# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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

# Table of contents

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

Editor-in-Chief

# Editorial

Publication of this issue has coincided with the third three months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar i.e. Rajab, Sha'bān and the holy month of Ramaḍān. In this period, there are very important occasions. The anniversary of birth of Imam Javad (A) on the $10^{th}$ of Rajab, birth of Imam Ali (A) on the $13^{th}$ of Rajab, eid of Mab'ath on the $27^{th}$ of Rajab, birth of Imam Husayn (A) on the $3^{rd}$ of Sha'ān, birth of Abu'a-Faḍl al-Abbas (A) on the 4th of Sha'bān, birth of Imam Sajjad (A) on the $5^{th}$ of Sha'ān, birth of Ali al-Akbar (A) on the $11^{th}$ of Sha'bān, birth of Imam Mahdi (A) on the $15^{th}$ of Sha'ān, birth of Imam Hasan (A) on the $15^{th}$ of the holy month of Ramaḍān, the Night of Qadr and eid al-Fitr are some of the greatest and happy occasions of this period. In this period there are also very sad occasions such as the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hadi (A) on the $3^{rd}$ of Rajab, the demise of Lady Zainab (A) on the $15^{th}$ of Rajab, the martyrdom of Imam Kazim (A) on the $25^{th}$ of Rajab, the demise of Lady Khadijah (A) on the $10^{th}$ of the holy month of Ramaḍān and the martyrdom of Imam Ali (A).

Thus, this season is full of opportunities for reflection and inspiration. In these three months the blessings of God come down to the inhabitants of the world more than any other time. In this period, there are times that are spiritually of the utmost importance, such the night of the $15^{th}$ of Sha'bān and the Night of Qadr. For more study on the spiritual significance of these three months, the readers may refer to the editorial of the Issue 38 (Vol. 10, No. 2) and the sixth paper in this issue. In what follows, I will focus on the $15^{th}$ of Sha'bān as one of the highlights of this period and that of which marks the middle of this season.

According to a well-known hadith from Imam Sadiq (A), his father Imam Baqir (A) in response to a question about the merits of the night of the 15th of Sha‘bān, said:

> "After the Night of Qadr, that night is the best night. In this night, God grants His favours upon His servants and out of His grace, forgives their sins. So try to do your best in order to approximate to Him. It is the night in which God has vowed not to disappoint and return empty-handed anyone who asks Him as long as he does not ask for the unlawful".

The birth of Imam Mahdi (A) has added to the significance of this night. God, the Almighty, out of His endless mercy in the month of Sha‘bān and where His mercy is at its peak and is most accessible to His servants, gave a child to Imam Askari (A) and Lady Narjis whose name was the same as the Prophet's (S), whose nickname was the same as the Prophet's (S) and whose mission is to "fill the earth with justice and equity." In his *Muntakhab al-Athar,* Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani has cited 130 hadiths from both Shi‘a and Sunni sources, in which the phrase: "He fills the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice and oppression" occurs. Here I would like to mention a hadith from the *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, in which the Prophet is quoted as saying:

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ أَبِي زِيَادٍ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ـ صلى الله عليه وسلم ـ إِذْ أَقْبَلَ فِتْيَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي هَاشِمٍ فَلَمَّا رَآهُمُ النَّبِيُّ ـ صلى الله عليه وسلم ـ اغْرَوْرَقَتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَتَغَيَّرَ لَوْنُهُ قَالَ فَقُلْتُ مَا نَزَالُ نَرَى فِي وَجْهِكَ شَيْئًا نَكْرَهُهُ . فَقَالَ " إِنَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتٍ اخْتَارَ اللَّهُ لَنَا الآخِرَةَ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّ أَهْلَ بَيْتِي سَيَلْقَوْنَ بَعْدِي بَلاَءً وَتَشْرِيدًا وَتَطْرِيدًا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قِبَلِ الْمَشْرِقِ مَعَهُمْ رَايَاتٌ سُودٌ فَيَسْأَلُونَ الْخَيْرَ فَلاَ يُعْطَوْنَهُ

فَيُقَـاتِلُونَ فَيُنْصَرُونَ فَيُعْطَـوْنَ مَـا سَـأَلُوا فَـلاَ يَقْبَلُونَـهُ حَتَّـى
يَدْفَعُوهَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَيَمْلَؤُهَا قِسْطًا كَمَا مَلَؤُوهَا
جَوْرًا فَمَنْ أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَلْيَأْتِهِمْ وَلَوْ حَبْوًا عَلَى الثَّلْجِ ."

> We (I and my family) are members of a household,
> for whom God has chosen the life of the Hereafter
> over the life of this world; and the members of my
> household shall suffer great affliction. They will be
> forcefully expelled from their homes after my
> death; then there will come people from the East
> carrying black flags, and they will ask for some
> good to be given to them, but they shall be refused
> service; accordingly, they will wage war and
> emerge victorious, and will be offered that which
> they desired in the first place, but they will refuse
> to accept it, and will hand it over to a man from my
> family who will appear to fill the Earth with justice
> as it has been filled with corruption. So whoever is
> alive at that time should go and join them, even if
> they have to crawl across ice, for among them will
> be the Vicegerent of Allah (*Khalifatullah*), al-
> Mahdi. (*Sunan* of Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Fitan, Bāb-u
> Khuruj al-Mahdi, First hadith, serial no. 4220)

Thus, Imam Mahdi (A) will complete the task of all the Prophets:
"Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We
sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind
may establish justice" (57:25). Interestingly, the Qur'an says that
God sent the Prophets not to establish justice by themselves;
rather they have come to guide and help people so that "people
themselves establish justice (*li-yaqum an-nas-u bi'l-qist*)." Imam
Mahdi (A) will also do the same. He is not going to miraculously
fill the earth with justice and equity by himself. If that were the
case why would he have to wait for centuries? He will come only
when there will be enough number of qualified helpers who will
have established justice and other values that Imam will call for

among themselves and then invite others to share with them. When people of the world see that values such as justice, equity, peace, security, brotherhood and mercy that form their own ideals are called for by Imam (A) and his people and moreover they are implemented by them "you will see the people entering God's religion in throngs" (110:2).

Here I should emphasise that that according to the teachings of Ahl al-Bayt (A), Imam Mahdi (A) will manifest universal and inclusive mercifulness for all people. In a hadith narrated by Jabir b. Abdullah al-Ansari, Imam Mahdi (A) is described as "*rahmatan lil-'ālamin*" which means "mercy for all the intelligent inhabitants of the world". (*Al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 528; *Al-Ghaybah* by Shaykh al-Tusi, pp. 145 & 146) This is a title for the Prophet Muhammad (S), the last Prophet (2:157) which is shared by the last successor. Indeed, it is an established idea that Imam Mahdi (A) will act according to the conduct and manner of the Prophet. (*Bihār al-Anwār,* Vol. 51, p. 123)

We also find in a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (S) that "the inhabitant of heaven and the inhabitant of the earth will be pleased with Mahdi." (*Al-Ghaybah* by Shaykh al-Tusi, p. 178) A similar hadith is narrated by Ibn Hajar, in which the prophet is quoted as saying: "The people (*ahl*) of heaven and the people of the earth and the birds in sky will be pleased with his governorship (*khilāfah*). (*Al-Sawā'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 164) According to a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (S) about Imam Mahdi (A), "His nation (*ummah*) will take refuge to him like bees who take refuge to their queen". (This hadith is narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khuddari and cited in *Al-Hāwi lil-Fatāwā.*)

The Qur'an tells us that the reason people gathered around the Prophet Muhammad (S) and remained with him was that "by God's mercy 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" (3:159). Thus, Imam Mahdi (A) will also show such an inclusive passion, love and mercy to the people of the world and even to animals and birds that everyone will be pleased with him and find his console in him. Of course, like the Prophet Muhammad (S), Imam Mahdi (A) will also be faced with the transgressors and all those who do not understand any language other than power. Fights will be imposed on Imam (A) and his helpers, but this will be temporary and in the transient situation before the establishment of his government.

One of the ideas that we find in the hadiths is that after the advent of Imam Mahdi (A) not only 'hostility will go away' but there will also be a perfect friendship and brotherhood among the people. For example, Imam Baqir (A) says:

> When al-Qa'im uprises, perfect friendship comes
> and a man may go and take what he needs from
> the pocket of his brother and he will not stop him.
> (*Bihār al-Anwār,* Vol. 52, p. 372)

In a conversation with Sa'id b. Hasan, Imam Baqir asked: "Does one among you go to his brother and put his hand in the pocket of his brother to take what he needs without being stopped?" He replied: "I know of no such a thing among us." Then Imam (A) said: "So, nothing." Sa'id asked: "Are we then destroyed?" Imam replied: "This people have not yet been given their [full] intellect." (*Al-Kāfi,* Vol. 2, p. 174)

Let us try hard and pray day and night to be included among those qualified helpers of Imam Mahdi (A) who will have established justice, brotherhood, mercy and piety among themselves and then offer them to others.

Thanks to God, we are now able to present to you a new issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn.* Similar to previous issues, this issue contains seven papers on different aspects of Islamic thought.

The first paper is entitled: "Key Concepts in Islamic Spirituality." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the last five issues, in this paper Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali refers to three major qualities that everyone needs to acquire for his spiritual progress. Having or lacking faith is directly connected to one's degree of his or her love for God. By increasing one's knowledge of God and His Creations, and reflecting upon this, love for Allah can be achieved and this will improve one's spiritual state. Related to love is being thankful, as the one who is thankful will love God. Finally, ultimate humbleness is held to be of utmost importance, on which servitude to God and many other good qualities depend. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Shomali is an associate professor and the Director of the International Institute of Islamic Studies, Qum. He is also the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the International Students at Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, this series of papers will continue in the forthcoming issues.

The second paper is entitled: "Divine Justice and the Problem of Evil." In this paper, Dr. Ghulam Hossain Adeel briefly studies the question of divine justice and evil, a subject meticulously studied by scholars for thousands of years. Dr. Adeel analyzes the problem of evil and the occurrence of pain and suffering under the authority of a Just God. This leads to the question of why so much evil exists if there is divine justice. The notion of divine justice from the viewpoint of Augustine theodicy, a largely adopted perspective held by the Western church, is also examined. Hujjat'l-Islam Dr. Ghulam Hossain Adeel has obtained his doctorate from the University of Birmingham and is currently based in Manchester.

The third paper is entitled: "Nasir al-Din Tusi and His Socio-Political Role in the Thirteenth Century." In this paper, Dr. Abbas

Ali Shameli refers to scientific and socio-political role of Khajah Nasir al-Din Tusi in one of the most critical eras of Islamic history and examines some of the controversies that exist about his affiliations. The paper illustrates Tusi's socio-political function, which included Tusi's flexible nature in communicating with Muslim scholars from different schools of thought, his long-term residence among the Shi'i Seveners, and his cultural influence of reviving Islamic knowledge. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Shameli is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fourth paper is entitlted: "Bayt al-Māl and the Distribution of Zakāt." In this paper, Dr. Mahmood Namazi introduces the Islamic concept of the Bayt al-Māl, and its objective in reducing inequality between the wealthy and the deprived by distributing wealth with the goal of the society's financial welfare taken into consideration. In giving a full description, Namazi explains the philosophy, concept, and sources of the Bayt al-Māl, as well as examining zakat and its socio-economic role in creating financial equality in Muslim countries. Hujat'l-Islam Dr. Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "The Doctrine of Mahdi and Pluralism." In the paper, Dr. Mohammad Hussein Mokhtari explains the idea of religious pluralism and examines its relation with the doctrine of Mahdi (A) in Islam. Hujat'l-Islam Dr. Moktari is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Kalām at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The sixth paper is entitled, "The Merits of Fasting and the Month of Ramadan." This paper elaborates on the concept of divine banquet and refers to some of the bounties of Allah SWT in the month of Ramadan and for those who fast. This paper is a transcript made by Mr Morteza Karimi of a lecture delivered by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali in July 2010 at the Islamic Centre England, London. Along with

The seventh and final paper is the second part of "Islam and Nationalism: A Theoretical Point of View." In this part, Dr Sayyid Ahmad Rahnamaei examines the position of nationalism in Islam and whether or not it prevents Islam from fulfilling its role in developing a just society. He highlights the fact that nationalistic biases never stemmed from religion itself; rather, its followers possessed prejudices that often led to disputes. Thus, Islam and nationalism, in reality, have few similarities. He demonstrates this by using Qur'anic passages on *millah* as a divine path and religion, defines the term *ummah* as stated in the Qur'an, and sheds light on the concept of an Islamic Ummah. In establishing a Muslim brotherhood, this not only creates an Islamic community between all nations and tribes, but it is the only way a believer can gain success in this world and the next. Only religion plays a fundamental role in forming an *Ummah Wāhidah*. For unity to occur, people of all nations and races are asked to follow the guidelines set by the Prophets of God to form one single community. Taking pride in one's nation is encouraged in Islam, though it is to be for the sake of advancement in all fields of knowledge and to avoid dependence on other countries. Adhering to traditions is also not a problem, provided that this does not conflict with divine teachings. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Rahnamaei is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

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

<div align="right">Mohammad Ali Shomali</div>

<div align="right">July 2010</div>

# Key Concepts in Islamic Spirituality:

# Love, Thankfulness and Humbleness

## Mohammad Ali Shomali

Love, thankfulness and humbleness are three very important or perhaps even the most important concepts in Islamic spirituality. In this paper, they will be discussed briefly. These three concepts are chosen not only because they are theoretically important, but also because they are practically rewarding. If we want to grow spiritually, we can easily do this by developing these qualities in our lives.

## Love

According to Islamic hadiths supported by rational arguments, the entire reason for having faith or lacking faith is based on love for Allah (SWT), and for whatever is related to Him (SWT). For example, we read in hadiths that once the Prophet (S) asked his companions: "What is the strongest handhold in Islam?" The companions gave different answers: some said prayers, others said fasting and others hajj. After they gave their answers, they said: "The Prophet and Allah know best". So the Prophet answered: "To love for the sake of Allah and to dislike for the sake of Allah."

We must ask: what is the difference between one who is a believer and one who is not? It is not enough to *know* certain truths: Satan knows all those truths but he is still considered to be

disobedient. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an that there are people who know everything and yet disbelieve:

> They impugned them —though they were convinced in their hearts— wrongfully and defiantly… (27:14)

Similarly, to *declare* the truth is not sufficient to be a believer, as hypocrites declare the truth frequently. Describing such people, the Qur'an says:

> And there are some people who say: "We believe in Allah and the last day; and they are not at all believers." (2:8)

Love for the truth is the main distinction between a believer and a non-believer. Love requires knowledge and readiness to declare. This readiness to declare the truth does not include circumstances where a person must exercise *taqiyyah,* or the hiding of one's faith in order to safeguard his own life or the life of other believers.

One might wonder why Islam focuses both on *love* for the sake of Allah (SWT) and *dislike* for the sake of Allah (SWT). One might question the need for disliking and say that we should only have love in our hearts. However, Islam is a rational religion, and it is rationally understandable that when we love something we must necessarily dislike its opposite. How can we love the honest without disliking the dishonest? Or love truth without disliking falsehood? If you love a virtue, you cannot help but dislike the vice. Similarly, if you love Allah (SWT), you automatically dislike His enemies. Of course, a believer should not have any personal dislike for anyone. If we dislike someone, it is because of their bad qualities. We might love someone as the servant of Allah (SWT), but we cannot love the bad qualities in him. This is the rational implication of loving good things.

Even if these two concepts are considered separately, they imply each other like two sides of the same coin. If we want to improve ourselves, we should try to increase our love for Allah (SWT) and those who are close to Him, and increase our love for the acts which are loved by Allah (SWT). This can be achieved by gaining more knowledge and then reflecting on it.

One interesting and practical way of improving ourselves is by reading biographies of people who have loved Allah (SWT) immensely and developed a close relationship with Him (SWT). Their life-stories reveal many hidden secrets about their lives, which can help and inspire us to be more inclined to their way of living. This is a naturally inspiring process.

Any knowledge that one gains must be coupled with reflection in order for that knowledge to come into practice. Reflection brings about a harmony in one's self, as one's emotions begin to support their knowledge. For example: if I know that telling lies is wrong, I might still tell lies. I need to take a few minutes every day and think about *why* telling lies is wrong, and realize, for example, that it brings about no benefit.

If we reflect on the people we love we may ask: why do we love these people? If someone gives you a job, you would not forget them for as long as you live; if someone teaches you something, you would be grateful and remember them; if someone helps you, or gives you money, or if your neighbour smiles at you or is kind to you, then you would love them. We do not need *great* reasons to love people: just a little caring and affection is enough. So how can we not love Allah (SWT) when everything we have is from Him and nothing bad is from Him? We know these things, but we just need to reflect on them. If our love for Allah (SWT) increases and intensifies, then we cannot disobey Him. How can you disobey the one that you love and make Him unhappy?

Love for Allah (SWT) is therefore a very important concept which can help us practically to develop spiritually, and become closer to Him (SWT).

## Thankfulness

The virtue of thankfulness is very much related to love for Allah (SWT). If you are thankful you will certainly love Allah because of all His favours and if you love Allah you will believe in Him and obey him. Thus, thankfulness is the core of *imān* (faith). It may not be accidental that in Arabic the terms used to signify ungratefulness and disbelief are identical, that is, *kufr*. Here are some verses of the Qur'an where a contrast is made between thankfulness and unthankfulness:

> If you are ungrateful (*takfur-u*), indeed Allah has no need of you, though He does not approve ingratitude (*al-kufr*) for His servants; and if you give thanks He approves that for you. No bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning what you used to do. Indeed He knows best what is in the breasts. (39:7)

> So when he saw it set near him, he said, 'This is by the grace of my Lord, to test me if I will give thanks or be ungrateful (*akfur*). And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful (*kafar*) [should know that] my Lord is indeed all-sufficient, all-generous.' (27:40)

> Certainly We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, 'Give thanks to Allah; and whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful (*kafar*), [let him know that] Allah is indeed all-sufficient, all-laudable.' (31:12)

A very striking verse is to be found in the Chapter *Man* (76:3), where thankfulness (to Allah for His guidance) is considered to be identical with faith and to be unthankful is the opposite:

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

Therefore, *shukr* (thankfulness) is a very significant concept. It is a primary issue related to the core of *imān*. It is also practical and uncomplicated. Moreover, if we are thankful, we can achieve many things as Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

> When Moses said to his people, 'Remember Allah's blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's clan who inflicted a terrible torment on you, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women, and in that there was a great test from your Lord.' And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing], but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe.' (14: 6 & 7)

Imagine a teacher who has a thankful student. That student appreciates the teacher and knows the teacher is doing a good job of helping him. Furthermore, the student declares that he is thankful, and then puts into practice what the teacher has taught him. The teacher would love to teach this student whatever he knows, as the teacher would not feel that his knowledge is being wasted. This is the example of a thankful servant who in his heart appreciates, with his tongue declares, and with his body, practices. Allah (SWT) will give such a person more and more and He has no limits. The more He gives, the more you receive. In the Dua of *Iftitāh* we recite:

> O the one that abundance of giving does not increase Him save generosity and bounteousness!

One might wonder how it is possible that Allah's (SWT) generosity *increases* by giving. When Allah (SWT) gives you something and you are thankful and can maintain that state, your capacity to receive increases. There is no limit for divine generosity except our limited capacity. The more Allah (SWT) gives, the more capacity we have to receive, and so His Generosity accelerates into this infinite Mercy.

The concept of thankfulness has been explored by many Muslim scholars who have made various useful distinctions between the various types of thankfulness. According to Khājeh Abdullah Ansari in his book *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (*The Stations of the Wayfarers*), there are three main types of thankfulness:

- Thankfulness from the heart: knowing that something is a gift from Allah;

- Thankfulness with words: declaring that you are thankful for divine bounties;

- Thankfulness in practice: doing something with your hands, feet, eyes, etc., as acts of worship. This is practical thankfulness.

The first type of thankfulness is the most important, as it brings about the other two types. He also mentions that thankfulness consists of three main things:

- To know something is a gift: for example, one might know everything about health, but to know that health is a *gift* from Allah is to know something additional.

- To acknowledge that this is a gift from Allah: this means to admit that what one has been given is a gift, and that he/she is the recipient. Sometimes one might know

something is a gift, but refuses to acknowledge it out of arrogance. One might think that he has earned it, or that he could live without it.

- To praise Allah for it.

Lastly, Khajeh Abdullah Ansari studies the notion of thankfulness and asserts that being thankful has different levels:

- Some levels are shared by ordinary people: they understand that there are some gifts from Allah that we are thankful for, and try to be pleased and praise Him.

- On higher levels, people are not only thankful for what they consider to be *gifts* that Allah has given them, but for *whatever* happens to them. Even a bad thing that occurs to a believer is not caused by a lack of love from Allah (SWT), and so a believer is thankful for that.

- Some people are very concerned with Allah's presence: they feel no ease or pain as they do not have any time to think about whether they are in the state of ease or pain. This is the power of love. Similarly, if you are watching an interesting film, you might forget that you are hungry. Or if we are in the company of someone we love, we may forget the time and do not want the meeting to end. People who love Allah (SWT) to this extent are completely distracted and absorbed by His Essence. Khajeh Abdullah Ansari calls it the thankfulness of the elite.

Love and thankfulness are two intertwined concepts which can help us practically on our journey to self-improvement. Imam Khomeini in his book *Forty Hadiths* points out that the appearance of the effects of love and thankfulness become apparent in the heart, on the tongue and in the bodily acts and movements. As for the heart, one becomes filled with humility, awe and love. As for the tongue, the effects are among praise and

glorification for Allah alone. As for the body, the effects consist of obedience and the use of the body for the sake of Allah. May Allah increase our love for Him by increasing our understanding of Him, and may He inspire us to be thankful in all situations.

## Humbleness

Another key concept in Islamic spirituality is ultimate humbleness or spiritual poverty. This means to strengthen our understanding of the need for Allah and achieve a sense of complete reliance on Him. This means that even saying, "Allah has been very kind to me" or that "Allah has been very generous to me" is not enough. Who are we without Allah's favour and grace? We are nothing! It is not that Allah has been generous to something independent of Himself. We are nothing else than what He has created. All good things come from Him; in the best scenario we are just recipients, contingent creations of Allah, not independent from Him in any way.

One might compare this to humbleness: but it is more important, more intense, and at a higher level. Sometimes people try hard to be humble. For example, if they feel very important because they have been successful they try to control themselves so that they do not become arrogant; this is a struggle. But if one achieves spiritual poverty there is no need to struggle, as one would feel they had nothing of their own to be proud of except the gifts of Allah (SWT). Reflection on our limits and absolute need for and reliance on Allah leaves no place for any kind of arrogance or self-admiration**.** Whatever we have, or is at our disposal, belongs to Allah. We are given things as trust for a short period of time and will be questioned on the Day of Judgement about the way we have dealt with them. Indeed, we ourselves belong to Allah in our very existence. Rene Guenon (1973) writes:

> The contingent being may be defined as one that is not self-sufficient, not containing in himself the point of his existence; it follows that such a being

is nothing by himself and he owns nothing of what goes to make him up. Such is the case of the human being in so far as he is individual, just as it is the case of all manifested beings, in whatever state they may be for, however great the difference may be between the degrees of Universal Existence, it is always as nothing in relation to the Principle. These beings, human or others, are therefore, in all that they are, in a state of complete dependence with regard to the Principle "apart from which there is nothing, absolutely nothing that exists"; it is the consciousness of this dependence which makes what several traditions call "spiritual poverty".

