

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD,
THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

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

Editor-in-Chief

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S MERCY

PART VII

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI¹

ABSTRACT: In the previous part, we studied the different types of responses to divine mercy. Some types of mercy are available to everyone, but those who show appreciation for it qualify themselves to receive additional blessings. It is noteworthy to mention that withdrawal of mercy from ungrateful people can be a mercy from God because receiving additional blessings requires greater responsibility. For example, if someone borrows money from a bank and shows that he is incapable of properly using it, giving him more would be problematic; instead, it is wiser to withhold offering money for him to remain responsible only for the amount he possesses. This part focuses on the qualities of those who qualify themselves to receive extra mercy from God.

Those who qualify themselves to receive extra mercy from God

1. The patient

As said in the previous part, one of the groups that receive extra mercy enormously and beyond any measure is the patient. In particular, we reflected on verses (2:155-157).

¹ Associate Professor of the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

2. *The good-doers*

The other group is the *Muhsinin*, or the people who do good deeds. In Arabic, the word *ihsān*, or ‘to do good’ derives from *husn*, meaning ‘goodness’. Thus, the benefactors of God’s mercy are those who do righteous deeds:

وَ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَ اذْعُوْهُ حَوْفًا وَ طَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ
اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And do not cause corruption on the earth after its restoration, and supplicate Him with fear and hope: indeed God’s mercy is close to the virtuous. (7:156)

3. *Those who carefully listen to the Qur'an*

Those who listen to the Qur'an when it is recited achieve extra mercy. When the Qur'an is recited, people should not converse with one another, and any on-going talk should be brought to an end. This is to show respect to the Qur'an and to benefit from it as well. God says:

وَ إِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَ أَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرَحَّمُونَ

When the Qur'an is recited, listen to the Qur'an and be careful! So that you may be given mercy. (7:204)

One must listen to the Qur'an while reflecting on its words instead of merely hearing it. Many times we hear voices without our reflecting on it. While playing the Qur'an in our homes or vehicles, we may make the mistake of conversing with others while doing so. The Qur'an should not be used as a background sound; it is to be carefully reflected upon during recitation. For any justifiable reason that one is not able to listen to the Qur'an, it is recommended to stop the player.

The Qur'an speaks of itself as a source of mercy (*rahmah*); therefore, it is not surprising that those who listen to it qualify themselves for receiving extra mercy from God:

وَنُزِّلَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِدُ الطَّالِبِينَ إِلَّا
خَسَارًا

We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss. (17:82)

One way to benefit from this mercy is to respectfully take heed of it to expose one's heart and mind to the light and guidance of the Qur'an.

4. Those who pray during night receive extra mercy

Those who pray to God after midnight and before dawn (*fajr*) receive extra mercy:

أَمْنٌ هُوَ قَاتِلُ آتَاهُ اللَّيْلَ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذِرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ
فُلْنَ هَلْ نَيْسَنْتُوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَنَذَرُ أُولُو
الْأَلْبَابِ

Is he who supplicates in the watches of the night, prostrating and standing, apprehensive of the Hereafter and expecting the mercy of his Lord? . . . Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only those who possess intellect take admonition. (39:9)

Allah compares two groups of people: one group is those who worship during the night and is concerned about the affairs of the Hereafter

while expecting to receive God's mercy. The second group is not mentioned. But by comparison we realize that it consists of the people who are negligent and sinfully spend most of their time in the night. It is clear that those who remember God during the day and do good deeds and then in the night which is the time for rest they find their rest in worshipping God, asking for forgiveness, and reciting the Qur'an would not be treated equal to those who fail to do so.

5. *The righteous*

The other group who deserves more mercy from God are the righteous (*sālihin*). God says in Surah *Al-Anbiyā'*, 75:

وَأَدْخِلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And We admitted him [Lot] into Our mercy. Indeed he was one of the righteous.

According to his verse, Prophet Lot did not just receive a special mercy from God; rather, he was put into His mercy because he was one of the righteous. A righteous person can be expected to be treated the same: he is placed amidst the ocean of God's mercy.

6. *Those who ask for forgiveness*

Those who ask forgiveness from God are expected to receive extra mercy:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِنِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا فَاعْفُنَا لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ
خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Allah praises a group of his servants who say: our Lord! We have believed in you, please forgive us and

treat us with mercy and you are the best of the merciful. (23:109)

If their prayer and request for forgiveness and mercy did not produce results, Allah would not have mentioned this in the Qur'an. If this prayer was void, Allah would not have praised them for making this prayer. Thus, we are to believe that such prayers indeed produce results; therefore, it is wise to learn these prayers and recite them in our *qunūt*² or on any other occasion. Other verses in the Qur'an also refer to the recommendation of asking for forgiveness:

قالَ يَا قَوْمَ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرَحَّمُونَ

He [Sālih] said, ‘O My people! Why do you press for evil sooner than for good? Why do you not plead to God for forgiveness so that you may receive His mercy?’ (27:46)

قَالَ رَبَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

He [Moses] said, ‘My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful. (7:151)³

7. Those for whom the angels pray

There are people who receive extra mercy from Allah because the angels pray for them. In addition to the general prayer of angels for believers which is seen in verses such as 40:7, the Qur'an refers to

² Raising our hands in supplication during the obligatory prayers.

³ See also: 2:286, 7:23; 149; 155 and 23:118.

particular cases in which angels have prayed to Allah to send His mercy to certain people. For example, when the angels gave Prophet Abraham (a) the good tidings of having a child, his wife was shocked because he was elderly and she was barren. The angels said:

قَالُوا أَ تَعْجِبُونَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَتُ اللَّهِ وَ بَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

They said, ‘Are you amazed at God’s dispensation? God’s mercy and His blessings be upon you, members of the household. Indeed He is all-laudable, all-glorious.’ (11:73)

The phrase “*God’s mercy and blessings be upon you*” can be a statement, but it is more likely to be a prayer saying, “Peace and mercy be upon you!” Thus, when there is a good household, that is, when the father and mother are good, pious people with good children, there is great chance the angels will pray for this household; the angels will supplicate, asking God to give the family more mercy and to treat them with more favour.

8. Those who migrate and struggle for the sake of God

Another group of people who are expected to receive extra mercy are those who migrate and struggle for the sake of God:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءامَنُوا وَ الَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَ جَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَ اللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Indeed those who have become faithful and those who have migrated and waged jihad in the way of God — it

is they who expect God's mercy, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (2:218)

Another verse is Surah Al-Tawbah, 20-21:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ هاجَرُوا وَ جاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأموالِهِمْ وَ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَعْظَمُ
دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ أُولئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ - يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَ رِضْوَانٍ
وَ جَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُقِيمٌ

Those who have believed and migrated, and waged jihad in the way of God with their possessions and persons have a greater rank near God, and it is they who are the triumphant. Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and [His] pleasure, and for them there will be gardens with lasting bliss, to remain in them forever. With God indeed is a great reward. (9:20-22)

Migration can be applicable today; it's not reserved for those who migrated from Mecca to Medina. Perhaps it can be applied to any migrant who leaves his residence for Allah's sake, for those migrate to protect their faith, to practice it, or to do charitable work. Thus, anyone who moves from his original place of upbringing to another place for the sake of Allah is called a *muhājir*.

Jihād means to struggle for the sake of Allah. This can be in education, agriculture, or medicine. It may also involve exercise of legitimate force to defend one's property, family, or nation depending on the circumstances and on what is required for the well-being of one's household, nation, or all humanity. Working hard in order to earn enough money to spend on one's family is considered in narrations as an example of *jihad*. Imam Sadiq (a) is quoted as saying:

الْكَادُ عَلَىٰ عِيَالِهِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Whoever strives for earning a living for his family is tantamount to a warrior who fights for the sake of God.⁴

A determined teacher working to educate people is an example of *jihād*. A farmer toiling for the sake of Allah to provide people with food is *jihād*. One who defends his or her country is also *jihad*. Therefore, *jihād* is a very broad notion that includes any struggle for the sake of God.

According to the above verses, those who have faith and those who migrate and struggle for the sake of God are expected to receive special mercy from God, and any shortcomings committed in the past are to be forgiven.

9. *The obedient*

Those who obey Allah and His Prophet are expected to receive more mercy:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ
الْفُورُ الْمُبِينُ

As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds, their Lord will admit them into His mercy. That is the manifest success! (45:30)

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

⁴ *Al-Kāfī*, V.5, P.88, H.1, V.9, P.566, H.8436 & *Man Lā Yahdhuruhul-Faqih*, V.3, P.168, H.3631

And obey God and the Apostle so that you may be granted [His] mercy. (3:132)

The obedient includes those who enjoin the good, prohibit the evil, say their prayers, and give alms:

وَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَاءِ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَ يَنْهَا
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يَقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَ يُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ
أُولَئِكَ سَيِّرْ حُمُّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

But the faithful, men and women, are guardians of one another: they bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and maintain the prayer, give the zakat, and obey God and His Apostle. It is they to whom God will soon grant His mercy. Indeed God is All-mighty, All-wise. (9:71)

Believing men and women are guardians for each other. As a result, they have the right to enjoin one other to do well and to stop and refrain from committing misdeeds. Whatever happens to one believer is linked to the other; thus, it is expected that believers readily accept constructive criticism and admonition without thinking that not a single person holds the right to meddle in their business. Of course, the conditions for practicing this are mentioned in the field of Islamic law, or *fiqh*. For example, if I see, my brother eating something poisonous, am I not responsible? Thus, how can I not feel responsible when I see he is, say, listening to prohibited (*harām*) music, that is, music fit for corrupted gatherings? Certainly I am responsible. This is different from prying into others' business. Though you do not want to do so, when we see someone doing something wrong, we are responsible for telling that person in a wise and decent manner that works best to stop the action.

In any case, the above verse indicates that if you enjoin the good and prohibit the bad, say your prayers, give alms, and generally obey Allah and the Prophet, you would soon receive the mercy of Allah.

A similar indication is seen in the following verse:

وَ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ آتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَ أَطْيِعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Maintain the prayer and give the zakat, and obey the Apostle so that you may receive [God's] mercy.
(24:56)

To be obedient means to have *taqwā*, that is, to be God-wary and protect yourself. It comes from the root “*wa-qa-ya*” which means ‘to save’ or ‘to protect’ yourself from doing that which is bad and harmful, that which causes Allah’s displeasure. *Taqwā* is a kind of immunity from all germs and pollutions. In addition to the verses about obedience to God, there are verses which indicate that *taqwā* leads to additional mercy:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ آمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتُكُمْ كَفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَ
يَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَ يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ وَ اللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

O you who have faith! Be wary of God and have faith in His Apostle. He will grant you a double share of His mercy and give you a light to walk by, and forgive you, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful; (57:28)

وَأَكْتُبْ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدُنَا إِلَيْكَ قَالَ عَذَابِي
أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءَ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسَعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَأَتُبَهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُّنُونَ
وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

And appoint goodness for us in this world and the Hereafter, for indeed we have come back to You'. Said He, 'I visit My punishment on whomever I wish, but My mercy embraces all things. Soon I shall appoint it for those who are Godwary and give the zakat and those who believe in Our signs (7:156)

وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَّكٌ فَاتَّقُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعْنَكُمْ ثُرْحَمُونَ

And this Book that We have sent down is a blessed one; so follow it, and be Godwary so that you may receive [His] mercy. (6:155)

In addition to extra mercy, God gives those have *taqwā* the ability to easily discern right from wrong:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهُ يَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيَكْفُرُ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَيَعْفُرُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

O you who have faith! If you are wary of God, He shall appoint a criterion for you, and absolve you of your misdeeds, and forgive you, for God is dispenser of a great grace. (8:29)

Furqān is something by which you can distinguish between right and wrong. This is the power of *taqwā*. The *Mutaqqi*, or one who has *taqwa*, can quickly decipher between good and bad, as opposed to those who take time to make decisions:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّنْصَرُونَ

When those who are Godwary are touched by a visitation of Satan, they remember [God and, behold, they perceive. (7:201)⁵

God also gives special type of knowledge to those who have taqwā:

اَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ يُعْلَمُ كُمُّ الَّلَّهُ وَ اَللهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Be wary of God and God shall teach you, and God has knowledge of all things. (2:282)

Thus, we can draw a conclusion that the believer's good actions qualifies him to receive more mercy. The good deeds can include asking forgiveness, saying night prayer (*salāt al-layl*), giving alms, and enjoining the good and prohibiting the evil (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*). The different types of the above-mentioned verses make it very clear that the people who have faith and piety and do righteous deeds are expected to be given more mercy by God.

Note I: According to the Qur'an, believers should advise each other to be merciful, and God praises those who do so:

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوا وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبَرِ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ

...while being one of those who have faith and who enjoin one another to patience, and enjoin one another to compassion. (90:17)

Believers advise each other to be patient and merciful. If one forgets to be patient and merciful, the other should advise him and remind him when he forgets. Elsewhere the Qur'an emphasises the need for advising each other to observe the truth and be patient:

⁵ The "light to walk by" (57:28) which is given to the pious people helps them to better understand and therefore helps in making better decision and performing better actions.

إِنَّ الْأَنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبَرِ

Indeed man is at a loss, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to [follow] the truth, and enjoin one another to patience.
(103:2)

Hence, the believers should advise each other to observe mercy, truth, and patience.

Note II: According to the Qur'an, God has put mercy in the hearts of husband and wife and in the hearts of the followers of Jesus (a):

وَ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَا يَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

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.
(30:21)

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَ جَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً

Then We followed them up with Our apostles and We followed [them] with Jesus son of Mary, and We gave him the Evangel, and We put in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy... (57:27)

When two people get married, God puts affection and mercy in their hearts for each other. Affection may need to be reciprocated, but mercy is unconditional, and one party may show mercy to the other without receiving anything in return, such as serving a sick spouse who is unable to do anything for the other.

Similarly God has put in affection and mercy in the hearts of those who followed Jesus. This can be only the word of God because Prophet Muhammad (s) brought a new religion and invited others to believe in his message, though he still acknowledges the merits of another faith community. The Qur'an also appreciates the good work of Christian priests and monks:

وَ لَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ نَصَارَى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ
قِسِّيْسِينَ وَ رُهْبَانًا وَ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

...and surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the faithful to be those who say ‘We are Christians.’ That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant. (5:82)

Some may expect that the Qur'an must not speak in favour of the clerics of a rival religion, but this is not the way the Qur'an approaches the issue. The Qur'an acknowledges the good works that monks and priests do. It also praises those Christians' humbleness. This must be a divine word.

The Qur'an also refers to the tendency towards monastic life among them which was not asked by God, but they themselves started it in order to please God, and afterwards some failed to observe its

requirements.⁶ Perhaps there have always been good monks, but you also find that over history, especially in the Medieval Ages, some monks who were supposed to renounce worldly pleasure themselves were involved in misuse of power and accumulating of wealth. Of course, the Qur'an does not generalise this; it excludes some (57:27) and adds that their intention was initially good.

⁶... But as for monasticism, they innovated it - We had not prescribed it for them - only seeking God's pleasure. Yet they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave to the faithful among them their [due] reward, but many of them are transgressors. (57:27)

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHARACTER OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (S) ON THE SPREAD OF ISLAM DURING THE MECCAN PERIOD

DR. ASGHAR MUNTAZIR QA'IM
TRANSLATED BY JABIR CHANDOO

ABSTRACT: After Prophet Muhammad's first revelation, he managed to take major steps in spreading Islam. This article discusses the role and personality of the Holy Prophet (s) during the early days of his mission. The type of research methodology employed in this paper is descriptive-analytic, and the historical data presented has been collected from first-hand sources. Some of the key strategies employed by the Holy Prophet (s) were: reforming and training righteous people committed to the cause of Islam; to enhance the level of awareness and insight of the early converts to Islam; having good conduct and spiritual personality; patience, perseverance and resistance in the face of difficulties and obstacles; revealing the Holy Qur'an, the miracle of the Holy Prophet (s); communicating and dialogue with the opponents; conforming his actions with his speech; focusing on the aim and accuracy in planning; creating devoted manpower out of the youth in Mecca; and seeking assistance from Allah (s) to overcome the obstacles.

The thirteen-year period of the beginning of the Prophet's mission comprised three stages of the call to Islam: the secret call, the call to

the nearest kin, and the public call. This period was successfully accomplished and many people, particularly the youths in Mecca, believed in Islam.

Witnessing that their cultural, social, and political life has been endangered, the heads of Quraysh strongly stood against the Holy Prophet (s) out of tribal fanaticism, paganism, and following the trend of the past. They did not leave any stone unturned in their opposition to the Holy Prophet (s), starting with physical torment of the Muslims to accusing him (s) and his companions of being magicians, fortune-tellers, madmen and poets.

Amidst such difficulties and dangers, the future of the Islamic movement and the formation of a religious community could not have been possible without a well-thought-out strategy. Consequently, to reach his lofty goals and objectives, the Holy Prophet (s) took some steps and employed several tactics to surpass the physical torture of the enemy and other major difficulties.

The early period of the Prophetic mission lasted thirteen years. During this time, the Holy Prophet (s) directed those inclined to accept his call to the good word of “There is no god but Allah” and to light the love of Allah (s) in their hearts through his great character, endearing style of invitation, extreme kindness, and words full of wisdom.

This period in history has its own distinctive characteristics which shall be discussed in this paper.

Characteristics of the Early Period of the Prophetic Mission

a. Methods and Stages of the Call to Islam

The call to Islam during this period was accomplished through three different phases:

- I. The secret call to Islam and the individual effort by the Holy Prophet (s) to search for people who could be trained morally and spiritually. These efforts produced fifty firm and devoted supporters¹ which resulted in consolidating the foundations of the Islamic movement.
- II. With the revelation of the verse “*And warn the nearest of your kinsfolk*²” the second phase of the call to Islam - by inviting the near relatives - took place under the event known in history as ‘The Day of the House’ (*yawm al-dār*). This event exposed the issue of succession after the Prophet; in this gathering, the Prophet said regarding Imam Ali, “Indeed this is my brother, my successor, and my caliph amidst you; therefore, listen to him and obey.”³
- III. The phase of open and public call to Islam that began in the fourth year and continued until the migration to Medina. The outcome of this phase was the spread of Islam extending to the Medina and far beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

b. Opposition from the Leaders of Quraysh

The opposition of the affluent and influential figures of the city of Mecca to the Islamic movement has been mentioned in Chapter 111 of the Holy Qur'an. Out of traditionalism and the spirit of following the trend of their ancestors, the leaders of Quraysh rose against Islam and the Holy Prophet (s) and insisted on idol worshipping, attaching importance to Pagan behaviour and culture, and being obsessed with material possessions and amplitude of wealth and people. Referring to

¹ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, part one, p. 250.

² Qur'an, 26:214.

³ Tabari, *Al-Tārikh*, vol.2, p.63.

this attitude, the Holy Qur'an says, "We did not send a warner to any town without its affluent ones saying, 'We indeed disbelieve in what you have been sent with. And they say, 'We have greater wealth and more children, and we will not be punished!'"⁴ Yet in another place, the Holy Qur'an says, "Rather they say, 'We found our fathers following a creed, and we are indeed guided in their footsteps.'"⁵

The opposition to the Holy Prophet (s) from the leaders of Quraysh like Abu Sufyan, Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl, Umayyah ibn Khalaf and Walid ibn Mughayrah stemmed from the fact that they considered the idols to be a symbol of the culture dominant over the Arabian society. They stood against the Holy Prophet (s) for the following reasons:

1. The backbone of the cultural survival of the affluent ones rested on the idols and places for their worship like the Ka'bah at that time.
2. The social and economic status gained by the affluent ones was endangered.
3. The call to believe in one God meant that all human beings are equal in their social status. The poor and the rich equally prostrate before the All-sufficient God. Belief in monotheism (*tawhid*) implied acknowledgement of equality among all human beings. Such a thing was unbearable for the leaders of Quraysh.

Accepting Islam meant the nullification of all kinds of unjustified economic and social privileges as well as the annulment of slave trade and all other forms of commercial proprietorship. Such economic and social vices had widely contributed to the eradication of justice and equality from the Meccan society and were rapidly driving the community towards moral decadence. Sensuality, merrymaking, lending women for sexual purpose, pride and selfishness, amassing

⁴ Qur'an, 34:34-35.

⁵ Qur'an, 43:22 and 5:104.

wealth, greediness, enslaving innocent people and Pagan fanaticism, were all among the distinctive characteristics of the Meccan aristocracy. Belief in the messengership of the Prophet Muhammad (s) would have put an end to all their political domination and social privileges, and for this very reason they continually opposed the Holy Prophet (a) and his call towards Islam.

c. Confrontation Methods of the leaders of Quraysh

Among the other distinguishing features of the Meccan period is the method of opposition employed by the heads of Quraysh in their confrontation against the Holy Prophet (s). After the commencement of the public call to Islam, the polytheists stood against the Holy Prophet (s) in different ways including:

1. Torturing his companions, and making the plot to assassinate him.
2. Bribing the Prophet (s) to the extent of telling him, “We will grant you a kingdom.”
3. Alleging him fortune-telling, madness, poetry⁶, magic, and being without heirs. As Rukanah ibn ‘Abd considered the Prophet (s) to be the greatest magician⁷, while ‘As ibn Wa’il gave him the title of ‘one who is without heirs and progeny (*abtar*) which resulted in the revelation of Surat al-Kawthar⁸.
4. Creating unnecessary disturbance and propaganda against the Holy Prophet (s) by people such as Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl and the chiefs of Thaqif.
5. Counter-attack and cultural assault against the Prophet (s) as Nadhr ibn Hārith accused him of narrating tales.⁹

⁶ Qur’ān, 52:29-30.

⁷ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, part one, p. 391.

⁸ Baladhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 1, p. 157.

⁹ Ibid, p. 159.

6. Creating economic, political, and military constraints for the Holy Prophet (s), such as sending Amru ibn ‘As to Abyssinia with the aim of returning the Muslims to Mecca, and the attacks of the chiefs of Quraysh on the Reef (*shi'b*) of Abu Talib.

d. The Stands of the Prophet Muhammad (s)

1. The endeavour to exterminate the culture of idol-worshipping and Pagan-like behaviour.
2. To bring reform to the Paganic norms and customs.
3. To purify the hearts and minds of the early Muslims through worshipping Allah and the recitation of the Qur'an.
4. Capacity-building and ideological preparation of the early Muslims.

During those difficult and unendurable times, the continuation of the Islamic movement and the formation of a religious community were not possible without a powerful and well-trained workforce. It was due to this very reason that the Holy Prophet (s) trained an efficient workforce from the youths of Mecca for the future of the Islamic movement.

5. Struggle against the polytheistic superstitions of Quraysh.
6. Initiation of a movement to bring a change in the decaying community of Mecca, as the Holy Qur'an asserts one of the duties of the prophets was to 'bring reform'.¹⁰

Reasons behind the Success of the Prophet Muhammad (s)

The following were some of the reasons behind the success and achievement of the Holy Prophet (s) in his mission:

1. Raising the Level of Awareness and Insight among the Muslims

¹⁰ Qur'an, 11:88.

The Holy Prophet (s) never resorted to cursing the polytheists or invoking Divine punishment on them, nor did he ever use bribery or deception. Like all other prophets in history, he started with a cultural struggle before achieving political power. The Prophet of Islam was the prophet of intellect and insight, nurturing human potential and advocating a civilised manner of argument with his opponents. In the initial verses of the Surat al-'Alaq and al-Qalam, pen, reading, education, and insight were introduced as the principal slogan of Islam.

