Spiritual Dimensions of Mourning for Imam Husayn (a)

Part I: The Divine Plan for Human Salvation[1]

Mohammad Ali Shomali

ABSTRACT: Human beings are labouring towards their Lord and will eventually encounter Him. Once we struggle to eliminate the superficial aspects of this world we will be able to achieve the new life given to those who believe, purify themselves, and perform righteous deeds. Given that the outcomes of our deeds count for very little in this long journey, God, with His infinite mercy, provided male and female role models who are on the straight path to assist people in purifying themselves to live a prosperous life and achieve eternal bliss. He also multiplies the righteous deeds of the faithful; our task is to learn how to use shortcuts to felicity presented by God. One of these shortcuts is enduring hardships which are a prerequisite for progress for spiritual elevation provided that they are accompanied with gratitude as opposed to complaining. Another quick path is to share in Imam Husayn's grief during the Battle of Karbala. This address offers the benefits people can derive from Imam Husayn's sacrifices to preserve Islam by mourning over the magnitude of the event's hardship. People are to love Imam Husayn by learning from his teachings and resembling him in his conduct. Since on the Day of Judgment, the Ahlul Bayt will enjoy the uppermost status everyone will wish to have, we also are given permission to reach that position by sharing in Imam Husayn's hardship.

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[1]This is the first part of an address originally presented at the Manchester Islamic Institute in the UK on the Day of Ashura 1429 A.H. (January 19th, 2008). It is published here with slight changes.

God, the Almighty, has granted mankind physical life by means of which human beings may reach a higher state of living. It is definitely better that man does this by his own efforts, for even if he does not, as the Qur'an states, it will inevitably happen:

> *O man! You are labouring toward your Lord laboriously, and you will encounter Him. (84:6)*

In this verse, God is giving a general message: O' mankind! Willing or not, understanding it or not, you are labouring towards your Lord and you will encounter Him. That meeting will undoubtedly take place. But for those who are impure, that meeting will be painful, instead of being sweet. This is similar to weak beings like ourselves being harmed if we stand too close to the sun. We would not benefit from the sun's rays or even be able to watch and enjoy them. In the Hereafter, meeting Allah will be painful for those who are not purified or well-prepared. However, man is able to improve himself in this world by thoroughly purifying his soul and increasing its capacity to such an extent that not only will meeting Allah be incredibly sweet for him in the Hereafter, he might also be able to experience it in this world. Thus, it is not necessary for him to die to experience it. This is a new life that people can find, even in this world. In other words, life in the hereafter currently exists, although it is hidden. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an states:

> "*They know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter." (30:7)*

Those who are negligent about the Hereafter only notice the superficial aspect of this world's appearance and are thus inattentive to the Hereafter; if we remove this superficial aspect and delve deeper, we would see that the Hereafter truly exists right here and now, parallel to the life that we are living in this world. It is only a matter of pulling the curtain aside. When a person dies, he will be

from you, and so your sight is acute today." (50:22) O' mankind! When you die, you will see that you were negligent about this: *"…they are oblivious of the Hereafter."* (30:7)

The negligent are those who know and have access to it, yet even so they are inattentive to it. This is a similar case for those who wear glasses. They may sometimes think they lost their glasses and end up looking for them while they are unaware that they already have them on. This is an example of negligence. The Holy Qur'an says: "*You were certainly oblivious of this." (50:22)*

As said in the Qur'an, Allah would then remove this cover:

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

> *We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today. (50:22)*

God says that He has pulled the curtains aside. Rather than referring to an enormous curtain that separates the people of this world and that of the spiritual life or the Hereafter, this curtain is indeed that of which people place in front of themselves. The Arabic term '*ghitā'ak*' refers to our own curtain. This veil can range from being extremely long to having no curtain at all. Afterwards, God says He has removed your curtain from in front of you *"so your sight is acute today."* Now your eyes are so sharp you can see anything. Therefore, it is obvious that there is life in the Hereafter, though a curtain prevents us from seeing that. If we can release our soul from material bonds and achieve a new life, then what will inevitably take place after death could easily happen right now. God, the Almighty, mentions this new life in some verses of the Qur'an, amongst which is the following:

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

Rather than merely reading these verses, take them in with all your heart. Imagine the Prophet (s) reciting this verse to you. God says that He will give a new life to everyone, whether male or female, to those who perform good deeds and is a believer. Islam might make differences between men and women in certain rulings, but on the path to perfection and on the journey to meet Allah, there is no difference between them. And where there are differences between them in Islamic rulings, it is only for the good of the people and society. However, whenever self-purification and getting closer to God is considered, the way is open to all, regardless of gender.

'Allamah Tabataba'ī commented with regards to giving a new life to those who do good deeds by saying that this does not mean that the person's everyday life will change; rather, he will experience an entirely new life. The Qur'an continues: "*…and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do.*" *(16:97)*

The reward God will provide for them is according to the best deeds they performed. It may be that if someone has recited his best two-*rak*'*at* prayer, God will consider all his prayers accordingly. Similarly, if he has completed one sincere pilgrimage, God will count all his pilgrimages accordingly. When God wants to reward someone, He will not merely count the good deeds separately and reward accordingly. He multiplies them, and even gives specific people immeasurable rewards:

> *… Indeed the patient will be paid in full their reward without any reckoning. (39:10)*

A person who performs righteous deeds will enjoy paradise in this world. Indeed, he will become a 'walking paradise' through whom those who come in contact with would be able to smell the fragrance of heaven. Elsewhere the Qur'an says:

> *O you who have faith! Respond to Allah and the Apostle when he summons you to that which will give you life. (8:24)*

It is important to note that there are two requirements in the verses "*Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female…..*"[2] and *"O you who have faith!,"* two requirements are stated: one is faith and the other is righteous deeds. We also read:

> *O you who have faith! Answer Allah and the Apostle when he summons you to that which will give you life. Know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that toward Him you will be mustered.* (8:24)

This verse also refers to the same fact that being faithful and obeying God and His Prophet leads us to having a second life.

What is meant by righteous deeds is submitting to religion by following the path which God has shown to us out of His Mercy. In doing so, that new life can be achieved. According to the Holy Qur'an, that right path is worshipping Him: *"Worship Me. That is a straight path." (36:61)*

To understand what the right path is, God says in the Holy Qur'an: *"Guide us on the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed." (1: 6-7)*

Thus, people are to look for those who are on this "straight path" and emulate them. And those whom God "blessed" are the revered infallibles. Taking into account that naming ourselves after them is not enough, we are to follow their lead. For example, having the name Mohammad Ali does not guarantee that I am a follower of Muhammad (s) and Ali (a). Some people are named Hasan; others are named Husayn. We also have names such as Sadiq, Kazim, Jawad,

[2] Qur'an, 16:97

Mahdi, Amir and the like. Knowing too well that having these beautiful names is not enough to help us find the right path, we must strive to successfully pass the classes taught by the infallibles. These names are merely entry requirements that can help us find the right path; yet unless we attend the actual course, we will not know the meaning of the name or the one after whom we are named. While being grateful to God for signing up, it is incumbent upon us to be in the presence of the immaculate teachers of this school and listen to them.

One great teacher in this school is the Holy Prophet (s) who *"…purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom."*[3] The Prophet (s) "purifies" and "teaches". The teachers in this school do not only educate the students on theoretical matters; rather, they inform others while being the perfect exemplars of what they teach. The Prophet (s) did not order people to do anything unless he acted upon it first. If we want to join those whom God has blessed, we are to enter this school fully engaged in what is expected from us and ready to act upon our duties. With regards to this, the Holy Qur'an states: "*Whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle, they are with those unto whom Allah has bestowed favor…*" *(4:69)*

Those who obey God and His Apostle (s) will find themselves beside those whom God has fully blessed. After this, Allah specifies the four groups who are blessed:

> *…from among the Prophets and the most truthful and the witnesses and the righteous, and what a good company they are. (4: 69)*

These four groups are our role models and we are required to follow them. But how? Through obedience, as seen in the verse, *"Respond to Allah and the Apostle…..*" along with performing righteous deeds,

[3] Qur'an, 62:2 & 3:164

since "*Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful…*"[4]

One of the most successful and perfect of those teachers is Imam Husayn (a), with whose instruction, we can easily and comfortably succeed in this path. To further explain this point, it is necessary to understand the outcome of our good deeds in that no matter how much a human being obeys and performs righteous deeds, it would still count for very little. When we consider our distance from God in addition to our weaknesses and limitations, we will see that there is a long way ahead of us and however much we struggle, we will not be able to gather enough provisions and resources for this long journey. Imam Ali (a) - with all his sincere worships and great services for Islam, while fully comprehending this journey – as well as his actions – said:

آه من قلة الزاد و بعد السفر و وحشة الطريق[5]

Alas! The provision is so little, the journey is so distant,
and the path is so lonely.

Imam Ali (a) felt concerned when he remembered his little provision on the one hand and the far journey to be made in loneliness on the other. If this is how Imam Ali (a) feels then where do we stand? Why is the journey so long? Isn't it is because we are heading towards infinity?

Thus, it would be wrong to believe that those daily prayers we recite, which are many times carelessly done, are enough. It is not even certain that during our entire lifetime, we have done two units (*rak'ahs*) of prayer with the presence of heart. We do some so-called fasting while we might commit numerous sins as well. We perform hajj whilst possessing impure intentions or might be annoying or even hurting our fellow pilgrims. In short, what can we say? We will be so

[4] Qur'an, 16: 97
[5] *Sharh Nahj al-Balāqhah*, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 18, p. 226.

miserable if we pride ourselves for the little that we do, such as performing some religious obligations, attending religious functions, giving sermons, or having built several mosques. If we are fully aware that we are heading towards God, we will understand that even though we have gathered many provisions, it will still count for very little. However, it is not wise to renounce performing good deeds and forsake the right path because of this.

Another way to achieve eternal bliss is to make sincere efforts while fully realizing that our actions are not enough, and to implore God, saying: "O' God! I did what I could. Please have mercy upon me and accept and grow it."

God multiplies the righteous deeds of the faithful. It may be that a person gives a little charity, but God will increase it so much that its worth may become greater than Abu Qubays Mountain (in Mecca) on the Day of Judgment. Sometimes we may be surprised with the way God assigns great rewards for certain deeds such as visiting Imam Husayn's (a) holy shrine, reciting the chapter *Tawhid* of the Holy Qur'an once, or fulfilling the need of a brother or sister in faith. God knows that we will not achieve much through our day-to-day performance. If God wants to give us only one reward for each action we perform, we would not get anywhere. On the other hand, God does not want to give us reward without us doing anything, because in this way we would not try to progress or improve. God creates opportunities for us to progress, and those who take advantage of and appreciate those opportunities will benefit tremendously. On the Day of Judgment, someone who does not receive that many rewards mentioned in narrations (*hadiths*) cannot complain that he had gone to hajj once and yet expects to receive the rewards for going to hajj a thousand times. God will remind that servant of the worth of fulfilling a person's need, which is much greater than performing the hajj pilgrimage. Thus, on that day, people will have no excuse. God, the Almighty, has and always will give us scores of opportunities and if we appreciate and use them, He will have a reason to reward us.

One issue in Shi'a jurisprudence is the rule of compromise in the reasoning of recommended rulings (*al-tasāmuh fi adillah al-sunan*). We have many narrations from the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) implying that if a person is told that performing a certain deed receives a certain amount of reward and the person does that deed hoping to receive it, then he or she will eventually be given that reward, even if the Prophet (s) had not actually said it:

> مَنْ بَلَغَهُ شَيْءٌ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ عَلَى (شَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ) فَعَمِلَهُ كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرُ ذَلِكَ (وَ إِنْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص لَمْ يَقُلْه)
>
> Whoever receives some narration about a reward for performing a good action and he actually performs that action in order to get that reward, he will be given that reward even if that narration was not said by the Messenger of God.[6]

Thus, if you hear or read a hadith that, for example, recommends a certain prayer in the *Night of Qadr* (*Laylat al-Qadr*) because it earns a special reward and a person actually reads the prayer, he or she would be given that reward even if that hadith was mistaken or forged. Of course, the narration and the recommended action must be in themselves reasonable and in compliance with the Qur'an, established sunnah, and reason.[7]

This is why our jurists are more flexible in declaring an act as recommended (*mustahabb*) than to declare an act as obligatory or forbidden. It's as if God is saying, "My servant made an effort while hopeful of receiving a reward, and so I will reward him; no one can complain or ask why I did not offer the same to them."