At the same time, for the being who has acquired this consciousness, it has, as its immediate consequence, detachment with regard to all manifested things, for the being knows from then on that these things, like himself, are nothing, and that they have no importance whatsoever compared with the absolute Reality.[1]

Imam Husayn (A) prays to Allah:

What can I bring when I want to come to you?…Can I come with my ears, my eyes, my tongue, my hands, my feet? Is not this the case that all of these are your blessings that you have given me?[2]

Elsewhere Imam Husayn (A) says:

O My Lord! I am poor in my richness so how can I not be poor in my poverty?[3]

Whatever I have is a sign of my need, a sign of my dependence. What about that which I do not have? Suppose that there is a

person who has taken a loan, say, of one million dollars from a bank and another person who has taken one hundred thousand dollars. Which one is richer, and which one is not? It seems obvious that the one who has taken more money is more indebted and more responsible and must have more concerns and worries. Whatever Allah gives us puts us more in debt. There are many many things that we do not have and even those things that we have do not belong to us so how can we feel proud and free from needs. Imam Husayn (A) says:

> With respect to my knowledge, I am ignorant.
> How can I not be very ignorant in respect to
> what I do not know?[4]

What we know is very limited and surrounded with lots of questions. The more we know, the more questions we will have. This is why those who are more knowledgeable are more careful and cautious in their claims and farther from arrogance. Also, over time, we can easily lose what we know. There are people who cannot even remember their own names or the names of their closest relatives. Imam Husayn (A) also says:

> O Allah! Verily the alteration of your affairs and
> the speed of progress of your decrees prevent
> those servants of You who know You to be
> confident when faced with your favour or to feel
> despaired when challenged with calamities.[5]

Everything changes quickly in this world. Sometimes we are happy and sometimes sad. Sometimes people respect us and sometimes no one respects us. Sometimes our children are good to us and sometimes not. There are lots of ups and downs. What is the reason for this? We need to learn that we cannot trust anything except Allah. No one knows what will happen and, therefore, we should not trust anything. As the sayings of Imam Husayn (A) shown above teach us, we should not trust anything or anyone other than Allah and at the same time we should not

despair. We should not be hopeless or feel helpless when bad
things happen. The key is in the hands of Allah and He can
change our situation to betterment in any moment. Having said
all this, Imam Husayn (A) says:

> I appeal to You with my poverty and need for
> You. And how can I appeal to You with
> something which is impossible to reach You? Or
> how should I mention my complaint to You
> while it is not hidden to You? O my Allah! How
> can I not be poor when You have put me
> amongst the poor? And how can I be poor when
> you have made me rich with your generosity? [6]

This shows that the means (*wasilah*) that the Imam uses to get
closer to Allah is his dependence on Allah and his deep
understanding that he is poor and nothing before Allah. Thus, the
valuable means that Imam Husayn (A) finds and wants to use is
'poverty'. According to the Qur'an, we are all needy. The Qur'an
says:

> O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need
> of Allah, and Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the
> All-laudable. (35:15)

We are all needy and it is only Allah who is rich and free of need.
Many people do not understand this. Imam Husayn (A) declares
that he understands and admits this and wants to use it as a means
to get nearer to Allah. Then the Imam (A) describes that when he
wants to come with his poverty there is a problem, in that poverty
does not reach Allah. This is to emphasise that poverty is only
from one side; poverty cannot reach Allah. This may also mean
that the one who goes with poverty will meet Allah whilst he is
rich. To become rich you must take poverty with you, but the
people who feel that they are the poorest people are the richest
people in the eyes of Allah. Whoever is the most humble, Allah
will raise him more than anyone else. As we find in a hadith,

'whoever tries to be humble for Allah's sake, Allah will elevate him.'[7] In a divine saying (*Hadith Qudsi*) we find that Allah told Moses (A) the reason why He made him a Prophet is that He looked into the hearts of all people and saw that Moses was the most humble one.

According to a well-known hadith, the person who avoids arrogance and chooses to be humble before Allah and serves Him sincerely is no longer a slave of others or of his own whims. He will achieve some kind of lordship:

> The servitude to Allah is a substance whose essence (core) is the lordship.[8]

In another hadith, we read:

> My servant, obey Me. [If you do so] I will make you an example of Myself. I am alive and never die so I make you alive and never die. I am rich and never become poor so I make you become rich and never poor. Whatever I want it will be, so I make you in the way that whatever you want it will be there.[9]

Reflecting on his life, one can see in the Prophet Muhammad (S) the perfect example of humbleness. Indeed, the reason why the Prophet Muhammad was chosen to be the 'Seal of the Prophets' and was given the final message of Allah lies mostly in the fact that he was a true servant of Allah and the most humble person before Allah and His people. At least nine times a day in their prayers Muslims bear witness that the Prophet Muhammad was a servant of Allah and His Apostle. This means that among all his qualities there are two that are exceptional: first, he managed to be a servant of Allah and second, he was rewarded by being appointed as the Apostle of Allah.

The Prophet was so humble that he never admired himself; he never felt superior to others. He never separated himself from the

masses and always lived a very simple life. He maintained the same conduct while he was both alone and powerless as well as when he ruled the Arabian Peninsula and Muslims were whole-heartedly following him. He lived very simply and was always with the people, especially the poor. He had neither a palace nor guards. When he was sitting with his companions, no one could distinguish him from others by considering his seat or clothes. It was only his words and spirituality that distinguished him from others.

Just before his demise, the Prophet announced in the Mosque: "Whoever among you feels that I have done injustice to him, come forward and do justice. Surely, enacting justice in this world is better in my view than being taken account of in the Hereafter in front of the angels and the Prophets." Those present in the Mosque wept, for they were reminded of all the sacrifices that the Prophet had made for them and the troubles that he had undergone in order to guide them. They knew that he never gave any priority to his own needs and never preferred his comfort and convenience to others. They therefore responded with statements of deep gratitude and profound respect. But one among them, Sawadah b. Qays, stood up and said: "May my father and mother be your ransom! O Messenger of Allah! On your return from Ta'if, I came to welcome you while you were riding your camel. You raised your stick to direct your camel, but the stick struck my stomach. I do not know whether this strike was intentional or unintentional." The Prophet replied: "I seek refuge from Allah from having done so intentionally."

The Prophet then asked Bilal to go to the house of Fatimah and bring the same stick. After the stick was brought, the Prophet told Sawadah to retaliate by hitting him back. Sawadah said that the stick had struck the skin of his stomach. The Prophet therefore lifted his shirt so that Sawadah could in return strike his skin. At that moment, Sawadah asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Do you allow me to touch my mouth to your stomach?" The Prophet gave him permission. Sawadah then kissed the stomach of the Prophet

and prayed that because of this act of his, Allah would protect him from fire on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet said: "O Sawadah! Will you pardon me or do you still wish to retaliate?" He replied: "I pardon you." The Prophet then prayed: "O Allah! Pardon Sawadah b. Qays as he pardoned Your Prophet, Muhammad!"[10]

Thus, in Islamic spirituality it is very important to feel humble and that we are nothing in front of Allah. Not just as a claim that we may utter without firm belief, but as a deep sense of nothingness. Once a person saw Imam Sajjad (A) in Masjid al-Haram, next to Ka'bah at Hijr of Isma'il. He said: 'I went to Hijr Isma'il and saw Ali b. Husayn (A) there saying his prayer. Then he went for Sajdah (prostration). I told myself: this is a pious man from a pious family, so let me listen to him while praying in his Sajdah.' Then he quoted the Imam (A) as praying:

> My Lord, your small and little servant has come to your door, your captive has come to your door, the one who is poor has come to your door, the one who begs you has come to your door.[11]

In the Qur'an, Allah warns the believers that if they turn away from His religion, Allah will soon bring forward a people that among their characteristics is their humbleness before the believers:

> O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves  and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, striving hard in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is Allah's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is All-bounteous, All-knowing. (5:54)

In Islamic literature, especially that by Persian poets, great emphasis has been put on spiritual poverty. For example, in a long poem in his *Mathnawi,* Rumi illustrates the significance of this feeling of nothingness and humility and the fatal danger of pride and arrogance. Rumi argues that whomsoever people flatter and prostrate before indeed poison him. If he is not spiritually strong, he may be deceived and feel proud of himself. In this way, he may become arrogant and damage himself and lose his humility. When people flatter someone who is clever he will realize that this can be detrimental. Rumi goes on praising those who are humble  in contrast to those who are arrogant. The example of someone who has not established humbleness in himself is like the one who drinks a poisonous wine. In the beginning he may feel happy and joyful, but after a few minutes he will collapse.

Another example that Rumi provides is the fight between two kings. When one king wins the battle and becomes victorious he will either imprison the defeated king or kill him, but he will never punish the beggars or the poor subjects of the defeated country. Indeed, he may help and promote them. Rumi says that the reason is that these types of people are humble and have no ambition of becoming a king and therefore they do not pose a threat to the new king. Another example is a caravan which is going from one place to another. When the thieves come to rob the caravan, those who have no money will be safe. Or when wolves attack they may attack anything that comes before them. They may even attack each other and this is why when they want to sleep they sit in a circle so that they can carefully watch each other. But Rumi says if there is a dead wolf they will not attack him. We know that the Prophet Khiḍr made a hole in the bottom of a boat because there was an unjust ruler in that area who used to confiscate every boat or ship passing by. Thus, the only way for that boat to be saved was to make it unusable.  If a mountain or hill has lots of valuable minerals inside, people will excavate the area to bring out all the soils, sand and minerals out of it. But an ordinary hill or mount which has nothing special inside will

remain intact. Someone who is walking is standing on his feet and his neck is straight. Therefore, the enemies may cut off his neck with their sword, but no one would cut off the head of a shadow person, since the shadow is so "humble" that no one thinks that it may pose any threat. When a ladder is going to collapse the one who climbs higher is very stupid. When the ladder collapses his bones will be damaged more severely.

After mentioning these examples, Rumi finally asserts that whatever he said were like the branches whose root or principle is much deeper. The underlying principle is that to feel arrogant is to associate one's self with Allah. This is polytheism (*shirk*). Rumi goes on saying that since you have not yet died and again gained life through Allah, you are not enjoying a spiritual life. Without such a death, whatever position you take is shirk. But if you die and become selfless, that is, if you are revived through Allah you may go higher and higher. In such condition, whatever you possess is for the sake of Allah and will be spent for the sake of Allah. This is pure tawhid or monotheism.[12]

It has been suggested that poverty means to not possess something and at the same time to have the desire to possess it. For example, he who feels in himself a certain lack of human perfection and sincerely desires to remedy this lack is a *'faqir'*. Furthermore, it has been suggested that in Sufism "the longing of love is born of *faqr* ('spiritual poverty')".[13] I think there are some problems with this understanding of poverty. First, poverty is much more than not to possess and then desire to possess. I think poverty is an awareness of our absolute need and dependence on Allah and as long as we are what we are this need cannot be removed. Second, this sense of poverty is a spiritual gift and virtue that should be maintained forever. Poverty is not a transient station towards richness or affluence. Rather, poverty itself is the greatest wealth and fortune that human beings can ever have. The Prophet Muhammad (S) is quoted as saying:

> My honour is from spiritual poverty. I have been
> honored over and above all prophets by being
> graced with spiritual poverty.[14]

**Conclusion:** In this paper, we have discussed the concept of love
as the strongest foothold in Islam, and as a distinguishing factor
of a true believer. Knowledge, coupled with reflection and the
grace of Allah (SWT), can increase our love. Secondly, we
discussed the concept of thankfulness as equal to faith, as taught
in the Qur'an. Understanding the different levels of thankfulness
can help us to be aware and thankful in all situations.

In this paper, we also discussed humbleness and spiritual poverty,
through which one can attain piety, spirituality and alleviation
from worries and difficulties. This concept is not implying that
human beings have no value, and neither does it underestimate
the value of human beings; rather, it fully appreciates the value of
humans: by serving the Most Perfect and the Most Pure Allah, we
can get closer and closer to perfection.

May Allah (SWT) help us understand how much we need Him,
how much He has given us, how to really ask from Him in the
best way, and how to make Allah (SWT) pleased with us so we
can become enlightened and pure. This is the power and will of
Allah (SWT), and there is no limit to it. Allah (SWT) has all the
power and all the reasons to be kind to us, and if there are any
obstacles, they are only due to us.

*O Allah, grant me*

*the riches of poverty*

*for in such largesse lies*

*my power and glory.*

(Hafez of Shiraz)

## Bibliography:

'Amili, Muhamamd Hurr, *Al-Jawāhir al-Saniyyah fi al-Ahādith al-Qudsiyyah* by Hurr 'Amili, p. 284.

Guénon, René, "Al-Faqr or Spiritual Poverty" in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter 1973, pp. 16-20

Majlesi, Mohammd Baqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*

Nurbakhsh, Javad, *Spiritual Poverty in Sufism*, tr. Leonard Lewisohn

Nuri, Mirzā Husayn, *Mustadrak Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*

Qummi, Sheikh Abbas, *Mafātih al-Jinān*

Reyshahri, Mohammad, *Mizān al-Hikmah*

Rumi, *Mathnawi*

---

[1] Rene Guenon, 1973.

[2] "Du'a of 'Arafah" in *Mafātih al-Jinān*.

[3] *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 95, p. 225.

[4] "Du'a of 'Arafah" in *Mafātih al-Jinān.*

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] This hadith is narrated from Jesus (*Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 14, p. 307), the Prophet Muhammad (Vol. 16, p. 265; Vol. 72, p. 120), Imam Sadiq (Vol. 72, p. 121) and Imam Kazim (Vol. 75, p. 312).

[8] *Mizān al-Hikmah*, Vol. 6, p. 13, No. 11317.

[9] *Al-Jawāhir al-Saniyyah fi al-Ahādith al-Qudsiyyah* by Hurr 'Amili, p. 284.

[10] *Mustadrak Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 18, pp. 287 & 288.

[11] *Bihār al-Anwār,* Vol. 96, p. 197.

[12] This section of Rumi's poem starts with the following couplets:

چاپلوست گشت مردم، روز چند        تو بدان فخر آوری، کز ترس و بند

زهر اندر جانِ او می آکنند        هر که را مردم سجودی میکنند

And ends with these couplets:

که ترفع، شرکت یزدان بود        این فروع است و اصولش آن بود

| یاغئی باشی، به شرکت، ملك جو | چون نمُردی و نگشتی زنده زو |
|---|---|
| وحدت محض است، آن شرکت کی است ؟ | چون بدو زنده شدی، آن خود وی است |

[13] Nurbakhsh, Javad, *Spiritual Poverty in Sufism*, tr. Leonard Lewisohn.

[14] *Bihār al-Anwār,* Vol. 69, pp. 32 & 55.

# Divine Justice and the Problem of Evil

## Ghulam Husayn Adeel

## Introduction

Divine justice and the problem of evil is a fundamental question and one of the most discussed topics among theologians and philosophers in the last two thousand years. The most important reason for this attention given to the subject is that human beings have always been faced with natural and moral tragedies. Consequently, some philosophers have doubted God's justice; others have denied the existence of God or believed in duality, because they were not able to how God, the Benevolent, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient can let these happen.[1] Among the Christian thinkers, there have been two historical types of theodicy: Augustine theodicy and Irenaen theodicy. The core of Augustine theodicy is goodness of God and goodness of the created world, but because of the Original Sin, all problems associated with pain and suffering have emerged. In contrast, the Irenaen theodicy is built on the purpose of a soul-making process. Among Muslim theologians, Abu'l Hasan Ash'ari and his followers denied objectivity of justice and injustice and maintained that whatever is done or commanded by God is good and just. On the contrary, the Mu'tazilites and Shi'ites believe in the objectivity of justice and choose divine justice as one of their principles. They believe that God does and commands only what is objectively good and just.

In what follows, we will first analyse the problem of evil and divine justice in general terms from a historical perspective. The

phenomena of pain and suffering shall also be discussed. Then we will focus on the notion of divine justice and the extent to which this relates to the problem of evil from the point of view of Augustine theodicy. Finally, there will be a discussion about what I think to be an appropriate position to be held.

## Divine Justice and the Problem of Evil

In a religious context, justice of God is called *theodicy*. The word *theodicy* is derived from the Greek word for 'God' (*Theos*). The Greek word *"Dike"* for justice is the word traditionally used in theology for an argument that seeks to justify the righteousness and justice of God despite the presence of evil and suffering in the world; hence, both terms shall be used interchangeably.

Despite the fact that the irrationality of evil does not offset the theodicy notion, even if we do not understand the reason or motive behind evil, we still try to understand why God permits evil. The response to this question moves us toward the doctrine of divine justice.

The problem of evil and divine justice has a historical significance from the early Christian period to the present time. In the fifth century, St. Augustine, the great theodicist, explained the problem of evil. In addition, various schools of thought have been presented by scholars, particularly those associated with Islamic Kalam[2] (theology) tradition of philosophy in the Middle Ages. John Hick states:

> Contrary to popular belief about the supposedly monolithic certitude of the age of faith, the challenge of evil to religious conviction seems to have been felt in the early Christian centuries and the medieval period as acutely as today.[3]

Divine justice is fundamentally important as it involves many problems faced by humanity, such as the existence of natural disasters, crimes and inequalities in the social order. In fact, a

whole storm of objections arise under this subject. People often ask why many parts of the world are terrible places to live while others are not. Why are some people ugly and others beautiful; some healthy and others sick? The suggestion that not everyone is created equal leads to one fundamental question: if there is a just God, why do these inequalities exist?

By looking at both sides of this issue this way, by really studying it, we come to have a better appreciation about *what the problem is* and why its solution is so important. It is critical that a religious person should be able to give a good and informed response to the problem of evil. Your belief can only be strengthened by facing such issues head on, understanding them, and working towards their solution.

**If God is just, why is there so much evil?**

There are many people who suffer from anxiety and pain in their daily existence, which may seem to make it implausible to argue that a loving Creator exists. One can understand that a perfectly loving God must abolish all pain. The simplified thinking is that if He cannot free mankind from their suffering, He is not perfectly loving and omnipotent. If we assume God is omniscient, omnipotent, and has perfectly created the world, then why are there catastrophes like death, war, earthquakes, poverty, hunger, and bitter conditions of life? This therefore implies that perhaps God is not powerful or God created evils such as catastrophes by accident, therefore implying He is not all knowing or finally God made evil on purpose and He does not want to destroy evil. Traditionally there are many different ways of addressing and responding to this dilemma:

1. God is omniscient, omnipotent and perfect, and justice is part of perfection and omniscience; hence, God is just. Injustice must therefore be from ignorance and fanaticism, or as a result of need. According to Qara'ati, the causes of injustice are as follows:

a. Ignorance: Sometimes ignorance causes injustice. But this does not apply to God, who is above all defects such as ignorance and whose knowledge is infinite.

b. Fear: Sometimes it is fear which is the cause of injustice. For example, one strong power is scared of another strong power who can become his rival or enemy. But the Almighty Allah has no one as His rival. Everything is His creation and completely dependent on him.

c. Wants: Sometimes the cause of injustice is one's sense of deprivation and thus from a psychological point of view one feels obliged to meet his needs and fulfil his wants. But God has no needs.

d. Meanness: Sometimes it is due to inner meanness that some people oppress others or when they see the deprived and oppressed people, they derive pleasure in seeing them so[4] But God is benevolent.

As the above characteristics cannot be attributed to God, an infinite being must therefore be free of all these characteristics, and nothing is hidden from his divine knowledge.

2. Evil is necessary for the greater good. This argument is used to justify and explain that a world with greater good and a little evil is better than a world with no good at all. Also, according to this argument, God made this world in the best and excellent manner possible.

3. Man's freedom is the cause of evil.

4. Evil is a negative thing. Man has free will and has the ability to be good or bad, humanist or tyrannical. This is the perspective of Augustine and this theodical response is known as *Augustine Theodicy.*

**The general feature of the Augustine's theodicy**

The main response to the problem of evil traditionally in the Christian world was addressed by St. Augustine (354-430 A.D). The main idea formulated was that evil is a negativity, a lack, a loss, and a privation of good. According to John Hick:

> Augustine holds firmly to the Hebrew-Christian conviction that the universe is good… that is to say, it is the creation of a good God for a good purpose. There are, according to Augustine, higher and lower, greater and lesser goods in immense abundance and variety; …Evil—whether it be an evil, an instance of pain, or some disorder or decay in nature—has therefore not been set there by God but represents the going wrong of something that is inherently good. Augustine points the blindness as an example. Blindness is not a "thing". The only thing involved is the eye, which is in itself good; the evil of blindness consist of the lack of proper functioning of eye.[5]

According to the Augustine Theodicy, God is the source of everything which has been created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) in accordance with divine Will. Consequently, everything in the world is created perfectly. In contrast, Plotinus taught that the further one descends from goodness (the divine source), the further into evil one falls. He emphasizes on the goodness of the Supreme Being (and creation) and the chaotic nature of evil (the absence of being).

> ... Evil represents the dead end of the creative process in which the Supreme Being has poured out its abundance into innumerable forms of existence, descending in the degrees of being and goodness until its creativity is exhausted and the

vast realm of being borders upon the empty darkness of non-being.[6]

As far as Augustine was concerned, *all* creation is good. So what is the notion of evil for? The notion is for the *privatio boni* ('privation of good') which occurs when a being renounces its proper role in the order and structure of creation and follows its own desires. Also, Augustine denied that sin has an independent existence apart from God and is merely the privation of the good; it seems in the end that evil does exist apart from God after all. However, it is parasitic on the good. All evil must have at least some good in it:

> What, after all, is anything we call evil except the privation of good? In animal bodies, for instance, sickness and wounds are nothing but the privation of health. When a cure is effected, the evils, which were present (i.e. the sickness and the wounds) do not retreat and go elsewhere. Rather they simply do not exist any more. For such evil is not a substance; the wound or the disease is a defect of the bodily substance which, as a substance, is good.[7]

Based on the above theory, if evil is a privation of good and non-being, why does it affect human lives? If it is insignificant, then what is the pain and suffering for?

These assertions are not sufficient to help explain the massive threat of evil. However, the notion of these arguments may be the answer in an attempt to preserve the duality concept, because when evil possesses the same significant existence like good, this presupposes that there are two gods. Each of these gods represents either good or evil. Therefore, theologians claim that evil is not the creation of God, but merely *represents the going wrong of something* and it is only privation of good.

Augustine believed that the world looks imperfect to us, because we look at things from a limited or distorted perspective. From the standpoint of God things are still good and even the apparent evil in the world contributes to bring about the perfection of the whole. In other words, all degrees of good and evil have a place within the divine Will. Our concerns about imperfection and evil are merely relative to our own point of view and with our own limited knowledge. As Hick puts it, "the universe with its sinister aspect is perfect."[8]

Augustine's theodicy is designed to protect not only God's sovereignty but also God's perfect goodness. So, as far as the natural order is concerned, although it displays imperfection, this is because the universe is ordered in such a way that the transitory nature of things is a part of the natural process of bringing forth new life:

> Since, then, in those situations where such things are appropriate, some perish to make way for others that are born in their room, and the less[er] succumb to the greater, and the things that are overcome are transformed into the quality of those that have the mastery, this is the appointed order of things transitory. Of this order the beauty does not strike us because by our mortal frailty we are so involved in a part of it, that we cannot perceive the whole, in which these fragments that offend us are harmonised with the most accurate fitness and beauty. [9]

St. Augustine believed that all happiness is from pious people although when we are observing imperfection in this world, it is the result of the sinner:

> Since there is happiness for those who do not sin, the universe is perfect; and it is no less perfect

because there is misery for sinner… the penalty of
sin corrects the dishonour of sin.[10]

This leads to the question of St. Augustine's theodicy concept,
that is, how reasonable is it to suggest that "it is no less perfect
because there is misery for sinner." Sometimes problems and
difficulties are presented for the purpose of tests because God
wants to test His servant for a higher stage.  The world is full of
examples where people have overcome their personal difficulties
and problems and are seen as examples of achievement within the
wider society whereby they are used as blueprints of endeavour
which inspire humanity. Hence, sometimes problems and
difficulties take place within human life for the purpose of soul
making and God wants to test His servant with some sort of
problem. John Hick declares this fact:

> According to the Irenaean theodicy, however,
> God's purpose was not to construct a paradise
> whose inhabitants would experience a maximum
> of pleasure and a minimum of pain. The world is
> seen, as a place of "soul making" or person
> making in which free beings, grappling with the
> tasks and challenges of their existence in a
> common environment, may become "children of
> God" and "heirs of eternal life". Our world, with
> all its rough edges, is the sphere in which this
> second and harder stage of the creative process is
> taking place.[11]

The *"soul making"* theory is good functionally but the negative
theory of Augustine is originally good and solves problems such
as duality. The *"soul making"* theory is sufficient for theism but
is not sufficient evidence for atheism. There is also a
contradiction in the idea of 'misery for sinner' and the idea that
'*all* creation is good'. If all creation is good then misery for
sinner is not conceivable and if misery for sinner is not

conceivable, then all creation is not good, otherwise misery for sinner should be good.

