

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN
A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES



The Ahlul Bayt (A) World Assembly

www.messageofthaqalayn.com

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN (UK ED.)

ISSN 2045-1040

A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies

Volume 13, Number 3, Autumn 1434/2012

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PUBLISHED BY

Islamic Centre of England
140 Maida Vale, London W9 1QB, UK

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The *Message of Thaqaalayn* 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 Thaqaalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.

Editor-in-Chief

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S MERCY

PART VIII

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: The previous part of these series touched upon the qualities of those who qualify themselves to receive extra mercy from God, namely the patient, the good-doers, the righteous, the repentant, the obedient, and those who migrate and struggle for the sake of God. This last part studies divine mercy as illustrated in the way God rewards. Our happiness in the Hereafter depends on our faith and actions, and we need adequate provisions for the eternal journey ahead. Since it is likely that people tend to exaggerate their few deeds, we may not realize the actual length and duration of this difficult journey. God, out of His vast mercy, assists us in various ways to enable us to obtain sufficient provision. Some characteristics of divine rewarding include: a) rewarding people for good intentions, although not punishing them for bad ones, b) multiplying rewards for good actions, although punishment for bad actions are not multiplied, 3) rewards for recommended deeds as emphasized in hadiths even if the hadiths are not authentic, 4) rewarding the pious according to their best performance and without measure, 5) transformation of sins into good deeds, and 6) forgiving people through intercession and for those who have hope in His forgiveness. In the meantime, people are to maintain a healthy balance between despair and contentment with our actions so as to become hopeful and determined to strive in doing good to tread on the right path towards the infinite God.

Our happiness in the Hereafter depends on our faith, actions, and the qualities we have earned as a result of those actions in this world. We have an eternal journey ahead of us and we need sufficient provisions for it. The longer your journey is, the more provision you need. So we cannot decide whether our provision is sufficient or not unless we know the distance we are going to travel. Thus, we can only understand whether our actions provide us with enough provision for our journey if we understand how long this journey will last. Since we do not have a good understanding of its length and duration, it is likely that we may regard our few actions as sufficient, that we have accumulated enough provision: we have so many prayers (*salāt*), fasts (*sawm*), visits to holy people (*ziyārah*), pilgrimages (*hajj*), and offered abundant charity (*sadaqah*). However, those who have a proper understanding of the distance and of the challenges faced think differently. Imam Ali (a) - with all his sincere worships and great services for Islam - when he looked at this journey and his actions, said:

آه من قلة الزاد و بعد السفر و وحشة الطريق¹

Alas! The provision is so little, the journey is so far-extending, and the path is so lonely.

Imam Ali (a) felt concerned when he remembered his little provision on the one hand and the far journey to be made in loneliness on the other. This is a journey that everyone is obliged to make for himself. Though a person may have companions, everyone will carry his own burden. The Qur'an repeatedly says, "...no bearer shall bear another's burden." In another verse, we read:

Say, 'Shall I seek a Lord other than God, while He is the Lord of all things'? No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform

¹ *Sharh Nahj al-Balāqah*, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 18, p. 226.

*you concerning that about which you used to differ.
(6:164)*

No bearer shall bear another's burden, and should one heavily burdened call [another] to carry it, nothing of it will be carried, even if he were a near relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord in secret, and maintain the prayer. Whoever purifies himself, purifies only for his own sake, and to God is the return. (35:18)

Elsewhere Imam Ali (a) says:

آه مِنْ قَلَّةِ الزَّادِ وَ طُولِ الطَّرِيقِ وَ بُعْدِ السَّفَرِ وَ عَظِيمِ الْمَوْرَدِ²

Alas! The provision is so little, the way is so long, the journey is so far, and the place to which we will be exposed is so great.³

When Salman al-Farsi died, Imam Ali (a) wrote on his grave:

وفدت على الكريم بغير زاد
من الحسنات والقلب السليم
فحمل الزاد أقبح كل شيء
إذا كان الوفود على الكريم⁴

I have called the generous without any provision of good actions and without having pure heart.

Carrying your provision with you is wrong when you are going to be hosted by the generous.

Thus, knowing that the journey is very difficult, Allah (swt), out of His mercy, helps us in different ways so as to enable us to obtain sufficient

² Ibid., vol. 18, p. 224.

³ This refers to the verses 19:71 & 72: *There is none of you but will come to it: a [matter that is a] decided certainty with your Lord. Then We will deliver those who are Godwary, and leave the wrongdoers in it, fallen on their knees.*

⁴ منهاج البراعة في شرح نهج البلاغة و تكملة منهاج البراعة ج 6 ص 63

provision. When we understand the way Allah (swt) rewards, we will simultaneously never despair nor become proud of our actions. This balanced understanding gives abundant hope and determination to do as much good as possible to continue our journey towards the infinite God. Even if we can do one more good action, we should do it, and although we know that our action by itself may not be significant, we would not become hopeless nor lose any opportunity to do a little more, because even minute actions, after they are accepted and grown by God, become significant. It is like when someone tells us that if we put \$1 he will add \$999, the total amounting to \$1000. Although \$1 is not worthy, it is significant to bring it because that was the only way to have \$1000. We have to bring our little contribution, and then God will multiply it, but if we bring zero, even if it is multiplied thousands of times, it will remain zero.

Characteristics of divine rewarding

1. God's reward is comprehensive in the sense that no good action will be neglected, even if it is very little. In many verses, the Qur'an indicates that all that you do would be taken into account. Of course, everything good that we do comes from Him, because I and all else at my disposal belong to Him and therefore I do not deserve any reward from Him; still, He assures me that I will be rewarded:

أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Allah never wastes (ignores) the reward of the believers. (3:171)

إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ

The people who are righteous, we don't waste their reward. (7:170)

In many verses, Allah (swt) asks us not to worry as to whether His reward will be wated or forgotten. Since He knows we tend to quickly doubt, and perhaps subconsciously about all that we are promised even by someone like God, He constantly reassures us. Although we may not be able see His reward right now, this would not make the reality different. When you are sure about something e.g. because a truthful person has informed you about it or an intellectual argument has led to it you should not let your acquaintance with sensual objects make you doubt.

2. His reward is tremendous. In several places, the Qur'an says:

نِعْمَ (فَنِعْمَ) أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ

How excellent is the reward of the workers [of righteousness]! (3:136; 29:58; 39:74)

3. Several verses in the Qur'an mention God's reward as *karim*, meaning 'generous' or 'noble':

فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ

You can only warn someone who follows the Reminder and fears the All-beneficent in secret; so give him the good news of forgiveness and a noble reward. (36:11)⁵

4. His reward is 'azim, or 'great':

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

Those who responded to God and the Apostle [even] after they had been wounded — for those of them who

⁵ See also verses 33:44; 57:11; 57:18.

have been virtuous and Godwary there shall be a great reward. (3:172)⁶

5. His reward is also *kabir*, or ‘big/mighty’:

لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ

...excepting those who are patient and do righteous deeds. For such there will be forgiveness and a great reward. (11:11)⁷

6. His reward is *hasan*, or ‘good’:

لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا

...[a Book] upright, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give good news to the faithful who do righteous deeds, that there shall be for them a good reward, to abide in it forever (18:2 & 3)⁸

7. His reward is enduring and everlasting:

لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds, there will be an everlasting reward for them. (41:8)⁹

8. His reward is ready and prepared:

أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا

⁶ See also verses 3:179; 4: 40, 67, 74, 95, 114, 146 & 162; 5:9 & 28; 9:22; 33: 29 & 35; 48: 10 & 29; 49:3; 64:15.

⁷ See also verses 17:9; 35:7; 57:7; 67:12.

⁸ See also verses 48:16

⁹ See also verses 68:3; 84:25; 95:6.

And remember what is recited in your homes of the signs of God and wisdom. Indeed God is all-attentive, all-aware. (33:34)

This is similar to parents promising their child a bicycle as a reward for a good exam score; until he succeeds and the parents actually buy him the bicycle, he is apprehensive as to whether his parents will keep their promise or if they have enough money. But another way to eliminate that worry is to buy the bicycle beforehand, and place it in the house to motivate the child to study well to achieve a high score. Likewise, Allah (s) prepares our reward ahead of time, and it awaits us:

أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

And hasten towards your Lord's forgiveness and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the Godwary (3:133).¹⁰

Heaven is ready and already created although it is not fixed. It is not until after the Day of Judgment that these rewards would be permanent. So, heaven is there and the reward of the good people is there.

Allah (swt) rewards people for their good intentions and does not punish the bad ones

Allah (s) rewards for good intentions, although He does not punish for bad ones. Although the one who intends to disobey Allah (swt) still deserves some kind of punishment, Allah (swt) would not punish him as long as one has not performed prohibited acts (*harām*). This is a general rule, though there might be exceptions.

Regarding good intentions, say you make your way to help a needy person by giving him money or food; when you reach the person's

¹⁰ See also 57:21.

house only to find that he or she has already been given sustenance and would not accept your offer. Though you leave without giving anything, because of your good intention, Allah (swt) rewards you.

Or you want to go to the mosque for the much-rewarded congregational prayer (*Salāt al-Jamā'ah*) and the moment you arrive, the leader of the prayer (*Imam*) is not present. Again, Allah (swt) will reward you because of your intention. The same goes for a person who fervently desires to go for the hajj pilgrimage yet cannot afford it. Because of your good intention, Allah (swt) rewards you.

Having good intentions before any action is vital for spiritual development. People should strive to have great intentions such as going the extra mile to help others by being compassionate and considerate towards them. Making such intentions along with doing as much as you can to complete the task will earn you rewards for the rest.

Allah (swt) multiplies rewards for good actions; the punishment for bad actions are not multiplied

If someone is going to be punished for sinning, his penalty would be equal to the sin committed. There is one penalty for every prohibited act (*harām*). One *harām* act leads to one punishment, and two *harāms* lead to two punishments. However, Allah rewards for good actions at least ten times more:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَثْمَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (6:160)

And His bestowal of rewards does not end there, as multiplying rewards by ten times is the minimum increase:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ
مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of God is that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. God multiplies for whom He pleases, and God is all-bounteous, all-knowing. (2:261)

Thus, one good action is similar to one seed that will become seven hundred, and still Allah (swt) may multiply this, as He says, “*God multiplies for whom He pleases.*” This possibly means that seven hundred may become fourteen hundred, and then twenty one hundred.

A hadith in *Mafātih al-Jinan* narrates that if a person asks for forgiveness seventy times each day of the month of *Sha‘bān*, it is similar to asking forgiveness 70,000 times in other months. What is more, God treats the charity (*sadaqah*) given in this month like a baby camel; He is responsible for its development and looks after it. On the Day of Judgment, people will see their *sadaqah* grow into the magnitude of Mount Uhud. Thus, spending a mere pound does not earn you one pound in return from Allah. Allah invests in your one pound to a great degree, perhaps earning you one million pounds in return on the Day of Judgment. And yet our one sin earns us a punishment to the extent of that action.

God’s mercy is manifested even more during the Month of Ramadan. Reciting one verse of the Qur’an is like reciting the entire book. Simply being a believer (*mu’min*) during this month is sufficient to earn some rewards. Your sleeping is rewarded as an act of worship -

and your breathing is rewarded as an act of glorification of Allah (swt) - ¹¹نَوْمُكُمْ فِيهِ عِبَادَةٌ
¹²أَنْفَاسُكُمْ فِيهِ تَسْبِيحٌ.

When it comes to the Night of Measure, or *Laylat al-Qadr*, the way Allah (swt) rewards is beyond belief. In a beautiful hadith from Imam *Baqir* (a) about *Laylat al-Qadr*, a person asked the Imam (a) to explain the notion of this night being better than one thousand months (97:3). The Imam (a) replied:

الْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ فِيهَا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ وَالرَّكَاةِ وَأَنْوَاعِ الْخَيْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ فِي أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ
لَيْسَ¹³ فِيهَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ، وَ لَوْلَا مَا يُضَاعَفُ اللَّهُ- تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى- لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ، مَا
بَلَغُوا¹⁴، وَ لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمُ الْحَسَنَاتِ

Whatever good action you do in *Laylat al-Qadr*, whether it is prayer (*salāt*), charity (*zakāt*), or other good deeds, is better than doing the same deed over a period of one thousand months in which there would be no *Laylat al-Qadr*. Had it not been that that Allah, the Blessed and the High, multiplies for the believers, they would never reach a high level. But He multiplies their good actions for them.¹⁵

Performing a two-rak'at prayer in *Laylat al-Qadr* is rewarded more than reciting a two-rak'at prayer every night in one thousand months. Spending one pound in charity in *Laylat al-Qadr* is better than giving one pound every night for one thousand months. Afterwards, Imam *Baqir* said, "Had it not been that that Allah, the Blessed and the High,

¹¹ *Wasā'il-u Shī'a*, vol. 10 p. 313

¹² *Ibid.* vol. 10 p. 313

¹³ في الفقيه: -/« فيها من الصلاة - إلى - شهر ليس».

¹⁴ في مرآة العقول: « قوله عليه السلام: ما بلغوا، أي غاية الفضل و الثواب».

¹⁵ *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 7, p. 626, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 20, p. 334

multiplies for the believers, they would have never reached [their perfection or heaven].”¹⁶

Thus, Allah (swt), who is aware of our neediness and how limited our provision for our eternal journey is, offers golden opportunities to perform our best, and once it is performed, He grows the results. In addition to the general way of multiplying His reward for good actions, He has introduced to us the times, places, and conditions which are especially fertile. In each day, week, and year, there are moments in which the chance of your payer being accepted is more, receiving forgiveness is easier, and His reward is more generous. To mention a few examples of such blessed times, places, and conditions, one may refer to midday (*zawāl* time: when the sun moves from the middle of sky towards the west), the last one third of night (before dawn), the night of Friday (*Jumu'a*), the first and last hours of Friday, the Day of 'Arafah, the middle of *Sha'bān*, *Laylat al-Qadr*, mosques, holy sites like *Masjid al-Harām* in Mecca and *Masjid al-Nabi* in Medina, and after the performance of ritual prayers, especially congregational prayers.

Allah (swt) rewards those who perform actions which are recommended in some hadiths, even if the hadiths are unauthentic

The rule of compromise regarding the sources that indicate recommended actions (*Qā'idah al-Tasāmuh Fi Adillah al-Sunan*) in the science of Principles of Jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) implies that if someone receives a hadith in which divine reward is promised for performing a given action and acts upon that hadith, he will be given the same reward, even if that hadith is not authentic. The ground for this rule is a set of hadiths from Prophet Muhamamd (s) and Imams (a) one of which reads:

¹⁶ *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 7, p. 626, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 20, p. 334

مَنْ بَلَغَهُ شَيْءٌ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ عَلَى (شَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ) فَعَمِلَهُ كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرُ ذَلِكَ (وَ إِنْ كَانَ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص لَمْ يَقُلْهُ)

Whoever receives some narration about a reward for performing a good action and he actually performs that action in order to get that reward, he will be given that reward even if that narration was not said by the Messenger of God.¹⁷

Thus, if you hear or read a hadith that, for example, recommends a certain prayer in the *Laylat al-Qadr* because it earns a special reward and a person actually reads the prayer, he or she would be given that reward even if that hadith was mistaken or forged. Of course, the narration and the recommended action must be in themselves reasonable and in compliance with the Qur'an, established sunnah, and reason.¹⁸

Allah's generosity is very apparent. When you hear of a good act of worship that you think is reasonable and pleasing to Allah and you perform it, Allah (swt) would accept it and reward you for it even if it was not in reality what He had prescribed for you through His Messenger. Allah (swt) accepts this because you did it for His sake. It is similar to a person who assumes you are thirsty when you are actually not and as a result brings you water; though you did not need it, you still thank him. Of course, you may not treat him like the one who brings you water when you really want it. However, Allah (swt) rewards such people equally. Allah (swt) means to tell us that since our intention was to do something good, He will reward us as a result given His kindness and generosity.

¹⁷ *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 1, p. 80 & vol. 30, p. 246. There is a chapter about this issue in vol. 1, pp. 8-82 which has ten hadiths.

¹⁸ Of course, everyone has to be careful, not to accept everything, because there are many superstitions or ideas that make no sense which are clearly far from truth and no one should act upon such narrations.

Allah (swt) rewards the pious according to their best performance

Another aspect of Allah's generous reward system is that He takes the best action for those who are pious, that is, those who have faith and do righteous deeds, as a measure by which He rewards all other instances of the same type of action that they have had in their life:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, —We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do. (16:97)

According to this verse, Allah (swt) gives those who have faith and righteous deeds a pleasant life (*al-hayāt al-tayyibah*) and will be rewarded according to the best of their actions. If you have reached this level of piety, Allah (swt) looks at all their deeds such as the thousands of *salāts* they may have performed during their lives, chooses the best one, and then rewards all their *salāts* accordingly. There might be only one special *salāt* in which you were focused, pure, and connected to Allah (s), and yet Allah (swt) makes that one the criterion by which He rewards all your *salāts*. If one act of charity was the best, He will reward all your charitable actions similarly.

This should also motivate us to be very careful about our actions. Some people may take advantage of this and regard their very good action - such as one good *salāt* in the past - as sufficient for Allah to reward all of their future *salat* thus so; they no longer need to worry about the quality of their *salāt*. However, this is a wrong approach. Indeed, if someone thinks this way, this reveals that he is not one of the pious

who have been given the pleasant life (*al-hayāt al-tayyibah*). Those who qualify for it continuously try to improve. They are hardly pleased with their acts of worship, and even if they feel one of them was good, they try to improve with the next one. They constantly raise their standards, especially because they know that improving the next performance can improve all their actions of the same type. For example, Allah observes the extent to which a person is conscious and careful to improve his prayers, and with every improved performance, He takes it as a measure by which He would reward all of his prayers.

Allah (swt) rewards the patient without measure

According to the Qur'an, there are people whom Allah (swt) rewards them without measure, which is evidently much more than giving a multiplied reward:

إِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّي الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Say, [God declares:] 'O My servants who have faith! Be wary of your Lord. For those who do good in this world there will be a good [reward], and God's earth is vast. Indeed the patient will be paid in full their reward without measure.' (39:10)¹⁹

¹⁹ This is about rewarding. There are also verses that promise unlimited provision or sustenance for certain people. The Qur'an says:

In houses God has allowed to be raised and wherein His Name is celebrated, He is glorified therein, morning and evening, by men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of God, and the maintenance of prayer and the giving of zakat. They are fearful of a day wherein the heart and the sight will be transformed, so that God may reward them for the best of what they have done, and enhance them out of His grace, and God provides for whomever He wishes without measure. (24:36-38)

Worldly life has been glamorized for the faithless, and they ridicule the faithful. But those who are Godwary shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection, and God provides for whomever He wishes without any reckoning. (2:212)

Here, the promised reward is not ten times more, or 1000 times more, or one million times more. *It is without measure.*

Allah (swt) is most forgiving

In addition to His generous rewards, Allah (swt) deals with sins or people with mercy and kindness. He assures the sinners that if they sincerely regret and repent, He will forgive them. When people go to the plane of 'Arafāt on the day of Arafah, all their sins will be forgiven, and by the time they leave 'Arafāt to go to *Mash'ar al-Harām* they must not have any doubt about the forgiveness of their sins. It has been narrated that Allah (swt) frees one million people from the hellfire each and every day in the month of Ramadan at the time of breaking the fast. On the night and day of Friday, Allah (swt) frees one million people during each hour. In the night and day at the end of the month, Allah (swt) frees people equal to whatever He has given during the month.

Different types of forgiveness

Upon reflection on the Qur'anic verses on forgiveness of sins by God, divine forgiveness can be classified into four types:

- a. ***Simple forgiveness*** - verses that refer simply to divine forgiveness such as the following:

Indeed God does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes. And whoever ascribes partners to

The above verses, indicate that God provides for whomever He wishes without measure. Although these verses do not explicitly introduce those God wishes to provide without measure, the following verse clearly suggests that those are the believers who do righteous deeds:

Whoever commits a misdeed shall not be requited except with its like, but whoever acts righteously, whether male or female, should he be faithful — such shall enter paradise, provided therein without measure. (40:40)

*God has indeed fabricated [a lie] in great sinfulness.
(4:48 & 4:116)*

*Whoever commits evil or wrongs himself and then pleads
God for forgiveness, will find God all-forgiving, al-
merciful. (4:110)*

- b. **Covering the sin** - Sometimes not only the sin is forgiven, but it is also covered by Allah (swt). Thus, on the Day of Judgment, no one would be able to find out the sin which this person had committed because it has been covered. This is preferable to people reading your record of the deeds and discovering your wrongdoings, even though they are forgiven. For example, the Qur'an says:

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَبِعَمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ
عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

If you disclose your charities, that is well, but if you hide them and give them to the poor, that is better for you, and it will atone for some of your misdeeds, and God is well aware of what you do. (2:271)²⁰

- c. **Wiping out sins** - According to Islamic sources, Allah (swt) may wipe out the sins and bad actions of certain people. This seems to be a kind of forgiveness which is more than simple forgiveness or even forgiveness with covering and hiding the sins, because here the sins are totally wiped out with no trace of them remaining. This is like an error in someone's writing that might be underlined and then forgiven by the teacher or might be forgiven and tippexed by the teacher. The advantage of the latter is that the corrected error would not be known by others and the one who has been forgiven would not be reminded of his sin. However, there is a worry that

²⁰ See also 4:31; 8:28; 29:7; 39:35; 64:9; 65:5.

this cover may be removed and the sins under it might be disclosed. Even when there is a cover, such as when correction liquid is put on the errors, it indicates that there was problem before. Thus a more powerful form of forgiveness is to entirely wipe out the error. For example, Imam Sadiq (s) is quoted as saying:

للجمعة حقا واجبا فإياك أن تضيع أو تقصر في شيء من عبادة الله تعالى و التقرب إليه بالعمل الصالح و ترك المحارم كلها فإن الله تعالى يضاعف فيه الحسنات و يمحو فيه السيئات و يرفع فيه الدرجات و ليلته مثل يومه فإن استطعت أن تحييها بالدعاء و الصلاة فافعل فإن الله تعالى يضاعف فيها الحسنات و يمحو السيئات و إن الله واسع كريم

Friday has an obligatory right. Be careful not to miss it or to do little in worshipping Allah (swt) and getting closer to Him through righteous deeds and refraining from all sins. Truly, Allah (swt) multiplies good actions and wipes out the sins on this day, and ranks will be elevated. Its night is like its day. If you are able to revive it by supplicating and saying prayer, do so, because Allah (swt) multiplies in it good deeds and wipes out the bad deeds. Truly Allah is All-bounteous, Generous.²¹

We also read in a hadith from Imam Baqir (a):

التَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ

The one who [sincerely] repents is like the one who has never done any sin.²²

d. **Transformation of sins into good deeds** - According to the Qur'an and hadith, not only does Allah (swt) forgives the sins of

²¹ *Al-Tawhid*, p. 167; *Al-Da'awāt*, p. 37.

²² *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 435, *Bihār Al-Anwār*, vol. 6, p. 21/41 & vol. 90, p. 281.

those who repent, but He may also transform their bad deeds into good ones:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Excepting those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, God will replace their misdeeds with good deeds, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (He wipes out the sins) and in each place writes down a good action. (25:70)

This is much more than forgiving sins and wiping them out. In this way, Allah (swt) actually replaces their sins with good actions and rewards them for these good sins. Not only will they not be punished for their sins, but they will be able to recover at least part of their loss. Certainly everyone who does not harvest good in his life is in loss, even if he does not do anything sinful. This is similar to a student who returns his exam papers while it is blank. Interestingly, it can be understood from a saying of Imam Sajjad (a) that good deeds which are replaced with bad actions might still be multiplied like the good actions of the pious. Imam Sajjād (a) addresses Allah (swt) in one of his supplications:

يَا مُبَدِّلَ السَّيِّئَاتِ بِأَضْعَافِهَا مِنَ الْحَسَنَاتِ

O He who changes evil deeds into manifold good deeds!²³

Not only does He replace good actions with bad actions, but He changes bad actions into manifold good actions. For example, one who has spent one pound sinfully after repentance and receiving this type of treatment from Allah (swt), he would receive rewards for spending

²³ *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Supplication Twenty-Four.

several points in good purposes in the record of his deeds on the Day of Judgement.

Reflecting on a) the types of people who would be forgiven, b) the types of people who would have their sins covered, c) those who have sins that have been wiped out, and d) those who would see their sins changed into a manifold of good actions, it might be inferred that if someone who has sincerely committed sins regrets and decides not to repeat them, his sins will be forgiven. As far as Allah (swt) is concerned, there is no doubt about this. The repentant's comprehension would increase resulting in the strength of his regret. He feels ashamed because although his sins are forgiven, he continues to ponder over his condition on the Day of Judgment, when he will stand in front of Allah (swt) and the witnesses as his sins are being read to him. Although they will finally be forgiven, he would worry about his honor and tell himself, "It is disgraceful and shameful to me that before God's forgiveness is announced, my sins will be read in the presence of the Prophet, Imams, and the general public." For such people, Allah hides or even erases their bad deeds.

As his understanding increases knowing that Allah (swt) has forgiven him and has promised to preserve his honour, what about the time and opportunities he wasted? He could have taken many provisions during those years for his eternal journey. For such people, Allah (swt) transforms their bad actions to good ones to prevent them worrying too much about their provision. But there is still a chance to develop their understanding and think that it is great that their bad actions have been changed into good actions, although we are still losing because those with good actions have been multiplied at least ten times, but our newly given good actions are not multiplied. It might be for such people that Allah (swt) changes their bad deeds into multiplied good actions.

Thus, depending on the increase of your understanding, He gives you more. Of course, this is the author's humble view about one possibility in explaining the different ways of divine forgiveness. Although this makes sense, it is not to be taken as a proof. So depending on your understanding and on your worries, Allah (swt) would help you, and this is another dimension of His mercy and generosity.

Allah (swt) does not punish anyone for another person's bad action, but He may forgive a sinner for another person's good action

Another aspect of divine mercy is that sometimes Allah (s) forgives someone for the sake of another person. For example, the Qur'an says:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَا أَلَتْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَمَلِهِمْ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِينٌ

The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith —We will make their descendants join them, and We will not stint anything from [the reward of] their deeds. Every man is a hostage to what he has earned. (52:21)

For pious parents who have children who are believers, although not too pious or do not possess enough good deeds to enable all of them to assemble in heaven. However, Allah (swt) is so kind that He spends from the rewards of the pious parents on their children without any reduction of rewards in the parent's account. It is not that Allah (swt) reduces the ten good actions of a believer and gives five to the parents and five to his or her child to elevate them. Rather, He would upgrade the child without reducing the good actions and the corresponding rewards of the parents. Commenting on the above verse, Imam Sadiq (a) said:

قَصَرَتِ الْأَبْنَاءُ عَنْ عَمَلِ الْأَبَاءِ فَأَلْحَقُوا الْأَبْنَاءَ بِالْأَبَاءِ لِتَقَرَّ بِذَلِكَ أَعْيُنُهُمْ

Sometimes children's actions fall short of the actions of their fathers, but the children will be allowed to join them to delight their parents.²⁴

Ibn Abbas narrates from Prophet Muhammad (s):

إذا دخل الرجل الجنة سأل عن ابويه و زوجته و ولده، فيقال له انهم لم يبلغوا درجتك و عملك، فيقول رب قد عملت لى و لهم فيؤمر بالحاقهم به

When a man enters heaven, he will ask about his parents, wife, and children. He might be told that they have not reached your rank and deeds. He will say, "My Lord! Whatever I did, it was for myself and for them." At this point, God will command to let them join him.²⁵

The Qur'an also informs us about the prayer of the angels for believers:

اللَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ
الْجَحِيمِ رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ
وُدُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَمَنْ تَقِ السَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهُ
وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Those who bear the Throne, and those around it, celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him, and they plead for forgiveness for the faithful: 'Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent and follow Your

²⁴ *Al- Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 249, *Al-Tawhid*, p. 394.