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

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

Or God offers to forgive all those who go on the Day of 'Arafah to the plain of 'Arafāt. The only condition for this is that you have to be aware and ask for forgiveness. So, if we do not benefit from this offer and are not forgiven, we should not complain and question why others have been forgiven. As far as God was concerned, He was ready to forgive all mankind. And even the person who could not actually go could at least have the desire in their heart to be there, and God would still give them something. Therefore, if we take up the opportunities that God has given us on our journey, then we could have some hope. But if we want to only consider our own actions such as performing the daily prayers and fasting only in the month of Ramadan, then our expectations will not be fulfilled. And if we do not act upon these duties, then we cannot have any hope. But it is also clear that no one should misunderstand this reasoning and say that if this is so then our deeds are in vain. You must try to do as much righteous deeds as possible, while realizing these are not enough.

We must be aware. Certainly the faithful person is astute. The most astute faithful was the Commander of the Faithful (a). He showed that being astute is the one who makes business with God. Knowing that there is none more trustworthy and generous than God, negotiating with anyone apart from Him is a deception. Even if it is not a deception, the person will eventually become bankrupt because his assets will be limited. Therefore, it is crucial that people only negotiate with Him.

If we want to use our lives properly and enjoy every moment of them in the most productive way, we must use those shortcuts presented to us by God. For example, one of those shortcuts and great opportunities is the Night of Qadr. This is the night which is "*better than one thousand months*."[8] Every good action performed in this night is rewarded by God as if it has been performed every night in one thousand months.

[8] Qur'an, 97:3

Thus, since we cannot excessively perform good deeds such as fasting, performing prayers, and reciting the Qur'an to receive rewards, enduring hardships is a shortcut given by God to the faithful who love God. Of course, we should do as much as we can because it gives us the strength to endure hardships. And if we truly comprehend what this hardship is for, we are to thank God for it. This is why after reciting *Ziyarat 'Āshurā* we prostrate to God and say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَکَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدَ الشّٰاکِرِینَ لَکَ عَلی مُصابِهِمْ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلی عَظیمِ رَزِیَّتی

> O God! To You belongs the praise of the grateful ones for their hardships. All praise is due to Allah for my great tragedy.

We also recite in a recommended supplication after the daily prayers in the month of Rajab: "O God! Truly I ask you to grant me the patience of the thankful…"

Hence, people are to praise God like those who are patient and grateful to Him for their suffering. We must be among those who learned from Imam Husayn (a) that hardships can be blessings. We must be among those who learned from Lady Zaynab that hardship is beautiful in her famous statement: "I saw nothing but beauty!"[9]

Thus, it is not surprising that on the Day of Judgment the faithful will see that the rewards God gives them for their hardships are greater than the rewards given for their worship. There are many kinds of troubles from which we may suffer. On the Day of Judgment, the rewards given to the faithful for being patient in difficulties will bore than what they will be given for their religious obligations. Of course, prayer and fasting are the basic requirements for their success. The requirement for benefitting from these hardships is to have faith and to perform righteous deeds; otherwise, instead of benefitting from those opportunities, complaining or nagging will cause people to lose their

[9] *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 45, p. 115.

rewards. Prophet Jacob considered Joseph's abduction *"a beautiful patience"* (12:18 & 83). This is the patience that is accompanied by gratitude, not the kind followed by complaints and objections against God. How pathetic we must be to lose a reward after we have faced hardships! If we are experiencing a hardship, adversity, calamity or any other trouble, of which a faithful person undoubtedly experiences, we are enduring that situation anyway, so why not make an investment of it for our Hereafter? Make benefit of it for seeking nearness to God! Praise Him and do not complain!

According to a narration in Abi Faad Hillī's *'Uddat al-Dā'ī,* on the Day of Judgment, when the faithful see what God gives them instead of what they wanted and did not receive in this world, they will wish none of their requests in this world had been answered. You may have taken care of a patient who has not been cured yet, wanted money which God has not given you, or attempted to marry without success. Everyone has his own problems and beseeches God and mourns about them. Sometimes it proves beneficial when a request is granted, and sometimes it is not. On the Day of Judgment, when we see what God will give us instead of what we had wanted and did not receive, we would wish that none of our requests in this world were granted. We would wish that all of it had been saved up for the Hereafter. On the Day of Judgment, all of us will wish we had suffered more hardships in this world. Currently, we do not perceive for our eyes are closed. We do not know the benefit of these hardships.

Concerning the qualities of the Imams' followers, Imam Sadiq (a) states, "We are patient, but our followers are more patient than us." This narration becomes more comprehensible in the following part: "We are patient with respect to what we know and they are patient with respect to what they do not know."[10] The Imams are patient while knowing the positive outcomes of sufferings, but their followers are patient while being unaware of the other side of sufferings. The

[10] *Al-Kāfi,* vol. 2, p. 93. The hadith reads as follows:
انا صبّر و شيعتنا اصبر منا لانا نصبر على ما نعلم و هم يصبرون على ما لايعلمون.

faithful person who is enduring hardships in this world, for example, whose family has left him or whose children do not respect him, does not currently know what he will gain for enduring these hardships for the sake of God. This is why it is difficult for him. The underprivileged whose poverty is not due to laziness and is still poor does not understand how many blessings he will receive after this poverty and so it is difficult for him to remain persistent. For those who know, not only is it easier to endure hardships; rather, they will also thank God. The patience of the grateful is then not so difficult. Therefore, the Imam (a) regarded his followers as more patient than the infallibles.

What is the patience of grateful people like? If I want to give an example, it could be compared to the difficulty we face when we want to pass an exam. We will study hard before the exam and we may have been sleepless for a week or more. But this is not bitter for us. It might be difficult, but not bitter. Sometimes, something is difficult *and* painful for people though it is not bitter. The same pertains to the hardships faced by Household (a). Do not ever think that the events of 'Ashura were not difficult. They were extremely difficult. They were painful, but they were not bitter. They were not ugly. That is why in *Ziyarat 'Ashura*, the supplicant thanks God by saying, "O God! To You belongs the praise of the grateful ones for their hardships."

On the Day of Judgment, the one who has endured hardships the most will have the greatest reward. The Holy Prophet (s) stated, "No Prophet suffered hardships like me." You may wonder why God's beloved servant should suffer most from hardships. The answer is that enduring hardship is not a sign of being disliked; God loved him more than anyone and he had to face hardships in order to be spiritually elevated. The person who is a nearer to God might face more hardships. Why? Is He an enemy of the servant? Does He want to annoy the servant for no purpose? No. The servant is given hardships for two reasons: 1) Hardship is the prerequisite for progress, and 2)

God only tests when He knows that the one tested is competent for the test.

God will not impose more on the faithful than they are able to endure; but He might gradually increase their capacity and their hardships accordingly. A good teacher does this. A trainer will do likewise. A good trainer will not expect everything of us on the first day. He would first evaluate our competence and then, when our capacity has increased, he will intensify his instructions. God increases the hardships of those whom He loves as their competence increases.

In the next part, we will study the suffering of Imam Husayn (a) and the way we can benefit more from mourning for him in our pursuit of salvation.

Spiritual Dimensions of Mourning for Imam Husayn (a)

Part II: The role of hardship and suffering in the spiritual progress[1]

Mohammad Ali Shomali

ABSTRACT: In the previous part, we discussed divine plan for human salvation in general and then we focused on the role of hardship in human life and what the faithful can achieve if they forebear the hardships with patience. We also stated that God will not impose more on the faithful than they are able to endure, though He might gradually increase their capacity and their hardships accordingly, like a good teacher or trainer who gradually introduces to his students more difficult subjects. In this world, the hardships of those whom God loves may increase so that they become more detached from this world and be more attached to the spiritual life. In this part, we will study how one can spiritually gain from mourning for Imam Husayn and his sufferings.

***Point One*:** Imam Husayn was very close to Prophet Muhammad and received everything from him. It is [frequently] reported from both Shi'a and Sunni authorities that the Holy Prophet stated, "Husayn is from me, and I am from Husayn." Naturally, it is interpreted as, 'Husayn is my son and my religion depends on him.' If it were not for Imam Husayn, the religion of the Holy Prophet would not have remained - the religion in which he had devoted his life to and for

[1]This Address was originally presented at the Manchester Islamic Institute in Manchester on Ashura 1429 on 19th January 2008); it is reprinted here more or less as delivered.

which he made a great deal of effort. Therefore, if it was not for Imam Husayn, Islam would have ceased to exist. Imam Husayn himself said:

> If the religion of the Holy Prophet would not remain but by murdering me, then O' swords! Take me!

Muhammad Hanafiyyah, a soldier whom Imam Ali sent to the Battle of Siffin several times asked why the Imam did not send his other sons - Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn - to the battle. Imam Ali answered, "You are my son and they are the Prophet's." Thus, Imam Ali felt more responsible to protect the lives of the sons of Lady Fatima[2] more than his other son who was not from the Prophet's progeny.

Only one thing that could be more important than Imam Husayn's life was the religion of the Prophet. Thus, Husayn stated in the form of a conditional proposition, "If it is only through murdering me that the religion of the Holy Prophet could survive, then O' swords! Take me!" If protecting the religion does not hinge upon the Imam's life, then his life must be protected. But when it is a matter of protecting the religion, not only Husayn ought to be martyred, but also dozens of people like him. Not one Imam died naturally; they were all killed by poison or sword. If protecting Islam requires it, the family of the Imam was ready to be taken captive because the value of Islam is beyond everything else.

When Imam Husayn saw the Prophet in a dream on his way to Karbala, the Prophet told him, "Surely, Allah wants to see you martyred. And surely, Allah wants to see them [Imam Husayn's children and family] captive." The phrase "God wants to" refers to a fact that there was no other way except for it to happen. If Islam were to be preserved, Imam Husayn were to be ready for martyrdom and his children and family were to be ready for captivity. Of course, this does not mean that God

[2] The daughter of Prophet Muhammad (s).

wanted Yazid to accomplish his heinous actions or approved of it. This dream was a sign of God's approval of Imam Husayn's decision at that time. Imam Husayn was going to Karbala anyway, but this dream along with the Prophet's hadiths confirmed that there was no other option for him.

The meaning of the Prophet's saying, "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn" is much deeper than what is normally thought in that it demonstrates extraordinary nearness.

Once Hudhayfah - a companion of the Prophet - heard Imam Husayn (who was a child at the time) talking about his murder by the Umawid tyrants under the command of 'Umar ibn Sa'd. Hudhayfah was surprised and asked Imam Husayn if he had heard about this event from the Prophet, and the Imam said he had not. After relaying this incident to the Prophet, the Prophet replied, "My knowledge is his knowledge and his knowledge is my knowledge, because we know an event before it happens."[3] This was Husayn's knowledge when he was just a child.

As stated in several hadith, everything the Imams declared was received from the Prophet though there is much that can be said about how they received their knowledge from him. It was not always through conventional methods of receiving information or knowledge as we quote *hadith*; they did not receive it in the ordinary way we might assume, such as recording speech word for word which may have included mistakes. Imam Ali stated, "The Prophet opened a door of knowledge to me, after which, thousands of doors were opened…" Thus, the method of transferring knowledge was not by the usual means of speaking and writing.