Augustine's theodicy has a touchstone of orthodoxy with regard to addressing the problem of evil and suffering. But this theodicy has been criticised in the modern period. The major criticism, according to Friedrich Schleiermacher, is based on the premise that the universe is created by God, so as to be exactly as God wished, containing no evil of any kind, and cannot obviously go wrong. In other words, the notion that a perfect creation has spontaneously gone wrong and without cause seems to be self-contradicting.

However, as evil is the privation of good, this suggests that evil must stem as a result of the abuse of one's own will in order to fulfil one's own desires.  Evil exists because God values free will, and free will carries with it the possibility of evil. Free will has a great value; thus, God takes the risk in the possibility of evil. Evil is not from God; it is the result of our misuse of free will.  There does not seem to be any contradiction to Augustine's Theodicy, as it is possible that a world can be perfectly created and evil is the source of mankind's actions which were initially created for the purpose of accomplishing good.  According to John Hick, Augustine's theodicy is:

> …built upon two central pillars of doctrine: first that God created good; and second, that free creatures, by an inexplicably perverse misuse of God–given freedom, fell from grace and that from this fall have preceded all the other evils that we know.[12]

But despite this, in critiquing Augustine, John Hick argues whether an innately good creature is capable of sinning. He says: "If the angels are finitely perfect, then even though they are in some sense free to sin, they never will in fact do so." [13]

The Protestant theologian Jean Cadier, in an important article titled "Calvin et saint Augustine" states:

> By this definition of evil as non-being St.Augustine threw into the process of theological reflection a principle which was to lead to a particular conception of grace, salvation, the Christian life and the church. In effect, if sin is a privation, the sinner is undeficient. Consequently the grace, which saves him, will fill up this deficiency, and will be an irresistible grace [un don de force]. The instrument of this infusion of supernatural life will be the sacrament. The church will have the treasury of these sanctifying graces at its disposal and will distribute it by means of its priests. Medieval theology would develop all the consequences of this principle … [14]

Perhaps Jean Cadier's argument does not seem sound on Augustine's theodicy because the perspective of grace and privation of evil is different from the concepts in Augustine's themes. The aspect of grace is concerned with the theological concept and privation of evil is related to his philosophical themes. Thus, there is insufficient coherence between the two themes.

But it could be a question of evil being considered as the absence of good ("privatio boni"). If negative theory on evil is merely deprivation of good, why should morally free agents choose evil in preference to good? If evil is the absence of good, what leads to malicious evil or deliberate rebellion?

However, in Augustine's theodicy, God is not the direct cause of evil; humans were created innocent, but exercised a good will badly. Our purpose is to worship and hell awaits those who succeed in rebelling. Perhaps Satan is a direct cause of evil. According to John Hick:

… In spite of such defection on its fringes the mainstream of Christianity has stood by its understanding of God as the most perfect conceivable being, and has thus insisted upon acknowledging the problem of evil as (in the Old Testament sense) the Satan that perpetually accuses faith.[15]

In any case, Augustine's theological themes are built upon God and creation, that God is good and the goodness of the created world, but the fall is the major problem for pain and suffering. According to him, God created an idyllic paradise with no suffering, death, or natural disasters. It was human disobedience that introduced these things into creation. Based on logic, we can say that the universe is God's creation and God is good; therefore, the universe is good. There could be some fundamental objections in Augustine's aspect of theodicy.

The concept of the fall is conceivable and an individual's sufferings are a divine punishment, so how plausible is it that general sufferings are a result of divine punishment for sins? How compatible is this with theodicy?  For Augustine, evil is not created from God but it is a by-product of God's creation.

In Augustine's theodicy the fall is central, where imperfection is due to the sinner and human disobedience. Well, if imperfection is due to human disobedience and the sinner, then the question arises that as to why the innocent suffer? Because they have not committed any sin and they don't have any disobedience. Augustine's theodicy is not a sufficient answer to the question "why do the innocent suffer"? However, perhaps there is a divine hidden purpose beyond it.

Augustine's philosophical idea that evil is non-being has had some resonance in the Islamic science of Kalam. Abu Abdillah Muhammad b. al-'Arabi (560/1165) known as "the greatest master" in his *Al-Futûhât al-Makkivvah* argues that evil is non-

being.[16] **"Good"** or "khayr" (in Arabic) is that which is positive, useful, profitable and beautiful. But "there is no good but God". The opposite, "sharr," (in Arabic) is evil or *lack* of goodness. Hence, it is non-existence. Good only emerges from good. All good exists. Existence is goodness. Evil results when creatures fail *to share in existence*. God is unlimited goodness, for no creature is as good as He, and there is nothing in creation like Him. So what is the purpose of the notion of evil? Ibn al-'Arabi has a perspective similar to St. Augustine that evil is non-being and it is a privation of good.

According to the great contemporary Muslim philosopher ' Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, in his book *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an,* evil is the privation of good. He writes:

> In general, ill manners (evilness) and natural disasters (evils) - earthquakes, floods, etc. are voids; and from this aspect they do not have fundamental existence (in as much as they are evil) to be counted among that which is good. In other words, sickness is the void of health, blindness is the void of sight, oppression is the void of justice, and ugliness is void of beauty.[17]

## Hasty decision

In the discussions on justice of God and the problem of evil, the basic dilemma will be solved if we do not make hasty decisions in the phenomena, because it is the major cause of improper judgement. Professor Muhsin Qara'ati writes an interesting reality in his book:

> An incident: A man had a pet dog. He went out to fetch something from the bazaar leaving his infant child in the care of his dog. When he returned to his house his dog welcomed him outside the house

with a bloodstained mouth. He thought for a moment that the dog had devoured his child and under the heat of passion he fired his gun and killed the dog there and then and went inside hurriedly. There he found his child hale and hearty. In fact a wolf used to visit the town and since the door of his house was wide open it went inside and wanted to devour the child. The dog jumped upon the wolf and in a grim battle he overpowered it and tore it into pieces and thereby saved the child from the wolf's clutches. But the man in his extreme haste fired at his faithful dog, which had saved the life of his child.

The man repented for his action and came to rescue his dog but it had already died. The man said that he looked into the eyes of his dog, which were lamenting over his wisdom and saying: "O man! How hasty you are! You should have first entered the house and seen for yourself the true situation. Why have you killed me?" After this tragic event the man wrote an article captioned "O man! How hasty you are in making a decision![18]

There may be some people who may have prayed for something and it was not granted, or they felt it was not fulfilled, but afterwards their thoughts changed and they thought it was better that the prayers were not granted.

It is possible that adopting a metaphysical concept could solve the dilemma. Some things appear good and others evil, but ultimately, evil is a very broad concept and many features within it have a different cause to understand as its origin.

Our initial understanding of unpleasant events is bound to be superficial; many times we do not possess the ultimate depths of phenomena and our limited precise knowledge is the result of

improper judgement because we are not prepared to recognise any truth beyond our initial impression. As a result, we therefore regard these issues as signs of injustice. Our observations lead us into the most illogical analysis. But if we recognise all events as they occur, with open horizons of thought, then we can realise that there isn't any injustice involved in these matters. However, our powers of judgement are not sufficiently comprehensive to deal with this problem.

For an elaborate account of Islamic view on the problem of evil, the readers are recommended to refer to *Divine Justice* (2007) by Ayatollah Mutahhari, published by the International Centre for Islamic Studies, Qum.

**Conclusion**

Augustine's theodicy has been largely adopted by the Western Church and has become the touchstone of orthodoxy with regard to addressing the problem of evil and suffering. Augustine's theodicy is originally right and Irenaean theodicy is functionally correct. Both theodicies are quite powerful but with different perspectives.

John Hick, whose many concepts have been referenced from his book, represented and promoted Irenaean theodicy and he is not very sympathetic with Augustine's theodicy. The idea of Irenaean's theodicy is essentially that God has designed the world so that humans may go through a process of *soul making*. *Soul making*, according to Irenaean theodicy, is much like *character building*.

Based on the creation story told in Genesis, Augustine believed that Adam and Eve ate the apple, fell from God's grace into sin, and were punished by being thrown from the Garden of Eden into the maddening world of sin and suffering. However, Augustine supposed that they deserved it. Not only did they deserve it, we all deserve to continue to be punished for what they did. Adam

and Eve sinned and are justly punished for it, and we are the descendants of Adam and Eve and are justly punished for their sins.

I suppose that both theodicies may be adequate for the believer but they are not sufficient for atheists. Therefore, the theory of "evil is non-being" is not a complete solution to this dilemma.

---

[1] The problem of evil leads to the following questions: Why is there so much evil? Why is there physical pain and psychological distress? Why do the innocent suffer? If there is a just God and He is the most perfect conceivable being, why does He let suffering or bad things happen to good people?

[2] Kalam is an Arabic word that literally means speech, discussion and talk. The etymology of this term may be that any significant discussion must relate to God. Kalam, according to Abdel Haleem, is a title of that branch of knowledge in Islam that is usually translated as "speculative theology" (*History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Nasar and Leaman, Vol. 1, Ch. 5, p.71).

[3] Evil and the God of love, Ch 1, p. 3, published by the Macmillan Press Ltd, London 1985.

[4] ***Lessons*** *from the Qur'an*, published by Rāh-e- Haqq, Ch. "Justice," pp. 68 & 69.

[5] *Philosophy of Religion,* Ch. "The Problem of Evil," p. 41.

[6] Hick, J, *Evil and the God of Love,* Macmillan, pp. 40 & 41.

[7] Ibid. p.48.

[8] Ibid. p. 84.

[9] Ibid. p. 86.

[10] *Philosophy of Religion,* Ch. "The Problem of Evil," p. 41 citing from "On Free Will," III, ix. 26.

[11] *Ibid. pp. 45 & 46*

[12] Hick, *'Evil and the God of Love',* Macmillan, p. 62.

[13] Ibid. p. 63.

[14] *Evil and the God of Love',* Macmillan, pp. 194 & 195 citing from *Communications du Congres International Augustinien* (Paris, 1954), ii, p. 1055.

[15] Ibid. pp. 4 & 5.

[16] For example, see Ibn-al-'Arabi*, Al-Futûhât al-Makkiyyah,* II 502.21, published in Egypt by Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabi al-Kubrā.

---

[17] Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. *Al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'an,* Vol. 1, p. 101.
[18] Qara'ati, Muhsin. *Lessons From the Qur'an,* published by Rāh-e-Haqq Institute, Ch. "Justice," pp. 77 & 78.

# Nasir al-Din Tusi and His Socio-Political Role
# in the Thirteenth Century

**Abbas Ali Shameli**

## Introduction

In the history of human civilization as a whole and in that of Islamic civilization in particular, there have been outstanding figures who played decisive roles in forming or changing various aspects of human life. Some of them are still surrounded by a mass of historical data containing contradictory judgments about them. Since their activities took place many centuries ago, modern scholars are often short of enough information to judge their real impact. It is difficult to come to a fair conclusion. In the history of Islamic civilization, Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi (597-1201/672-1274) was a unique scholar, in one of the most crucial periods, whose real role and personality are still obscure. His age was full of such harsh socio-political events in all parts of the Islamic world that some regarded it as the worst period in human history. The intercontinental Mongol invasion and the collapse of all Islamic powers and states at the same time as the abolishment of Ismāʿili fortresses and the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate created a bloody and unstable condition for all Muslims including Tusi. In this complicated atmosphere, one can hardly rely on historical data which are conflicting and controversial.

Considering these difficulties, this paper attempts to assess Tusi's role as a person who witnessed the situation but stood apart from it, preventing himself from assimilating to his age. Holding the

chain of Islamic thought, Tusi played an active role in linking pre-Mongol civilization to the post-Mongol world.

Trying to obtain a better and wider understanding of Islamic knowledge, Tusi left Nishāpur, visited Ray, Baghdād and Musil. He witnessed the socio-political situation of the Abbasid caliphate and evaluated the possibilities of being influential in Baghdād. On his way home, he visited an Ismāʿili leader (*dāʿi*) in Isfahān, spent a few months in one of their fortresses, and finally joined their central forts in Quhistān and Alamut. He then accompanied Hulākū, took over the administration of *Awqāf* (endowments), and concentrated his efforts in establishing the observatory of Marāgha. It is difficult to decide what Tusi's real ideas were and which cause he truly supported. His letter to Ibn al-ʿAlqami the Shiʿi vizier of al-Mustaʿsim, requesting a position that would bring him into contact with the caliph, his long lasting connection with the Ismāʿili elite and his supervision of the institute of *Awqāf* to administer the observatory of Marāgha are some aspects which will be dealt with in this paper.

In addition to his significant intellectual influence, did Tusi play an active socio-political role or did he manifest a kind of withdrawal and negative cooperation? A discussion of this question will form the core of this paper.

## Biographical data

Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Hasan b. Abi Bakr (Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi) was born into a learned family known as Firuz Shāh Jahrudi, the name of one of his ancestors. Jahrud was a city in Sāva, originally a province in Iran, which later became a suburb of Qum. Since he was born in Tus on 11th Jumādā I 597 (Feb. 18, 1201), he is known as Tusi. He died in Baghdād on the 18th Dhu al-Hijjah 672 (June 26, 1274).[1] As Islamic history indicates, Tusi was one of the most distinguished figures produced by Islamic civilization. Nonetheless, one can hardly form a clear picture regarding his true personality and

influence from historical data. Shi'i and Sunni scholars offered divergent points of view concerning his socio-political impact and his beliefs.

According to G. Sarton, Tusi was one of the greatest scientists of Islam.[2] Ibn Khaldun similarly believes that most Muslim scholars were from Iran, asserting that there were not any important scholars after Ibn al-Khatib Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzi (544-606 A.H.) and Nasir al-Din Tusi.[3] Imāmi scholars (Twelver Shi'i scholars) like Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 676) in his introduction on *R. Istishbāb Tayāsur al-Qiblah li Ahl al-'Irāq*[4] and Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad in his permission (*ijāzah*) to Sayyid Badr al-Din Hasan b. Shadqam considered Tusi to be the greatest Imāmi scholar.[5] He is also entitled "*ustād al-bashar wa al-'aql al-hādi 'ashar*" (the Teacher of humanity and the 11th Intelelct).[6] Most Sunni scholars, however, such as Abi al-Fallāh Hanbali, Subki, Yāfi'i, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, accused him of treachery and infidelity. However, Salāh al-Din Safadi[7] and Ibn Shākir al-Kutubi,[8] also Sunni scholars, considered him to be a wise and true Muslim.[9] Tusi's unique significance was due to his wide and profound knowledge on almost all aspects of Islamic learning, including Islamic philosophy, logic, jurisprudence, theology, mysticism, ethics, medicine, astrology and mathematics.

## Tusi's Socio-political role

In the first period of his life, Tusi migrated from Tus to Nishāpur where he spent several years. We do not know much about his career as a student. We are also short of accurate information about a sudden circle which Tusi formed by traveling from Nishāpur to Ray, Baghdād, Musil, Isfahān, and again to Nishāpur. The second phase of Tusi's life can be divided into four main periods. The first and the second parts were spent among the Ismā'ilis. After he had spent several years with Nāsir al-Din Muhtashām (d. 655), the ruler of Quhistān, he was invited to Alamut by 'Alā' al-Din Muhammad (d. 653) the major leader of the Isma'ilis. He stayed for several years in Alamut and

witnessed 'Alā' al-Din's reign and one year of the reign of his son Khurshāh (d. 654). Historical sources do not indicate whether Tusi played any major socio-political role among the Ismā'ilis other than his intellectual activities. Some historical accounts show that the only significant political action of the scholar in this period is a letter and an elegy or *qasida,* to Ibn al-'Alqami (d. 656/1258). As a Shi'i chief minister of the caliph of Baghdād al-Musta'sim (from 1245-1258), al-'Alqami was in a position to present the caliph with Tusi's letter, in which the scholar praised the caliph, wishing to acquire his favor toward the Imāmi sect.[10] Clearly, in the beginning, Tusi felt a responsibility to spread Shi'i thought. Under the benefit of the patronage of Ibn al-'Alqami, he started his missionary activity with the caliph of Baghdād.

From 654 A.H., when the fortresses of the Ismā'ilis collapsed, Tusi started the third and fourth periods of his life, during which he not only accompanied the Mongols to Baghdād but also remained with them until the end of his life.[11] In the final period of his life, he was appointed supervisor of endowments *(Awqāf)* and chief of the scholars. In this period he managed to established the observatory at Marāgha.[12]

**Tusi and the Shi'i Seveners (Ismā'ilis)**

Tusi began his career as an astronomer for the Ismā'ili ruler Nāsir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim in Sertakht.[13] He spent over 25 years among the Nazāri Ism'ilis. This Shi'i group was alternatively known as Esoterists, Hermanutists (*Bātiniyyah wa ahl al-Ta'wil*) or Seveners. At the same time they were known as Infidels (*Malāhida*) by more orthodox Muslims. From Hasan Sabbāh, the founder of the Nazāri Ismā'ili's, they took two names: Sabba'iyya, as an indication of their allegiance and Ta'limiyya because they followed his instructions: "in addition to reasoning and thinking, people need a teacher and a guide to teach them how to know God." They were also known by the names of their more influential leaders; for example, they were called QarāmiTa after Ahmad Ibn Ash'ath QarmaTi one of their *dā'i* in the second

half of the 3rd century and Maymuniyya after ʿAbd Allah Ibn Maymun al-Qaddāh an Ismāʿili supporter between 204-264 A.H.. Their opponents superstitiously called them Hashishiyya from the belief that they used drugs to entice their followers into obeying their orders.[14] Finally, they are known in the west as Assassins.

Why did Tusi, undoubtedly an Imāmi scholar, join the Shiʿi Seveners, and what was the real reason for his connection with the Ismāʿilis? It is difficult to find the real reason or the exact time in which Tusi joined the Seveners. Some believe that Tusi was, in fact, an Ismāʿili Shiʿi who was born into an Ismāʿili family. However, we should note that his father, Muhammad Ibn Hasan, was one of the *zāhiri* Shiʿi scholars of Tus. We lack any information which indicates that his family had any kind of relationship with the Ismāʿilis. Tusi himself in his *R. Sayr va Suluk* states that he had been trained among a family who believed in and acted according to the *zāhir* of *Shariʿa*.[15] Was he really an Ismāʿili Shiʿa? If not, how can we justify those part of his writings which were written to support the Seveners or at least dedicated to the Ismāʿili leaders? An answer to this question requires a comprehensive look at the roots of his connection to the Seveners. Some scholars held the idea that as a truth-seeking scholar, Tusi wanted to obtain a real picture of the Seveners, not through the assertions of their opponents, but by studying their literature and by discussions with their scholars. Accordingly, he decided to live among them.[16] This idea is defended by the fact that Tusi's involvement occurred after he had observed a considerable change in Ismāʿili ideas. When he was eleven years old, the Seveners in Iran and Syria returned to the appearance *(zāhir)* of Islam.[17] According to Ibn al-Athir, in 608 Jalāl al-Din Hasan send a person to Baghdād announcing to al-Nāsir li Din Allah, the Abbasid caliph, that the Seveners had returned to the Shariʿa and conduct acceptable to all Muslims. When Jalāl al-Din's mother entered Baghdād on her way to the *hajj*, she was greatly honored by the Abbasid caliph.[18] This change might have facilitated Tusi's later relations with the Ismāʿilis since they were no longer rejecting the appearance of the *Shariʿa.*

Some historians believe that Tusi's connection with the Seveners was the result of the socio-political atmosphere of the time. The Mongols' continuous invasions in the northern part of Iran, on one hand, and the rigidity of the Sunnis, who formed the majority of the population, on the other hand, forced Tusi to look for a secure and suitable place for his research. According to the introduction of *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri,* after the Mongol invasions of Khurāsān and Nishāpur, he left his hometown to go to Ray, then to Baghdād and Musil. Finally, on his way home, he visited Isfahāan and then returned to Khurāsān.[19] However, his return was unfortunate because he found himself at the center of the war which had covered all the northern parts of Iran. The Mongol invasions had created a situation of insecurity and massacre. Hence, when he was invited to Quhastān by the Ismā'ili leader Nāsir al-Din Muhtasham, he accepted the invitation.[20] However, according to Tusi's statement at the end of his commentaries on Ibn Sinā's *K. al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt,* fleeing to the Seveners did not ease his difficulties; rather, it was the hardest and most difficult period of his life. Although he received honour and appreciation from them, he could not tolerate many of their ideas and actions. The first evidence of his dissatisfaction among the Seveners is that during his early stay in Quhistān, he communicated with Ibn al-'Alqami in an attempt to find a position in Baghdād.[21] Tusi's intentions became clear to the rulers of the Ismā'ili forts and they sent him to Alamut where they kept him in a more controlled situation among themselves until the fall of their dominance.[22] In his introduction of *Zij-i Ilkhāni,* Tusi praises Hulāku, describing him as the person who freed him from the infidels. Another piece of evidence of Tusi's disagreement with the Assassins is that, soon after he was out of Alamut, he changed the introduction and afterword of *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri,* which had praised Nāsir al-Din Muhtasham and 'Alā' al-Din Muhammad Ibn Jalāl al-Din, two Ismā'ili leaders.[23] J. Humā'i states that a comparison between the first version and the revised version of *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri* shows that after Tusi was accused of being a Sevener, he omitted the first and the last parts of *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri* and modified those parts of his writings which were

compatible with their ideas and were written when he was living among them.[24] In addition, prior to his death in Baghdād he requested that his body be buried in front of the shrine of Musā al-Kāzim, the other son of Jaʿfar al-Sādiq and the seventh Imām of Twelvers,[25] rather than the tomb of Ismāʿil, the first hidden Imām of the Seveners. M. Zanjāni quotes the author of *Durrat al-Akhbār* who believed that Tusi was forced to live among the Seveners. He states that Tusi was captured and was sent first to Quhistān and then to Alamut.[26] It is fairly reasonable to conclude that during the period of Tusi's life among the Seveners, he practiced *taqiyya*.

## Tusi and the fall of the Abbasid caliphate

A quick glance at Tusi's life reveals that he was simultaneously dissatisfied with the Seveners and their ideas and with the Abbasid caliphs. After Hulāku conquered Alamut in 654 A.H., Tusi accompanied him to Baghdād. According to Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah, Manqu Qāʾān, the great khān of Qarā Qurm, ordered Hulāku to force Tusi into his army. Manqu Qāʾān, familiar with astrology and mathematics, was interested in establishing an observatory in his territory. Aware of Tusi's expertise in this field, he asked Hulāku to send the scholar to his court after he had conquered the Ismāʿili fortresses.[27] In discussing Tusi's reasons for traveling with Hulāku's court, Hāʾiri notes that the Mongol kings were extremely interested in history and astronomy. They saw these as the main instruments of their expansion: history to record their expeditions and astrology to predict their chances of success in a new attack. He concludes that they invited Tusi to accompany them as a renowned astrologer.[28]

According to some historical documents, Tusi not only encouraged Hulāku to conquer Alamut but also to attack Baghdād.[29] They claim that Hulāku had originally decided to invade Constantinople,[30] but Tusi encouraged him to attack Baghdād. In contrast to the argument of Husām al-Din Munajjim, a Sunni astrologer and consultant in the court of Hulāku, who

insisted that invading would cause the corruption of the entire
world, Tusi argued that there would not be any problem. Tusi
reminded Hulāku that both Abbasid and non-Abbasid caliphs had
been killed in the past without dire results. He added that the
Abbasid caliph Ma'mun had killed his brother Amin and
Mutawakkil, another caliph, had been assassinated by some of his
military commanders and even his own son without upsetting the
world order. The killing of Musntasir and Mu'tazz occurred
without releasing universal corruption into the world.