²⁵ *Al-Mizān*, vol. 19, p. 16, cited from *Al-Durr al-Manthur* by Jalal al-Din Suyuti.

way and save them from the punishment of hell. Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of Eden, which You have promised them, along with whoever is righteous among their forebears, their spouses and their descendants. Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise. Save them from the ills; and whomever You save from the ills that day, You will have had mercy upon him, and that is the great success.’ (40:7-9)

Commenting on the above verses, Allamah Tabataba’i maintains that they refer to two groups of the believers: One consists of those who are complete (*al-kāmilūn*) in their faith and practice; the other refers to some of the relatives of the first group who are lower in their rank, since their faith and practice are incomplete. The angels request Allah (swt) to forgive the former and give them the heaven that He had promised them. They also request Him to let the latter join the former to save them from evils.²⁶

It does not seem plausible to think that Allah (swt) would let these great angels down by rejecting their requests. Indeed, it is Allah (swt) Himself who inspired them to pray to Him in this way. Similarly, Allah asks Prophet Muhammad to ask forgiveness for the people.²⁷

²⁶ See *Al-Mizān*, vol. 17, p. 310. The original Arabic text is as follows:

و يظهر منه أن الطائفة الأولى هم الكاملون في الإيمان والعمل على ما هو مقتضى حقيقة معنى قولهم: «الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَ اتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ» فذكروهم و سألوه أن يغفر لهم و ينجز لهم ما وعدهم من جنات عدن، و الطائفة الثانية دون هؤلاء في المنزلة ممن لم يستكمل الإيمان والعمل من ناقص الإيمان و مستضعف و سبى العمل من منسوبي الطائفة الأولى فذكروهم و سألوه تعالى أن يلحقهم بالطائفة الأولى الكاملين في جناتهم و يقبهم السيئات فالآية في معنى قوله تعالى: «وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ اتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَ مَا أَلْتَنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ»؛ الطور:- 21 غير أن الآية التي نحن فيها أوسع و أشمل لشمولها الأبناء و الأزواج بخلاف آية سورة الطور، و المأخوذ فيها الصلوح و هو أعم من الإيمان المأخوذ في آية الطور.

²⁷ “It is by God’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God. Indeed God loves those who trust in Him. (3:159)

Allah (swt) forgives through intercession

Allah (swt) forgives the major sins of those who please to Him through intercession (*shafā'ah*). The Qur'an says:

Intercession is of no avail with Him except for those whom He permits. When fear is lifted from their hearts, they say, 'What did your Lord say?' They say, 'The truth, and He is the All-exalted, the All-great.' (34:23)

Every soul is hostage to what it has earned, except the People of the Right Hand. [They will be] in gardens, questioning concerning the guilty: 'What drew you into Hell?' They will answer, 'We were not among those who prayed. Nor did we feed the poor. We used to gossip along with the gossipers, and we used to deny the Day of Retribution, until death came to us.' So the intercession of the intercessors will not avail them. (74:38-48)

Commenting on this verse, Allamah Tabataba'i argues that the sinful people are either qualified to receive intercession so that they can be forgiven or they disqualify themselves for receiving intercession and therefore will remain hostage to their sins and will suffer in hell. Allamah also refers to a well-known hadith of Prophet Muhammad (s) in which he is quoted as saying:

ادَّخَرْتُ شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي

I have reserved my intercession for those from my nation who have committed major sins.²⁸

Those who will be given the right to intercede are also certainly pleasing Him. The Qur'an says:

²⁸ *Bihār al- Anwār*, vol. 8, pp. 30 & 62.

Intercession will not avail that day except from him whom the All-beneficent allows and approves of his word. (20:109)²⁹

Thus, Allah's (swt) is very merciful and generous and therefore He may even forgive those who are sinful and condemned to hell.

Allah (swt) forgives those who have hope in His forgiveness

According to many hadiths, Allah (swt) treats people in a way that they expect Him to treat them. Of course, this is one factor that is to be balanced with other factors as well; no single factor should be considered in understanding how Allah (swt) will treat people. Thus, there is a big chance that God will indeed forgive those who have hope in His mercy and believe that He will forgive them. In a beautiful hadith from Imam Sadiq (a) we read:

إِنَّ آخِرَ عَبْدٍ يُؤْمَرُ بِهِ إِلَى النَّارِ يَلْتَفِتُ فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ أَعْجَلُوهُ فَإِذَا أُتِيَ بِهِ قَالَ لَهُ يَا عَبْدِي لِمَ التَفَتَ فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ مَا كَانَ ظَنِّي بِكَ هَذَا فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ عَبْدِي وَمَا كَانَ ظَنُّكَ بِي فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ كَانَ ظَنِّي بِكَ أَنْ تَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي وَ تُسَكِّنِي [تُدْخِلَنِي] جَنَّتِكَ فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ مَلَائِكَتِي وَ عِزَّتِي وَ آلَانِي وَ بِلَانِي وَ ارْتِفَاعِ مَكَانِي مَا ظَنَّ بِي هَذَا سَاعَةً مِنْ حَيَاتِهِ خَيْرًا قَطُّ وَ لَوْ ظَنَّ بِي سَاعَةً مِنْ حَيَاتِهِ خَيْرًا مَا رَوَّعْتُهُ بِالنَّارِ أَجْبِرُوا لَهُ كَذِبَهُ وَ أَدْخِلُوهُ الْجَنَّةَ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَا ظَنَّ عَبْدٌ بِاللَّهِ خَيْرًا إِلَّا كَانَ اللَّهُ عِنْدَ ظَنِّهِ بِهِ وَ لَا ظَنَّ بِهِ سُوءًا إِلَّا كَانَ اللَّهُ عِنْدَ ظَنِّهِ بِهِ وَ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ ذَلِكَمَ ظَنُّكُمْ الَّذِي ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

The last servant who is asked to be sent to hell turns his face back. Allah, the Almighty ('azza wa jallah), will ask to stop him, and when he is brought back, He will ask him: "My servant! Why did you turn back?" The person would reply:

²⁹ See also the verse 43:86.

“My Lord! This was not what I had expected from you.” Allah, the Almighty (*jalla jalāluhu*), will ask him: “What did you expect from Me?” He would reply: “My Lord! My expectation from You was that You would forgive my sins and settle [enter] me Your heaven.” At that point, Allah will say: “My angels! By My dignity, My bounties, My trials and My High position, he has never had in his life a good opinion about Me. Had he had done so I would not have frightened him by [sending him towards] hell. Accept his lie and allow him to enter heaven!”

Then Imam Sadiq (a) said: “No servant of Allah forms a good opinion about Allah except that he would find Allah treating him as he thought and no servant of Allah forms a bad opinion about Allah except that he would find Allah treating him as he thought. This is what can be understood from the verse: *“And that was your (evil) thought which you entertained about your Lord that has tumbled you down into perdition, so are you become of the lost ones.”*³⁰

This is His mercy and generosity and this is why when Imam Sajjād (a) was told about Hasan al-Basri’s statement: “It is not a wonder how some people are destroyed; it is a wonder how anyone can be saved,” The Imam said: “I say, ‘It is not a wonder how some are saved. It is a wonder how some are destroyed despite Allah’s inclusive mercy’.”³¹ Thus, those who go to hell are those who have disqualified themselves and eventually would not benefit from His great mercy. They are

³⁰ *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 7, p. 287. There is a chapter on what will become manifest on the Day of Judgement from His mercy. The above hadith is the third hadith of this chapter. All the nine hadiths in this chapter worth reflection for better understanding divine mercy and some of the ideas discussed above like forgiving the sins, erasing sins from one’s record of deeds and transformation of sins into good deeds.

³¹ *Ibid.* vol. 75, p. 154. The hadith is as follows:

قِيلَ لَهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَ الْبَصْرِيَّ قَالَ لَيْسَ الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ هَلَكَ كَيْفَ هَلَكَ وَ إِنَّمَا الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ نَجَا
كَيْفَ نَجَا فَقَالَ ع أَنَا أَقُولُ لَيْسَ الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ نَجَا كَيْفَ نَجَا وَ أَمَا الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ هَلَكَ كَيْفَ هَلَكَ مَعَ
سَعَةِ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ

condemned to hell, and indeed hell will suffer from them. You might have experienced that sometimes you have to deal with some people who hurt you like fire or even more severely; fire burns your skin, but these people burn your heart, mind and everything that you have. Perhaps this is why they can become the fuel for the fire of hell (2:24; 3:10; 66:6) which can burn even one's heart (104:6 & 7). So, what keeps fire of hell igniting seems to be only such people.

Final remark: Although this world and the Day of Judgement are all manifestations of His great mercy, it will only be in heaven that His mercy can become manifest in the best possible way, since there is no barrier or restriction involved. This world is too limited without a chance to have everything: heaven has limitless. Whatever you want God will give you (39:34; 42:22) and even more (50:35). With our limited understand and our desire for petty things in comparison to His vast generosity, God does not merely give us what we want: He first gives whatever you desire and then offers you the extra rewards He has prepared and kept hidden as a surprise:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

No one knows what has been kept hidden for them of comfort as a reward for what they used to do. (32:17)

May Allah (swt) enable us to better understand and benefit more from His mercy, and may we receive more of it and become the channel for His mercy to reach people. Allah looks for agents to spread His mercy. Who is ready to become His agent? If you become his agent, He gives you so abundantly that His mercy will overflow from you to others, like Prophet Mohammad (s) (3:159; 21:107). May Allah (swt) forgive all our sins and mistakes and may He (swt) continually keep us on the right path.

Conclusion

In this series of eight papers, we studied some aspects of the Islamic understanding of God's mercy. We studied different names and qualities of God and demonstrated that those which relate to His mercy are by far the most emphasized ones. Then we studied some of the characteristics of divine mercy and argued that His mercy is the reason for creating the world. Out of His mercy, God has created us and all that we need for our survival and convenience and provided us with Prophets and divine messages for guidance. We also referred to the different types of mercy God has provided mankind in order to be able to successfully tread the right path. Some people appreciate and some do not. Those who do not appreciate deprive themselves from further mercy; those who appreciate God will give them extra and additional mercy. Finally, we studied how God treats people with His mercy on the Day of Judgment with respect to the generous reward in which He will demonstrate His vast forgiveness.

Thus, several aspects of God's mercy were touched upon in these series: 1) divine mercy as that which plays a central role in Islamic spirituality and morality, 2) the implications of Allah's attributes, such as *al-Rahmān* and *al-Rahim*, as well as His coexisting attributes of mercy and power with a connection to Allah's objective in His creation, 3) attributes such as His generosity, forgiveness, and kindness with further descriptions of His mercy connected to His knowledge and richness, 4) God's mercy in making various arrangements for our survival and convenience on Earth, such as creating the stars, maintaining the sky, and delivering us from misfortunes; and God's mercy in human guidance as He sent humankind messengers with the impeccable qualities of empathy and gentleness, 5) God arrangement for different kinds of support in people's spiritual life, such as protection from Satan, misguidance, and from the tempting soul, 6) the different types and levels of divine forgiveness, how God may even

transform one's immoral deeds into good ones, people's response to divine mercy, and additional mercy for the patient, 7) the people who qualify themselves to receive extra mercy from God, some of the qualities being the patient, the good-doers, the righteous, the repentant, the obedient, and those who migrate and struggle for the sake of God, and 8) God's forgiveness and generous reward.

THE PROLONGED LIFESPAN OF IMAM MAHDI (AJ)

ZAINAB MUSAWI

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN AND STAFF

ABSTRACT: The duration of the longevity of Imam Mahdi's life has been an area of disagreement among several Sunni and Shi'i scholars. The findings of this research are based on the Qur'anic verses, Shi'a and Sunni hadith, biological and medical law, and historical documents. These findings reveal that it is possible to live an exceedingly long life, as the Prophet Noah, the Men of the Cave, and Prophet Khidr are among those who have done so. Longevity, with its conditions, is also possible according to biological and medical law, and history has witnessed those who were not prophets who have lived prolonged lives. Moreover, the longevity of Imam Mahdi is not considered unnatural and opposed to the Holy Qur'an and hadith.

Statement of the problem

Opponents have always attacked the belief in a hidden Imam – one of the strong opinions of the Shi'a Muslims.¹ Given reliable hadiths, besides belief in the previous eleven present Imams, the Shi'a believe in the presence and influence of the hidden Imam and consider it an obligation to answer to its misconceptions.

¹ Those who believe the Imams to be the spiritual and political successors to Prophet Muhammad (s).

Among the important issues discussed by Shi'a and Sunni thinkers is the prolonged lifespan of Imam Mahdi. This issue – which has been discussed among the academics for a long time² – has left some so dumbfounded that they have essentially denied the existence of the true character of Imam al-Mahdi (a).³

This paper investigates the longevity of Imam Mahdi and to prove the truth of the Twelver-Imam Shi'a belief. By considering its different aspects and resorting to the Shi'a and Sunni hadith, we respond to those who question this issue.

Imam al-Mahdi (a) at a Glance

According to the Twelver-Imam Shi'a belief, Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Askari, or Imam Mahdi, is the twelfth and final successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Based on the Shi'a belief, he is now alive, although he is hidden and absent. He was born in secrecy on the 15th of Sha'aban in the year 255 A.H. in harsh and repressing conditions from a mother named Narjis Khatoon. In 260 A.H., with martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-Askari, he became the Shi'i Imam when he was only five years old. By the order of his noble father and in accordance with the promise of his predecessors, he continued his life undisclosed from that day forward.

The occultation of Imam Mahdi happened in two stages: the first stage is known as the Minor Occultation lasted 69 years, until 329 A.H. Afterwards, his major occultation (*Ghaybat al-Kubra*) began and continues till today. The possibility of Imam Mahdi's long life can be proven through the Holy Qur'an, hadith, the rules of nature, and history.

² Sheikh Tusi, *al-Ghayba*, 112.

³ Ahmad Amin, *Zuhur al-Islam*, vol. 4, 118.

1. *Longevity in the Qur'an*

The Holy Quran – a text accepted by all Muslims – contains verses that can prove the Shia claim about the possibility of the prolonged lifespan of Imam al-Mahdi (a).

A. *The Spider (Ankabut), verse 14*

و لقد ارسلنا نوحا الى قومه فلبث فيهم الف سنة الا خمسين عاما فأخذهم الطوفان و
هم ظالمون

*Certainly We sent Noah to his people, and he remained with them for a thousand-less-fifty years. Then the flood overtook them while they were wrongdoers.*⁴

In this verse, Prophet Noah invited his people to Allah for 950 years. Scholars question his age when he was sent as a prophet and on how long he lived after the Flood. This disagreement is to such an extent that the great Sunni Scholar, Alusi, narrated numerous hadiths based on which the Prophet Noah lived for 1,700 years.⁵ Likewise, the late Shaykh Saduq, a prominent Shi'a thinker of the 4th century A.H., narrated from Imam Sadiq that the Prophet Noah lived for 2,500 years.⁶

Furthermore, Fakhr Razi, a renowned Sunni scholar, considered the medical opinion that human lifespan does not exceed 100 or 120 years in contradiction with the above-mentioned Qur'anic verse; he regarded the great longevity of man as possible only by divine providence.⁷

⁴ Ankabut, 14.

⁵ Alusi, *Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, vol.10, pp.347-348; also see Ibn Kathir, *Tafir-ul-Qur'an al-Azim* (The Commentary on the Holy Qur'an), vol.3, p. 418; Jalal-u-Din Soyuti, *a-Dur-ul-Manthur*, vol. 3, p.334.

⁶ Shaikh Saduq, *Kamal-u-Din wa Tamam-u-Ne'mah*, p.523.

⁷ Fakhr Razi, *Mafatih-ul-Ghayb*, vol. 25, p.38.

B. *The Cave (al-Kahf)*

Shi'i scholars have used this verse regarding the People of the Cave to prove the possibility of the longevity of Imam Mahdi's life:

ولبثوا في كهفهم ثلاث مئة سنين وازدادوا تسعا

So they stayed in their Cave three hundred years, and [some] nine [more].⁸

Along with other consistent Qur'anic verses, this one demonstrates that the People of the Cave lived for 309 years asleep in the cave. While sleeping, they turned from side to side by the power and will of Allah. Those who believe in the living of People of the Cave for 309 years without their eating anything does not find the longevity of Imam Mahdi surprising nor impossible. Is Allah not able to keep His vicegerent alive under better conditions if He can keep the People of the Cave alive without eating anything?

C. *The Cow (al-Baqarah)*

This verse tells the story of Prophet Ezra (*Uzayr*) whose life Allah took for one hundred years and then brought him back to life while his food and water remained intact:

قال أنى يحيي هذه الله بعد موتها فأماته الله مئة عام ثم بعثه قال كم لبثت قال لبثت يوماً أو بعض يوم قال بل لبثت مئة عام فانظر إلى طعامك وشرابك لم يتسنه ... أن الله على كل شيء قدير

He said: "Oh! How shall Allah bring it [ever] to life, after its death?" So, Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, and then raised him to life. He said: "How long have you tarried [thus]?" He said: [Perhaps]

⁸ Kahf, 25.

a day or part of a day." He said: "Nay, you have tarried thus a hundred years; but look at your food and your drink; they show no signs of age; and look at your donkey, and that We may make of you a sign unto the people; look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh." When this was shown clearly to him, he said: "I know that Allah hath power over all things."⁹

According to both Sunni and Shi'a hadith collections and Qur'anic commentaries, his meal was made up of figs, grapes, and milk, all of which are prone to rotting quickly.¹⁰ With firm belief in Allah, Muslims regard this phenomenon as possible and natural. Now the question arises: Can Allah, Who is able to keep these foods fresh and intact for one hundred years, not keep His vicegerent alive for His desired period of time?

2. Longevity in hadiths

According to narrations in the hadith collections, there existed people who lived a long life before Imam Mahdi. In addition to those referred to in the Qur'anic verses, at least two persons can be cited:

A. Prophet Jesus

Muslim Neishaburi, a well-known Sunni narrator, quotes the Prophet (s) as saying, "How will you be when Jesus, son of Mary, will descend to you and be your Imam?"¹¹

Likewise, Nu'mani, a well-known Shia narrator, reports the Prophet (s) addressing Imam Ali (a) concerning the number of successors

⁹ Baqarah, 259.

¹⁰ Al-Qurtubi, al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol.3, pp. 292-293; Jalal-u-Din Soyuti, a-Dur-ul-Manthur, vol. 2, p.332; Ayyashi, Ayyashi Commentary, p.141.

¹¹ Muslim Neishaburi, Sahih of Muslim, vol.1, p.94.

(*awsiyā*), as saying: “They are as many as the months of year, and the Prophet Jesus Christ will pray behind the last one of them.”¹²

Based on these hadiths and verses, the Prophet Jesus will be alive until the uprising of Imam Mahdi which attests to his exceedingly long life.

The Holy Qur’an also rejects the idea that the Prophet Jesus was crucified and says that Allah raised him up to Himself:

وقولهم إنا قتلنا المسيح عيسى ابن مريم رسول الله وما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن شبه لهم وإن الذين اختلفوا فيه لفي شك منه ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباع الظن وما قتلوه يقينا بل رفعه الله إليه وكان الله عزيزا حكيما

*That they said, ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah’; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who disagree on this are full of doubts, with no [certain] knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for surely they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.*¹³

B. The Prophet Khidr

As seen in hadiths, Prophet Khidr is among those who lived an exceedingly long life. Muslim Neishaburi narrated a hadith from the Holy Prophet, who said, “When Dajjal appears and encounters Khidr, he will decide to kill Khidr, but will not succeed.”

The longevity of Khidr has also been verified by Shi‘a sources. For example, Sudair Sayrafi related that along with Mufaddal ibn Umar, Aban ibn Tghlab and Abu Basir, he went to Imam Sadiq and saw him

¹² Nu‘mani, al-Ghaibah, p.58; also see Shaikh Saduq, Kamal-ul-Din, p. 251 & Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 191.

¹³ Nisa, 157, 158.

sitting on the ground. While crying heavily he (a) said, “My Majesty, your long absence is breaking my being and the comfort of my conscience is taken from me.” Sadir said, “I asked, ‘May I be your ransom, why are you in a state of crying?’ He said, ‘I looked in the book *Al-Jafr*¹⁴ until I reached the birth of Imam Mahdi (a) to whom God will grant a long life and in whose absence there will be disturbance in this world...because of that day, I was saddened and became tearful.’”

Then, he added, “Imam Mahdi will be born the same way the Prophet Moses was born, his occultation being similar to that of the Prophet Jesus, his stay among his people resembling Prophet Noah’s, and his long life like that of Prophet Khidr.”¹⁵ Shi‘i sources also refer to Prophet Khidr’s meeting Imam Ali.¹⁶

Thus, the length of the lifetime of Imam al-Mahdi (a) is not unheard of. And if God, due to good will, was able to give long life to a number of people, He can do the same concerning Imam al-Mahdi (a).

3. Longevity according to the rules of nature

So far, man with his inquiring nature has discovered endless facts about the universe, each of which is key to knowing his Creator. However, there are numerous facts and rules in the universe that mankind has not yet exposed. Nonetheless, taking these discoveries into account can assist inquirers of the longevity of Imam Mahdi.

Another reason for the significance of considering the rules of nature as related to this issue is that these rules are not specific to a particular religion; they go beyond religion and are accepted by different groups.

¹⁴ A holy book compiled by Imam Ali (a) inherited to him by Prophet Muhammad (s)

¹⁵ Shaikh Saduq, Kamal-u-Din, p. 35.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.315; Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaybah, p.155.

According to the evidence presented thus far from the Qur'an and hadith which confirm the possibility of man experiencing long life, the question as to whether longevity is a natural phenomenon or if the above-mentioned cases were realized by the infinite power of Allah is worth examining.

Biology experts believe that the main components of the human body have an infinite lifespan, and therefore, human life in itself can also be infinite.

Medical experts have also proven that man's lifespan can extend for long period, and death at a young age occurs as a result of some medical conditions. Some physicians maintain that the natural principles of animals' life can be applied to man given that because some animals have a natural lifespan of 900 to 7200 years, man can also be kept alive as long.¹⁷

Longevity is a natural phenomenon, and the reasons for a long or short life should be sought in time, place, nutrition, and other conditions. The lifespan of a living being during the time of war is different from that of an era of peace, and so is one's lifespan breathing in polluted air as opposed to clean air.

Adhering to the natural laws stated above, Shi'a scholars consider the lifespan of Imam al-Mahdi (a) a natural phenomenon and matters such as the environment, proper nutrition, spiritual activities, and a healthy body are considered effective factors for a lengthy living.¹⁸

4. Longevity in History

Another reality taken into account in examining longevity and its feasibility is human experience throughout history. This discussion is

¹⁷ Al-Hilal magazine, vol.5, year 37, issue 1930, p.67.

¹⁸ Ibrahim Amini, *The One Who Will Administer Justice in the World*, p.175-195.

significant because some prophets with a prolonged life have been noted, and the possibility of longevity has also been underlined by natural laws. As to whether biologists and medical experts consider this possible or not remains a question.

If longevity has occurred in the course of human history, albeit in very few cases, its repetition will be a natural, rational, and acceptable phenomenon. Historical accounts which contain valuable material have been the main source of our information since we did not live in the past, nor have we experienced longevity.

People who have lived long lives are available in many historical accounts: Shi'i scholars call them *long-lived people* (*mu'ammārūn*). Moreover, historians have introduced them to us, and recorded and spoke of their names, lineages and tribes, their place of living, the number of their offspring, their journeys and even their words and wills.

Historical accounts demonstrate that:

1. Luqman lived for 400 years
2. Riyan, father of the king of Egypt, lived for 1,700 years
3. The Prophet Adam lived for 930 or 1000 years
4. The son of the prophet Andreas lived for 969 years
5. Seth, son of Adam, lived for 912 or 940 years
6. Anush, son of Seth, lived for 750 or 960 years
7. Qeinan, son of Seth, lived for 920 years
8. Mahlā'il lived for 800 or 960 years
9. Mahlā'il's mother lived for 960 years
10. Shaddad, son of 'Āmir, lived for 900 years
11. Jamshid lived for 850 years
12. 'Umar, son of 'Āmir, lived for 800 years
13. Lamech lived for 777 or 790 years
14. The Prophet Hud lived for 760 years

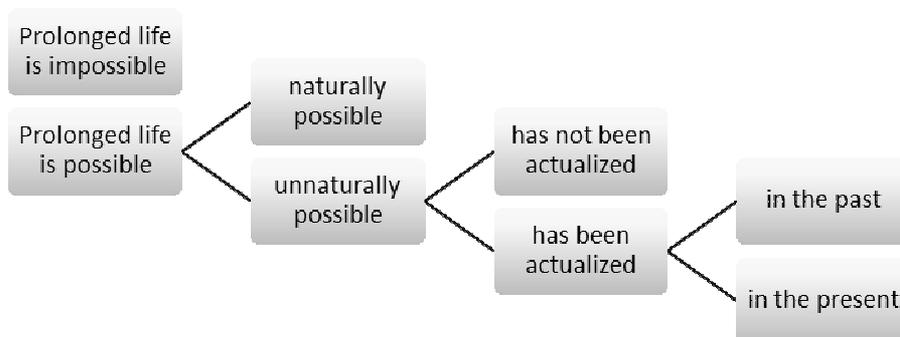
15. The Prophet Solomon lived for 712 years
16. Egyptian king lived for 700 years
17. Fereidun lived for 500 years
18. Darid, son of Zaid, lived for 456 years
19. 'Amr, son of Hujjah Rumi, lived for 400 years
20. Zuhair, son of Abdullah Kananah, lived for 420 years
21. Pharaoh lived for 411 years
22. Rabi', son of Saba', lived for 380 years
23. Abdul-Masih Nasrani lived for 350 years
24. Aktham, son of Safar Asadi, lived for 330 years
25. The Prophet Jethro/Shu'aib lived for 240 years
26. Sirat, son of Sa'id, lived for 220 years
27. Safieddine Riyahi lived for 200 years...and so on.¹⁹

With careful investigation of the historical sources, many others with exceedingly long lives have existed.

¹⁹ For more information, see Shaikh Saduq, Kamal-ul-Din, p. 555-onward; Ali ibn Hussain Ma'sudi, Murawwij-a-Dhahab, vol.1, p. 338-onward; Allameh Majlisi, Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.51, pp. 227-286; Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Qazwini, Imam al-Mahdi, p. 276.