[3] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 44, p. 186. The original text of hadith is as follows:

مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ جَرِيرٍ الطَّبَرِيِّ فِي كِتَابِ دَلَائِلِ الْإِمَامَةِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ حُذَيْفَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ الْحُسَيْنَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ ع يَقُولُ وَ اللَّهِ لَيَجْتَمِعَنَّ عَلَى قَتْلِي طُغَاةُ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ وَ يَقْدُمُهُمْ عُمَرُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ وَ ذَلِكَ فِي حَيَاةِ النَّبِيِّ ص فَقُلْتُ لَهُ أَنْبَأَكَ بِهَذَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ لَا فَقَالَ فَأَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ فَقَالَ عِلْمِي عِلْمُهُ وَ عِلْمُهُ عِلْمِي لِأَنَّا نَعْلَمُ بِالْكَائِنِ قَبْلَ كَيْنُونَتِهِ

***Point Two*:** Thus, carefully studying Imam Husayn's life is a necessity for both his friends and foes. It is not possible to find a flaw in his life, not a single imperfection. Not only is there no negative point, but no ambiguous point in Imam Husayn's life. If we give only the facts of the event of Karbala to any person, he would not doubt consider Imam Husayn right and his enemy wrong. Sometimes there are noble men who were flawless throughout their lives, but their lives still contain ambiguity. The events in Karbala occurred in such a way that they clearly manifest Imam Husayn and his mission. This is where the statement, "Surely, Husayn is the light of guidance" holds true.

Throughout history, there have been many guides though we do not fully understand some of them, since it needs patience, endurance, and preparation. Khidr, the Prophet, was a guide, but even Moses could not benefit from him. The problem was from neither Moses nor Khidr. But Khidr was not that "light of guidance" the way Husayn was and still is. Anyone - a Christian, Hindu, or an illiterate person who does not believe in Islam or knows little of it - can understand Husayn. This is why many non-Muslims take part and spend money in ceremonies that commemorate Imam Husayn's martyrdom.

***Point Three*:** Imam Husayn endured a great hardship that no one in history had or will ever endure. The hardship Imam Husayn faced was extremely severe. In *Ziyarat Ashura*, we read:

> O Abu Abdullah! Unbearable is the sorrow; nerve-racking is the agony you put up with, for us and for all the (true) Muslims. The crimes committed against you also shocked and unnerved the dwellers of the heavens, one and all.

The hardships endured during the Battle of Karbala were so great it goes beyond our imagination, a hardship that cannot be perceived by our minds, a hardship so great that even after fourteen centuries it is

unforgotten. No one should think that the reason we mourn is because we are emotional and sensitive people. It was the hardship of this event that was so enormous. On one hand, the task carried out by the Imam and his companions was tremendous; on the other, the wretchedness of the enemies was so great that it is neither forgotten nor has it depreciated. No matter how much time passes after the event, nothing can have an impact on it. More than one thousand and four hundred years have passed, and within the next thousand years, nothing more severe than Imam Husayn's hardship will ever happen: "No day has ever been like your day, O Abu Abdillah!"[4]

***Point Four*:** So why did Imam Husayn endure such a hardship? *To protect Islam*. How can we benefit from this great sacrifice? *We must share in Imam Husayn's grief and suffering*. If we can regard Imam Husayn's grief as our own, then we too can benefit in his hardship. Of course, we do not have the capacity to endure this type of hardship. If something slightly bad happens to us, we weep and wail, cry to the heavens, complain to God, and say that our supplications are of no use or ask why our requests are not granted. But one way has been prepared for us, which is possible for everyone to seek. Christians can also come and seek this way. Jews can also do so. And even non believers. Everyone can more or less benefit. When they hear what happened to Husayn and his Household, they can come and share in Imam Husayn's grief. Another part of *Ziyarat Ashura* reads:

> I implore Allah to give me because of my suffering in you the best which might be given to an afflicted

[4] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 45, p. 218. The original text of hadith from Imam Hasan is as follows:

أَنَّ الْحُسَيْنَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ ع دَخَلَ يَوْماً إِلَى الْحَسَنِ ع فَلَمَّا نَظَرَ إِلَيْهِ بَكَى فَقَالَ لَهُ مَا يُبْكِيكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ أَبْكِي لِمَا يُصْنَعُ بِكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ الْحَسَنُ ع إِنَّ الَّذِي يُؤْتَى إِلَيَّ سَمٌّ يُدَسُّ إِلَيَّ فَأُقْتَلُ بِهِ وَ لَكِنْ لَا يَوْمَ كَيَوْمِكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَزْدَلِفُ إِلَيْكَ ثَلَاثُونَ أَلْفَ رَجُلٍ يَدَّعُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مِنْ أُمَّةِ جَدِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ (ص) وَ يَنْتَحِلُونَ دِينَ الْإِسْلَامِ فَيَجْتَمِعُونَ عَلَى قَتْلِكَ وَ سَفْكِ دَمِكَ وَ انْتِهَاكِ حُرْمَتِكَ وَ سَبْيِ ذَرَارِيكَ وَ نِسَائِكَ وَ انْتِهَابِ ثِقْلِكَ فَعِنْدَهَا تَحِلُّ بِبَنِي أُمَيَّةَ اللَّعْنَةُ وَ تُمْطِرُ السَّمَاءُ رَمَاداً وَ دَماً وَ يَبْكِي عَلَيْكَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى الْوُحُوشِ فِي الْفَلَوَاتِ وَ الْحِيتَانِ فِي الْبِحَارِ.

> person, for the sake of your place before Him and your rightfulness and also the hardship I endured in your way.

Here the supplicant does not ask God to give him the reward for his own actions. He asks for the reward as a result of suffering. As explained before, the reward for a believer's enduring hardship is not comparable to anything else. What adds to the significance of this particular suffering is that it is not personal. This suffering is because of the loss of great friends of God in the most tragic event.

We should welcome "the hardship I endured in your way." Today we must be stricken with grief, similar to a person who has shared in Husayn's hardship. We must wear black and mourn. We must cry and weep and not just sit somewhere saying that we are very sorry about what happened. Neither must we be like those who merely hold a conference where articles are presented about the tragedy, or, God forbid, hold parties because Imam Husayn achieved his goal and became martyred. There are those who do so. But the heart of the matter is that we must be stricken with grief. The suffering of the Ahl al-Bayt must become your own suffering. We must pay attention to the fact that the more stricken we are, the closer to Imam Husayn we will be. We will be granted rewards according to how much we endure hardships. When we say, "Give me the best which might be given to an afflicted person for the sake of the hardship I endured in your way," means that we are imploring God for the best thing given to an afflicted person.

This is a way God has laid out for us. If we understand, we will gain the greatest rewards through sharing in Imam Husayn's hardship. In hadiths we read that if someone makes a hundred people to weep, or even a single person weep, he would go to heaven. Other hadiths state that if we weep we would go to heaven and furthermore, it is stated that

if at least we pretend to weep, we might go to heaven. It means that the very least we can do to show that we share in Imam Husayn's suffering is to be sad and prepared to cry. Sometimes we cannot cry. Although it is better to be able to cry, if we cannot, then we should not think that we have missed everything. Even if we have only come to the mourning session and pretended to weep, it still shows that we are stricken with grief. Of course, the more grief we feel, the higher our level will be.

If we really feel the grief and take the tragedy as our own, is it practically possible that we are not in opposition to Husayn's enemies? Be fair! If someone does to you what they did to Imam Husayn, that they killed his brothers, his nephews, his young son, and his six-month old son, and then also took his Household captive, then, can you help taking those people as your own enemies and ask God to keep them away from His mercy? Of course, you should have so much control over your emotions that you remain calm and not swear at them. But can you really say that you are truly heartbroken when tens of your family members, including the children, are brutally killed, the tents are looted and burnt and the rest of the family, mostly women and girls, are taken captive by the army of Yazid, and still not have any negative feelings for those enemies? Is this possible?

In any case, we must share in Husayn's hardship. We must be stricken with grief today. Contrary to some Christian friends believe Jesus to have suffered and finally crucified to have everyone's sins forgiven, we believe that Imam Husayn endured a great hardship, although not everyone is forgiven because of it. We must have done righteous deeds and be under Husayn's leadership in his camp. It is not possible to act sinfully like the enemies of Husayn and still hope to accompany him in the Hereafter. But if we are like Husayn, then there is hope for us. Indeed, the whole point is that your love for Husayn as a true servant of God must increase so much so that you resemble him in his conduct.

When people love and admire ordinary talented person, they subconsciously imitate his every move. How can we claim that we truly love Husayn and then act against his conduct and teachings?

Point Five: One of the great outcomes of sharing the suffering of Imam Husayn is that we would be able to be with him in the hereafter. Another part of *Ziyarat Ashura* reads:

I ask Him to take me to the praised position (*al-maqām al-mahmud*) which you (the Ahl al-Bayt) have before Him.

What is the Praised Position? God told His Prophet: *"And stay awake for some part of the night, beyond what is incumbent on you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praised position."* (17:79)

In the Hereafter, the Prophet and his Household will enjoy the uppermost status everyone will wish to have. In *Ziyarat Ashura*, those who are heartbroken over Imam Husayn's hardship will say, "I ask Him to take me to the praised position that you have before Him." This is a great business, if we fully understand. If this prayer is answered we would be able to be with the Prophet and his Household in the Hereafter without having done the great services they did. It is true that we have faith, perform daily prayers, fast, and so on, but, as mentioned before, these deeds are very few considering the long journey we have ahead; however, we can see the aspiration mentioned in this ziyarat. We are told to ask God to give us the position of Great Glory which the Household will indeed have.

How can we reach that position? Through sharing in Imam Husayn's hardship, God the Almighty will let you share with Imam Husayn in his reward without reducing his own. This is the mercy of Allah that through love, sympathy, and agreement you can share the reward for the good any person does or the suffering he undergoes without that person losing anything. In any case, by following Husayn, he will take

you where he himself is heading. That is why the Prophet described Imam Husayn as *safinat al-najat* or "The ship of salvation". Because life's troubles are like a vast ocean ahead of us which is full of dangers and we do not know how to swim in such an ocean, embarking on this "ship of salvation" is a necessary blessing. What do we know? What are we proud of? Sometimes we cannot even find an address in the city we live in! How can we hope to find our way in this vast ocean? It may take a lifetime of a thousand years to do this! Considering the tiny amount of good deeds we do, even if we do not commit any sins, we might need to live for thousands of years to gain something worthy enough as a provision for the journey to eternity that we have ahead of us. In mathematics, we learn that any number divided by infinity would come to approximately zero; which means that if we even live and work for hundreds of years, compared to our eternal journey, it will be nothing.

We need something to take us through this. To put our mind at ease, we need a safe and fast vehicle moving us in the right direction because we do not have thousands of years to live. With regards to this, in some sources, it has been reported from the Ahl al-Bayt: "We are all ships of salvation, but the ship of Husayn is the largest and the fastest." All the guides in history have been like rescue ships, but this one is special. This is the rescue ship that will quickly take us to our destination. Why? Because it is driven by the power of suffering and love and does not depend solely on our deeds. Our good actions are very few. To be honest, how much are we committed to the night prayers? How much do we give charity? Let us come and share in Husayn's hardship! Come and embark on this ship! Obviously, this ship has different levels depending on the deeds we have performed. Some people have taken the back seat, some may have taken seats in the engine room, and some people are in the most luxurious rooms of the ship. At least let us just get on the ship to be safe! Do not be like the son of Noah who told his father, "*I shall betake me (for refuge) to some mountain that will save*

me from water" (11:43). There is no mountain that can save the sinful from going astray! There is no mountain that can save us from hell! We have to get on that ship. May Allah give us the opportunity to experience such a pleasant life: "*Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do"* (16:97).

May Allah enable us to get on board the ship of Husayn and place ourselves under his flag and in his camp. If we do so, we should not have to worry about anything. But we should not deceive ourselves. Do not say that it is enough to love Imam Husayn. Become like him. Seek his way and adopt his manners. Look at Imam Husayn's regard for prayer: While the enemy did not stop the war for a moment, Imam Husayn performed the prayer on time at noon on the day of Ashura. Today we can see that even non-believers respect us when they see us performing our prayers. They even try not to make any noise. The enemies of Imam Husayn pretended to be Muslim, but they did not even respect the prayers. However, Imam Husayn did not consider this as an excuse to avoid praying on time. While Imam was praying two of his companions i.e. Sa'eed ibn 'Abdullah and Zuhayr ibn Qayn stood in front of Imam Husayn to guard him. They were so loyal that even though they were frequently hit by the enemies' arrows, they did not leave the Imam alone. Neither did Imam Husayn give up praying on time. Why have we kept such distance from Imam Husayn? How will someone be able to look him in the eye on the Day of Judgment and tell him that he is his Shi'a but that he sometimes forgot his prayers?