Such verses are a very strong response to people who attempted to portray Islam as devoid of any rationality, reflection, and love, whereas on the contrary, the importance given to education and learning in Islam is far greater than the importance given to it in other divine religions. There is no divine religion or human school of thought that has laid so much emphasis on learning and knowledge at its inception as has been done by Islam. The Holy Qur'an says, "Say, 'This is my way. I summon to God with insight - I and he who follows me. Immaculate is God, and I am not one of the polytheists.'"¹¹

In the early period of the Prophetic mission, the Holy Prophet (s) was able to take major steps in elevating the level of scientific and culture awareness among his companions. By virtue of the light of knowledge, they developed a deeper understanding of the religious teachings as well as the ability to analyse the socio-cultural issues surrounding them. As per the teaching of the Holy Qur'an "Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'"¹², the Prophet of Allah (s) paved the way for the scientific development and prosperity of the Muslims in the ages to come.

¹¹ Qur'an, 12:108.

¹² Qur'an, 39:9.

2. *The Character of the Holy Prophet (s)*

The character of the Prophet (s) was based on the Qur'an and outstanding. His countenance was rosy; he had large dark eyes with thick and relatively straight hair and flat cheeks. He had robust arms and legs, a long thin nose, and his teeth were as shiny as silver. He had a balanced stature, he was neither very tall nor very short, and neither too plump nor very thin.

His attractive and good-looking appearance together with his gentle and kind character - contrary to the rough and rude manners of the affluent leaders of Quraysh - had a profound impact on the hearts of the Arabs who were already thirsty for love and respect.

His guidance and spiritual charisma compared to the violent and cruel nature of the Meccan tycoons had an incredible impact on attracting people towards Islam. This was exactly in line with how the Holy Qur'an has described the Holy Prophet (s): "*In the Apostle of God there is certainly for you a good exemplar, for those who look forward to God and the Last Day, and remember God greatly.*"¹³

Throughout his mission, the Holy Prophet (s) had succeeded in bringing about a fundamental ideological change at the crux of the cultural life of a people who were deprived of a rich culture and civilization. He managed to demolish the foundations of polytheism and idol-worshipping, and to spread monotheism (*tawhid*) in its complete form. Through purifying the hearts of his companions by means of prayers (*salāt*), he trained believing and selfless men who were solely devoted to the lofty objectives of humanity.

He was a perfect manifestation of virtues. Due to his great personality, the Muslims were so much fascinated by him that they would revolve around him like flies around a candle and ardently

¹³ Qur'an, 33:21.

sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah (swt) in compliance with his order. The words of ‘Urwah ibn Mas‘ūd, the representative of Quraysh to the Holy Prophet (s), attest to this reality when he said, “I have never seen an emperor who commands so much love among his companions as Muhammad does. They do not raise their voices over his and they are quick in doing what he instructs them to do.”¹⁴

The Holy Qur'an considers the Prophet (s) as a radiant lamp sent to mankind¹⁵ and a manifestation of the divine mercy. It considers his affection, kindness and good character to be among the infinite grace of Allah (s) as it addresses him saying, “*It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs ...*”¹⁶

Describing the Prophet of Allah (s), Ali (a) says, “[He was] like a roaming physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments ... searching with his medicine the spots of negligence and places of perplexity.”¹⁷

His level of tolerance, love, care and sympathy for fellow human beings was so great that when his companions asked him to invoke the curse of Allah (s) on the tribe of Thaqif, he said, “O Allah! Guide the people of Thaqif and make them enter our company.”¹⁸ And in response to the request of Tufayl ibn Amru Dawsî to invoke the wrath of Allah (s) on his community, he said, “O Allah! Guide his community.” The next time he came to see the Prophet (s) in Madina, he came along with seventy families who had embraced Islam.¹⁹

¹⁴ Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghâzi*, vol. 2, p. 598.

¹⁵ Qur'an, 33:46.

¹⁶ Qur'an, 3:159.

¹⁷ Ali (a), *Nahj al-Balâghah* of Faydh al-Islam, sermon 107, p.321.

¹⁸ Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghâzi*, vol. 3, p. 937.

¹⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqât*, vol. 4, p. 238.

He was so clement and kind that when he was requested by Safwan ibn Umayyah – one of the leaders of Quraysh who had assigned Umayr ibn Wahab with the task of assassinating the Prophet (s) - to be granted a period of two months to think about Islam, the Holy Prophet (s) gave him four months instead. He used to give this piece of advice to each and every propagator of his message, “Be lenient to the people in their affairs and do not be rigid; give hope to them and do not cause break up among them.”²⁰ “Islam is a balanced religion, so be moderate in acting on its commandments.”²¹

The Holy Prophet (s) used to always tell his companions that, “The dearest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection is the one with the best character.”²²

He advised the children of ‘Abd al-Muttalib saying, “Spread the word of peace (*salām*), maintain good relations with nearest kin, keep vigil at night, give food in charity, and be fair in your speech so that you may enter the heaven in peace.”²³

He has also been reported to have said, “The best among you is the best of you in character.”²⁴ He was more affectionate towards the children than anyone else and he would be the first to greet children whenever he passed by them.²⁵ He was extremely approachable and was warm and jovial in their company. As history records, he would seat Hasan and Husayn on his lap and carry them on his shoulders.

The Prophet of Islam was also the embodiment of the Divine benevolence. During the Battle of Hunayn, he had granted forgiveness to six thousand captives at once.

²⁰ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, part two, p. 590.

²¹ Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghābah*, vol. 1, p. 148.

²² Al-Ya’qubi, *Al-Tarikh*, vol. 2, p.94.

²³ Ibid, p. 92.

²⁴ Ibn Sa’d, *Al-Tabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 377.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 382.

During the conquest of Mecca, Faḍalah ibn ‘Umayr once resolved to assassinate the Holy Prophet (s) while he was in the state of circumambulation of the Ka‘bah. When the Prophet (s) saw him, he asked him, “Are you Faḍalah?” “Yes”, he replied. “What were you thinking of?” said the Prophet (s). “I was busy remembering Allah”, Faḍalah answered. The Prophet (s) smiled and told him, “Ask forgiveness from Allah” and then he placed his blessed hand on his heart and he calmed down. Faḍalah used to say after this incident, “By Allah, he had not yet taken off his hand that I started feeling that he is the most beloved of the creatures of Allah to me.”²⁶

In another similar incident, Mālik ibn ‘Awf al-Nasri – the commander in-chief of the polytheists in the battle of Hunayn - composed the following verses in praise of the Prophet of Islam after he was pardoned by him, “I have never seen or heard among the people of a person like Muhammad; if they were to ask generosity and remission from him, he would be the most generous and most forgiving.”²⁷

Jabir ibn ‘Abdillah al-Ansari reports, “The Messenger of Allah (s) was the most bountiful of the people; and he was even more generous during the month of Ramadan.”²⁸

The Holy Prophet (s) says, “A generous person is closer to Allah, to the people, and to heaven, and is distant from the hell-fire.”²⁹

Despite being so lenient and generous to the people, he was very firm with himself such that at times he would sleep on an empty stomach for consecutive nights and his family also remained without food. Moreover, they would generally consume bread prepared from

²⁶ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyah*, part two, p. 417.

²⁷ Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghāzi*, vol. 3, p. 954.

²⁸ Sa‘id al-Din Muhammad bin Mas‘ud Kazeruni, *Nihāyat al-Mas’ul fi Riwayat al-Rasul*, vol. 1, p. 342.

²⁹ Al-Ya‘qubi, *Al-Tārikh*, vol. 2, p. 92.

barley³⁰ and his pillow was made of tanned skin filled with palm leaves.³¹ There was no form of luxury in his life as he was very economical.

Describing the lifestyle of the Holy Prophet (s), Ali (a) says: “He left this world on an empty stomach and he entered the life hereafter unblemished. He did not build for himself a considerable place of stay until he departed this world.”³² On his deathbed, he had only seven dinars of the fortune of this world which he ordered his wife ‘Aishah to hand over to Ali (a) to distribute among the destitute.³³

He was indeed a messenger of mercy. He would meet hatred and enmity with love and kindness. With such behaviour and attitude, he managed to endow human relations with magnificence through the fragrance of love and sincerity, as he had spread the wings of mercy for the believing men and women.³⁴

The hardships and difficulties faced by the people were very painful for him given his sympathetic spirit and extreme love for them. He was deeply concerned about their salvation and was kind and merciful to the believers.³⁵

He was a caring friend who through his guidance would warn his people against evil deeds and self-imposed customs which tied them as shackles of enslavement.³⁶ His presence was a great blessing and benevolence of God to mankind because he was the embodiment of noble traits of character as Allah (s) had embellished him with a great

³⁰ Ibn Sa’d, *Al-Tabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 400.

³¹ Ibid, p. 465.

³² Ali (a), *Nahj al-Balāghah* of Faydh al-Islam, sermon 169, p. 512.

³³ Ibn Sa’d, *Al-Tabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 237.

³⁴ Qur'an, 26:215.

³⁵ Qur'an, 9:128.

³⁶ Qur'an, 7:157.

character.³⁷ He himself used to say, “I have been sent to accomplish the excellent moral traits.”³⁸

Indeed he was the beloved who was a manifestation of insight, love, and immersion in the ocean of divine luminosity, in body and spirit, in thoughts and remembrance, in his outer appearance and his inner spirit.

3. Perseverance, Patience, and Resistance in the face of Difficulty

Forbearance against accusations and difficulties such as mockery, bribery, being accused of magic and poetry, infliction of calamities and torture, economic sanctions, physical injuries such as that which he went through in his journey to Ta’if could not have been possible without the spirit of resistance. The Holy Qur'an calls on the Prophet of Allah (s) to show resistance and says, “*So be patient, and you cannot be patient except with God's help. And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their guile.*”³⁹ Yet in another place the Qur'an addresses the Prophet (s) saying, “*And be patient over what they say, and keep away from them in a graceful manner.*”⁴⁰

4. The Noble Qur'an, the Miracle, and the Scale Model of the Holy Prophet (s)

The Qur'an was the greatest miracle of the Holy Prophet (s) because it was in confrontation of this piercing armament. The enemies of Islam sanctioned the listening of the Qur'an as mentioned by the Holy Qur'an itself, “*The faithless say, ‘Do not listen to this Qur'an and*

³⁷ Qur'an, 68:4.

³⁸ Nahj al-Fasāhah, p. 288, hadith no. 1372.

³⁹ Qur'an, 16:127.

⁴⁰ Qur'an, 73:10. In verse 34 of Surat An'am, Allah urges the Messenger of Allah (s) - like the previous prophets - to show perseverance.

hoot it down so that you may prevail [over the Apostle].”⁴¹ This verdict from the heads of Quraysh indicates the degree of effectiveness of this Noble Book, for the Qur'an is a book of wisdom, all-laudable, is the criterion, and the distinguisher between the truth and falsehood. It is a book in which falsehood cannot approach it nor can it be abrogated as it is the guidance for all times.⁴²

The Qur'an is a light that was sent down together with the Prophet (s)⁴³ with the aim of illuminating different aspects of human life. It is a book of guidance, a source of clarification of all things, a mercy, and good news.⁴⁴ It guides mankind to the truth and the straight path.⁴⁵ Had the Qur'an been from someone other than Allah (s), there would have been discrepancy in it.⁴⁶ No one shall ever be able to bring a chapter (*surah*) like that of the Qur'an⁴⁷ nor is anyone able to alter the words of Allah (s). The Prophet (s) conveyed all that was sent down onto him by Allah (s) in the same manner and in clear Arabic words⁴⁸ as it was revealed, without any alteration.

Ali (a) says in this regard, “[The Qur'an] is a light which shall never extinguish; it is a lantern whose brilliance will never die away. It is an ocean whose depth cannot be comprehended; it is the origin of faith (*imān*) and the cause of its prosperity; it contains springs of knowledge and its oceans; it is the spring of justice and its source; and it is the backing stone of Islam and its foundation.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ Qur'an, 41:26.

⁴² Qur'an, 41:42.

⁴³ Qur'an, 7:157.

⁴⁴ Qur'an, 16:89.

⁴⁵ Qur'an, 46:30.

⁴⁶ Qur'an, 4:82.

⁴⁷ Qur'an, 2:23; 10:38; 17:88 and 11:38.

⁴⁸ Qur'an, 18:27; 6:34 and 115.

⁴⁹ Ali (a), *Nahj al-Balāghah* of Faydh al-Islam, sermon 189, p. 641.

The clarity and sweetness of style of the Qur'an is such that "it astonishes those familiar with the Arabic language and makes them unable to speak when they attempt to describe it."⁵⁰

The Qur'an has illustrated the basic principles of Islam in three sections:

- a. The fundamental doctrines of Islam like monotheism, prophethood, the Day of Resurrection, and the creation of the heavens and the earth.
- b. Good character and manners.
- c. Practical edicts and scientific laws. The rulings pertaining to them have generally been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an while the detailed commentary upon them is given by the Holy Prophet (s).⁵¹

It is worth mentioning that, in general, the eighty-six Meccan chapters of the Qur'an talk about the Islamic doctrine and noble character in a concise manner, while the remaining twenty-eight Medinan chapters of the Qur'an focus on the Islamic practical laws in detail.

5. Dialogue and Upright Speech in Confrontation with the Opponents

Another factor behind the success of the Prophet of Islam (s) in guiding the people and propagating Islam was the employment of sound speech in his dialogue and conversation with the polytheists and the People of the Book. The Qur'an has also made it incumbent upon Muslims to use upright language in their conversation and interaction with the people of other faith. Addressing the Holy Prophet (s), the Holy Qur'an says, "Tell my servants to speak in the

⁵⁰ Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Qur'an Dar Islam*, p. 118.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 11.

manner which is the best.”⁵² Yet in another place it urges the Muslims saying, “... and speak kindly to people.”⁵³

In order to bring the hearts of the people closer, Allah (s) recommended His Prophet (s) to observe good manners in his speech, and to employ beautiful language in his discussions and arguments against his opponents. The Holy Qur'an says in this regard:

*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and dispute with them in a manner that is best. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided.*⁵⁴

The Holy Qur'an also reminds the Muslims of the important principle of observing pleasant conduct: “*Do not dispute with the people of the Book except in a manner which is best.*”⁵⁵

6. Conformity between the Speech and Character of the Prophet of Allah (s)

Among the ethical approaches employed by the Holy Prophet (s) in guiding the people was to practice what he preached. He had trained himself in such a manner that his actions would concur with his words so that he may not be among those reprimanded in the following verses of the Qur'an:

*O you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do?*⁵⁶ and “*Will you bid others to piety and forget*

⁵² Qur'an, 17:53.

⁵³ Qur'an, 2:83.

⁵⁴ Qur'an, 16:125.

⁵⁵ Qur'an, 9:46.

⁵⁶ Qur'an, 61:2.

*yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not apply reason?*⁵⁷

He himself used to say, “He who does not consider his words to be part of his actions, his misdeeds shall proliferate and he will meet his punishment.”⁵⁸

Thus, the actions of the Holy Prophet (s) used to correspond with his words. He would also advise the Muslims to be accountable for their words as he considered discrepancy between words and actions to be a source of multiplication of sins.

7. Focus on the Aim and Accuracy in Planning

Right from the early days of his mission, the Holy Prophet (s) had deliberated a program with a specific purpose and timeline aimed at training the people spiritually, creating a devoted manpower, terminating the Paganic culture and misguidance, and combating the conspiracies of the infidels.

The Holy Prophet (s) first demonstrated his goal to his followers. Thereafter in his public call to Islam, he made his ideals clear when he stood at Abtah and declared, “I am the Messenger of Allah; I am inviting you to worship Allah the One, and to stop worshipping idols who neither benefit nor harm, neither create nor provide, and neither give or take life.”⁵⁹

It is obvious that the identification of the aim by the Holy Prophet (s) contributed to the acceptance of his ideals among the people. This was similar to the message he was instructed by Allah (s) to convey to the people at the beginning of his mission: “Say, ‘Indeed I have been

⁵⁷ Qur'an, 2:44.

⁵⁸ Muhammadi Reyshahri, Muhammad, *Mizān al-Hikmah*, vol. 3, p. 2738.

⁵⁹ Al-Ya'qubi, *Al-Tārikh*, vol. 1, p. 379.

commanded to worship God and not to ascribe any partner to Him. To Him do I summon [all mankind] and to Him will be my return.”⁶⁰

8. Training Manpower from among the Youths of Mecca

The Holy Prophet (s) was well aware that for an ideological and socio-cultural transformation of a Paganic society there was a need for sufficient manpower. Hence, he took up the challenge of training such manpower. Historical evidence shows that the Holy Prophet (s) would spend most of his energy in guiding the youths such that the average age of the early Muslims was 30 years. Personalities like Imam Ali (a) was 10 years old at the time,⁶¹ Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr – the propagator of the Prophet (s) in Yathrib - was 27 years old⁶², Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib – the leader of the Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia - was 23 years old⁶³, and Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam – whose house was the centre of propagation of the Holy Prophet (s) - was 18 years old.⁶⁴

Apparently, the majority of the early Muslims were among the young people. This is attested by the words of the representatives of the Quraysh before Najashi, the emperor of Abyssinia, “A group of foolish young men from our community have recently escaped from the religion of their fathers and have embraced a new faith.”⁶⁵ This statement clearly shows that the Holy Prophet (s) had initiated an extensive struggle to recruit devoted manpower from among the youth to guarantee the future of the Islamic movement.

This move came as a result of the fact that the youths were more prepared to accept the message of Islam compared to those people

⁶⁰ Qur'an, 13:36.

⁶¹ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, part one, p. 245.

⁶² Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghābah*, vol. 4, p. 369.

⁶³ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 289.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 60.

⁶⁵ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, part one, p. 325.

who were spiritually and mentally bred with the pagan customs and traditions and more capable of severing the cause of God.

9. Seeking Divine Assistance

Yet another factor behind the success of the Holy Prophet (s) during his Prophetic mission was seeking divine help from Allah (s) because of the severe pressure and torture the companions of the Prophet (s) were subjected to, as well as the accusations made against him like that of being a magician, fortune-teller, madman, and poet. These were among the major barriers in guiding the people towards Islam.

Thus, by his continuous reliance on Allah (s) and seeking His help, the Prophet (s) would bear these difficulties and hurdles one after another, and he would firmly continue with his mission as learned from the Holy Qur'an: "*Say, 'I have been instructed to worship Allah and not to associate any partner with Him; I call on Him and to Him is the return'*"⁶⁶ or "*Say, 'He is my Lord, there is no god except Him, in Him I have put my trust and to Him will be my return.'*"⁶⁷

During his journey to the city of Tā'if, when he was stoned by some of the ignoble men of the city on the instructions of their chiefs, he whispered to Allah (s) saying, "My Lord! I complain of my weakness and disability to You; You are the All-beneficent and the All-merciful Lord; You are my Lord and the Lord of the weak; in whose hands have you entrusted me?"⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Qur'an, Ra'd (13):36.

⁶⁷ Qur'an, Ra'd (13):30.

⁶⁸ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah*, section one, p. 419.

Conclusion

Based on what has been discussed, it becomes clear that after the Holy Prophet (s) declared himself a prophet, when the infidels and the leaders of Quraysh sensed their social and cultural life to be in danger, they did not leave any stone unturned in labelling the Holy Prophet (s) with different kinds of accusations and in torturing his companions, and they mobilised all their strength to stand against the call of Islam to liberate mankind. Although these difficulties and problems were a major obstruction in the way of the Holy Prophet (s) to attain his lofty goals, they could not stop him from reaching the heights of success. The factors that contributed to the success of the Holy Prophet (s) during the early days of his mission are studied above.

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A BIOGRAPHY OF IMAM JA‘FAR AL-SADIQ (A)

MUHAMMAD NASIR HUSAYNI ‘ALA’I
TRANSLATED BY: MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq, the sixth Imam, was revered by both Sunni and Shi‘a Muslims for his deep Islamic scholarship, piety, and academic accomplishments. This article offers a brief biography of his life, the distinctive features of his Imamate compared to other Imams, his educational achievements, and his political confrontations. Although the Imam is most renowned as the initiator of Shi‘a Islamic fiqh, called Ja‘fari jurisprudence, his extensive knowledge in a variety of fields had a great academic impact on the people of his time. *Tawhid al-Mufaddal*, a compilation of his teachings, reflected his extensive knowledge, particularly on the wonders of creation. Moreover, given the grim political situation for 21 years under the rule of the second Abbasid caliph Mansur, he supported Shi‘a uprisings and advised them to implement a suitable approach to confront oppressors.

Ja‘far ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Husayn ibn Ali (a)

The sixth Shi‘a Imam (a) was born on a Monday or Friday on the 17th of Rabi‘ul Awwal 83 or 86 A.H.¹ He was born on the same day the Prophet was born 136 years earlier.

¹ The Virtues of Abi Talib’s Household, Ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 4, pp. 279-280

His Name, Epithets, and Appellations

He was named Ja‘far by his holy father, Imam Baqir (a). In response to Daris Kanani as to why he was called Ja‘far, the sixth Imam responded, “Oh Daris! Your father ignorantly called you Daris, which is the name of an offspring of Satan, while my father out of knowledge named me Ja‘far, which is the name of a brook in Heaven.”² His great father was Imam Muhammad Baqir (a) and his mother was Umm Farwah bint Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr. His epithets are Aba Abdillah, Aba Isma‘il, and Abu Musa.³

His appellations are also al-Sadiq, Sābir, Fāḍil, Tāhir, Qā’im, Kāfi and Munji; the most famous one is al-Sadiq. As to why he was called al-Sadiq (the truthful), while all Imams are truthful in the real sense of the word, Imam Sajjad (a) is quoted as saying, “The dwellers of Heaven know Ja‘far ibn Muhammad as al-Sadiq because a descendant of his called Ja‘far would falsely claim to be Imam. That is why he is known as Ja‘far al-Kadhdhab (the liar).”⁴ Ja‘far al-Kadhdhab attempted to present himself as the successor of Imam Hassan Askari (a). However, by Allah’s grace, Imam Mahdi (a) would prove his false claim to the Shi‘as. The distinction between the sixth Imam and this descendant of his through five generations proves his veracity.

The Distinctive Features of his Imamate

The turbulent lifetime of Imam al-Sadiq (a) began in 83 A.H. and ended in 148 A.H. He spent 31 years of his life in the presence of his holy father.

² Bihar-ul-Anwar, Allameh Majlisi, vol. 47, p. 27.

³ The Virtues of Abi Talib’s Household, vol. 4, p.281.

⁴ ‘Illal-u-Sharayi’, Shaikh Saduq, vol. 1, p. 234.

Compared to other Imams before and after him, the period of Imam al-Sadiq's Imamate is politically distinctive and noteworthy in two respects:

1. *The great number of Caliphs during his Imamate*

The sixth Imam was a contemporary of seven Caliphs, namely Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik (105-125 A.H.), Walid ibn Yazid Abdul-Malik (125-126 A.H.), Yazid ibn Walid ibn Abdul-Malik (126), Ibrahim ibn Walid ibn Abdul-Malik (70 years in 126 A.H.), Marwan ibn Muhammad known as Marwan Himar (126-132), Abdullah ibn Muhammad known as Saffah (132-137), and Abu Ja'far known as Mansur Dawaniqi (137- 158).⁵ No other Imam was a contemporary of this great number of Caliphs, and Imam Sajjad (a) and Imam Hadi (a) were contemporary with at most six Caliphs during their Imamate.

2. *Different dynasties*

In contrast to the political situations of others Imams, during the Imamate of Imam al-Sadiq (a), the Umayyad dynasty was replaced by the Abbasid one. Thus, his confrontation with the governments of his time, his backing the Shi'i uprisings, his advising the Shi'as to adopt an appropriate approach to confront tyrants, and so forth are noteworthy. The holy Imam (a) was not only active in the era of freedom, but he also lived under the extremely dictatorial and tyrannical regimes.

Training Students

In order to train his students, Imam al-Sadiq (a) made the most out of the time when there was no dictatorship and cruelty because the Abbasids and the Umayyads were in political conflict with one another over power.

⁵ *The History of the Caliphs*, Suyuti, pp. 281-312.