Longevity and its Divisions

Given what was mentioned before, longevity can be divided into various types:



These five types are explained as follows:

1. *Prolonged life is impossible* – such as the lifespan of someone who is careless about his/her nutrition, environment, and other conditions and God’s will has not actualized the longevity of such a person.
2. *Prolonged life is possible* – such as the lifespan of 80 to 120 years, which has been achieved by a countless number of people.
3. *Prolonged life as unnaturally possible that has not been actualized* – such as the lifespan of 500 to 1,000 years, the case of most human beings.
4. *Prolonged life as unnaturally possible that has been actualized in the past* – such as the age of super-centenarians, which include both prophets and non-prophets.
5. *Prolonged life as unnaturally possible that has been actualized in the present* – such as Imam al-Mahdi’s (a) age.

Thus, prolonged life is not of one kind and one ruling. Some kinds of it are not rationally impossible. Because they do not occur frequently,

they seem impossible according to conventional standards. However, they are not rationally impossible.

Ahmad Amin's View

Ahmad Amin, one of the late Sunni thinkers, criticized the Shi'a belief in the existence of Imam al-Mahdi (a) and has come to believe that it is God's practice (*sunnah*) to limit the human lifespan and that such a practice pertains to prophets as well. To give an example, Prophet Muhammad lived for only 63 years, and the Shi'a Imams also had limited lifespans. Likewise, he maintains that throughout history, there were few people who lived more than one hundred years and certainly no one lives forever.²⁰

Even though his doubts are based on his own attitude toward the issue of Imamah - which is clearly different from the Shi'a approach concerning this matter - bearing in mind the previous discussions, in response it can be said:

- 1) According to reason, a long lifespan is a possible matter.
- 2) God's power is infinite and is applied to matters that are possible. Therefore, God is able to lengthen the life of his servant, Imam al-Mahdi (a).
- 3) Based on the Qur'anic verses, Shi'a hadith collections, and Sunni sources, there were some prophets and prominent people with an exceptionally long life in this world. When it comes to Khidr, according to Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, most scholars believe that Khidr is a long-lived person who is still alive.²¹

²⁰ Ahmad Amin, *Zuhr-ul-Islam*, vol.4, p.118.

²¹ Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, *al-Isabah*, vol.2, p. 246.

- 4) According to historical reports, many people, including non-prophets, existed who experienced a long lifespan.
- 5) Biologists and medical experts maintain that if proper conditions are provided for man and if he is protected from harmful factors, he can live a very long life. In other words, scientifically short lifetimes are not due to impossibility of longevity, but they happen due to lack of influential factors in the natural life. Hence, man can live a long life by having a good hygiene and other conditions.²²

Conclusion

Considering what has been said, one can say that the prolonged lifespan of Imam al-Mahdi (a) is fully justified according to intellectual, Qur'anic, traditional, scientific, and historical accounts and does not go against any human or non-human law.

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²² See al-Muqtataf magazine, vol. 3, p.59.

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INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC SCIENCES

PART II: FIQH AND USUL AL-FIQH

RASOUL IMANI KHOSHKU

TRANSLATED BY MOHAMMAD REZA FARAJIAN

ABSTRACT: The previous article - *Introduction to Islamic Sciences, Part I* – presented some of the most important Islamic sciences that have long been studied in Islamic seminaries, namely theology (*kalam*), philosophy, mysticism (*irfan*), and jurisprudence. This article touches upon two subjects: Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Usul of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh)*. *Fiqh* – the profound understanding of religious rulings - is the most comprehensive subject in Islamic sciences. Among the five schools of thought, namely, Ja’fari, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi’i, and Maliki, this article delves into Shi’a Ja’fari fiqh, offering a glance into its history, key subjects, and sources. Its major subjects comprise of acts of worship, contracts, occasions, and rulings, while its sources include the Qur’an, Sunnah, consensus, and reason. Connected with fiqh is the study of *Uṣūl of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh)*, or the study of rules used in deducing Islamic laws. This will be studied with a brief look into its history and key issues.

1. Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Fiqh is among the broadest and most comprehensive Islamic sciences. There are five major schools in fiqh: Ja’farī, Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, Shāfi’ī, and Mālīkī. Ja’farī fiqh is a title given to the school of Ahl al-Bayt’s (a) fiqh; the other four schools are Sunni schools of fiqh. Except the mentioned four schools of fiqh, there have been other schools fiqh

among Sunnis which have lost their followers so far, and most Sunni Muslims currently follow the four mentioned schools around the world.¹

The major difference of opinion among the Shi'a and Sunni schools of fiqh revolves around their ways of understanding the Prophet's (s) conduct (*sunnah*) and the sources of fiqh. Sunnis have adopted the Prophet's (s) hadiths and conduct from the companions of the Prophet, while the Shi'a have received them from his progeny (a). On the other hand, Sunni schools of fiqh follow the opinions of some scholars of fiqh (*faqih*s) of Medina and Iraq, while the Shi'a schools of fiqh follow the opinions of the Imams (a). Among the Shi'a, the Twelvers, who constitute the great majority, follow the opinions of their twelve Imams (a), especially their sixth Imam, Abū Abdullah Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (a) and due to which they are well-known as Ja'fari.²

Ja'fari fiqh will be introduced below and the definition, history, issues and sources of fiqh will be explained in the Twelver school of the thought.

Definition of Fiqh

The term 'fiqh' means 'a profound understanding'. In the terminology of Twelver faqihs, fiqh refers to 'the knowledge of secondary rulings³ of Islam and practical tasks acquired through explanatory sources for them.'⁴ Islamic scholars have categorized Islamic teachings into three: a) beliefs such as subjects concerning the origin of creation, the hereafter, prophethood, revelation, the angels, and Imamate; b) morality and educational issues including spiritual virtues such as piety, self-restraint, generosity, courage; as well as vices a person is expected to refrain from such as greed, begrudging, and lying; c) rulings and practical issues

¹ Tawakkulī, Mohammad Ra'ūf, *The Four Imams of Sunnah and Jamā'ah*, p. 9.

² Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Ḥusayn Mudarrisi, *Muqaddameh-ī bar Fiqh Shi'a*, trans. by Muhammad Āṣif Fekrat, p. 11.

³ Rulings other than principles of religion

⁴ Meshkīnī, Mīrzā Ali, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Uṣūl wa Mu'azzam Abḥāthihā*, p. 180.

which allocate our tasks and practical duties in certain conditions and the quality of their accomplishment during lifetime; i.e. laws and rulings made by God for regulating people's deeds.

The last mentioned category of Islamic teachings is the subject of *fiqh*, or Islamic jurisprudence, which is the extension of the Islamic law (*sharia*) explained in the Qur'an often accompanied by tradition (*sunnah*) and implemented by the rulings and interpretations of Islamic jurists (*fuqaha*).

History of Imami Fiqh⁵

If we consider *fiqh* as the knowledge of divine rulings, it has a history as long as the rise of Islam itself. Undoubtedly, the holy Prophet (s) is the primary source for adopting the rulings; he issued rulings through direct contact with divine revelation⁶ and thus, his speech is the final word on *fiqh*. Thus, following his orders are mandatory whether in legislation or in resolving arguments.⁷

The history of Imami [Ja'fari] *fiqh* after the Prophet (s) are divided into four main periods:

1. The time of the companions [of the Prophet (s)] (until 40 A.H.)
2. The Era of the Followers (*tābi'in*)⁸ and their followers and the followers of their followers until the Minor occultation (260 A.H.)
3. The time of the Four Agents and the four delegates until the Major Occultation (329 A.H.)⁹

⁵ Twelvers' *fiqh*

⁶ As an instance, one might refer to the event of asking the Prophet (s) of the ruling on the way of inheriting of Kitalah (brothers and sisters of one's father or mother) which is mentioned in the Surah of Nisā' (Women), ayah no. 176.

⁷ Subhānī, Ja'far, *Tārīkh fiqh wa fuqaha-ye Imamīyyah*, translated by Hassan Jalali, p. 40.

⁸ This refers to the people who did not see the Prophet (s), but saw some of his companions.

At the time of the Followers (*tābi'in*), there were seven persons known as the Seven Fiqh Scholars as the authorities to whom people referred after the companions. They are listed as follows in chronological order of their death: 1. 'Urwah ibn Zubayr ibn 'Awwām (d. 74 A.H.) 2. Sa'īd ibn Musayyib (d. 91 A.H.) 3. Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 94 A.H.) 4. Sulaymān ibn Yasār (d. 94 A.H.) 5. 'Ubaydallah ibn 'Utbah (d. 98 A.H.) 6. Khārijah ibn Zayd (d. 99 A.H.) 7. Qāsim ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr (d. 101 A.H.).¹⁰ The infallible Imams (a) approved some of the mentioned faqihs according to the late Kulaynī quoted from Imam Ṣādiq (a): "Sa'īd ibn Musayyib, Qāsim ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr, and Abū Khālid Kābulī were reliable and trustworthy in the eyes of Ali ibn al-Husayn (a)."¹¹

During the time of the Infallible Imams (a) which continued until the middle of the third century A.H., the major source and the reference of people for their questions in fiqh and practical rulings were the Imams (a) themselves. Still, they would introduce certain persons as faqihs and ask them to answer people's questions in fiqh through *ijtihād*.¹² Notable faqihs of this period were 1) Zirah, 2) Ma'rūf ibn Kharbūd, 3) Abu Baṣīr Asādī, 4) Barīd ibn Mu'āwīyah, 5) Muhammad ibn Muslim Ṭā'ifī, 6) Yūnis ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, and 7) Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā Bīyā' Sābirī.¹³ Although some of them wrote on fiqh and their books contained their perspectives, they were mostly relied on hadiths; they would convey authentic hadiths on any topic and practice it accordingly. Therefore, their books have been compiled in the form of hadith collections.¹⁴

After the period of the Imams' (a) presence and the beginning of the Minor Occultation when the Shi'as were able to contact the last Imam

⁹ Khurāsānī, Maḥmūd ibn Abd al-Salām Turbatī Shahābī, *Adwār Fiqh (Shahābī)*, vol. 3, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 328.

¹¹ Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 472.

¹² A method of independent judgment

¹³ Subḥānī, Ja'far, *Tārīkh fiqh wa fuqaha-ye Imamīyyah*, translated by Hassan Jalali, p. 71.

¹⁴ Muṭahharī, Murtaḍā, *Āshnā'ī ba 'Ulūm-e Islāmī*, vol. 3, p. 61. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences," ICAS, 2000: London]

(a) only through his four special agents, distinguished faqihs emerged. Although ijtihād in fiqh had become more prominent during this period, it was through the indirect contact of the scholars (*ulamā*) with the infallible Imam (a) that the jurists could receive the Imam's (a) guidance and supports in complex issues.

Generally, the history of Twelvers' fiqh is divided in some periods, namely:

1. The beginning of minor Occultation up until the time of Sheikh al-Óā'ifāh – Sheikh Óūsī (d. 460 A.H.)
2. The era of Sheikh Óūsī until the time of 'Allamah Ḥillī (d. 728 A.H.)
3. The era of 'Allamah Ḥillī until the time of Āqā Bāqir Behbahānī (d. 1208 A.H.)
4. The time of Āqā Bāqir Behbahānī until the present era.¹⁵

The history of fiqh after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a) until the time of Sheikh Óūsī can be considered a period of Shi'a fiqh that had two distinctive features: a) categorization of hadiths, and b) development and promotion of ijtihād.¹⁶ In that period, collections of hadiths based on various topics were categorized thematically according to topics in fiqh whereas previous hadith collections excluded any specific order. The Four Books of Shi'a are the most important heritage of this period which were written with thematic classification. In addition to the faqihs' great efforts in writing these collections, ijtihād also had a key role in this period to such an extent that some researchers call the faqihs of this period as *Ahlul Fatwā* as the authorities to whom people referred to for receiving religious permission and knowing their practical duties. Faqihs

¹⁵ Khurāsānī, *ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁶ Subḥānī, *Ja'far, Adwār al-fiqh al-Imamīyyah*, p. 73.

such as Ali ibn Bābiwayh Qummi (d. 329), Ibn Junayd Iskāfī (d. 381) and Sayyid Murtaḍā known as ‘Alam al-Hudā (d. 436).

A great turning point in the history of Shi‘a fiqh is the emergence of Sheikh Tūsī, one of the few most prominent figures who greatly influenced fiqh for around a century. His progeny were among scholars and faqihs for some generations. He was born in 385 A.H. and immigrated to Baghdad - the center for Islamic culture and sciences - in 408 A.H. He became the scientific and legal Shi‘a authority following his teacher, Sayyid Murtaḍā. After Sayyid Murtaḍā’s death, Sheikh Tusi’s house and library were plundered due to some riots, and as a result, he moved to Najaf where he established a seminary. He passed away in Najaf in 460 A.H., leaving behind prominent works, the most important being *Al-Tahdhīb* and *Istibṣār*, two of the Four Books of Shi‘a traditions. He also left behind *Al-Nihāyah* which has been one of the textbooks for seminary students from long ago, *Mabsūṭ*, the finest descriptive book in Shi‘a fiqh, and *Khilāf*, a collection of all Shi‘a and Sunni scholars’ opinions in fiqh.

About a century after he passed away, his ideas were followed by many Shi‘a faqihs. The method of ijtihād (individual judgment) which made the essential element of Shi‘a thought was the major element of his fiqh fundamentals and thoughts. The situation did not change until the sixth century, when the seminary of Ḥillah flourished and the Twelvers’ fiqh entered a new period of development and progress. Indeed, Ibn Idrīs Ḥillī (543 – 598 A.H.), the great faqih and mujtahid was the one who started that progress. Thanks to his lively mind and outstanding talent, he made ijtihād about many issues in fiqh, without having to think twice as to whether his judgments and justifications contradicted those of previous scholars such as Sheikh Tūsī’s or not. In *Sarā’ir*, although he showed utmost respect for Sheikh Tūsī, when his opinion differed from Sheikh Tūsī, he managed to bring firm justification and judgments and

reviewed Sheikh Tūsī's works for clarification in some of his works. Sheikh Tūsī's opinions were similar to that of Ibn Idrīs.¹⁷

The innovation of Ibn Idrīs in the seventh century was a great turning point in the history of Shi'a fiqh. In that century, tens of critical works in fiqh that were published have been among the most significant references of Shi'a fiqh. The principles of fiqh received great attention from the scholars of that period, and rules and regulations were made for assessing the authenticity of hadiths. There are many other prominent scholars living in the seventh and eighth centuries such as Najīb al-Dīn ibn Namāy-e Ḥillī (565 – 645 A.H.), Najm al-Dīn Ja'far ibn Hasan Dīn, known as Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī (602 – 676 A.H.), the author of *Sharā' al-Islām fī Masā'il al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*, Jamāl al-Dīn Hasan ibn Yūsuf Ḥillī, known as 'Allāmah Ḥillī (648 – 726 A.H.), the author of *Tadhkirah al-Fuqahā' wa Nihāyah al-Aḥkām fī Ma'rifah al-Aḥkām*, Muhammad ibn Hassan ibn Yūsuf known as Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn (682 – 771 A.H.), the author of *Īdāh al-Fawā'id fī Ḥall Mushkilāt al-Qawā'id*, Muhammad ibn Makkī 'Āmilī (734 – 786 A.H.), and the author of *Durūs al-Shar'īyah fī fiqh al-Imāmīyah wa al-Lum'ah al-Damishqīyah*.

[After this period] Muhammad Bāqir Behbahānī (1118 – 1205 A.H.), the great Mujtahid with a high scientific status, revived the Shi'a method of ijtihād. Historians considered his life as the beginning of a new period in Shi'a fiqh.

In the eleventh century, Muhammad Amīn Astarābādī¹⁸ founded the Akhbārī school of thought. The Akhbaris are Twelver Shi'a Muslims who excluded the use of reasoning in deriving verdicts, and believe the Qur'an and hadith as the only source of law. Unlike Usulis, Akhbaris do not follow marjas¹⁹ who practiced the modern form of ijihad. Akhbari's

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁸ Believing only in Khabar (a tradition or hadith from Imams (a) explaining an issue)

¹⁹ scholars as models for imitation

argue that Imams did not allow *ijtihād*. In *al-Fawā'id al-Madanīyyah*, Astarabadi expressed that deriving verdicts according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an is not permitted because of the existence of numerous modifiers and the possibility of imposing one's personal opinion on the Qur'an unless there is a tradition from the Ahlul Bayt (a) in such an interpretation.²⁰ Moreover, he considered hadiths from the Ahlul Bayt (a) as the only valid source for knowing speculative (not self-evident) doctrines of religion including major and minor ones. He also rejected the necessity of agreement between reason and hadith and insisted on necessity of following hadith.

Relying only upon the surface meaning of hadiths and rejecting reasoning as a valid source of understanding, this school of thought seriously threatened Shi'a fiqh relying on *ijtihād*. The Akhbari thought transformed a progressive phenomenon that could fulfill the needs in any period based on original sources in religion to a static and inoperative element. In such an atmosphere which prevailed over the seminaries of Iraq and Karbala in the twelfth century and was driving out the Uṣūlī²¹ faqihs, Muḥaqqiq Behbahānī rose to defend the fiqh relying on *ijtihād* and principles of fiqh and fought against the Akhbārī school of thought. He expressed that to practice according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an after considering all the modifiers is different from following one's personal opinions. He wrote a treatise on goodness and badness (*husn-o-qubh*) according to the intellect and considered the rule of reasoning about *Mustaqillāt al-Aqlī*²² as valid. He also criticized intellect in some hadiths to be speculations such as (deduction) *qīyās* or *istihsān*.²³

²⁰ Astarābādī, Muhammad Amīn, *Fawā'id al-Madanīyyah – Shawāhid al-Makkīyyah*, p. 269.

²¹ Relying on principles of fiqh for judgment

²² Issues understood by intellect independently from religion

²³ Leaving deduction by the faqih or judge and prefer what is easier for people according to the intellect.

Thanks to the scientific endeavors of Muḥaqqiq Behbahānī, intellectual reasoning returned to fiqh circles of Iraq and was used again in interpretations and judgments in fiqh. The principles of fiqh was once again widely held. Moreover, many Akhbārī scholars were convinced by the arguments of Muḥaqqiq Behbahānī and the Akhbārī movement declined in later periods.

After Muḥaqqiq Bihbahānī, fiqh relying on ijtihād and reasoning began its evolutionary movement. It flourished thanks to great publications on principles of fiqh that bloomed in renowned works such as *Jawāhir al-Kalām*.

Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafī's fiqh encyclopedia *Jawāhir al-Kalām fī Sharḥ Sharā'i' al-Islām* is among the noble works of Shi'a fiqh that was written in 30 years. Its richness of content manifests the intelligence, perseverance, and endless endeavor of the author. Sheikh Najafī was one of the renowned jurists and finally possessed the absolute authority in the Shi'a world. He passed away in 1266 A.H., contemporary with the beginning years of Nāṣiruddīn Shāh's kingdom.

After Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafī, the second most distinguished recent Shi'a fiqh is Sheikh Murtaḍā Anṣārī. Originally from Dezful, Iran, he was homeschooled by his father until the age of twenty and then left Iraq with him. When his contemporary scholars saw his extraordinary talent, they asked his father not to take Murtaḍā with himself to Iraq. After staying in Iraq for five years and benefitting from the lessons of great teachers, he returned to Iran, travelled to different cities, and benefitted from famous teachers throughout his journeys. In 1253 A.H., he returned to Iraq, began teaching, and reached absolute authority after Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafī. There are very few scholars in Shi'a history similar to Sheikh Anṣārī in precision and insight. He entered the principles of fiqh and fiqh itself into a new era and made new exceptional innovations. His two prominent works,

Rasā'il and *Makāsib*, are still taught as textbooks in all seminaries. The scholars after him were mostly his followers and wrote various commentaries on the margins of his books. He passed away in 1281 A.H. in Najaf.

After Sheikh Anṣārī, there were great scholars in fiqh and ijtihād such as Muhammad Hasan Shīrāzī, Mulla Muhammad Kādim Khurāsānī, Sayyid Abu al-Hassan Iṣfahānī, and Hāj Āqā Husayn Burūjirdī. They transferred the valuable heritage of fiqh from the Ahlul Bayt to contemporary Shi'a faqihs.

The history of Shi'a fiqh as taught in seminaries from the beginning of the Age of Major Occultation until today have been functioning uninterrupted to the extent that the lineage of student-teacher relationships has never halted. For any contemporary Shi'a jurist chosen, his chain of teachers can be traced back to the time of the Ahlul Bayt (a). Such an unbroken chain seems to be unavailable in other civilizations and cultures. One might find longer courses in their history, but there have been many interruptions and breaks in them.²⁴

Major Subjects in Fiqh

Generally, Islamic teachings are categorized into three categories: beliefs, ethics, and practical rulings. Beliefs include the thoughts and knowledge a Muslim must have; ethical codes are the good attributes every believer must endeavor to achieve; and practical rulings are orders from Allah upon Muslims to organize their lives accordingly. Fiqh generally includes the practical orders of Islam and thus it describes the rulings Allah has issued upon Muslims. The most important topics in

²⁴ Muṭahharī, Murtaḍā, *Āshnā'ī ba 'Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 3, p. 85. [trans. as *Understanding Islamic Sciences*, ICAS, 2000: London]

fiqh are classified in four groups: acts of worship, contracts (*'uqūd*), one-sided obligations (*iqā'āt*), and rulings.²⁵

About the reason behind the mentioned classification, it has been stated that topics in fiqh are either related to the hereafter and a person's spiritual life or they are related to a person's worldly life. The first part is acts of worship; the second part is transactions, which by themselves are divided into two kinds: a) obligations that people have towards one another and b) obligations that are not reciprocal. The former type is divided in two: a) some of them are reciprocal; i.e. the parties are responsible towards the other parties and they are called contracts, and b) some others are when one party takes on obligations, called one-sided obligations.²⁶

It is customary now that books of fiqh address the topics in all the four mentioned divisions. However, in the beginning centuries after the hijrah, books were written concerning one or some topics in fiqh. Another point to mention accordingly is that major topics of fiqh which refer to a certain topic are known to faqīhs as Books; each chapter is called a 'book' i.e. *The Book of Prayer* or *The Book of the Marriage*.

Topics and subtopics of each of the four mentioned divisions in Books of fiqh are as follows:²⁷

²⁵ In *Al-Marāsim al-'Alawīyyah wa al-Ahkām al-Nabawīyyah*, Sallār Daylamī categorized fiqh in two groups of acts of worship and transactions. Then, he categorized transactions into contracts and rulings. He categorized rulings into penal rulings and other rulings. Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī wrote his book called *Sharā'i'* in four parts of acts of worship, contracts, one-sided obligations and rulings. This approach was accepted by all faqīhs after him. Modarrisī, Sayyid Husayn, *Muqaddamih-yī bar fiqh Shi'a*, trans. by Muhammad Āṣif Fikrat, p. 21.

²⁶ *Īqā'āt*

²⁷ Excerpt from Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Ḥusayn Mudarrisī, *Muqaddameh-ī bar Fiqh Shi'a*, pp. 25-28.

A) Acts of Worship:

- a. The Book of Cleansing (concerning Nijāsah [impurities / filth] and cleaners. Also, it includes a chapter on the rulings associated with non-Muslims and corpses.)
- b. The Book of Prayer: topics on the time of prayer and Qiblah are discussed. Also in the section of Friday congregational prayer, there are discussions on the social status of a faqih, his duties, and the nature of the Islamic government.
- c. The Book of Zakāh²⁸
- d. The Book of Khums: a fifth of everyone's outcome taken out from all types of outcomes is considered as khums by Shi'a fiqh and must be paid. Also, rulings concerning non-Muslims living in an Islamic territory are mentioned in this section since one of the cases for which the fifth (khums) is calculated and extracted is the lands sold to non-Muslims. The end of this section includes a discussion including the issues about Anfāl, or the properties of an Islamic government including all the dead lands and the natural resources.
- e. The Book of Fasting
- f. The Book of *I'tikāf*, or the recommended act of seeking solitude in the major mosque of the city for the purpose of worship. The Book of Hajj, or the pilgrimage to Mecca and performing certain actions and rituals in Dhil Hijji, the last month of the Hijri calendar.
- g. The Book of 'Umrah which is the simpler way of pilgrimage to Mecca and can be performed at any time of the year.

²⁸ Obligatory alms on livestock

- h. The Book of Jihad, or holy war, whether offensive or defensive, the latter of which is to defend against external or internal enemies. In this book, the relations between the Islamic government and other non-Islamic governments, the situation of non-Muslims living in the Islamic territories and similar issues are discussed.
- i. The Book of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil includes discussions on the associated rulings with this common social duty of all individuals living in an Islamic society.

B) Contracts

- a. The Book of Transactions discusses the right and wrong ways of transactions and financial exchanges, illegal transactions, different options of withdrawal [from transactions], rulings about the conditions of contracts and similar issues. This chapter also includes discussions on the ownership and tax system of different types of land in the Islamic territory. The ruling about working for unjust and illegitimate governments, their rights and limits over Muslims treasures (and in the recent sources of fiqh since the last century on, there has been a chapter on Wilāyah of Faqih). Issues such as listening to music and financial interest on interest-free loans are discussed in this chapter.
- b. The Book of Mortgage
- c. The Book of the Bankruptcy: About bankruptcy and the government's responsibilities toward such a person, whose income is not enough for his debts.
- d. The Book of [legal] disability, regarding one who has no right to make decision on his property or he cannot sell it as this is applicable for the insane and the underaged children.

- e. The Book of Trust: Financial guarantee for persons (bail) are discussed in this chapter.
- f. The Book of Agreement: about an agreement between two persons on a particular subject, the details of which are not clear, such as an agreement between a debtor and a creditor on a specific value when the value of debt is not clear.
- g. The Book of Partnership
- h. The Book of Sponsorship: about an agreement on a partnership in which the capital is provided by one party and business is performed by the other party.
- i. The Book of Crop-sharing contract (*muzāra‘ah*) and a lease of planation for one crop period (*musāqāt*) is about situations when a landowner gives his land to the peasant in return for a part of product.
- j. The Book of Keeping in Trust
- k. The Book of Deposit (Keeping someone’s property as a trust)
- l. The Book of Loaning
- m. The Book of Leasing
- n. The Book of Delegation (Deputyship)
- o. The Book of Devotion and Donation
- p. The Book of (temporary) Allocation
- q. The Book of Competition and Archery (archery, horse, and camel racing which are the only cases where betting is allowed in Islamic fiqh reserved for contestants).

r. The Book of Conducting Wills

s. The Book of Marriage

C) Occasions

a. The Book of Divorce

b. The Book of Khul' and Mubāra'ah (two kinds of divorce in which the wife redeems herself from the marriage contract on certain grounds)

c. The Book of Zihār (When a husband likens his wife to his mother in certain way which charges him with atonement)

d. The Book of Īlā' (when a husband swears to abstain from his wife which makes her forbidden for him for a period of more than four months, in which he must either break his vow or have a divorce)

e. The Book of Li'ān (which is the husband's swearing at his wife for her unfaithfulness at the presence of the court or the wife's swearing the same way at her husband, the repetition of which action leads to the cancelation of the marriage).

f. The Book of 'Itq (pertaining the laws and rules of manumission of slaves)

g. The Book of Tadbīr, Mukātibah, and Istīlād (three ways of manumission of slaves. Tadbīr becomes possible when the owner of the slave dies. Mukātibah is a contract between the owner and the slave. Istīlād is about a female slave who becomes pregnant by her owner and becomes free after her owner dies because of her child.)

h. The Book of Iqrār (issues pertaining the acknowledgement of a person about his debt, his family relationships and as such)

- i. The Book of Ju‘ālah (when a person owes money to another because of his commitment to him)
- j. The Book of Īmān (about swearing on the great name of God)
- k. The Book of Nadhr (undertaking to do something for the sake of God, provided that something specified would not happen or something specified would happen).

