيك يوم القدير و أشهد أنك الغنى يقول
العزيز الرحيم و أن هذا صراطي مستقيماً ولا تتبعوا السبل

²⁶ ibid., vol. 99, p.144.

the Shi'as to the Imam al-Hadi's house, and that the Imam intended to rise against the Abbasid government, Mutawakkil sent his deputies to raid his house although they could not find anything. Rather, they found Imam al-Hadi in a closed room wearing coarse clothes sitting on the ground, worshipping God and reciting the Qur'an. They arrested him and took him to Mutawakkil, reporting what they had seen there. Impressed by the Imam's grandeur and awe, Mutawakkil involuntarily respected him and seated him beside his own throne. However, he disrespectfully offered the wine glass in his hand to the Imam. Imam al-Hadi swore, "My flesh and blood were not tainted with such things; exempt me from drinking it!" Mutawakkil accepted his excuse but told the Imam, "Recite a poem!" The Imam said, "I recite poetry very rarely." Mutawakkil said, "You must." At his insistence, the Imam recited a poem by which everybody in that gathering was touched, and they burst into tears. The wine party turned into a mourning session, and they broke the wine glasses. The poem he read was:

[The arrogant defiant people and powerful kings] spent nights on the summits of mountains [at the heights of government] while strong men were guarding them, but the summits could not save from their death.

After living gloriously for a while, they were pulled down from the safe places and placed in the holes [graves]. What a disagreeable abode!

After they had been buried, a caller called out, "Where are those expensive and fancy bracelets, crowns, and clothes?"

Where are those faces grown affluently and respected by being kept behind curtains? The grave answered instead of them, "Now worms are fighting over eating their faces! They ate and drank for a long time in this world, but now they are being eaten!"²⁷

²⁷ *ibid.*, vol. 50, pp. 211-212.

عَلِبَ الرِّجَالُ فَلَمْ تَلْقَهُمُ الْقُلُوبُ	بَاتُوا عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْأَجْبَالِ تَحْرِشُهُمْ
وَأَسْكَنُوا حُفْرًا يَا بَلَسَ مَا تَزَلُّوا	وَاسْتَنْزَلُوا بَغْدَ عَمْرٍ عَنْ مَعْقِلِهِمْ
أَمِنَ الْأَسَاوِرُ وَالسَّيَاحُ وَالْخُلُوفُ	نَادَاهُمْ صَارِخٌ مِنْ بَغْدِ دَفْتِهِمْ
مِنْ دُونِهَا تُضَرِّبُ الْأَسْتَارُ وَالْكُلُوفُ	أَمِنَ الْوُجُوهُ الَّتِي كَانَتْ مُنْعَمَةً
يَلِكُ الْوُجُوهُ عَلَيْهَا الْبُرْدُ يُقْتَبِلُ	فَتَأْفُضُحُ الصَّبْرُ عَنْهُمْ حِينَ سَأَلَهُمْ
وَأَصْبَحُوا بَغْدَ طَوِيلِ الْأَكْلِ قَدْ أَكَلُوا	قَدْ طَالَ مَا أَكَلُوا دَهْرًا وَ مَا شَرَبُوا

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS, PART III

HABIBOLLAH TAHERI

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Mental illness, anxiety, depression, and worries are among the predicaments of human society in the present century. In recent decades, the factors contributing to, preventing, and curing these illnesses have been addressed from different angles. The resulting achievements are various cognitive, behavioural, psychological, psychodynamic, and biological theories that, of course, led to valuable outcomes. The previous paper addressed general symptoms and the stages of mental illness according to the Qur'an. This paper offers the consequences of religious teachings on the treatment of mental illness; faith in God, living the "goodly life", God-wariness (*taqwa*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) are some qualities that stave off mental illness and bring about peace and tranquillity.

1. Islam

According to the Muslim scholars, Islam brings peace of mind and security, hence a means of mental health. When disbelief is regarded as a mental illness, Islam would then be considered mental health.

Imam Ali said:

“Praise be to Allah, Who has opened the way of Islam, facilitated learning and practising its injunctions for those who are willing to, strengthened its pillars against those who fight with it, and made it a safe refuge for those who hold fast to it, a means of health for those who enter it, proof and arguments for those who follow its logic...”¹

Elsewhere he said,

“God has chosen Islam specifically for you and has chosen you for it because the word ‘Islam’ is derived from the root ‘Salam’ (meaning ‘health’), and Islam is the source of honour...”²

2. Faith and belief in God

Faith in God is man’s best asset which, if realized, is the source of many blessings; if someone is not faithful, he is permanently in loss: *“By Time! Indeed man is in loss, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds,”*³ Faith and the knowledge accompanied by faith bring peace and assurance, both integral parts of faith. Faith in God has positive results divided into cognitive and behavioural categories; some results are manifested in one’s beliefs, and some in his personal behaviours, altogether forming a strong, good-natured man void of apprehensions and anxiety.

الحمد لله الذي شرع الاسلام فسهل شرائعه واعز اركانه على من ظالبه لجعله امناً لمن علقه وسليماً لمن دخله وبرهاناً لمن تكلم به....¹

ان الله تعالى خصكم بالاسلام، واستخلصكم له وذلك لانه اسم سلامه وجماع كرامه...²

«والعصر ان الانسان لفي خسر الا الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات...»³ al-‘Asr, 1-3.