Let us persevere with our good deeds, board the ship, and be at ease. If we are pious and get on Imam Husayn's ship, God willing, we will not face any harm at all, for "*Surely God's friends shall have no fear nor shall they grieve*." (10:62)

An Inquiry into Religious Dissimulation

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ABSTRACT: Dissimulation is a practice emphasized by the Ahlul Bayt on several occasions. Dissimulation is protecting oneself or one's family or innocent people from harm by doing or avoiding something or by doing or saying something which is not recommended or permissible under normal conditions. Using Islamic sources and documents, Shi'a scholars divide dissimulation into three types: prohibited, mandatory, and permissible. In the Holy Qur'an, we can find some instances – such as the believer of the Pharaoh's people – based on which dissimulation can be regarded as permissible. There is also some evidence in Sunni traditions suggesting that dissimulation is religiously legal and rational. Among the permissible conditions whereby dissimulation can be practiced referred to in traditions by the Ahlul Bayt are a) saving the life of the believers, b) elevation of man's status and his perfection, and c) preserving Islamic unity.

Introduction

Shi'ism, one of the two major Islamic sects, entails particular teachings and messages, and it is a duty upon its believers to defend them. Some of these teachings concerns the Shi'a beliefs while others are concerned with their practice.

Among these teachings is dissimulation - or *taqiyyah* - which is considered a definite and undeniable Shi'a principle. Also, in many traditions, the Imams advised the Shi'as to act upon it. Imam Baqir said, "Dissimulation is the belief of me and my forefathers; the one who

does not act upon it has no faith."[1] Moreover, up until now, numerous praiseworthy articles and books have been written on it, indicating its importance.

In this article, three areas will be covered: 1) the meaning of dissimulation, 2) a probe into its traditions, and 3) responses to doubts and misconceptions cast on it.

Literal meaning

The Arabic word for dissimulation is *taqiyyah*, derived from the root *'wa-qa-ya'* and '*wiqayah.'* According to Raghib in his book *Mufradat*, *'wiqayah'* means protecting something from harm.[2] Accordingly, *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) literally means avoiding evil and warding it off. Its infinitive means 'protecting'[3] and its gerund means 'keeping'.[4] However, in traditions, it generally refers to any action that keeps man immune from the evils of others.[5]

Technical meaning

Both Sunni and Shi'a scholars have given similar technical meanings for dissimulation.

According to Shaikh Mufid, Dissimulation is "hiding our inner beliefs from the opposition to avoid religious and worldly harms."[6]

Shaikh Ansari defined dissimulation as follows: "Dissimulation consists of protecting oneself from harm by other person and agreeing with his words and actions; this is actually disagreeing with the truth."[7]

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[1] Ibid.
[2] *Mufradat-ul-Qur'an*, Raghib Isfahani, p. 530.
[3] *Waqi' a-Taqiyyah 'ind al-Madhahib wal-Firaq al-Islamiyyah*, Nasir Hashim, p. 21.
[4] *Lisan-ul-'Arab*, vol.15, p. 402.
[5] *Commentary on the Qur'anic Verses*, Qurbani Lahiji, Zayn-ul-'Abidin, p. 211.
[6] *Tashih-ul-'Itiqadat*, Shaikh Mufid, p.66.

Sunni scholar, Sarakhsi Hanafi said regarding dissimulation, "Dissimulation is to protect one's life from danger and harm through revealing something opposed to one's inner beliefs."[8]

Similarly, according to Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani Shafi'i, "Dissimulation means refraining from expressing one's inner beliefs to others."[9]

Shaikh Muhammad Abu Zuhreh also gave a similar definition as follows: "By dissimulation, one hides his belief to ward off harms and damages."[10]

Thus, the technical definition is summed up as follows: "Dissimulation is protecting oneself from harm through doing or giving up an action or saying something impermissible under normal circumstances."[11]

Dissimulation: A rational principle

Like other religious recommendations, dissimulation enjoys the required rational support; in addition to religion, common sense also decrees dissimulation. All over the world, particular security measures are taken to protect vital information. Likewise, in political, military, and economic information, some codes are used to conceal secrets and goals.

Dissimulation is also a strategy and method for protecting one's beliefs, life, reputation, and property or those of other innoncent people. In fact, it is considered a defensive measure. The right for self-defense is recognised by divine religions, human doctrines, and intellect.

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[7] *The Outcome of Discourse* (a research complied in the Iranian Leader's Office in the Affairs of Sunnis), p. 113.
[8] *Al-Mabsut/Sarakhsi*, 24, cited in Waqi'-u-Taqiyyah 'ind al-Madahib wal-Firaq al-Islamiyyah, p.179.
[9] *Fath-ul-Bari*, Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani Shafi'i, p.262.
[10] *Al-Taqiyyah, its Definitions, Limits and Reasons*, Subhani, Ja'far, p. 13.
[11] *The Outcome of Discourse*, p. 113.

Thus, there is no doubt that dissimulation and concealment of one's inner beliefs is a method confirmed by the intellect as an effective rational technique and is a basis for the actions taken by wise people worldwide.

Types of dissimulation

As said before, protecting one's life and belief is considered a key element in dissimulation. Naturally, the issue of self-protection is raised when one's life is threatened. However, by referring to the legitimate applications of dissimulation, we find out that in some cases one's life is in no actual danger, but in order to protect the great interests of Islam and Islamic society, concealing one's beliefs is recommended. Accordingly, dissimulation can be divided into three types: a) dissimulation out of fear, b) dissimulation for concealment, and c) dissimulation out of lenience. In what follows, each type is briefly explained:

1. *Dissimulation out of fear* is dissimulation when facing pagans and enemies of Islam through doing something in accordance with their opinions.[12]

As the definition indicates, the aim of this kind of dissimulation is to prevent the spiritual ability of the faithful person from being wasted and to save his life, because he may put his life at risk to reveal his inner belief. Under such a circumstance, both religion and intellect decree that one protects his life and property through dissimulation.

2. *Dissimulation for concealment* refers to safeguarding the fundamentals of Islam through hiding one's sect before the oppressive governments and the tyrants.[13]

[12] *Shi'ism and Unity*, Professor Imani, instructional pamphlet 1384, p. 78.
[13] Ibid.

Hiding one's belief is considered a tactic used by the righteous minority to safeguard the fundamentals of Islam against tyrannical governments. This kind of dissimulation was common in the early Islam, such as the migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina and the hidden and gradual movement of Muslim migrants to Abyssinia.

3. *Dissimulation for lenience* or *for preserving Islamic unity* consists of mixing with Muslims brothers and sisters from other schools of Islam, good conduct in life, and attending Sunni meetings and circles to preserve Islamic unity and defend Islam.

Thus, this kind of dissimulation adopted from the Sunnah is not due to fear or apprehension; rather, it is to establish an amicable relationship among the Muslims. It is applied when one gives up doing certain Shi'i deeds and acts upon the Sunni sect to show lenience to Sunnis while there is no fear. Therefore, unifying measures of the Shi'as should not be deemed to be out of fear, because sometimes the Shi'a Imams have taken such measures; this cannot be considered to be due to their fear. For instance, Imam Ali, known for his valour, did not perform prayer with his opponents out of fear, although he overlooked inter-religious disagreements for the continued existence of the Islamic system.[14]

The legal rulings of dissimulation

Using the Islamic sources, Shi'a jurisprudents divide dissimulation into three types: a) prohibited dissimulation, b) mandatory dissimulation, and c) permissible dissimulation.

A. Prohibited dissimulation

The philosophy of dissimulation is to safeguard and elevate the truth and to preserve a correct belief. If something against this purpose is

[14] *Imam Khomeini and the Convergence of the Islamic World*, Hashimi, Sayyid Muhammad Jawad, pp. 74-76.

done through dissimulation, it is not permissible to dissimulate; in fact, it is prohibited to do so. Such circumstances include the following:

1. When the truth is at risk: When covering and hiding, one's belief spreads corruption, strengthens atheism and disbelief, extends disorder, and undermines the pillars of Islam; as a result, if it misleads people, erases Islamic rituals, and violates Islamic legal rulings, it is obligatory not to dissimulate. Thus, it is a grave mistake to assume that dissimulation is allowed under such circumstances. These kinds of dissimulation are destructive and negative. Only when dissimulation is constructive, positive, in line with achieving the goal, and not in the reverse direction, it is permissible or obligatory.

2. It is forbidden to dissimulate in murder: If somebody comes under pressure to kill one or more innocent people, otherwise, his life will be at risk, he is not entitled to kill others even though he is certain that he will lose his own life if he does not listen.[15] In this respect, Imam Baqir said, "Dissimulation has been made legitimate to save lives; if it causes murder, it is not permissible."[16]

B. Obligatory dissimulation

The above-mentioned kinds of dissimulation - dissimulation out of fear, for concealment, and out of lenience for preserving Islamic unity -can be considered obligatory.[17]

C. Permissible dissimulation

One can dissimulate in some permissible actions if abandoning them does not cause any harm.[18]

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[15] *Dissimulation: a Shield for Deeper Struggle*, Makarim Shirazi, p.113.
[16] *Wasa'il-u-Shi'a*, section 31, Hadith no.1.
[17] *Dissimulation: a Shield for Deeper Struggle*, Makarim Shirazi, p.70.
[18] *A-Taqiyyah*, Shaikh Ansari, Murtida, p.14.

Dissimulation in the Holy Qur'an

In the Noble Qur'an, there are some verses that recommend dissimulating:

> لاَّ يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ أَن تَتَّقُواْ مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللّهِ الْمَصِيرُ
>
> *The believers must not make friend with disbelievers instead of believers: if anyone does so, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by avoiding them, that you may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you [to remember] Him; for the final goal is to Allah.* (3:28)

This verse first warns the believers that if they select disbelievers as their guardians, their relation with God is completely broken off, but it also makes an exception to this fundamental rule, saying that there is no problem with the relation with disbelievers if it is established because of dissimulation. This is because Islam only seeks to revive the truth, and sometimes dissimulating is in the interests of Islam and its life more so than abandoning dissimulation.

In addition to the verses that explicitly permit Muslims to dissimulate in order to safeguard Islam and their beliefs, some other verses tell the story of the true followers of the previous religions and Muslims and praise them for dissimulating. They include:

1. 'Ammar Yasir

> مَن كَفَرَ بِاللّهِ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلاَّ مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالإِيمَانِ وَلَكِن مَّن شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

> *Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters disbelief – except under compulsion, with his heart remaining firm in Faith – but such as open their heart to disbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful punishment.* (16:106)

This verse indicates that if somebody expresses disbelief forcefully, although he has no doubt about God in his heart, he is not deemed guilty and sinful. Interpreting this verse, Qurtabi said, "There is consensus among scholars that if he expresses disbelief forcefully and out of fear for his life while his heart is replete with faith, he is not to blame."[19]

Although a minority of Sunni scholars relate this verse to the Meccan Muslims who were under intolerable pressure from the Qurayshites, most Sunni scholars attributed it to the great companion of Prophet Muhammad - 'Ammar Yasir - who uttered some words opposed to his belief under the brutal torture by the Qurayshites of Mecca.[20]

This word by the Sunni commentator in the 7th century, Qurtabi, demonstrates that dissimulation is not a Shi'i innovation and has its roots in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

2. The Believer of the Pharaoh's People

و قالَ رَجُلٌ مُؤْمِنٌ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إيمانَهُ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلاً أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَ قَدْ جاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّناتِ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَ إِنْ يَكُ كاذِباً فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ وَ إِنْ يَكُ صادِقاً يُصِبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذي يَعِدُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يَهْدي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّاب

[19] Ansari a-Qurtabi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol.11, p.182.
[20] Tabarsi, Fadl ibn Hassan, Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol.6, p.598; ibn Abi Hatam, 'Abd-u-Rahman ibn Muhammad, The Great Qur'anic Commentary, vol.7, p.2304; ibn Kathir, Isma'il ibn 'Amru, The Great Qur'anic Commentary, vol. 4, p.520; Soyuti, Jalal-u-Din, a-Dur-ul-Manthur, vol. 4, p.132.