D) Rulings

- a. The Book of Hunting and Slaughtering
- b. The Book of Foods and Drinks
- c. The Book of Extortion (Usurpation)
- d. The Book of Shuf‘ah (pre-emption) (the right of the partner in buying the other part of property)
- e. The Book of Reviving Barren Land (to change an arid land to farmable land. This section is about the fiqh of lands and studying the common issues such as water and pasture)
- f. The Book of Luqtah (Found Property)
- g. The Book of Fara’id (about inheritance computation)
- h. The Book of Judgment (about judicial issues)
- i. The Book of Testimonies (in cases of bearing witness and testimony)
- j. The Book of Penal Laws

- k. The Book of Retribution (as of the right for the oppressed to retribution)
- l. The Book of Compensations (as blood money, for money, etc.)

Sources of Shi'a Fiqh

As it was mentioned in the definition of fiqh, it is the knowledge of drawing practical rulings²⁹ from original sources. Now let us refer to the authentic sources of the Twelvers' fiqh used for deducing ruling:

1. ***The Qur'an***: it is the primary source containing the rules in Islam and is agreed upon by all Islamic schools of thought to be the main source for knowing the rulings.³⁰ In the Qur'an, there are more than 500 verses (about one-thirteenth of the Qur'a) about rulings. Islamic scholars have written numerous books about them, such as *Āyāt al-Aḥkām* by Muqaddas Ardebīlī, a pious Shi'a faqih and mujtahid. Since early Islam, Muslims referred primarily to the Qur'an, but at the time of the Safavids, the Akhbarids forbade referring to the Qur'an and claimed that only the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) have the right to refer to and interpret it, while others must refer to the sunnah, i.e. narrations and hadiths. Although, the Akhbari movement could expand its ideas through some of the southern cities of Iran and some of the religious cities of Iraq at the beginning, their influence was counteracted by eminent mujtahids and were eventually pushed aside.
2. ***Sunnah***: the speech and act of the Ahlul Bayt or their acknowledgement of something. Shi'as believe that imamate is in line with prophethood; there is no difference between the sayings and acts of Imams (a) with the Prophet (s). Their only difference

²⁹ Rulings other than principles of religion

³⁰ Mohammad Ibrahim Jannāti, *Manābi' Ijtihād az Didigāh Madhāhib Islami*, p. 5.

lies in the issue of revelation.³¹ Therefore, if there is a statement about a ruling in the sayings of the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) or it is proved how they have acted in a certain situation or others have performed religious obligations in front of them and the Prophet (s) or Imams (a) have approved that act verbally or in action, i.e. they maintained silence towards that act, then a faqih can refer to it and allow or disallow an act accordingly.

3. **Consensus:** the agreement of scholars on one opinion towards a ruling. In Shi‘a fiqh, consensus is not accepted as an independent source for religious rulings, yet it is acceptable once it is the means for understanding the Infallibles’ speech; it serves as a proof that either the Prophet (s) or Imams (a) have had the same opinion as of the scholars’ who have reached consensus over one issue.

Among Shi‘a scholars, Uṣūlī scholars have different methods to achieve the mentioned discovery with certainty. For instance, some scholars assume the consensus of all scholars on the wrong as inadmissible, suggesting that it is incumbent upon the Imam (a) to provoke disagreement between them in order to save the Ummah from going astray. Another group of scholars assume the consensus of all scholars on one issue indicates the existence of a hadith which has been available to those scholars and they could issue a fatwa based on it.³²

4. **Reason:** Shi‘a scholars believe that there is full correspondence between religious rulings and reason and that reason supports any Islamic ruling; thus, they always have considered reason a valid means for knowing religion and its rulings in the absence of other sources such as the Qur’an and Sunnah.³³ However, they

³¹ Ibid. p. 75.

³² Meshkini, Ali, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Uṣūl wa Mu‘zam Abḥāthihā*, pp. 23 – 24.

³³ Ibn Idrīs, *Sarā’ir al-Ḥawā li Taḥrīr al-Fatāwī*, p. 19.

distinguished between the issues of *Mustaqillāt al-Aqlī*³⁴ and other issues and they considered reason to be valid only regarding the former issues. Furthermore, in cases where intellectual judgments are the products of sane intellect and not mingled with carnal intentions and desires, the judgment of reason is valid and the intellect can understand an issue independently and without the assistance of religion. However, sometimes a judgment is based on carnal desires and inclinations, and they prevent reason from having sound judgment. In such cases, those who are not sharp-sighted would consider these judgments as intellectual, while the fact is that such judgments are unreliable and are not the products of sound intellect.³⁵ Therefore, in religious epistemology, only sound intellect can be used as a source for knowing the religion and its rulings.

2. *Uṣūl of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh)*

Principles of Fiqh, briefly known as *uṣūl*, is “the knowledge of general rules for deducing Islamic rulings from their sources i.e. the Qur’an, Sunnah, reason, and consensus.”³⁶ The relation between fiqh and *uṣūl* is like the relation between philosophy and logic.³⁷

Fiqh is the profound understanding of Islamic rulings using the basic sources of religion. This discipline is essential since many details of Islamic rulings are not specifically mentioned in the Qur’an or even Sunnah. Thus, the jurist (*fuqahā*) come to a judgment about specific cases concerning *mukallafs*³⁸ through looking into the primary sources using the general and common rules. This in turn requires a new

³⁴ Intellectual Independents

³⁵ Mohammad Ibrahim Jannāti, *Manābi’ Ijtihād az Didigāh Madhāhib Islami*, p. 243.

³⁶ Ṣadr, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir, *‘Ilm Uṣūl (Marhaleh Awwal wa dowwom)*, trans. Naṣrullah Hekmat, p. 30.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁸ Those for whom worship is obligatory in Islam

discipline to formulate the rules for jurists to understand jurisprudential issues and eventually deduce the rulings.³⁹

Therefore, the study of the principles of jurisprudence is the study of the rules to be used in deducing Islamic laws along with teaching students the correct way of doing so. This discipline enables students to discern the valid method of deducing and extracting the laws of Islam from the sources of jurisprudence by using reason and the proofs provided by God through the Prophet and the Imams.

The History of Uṣūl in Shi‘ism

Some believe that uṣūl first emerged through Sunni scholars. Ibn Idrīs Shāfi‘ī was the founder and first author of uṣūl,⁴⁰ however, history reveals that some topics in uṣūl such as orders, prohibitions, and broad and specific issues were discussed among the Shi‘a before Shāfi‘ī. Existence of some treatises⁴¹ which were written by the companions of the Imams (a) proves that they were already involved in uṣūl and that the discipline of uṣūl did not emerge among the Shi‘a just after the Occultation of Imam Mahdi (aj). Thus, issues relating to this discipline existed at the time of Imams (a), particularly Imam Sadiq (a) and Imam Baqir (a), both of whom prepared the grounds for uṣūl by teaching its principles and demonstrating to their students how to infer from the Qur’an and Sunnah.⁴²

Sayyid Murtada: Since the beginning of the Major Occultation, the first scholar who wrote books in uṣūl and whose works were discussed for centuries after him was Sayyid Murtaḍā ‘Allam al-Hudā (d. 436

³⁹ Ṣadr, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir, *Al-Ma‘ālim al-Jadīdah*, Collection of Works no. 8, pp. 19 – 22, (Qom: Congress of the Martyr Ṣadr)

⁴⁰ Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *Al-Wasā’il ilā Ma’rifah al-Awā’il*, p. 117.

⁴¹ Treatises such as *Al-Alfāz* and *Al-Alfāz Kayf Taṣīh* written by Hishām ibn Ḥakam (d. 179 or 199 AH), *Ikhtilāf al-Ḥadīth wa Mas’alah ‘an Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā ibn Ja’far* written by Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 183 AH),

⁴² Mīr‘Imādī, Sayyid Ahmad, *ibid.*, p. 18.

A.H). He lived in the fourth and fifth centuries and was Sheikh Mufīd's student.⁴³ His most famous work in usul was *Al-Dharī'ah Ilā Uṣūl al-Shī'ah*.

Sheikh Tusi: After Sayyid Murtaḍā, Sheikh Abu Ja'far Ṭūsī (d. 460 A.H) - a student of Sayyid Murtada and Sheikh Mufid - was the leading scholar. His ideas remained very influential for three to four centuries. He also established the seminary of Najaf. His book in Usul al-fiqh, *'Uddat al- Uṣūl*, was very well received. Both *Al-Dharī'ah Ilā Uṣūl al-Shī'ah* and *'Uddat al- Uṣūl* were unmatched in their quality as they were the most influential sources of uṣūl until the end of the 5th century.⁴⁴ After Sheikh Ṭūsī, the disciplines of fiqh and uṣūl declined in Shi'a seminaries in the sixth century. Some have argued that this was largely due to the fact that in the Sunni world fiqh and uṣūl al-fiqh had declined and therefore there was no serious debates and discussion happening among the two schools of Islam.⁴⁵ However, the promotion of the Seminary of Ḥillah and the scientific endeavors of Ibn Idrīs Ḥillī (d. 543 – 549 A.H) in the seminary steered Shi'a fiqh and uṣūl to a new stage of development. Although Ibn Idrīs did not compose a work on uṣūl, he used the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus, and reason to eloquently discuss issues in fiqh and uṣūl in his book *Sarā'ir*. He also benefitted from *Barā'ah* (exemption) and *Iḥtīyāt* (precaution) as a means of reasoning from time to time.⁴⁶

In the seventh century, uṣūl was reinvigorated through the scientific quality in the works of Najm al-Dīn Ja'far ibn Hasan Hillī,⁴⁷ the great Shi'a scholar known as Muḥaqqiq Hillī. He wrote two books in uṣūl: *Ma'ārij al-Uṣūl* and *Nahj al-Wuṣūl ilā Ma'rifah al-'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, the former of which is now available to us. *Ma'ārij al-Uṣūl* is a brief yet

⁴³ a renowned famous Shi'a kalām (theology) scholar who died in 413 A.H

⁴⁴ 'Alipūr, Mahdi, *Dar'āmadi bi Tārīkh 'Ilm Uṣūl*, p. 127.

⁴⁵ Ṣadr, Muhammad Baqir, *Al-Ma'ālim al-Jadīdah*, pp. 88 – 89.

⁴⁶ 'Alipūr, Ibid., p. 148.

⁴⁷ 602 – 672 AH

comprehensive reference for the most important topics in uşūl. Its other advantages include the separation of issues in logic and kalam from usul, as well as its more developed organization and classification compared to previous references in uşūl.⁴⁸

After Muḥaqqiq Hillī, Shi‘a fiqh flourished through his nephew, Jamāl al-Dīn Hasan ibn Yūsuf Hillī⁴⁹ known as Allamah Hillī. He was the most prolific author in the history of uşūl; some of his books include *Tahdhīb al-Wuṣūl ilā al-‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, *Mabādī al-Wuṣūl ilā al-‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, *Nihāyah al-Wuṣūl ilā al-‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, *Muntaha al-Wuṣūl ilā al-‘Ilm al-Kalām wa al-Uṣūl*.

Subsequently, uşūl continued its development in the 10th and 11th centuries, its works including: *Tamhīd al-Qawā’id* written by Zayn al-Dīn ‘Āmilī⁵⁰ (or Shahīd al-Thānī). In this book, he discussed the related issues after each principle in uşūl. Doing such a comparative practice, he demonstrated the principles of uşūl as a prerequisite for fiqh and avoided irrelevant details and discussions.⁵¹

After Shahīd al-Thānī, Sheikh Hasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn,⁵² author of *Ma‘ālim*, was the most eminent figure known to Shi‘a scholars in uşūl. His *Ma‘ālim al-Dīn wa Malādh al-Mujtahidīn* was referred to by researchers and was long being taught in seminaries with commentaries written on it for centuries after him, namely: *Hāshīyeh*,⁵³ *Mullā Sāliḥ Māzandarānī*, *Hāshīyeh-ye Sultān al-‘Ulamā* and Sheikh Muhammad Taqī Işfahānī’s *Hidāyah al-Mustashriqīn*.

Among the most important historical challenges faced in uşūl was the emergence of the Akhbārī movement in the 11th century. Akhbārīs

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 156.

⁴⁹ 648 – 726 AH

⁵⁰ 911 – 965 AH

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 183.

⁵² 959 – 1011 AH

⁵³ A type of commentary in the form of notes written in the margins of the original book.

opposed uṣūl considering it as a derivative and misleading knowledge towards the common tradition of the companions in referring to the infallible Imams (a) and following their hadiths. They considered the commonly known ijtihād⁵⁴ as a knowledge that created doubt in that referring to uṣūl to derive practical rules was impermissible. They brought many reasons⁵⁵ in rejecting it and wrote many critiques regarding the principles of mujtahids to verify their arguments.⁵⁶

Muhammad Baqir Wahid Behbahani⁵⁷ strongly rose up against the Akhbārī movement. He had entered the Karbala Seminary when the Akhbārī movement was strongly influential. While teaching uṣūl and ijtihād, he also debated and held discussions with Sheikh Yusuf Baḥrānī, the grand Akhbārī scholar of Karbala Seminary. During these years, he trained outstanding students such as Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', Sayyid Ali Óabāṭabā'ī and Mirza-ye Qummi through whom he revived uṣūl and emphasized on the need for mujtahids. Among his works are: Marginal Notes (*Hāshīyeh*) on *Ma'ālim al-Uṣūl*, Marginal notes (*Hāshīyeh*) on Mirza-ye Qummi's *Qawānīn al-Uṣūl*, critical marginal notes on Fayḍ Kāshānī's *Al-Fawā'id al-Uṣūlīyyah*, and *Al-Fawā'id al-Hā'irīyyah*.

In the contemporary centuries, the most influential uṣūl scholar distinguished among others was Sheikh Murtaḍā Anṣārī, who brought uṣūl to a new stage and whose opinions are currently taught and discussed in seminaries.

⁵⁴ In Islamic law: a scholar's independent interpretation or use of reason to derive a rule of divine law from the Qur'an if not precisely described in the Qur'an, hadiths, and scholarly consensus.

⁵⁵ Cf. Astarābādī, Muhammad Amin, *Al-Fawā'id al-Mudunīyyah*, pp. 90 – 120.

⁵⁶ Also cf. Mulla Muhsin Fayḍ Kāshānī's *Al-Uṣūl al-Aṣlīyyah*, Sheikh Tusi's *Al-Fawā'id al-Ṭūsīyyah* and Sheikh Ḥurr 'Āmilī's *Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah*.

⁵⁷ 1118 – 1205 AH

His deep influence gained him the status of being the founder of a new school in uṣūl.⁵⁸ All scholars after him followed his school as there has not been any doctrine that drastically changed this department.⁵⁹ In addition to being an uṣūl scholar, he was great in theorization, without ignoring the importance of literature review in research. His works indicate his reviews of the opinions of the previous scholars. He also classified the discussions sequentially and added additional theories, integrated them into a developed one, and afterwards critiqued it.⁶⁰

Sheikh Murtaḍā Anṣārī's most important work which includes much of his research and innovations in uṣūl is *Farā'id al-Uṣūl*, predominantly known as *Rasā'il*. Most scholars after him followed the example of this book in structure and content, and it has been officially taught in seminaries since then. Because of its significance, there has been more than eighty *Hāshīyehs* and commentaries written about it,⁶¹ among which are *Baḥr al-Fawā'id* written by Muhammad Hasan Āshṭīyānī,⁶² *Durar al-Fawā'id fī Sharḥ al-Fawā'id* written by Mulla Muhammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī and *Hāshīyeh-ye Rasā'il* written by Muhammad Kāẓim Yazdi.⁶³

The most renowned student in Sheikh Murtaḍā Anṣārī's seminary was Mulla Muhammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī⁶⁴ who wrote the valued book of *Kifāyah al-Uṣūl*. This book has also been among the collections of works in seminaries from long ago. After the late Mulla Muhammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī (known as Ākhūnd Khurāsānī), there has been an emergence of new perspectives. Currently, its development carries on

⁵⁸ Āqā Bozorg Tehrani, *Al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 16, p. 132.

⁵⁹ Muṭahhari, Murtaḍā, *Āshnā'ī ba 'Ulūm-e Eslāmī*, vol. 3, p. 23. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London]

⁶⁰ Alipūr, Mahdi, *Dar'āmadi bi Tārīkh 'Ilm Uṣūl*, p. 366.

⁶¹ Āqā Bozorg Tehrani, *Al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 6, pp. 152 – 162.

⁶² 248 – 1319 AH

⁶³ d. 1337 AH

⁶⁴ d. 1328 AH

with the on-going courses and discussions in seminaries that address issues in uṣūl.

Issues in Uṣūl

Issues in uṣūl are classified into four categories:⁶⁵

1. *Linguistic Discussions* address the application of terms for concepts and the way people use them in both factual and allegorical senses. Other general issues included in this section refer to different models of enjoining good and prohibiting bad, the approach to apply general rules to certain cases (*'āmm* and *khāṣṣ*; general and specific), absolute rules and their specific cases (*muṭlaq* and *muqayyad*; absolute and conditioned) and major and minor reasons for rules (meaning and appearance).
2. *Intellectual Discussions* study the rulings that are not expressly mentioned in the Qur'an or hadiths but are implied logically by them such as a) the correlation between a religious rule and an intellectual one, b) the religious necessity of the prerequisites for a religious obligation, c) the possibility of being addressed by a command and a prohibition at the same time from two different aspects, and d) the question whether the opposite action to what has been commanded becomes prohibited.
3. *Religious Proof (hujjat)* refers to an action that fulfils one's duty towards God and discharges him from a religious obligation. This way, the validity of issues such as a *khobar al-wahid* (خبير الواحد). Although in Arabic the term "wahid" means one, technically it is not meant to only refer to a narration narrated by one person. It refers to every hadith which cannot be classified under mutawatir and furthermore does not have any other evidence to prove that it is

⁶⁵ Al-Muzaffar, Muhammad Reza, *Uṣūl ul-Fiqh*, p. 8.

definitely from the Prophet (s) or his household (a). Also, the validity of acting according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the validity of other sources of fiqh such as tradition, consensus, and reason is discussed.

4. *The Principles of Application (al-uṣūl al-'amaliyyah)* study validity and the limits of the validity of practical principles. These practical principles are *barā'ah*,⁶⁶ *iḥtīyāt*,⁶⁷ *takhyīr*⁶⁸ and *istiṣhāb*.⁶⁹ These four principles include all cases where the real obligation is not clear.⁷⁰ If an instance has a history and its previous state is clear, then according to *istiṣhāb* (continuance), the latest rule must be followed, otherwise, *barā'ah* (exemption) suggests that there is no obligation regarding that instance. However, if the existence of an obligation is obvious, but its quality and limits makes two or more options, then one must fulfil all related options as obligatory about that instance based on *iḥtīyāt* until he is certain about the fulfilment of his obligation. This can be applied only if it is possible. If not, that the person does all of those options. Afterwards, according to *takhyīr* (option), he can choose one of the options to fulfil. In the recent Shi'a uṣūl of fiqh, these four principles including their application and domain of usage are crucial and have been scrutinized. Many logical and philosophical concepts have been used and through these discussions, many new logical and philosophical ideas emerged for the first time.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Principle of exemption

⁶⁷ Principle of precaution

⁶⁸ Principle of option

⁶⁹ Principle of continuance

⁷⁰ As it was mentioned in the Twelvers Shi'a definition of Uṣūl, this discipline helps faqīh drawing up the rules for specific cases from the four major sources of fiqh. However, it is possible that through ijtihād, a faqīh might face cases, for which he cannot reach a judgment out of the four sources of the Qur'an, tradition, consensus, and reason. In such cases, due to the problem of the people in finding the real rule for their specific cases, religion has considered a series of alternative rules and practical tasks for people called "apparent rules."

⁷¹ Mudarrisī, Sayyid Hassan, *Muqaddameh-yī bar Fiqh-e Shi'a*, p. 17.

Further to the four mentioned types of issues, there is another common chapter in the books of uṣūl about *ta'ādul*⁷² and *tarājīh*.⁷³ When referring to narrations, it frequently occurs that there are various narrations about one subject which contradict each other. A great deal of the efforts of uṣūl scholars is dedicated to collect such hadiths or to find regulations and evidence for rejecting one narration and acting according to another. Some of these regulations are instructions suggested by Imams (a) are known as '*ilājīyyah* (remedial) hadiths.'

The upcoming articles in these series continue with the sections entitled "Hadith Studies" and "Qur'anic Sciences."

⁷² Balance. This refers to equality of both hadiths in their validity

⁷³ Preferences. This refers to preferring one hadith because of having more evidence on its side

THE POSITION OF LADY FATIMA AL-ZAHRA (A) IN THE VERSE OF *MUBĀHALAH*¹ FROM A SUNNI PERSPECTIVE

MUHAMMAD YA'QŪB BASHVI²

TRANSLATED BY SEYYEDEH ZAHRA MIRFENDERESKI

ABSTRACT: The verse of *Mubāhalah* indicates the infallibility of the People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kisā*) in their words and deeds. This verse refers to the famous event of al-Mubahalāh which took place in the year 10 A.H. against the Christians of Najran. Both Shi'a and Sunni scholars have narrated this event. Imam Ali (a) was considered as 'our souls' (*anfusanā*), Lady Fatima (a) as 'our women' (*nisā'anā*), and Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husayn (a) as 'our sons' (*abnā'anā*). Some Sunni scholars believe that this report is fully authentic. Traditions about *Mubāhalah* have been reported in 51 different ways and quoted from 37 major religious scholars.

Introduction

The interpretation of verses on the high status of Lady Fatima are found in both Shi'a and Sunni traditional and exegetical sources. According to Sunni traditional and exegetical sources, more than 135 verses in 49 chapters and two complete chapters (*Dahr* and *Kawthar*) are related to Lady Fatima's persona. Verses interpreted concerning Lady Fatima (a) in Shi'a sources are not included in these numbers, demonstrating the abundance of verses with reference to her. Among

¹ 3:61

² MA in Qur'an and hadith sciences from Imam Khomeini school

her titles include *Ummi Abīhā*³ (or ‘the mother of her father’), the great woman of all women⁴, *Kawthar*⁵ (‘abundance’) in the Qur’an, and a piece of the Prophet’s (s) heart.⁶

Hundreds of related verses and many exegetical traditions in both Shi‘a and Sunni sources indicate infallibility, purity, honesty, self-devotion, sincerity, and other spiritual excellences of Lady Fatima (a). However, her character still remains unknown; she is the one whose pleasure is a sign of Allah’s pleasure and whose wrath is a sign of Allah’s wrath. Truly, no pen can bear the burden of writing about the different dimensions of her character. Therefore, from among many verses revealed about Lady Fatima (a), the only verse discussed in this article is the verse of *Mubāhalah* from a Sunni point of view.

The verse of Mubāhalah

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ
وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى
الْكَاذِبِينَ

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, ‘Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and yourselves, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.’ (3:61)

³ See: ‘Iz al-Dīn ibn Athīr, *Asad al-Ghābah fī Ma‘rifah al-Ṣaḥābah*, Beirut, Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, vol. 5, p. 52.

⁴ See: Muhammad ibn Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Beirut, Dār al-Jayl, vol. 4, p. 248; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr al-Ma‘thūr*, Dār al-Fikr, 1993, vol. 2, p. 19.

⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1985, in the commentary of chapter of Kawthar.

⁶ Maḥmūd ibn Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 36; Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, vol. 3, p. 158.

Literal meaning of Mubāhalah

According to Jawharī⁷ (d. 393 A.H) in his *Sihah al-Lughah*, the term *Mubāhalah* means ‘to curse each other’ and *ibtihāl*,⁸ means ‘to pray to Allah (swt) earnestly’.⁹ Moreover, Ibn Fāris (d. 395 A.H) in his *Mu‘jam Maqā’is al-Lughah* says: “b-h-l”¹⁰ has three meanings: a) to empty and set free, b) to invoke and pray fervently, and c) shortage of water.

The term *Mubāhalah* and the verse of Mubahala¹¹ (3:61) refers to the second meaning, that is, ‘to invoke and pray fervently’, because when two people engage in *Mubāhalah*, one curses the other and begs Allah (swt) to punish the addressee.

Definition and incident of Mubāhalah

Mubāhalah occurs when one person or group invokes the curse of Allah (swt) on another person or group about a religious issue and they implore Allah to disgrace those who lie about it.

According to both Shi‘a and Sunni sources, a group of Christians from Najrān went to the Prophet (s) and talked about Prophet Jesus (a). The next day when the Prophet (s) decided to do *mubahalah*, he chose Imam Ali (a) to represent the Muslims as ‘ourselves’, Lady Fatima (a) as ‘our women’, and Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husayn (a) as ‘our sons’ from amongst all Muslims to confirm his prophethood. This act of the Prophet (s) is a proof for the infallibility and honesty of Lady Fatima al-Zahra (a).

⁷ Abu Nasr Isma‘il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari, the author of a notable Arabic dictionary

⁸ In Arabic, verbal noun of Mubāhilah

⁹ Ismā‘il Jawharī, *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, Beirut, Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Mullā’in, 1987, under root form “b-h-l”.

¹⁰ In Arabic, past root of Mubāhilah

¹¹ Ahmad ibn Fāris, *Mu‘jam Maqāyis al-Lughah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabīyah, under root form “b-h-l”.

Revelation of the verse of Mubāhalah

1. ‘Albā’ ibn Ahmad Alīshkarī says, “When the verse of *Mubāhalah* (3:61) was revealed, the Prophet (s) called Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) and invited the Jews for *Mubāhalah*. As soon as a young man from among them was informed of the Prophet’s (s) suggestion, he told them, “Woe to you! Have you forgotten that your brothers were mutated into monkeys and pigs? Avoid *Mubāhalah*, otherwise you would suffer the same.”¹²

2. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh reports that the verse of *Mubāhalah* is about Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a). He believes that the word ‘ourselves’ refers to the noble Prophet (s) and Ali (a), ‘our sons’ refers to Hasan (a) and Husayn (a), and ‘our women’ refers to Lady Fatima (a).¹³

3. Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ reports: “When the verse of *Mubāhalah* was sent down, the noble Prophet (s) summoned Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a), and stated, ‘O Allah! These are my household.’”¹⁴

The three above-mentioned traditions show that the verse of *Mubāhalah* has been revealed concerning the People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kisā’*).