1. The consequences of belief in God

According to the Qur'an, belief or faith in God has many cognitive benefits, some of which are as follows:

a. The believers always see themselves under the auspices of God because they do not know any Wali (Master) and supporter except Him, *"... and hold fast to Allah. He is your master—an excellent master and an excellent helper."*⁴

b. The believers view themselves as needing God under any circumstances and see Him All-powerful and All-embracing: *"O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable."*⁵

c. The believers only fear God and do not fear anybody else: *"...and fear Him, and fear no one except Allah, and Allah suffices as reckoner."*⁶

d. Due to the light in their hearts, the believers can distinguish between the truth and falsehood—the right and the wrong way. There is a difference between them and those in darkness. They are never anxious and apprehensive because of their correct understanding and their knowledge of the correct way: *"Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darkness which he cannot leave?"*⁷

⁴ al-Hajj, 78. واعتصموا بالله هو مولاكم فنعم المولى و نعم النصير؛

⁵ al-Fatir, 15 يا ايها الناس اقموا الصلوة واتقوا الله و الله هو الغنى الحميد

⁶ al-Ahzab, 39. و تخشونه ولا يخشون احدا الا الله و كفى بالله حسيلاً

⁷ al-An'am, 122. و من كان ميتا فاحييناه و جعلنا له نور يمشى به في الناس مكن مثله في الظلمات ليس بخارج منها....؟

e. Believers neither regret losing something nor are delighted at worldly gains; and they do not worry about the future. These three states lead to others' permanent anxiety, apprehension, and fear: "*So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way, and Allah does not like any swaggering braggart.*"⁸

f. Due to the peace and composure descended on their hearts, their belief in God is constantly increasing; doubt and fear are removed from their hearts, resulting in steadfastness during hardships: "*It is He who sent down composure into the hearts of the faithful that they might enhance their faith.*"⁹

This peace of mind may have ideological aspects and dispels the instability of beliefs, or it can be practical so that one can have steadfastness, resistance, and patience. In short, the believer never wavers and grieves in the face of hardships; he sees himself constantly superior to the enemy and adheres to the verse: "*Do not weaken or grieve: you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful.*"¹⁰ However, the anxiety of disbelievers is evident in their words and actions, especially during hardships.

2. The conduct of believers

The believers are also fundamentally different from others in their conduct, some of which are as follows:

a. They have no fear, sorrow, and grief: "*Look! The friends of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve.*"¹¹ The one who has no

⁸ al-Hadid, 23. لَكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

⁹ al-Fath, 4. هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيُزِيدُوا إِيمَانًا مَّعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ..؟

¹⁰ Ali-Imran, 139. وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

¹¹ Yunus, 62. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخَفُوا اللَّهَ لَا يُخِيفُكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

fault and sees God as the Just One, Who never punishes the sinless, and the one who is always supported by Him should not be afraid or grievous.

- b. They fulfil their commitments.
- c. They are reliable in their personal lives and social interactions.
- d. They are chaste and avoid unusual sexual behaviours.
- e. They comply with religious obligations.
- f. They will achieve salvation and enter Heaven because of their good deeds:

Certainly, the faithful have attained salvation—those who are humble in their prayers, who avoid vain talk, who carry out their [duty of] Zakat, who guard their private parts, (except from their spouses or their slave women, for then they are not blameworthy; but whoever seeks [anything] beyond that—it is they who are transgressors) and those who keep their trusts and covenants, and who are watchful of their prayers. It is they who will be the inheritors, who shall inherit paradise, and will remain in it [forever].¹²

- g. They do not surrender to hardships as they overcome their problems by relying on Divine power.

¹² قد افلح المؤمنون، الذين هم في صلاتهم خاشعون، والذين هم عن اللغو معرضون، والذين هم للزكّات فاعلون، و الذين هم لقربهم حافظون و الذين هم لاماناتهم و عهدهم راعون، و الذين هم على صلاتهم يحافظون، اولئك هم الوارثون، الذين يرثون الفردوس و هم فيها خالدون al-Mu'minun, 1-11.

h. They do not feel humiliated and inferior to others: *“Do not weaken or grieve: you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful”* (3:139).

3. Doing good deeds

Wherever faith or belief is referred to, it is immediately followed by reference to virtuous deeds. Belief and good deeds are interdependent. According to the Qur'an, the result of good deeds (i.e., any good behaviour stemming from justice and fairness) is the “good life” (*al-hayat al-tayyibah*) in this world. In other words, the good doers have lives cleansed of any oppression and worry, and replete with serenity and well-being:

*Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful,—We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do.*¹³

In contrast, those who are cut off from God and turn away from His remembrance will have a hard life, full of anxiety.