> *A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: "Will you slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'? – when he has indeed come to you with Clear [Signs] from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on him is [the sin of] his lie: but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the [calamity] of which he warns you: truly Allah guides not the one who transgresses and lies!* (40:28)

Based on the above verse, it can be said that although the believer of the Pharaoh's people believed in the Prophet Moses, he expressed disbelief and hid his faith out of dissimulation.[21] The important point is that the practice of a believer who had no way but to conceal his belief due to the particular situation of his time is praised, and in this way people are taught that they should follow the example of such people in life and act like them.[22]

3. Prophet Abraham

> فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ فَتَوَلَّوْاْ عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِين فَرَاغَ إِلى ءَالِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلا تَأْكلُون مَا لَكمُ لَا تَنطِقُون فَرَاغَ عَلَيهِمْ ضَرْبَا بِالْيَمِين فَأَقْبَلُواْ إِلَيْهِ يَزِفُّون قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُون و اللَّهُ خَلَقَكمُ وَ مَا تَعْمَلُون

> *Then did he cast a glance at the stars. And he said, "I am indeed sick [at heart]!" So they turned away from him, and departed. Then did he turn to their gods and said, "will you not eat [of the offerings before you]? What is the matter with you that you speak not [intelligently]?" Then did he turn upon them, striking [them] with the right hand. Then came [the worshippers] with hurried steps, and faced [him]. He*

[21] The Qur'anic Commentary *Majma'-ul-Bayan*, Tabarsi, vol. 21, p. 251.
[22] The Qur'anic Commentary *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, p. 254.

> *said, "Worship you that which you have [yourselves] carved? But Allah has created you and your handwork!"* (37:88-96)

Prophet Abraham did not reveal his plan to break the idols to the people of city; rather, he told them he was sick. However, he was, in fact, upset at their idol-worshipping and took the golden opportunity to destroy the idols and awaken people through dissimulating and hiding his belief. That is why Imam Sadiq said, "By Allah, dissimulation is a part of the divine religion. [Out of dissimulation], Prophet Abraham said, '*I am sick,*' also, [out of dissimulation], Prophet Joseph said, '*O you [in] the caravan! You are thieves, without doubt*!' (12:70) while by God, they had not stolen anything."[23]

Dissimulation in Sunni traditions

Although nowadays dissimulation is known as a Shi'a teaching, Sunni hadiths also imply permissibility of dissimulation and its enjoinment. This in itself gives us a reason that dissimulation is not limited to the Shi'a, but it is a religious principle that is confirmed by Islam. In what follows, several Sunni traditions are listed:

1. In *Kanz ul-'Ummal*, there is a famous hadith by the Holy Prophet known as the Hadith of *Raf'*: "In mistakes, oblivion, and actions they are forced to take, my Ummah is not to blame."[24]

This hadith indicates that when one is coerced into doing something, its verdict is overturned, and he is not rebuked. Hence, if in order to save his life and safeguard great interests a person one is to express something opposed to his heartfelt belief, he has committed no sin and

[23] *Kulayni*, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.217.
[24] Kanz-ul-'Ummal, vol. 4, p. 233, Hadith no. 1,3,7; Qurtabi Qur'anic Commentary, vol. 10, p. 181.

will face no punishment. Hence, this narration clearly indicates the permissibility and legitimacy of dissimulation.

2. Regarding dissimulation, Hasan Basri is quoted as saying: "Until the Day of Judgment, the believer is permitted to dissimulate except for murder because Allah has forbidden it."[25]

3. Abdullah ibn 'Umar quoted Prophet Muhammad as saying, "It is not proper for the believer to make himself abject." Then the Holy Prophet was asked, "How does he do so?" He replied, "He gets involved in unbearable incidents."[26]

Dissimulation and its positive effects in the Infallibles' hadiths

In the hadiths by the Holy Imams, besides references to dissimulation in danger, we can find a number of its benefits some of which are mentioned below.

1. ***Man's elevation to a higher status:*** Imam Sadiq quoted his father, Imam Baqir as saying, "By Allah, there is nothing on the Earth more beloved by me than dissimulation. O' Habib! The one who dissimulates will be elevated to the higher status by Allah, and anyone who does not dissimulate will be demoted."[27]

2. ***A shelter for the believers:*** According to Imam Ali, "Dissimulation is among the best ***deeds*** of the believers who save both themselves and their brothers in faith from sinners through it."[28] Likewise, Imam Sadiq said, "Dissimulation is the shield of believer; it is a means of safeguarding him in the struggle."[29] Similarly, Prophet

[25] *A-Taqiyyah 'inda Ahl-ul-Bait*, Mustafa Qaisar, p. 27.
[26] *Waqi' a-Taqiyyah 'ind-al- Madhahib wal-Firaq-ul-Islamiyyah*, Hamidi, Thamih Hashim, p. 84.
[27] Ibid.
[28] *Wasa'il-u- Shi'ah*, "Enjoining the Good", section 28, Hadith no. 3.
[29] Ibid.

Muhammad said, "The believer who abandons dissimulation resembles a headless body."[30]

3. ***The protector of Islamic unity:*** Hadiths on dissimulation imply that it ***safeguards*** Islamic unity. Imam Sadiq said in this regard, "The one who performs prayer on the first line of [Sunni] public prayer, it is as if he performed public prayer on the first line with the Messenger of Allah."[31] In another hadith, he said, "Visit their [Sunnis] sick people, attend their funerals, and perform prayer in their mosques."[32]

In short, we can see dissimulation is a necessity because it revives Islam and brings about Islamic unity. However, abandoning dissimulation when it is necessary causes disunity and rancor among Islamic sects; it also strengthens the enemies of Islam.

Response to doubts on dissimulation

Some have questioned dissimulation; some of these doubts will be mentioned and responded to below.

1. Dissimulation: an unjustified fear

Dissimulation is to protect one's own interests, to sacrifice the interests of others, and to abandon nobility and magnanimity. This is contrary to the Islamic teachings.

Response: This claim that dissimulation means giving up magnanimity is contrary to the conduct of Prophet Muhammad, because his call to Islam was secret for three years.[33] In addition, his leaving secretly from Mecca - where he was surrounded by enemies - his hiding in a cave in Mount Thawr, his secret migration to Medina, walking during the

[30] Ibid, section 28, Hadith no.2.
[31] I'tiqadat, Shaikh Saduq, p.133.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Excerpts from History of Islam, Subhani, Ja'far, p. 99.

nights and concealing himself throughout the days are all considered dissimulation.[34]

2. Dissimulation: a factor in the spread of telling lies

Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab, and their followers have condemned dissimulation because it may be accompanied by lying; they have introduced it as a factor in the spread of lying.[35]

Response: Intances of dissimulation appear in both Islamic history and its rulings. If it involves lying, it is considered permissible based on the principle of prioritization. In this respect, Imam Ghazali said:

> … So whatever good purpose can be achieved through telling both the truth and a lie, it is prohibited [*haram*] to tell lies for it. If achieving this purpose is only possible through lying, then it is permissible to tell lies provided that this purpose is permissible, and it is obligatory to tell lies provided that it is obligatory; for example, to save the lives of Muslims. Thus, whenever truthfulness causes a Muslim who is hiding from a tyrant to lose his life, it is definitely not permissible to tell the truth and it is obligatory to tell lies. Likewise, if the purpose – in war, making peace between two people, and solacing an oppressed one – is not achieved but through lying, it is necessary to make use of lies and lying is obligatory….[36]

Moreover, based on Prophet Muhammad's saying - "It is not forbidden for a person who seeks to make peace between people to tell lies,"[37] - one can decree that dissimulation is permissible even though it involves lying.

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[34] Ibid, pp. 195-201.
[35] *Dirasah fi Minhaj fi Sunnah li Ma'rifah Ibn Taymiyyah, 'Aqidah wa 'Ilman wa 'Idalah*, Husayni Milani, Sayyid 'Ali, pp. 170-171.
[36] *Ihyah al- 'Ulum, Ghazzali*, vol. 3, p. 132, (*Bayan ma rakhas fihe min al-kidhb.*)
[37] Usul Kafi, vol. 2, p. 354.

3. Dissimulation: A corollary to hypocrisy

As dissimulation is to express something or do something opposite to the heartfelt belief, it is a kind of hypocrisy, because hypocrisy means pretention contrary to belief.

Response: The answer to this doubt is obvious, since based on the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, dissimulation means expressing disbelief and hiding faith or pretending to believe in falsehood and concealing the truth. This is the opposite of hypocrisy, because hypocrisy consists of expressing faith and hiding disbelief or pretending to believe in the truth and concealing falsehood.

In addition, the Qur'anic verses and Hadiths deprecate hypocrisy, while they emphasize that dissimulation is permissible and obligatory.

4. Dissimulation before Muslims: an Innovation[38]

It may be assumed that the permissible dissimulation is the one before the pagans, but dissimulation before Muslims is an innovation introduced by the Shi'as.

Response: The dissimulation considered permissible by the Shi'as is based on its criterion and advisability which are saving one's life, face, property, etc. Whenever this criterion is met, it can be decreed that dissimulation is permissible. Thus, it does not make any difference whether it is before pagans or Muslims, Sunnis or Shi'as.

As Imam Shafi'i said, "In order to save one's life, dissimulation is permitted. As it is allowable among the pagans, it is permissible among Muslims."[39]

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[38] Ibid, p.80.
[39] *A-Taqiyyah 'Inda Ahl-ul-Bayt*, p. 27.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can conclude that:

1. Dissimulation is a rational action.

2. Both Sunnis and Sh'ias agree on legitimacy of dissimulation.

3. In Islamic hadiths, dissimulation is called the Sunnah of the divine prophets, the requisite for safeguarding faith, and a defense mechanism that preserves Islamic unity.

4. Dissimulation by no means contrasts with magnanimity, since the Prophet of Islam also dissimulated.

5. Dissimulation is not considered hypocrisy, because hypocrisy involves expressing faith and hiding disbelief, while dissimulation involves expressing disbelief and concealing faith unwillingly.

6. Whenever the religious obvious and necessary matters are tainted or murder occurs by dissimulation, it is not permissible.

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A Probe into the Purport and Application of the Verse of Love

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ABSTRACT: There are several verses in the Holy Qur'an in which the members of the Household of the Prophet have been praised and acclaimed by the Almighty Allah and their position in the Islamic community has, thus, been clearly introduced to the Muslims. Among such verses is 'the verse of love' (*mawaddah*). What follows is a discussion on the meaning of this verse and its application. According to the findings of this study, there are numerous narrations, from both Shi'a and the Sunni sources, that reveal the fact that the people referred to in this verse are Lady Fatima and the purified Imams from the Household of the Prophet Muhammad, and that the love of Ahl al-Bayt is a religious duty upon all Muslims.

Introduction

Replete with lofty ideological, ethical, and legal guidelines, the Holy Qur'an serves as a constitutional framework for all Muslims. In addition to guiding His creatures directly through the verses of the

Qur'an, Allah has also directed them to His chosen servants and guides on the earth.

Another fact agreed upon by all Muslims is that the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, never asked for any compensation in return for the hardships and difficulties he experienced during his Prophetic mission. Yet, in verse 42:23, the Prophet is being instructed by Allah to inform the Muslims that he does not want any reward from them except that they should have love for his nearest kin.

Does this verse contradict the other verses in the Qur'an? What is the principal message intended to be conveyed by this verse? These and other similar questions shall be discussed in this paper.