In his commentary, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, Imam Fakhr Rāzī writes, “Once the Prophet (s) left his house toward the place of *Mubāhalah*. As his black hair hung down to his shoulders, he (s) was carrying Husayn (a)

¹² Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āyāt al-Qur’ān*, Dār al-Fikr, 1988, vol. 3, p. 301; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233.

¹³ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 231; Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Azīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1987, vol. 1, p. 379; Ali Wāhidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, Riyadh, Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmīyah, 1984, pp. 90-91.

¹⁴ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Sharḥ-e Nawawī, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1987, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Sunan Tirmidhī*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1994, vol. 5, p. 407; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233.

on his shoulders - or cuddling him - and holding Hasan's (a) hand. Lady Fatima (a) followed him and Ali (a) was behind her. When they reached their journey's end, the Prophet (s) told them, 'After each prayer of mine, say 'Amen.'"

When the bishop of Najrān saw this great scene, he said, "I see such faces that if they were to ask Allah (swt) to uproot mountains He (swt) would do so. O Christians! Avoid doing *Mubāhalah* with this man, or you will be destroyed and not a single Christian will survive in the world until the day of Resurrection."

Then the Prophet (s) said: "I [swear] by Allah (swt) to Whom my life belongs, if they did *Mubāhalah*, they would have been destroyed. They would have been mutated into monkeys or pigs. A fire would occur in their land [Najrān] and all its inhabitants, including the birds on the trees, would be consumed. Nothing would prevent destruction and all Christians would die."¹⁵

The verse of Mubāhalah according to Sunnis

The main part of the story, which is the fact that the Prophet (s) chose Ali (a) as 'ourselves', Lady Fatima (a) as 'our women', and Hasan and Husayn (a) as 'our sons' is accepted by all scholars of exegesis and hadith, as some Sunni exegetes such as Imam Fakhr Rāzī¹⁶ and Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī¹⁷ have confirmed it as well. Nayshābūrī adds, "'Ourselves' refers to Ali (a) and the majority of scholars of exegesis and hadith have accepted it."¹⁸

¹⁵ Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid*. d. 604 A.H

¹⁷ d. 728 A.H

¹⁸ Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'an wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1996, vol. 2, p. 178.

Imam Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ¹⁹ wrote: “All historians and narrators agree that on the day of *Mubāhalah*, the Prophet (s) approached the Christians and invited them for *Mubāhalah* while he (s) held Hasan and Husayn’s (a) hands and Ali (a) and Lady Fatima (a) accompanied him.”²⁰

Hākim Nayshābūrī²¹ believes that the story of *Mubāhalah* has been narrated by successive transmitters and says, “It has been related in commentaries of Qur’an by successive transmitters such as ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet (s) on the day of *Mubāhalah* held Ali (a) and Hasan (a) and Husayn’s (a) hands and put Lady Fatima (a) behind them. Then he (s) called them “ourselves,” “our sons,” and “our women.””²²

On the authenticity of the verse, Zamakhsharī²³ wrote, “There is no proof better than this [verse] that indicates the high status of People of the Cloak (*Aṣḥāb-e Kasā’*) who are Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a), and Husayn (a).”

Other Sunni scholars such as ibn Taymīyyah,²⁴ ibn Kathīr,²⁵ ibn Yāsīn,²⁶ Muhammad ibn Sūrah,²⁷ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī²⁸ and

¹⁹ d. 370 A.H

²⁰ Ahmad Rāzī Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 A.H), *Aḥkām al-Qur’an*, Mecca, al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyyah, vol. 2, p. 23.

²¹ d. 405 A.H

²² Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Nayshābūrī, *Ma’rifah al-‘Ulūm al-Hadīth*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1977, p. 50.

²³ d. 538

²⁴ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Damishqī, (d. 728 A.H) *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah fī Naqḍi Kalām al-Shī’ah wa al-Qadrīyyah*, Cairo, Maktabah ibn Taymīyyah, 1998, vol. 4, p. 35.

²⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Rāzī, (d. 774 A.H.) *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Azīm Sanadan ‘an Rasūl Allah wa al-Ṣaḥābah wa al-Tābi’īn*, Beirut, al-Maktabah al-Miṣrīyyah, 1999, vol. 1, p. 421.

²⁶ Hikmah ibn Yāsīn, *Al-Tafsīr al-Ṣaḥīḥ Mawsū’ah al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Masbūr min al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma’thūr*, Medina, Dār al-Athar, 1999, vol. 1, p. 421.

²⁷ Muhammad ibn Sūrah, (d. 279 A.H.) *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

²⁸ Muhammad Shūkānī, *Faḥḥ al-Qadr al-Jāmi’ fī fann al-Riwāyah wa al-Dirāyah min ‘Ilm al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 449. In its marginal note, the researcher of the book has acknowledged authenticity of the hadith related by Sa’d.

Hākīm Niyshābūrī²⁹ have acknowledged the authenticity of the above-mentioned hadiths.

The verse of *Mubāhalah* indicates the greatness and honesty of Lady Fatima (a) and her high status in this world and the next. Ālūsī³⁰ has also acknowledged the prominence of this hadith. He says, “The indication of this verse as to superiority of the family of His messenger (s) is a matter no faithful person doubts and [it is a fact that] hostility against the family of the Prophet (s) undermines one’s faith.”³¹

The unsurpassed greatness of Lady Fatima (a)

The Prophet (s) took only Lady Fatima (a) as ‘*nisā’anā*,’ ‘our women’ for Mubāhalah in the presence of some of the wives of the Prophet (s). Nevertheless, he (s) took none of them for Mubāhala. He (s) needed to take people with himself that could be his support on his prophetic mission, and Lady Fatima (a) was so. If the Prophet (s) had taken with himself someone who had lied even once in his/her life he (s) could not have cursed liars, because if he had done so he would have cursed the one who was with him as well. This elucidates Lady Fatima’s infallibility: she (a) was a perfect exemplar of honesty which confirms her high status and greatness. Even the bishop of Najrān spoke of Lady Fatima’s (a) greatness to his people by saying, “I see such faces who if they were to ask God to uproot mountains and He would do so. O Christians! Avoid doing *Mubāhalah* with this man, or you will be destroyed and even one Christian will no longer survive in this world.”³²

The Prophet (s) took Lady Fatima (a) as a proof of his prophethood for *Mubāhalah*. Before going to the meeting, he (s) gathered Ali (a), Lady

²⁹ Hākīm Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 150.

³⁰ Maḥmūd Ālūsī, (d. 1270 A.H.)Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm wa al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī, Tehran, Jahān, p. 168.

³¹ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 167.

³² Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 89.

Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) together and said, “O Allah! These are my family.”³³ Indeed, the Prophet (s) introduced his true household to the Muslims. Especially among women, it is Lady Fatima (a) who is meant to be “our women.”³⁴

Transmitters of traditions of Mubāhalah

The event of *Mubāhalah* has been transmitted in 51 different ways,³⁵ from 37 companions [of the Prophet (s)], followers of the companions, and household of the Prophet (s), including Imam Ali (a),³⁶ Imam Hasan (a),³⁷ Imam Ali ibn Husayn (a),³⁸ Abī Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Ali al-Bāqir (a),³⁹ Imam abī ‘Abdullah Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Šādiq (a),⁴⁰ and Imam Mūsā ibn Ja‘far (a).⁴¹

Companions, followers, and prominent people include: Ibn ‘Abbās,⁴² Jābir ibn ‘Abdullah,⁴³ Sa‘d ibn abī Waqqāš,⁴⁴ Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān,⁴⁵

³³ Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2000, vol. 1, p. 324; Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407; Rashīd al-Din Meybūdi, *Tafsīr Kashf al-Asrār Wa’dah al-Abrār*, Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1376, vol. 2, p. 151; Ḥikmah ibn Yāsīn, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 421; Khālid Āl ‘Uqdah, *Jāmi‘ al-Tafsīr min Kutub al-Aḥādīth*, Riyadh, Dār Ṭayyibah, 1421 A.H, vol. 1, p. 370.

³⁴ In some commentaries by Sunni scholars, this ḥadīth is continued as follows: Then, Gabriel (a) came and said, ‘O Muhammad! What if I be a member of your household?’ The Prophet (s) answered, ‘O Gabriel! You are one of us.’ Then, Gabriel (a) went back to skies, boasted and said, ‘Who is like me? I am the chief of angels in the skies and a member of Muhammad’s (s) household on the earth.’ Rashīd al-Din Meybūdi, *Ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 151-152.

³⁵ Ali Ṭāwūs, *Su‘ad al-Su‘ūd*, Qom, Dalīl, 1379, p. 182.

³⁶ Ahmad ibn Ḥijr Haythamī, al-Šawā‘iq al-Muḥarraqaḥ fi al-Rad ‘alā ahl al-Bad‘ wa al-Zunduqaḥ, Cairo, Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1965, p. 156.

³⁷ Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Abd al-Rahmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 168.

⁴¹ Nūrullah Ḥusaynī Mar‘ashī Tustarī, *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaq wa Azhāq al-Bāṭil*, vol. 9, p. 91, quoted from: Shahāb al-Dīn Ahmad Nuwayrī, *Nahāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, vol. 8, p. 173.

⁴² Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *Ma‘rifah ‘Ulūm al-Hadīth*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, p. 50.

⁴³ Ali Wāḥidī, *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūfī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 233; Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jawzī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 324.

⁴⁵ Ḥākim Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl Liqwā‘id al-Taḥḍīl*, Beirut, al-‘Alami Lilmaṭbū‘āt, vol. 1, p. 126.

Abī Rāfi‘ (slave of Prophet (s)),⁴⁶ ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān,⁴⁷ Talḥah ibn ‘Abdullah,⁴⁸ Zubayr ibn al-‘Awām,⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf,⁵⁰ Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib,⁵¹ Anas ibn Mālik,⁵² Bakr ibn Mismār,⁵³ Munkadir ibn ‘Abdullah from his father,⁵⁴ Hasan Baṣrī,⁵⁵ Qutādah,⁵⁶ Suddī,⁵⁷ Ibn Zayd,⁵⁸ ‘Albā’ ibn Aḥmar Alīshkarī,⁵⁹ Zayd ibn Ali,⁶⁰ Sha‘bī,⁶¹ Yahyā ibn Ya‘mar,⁶² Mujāhid ibn Jabr Makkī,⁶³ Shahr ibn Ḥawshab,⁶⁴ Abī Ṭufayl ‘Āmir ibn Wāthilah,⁶⁵ Jurayr ibn ‘Abdullah Sajistānī,⁶⁶ Abī Uways Madanī,⁶⁷ ‘Amr ibn Sa‘īd ibn Ma‘ādh,⁶⁸ Abī al-Bakhtarī,⁶⁹ Abī Sa‘īd,⁷⁰ Salmah ibn ‘Abd Yashū’ from his father,⁷¹ and ‘Āmir ibn Sa‘d.⁷²

⁴⁶ Abu al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Ghānī*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1992, vol. 12, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵¹ Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 379.

⁵² Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁵⁶ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol.2, p.301.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah Andulusī, *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996, p. 447.

⁶⁰ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol.3, p.300.

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātam, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁶² Ali Ṭāwūs, *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Ḥākim Ḥaskānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp. 120-128.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ Ahmad Ṭabarī, *Dhakhā’ir al-‘Uqbā*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, p. 25.

⁷¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 229.

⁷² Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185.

Arguments for the verse of *Mubāhalah*

1. On the day of *Shurā* (*Consultation*), Imam Ali (a) reminded the audience that the verse of *Mubāhalah* has been sent down about him [and the rest of the household of the Prophet (s)].⁷³
2. ‘Āmir ibn Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ has quoted from his father, “One day, Mu‘āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān ordered Sa’d to curse Ali (a). Sa’d disobeyed him. Mu‘āwīyah asked him, “Why do you refuse to swear at Ali (a)?” Sa’d answered, “Once the Prophet said that Ali (a) possessed three attributes. So, I would never swear at him. If I had just one of them, I would count it better than having camels with red hair...”⁷⁴
3. When the verse of *Mubāhalah* was sent down, the Prophet (s) summoned Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) and said, ‘O Allah! These are my family.’⁷⁵
4. Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (a) used the verse of *Mubāhalah* as a convincing argument when Hārūn al-Rashīd protested.⁷⁶

Objectors’ view

This section describes some of the objections on the significance of *Mubāhalah*.

1. Ibn Taymīyyah’s view

Ibn Taymīyyah⁷⁷ acknowledges that the Prophet (s) took Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a), Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) for *Mubāhalah* and believes that

⁷³ Ahmad ibn Ḥujr Haythamī, *Ibid*, p. 156.

⁷⁴ *Sahih* of Muslim, Vol. 4, p. 1871, no. 2408. (Kitab Fada’il al-Sahabah, Sakhr serial No. 4420).

⁷⁵ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185; Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

⁷⁶ Sulaymān Qundūzī, *Yanābī’ al-Mawaddah*, Qom, Basirati, chapter 63, p. 362.

⁷⁷ d. 728 A.H

it is an authentic hadith; however, he says he (s) took them because they were his closest relatives.⁷⁸

Reply: If the Prophet (s) took them because they were just his close relatives, he (s) should have taken at least three persons of his relatives as ‘our souls’ (*anfusanā*), since Sunnis believe that Ali was not the only son in law of the Prophet (s). He (s) could have also taken his wives as ‘our women,’ but he (s) took only Lady Fatima (a). In spite of the fact that ‘our women’ is a plural noun and includes at least three people, the noble Prophet (s) took only Lady Fatima (a).

On the other hand, ‘Abbās was a closer relative to the Prophet (s) than Ali (a), because he was the Prophet’s (s) uncle. Nevertheless, he (s) took Ali (a) and not ‘Abbās. Therefore, Ibn Taymīyyah’s view is not correct. The Prophet (s) chose his household because of their high spiritual status, and not because of their relationship.

2. ‘Abduh’s view

Muhammad ‘Abduh says: All hadiths and traditions agree unanimously that the Prophet (s) chose Ali (a), Lady Fatima (a) and their two sons for *Mubāhalah*, and that “our women” meant Lady Fatima (a), and “ourselves” meant Ali (a). These Shi‘a traditions were spread among the Muslims; those who did so succeeded in their attempt spread them among the Sunnis as well. However, those who fabricated these hadiths could not reconcile their false traditions on the verse of *Mubāhalah*. They argue that the word “*nisā‘ana*” - ‘our women’ - in the verse is a plural noun in Arabic, and Arabic-speaking people do not use this word for one woman, especially not for a woman who is the daughter of a narrator who has several wives.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 118.

⁷⁹ Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Minār*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1999, vol. 3, p. 265.

Reply: ‘Abduh has unfairly said that the source of traditions is the Shi‘as, although many Sunni exegetes and narrators of hadiths have reported this tradition in their commentaries and collections of hadiths and have acknowledged it, such as: Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H),⁸⁰ Imam Muslim (d. 273 A.H),⁸¹ Muhammad ibn Sūrah (d. 279 A.H),⁸² Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H),⁸³ Ibn abī Ḥātam (d. 375 A.H),⁸⁴ Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī (d. 356 A.H),⁸⁵ Imam Abū Bakr Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 A.H),⁸⁶ Samarqandī (d. 375 A.H),⁸⁷ Ḥākim Nayshābūrī (d. 405 A.H),⁸⁸ Tha‘labī (d. 427 A.H),⁸⁹ Māwardī (d. 450 A.H),⁹⁰ Beyhaqī (d. 458 A.H),⁹¹ Wāḥidī (d. 468 A.H),⁹² Ḥākim Ḥaskānī (d. 471 A.H),⁹³ Imam Baghawī (d. 516 A.H),⁹⁴ Zamakhsharī (d. 538 A.H),⁹⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah,⁹⁶ Ibn Jawzī (d. 597 A.H),⁹⁷ Fakhr Rāzī (d. 604 A.H),⁹⁸ Qurṭubī (d. 671 A.H),⁹⁹ Muḥib Ṭabarī (d. 694 A.H),¹⁰⁰ Nusufī (d. 710

⁸⁰ Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 185.

⁸¹ Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 185.

⁸² Muhammad ibn Sūrah, *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 407.

⁸³ Muhammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 299.

⁸⁴ Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁸⁵ Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī, *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ Ahmad Rāzī Jaṣṣāṣ, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 23.

⁸⁷ Ibrāhīm Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-Musammā Bibaḥr al-‘Ulūm*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1993, vol. 1, p. 4027.

⁸⁸ Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 150.

⁸⁹ Ahmad Tha‘labī, *Tafsīr al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002, vol. 3, p. 85.

⁹⁰ Ali Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-‘Uyūn (Tafsīr al-Māwardī)*, Egypt, al-Bunyah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah Lilkitāb, 1979, vol. 1, p. 399.

⁹¹ Ahmad Biyhaqī, *Dalā‘il al-Nubuwwah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1985, vol. 5, p. 388.

⁹² Ali Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī, *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁹³ Ḥākim Ḥaskānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 123.

⁹⁴ Hussein ibn Mas‘ūd al-ḡarrā‘ al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 2002, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁹⁵ Mahmūd Zamakhsharī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 193.

⁹⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *al-Ḍaw‘ al-Munīr*, vol. 2, p. 64.

⁹⁷ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 324.

⁹⁸ Fakhr Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 88.

⁹⁹ Muhammad ibn Ahmad Qarṭabī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur‘an*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, vol. 4, p. 104.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmad Ṭabarī, *Ibid*, p. 25.

A.H),¹⁰¹ Imam Khāzin (d. 725 A.H),¹⁰² Nizām al-Dīn Nayshābūrī (d. 728 A.H),¹⁰³ Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728 A.H),¹⁰⁴ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Miṣrī (d. 733 A.H),¹⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥayyān Andulusī (d. 745 A.H),¹⁰⁶ Dhahabī (d. 748 A.H),¹⁰⁷ Ibn Kathīr (d. 744 A.H),¹⁰⁸ Bayḍāwī (d. 791 A.H),¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī (d. 852 A.H),¹¹⁰ Suyūfī (d. 911 A.H),¹¹¹ Ibn Ḥijr Haythamī (d. 973 A.H),¹¹² Abī Sa‘ūd (d. 982 A.H),¹¹³ Muhammad Ali Ṣābūnī (d. 997 A.H),¹¹⁴ Burūsawī (d. 1137 A.H),¹¹⁵ ‘Ijlī (d. 1204 A.H),¹¹⁶ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ujaybah (d. 1244 A.H),¹¹⁷ Ālūsī (d. 1270 A.H),¹¹⁸ Qāsimī,¹¹⁹ Shawkānī (d. 1250 A.H),¹²⁰ Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī,¹²¹ Miybudī,¹²² Ḥikmat ibn Yāsīn,¹²³ Sa‘īd Ḥuwī,¹²⁴ Sayyid

¹⁰¹ ‘Abdullāh Nusufī, *Tafsīr al-Nusufī (Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā’iq al-Ta’wīl)*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1995.

¹⁰² ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ali Khāzin Baghdādī, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, p. 254.

¹⁰³ Nizām al-Dīn Niyshābūrī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 178.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Taymīyyah al-Harrānī al-Damishqī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 118.

¹⁰⁵ Nūrullah Tustarī, *Ibid*, vol. 9, p. 118.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥayyān Andulusī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1993, vol. 2, p. 479.

¹⁰⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Dhahabī, *Sayr A’lām al-Nubalā’*, Beirut, al-Risālah Institute, 1996, chapter: Sayr al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn, p. 230.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn abī Ḥātam, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 379.

¹⁰⁹ Nāṣir al-Dīn Shīrāzī Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr Bayḍāwī*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1996, vol. 1, p. 163.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Ḥijr ‘Asqalānī, *al-Aṣābah fī Tamīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1995, vol. 4, p. 468, “Ali.”

¹¹¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūfī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 232.

¹¹² Ibn Ḥijr Haythamī, *Ibid*, p. 212.

¹¹³ Abu al-Su‘ūd Muhammad ibn Muhammad ‘Imādī, *Tafsīr abī al-Su‘ūd (Irshād al-‘Aql al-Salīm Ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm)*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1999, vol. 1, p. 378.

¹¹⁴ Muhammad Ali Ṣābūnī, *Mukhtaṣar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1996, vol. 1, p. 289.

¹¹⁵ Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Buruswī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001, vol. 2, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ ‘Ijlī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhīyyah*, vol. 1, p. 432.

¹¹⁷ Ahmad ibn ‘Ujaybah, *al-Baḥr al-Madūd fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-Majīd*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 2002, vol. 1, p. 363.

¹¹⁸ Muhammad Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol 3, p. 167.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Jamāl al-Dīn Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī (Maḥāsīn al-Ta’wīl)*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, 1997, vol. 2, p. 293.

¹²⁰ Muhammad Shawkānī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 449.

¹²¹ Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-Karīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1. P. 127, in the commentary on the verse.

¹²² Rashīd al-Dīn Miybudī, *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 147.

¹²³ Ḥikmat ibn Yāsīn, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 421.

Ṭanṭāwī (Mufti of Egypt),¹²⁵ Hasan al-Manṣūrī,¹²⁶ Nīyāz Qārī,¹²⁷ ‘Abd al-Qādir Āl ‘Uqdah,¹²⁸ Abū Bakr Jazā‘irī,¹²⁹ and Sulaymān Qundūzī Ḥanafī.¹³⁰

These scholars and many other scholars of exegesis and hadith who have narrated this tradition in more than 51 different ways are among well-known Sunni scholars. No Sunni exegete, transmitter of hadiths, historian, scholar of *rijāl*¹³¹ or criticism of traditions has claimed that this tradition is a fabrication. On the contrary, as it was mentioned before, some Sunni scholars have said that this tradition is accepted by all or majority of exegetes and traditionists and they believe that it has been narrated by successive transmitters.

Furthermore, the following statement of ‘Abduh’s is not true:

Those who fabricated this story could not reconcile it with the verse of *Mubāhalah*, because when an Arab hears the word of *nisā’ana* - which is a plural noun - does not imagine that the speaker might mean his own daughter, especially when the speaker has several wives.

Zamakhshari (d. 538 A.H), a literature scholar who has also written a commentary (*tafsir*) on Qur’an, has written the following:

¹²⁴ Sa’īd Ḥuwī, *al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, 1996, vol. 1. P. 332.

¹²⁵ Ṭanṭāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīl lil-Qur’an al-Karīm*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma’ārif, vol. 2, p. 130.

¹²⁶ Muṣṭafā Hassan al-Manṣūrī, *al-Muqtaṭaf min ‘Uyūn al-Tafāsīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, 1996, vol. 1, p. 332.

¹²⁷ Nīyāz Qārī, *Tafsīr Fath al-Rahmān*, vol. 1, p. 133.

¹²⁸ ‘Abd al-Qādir Āl ‘Uqdah, *Jāmi’ al-Tafsīr min Kutub al-Aḥādīth*, vol. 1, p. 370.

¹²⁹ Abū bakr Jazā‘irī, *Aysar al-Tafāsīr Li Kalām al-Āli al-Kabīr*, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, vol. 1, p. 325.

¹³⁰ Sulaymān Qundūzī, *Ibid*, p. 330.

¹³¹ The knowledge of transmitters of hadiths and their validity

This event is the most convincing proof of excellence of People of the Cloak (*Ashab-e Kisa'*) and it is a clear evidence for the prophethood of the Prophet (s).¹³²

How could it be possible that such men of letters [i.e the exegetes] and eloquence have not understood that [with that interpretation of the verse] they would have made a false claim about the glorious Qur'an, despite the fact that the Qur'an has used plural nouns referring to persons, e.g. in (3:45) we read:

When the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him

In this verse, "angels" is a plural noun that refers to one angel, i.e. Gabriel.¹³³ Moreover, in the glorious Qur'an, the word of *nisā'anā* has been used for girls as well, e.g. in the verse 2:49, God says regarding Pharaoh says:

...and slaughtered your sons and spared your women...

Or in the verse 4:7, we read:

...and women have a share in the heritage left by parents and near relatives...

If the word *nisā'* (women) could be used for girls, it makes no difference as to whether the girl is the speaker's daughter or the addressee's.

3. *Rashd Riḍā's view*

After reporting traditions of *Mubāhalah*, Rashd Riḍā' writes:

¹³² Muhammad Zamakhsharī, *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 193.

¹³³ Maḥmūd Ālūsī, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 141.

Regarding the verse "...come! Let us call our sons and your sons...", Ibn 'Asākir narrates from Ja'far ibn Muhammad (a) that he quoted his father (a) as saying, "The Prophet (s) took Abū Bakr and his son, 'Umar and his son, and 'Uthmān and his son for *Mubāhalah* and, apparently, he meant a group of Muslims."¹³⁴

Response: Ibn 'Asākir has quoted this tradition from Imam Ṣādiq (a) through Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah and Haytham ibn 'Uday.

About Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah, Abū Ḥātam Rāzi says, "He does not tell the truth."¹³⁵ 'Abd al-Raḥmān says, "Once Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) stated, "Sa'd ibn 'Anbasah is a liar; I heard from my father that he does not tell the truth."¹³⁶ Also Yaḥyā ibn Mu'in says, "He is a liar."¹³⁷ Ibn Abi Ḥātam quotes from his father, "It is questionable."¹³⁸ In famous Sunni books of rijāl, not only is there no compliment about him, but rather he is strongly criticized and it is emphasized that he was a liar and rejected as a hadith narrator. Dhahab (d. 748 A.H),¹³⁹ Ibn Jawzi¹⁴⁰ and Ahmad ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalāni (d. 852 A.H)¹⁴¹ have acknowledged this issue.

About Haytham ibn 'Uday, Bukhāri said, "It is not the truth, he has lied". In addition, Yaḥyā has said the same about him. Abū Dāwūd said, "He is a liar." Nisā'i called him, "A rejected hadith narrator."¹⁴²

¹³⁴ Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 256.

¹³⁵ Ahmad Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 2, p. 154.

¹³⁶ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rāzi, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, vol. 2, p. 53.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*.

¹³⁹ Ahmad Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi al-Ḍu'afā'*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1997, translation of 2438; the same author, *Dīwān al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-Matrūkīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1988, p. 331, no. 1639.

¹⁴⁰ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-Matrūkīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1986, vol. 1, p. 324, no. 1429.

¹⁴¹ Ahmad ibn Ḥijr 'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1995, vol. 3, p. 286.

¹⁴² Ahmad Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, vol. 4, p. 324.

Sa'di said, "Haytham ibn 'Uday is rejected."¹⁴³ Yaḥyā ibn Mu'in said, "I asked my father about him, he answered: 'he is a rejected hadith narrator'."¹⁴⁴ 'Abbās al-Dawri said, "Some friends of us quoted from Haytham ibn 'Uday's handmaid. 'There is no night except that my master gets up for praying, and when the morning comes, he lies!'"¹⁴⁵ Basti said, "He narrates from trusted people important things...while he conceals some of them."¹⁴⁶ Bukhār (d. 256 A.H) is also quoted as saying that, "I keep silent about [do not quote from] him."¹⁴⁷ Azdī believed that he was a "rejected hadith narrator".¹⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥabbān is quoted as saying that, "It is not allowed to refer to or narrate from him unless there is another way to verify the hadith."¹⁴⁹

Some scholars such as Dāraqṭanī,¹⁵⁰ Dhahabī¹⁵¹ and 'Aqīlī¹⁵² considered him as an unreliable and rejected hadith narrator. Therefore, the tradition he narrated is not authentic and it is not compatible with true and widely transmitted traditions and hence it should be rejected.