4. Piety

Piety, or Godwariness, is essential for anyone who wants to lead a relaxed and comfortable life under the control of the intellect. As seen in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions, the effects of piety are abundant:

a. Clear-sightedness: Due to piety, the heart's eyes open and see the truth as it is. He or she will have an inner awareness of religious

¹³ al-Nahl, 97. من عمل صالحاً من ذكر أو أنثى وهو مؤمن فلنجزيه حياتاً طيبه ولنجزينهم اجرهم باحسن ما كانوا يعملون

obligations (which might on occasions be the believers' most difficult problem), and is free of confusion (i.e., a mental problem) because these obligations are clear due to comprehension of Divine teachings and having a bright soul: *"O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion for you."*¹⁴ Elsewhere, God says in the Qur'an, *"Be wary of Allah and Allah shall teach you."*¹⁵

Prophet Muhammad also said, "Beware of the believer's insight because he sees by means of God's light."¹⁶

b. Protection against harms: The pious people are protected against the harms of evil-doers and the enemies' deceit: *"Yet if you are patient and Godwary, their guile will not harm you in any way."*¹⁷

c. Being saved from hardships and receiving untold provisions: *"And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him, and provide for him from whence he does not reckon."*¹⁸

d. Forgiven sins: If the pious commit a sin, God will forgive him due to their piety: *"O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, ... He shall rectify your conduct for you and He shall forgive you your sins."*¹⁹

e. Entering Heaven: From numerous Qur'anic verses, it can be inferred that the pious are the dwellers of Heaven, encompassed by

¹⁴ يا ايها الذين امنوا ان تتقوا الله يجعل لكم فرقانا al-Anfal, 29.

¹⁵ يا ايها الذين امنوا اتقوا الله وعلّمكم الله al-Baqarah, 282.

¹⁶ اَتَّقُوا قَرَارَةَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَإِنَّهُ يَنْظُرُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ

¹⁷ يا ايها الذين امنوا واثابوا واثابوا واثابوا واثابوا ale-Imran, 120.

¹⁸ يا ايها الذين امنوا اتقوا الله وعلّمكم الله وعلّمكم الله al-Talaq, 2,3.

¹⁹ يا ايها الذين امنوا اتقوا الله وعلّمكم الله وعلّمكم الله al-Ahzab, 70-71.

Divine mercy: *"...Indeed the Godway will be amid gardens and springs. 'Enter it in peace and safety!'..."*²⁰

Considering the above verses, that which renders people apprehensive or sad, either about this world or the hereafter, and may lead to mental illness, can be prevented through piety, as it leads to a relaxed life. The pious, including the poor, live a life void of tension, anxiety, and stress; while those who are not pious, including the rich, are always in a state of unease.

5. Remembrance of God

Remembrance of God (*dhikr*) brings peace of mind; hearts attracted to the other than God, be it a powerful ruler or one's clan, tribe, family members, properties, and positions, etc... never finds peace because nothing can satisfy him. No matter what he gains, he wants more. The only thing brings peace of mind and satisfaction is the remembrance of God. The one who remembers God and is fond of Him does not yearn for anything else and won't become anxious and disturbed about it. Experience shows that even if man has all his life amenities as many times as necessary for his lifetime, his divine nature that seeks God never rests in peace. God said in the Qur'an, *"Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!"*²¹ It should be noted that remembrance of God does not merely refer to articulating specific *dhikr* such as "There is no god but Allah"²², "Immaculate is Allah,"²³ and "Praise be to Allah"²⁴ Rather, it means whatever

²⁰ *al-Hijr*, 45-46. *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ* *وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ* *لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَثِيرٌ*

²¹ *al-Ra'd*, 28. *لَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ*

²² *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ*

²³ *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ*

²⁴ *الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ*

reminds man of God, whether it be reciting some dhikr or avoiding sins, being patient in hardships, resorting to divine prophets, heeding to the verses of the Qur'an, prayers, and other religious injunctions, each of which reminds man of God because any deed should be done for His sake. In short, a factor in mental health and prevention of mental illnesses is the remembrance of God.

6. Trust in God

Through trust in a power superior to all other powers, people feel deeply calm. In Islamic teachings, whenever one is urged to do something without being fearful and stressed out, the issue of trust in God is raised, and he or she is told not to fear problems and trust in God and in His eternal power when beginning a difficult task. In return, God will help because trust in Him prevents frustration and hopelessness. The one who trusts in God is never defeated and frustrated, and can easily tolerate problems, as said in the Qur'an:

*And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him. Indeed Allah carries through His command. Certainly Allah has set a measure for everything.*²⁵ And "Those [the Prophet's companions in the battle of Hamra al-Asad] to whom the people [Abd-ul-Qays caravan going from Mecca to Medina] said, 'All the people [Abu-Sufyan's army] have gathered against you; so fear them.' That only increased them

al-Talaq, 3. « من يتوكل على الله فهو حسبه ان الله بالغ امره، قد جعل الله لكل شيء قدراً »²⁵

*in faith, and they said, 'Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee.'*²⁶

Those who trust in God—albeit few, and defeated (in the Battle of Uhud) and lacked modern weapons—stood strong against the so-called triumphant enemy, and they never feared or worried; rather, their faith was strengthened. One factor in prevention of mental illnesses resulting from stress and worry is trust in the All-powerful and All-merciful God.