The Verse of Love

Say, 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.' (42:23)

The occasion of revelation of the Verse of Love

With regards to the occasion of revelation of this particular verse, a number of views have been expressed by the Shi'a and Sunni commentators of the Qur'an. However, it is crystal clear that a thorough consideration of the cases of revelation plays a decisive role in the correct understanding of a verse and in the identification of its application.

Many commentators have reported from Ibn 'Abbas on the authority of Sa'id bin Jubayr that after the migration of the Prophet to Medina and the establishment of the Islamic society, the Ansar came to see the Prophet and held talks with him concerning the administration of the newly founded Islamic state. The Ansar proposed that in case of any kind of financial need in administering the Islamic government or

running the affairs of the Islamic community, they would be more than willing to put all that they have at the disposal of the Prophet.

It was exactly at this particular moment that the Angel of Revelation, Gabriel, descended upon the Prophet revealing the following verse, "*Say, 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.'"* (42:23) The Prophet communicated the verse to the Muslims and thereafter said, "Today onwards you should have love for my family."

The Ansar left the presence of the Prophet while submitting to this order of Allah and His Messenger. However, a group of hypocrites accused the Prophet, saying that this verse was not a divine revelation; rather, it was a fabrication by the Prophet with the aim of subjugating the Muslims to the rule of his family after him. Consequently, the following verse was revealed, *"Do they say, 'He has fabricated a lie against Allah'? If so, should Allah wish He would set a seal on your heart, and Allah will efface the falsehood and confirm the truth with His words; indeed He knows well what is in the breasts."* (42:24)

The Holy Prophet immediately sent for them and recited this verse to them. The Ansar were disappointed with what happened and broke into tears. Thereafter, this verse was revealed: *"It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants, and excuses their misdeeds and knows what you do.*" (42:25) Again, the Prophet sent for them and gave them the glad tidings that Allah accepts the repentance of those who repent and answers their supplication.[1]

Explanation of key words

The key words crucial to the meaning of the Verse of Love are as follows:

[1]Tabarsi, FaÃl bin Hasan, *MajmaÝ al-Bayan*, vol. 9, p. 29.

1. Love (*mawaddah*)

Lexically the word '*mawaddah'* derives from the root verb *wadda* meaning 'to love something'.[2] In addition to the above meaning, Raghib al-Isfahani also considers *wadda* to mean 'to wish'. He maintains that *wadda* is used for both meanings and, in fact, the act of 'wishing for something' involves love and liking for that thing.[3]

2. Relatives (*qurba*)

Lexically, *qurba* is an infinitive verbal noun (*masdar*) which derives from *qurb* meaning 'nearness'. According to some lexicographers, *qurb* is the opposite of *bu'd*, or 'farness'. *Qurb al-shay'* means 'proximity to something', and *al-qarabah* or *al-qurba* means 'closeness to someone through blood relationship'.[4]

Acknowledging the meaning of the above derivatives of the word *qurb*, Raghib al-Isfahani insists that the word is applicable to closeness in place, time, lineage, position as well as spiritual proximity.

The application of 'al-qurba'

The most important question regarding the Verse of *Mawaddah* concerns identification of *al-qurba.* The answer to this question has been the major point of difference of opinion between the Shi'a and Sunni *mufassirun* of the Holy Qur'an. Based on numerous proofs, the Shi'ah believe that the individuals referred to by the word *al-qurba* are the members of the Household of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt, the most

[2] Farahidi, Khalil, *Al-'Ayn*, under the entry *wadda*; Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, under the entry *wadda* and Turayhi, *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, under the entry *wadda*.
[3] Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, translation by Dr. Khosrawi, under the root verb *wadda*.
[4] Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, under the entry *qaruba*.

distinct of them being ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Husayn and the rest of the nine Divinely guided leaders from the progeny of Husayn.[5]

On the contrary, Sunni commentators present numerous interpretations that contradict the Shi‘a view, as will be mentioned shortly in our discussion.

In his book *Nahj al-Haqq*, ‘Allamah al-Hilli ranks the verse of *mawaddah* as the fourth verse from the Qur’an which establishes the divine authority (*imamate*) of Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. Expounding on this verse, he relates a report from Ibn ‘Abbas who said, “When the verse of *mawwadah* was revealed, the Prophet was asked, ‘Who are these people whose love has become incumbent upon us?’ He replied, ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.’” Thereafter, ‘Allamah al-Hilli states that the obligation to love someone necessitates the obligation of obeying him.[6]

Shi‘a narrations on the Verse of Mawaddah

Shi‘a scholars have cited numerous traditions from both Shi‘a and Sunni sources that attest that the Verse of *Mawaddah* was revealed in relation to the Ahl al-Bayt.[7] Based on the Shi‘a sources, these traditions can be classified into three categories:

1. Ahl al-Bayt as the Instance of the Verse of Mawaddah

Imam al-Sajjad was once asked about the Verse of *Mawaddah* to which he replied, “It refers to our proximity – the Ahl al-Bayt - to the Prophet.”[8]

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[5] See: Shaykh Tusi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, vol. 9, p. 158; and TabarsI, Fazl bin Hasan, *Majma‘ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, vol. 9, p. 48.
[6] ‘Allamah Hilli, Hasan bin Yusuf, *Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, p. 175.
[7] ‘Allamah Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*. An approximate of 32 narrations have been mentioned.
[8] *Furat al-Kufi*, Abu al-Qasim Furat bin Ibrahim, p. 392.

2. *The People of the Cloak as the case of application of the Verse of Mawaddah*

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq says in this regard, "This verse was revealed concerning us the Ahl al-Bayt – the People of the Cloak."[9]

3. *The 12 Imams as the Case of Application of the Verse of Mawaddah*

In other narrations, all the twelve Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt have been considered as the case of application of this verse as it has appeared in a tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir.[10]

It is noteworthy that the above narrations are compatible with each other and do not contradict one another. The first category of narrations generally identifies the Ahl al-Bayt as those referred to by the word *al-qurba*. The second and the third categories specify, in particular, the twelve holy Imams together with Lady Fatima as the individuals meant by the holy verse.

Sunni narrations on the Verse of Mawaddah

Numerous narrations have been recorded in the Sunni works of *tafsir* and *hadith* concerning the verse, as well as the individuals intended by the word *al-qurba*, such that thorough attention to them would clarify any doubt regarding the meaning of the verse.

In his annotations on the book *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, the late Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi names forty-six renowned Sunni scholars who have reported in their works the narrations concerning the verse through different chains of narration.

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[9] Hakim al-Haskani, 'Abdullah bin Ahmad, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, p. 213.

[10] Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Baqir is reported to have said regarding the verse 'Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives': "They are the [twelve] Imams." Al-Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya'qub, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 413.

In his book *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, the well-known Sunni scholar Abu al-Qasim Hakim al-Hasakani records 22 traditions regarding the verse, most of which identify the Ahl al-Bayt as the case of application of this verse, and in some of them ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn have particularly been regarded as the instances (*masadiq*) of the verse.[11]

Hereunder, we shall cite a number of narrations from the Shi‘a and Sunni sources which clearly indicate that the people referred to by the word *al-qurba* are the Ahl al-Bayt:

1. Ahmad ibn Hanbal reports from Ibn ‘Abbas through an uninterrupted chain of narration: “When the verse *‘Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives’* was revealed, the companions of the Prophet asked, ‘O the Messenger of Allah! Who are your relatives whose love has become incumbent upon us?’ He answered, ‘‘Ali, Fatima, and their two sons.’ He repeated this three times.”[12]

It is evident from this narration that the fact that *al-qurba* refers to the relatives of the Holy Prophet was known to all Muslims during that time or, at least to some of them, and as a result, their query was regarding the identification of these individuals.

Furthermore, given that the Prophet identified only four individuals from his relatives as those intended by the verse implies that, beside these four individuals, none of his other family members during his time are included in the verse; for in other than this case the Prophet would have certainly mentioned them.

2. Expounding on the verse, Jalal al-Din Suyuti in his famous work *Al-Durr al-Manthur* reports from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Prophet said

[11] Hakim al-Haskani, ‘Abdullah bin Ahmad, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, pp. 189-196.
[12] Qurtubi, Muhammad bin Ahmad Ansari, *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 2.

regarding this verse, "You should observe my right in relation to my household and have love for them because of me."[13]

3. In his commentary of the Qur'an, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari reports from Sa'id bin Jubayr, and based on another chain of narration from 'Umar bin Shu'ayb, that the people meant in this verse are the relatives of the Prophet.[14]

4. Hakim al-Hasakani, the famous Sunni scholar of *tafsir* and *hadith*, narrates in his book *Shawahid al-Tanzil* from Abu Amamah al-Bahili that, "The Prophet of Allah said, 'The Almighty Allah created the prophets from different trees, but he created me and 'Ali from one tree. I am the root of that tree while 'Ali is the branch of it; Fatima is the source of growth of that tree whereas Hasan and Husayn are its fruit and our followers (*shi'ah*) are its leaves. If a person were to worship Allah between the [hills of] Safa and Marwa for a thousand years, and thereafter for a thousand years, and again for a thousand years after that … but does not have our love [in his heart], Allah shall put him into the Fire on his face.' Thereafter, the Prophet recited this verse: *"Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.'"*[15]

The purport of the Verse of Mawaddah

After elucidating the key words in the verse and identifying the individuals referred to by it, we shall now discuss the purport and meaning of the verse.

Despite the fact that we made use of the Sunni narrations for the identification of the individuals intended by the verse, the Sunni interpretation of the verse still differs from that of the Shi'a.

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[13] Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *Al-Durr al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma'thur*, vol. 6, p. 7.
[14] Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, vol. 25, pp. 16-17.
[15] Hakim al-Haskani, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, p. 203.

We shall first discuss the Sunni point of view on the verse and thereafter we will present the correct interpretation of it.

1. The Sunni point of view

Regarding the verse, at least two views can be traced among the Sunni commentators:

The first view: The Messenger of Allah had blood relations with the Quraysh as he was also related to a number of other tribes through marriage. He had womb relation with the tribe of Bani al-Najjar in Madina and was also related to the tribe of Banu Sa'd through his foster mother.

Thus, the meaning of the verse is this: 'If you are not ready to recognise my right of prophethood, then at least observe my right of kinship to you and do not hurt me due to my family relationship with different tribes.'

A close look at this view shows that such a meaning does not go along with the context of the verse; for the reward is asked of those who have already acknowledged his apostleship, and in that case there is no room for such an interpretation. If they have already been respecting him as the Messenger of Allah, then there was no need for them to hold him in esteem due to his kinship to them, since the respect that stems from accepting that his apostleship is superior to all other forms of respect.

As a matter of fact, this interpretation needs to be considered as a serious mistake committed by some commentators of the Qur'an, since it completely alters the meaning of the verse.[16]

[16] Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, p. 408.

The second view: According to this view, the reward for conveying the divine message is to have love for all those things which lead one to divine proximity. In other words, the meaning of the verse is: 'You should show your love to me by performing good deeds so that you may attain closeness to Allah.'[17]

This exposition also does not seem to be compatible with the apparent meaning of the verse; for in this case the verse would mean: 'That what is required of you is to have love for the obedience of Allah', whereas, in reality, it should say 'What is required of you is the obedience of Allah', and not the love of His obedience.[18]

2. The Shi'a point of view

A close look at the verse clearly shows that Allah has specified love for the nearest kin as the reward of the apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad. Thorough consideration of the context of the verse and the narrations in this regard also lead us to the fact that love for the relatives of the Holy Prophet is a religious obligation on every Muslim, as it is evident from a narration of Imam Muhammad Baqir in which he says about the verse, "Love for the members of the household of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) is indeed a divine obligation on the people in honour of Muhammad."[19]

Moreover, still a closer scrutiny of the verse reveals the fact that the love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* is a means that leads one to the acknowledgement of the divine leadership of the infallible Imams from the progeny of the Prophet as well as a backing for the accomplishment of the Prophetic mission.

The following explanation would help clarify the above conclusion:

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[17] Sullami, Muhammad bin Husayn, *Haqa'iq al-Tafsir*, vol. 1, p. 53.
[18] Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir-i Namunah*, vol. 20, p. 407.
[19] Barqi, Ahmad bin Muhammad Khalid, *Al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 144.