In doing so, Imam al-Sadiq (a) followed in his father's footsteps. The school established by Imam Baqir (a) was expanded by Imam al-Sadiq (a). Students trained in this school include Hisham ibn Hakam, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Aban ibn Taghabib, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu'min Taq, Mufaddal ibn 'Umar, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Mu'alli ibn Khanis, Mu'awiyyah ibn Ammar, and Ali ibn Yaqtin.⁶

Some of these students were so advanced and well trained that they were the pivots of their fields. For example, Hisham ibn Hakam wrote thirty one books⁷ and Jabir ibn Hayyan authored more than two hundred twenty books⁸ on various subjects, especially on rational and natural subjects and chemistry, which was called alchemy then. That is why Jabir ibn Hayyan is known as 'The Father of Chemistry.'

Imam al-Sadiq's students were not limited to Shi'as; rather, Sunnis also benefited from his knowledge. Many well-known Sunni leaders were directly or indirectly the Imam's students. Foremost among these leaders is Abu-Hanifah who studied under the Imam for two years. He talked of these two years as the foundation of his knowledge, saying, "Had it not been for those two years, Nu'man (Abu-Hanifah) would have been destroyed."⁹

The Imam's Breadth of Knowledge

The spread and modification of Shi'i Islam is indebted to the scientific endeavors of Imam al-Sadiq (a). On different occasions, the Imam made use of the political pressures in society caused by the transfer of power from the Umayyads to the Abbasids to revive the principles of Shi'i thought that the governments prevented their dissemination to define the injunctions of Islamic law (*shari'a*) and to

⁶ Imam al-Sadiq (a) and the Four Islamic Sects, vol. 1, pp. 69-77.

⁷ Rijal, Khu'i, vol. 19, p. 271.

⁸ Al-Fihrist, pp. 420-423.

⁹ Imam al-Sadiq (a) and Four Islamic Sects, vol. 1, p. 70.

elevate Shi'a Islam. Hence, the “twelver-Imam Shi‘ism” is called “Ja‘fari Shi‘ism”.

According to the renowned leader of the Hanafi sect, Abu-Hanifah, “When Mansur Dawaniqi summoned Ja‘far ibn Muhammad (a), he told me, ‘People are fond of Ja‘far ibn Muhammad (a). In order to denounce him, think of some difficult questions.’”

So I thought of forty difficult questions. One day Mansur was in “Hayrah” and summoned me. When I went to him, I saw Ja‘far ibn Muhammad (a) sitting on his right side. Mansur turned to him and said, ‘This is Abu-Hanifah.’

‘Yes, I know him,’ he replied.

Then Mansur added, ‘O’ Abu-Hanifah! Share your questions with Abu-Abdillah.’

I started posing the questions. For every question I asked him, he explained all about my opinion, the view of people of Medina and the Shi‘i opinion on it. On some questions, he agreed with us, on others with people of Medina, and still on some others he disagreed with both of us. This way, I raised forty questions and he answered all. Reaching this point, I pointed to Imam al-Sadiq (a), saying, “[He is] the most knowledgeable of people, aware of their disagreements on Fatwas and jurisprudential issues.”¹⁰

According to the famous scholar of the 3rd century A.H., Abu-Bahr Jahizh, “Ja‘far ibn Muhammad (a) is a person whose knowledge is world-famous. It is said that Abu-Hanifah and ’Uthman Thawri were his students. This suffices for demonstrating his high scholarly status.”¹¹

¹⁰ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.47, pp. 217-218.

¹¹ *Imam al-Sadiq (a) and the Four Islamic Sects*, vol. 1, p. 55.

Besides strengthening the principles of Shi‘i thought, Imam al-Sadiq (a) particularly endeavored to refute the principal thoughts of other sects. In a debate between him and Abu-Hanifah, he refuted the analogical reasoning of Abu-Hanifah.

The Imam said, ‘I have heard you issue an Islamic ruling (fatwa) based on analogical reasoning.’

‘Yes.’

‘Woe to you! The first one who expressed ideas based on analogical reasoning was Satan. When Allah ordered him to prostrate himself before Adam, he said, ‘I will not, because You have created me out of fire and him out of soil, and fire is superior to soil.’

Then, in order to invalidate ‘analogical reasoning’, the holy Imam mentioned some instances of Islamic legal rulings opposed to this principle. He said, “Which one is worse, killing somebody unjustly or committing adultery?”

“Killing someone unjustly.”

“Now if acting upon analogical reasoning is to be correct, why are two witnesses enough to convict somebody of murder, but four are necessary for convicting somebody of adultery? Is this Islamic ruling in accordance with analogical reasoning?”

“No.”

“Which one is more important, prayer or fasting?”

“Prayer.”

“So why is it incumbent on menstruating women to make up for obligatory fasting, while this is not the case with obligatory prayer? Is this Islamic ruling concurrent with analogical reasoning?”

“No.”

“I was told you have commented on this Quranic verse, “Verily you shall be questioned about the blessings on the Day of Judgment,” as follows, “Allah will rebuke people for eating delicious foods and drinking cold water in the summer.”

“Yes, I have commented on it this way. If somebody invites you over and serves you delicious food and cold water, then he reproaches you for having entertained you, what will you think of him?”

“I will consider him ungenerous.”

“Is Allah ungenerous?”

“So what is meant by the blessings about which man will be questioned?”

“This blessing is the love for us, the Prophet’s Household (a).”¹²

Tawhid of Mufaddal: a Reflection of the Imam's Knowledge

Mufaddal ibn 'Umar Kufi was a student of Imam al-Sadiq (a) who was instructed by the Imam for four days and compiled the Imam's teachings in the form of a treatise called *Tawhid of Mufaddal*. This book includes complicated and hidden facts about the world from humankind to astronomy.

I am going to tell you about the Divine philosophy in creating the universe, with its animals, wild ones, and insects; that is, all living beings, animals and plants, from fruit trees to the edible and inedible plants, so that [people] may learn a lesson.

¹² See its details in *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol.10, p. 220-221, no. 20.

Afterwards, the Imam spoke of the wonders of creation as Mufaddal wrote them down.¹³

Imam al-Sadiq's Confrontation with the Tyrants of his Time

The Imam spent 21 years of his Imamate under the tyrannical rule of the second Abbasid caliph, Mansur. The struggle strategies the Imam recommended to his followers included adopting a non-violence policy, covert and overt struggle and defensive policies, showing the Shi‘as the appropriate policy of not cooperating with the government, supporting the Shi‘a uprisings while not helping those who wanted to align Imam al-Sadiq (a) with themselves.¹⁴

Each above-mentioned strategy is beyond the constraints of this paper. However, part of the Imam’s struggle was based on not recognizing any illegitimate government. According to Imam al-Sadiq (a), a legitimate government has its roots in Allah’s order, not in social contract, coercion, and the like.

For example, consider the following valid narration reported by ’Umar ibn Hanzalah. It is considered accepted (maqbul) by some scholars due to the reliability of its chain of authorities; some others consider it a sound hadith. ’Umar ibn Hanzalah related:

Imam al-Sadiq (a) was asked about two Shi‘as who had a dispute over debt and inheritance, and turned to the illegitimate ruler or judge for a verdict on it. He was asked if this (turning to them) was allowed.

The Imam (a) replied, “Whoever turns to the illegitimate ruler or judge whether rightfully or not and asks him for a verdict definitely asks *tāghut* (false deity) for a verdict. Also, it is wrong that he should accept something by the verdict of *Tāghut* even though it is his vested

¹³ *The Conduct of the Shi‘a Leaders*, Mahdi Pishwa’i, pp. 353-410.

¹⁴ *Wasa’il-ul- Shi‘a*, Hurr Ameli, vol. 18, p. 99, Hadith no. 1.

right because he enjoys it by the judgment of *Tāghut*. Allah has ordered people to disbelieve in *Tāghut*. He said in the Hoy Quran, “*They want to turn for judgment [in their disputes] to Tāghut, though they were ordered to disbelieve in him,*” (4:60).

The Imam (a) was asked again, “So what should they do?”

He responded, ‘They should turn to somebody who narrates our Hadiths, takes our halal and haram into account and knows our injunctions. Whatever verdict he gives, they should be content with it because I have appointed him a judge. So if they belittle his verdict which is based on our injunctions, they definitely underestimate the verdict of Allah and deny us. Whoever denies us actually denies Allah and this is tantamount to associating somebody with Allah.’¹⁵

In the above-mentioned narration, Imam al-Sadiq’s saying is well-documented by his referring to the divine word.¹⁶

Considering the verses before and after it, that is, verses 58-68, the Qur’anic verse Imam al-Sadiq (a) mentioned enjoys a unique theme. If we consider all 10 verses together, it will be made completely clear that the rule of *Tāghut* and turning to him are illegitimate and unlawful. In some parts of these verses,¹⁷ Allah even swears by Himself, and He sees those who ask somebody other than the Messenger of Allah for a verdict on their disputes as faithless. In some other part, He views the faith of those who accept the judgment of *Tāghut* as imaginary. In a nutshell, Allah regards turning to *tāghut* and submitting to him as false and wrong.

¹⁵ Nisa’, 65.

¹⁶ The example of *Signs on the Occasions of the Revelation of the Quranic verses*, Dr. Muhammad Baqir Muhaqqiq, pp. 215-216; Nemuneh Quranic Commentary, vol. 3, pp. 429,453, 445.

¹⁷ Nemuneh Quranic Commentary, vol. 3, p. 443.

In this narration, Imam al-Sadiq (a) extended this Qur'anic verse beyond the time of the Holy Prophet¹⁸ to the future. Thus, when Shi'a have dispute over an issue and there is no Infallible (a), they should turn to a jurisprudent because three characteristics, namely narrating hadiths, taking halal and haram into account and knowing the injunctions, are not consistent with qualities of anybody but jurisprudents. Therefore, as for the time when there is an Imam but he is inaccessible or when he is in occultation, the permanent ruling has been made clear.

The word 'tāghut' from the root of 'tughyan', means rebelling against Allah and breaking divine laws, or any means of revolt and rebellion against Allah.¹⁹

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is also quoted as saying, "Whoever does not judge by right and truth, and people seek his judgment, is considered a tāghut."²⁰

Another hadith by the sixth Imam reads as follows, "We are those obeying whom Allah has made obligatory, while you obey the one for whose ignorance people cannot provide any pretext before Allah."²¹

The sixth Imam also warned jurisprudents and hadith narrators against having any tie with the illegitimate government of that time, saying, "Jurisprudents are the trusted agents of the Prophets. If you see them turning to the kings and intimately cooperating with oppressors, be suspicious of them and do not trust them."²²

Imam al-Sadiq (a) prevented his companions from associating and cooperating with the court of the caliphate. Once a companion asked

¹⁸ ibid.

¹⁹ *Usul Kafi*, Kulayni, vol. 1, p.186, Hadith no. 3.

²⁰ *Imam al-Sadiq (a) and the Four Islamic Sects*, vol. 2, p. 21.

²¹ *Wasa'il-ul- Shi'a*, vol. 12, p. 129, Hadith no.6.

²² *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol.47, p. 184.

him, “Sometimes Shi‘as become poor and short of money, and they are offered to build houses and dig a canal for the Abbasids. What do you think of this job?”

The Imam replied, “I do not like to tie a knot or to put a lid on water-skin for them even though they pay a high wage, because those who help the oppressors will be thrown into a tent of fire until Allah gives His verdicts on all servants.”²³

Once Abu-Ja‘far Mansur wrote to the sixth Imam, “Why don’t you come to us like others?”

In response, Imam al-Sadiq (a) wrote, “We do not have anything worldly to be fearful of you for it. You do not have anything otherworldly either so that we pin our hopes on you for it. You do not enjoy any blessing so that we congratulate you on it, nor do you find yourself in an affliction and catastrophe so that we offer you condolence. So why do we come to you?”

Mansur wrote in response, “Come and give us advice.”

The Imam responded, “The people fond of this world do not give you advice, and the Godly people who care about the hereafter do not come to you either.”²⁴

The Manifestation of Imam al-Sadiq’s Political Movement in Zayd’s Uprising

Zayd ibn Ali ibn Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi-Talib was born in 79 A.H. and was martyred on the second of Safar²⁵ 121 A.H. [and based on another account 122 A.H.]²⁶ in Kufa at the age of 42. He was a great and virtuous man of the Prophet’s household. He was also a

²³ Nemuneh Quranic Commentary, vol. 3, p. 456.

²⁴ Irshad, Shaikh Mufid, vol. 2, p.170.

²⁵ Al-Milal wa-Nihal, Shahrestani, translated, Mustafa Khaliqdar Hashemi, vol. 1, p. 203.

²⁶ ibid, pp. 202-205.

knowledgeable, pious and brave ascetic who lived in the Umayyad era. It is said that he was the student of Wasil ibn ‘Ata, the founder of the Mu‘tazilites.²⁷ A sect with its specific beliefs is also attributed to him. Among them are beliefs in two Imams at the same time and the possibility of giving priority to the less qualified (*mafḍūl*) when there is a more qualified (*fāḍil*) candidate for caliphate.²⁸

He was among those who believed in armed uprising against the tyrannical rulers and was martyred due to his belief; that is why he was known as “Martyred Zayd.”²⁹ Considering the character of Zayd and his measures, it can be said with certainty that the Zaydiyyah sect is not connected with his beliefs at all.³⁰

Imam al-Sadiq and Zayd’s Uprising

1. In line with his political struggles against the tyrannical rule, Imam al-Sadiq (a) supported Zayd’s uprising; it even occurred with the Imam’s permission. There is evidence that demonstrate this including the following: Imam Rida (a) said, “My father Musa ibn Ja‘far (a) quoted his father, Ja‘far ibn Muhammad (a), as saying, ‘Zayd consulted me about his uprising and I told him, ‘Oh My uncle! If you would like to be the very person hanged in Kinasih (Kufah), this is your path.’ When Zayd left the holy Imam, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, ‘Woe to anybody who hears his call and does not rush to help him.’”³¹
2. Imam Rida (a) said, “Zayd was a scholar of the Prophet’s household. He was enraged for the sake of Allah and fought

²⁷ *Nasikh-u-Tawarikh*, Abbas Quli-Khan Sepehr, vol. 2, p. 42.

²⁸ *Ya‘qubi History*, vol. 2, pp. 296-299; *Tabari History*, vol. 10, p. 4265-4267.

²⁹ *Islamic Revolution and its Roots*, Amid Zanjani, p.134.

³⁰ For further information, see the related history books with detailed accounts on Zayd’s uprising. ‘*Oyun Akhbar-u-Rida*, Shaikh Saduq, vol. 1, p. 255, section 25; cited in *The Conduct of the Shi‘a Leaders*, p. 408.

³¹ ‘*Oyun Akhbar-u-Rida*, Shaikh Saduq, vol. 1, p. 248.

with enemies of Allah until he was martyred. My father quoted his father as saying, ‘May Allah bless my uncle, Zayd, who invited people to believe in the Prophet’s household. If he triumphed, he would put his words into practice.’³²

3. Talking to a companion of Zayd who had killed six Umayyad soldiers along with Zayd, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “May Allah consider me one of those who killed them. By Allah, my uncle, Zayd followed in the footsteps of Imam Ali (a) and his companions.”³³
4. After Zayd’s martyrdom, Imam al-Sadiq (a) served as the guardian of his family. Through one of his companions, he also sympathized with the families of martyrs and helped them financially.³⁴

Zayd himself did not hide his devotion to the Prophet’s household. On different occasions, he expressed his love, devotion, and obedience to his brother and nephew. Consider the following:

1. According to Zayd, “Ja’far ibn Muhammad (a) is our Imam, determining halal and haram.”³⁵
2. Zayd also said, “In every age, somebody from among us – the Prophet’s household – is a hujjat (Proof) of Allah. The Hujjat of Allah in our time is my nephew, Ja’far ibn Muhammad (a). Whoever follows him will not go astray, and whoever opposes him will not be guided.”³⁶

Despite all the Infallibles’ support for Zayd and their emphasis on his character, they did not back him openly because Zayd’s uprising had to occur prudently while taking all precautions. The enemies might

³² *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol. 46, p. 172.

³³ *Rijal-ul-Hadith*, vol.3, p. 348.

³⁴ *Ikhtiyar Ma‘rifa-tu-Rijal*, Shaikh Tusi, p. 361; cited in *The Conduct of the Shi‘a Leaders*, p. 409.

³⁵ *Thawab-ul-‘Amal*, p.530.

³⁶ *Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh*, p. 428.

have heard about the Imam's intervention and his agreement with Zayd's uprising. Neither the Imam and Zayd nor his close companions wanted anybody to be informed about it.

There is no doubt that Zayd rose to avenge the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a). He viewed reviving the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding evil as the main objective of his uprising. His sincere uprising led to the Imam's support. This way, Imam al-Sadiq (a) showed future generations that struggle against the tyrannical rulers is a fundamental principle, though it takes different forms over time.

The Imam's Martyrdom

According to historians, Imam al-Sadiq (a) was martyred by the poisonous grapes Mansur had him eat. Um Hamidah is quoted as saying, "On his deathbed, the holy Imam gathered all his relatives. When everybody showed up, he said, 'Our intercession does not go to somebody who belittles the daily prayers and is heedless to it.'"³⁷

Nonetheless, Imam al-Sadiq was martyred on the 25th of Shawwal in the year 148 A.H. at the age of 63.³⁸

The news of Imam al-Sadiq's martyrdom spread over the Muslim land, and true Shi'as shed tears over his martyrdom. He was buried in Baqi' cemetery next to the graves of his holy father and grandfather.

³⁷*The Virtues of Abi Talib's Household*, vol. 4, p. 280.

³⁸*Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol. 47, p. 1. There is variance among historians over the date of his martyrdom and age.

AN INQUIRY INTO INTERCESSION

ASIYAH BANU

TRANSLATED BY: MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Intercession (*shafā‘ah*), the act of an intercessor when he asks God for forgiveness and help on behalf of sinners, is of two types: generative and legislative. It is a principle found in many Islamic schools of thought, although questioned by some. This paper analyzes and explains the verses of the Qur'an regarding intercession and replies to several objections raised by its opposers. Qur'anic verses on intercession do not contradict one another; rather, they emphasize that intercession inherently belongs to God, and some special servants of God are entitled to intercede by His permission. This paper also refers to Sunni and Shi'a hadiths in support of the principle of intercession and ends by highlighting some of its positive outcomes, such as preventing sinners from despairing of Allah's mercy and promoting a stronger relationship with those who can intercede. Based on Qur'anic verses and hadiths, those who have been granted permission by Allah to intercede include prophets, angels, martyrs, and religious scholars.

Intercession is a shared principle in many Islamic schools of thought. Moreover, Twelver Shi'ites believe in intercession by prophets, Imams, and even martyrs and religious scholars. Like Shi'a thinkers, Sunni scholars underscore the truth of this Islamic teaching to such an extent that some Sunni thinkers have written books on intercession

that beautifully respond to various doubts on it.¹ However, Wahhabism - founded by Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab - who was inspired by the thoughts of Ibn Taymiyyah, questioned and attempted to refute intercession, and considered those who believe in the concept to be polytheists. This paper responds to doubts about intercession from the Qur'anic and hadith perspectives focusing on both Sunni and Shi'a sources.

The Literal and Technical Meaning of Shafā'ah

According to philologists, shafā'ah derives from the root *shaf'* which means 'even' in contrast to odd. In this way, *shafā'ah* means to be linked and attached to something.² In the same vein, the reason why an intercessor is called *shafi'* in Arabic is that he attaches the person interceded for to himself, meets his needs, and saves him.³

The technical meaning of *shafa'ah* is to help someone by negotiating on his behalf and asking the judge or the ruler or the like for some kind of exemption or forgiveness that on the Day of Judgment, with God's permission, the intercessor will request God to save the one interceded for from Hell, and will help the latter to enter Heaven.

Types of Intercession

Intercession can be divided into two parts:

1. Generative Intercession

Generative (*takwini*) intercession refers to intercession in the literal sense with its endless occurrences. There are boundless instances of

¹ See Sheikh Muhammad Mutiwalli Sha'rawi, *al-Shafā'ah wal-Maqam al-Mahmud*, Beirut: al-Maktabatul-Misriyyah (Egyptian publications).

² Khalil Farahidi, *Kitab-ul-'Ayn*, vol. 2, p. 627; Ibn Manzur, *Lisan-ul-'Arab*, vol. 8, p. 83; Raghib Isfahani, *Mufradat*, vol. 2, p.33.

³ Ja'far Subhani, *al-Wahhabiyah fil-Mizan*, p. 292; Najmu-Din Tabasi, *A Rational Approach to Wahhabi Beliefs*, vol. 1, p.5.

generative intercession in the world. All the causes intercede for their effects in order to come into existence. There is a tendency for stronger beings to help the weak. For instance, when the seeds of plants split open and the feeble sprout emerges, the soil provides it with nutrients, the sun shines at it with its warm light, and it pours with life-sustaining rain from dense clouds. As a result, this delicate creature can overcome obstacles and turn into a giant, luxuriant tree. Likewise, capable parents who protect and raise their feeble infant and the knowledgeable person who helps the ignorant one are examples of generative intercession.⁴

2. Legislative Intercession

Legislative (*tashri'i*) intercession is based on the technical meaning of the term, that is, the act of mediating between two parties, and the intercessor attaches himself to the person in need of intercession, meets his needs, and tries to save him. According to Shi'a and many Sunni scholars, at least the prophets enjoy this right.

As to how intercessors intercede for sinners, their intercession is a reflection of the generative intercession, although this occurs in the hereafter. Imam Ali said, "Intercession is the wings of the one who asks for forgiveness."⁵ In other words, just as the nestlings learn how to fly with the help of their parents, intercessors are the wings of the sinner that can help him achieve salvation and perfection.⁶

The Philosophy of Intercession

Does intercession encourage sinners to commit more sins and eventually cause man to lag behind others in achieving perfection? In other words, what is the purpose of intercession? Why does God,

⁴Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *The Message of the Quran*, vol. 6, p. 522; Sayyid Hasan Tahiri Khurram-Abadi, *Intercession*, p.104.

⁵ *Nahjul-Balaghah*, Feid-ul-Islam, sayings, no. 60, p.1115.

⁶ Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *The Message of the Qur'an*, vol. 6, p.522.

Who can intercede Himself, grant this privilege to some of His servants? To answer these questions, it is important to discuss the positive outcomes of intercession for those who seek it. The philosophy of intercession includes:

1. Giving hope and removing despair

When a person gives in to his carnal desires and commits sins as a result, this can lead to feelings of hopelessness. God through His Wisdom offers intercession as an option. This hope for intercession by the Friends of God, that is, the Prophets and Imams, makes man optimistic about life and Allah's mercy; he endeavors to do good deeds to rise to a higher spiritual rank that makes him deserving of intercession.

2. Developing a spiritual relationship with the Friends of God

Intercession encourages people to familiarize themselves with the Ahlul Bayt. This in itself furthers a person's mental and spiritual growth and perfection. Knowing that the Ahlul Bayt can intercede with God on the Day of Judgment, a person would try to acquaint himself with them and establish with them a close spiritual relationship. Another positive outcome of this relationship is man's endeavor to make them pleased with him, which in turn is divine satisfaction.⁷

Muslim Scholars' View on Intercession

Most Islamic schools of thought believe in intercession. Since Shi'as firmly believe in it, in what follows intercession is investigated from the viewpoint of Sunni scholars.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Muslim Neishaburi, Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, the author of *Sunan of Ibn Majah*, Nisa'i, the author of

⁷ Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *The Message of the Qur'an*, vol. 6, p.524.

Sunan of Nisa'i, narration of hadiths⁸ from the Holy Prophet about intercession displays their belief in intercession.