7. Not being attached to this world

According to Qur'anic verses and Islamic traditions, the love for and fondness of this world and its manifestations are the roots of all evils. God revealed to Prophet Moses, "Know that love for and attachment to this world are the origin of all evils."²⁷

Imam al-Sadiq also said, "Love of this world is the peak of all errors."²⁸

Likewise, Imam Ali said, "Love of this world is the apex of all seditions and the root of all sadness."²⁹

In the Qur'an, this world is introduced as 'a means of deception':
*"The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion."*³⁰

In the same line, Imam Ali said, "Trust in and attachment to the world are the greatest deceit."³¹

²⁶ Ale-Imran, 173. *الذين قال لهم الناس ان الناس قد جمعوا لكم فاخشوهم فزادهم ايمانا وقالوا حسبنا الله و نعم الوكيل*

²⁷ *اعلم ان كل فتنه تذرها حب الدنيا*

²⁸ *رأس كل خطيئة حب الدنيا*

²⁹ *حب الدنيا رأس الفتن وأضل الميخن*

³⁰ Ale-Imran, 185. *و ما الحياه الدنيا الا متاع الفرور*

Accordingly, Imam al-Sadiq said, "Now that the world is ephemeral and mortal, attachment to it is meaningless."³²

In his will to Imam Hasan, Imam Ali said, "Do not make this world your greatest purpose."³³

Finally, one cannot love this world and the hereafter (i.e., God) at the same time. Thus, fondness of this world ruins our lives and distresses our hearts. Likewise, inattention to this world and its manifestations save us from sorrows and stress. In short, disregard of this world is a factor in mental health. Of course, it does not mean not using the blessings in this world.

8. Paying zakat

Paying zakat, a way to spend money in the way of God, for the needy while receiving their prayers in return bless one's property and brings peace of mind:

*Take charity [as zakat] from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby, and bless them [when receiving Zakat]. Indeed your blessing is a comfort to them, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing.*³⁴

In this verse the two aspects of moral, mental, and social philosophies of zakat are referred to. It means: O Prophet, when you take charity from their wealth, you cleanse them of their sins and

³¹ سَكُونِ النَّفْسِ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَكْثَرِ الْغُرُورِ

³² إِنْ كَانَتْ الدُّنْيَا قَانِيَةً فَالْطَّعَامُ يَنْتَهِي إِلَيْهَا إِنْ شَاءَ؟

³³ لَا تَكُنِ الدُّنْيَا أَكْبَرَ هَوَاكَ

³⁴ al-Tawbah, 103. خذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

help them grow spiritually. You cleanse them of their moral vices, avarice, parsimony and cultivate philanthropy, generosity and respect for the others' rights. Furthermore, you eliminate the corruption created in society due to poverty, social class differences, and deprivation through acting upon this religious injunction and cleanse the society of such contamination. In the next sentence, God says: When taking zakat from them, pray for them, and say hello to them (i.e., bless them) because this prayer brings them peace of mind. With this prayer, they are showered with the Divine mercy such that they feel it clearly. In addition, the gratitude of the Prophet or his rightful successors to the people for their paying zakat gives them peace of mind. In other words, if they have apparently lost something, they have gained something better in return. Interestingly, nowhere in the world is it heard that tax collectors are required to thank people, though this ruling in Islam is a recommended injunction. Hence, giving zakat is a factor in our mental peace.

9. Marriage

In the Qur'an, marriage is introduced as a Divine sign; a spouse is introduced as relief and peace of mind: *"And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you."*³⁵

³⁵ al-Rum, 21, و من آياته ان خلق لكم من انفسكم ازواجاً لتسكنوا اليها و جعل بينكم موده و رحمه

In another verse, God referred to Eve as a means of peace to Adam: *"And made from it its mate, that he might find comfort with her."*³⁶

This peace lies in the fact that spouses complement each other and cause one another to flourish, delighting each other in such a way that one is incomplete without the other. Naturally, there is attraction between those who complement each other which the Qur'an referred to as "affection and mercy".

This peace may be physical or mental, individual or social. When a person enters a marriage, he develops a new personality and feels more responsible; this is the meaning of tranquillity through marriage.

10. Open-heartedness

In the Qur'an, open-heartedness is introduced as opposed to hard-heartedness, a kind of mental illness. The hard-hearted person refuses to follow the Divine teachings and injunctions and turns away from remembrance of God. Open-hearted people, on the other hand, who have enlightened and pure hearts have no problem accepting Islam and its Divine injunctions. Thus, they are guided; they tread the right path and will be saved on the Day of Resurrection. *"Is someone whose breast Allah has opened to Islam so that he follows a light from His Lord? So woe to those whose hearts have been hardened to the remembrance of Allah."*³⁷

³⁶ al-A'raf, 189. و جعل منها زوجها ليسكن اليها

³⁷ al-Zumar, 22. فمن شرح الله صدره للإسلام فهو على نور من ربه فويل للقاسية قلوبهم من ذكر الله أولئك في ضلال مبين

10. Not oppressing others

"Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing—for such there shall be safety, and they are the [rightly] guided."³⁸

Considering the above verse, one can see that tranquillity is achieved only when there are two principles governing the society: faith and social justice. Because when a person's faith is weakened, he or she does not feel responsible towards God; social justice is replaced with injustice, which leads to less security in society. That is why despite all the efforts of world thinkers to eradicate various forms of insecurity from the world, people are moving further away from real peace and security. The reason can be found in disregarding the two above principles, that is, people's faith is weakened, so there is injustice. No doubt faith generates serenity and inner security, and unbelief generates a guilty conscience and unrest.

12. Studying history

Sometimes when faced with misbehaviours, obstinacy, rebellion, and ingratitude, one may feel hopeless, anxious, distressed, and fearful of his failure, and may either give up or continue his efforts anxiously. However, when he studies history, he sees all godly reformers and prophets faced these problems, but they overcame them through their patience and resistance, and they have become well-known throughout the history. However, there remains no trace of rebellious oppressors and enemies of the righteous in history. This

³⁸ الذين آمنوا ولم يلبسوا إيمانهم بظلم أولئك لهم الأمن وهم مهتدون؛ al-'An'am, 82.

way, one's willpower becomes strong, one's heart rests, and one continues his efforts confidently, strongly, and diligently.