A number of prophets have been quoted in the Qur'an as saying, "I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds."[20]

On the other hand, the Qur'an quotes different assertions from the Prophet of Islam on the issue of asking for reward. It says on one occasion, *"Say, 'Whatever reward I may have asked you is for your own good. My [true] reward lies only with Allah, and He is witness to all things."*[21]

In another verse, the Prophet is quoted to have said, *"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord.'"*[22]

Yet at another place it says, *"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, and I am no impostor.'"*[23]

If the above three verses are considered against the verse, then the following conclusion is derived: First, Prophet declines any kind of compensation; second he wants the reward only from a person who wishes to take the way to his Lord; third, he asserts that whatever reward he has asked of us is for our own benefit. And in the Verse of *Mawaddah*, the Prophet proclaims love for his relatives as the reward for his Prophetic mission.

In other words, the message of the Prophet to all Muslims is that he has asked them a reward whose benefit does not return to him; rather, it is entirely for their own good. It is something that would pave for them the way to Allah (swt). And it is obvious that the continuance of the path to reach Allah (swt) would only be conceivable if the torch lit by the Holy Prophet continues to burn after him under the custodian of his

[20] Qur'an, Shu'ara (26):109, 127, 145, 164 and 180.
[21] Qur'an, Saba' (34):47.
[22] Qur'an, Furqan (25):57.
[23] Qur'an, Sad (38):86.

infallible successors and the divinely guided leaders who have all been from his holy progeny. This reality perfectly justifies this Prophetic instruction to have love and affection for his relatives.[24]

Response to some doubts

It has been established up until here that according to the verse, the love for the Household of the Prophet - who are none but the infallible Imams from his progeny - is a religious obligation upon all Muslims. Below are some responses to doubts have been raised concerning the verse.

Doubt 1: The revelation of the Verse of Mawaddah in Mecca

Some Sunni commentators of the Qur'an reject the idea that the verse was revealed regarding the Ahl al-Bayt based on the argument that the Chapter *Consultation* (*Surat al-Shura*) was revealed in Mecca. They argue that this chapter was revealed during the Meccan period of the Prophetic mission wherein the marriage between 'Ali and Fatima had not yet taken place and, therefore, Hasan and Husayn were not yet born. As a result, this verse could not have revealed in relation to these four individuals.[25]

Response: Many commentators of the Qur'an have affirmed that although *Surat al-Shura* was revealed in Mecca, the verse and the three verses after it were revealed in Medina.[26] They have, moreover, reported from Ibn 'Abbas and Qutadah who said, "This is a Meccan *surah* except for the four verses which were revealed in Medina, the

[24] Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, pp. 409-410.
[25] Àbidi, Khuda Husayn, *Tafsir i Tatbiqi i Àyah i Mawaddat*, p. 167.
[26] See: Zamakhshari, Mahmud, Al-Kashshaf, v.4, p.208; Qurtubi, Muhammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, vol. 16, p. 1; Maraghi, Ahmad bin Mustafa, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, vol. 25, p. 13 and Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, pp. 423-424.

first one being *"Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives …".*[27]

Doubt 2: Asking for reward controverts the norm of the Prophets

Asking for compensation by the Prophet stands in sharp contrast with the practice of the past prophets like Nuh, Hud, and Salih who openly declared, *"I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds."*[28]

Now, since our Prophet is the best among all the prophets, it befits him more not to ask for any reward.

Response: No prophet asked for any reward in return for his prophetic mission. The Prophet himself declined financial offer a couple of times from the infidels of Mecca during the early stages of his Prophetic mission as he also refused a similar offer from the Ansar after his migration to Medina.

It therefore becomes clear that the nature of the reward that the Prophet asked from the people was different to the one turned down by all the prophets in history, including our Holy Prophet Muhammad. The reward rejected by all prophets was the material and worldly form of reward, whereas the reward asked by our Prophet was spiritual in nature and for the good of the people themselves as indicated by the Qur'an, *"Say, 'Whatever reward I may have asked you is for your own good…."* (34:47)

Doubt 3: Asking for reward gives rise to acccusations against the Prophet

[27] Maybudi, Ahmad, *Kashf al-Asrar*, vol. 9, p. 4.
[28] Qur'an, Shu'ara (26):109.

Asking for reward from the people makes the Prophet subject to accusations, as asking for reward in return for fulfilling a duty is not acceptable from an ordinary person, let alone the Prophet of Islam.

Response: Firstly, had the reward been a material and financial one which is normally given to somebody in return for accomplishing a task, then such an accusation could have been in place. However, the reward mentioned in the verse in return for the Prophetic mission eventually culminates in directing the people towards the Ahlul Bayt in matters related to religion and guidance, and in this case, the good of it does *in no way* return to the Prophet or the Ahlul Bayt, rather it is in the interest of the people themselves.

Based on the above explanation the Prophet would, therefore, be free from such accusations.

Furthermore, the addressees of the Verse of *Mawaddah* are believers who supposedly believe in the infallibility of the Prophet; thus, such accusations from them would be out of the question.

Secondly, if we assume that the Prophet could be subjected to such an accusation on the issue of asking for reward, how would we respond then in the case of such other Islamic tenets as *khums*, *anfal,* and the necessity of obedience to the Prophet which are - either completely or partially - specific to the Prophet himself?

Moreover, what other justification could be found for those narrations, from both Shi'a and Sunni sources, which apply the verse to the Ahlul Bayt?[29]

Conclusion

The following points are concluded from the above discussion:

[29] Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, vol. 18, pp. 67-68.

1. The Verse of *Mawaddah* is among the contentious verses of the Qur'an between the Shi'a and Sunni exegetes (*mufassirun*).

2. According to this verse, the Prophet decreed love for his relatives as the reward for his apostleship.

3. According to numerous Shi'a and Sunni narrations, the individuals referred to by this verse are the twelve Shi'a Imams.

4. The Prophet did not ask for any reward for himself. Such a reward was in the interest of the people themselves; due to the affinity of the love of Ahlul Bayt, the Muslims would become acquainted with the genuine teachings of Islam and attain spiritual perfection.

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Fatima Zahra in the words of the Infallibles

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Translated by Asma Sultan

ABSTRACT: Muslims have always had high regard for Lady Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, the wife of Imam Ali, the mother of all the Imams, and the most exemplary woman in Islam. Despite many efforts made to introduce this unique woman to the people of the world, more work is to be done. This article introduces some of the facets of her status and personality by relying on the words of the Prophet, the Imams, and Lady Fatima herself. Some of her merits include her being a leader of all women who was infallible, an angel in the form of a human, and an intercessor on the Day of Judgment. She was privileged with having spoken to the angels and her pleasure and displeasure was God's pleasure and displeasure. Moreover, heaven is given as a reward to those who send their peace on her.

Introduction

Understanding the personality of Fatima al-Zahra is a source of better understanding the teachings of Islam and the events before and after the demise of the Prophet, and benefiting from this great role model. In this regard, many Islamic writers and thinkers recount various aspects of Lady Fatima's personality. In doing so, they refer to the words of the

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[2] Post-graduate student of Islamic History

Ahlul Bayt who knew her better than anyone else. The narrations used in this article are those accepted by both Shi'a and Sunni scholars.

1) Fatima al-Zahra in the words of Prophet Muhammad

Certainly no one knows Lady Fatima better than her father, Prophet Muhammad.

1.1 Fatima the leader of the Muslim women

The Prophet of Islam - the leader of the Islamic Nation (*Ummah*) - when describing Fatima al-Zahra says, "Fatima is the leader of the women of this nation."[3]

With these words, the Prophet is introducing Fatima as the best, most perfect, most exemplary Muslim woman.

1.2 Fatima - the perfect human being

The Prophet said, "Many men have reached perfection, but from among all women only four women have [reached perfection]; no other woman apart from these four will reach this status. Those four women are: Asiya[4], Maryam[5], Khadijah[6] and Fatima."[7] [8]

In other words, the Prophet presents these four women as the best and highest moral and practical examples for women in all ages - from the past until the future - whom all women should follow.

1.3 Fatima – an angel in the form of a human

[3] Husayni Firoozabadi, 1393 (A.H.), vol. 3, p. 137.
[4] The daughter of Muzahim and wife of the Pharoah
[5] The daughter of Imran
[6] The daughter of Khuwaylid
[7] The daughter of Muhammad
[8] Tha'labi, 1422 (A.H.), vol. 9, p. 353.

The Prophet, who knows the realities of this world and the next better than anyone else, while addressing Asma bint 'Umays, said, "Asma! Surely Fatima is an angel who has been created in the mould of a human being."[9]

In another place he said, "My daughter Fatima is an angel in the face of human beings."[10]

This expression of the Prophet is one of the best expressions present about the personality of Lady Fatima. It reveals her infallibility and purity from sins and impurities since an angel is the manifestation of beauty, pleasantness, tenderness, and purity. From another angle, she is the symbol of infallibility and virtue because of her heavenly existence.

1.4 Fatima – fragranced with the scent of Heaven

The Seal of the Prophets repeatedly mentioned, "Whenever I would yearn for Heaven, I would breathe in the scent of Fatima.[11] And whenever he desired the fragrance of Heaven, he would kiss Fatima."[12]

1.5 Fatima is the height of goodness and virtue

The Prophet used to praise the personality of Lady Fatima by saying, "If goodness and virtue was in the form of a person, surely that person would be Fatima; in fact, Fatima would be better than that person, for definitely my daughter Fatima is the best of creation in terms of descent, honour, and nobility."[13]

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[9] Ibne Magazili, 1424 (A.H.), p. 296, hadith no. 416 / Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 148.
[10] Qandoozi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 218/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 456/ Amini Najafi, 1416 (A.H.), p. 33.
[11] Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 148.
[12] Amini Najafi, 1416 (A.H.), vol. 3, p. 33.
[13] Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 100, hadith no. 24/ Juwaini Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 68.

These words of the prophet show the boundless perfection of Lady Fatima.

1.6 Fatima – the bright star of guidance

The Prophet once said to his companions, "Look for the sun; when the sun is hidden in the night, look for the moon. When the moon is hidden, search for Venus, the evening star; and when that, too, is hidden, look for the two bright stars in the Ursa Minor."[14]

"His companions asked him, 'O Prophet of God. Who is the sun?' He replied, 'I am the sun.' They asked, 'Who is the moon?' He replied, 'Ali.' The companions asked, 'Who is Venus?' The Prophet replied, 'Fatima.' They asked, 'Who are the two stars of the Ursa Minor? He answered, 'Hasan and Husayn.'"[15]

With this, the Prophet clearly showed the path of guidance to the Islamic Ummah. He compared himself as being the bright sun of guidance, Ali as the glowing moon that a person must turn to and benefit from its light when the sun is hidden, and compared Lady Zahra and the Hassanain to the bright stars of guidance towards God.

1.7 Fatima – A part of the Prophet

A great number of narrations with similar content have been narrated from the Prophet where he says, "Fatima is a part of me; whoever hurts her has hurt me, and whoever pleases her has pleased me."[16]

These narrations show the extent of the emotional connection between the Prophet and Fatima al-Zahra. They also portray Fatima's absolute

[14] A constellation in the northern sky, also known as the Little Bear

[15] Juwaini Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 17, hadith no. 361/ Haksani, 1393 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 59, hadith no. 91.

[16] Muslim Ibne al Hajjaj Qushayri, 1419 (A.H.), p. 993, hadith no. 2449/ Bukhari, 1423 (A.H.), p. 684, hadith no. 3767/ Tirmidhi, 1421 (A.H.), p. 1006, hadith no. 3876/ Suyuti, 1408 (A.H.), p. 45/ Ibne Hajar Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 265.

obedience to divine commands, and sincerity and steadfastness in servitude to God and His Prophet, that she took no steps outside the line of truth, such that her happiness and pleasure was the happiness and pleasure of the Prophet and her pain was the pain of the Prophet. It is for this reason that the Prophet addressed her as "a part of me" and announced her pain to be his and her pleasure to be his.