Additionally, the following Sunni scholars stressed on their conviction in intercession: Soyuti in the book *A-Dur-ul-Manthur*⁹, Rashid Rida, the author of the Qur'anic Commentary *Al-Minar*¹⁰, Zamakhshari in the Qur'anic Commentary *Kashshaf*¹¹, Khatib Baghdadi in *The History of Baghdad*,¹² and Tabarani in *Al-Jami‘ al-Kabir*.¹³

Intercession in the Quran

The word *shafa‘a* and other words derived from it are repeated in the Holy Qur'an almost 30 times. Some of these Qur'anic verses are cited by the Wahhabis to deny intercession the same are cited by the Shi‘as to prove it. On the other hand, God asserts in the Quran that there are no contradictions in the Qur'an:

لَوْكَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوْجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

*Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.*¹⁴

Likewise, according to Imam Ali, it is impossible to find any discrepancy in the Qur'an: “Surely some parts of the Noble Qur'an

⁸ These narrations and their references will be mentioned in what follows.

⁹ Soyuti, *a-Dur-ul-Manthur*, vol.1, p. 329.

¹⁰ Rashid Rida, *The Qur'anic Commentary al-Minar*, vol.7, p.602 & vol.8, p.8.

¹¹ Zamaknshari, *The Qur'anic Commentary Kashshaf*, vol. 3, p.444.

¹² Khatib Baghdadi, *The History of Baghdad*, vol. 13, p.476.

¹³ Tabarani, *al-Jami‘ al-Kabir*, vol. 18, p. 547; cited in Ali Kurani, Islamic Beliefs, vol. 3, p.130.

¹⁴ *Nisa'*, 83.

elaborate on its other sections, and some parts of it attest to its other sections.”¹⁵

Hence, all Qur’anic verses should be examined and classified together. The Qu’ranic view can then be inferred by taking all of them into account.

Verses that Deny Intercession

The first group of verses refutes intercession entirely:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا يَبْعَثُ فِيهِ وَلَا
خَلَةٌ وَلَا شَفاعةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

O’ you who believe! Spend [in the way of God] out of [the bounties] We have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining [will avail you], nor friendship nor intercession, and the unbelievers; they are the wrong-doers.¹⁶

The above-mentioned verse explicitly negates intercession on the Day of Judgment and is often cited to disprove intercession. However, based on other related verses, there are two points that prevent us from definite denial of intercession:

Firstly, the next verse demonstrates that none but Allah can intercede, unless granted His permission:

مِنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عَنْهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

¹⁵ *Nahjul-Balaghah*, ‘Abdu, sermon 136.

¹⁶ Baqarah, 254.

Who can intercede in His presence except with His Permission?¹⁷

Although intercession on the Day of Judgment is not deduced from this verse, one cannot completely deny the concept of intercession nor can one question this disbelief. Those who are interested are instead encouraged to refer to other verses.

Second, to understand the Qur'anic viewpoint, related verses must be considered. And through careful attention to the term “*nor friendship*,” we understand that God negates intercession based on friendship ties, not intercession itself. In other words, on the Day of Resurrection, ties of friendship among the disbelievers will be cut while those amid the pious will be maintained:

الآخلاء يومئذ بعضهم عدو إلا المتقين

Friends on that day will be foes, one to another except the pious.¹⁸

Likewise, although the first verse refutes friendship on the Day of Resurrection, the second verse reveals that God means negating false friendship. In what follows, we will refer to other relevant Qur'anic verses to learn the true Qur'anic reading on intercession.

Verses that seemingly suggest intercession being restricted to Allah

The second group of verses presents intercession as exclusive to God:

¹⁷ Baqarah, 255.

¹⁸ Zukhruf, 67.

وأنذر به الذين يخافون أن يحشروا إلى ربهم ليس لهم من دونه ولی ولا
شفیع لعلهم يتقوون

Give this warning to those in whose [hearts] is the fear that they will be brought [to judgment] before their Lord: except for Him they will have no protector, nor intercessor that they may be pious.¹⁹

وذر الذين اتخذوا دينهم لعبا ولهوا وغرتهم الحياة الدنيا وذکر به أن تبسل
نفس بما كسبت ليس لها من دون الله ولی ولا شفیع

Leave alone those who take their religion to be mere play and amusement, and are deceived by the life of this world, and remind (them) thereby lest a soul should be given up to ruin by its own acts: it will find for itself no protector or intercessor except God.²⁰

قل لله الشفاعة جمیعا

Say, intercession belongs to God exclusively.²¹

These verses emphasize that the right to forgive or intercede for sinners belongs only to God, Who created and possesses all creatures, from Whom all creatures have come into existence and to Whom they will return. Therefore, based on these verses, God will undoubtedly be an intercessor on the Day of Resurrection.

Of course, it should be noted that these verses do not oppose the idea of the proponents of intercession who believe in it as done by

¹⁹ An‘am, 51.

²⁰ An‘am, 70.

²¹ Zumar, 44.

intercessors on the Day of Resurrection. There are two reasons for this. First, these verses consider intercession belonging exclusively to God and proponents of intercession never regard such intercession as belonging to other intercessors; rather, they believe that these great people are given this right by God and with His permission. Second, these verses, at least some of them, shatter what the idol-worshippers believe in: idols intercede for them. In fact, the above verses emphasize such verses as the following one:

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ مِنْ شَرْكَائِهِمْ شَفِعَاءٌ وَكَانُوا بِشَرْكَائِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ

No intercessor will they have among their Partners [idols] and they will disbelieve in their Partners [idols].²²

Thus, they do not seek to deny that someone other than God intercedes. To find out whether someone other than God can intercede, we refer to additional Qur'anic verses.²³

Verses that Approve of Intercession Only with God's Permission

This third group of verses includes verses that validate the intercession of someone other than God as long as they have His permission.

مِنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عَنْهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Who can intercede in His presence except with His Permission?²⁴

²² Rum, 13; also An'am, 94; Yunus, 18; Zumar, 43.

²³ Ja'far Subhani, *The Eternal Charter*, vol.8, p.42.

²⁴ Baqarah, 255.

ما من شفيع إلا من بعد إذنه

No intercessor [can plead with Him] except after His permission.²⁵

لا يملكون الشفاعة إلا من اتخد عند الرحمن عهدا

None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission [or promise] from [God], the Beneficent.²⁶

يومئذ لا تنفع الشفاعة إلا من أذن له الرحمن

On that Day they shall control no intercession except he who has made a covenant with [God], the Beneficent.²⁷

Pondering over these verses, we understand that on the Day of Judgment, intercessors can intercede only with permission of God, and independent intercession belongs only to God.

Verses that Detail the Qualities of Intercessors

In the fourth group of verses, God explicitly mentions the conditions of the intercessors on the Day of Judgment:

و لا يملك الذين يدعون من دونه الشفاعة إلا من شهد بالحق وهم يعلمون

²⁵ *Yunus*, 3.

²⁶ *Maryam*, 87.

²⁷ *Taha*, 109.

And those whom they invoke other than God have no power of intercession; only he who bears witness to the Truth, and they know [him].²⁸

The first part of this verse negates intercession by all deities, including angels and men. The second part grants this status to some on a number of conditions:

First, intercessors must testify to the truth; that is, monotheism.

Second, the intercessor must have knowledge of monotheism in their hearts.

وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْضَى وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشِيتِهِ مُشْفَقُونَ

And they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His [Glory].²⁹

This verse was revealed to deny the false beliefs of the idol-worshippers who supposed that angels are the offspring of God and consequently worshipped them in order to enjoy their intercession. Revealing this verse, God refuted their conception and emphasized that angels are fearful of God, and intercede with Him only for those with whom God is satisfied.³⁰

Proving the truth of intercession by other than God, this verse explicitly regards the intercessor as one who obeys God and fears Him. In addition, they will intercede with God only for those with whom God is satisfied. Likewise, from the previously discussed verse, one condition for intercessors is that God permits them to intercede.

²⁸ Zukhruf, 86.

²⁹ Anbiya, 28.

³⁰ Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *The Message of the Quran*, vol. 6, p. 516.

Verses that Specify the Conditions for being Granted Intercession

The fifth and final group of verses provides the conditions for those whom can be interceded for.

ما للظالمين من حميم و لا شفيع يطاع

No intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrong-doers have, who could be listened to.³¹

In the above verse, God, the Almighty conveys that wrongdoers will not be interceded for on the Day of Judgment. This verse means that intercession itself will be carried out on that day, but not everybody will be granted this mercy. Moreover, it indicates that there will be some whose word will be accepted and some others will be saved by them.

As for what is meant by wrong-doers, there are several opinions:

According to the Qur'anic commentator of the 6th century A.H., the late Amin-ul-Islam Tabarsi, wrong-doers are the polytheists and hypocrites.³²

The prominent Qur'anic commentator of the 5th century AH., Sheikh Tusi maintained that it may mean disbelievers or both disbelievers and others who do wrong and oppress others.³³

Accepting intercession in essence, the great Qur'anic commentators, Fakhr Razi and Qurtabi, considered wrongdoers to be disbelievers.³⁴

³¹ *Mu'min*, 18.

³² Amin-ul-Islam Tabarsi. *Majma'-ul-Bayan*, vol. 8, p. 433.

³³ Sheikh Tusi. *al-Tibyan*, vol.9, p.65.

³⁴ Fakhr Razi. *The Great Qur'anic Commentary*, vol. 27, p.43; Qurtabi, al-Jami' li Ahkam-l-Quran, vol.1, p.379.

وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْتَضَى وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشِيتِهِ مُشْفَقُونَ

And they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His [Glory].³⁵

Based on this Qur'anic verse, a necessary condition of the one to be interceded for is that God is satisfied with him.

Conclusion derived from the verses

In order to conclude from the verses, it is necessary to list their content as follows:

1. One group entirely negates intercession.
2. Another group regards intercession as exclusive to God.
3. Still another group renders intercession by some other than God depending on His permission.
4. The next group refers to the necessary conditions of intercessors on the Day of Judgment.
5. The final group mentions the necessary conditions of those who will be interceded for on the Day of Judgment.

The question remains as whether these verses contradict one another. The last three groups do not oppose each other in the least; instead, they complement one another. The five above-mentioned groups can be decreased to three ones.

1. One group of verses completely negates intercession.
2. Another group regards it as exclusive to God.
3. Still another group proves intercession by some other than God and refers to the necessary conditions of intercessors and those who are interceded for.

³⁵ *Anbiya*, 28.

Ironing out the seeming contradiction between these three groups is not problematic, because as mentioned before, the first group of verses seeks to negate false intercession through idols or based on friendship. Thus, it does not oppose to the second and third group.

Therefore, the primary contradiction between the second and third groups must be resolved.

Before discussing this issue, it is noteworthy that these verses were revealed by God. If we considered His words self-contradictory, we would deny His necessary existent essence. On the other hand, in some verses God, regards intercession as exclusive to Himself, and in some others He introduces somebody other than Himself as entitled to intercede.

After studying both groups, we can say that intercession inherently and absolutely belongs to God; as a result, none but Him enjoys such a status. Thus, if based on some verses others are also entitled to intercede, their status is by no means independent, because this would be a real established contradiction. Hence, intercession by other intercessors depends on authorization by God. Above all, it can be said that independent intercession by some other than God is the very intercession by God. There are three reasons for this. First, the right to intercede is granted to them by God. Second, such intercession can be carried out only by His permission. Third, others will intercede only for those with whom God is satisfied. Therefore, God is present and plays a role in all stages of intercession by any than Him.

In a nutshell, based on the verses, intercession is a definite and proven fact, and others are also entitled to intercede with permission of God.

Intercession in Hadiths

In addition to the Qur'an, the idea of intercession is clearly mentioned in hadiths. These narrations are too numerous to be included in this short paper. Hence, we will refer here only to some Shi'a and Sunni hadiths.

Shi'a Hadiths on Intercession

1. The Prophet Muhammad said, "Verily my intercession will go to those from among my Ummah who have committed deadly sins."³⁶ He also said, "My intercession does not go to the one who underestimates the daily prayers."³⁷
2. Imam Ali said, "There is intercession for us, so is for those who love us."³⁸
3. Imam Sadiq said, "On the Day of Judgment, God will muster both the worshipper and the religious scholar. The worshipper will be told, "Enter Heaven," and the religious scholar will be told, "Stop and intercede for people because you have trained them well."³⁹
4. Imam Rida quoted the Holy Prophet as saying, "There are four people for whom I will intercede on the Day of Judgment: the one who reveres my offspring, he who meets their needs, anyone who helps them in an emergency, and the one who loves them in heart and in words."⁴⁰

Likewise, Imam Ali is quoted as saying, "The one who denies the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad will not enjoy his intercession."⁴¹

³⁶ Sheikh Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhul-Faqih*, vol. 3, p. 574.

³⁷ Kulaini, *al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 400.

³⁸ Sheikh Saduq, *al-Khisal*, p. 624.

³⁹ Sheikh Saduq, *Ilal-u-Sharayi'*, vol. 4, p. 399.

⁴⁰ Sheikh Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar-u-Rida, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁴¹ Ibid. p.71.

5. Imam Hadi said in *Ziyarah Jami‘ah*, “For you, there is imperative devotion, high status, and an accepted intercession.”⁴²

Sunni Hadiths on Intercession

In Sunni hadith collections, there are tens of hadiths that accept intercession and elaborate on its conditions:

1. Ahmad Hanbal (d. 241 A.H.) narrated from the four Sunni Imams, who quoted the Prophet as saying, “My intercession goes to the one who testifies to the unity of God sincerely, and his heart confirms his words and vice versa.”⁴³
2. The renowned Sunni hadith narrators, Muhammad ibn Isma‘il Bukhari (d. 256 A.H.) and Muslim Neyshaburi (d. 261 A.H.) narrated from the Prophet Muhammad in a slightly different version: “There is an answered prayer for every prophet, and God-willing I am going to reserve my answered prayer for interceding for my Ummah on the Day of Judgment.”⁴⁴
3. The noted Sunni hadith narrator, Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini (d. 257 A.H.) gathered and included eleven narrations under the heading “Section of Intercession” in his book *Sunan of ibn Majah*. He narrated from the Prophet, “Verily my intercession will go to those from among my Ummah who have committed deadly sins.”⁴⁵

⁴² Sheikh Saduq, *Man La Yahduruhul-Faqih*, vol.2, p.216.

⁴³ Ahmad Hanbal, *Musnad of Ahmad*, vol.2, p.307; also see vol.6, p.428, vol.3, p.9, and vol. 3, pp.50 &55.

⁴⁴ Bukhari, *Sahih of Bukhari*, vol. 8, p.192; also see Muslim Neishaburi, *Sahih of Muslim*, vol.1, p.131;and Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, *Sunan of ibn Majah*, vol. 2, p.1440.

⁴⁵ Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, *Sunan of ibn Majah*, vol. 2, p. 1441; also see Tirmidhi, *Sunan of Tirmidhi*, vol. 4, p.45.

He also quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: “On the Day of Judgment, I will be the leader and orator of the other prophets, and the intercessor among them.”⁴⁶

4. In his famous book “Sunan of Tirmidhi”, Muhammad ibn ‘Isa Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H.) included some narrations under the heading “Intercession”, including a long hadith in which on the Day of Judgment, the troubled ones from previous peoples will come to the Prophet of Islam (S) and request intercession from him. Addressing the Prophet Muhammad (S), God will say,

“O’ Muhammad (S)! raise your head, ask [for whatever you want] [because your request] will be granted, and intercede [because] your intercession [will be accepted].”⁴⁷

5. Another Sunni scholar, Ahmad ibn Shu‘aib Nisa’i (d. 303 A.H.), in his book *Sunan of Nisa’i* quoted the Holy Prophet as saying,

“I have been granted five things which had not been given to anyone before...and I have been granted intercession.”⁴⁸

The Intercessors on the Day of Resurrection

Now that it has been proven that the Qur'an and hadiths underline intercession, we should specify whom God has granted this right.

1. The Prophets

What was mentioned before reveals that the great divine prophets are the intercessors on the Day of Judgment. Both Shi‘a and Sunni hadith narrators report the following hadith from the Prophet,

On the Day of Judgment, prophets will intercede.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, *Sunan of ibn Majah*, vol. 2, p. 1443.

⁴⁷ Tirmidhi, *Sunan of Tirmidhi*, vol. 4, p. 44; also see vol. 5, p. 247.

⁴⁸ Nisa’i, *Sunan of Nisa’i*, vol. 1, p. 210; also see vol. 2, p. 27.

2. *The Angels*

وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْضَى وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشِيتِهِ مُشْفَقُونَ

And they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His [Glory].⁵⁰

3. *Religious Scholars*

There are many hadiths that regard scholars as intercessors. For example, according to Imam Sadiq, “On the Day of Judgment, God will muster both worshippers and religious scholars. The worshipper will be told to enter Heaven, and the religious scholar will be told to intercede for people for training them well.”⁵¹

It is noteworthy to mention that based on the above hadith, the Imams are also entitled to intercede because according to both their followers and opponents they are the sources of Islamic knowledge.

4. *The Martyrs (or witnesses)*

The Prophet said, “On the Day of Resurrection, the prophets, then religious scholars, and after them martyrs (or witnesses) will intercede for people.”⁵²

Likewise, in other, albeit few, hadiths, some other people were introduced as intercessors. For example, ibn Abbas quoted the Prophet Muhammad as saying, “There are seven groups of people

⁴⁹ Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, *Sunan of ibn Majah*, vol.2, p.724; also see Sayyid Humairi, *Qurb-ul-Asnad*, p. 64.

⁵⁰ *Anbiya*, 28.

⁵¹ Sheikh Saduq, *Ilal-u-Sharayi'*, vol. 4, p.399.

⁵² Muhammad ibn Yazid Qazwini, *Sunan of ibn Majah*, vol.2, p. 724; also see Sayyid Humairi, *Qurb-ul-Asnad*, p. 64; also *Bihār anl-Anwār*, vol. 8, p. 34.

who, like prophets, can intercede: muezzins⁵³, Imams, martyrs (or witnesses), the bearers of the Qur'an (i.e. those who memorize it), scholars, students, and the repentant.”⁵⁴

Response to the Doubts Cast on Intercession

As mentioned before, intercession, according to Shi'a and many Sunni scholars, means that on the Day of Judgment, some special servants of God will intercede for believers who sinned with permission of God, and as a result, the sinners will enter Heaven. This belief has long been held by the Shi'a, and some great Sunni scholars. However, in the 8th century A.H., it was questioned and denied by Ibn Taymiyyah. After him, in the 11th century A.H., Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab followed in his footsteps and tried to disseminate Ibn Taymiyyah's notion. This has made intercession one of the points of disagreement between Wahhabism and other Islamic schools of thought.

Of course, it should be noted that they have not negated intercession in essence; rather, they similarly believe that on the Day of Judgment intercessors will intercede for sinners. However, they believe that firstly we should not ask them for intercession in this world and for the worldly matters; and secondly, although prophets can intercede, we cannot directly ask them for intercession. Instead, we must request God to let them intercede for us, and if somebody asks them directly for intercession, he becomes polytheist.⁵⁵

The Wahhabi Perspective

Wahhabis provide a number of arguments opposing the principle of intercession:

⁵³The chosen person at a mosque who recites the call to prayer (*adhan*)

⁵⁴Abdul-Karim ibn Muhammad Sam'ani, *al-Ansab*, vol.5, p.623

⁵⁵Ja'far Subhani, *Wahhabism* in al-Mizan, pp. 293, 294.

1. Requesting intercession is polytheistic

Wahhabis consider requesting intercession from intercessors polytheistic because it means a person invokes someone other than God. And if invoking somebody other than God is polytheism in worship, then so is asking intercessors for intercession. The reason for the second premise is this Qur'anic verse: “*So invoke not any one along with God.*”⁵⁶

Response

Polytheism is to worship somebody or something other than God. However, believers in intercession never intend to worship a deity when requesting intercession. In other words, invoking someone other than God in itself is neither prohibited nor polytheistic because if taking an action by somebody is legitimate, then so is asking him for that action. If we accept that intercession by intercessors is legitimate, then seeking intercession from them is also legitimate.

Indeed, if someone considers intercessors as being allowed to intercede without the permission of God, then he is a polytheist as it is our belief that no one can intercede without permission of God.

Pointing out the story of Prophet Joseph, the Qur'an approves of intercession. The Qur'an quotes the sinful offspring of Prophet Jacob as pleading:

قالوا يا ابانا استغفر لنا ذنبينا اانا كنا خاطئين

They said: ‘O’ our father! Ask for us forgiveness for our sins, for we were truly at fault.’⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Jinn*, 18.

⁵⁷ *Yusuf*, 97.

2. *The polytheists' request for intercession from other than God is condemned*

Wahhabis maintain that in the Qur'an, God, the Almighty condemned the polytheists in the early Islam, who sought help from other than God:

و يعبدون من دون الله ما لا يضرهم و لا ينفعهم و يقولون هولاء شفاؤنا
عند الله

They worship, besides God, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say: ‘These are our intercessors with God.’⁵⁸

Since the Shi‘as also request intercession from other than God, the Qur'an condemns them, too.

Response

Polytheists are rebuked and condemned because 1) they worship something other than God, and 2) they contend these deities can intercede, while God does not grant such a right to their deities.

In other words, they were rebuked for worshipping something other than God and considering false deities as intercessors. However, we maintain that 1) worshipping something other than God is not permissible, and 2) we regard intercession as belonging essentially to God, who has permitted some of His elite servants to intercede with His permission; and 3) our intercessors comprise of the select servants of God.

⁵⁸ Yunus, 18.

Therefore, there is no common ground between the Shi'a view of intercession and that of the polytheists. Indeed, it can be argued that the very idea of requesting intercession from good servants of God and with the permission of God is an embodiment of the unity of God.

3. Intercession is exclusive to God

The Wahhabis contend that based on the following Qur'anic verse, intercession is exclusive to God:

قل لله الشفاعة جمِيعاً

Say: To God belongs exclusively [the right to grant] intercession.⁵⁹

Hence, belief in intercession by some other than God is opposed to the Qur'anic.

Response

The above-mentioned discussion indicates that intercession, in that it influences the destiny of man, is a manifestation of the divinity of God, and it primarily and essentially belongs to God. However, this is not in contrast with the belief in intercession because believers in intercession stress that intercessors cannot intercede independently, thus again it is God, Who manages the affairs.

4. It is futile to ask the dead for intercession

According to Wahhabis, seeking intercession is a kind of prayer, but intercession from the dead is futile, because they are in Barzakh

⁵⁹ Zumar, 44.

(Purgatory) and are not alive. It is also argued that the Quran stresses that the dead cannot hear anything:

انك لا تسمع الموتى و لا تسمع الصم الدعاء اذا ولوا مدبرين

Truly you cannot cause the dead to listen, nor can you cause the deaf to hear the call, when they turn back in retreat.⁶⁰

Through this verse, God referred to the polytheists who were reluctant to accept the words of the Prophet; comparing them to the dead indicates that both polytheists and the dead cannot understand anything and nothing can be requested from them.

Although Wahhabis accuse other Islamic sects of polytheism in order to impugn them, they have acted differently in presenting this argument. In response, it can be argued that when the soul leaves the body, the latter can no longer be addressed because it has lost its perception and consciousness. In the above verse, God intended to convey the same meaning. The polytheists, albeit alive outwardly, are lifeless; they are akin to a dead body because they do not understand anything.

When we ask the Messenger of God for intercession, we do not ask of his body; rather, we believe that his essence – or his soul - is still alive, because God said about martyrs in the Holy Quran:

ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله امواتا بل احياء عند ربهم يرزقون

Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Naml*, 80.

If martyrs are alive, then the Prophet must also be alive and aware of our please for intercession.⁶²

Conclusion

Intercession with the permission of God – a Qur’anic teaching held by most Islamic schools of thought – is in accordance with the noble Quran and confirmed by hadiths. Likewise, doubts cast by those who negate intercession can never be proved and justified.

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⁶¹ *Ale-Imran*, 169.

⁶² In this part, the author made use of the book *Wahhabism* by Ayatollah Subhani as well as the book *Salafism and Response to Doubts* by Ali Asghar Halabi.