To reassure Prophet Muhammad, God narrated the history of the previous prophets to him, strengthening him and allaying his anxiety. *"Whatever We relate to you of the accounts of the apostles are those by which We strengthen your heart."*³⁹

13. The dark night

*"...and He has made the night for rest."*⁴⁰

14. Sleep

*"It is He who made for you the night as a covering and sleep for rest."*⁴¹

15. A home

"It is Allah who has made for you your homes as a place of rest".⁴²

³⁹ و كلا نقص عليك من انباء الرسل ما نثبت به فؤادك al-Hud, 120.

⁴⁰ و جعل الليل سكناً al-'An'am, 96.

⁴¹ و جعل الليل سكناً والنوم سباتاً al-Furqan, 47.

⁴² و الله جعل لكم من بيوتكم سكناً al-Nahl, 80.

COMMUNITY BUILDING, PART VII¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: Having a shared identity that works towards a collective cause is vital for a healthy community, and in doing so, a community must share specific qualities to be successful. This series of papers offers a glimpse into the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to implement it. Character traits such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, and unity were illustrated. The previous article touched upon our relationship with God, love for His creation, acting as a channel for God's mercy in our daily lives in doing charitable work, and caring for the ill in an Islamic community. This article expands on two topics: 1) our love for God's creation as that which extends to non-human beings, such as animals, plants, and natural resources, and 2) and the importance of marriage and family life in the formation of a stable Islamic community.

In the previous part, we covered the principle of charity and loving Allah's creatures, because we, as Muslims, love God and should also love His people. However, our love should not be exclusive to human beings because we should also love non-human beings, for example, animals, plants and natural resources.

¹ This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

Love and care for Allah's creation

We should look at everything as a sacred creation of Allah. According to Islamic sources of hadith and jurisprudence, for example, killing animals for fun or as a leisure activity is prohibited. One cannot hunt foxes or even birds merely for enjoyment. We can only hunt an animal or a bird, if used them as food or to protect ourselves from any danger posed by them. Thus, killing an animal is only allowed to serve life, either in the form of food or in the form of protection of human life from the danger they pose; otherwise we cannot just kill animals for no good purpose.

Protection and preservation of environment and natural resources

We also cannot waste natural resources. A faithful person, or a faithful community should be very careful about the way they treat an insect or even a cup of water. For example, according to our hadiths, even if we are next to a river we should not take a cup of water out of the river and pour it on the ground for no particular reason, as this is a waste of water. This is not because we fear facing problem in the future; some people respect the environment merely for the sake of eliminating future environmental issues. In the Islamic view, even if we are completely sure no environmental crisis or shortages will occur, we should still not damage the environment or waste natural resources.

Importance of the family in Islam

After talking about this general and inclusive love for all creation and, in particular, for human beings, there are some groups who

receive further attention in Islam. We have spoken about people who are vulnerable, who for some reason need support, such as elders, the ill, guests, asylum seekers, or refugees. Our focus now is on the family as an additional group of people who must receive love and care which is important for the formation and development of an Islamic community, as an Islamic community cannot exist without having strong families within it.

Family ties are naturally important, but this should not then exclude other people from our care and love, as happens unfortunately with some who think so highly of their own families that they are not concerned for others. Though we should love and care for everyone, we have more responsibility for particular people such as our family.

Unity of family brings unity of community

If we have a good sense of unity inside the home between the mother, father, and children, we can have a better sense of unity in the extended family, between grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, uncles, and aunts; and this can in turn help keep the community united. We need to have various levels of unity and ties between people to keep the community together.

Unity within particular groups of people helps society

Sometimes the people who come from the same city or country, or speak the same language, feel united by a common sense of identity. We should not view their unity negatively. Indeed, it can be positive if it does not cause them to ignore the rest of community; if the people from one particular country or ethnicity are firmly united and then work for the good of the larger community, this is very useful.

In the same way, it is good if the Muslim community is closely united and works for, say, the betterment of the entire British society. The British society must not be afraid if Muslims are united; and similarly, Muslims must not be intimidated by other united Muslims from different backgrounds. All types of unity can be beneficial to society, as long as they are not formed against outsiders.

The importance of marriage in Islam

There is a famous hadith from Prophet Muhammad:

ما بنى بناء في الاسلام أحب إلى الله عز وجل من التزويج²

In Islam, no construction has ever been built which is dearer to Allah than marriage.

Marriage, the beginning and foundation of the establishment of a family, is the dearest and most loved construction in Islam.

This attitude is quite opposite to the one found in some other spiritualities who regard marriage negatively; that the marital relationship between a man and a woman is either satanic or completely material in nature, and hence it is better for a person to remain unmarried, and if they must marry to avoid sinning it is merely a necessity that is the lesser of two evils.

However, from the Islamic point of view, marriage is sacred, and after careful examination of all Qur'anic verses and hadiths, our jurists state that marriage is recommended (*mustahab*). The married will be rewarded as those who are rewarded. Furthermore, if the

² *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 14, p. 3.

only way to protect oneself from committing sin is marriage, it becomes mandatory (*wajib*).