Conclusion

The verse of *Mubāhalah* undeniably indicates the infallibility and honesty of Lady Fatima (a). It is remarkable that according to this verse, Lady Fatima (a) is not one person amongst *nisā'anā* (our

¹⁴³ Ibn 'Uday, *al-Kāmil fi al-Ḍu'afā*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1989, vol. 8.

¹⁴⁴ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rāzī, *Ibid*, vol. 9, p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ Ahmad Dhahabī, *Sayr A'lām al-Nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 426.

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad ibn Ḥayyān Bastī, *al-Majrūhīn*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1992, vol. 3, pp. 92-93.

¹⁴⁷ Muhammad ibn Ismā'il Bukhārī, *al-Ḍu'afā' al-Ṣaghīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1986, no 390.

¹⁴⁸ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī, *al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, vol. 3, p. 179, no 3622.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁰ Ali Dāraqṭanī, *al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, Riyadh, Maktabah al-Ma'arif, 1984, p. 388, no 563.

¹⁵¹ Ahmad Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi al-Ḍu'afā'*, vol. 2, p. 488, no 6808; the same author, *Dīwān al-Ḍu'afā wa al-Matrūkīn*, vol. 2, p. 424.

¹⁵² Muhammad 'Aqīlī, *al-Ḍu'afā' al-Kabīr*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998, vol. 4, p. 352, no 1959.

women), but rather this word refers to Lady Fatima (a) exclusively¹⁵³ as she was the sole person capable of fulfilling the qualifications of the verse.

¹⁵³ It is similar to the verse (16: 120) in which the Glorious Qur'an calls Prophet Ibrāhīm (a) "a nation", although he (a) was only one person. Similarly, in the verse of Mubāhalah, Lady Fatima (a) is called nisā'anā (our women) because she (a) is the complete reality of Muslim women.

SHI'ITE AUTHORITIES IN THE AGE OF THE MAJOR OCCULTATION

PART III: SAYYID MURTADĀ

ALI NAGHI ZABIHZADEH

TRANSLATED BY MOHAMMAD REZA FARAJIAN

ABSTRACT: Abu al-Qasim 'Ali ibn Husayn al-Sharif al-Murtadha (d. 436 A.H), known as Sayyid al-Murtadha, was one of the most renowned scholars of his time. After the death of Sheikh Mufid and his brother Sayyid Radi, Sayyid Murtadha shouldered the governmental responsibilities by leading the Shi'a society. He was the head of high court of justice who led the Alawites and supervised the hajj pilgrimage. In addition to his social activities, he was well-known for his piety and expertise in various fields of theology, jurisprudence, literature, and poetry. In this exposition, after outlining the preceding notions, Sayyid Murtadha's publications, teachers, and students have been listed, as well as a description of his religious, scientific, and political authority during a golden age of Islamic history.

Abu al-Qasim 'Ali ibn Husayn, commonly known as Sharif/Sayyid al-Murtadha¹ with the epithet of '*Allam al-Huda*' (*The Banner of Guidance*), was one of the most prominent scholars of his time. He was the elder brother of Sayyid al-Radi,² the compiler of Nahjul

¹ 965 - 1044 AD; 355 - 436 AH

² Sayyed Radi

Balagha, and lived during the era of Buyid Dynasty, a flourishing period of intellectual and cultural renaissance in Islamic history. The epithet ‘Sayyid’ reveals his descendancy from Prophet Muhammad: his paternal lineage is directly traced to the seventh Twelver Imām, Mūsā al-Kādhim, while his maternal lineage is traced back to the fourth Twelver Imām, ‘Alī Zaynul ‘Ābidīn.

The Political situation during the time of Sayyid Murtaḍā

As distinguished students of Sheikh Mufīd, Sayyid Radi and Sayyid Murtaḍā spent a part of their lives with their teacher during the times of the Abbasid caliphs Ṭā’i’ (363 – 381) and Qādir (381 – 422). The rest of Sayyid Murtaḍā’s life was spent during the reign of caliph Qā’im Abbasi and the beginning of the decline of the Buyid Dynasty. The Seljuks rose to power as Tugrul, the head of the Seljuk Dynasty, entered Baghdad in 347 A.H and seized the throne from the Buyids. After his brother Sayyid Radi, Sayyid Murtaḍā lived up to 436 A.H. He passed away eleven years before Tugrul entered Baghdad. After he passed away, Sheikh Ṭūsī held the authority and the leadership of the Shi’ites.

Caliphate of Qā’im bin Amrillah³

After Qadir’s death, people paid allegiance to Abu Ja’far ‘Abdullah al-Qā’im bi Amrillah. As a result, bitter disputes escalated among the Shi’ites and Sunnis, resulting in anarchy, murder, and plunder. The army of Jalāl al-Dawla Daylamī revolted and asked Abu Ja’far to dismiss him and then the Turks plundered his house.

As a result, Jalāl al-Dawla escaped from Baghdad. Rebels called Abu Kalījār, son of Sultan al-Dawla and Jalal al-Dawla’s nephew who controlled Fars and Kerman, although Jalal al-Dawla refused to join

³ 422 – 467 A.H

them. They eventually brought Jalāl al-Dawla back. He continued his rule in Iraq as his army rebelled several times until his death in 1044 (435 A.H), a year before Sayyid Murtada passed away, and following which Abu Kalijar managed to gain control of Iraq. After Jalāl al-Dawla's death, a group of people gave allegiance to his son Al-Malik al-'Azīz living in Wāsiṭ and called him to Baghdad. Meanwhile, Abu Kalījār, nicknamed Muhyiddin by the caliph, made many promises to the soldiers and seized the throne. In 436 A.H, speeches were made in his name in Baghdad. Abu Kalījār died six years after Sayyid Murtaḍā passed away in 440 A.H, after which the people gave allegiance to his son, Abu Naṣr Firūz Būyih'ī nicknamed Malik Raḥīm.⁴

Religious and political accomplishments

After Sheikh Mūfīd passed away in 413 A.H, Sharīf Murtaḍā was the head of all seminaries and became the authority over Shī'a society. The great contemporary scholars during his time believed that his position was higher than Sheikh Mūfīd's. Abu Maṣṣūr Tha'ālibī⁵ says concerning Sayyid Murtadha, "Today in Baghdad, the position of a leadership with eminence, dignity, knowledge, courtesy, grace, and generosity exclusively belongs to Sharīf Murtaḍā."⁶ Sayyid Murtadha was also highly revered by Ibn Basām Andulusī:

This Sharīf, the leader of Iraqis leaders was present [and offered solutions] regardless of whether they were involved in disputes or they were in agreement. Iraqi scholars sought his advice [to solve their problems], and the nobles of Iraq acquired knowledge from him.

⁴ Cf. Hasan Pirmia, Iqbal, *Tārīkh-e Iran*, p. 165 – 176 and Bayāt, op. cit. p. 148. More information concerning these political changes will be given in the section about political changes of the time of Sheikh Ṭūsī.

⁵ d. 429

⁶ *Yatimat al-Dahr*, vol. 1, p. 53 quoted from Davānī, op. cit, vol. 3, p. 247 and "Memorial of 'Allāmah Sharīf Murtaḍā", the section concerning Muhammad Jāvdān's statements, p. 290.

People quoted him everywhere and his poems were infamous.⁷

Ibn Khalkān mentions that Sharīf Murtaḍā was the leading scholar in kalām (Islamic theology), literature, and poetry.⁸ According to ‘Allameh Ḥillī, Sayyid Murtaḍā was an expert in sciences such as kalām, Islamic jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, and literature including syntax, poetry, and morphology. He truly was ahead of all scholars in his era.⁹

In addition to being the Islamic authority and leader of the Shī‘ites, Sayyid Murtaḍā was a nationwide reputable person whose authority was the result of his personality, since he was a peerless leader in the above-mentioned sciences, and his poetry had a great impression on the Arab people’s minds and souls. Moreover, his positions of the high leadership of the Alawites, the supervision of the Hajj pilgrimage, and being head of the high court of justice¹⁰ gave him the power to solve social issues. He used financial resources to solve many social problems which rendered him more socially influential than his teacher.¹¹

Earlier, during the time of Sheikh Muḥīd, religious classes were held at Karkh, the mosque of Baghdad, though Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sayyid

⁷ *Al-Dhakhīrh*. Ibn Khalkān, *Wafayāt al-A‘yān*, p. 443; and Sayyid ‘Alī Khān, *Al-Darajāt al-Rafī‘ah*, p. 459.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 313.

⁹ Cf. *Khulāṣat al-Aqwāl*, p. 94; quoted from Davānī, op. cit. p. 272. For more information, refer to *Fawā‘id al-Raḍawīyyah*, p. 282 further; *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 3, p. 116 further; *A‘yān al-Shī‘a*, vol. 8, p. 213 further.

¹⁰ Ibn ‘Inabah, ‘Umdat al-Ṭālib fī Ansāb Āl-e Abī Ṭālib, pp. 204 – 5.

¹¹ About Sayyid Murtaḍā, it is quoted from judge Tanūkhī, friend and contemporary with him that said: “He [Sayyid Murtaḍā] was at high level of knowledge and official ranks. He was in position of leadership of the entire Islamic world, supervision of hajj pilgrimage and Ka’bah and the shrine of the Prophet (s), being the head of high court of justice for 30 years until the end of his life. (quoted from Sayyid Mohsen Amin, *Ibid*, p. 214; Abbas Qomi, *Fawā‘id*, p. 283.)

Raḍī built different religious schools¹² for research and teaching sessions. His classes were not exclusive to the Shī'ites; scholars, jurists and scholars of literature from different Islamic schools participated in his classes. Sharīf Murtaḍā provided financial aid to his students to facilitate a peaceful study environment. Sayyid offered salaries according to their conditions, such as giving Sheikh Ṭūsī twelve dinars every month and to Ibn Barrāj eight dinars.¹³ Sayyid Murtaḍā sold a part of his estate to provide paper for jurists and scholars¹⁴ and established a great library. In 422 A.H., his father's house was burnt due to the riots of the Hanbalis and Sayyid was moved to another house in Karkh where he resumed his lessons. He equipped other houses with libraries, and it was not long until a scientific community of researchers was established in the Shī'a mosque of Karkh. The knowledge and sciences that developed as a result were due to the great efforts of Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sayyid Raḍī. Due to the increase in students, the Shī'ites of Karkh owned the greatest scientific site in Baghdad and in the Islamic world. More than three hundred scholars reached a high scholarly level of having the authority of judgment (*ijtihād*) in the school of Sheikh Ṭūsī. This number were from only the Shī'ite students of Sheikh Ṭūsī, since the rest of his students were countless.

Scientific and governmental positions of Sayyid Murtaḍā during the time of Qādir 'Abbāsī

Sayyid Murtaḍā, who lived in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, was known for his scholarship and piety among Shi'i hadith scholars:

¹² For more information refer to Ibn 'Inabah, *Umdat al-Ṭālib fī Ansāb Āl-e Abī Ṭālib*, pp. 209 – 210; Sayyid Murtaḍā built a library in his school which held 80 thousand books accessible to students and teachers. (Cf. *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, vol. 1, p. 501; *Al-Darajāt al-Raḥī'ah*, p. 463.)

¹³ Sayyid 'Ali Khān, *Al-Darajāt al-Raḥī'ah*, p. 460.

¹⁴ *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 4, p. 296.

Mirza [Sayyid Murtaḍā] had many written works which I have mentioned in my book, *Kabīr*. The Shi‘ite scholars of our time - 693 A.H - have benefitted from his books and he has been their teacher. May Allah bless his soul and reward him from his fathers the best of rewards.¹⁵

In his time, Sayyid Murtaḍā was close to the Abbasid caliph. It has been reported:

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn ‘Abdur- Rahīm, the minister of Qādir Abbasi fell sick in 420 A.H and his illness continued until he saw the Commander of the Faithful (a) in his dream who said to him, ‘Tell ‘Allam al-Hudā to recite a supplication for you and you will become healthy.’ The minister says that I asked the Imam (a), ‘Who is ‘Allam al-Hudā?’ Imam (a) answered, ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mūsavī.’ Then the minister wrote a letter to ask Sayyid Murtaḍā to supplicate before Allah to cure him and wrote the nickname he had heard in his dream as the address of his letter. When Sayyid Murtaḍā read the letter, he did not feel he deserved that nickname and wrote to the minister, “[I ask] Allah [to help me in my affairs]. Certainly, this nickname is too great for me!” The minister replied, ‘By Allah, I swear that I did not do anything but what I was ordered to by the Commander of the Faithful.’” After the minister recovered from illness thanks to Sayyid Murtaḍā’s prayer, he wrote his story to Qādir ‘Abbāsī and mentioned Sayyid Murtaḍā’s refusal of accepting the nickname. Qādir told Sayyid Murtaḍā, ‘O Sayyid Murtaḍā! Accept what your great ancestor has nicknamed you.’ He also ordered writers of the government to add that name to their documents. Since

¹⁵ Allamah Hilli, quoted from *Majālis al-Mu‘minīn*, vol. 1, p. 503, in *Khulāṣah*

then Sayyid MurtaḌā became well-known by the name 'Allam al-Huda.'¹⁶

After Sayyid Radi passed away, Sayyid MurtaḌā shouldered his governmental responsibilities and became the leader of Shī'ites and head of the high court of justice. With all these responsibilities, he managed to heed to scientific discussions and wrote on Shī'ite theology and jurisprudence:¹⁷

Sayyid MurtaḌā was a noble man and elder of his brother, Sayyid Raḏī. He was the supervisor of religious students, Shī'ites and Mu'tazilites. Discussions concerning all religions would be held before him. He wrote books about Shī'ites' major and minor principles.¹⁸

Regarding Sayyid MurtaḌā's knowledge and position, Yāfi'ī wrote, "Sayyid MurtaḌā was the leader in theology, literature, and poetry. He wrote books about Shī'ites and a treatise about principles of religion."¹⁹ Also, with regards to Sayyid MurtaḌā, Allamah Baḥr al-'Ulūm wrote²⁰:

Sayyid MurtaḌā was a great personality who wrote a book called *Thamānīn*. He lived for eighty years and eighty months. About Sayyid MurtaḌā, his friend Judge Tanūkhī said: 'He [Sayyid MurtaḌā] reached high scientific and spiritual states. He became the leader and guardian of the Sayyids in the east and the west. He was the supervisor of Hajj pilgrimage. He was also the head of high court of justice for thirty years.'²¹

¹⁶ Cf. *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, vol. 1, p. 501; *Al-Darajāt al-Rafī'ah*, p. 460.

¹⁷ Ibn Kathīr Shāmī's history book

¹⁸ Quoted from *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, vol. 1, p. 502; *Rīyāḏ al-'Ulamā*, p. 460.

¹⁹ Quoted from Qāḏī Nūrullah Shūshtarī op cit.; *Rīyāḏ al-'Ulamā*, p. 460.

²⁰ *Fawā'id al-Rijālīyyah*

²¹ *Fawā'id al-Rijālīyyah*, 'Allamah Tabatabā'ī, (Baḥr al-'Ulūm) and Sayyid 'Alī Khān Shīrāzī, *Al-Darajāt al-Rafī'ah*, quoted from A'yān al-Shī'ah, vol. 8, pp. 213 – 4; Cf. Mudarrisī, *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 3 & 4, p. 16.

In addition to Sheikh Mufīd, Sayyid Murtaḍā, and Sheikh Ṭūsī's efforts, other Shī'ite governmental officials were also involved in propagating Islamic sciences, among whom was Shāpūr ibn Ardehīr, the minister of Bahā' ad-Dawla and Sharaf ad-Dawla. He established a great library in 381 A.H. to the advantage of scholars of all fields. It held ten thousand books handwritten by their own authors.²²

The availability of books and the expansion of knowledge and research in Karkh continued until 448 A.H. Afterwards, Toḡrul, the second Seljuk king, along with some of the Hanbalis, burned Baghdad in a fire of bigotry. It was not too long until Sheikh Ṭūsī's official class was terminated, his own library and Shāpūr's great library destroyed, and the people's lives and properties were lost. In addition, Sheikh Tusi's great contribution of knowledge was lost when he left Baghdad.²³

Knowledge, sciences, invention, experimental studies, and research were promoted to the highest degrees during the government of the Shī'ite Buyid dynasty in the fourth and fifth centuries throughout Sayyid Raḍī and Sayyid Murtaḍā's lives. During these two centuries, scholars were dedicated to all sciences, especially natural sciences and cosmological studies. Scholars such as Abu Naṣr Fārābī, Abu al-Hasan Mas'ūdī, Yaḥya ibn 'Uday, Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī, Abu al-Hasan 'Āmirī, Abu Reyḥān Bīrūnī, Sheikh Ra'īs ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Abu Sulaymān Mantīqī Sajistānī, Ibn Heytham, 'Ali ibn 'Īsā 'Umar Khayyām, Nāṣir Khusrou, Ghazzālī and Bahmanyār existed at that time. The numbers of similar scholars were reduced in the next centuries since the grounds for spreading knowledge during that time

²² Cf. Ali Davani, *Millenium of Sheikh Tūsī*, Lecture script of Va'iz Zadeh, p. 41; cf. Muhammad kurd Ali, *Khuṭatush Shām*, vol. 6, p. 185, quoted from *A'yān Ash-Shī'a*, vol. 9, p. 159.

²³ More details about these events will be discussed later when Sheikh Ṭūsī's life will be discussed.

were not prepared. However, the weakness of the Abbasids helped the the Shī'ites to establish a temporary authority.²⁴

Sayyid Murtaḍā's Publications

Sayyid Murtaḍā published many works in different Islamic sciences. The author of *Rayḥānat al-Adab* lists more than seventy works of Sayyid Murtaḍā, among which are: 1) Al-Shāfī fi al-Imāmah, 2) Al-Dhakhīratu fi al-Kalām, 3) Jumal al-'Ilm wa al-'Amal fi al-Fiqh, 4) Taqrīb al-Wuṣūl, 5) Dalīl al-Muwaḥidīn, 6) Al-Rad 'alā Yaḥya ibn 'Uday, 7) Ṭabī'at al-Islam, 8) Tanzīh al-Anbīyā'i wa al-A'immah, 9) Al-Muqni'u fi al-Ghaybah, 10) Al-Ṣarfuhu fi al-I'jāz, 11) Al-Dharī'at fi al-'Uṣūl, 12) Masā'il al-Khalāf, 13) Sharḥ al-Risālat fi al-I'jāz, 14) Sharḥ al-Khuṭbat al-Shaqshaqīyyah, 15) Funūn al-Qur'ān, 16) Tafsīr al-Ḥamd wa al-Baqarah, 17) Al-Fiqh al-Makkī, 18) Al-Intiṣār fīmā Infaradat bihi al-Imāmah, and 19) al-Khalāf fi al-'Uṣūl al-Fiqh.²⁵

Sheikh Mufīd, Sayyid Murtaḍā, their teachers, and the contemporary scholars who accompanied them were mostly considered authorities in Islamic theology (*kalam*). Their task was to remove doubts raised by adversaries and it seems that this knowledge was more important than other sciences - including Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and hadith studies at that time - due to the availability of many treatises called '*Responses to Issues*' (*Ajwabat al-Masa'il*). These treatises were requested from the mentioned authorities by people from near and far cities. There were also many books written to reject criticisms against the Shī'a. The names of all books and treatises are mentioned in the bibliographies of the sources of that time.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Yādnāmeḥ-ye Sharīf Raḍī, pp. 292 – 293.

²⁵ Cf. *Rijāl Najāshī*, pp. 270 & 271; *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 4, pp. 301 & 302; Sayyid Muḥsin Amin 'Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 8, p. 219; *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 3 & 4, p. 119.

²⁶ Ali Davānī, *ibid.* p. 38.

Sayyid Murtaḍā's teachers and students

Sayyid Murtaḍā, or 'Allam al-Hudā as he was known, was taught by great teachers such as Sheikh Mufīd, Khaṭīb Adīb ibn Nabātah, Sheikh Husayn ibn Bābiwayh, Hārūn ibn Mūsā Tal'ukbarā, Abū 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn 'Imrān Marzbānī Khurāsānī, Ahmad ibn Sahl Dībāchī, and Ahmad ibn Sa'īd Kūfī.²⁷

Sayyid Murtaḍā taught students who were to be distinguished scholars such as Sheikh Ṭūsī, Qāḍī ibn Barrāj, Abū al-Faṭḥ Karājākī, Sallār ibn 'abd al-'Azīz, Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Ḥalabī and tens of other Shī'ite scholars.

Short biographies of two great students of Sayyid Murtaḍā: Sallār and Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Ḥalabī

Several of Sayyid Murtaḍā's students who were also Sheikh Ṭūsī's students were great experts and scientific scholars. In this section we will briefly describe some of the accomplishments of these two students, namely Ḥamzat ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Daylamī and Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Sheikh Taqī al-Dīn Ḥalabī.

Ḥamzat ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Daylamī

Ḥamzat ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Daylamī, also known as Sallār,²⁸ was a great Islamic jurist among the luminaries of Shī'ite jurisprudence. He was born in Mazandaran and grew up there until he moved to Baghdad and Najaf to complete his education. He was one of the greatest early Shī'ite scholars in science and literature. Being a student of 'Allam al-Hudā and among the hadith teachers of Abu 'Ali, Sheikh Ṭūsī's son, he would sometimes teach on behalf of Sayyid Murtaḍā. Afterwards, he

²⁷ Cf. Mīrzā Abdullah Āfandī Isfahānī, *Rīyāḍ al-'Ulamā*, vol. 4, p. 15.

²⁸ Sallār is the Arabized word for Sālār. Persian word meaning "grand" and "commander"

was appointed by Sayyid MurtaḌā to be the religious authority to resolve disputes in cities around Hallab given his intellectual abilities and talent in jurisprudence.²⁹

Some of his books are *Al-Abwāb wal-Fuṣūl* concerning fiqh, *Al-Tadhkirat fi Ḥaḳīqat al-Jawhar* on Kalam, *Al-Taqrīb* on the principles of Fiqh and *Al-Radd*³⁰ ‘*alā Abi al-Hasan al-Baṣrī fi Naqd al-Shāfi*.

With respect to the last mentioned book, it has been said that Qāḍī [Judge] ‘Abd al-Jabbār Mu‘tazilī wrote a book in rejection to Shī‘as and titled it as *Al-Mughnī al-Kāfi*. Sayyid MurtaḌā wrote a book to reject it and titled it as *Al-Shāfi fi Naqd al-Kāfi*. Abu al-Hasan Baṣrī wrote a book in rejection to Sayyid MurtaḌā’s book. Afterwards, Sallār wrote the mentioned book (*Al-Rad ‘Ala abi al-Hasan al-Baṣrī fi Naqd al-Shāfi*) by the order of Sayyid MurtaḌā in rejection to Abu al-Hasan Baṣrī’s book.³¹

At Sayyid MurtaḌā’s funeral, his teacher, Najāshī mentioned the name of Sallār among the people who attended the burial.³²

Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Sheikh Taqī al-Dīn Ḥalabī

Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Sheikh Taqī al-Dīn Ḥalabī, a student of Sayyid MurtaḌā, was a great jurist, hadith scholar, and exegete known for his reliability and trustworthiness. He was mostly taught by Sayyid MurtaḌā and Sheikh Ṭūsī. Ḥalabī also participated in the class of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz known as Sallār. Later he was appointed by Sayyid MurtaḌā to teach and revive religious obligations in Damascus and the Halab

²⁹ *Rayḥānat al-Adab*, vol. 2, p. 210; Cf. *A ‘yān al-Shī‘ah*, vol. 7, pp. 71 – 170.

³⁰ Meaning: Rejection of

³¹ *A ‘yān al-Shī‘ah*, vol. 7, pp. 71 – 170; Cf. Mir Mustafa Tafrishi, *Naqd al-Rijāl*, p. 156.

³² “After Sayyid MurtaḌā passed away, I washed his body and Abuy ‘Ali Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Ja‘farī and Sallār ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz accompanied me.” *Rijāl Najāshī*, p. 271; Cf. Muhammad Taqī Tustarī, *Qāmūs al-Rijāl*, vol. 7, p. 441.

(Aleppo) regions, attaining him the title ‘Caliph of Murtaḏā.’³³ After Sayyid Murtaḏā passed away, Sheikh Ṭūsī kept him in his position and became his delegate, and continued to be named the ‘Caliph of the Sheikh.’

He would solve people’s problems and answer their questions freely. The author of *Rawḏāt al-Jannāt* wrote:

The well-known and great jurisprudent, Abu al-Ṣalāḥ Taqī al-Dīn ibn Najm ibn ‘Ubaydullah Ḥalabī is the trusted jurisprudent before the scholars of the science of Rijal. He is among the luminaries of Shī‘a, famous jurisprudents of Halab and known as “Caliph of Murtaḏā” due to being appointed by his great teacher, such as Ibn Barrāj who was appointed by Sheikh Ṭūsī. Such appointment has been for the purpose of judgment or teaching. Since both appointment have been confirmed and proved, the great position of this jurisprudent is manifested.³⁴

He was the author of *Al-Bidāyah* (in jurisprudence), *Taqrīb al-Ma‘ārif* in Kalam, *Daḡ‘ Shubhat al-Malāḥidah* in kalam, *Al-Shāfiyyah*, *Sharḥ Dhakhīreh ‘Alam al-Hudā*, *al-‘Umdah*, *Al-Kāfi* and *Al-Murshid fi Ṭarīq al-Ta‘abbud*.³⁵

He lived about a hundred years and passed away in 447 A.H and was buried in Halab. Sheikh Ṭūsī wrote in his book, *Rijāl*:

³³ Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Book of al-Ijāzāt, quoted by ‘Allāmah Baḡr al-‘Ulūm, vol. 2, p. 131.

³⁴ *Rawḏāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 2, p. 112.

³⁵ *A’yān al-Shī‘ah*, vol. 3, p. 635; *Rawḏāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 2, p. 113.

Taqī ibn Najm Ḥalabī is a reliable scholar who has some books and has studied before me and Sayyid Murtaḍā.³⁶

According to the author of *Rīyāḍ al-'Ulamā'*, acknowledgement of Ḥalabī by Sheikh Ṭūsī in his book clarifies his great position of in religiosity and science. Ḥalabī was one of the famous Shī'ite scholars who was appointed by Sayyid Murtaḍā in Halab and taught many students for years there. He wrote priceless books and disseminated fiqh and hadiths there. He wrote *Al-Bidāyah fi al-Fiqh* and *Al-Kāfī fi al-Fiqh* and also wrote commentary on *Al-Dhakhīrah* written by Sayyid Murtaḍā³⁷ and passed away around 449 A.H.

In one of his writings, Shahīd Thānī refers to Ḥalabī as “the representative of Murtaḍā in Ḥalab and suburbs, Abi al-Ṣalāḥ Taqī ibn Najm al-Ḥalabī.”³⁸

Final Remark

Sayyid Murtaḍā is believed to be among the greatest models of science and piety in the whole Islamic world, so much so that the blind Arab genius, Abu al-'Alā Mu'irri was proud to accompany him everywhere. It is said that when Abu al-'Alā' was leaving Iraq, he was asked about his opinion towards Sayyid Murtaḍā. He answered in the form of the following poem:

*“O’ one who asks me about him,
Behold that he is a man void of defect,
You may see him as all people in one man
And the history at a moment and the earth in a house.”*³⁹

³⁶ Muhammad Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī*, p. 457.