Tusi's suggestion to Hulāku was not merely the result of an
astrological interpretation of the stars. As an Imāmi scholar he
did not accept the legal authority that declared the Abbāsid
caliphs to be the religious leaders of the Muslim community. His
letter to Baghdād, asking Ibn al-'Alqami to cooperate with him in
converting the Abbāsid caliph to the Shi'i doctrine, shows his
discontent with caliphal religious authority as early as the first
half of the thirteenth century.

After Hulāku conquered Baghdād, he hesitated to kill Musta'sim
(d. 656) due to Munajjim's prediction that killing the vicegerent
of the Prophet Muhammad (S) would result in disaster. Again
Tusi promised that nothing would happen if the Abbasid caliph
was killed and finally, in 656 A.H., the last Abbasid caliph was
executed. Other sources suggest that Tusi did not encourage the
assassination of the caliph; rather. his support of Hulāku was a
way to assist scholars and innocent people.[31] By holding an
important position in Hulaku's court, he was able to restrain some
of the Mongol leader's excesses.

At this time, Mustansir's vizier was a Shi'i named Ibn al-'Alqami
(d. 656). He had had some covert relations with Tusi while the
latter was living among the Seveners. It is believed that Ibn al-
'Alqami also wrote a letter to Hulāku, telling him he need not be
afraid to come to Baghdād.[32] The fact that he was appointed as
the ruler of Baghdād by Hulāku after the Mongol leader had left
the city lends some support to this idea.

Was Tusi's advice to Hulāku, perhaps aided and abetted by Ibn al-ʿAlqami, the only reason or even the main reason, for the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate? As Hairi mentions in his analysis of Tusi's role in the conquest of Baghdād, contemporary sources make no allusion to any political impact made by Tusi. Sources such as the *Al-Ādāb al-Sultāniyya, (al-Fakhri)* (701/1301) of Ibn TaqTaq or the *Mukhtasar* of Abu al-Fidāʾ (d. 732/1331), as well as Tusi's own report about the conquest of Baghdād do not mention anything about Tusi's role. *Tārikh-i Vassāf* (728/1327) and *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārikh* (710/1310) only point out that Tusi predicted that the Mongol leader would replace the caliph.[33]

One of the main goals of the Mongols from the early period of their dominance was to open the gates of Baghdād. They attempted to invade Baghdād several times, but they were defeated. Manku Qāʾān came to power during the period that the Crusaders were fighting the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria. Having received complaints from both Mongolian commanders and some of the *ʿulamā* who were under the pressure of Ismāʿili terrors and the ill treatment of the Abbāsids, the great Khān asked his brother Hulāku to invade the Islamic lands. Moreover, an agreement with King Hethum I of Armenia motivated the great Khān to expand his conquest to include Egypt and Syria.[34] According to Cahen, Hethum I, had acted as the precursor of the Mongols on the shores of the Mediterranean against the Muslims of Syria and Asia Minor. His actions were, in fact, the result of favorable impressions sent to him by his eastern co-religionists.[35] Hulāku began his mission by attacking the forts of the Assassins. Once he had invaded the Assassins, he moved toward Baghdād with Tusi as his consultant. Whether Tusi himself decided to be in the court of the Mongols or whether the Mongols forced him to do so is still disputable. In addition to the external threats, the Abbāsid caliphate had its internal problems rooted in the weakness and the corruption of the caliphate.[36]

Although Tusi did not accept the Abbāsid caliphate as legal authority, why would he prefer the secular authority of the Mongols? Did not Tusi, by encouraging Hulāku, actually participate in killing Muslims and destroying Muslim centers?

Attributing the fall of the caliphate to a single cause or a single person is a simplified interpretation of a complicated situation. Tusi witnessed the pre-Mongol conflicts and realized that the Mongol invasion of the Islamic world was inevitable. Considering the internal and external situations of the Islamic world, the Mongols had already reached the conclusion that they had to start implementing their policies to conquer the world. The last and the most necessary choice that remained for the scholar was a limited and carefully planned cooperation with the Mongol troops. Through his association with Hulāku, he could obtain a high position in the Ilkhān's court and play a constructive role in his policies. By using his influence with Hulāku, Tusi hoped to persuade the Mongol leader to act in the interests of the Muslims. Alone among Muslim scholars, Tusi noticed that the Mongol invasion was not ideological. The Mongols invaded the Islamic lands in order to spread their power over a vast territory. Since their religion, which combined both pagan and shamanistic beliefs, was not likely to be an alternative to Islam, scholars like Tusi were able to use their presence as an instrument to save Islam. Vladimir Minorsky remarks that since the Mongols' beliefs were vague and primitive, there was no chance for their propagation among the conquered population. Hence they were tolerant toward the other religions.[37] Dawson also maintains that during the reign of Chingiz Khān, it was a part of his law that all religions were to be respected without favouritism.[38]

After the fall of the Ismāʿilis and the Abbāsid caliphate, the flexible atmosphere allowed people a free choice in religion. Tusi's position at the court of Hulāku attracted the Muslim scholars from many places to one center and led to the revival of the Islamic sciences. Although Tusi paid special attention to the Imāmi sect and immediately after the fall of Baghdād visited

Hilla, the very center of Imāmi scholarship, his main attempts were never limited to a particular group. He not only invited the scholars of all sects to cooperation together at the school of Marāgha, but also spent *Awqāf* (endowments) to sponsor all Muslim scholars.

## Tusi's Cultural influence

In spite of the bitter accusations hurled at Tusi for the role he was believed to have played in the fall of Baghdād and the massacre of Muslims, study of that crucial situation shows that without the support of a strong Muslim state, individuals such as Tusi could do nothing to prevent the Mongols from achieving their destructive goals. However, Tusi's influence on the continuation and revival of Islamic scholarship was more effective than his impact, if any at all, on the fall of Baghdād. As an outstanding Islamic scholar who may be placed beside distinguished thinkers like al-Fārābi, Ibn Sinā, and al-Biruni, Tusi was an exception in a highly crucial period. His significant role in holding and reviving the Islamic civilization by obtaining the favor of Hulāku should not be ignored.[39] Despite his critical evaluation of Tusi, Arberry gives the following account of Tusi's cultural role :

> The Mongols, like their twentieth century disciples, knew how to handle and exploit to their own ends men of that caliber; and in the end, whether out of conviction or statecraft, the Ilkhāns accepted Islam and Muslim civilization was revived in Persia and Iraq. That such a renaissance could take place at all, after the chaos and slaughter of the preceding years, was in large measure due to the collaboration of such as Nasir al-Din Tusi and Shams al-Din Juvaini, brother of the well-known historian and head of the administration of Persia under Mongol rule in the reigns of Hulāku (to 1265), Abākā (1265-82) and Ahmad (1282-4).

Apart from numerous writings in various fields of Islamic scholarship, Tusi made unique contributions in astronomy. After the fall of Baghdād, his main concern was to establish the school of Marāgha. His scientific center in Marāgha was so attractive that scholars, both Muslims and non-Muslims, came from all over the world to study and research there. In addition to Muslim scholars, philosophers and scientists, Chinese astronomers were invited to work at the school of Marāgha. For the last eighteen years of his life, Tusi was engaged in building this observatory. His contribution in astronomy was so important that even modern scholars have benefited from his findings.[40] In appreciation of his scientific findings, NASA nominated one of the craters on the moon to commemorate him.[41]

## a. Tusi and the school of Marāgha

Despite the socio-political role he was forced to play by circumstances, Tusi's main contributions and interests were intellectual. After Jundi Shāpur with its legacy of a pre-Islamic university and the Nizāmiyya established by Nizām al-Mulk in Baghdād, the school of Marāgha was the most important madrasa in the Islamic world. Although this school was first founded as a center for astronomy and mathematics, it then became an important center for all Islamic sciences. The first observatory in the Islamic world was established at the command of al-Ma'mun, an Abbasid caliph. By the end of the third century A.H. other observatories had been founded in Syria, Egypt and Baghdād. Tusi's observatory, established at Marāgha in 617/1285, was the most fascinating and advanced.[42] Astronomers were invited to study there from the east and the west while the school of Marāgha incorporated various branches of Islamic sciences. Students of astronomy were called from as far away as China to study at the school of Marāgha. The observatory of Marāgha was unique for almost three centuries.[43] Tusi actually established in Marāgha the prototype of the modern university. Its library was composed of more than 400,000 volumes, collected from different cities like Transoxiana, Khurāsān, Baghdād, Musil and

Damascus which were the victims of the early Mongol invasions.[44] The school of Marāgha incorporated different sections *(dār al-hikma)* devoted to philosophy, medicine, jurisprudence (*Fiqh),* and *hadith*. Interestingly, they each had a different priority and received their funding based on this hierarchy. Researchers in *Dār al-Hikma* received three *dirhams* for every 48 hour period, those in *Dār al-Tibb* received two *dirhams*, those in *Dār al-Fiqh* one *dirham*, while those in *Dār al-Hadith* received only half a *dirham*.[45] The main source of the income to pay these expenses was the *Awqāf* under Tusi's supervision. The distinguishing characteristic of the Marāgha School was its variety of subjects and the priority given to some of the branches of Islamic sciences. These characteristics might explain the accusations which claimed that Tusi was using Muslim endowments not for *fiqh* but for Greek philosophy and other sciences. One of Tusi's outstanding characteristics was that although most of his life was spent among either Assassins or Mongols, surrounded by wars, attacks and retaliations, all of which were conditions unsuitable for study and research, he had an effective influence on intellectual development. This influence was most prominent in astrology, mathematics, philosophy and theology. According to Strothmann, Tusi's fame outside Shiʻi circles was due to his books and research in the exact sciences, namely medicine, physics, mathematics and particularly astrology and astronomy. Another important aspect of Tusi was his flexibility and openness in his intellectual relations with all Muslim scholars even non- Shiʻa. He did not allow his devotion to his own sect to cut him off from scholarly connections with non-Imāmi *ʻulamā.*[46] This unique characteristic enabled him to influence and be influenced by many contemporary scholars.

## b. Reviving the Imāmi theology (particularly the issue of the Imāmate)

One of the most important aspects of Tusi's intellectual career was his significant role in reformulating the Shiʻi theology, combining the Peripatetic style with what he had grasped from

his Shiʿi ideology to give new understanding to the issue of the Imamate. For example, *Tajrid al-ʿAqāʾid,* commented on by several Shiʿi scholars, and *Qawāʿid al-ʿAqāid* were written based on an Imāmi point of view. In *Fusul Nasiriyya* he explicitly disagreed with the philosophic and determinative Ashʿarite point of view while in *Talkhis al-Muhassal* he critiqued the *K. al-Muhassal* of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzi. His *Masāriʿ al-Masāriʿ* was a critical commentary on *K. al-Musāriʿa* of M. ʿAbd al-Karim al-Shahrastāni which refuted Ibn Sinā's ideas. Several other treatises were written based on either the Imāmi or the Ismāʿili points of view.[47] More important is a treatise on the issue of the Imāmate republished on the occasion of the commemoration of his 7th anniversary. His main goal in these works was to rationalize what previously had been presented by other Imāmi scholars in a more or less traditionalist point of view. This characteristic will be clearer if his method is compared with that of Nawbakhti in *K. al-Yāqut* and those of Shaykh al-Mufid (336-413) and Seyyed Murtazā (355-436) against Bāqilāni.[48] In the history of Imāmi theology, Tusi reformulated this branch of thought from traditionalism to rationalism. His doctrines put him in a position distinct from both Ismāʿilis and Sunnis. *Tajrid al-Iʿtiqād, Fusul Nasiriyya* and the *Treatise on the Imamate* were written using an Imāmi methodology. In his *Qawāʿid*, particularly on the issue of the Imamate, he tried to present various ideas according to Imāmis, Zaydis, *Extremists (Ghulāt),* Kaysānis and Sunnis without insisting on any particular idea.[49]

## c. Tusi and philosophy, mysticism and ethics

As a philosopher, Tusi was greatly influenced by Ibn Sinā (980-1037). He supported Ibn Sinā's ideas by refuting critiques written against him.[50] He spent about twenty years writing a commentary on the *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* (Safadi*, Al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*). However, he disagreed with Ibn Sinā on the issue of God's knowledge and approached it from an illuminationist *(Ishrāqi)* point of view. Like Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (d. 587/1191), he

believed that God's knowledge is a kind of illuminational relation *(izāfa ishrāqiyya)*.[51]

Tusi's mystical background goes back to his early learning period in Nishāpur when he first visited Farid al-Din Sa'id Ibn Yusif Ibn 'Ali 'ATTār (513-617A.H) and was attracted to his ideas.[52] He treated mystics with respect and honor. At the time of the conquest of Baghdād, he and Hulāku visited Abā al-Fuqarā' Muhammad b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, one of the greatest mystics of the time, at his *zāwia* (privte place for the Sufi's practices and contemplation)*.* When Abā al-Fazl Ja'far b. 'Ali, known as al-Mu'taman al-Sufi al-Baghdādi, went to Marāgha to visit Tusi, Tusi assigned 100 *dinārs* to him each year from the *awqāf* of Baghdād.[53] In addition, Tusi had a warm relationship with Sadr al-Din Qunyawi (d. 673) and Jamāl al-din 'Ayn  al-Zamān Jili (d. 651) - two of the great mystics of the time -through various letters.[54] In the meantime, Tusi himself wrote mystical treatises. His *Awsāf al-Ashrāf* written at the request of Hulāku□s vizier Shams al-Din Muhammad Juvayni (d. 681) is a written price with a mystical methodology about the spiritual journey (*Sayr wa Suluk*).[55] In spite of his considerable devotion to the twelve Imāms, his deep respect for Hallāj distinguished him from most of the other Shi'a.[56] *R. Āghāz va Anjām,* also entitled as *Tadhkira,* has an Ismā'ili basis and deals with demonstrating the principles of beliefs in a mystical way.[57]

Why was the intellectual atmosphere of Tusi's time dominated by mystical thought and the Ismā'ili esoteric understanding of Islamic belief?  Although this current of mystical thought was mainly centered at the court of the Saljuks of Rum, other parts of the Islamic world were not totally exempt from this trend.

The esoteric doctrines of the Ismā'ilis might have been a reaction against Sunni orthodox Islam, first formed by the Fatimids of Egypt and then by the Nazāri Ismā'ilis of Iran and Syria. They were the opposite side to the extreme traditionalism held by the Abbasid caliphs and their political supporters such as the Saljuks.

Nonetheless, this pole of esoteric thought collapsed officially upon the destruction of the Ismāʿili fortresses. As far as an extension of pure mystical thought is concerned, one can find various interpretations. Some believe that mystical tendencies are rooted in a weakness of the political authority or material disadvantages. When the people are deprived of worldly advantages, they tend to focus on the afterlife. However, the very core of mystical thought and its flourishing took place at the powerful and wealthy court of the Saljuks of Rum. By the time of the Mongol invasion, the Saljuks of Rum were the only shelter for Muslim scholars under the pressure of Mongol attacks. Since the most dominant figure at this court was Sadr al-Din Qunyawi, the immediate disciple of Ibn ʿArabi, his colleagues were mostly mystics.

Undoubtedly, one main reason for the spread of mystical thought at this time was the immigration of Ibn ʿArabi from Andalusia to Anatolia. His school of thought was so influential that for several centuries, it remained active throughout the Islamic world. The reasons for Ibn ʿArabiʿs departure from Andolusia remain unclear. His migration may have been the result of a dream which inspired him to leave Andalusia. On the other hand, he may have wanted to leave Islamic lands dominated by Māliki ideas and the Peripatetic philosophy which denied an esoteric interpretation of Islamic knowledge. What was it about the eastern part of the Islamic world which attracted Ibn ʿArabi and encouraged him to establish his own school of thought there? What was the real background in the eastern part of the Islamic lands which caused the development of mystical thought? Can we find any socio-political reason for this flourishing mysticism? These questions remain unanswered.

Tusi's writings in ethics were written mainly while he was living among the Ismāʿilis. At the request of Nāsir al-Din ʿAbd al-Rahim Ibn Abi Mansur, the ruler *(muhtasham)* of Quhistān, he rewrote and corrected *Tahdhib al-Akhlāq wa Tathir al-Aʿrāq* by Abu ʿAli Miskawayh (d.421/1029) and called it as *Akhlāq-i*

*Nāsiri*.[58] Then he translated the *K. Adab al-Saghir* of Ibn al-Muqaffa' into Persian.[59]

## A Comparison between Tusi and Nizām al-Mulk

Since Nizām al-Mulk and Nasir al-Din Tusi were both viziers in very different Iranian Empires, it is interesting to compare their decisive roles in different aspects. In addition to their political role, they both played a constructive role in reviving the intellectual atmosphere by re-establishing madrasas. They both used *waqf* as the main source to sponsor these madrasas. However, they were also dissimilar. For example, Tusi wrote more than 56 different books and treatises.[60] Nizām al-Mulk, however, published few writings. Tusi's political attitude derived from his Shi'i ideas while that of Nizām al-Mulk was rooted in Sunni Islam. The difference appeared in supporting or abolishing the idea of the caliphate in both theory and practice. While Nizām al-Mulk believed in the legitimacy of the Abbasid's authority and motivated the Saljuks to support the Abbasid caliphs, Tusi accompanied Hulāku to invade Baghdād and destroy the caliphate.[61] In spite of their emphasis on reviving intellectual and religious thought, the Nizāmiyya of Baghdād was explicitly a center of Shāfi'i *fiqh* and Ash'rite theology whereas the Nasiriyya of Marāgha incorporated a wider field of Islamic sciences. Moreover, Tusi did not announce that the orthodox *fiqh* and theology must be Imāmi.

The library of Marāgha was more important than that of the Nizāmiya; it contained a considerable number of books since it was a collection of the writings from Baghdād, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula. In addition, those books which were gathered from the eastern parts of the Mongol Empire were added to the collection.

Another important difference between the two Muslim viziers was their political involvement. After the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate, Tusi addressed only two important political letters to

the rulers of Shāmāt and Halab, - al-Malik al-Nāsir, Sayf al-Din b. Yaghmur and 'Alā' al-Din al-Qushaymuri, respectively[62] - and devoted most of his concerns to intellectual affairs, particularly the establishment of the observatory of Marāgha.[63] He traveled to Baghdād and other cities with Hulāku and his successor Abāqākhān only to visit *'ulamā* and raise the *awqāf* which he then spent on the school of Marāgha.[64] The main feature of Nizām al-Mulk's career, on the other hand, was his involvement with socio-political affairs, as he was one of the most important political figure of his time.

## Concluding Remarks

Living in one of the most difficult periods of Islamic history, Nasir al-Din Tusi was able to play a decisive role in maintaining and even developing the stream of Islamic civilization in its various aspects. The variety of his writings, his openness toward Muslim scholars from different schools of thought, and his willingness to examine  Islamic knowledge through both its esoteric and exoteric ways are some characteristics that distinguished Tusi not only from other scholars of his generation but also among Muslim thinkers throughout the history of Islamic civilization. His most positive contributions were probably the establishment of the school of Marāgha, supervising the *Awqāf* property of the vast portion of the Muslim world and spending a considerable amount of it in administrating the school of Marāgha. His long-lasting stay among the Seveners, and his involvement in the court of the Mongols could never extinguish the light of Tusi's enlightenment. Yet he was able to revise his Imāmi ideology while reviving Islamic knowledge in its comprehensive form.

Although the school of Marāgha concentrated on astrology and astronomy as the fields which interested the Mongols, it also covered different aspects of Islamic knowledge. It can even be considered as the prototype of a modern university. In addition to his unique expertise in astrology, Tusi was a distinguished

scholar in other fields of Islamic knowledge. Philosophy, theology, ethics, mysticism, medicine and pure sciences are fields that were creatively touched by this medieval thinker. Interestingly, in theology he focused on the issue of the Imamate, as the main concern of the Ismāʿilis and an alternative for the institution of the Abbasid caliphate. He may have had a socio-political concern which led him to deal with this issue in his theological writings. Both in theory and practice, Tusi was positively involved with mysticism. This involvement indicates the dominance of mystical thought at that period. His numerous writings in this field, his written relationships with his contemporary mystics, and his respectful treatment of the true mystics of his time are clues to the characteristics which created a unique personality out of an individual born into a *zāhiri* Imāmi family. Tusi was, clearly, a unique Muslim scholar rather than a mere politician.

---

[1] Strothmann 1913, p. 980.

[2] Sarton 1951, p. 1001.

[3] Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddamah*, pp. 311, 315.

[4] Nurāni, 1345s., p. 7.

[5] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 54.

[6] M. Rasavi, *Ahvāl va Āsar,* p. 1.

[7] Safadi, *al-Wāfi* 1931, pp. 179,182.

[8] Ibn Shākir, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt* 1973, vol. 3, pp. 247, 250.

[9] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 55.

[10] *Tārikh-i Vassāf,* 1, pp. 29-30.

[11] Strothmann 1913, p. 981.

[12] M. Razavi 1354s., *Ahvāl va Āsār,* p. 82.

[13] Strothmann 1913, p. 980.

[14] Fasāʾi, 1984, pp. 22, 25.

[15] M. Razavi 1335s., "Introduction", *Majmuʿa Rasāʾil*, and *R. Sayr wa Suluk* p. 38.

[16] Tusi, "R. Sayr va Suluk", *Majmuʿa Rasāʾil,* p. 41.

[17] Mandub 1335s., p. 88.

[18] Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, vol., 10, p. 357.

[19] M. Razavi 1335s., *Yādbud-i Hafsadumin*, p. 3.

[20] Tusi, "Introduction", *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri,* p. 3.

[21] *Tārikh-i Vassāf al-Hazra,* 1, pp. 29-30.

[22] Khʷāndamir, *Habib al-Siyar*, 3, pp. 105-106.

[23] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 126.

[24] Humā'i, "Muqaddamah-i Qadim-i Akhlāq-i Nāsiri", *Majmu'a Rasā'il*, pp. 6-7.

[25] Rashidi, *Jāmi'*, 2, 558 & Shushtari, *Majālis*, 2, p. 206.

[26] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 28.

[27] Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi'*, 2, p. 718.

[28] Hā'iri 1968, p. 37.

[29] Āqsarā'i 1943, *Musāmara al-Akhbār,* pp. 47-48.

[30] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 35.

[31] M. Razavi, *Yādbud-i Haftsadumin,* p. 16.

[32] Kutubi, *Fawāt* 1973, p. 252.

[33] Hairi 1968, pp. 42, 95.

[34] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 43.

[35] Cahen, *Ency. of Islam*, Vol. 1, p. 639.

[36] M. Zanjāi 1335s., pp. 41-45.

[37] Minorsky 1959, p. 191.

[38] Dawson 1955, pp. 23-24.

[39] Hairi 1968, pp. 72,73.

[40] Hairi 1968, pp. 72-75.

[41] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 93.

[42] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 70.

[43] Anas Khān 1335s., p. 81.

[44] Safadi, *al-Wāfi,* vol. II, p. 179.

[45] Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, vol. 13, p. 228.

[46] Strothmann 1913, p. 981.

[47] M. Zanjāni 1335s., pp. 182-195.

[48] Dānish Pazhuh 1335s., p. 4.

[49] Dānish Pazhuh 1335., p. 5.

[50] M. Razav*i, Ahvāl va Āsār* 1354s., pp. 111-113.

[51] M. Zanjāni 1335s., pp. 166-67.

[52] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 3.

[53] Mandub 1335s., p. 109.

[54] M. Razavi, *Ahvāl va Āsār* 1354s., p. 94.

[55] M. Razavi *Ahvāl va Āsār* 1354s., p. 457 & Brown 1956, p. 486.

[56] Strothmann 1913, p. 981.

[57] Afshār 1335s., p. 1.

[58] Strothmann 1913, p. 981.

[59] M. Zanjāni 1335s., p. 195.

[60] Brockelmann, vol. 2, pp. 508-12.

[61] Strothmann 1913, p. 981.

[62] M. Razavi, *Ahvāl va Āsār* 1354s., pp. 28-36.

[63] M. Razav*i, Ahvāl va Āsār,* p. 82.

[64] Tusirkāni 1335s., p. 215.