Therefore, the formation of a family, beginning with the marriage of a man and a woman, is highly recommended, and sometimes compulsory. According to the above hadith from the Prophet, marriage is more important than physical constructions such as houses, schools, hospitals, masjids, roads and bridges. It is also more important than any political, economic and social institutions that people may make.

Divorce is the worst of permitted actions

On the other hand, destruction of a marriage in the form of divorce is permitted, although it is the worst permitted or the most disliked (*abghad al-halal*) action because one is destroying the dearest construction. However, Islam does not prohibit divorce because it is a realistic religion that takes real situations into consideration; it is accepted that there are cases in which divorce is the only solution.

Furthermore, if a man and woman know there is absolutely no chance for divorce, this can create psychological problems; it is the nature of human beings to become tempted to do something which has been prohibited.³ If men and women were told it is impossible to divorce once they marry, and that they must remain married until one of them dies, this can create problems in the future as they are kept together by force even if their marriage has failed.

³ Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying:

إن ابن آدم خريص على ما منع
Truly son of Adam is greedy with respect to what has been banned.
(*Mizan al-Hikmah*, vol. 1, p. 589.)

Thus, Islam is realistic from a legal point of view, in that divorce is possible and permitted; but from a moral point of view, Islam very much tries to avoid divorce because marriage is sacred.

Marriage according to the Qur'an

Verse 21 of Surah Rum (30) is very famous and is normally recited during marriage ceremonies:

And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.

Allah continues in verse 22 with the creation of the heavens and the earth, and on the various languages and colours as being His signs, including our ability to sleep during the night and then earn an income as additional signs that lead us toward Him.

However, among most or all the signs related to creation of the world and of man, one sign in particular is about marriage and about the relationship of a man and a woman in forming a family (30:21). This phrase "*from your own selves*" is very important. We need a spouse who comes from the same reality as our own and is of the same nature; we cannot marry angels, let alone animals. We may think marrying an angel is good, although it would not work because we may not understand angels. We simply do not match each other. Similarly, Allah says:

Allah certainly favoured the faithful when He raised up among them an apostle from among themselves

to recite to them His signs and to purify them and teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error. (3:164)

The Prophet was not an angel from heaven and then suddenly surprised people by declaring his prophethood. The Prophet is a human being like us and living amongst us; although he is a special human being due to his exceptional piety and nearness to Allah, with which he is able to receive revelation. Allah says: “

Say, ‘I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God. So whoever expects to encounter his Lord—let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.’ (18:110)

Prophet was a human being like us, but he was receiving communications from God.

Natural and necessary differences between men and women

Although husbands and wives are human beings, sometimes they have difficulties understanding one another due to gender differences. No matter how much they try, they may eventually not understand one another perfectly. The only solution is to simply trust each other and respect each other's views.⁴

⁴ For example, a father's regard for his children can never be the same as his wife's care. A father should not expect his wife to be like him; if that occurs, then the children may suffer because normally fathers are not very precise in their concern for their children. On the other hand, a mother should not expect her husband to be like her in showing a great deal of worry over every detail concerning her children otherwise the entire family structure will collapse.

The differences between men and women are beautiful and meant to complement each other. If we attempt to force our spouse to be like us, we have missed the whole point of marriage. As men and women, we can never completely understand one another and indeed, this is good and natural because we would only be able to understand each other perfectly if we were completely alike, and this would then mean it would be as if we were both men or both women. This is not an ideal situation, nor does it make sense. We are meant to be different from one another, while acknowledging and respecting our differences.

For example, if a husband thinks that his wife worries too much, then he should not criticise or blame her. This is how a mother must be. Of course, bearing in mind that worrying more than the norm is an issue; she should be judged according to what is average amongst mothers, not according to the father's reaction, and vice versa.

It is one of the beautiful factors in Allah's creation that He created another human being for us from our own species and of our own nature along with some differences.

In addition to our spouse being from the same nature, they are also our pair. There is one common point between us and one difference: the common point is that we are both human beings and hence we share a great deal. The difference is that we are to be pairs (*zawj*). If there are two men or two women, they do not form this pair. A perfect pair is formed by the joining together of one person from each gender.

Therefore, a balanced family requires one who is less emotional and one who is more emotional.

Reasons for gender differences

Why has Allah created it this way? The Qur'an says that this is to find peace and tranquillity with each other and Allah has created affection (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*) between them (30:21).

According to some exegetes such as Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi in Tafsir-e Nemuneh, 'mawaddah' is mutual because we offer and receive love and care while 'rahmah' can be one sided. For example, if a husband is ill and cannot do anything for his wife, she can still show 'rahmah' to him and vice versa. If a husband cannot support his wife well, she should still show love towards him and vice versa. This is 'rahmah.' Therefore, according to this interpretation, 'mawaddah' is something which we reciprocate, but mercy can be either mutual or unilateral.

It is important to note here that the Qur'an tells us that there are 'signs' in this, and not merely one sign (30:21).

Challenges faced by human beings

If Allah had not designed such a plan, there would not exist generations of human beings on this earth for thousands of years. Human beings generally would not feel happy and somewhat tranquil despite the large number of challenges they face, incomparable to the situation of any other being on the planet. If we look at the life of an animal, we see that although they face problems, in comparison to the problems we face, their problems are relatively minor. They may at times experience difficulties in finding food or looking after their young, but they forget as their memories reset quickly. Indeed, it is like resetting a computer. Everything starts afresh with the useless and negative things removed; in the

same way, for most animals, memories of past difficulties do not affect them in the present. Moreover, animals seem not to suffer psychological or emotional problems, at least for a long period of time.