³⁷ Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Ma'ālim al-'Ulamā'*, p. 29.

³⁸ *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Book of al-Ijāzāt, quoted by 'Allāmah Baḥr al-'Ulūm, vol. 2, p. 131.

³⁹ Quoted from *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 8, p. 217.

LADY NUSRAT BEYGUM AMIN

TAYYEBEH CHERĀGHĪ¹

TRANSLATED BY SAYYEDEH ZAHRA MIRFENDERESKI

ABSTRACT: Sayyida Nosrat Beygum Amin was one of the most outstanding female jurists and theologians of the 20th century. After being given the permission of *ijtihād* by prominent scholars, thus entitled *mujtahida*, she in turn granted permission of narrating hadith of *ijtihād* to future renowned female and male scholars. For example, she gave permission of narrating hadiths to the grand Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi. This paper offers a brief account of Lady Amin's academic and spiritual standing, along with her lineage, teachers, and works. Her ardent love for God led her to fervently study in a variety of Islamic disciplines, leading her to moral excellence and reaching the level of *ijtihād*. In addition to her academic scholarship, Lady Amin displayed firmness in her movement against the emergence of modernism and false propaganda against Islam when she rose against the misleading ideologies promoted by Reza Khan. In a generation bombarded with celebrities that entice today's youth to overlook true exemplars, Lady Amin is an example of a woman with notable achievements in which people can apply to their modern lives.

Lady Nuşrat Beygum Amin, commonly known as Banu Amin, Nosrat Amin, or Lady Amin, was born in 1274 SC (1895 CE) in Isfahan to a noble Sayyid family.² After marriage, she was homeschooled under

¹ A researcher graduate of Jami'ah al-Zahra Seminary

² Descendants of Imam Ali

Ayatullah Najaf Ābādi and Ayatullah Zafareh'ī. She achieved the degree of *ijtihād*³ and was granted the permission to transmit hadiths from Ayatullah Sheikh Abdulkarim Ḥā'iri Yazdi and other prominent Shi'a authorities. After a lifetime of endeavor in self-purification and training students, she passed away in 1362 SC⁴ (1983 CE).

Introduction

History has shown the great achievements of committed Muslim women in the fields of culture and literature, and they have proven to be worthy role models of endeavor and self-devotion. Appreciating the position of women and doing justice towards them according to the glorious Qur'an and the conduct of the noble Prophet (s) and Infallibles (a) has always led to Muslim women's progress in Islamic society. Examples of such great women in the history of Islam are Khadījah (a), Fatimah al-Zahra (a), Zaynab-e Kubrā (a) and Sakīnah (a), the daughter of Imam Husayn (a).

Throughout Islamic history, there have been many devoted, knowledgeable, and pious women who excelled in educating society and in doing so have trained prominent men. Such women in the history of Shi'a Islam were the mother of Sayyid Raḍī and Sayyid Murtaḍā, the daughter of Sheikh Ṭūsī, and the daughter of Muhammad Taqi Majlisi.

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Iranian women who were well-trained under Islamic values demonstrated the great status of Muslim women to the world. The mothers and wives of the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war displayed noble attributes of abstinence and piety, and were responsible for celebrating the achievements of great Muslim women. In this paper, we will take a brief look at the personality of one of the

³ In Islamic law: a scholar's independent interpretation or use of reason to derive a rule of divine law from the Qur'an, hadiths, reason and scholarly consensus.

⁴ Solar Calendar

finest exemplars of the society who held a high spiritual and academic status, making her one of the luminaries of the Islamic world.

This honorable and modest *mujtahidah*⁵ lady is Sayyida Nuşrat Amin, about whom Ayatullah Khamene’ī stated, “Celebrating this Isfahani lady [Lady Amin] and introducing mystical, jurisprudential, and philosophical aspects of such a woman in our country is a cherished action that will revive the Islamic values in women.”⁶

The academic level and piety of this scholar demonstrated that faithful Muslim women who pursued high levels of knowledge are able to greatly contribute to academic and cultural services and set themselves free from deprivations imposed on them and upon Islam and Muslims by the enemies’ plotting and friends’ unawareness of Islamic and Qur’anic rulings.

Biography

Hajjiyyah⁷ Sayyida Nuşrat Beygum Amin (with the penname “the Iranian Lady”) was born in 1276 SC (1897 CE)⁸ in Isfahan. Her father, Hajji⁹ Sayyid Mohammad Ali Amin al-Tujjr Isfahani was a pious and generous man, and her mother was a respectable and benevolent woman. Hajji Sayyid Mohammad Ali was the son of Sayyid Husayn and grandson of ‘Allamah Sayyid Ma’sum Husayni Khatoon Abadi¹⁰ whose mother was from a noble lineage.¹¹

⁵ A female religious jurist, competent enough to apply private rulings in offering answers to legal questions.

⁶ Women’s Center for Cultural Studies, collection of articles and lectures of first and second congress of celebrating Sayyida Nusrat Amin, Center for Cultural study and research, 1374, p.

⁷ A woman who has performed the pilgrimage is titled as “Hajjiyyah.”

⁸ Nahid Tayyebi, Biography of the Iranian Lady, Sabequn publication, 1380, p. 26.

⁹ A man who has performed the pilgrimage is titled “Hajji.”

¹⁰ Mir Ma’sum Hussayni Khatoon Abadi was a pious scholar from Isfahan. He passed away in 1155 (AH) and was buried near mausoleum of Aqa Muhammad Bid Abadi in Takht-e Fulad, Isfahan. It is said that Aqa Muhammad Bid Abadi saw a strange dream which proved spiritual greatness of Mir Ma’sum. Because of this reason, he wrote in his will to be buried near Mir

Lady Amin's maternal family - the Jinābī family - were pious descendants of the Prophet (s) (*Sayyids*) from Isfahan and were great scholars, poets, and artists during the Safavid era.¹² Lady Amin was born after three sons. At the age of four, her mother sent Lady Amin to Khadijah Beygum's Qur'an School during a time when very few families allowed their daughters to go to school, due to the unIslamic atmosphere of most of the schools at that time.¹³ Thus, Lady Amin pursued her education until the age of thirteen, when she married her cousin, Hajji Mirza Aqa, known as Mu'in al-Tujjar. During all the years she lived with her parents, they raised her well with utmost love and care.¹⁴

After marriage, though Lady Amin managed her domestic chores and trained her children, her responsibilities as a wife and mother did not prevent her from pursuing her education in Islamic sciences. She gave birth to eight children, although seven of them underwent early death with one son remaining. As hard as it was, Lady Amin displayed patience and interpreted these events as Divine trials.¹⁵ She passed away after a lifetime of devoted service on the 23rd of Khordad, 1362 SC (13th of June, 1983).

Ma'sum. Recently, one person sought help from his blessed soul and his need was fulfilled. So, he made a tombstone for his grave and craved some verses on it which narrated the story of seeking help from Mir Ma'sum's soul and fulfilling his need. (see: Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 28 quoted from Muhammad Ali Mudarrisi, *Riyhanatul Adab*, vol. 5, p. 266.)

¹¹ Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 28; Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Banuy-e Nemooneh, Jelweh hayi az Hayat-e Banuy-e Mojtahedeh Amin Isfahani*, Qum, Islamic Office for Propagation, 1377, p. 29.

¹² Ali Akbar Dehkhoda introduced the family of "Jenab-e Isfahani" as follows:

Jenab-e Isfahani

A: Abu Talib, son of Mirza Nasir who was a poet and calligrapher at the time of Sultan Hussein Safavi and the penman of the Supreme Court. (In *Tadhkirah al-Qubur* by Muslih al-Ddin Mahdawi, the date of his death is recorded as 1105 AH)

B: Fathullah, a poet who rose to the rank of supreme at the time of second Shah Tahmasb Safavi and was ordered by Nader Shah and was killed by his order 10 years later (1146 or 1148). (Dehkhoda Dictionary, Tehran, Tehran University, vol. 3, p. 7861)

¹³ Women's Center for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, p. 11; Sayyid Mostafa Hadawi (Shahir Isfahani), *Yadnameh Sayyedehe Nosrat Amin*, Isfahan, p. 9.

¹⁴ Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 39; Women's Center for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, p. 11.

Academic Degrees

Banu Amin involved herself in a variety of academic disciplines at home from qualified teachers. She dove into spiritual sciences and achieved honorable qualities along with her practical spiritual journey and her great efforts to learn Qur'anic sciences:

She grew up in a very spiritual way, and as she herself wrote in *Nafahāt al-Rahmāniyyah*, she was so thoughtful of God that she was able to hear the glorification of God by the flowers and plants. Until the age of forty, she practiced self-refinement and self-discipline, and passed through stages of spiritual journey.¹⁶

After learning Arabic conjugation, syntax, rhetoric, exegesis [of the Qur'an], hadith studies, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*usul*), and Islamic philosophy, she continued her studies of *fiqh* and *usul* at higher levels until she achieved the degree of *ijtihād*.¹⁷ She was known for her fervent determination, as she once said, "Even the death of a child would not stop me from attending my classes."

One of her teachers, the late Ayatullah Ali Najaf Abadi,¹⁸ said, "I was amazed at her passion for learning. When I heard the news that her child had passed away, I thought she would not attend class anymore. On the contrary, two days later, she sent someone to ask me to come over and continue her lessons."¹⁹

¹⁶ *Iranian Woman*: Introduction to morals and happiness, Isfahan, Council for supporting families without a guardian, 1371, p. 5.

¹⁷ Interpretive and independent reasoning

¹⁸ Ayatullah Hajji Mir Sayyid Ali Najaf Abadi

¹⁹ Sayyid Mustafa Hadawi, *Ibid*, pp. 13, 14.

Her Achievement of the Level of Ijtihād

Her giftedness, endless efforts, strong determination, and infinite patience with obstacles bore positive outcomes after years of education and hard work. She was almost forty when Ayatullah ‘Abd al-Karim Ha’iri Yazdi²⁰ and Ayatullah Muhammad Shirazi evaluated her; after her achievement, they granted her the authority to practice *ijtihād*.²¹ Ayatullah Estahbanati and Ayatullah Sheikh Muhammad Reza Abu al-Majd Najafi Isfahani also granted her permission to do so.²²

The great academic and spiritual level of Lady Amin is clearly mentioned in the permission letter of Ayatullah Abu al-Majd Najafi to transmit hadiths:

I authorize this learned and noble Sayyida, the priceless hidden gem, one of the best children of Lady Zahra (a), the sagacious woman, the perfect gnostic and theologian, to transmit from me what I am authorized to quote from commentaries of the Qur’an, supplications, hadiths, and jurisprudence.²³

The outcomes of her great academic efforts originating from her piety and renunciation from the material world was so outstanding that even grand scholar Ayatullah Mar’ashi Najafi requested permission from her to transmit hadiths. In a part of the permission letter she wrote to Ayatullah Mar’ashi,²⁴ she said, “After doing *istikhāra*,²⁵ I authorized him to transmit from me what I am authorized to transmit from commentaries, supplications, hadiths, and Islamic rulings from Shi’a

²⁰ The founder of Qom Seminary

²¹ Nasir Baqeri Bid-hendi, *Ibid*, p. 36.

²² *Ibid*, p. 36.

²³ Sayyid Mustafa Hadawi, *Ibid*, p. 20.

²⁴ Written on the 1st of Muharram al-Haram of 1358 AH [21st February, 1939 CE]

²⁵ Entrusting Allah with the choice between two or more options

works and non-Shi'a reports in every way they have been transmitted.²⁶

She was considered the unique mujtahidah of her time since her academic and mystical position rose so high that great scholars and mystics considered it a blessing to be in her presence and took advantage of her knowledge and wisdom. These scholars include 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (author of *al-Mizān*), 'Allamah Sheikh 'Abd al-Husayn Amini (author of *al-Ghadir*), and Allamah Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari (author of *Sharh-e Nahj al-Balāghah*)²⁷ who said:

Upon studying her available works, [I can confirm that] Banu Amin is undoubtedly one of the most celebrated scholars of the Shi'a world. Her academic method is quite comparable to other scholars. Because of her high spiritual status, she is considered one of the outstanding scholars who are born again in their lives [*al-hayāt al-tayyiba*].²⁸

Her Great Teachers

1. Ayatullah Aqa Sayyed Abu al-Qasem Dehkordi:²⁹ This great *faqih*³⁰ and famous *mujtahid* was a distinguished professor of jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence who lived in Isfahan. He learned Islamic sciences in Isfahan from great teachers such as Mirza Abu al-Ma'ali Kalbasi, Hajj Sheikh Muhammad Baqir Masjid Shahi, and Aqa Mirza Muhammad Mohsin Najafi.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 22; Women's Office for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, article of Muhammad al-Hasun, p. 296; Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 285; Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Ibid*, p. 141.

²⁷ Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Ibid*, p. 36.

²⁸ *Iranian lady*, *Ibid*, p.4.

²⁹ 1272- 1353 AH [1856 – 1934 CE]

³⁰ An expert in Islamic jurisprudence

2. The late Aqa Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi in Samarra: she studied with him until she was able to independently derive a rule of divine law from the Qur'an (*ijtihad*).³¹

3. Hujjat al-Islam Mirza Ali Asghar Sharif:³² He was son of Hajj Muhammad Baqir, an Arabic literature teacher who taught other basic courses in the Seminary of Isfahan. There, he also was the prayer leader in a mosque. He lived a long life;³³ when he passed away, Lady Amin was eighty years old.³⁴

4. Ayatullah Mirza Ali Aqa Shirazi:³⁵ He was one of the outstanding people of his time, mastering in jurisprudence, exegesis, spirituality, morality, and Arabic literature. He was the son of Ali Akbar Shirazi and a student of great teachers such as 'Allamah Sayyed Muhammad Baqir Dorcheh'i, Hajj Aqa Husayn Borujerdi, and others in Isfahan Seminary. He also studied philosophy under distinguished philosophers such as the Jahangirkhan Qashqa'i and Akhund Mulla Muhammad Kashani, and physics under Muhammad Baqir Hakim Bāshi. In Najaf al-Ashraf and learned from Grand Ayatullahs Sheikh al-Shari'ah Isfahani, Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Kazem Yazdi, and Akhund Khorasani and achieved great degrees in knowledge. Afterwards, he went to Isfahan where he taught until the end of his life.³⁶

5. Hujjat ul-Islam Hajj Sheikh Abu al-Qasim Zofreh'i:³⁷ He was known as "Hajj Akhund" a pious man who taught in the Seminary of Isfahan.³⁸ Lady Amin was 48 when he passed away.³⁹

³¹ Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Ibid*, p. 30.

³² d. 1384 AH [1964 CE]

³³ Sayyed Mosleh al-Din Mahdawi, *Seiri dar Tarikh-e Takht-e Foolad*, Isfahan, Assembly of public libraries of Isfahan, p. 87.

³⁴ Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 35.

³⁵ 1294 – 1374 AH

³⁶ Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Ibid*, p. 33.

³⁷ d. 1352 AH [1934 CE]

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 34.

6. Hujjat ul-Islam Hajj Aqa Husayn Nizam al-Din Kachu'i.⁴⁰

7. Sheikh Zayn al-'Abedin Mazandarani and Hajj Mirza Husayn Nuri in Iraq.

8. Ayatullah Mir Sayyid Ali Najaf Abadi:⁴¹ He was a mujtahid who taught Islamic sciences in Isfahan Seminary. He was also Lady Amin's most influential teacher, playing the leading role in several stages of Lady Amin's education⁴² as he taught her jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, and Islamic philosophy. He once said, "My uncle taught me Islamic philosophy, but there is nobody I could teach it to. I was sure that if I taught it to this lady, it will be remembered."⁴³ His quote implied that apparently there was no one who could comprehend sophisticated concepts of Islamic philosophy at that time other than Lady Amin. When she wrote *'Arba'in-e Hāshemiyyeh* and scholars of the Najaf Seminary read it, they greatly admired it, and Ayatullah Najaf Abadi said, "Whatever Lady Amin has written in her book is originated from her own thoughts; it was not the outcome of my teachings."⁴⁴

Her Reaction to Banning Hijab in Iran

Lady Amin's efforts and achievements were exhibited during a time when women were not permitted to leave the house. Naturally, because she spent most of her time studying, she was often at home, leaving the house only on necessary occasions, such as educating and guiding women of all ages. Except for the Qajar period, the era of Reza Khan was almost contemporary with the emergence of modernism and propaganda against Islam, and this wave was particularly rampant in Isfahan. At the beginning of that period, Lady Amin was 35, and

³⁹ Nahid Tayyebi, *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Naser Baqeri Bidhendi, *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁴¹ 1275 – 1362 AH [1859 – 1943 CE]

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.35; Women's Office for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Sayyid Mustafa Hadawi, *Ibid*, pp. 13- 14.

Isfahan had several seminaries. After Tehran, Isfahan was a target for modernist activities by some women. Ms. Seddiqeh Dolat Abadi was one of those who conducted such activities about whom it is reported that, “She publicly uncovered her head-scarf (*hijab*) years before Reza Khan banned hijab. Obviously, there were other women such as Dolat Abadi and other women who thought they would be deemed “modern” if they participated in such ceremonies. The wave of modernism prevented the spread of religious thoughts, especially amongst women, and for this reason, Lady Amin is seen as influential as she established a great movement.

Reza Khan promoted his own flawed ideology, such as promoting modernism based on the radical nationalism that had two major goals: to debase and destroy Islamic civilization, and to return to the pre-Islamic period of Iran.

Counter to Reza Khan’s radical nationalism, Lady Amin wrote under the pseudonym “Iranian Lady” particularly because Reza Khan wanted to return Iranian women to the pre-Islamic period and bring back the culture of that time. On the contrary, Lady Amin wanted to say, “Today’s Iranian woman is she whom began her life since the appearance of Islam. Women did not have an identity or nobility before Islam; the true identity of Iranian women was formed since Islam spread to Iran and Iranians became Muslim.”⁴⁵

When the dictatorship of Reza Khan stood against Islamic values and Qur’anic rules, in addition to her studies, work, and family responsibilities, Lady Amin defended religious standards. The ban of wearing of *hijab* in public was decreed in 1310. In 1311, the *Congress of Eastern Women* attended by Mrs. Dolat Abadi took place, and afterwards, hijab was officially banned.

⁴⁵ Women’s Office for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, (Dr. Shabestari’s speech), pp. 254-255.

As a result, Lady Amin wrote the book *Rawesh-e Khoshbakhti (The Way of Achieving Prosperity)*. She quotes: “If a body limb becomes sick, other limbs would not remain healthy” and “Women are the pillars of society; if they are unethical, the entire society will become corrupt, especially if their immoral deeds are open to the public.”⁴⁶

In another part, she writes:

O you woman who have uncovered your *hijab!* and in such a shameful way display your finery in the streets and passages in the public while you claim that you are a Muslim! Do you not realize that through this action, which you should not consider unimportant, that you inflict great damage on religion? O Europeanized woman! Do not consider this sin unimportant. If you are truly a Muslim, this is not Islamic. If you do not believe in Islamic teachings, declare your disbelief, so that your wrong action does not encourage others to do the same. And if you are not interested in the religion, why do you incur enmity? The holy Prophet (s) did not do injustice towards women during his time. He (s) granted them rights and gave them an equal position to men in all social affairs at a time when women were considered worthless in the society.⁴⁷

Her Moral Virtues

Lady Amin was not unaware of the society’s needs. She was also precise in abiding by general rules of good conduct and being considerate towards others, and this had a big influence on her students. Her students say that she was very dignified, yet humble and decent, and she had spiritual charisma.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lady Amin Isfahani, *Rawesh-e Khoshbakhti*, Isfahan, Muhammadi, p. 34.

Lady Amin established a school in Isfahan called *Maktab-e Fatemiyyeh*, a place where many students quenched their thirst for knowledge and became prolific authors. She taught her *Rawesh-e Khoshbakhti*, a work based on moral beliefs, in a simple, sweet, and pleasant way. She devoted the rest of her life to teaching, researching, writing, and managing the school. Piety and self-confidence were amongst her qualities. Her love for the glorious Qur'an was apparent as depicted in her commentary of *Makhzan al-'Irfan* (15 volumes).

Concerning her discipline, management, and spiritual grandeur, one of her students says:

With regards to the life of Mrs. Amin, she managed her time efficiently. She arranged her programmes in a way that she could do all of her work properly. She never dreaded any troubling event as she constantly put her trust in God. She welcomed guests unpretentiously. She attracted youths to Islam through reasoning and without compulsion. Now that I have passed the sweet days of youth, I see that I have received no affection deeper than her genuine kindness, and I did not take anyone's hand warmer than hers, which taught me the alphabet of the Word of God [i.e. the Qur'an]. I cannot accurately describe her; my tongue is unable to describe her and no pen is able to write it completely... I encourage others to read her works to familiarize themselves with her character. She inspired us - people who were unable to do efficiently and well - and she filled our dark minds with thirst for knowledge. She flied our souls from lowest point of misery to the peak of honour. She forever remains in our memories.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Women's Office for Cultural Studies, *Ibid*, (speech of Ms. Ghazi), p. 158.

All of her students and those who enjoyed her company learned wisdom first and then academic issues related to Qur'anic sciences. Her manners and lifestyle was the most impressive factor in appealing to her students.

Another one of her students says:

The first time I visited her, I was like a spiritually sick person. I deeply felt pain inside myself and I needed to see a qualified [spiritual] physician. Her sayings were effective treatments. That physician, gnostic, and theosophist diagnosed my illness very soon. As she herself said, the medicine prescribed by a physician is bitter, but the result - its cure - is sweet. I talked about my problems and she found out that I needed help. She had the power of insight, and through an in-depth look, she understood others' needs. Then, she suggested teaching Feyz Kashani's *Haqayeq* to me. She said, 'I have studied this book several times and I think this would definitely work for you.' I accepted her suggestion and the class was started. Besides that book, she taught me *The Spiritual Journey (Seyr wa Soluk)*, *Morality (Akhlaq)* and *Resurrection (Ma'ad)*. She also said, 'The understanding of resurrection originated from my own mind; I have not taken it from anywhere. I wrote what I myself have understood from it on paper.' If one day I did not go to her, she would send her servant to ask why I had not gone to see her, and I managed to go to her in any way I could. When her servant once came to me and said, 'The Lady has become sick and would like to see you,' I went to her, and she said, 'Recite the surah Fatihah [the chapter *The Opening*] for me!' I answered, 'I am not in a position to recite it for you!' She said, 'Recite it to make my heart bright!' I sat beside her bed, took her hand, and began to recite it seventy times. As I was reciting, I thought that I am not qualified to do so; after all, she taught mysticism and spirituality; she was a true monotheist. Suddenly, I glanced

out the window. I took the trees to witness and implored God, ‘O God! You know that all of these trees will bear testimony that this Lady has prayed so much to You.’ Then I felt that all the trees were praising God. My body began to shiver and I told the Lady what I had seen. She sighed, put her hand on her heart and said that she felt well and calm. Then she recited the surah of Qadr from the Qur’an and got up and told me, ‘Your heart is brightened to some extent. Be careful not to darken it. Follow your heart.’

She was very humble and wished to help everyone good-heartedly, to help people in thought, knowledge, and moralities. She emphasized on acquiring higher education with the intention of having knowledge complemented with action:

[One must acquire] knowledge accompanied with action, purified action together with enlightenment. If one’s knowledge is not purified, it would make vanity and veil its possessor. For such a person, ascent is impossible and his fall is inevitable. She said: ‘Purify your soul, since the Prophets (s) were sent for this.’⁴⁹

Her lineage reached Imam Ali (a) after 30 fathers. She made efforts to establish the status and position of the family of the Prophet (s) in her talks, so much that her love for them is manifested in her work *Makhzan al-La’ālī fī Manāqib Mawlā al-Mawālī Ali (a)*.⁵⁰

Banu Amin and Imam Khomeini

Banu Amin was a supporter and believer of Imam Khomeini and the Islamic revolution of Iran. Accordingly, one of her students said:

⁴⁹ Ibid. pp. 162 – 163.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Husayn Rīyāhī, *Nazari bar Shakhsiyyat va Zendegi Banu Amin, Saheb Tafsiir Makhzan al-Irfan*, Ettela’at Daily, No. 20019, p. 7.

In 1359 SC (1980 CE) when she could not leave her house, she kept up with the news of the revolution. When Imam Khomeini spoke on the interpretation of the surah of *Fātiḥah* on television, she was captivated by his speech and lessons and asked me to bring his books for her to study them, which I later did. The next day, after she had read the books, she told me, ‘The Imam’s knowledge of God is at a high level. If anyone wants to - God forbid - smear his reputation or insult him, tell that person on my behalf that a calamity awaits him. Beware! Do not ever – God forbid – insult him, since it is due to his great knowledge that he can do extraordinary things.’ A goldsmith knows the value of gold, and a lapidist knows the value of gems.⁵¹

Likewise, Imam Khomeini respected Banu Amin, as he would ask about her at times. One of the seminarians in Isfahan says accordingly, “Now and then I went to visit the Imam and he asked about Lady Amin’s health and work, and when I went to the Lady Banu’s house, she would send her regards to him, and would pray for his health and success in achieving Islamic aims.”⁵²

Lady Amin’s Works

Her works reflect her refined soul. According to a quote from one of her relatives, “She did not have any slip of the pen when she took pen to write” and this signifies unseen divine assistances to her. She wanted to remain unknown and signed her books with the pen name of “Iranian Lady” or “Isfahani Lady.” Her published works are as follows:

⁵¹ Majmū‘ih Maqālāt Farhangī Bānovān, *ibid.*, (Dr. Ghāzī’s Speech), p. 164.

⁵² Sayyid Muṣṭafā Hādavī, *ibid.*, p. 47, quoted from Hujjat al-Islām wa al-Muslimīn Sayyid Kamāl Faḡīh Īmānī.

1. *Arbaʿīn al-Hāshimīyyah*

Her first valuable work in Arabic⁵³ includes forty hadiths in monotheism, Divine attributes, ethics, and religious rulings with philosophical, mystical, and jurisprudential themes. The book's accuracy motivated the scholars of Najaf and religious authorities to assess the Lady in the areas of fiqh, uṣūl,⁵⁴ and other disciplines [mentioned in her book]. She passed all exams successfully and gained her the degree of ijtihād.⁵⁵

2. *Jāmi' al-Shitāt*

This book, compiled by Sheikh Murtada Mazahir, consists of Lady Amin's detailed answers to questions asked by scholars such as Muhammad Ali Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sheikh Muhammad Ṭāhā Hindāwī Najafī Zadeh and Sayyid Hasan Husayni.⁵⁶

3. *Ma'ād yā Ākharīn Seyr-e Bashar*

This book, consisting of nine articles, pertains to the spiritual aspect that people inevitably encounter in the course of perfection to move towards the Hereafter and Resurrection.⁵⁷

4. *Nafahāt al-Raḥmānīyyah fī al-Wāridāt al-Qalbīyyah*

This book is about the mystical experiences of the author had in her journey towards Allah. In the *Nafḥa* (impression) no. 21 of this book, she states:

⁵³ Translated to Persian by Ms. Homayūnī, her student

⁵⁴ *Principles of fiqh*

⁵⁵ Capability of making a religious judgment

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Nāsir Baqeri Bidhendi, p. 40.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, *The Deputy of Research of The Center for Management of Seminaries for Sisters*, pp. 38 – 57.