## Bibliography

ʿAmid Musā (1957), *Yādbud-i Haftsadumin Sāl-i Khwāja Nasir-i Tusi*, (Tehran University).

Anas Khān, Muhammad (1957). "Naqsh-i Tusi dar Waqāya, Tanzim va Taʿmim-i Riyāziyāt va Nujum". Art in: *Yād nāmah-i Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi.* Vol. 1. Lectures. Tehrān University, 1336s/1957. pp. 76-85.

Al-Āqsarāʾi, al-Karim Mahmud b. Muhammad. Musāmara al-Akhbār wa Musāyara al-Akhyār (1943), Ed. ʿUthmān Turān. Ānkārā: Chāpkhānah'-i Anjuman-i Tārikh-i Turk.

Arberry, A.J. (1958), *Classical Persian Literature*. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd).

Brown, Edward G. (1956), *A Literary History of Persian.* Vol. 2. (Cambridge: At the University Press).

Burhān, Muhammad Husayn b. Khalaf-i Tabrizi (1952), *Burhān-i QāTiʿ,* Ed. Muhammad Muʿin. Vol. 2, (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Zavvār)

Cahen, CL. (1960) "Armenia", Art In: *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Vol. 1.

Dānish Pazhuh, Muhammad Taqi (1956), *Majmuaʿ Rasāʾil-i Khāja Nasir.* (Tehrān University)

Dawson, Christopher (1955), *The Mongol Mission*. (London & New York: Sheed Ward)

Fazāʾi, yusif (1984), *Ismāʿiliyya va Nihzat-i Hasan-i ‹abbh* (Tehran: Muʾassasah '-i MaTbuʿāti-i ʿATāʾi)

Hairi, Abdulhadi (1968), *Nasir al-Din al-Tusi: His Supposed Political Role in the Mongol Invasion of Baghdād.* M.A thesis. Institute of Islamic Studies (Montreal: McGill University)

Humā'i, Jalāl al-Din (1335s), "Muqaddamah-i Qadim-i Akhlāq-i Nāsiri", *Majmu'a Rasā'il Kh$^w$āja Nasir* (Tehran University)

Huart, C.L. "Kh$^w$ādja", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. 1st ed. Vol. 2, 865.

Ibn al-Athir (1987), *al-Kāmil fi al-Tārikh*. Vol. 10. Ed. M. Y. al-Duqāq (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya)

Ibn Kathir (1987), Abu al-Fidā' al-Hāfiz. *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*. Vol. 13. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya)

Ibn Khaldun (1958), *The Muqaddima, An Introduction to History*. Trans. Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul)

Ibn Taymiyya, Shaykh Taqi al-Din (1903)*, Minhāj al-Sunan al-Nabawiyya fi Naqd Kalām al-Shi'a waal-Qadariyya.* Vol. 2. (Cairo: MaTbaq'a al-Kubrā al-Amiriyya)

Jawād Mandub, Mustafā (1957), "Ihtimām Nasir al-in al-Tusi bi Ihyā' al-Thiqāfa al-Islāmiyya Ayyām al-Mughul". Art in: *Yād Nāmah-i Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi.* Vol. 1. Lectures. (Tehrān University) pp. 86-115.

Kh$^w$āndamir, Ghiyāth al-Din b. Humām al-Din al-Husayni (1954), *Tārikh-i Habib al-Siyar fi Akhbār-i Afrād al-Bashar.* Vol. 3 (Tehrān: Kitābkhānah Khayyām)

Al-Kutubi, Muhammad b. al-Shākir (1973), Fawāt al-Wafayāt. Vol. 3. Ed. I. (Abbās. Beirut: Dār Sādir)

Minorsky, V (1955), *"Iran: Opposition, Martyrdom and Revolt", Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*. Ed. G. E. Van Grunebaum (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press)

Mudarrisi Razavi Muhammad Taqi (1957), *Yādbud-i Haftsadumin Sāl-i Kh^wāja Nasir-i Tusi* (Tehran University)

------- (1335s), *Majmuʿa Rasā'il*. Tehran University.

-------, (1354s), *Ahvāl va Āsār-i Nasir al-Din*. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Irān).

Mudarrisi Zanjāni, Muhammad (1956)., *Sargudhasht va ʿAqā'id-i Falsafi-i Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi* (Tehrān University)

Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah (1959), *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārikh.* Vol. 2. Ed. B. Karimi (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Shirkat-i Nisbiy-i Iqbāl va Shurakā')

Safadi, Salāh al-Din Khalil b. Ibak (1931), *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*. Vol. 1. Ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istanbul: MaTbaʿa al-Dawla)

Sarton, George (1951), *Introduction to the History of Science*. Vol. 2. (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington)

Scott, Richard J. *Mamluk-Arminian Relations During the Ba☐r☐ Period* 1250-1375 (1981). Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies (thesis) (McGill University)

Shushtari, Qāzi Nur Allah (1950), *Majālis al-Mu'minin* (Tehran: Kitābfurushi-i Islāmiyya)

Strothmann, R. "al-Tusi", Art in: *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 1st Ed. Vol. 4. pp. 980-81.

Subki, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Taqi . *Tabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*. Vol. 5. Cairo: MaTbaʿa al-Husayniyya   al-Misriyya, n.d.

Tusirkāni, Qāsim (1957), "Kārhāy-i Siyāsi Khāja Nasir al-Din va Hadaf-i Vei". Art in: *: Yād nāmah-i Khāja Nasir al-Din Tusi.* Vol. 1. Lectures (Tehrān University) pp. 204-219.

Tusi Kh<sup>w</sup>āja Nasir al-Din, Muhammad (1966), *Musannafāt I: Sharh Mas'alat al-'Ilm*. Ed. Nurāni 'Abd Allah (Mashad University)

-------,(1335s),  "R. Sayr va Suluk". in: *Majmu'a Rasā'il-i Kh<sup>w</sup>āja Nasir*. Compiled by Mudarrisi Razavi Muhammad Taqi. On the occasion of the seventh anniversary of Kh<sup>w</sup>āja Nasir al-Din Tusi (Tehran University)

-------, *Akhlāq-i Nāsiri.* Tehran: Kitābfurushi-i 'Ilmi'-i Islāmiya, no date.

Vassāf, Fazl Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh Shirāzi (1959), Tajziya al-Amsār va Tazjiya al-A'sār, also known as: Tārikh-i Vassāf al-Hazra. Vol. 1 (Tehran: Ibn Sinā)

Wilson, Mount. Et. Al (1960),  Photographic Lunar Atlas  (The University of Chicago Press)

# Bayt al-Māl and the Distribution of Zakāt


## Mahmood Namazi


## Introduction

The *Bayt al-Māl* (literally meaning the House for Money, is used as an equivalent for the Treasury House where public fund is kept) is an Islamic concept built upon three main factors: wealth, trust and socio-economic justice. It is clear that attainment of socio-economic justice is an immediate objective of the *Bayt al-Māl*. The *Bayt al-Māl* bears the responsibility of the undertaking of the society's fiscal system and welfare provisions.[1] Accordingly, the *Bayt al-Māl* acts as a treasury complemented with the task of planning and distributing society's wealth in the whole socio-economic and political set-up of the nation. Hence, it is the financial pulse to the development process of the nation.[2] In this paper I intend to briefly consider the philosophy and sources of wealth in the *Bayt al-Māl* and then examine *zakāt* as its main part, elaborating on coverage, rates and the distribution of *zakāt*. Finally, I will try to show the role of *zakāt* in the socio-economic justice of Muslim countries.

## The philosophy of Bayt al-Māl

According to A. Ghazali,[3] the philosophy of the *Bayt al-Māl* is to form the basis of public financing. The final aim is to mould a society committed to balancing material and spiritual values by ensuring that wealth obtained by individuals is distributed from the "haves" to the "have-nots". The *Bayt al-Māl* can also manage national trading activities, coordination of foreign exchange and

international trade transactions. In the modern-day context, this role is held by the banking system which need not necessarily be a separate entity of the financial system. Finally, everyone in the Islamic state is entitled to a reasonable standard of living and the Islamic state should guarantee its citizens' clothing, housing, health facilities, educational opportunities, and access to food at reasonable prices. A. Ghazali states that "although the *Bayt al-Māl* may not be directly involved in the administration of these welfare provisions, its funds may contribute towards the provisions of such matters."[4]

## Concept and types of the Bayt al-Māl

The *Bayt al-Māl* is a broad concept and is based on the faith that everything belongs to God, and that man being His agent on the earth may possess some of these things only temporarily and secondarily.[5] There are three types of the *Bayt al-Māl*:

I *Bayt al-Māl al-khāss*: This was the "royal treasury" or the privy purse, with its own sources of income and items of expenditure. It would cover the personal expenses of the Caliph, his palaces, harem, pensions of the members of the royal family, palace guards and gifts from the Caliphs to foreign princes.

II *Bayt al-Māl* was similar to a state bank for the Muslims. According to M. A. Mannan this does not mean that it had all the functions of the present day central bank, but that whichever of these functions did exist in their primitive forms were performed by it. Administration of *Bayt al-Māl* was always in the hand of one person. At the provincial level, the utmost head of the *Bayt al-Māl* was the governor of the province. He was in charge of collection and administration of the revenue. The central *Bayt al-Māl* was situated at the capital of the state so that it could be under the direct control of the Caliph.

III The last and most important type of *Bayt al-Māl* was also a public treasury and it is called *Bayt-u Māl al-Muslimîn,* or the

treasury of the Muslims. In reality, it was not only for the Muslims; its function, M. Mannan states, included the welfare of all the citizens of the Islamic state regardless of their caste, color or creed. The function of this *Bayt al-Māl* consisted of maintaining public works, roads, bridges, mosques, churches and the welfare and provision of the poor. This *Bayt al-Māl* was situated at the chief mosque and was administered by the Chief Qāḍī at the provincial level.[6]

## Sources of wealth in the Bayt al-Māl

According to A. Ghazali, the wealth collected by *Bayt al-Māl* for the various expenses can be categorized into special wealth and general wealth.[7]

Special wealth includes all revenues that are determined by the *Shari'ah*. This wealth cannot be spent on any other purposes except for those stated in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. The main item under this category is *zakāt* which, according to the Shi'ite jurisprudence view includes nine assets. For example, according to Ayatollah Khomeini zakātable assets include wheat, barley, date, raisins, gold, silver, camel, cow and sheep.[8] Each of these items after reaching certain amount become zakātable.

General wealth consists of all wealth collected by the *Bayt al-Māl* with the exception of *Zakāt*, such as dfferent types of tazes.[9]

## Zakāt

The word *zakāt* has been traced to verbs that in English translate most closely as "to be pure" (as in the verse *qad aflaha man tazakkā,* i.e. Prosperous is he who has sought purity (87:14). Thus, giving *zakāt* is seen as an act of purification for one's soul from e.g. selfishness and greediness. Others have emphasized its link to the verbs "to grow" and "to increase"[10] and have interpreted the giving of *zakāt* as leading to a significant increase of blessings in terms of material property in this world and of spiritual merit for the hereafter.[11]

It is recognized that only wealth above a certain minimum level and held for certain period of time obligates its owner to pay *zakāt*.[12] According to Imam Khumainî[13] a large number of items are exempted. Although the center piece of Islamic Public Finance is *zakāt*, its coverage, rates, beneficiaries and administration have been a controversial problem among Muslim scholars from different schools of Islam.

## Coverage

In contrast to the majority of Shi'a jurists, it is generally agreed among Sunni scholars that the coverage of *zakāt* has to be extended to forms of wealth not known in the early days of Islam. According to M. N. Siddiq, shares and securities, saving in the form of insurance premiums and provident funds, rented buildings and vehicles on hire, machinery and other capital goods are taxable. He states:

> Many issues continue to be controversial, one of them being the *zakāt* on machinery and capital goods. Mawdudi regards only the marketable produce of industrial units to be subject to 2.5% annual tax, and all other merchandise such as capital goods and machinery installed in these units are exempted from *zakāt*. Akram finds this view to be inconsistent with Mawdudi's opinion on the *zakāt* of shares in industrial concerns.[14]

## Rates

In contrast to the 'ulamā who generally have the same opinion regarding the rates of *zakāt* as permanently fixed by Islamic law, a number of recent writers, such as M. N. Siddiq,[15] argue in favor of making these rates open to change by the state. `Ulama point out that the state is empowered to collect additional taxes, over and above the prescribed *zakāt*, for no specific provisions are found in the *Shari'ah* that the arguments in favor of flexible rates

have practical significance. The arguments in favour of valuation of the *nisāb*, i.e. the exemption limits prescribed by the *Shari'ah,* are more difficult. The main economic reason is maintained as follows:

> Logically and practically it is impossible to treat as watertight compartments the three branches of fiscal planning: resource allocation, economic stabilization and income and wealth distribution. In a smoothly running Islamic economic system, the redistribution function through progressive taxation would wither away, leaving it the task of merely maintaining the egalitarian economic system with proportional taxation. To achieve and maintain such an egalitarian system, except for minor direct transfer payments mainly to those mentally and physically deprived of the capacity to earn, the main head of expenditure of *Zakāt/Sadaqah/ Infāq* tax revenues would be in the resource allocation and stabilization branches. This would be consistent with the multiple goals of the Islamic economic system, spending on all the beneficiaries enumerated in the Qur'an by maintaining full employment and enabling everybody to acquire earned income and wealth in a manner that preserves human dignity.[16]

In this regard M. N. Siddiq states:

> One of the major roles of progressive taxation in a modern economy is an equitable sharing of the burden of raising income for the state. Progressive taxation ensures equitable sharing of this burden. As the need for such income is likely to go on increasing, there is no possibility of doing away with progressive taxation. [17]

## Distribution of the zakāt by the Bayt al-Māl

There are eight categories of the recipients of the *Zakāt* funds:

1. Poor: Those who do not have enough for their basic needs.

2. Destitute: Those who become weaker or who are under hardship of insolvency and are keeping their conditions hidden from others. The people who fall under this category are those who have no control over changing their financial conditions and are victims of circumstances.

3. *Zakāt* collectors: They are to be paid only according to the prevailing wages, that is, commensurate with other jobs which require a similar amount of time and energy.

4. Those who need special attention and kind treatment in order to win their hearts: There are three main categories: a) Muslims who are wavering, including the newly-converted Muslim, b) Muslims living in border areas who need stronger support for defence, and c) Non-Muslims who agree not to fight against Muslims and/or otherwise become helpful to the Muslims and/or the Islamic state.

5. Freeing human beings from bondage.

6. Those unable to pay their debts.

7. Spending in the cause of Allah.

8. Travellers who run out of money and the handicapped.[18]

There is a different opinion regarding disbursement of *zakāt* revenue among the various groups of the beneficiaries listed in the Qur'an. According to M. N. Siddiq[19] some 'ulama insist on direct transfer payments to the beneficiaries. Some permit the *zakāt* benefits to flow to the beneficiaries indirectly through institutions providing needed services. Some scholars believe that

if the beneficiaries are the deprived, the officers in *Zakāt* administration and those whose hearts are to be won over *zakāt* revenue must be transferred directly and the rest can receive the benefits indirectly.

## Conclusion

With the above-mentioned categories, Islam maintains that the application of the *zakāt* institution will minimize the unfairness between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Hence, it leads to a more equal situation for society as a whole. However it is the role of the *Bayt al-Māl* to help *zakāt* recipients to become *zakāt* payers. This need not necessarily be in monetary forms.[20] A. Ghazali writes:

> Disbursement of *zakāt* in monetary form is only a short-term solution to the poverty question unless the *zakāt* recipients themselves have the initiative to invest their *zakāt* money into enterprising ventures. Therefore, to ensure that the *zakāt* funds of the *Bayt al-Māl* attain the desired long-run benefits for the recipients, *zakāt* funds should be utilized with the main aim of establishing, for example, employment-creation projects.[21]

## Bibliography

Abdul Mannan, Muhammad (1986), *Islamic Economics: Theory and Practice*. (Britania:The Islamic   Academy, Cambridge)

Arberry, Arthur J., trans (1982), *The Koran* (Oxford University Press)

Dekmejian, R. Hrair (winter 1980),. "The Anatomy of Islamic Revival," *The Middle East Journal*   34/1): 1-12.

Esposito, John L. ed. (1980), *Islam and Development; Religion and Sociopolitical Change* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press)

Ghazali, Aidit (1990), *Development An Islamic Pespective* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Publication)

Gibb, H.A.R. and J.H. Kramers (eds.), *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1961) (London: Luzac & Co.), pp. 654-656.

Hasanuzzaman, S. M. (1976), "*Zakāt* and Fiscal Policy" Paper presented at the *First International Conference on Islamic Economics* (Makka)

Khomeini, Sayyid Rûhullah  (1979), *Islamic Government (al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya)* with an introduction by Dr. Hassan Hanafi (Cairo: n.p.)

-------. RIsāla *Tawdih al-Masā'il*. (Qum: Daftar-i Intishārāt-i Islāmî)

Khurshid Ahmad (1976), "Economic Development in an Islamic Framework". *First International      Conference   on   Islamic Economic* (Selected Papers) (Jeddah: Taj Offset Press)  pp. 171-188.

Khurshid, Ahmad (1969),  *Socialism or Islam* (Karachi: Chirāgh-i Rāh Publications)

Najatullah Siddiqi, Muhammad (1976), "Muslims Economic Thinking: A Survey of Contemporary Literature". *First International Conference on Islamic Economic* (Selected Papers) (Jeddah: Taj Offset Press) pp.  191- 269.

Nicholas, P. Aghnides (1916), *Mohammadan Theories of Finance* (New York: Columbia University Press)

Qutb Ibrāhîm Muhammad (1990), *al-Siyāsat al-Māliya li abî Bakr*. (Cairo: al-Hay'atal-Misriyyat al-'Ām lilkitāb)

Sadr, Muhammad Bāqir (1968),  *Iqtisādunā*. (Beirut: N.P)

Thomas, C. John (1980), "Islam and Modern Economic Change". *Islam and Development; Religion and Sociopolitical Change*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press) pp. 25-47.

---

[1]Aidit Ghazali, *Development: An Islamic Perspective*, (Malaysia: Pelanduk Publication,1990), p. 46.

[2] Ibid. p. 47.

[3]Ibid. p. 51-2.

[4]Ibid. p. 52.

[5]Muhammad, Abdul Mannan. *Islamic Economics: Theory and Practice* (Britania: The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, 1986), p. 175.

[6]Ibid. p. 176.

[7]A. Ghazali, *Development,* p. 47.

[8] Khomeini, Sayyid Ruhullah, *Risālah Tawḍih al-Masā'il* (Qum: Daftar-i Intishârât-i Islâmî), p. 202.

[9]A. Ghazali, *Development,* p. 48. See also Qutb Ibrâhîm Muhammad, *al-Siyâsat al-Mâliya liabî Bakr* (Cairo, al-Hay'at al-Misriyat al-`Âm lilkitâb, 1990), p. 149.

[10]N. P. Aghnides, Mohammedan Theories of Finance, p. 203.

[11]John Thomas, Cummings and others. "Islam and Modern Economic Change". *Islam and Development; Religion and Sociopolitical Change* (Syracuse University Press, 1980), p. 27.

[12]R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Anatomy of Islamic Revival," The Middle East Journal 34, 1 (winter 1980): 1-12, p. 12. (q. John Thomas, Cummings and others. "Islam and Modern Economic Change". *Islam and Development; Religion and Sociopolitical Change*. Syracuse University Press, 1980. p.28.)

[13]Imam Ruhollah al-Khomeini, Islamic Government (al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya) (Cairo: n.p., 1979) with an introduction by Dr. Hassan Hanafi. (q. Ibid)

[14]Muhammad Najatullah Siddiqi, "Muslims Economic Thinking: A Survey of Contemporary Literature". *First International Conference on Islamic Economic* (Sellected Papers) (Jeddah: Taj Offset Press,1976), p. 212.

[15]Ibid. p. 213.

[16] Hasanuzzaman, S. M.: "Zakat and Fiscal Policy" Paper presented at the *First International Conference on Islamic Economics* (Makka, 1976), p. 205. (q. Ibid).

[17] M. N. Siddiqi, "Muslims Economic Thinking" p. 214.

[18] A. Ghazali, *Development,* p. 49-50. See also S. R. M. Khumainî, *Risâla Tawdih al-Masâ'il*, p. 211.

[19] M. N. Siddiqi, "Muslims Economic Thinking" p. 214.

[20] A. Ghazali, *Development*, p. 50.

[21] Ibid.

# The Doctrine of Mahdi and Pluralism

## Mohammad Hussein Mokhtari

Literally, pluralism means "many" and "multiple" and, technically, it refers to the difference in viewpoints and plurality of the readings of a school. The term pluralism is not only used in religion but it is also used in other disciplines such as ethics, law and politics. In this paper, we will try to examine briefly the idea of religious pluralism and its relation with the doctrine of al-Mahdi in Islam.

### The history and origin of the idea of religious pluralism

Unacceptable conduct of the medieval church along with her failure in engaging with productive and respectful dialogue with the scientists and philosophers paved the way for development of religious pluralism. Of course, the foundation of this theory is deeply connected with political and religious liberalism as well. The term "liberalism" was used for the first time by a political ideology at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe. The movement in theology founded by Friedrich Schleiermacher was identified as liberal Protestantism at the same time. However, there are those liberal protestants who are not politically liberal and also political liberals who are not concerned with religious liberalism. The mentality among political and religious liberals in ethical, social and political terms is more often than not the reflection of the same basic beliefs and perspectives especially in terms of the relationship between religion and politics.[1]

Religious liberalism appeared along with political liberalism. In fact, it was a reaction against political liberalism. At first, political liberalism which was a reaction against wars and homicide emerged. A group of political thinkers revolted against prejudice and founded political liberalism based on tolerance, forbearance and respect for individual freedoms and rights. Afterwards, religious liberalism appeared to politically justify political liberalism. A group of Christian theologians, including Schleiermacher, defended this viewpoint theologically and philosophically.

Thus, the historical record of religious liberalism is traced back to the nineteenth century, starting with Schleiermacher and rooted in political liberalism. Therefore, some of the features of religious liberalism or liberal Protestantism resulted from the acceptance of modern and nontraditional interpretations of the Bible and recognition of religious experience and personal feeling as the basis and essence of religion.

Thus, Protestantism is the source of political liberalism which itself is the source of religious liberalism; therefore, religious pluralism is the result of religious liberalism.

**Religious Pluralism**

There are various interpretations of religious pluralism, the most important being:

1. The true religion is only one but this one absolute truth is not received by one divine prophet. It has been revealed to all prophets in one form or another. In other words, the religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism represent different aspects of a single truth. The difference between the aspects is not that they are right or wrong; rather, they differ in point of view. Therefore, all divine religions are the same in legitimacy and each can lead to human happiness.

2. There are many and various truths. This interpretation recognizes all religions and human schools of thought, but considers the truth of one religion different from that of other religions. In other words, it does not believe in a single 'Right Path' but in multiple 'Right Paths'. Thus, it regards all human religions and schools as genuine and parallel paths to human felicity and salvation. As Christian theologian and philosopher John Hick argues, pluralism implies that it is possible to have "the conversion of human beings from egoistic to truth (of God)-oriented attitude in different ways within all world religious traditions. In other words, there are various and plural ways for happiness and salvation."[2]

Of course, the theory of religious pluralism stands against religious 'exclusiveness' which holds that there is only one true religion. Of course, exclusivism may leave some room for happiness of followers of some other religions. For example, from a Christian point of view, Christianity is the only true religion, but since followers of other religions have been looking for the divine will and submitted to it, they are actually harmonious with the spirit and message of Christianity, despite the fact that they have not known Christianity or knowingly repudiated it. Karl Rahner, an advocate of this theory, has called such people "the unknown Christians." [3]

## The principle of salvation and felicity

Another interpretation of pluralism is to regard religion as a path to salvation and eternal happiness. In other words, all divine laws in all ages lead to salvation. Believing in God, following divine laws, and implementing their precepts are sufficient to reach salvation.