Marriage and family life as solution to pressures of life

We need to reduce and recover from the pressure and stress of human life. Of course, the main cure and source of tranquillity derives from the remembrance of Allah, which is something that can never be replaced; it is possible that if we remember Allah in a complete and perfect way, then even without marriage we will not feel we are missing anything. However, this is not something to be expected from every human being, and especially not at the beginning of their spiritual journey as it may take time to reach that state. There are also other reasons for which we need unity and family life so that we can have peace and tranquillity; marriage is one aspect Allah has provided in His creation to bring this about.

For this reason, in a sermon before conducting someone's marriage, Imam Riḍa made a beautiful point. He said that even if we did not have any Qur'anic verses or hadiths regarding marriage, there are so much of blessings and benefits in it that rational people still would have had interest in it and would have moved fast towards it.⁵

⁵ *Al-Kaṣf*, vol. 5, pp. 373 & 374. Original text is Arabic is as follows:

ولو لم يكن في المناكحة والمصاهرة آية محكمة ولا سنة مقبلة ولا أثر مستفيض لكان فيما جعل الله من بر القريب وتقريب البعيد وتأليف القلوب، وتشبيك الحقوق وتكثير العدد وتوفير الولد لنواب الدهر وحوادث الأمور ما يرغب في دونه العاقل اللبيب ويسارع إليه الموفق المصيب ويحرص عليه الأديب الأريب

If we go to any primitive society, whether in jungles, deserts, or mountains, or if we go back thousands of years, we find the institution of the family present everywhere. Indeed, this is why it is called an institution; because it has always existed, although in various forms.

Parent-child relationships

Greater love and compassion are a must amongst family members, especially from the parents towards their children, as children are more vulnerable and are in greater need. Of course, it is also important for children to love, respect, and obey their parents. However, whether parents are psychologically harmed or not, as adults they are able to survive; though parents will feel somewhat upset and disturbed, they will most likely not experience a disruption in their psychological development due to their maturity. However, if a developing child does not receive love and compassion from his or her parents, it is like not receiving enough food during growth years. If a child is given, say, half a meal every other day instead of three daily meals, then that child will not physically develop. The same is for spiritual development. If parents do not show love and attention to their children, the children may not grow properly in a mentally or psychologically.

Importance of keeping promises made to children

Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying:

أحبوا الصبيان وأرحمهم وإذا وعدتموهم شيئاً ففوا لهم فإنهم لا يدرون
إلا أنكم ترزقونهم⁶

Love children and show mercy to them and when you promise them something to keep your promise, because they don't know except that you sustain them.

For a child of 3 to 5 years of age, the parents are like gods, as they are the only people they trust and rely on and have hope in. If parents make a promise and then break it the child's world is shattered. Imagine if Allah did not keep His promise to us. We would go mad because the understanding we have of God and His ultimate Mercy, care, and concern for us does not match that behaviour. It is not something which we can accept. In Du'a Kumayl, Imam Ali says:

My Master, so how should he remain in the chastisement, while he has hope for Your previous clemency?

Or how should the Fire cause him pain while he expects Your bounty and mercy?...

Far be it from You! That is not what is expected of You,

Nor what is well-known of Your bounty,

Nor it is like the goodness and kindness You hast shown to those who profess Your Unity.

⁶ *Al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 49. Also, there is a hadith from Imam Kazim Ibid., p. 50 which reads as follows:

قال لي أبو الحسن عليه السلام: إذا وعدتم الصبيان ففوا لهم فإنهم يرون أنكم الذين ترزقونهم إن الله عز وجل ليس يفضي لشئ كفضيه للنساء والصبيان.

Thus, parents must be extra careful about the promises they make to their children.

The importance of solving children's problems

Often, we take it very lightly when a child has a problem and approaches us for support; for example, we undervalue the importance of helping them look for their lost toy. We should realise that for the child, losing their toy is more important to them than us losing our jobs; we should try to imagine our disappointment when we go to work one day and are told that we are no longer needed. We are to understand their perception of the world and their place in it.

It is interesting to reflect on a child's cries which should deeply hurts one's heart. I think it is because they cry in a truly heartbroken manner with a real sense of pain, as if it is the end of the world. Most adults are not like this; if they lose something, even if they cry about it, they still have numerous other blessings to appreciate. This strong effect in the cry of a child is a beautiful thing created by Allah. We may wonder about the relationship between this sound and its painful effect on our hearts to the point we cannot remain indifferent to it. This is not the same as the effect of an alarm clock, for example, where it rings, and we can choose to ignore it. The cry of a child affects our hearts. We cannot continue proceeding with our works unless we are merciless. If we have even a little mercy, it is impossible to continue concentrating on a task when a child cries.

The importance of caring for women

Although there is no doubt that a wife should show love to her husband, a man should feel more responsible for showing love. Imam Kazim (a) is quoted as saying:

إن الله عز وجل ليس يغضب لشئ كغضبه للنساء والصبيان⁷

Truly God the Almighty does not become angry for anything like the time He becomes angry when women or children are mistreated.