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INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC SCIENCES,

PART I

RASOUL IMANI KHOSHKHU¹
TRANSLATED BY: MOHAMMAD REZA FARAJIAN

ABSTRACT: Acquiring and possessing knowledge is highly recommended in Islam as God encourages people to seek knowledge as seen in the Qur'an and hadith. Educators and scholars hold a revered position because of their efforts of pursuing knowledge and using it to influence their actions. This article introduces the most important Islamic sciences that have long been studied in Islamic seminaries. A brief definition as well as the nature and history of each of the widely studied disciplines by Islamic scholars will be offered, namely theology (*kalām*), philosophy, mysticism (*irfān*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Islamic sciences apply to three different types of disciplines:

Knowledge originating from religion: This includes statements that are either mentioned in religious sources or excerpts from sources that religion considers valid. In Islam, such disciplines mostly rely on the Qur'an and Sunnah, or are intellectually understood. Therefore, all of them are deemed Islamic. Some of such disciplines are theology

¹ Lecturer at the Jami'at al-Zahra (a), Qum.

(*kalām*)², jurisprudence (*fiqh*),³ Ethics (*akhlāq*)⁴ and Mysticism (*irfān*).⁵

Introductory and prerequisite disciplines: teachings that are a preliminary to the above-mentioned disciplines; they are the essential means to understand religious texts and benefitting from sources such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, and reason. For this reason, they are termed 'Islamic.' Examples of such disciplines are logic, Arabic literature, Qur'anic sciences, hadith sciences, and principles of jurisprudence.

Sciences that do not originate from religion: sciences that are not exclusive to Islam or any other religion, although they have developed in Islamic atmospheres and therefore have a particular spirit. For example, philosophy consists of rules and principles far beyond a specific school of thought. However, according to some scholars,⁶ development of its rules and principles by Islamic scholars in an Islamic atmosphere makes it possible to speak of 'Islamic philosophy' and label it as a religious discipline.

According to the above-mentioned categorization, some of the most important and widely studied disciplines in the Islamic seminaries will be introduced.

1. Theology (*kalām*)

Islam has always demanded its followers to have unwavering faith in its revealed teachings while simultaneously insisting on the rational aspect of its instructions. The Qur'an inspires believers to ponder about the divine creation and signs of the Holy Essence of God to

² Islamic theology

³ Islamic jurisprudence

⁴ Islamic ethics, spirituality and moral teachings

⁵ Islamic mysticism

⁶ 'Abd al-Razzāq, Muṣṭafā, *Zamineh-ye Tarikhi-ye Falssafeh-ye Eslami* (translated title), trans. by Fathali Akbari, p. 18.

strengthen their faith. In some cases, the Qur'an itself justifies the existence of God. These religious inspirations and giving the opportunity to contemplate the divine signs is a valuable opportunity for Muslim thinkers to discuss religious doctrines and to verify its truth through reasoning. Kalām follows the track of reasoning and benefits from the traditions received from the Imams (a).

The nature of Kalām

Kalām is one of the traditional sciences in Islam that scholars have referred to throughout history with terms such as 'principles of religion',⁷ 'greater fiqh,'⁸ 'science of religious opinion and reasoning,'⁹ 'science of monotheism and attributes,'¹⁰ and the 'science of Kalām' (Islamic Theology).¹¹ The most common term is *kalām* itself which is named thus so in Shi'a narrations.¹²

Religious sciences today are divided into three major categories: beliefs (*kalām*), rulings (*fiqh*), and ethics (*akhlāq*). Beliefs refer to the fundamental and basic issues of a religion that corresponds with Islamic ideology. The issues discussed in beliefs include the existence of God, His attributes and actions, Prophethood, Imamate, the Hereafter and general issues about humankind's destination. Additionally, new questions have been raised in this field that led to a new branch, 'The Modern *kalām*' or 'Modern Problems of Kalām'.

⁷ Ibn Meytham Bahrānī who was a scholar of Kalām in the 8th century AH reports from other Kalām scholars call this discipline as 'principles of religion'. *Qawā'id al-Marām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, p. 20.

⁸ Taftazānī, a Sunni scholar of Kalām, has used this term in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, p. 164.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ḥalabī, *Ali Asghar, Ilm Kalām dar Iran wa Jahān-e Islam*, p. 28.

¹¹ The hadith narrated by Ibn Abi al-'Awjā' is among such hadiths. He came to Imam Shādiq (a) and asked: "Do you allow me to enter the science of Kalām?" Imam (a) allowed him. Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, Ch. 36, hadith no. 4.

Since discussing practical rulings can be meaningless before one's religious beliefs are confirmed, this discipline is also called 'The Greater Fiqh' or 'The Principles of Religion'.

According to the problems, goals, and approaches they have followed, various definitions of this discipline have been offered. By exploring all definitions of kalām, two factors have been common in most of them: 1) proving religious beliefs and 2) defending them against objections raised. Thus, Kalām is a discipline that involves understanding, regulating, explaining, and justifying or proving beliefs through various approaches based on either reason or tradition and is responsible for defending it against any doubt."

The ultimate goal of kalām is to prove the principles of religion and shield it against any doubt. This objective can be achieved in various ways that are not limited to providing demonstrations (*burhān*) and deductive reasoning. Thus, the aim of this discipline is sometimes achieved through providing demonstrations. In some cases, if the addressee is a layman and is not capable of understanding complicated philosophical arguments, to convince him, a theologian may use some of the ideas of the addressee himself or those which are commonly accepted to prove or disprove his position the addressee's position. The Qur'an also emphasizes on the three approaches of justification i.e. wisdom (illustration or *burhān*), good preaching (*khitābah* of speech) and debate (*jadal* or dialectic) when inviting others towards God and proving the revealed teachings of religion.¹²

History

Theological issues are as old as humanity. For example, all prophets, including Prophet Adam (a), have taught the doctrine of monotheism, which is the most important issue in kalām. Similarly, prophethood

¹² "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best." Qur'an, (16: 125)

too existed since the beginning of time. The first instruction of the Prophet was ‘Oneness of God’. The Qur'an entails a plethora of theological issues about general principles and detailed descriptions of the Oneness of God, Prophethood, and the afterlife. There also have been numerous debates between the Prophet and Jewish and Christian scholars.¹³ Such evidences prove that theological discussions and debates existed from the very beginning of Islam. Therefore, the teachings presented by the Prophet (s) triggered the discussion of theological issues. The verses of the Qur'an not only supported raising such issues, but they were essential in forming theological trends. However, the collection of such discussions and debates is not the *discipline* of kalām, although some believe that it is kalām, and those who sought these discussions were called *Mutakallim*.¹⁴ There truly is no proof for this claim. Thus, the grounds for emerging theological discussions or the discipline of kalām are the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet rather than the influx of Greek philosophy, even though Greek philosophy was influential in generating such issues.¹⁵

Imamate was among the first theological discussions considered as the most important about which Muhammad ibn ‘Abdulkarīm Shahristānī (479 – 548 AH) says, “Muslims have not fought over any other issues as much as over this.”¹⁶ This issue arose soon after the Prophet (s) passed away, and it led to the emergence Sunnism and Shi‘ism, the two major Islamic schools of thought. Sunnis believe in the election of a

¹³ Cf. Tabarsī, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, pp. 14 – 89.

¹⁴ ‘Abd al-Halīm, Muhammad, *Kalāmi Qadīm*, trans. by Mohsen Jahāngīrī, cited in *Tārīkh-e Falsafeh-ye Islami*, supervised by Sayyid Husayn Nasr and Oliver Leaman, p. 132.

¹⁵ Fakhru, Mājid, *Sayr falsafeh fil Islam*, trans. by a group of translators under supervision of Nasrullah Pūr Javādī, Tehran, Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 1994, p. 59. However, elsewhere in his book, the author clearly says that emergence of the discipline of Kalām in the second century [A.H] was due to a new questioning spirit in people raised by entering the Greek philosophy in Islamic world. Ibid. p. 221.

¹⁶ Shahristānī, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdulkarīm, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*, vol. 1, p. 24.

caliph as that which relies on the counsel of people, just as Abu Bakr was appointed as the caliph. On the other hand, the Shi'a believe that appointment of the successor of the Prophet (s) must be through Allah, and the sole person qualified for this task was Ali ibn Abi Tālib. The concept of Imamate led to debates among scholars that developed over the course of history and led each group to write voluminous treatises and books.

Various methods have been used by kalām scholars of different theological schools of thought. Shī'a scholars such as Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Hishām ibn Sālim, and Mu’min al-Tāq emphasized on reason as well as tradition; Mu’tazilite Kalām scholars such as Wāṣil ibn ‘Aṭā’, Abu al-Hudhayl ‘Allāf, Abu ‘Ali and Abu Hishām Jubā’ī – who followed the Sunni school of thought – insisted on using reason. The *People of Hadith* – another Sunni sect – used strict interpretation and ruling to the mere appearance of verses and traditions and would not accept any question about its content and message. This strong opposition encouraged Asharite and Mātrīdīte Kalām scholars such as Abu al-Hasan Ash‘arī and Abu Mansūr Mātrīdī from other Sunni sects to mediate and reconcile the Mu’tazilites and the *People of Hadith*.

The history of kalām in the following centuries shows that some philosophical issues entered kalām first seen in the works of Sheikh Mufīd (d. 413 A.H.) such as in his *Awā'il al-Maqālāt* and the works of Sayyid Murtadā (d. 436 A.H.) such as *Al-Dhakhīrah fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* among Shi'ite sources. Later, philosophical issues were seen in the works of Fakhr Rādī (d. 606 A.H.) such as *Al-Muhaṣṣal* and in *Al-Barāhīn fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* among Sunni sources. It was seen afterwards in the works of Khajeh Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭusī (d. 672 A.H.) such as *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād* and the works of Ibn Maytham Bahrānī (d. 699 A.H.) such as *Qawā'id al-Marām*. This mixture lasted for centuries to the present time when such issues were seen in kalām texts.

Although kalām is among the most essential Islamic science, this discipline has had serious opposition among both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Those who fervently objected to kalām were the *People of Hadith* as they resisted against any interpretation of verses and traditions based on reason.

Accordingly, Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, “There are three things that are not found in Islam: *Maghāzī*, *Malāhim*, and *Kalām*.¹⁷ He also declared, “One who knows kalām can never achieve salvation. Kalām scholars are heretical.”¹⁸ Abu Hanifa’s student, Abu Yūsuf, said, “Anyone who seeks [to understand] religion through kalām is a deviator.”¹⁹

Shāfi‘ī said accordingly, “If God afflicts His servant with all great sins except polytheism, it would be far better than He afflicts His servant to learn anything from kalām.”²⁰ He also declared as a ruling, “If a man leaves all his books to another in his will, and a book on kalam is to be found among them, that book could not be left included with other books.”²¹

The peak of the Shāfi‘īs’ opposition with Kalām and its scholars is understood in the following statement: “They [Kalām scholars] must be lashed and taken around among tribes and announce that ‘This is the punishment of those who abandon the Qur'an and tradition to learn Kalām.’”²²

Branches of Kalām

¹⁷ Cf. *Tafsīr al-Minār*, quoted from Ali Asghar Ḥalabī in *Ilm Kalām dar Iran wa Jahān-e Islam*, pp. 32 and 33.

¹⁸ Ibn Jawzī, Abu al-Faraj, *Tilbīs Iblīs*, p. 87.

¹⁹ Ḥalabī, Ali Asghar, *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Fakhr Rāzī, *Tafsīr Kabīr*, vol. 2, p. 96 quoted by Ali Asghar Ḥalabī, *ibid.*, p. 33.

²² Ibn Jawzī, *Ibid.*

Emergence of various branches of Kalām in religion was triggered historical and social factors; however, one of the most important features is the difference of opinions towards the nature of religion, religious texts, their interpretation, and the details of religious issues.²³ In different periods and after each occasion, an ideological and intellectual issue arose which led to formation of different schools. Each group distributed their own ideas and beliefs to attract more followers, and Islamic society ultimately faced the formation of new sects.

Thus, the debate regarding the concept of imamate divided the Islamic society into Shī‘as and Sunnis. The important issues that led to the emergence of the Khawārij and Murjī‘ah were faith, deeds, and the rulings regarding major sins. The method of interpreting verses and narrations that led to thinking of God as a corporeal being led to the emergence of sects such as Ḥashwīyyah and Kirāmīyyah.

On the whole, the most distinguished sects and schools of kalām in the Islamic world include:

1. ***The Shī‘a:*** Those who believe in the uninterrupted succession of Imam Ali (a) after the Prophet (s). They eventually divided into different groups such as the Zaydīs²⁴, Ismā‘īlīs,²⁵ and Wāqifīds.²⁶ The most distinguished Shī‘a kalām scholars living contemporary with the Imams (a) were great personalities such as Qays ibn al-Māṣir, Mu’min Tāq (d. c. 160 A.H.), Hishām ibn Ḥakam (d. c. 199 A.H.), Hishām ibn Sālim, and Faḍl ibn Shādhān (d. 260 A.H.).

²³ Ṣābirī, Husayn, *Tārīkh Feraq-e Islami* (1), p. 31.

²⁴ The supporters of the imamate of Zayd ibn Ali.

²⁵ The supporters of the imamate of Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far.

²⁶ Believers in accomplishment of imamate in Imam al-Kāzim.

Since the beginning of the Age of Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a), there have been eminent kalām scholars such as Sheikh Ṣadūq (d. 381 A.H.), Sheikh Mufīd (d. 413 A.H.) Sayyid Murtaḍā ‘Alam al-Hudā (d. 436 A.H.), Khajah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672 A.H.), ‘Allāmah Ḥillī (d. 726 A.H.), and Fādil Miqdād (d. 826 A.H.).

2. ***The Mu‘tazilites:*** The Mu‘tazilites, whose founder was Wasil ibn ‘Ata (d. 131 A.H.) believe in five principles: the Oneness of God, justice, position between positions, reward and punishment, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.²⁷ The peak of the Mu‘tazilites’ power was during the era of Ma’mūn ‘Abbāsī until the ruling of Wāthiq ‘Abbāsī (198 – 232 A.H.). Afterwards, this sect began its decline.²⁸

The most renowned kalām scholars of this group were Abu Hudhayl ‘Allāf (d. 227 A.H.), Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār Nazzām (d. 231 A.H.), Abu ‘Uthmān Jāhīz (d. 255 A.H.), Abu al-Hasan Khayyāt (d. c. 300 A.H.), Abu ‘Ali Jubā’ī (d. 303 A.H.), Abu Hāshim Jubā’ī (d. 321 A.H.) and Judge ‘Abd al-Jabbār Mu‘tazilī (d. 415 A.H.).

3. ***The Asharites:*** The founder of this sect was Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ismā‘īl Ash‘arī who began as a Mu‘tazilite and later searched to find a way between the Mu‘tazilites’ rationality and textualism of the *People of Hadith*. Thus, he broke away from them and founded this new school of thought. He presented new theories, among which is the famous ‘theory of acquisition (*kasb*)’ as opposed to determinism (*jabr*) and “delegation of affairs to humanity” (*tafwīd*).

²⁷ Cf. Ash‘ari, Abu al-Hasan, *Firaq wa Madhahib Kalami*, pp. 276 – 277.

²⁸ Cf. Rabbānī Gulpāyigānī, Ali, *Firaq wa Madhahib-e Kalāmī*, pp. 276 & 277.

Nowadays, the most well-known Sunni kalām school of thought is Ashari. Its prominent kalām scholars include Judge Abu Bakr Bāqilānī (d. 403 A.H.), Abu al-Ma‘ālī ‘Abd al-Malik Juwaynī (d. 478 A.H.) known as Imam al-Haramayn, Abu Ḥāmid Muhammad Ghazzālī (d. 505 A.H.), Muhammad ibn ‘Umar Fakhr Rāzī (d. 606), Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi Ali Sayf al-Dīn Āmadī (d. 631 A.H.), Judge ‘Aqdūd al-Dīn Ījī (d. 756 A.H.), and Sa‘d al-Dīn Mas‘ūd ibn ‘Umar Taftazānī (722 – 792 A.H.).

4. ***Māturīdiyyah***: This sect was founded by Abu Manṣūr Mātirīdī (d. 333 A.H.). He rose in central Asia (Samarqand) – similar to Abu al-Hasan Ash‘arī – with the intention of reforming religious beliefs. His viewpoints were close to the Asharites’ although they differed in some issues such as intellectual goodness and badness, where the Shī‘a and Mu‘tazilites perspectives are similar in this regard. Prominent Mātirīdī Kalām scholars include Abu Mu‘īn Nasafi (d. 508 A.H.), Najm al-Dīn ‘Imran Nasafi (d. 537 A.H.), and Abu al-Barakāt Nisfī (d. 701 A.H.).²⁹

2. Islamic Philosophy

Philosophy is among the common intellectual sciences among Muslim scholars. Although the time of emergence of philosophical thoughts and issues existed long before Islam and assumed to have emerged in Old Greece, the role of Islamic philosophers in its development is not hidden to anyone so far as Muslim philosophers such as Fārābi and Ibn Sinā are concerned as they are infamous names in the field of philosophy.

²⁹ Sābirī, Husayn, *Tārīkh Feraq-e Islami* (1), pp. 303 - 305.

The Nature of Philosophy

The term ‘philosophy’ termed by Socrates, is a Greek word derived from ‘*philosophia*’ meaning “the lover of knowledge.” Philosophy would be the title for three types of sciences: a) all real sciences b) all real and conventional sciences and c) Non-empirical sciences and knowledge.³⁰

In a general sense, philosophy includes all rational sciences as opposed to scripture-based sciences. This includes lexicology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, prosody, exegesis, hadith studies, Islamic law, and principles of Islamic law. In this sense, philosophy has been applied to all intellectual sciences including intellectual theology, mathematics, politics, and ethics. But today, the term ‘philosophy’ is commonly applied to a specific branch of intellectual sciences which studies the ‘descriptions of being qua being.’ In this application, philosophy can be considered a discipline that independently discusses the concept of being, and general descriptions of it using rational and analogical methods as well as self-evident propositions; it ultimately provides a comprehensive and rational interpretation of the entire world.

History of Islamic Philosophy

When the Islamic territory expanded and included different tribes and nations, many scientific centers were established in these lands. This created the grounds for the exchange of knowledge by scholars of diverse regions. And because the official language of these countries was Arabic, many books from Indian, Hebrew, Latin, Persian and other languages were translated to Arabic to prepare the grounds for Muslim thinkers to become acquainted with philosophical opinions of notable scholars of other regions, especially ancient Greece.³¹

³⁰ Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Muhammad Taqī, *Āmūzesh-e Falsafeh*, p. 65.

³¹ Ibid. p. 30.

In doing so, brilliant people such as Fārābī and Avicenna made great endeavors as people who were prolific in all philosophical thoughts of their period and analyzed them selectively using their God-given talent under the light of revelation and sayings the Ahlul Bayt. They founded a philosophical system which although influenced by the views of Plato, Neoplatonists and Aristotle³², it included novel beliefs which were considered a new system.

Another deep evolution in Islamic philosophy was owing to the endeavors of Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardi (549–587 A.H.). Using the ideas of ancient Iranian philosophers and comparing them with the ideas of Plato, Plotinus, and Stoics, Suhrawardi founded a new school called “The School of Illuminationism” which is mostly influenced by Platonic ideas. However, some Islamic scholars³³ believe that Suhrawardi adopted his illuminationist approach under the influence of Islamic Sufis and mystics. Merging mystical findings with reasoning was his innovation. The main difference between the two illuminationist and peripatetic philosophical schools is that illuminationism does not consider reason and intellectual justifications enough for studying philosophical issues, especially theosophy. It considers the efforts made for the spiritual journey that leads to purification necessary to discover realities, though the peripatetic philosophical school relied on mere reasoning.

In later periods, notable philosophers such as Khājih Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭusī and Muhaqqiq Dawānī critiqued previous scholars’ views and generated new theories that enriched Islamic philosophy; this eventually carried Islamic philosophy to a new age of development.

³² Aristotle and his followers were called “peripatetics” with reference to Aristotle’s practice of walking to and fro while teaching

³³ Muṭahharī, Murtadā, *Āshnā’i ba ‘Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 1, p. 145. [trans. as “*Understanding Islamic Sciences*”, ICAS, 2000: London]

Khājih Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭusī (597 – 672 A.H.) a peripatetic philosopher, revived the philosophy of Ibn Sina, titled “The Chief of Paripatetics,” in the 7th century A.H. by compiling notes on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt* and organizing it to eventually preserve Ibn Sina’s philosophy.³⁴ In that book, he answered all major objections issued by Imam Fakhr Rāzī (d. 606 A.H.) who himself had an explanatory book on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt*. The connections between these two explanatory notes on *Ishārāt wa Tanbīhāt* led to discussions between Muslim philosophers of different generations.³⁵

Peripatetic philosophy was later led by Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (830 – 908 A.H.) who was a famous philosopher of the 9th century A.H. He had a liking for peripatetic philosophy and so he wrote his comments on one of the explanatory books on Khājih Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭusī’s *Al-Tajrīd*. His comments, reviewed by Șadr al-Dīn Muhammad Dashtakī (d. 903 A.H.), were later called *Hāshīyeh-ye Qadīm* or *The Old Comments*. In his second series of comments, Dawānī answered to Dashtakī’s objections in his review. Again later, Dashtakī reviewed and critiqued Dawānī’s answers and again Dawānī responded to Dashtakī’s objections in his third series of comments, later called *Hāshīyeh-ye Ajād* or *The Newer Comments*. All three series of Dawānī’s comments and the two reviews by Șadr al-Dīn Muhammad Dashtakī are known as a collection called *Tabaqāt al-Jalālīyyah wa al-Şadrīyyah*.³⁶

Ghīyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī Shīrāzī (d. 948 A.H.), son of Șadr al-Dīn Muhammad Dashtakī, can be considered as the connecting link with the new era of Islamic philosophy which was called *The School of Isfahan*. He was among the great Shi‘a scholars of the Safavid period

³⁴ Sayyid Husayn Naṣr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy* trans. by a group of philosophers, vol. 3, p. 39.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 110 – 111.

in rational sciences as well as fiqh and its principles.³⁷ He trained students who filled the gap between his period and the time of Mīrdāmād, the founder of the School of Isfahan.

Mīr Burhān al-Dīn Muhammad Bāqir Dāmād is seen as the representatives of the first generation of philosophers during the Safavid period in Iran. He was son of Mīr Shams al-Dīn Dāmād, the son-in-law of Muhaqqiq Karakī (or the second Muhaqqiq [meaning “researcher”]) who came to Iran at the beginning of the Safavid period. Mīr Dāmād³⁸ was born in Astar-Abad. He later moved to Mashhad with his family and afterwards moved to Isfahan. There, he became proficient in both fields of rational and traditional sciences. His works include literature in philosophy, kalām, Prophetic traditions, narrations of the Imams, Shi‘ā jurisprudence, Qur’anic exegesis, ethics, mysticism, and logic. Nonetheless, he knew himself as a philosopher by calling himself “The Third Teacher” after Aristotle and Fārābī.³⁹ His philosophy works include *Al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm wa al-'Ufuq al-Mubīn*, his most important work being *Qabasāt Haqq al-Yaqīn fī Hudūth al-'Ālam* or simply, *Qabasāt*, a book about the creation of the world and the possibility of its origination in God. Selected philosophers in Isfahan contemporary with Mīr Dāmād were Sheikh Bahā'ī, Mīr Fendereskī, and Judge Sa‘īd Qummi (d. 1103 A.H.) who were considered among the most distinguished personalities of the Isfahan *School of Philosophy*.

Isfahan’s main goal was to unite various and sometimes contradictory rational approaches, each of which would have been accepted by a group of Muslims over the course of history and to incorporate all of

³⁷ He had a discussion with Muhaqqiq Karakī on the issue of the accurate calculation of the direction of Qiblah which resulted in correction of direction of Qiblahs in all mosques in Iran. During that discussion, they entered into a dispute and Shah Tahmāsb Safavī backed Muhaqqiq Karakī and took the title and position of Dashtakī as the “Ṣadr al-Dīn” and gave it to Karakī.