To understand this subject we must first be aware that the idea of religious pluralism in Christianity is the result of special Christian beliefs about salvation and felicity. This means that man can

benefit from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and find salvation solely through Christianity.

According to the traditional teachings of Christianity, salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ. Even the great prophets must wait in Limbo for Jesus Christ to take measures and bring them salvation. A group of Christian thinkers who opposed this idea tried to find a way for the salvation of non-Christians. They claimed that faith can lead to salvation. Despite their religious affiliation, those who are faithful have potentially accepted Christianity. They proposed that there ought to be a faith of the common heritage for all the great religious traditions of the world. Regardless of the differences in view among Christian groups concerning pluralism, there is a common presupposition. An appropriate faith is the prerequisite for salvation. This view is also supported by Hick and Rahner. To open the gate of paradise more, Rahner has extended the meaning of appropriate faith to include those who live like Christians and might have converted to Christianity had they been subject to Christian teachings. However, Hick has taken it a step further to emphasize the compatibility of the surface differences of world religions.[4] The principle of salvation and felicity in Christianity is a response to the question of who would be worthy of it and who would be deprived of this privilege.

Christian scholars, including Hick, respond to this question in different ways: 1) exclusiveness, 2) inclusiveness, and 3) religious pluralism.

The exclusivists believe that truth and felicity exist in only one religion and there is only one inclination to one religion through which one may reach felicity. That is, through the belief in the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, forgiving people's sins and participating in the sacrifice is the only factor of felicity.

The adherents of inclusiveness believe that although Christianity is the only way of salvation, all could step in this path provided

that they adhere to the rules of the religion and sincerely follow it. Christians who are good doers and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ are also regarded as worthy of salvation. In proving this, several justifications are given. For example, one justification is that other religions are not absolutely void and have somehow benefited from the truth and eternal happiness. However, there is only one main road; other roads are close to the main one and their followers are subject to salvation.

But religious pluralism states all religions can be a source of felicity and salvation. In other words, truth and felicity may be with all religions and all their followers might benefit it. All religions are different aspects of one truth; therefore, they are different ways to a single truth. Followers of other religions are not subject to punishment.

Therefore, religious pluralism, in response to the principle of salvation, went beyond and introduced the genuineness of non-Christian religions. The adherents of this attitude severely criticized the claim of the genuineness of a particular religion in order to open the gate of Heaven to followers of non-Christian religions. They believed that all religions are true and it guides their followers to the final truth. Thus, currently in the West the issue of religious pluralism is beyond the principle of felicity. Therefore, it is essential to elaborate on the Islamic idea about the two issues of "the principle of salvation" and "the genuineness of all religions" and with a look into the religion, study the two issues under the one title of "Islam and the genuineness of religions." Islamic sources will be used to elucidate the Islamic idea in this regard. Then the relationship between this issue and the doctrine of Mahdi will be analyzed.

**Islam and the genuineness of religions**

According to Islam, the issue of salvation and felicity is different from the genuineness. The concept of salvation and felicity in Islam is wider in its scope than the concept of genuineness.

According to Islam, salvation and eternal happiness is possible for the following: followers of Islam since the time of the Prophet (S) until the end of the world, followers of every divine religion before a new religion came from God and those who essentially had no access to true religion, such as those who could not find out or understand it and those who have not yet reached puberty. The Holy Qur'an exempts such groups from obligations and, therefore, they are not subject to punishment.[5]

It should be mentioned that every religion at every period was intended to save its followers. However, they did not work parallel to each other; otherwise, there would be no difference between Islam and other religions. The Qur'an invites Jews and Christians to Islam. It also criticizes those who refute the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam.[6]

Therefore, the belief that all religions are true or that each of them carries a part of the truth and thus is a source of salvation for its followers even at the present age is not acknowledged by Islam. Islam does not recognize all religions as true. It condemns the exclusive claim of the Jews and the Christians as mentioned in various verses in the Holy Qur'an: "The Jews said that only the Jews would enter Paradise and the Christians said only the Christians. This is only a void wish of theirs; say to them bring evidence if you are truthful."[7] Nevertheless, Islam is exclusive in terms of genuineness but its exclusiveness is different from that of Judaism and Christianity, because the exclusive attitude of Islam in terms of genuineness implies that after Muhammad (S) was called to prophethood, whoever received his message and could understand the content then he or she had to accept the invitation to Islam. The Holy Qur'an, in *The Cattle: 19*, quotes the Prophet of Islam: "God is witness between me and you, and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach"

Other divine laws such as that of Abraham, that of Moses and that of Jesus Christ have been valid at their own time. It should be

noted that Islam is sometimes applied to all divine religions and laws so the religion that each messenger brought from God was *Islam*. It is also used to refer to the special religion and law of the Prophet Muhammad (S). The former is called "the eneral Islam" and the latter is called "the particular Islam."[8]

Therefore, the truth of all divine religions is one which is revealed to all prophets who possessed a law. What has been revealed to them is the assertion of God's Unity and submission to the Absolute One. Thus, it is erroneous to think that the truth of religions has been completely out of the reach of the prophets and that the religions have not been completely revealed to them. Neither is it true that when there is a difference among the divine religions it is due to difference of opinion amongst the prophets and the variety of the aspects of the truth. However, the reason to such differences is the difference in mental growth of humanity as well as varying cultural and social conditions Additionally, the difference among the followers of early divine laws and the distortions they were subject to are among the other causes for renewing the divine laws.[9]

The plurality which exists in religions and divine laws and sources is not relative but ambiguous, the ambiguity of external facts and the ambiguity of human sciences; because the divine laws, depending on the needs of people of different periods, are revealed as various facts in many laws, while common at the same time. Such is the case of prescribing different kinds of medicine for a patient at different stages. A doctor prescribes a particular medicine at each stage. Each medicine in turn has its special effect. It is not the case that some medicine is useful and some other is useless. Therefore, the differences among the divine laws are related to ambiguity in external reality. The same exists in the human sciences since understanding is actually the result of different degrees of understanding of realities, knowledge becomes ambiguous and the differences of opinion among interpreters in interpreting a text are of the same kind.[10]

According to the Holy Qur'an, all the monotheistic religions are actually one religion and all prophets invite people to Islam. We read in the Qur'an:

> The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein.[11]

The truth of Islam in this sense is submitting wholeheartedly to the divine commands. Imam Ali (A) defines Islam in this way: "Islam is submission which is certitude which is acknowledgement which is admission which is fulfilment which is to act."[12]

Thus, the general Islam which is submission to what appears in the form of Abraham's law at the time of Abraham, Moses's law at the time of Moses, Jesus's law at the time of Jesus and it appears in the form of Muhammad's law at the age of the seal of the prophecy.

The meaning of Islam at the time of each of the above-mentioned prophets is that the prophet of the time and also earlier prophets should be obeyed. People should have faith in the prophet of the time as well as the prophets before him. Otherwise, he or she would not have obeyed the divine commands. At the present time when Muhammad's law is to be followed since it is the crystallization of the general Islam, every sane person should follow and respond to him when hearing his message.

Ibn 'Arabi, the well-known mystic, also believes in the superiority of Islam over other religions. He insists on exclusiveness, too, since he regards earlier religions as stars compared to the sun of Islam. He explicitly speaks of the expiration of the previous laws.[13] In other sources he describes

Islam as "the soul of religions," "the trueth of all truths" and "the greater and the clearer truth" where he is explicit in the idea of the superiority of Islam over other religions.[14]

The superiority of Islam implies that the existence of a law as the true law in every period in human history is an undeniable fact. The true law at our time is Islam. The soul and essence of all divine laws is the same monotheism in terms of belief and action. The common basis of the invitation of all divine prophets has been monotheism i.e. worship of the absolute One and submission to His will. Some of the commands and prohibitions are common among religions while others are related to cultural and social conditions that change over time. Therefore, the religions contain common as well as individual points but with the advent of Islam as the most complete form of divine revelation and laws, all previous laws are no longer feasible.

The Holy Qur'an is the only one not distorted, since God has promised to guard it from corruption.[15] As a matter of fact, this book is not limited to a particular time and place; on the contrary, it should be followed until the Day of Resurrection and throughout the world. With the advent of Islam, the divine religion has reached a state of perfection.[16] Thus that would be the last prophet appointed by God.[17]

Therefore, the principle of exclusiveness from the perspective of genuineness has a particular interpretation in Islam: it is the submission before the commands of the Almighty God. The fact that some of the "People of the Book" have been severely criticized in the Holy Qur'an is because they insisted on their way and path and did not submit to the command of God, despite the fact that they possessed certitude about God's commands and their responsibility towards them. Although they knew that the Prophet's sayings are true and knew him as well as they knew their own children and could find in him the signs given by the Old and New Testament (2:146), they did not submit to the truth; on the contrary, they tried to hide it. However, the Holy Qur'an

and the law of Muhammad were meant to guide the People of the Book too. It is only through this new revelation that they could find guidance into the straight path. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an explicitly states:

> O People of the Book! Certainly Our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you used to hide of the Book, and excusing many [an offense of yours]. Certainly there has come to you a light from God, and a manifest Book. With it God guides those who follow [the course of] His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path. (5:15 & 16)

## Doctrine of Mahdi and belief in genuineness and eternality of Islam

As mentioned earlier, "religion" is one essence in all periods and is not described as plural. In other words, religion is beyond expiration and is not subject to addition or deduction. Since it is one, in Arabic *dīn* (religion) is used only in the singular form and not plural (adyān). Religion does not admit plurality and its truth is the admission to the one God who is worthy of worship. Thus the Holy Qur'an states:

> The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will). (3:19)

> Islam is the only acceptable religion: If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good). (3:85)

Of course, this divine command is not restricted to the time of the Prophet; it is in effect in other ages as well. We read in the Holy Qur'an about the Prophet Abraham: "Abraham was neither a Jew

nor a Christian but he had submitted to the religion of Islam; he had not committed polytheism." (3:67)   The meaning of this verse is nothing but the belief in plurality and variety of divine laws or religions since religion is the belief in the oneness of God and the unquestionable submission to Him which is the common aspect of all religions advertised and promoted by all prophets.

Therefore, the mission of Imam Mahdi (A) is nothing but the promotion of Islam, the one religion promoted by all divine prophets and its developed and comprehensive form under the title of "religion of Islam" as a perfect set of teachings and beliefs. Among the heavenly laws, Islam is not revealed for a particular time or place but it would include all nations and all periods:

> We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and warner to all mankind, but most people do not know. (34:28)

> We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations. (21:107)

Islam came when human beings had reached a level of understanding that could receive and protect the final message of God. Thus, the religion of Islam is not limited to a particular age, group or race. It belongs to human nature and all human beings may draw on its guidance. According to Shi'ite and Sunni traditions, Imam Mahdi (A) will command on the basis of the Qur'an while his religion will be the religion of Islam and will take measures towards establishing justice and equity all over the world. He will surmount all obstacles on the way of this great mission and bravely introduce the original teachings of Islam. He will eliminate the divisions and will unite all human communities on the basis of the great religion of Islam. Imam Riḍā (A) praying to God said: "Oh God! Through him (Imam Mahdi) turn the Ummah's dispersion to continuity and division to unity; annihilate oppression and establish justice."[18]

Therefore, the plan of the promised Mahdi (A) for the world is to implement divine rules; he will call people to no religion but Islam. Logically, it goes without saying that it is not possible in any other way since the essence of religion is the same for all nations and races for the following reasons: firstly, no religion except Islam will be accepted by God; secondly, the truth of man who is created by God is an unchangeable one; thirdly, God is responsible for the development of this truth; fourthly, God will never be subject to ignorance, negligence and mistake but He is eternally aware of all truths. Therefore, God does not have two religions and does not issue two sets of commands at the same time. This fact is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.[19] It is the manifestations of religion that are perfected. It is not true to say that religion had been defective and then it was perfected. In other words, the truth of religion is one; sometimes its lower stages are revealed; other times its final stages is revealed: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as the best religion" (5:3) The conditions of an era change only the subsidiary rules of religion, and not the principles of religion.

On the other hand, one might say since human being is a combination of soul and body, his soul depends on the metaphysical world which is stable throughout the ages and not affected by the passage of time. Thus, the causes and elements of its development should be looked for in metaphysics. However, his body is rooted in nature and place and therefore his material needs may change. Therefore, the laws which are related to the changing dimension of man are themselves diverse and changing. The principles of religion and the general guidelines of ethics, laws and jurisprudence, prescribed for the unchageable of human beings are fixed themselves because man is of a stable nature. But the laws which depend on the conditions and ways of human life are varying. [20]

**The renaissance of Islam and its inclusiveness**

The Shi'a believe that Islam will be revived with the appearance of Imam Mahdi (A). He will also revive the Sunnah and conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (S). There are several verses in the Qur'an related to the advent of Imam Mahdi (A). For example, the Qur'an says:

> It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse. (9:33)

To illustrate this, here are some traditions interpreting the above-mentioned verse. For example, Abu Basir, a companion of Imam Sadiq (A) says that he asked the Imam about this verse and Imam replied: "I swear by God that the interpretation of the verse has not been realized yet". I asked: "when will it be realized, my master?" Imam replied: "When the will of God is fulfilled and Imam Mahdi (A) appears. When he appears, the infidels will be worried about his appearance…." [21] It is also narrated that Imam Baqir (A):

> The Imam will be victorious because of the fear in the hearts of the enemy. He is supported by God; the earth will be trodden for him; the treasures of earth will be uncovered to him; while his sovereignty will cover the East and the West of the world. God will make His religion overcome all schools of the world though the infidels will be unhappy and opposing. He will rebuild the ruins of the earth while Jesus Christ will stand behind him for prayer. [22]

It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq (A) who stated:

> My father (Imam Baqir) was asked about the verse and he responded in this way: the verse is not to be interpreted yet; when Imam Mahdi (A) uprises

> those who are alive then will realize the
> interpretation of the verse. Then the religion of
> Muhammad will change as if from night to a true
> day. There will be no trace of polytheism then as
> stated by God in the verse. [23]

Here, it is likely to mention a few points about the Shi'ite belief
in the sovereignty of Islam throughout the world by the last
Imam, the realization of the divine ideals and a world government
founded on justice, peace, coexistence of all human races and
nations together with kindness in the light of the Holy Qur'an.
Imam Mahdi, the only a son of the Prophet of Islam will
materialize the promise of God.

According to Islamic hadiths, the successors of the Prophet
Muhammad (S) are twelve in number and all descend from the
Quraysh tribe.[24] This can be found in major Sunni collections of
hadith like *Sahih* of Muslim, *Sunan* of Tirmidhi, *Sunan* of Abi
Davoud and *Musnad* of Ahmad. The same can be found in major
Shi'a collections of hadith like *Al-kāfi*. In an authentic hadith,
Kulayni reports that Imam Baqir (A) said: "God has sent the
Prophet Muhammad (S) for the human being and the jinn and
assigned twelve Imams."[25]  In the same book there is antother
hadith from Imam Baqir (A) stating: "We are twelve Imams
including Hasan and Husayn and then Imams who descend from
Imam Husayn (A)".[26]

Again according to Sunni and Shi'ite sources, the Imams descend
from the family of Muhammad, the first one being Imam Ali
(AS). For instance, Ibn Abbas narrates from the Messenger of
God who has said:

> Whoever likes to lead a life like mine, have a
> death like mine and find his destination in the
> paradise they should follow Ali (A), be a company
> of Imam Ali's followers and follow the Imams
> after me who descend from my household.[27]

The Prophet said: "Mahdi (A) is a member of our household; the same behind whom Jesus Christ, son of Mary, stands for prayer."[28] The Prophet (S) also said: "Mahdi is a descendent of my household and a son of Fatima; he will struggle on the basis of my way and method as my struggle was based on revelation." [29] In another tradition the Prophet said: "He will uprise with the religion of Islam at the end of the world, as I moved with Islam at the beginning of Islam".[30]

It is clear then, according to these traditions, Imam Mahdi (AS) is a descendant of the prophet of Islam, that there will be a government of Islam at the end of the world and that there will be no other religion whatsoever. It can be understood from hadiths that the government of the Ahl al-Bayt will be the last government to implement justice and righteousness in the world.[31]

Imam Mahdi (A) will attempt to form a united Islamic ummah of the world and establish justice, peace and permanent coexistence among all nations and groups of any race, colour and culture. In this regard, Imam Sadiq states: "God will elevate Islam after its trivialization through Imam Mahdi (A) and He will revive it after a period of isolation." [32]

In the supplications about Imam Mahdi (A), we find that God is asked to hasten the appearance of Imam Mahdi (A) and thus the fulfilment of the divine promise so that in the light of such a government Islam and Muslims find again their greatness and elevation while the infidels and the hypocrites meet humiliation and trivialization. For instance, we find in the prayer of "*Iftitāh*":

> Oh God! We ask you earnestly to establish an honourable government by which you honour Islam and Muslims and humiliate hypocrisy and the hypocrites; in that government make us of those who call for your obedience and guide into

> your path; blessed with such a government grant
> us gifts of grace in this world and in the hereafter.

According to the hadith of "*Thaqalayn*", the infallible Imams, especially Imam Mahdi (A), will never get separated from the Holy Qur'an. Thus, he will put an end to the isolation of the Holy Qur'an. This tradition is widely transmitted and has been registered in the famous Sunni and Shiite resources.[33] Twenty three companions of the Prophet have narrated it directly from the Prophet. Therefore, there cannot be any doubt about the authenticity of the tradition.

The infallible Imams are the true interpreters of revelation; they say nothing that contradicts the Holy Qur'an. Imam Ali (A) asserts:

> He (Mahdi) takes the opinion from the Qur'an
> when others impose their own ideas on it; he
> shows them the way of justice and revives the
> Book and the Sunnah which have been isolated
> and abandoned.[34]

Thus, since Imam Mahdi (A), like his forefathers, is the true interpreter of the Holy Qur'an and familiar with the secrets of the revelation and has access to the secret and the truth of the Qur'an, he will identify the inauthentic interpretations narrated after the demise of the Holy Prophet up until the age of appearance. He will clarify the true meaning of the Qur'anic verses to the people. He will also struggle to implement the Holy Qur'an on earth accompanied by Jesus Christ, son of Mary.

Thus, there will be a renaissance and a revival of the bright commands of Islam.

**Conclusion**

Reason dictates that we choose the more complete religion and prefer the more comprehensive and better divine law. Islam is the

manifestation and the summary of the evolutionary development of past divine laws revealed to the great divine prophets by God at different ages and according to the conditions and intellectual and cultural capabilities of human communities. There exists ample evidence in the Holy Qur'an and the hadiths which imply that at the end, the righteous people will rule throughout the world. Any kind of polytheism will be eliminated from the entire world. Such a universal event will be realized by a descendent of the prophet of Islam. Thus, the doctrine of Mahdi and the belief in a one-world government is outstanding evidence which alludes to the fact that pluralism is baseless. It is because all will be called to one single religion. A single religion will govern the entire world. Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, will accompany and followthe Imam (A) and will invite his followers to accompany him (A) in this significant divine event. These are good enough reasons that religion is limited to "the religion of Islam" and thus the idea of religious pluralism is rejected. Therefore, Imam Mahdi (A) will lead humanity towards a just law, permanent peace and justice as well as ethical and spiritual virtues.

---

1 Muhammad Legenhausen, *Islam and Religious Pluralism*, p. 13
2 John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, p. 36
3 Ibid., p. 34
4 Muhammad Legenhausen, *Islam and Religious Pluralism*, p. 96
5 Israa: 15, The Poets: 208, 209, The Story: 47, Taha: 134
6 Cattle: 20-21; Israa: 15, The Poets: 208, 209, The Story: 47, Taha: 134
7 The Cow: 111
8 *Mabāni-e Ma'refat-e Dini* (Principles of Religious Knowledge) by Muhammad Husseinzadeh, p. 139
9 Majmueh Athār of Murtaza Mutahhari, vol. III, pp. 154-157
10 *Dinshenāsi*, Javadi Amuli, pp. 205-206
11 Counsel: 13. The same them can be found in the Cow: 132, the House of Imran: 67 and other verses.
12 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, the Short Sayings, no. 125
13 *Al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah*, Muhyiddin al-'Arabi, vol. III, pp. 152, 311

14 *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Muhyiddin al-'Arabi, vol. I, pp. 90, 79

15 Stoneland: 9

[16] The Table: 3

[17] The Clans: 40

[18] Muhammad Muhammadi Reyshahri, *Ahl al-Bayt in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith,* vol.II, p. 789

[19] The House of Imran: 19 & 85

20 Ibid., p. 191.

21 *Mahajjah* by Bahrani, p. 86

22 *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, p. 191.

23 *Tafsir*-e by 'Ayyashi, vol. II, p. 56

24 *Sahih* of Bukhari, Kitāb al-Ahkām, vol. V, tradition no. 165

25 *Usul-e Kāfi*, vol. I, p. 532

[26] Ibid. p. 533.

[27] *Helyat al-Awliya*, vol. I, p. 86

[28] Majlisi, *Bihār Al-Anwār*, vol.51, p. 91

[29] *Bayān-e Shafei*, p. 63

[30] *Bihār Al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 78

[31] *Amāli* by al-Saduq, vol. III, p. 396

[32] *Bishārat al-Islam*, p. 297

[33] *Sahih* of Muslim vol. IV, p. 1873; *Sahih* of Tirmidhi, vol. V, p. 662, the chapter of Manāqib Bayt Al-Nabi, tradition no. 3786

34 Ibn Abi Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. IV, p. 36

# The Merits of Fasting and the Month of Ramadan

## Mohammad Ali Shomali

The significance of fasting in Islam can be deduced from many verses of The Holy Qur'an. For example, the verses 2:45 reads:

استعينوا بالصبر و الصلوه و انها لكبيره الا على الخاشعين

> And take recourse in patience and prayer, and it is indeed hard except for the humble.

Based on several narrations, "patience" has been interpreted as fasting due to the fact that fasting, consisting of abandoning certain acts such as eating and drinking for part of the day is one of the best forms of patience. Muslims have been advised by the narrations to resort to fasting when confronted with challenging problems and difficulties.

Although fasting is deeply connected to the month of Ramadan, it is an important act of worship by itself that cab be performed outside Ramadan as well. Except for two forbidden days, fasting is a recommended deed throughout the year, especially in certain months such as Rajab and Sha'ban and on certain days such as Mondays and Thursdays. Moreover the month of Ramadan, regardless of fasting, provides a great opportunity to give even to those upon whom fasting is not incumbent an opportunity to benefit from countless merits of this month. Interestingly, this opportunity is not confined to mature people, for Islamic narrations state that a fetus in his/her mother's womb or an immature child can participate in this banquet of Allah (SWT). Furthermore, sleeping is not regarded as an impediment for one's share of the excellence of the month of Ramadan.

**Month of Ramadan as described by the Holy Prophet of Islam**

In a well-known sermon delivered by the Holy Prophet of Islam (S) in the last Friday of the month of Sha'ban, he emphasized:

ايها الناس انه قد اقبل اليكم شهر الله بالبركه و الرحمه و المغفره

> Oh people! Month of Allah has come toward you bringing divine blessing, mercy and forgiveness.[1]

The subtle point in this phrase is the fact that these three divine offerings are not granted to the people at the end of this month; rather, these are the special gifts of the month of Ramadan from the very day it begins.

The Holy prophet continued:

شهر دعيتم فيه الى ضيافه الله

> This is the month in which you have been invited to the banquet of Allah.[2]

According to the wording of the above phrase, people are "*invited*" to this banquet. Therefore, in order for one to enter such an auspicious banquet, he should accept this invitation and act upon it.

Generally speaking, while "banquet" is understood as requiring something to eat, drink and may also include some kind of entertainment, the "banquet of Allah" is essentially different. Fasting is a condition for one in order to receive the special gifts granted by Allah (SWT) in this banquet.

**Essential elements of a banquet**

For grasping the character of divine banquest, we should first note that every banquet consists of four essential elements:

1. When you are invited you will not be rejected. Thus, the host is expected to welcome his guest; otherwise, an "*invitation*" is meaningless when the invitee is denied of reception. Accordingly, when Allah (SWT) invites His servants to the banquet of Ramadan, the gates of His mercy will be opened to those who accept the invitation.