Although Allah is unhappy when a man is mistreated, the harm and abuse done on a woman or child brings about more of His anger. Also, we find in Islamic narrations, that one must be extra careful by avoiding injustice to those who have no helpers other than Allah; if not, then Allah Himself would approach us on his or her behalf to confront us about our misbehaviour. For example, we read in a hadith from Imam Bāqir that his father Imam Sajjad (a) before his demise advised him with what his own father had advised him before he had passed away and that was to make sure that he would not do injustice to [anyone especially] those who have no helpers other than God.⁸

⁷ *Al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 50.

⁸ *Ibid.* vol, 2, p. 331. The hadith reads as follows:

عن أبي حمزة الثمالي، عن أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) قال: لما حضر علي بن الحسين (عليهما السلام) الوفاة ضممني إلى صدره، ثم قال: يا بني أوصيك بما أوصاني به أبي (عليه السلام) حين حضرته الوفاة وما ذكر أن أباه أوصاه به، قال: يا بني إياك وظلم من لا يجد عليك ناصرا إلا الله.

Respect and thankfulness towards parents

Allah also asks children to be respectful to their parents. The Qur'an says:

Your Lord has decreed that you should not worship anyone except Him, and (He has enjoined) kindness to parents. Should they reach old age at your side – one or both of them –do not say to them: 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them, out of mercy and say: 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was small (child)! (17:23 & 24)

After reminding us about the Unity of God (*tawheed*), the Qur'an says that we must be kind towards our parents, because our very existence and upbringing depend on our parents. Although we are in debt to Allah to a far greater extent because we owe Him everything including our very parents, it is an Islamic duty that when we receive a blessing from Allah, we must also be thankful to those who were channels for us to receive His mercy.

Thus, an exemplar community must not ignore the role of parents. They should not reject their parents, should speak with gently and respectfully, honour them, have mercy on them, be humble with them, treat them with dignity, and pray for them, asking Allah to treat them with mercy in the same way that they showed us mercy when raising us.

Prophet Muhammad said: "It is an act of worship to look at either parent with affection and kindness." Simply looking at them with love and affection is worship (*ibaadah*).

Do not look at parents with anger

One narration states that if we look at our parents with anger even if they committed an injustice to us, our prayers will not be answered for forty days.⁹ This is another indication of the importance of treating parents with respect.

Good treatment of parents even if they are non-believers

Amongst the companions of the Imams, there were people who, when they embraced Islam, increased their love and respect to their parents. In one case regarding a man whose mother was not a Muslim, Imam al-Sadiq instructed him to be more merciful towards her. His mother noticed this and asked her son why he had changed his behaviour towards her as he did not treat her as well when he followed the previous religion. When he informed her of the Imam's advice, she embraced Islam.¹⁰

Islam is a religion that instructs humanity to have much respect for parents. According to Islamic narrations, people have no excuse if they withdraw their kindness towards their parents, no matter whether the parents are pious or sinful.¹¹

Prophet Jesus speaks of kindness to his mother

One of the sentences Prophet Jesus uttered as a new-born baby was:

⁹ Ibid. p. 349. The hadith reads as follows:

عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال: من نظر إلى أبيه نظر مآقت وهما ظلمان له لم يقبل الله له صلاة .

¹⁰ See *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, pp. 160 & 161.

¹¹ Ibid. vol. 5, p. 132. The hadith reads as follows:

سمعت أبا عبد الله (عليه السلام) يقول: ثلاثة لا عذر لأحد فيها: أداء الأمانة إلى البر والفاجر والوفاء بالعهد إلى البر والفاجر وبر الوالدين برين كانا أو فاجرين.

(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable. (19:32)

This is very important because this was one of the few things which were said by this new-born baby, who had to defend the integrity of his mother in front of those who had accused her and questioned her piety.

Paradise lies under the feet of mothers

Finally, we should remember what the Prophet said about mothers in particular:

الجنة تحت أقدام الأمهات¹²

Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.

What does this mean? It may mean that the way to secure our entrance into Heaven is to show maximum humbleness and respect to our mothers. It may also mean that showing love and respect for our mother must be more important than going to Heaven because it lies under her feet — that she is more important than Heaven itself.

It is impossible to imagine that we have hope to enter heaven while we hurt or neglect our mothers, and of course, our fathers as well. However, normally the phrase is understood in the sense that going to Heaven depends more on pleasing our mothers. If we truly want to go to Heaven, we must please our mothers.

¹² *Kanz al-Ummak*, vol. 16, p. 461, hadith no. 45439.

Conclusion

In an Islamic community, family life is highly regarded and protected. Any measure that may weaken families must be either negated or avoided. On the other hand, everything that can make families stronger, more united and more capable of flourishing must be encouraged. We cannot sacrifice family life for anything else, such as economic or social reasons. Without having proper and stable families, society will sooner or later face enormous challenges.

A family is either a man and woman who are married according to a covenant Allah has endorsed or a man and woman. A family does not necessarily need to include children, but it is recommended to include them if possible. Those who cannot have children are still a family as a married couple. The family must be a traditional one founded on the marriage of a man and woman according to the way that God the Almighty endorsed, and they must know and feel that this is a Divine covenant. Marriage is not a contract like a financial or legal contract with which two partners form a company. It is a Divine covenant planned and legislated by Allah: both in His creation and in His legislation, He willed families to form and to continue.

May Allah strengthen our families more and more, day by day, and may the relationships between parents and children and between husbands and wives in our communities become as that which He is pleased with.