³⁸ Mīr Burhān al-Dīn Muhammad Bāqir Dāmād

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 130 – 132.

them under the title of Shī'a teachings.⁴⁰ Its founder, Mulla Sadra Shirazi, a distinguished student of Mīr Dāmād, mixed the harmonious elements of peripatetic and intuitive philosophy and mystic disclosures and added his own views to present ‘transcendental philosophy,’ a term well-rooted in Islamic philosophy.

Among the most important measures of Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn⁴¹ in transcendental philosophy was organizing philosophical topics in the order mystics have taught regarding the spiritual journey of the soul. According to Ṣadrā’s system, philosophical topics and issues are categorized in four groups of issues: a) Principles and base of issues about monotheism, b) Monotheism, theology, and divine attributes, c) Divine actions and universals in being, and 4) The Hereafter and soul. *The Four Journeys* by Asfār Arba‘ah is written according to the mentioned system.⁴²

Philosophical issues

As was mentioned before, philosophy is “being qua being” and it is clear that issues discussed in philosophy are about the mentioned subject and its surroundings. Thus, most important issues in philosophy are categorized into four groups⁴³ of issues that deal with:

- a) Existence itself versus non-existence. More specifically, the fundamentality of existence and quiddity.
- b) Different types of existence such as necessary being versus contingent being, created being versus eternal being, external being versus mental being.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

⁴¹ Byname of Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī

⁴² Muṭahharī, Murtaḍā, *Āshnā’ī ba ‘Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 1, p. 157. [trans. as “Understanding Islamic Sciences”, ICAS, 2000: London]

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 163.

- c) General laws of existence such as causality, ontological homogeneity of cause and effect, priority and posteriority, and togetherness in the levels of existence.
- d) The affirmation of the levels or realms of existence. Islamic philosophers categorize realms of existence into four groups: The world of nature (*nāsūt*), the world of analogies (*malakūt*), the world of intellect (*jabarūt*) and the realm of Divinity (*lāhūt*).

3. Islamic Mysticism

One of the disciplines that originated and developed in Islamic culture is mysticism (*irfān*). Although some people believe that mysticism and delicate mystical thoughts have been imported from outside of Islam such as the ideas that mysticism is rooted in Christian thought⁴⁴, neo-Plutonian⁴⁵ belief, or inspired by Upanishadic (Hindu) teachings.⁴⁶ However, mysticism in Islam, whether in practical or theoretical aspects, originated from Islamic genuine sources and has later adapted principles accordingly. During the course of its development, it has been influenced by *kalām*, philosophy, and particularly illuminist philosophy.⁴⁷ Islamic culture includes vast theoretical and practical issues as well as spiritual models that motivated Muslims towards mystical issues.⁴⁸

Description of Islamic Mysticism

Lexically, mysticism means ‘knowing’ and terminologically it is “knowing the monotheistic and spiritual truth of existence in which its

⁴⁴ Badawī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān, *Tārīkh al-Tasawwuf al-Islamī*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁷ Muṭahharī, Murtaḍā, *Āshnā’ī ba ‘Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 2, p. 84. [trans. as “Understanding Islamic Sciences”, ICAS, 2000: London]

⁴⁸ Amīnī Nejād, Ali, *Āshnā’ī ba Majmū‘eh-ye ‘Irfān-e Eslāmī*, p. 62.

origin includes a simple, general, obscure, and subconscious quality and in an internal-knowing process, that origin turns to an intuitive, distinctive, clear, and definite knowledge.”⁴⁹ This unique knowledge cannot be grasped through sensation, experience, reason, or tradition, and is attained through internal intuition and spiritual perception.⁵⁰

As a cultural and scientific system, mysticism has theoretical and practical aspects:

- a) Theoretical mysticism is the knowledge of that which the mystic achieves through his intuition at the end of his spiritual journey. This includes knowing God and the manifestations of His Names and Attributes, as well as His relation with plurality. A mystic’s monotheism is the ultimate point of the perfection where he or she comprehends that everything other than God is a mere image; there is actually nothing but God. The rest are manifestations and aspects of the Truth. Scholars of theoretical mysticism claim that they grasp these truths through intuition and they are taught in the form of analytical knowledge and words. They would make efforts to benefit from similes, metaphors, and allegories to create even an ambiguous and incomplete image from those truths in the minds and hearts of their listeners.⁵¹

Accordingly, subjects of theoretical mysticism are categorized into three groups:

1. Mystical theology (or specific unity of existence)
2. Mystical cosmology (or the order of creation)
3. Mystical anthropology (or the notion of perfect man)

⁴⁹ Muvaḥḥidīyān ‘Aṭṭār, Ali, *Mafhūm-e Irfān*, p. 433.

⁵⁰ Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Muhammad Taqī, *Dar Justujīy-e Irfān-e Eslāmī*, p.33.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 38.

In fact, mystical issues revolve around the origination and circulation of plurality from the essential unity of God, the relation between this plurality with that essential unity, and the explanation of manifestations of Divine Names and Attributes.⁵²

- b) Practical mysticism is the relation of a person with himself, the world, and with God. This is about the traveler's journey, that is, his starting point, the steps he must take, the states of heart experienced within each step, and the position attained after each step for a traveler on the spiritual path to reach the highest level of perfection i.e. Unity.⁵³ In practical mysticism, mystics take heed to the heart and its actions. The meaning of actions is broader than the mere actions of limbs; it includes the actions of the heart as well and practical steps are taken to improve it.⁵⁴ Overall, practical mysticism paves the way of spiritual journey for the mystic to ultimately reach his or her final goal.

The mystical journey, like any common developmental stage, is a spiritual movement that begins from the lower and superficial levels of the soul and ends with profound levels. These phases correspond with the spiritual stations that the traveler experiences:

- a) The initial stages of the spiritual journey that correspond to the traveler's soul.
- b) The middle of the way towards God that correspond to the traveler's soul; the traveler enters after he passes the stations of the self.

⁵² Yathribī, Sayyid Yaḥyā, *Irfān-e Naẓarī*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, ibid.

- c) The final stations of the mystical journey that correspond to the most interior aspect of human being, i.e. his ‘inner self’ (*sirr*).⁵⁵

Each of above stages includes particular stations and each of those stations includes positions that comprise of one hundred stations and positions the traveler must pass. Khajih ‘Abdullah Anṣārī’s *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* (or *the Hundred Stations*) a prominent work in the field of mysticism, elucidates the hundred mentioned stations in detail.

History

Islamic mysticism traces back to the first century after hijrah. Although the development of Sufism and Irfān and the groups attributed to them did not exist in the first century A.H., the existence of theoretical and practical concepts of Irfān in the first century confirms that all that the mystics achieved in the following centuries can be found in the teachings of the Prophet (s), Imams (a) and in their companions’ acts.⁵⁶ From the beginning of Hijrah, people such as Abu Dhar al-Ghiffari and Salmān Fārsī, who were trained in comprehending Islamic rulings, spread the message and taught people how to purify their souls. People such as Kumayl ibn Ziyād Nakha‘ī and Uways Qarānī (d. 37 A.H.) as well as many Sufis followed Abu Dhar and Salman.⁵⁷

Centuries after them, Sufi historians listed mystics such as Ḥasan Baṣrī (d. 110 A.H.), Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 131 A.H.), Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham (d. 166 A.H.), Rābi‘ah ‘Adwīyyah (d. 135 or 185 A.H.), Fuḍayl ibn ‘Ayād (d. 187 A.H.) and Shaqīq Balkhī (d. 194 A.H.). However, Islamic Irfān bloomed in the beginning of the third century A.H.

Islamic Irfān entered a new stage during the beginning of the third century A.H. until the beginning of the seventh century A.H. In this

⁵⁵ Amīnī Nejād, *Ibid.*, p. 403.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

period, mystics became prolific authors in their field as great mystical works were published. The specific Irfān terminology was adopted mostly from Islamic concepts and sometimes from philosophy and kalām (Islamic theology). Practical Irfān, the base of Islamic Irfān until the seventh century A.H., reached its peak. In that period, organization, group hierarchy, traditions, and Sufi rituals were fully developed.⁵⁸ Renowned mystics of that period included Ḥārith Muḥāsibī (d. 243 A.H.), Dhu al-Nūn Miṣrī (d. 245 A.H.), Bā Yazīd Baṣṭāmī (d. 261 A.H.), Junayd Baghdādī (d. 297 A.H.), Husayn ibn Maṇṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 306 or 309 A.H.), Abu Sa‘īd Abu al-Khayr (d. 440 A.H.), Abu al-Qāsim Qushayrī (d. 465 A.H.), Khajeh Abullah Anṣārī (396 – 481 A.H.), and Abu Ḥāmid Muhammad Ghazzālī (450 – 505 A.H.).

The evolutionary process of Islamic Irfān continued until the seventh century, making it the turning point of Islamic irfan. Practical Irfān reached its peak although theoretical Irfān was also frequently discussed in their works. Through Sheikh Akbar and Muhammad ibn Ali Muḥy al-Dīn Arabī (560 – 638 A.H.), theoretical Irfān became independent and about which an independent book was written. Muḥy al-Dīn organized topics in Irfan. He also explained the details of topics in theoretical Irfān which were often seen in the works of previous mystics.⁵⁹

Muḥy al-Dīn Arabī's two important works are *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* and *Futūḥāt Makkīyyah*. The latter is like an encyclopedia of theoretical and practical Irfān. Regarding *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, Muḥy al-Dīn claimed it to have been bestowed on him by the holy Prophet (s) in a dream.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 99-100

⁵⁹ Yazdān-Panāh, Seyyed Yadullah, *Mabānī wa Uṣūl Irfān Naẓarī*, p. 26.

⁶⁰ Muḥy al-Dīn, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, p. 47.

Muhy al-Dīn's efforts in Irfān resulted in three achievements: 1. Irfān was drawn near to philosophy and philosophers and mystics became better friends; 2. Discussions on the concept of the perfect man drew Muhy al-Dīn's school close to the school of Shi'ism and Imamate. 3. Religious law (i.e. all religious beliefs) was drawn near to Irfān.

Muhy al-Dīn's Irfān was adopted from religious law as he benefited from the verses of the Qur'an and narrations in *Futūhāt Makkīyyah*.⁶¹

After Muhy al-Dīn, his school of Irfān was developed and promoted through his students, at the top of whom was Muhammad ibn Ishāq Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (603 - 773 A.H.). In the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries, his school reached its height through great personalities such as Abd al-Razzāq Qāsānī (d. 716 or 730 A.H.), Dāwūd ibn Maḥmūd Qayṣarī (d. 751 A.H.), Abu Ḥāmid Muhammad ibn Turkah, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 783 A.H.), Ali ibn Muhammad Turkah (d. 835 A.H.), Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad Jāmī (d. 898 A.H.). But from the 10th century A.H. on, theoretical Irfān declined as less researchers in Irfān were available. With Mullā Ṣadrā in the 11th century, Irfān and Islamic thought entered a new era.

Mullā Ṣadrā helped promote its progress which Muhy al-Dīn had begun in the 7th century A.H. in drawing reason, heart, philosophy, and Irfān to its perfection and full agreement with philosophy. He enriched the language of philosophy and the usage of precise terminology to simplify matters in Irfān. Mullā Ṣadrā also made understanding theoretical Irfān easy for those after him without having to have embarked on a spiritual journey, even though being on one would prove beneficial in understanding truths in Irfān.⁶²

⁶¹ Yazdān-Panāh, *Ibid.*, pp. 54 – 56.

⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 58-59.

From among Mullā Ṣadrā's other efforts was separating genuine Islamic Irfān from the Sufi movement of his time which was going astray. Mulla Sadra's *Asnam al-Jāhiliyyah* critiqued the Sufi order that did not coincide with Islamic mysticism and instead promoted heterodox beliefs, limiting performance only to the rituals, and paying less attention to religious practices and law. One of the results of such efforts is differentiation in the meaning of the terms Sufi and ‘Ārif [mystic], in a way that Sufi and Sufism had negative connotations and they were used to distinguish false movements of Irfān from the genuine Islamic Irfān. Since then, true great mystics did not accept Sufi orders and instead gradually made a certain chain of order like a purified sapling which benefitted Shi‘a with great fruits and blessings. Some luminaries after Mullā Ṣadrā, have been the fruits of the mentioned sapling such as: Mullā Muhsin Feyd Kāshānī (d. 1091 A.H.), Qādī Sa‘īd Qummī (d. between 1107 and 1100 A.H.), Mullā Ali Nūrī Māzandarānī (d. 1246 A.H.), Mullā Hādī Sabzwārī (d. 1289 A.H.), Ākhūnd Mullā Husayn Qulī Hamadānī (d. 1311 A.H.), Sayyid Ali Āqā Qādī Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1366 A.H.) and Muhammad Taqī Bahjat Fūmanī (d. 1430 A.H.).

Stations and positions in Islamic Irfān

Mystics believe that without passing the stations of true mysticism, one would not reach true irfān. As said before, according to some mystics like Khwajah Abdullah Ansari, there are one hundred stations. In what follows, we refer to some of the major stations along with the outcomes of passing through them as explained by Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari.⁶³

The first station: This is ‘desire,’ a kind of inclination and liking that befalls a person as a result of thinking, worshipping, or having faith;

⁶³ Muṭahharī, Murtadā, *Āshnā’ī ba ‘Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 2, p. 124. [trans. as “*Understanding Islamic Sciences*”, ICAS, 2000: London]

this occurs when a person's soul moves towards the truth. This desire is in fact a kind of awakening and incentives will be created in it to enable it to answer the truth.

The second station: Action, self-discipline, and asceticism. The goals of ascetics are three: a) driving out all but God that is actualized through an ascetic life, b) controlling the soul which tempts people towards vices and its control can be achieved through worship and presence of the heart, c) to soften and purify the soul to foster awareness through true love together with reserve and constraint.

The third station: The mystical trances⁶⁴ that the traveler experiences. At the beginning, this state is transient, unless the traveler continues his or her asceticism. It is quite possible that a mystic looks at something and then quickly recalls the realm of the Holy. In mystical terminology, it is called 'the time' (*waqt*).

The fourth station: A continuation of the mystical raptures. Transient attractions turn into continued and ever-following raptures so that the mystic would be familiar with the Truth. In other words, it is as if he has always been together with the Truth and has experienced it with it, while becoming distressed when he distances himself from Him.

The fifth station: The mystic is drawn to seeing the truth while it is no more under his control. He would see God behind anything he sees and he would detach himself from anything other than God. At such a state, his conscience is a clear and unclouded mirror that reflects the Truth. In a way which cannot be described by words, spiritual pleasures cast

⁶⁴ "About the state of trance, some mystics have said that: Upon the encounter with the heavenly souls, the soul of the mystic receives impacts enabling him to learn about incidences in the future. He would receive such impacts in his dreams while sleeping as well as while he is awake. Whatever he sees while he is asleep are truthful dreams and whatever he sees while he is awake are visionary disclosures and whatever he experiences between sleep and wakefulness is trance." Cf. Sajjādī, Ja'far, *Farhang-e Ma'ārif Islāmī*, vol. 2, p. 929.

upon the mystic, which shuttles between two views: a view towards the Truth and a view towards his self [as the mirror]. He would sometimes look into the One reflected in the mirror and sometimes look into the mirror itself which reflects that One.

In the next stage, the mystic becomes [ignored from and] invisible to himself and sees only God. This is when the mystic is connected with the Truth and the mystic's journey from the self to the Truth ends.

After finishing this journey, the mystic makes a journey in the Creator Himself. This means that he becomes familiar with the Divine Names and Attributes and tries to manifest them in himself as much as possible.

In his next journey, the mystic returns to the people without disconnecting himself from the Truth. While he is with the Truth, he turns to people to help and guide them.

Finally, the mystic's last journey is among people of the Truth in which he is with people and among them and tries to direct their affairs in the way that they can be directed towards God.

FATIMA BINT ASAD (A)

MUHAMMAD JAWAD RUDGAR¹
TRANSLATED BY: MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: The lofty and superior personality of Fatima Bint Asad (a) – a woman who strove in the cause of God – can be considered from two angles: her roles as a guardian for the Holy Prophet (s) and in raising her son, Imam Ali (a). This paper studies some of her traits of character such as her devotion to God, wilayah, and jihad, as well as her presence in the cultural, political, and social arenas. A study of her life results in an understanding of her steadfastness in safeguarding and disseminating Islamic values, her existential and ideological nearness to the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Imam Ali (a), and her deep insight, wisdom, and piety.

The lofty character of Fatima Bint Asad (a) is known analytically and comprehensively for two reasons:

- a. She was an exemplary woman in early Islam and a shining example of faith, struggle in the way of God, and insight and forbearance in the ideological, political, and social arenas.
- b. She was an influential and competent mother who played a vital role in both her family and society. She was the mother of

¹ PhD in Islamic spiritual mysticism, a faculty member of the *Islamic Culture and Thought* research center.

Imam Ali (a) who was a source of truthfulness, wisdom, and gnosis and the embodiment of justice and rationality. She was also a role model for all worshippers and mystics.

People have always been - and still are - in need of and eager for such eternal role models for mankind who went beyond time, place, and language and played a dynamic and decisive role in history.

The Facets of her Character

The personality of Fatima Bint Asad (a) is discussed in two parts:

1. Her guardianship of the Prophet Muhammad who was titled ‘the universal reason’, the ‘guide to the paths’, the ‘Seal of the Prophets’ and the ‘bearer of good tidings.’ It is also examined with respect to her being a mother of a son who bore complete and absolute devotion to God, namely Imam Ali (a). The layman fails to understand the unseen stations and the spiritual and existential achievements of Imam Ali (a), who called himself “a servant among Muhammad’s servants.”² Such a figure as Fatima Bint Asad (a) was the mother of Imam Ali (a)³ and played the role of a mother to the Messenger of God (s). This is a great honor, merit, and inherent nobility of this exemplary lady, who was an excellent mother and a woman of faith and good deed, and who was the prime example of “*Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure*” (*Nahl*: 97).⁴

² *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, pp. 89 & 90, section *Kawn wal-Makan*.

³ Sheikh Mufid, *al-Irshad*, vol. 1, p.2 ; Sheikh Abbas Qumi, *The Biography of Imam Ali (a.s.)*, p.14; Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mhallati, *The Biography of Imam Ali (a.s.)*, 8th ed., Tehran: The Office of Dissemination of the Islamic Culture, 1377, pp. 14 & 15.

⁴ See Jawadi Amuli, *Woman in the Mirror of Majesty and Beauty*, 3rd ed., Qum: Isra', 1377, pp. 90 & 91.

2. The personal character of Fatima Bint Asad (a) is manifested in her belief in monotheism and a seeker of the truth (*hanif*). Before the prophetic mission of the Prophet Muhammad (s), she followed the religion of her forefather, Prophet Abraham (a), just as her husband did, as he was also a *hanif* and believed in the monotheism preached by Abraham.⁵ After the advent of Islam, she was among the first women who embraced Islam. Apart from Lady Khadija (a), she was the first woman who paid allegiance to the Messenger of God (s)⁶ similar to her husband, Abu Talib, who was also a fervent believer in the message of Islam, as seen in his line of poetry: ‘*Verily I knew that the religion of Muhammad (s) was the best religion in the world*’.⁷

When witnessing the Holy Prophet (s) performing prayer along with Imam Ali (a) in a valley in Mecca, Abu Talib told his son, Ja‘far, “Go and say prayer along with your cousin.”⁸ Such a figure as Lady Fatima bint Asad who had followed the religion of the Prophet Abraham (a) before the advent of Islam and was one of the first converts to Islam must have maintained a high status in gnosis, faith, morality, and education. Such a woman whose life was influenced by revelation and heavenly tendency is enough to be qualified as a role model? Lady Fatima’s informed and free choice based on awareness and steadfastness in the divine religion has elevated her to such a high rank among humankind that the Prophet (s) greatly revered and praised her. Furthermore, God the Glorified deemed her as worthy of being the mother of Imam Ali (a) and permitted her to enter His House, the Holy Ka‘bah. This shows not only the high position of Imam Ali (a), who

⁵ Ali Muhammad Ali Dakhayyal, *Fatima Bint Asad (a.s.)*, tras. Sadiq A’ineh-vand, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1362, p. 12.

⁶ Ibn al-Sabaq Maliki, *al-Fosul al-Muhimmah*, p. 31.

⁷ Ali Muhammad Ali Dakhayyal, *ibid*, p.13.

⁸ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *The Commentary on Nahj-ul-Balaghah*, vol. 1, p. 5. In Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 448, there is also a Hadith by Imam Sadiq (a) in this regard: he considered Abu Talib similar to the Men of Cave, who had hidden their faith and pretended to be polytheistic; as a result, God had rewarded them twice as much.

was born in the Ka‘bah, but it implies the preeminence of Fatima Bint Asad (a) as well.

Now we should reflect that given the fact that Lady Mary held the rank of servitude, purity, and guardianship (*wilayah*),⁹ does Imam Ali’s mother, for whom the wall of Ka‘bah cracked open so that she could take refuge in the divine favors and gifts, not hold such positions?¹⁰ The rank of *wilayah* is attained through knowledge and worship of God and devotion to Him, as well as by taking the lead in faith and good deeds. This is the rank of total submission to God, witnessing the dominion of the world and of man, and witnessing the absolute ruler of the seen and unseen world: “*In Whose hands is the dominion of all things*” (*Yasin*, 83); “*So also did We show Abraham the dominion of the heavens and the earth,*”¹¹ the dominion to which Fatima Bint Asad (a) opened the eyes of her heart and played a role in her sincerity and certitude.

Biography

Fatima Bint Asad ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf (a) was from the family of Abu Talib, and Abu Talib was both her spouse and cousin; thus, this made her from same family of the Prophet himself.¹² She was the first Hashimite lady whose husband was also a Hashimite.¹³ Because of her role as mother to the Prophet (s), her faith and firmness in the way of monotheism, and her migration from Mecca to Medina, she was considered pre-eminent and exemplary. As Abul-Faraj Isfahani stated,

⁹ Maryam 17 & 18, Tahrim 12, Ale-Imran 37, 42, 43,45; also, Abullah Jawadi Amuli, *ibid*, pp. 137-144; Abullah Jawadi Amuli, *Wilayah in the Holy Quran*, Tehran: Raja; 4th ed., 1375, p. 276.

¹⁰ See Muhammad Deilami, *Irshad al-Qolub*; Sayyid Muhsin Amin Ameli, *A‘yan al-Shi‘a*; Sheikh Saduq, *al-Amali*; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Jala’ al-‘Uyn*; idem., *Bihar al-Anwar*; Sheikh Saduq, *Ilal-u-Sharayi’*.

¹¹ The Qur’ān, *An‘am*: 75

¹² Sayyid Ja‘far Shahidi, *Ali (a.s.) according to Ali (a.s.) or The Biography of Imam Ali (a.s.)*, 8th ed., Tehran: The Office of Dissemination of the Islamic Culture, 1378, p. 6.

¹³ Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *ibid*, vol. 3, p. 10.

“She was the first woman who paid allegiance to the Holy Prophet (s) after the revelation of the Qur’anic verse, ‘*O Prophet! When the believing women come to you to give you a pledge...*,’ (*Mumtahanah*, 12).¹⁴ Ibn Abi al-Hadid also admitted and referred¹⁵ to the fact that she was the 11th person who converted to Islam.¹⁶ Thus, she was the epitome of the abovementioned verse.¹⁷ According to Ibn Abbas, this verse was revealed with regards to Fatima bint Asad (a).¹⁸

Likewise, she was the epitome of the verse:

*The vanguard [of Islam] - the first of those who forsook [their homes] and of those who gave them aid, and [also] those who follow them in [all] good deeds, well-pleased is God with them, as are they with Him: for them has He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme felicity (9:100).*¹⁹

Fatima Bint Asad (a) was among the great women who enjoyed the virtues of taking the lead in Islam and migrating for the sake of God. In the verse 12 of *Mumtahanah*, after attributing the quality of making allegiance with the Prophet Muhammad (s) to her, she was cleansed of the reprehensible and vicious traits of polytheism, robbery, fornication, slander, calumny, and opposition to the Prophet (s). She refrained from all above-mentioned evils and gave the Prophet (s) a pledge to avoid

¹⁴ Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *Maqatil-a-Talibin*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *O Prophet! When the believing women come to you to give you a pledge that they will not associate in worship any other thing with God, that they will not steal, that they will not commit fornication, that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey you in what is good, accept their pledge, and pray to God for the forgiveness [of their sins]: for God is Forgiving, Merciful (Mumtahanah, 12).*

¹⁸ Sibt ibn Jowzi, *Tadhkirah al-Khawas*, p.10.