2. When you enter the venue of the banquet, you will be treated with honor and respect. Although every person who has been let in is not competent of being respected, the same is not true for the one who has been *invited* as a guest. In light of this fact, one may understand the following statement in the above-mentioned sermon:

و جعلتم فيه من اهل كرامه الله

In this month, you are made of those people whom Allah respects and honours.[3]

3. When you go to a banquet you will be given or shown something without payment. In other words, you expect to gain something without return. Correspondingly, in the banquet of Ramadan, Allah (SWT) not only rewards our actions gernerously, but also entertains His guests with various bounties without them doing something so much so that He counts the sleep of His guests as an act of worship and their breaths as His glorification, as explicitly stated in the same sermon:

انفاسكم فيه تسبيح و نومكم فيه عباده

Your breaths in it (the month of Ramaḍan) are glorification (of God) and your sleep in it is worship.[4]

4. When you are invited to a party, you naturally expect to meet the host and consider his absence as a humiliation. Accordingly, when Allah (SWT) invites His servant to His

banquet, by nature, He is ready to show Himself to His guests and meet them.

"This is the month in which you have been invited to the banquet of Allah.." This part of the sermon inspires the fact that this blessing has been dedicated to the month of Ramadan. The Holy Prophet of Islam added:

شهر هو عندالله افضل الشهور و ايامه افضل الايام و
لياليه افضل الليالى و ساعاته افضل الساعات

> In the sight of Allah, this month is the best month, its days are the best days, its nights are the best nights and its hours are the best hours.[5]

Although this month's prominence over others involves that its days, nights and hours are the best as well, by mentioning these three phrases independently, the Prophet emphasized that every portion of this month is better than its counterpart in every other month.

**Recommendations for the month of Ramadan**

The sermon continues by several instructions:

ايها الناس، ان ابواب الجنان فى هذا الشهر مفتحه
فاسالوا ربكم ان لا يغلقها عنكم

> Oh people! The gates of heaven are open in this month. So ask your Lord not to close them.[6]

The phrase, 'the gates of heaven being open' has at least two meanings:

I The chance of the one to deserve entering heaven is more in this blessed month than the other months.

II Due to the openness of heaven's gates, all kinds of divine mercy in heaven are ready to encompass the servants in tis world, angels are permitted to come to their presence and the breeze of heaven blow into this world. These make the sleep and breaths of the faithful in the month of Ramadan like the inhabitants of heaven glorification of God and worship.

Although the gates of heaven are open, the Holy Prophet warns people that if they do not appreciate such a great opportunity, subsequently Allah (SWT) will close them. The situation of the gates of fire is quite the contrary:

و ابواب النیران مغلقه فاسالوا ربکم ان لایفتحها علیکم

> And the gates of the fire are closed. So ask your
> Lord not to open them.[7]

Along these lines, the condition of satans is described as follows:

و الشیاطین مغلوله فاسالوا ربکم ان لا یسلطها علیکم

> And satans are in chains. So ask your Lord not to
> dominate them over you.[8]

Although Satan and his assistants are chained up in this month, committing sins results in releasing them. Therefore, while the month of Ramadan is the best month in itself, for a group of people, this month is worse than the other months just as the Holy Qur'an is "a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss" (17:82).

The fourth Holy Imam, Imam Sajjad, (A) in his farewell supplication for the holy month of Ramadan declares:

السلام علیک ما اطولک علی المجرمین و ما اهیبک فی
صدور المومنین

> Oh month of Ramadan! Peace be upon you! How
> long you were for wrongdoers and how awesome
> you were in the hearts of the faithful! (*Al-Sahifah
> Al-Sajjādiyyah*, supplication no. 45)

As implied by this supplication and as proved by the experience, the month of Ramadan, for those who do not fast deliberately and without any religious excuse, seems like a whole year and every moment of it is a kind of torture for them. On the contrary, those who do their best to appreciate this month find it passing quickly

and are concerned about losing a second without taking the full benefit of it.

Another instruction offered by the Holy Prophet in his Sh'baniyyah sermon is:

اذكروا بجوعكم و عطشكم فيه جوع يوم القيامه و عطشه

> When you feel hungry and thirsty in this month remember the hunger and thirst of the Day of Judgment. [9]

Tolerating thirst and hunger in this world is so difficult. We must then ponder upon the fact that the thirst and hunger in the hereafter last for years and years or for some groups of people forever. Additionally, in this world, death may be regarded as a solution for intolerable thirst and hunger, but in the next world, eternal life turns this solution into a useless one. In this regard, Chapter 43 Verse 77 reads:

وَ نادَوْا يا مالِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنا رَبُّكَ قالَ إِنَّكُمْ ماكِثُونَ

> They will call out," O Mālik! [the name of the guardian of the hell]  Let your Lord finish us off!"
> He will say," Indeed you will stay on.

According to the Holy Qur'an, there is no death for wrongdoers in the hereafter and even when their skin is burnt a new one will be replaced so the punishment of the hereafter is always experienced as a fresh one! Chapter 4 Verse 56 reads:

إِنَّ الَّذينَ كَفَرُوا بِآياتِنا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ ناراً كُلَّما نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْناهُمْ جُلُوداً غَيْرَها لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذابَ إِنَّ اللّهَ كانَ عَزيزاً حَكيما

Surely those who disbelieved in Our Signs and
Miracles, We shall cast them into the Fire. As
often as their skins are roasted wholly, we shall
change them for other skins that they may taste
the punishment. Verily, Allah is the Invincible-
Mighty, Wise.

Thus, when compared to the chastisement of the doomsday,
worldly pains can be regarded as nothing. It has been recorded in
history that during the caliphate of Imam Ali (A), when his blind
brother 'Aqil asked him to grant him an additional portion of
public treasury due to his severe poverty, the Holy Imam (A)
brought a hot piece of metal near 'Aqil. Feeling the hotness of it,
'Aqil protested: "Are you going to burn me?" "No!" Imam
replied. "You cried because of a metal made hot by a human
being for fun. Then, how do you expect me not to cry for the fire
prepared by Allah (SWT) due to His anger?"

Beside reminding us of the hereafter, the thirst and hunger during
the  month of Ramadan  reminds those who fast of poor people
experiencing the same feelings during whole days of their life and
encourages those who fast to spend some portion of their
properties in the way of Allah (SWT) and for the sake of needy
people.

**Some narrations regarding fasting**

The Holy Prophet of Islam (S) is quoted as saying:

ان الله عزوجل وكّل ملائكه بالدعاء للصائمين و قال
اخبرنى جبرئيل عن ربه انه قال ما امرت ملائكتى
بالدعاء لاحد من خلقى الا استوجبت لهم فيه.

Verily Allah (SWT) has appointed some angels
only in order to pray for the people who fast.
Gabriel has informed me that Allah (SWT) has
said: "I have not commanded my angels to pray
for one of my creatures, unless I have accepted
their prayers for him."[10]

The sixth Holy Imam, Imam Sadiq (A) has stated:

من صام لله عزوجل يوما فى شده الحر فاصابه ظما
وكل الله به الف ملكا يمسحون وجهه و يبشرونه حتى
افطر قال الله عزوجل له ما اطيب ريحك و روحك
ملائكتى اشهدوا انى قد غفرت له.

> When a person fasts on a hot day for the sake of
> Allah and becomes thirsty, Allah SWT sends 1000
> angels to touch his/her face and give him/her glad
> tidings up to the time of breaking the fast when
> Allah (SWT) tells him/her: "How nice you smell!
> What a pleasant soul you possess! Oh my angels!
> Bear witness that I have forgiven him/her."[11]

Based on narrations like this, everything that seems bad in this
world is not necessarily the same in the hereafter and vice versa.
Therefore, although the person who fasts his mouth may smell
bad in this world, he has a pleasant odour for Allah (SWT) and
the residents of heaven. On the other hand, a woman smelling
nicely for non-mahram men will not be the same in the world to
come. Thus, realities are not necessarily what appear to us in this
world.

- According to a very famous tradition narrated by both Sunni and
  Shi'ite scholars, the Holy Prophet said:

قال الله عزوجل الصوم لى و انا اجزى به

> Allah (SWT) said: "fasting is for me and I am the
> one who rewards for it".[12]

The content of this narration has been widely discussed among
the scholars. While all worships are for Allah (SWT) and
rewarded by Him, the Almighty, why has fasting been
appropriated a special position in this narration?

Three answers might be suggested here:

1. The first reason is that fasting is the abandoning of some
   acts; thus, it is the only worship that is not seen or known
   by anyone.

2. Another reason, as suggested by some scholars, is the fact that during the history, all kinds of worship (praying, pilgrimage, giving alms, sacrifice, and so on) have been offered to idols and false gods and the only exception among the acts of worship is fasting since no one has ever fasted for anyone or anything other than Allah (SWT).

3. The third reason is the special relationship between fasting and Allah swt just as we call some days as the days of Allah (SWT) and some places as the house of Allah (SWT) , even though every time and place belong to Him. This meaning implies the special mercy of Allah (SWT) for those who fast. The same implication is true with the next phrase which says: "and I am the one who rewards for it." When some workers are employed by a person he may give their wage to his agent to distribute among them. However, if the job is a special one he may personally hand the wages out to them. Similarly, Allah (SWT) without any mediation rewards those who fast.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Arabic term "اجزی" in the above-mentioned narration can be read in both active and passive forms. According to the latter, the narration gives another meaning:

"Fasting is for me and I am its reward!"

Thus, the one who fasts has Allah (SWT) with him/her as the reward of his/her act of worship just as the guest of a banquet who expects the host to welcome and meet him/her.

---

[1] *Al-Amāli* by Saduq, p. 93.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. p. 95.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid. p. 93.
[10] *Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 10, p. 396.

---

[11]  Ibid. P. 409

[12]  Ibid. p.400

# Islam and Nationalism: A Theoretical Point of View

## Part II

### Sayyid Ahmad Rahnamaei

**Nationalism and Islam: Clash or Reconciliation?**

The phenomenon of 'nationalism in religion' according to S. W. Baron is considered to be an obstacle that prevents religion from fulfilling its role in human life. The necessary balance between organized humanity's social responsibility and the right of each state would be gained through organized religion. In *Modern Nationalism and Religion*, Baron attempts to show a way to achieve this aim. For the sake of this aspiration, he makes the proposal that "religion must try to purge itself of its nationalist biases." In this regard, he believes that "the impact of religious bodies can make itself felt most strongly and effectively."[1] He further adds:

> The world religions have long represented large-scale approaches to the riddles of existence. While stressing individual beliefs and observations and, at times, overemphasizing parochial duties and attitudes, they also have taught man to think in terms of a universal godhead, the cosmic relevance of even minutiae of ethical behaviour and the essential nature of an all-human brotherhood.[2]

The religions that Baron is speaking of here are the most dominant surviving religions in the West, i.e., Christianity and Judaism. Referring to the position of the Judeo-Christian heritage, Baron remarks that it "has been endangered by the rise of the

neopagan forms of extreme nationalism and the idolization of race and state ...."[3] The negative impact of nationalism on the living religions of modern Western societies seems obvious. It should be emphasized, however, that the nationalist biases within a divine religion have never had their origin in the religion itself; rather, it is the adherents and followers who burden themselves with such prejudices. This will be made clearer when I later consider the Qur'anic teachings in this area and the philosophy of prophethood.

To fulfil the objectives of the present study, I should restrict myself to a description of nationalism in the mirror of Islam only. From a theoretical point of view, I can see that there are not many similarities between Islam as a divine religion which has its own especial doctrine of human life, and nationalism as, let us say, a political movement in terms of its fundamental elements.

A distinction between the attitude of Islam and the practice of its adherents has been suggested by Soekarno. He, criticizing nationalists' and Marxists' comment on Islam, remarks that:

> Nationalists and Marxists both blame Islam for the down-fall of the Moslem nations, their present backwardness and the fact that most of them are under Western domination.
>
> But they are confused! It is not Islam, but rather its adherents who have been at fault. Seen from a nationalist and socialist perspective, it would be hard to find a civilization comparable in greatness to that of the early Islamic world. The downfall of national greatness, the downfall of Islamic socialism was not brought about by Islam itself, but by the moral downfall of its leaders. ... Once the "Caliphs became kings," the true nature of Islam was suppressed.[4]

Soekarno also says: "I am certainly not saying that Islam accepts Materialism; nor do I forget that Islam transcends national boundaries and is supra-national in character."[5]

Once the Muslim *Ummah* was established in Madina in 632 A.D., the leader of Islam proclaimed the message of Islam on a universal scale. In his *Political Theory of Islam,* Abul 'Ala Mawdoodi remarks: "A state of this sort evidently cannot restrict the scope of its activities. It is a universal and all-inclusive state. Its sphere of activity is co-extensive with the whole of human life"[6] Islam, from the very beginning, has been a monotheistic religion of "supra-national and universal human scope." Islam, rejecting racism and nationalism, "did not stop at the call to the faith. It rose to establish a state which embodied a new nation, which is that of the believers, Islamic *Ummah* or *Ummah Muslima*."[7] P. J. Vatikiotis, in paraphrasing this point, states:

> The very basis of this new nation and its nationalism, if you wish, has been the religion of Islam. The state has been and remains its instrument. The state, therefore, has no value in itself; nor is it set up temporally for a particular people, as a nation-state, to the exclusion of others. Rather, it is based on the universal principle of Islam to safeguard the religion and extend its message.[8]

The Muslim *Ummah* is built on the basis of the Qur'anic faith and certain self-evident truths such as the equality of all people before God, friendly relationships among fellow believers, and kindness towards people. Here are some words from Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Rida (765-818) where he says:

> To be friendly with others denotes one half of wisdom.

> The believer who is endowed with a good temper will have the strongest faith.
>
> Perfection in intellect is primarily to have faith in God and secondly to behave well towards others.
>
> To bear enmity towards people is the worst provision for the journey to the Hereafter.[9]

The members of the Muslim Community, recognizing that humankind is endowed by the Compassionate Creator with certain inalienable rights, like the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are encouraged to do good, to help the persecuted and to fulfil the desires of the needy.[10] As Majid Khadduri mentions:

> In the Tradition, Muhammad is reported to have conceived of the Muslim community as "a single hand, like a compact wall whose bricks support each other," and in the Qur'an it is often referred to as a distinct "nation" (*ummah*) or a "brotherhood," bound by common obligations to a superior divine authority.[11]

Thus, one finds neither inspiration nor encouragement towards nationalism within the constitution of the Muslim ummah.

Regarding the attitude of Islam towards nationalism, there has been a very long discussion among the theoreticians of the political and social sciences. Those who express negative feelings towards nationalism are themselves divided. Some believe that nationalism is in conflict with Islam, but at the same time, they maintain, as a kind of justification, the existence of temporal secularism within the power structure of the Islamic nation. One such theoretician is Vatikiotis, whose attitude is clarified in the following passage.

> Nationalism (*qawmiyya*)[12] as an ideology is incompatible with the world of Islam, for it implies a pre-Islamic kind of tribal particularism, or *jahiliyya*. In fact, nationalism is Islam's deadliest, for it represents an attempt to separate Islam from polity and isolate it from the resolution of temporal matters. That is, it postulates the separation between religion and polity, religion and the state, or it denies Islam its central role in the regulation of Muslim earthly political affairs. The nation state in Islam is then an ideological, not a territorial concept. It comprises the community of the faithful or believers wherever they may be.[13]

Vatikiotis explains that the nation state of Islam implies "the structure of temporal-secular power."[14] The author justifies this kind of "temporal-secular power" as a means of safeguarding the *ummah* "against its external, infidel enemies and ensures that the believers can lead the life of observant Muslims."[15] This is in spite of the fact that the Qur'anic nation state of Islam by itself has nothing to do with secularism, even in its temporal form. Islam is a religion, and between it and secularism there can be found no harmony. From the genuine Islamic point of view, the believers are even taught not to accept an unbeliever ruler who governs not by the revealed *Shari'ah* of Islam.[16] As Kohn mentions:

> From the very first Islam was not only a religion, but a political and social system as well. The Koran, the Sunna, and the systems based upon them, contain not only religious commandments but also the principles of private and public law.[17]

## A glance at the Qur'anic passages

There are two Qur'anic terms that imply more or less the notion of a nation. One of these is *milla*, which is mentioned seventeen

times in fifteen verses. In defining the concept of *milla*, Raghib Isfahani, in his dictionary of Qur'anic words and expressions, states that *milla*, *imlal* and *imla'* are all of the same root. The infinitive *imla'* meaning 'to dictate', contains the notion of something which is dictated from any divine or undivine, mighty or unmighty, holy or non-holy source. The word *milla* in its religious sense means a way, a path, or a cult which is dictated and presented by a divine[18] or perhaps undivine leader or group. Both cases have been exemplified in the *Qur'an*:

> "*Say, verily, my Lord has guided me to the straight way, a right and steadfast religion, the milla (religion-trod) of Ibrahim, the true in faith, and Ibrahim certainly joined not gods with Allah.*"[19]

This verse hints at Ibrahim's *milla* as a divine path and religion. On the other hand, we recite in the *Qur'an* "*And the unbelievers said to their apostles, 'Be sure we shall derive you out of our land, or you shall return to our milla (religion).'*"[20]

Since a divine religion like that of Ibrahim was revealed and dictated by Allah, it is called *milla* in the sense that it is a dictated path that should be followed by the adherents of that divine religion. Thus, *milla* in its most elementary concept is employed to mean path, rite or religion itself, as it may be applicable to people who follow that rite or religion. In either case, *milla* in its divine sense is also attributed to the prophet or to the leader of a religion.[21] According to the *Qur'an*, people are requested to recognize and practice the divine religion of the prophet Ibrahim: "*Say, Allah speaks the truth, thus, follow the religion of Ibrahim (millata Ibrahim), the sane in faith; he was not of the pagans.*"[22] The *milla* of infidels, by contrast, is a satanic cult which is considered to contradict the divine paths of God's prophets.

Islam is an Abrahamic religion, and Muslims are to honour the *milla* of their father Ibrahim[23] by following the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims then form an Abrahamic *milla* with

especial qualifications, all of whose elements are based on divinity without taking any racial, territorial, linguistic, or other differences into consideration. This is because, as we understand from the Qur'anic verses, there is an eternal togetherness between the nation of Islam and Islam itself. Hess Andrew C. mentions that the word *millet* [*milla*] though basically employed to mean "religion", later in Islamic history is extended to include "religious community", i.e., the community of Islam.[24]

The word '*ummah*' is another Qur'anic term, referring to the religious nation of Islam. This word occurs more than forty times in the *Qur'an* as well as a number of other times in two other conjugations, i.e., *ummatukum* (your *ummah*) and *umam* (different *ummahs*). The passages that contain the word *ummah* are so varied that its meaning cannot be rigidly defined." But is the term in its Qur'anic concept identified with what R. Paret deems as always referring to "ethical, linguistic or religious bodies of people who are the objects of the divine plan of salvation"?[25] We may take this definition of *ummah* as applicable in the case of some other ethical religious nations in reality; nevertheless, it seems a problematic concept when we are concerned with the notion of a Muslim community referring to the Qur'anic passages that contain the term *ummah*. Accordingly, there is no supposition of elements like language or ethnicity as playing a role in the formation of the Islamic *ummah*. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri says:

> In an Islamic state, Islam cannot be treated as a personal affair of an individual or a belief or faith of a particular group. ... It negates the idea of duality of religious and secular life as it practically exists in present-day Christianity in the form of incompatibility between church and state.[26]

Thus, an Islamic state and secular life contradict one another. In a secular state, religion has no obligatory role in providing the

authority; rather, it is the people themselves who are the source of its authority. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri says:

> "But the authority of an Islamic state derives from the Almighty Allah ... and Islam is the basis in polity in an Islamic state; it regulates both individual and state affairs."[27]

## The usage of ummah in the Qur'an and the concept of an Islamic ummah

To some extent, the usage of the term *ummah* in the *Qur'an* does not answer our understanding of the concept. On a few occasions, the exegetes of the Qur'an qualify the term as referring exclusively to the Islamic community. Allamah Tabataba'i[28] describes the literal concept and other usages of the word *ummah* in the *Qur'an* by offering four definitions:

1- It may be literally translated as 'people', meaning a group of people, as in the verse: "*Mankind was but one single ummah (people, nation) ...*"[29]

2- Sometimes the word is meant to describe a single human being, as in the verse: "*Surely Ibrahim was an ummah devoutly obedient to Allah.*"[30]

3- 'A long period of time' is another usage of the word, as is implied in the verse: "*And remembered after an ummah*",[31] meaning after a long time.

4- 'Religion' is considered to be a fourth usage of the term, such as in the verse: "*And surely this is your single ummah and I am your Lord, therefore, fear Me,*"[32] or in the verse: "*Surely this your ummah is one ummah and I am your Lord, therefore, worship Me.*"[33] Allamah maintains that "In both these verses, according to some commentators, the word ummah ... has been used for 'religion'.[34]

Allamahh regards the first usage of the above-mentioned ones as the original meaning and remarks that the other kinds of usage are based on this fundamental one.[35] In the case of the fourth concept, he prefers to explain the word *ummah* in the sense of a 'people.' Accordingly, it represents the notion of one single Muslim nation that believes in Allah, worships Him and is faithful to Him.

Once again in dealing with the notion of the Prophet's *ummah*, Allamah interprets the word *ummah* in the two latter verses to mean nothing more or less than a group of people. He furthermore states that the reference to Muhammad's *ummah*, in the sense that it includes all those who have believed in his call, gained currency after the revelation of the Qur'an and the expansion of Islam.[36]

In his commentary on the verse: "*Verily this is your ummah, the unique ummah, and I am your Lord, then worship Me,*"[37] Allamah mentions that the word *ummah* hints at a group which gathers around the same objective. Such a translation is understood from the first root of the word *ummah*, which is *amma*, i.e. "had an aim." Therefore, *ummah* is a company of people "which has a single aim, a single goal and a single ambition, and that unity of aim unites all the members, and makes them one people. That is why it is correct to use it for one human being as well as for many ..."[38] On another occasion, Allamah maintains that the unification of the *ummah* springs from its unique *shari'a*, that is, the *Shari'a* of Oneness (*Din al-Tawhid*).[39]

## The constitution of the first Islamic community

The formation of the Islamic community dates from the time of the Prophet in Madina. He created a new community there shortly after arriving in this first city-state of Islam.[40] Ibn Ishaq in his *Sirat Rasul Allah* relates the following passage[41] which is translated by A. Guillaume:

> The apostle wrote a document concerning the emigrants and the helpers in which he made a friendly agreement with the Jews and established them in their religion and their property, and stated the reciprocal obligations, as follows: This is a document from Muhammad the prophet [governing the relations] between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and laboured with them. They are one community (*ummah*) to the exclusion of all men.[42]

The broad outlines of an Islamic state were established within this first constitution of the city-state of Madina. Through this constitution, the Prophet declared Madina to be a political unit. As depicted in article 2 of the constitution, Muslims established a "unique communication" (*ummah wahida*) as "distinct from all the people of the world."[43]

The prophet "went beyond the circle of Muslims proper and included those citizens of Madina who had not yet heeded his religious appeal in one political combination."[44] Within the framework of the constitution it is expressly stated that all citizens, including the Jews and other non-Muslim minorities, lived under the protection of the Islamic state. At any rate, this single *ummah* constituted by the Prophet was a Muslim *ummah* under whose political aegis many non-Muslim minorities had been given protection.[45] In short, as Khadduri states: "The conception of the ummah or brotherhood constituted the basis of the Islamic community in whose membership alone the believer obtains prosperity in this world and salvation in the next."[46]

The Qur'an, appreciating the wise act of the Prophet, says "*It is the milla (cult, nation) of your father Ibrahim. It is He (God) Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this revelation.*"[47]Furthermore, the Prophet, in order to reinforce the position of the newly born *ummah*, "instituted brotherhood

between his fellow emigrants and the helpers, and he said, ... 'Let each of you take a brother in God.'"