On the ninth night of the month of Muharram 1359 SC (1980 CE), I was sitting and thinking to myself as to whether I love the world or not? How much do I love the world? And I was preaching to myself. Suddenly, an unseen voice told me, ‘You love the world not because of the world, but because the world is a manifestation of the beauty and glory of God, the Exalted, and every corner of the world you look, you find your Beloved.’ When I heard this, I found that my love for the world is not for the sake of it, but it is because the world is the place of emanation of the beauty and glory of God. Thus, I prayed God to bestow me a life long enough to see His beauty and glory, to hear His attributes from scholars, to speak of His beauty and glory for people, to write about His beauty and glory, to serve Him, and to wholeheartedly work to bring awareness to the people.

In *Nafha*, she stated, “Then, God granted me forty years to write a commentary on the Qur’an to guide people.”⁵⁸

Nafahāt is her only book in Arabic among her books that have not been translated to Farsi. The reason for this is mentioned by one of her students:

She hesitated to give the book to anyone when she was alive, because it was about her own mystical experiences. I can remember that a woman had written a letter and asked for the book *Nafahāt (Impressions)*. She said, ‘I fear to hand this book to everyone because they may falsely label me.’ But eventually, she sent the book to that woman. After two months, a letter came from that woman which made her very sad. She told me, ‘Do you see what happened? I am labeled a Sufi.

⁵⁸ Office for Cultural Studies of Women, *Ibid.*, p. 159.

That is why I did not want to give the book to everyone.’ That is why the book is not translated yet.

5. *Akhlāq (Morality)*

This book is a commentary on Ibn Miskiwayh’s *Ṭahārah al-Akhlāq*, a part of which has been translated and Lady Amin’s comment about that part has been added to it as marginal notes. The book is both scholarly and practical.⁵⁹

6. *Tafsīr Makhzan al-‘Irfān*

This book is a comprehensive commentary of the Qur’an published in 15 volumes in Farsi. After writing a commentary on the first two sections of the Qur’an, Lady Amin continued writing a commentary until the last section (the 30th juz’) as she feared having a short life, and she finished that commentary near the end of her life. This way, this noble mujtahidah became the only female exegete of the Islamic world who has written a complete commentary on the Qur’an from the beginning until the end.⁶⁰

7. *Ravesh Khoshbakhti va Towsiyeh beh Khaharan-e Imani*

In this book, the meaning of happiness and prosperity and the way to achieve it has been clarified using beneficial advice to sisters in faith. In doing so, she first explains the two elements of happiness, i.e. “comfort and health” and “mental health, free-mindedness, and peace of the soul” which are achieved by observing the two essential principles of “true beliefs and faith in the origin and the Hereafter” and “good moral conduct.” In this way, she explained the principles of religion. She ends the book with a discussion on entreating the Imams (a), fighting with superstitions and obsession, some advice to the

⁵⁹ The Deputy of Research of The Center for Management of Seminaries for Sisters, p. 58

⁶⁰ Ibid.

sisters, privileges, characteristics and dignity of women, moral refinement, and principles of good conduct.⁶¹

8. *Makhzan al-La'ālī fī Manāqib Mawlā al-Mawālī Ali (a)*

This book studies the virtues of Imam Ali (a).⁶²

9. *Seyr wa Sulūk dar Rawish Awlīya' wa Ṭarīq Seyr Su'adā*

This book discusses intuition, illumination and journey towards Allah. About finitude and perpetuity, Lady Amin mentions in a part of this book:

...unless you die from your *self*, you would not become eternal to Him; and unless you lose what you have, you would not enter the realm of divine; and unless you begin a very long journey with hope, you would not settle down in the dwelling of safety and calmness; unless you take the trouble of asceticism and worship, you would not achieve peace; unless you taste the bitterness of separation, you would not taste the sweetness of reunion; unless you extinguish the fire of your anger, you would not receive divine mercy; unless you be patient on hardships, you would not be pleased with the sweetness of eternal blessings; unless you abandon unreal natural pleasures, you would not become the beloved of God; you would become king of the kings if you wear the necklace of servitude; If you practice asceticism and depart towards God, you would reside in the closeness of God...⁶³

The same theme is found in most of Lady Amin's works, which mostly include advice on educational instructions and methods of self-

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 59

purification, described in *Seyr wa Sulūk*, regarding intuition and journey towards God. She explains the stages of the spiritual journey as follows:

The one who journeys towards God and is thirsty to reach closeness to Him must first fully struggle with the self by preventing it from pleasure-seeking, and fueling one's carnal desires. He or she must also be contented with what is necessary in this world and wear the necklace of obedience and servitude to God.⁶⁴

In reply to the question, "What is the best jihad for women today?" Lady Amin answered:

Currently, the most important action of a woman is that they fight with their worldly temptations and pleasure-seeking soul regarding jewelry, clothes, and new fashions. Although this may seem difficult at the beginning, with practice, they soon will achieve spiritual excellence. In other words, the best jihad for them is to modestly cover themselves.⁶⁵

In a message to young women, she said, "Among the most significant attributes of women is modesty; so much so that the scholars of ethics have said: 'The greatest dignity of women before the wise of the society is in their modesty.'"

Conclusion

In a generation infiltrated with mainstream figures that lure today's adolescents and young adults to disregard true exemplars, Sayyida Nosrat Beygum Amin is a model of a woman in the modern era with

⁶⁴ Office for Cultural Studies of Women, *Ibid.*, Ms. Zahra Shojā'ī quoted from *Seyr wa Sulūk dar Rawish Awlīya' wa Ṭarīq Seyr Su'adā*, p. 146.

⁶⁵ i.e. their hair and the curves of their bodies

remarkable accomplishments. As an exceptional jurist and theologian in the 20th century, she was given permission of ijtihād by scholars and in turn granted permission of ijtihād to eminent distinguished male and female scholars. With her avid love for God as an incentive to study in a variety of disciplines to reach higher levels of spirituality and moral fineness, she was a prolific author in the fields of literature, Islamic law, Qur’anic interpretation, and ethics, and she demonstrated her sociopolitical activism in the movement against Reza Khan’s false propaganda. Upon glancing at her lifetime of devoted service to Islam, she is indeed a role model people can apply to their modern lives.

THE VIRTUES OF IMAM HUSAYN (A) AND HIS COMPANIONS¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: On the day of Ashura, Imam Husayn (a) and his companions displayed the greatest morals while their enemies possessed the vilest traits. This paper presents some of the most prominent and finest of the Imam's and his companions' virtues, namely, ardent love for Allah (swt), great honor, and unwavering patience. Those who truly love Imam Husayn and mourn for his suffering can – through Allah's mercy – join him in the countless rewards he received as a result of his patience and the actions that stemmed from it. An additional illustration of the three types of patience will be offered, specifically, patience pertaining to performing obligatory acts, refraining from forbidden acts, and patience during calamities. These three actions earned Imam Husayn immense heavenly rewards, and furthermore, Allah grants these rewards to those who wholeheartedly commemorate the tragedy of Karbala and endeavors to courteously visit him (a).

Imam Husayn (a) and his companions exhibited the greatest values a persona can achieve. Conversely, their enemies showed the worst vices a person can suffer from. Devising a comprehensive list of the virtues manifested in the Imam's action on Ashura would bring about an

¹This paper is based on Lecture 11 of a series of lectures entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala." This lecture was delivered by Dr. Shomali on the Day of Ashura in Muharram 1433/Nov & Dec 2011 in London.

exceedingly long list. In what follows, we will refer to selected virtues that stood out as the finest of these virtues, namely love for Allah (swt), honour, and patience.

Love for Allah

Sometimes we obey Allah (swt) because we do not want to get punished or blamed by Him. However, sometimes it is not merely a matter of obedience. When you love Allah (swt), this love drives you to want to serve Him even when it is not compulsory. For such people, recommended acts become necessary because they know that this is what the Beloved wants. If you live with a special person whom you love, you willingly wait to do something for him or her. As soon as this person gets thirsty you bring a nice drink or enjoyably get anything else he or she might needs. Thus, love is a level much higher than obedience. Love is to go out of your way to please your beloved. It is love that kept the companions of Imam Husayn (a) with him, even after he gave them permission to leave. Even though he encouraged them to leave the battlefield to a safe haven with Imam's family members, none of them left. Although they knew they would inevitably face death, they decided to stay with him (a), since such a death was more desirable for them than to be far from their beloved Imam.

Honour and Dignity

Imam Husayn's (a) speeches, especially from Medina to Karbala, displayed his firm desire for honour and dignity. When it comes to honour, there is no question of giving it up. It is unfortunate when people take time to consider whether or not to give in to the temptation of sinning, and try to find excuses. A true believer does not need to reconsider committing a sin or not, especially when his or her honour is concerned.

One way to better understand the importance of it is to bear in mind that one of the universal tasks of all the prophets was to help people establish social justice. The following verse shows the central position of justice:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

Certainly, We have sent all the messengers with manifest truths and gave them book and scale [law] so that people establish justice. (57:25)

Another value close to justice, something that comes directly under justice, is dignity. The highest right we have as a human beings is dignity. Many people think that the highest and the most important right is life. However, although the right of life is very important, dignity surpasses it. A person's dignity is more important than his life. If I'm kept alive while being treated like an animal by having food thrown along with constantly being humiliated, what is the value of such life? Is life the most important right given to a person? The most crucial right is to be treated as a human being with honour and dignity.

Therefore, justice is to give people what they deserve and even more is to treat them with honour and dignity. This essential value was planned by Allah to eventually be achieved at a universal scale. Without having at least a day in which humanity can live with justice and dignity the world will not come to an end. Living with justice in this world is inevitable. The kingdom of Allah must be established on this earth before witnessing and experiencing it in the hereafter.

The role model for establishing justice

The leader who will succeed in establishing justice is Imam Mahdi. Naturally he will not do so miraculously: if it was expected to be a miracle, there is no need for people to wait. He will eventually and undoubtedly be the leader although people are expected to prepare the grounds for the establishment of justice by a) establishing justice in their own souls and hearts, b) showing this fairness to their brothers and sisters in their community, c) extending this trait to people of other faiths or beliefs, and d) spreading this to other living beings. Such people who have aspired to establish justice can then ask the Imam to use them in his movement which will inevitably spread worldwide justice.

For such people who desire to receive inspiration and energy for their efforts in bringing about a life of dignity and honour, Imam Husayn is the role model they emulate. Those who want to help Imam Mahdi by preparing for his reappearance and then support him all the way through so that he achieves this justice and gives all the human being their honour and dignity cannot do this without remembering the Imam. This is because Imam Husayn demonstrated that although life is indeed important, there are features that outweigh physical life, as he said:

الموت خير من ركوب العار و العار اولى من دخول النار

Death is better than losing you honour.

And losing your honour is better than going to hell.²

The Imam knew all too well that his life would be saved and he would live a comfortable life with respect and suitable to his needs while continuing his spiritual and societal responsibilities if he pledged allegiance to Yazid. However, regarding the fact that Yazid ordered the Imam to pledge allegiance, Imam Husayn says:

مثلى لا يبيع مثله

“A person like me would not pay allegiance to someone like him.”³

A person who has dedicated his entire life in obedience to Allah by no means would pay allegiance to an oppressor like Yazid. There would be no value in his life even if he spent all of it worshipping Allah without his dignity and honor by having to pledge allegiance to an oppressor. Imam Husayn regarded dignity as an essential part of living, as seen in his speech regarding Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad:⁴

² A verse from the poem composed by Imam Husayn on the day of Ashura - *Bihar al-anwar*, chapter volume, page 193

³ *Bihar al-anwar*, volume 44, page 324, chapter 37

⁴ The son of Ziad ibn Abi Sufyan, who after his father's death, governed Kufa and Basra and led the army of Yazid during the battle of Karbala.

ألا وإن الدعي ابن الدعي قد تركني بين السلة و الذلة و هيهات له ذلك مني هيهات
 منا الذلة أباي الله ذلك لنا و رسوله و المؤمنون و حجور طهت و جدود طابت

Behold; the illegitimate, son of the illegitimate [by birth], has settled between two, between unsheathing [the sword] and humiliation, and how impossible is humiliation from us! Allah refuses that for us, and his messenger, and the believers, and those pure laps [on which Husayn was brought up].⁵

Patience

Without moral virtues we cannot achieve anything, and if we do, we cannot maintain it. Moreover, without patience, we cannot achieve the virtues of love, knowledge, and honour. If we do achieve them, they can easily be lost without patience. This is why patience is said to represent the head if faith were the body.⁶ We cannot retain the quality of being a believer without patience.

Patience has three branches.⁷ First, it is to be patient with respect to performing obligatory acts, such as performing prayers on time along with abiding by its conditions. This needs perseverance, especially from the onset. When one loves prayer, it would become very difficult not to pray even for few hours. But in the beginning it might be a burden, especially trying to get out of a warm, comfortable bed on a cold morning. To leave your bed and make *wudu*⁸ for prayers needs patience. Other forms of religious obligations, such as observing *hijab*,⁹ giving money in the form of *zakat*¹⁰ and *khums*,¹¹ and performing the *hajj* pilgrimage while leaving family behind needs patience.

⁵ *Al-Ihtijaj*, volume 2, page 300

⁶ *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 114, chapter 16, no. 4

⁷ *Ibid.* vol. 68, p. 95, chapter 62, no. 57

⁸ Or *ablution*. The Islamic ritual for washing parts of the body in preparation for prayer.

⁹ Islamic headscarf worn by Muslim women

¹⁰ The religious obligation of giving a fixed portion of one's wealth as a tax, generally to the poor, needy, or to those who collect it.

¹¹ The religious obligation of contributing one-fifth of a certain income to charity.

The second type of patience is that with respect to refraining from forbidden acts. To do obligatory acts whilst also performing forbidden acts is like preparing a dish and then poisoning it. For this reason we sometimes perform our obligatory duties and then feel that we haven't benefited. Our bad habits and actions prevent us from benefiting from our good acts. In relation to this point, the famous poet, Rumi, tells a story: once there were several farmers who harvested their wheat and regularly placed it in a storage room. However, to their surprise, each day they would find the storage empty with no sign of a break-in. In the middle of one night when they decided to sleep inside and see what would happen, they saw some big rats taking everything with them. Those rats symbolize our bad habits. Rumi then asks, "If there were no rats in our heart then why do we not see the light of our prayers?"

Most of our problems come from our self as the Prophet (s) said:

أَعْدَى عَدُوِّكَ نَفْسُكَ الَّتِي بَيْنَ جَنَبَيْكَ

"Your greatest enemy is your own self."¹²

A person who has not trained and purified himself by being cautious and carefully evaluating his deeds should not blame others for his problems. During this process, praying at nights play an important role as it is a very good opportunity to reflect on our weaknesses.

Once Ayatullah Qāzi Tabatabai, a great Shi'a scholar, put his hand on the shoulder of a young student, later to be the grand Allamah Sayyid Mohammad Husayn Tabatabai, and told him, "If material success in this world is what you want perform *salat al-layl*,¹³ and if you want happiness in the hereafter [again] perform *salat al-layl*." Therefore, if we want to grasp any opportunity to train ourselves, many of our problems - if not all of them - will be solved.

¹² Ibid. vol. 67, p. 64, chapter 45, no. 1

¹³ The night prayer – one of the ways of remembering Allah by waking up at night for prayer and supplications.

Third is to be patient when facing a calamity. This is perhaps the most difficult, because once a person has been stricken by a calamity, such as losing a loved one, it is difficult for him to control himself and to remain patient.

The reward for the patient

Now the question arises: what is the reward for a believer who is able to keep his patience with respect to performing his duties, refraining from prohibited acts (*haram*), and facing a tragedy? Allah (swt) responds to this in the Qur'an:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ
وَأَسْعَىٰ إِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Say: 'O ye my servants who believe! Fear your Lord, good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is God's earth! those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!'

Faith without piety is not enough. If you want to cross a channel and simply take one step, you will remain in the middle. You have to walk long enough to cross it. The verse adds that those who do good deeds will be rewarded and that the land of Allah (swt) is very great and vast, suggesting that migration is an option for those who are prevented from practicing his or her faith in a city. Then, the verse refers to patience - that Allah will reward those who are patient without measure. And this is the only verse in the Qur'an in which Allah (swt) says that He will reward without measure.¹⁴ Of course, there are a group of people in the Qur'an, the *Mukhlisin* (the Purified), the select of the select, who will not even be judged, let alone receiving rewards according to their actions:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

¹⁴ There are verses about the people that Allah (swt) gives them sustenance without measure, but for rewarding the verse above seems to be unique.

*But they impugned him. So they will indeed be arraigned
[before Him] – [all] except God’s exclusive servants.
(37:127-128)*

Therefore, apart from the *Mukhlasin* - a very special group before God - patient believers are the only ones whom the Qur’an says will receive reward without measure.

We all have problems in this world. There is no one who is not facing problems. Yet we tend to think about our own problems while assuming others are satisfied. Every person has some type of problem whether it be poverty, illness, lack of security, and so forth.

The life of this world is depicted in the Qur’an when Prophet Adam was in heaven and Allah (swt) told him:

يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَ لِرِزْوَجِكَ فَالَا يُخْرِجَنَّكَمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْتَقِي

O Adam! verily, this is an enemy to thee and thy wife: so let him not get you both out of the Garden, so that thou art landed in misery. (20:117)

Adam was not to follow Satan who in turn wanted to drive Adam and Eve out of heaven. One aspect of Adam’s departure from heaven is that he will surely suffer. This world is not heaven.

We hope and pray, however, that our problems are in worldly matters and not our religion. Every pleasure in this world is mixed with pains and difficulties. This is the main point. Either you have your problems in the worldly matters or in your faith. Some people have lost their faith and this is the worst disaster. This is why in one of our supplications we implore Allah (swt):

لا تجعل مصيبتنا في ديننا

“Please don’t let our suffering be in our faith.”¹⁵

¹⁵ *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 63, chapter 12, no. 11

This world is not a purely joyful and pleasing abode. If you want to enjoy a dish, you are expected to buy the ingredients and take the time to cook it. Even eating out requires a person to make money. Thus, relishing in a very simple matter such as enjoying a meal is not free from some discomfort or sacrifice. Everything has its troubles.

A believer is patient and to such a person Allah (swt) says that all these problems can work as opportunities to earn credit for the hereafter. For example, if you have a disease such as cancer and you remain patient, Allah (swt) rewards you. Although you did not get ill for the sake of Allah (swt), He rewards you because of your patience. The Imams encouraged believers to be patient, as seen in Imam Sadiq's narration:

وَلَدٌ يُقَدَّمُهُ الرَّجُلُ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ وَلَدًا يُخَلِّفُهُمْ بَعْدَهُ كُلُّهُمْ قَدْ رَكِبُوا الْخَيْلَ وَ
جَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

One child, whom a person loses in his lifetime, is better than seventy that live after him, all of whom mount their horses and fight in the way of Allah¹⁶

If one of your children – God forbid – dies in an accident and you remain patient, the reward you achieve is better than the reward you would get if you had seventy children who were killed for the sake of Allah (swt). Of course, no one wants you to suffer, but if you are and you keep your patience, Allah (swt) will appreciate it.

The Second Martyr (*al-Shahid al-Thāni*) Sheikh Zayn al-Din Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jab'ī al-'Amili (1506-1558) who had lost his sons wrote a book in honor of those who experienced the same condition called "*Comforter of the Heart at the Loss of Loved Ones*."¹⁷ In this book, he says that according to many narrations we understand that if a believer knows how much Allah (swt) has prepared for him because of his

¹⁶ *Al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 218

¹⁷ مسكن الفواد عند فقد احبه و الاولاد

suffering, he would wish that in this world he was cut into pieces by scissors.¹⁸

Many will wish they had suffered in the world when they witness the generosity of Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgment. Allah (swt) will know what happened to us and will not forget us. He will reward us on the Day of Judgment as a result of all the problems that were not under our control. The Prophet Muhammad (s) suffered more than any other prophet:

ما اوذى نبي مثل ما اوذيت

“No prophet was annoyed like I was.”¹⁹

Didn't Allah (swt) love him? Why did he have to lose his father before being born and then his mother early after that and then his grandfather, uncle, and his dear wife, Lady Khadijah? He was tortured and saw his companions being tortured, and when he moved to Medina he was forced into many battles.

Was all of this because Allah (swt) had abandoned him? No. This is because Allah (swt) had destined him such a great level he could only achieve through this suffering. Narrated from the Prophet (s):

إن العبد إذا سبقت له عند الله تعالى منزلة و لم يبلغها بعمل ابتلاه الله في جسده أو في ماله أو في ولده ثم صبر على ذلك حتى يبلغه المنزلة التي سبقت إليه من الله عز وجل

If Allah decides for a servant to reach a certain rank which he did not achieve by his deeds. Then Allah will try him, in his body or money or children, and then He grants him patience, until he reaches that rank.²⁰

¹⁸ Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 64, p. 212

¹⁹ Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 39, p. 55

²⁰ Musakkin Al-Fu'ād, p. 21

Sometimes Allah (swt) in His plan decides that you must reach a certain rank. However, your deeds cannot get you there because either you don't have enough good deeds or that rank is so high that your deeds would fall short of reaching you there. How much can you do in this world if you do good deeds all day and night? Allah (swt) tries and tests you in your body, wealth, or child(ren) when He wants to make sure that you reach that position. If you remain patient, you can achieve that position by your patience.

The Suffering of Imam Husayn (a)

Now let us return to Imam Husayn. When the Imam left Mina he did not go to Mecca to prevent himself from being killed because he wanted to preserve the sanctity of Mecca. He performed the *umrah al-mufradah*²¹ instead of the hajj and left for Karbala. But before leaving, he delivered a speech where he clearly informed people that he is going to be killed:

من كان باذلاً فينا مهجته و موطننا على لقاء الله نفسه فليرحل معنا فإنني راحل مصباحاً
إن شاء الله تعالى²²

Whoever is ready to give the last drops of his heart for us, and has made himself prepared for meeting Allah, let him depart with us, for I am I'm going to move tomorrow morning insha-Allah.

During this speech, the Imam also said:

نصبر على بلائه يوفينا اجور الصابرين

We are patient in the face of Allah's trials, and He will reward us with the reward of those who are patient.

²¹ Visiting the Sacred House of God (Ka'aba) independently of the hajj.

²² *Al-Luhuf*, p. 60

Imam Husayn (a) clearly says that he wants to be patient to achieve the reward that does not have measure. The Imam even used the verb *ajr* which derives from the same root of *ajr* used in verse 39:10²³ regarding the measureless reward of the patient. Through his patience, the Imam achieved an unlimited position in which Allah (swt) gave him whatever he wants whether for himself, his family, or for those who sincerely love him.

Allamah Bahr al-'Ulūm, a very pious and outstanding scholar, was once pondering over why Allah (swt) rewards the visitors of Imam Husayn (a) abundantly as mentioned in various narrations. The mentioned rewards are so much that makes it difficult to understand why. While busy with this thought, a person came asking him what he was thinking about. After listening to Allamah's response, this person responded by narrating a story:

One day, a king and his companions left their palace to go hunting. During the trip, the king got lost. It was getting dark and he was not able to find any of his companions to show him the way. After lots of struggles and attempts, all he found was a tent of an old lady who lived with her son. Their only possession apart from the tent was a goat that provided them with milk as their only food. Not even knowing the true identity of their guest, they slaughtered their goat and prepared a good meal for him. Then they prepared a bed for him to sleep. The next day, the king found his companions. When he returned to the palace he called for a meeting in which he asked for an appropriate way to reward those people. All the ideas they came up with were rejected by the king because he said the old lady and her son gave me all they had while they were not in debt to me, so now even if I give them my entire kingdom it will not compensate for what they did for me.

Hearing this story helped Allamah realize why Allah (swt) treats Imam Husayn (a) in such a way: the Imam gave everything he had for Allah

²³ "Say: 'O ye my servants who believe! Fear your Lord, good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is God's earth! those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!'"

(swt). Thus, Allah (swt) grants so much reward not only for Imam Husayn (a) but also to those who visit him. There is no limit in Allah's riches: He gives those rewards to Imam Husayn (a) and has yet more to give. Of course, this is, indeed, an excuse for Allah (swt) to provide for His creatures, since He is always looking for excuses to give due to His boundless generosity. It is a shame that sometimes we can be so indolent that we do not even give Him an excuse to help us and offer us His abundant blessings.

Our suffering over the loss of Imam Husayn (a)

The tragedy of Ashura is not only the tragedy of the Ahlul Bayt (a); it is our tragedy. We are also those whom condolences are offered to. In Ziyarat Ashura, we refer to it as our tragedy when we say:

ان يعطيني بمصابي بكم افضل ما يعطى مصابا بمصيبته

I ask Allah (swt) to give me because of my pain and suffering over your loss the best reward that a person who faces a tragedy receives.

We do not just participate in the mourning congregations to offer condolences; rather, we are here because it is our tragedy - we have lost our Imam. When we meet on the day of Ashura, we are recommended to say to each other:

اعظم الله اجرنا بمصابنا بالحسين

May Allah (swt) make our reward for our suffering over the loss of Husayn great!

Today, on the day of Ashura, Imam Husayn (a) reached a lofty status by being patient in the face of this tragedy, a status which he could not have achieved without experiencing it. The true lovers and mourners of Imam Husayn (a) can join him by having the same patience, a patience which resembles the patience of Imam Husayn (a) with fortitude, honour, and love for Allah.

Conclusion

One of the greatest virtues exhibited by Imam Husayn (a) and his companions on the day of Ashura is love for Allah (swt). Love is a higher level than obedience. It is love that kept the companions of Imam Husayn (a) with him even after he gave them permission to leave. Another virtue exhibited by Imam Husayn (a) is honour and dignity – he chose to stand against oppression and living a life of humiliation. Finally, Imam Husayn exhibited unwavering patience. Without patience we cannot achieve anything, and if we do, we cannot maintain it. According to the narrations, patience in relation to faith (*imān*) is like the head to the body. The three types of patience are with respect to a) performing obligatory acts, b) refraining from forbidden acts, and 3) during a calamity. A believer is patient with respect to these difficulties, and this patience is rewarded in the hereafter. Before leaving Mecca, Imam Husayn (a) delivered a speech in which he said, “We are patient in the face of Allah’s trials, and He will reward us with the reward of those who are patient.” Imam Husayn (a) gave everything he had for Allah (swt), and for this reason Allah (swt) grants him abundant rewards not only for him but also his visitors. The tragedy of Ashura is thus not only the tragedy of the Ahlul Bayt (a); it is also our tragedy. The true lovers and mourners of Imam Husayn (a) can join him by resembling the same qualities.