¹⁹ See Nasir Makarim Shirazi et al., *Nemuneh Qur’anic Commentary*, vol.8, pp. 99-111.

the aforementioned vices. Even before paying allegiance and after it, she was never tainted with these vices. In other words, she was a faithful woman with a firm belief in monotheism. Her purity in both appearance and heart benefitted her in attaining the rank of being cleansed of blameworthy characteristics.

In the verse 100 of the chapter *Tawbah*, “*taking the lead*” and “*migration*” are mentioned as distinguished virtues. Moreover, some crucial, fundamental, and cognitive-spiritual traits which imply pure belief, morals, and deeds were specified for those who followed Prophet Muhammad (s), those whom God was pleased with them and they loved Him, those whom God prepared Heaven for them – which proves they are dwellers of Heaven – and the fact that they will attain supreme felicity and salvation. Fatima Bint Asad (a) enjoyed all the good qualities mentioned in the above verses. As Ja‘far ibn Muhammad, Imam Sadiq (a) was quoted as saying, “Fatima Bint Asad (a) was the first woman who migrated on foot toward the Holy Prophet (s) from Mecca to Medina.” He also said, “The mother of Imam Ali (a) - Fatima bint Asad (a) - was among the eleven ‘vanguards’ (*al-sābiqun*) of Islam and the ‘People of Badr,’ or *Badriyyun* - those who attended the Battle of Badr. When verse 12 of the chapter *Mumtahanah* was revealed, Fatima was the first woman who paid allegiance to the Holy Prophet (s).”²⁰

Her unswerving faith in God

Lady Fatima displayed unwavering faith in God even before the prophetic mission of the Messenger of God (s). Based on a narration in *Usul al-Kafi* about the birth of the Commander of the Faithful (a) narrated by both Shi‘a and Sunni scholars, when the pains of childbirth

²⁰Hashim Bahrani, *al-Borhan fi Tafsir al-Quran*, vol.4, p. 227; as for the conditions of allegiance and the relationship between women’s allegiance and their characters, see Nasir Makarim Shirazi et al., *ibid*, vol.24, pp. 44-50 & vol. 22, pp. 69-78.

became severe, she went towards the Ka‘bah and revealed the magnificence of her faith before God, saying:

O My Lord! I believe in You and all the prophets and divine books sent down by You. I have also confirmed the words of my forefather, the Prophet Abraham (a), who built Ka‘bah. O’ My Lord! By the one who built this House and by the baby I am expecting, I beseech You to facilitate his delivery.²¹

The above-mentioned narration refers to several facets of Lady Fatima’s conviction: a) her faith in God and His unity, b) her faith in the divine prophets, c) her faith in the Prophet Abraham (a), d) her faith in the divine books revealed to the prophets, e) her belief in the Ka‘bah and its sanctity, f) her knowledge Imam Ali’s grand status before God, and g) her appeal to God through the prophets, the Ka‘bah, and Imam Ali (a).

In other narrations, there are references to the lofty character of Fatima Bint Asad (a) and her awareness of the high status of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a).²² Likewise, after Lady Fatima’s burial, the Prophet of God (s) told Ammar:

By God! I did not come out of Fatima’s grave but I saw two rays of light brought to her head and two others to her hands and still two others to her feet. Also, two angels were assigned to her grave to request

²¹ Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub Kuleini, *Usul Kafi*, vol.3, pp.301-313; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.5, p.307; Allameh Amini, *al-Qadir*, vol. 6, pp. 21- onward; Hakim Neishaburi, *al-Mustadrak ala-Sahihain*, vol.3, p.483.

²² Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.25, pp. 70, 179, 180; Ibn Athir, *Usd-ul-Ghabah*, vol. 5, p. 517;

God's forgiveness for her till the Day of Resurrection.²³

The Holy Prophet's actions in the burial service and funeral procession of Lady Fatima is enlightening, giving us insight into her high status. As reported by both Shi'a and Sunni hadith narrators, the Messenger of God (s) took part in her burial service by carrying the coffin and digging her grave. Then, he entered the grave and lay in it. Afterward, he took off his garment and had Lady Fatima covered in it as a burial shroud before she was placed into the grave.²⁴ As narrated by Imam Ali (a):

After Fatima Bint Asad ibn Hashim had passed away, the Messenger of God (s) enshrouded her in his garment and performed the funeral prayer. In the prayer, he said the Takbir (*Allahu Akbar*) seventy times. Next, he entered her grave, extending and strengthening it. Then, he came out of the grave, shedding tears and casting soil on the *Lahad* (internal grave) stone.²⁵

On the other hand, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s)'s birth, Lady Fatima rushed to help his mother, Amina (a). Once the Prophet Muhammad (s) was born, some light appeared, extending between the east and the west, startling both of them. Fatima Bint Asad (a) talked happily to Abu Talib (a) of the light she had seen.²⁶ This indicates at least two points:

²³ Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mhallati, *ibid*, p.15.

²⁴ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.25, pp. 70, 80, 179, 180; Ibn Athir, *Usd-ul-Ghabah*, *ibid*, vol. 5, p. 517.

²⁵ Hakim Neishaburi, *ibid*, vol.3, p.108.

²⁶ Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mhallati, *ibid*, p.12.

1. The presence of Fatima Bint Asad (a) at the time of the Prophet's birth and her helping his holy mother, Aminah Bint Wahab (a)
2. Her witness of the all-sweeping light that extended between the east and the west.

The Holy Prophet's participation in the funeral of Fatima Bint Asad (a) and her mystic intuitive presence at the time of the Prophet Muhammad's birth truly imply her sublimity and her existential nearness to God and His Messenger (s).

Her image in terms of faith and gnosis

The Prophet stated five enlightening and profound words regarding the persona of Fatima Bint Asad (a):

1. The Messenger of God (s) commemorated her, saying, “Apart from Abu Talib (a), she treated me best. She was my other mother after my own mother. Abu Talib (a) benevolently prepared the food and Fatima gathered us for this food; she gave me a larger share of all foods so that I might return to their home again.”²⁷
2. Fatima Bint Asad (a) heard the Messenger of God (s) say, “On the Day of Resurrection, people will be mustered bare.” Fatima said, “Woe to me for such a brazen act!” The Prophet (s) said, “I will request God to muster you covered.” Also, when Fatima heard the Prophet Muhammad (s) speak of the chastisement in the grave, she said, “Woe to me, helpless in that situation!”

²⁷ Tawfiq Abu 'Ilm, *al-Imam al-Ali; Rajul al-Islam al-Mukhallad*, p.33; Ibn Hajar Asqalani, *al-Isabah fi Tamiz al-Sahabah*, vol. 4, p.369; Abu-l-Muayyad al-Muwaffaq al-Kharazmi, *Maqtal al-Hussain (a.s.)*, vol.1, p.33.

The Messenger of God (s) said, “I will ask God to take care of you in this regard.”²⁸

3. The Prophet of God (s) said, “I lay in her grave in order to ease the strains of her grave and I dressed her in my garment so that she might wear the heavenly garment.”²⁹
4. After burying Fatima Bint Asad (a), the Prophet of Islam (s) said, “The angels were everywhere in the horizon, opening the door of Heaven to Fatima and rolling out the heavenly carpets for her. The heavenly ladies rushed to meet her. Now she is showered with happiness, bounty and heavenly blessings, and her grave is a heavenly garden.”³⁰
5. The Prophet of Islam (s) said, “The Archangel Gabriel informed me she is a dweller of Heaven and God has commanded seventy thousand angels to pray for her.”³¹

In addition to the Prophet’s high regard for her, great Muslim scholars and thinkers have also praised her in terms of her gnosis, morals, faith, and spirituality:

- a. Abdullah ibn Abbas: “She was the first woman who migrated from Mecca to Medina in bare feet. In addition, she was the first woman who, after Lady Khadija (a), pledged allegiance to the Prophet of Islam (s).”³²
- b. Zahri: “The Holy Prophet (s) used to visit her and stay at her house. She was a praiseworthy lady.”³³
- c. Jamal al-Din Abul-Faraj Abd-u-Rahman ibn al-Jowzi: “She was a righout woman who wholeheartedly embraced Islam.”³⁴

²⁸ Sibt ibn Jowzi, *ibid*, p. 12.

²⁹ ‘Imad-u-Din ibn Yahy ibn Abi Kibr al-Ameri, *Commentary On Bahjat-ul-Mahafil*, vol.1, p.232.

³⁰ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 9, p.17.

³¹ Hakim Neishaburi, *ibid*, vol.3, p.108.

³² Sibt ibn Jowzi, *ibid*, p. 13.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 12.

³⁴ Jamal al-Din Abul-Faraj ibn al-Jowzi, *Safwah al-Safwah*, vol.2, p. 28.

- d. Sayyid Muhsin Amin: “She was a pioneer in Islam and the first woman who migrated to Medina.”³⁵

Fatima Bint Asad (a) was among the women who migrated to Medina, heading toward the Prophet of Islam (s) along with Imam Ali (a) and Lady Zahra (a). During their 24-hour stay in “Dajnan,” Imam Ali (a) along with Fatima performed their prayer and remembered God the whole night, standing, sitting, and lying. At dawn, they said the dawn prayer with Imam Ali (a). They had covered each stop remembering God until they reached Medina. Before their entering Medina, the divine revelation was sent down about them: *“Those who remember God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth.”* (Ale-Imran, 191) In response to them, the end of this very Qur’anic verse reads as follows, *“So their Lord accepted their prayer that never will I waste the work of any worker among you, whether male or female, ...”* (Ale-Imran, 195). The term “male” refers to Imam Ali (a) and the term “female” refers to three Fatimas (Fatima, the daughter of the Messenger of God, Fatima bint Asad, and Fatima, the daughter of Zubair).³⁶

Final remarks

First, Fatima bint Asad (a) had deep understanding and a pure heart, and God granted her the true faith and good deeds. He also made her the wife of Abu Talib (a), who strove in the cause of God, and was a self-sacrificing Muslim who was a full-scale supporter of the Prophet Muhammad (s).³⁷ Her divine-monotheistic belief rendered her the receptacle of Imam Ali (a) and deserving of his training. Thus, she was the epitome of “*good land*” (A’raf, 58) and “*good word*” (Ibrahim, 24).

³⁵ Sayyid Muhsin Amin, ibid, vol. 42, p.250.

³⁶ Ali Muhammad Ali Dakhayyal, ibid, pp.24-25.

³⁷ See Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 35, pp. 183-68; Allameh Amini, ibid, vol.7, pp.330-49; Abdullah Sheikh Ali al-Khunaibizi, Abu Talib: the Quraishite Believer.

Fatima bint Asad (a) became the divine greatest sign;³⁸ that is, she trained the Father of all Imams, Imam Ali (a), and the Holy Prophet (s) regarded her as his mother.

Second, Fatima bint Asad enjoyed knowledge and gnosis,³⁹ was God-fearing,⁴⁰ did jihad in the way of God,⁴¹ and took the lead in Islam by embracing it.⁴² These are the yardsticks of virtue and superiority, the stages of theoretical and practical perfection of the gnostic and spiritual journey. Likewise, based on the Qur'anic verse revealed about Imam Ali (a) and the Fatimas,⁴³ she was contemplative, remembering God and enjoying wisdom and intellect. Hence, she was a woman of intellectual and cultural genius, political and social insight, and mental and practical purity, similar to Lady Khadijah (a) and Sumayyah from the household of Yasir, who made many efforts to elevate faith and propagate Islamic values. They endeavored alongside the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a) as well as warriors and migrants for the sake of Islam and supported Islam when it had very few defenders.⁴⁴

Third, due to her inner intellectual qualifications as well as her innate talents and capacity, Fatima bint Asad (a) was deserving of a lofty status. In other words, since she was constantly in the presence of the Prophet and Imam Ali, she benefited adequately from these divine rays of two perfect men who held the privileged positions of the Prophethood and Imamate. She was indebted to them for her spiritual journey in terms of creation and morality, her existential and purifying manifestation and her attraction of spiritual journey and spiritual journey of attraction. There were very few virtuous people who were

³⁸ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 36, p. 1.

³⁹ Mujadalah, 11.

⁴⁰ Hujurat, 13.

⁴¹ Naba', 95; Tawbah, 20.

⁴² Hashr, 10; Tawbah, 100.

⁴³ Ale-Imran, 190-195; Nasir Makarim Shirazi et al., ibid, vol. 3, pp. 243-251.

⁴⁴ See Abdullah Jawadi Amuli, *Woman in the Mirror of Majesty and Beauty*, p. 290-304; Ali Muhammad Ali Dakhayyal, *The Great Muslim Women*, vol.2, pp.34-9.

qualified enough to be under spiritual guidance and support of such perfect men as the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Imam Ali (a). How elegantly and honestly Fatima bint Asad (a) became their disciple, attained spiritual elevation, got eternal in history, followed the examples of these great role models, and herself became a role model for the truth-seeking spiritual wayfarers, Muslims and believers.

Fourth, Fatima bint Asad (a) enjoyed excellence of both intellect and heart; that is, both the intellectual gnosis and the inner one. Embracing monotheism before the prophethood of the Messenger of God (s), converting to Islam after his prophetic mission, sacrificing in the way of Islam and religiousness, seeing the divine Unseen rays at the time of the Prophet's birth, and appealing to the baby she was expecting – Imam Ali (a) – at the time of his birth in Masjid al-Haram are all evident proofs that she was the very epitome of this Qur'anic verse, "*Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses [the truth],*"⁴⁵ that she had divine vision and hearing to grasp the truths and hear the divine songs and tunes, and that she could benefit satisfactorily from her two kinds of eyes, ears and hearts;⁴⁶ that is, her outward and inward faculties.

Fifth, Fatima bint Asad (a) was supported by the divine blessings and the Prophet (s) confirmed her knowledge. She enjoyed such a high status that the Prophet (s) attended her funeral as he carried her coffin, dug her grave, and talked to her, finished his words by saying, "Your son!" three times. Afterwards, he filled the grave with soil and threw

⁴⁵ Qaf, 37; also see Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulayni, *ibid*, translated and commented on in Persian, 5th ed., Osweh, 1381, vol.3, p. 307, no.3.

⁴⁶ Hajj, 46, Mulla Muhsin Feiz Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi*, Mashhad: Sa'id Publications, vol.3, pp.383 & 384; Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Tabataba'i, *al-Mizanfi Tafsir al-Quran*, vol.14, p.389, Arabic version, published in Iran; Nasir Makarim Shirazi et al., *ibid*, vol.14, pp.145-146.

himself on it. Those who were present heard him say, “There is no god but God. O’ my Lord! I entrust her to You.”⁴⁷

Conclusion

Fatima bint Asad (a) was truly the epitome of the verse, “*To Him go up [all] pure words: It is He Who exalts each good deed,*” (*Fatir*, 10). She is considered an exemplary woman in early Islam and one of the pioneers of faith, monotheism, jihad, and migration. She was a leading religious figure in terms of both understanding religion and taking responsibility for it.

⁴⁷ Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mhallati, *ibid*, pp. 14 & 15; Sayyid Mahdi Sahams-u-Din, *The Exemplary Women*, Qum: Daral-Fikr, 1376, p. 35.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION TO THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE WORLD

JAHANBAKSH THAWAQIB
TRANSLATED BY: MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Despite backward situation of Arab Peninsula in the Age of Ignorance, that is, pre-Islamic era, Muslim researchers and intellectuals endeavored to enter the realm of science by displaying their talents and introducing their innovations. This article describes the geographical expansion of Islam, the progress of Islamic civilization with its advances in areas such as medicine, physics, astronomy, and history, as well as its impact on western civilization. It demonstrates how Muslims were able to achieve a remarkable civilization and benefit other societies, particularly the western world.

Introduction

The geographical expansion of the Muslim world and the development of Islamic sciences and civilization are historically stunning and glorious. This occurred at a time when the western world was overtaken by the scientific stagnation of the Middle Age. Inspired by Islam and monotheism, Muslims who had entered other territories outside the Arabian Peninsula tried firstly to acquaint themselves with

the cultural heritage of the new lands. Due to their thirst for learning and knowledge, they turned their focus on science, literature, and the arts.

Muslims significantly contributed to human knowledge in various fields through their innovations. This contribution was so great that Islamic civilization has been the pioneer of the scientific, intellectual and cultural genius for a long period of time, with the West benefiting from its great achievements.

The Geographical Expansion of Islam

The mission of Prophet Muhammad began in the Arabian Peninsula in Mecca in 7th century A.D. There, the Holy Prophet invited people to Islam for 13 years. In doing so, various kinds of hardships were inflicted on him by the pagans of Quraysh. After the polytheists planned in *Dār al-Nadwah* to kill him, the Holy Prophet had to migrate to Medina. Thereafter going through a decade of challenges including battles and after 23 years of efforts to invite people to Islam and propagate it, he could finally lay foundations for an Islamic civilization.

Before long, Islam transcended the boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula. During the time of the Prophet's successors, Islam proceeded to the heart of Asia in the East and northern Africa in the West. Muslims' advance on Iran began in the time of the first caliph. Afterwards, during the time of the second caliph, Islam spread in Iran. Finally, during the time of the next few caliphs, the whole of Iran was conquered by the Muslims.

In addition, Muslims made some advances on the northern and northwestern areas of the Arabian Peninsula; that is, in the front line facing the conquests of the Roman Empire. The Muslim army conquered Syria and Palestine in 19 A.H and reached Armenia in 21

A.H. Alexandria was also conquered in the same year and Tripoli in 23 A.H. Likewise, the Muslims entered Tunisia in 27 A.H.¹ Finally crossing the strait between Morocco and Iberia (Gibraltar strait) in 92 A.H, the Muslims (Arabs and barbarians from northern Africa) entered the whole of Iberia (Andalucía – Spain, which also included the present-day Portugal) under Tariq ibn Ziyad's command. After crossing the Pyrenees, they also proceeded into the heart of France.²

The rapid spread of Islam was due to various factors. The first main factor was the Holy Qur'an; it contains teachings which promise to save the mankind. It is also based on justice, equality, and moral virtues. These very lofty principles attracted people who were suffering oppression by the emperors and considered Islam to be the call of freedom.

About the impact of the Glorious Qur'an on the individuals and society, and the fact that Muslims could achieve outstanding progress under the Holy Qur'an, the European historian, Will Durant, wrote as follows:

Thanks to the Qur'an, the Muslims' conduct and culture developed. The Qur'an saved them from illusions, superstitions, oppression, and violence. It

¹ For a detailed description of Muslims entering the Roman Empire, see Baladhuri, *Fotuh-al-Buldān*, p. 140; *Ya'qubi History*, vol. 2, p. 31; *Tabari History*, vol. 5, pp. 1775-930; *Arab History*, pp. 188-98, pp. 206-16; Shahidi, *The Analytical History of Islam*, pp. 122-26; Fayyaz, *The History of Islam*, p. 143, pp.148-51; Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, pp. 166-77.

² See Albert Mallet & Jules Isaac, *The History of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4, pp.102-7; *The Civilization of Arabs*, pp. 274-7; Aldo Mie Lee, *Islamic Sciences and their Role in the World Scientific Development*, p.107; Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, p. 302-60. For more information about the way Islam spread, see Harry Fozzard, *The Atlas of Islamic History*; Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1970. Being translated to Persian (and entitled *The History of Spread of Islam*, translated by A. Ezzati, the Publications of Tehran University,1385), this book discusses the spread of Islam in the western Asia, Africa, Spain and the European regions under the Uthmaids as well as its spread in Iran, the Middle East, China, Africa, the Malaya archipelago, etc in detail.

granted the people of the lower classes honour and esteem. Likewise, it made society replete with such justice and piety that no parallel can be found for it. At the same time, the Qur'an urged them to make progress which led to making such a progress that was unique in history.³

Aside from the Glorious Qur'an, another factor contributing to the spread and progress of Islam is its compliance with human nature. Islam does not merely consist of religious rituals, it consists of both religion and the law. All public and private aspects of life are taken into account in it and for each one some guidelines have been provided. In Islam, there is a relationship between human nature and religious obligations. In these two fields, all legal applications are interconnected.⁴ Thus, the consistency between Islam and human nature facilitates people's inclination to it.

According to some European scientists, the simplicity of the Islamic principles and teachings contributed to its spread.⁵ In the introduction to his translation of the Holy Qur'an, George Sale pointed out:

The main reason behind the progress of Islam is the unaffected simplicity of its teachings. This contributed to the spread of Islam and sowed its seeds more than the swords of warriors did. Islam influenced the Christian world greatly and established a spiritual religion in Asia.⁶

³ Durant, *The History of Civilization* (The era of Faith, 2nd section, Islamic Civilization), p. 52.

⁴ Vagliari, *The Call of Islam from the heart of Italy*, p. 94.

⁵ For instance, "Through its simplicity, Islam is distinguished from other religions and has spread quickly since it is really easy to understand its injunctions and perform its religious obligations, also it does not include complicated and unfamiliar issues." (See Albert Mallet & Jules Isaac, *The History of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4, p. 110).

⁶ Salmasi-Zadeh, *The History of the Qur'anic Translation in the World*, p. 69.

Professor Montet referred to the “rationality of the principles of Islamic beliefs” and its resultant merits in its propagation. He writes:

In the best sense of the word, Islam is basically rational both ideologically and historically. The definition of the term “rationality” as a thought system that imparts the religious beliefs to the principles confirmed by the intellect corresponds to Islam completely...To a Muslim, the religious principles come down to the belief in the unity of Allah and the prophetic mission of His Messenger ... No doubt, the simplicity and clarity of these teachings are the key decisive factor in the progress, religious activities, and propagation of Islam. These perfect principles, so pure and void of theological and intellectual sophistication; thus, so accessible and comprehensible, are in fact greatly able to permeate the human conscience.⁷

The Progress of Islamic Civilization

Under Islamic teachings and due to their turning to sciences, Muslims progressed rapidly in all different aspects of civilization including the arts, architecture, fine arts, textile industry, geography, shipbuilding, seafaring, trade, exploration, discoveries, physics, chemistry, medicine, astronomy, botany and agriculture, irrigation, music, calligraphy, urban development, book and library, religious sciences, and so forth. Through this, they founded the brilliant Islamic civilization so amazingly that orientalists admitted to the stunning progress of Muslims in various sciences.

⁷ Thomas Arnold, *The History of the Spread of Islam*, p. 302.

Will Durant, Gustav Le Bon, and Gume, are among orientalists who admitted to the brilliant Islamic civilization, its impact on Europe, and Muslims' role in scientific development.

For instance, Gustav Le Bon wrote about the reasons behind the spread of Islam as follows:

In addition to the just and benevolent treatment of people, simplicity and clarity of the Islamic principal beliefs were the main factors that caused Islam to spread. The very simplicity, clarity, and good manners made people such as the Egyptians who had been Christian since the time of the Byzantine emperors embrace Islam the moment they were invited to it. No Muslim tribe, whether victorious or defeated, was seen giving up Islam for Christianity. The impact of the Islamic civilization and politics is really astonishing. In the Age of Ignorance, Saudi Arabia consisted of some small principalities and self-willed tribes which were always engaged in civil war, murder and plunder. However, a century after the advent of Islam, the scope of religiousness expanded over the area between the Sind Sea and Andalucía. In all the countries that were under the banner of Islam, the progress was truly astounding in every aspect. This occurred because of Islamic beliefs being in accordance with natural rules and principles. They even out the general ethics and create justice, benevolence, and religious leniency in them.”⁸

In his book *The History of Civilization*, Will Durant considered the rise and fall of the Islamic civilization a great event in history and maintained that during five centuries (81- 597 A.H / 700-1200 A.D), Islam was the world precursor of power, discipline, and expansion of

⁸ Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, p. 144

its realm, good manners, improvement of the standard of living, fair human laws, religious leniency, literature, and scientific research in medicine, philosophy, etc.