One of the aspects of the Prophet's conduct (*sirah*) that discourages nationalism and focuses on faith as the key-element of Muslim unity is this brotherhood between people of several nations and tribes. One may go further and say that even the wars that occurred between the Qurayshi Prophet and the infidel tribesmen of the Quraysh were intended to discourage tribalism as well as nationalism. The Prophet and Muslims, as depicted in the Qur'an,[48] were allowed to defend themselves and fight against the Quraysh since he and his followers had been unjustly treated by the Quraysh simply because of their faith in Allah.[49] In this case, the nationalist and tribalist interests were disregarded for the sake of the monotheistic faith of Muslims in contrast to the idol-worship of the Quraysh. This means that the faith of the *ummah* at that time overshadowed all other elements and aspects of life.

## The role of religion in the formation of the ummah wāhida

Ever since Islam was first revealed, Muslims have been encouraged to live together and to work towards establishing a single Muslim nation embracing all Muslims around the world. The Qur'an, in explaining the role of the prophets, goes beyond the concept of one Muslim nation and explains how humankind used to be one community, but because of internal disputes became divided:

> (*All*) *people were a single nation, so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners; and with them He revealed book with the truth, so that it might judge between people in that in which they differed and struggled; and none but the very people who were given the book, after clear signs* (*and arguments*) *had come to them, differed about it, due to their selfish contumacy.* [50]

This verse is addressed to all people belonging to the human race.[51] Allamah Tabataba'i states:

> This verse refers to the beginning of humanity when they were united, lived a simple life and had simple thoughts. There were no differences or any tug-of-war in matters of life or livelihood, nor were there any disagreements about religion or religious matters.[52]

During the early period of human history, there were no considerable struggles over matters affecting both everyday life and religious beliefs. Year after year, and generation after generation, human beings have been continuously climbing "the heights of knowledge and thought and ever progressing along the path of learning and culture."[53] Day by day new ways to improve human civilization are found, and newer instruments invented "to make life more and more comfortable."[54] People in primitive times did not become entangled in any serious disagreements; "nor there occurred among them any lasting differences."[55] However, since human beings possess "the natural urge to take advantage of others" and have a natural need to cooperate with others, they cannot avoid quarrelling with one another. Since some individuals were stronger in body and mind than others, they used to take more from the weaker "than they gave them in return." Thus, human mind was occupied by two different motivations with two opposite consequences. On the one hand "whenever he used a newly-acquired expertise, it opened new avenues of progress and dexterity for him." On the other, he was in need of cooperation with others.[56] Allamah Tabataba'i states:

> It may seem strange that the same natural urge compelled men to remain together, on one hand, and led them to quarrel and find differences on the other. But ... there is a third faculty above them to judge and decide, and to create a balance between them.[57]

I have paraphrased at length Allamah Tabataba'i's interpretation of the verse 2: 213 to show that according to his interpretation, God's prophets, whose major responsibility was to call people to the religion of Oneness and to establish a monotheistic religious nation, were the great architects of the *ummah wāhida*. For the sake of unity, people of all nations and races are asked to follow the path set down by those guides who themselves have been guided by Allah. Muslims, regardless of national, racial, tribal, and ethnic differences, are expected to follow the Prophet Muhammad as the Seal and as the Last of the prophets. They are called to embrace Islam with their whole existence and to worship one God, follow one prophet, acknowledge one book, one *shari'ah* and one direction, so that they might form one single community, even though they may be from different nationalities or territories.

The same Qur'anic verse encourages people to form a single community and avoid any conflict among them. However because of moral, behavioural and practical problems such as selfishness, greed, ungratefulness, injustice, etc., human beings have always contended with one another, except for those who sincerely believe. Accordingly, the best way to establish a real single community is to follow the teachings of Allah's prophets and to adhere to the divine religion revealed to them. Since the messages of all the prophets fundamentally are the same, as they all call attention to the Oneness of God and belief in the Hereafter, their sincere followers, by respecting these principles, may get along together more comfortably than unbelievers. The uniqueness of the divine religion is manifested in the following verse: "*Verily, the only religion before Allah is Islam*",[58] illustrating that all messengers had basically the same path and religion.

Allamah Tabataba'i states concerning the interpretation of the Qur'anic passage: "the verse explains why religion was promulgated and mankind obliged to follow it, and why differences occurred in it."[59]  Going into more detail, Allamah

explains that religion plays an important role in the formation of a single *ummah*. The creation of a single *ummah* is a goal which is in harmony with the nature of humankind. He maintains that "mankind having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group." Disputes however occurred that caused them to lose their togetherness. As a result of differences and disputes, people were divided into different groups and sects. These differences occurred either because of "the acquisition of the necessities of life" or "because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them."[60]

No factor other than divine religion, such as nationality, language, race, blood, territory, etc. can bring people under a single umbrella; rather, they by themselves may introduce differences of opinion. In this regard, what the verse is implying is that there are two sorts of differences: "first, the differences based on worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the differences regarding religious matters which were based not on nature, but on the revolt of mischief-makers."[61] To remove both kinds of differences, Allah created divine laws based on true faith, fine character and good actions.[62]

Based on this interpretation, Allamah remarks that the problem of human differences can be solved only by means of divine religion, whose perfect role within human society can help in the formation of one single *ummah* and the establishment of social justice. He states:

> The divine religion is the only means of happiness
> and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life
> in order. It creates a balance between various
> human instincts and urges, and keeps them on the
> middle path, preventing them from going towards
> either extreme. Thus, there appears the best system

> and the highest discipline in the human life both of
> this world and of the Hereafter, the material as
> well as the spiritual.[63]

Here, "an outline of the social and religious history of human
beings" is given in the verse.[64]

Due to the premise that human beings are social by nature, there
is a natural instinct to take advantage of others just as others may
benefit from him.

> This 'give-and-take' promoted men to live in
> society and to cooperate with each other in their
> affairs. It necessitated the safeguarding of the
> rights of every member of that society to keep a
> balance between their rights and their duties. This
> is called social justice.[65]

Throughout history, social justice has been the chief goal of
human beings. However, this same history shows that because of
the negative aspects of character, human beings always engaged
themselves and their fellows in personal and social problems.
Consequently, they let difficulties and disasters develop and
remain unsolved. Some of the characteristics of human beings are
mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: "*Surely man is unjust,
ignorant*"[66]; "*Surely insan is created avaricious*"[67]; "*Surely insan
is unjust, very ungrateful*" [68]; "*Nay! Verily insan is wont to rebel
as he sees him/herself free from want.*"[69] With respect to such
comments, Allamah remarks:

> This is why whenever a man acquires power over
> his fellows, the dictates of social justice are
> forgotten; and the mighty one ignores the rights of
> weaker ones. It is as much true in the case of
> individuals as in that of nations and states; and this
> has been going on from the early history of

mankind until the present, which is called the age
of civilization and freedom![70]

This is a common problem for human nations including Muslim
societies all around the world. It is clear that ever since it
emerged within the Muslim world, nationalism, inasmuch as it is
mostly a political movement, has not been yet able to overcome
such problems. From a historical point of view, the wave of
nationalism among Muslim societies dates to the late nineteenth
century. The phenomenon of national consciousness emerged
first in Europe and then manifested in other continents including
Muslim countries. Due to some political reasons, the first
inspiration of nationalism showed itself in the territories of
Ottoman Empire.[71]

Nationalism, though it may answer some of the needs of a nation
or eliminate certain of its problems, can never remove them all; in
fact it is likely to cause further problems. Thus, there has always
been a vital need for a strong and authentic instrument by means
of which human beings may do away with their personal and
social problems and bring social justice into practice. Allamah,
writing of the differences and disputes that have resulted in
people failing to remain as a single community, insists that divine
laws, based "on the belief of the oneness of Allah, on true faith,
on fine character and good deeds" provide the only solution.[72]

Within the framework of the constitution of Islamic society, the
afore-mentioned points are significant. Islamic society is
something of a phenomenon in our present time, potentially
maintaining as it does a certain unity in spite of the fact that it is
composed of several nationalities, and these widely separated
geographically. Today, Muslims all over the world are members
of this society, sharing many common ideas, feelings and causes.
Establishing brotherhood,[73] the Qur'an encourages believers to
have as well as to show a powerful sympathy and integration
between them. In fact, it has only been because of military or

political matters, or perhaps due to colonial interference, that Muslims, albeit unwillingly, have separated from each other.

As was mentioned before, in recent centuries, the Western powers have been one of the main causes of this separation. However, nothing has been able to destroy the basis of the unity which is rooted in the faith and implemented in the hearts of Muslims. As Iqbal, the great poet, says, "the truth is single one; though our tents (homes) are not connected to each other, our hearts are alike and united."[74]

The annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca during the month of *Dhi'l-Hijjah* is a remarkable gathering of Muslims of every nationality, and an indication of the importance that they attach to the principles in which they believe in common. The cooperation manifested in the hajj may be regarded as nothing less than a model for a potential or real United Muslim Community.[75]

## The problem with religious nationalism

Peter Van der Veer, in his work *Religious Nationalism* wherein he offers a case study of Hindu and Muslim religious struggles in India, tries to interpret this phenomenon by describing it as 'religious nationalism'. It is doubtful however whether such a problematic doctrine truly reflects reality or is merely an unfounded allegation. The author himself, being aware of this problem, says,

> The claim that something like religious nationalism exists will be rejected by many students of nationalism for the simple reason that both nationalism and its theory depend on a Western discourse of modernity. This discourse constitutes the 'traditional' as its antithesis and interprets difference as backwardness. A crucial element of the discourse of modernity is the opposition of the 'religious' to the 'secular'.[76]

Van der Veer's response to this objection does not seem satisfactory. He points out two factors which are to him necessary for understanding religious nationalism in India: first, "an analysis of 'traditional' that is not prejudiced by the discourse of modernity" and second, "a theory of the impact of colonialism and orientalism that does not deny agency to colonial subjects."[77]

Van der Veer's main illustration of his argument depends on just one event that happened in Ayodhya, an important religious centre in India.[78] There was an old mosque in Ayodhya "that had been long under dispute between Hindus and Muslims." This site, according to Hindu tradition, was the birthplace of Lord Rama the prime god of Ayodhya." Van der Veer describes the event as such:

> In 1982, however, the relative peace of the place was suddenly disrupted when a campaign 'to liberate the birthplace of Lord Rama' was launched. The initiate was taken not by local monks but by a Hindu nationalist movement with branches all over the country.[79] ... Hundreds of people have died in riots between Hindus and Muslims.[80]

Finally, on 6 December 1992, the mosque was demolished by a Hindu mob. Van der Veer concludes that:

> The Ayodhya case reflects all the elements of religious nationalism in which I have come to be interested. While this book is not principally about Ayodhya, the Ayodhya case is taken here as the main illustration of my argument.[81]

He then attempts to show that religious nationalism "builds on a previous construction of religious community."[82]

What may be said in response to Van der Veer's argument is that the case of Ayodhya reflects nothing more than a rigid religious

bias and prejudice on the part of both Hindus and Muslims against one another. Like many disputes between people of different religious rites and sects, the Hindu-Muslim prejudice in the case under study is concerned with the religious traditional heritage of both sides and not with their nationalism. This comment seems sound when one considers the definition of nationalism as being opposed to religion and religious customs. Even the distinction between the sacred languages of Hinduism and Islam, as it is another aspect of Van der Veer's argument,[83] cannot support the idea of religious nationalism, because first, it is problematic to state that language itself may play an important role in the formation of nationalism, and second, the sacredness of language is more relevant to the description of a religion than of a nationality.

Another case-example of the so-called religious nationalism is illustrated by Martha Lee. Considering the African American movement, Lee goes on to elaborate a kind of the black Americans' religious movement.  Her attempts have no further result than to affirm a significant role and place for religion in awakening the black nation of America. There is no doubt that religion played such an important role in encouraging the black nation to re-discover their humanity and identity and in helping them to direct their destiny.[84] Martha Lee remarks:

> The Black population of the United States has long struggled to find its identity in the context of the society and republic in which it must exist. This struggle is not surprising; the political question "who are we?" must be answered by reflection upon and interpretation of the past. ... As Black Americans know well, slavery is an institution that denies humanity and political visibility. A restoration of their community therefore requires a comprehensive explanation of their origins and an interpretation of the meaning of their existence.[85]

The same author then concludes: "One of the most appropriate ways to examine this problem is through religion."[86] In reaction to what Lee indicates, I believe one should be cautious about interpreting or recognizing this role of religion as religious nationalism.

## Conclusion

Due to their respective principles and characteristics, Islam and nationalism each has its own message, teachings and space. We have seen that since the very beginning, Islam has discouraged tribalism, racism and prejudice in all of their forms. This discouragement extends itself to the realm of nationalism in the modern age. In fact, considering its negative attitude towards nationalism, it cannot be said that Islam regards internationalism in any more positive a light. This is because the concept of internationalism is too restricted to represent Islamic social thought.

The idea that emerges out from within the Qur'an and Islamic tradition indicates that Islam, on a universal scale, calls for the creation of a single community and encourages humankind to practice justice and to live in peace. Imam 'Ali, in his address to Malik Ashtar on appointing him as the governor of Egypt, wrote:

> Remember, Malik, that among your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as yourself and they are brothers unto you and those who have other religions than yours and yet are human beings like you ... Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect God to show mercy and forgiveness to you.[87]

Although nationalism did emerge within the Muslim world, nevertheless, the movement was never derived from Islamic

teachings. The only thing that we may find in Islamic tradition is a *hadith* that advocates devotion to one's nation: "*One's love for his country is a matter of faith.*" Some Muslim scholars believe that this saying contains a mystical rather than a patriotic message. The famous poet Iqbal says, "Our hearts do not belong to any homeland, whether it be Greece, India, Syria or elsewhere. In fact, there is no border encircling us or defining us other than Islam."[88] Regardless however of its mystical sense, the *hadith* encourages Muslim believers of every nation to work hard in achieving material benefit for their respective homelands. It urges them to make progress in every field of knowledge in order to meet, and thus avoid having to be dependent on non-Muslim countries. Again the hadith, heartening Muslims to show their love for and loyalty towards their homelands, declares a supranational message for all Muslim nations and does not restrict itself to a specific nation.[89] As Soekarno states, "...true Islam requires all its adherents to love and to work for the country in which they reside, to love and to work for the people among whom they live."[90] Finally, love and loyalty are derived from our instinctive feelings and consciousness, whereas nationalism is an ideology whose birth place was the political arena.[91]

The people of a nation may express the same love and loyalty towards their great figures of science, their national pride, their epic history and all their distinguished achievements. Islam, which encourages Muslims to respect their own material and spiritual values and wealth as well as to be independent and steadfast in their loyalties, is certainly not opposed to this kind of attitude. Muslims are allowed to take pride in their nation loyalties so far they do not encourage or cause any prejudice in theory or in practice. The Qur'an condemns only those who sacrifice the faith by clinging to ancestors or by aping national figures. There is no problem as such with imitating these personalities so long it does not conflict with Islamic teachings. In accordance with the divine teachings and prophetic missions, Muslims are requested not to follow the example of any one whose path is in direct contradiction to God's commands.[92] As

depicted in the Qur'an, prophets were continually being responded by their people that what they taught "was against the prevalent customs and traditions of the country" and those of their ancestors. The prophets strived to call people to the Oneness of God, to the monotheistic faith, but the people's response was that they observed their fathers' customs and wanted to follow them.[93]

A global education seems necessary to ultimately create mutual understanding and cooperation between the different nations of the world. It is the obligation of Muslim educators in particular and all others in general to cooperate with one another in order to provide a peaceful global environment. The survival of our planet earth greatly depends upon our carrying out this obligation.

## Bibliography

A.K.P. (1982), *Dar Jusujuy-i Rah-i Imam az Kalam-i Imam*; ("Milli Garayi", no. 11, Tehran)

Baron (1947), *Modern Nationalism and Religion* (New York)

Dabashi, Hamid (1993) *Theology of Discontent; The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York; London: New York University Press,)

Frazier, Franklin (1964), *The Negro Church in America* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

Ha'iri, Husayn (1992), *Eighty Eight Aphorisms from the Eight Imam* (Iran: Mashhad)

Hayes, Carlton J. H. (1960), *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York)

Hazrat Ali (1967), *Nahjul Balagha*, English Translation by Syed Mohammad Askari Jafery (India: Poona)

Hess Andrew C.(1995), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, v. 3, "MILLET", editor in chief John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press)

Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad (1955), *The Life of Muhammad,* English translation by A. Guillaume (London, New York, Toronto)

ICPIKW (1994),  *Pity Aphorisms*, selected and collected from Ayatullah Khomeini's words and published by the Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, (Tehran)

Khomeini, Sayyid Ruhullah (1989), *Forty Hadith* (English translation by m. Qara'i, Tehran)

Khomeini, Sayyid Ruhullah (1989),  *Imam's Final Discourse*, English translation by translation unit of the Ministry of Guidance and Islamic Culture (Tehran)

Khadduri, Majid (1955). *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Virginia: William Byrd Press)

Khaji Nuri, A. (1980), *Bazigaran-i 'Asr-i Tala'i; Sayyid Hasan Mudarris* (Tehran)

Kohn, Hans. (1929), *A History of Nationalism in the East*, English translation by Margaret M. Green (London)

Kohn, Hans (1965), *Nationalism; Its Meaning and History*, (New York)

Kohn, Hans (1946) *Prophets and Peoples; Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism* (New York)

Lee, Martha (1988)., *The Nation of Islam*: An American Millenarian Movement (Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press)

Mawdoodi, Sayyid Abul 'Ala (1964), *The Political Theory of Islam* (Hind: Delhi)

Mawlawi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad (1987), *Mathnawi-e Ma'nawi-e Mawlawi* (Tehran: Jawidan)

Muhaiyaddeen, Bawa, M. A. (1987), *Islam and World Peace: Explanation of a Sufi* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Mutahhari, Murtada (1981), *Khadamat-i Mutaqabil-i Islam va Iran*, (Tehran)

Naqawi, 'Ali Muhammad (1984), *Al-Islam wal-Qawmiyya* (Tehran: Munazamah al-I'lam al-Islami)

Paret R., (1987) *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, "UMMA" 1st ed. v. 8, (Leiden: New York: E. J. Brill)

Sharabi, Hisham B. (1966) *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World* (Toronto, New York, London)

Soekarno (1984), *Nationalism, Islam and Marxism*, English translation by Karel H. Warouw and Peter D. Weldon, (2nd edition, New York)

Steiner, M. J. (1947) *Inside Pan-Arabia*, Chicago: 1947.

Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn (1974), *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, v. 14, (Beirut)

Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn (1982), *Al-Mizan; An Exegesis of the Qur'an*, English translation by Rezvi, v. 3, (Tehran)

Tahir-ul-Qadri (1986), *Islam in Various Perspectives* (Lahore: Model Town)

Turgay, A. Üner (1995), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, v. 3, "NATION", editor in chief John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press)

Van der Veer, Peter (1994), *Religious Nationalism*, (London: University of California Press)

Vatikiotis, P. J. (1987), *Islam and State* (London, New York, Sydny: Croom Helm)

---

[1] Baron, *Modern Nationalism and Religion*, (New York: 1947), p. 269.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 270-271.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 269.

[4] Soekarno, *Nationalism*, p. 47.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 48.

[6] Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdoodi, *The Political Theory of Islam*, (Hind: Delhi, 1964), p. 40.

[7] Vatikiotis, *Islam and State*, p. 10.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Imam Rida, *Eighty Eight Aphorisms*, (Iran: Mashhad: 1992), pp. 72-73, 87 & 92.

[10] "The best and most respected virtue of a man is to do good, to help the persecuted man and to fulfil the desires of the needy", *Ibid*., p. 10.

[11] Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 3-4.

[12] For more details see also the author's article on *Kawmiyya* (Nationalism) in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, edited by E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), v. 4, pp. 781-784.

[13] Vatikiotis, *Islam and State*, pp. 10-11.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] Perhaps it is understood from the verse: "Allah never gives by any means the unbelievers a way against the believers", The *Qur'an*, 4: 141.

[17] Kohn, *A History of Nationalism*, p. 40.

[18] Cf. Mutahhari, *Khadamat*, pp. 39-40.

[19] The *Qur'an*, 6: 61.

[20] *Ibid.*, 15: 123.

[21] Mutahhari, *Khadamat*, p. 40.

[22] The *Qur'an,* 3: 95.

[23] *Ibid.*, 22: 78.

[24] Hess Andrew C. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, editor in chief John L. Esposito, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), v. 3, "MILLET", p. 107

[25] R. Paret, *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, "UMMA", (Leidoni: New York: E. J. Brill, 1987), v. 8, p. 1015.

[26] Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islam in Various Perspectives*, (Lahore: Model Town, 1986), p. 153.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

[28] Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i known as 'Allama, is one of the contemporary Shi'i philosophers and exegetes, whose major work on the *Qur'an*, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, containing 20 volumes (Beirut: 1970) is considered to be the most distinguished example of the cross-reference exegesis of the *Qur'an*.

[29] *Ibid.*, 2: 213.

[30] *Ibid.*, 16: 120.

[31] *Ibid.*, 12: 45.

[32] *Ibid.*, 23: 52.

[33] *Ibid.*, 21: 92.

[34] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, English, v. 3, p.182.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*, Arabic, v. 1, pp. 296-297.

[37] *The Qur'an*, 21: 92.

[38] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, English, v. 3, p. 182.

[39] *Ibid.*, v. 10, p. 29.

[40] R. Paret, *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 8, p. 1015.

[41] Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirat al-Nabawiyya*, (Cairo: 1955), 2nd ed., v. 1, pp. 501-502.

[42] Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, translated into English by A. Guillaume, (London, New York, Toronto: 1955), pp. 231-232.

[43] Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islam*, p. 154.

[44] R. Paret, *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 8. p. 1015.

[45] *Ibid.*, also see: Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islam*, p. 154.

[46] Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 4.

[47] The *Qur'an*, 22: 78, see: Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islam*, p. 154.

[48] The *Qur'an*, 22: 40-42 & 2: 198.

[49] Ibn Ishaq, *The Life*, pp. 212-213.

[50] The *Qur'an*, 2: 213.

[51] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, (Beirut: 1957/8-1974), v. 14, pp. 322-323.

[52] *Ibid.*, English, v. 3, p. 182.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] The *Qur'an*, 3: 19.

[59] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, English, v. 3, p. 167.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] *Ibid*.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[66] The *Qur'an*, 33: 72.

[67] *Ibid.*, 70: 19.

[68] *Ibid.*, 14: 34.

[69] *Ibid.*, 96: 6-7.

[70] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, English, v. 3, p. 174.

[71] For more details see: Naqawi, *al-Islam,* p. 31; also Uner Turgay, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, v. 3, NATION, pp. 232-234.

[72] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan,* English, v. 3, p. 177.

[73] The *Qur'an*, 49: 10, "*The believers are but brethren ...*"

[74] Mutahhari, *Khadamat*, p. 35.

[75] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[76] Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, (London: University of Callifornia Press, 1994), p. x.

[77] *Ibid*.

[78] A Hindu pilgrimage center in Uttar Pradesh, a province in North India. *Ibid*.

[79] The *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP), an organization of religious leaders. *Ibid*. p. 1.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. xi.

[81] *Ibid*.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

[83] *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

[84] Cf. Martha Lee, *The Nation of Islam, An American Millenarian Movement*, (Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), pp. 1-2.

[85] *Ibid*.

[86] *Ibid*. p. 2.

[87] Hazrat Ali, *Nahjul Balagha*, translated into English by Syed Mohammed Askari Jafery, (India: Poona: 1967), pp. 485-486.

[88] Naqawi, *al-Islam*, p. 7. Another mystical interpretation of the same *hadith* is represented by the famous mystic poet Mawlawi. See: Jalal al-Din Muhammad

Mawlawi, *Mathnawi-e Ma'nawi-e Mawlawi,* (Tehran:  Jawidan, 1987), pp. 739-740.

[89] *Ibid*. p. 59.

[90] Soekarno, *Nationalism,* p. 48.

[91] Cf. Naqawi, *al-Islam*, p. 59.

[92] Muhajir, *Islam*, p. 7.

[93] *Ibid*. The *Qur'an*, 21: 53.