Muslim scientists acquired and perfected Greek mathematics, natural sciences, astronomy, and medicine. They also transmitted even more enriched Greek legacy to Europe. For 500 years, Muslim physicists were the pioneers of the world's medicine. European architects, blacksmiths, glass-blowers, goldsmiths in Italy, the new boom of the creative potters in Italy and France, and armorers in Spain were all inspired by Muslim craftsmen. Only the golden ages of a community's history can produce so many renowned figures in the fields of politics, education, literature, philology, geography, history, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, medicine, etc.; they emerged during four centuries, from the time of Harun to ibn Rushd's era.⁹

Muslims increased and advanced the knowledge they learned from Greeks through experimental studies. In the strongest sense, they invented laboratory experiments and truly pioneered objective scientific research. Scientific researches with the aim of discovering the real essence of single elements were first conducted by Muslims. The corollary of these pioneering activities was that it stimulated the forerunners of the European intellectual movement, that is, Rodger Bacon, Albertus Magnus (the great Albert), Leonardo da Vinci, and Galileo.¹⁰

It is beyond the constraints of this paper to fully enumerate the Muslim scientists with important scientific works, discoveries, and inventions in various fields of material sciences who achieved world repute.

⁹ See Durant, *The History of Civilization*, p. 322. About the greatness of Islamic civilization, see Mirhov, *The Islamic Legacy*; Albert Mallet, *The History of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4, pp. 107-13. For more information on what scientists admitted about the Islamic civilization and science, see Muhammd Reza Hakimi, *Muslims' Knowledge*, pp. 318-20.

¹⁰ For the method of scientific research of Muslims, see Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, p. 559-62; Hunke, *Islamic Culture in Europe*, p. 419.

However, in gratitude to their high scientific status and their role in the brilliant Islamic civilization, we refer to some of these great men in different fields and their respective specialized works.

Medicine: Ali ibn Rabben Tabari (*Ferdows-ul-Hikmah wa Manafi‘-ul-At‘amah wa al-Ashrabah*), Muhammad ibn Zakaria Razi (*al-Hawi, Mansuri Medicine, al-Judari wa al-Hasbah*), Ali ibn Abbas Ahwazi (*Kamil-u-Sanayi‘or al-Maliki*), Avicenna (*The Canon of Medicine*), etc.

Physics, mechanic and chemistry: Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Hassan ibn Heitham (*Kitab-ul-Manazhir*), Abu Reihan Biruni, Qutb-u-Din Shirazi, Abd-u-Rahman Khazeni, Kamal-u-Din Farsi, Khwarizmi (*Mafatih-ul-Ulum*), offspring of Musa ibn Shakir (*Kitab-ul-Hiyal*), Jabir ibn Hayyan, Zakaria Razi (*Sirr-ul-Asrar*).

Mathematics: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Fazari (*al-Qasidah fi Ilm-e-Nojum, Kitab-ul Miqyas, Kitab-u-Zij ala Sunan-l-Arab, Kiath fi Tastih-l-Korah* and translation of Sadhant = Sandhind), Muhammad ibn Musa Khwarizmi (*Algebra and Muqabilah*), Abul-Wafa Buzjani (of numerous theories and books), Umar Khayyam Neishaburi (the treatise of algebra and Muqābilah), Ghiyath-u-Din Jamshid Kashani (*Miftah-ul-Hisab*). Furthermore, figures like ibn Heitham, Avicenna, Biruni, Khajeh Nasir Tusi, Sheikh Baha‘i, Thabit ibn Qurrah, Alai‘-Din Qushchi, Ahmad Sarakhsī, etc. were well-versed in mathematics.

Astronomy: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Fazari, Yaqub ibn Tariq, Abu Mash‘ar Balkhi (*al-Madkhal-ul-Kabir*), Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Batani (*al-Zij*), Abu Reihan Biruni (*Mas‘udi Canon, a-Tafhim li Awa’il Sana‘at-l-Tanjim*), Khajeh Nasir Tusi, etc.

History and geography: Many historians and geographers emerged and left precious works. The historians include Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari (*Tarikh-u-Rusul wa al-Umam wa al-Muluk*), Ya‘qubi (*Ya‘qubi*

History), Abul-Hassan Ali ibn Hussain Mas‘udi (*Murawwij-u-Dhahab wa-Tanbih wa al-Isharf*), Hamzah Isfahani (*the History of Sini Muluk-ul-Arz*), Ibn Athir (*al-Kamil fi-Tarikh*), ibn Khaldun (*ibn Khaldun History*), Abu Ziad Balkhi (*al-Bad’ wa-Tarikh*), Abu Hanifah Dinwari (*al-Akhbar-u-Tawal*), Abu-l-Fida (*al-Mukhtasar fi Ahwal-l-Bashar*), Abu Reihan Biruni (*al-Athar-ul-Baqiyah*), ibn Khallikan (*Wafiyat-ul-A‘yan*), Jalal-u-Din Soyuti (*Tarikh-ul-Khulafa*), Abu Abdillah Jahshiari (*al-Wuzara wa al-Kitab*), Ahmad Qalqashandi (*Subh-l-A‘sha*), Taqi-u-Din Maqrizi (*al-Khutat wa al-Suluk li Ma‘rifat-l-Dowal-ul-Muluk*), etc.

Likewise, the geographers include Muhammad ibn Khurdadbeh (*al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik*), Abuzaid Balkhi (*Surat-ul-Aqalim*), Abu Ishaq Istakhri (*Masalik wa Mamalik*), Mas‘udi (*Murawwij-u-Dhahab*), Muhammad ibn Hawqal (*al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik= ibn Hawqal’s travelog*), Abu Abdillah Ahmad ibn Muhammad Muqaddisi (*Ahsan-u-Taqasim fi Mmarafat-l-Aqalim*), ibn Wazih Yaqubi (*al-Bildan*), Abu Abdillah Jeihani (*Ashkal-ul-‘Alam*), Zakaria Qazwini (*Athar-ul-Bilad wa Akhbar-ul-Ibad*), Hamdullah Mostowfi (*Nuzhat-ul-Qulub*), Ahmad ibn Majid (*al-Fawa’id fi Usul-l-Bahr*), Yaqut Himawi (*Mu‘jam-ul-Bildan*), Baghdadi (*Marasid-ul-Ittila’*), ibn Jabir, ibn Batutah, Nasir Khosrow, ibn Fadlan, Abu Zaid Hassan Sirafi, each of which produced travel logs and works describing the cities and natural geography of Muslim and non-Muslim lands.¹¹ Not only did Islamic civilization save the Greek legacy from annihilation and oblivion, create a pattern for it, organize it, and transmit it to Europe, but it also pioneered the experimental chemistry, physics, algebra, the present-day calculus,

¹¹ For more information about Muslim scientists in various fields (of material sciences) and their innovations and inventions, see Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, p. 556-638; Durant, *The History of Civilization*, vol. 4, section 2, pp. 1229-33; Zeidan, *The History of Islamic Civilization*, vol. 3, pp. 551-90; Safa, *The History of the Rational Sciences in the Islamic Civilization*, vol.1; Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* , pp. 38-220; Qurbani, *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, pp. 182-308; Hakimi, *Muslims’ Knowledge* pp. 144-76; Hatta, *The History of the Arabs*, pp. 462-552; Ja‘fari, *Muslims in History*, pp.177-202; Aldo Mie Lee, *Islamic Sciences and their Role in the World Scientific Development*, pp.177-305; Baron Carra De Vaux, *Muslim Thinkers*, vol.2, (Geographers, mathematics and natural sciences), pp.16-100.

spatial trigonometry, and geology. Islamic civilization granted the West innumerable valuable discoveries and inventions. The most valuable one may be the method of research on natural sciences. It was the pioneering efforts of Muslims that paved the way for Europe and led to the knowledge of natural rules and dominance over nature.¹²

Sigrid Hunke pointed out that in 1000 A.D, hundreds of librarians worked in two libraries of the caliph, which included 2,200,000 books combined. These books were twenty times as many as the rolled-up books in the unique library of Alexandria at the peak of its boom.¹³

According to Hunke, in this very year Abul-Qasim compiled a book on surgery, which was the main source for those seeking information on this scientific field for many years. In addition, in this year, Biruni described how the earth rotates around itself, and al-Hassan al-Heitham discovered the rules of eyesight, experimented with the boxed camera, and on lens, convex, concave, cylindrical mirrors, and focus. Finally, in this very year while the Muslim world was moving rapidly toward the apex of its golden age, Europe waited fearfully for the apocalypse; that is, the historical, geographical, and astronomical end of the world.

At that time, the common idea among Westerners was that conducting scientific research, familiarizing themselves with nature, and exploring the world's wonders mean nothing but wasting and misusing the rational faculties.¹⁴

Laktantius (317 A.D), who taught in a church school, said, "As nobody has reached the truth yet and a lot of efforts and time might have been wasted in search for it, obviously knowledge cannot be found where science and scientific research is sought." Another Christian called

¹² Hunke, *Islamic Culture in Europe*, p. 420; Safa, *The History of the Rational Sciences in the Islamic Civilization*, p. 133.

¹³ Hunke, *ibid*, p. 352.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 361.

Tertolian said openly, “On Jesus Christ’s orders, after the descent of the Bible, it is not our duty to be inquisitive and acquire knowledge further than what is in the holy book.”¹⁵

Moreover, a priest closed the library of Muzayunis and put the scientists to flight. In 366 A.D during a Byzantine Caesar, this library was transformed to a church, its books were burnt, and their philosophers – charged with sorcery and magic – were persecuted. In 529 A.D, the last center of philosophy closed down in Greece. In 600 A.D, the Platini library, which was established by Augustus, was burnt. Likewise, studying the works of different doctrines, particularly acquiring mathematics, was prohibited.¹⁶

However, Muslims were very fond of books, particularly books on geometry, mechanics, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, and the like.

It was said that after Harun al-Rashid had won the battle of Amuriyyah with Byzantium (839 A.D), he agreed to make peace with Byzantium on condition that the ancient Greek writings were surrendered. After victory over Byzantium, he demanded of Michael III that all philosophical works, even though not yet translated to Arabic, be surrendered to Muslims as war tribute.¹⁷

Muslims even used to send special envoys that had great authority and enough money from Baghdad to Byzantium and India in order to collect the works and to ask scientists of other countries for help. Caliphs, viziers, and other great Muslims each had a private library. There were also numerous public and private libraries in the Muslim

¹⁵ ibid, p. 362.

¹⁶ ibid, p. 363.

¹⁷ In this regard, see Zeidan, *The History of Islamic Civilization*, p. 631; Hatta, *The History of the Arabs* pp. 381-401; Safa, *The History of the Rational Sciences in the Islamic Civilization*, pp. 42-45; Hunke, *Islamic Culture in Europe*, p. 379; Ja'fari, *Muslims in History*, pp. 94-5, 150; Ghunaimah, *The History of the Great Islamic Universities*; Shibli, *The History of Education in Islam*, p. 140.

world. Mosques and hospitals had special libraries as well.¹⁸ These books and libraries contributed to the spread of Islamic culture and civilization. The statistical information about these books and libraries can be found in various historical sources including the *Al-Fihrist* by of ibn Nadim.

The Impact of Islamic Civilization on Europe

As mentioned above, through conquering various lands (Fertile Crescent, Iran, Egypt, etc.), Muslims added vast areas to their territory. They could geographically expand the initial religious government which the Prophet had formed in Medina. Their government covered a large part of western Asia and northern Africa in addition to the Arabian Peninsula. They formed such a great government that within a short period of time most developed areas of the then civilized world were included in it.

Similarly, in terms of civilization, Muslims inherited the ancient civilizations and their heritage has dated back to the time of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Iranians, and the Egyptians. Being fascinated with sciences, they acquired, assimilated, and modified the rational and artistic heritage in cooperation with the scholastic figures of the very conquered lands. They also developed their specific culture and civilization.¹⁹ Haskins wrote, “The first and most forceful scientific and philosophical activities of the middle age from medicine and mathematics to astronomy and alchemy were found in the territory of the Prophet.”²⁰

¹⁸ In this regard, see Ghunaimah, *The History of the Great Islamic Universities*, chapters 3 & 6; Safa, *The History of the Rational Sciences in the Islamic Civilization*, pp. 48-120; Hunke, *Islamic Culture in Europe*, pp. 122-68; Qurbani, *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, pp. 298-300; Zeidan *The History of Islamic Civilization*, pp. 630-40; Hatta, *The History of the Arabs* pp. 529-30.

¹⁹ See Hatta, *The History of the Arabs* pp. 154 & 223-4.

²⁰ Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, Mass, U.S.A., 1971, p. 882.

As a result of creating the really stunning and brilliant culture and civilization, the Muslim world could penetrate into the Christian world and influence it. As for the various manifestations of the penetration of the Islamic culture into Europe, Will Durant wrote:

The Islamic civilization penetrated into Europe through trade, Crusades, translation of hundreds of Arabic books into Latin and the journey of such scholars as Gerbert, Michael Scott, Adelard of Bath, etc. to the Islamic Andalucía as well as by young Christians who were sent by their fathers to the Muslim countries in order to acquire knowledge and etiquette and become civilized.²¹

During many years of contact between Muslims and Christians, the impact of the Christian world was almost limited to some religious rites and war customs. As for religious rites, it is most likely that Sufism entered Islam through Christian instances of monasticism and acts of worship by Saints. The biography of Prophet Jesus Christ and his personality²² remained in the Muslims' minds; Islamic poetry and arts received attention as well.²³

In return, the Muslim world also had various influences on the Christian world. Europe learned the following from Islamic lands: various dishes, syrups, medications, weapons, coats of arms, artistic flair, industrial and commercial tools and traditions as well as rules and

²¹ Durant, *The History of Civilization*, vol.4, pp. 1229-33; also Qurbani *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, p. 320. According to Washington Orumig, "The castle of our civilization was built by the science and technique of capable Muslims'. No matter where the Christian European nations are, they are indebted to Muslims." (*The Muslim World*, p .77; Qurbani, *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, p. 318).

²² Of course, Muslims paid attention to Prophet Jesus Christ mostly because according to the Glorious Qur'an, he was a divinely chosen Prophet sent to guide mankind. Accordingly, the belief in all divine prophets is among the Islamic beliefs and all Prophets are respected and revered by Muslims.

²³ *The History of Civilization*, p.319; also see Qurbani, *The Reasons of Spread of Islam and Muslims' Fall*, pp. 21-2; Pier Russo, *The History of Sciences*, p. 146.

customs of seafaring. Likewise, they borrowed many of their terms from Muslims.²⁴ Having acquired, developed, and boosted various sciences, Muslims transmitted them to Europe and prepared the ground for scientific development in the West.

The cultural and scientific influence of Islam on Europe began after the contacts between the worlds of Islam and Christianity and it increased gradually. These contacts were mostly of three types: a) the contacts established during the Crusades between Muslims and westerners; b) those which were established in Sicily; c) the contacts in Iberia (Andalucía and the present-day Spain) between Muslims and westerners.²⁵ The very recent contacts which Muslims established after the conquest of Spain and Sicily were most productive.

In order to maintain their unstable dominance over the Syrian and Palestinian coasts, crusaders proceeded towards the East in order to conquer Jerusalem. Greatly surprised, they faced a civilization superior to theirs in these lands. Despite the roughly permanent wars either with non-Christians or between Christian princes, which led to horrendous massacres by Christians, some enterprising crusaders tried to acquire parts of this civilization. Some other real scientists who stayed in the lands conquered by Christians got the chance to know a part of Arabic (Islamic) literature. They included a renowned figure, Adelard of Bath, who after a journey to the East and his stay there (in 510-37A.H - 1116-42 A.D) was so deeply influenced by Islamic sciences that this

²⁴ About the impacts of the Islamic civilizations on Europe, see Durant, *The History of Civilization*, p.319; Hunke, *The History of Islam in Europe*, pp. 419-20; Qurbani, *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization*, pp. 309-21; Shakib-Arsalan, *The History of Islamic Conquests in Europe*, pp. 229-305.

²⁵ Aldo Mie Lee, *Islamic Sciences and their Role in the World Scientific Development*, p. 477; Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, pp. 731-5; Durant, *The History of Civilization*, vol.4, section 2, pp. 1229-33. As for the influence of Islam in Spain and the civilization of the Islamic Spain, see *The History of Civilization*, section 1, pp. 372- 90; Joseph Mockups, *The Greatness of Muslims in Spain*, various pages.

influence can be seen in both his own works and his translations of Islamic writings into Latin.²⁶

Although the role assumed by Sicily and southern Italy in transmitting the Islamic sciences to the West was geographically limited, it was deeply influential. African Muslims disembarked in Sicily in 827 A.D / 213 A.H. In 831 A.D / 216 A.H and they conquered Palermo and then Messina in 842 A.D / 228 A.H. Finally, they conquered the entire island in 878 AD. / 265 A.H. Muslims inhabited this island without facing any serious foreign invasion until 1060 A.D / 452 A.H.²⁷

Thanks to the Muslims' control and creation of favorable conditions aimed at the spread of civilization, a unique culture was created in Sicily which existed for many years; three world scientific languages existing then were simultaneously used there. These three languages were Latin, Greek, and Arabic.²⁸ At this point, the highly active trend of translation of various works started due to which many works of Muslim scientists on different fields were translated from Arabic to Latin by Sicilian translators.

Transmission of Islamic sciences to the Christian world was deeper and more intense in Iberia, and longer compared to other places. It was in Iberia that the definite transformation to which the revival of the European sciences had to be linked was realized. The Muslim rulers' spirit of forgiveness and lenience when treating believers in other religions, particularly the Christian and Jewish scientists, caused diverse students to flock to this land. New sciences thrived during this time as a result of the penetration of Islamic sciences into the Christian world through the numerous works of translators. Muslim scientists

²⁶ Aldo Mie Lee, *Islamic Sciences and their Role in the World Scientific Development*, pp. 448-9. About Islamic civilization in Sicily, see Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of Islam and the Arabs*, p. 385- onward.

²⁷ Aldo Mie Lee, *Islamic Sciences and their Role in the World Scientific Development*, p. 491-2.

²⁸ ibid, p. 493.

and European historians agree that the flourishing of the Islamic civilization in Spain awakened the western nations and Christian Europe. It was also the origin of the present scientific and industrial development.²⁹

As for Islamic civilization in Andalucía (Spain), Gustav Le Bon said:

In the era of Visigoth, Andalucía enjoyed limited development and their culture was similar to that of the barbarians. Particularly in the last phase of their conquest, Muslims began to progress; within one hundred years, they completely cultivated and developed the waste lands, built magnificent structures and mansions, and established commercial relations with other nations, then they endeavored to disseminate sciences and crafts and translated Greek and Latin books. They had set up some schools and colleges which the Europeans made use of and benefited from for a long time.³⁰

In Córdoba, the Islamic civilization reached such a peak that in terms of scientific development, it was the honor of all cities around the world for three hundred years. One of the features of the Islamic civilization of that time was that Muslims were extremely eager to acquire the sciences and crafts; they established schools, libraries, and scientific and literary institutes and societies and they also translated Greek books. They continued to successfully master geometry,

²⁹ The European writers believe that through Spain and Sicily, Islam exerted influence over most of the western countries such that it can be said that Islamic influence on the West was greater through Spain and Sicily than through Musil, Baghdad and Cairo. They give two reasons for this claim. First, sciences and cultures of these two religions were not mixed in Syria as they were mixed in Sicily in the time of Roger II and Fredrick II. Second, while Latin Syrians always had access to the Islamic sciences, they were never able to acquire them. In contrast, Christians of the western Mediterranean acquired the sciences and crafts of Córdoba and finally Islamic Spain (*Islamic Heritage*, p. 12).

³⁰ Le Bon, *The Civilization of Islam and the Arabs*, p. 341.

astronomy, natural sciences, chemistry, and medicine. Muslim scholars achieved considerable successes in science and technology, and they could make important discoveries. Trade and industry also reached their zeniths. Minerals, weapons, silk and other fabrics, tanned leather, and sugar were produced there and were taken to Africa and the East by the tradesmen of the time. Muslims proved their talents and capabilities in public services, too. Many roads, bridges, caravanserais, inns, and mosques were built in various areas.³¹

They were superior in not only scientific and technical issues but also in morals, as Sedilo wrote:

In that era, Muslims were superior to Christians in terms of morals as well as science and technology. In all of their states and behaviors, there were such generosity, benevolence, and sacrifice the like of which could not be found in other nations. Among the characteristics that distinguished them from other nations is their respect for mankind, which is considered one of their glories.³²

A valuable human characteristic which Muslims taught or tried to teach Christians was religious leniency with believers of other religions. They treated the conquered nations so leniently that Christians set up the Inquisition in Seville in 782 A.D and in Córdoba in 852 A.D. From the many churches built during the Islamic reign, Muslims showed much respect for the religions of the defeated nations. Hence, many Christians converted to Islam even though it was not necessary because

³¹ ibid, p. 342. The introduction of *The History of Islamic Conquests in Europe*, p. 29. Also, see Durant, *The History of Civilization*, 1st section, pp. 372-90 & “Thought and Art in the Islamic Western Territories”, pp. 303-59. About the spread of Islam among Spanish Christians, see Thomas Arnold, *The History of the Spread of Islam*, pp. 69-105.

³² *The Civilization of the Arabs*, p. 350.

in the Islamic government, Christians and Jews enjoyed the same rights as Muslims and they could hold any position in the court.³³

The Islamic civilization had been shining in the present-day Spain, Portugal, southern France, central Switzerland, western Italy, Sicily and other Mediterranean islands, and Islam had covered all this vast area until the rulers of these Islamic territories became despotic and their power was steadily undermined. They lost their unity and turned into petty kings; as a result, they lost parts of their territory. In 1498 A.D, Ferdinand, the Christian king of Aragón, married Isabella, the queen of Castilian Spanish. This marriage led to the great political unity of two main parts of Spain, that is, Aragón and Castilian Spanish as well as their territorial integrity. This resulted in Spain becoming a powerful country. These two Christian rulers retook the Islamic conquests and the incompetent Muslim kings lost control of them. They had expanded their territory until Granada collapsed in 898 A.H / 1492 A.D. As a result, the last Islamic base in Europe was lost. Thus, this political unity put an end to the Islamic reign in Iberia. In this very year, with the provisions given to him by Ferdinand and Isabella, Christopher Columbus had set out to discover the unknown continent, which was later known as America.³⁴ The interesting point to historians is that the contract of Christopher Columbus's journey to discover the new world was signed in Santafe, which was built by Spaniards during war with Muslims six miles from Granada in 896-97 A.H / 1490-91 A.D. They were glad that it was the only Spanish city which was not contaminated by the so-called Islamic heresy.³⁵ Afterward, Portugal split from Spain and each separately began to

³³ ibid, p. 345.

³⁴ See Amir-Ali, *The History of Arabs and Islam*, p. 523-35; Shakib-Arsalan, *The History of Muslims' Conquests in Africa*, p. 25 of Introduction and p.25-onward; Abdul-Hadi Haeri, *The Early Confrontations of the Iranian thinkers with Bourgeoisie of the Western Civilization*, p. 56; Gustav Le Bon, *The Civilization of the Arabs*, PP. 336-7.

³⁵ Roger B. Merriam, "The Conquest of Granada", in Lewis, *The Islamic World*, p. 142. Also, see Ha'eri, *The Early Confrontations of the Iranian thinkers with Bourgeoisie of the Western Civilization*, p. 56.

discover and colonize different parts of the world. Thereafter, the British, the French, the Dutch and Germans endeavored to colonize various countries. With the revival of Christian nations, new discoveries and inventions after the renaissance, and the industrial revolution and scientific development in Europe, the new western civilization was founded, drawing on Muslims' legacy.

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