1.8 Fatima – A reason for the Prophet's happiness

The Prophet has said, "Fatima is the joy and happiness of my heart. Her sons are the fruit of my heart, her husband is the light of my eyes, and the Imams from the progeny of her son are the trustees of my God and the rope that connects God and His creatures. Whoever holds on to them will be saved and whoever goes against them has gone astray."[17]

The words of the Prophet indicate that looking at Fatima, sitting with her and her very existence are a source of happiness and joy for the Prophet. This hadith is also used as a commentary to the Hadith of Thaqalayn.[18]

1.9 Friendship and enmity with Fatima is friendship and enmity with the Prophet

In numerous places the Prophet has pointed to the true status of Lady Fatima and, addressing Fatima, her husband Ali and their sons Hasan and Husayn as said, "I am the enemy of anyone who is your enemy and the friend anyone who is your friend with."[19]

Therefore, friendship with Fatima, her husband, and children means friendship with the Prophet, and enmity with them is enmity with him.

[17] Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 99, hadith no. 21.
[18] Hadith of "the two weighty things" that is, the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt.
[19] Tirmzi, 1421 (A.H.), page 1007, hadith no. 3879/ Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.) vol. 1, p. 101, hadith no. 26/ Ibne Haja Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 266/ Ibne Athir Juzri, 1419 (A.H.), vol. 6, p. 228.

1.10 Fatima – A unique existence

Fatima has such a high status that she is unparalleled in this world, as the Prophet has mentioned, "If it wasn't for Ali there would be no [compatible] partner for Fatima."[20]

1.11 Fatima's pleasure and displeasure is God's pleasure and displeasure

The Prophet repeatedly said, "Surely God is angered whenever Fatima is angry, and is pleased when Fatima is pleased."[21]

Imam Ali has narrated another narration that the Prophet - addressing Fatima - said: "Surely God is angered when you are angry and is pleased when you are pleased."[22]

Lady Fatima has reached such a status of servitude and obedience in that she is angered and pleased only for God's sake, and not as a result of personal desires.

2) Fatima Zahra in the words of the Imams

From among the writers and speakers who have described her, the Imams have a prominent and greater role in our recognition of her qualities because they are her progeny and can introduce her better than anyone. In truth, if they and their eloquent words in describing her personality and status were not present, our information and recognition today regarding the Lady would be very limited.

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[20] Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 107, hadith no. 38/ Juwayni Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 68.

[21] Juwayni, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 46, hadith no. 378/ Haakim Neyshapoori, 1406 (A.H.), vol. 3, page 153/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 93.

[22] Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 285, hadith no. 401, Haakim Neyshapoori, 1406 (A.H.), vol. 10, p. 116/ Qandoozi 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 204/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 146/ Ibne Hajar Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 266/ Ibne Athir Juzri, 1419 (A.H.), vol. 6, p. 227/ Ibne Jozi, 1401 (A.H.), p. 279.

Below are some sayings of the Imams in this regard:

2.1 Fatima's understanding and knowledge of the Prophet

Imam Baqir has narrated, "Some war booty had reached Imam Ali and he gifted it to Fatima. She went to the bazaar and bought two silver bracelets and a curtain. When she returned home, she put on the bracelets and hung the curtains.

The Prophet was travelling at this time, and when he returned he went to the mosque, since it was his usual habit when he returned from a trip to go to Imam Ali's house from the mosque to visit Fatima. Fatima, who had heard that her father had returned, hurried enthusiastically and happily to welcome her father; but as soon as the Prophet saw the silver bracelets on her hand and the curtains at the door, he returned.

Fatima's eyes filled with tears; she said, "My father has never reacted in this way with me." She removed the curtain from the entrance, took off the bracelets, and called Hasan and Husayn. She then sent bracelets and the curtain with them and said, "Go to my father and give him my salaam."

The young Hasan and Husayn went to the Prophet and gave their mother's greetings, including the parcel she had given them. The Prophet hugged and kissed both of them and sat them on his knee. After that, he asked that the bracelets be broken and have the pieces distributed among the shelterless and poor Muhajirs (the companions of Saffah). He also gave the curtains to those who had no clothes. He then said, "May God have mercy on Fatima and clothe her with Heavenly clothes in return for this curtain and reward her with Heavenly ornaments in reward for these two bracelets."[23]

2.2 Fatima's knowledge

[23] Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, pp. 64-65.

Imam Baqir once narrated that Imam Ali came to Fatima while being upset. When Fatima asked why, he replied:

The Prophet of God asked us a question we couldn't answer. The question was "What is a woman?" We replied, "Something private that has been clothed." He then asked, "When is a woman closest to her Lord?" And then we had no answer. Fatima repolied, "Go back to the Prophet and tell him that a woman is closest to her Lord when she remains at home." Imam Ali returned to the Prophet and related the answer to him. The Prophet asked, "O Ali! Who told you this answer?" Imam Ali explained all that had passed between him and Fatima. After hearing the words of Ali, the Prophet said, "What she said is true; surely Fatima is a part of me."[24]

Considering the social conditions of early Islam and the related verses, we can conclude from Lady Fatima's saying - that a woman staying in her house is closest to her Lord - refers to staying away from revealing herself to, and unnecessarily interacting with, non-mahrams. This means that she is to refrain from a) leaving the house without reason, b) revealing the parts of her body that must be covered (or beautifying herself), and c) engaging in unnecessary and immoral conversations with non-mahrams.

2.3 Lady Fatima implements the best of hijab

Imam Sajjad narrates, "Once a blind man sought permission from Fatima to enter her house, and when he entered, Fatima hid herself from his sight. The Prophet, who was present and a witness to this scene, said: 'Fatima, why did you hide yourself from him when he can't see you?' She replied, 'O Prophet of God, although he cannot see me, I can see him and my scent will reach him.' The Prophet praised her and said, 'I bear witness that you are a part of me.'[25]

[24] Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 304, hadith no. 430.
[25] Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 457.

A similar incident has also been narrated from Imam Ali.[26] In another hadith, Imam Ali asked Fatima, "Who are the best of women?" The noble and pious Lady replied, "When she does not see (non-mahram) men and (non-mahram) men do not see her."[27]

In the incident with the blind man, Lady Fatima indicates two things: 1) Hijab, chastity, and piety is not limited to keeping oneself away from the sight of non-mahrams, but also not looking at non-mahrams - or controlling our sight from looking at them - is considered a prerequisite to hijab, and 2) smelling the scent and perfume of a person by a non-mahram can also excite the emotions and desires and can cause one to fall into sin.

2.4 The Prophet's love for Fatima

The Prophet's high regard for Lady Fatima as that of a woman who was held with high esteem is seen in Imam Baqir's narration: "Whenever the Prophet decided to travel, he would bid farewell to his family members first; in the end, he would say goodbye to Fatima. The last person he would meet before travelling was Fatima and the first person whose house he would visit upon his return was Fatima."[28]

2.5 Lady Fatima – one of those who cried the most

Imam Sadiq said, "There are five people who are "*bakkā'ūn*" (those who cried a lot): Adam, Ya'qub, Yusuf, Fatima, and Ali, son of Husayn."[29]

Imam al-Sadiq said that Fatima cried so much after the death of the Prophet that some of the people of Medina were bothered by the sound of her wailing. They would say to her, "You have vexed us by your

[26] Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), pp. 303-304, hadith no. 429.
[27] Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (a,h.), vol. 1, p. 103, hadith 29.
[28] Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 64.
[29] Ayyashi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 358, no. 2133/61.

constant tears." After that, Fatima would go and cry for long periods besides the grave of the martyrs until she would calm down and eventually return home.[30]

This constant crying of Fatima in the few months after the death of the Prophet, apart from the political messages it portrayed, exposed her great love for the Prophet.

2.6 Lady Fatima is pure of all evil

It has been narrated by Imam Sadiq, "Fatima has nine heavenly names: *Fatima, Siddiqah, Mubarakah, Taherah, Zakiyyah, Raaziyah, Marziyyah, Muhaddathah,* and *Zahra*. He then asked, "Do you know what the name 'Fatima' means? It means, 'She is separated from all evil.'"[31]

Therefore, Fatima was given this name because she is pure of all things evil and indecent and is the epitome of all things good and beautiful.

2.7 Lady Fatima is a star for the inhabitants of the skies

Imam Sadiq was asked, "Why was Fatima given the name 'Zahra'? He replied, "Because when she would stand in the place of prayer (*mihrāb*), her light would shine upon the inhabitants of the skies just as the stars shine upon the inhabitants of the Earth."[32]

2.8 Lady Fatima is the leader of the women of the world

Mufaddal ibn 'Umar says, "I asked Imam Sadiq to explain these words of the Prophet where he says, 'Fatima is the leader of the women of the

[30] Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 498.
[31] Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), p. 212, section 142, hadith no. 3/ Shaykh Saduq 1410 (A.H.), p. 474/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 13/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 89/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), pp. 79-80, Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 445.
[32] Shaykh Saduq, 1361 (A.H.), p. 64, section 28, hadith no. 15/ Same, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 143 and 215, hadith no. 3/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 149/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 15.

world.' Is she the leader of the women of her time?" Imam Sadiq replied, "It was Maryam who was the leader of the women of her time; Fatima is the leader of *all* women, from the beginning until the end."[33]

2.9 Lady Fatima spoke to angels

Imam Sadiq said, "Fatima was given the name '*Muhaddatha'* because the angels would descend to the Earth and converse with her, just as they would converse with Lady Maryam, the daughter of Imran. They would say to her, 'O Fatima! Surely God has chosen and purified you and favoured you over the women of the world. O Fatima! Perform *qunoot*[34] and prostration (*sajdah*) for your Lord and genuflect (*rukū'*) with the ones who perform genuflection.' One night Fatima asked them, 'Isn't Maryam - the daughter of Imran - the one who has been favoured above the women of the world?' They said, 'Surely, Maryam is the leader of the women of her own time, and God Almighty has chosen you as the leader of all the women of all times.'"[35]

2.10 Lady Fatima's love for others in her prayers

Imam Hasan narrates, "I saw my mother in the prayer site (*mihrāb*) on Friday night when she continuously performed genuflection and prostration until the sun rose. I heard her praying for the believing men and women; she would mention their names and sincerely prayed for them, but asked nothing for herself. I said to her, 'My dear mother! Why don't you pray for yourself as you pray for others? She replied, 'My son, we must first pray for our neighbours (i.e. others) and then for ourselves.'"[36]

2.11 Lady Fatima – a person like no other

[33] Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 149.
[34] Literally means "the act of standing": special supplications made in prayers while in the standing position.
[35] Same, p. 80/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 456.
[36] Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 215, section 145, hadith no. 1/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 94/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 152/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 63.

When describing his honourable mother Lady Fatima, Imam Sadiq said, "If Imam Ali had not married her, there would be no match for her on this Earth until the Day of Judgement.[37]

The eighth Imam also narrates that after the wedding of Ali and Fatima, God said to his Prophet, "If I had not created Ali there would be no match for your daughter on this earth."[38]

2.12 Lady Fatima as a wife

Imam Baqir narrates, "Fatima made a commitment to Ali that she would perform the duties in the house, such as kneading and baking the bread, as well as sweeping the house. One day Ali asked Fatima, 'Do you have any food in the house?' She replied, "We don't, I swear by the one who made your right great. It is three days that we do not have any food in the house from which I can give you.' Ali said, 'Why didn't you let me know?' She answered, 'The Prophet of God forbade me to ask anything of you. The Prophet had said, 'Do not ask anything of your cousin. If he brings something for you accept it, otherwise do not ask.'"[39]

From this narration we can understand a few important points about Lady Fatima as a wife:

1. Dividing the duties of the married life with her husband Ali and undertaking the duties inside their house.

2. Knowing the rights of her husband, and her own duties to him, as seen in her statement, "I swear by the one who made your right great."

[37] Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 212, section 142, hadith no. 3 / Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 89 / Tabari 1413 (A.H.), pp. 79-80/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 445.
[38] Ataridi, 1413 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 141, hadith no. 177.
[39] Ayyashi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 303-304, hadith no. 681/42.

3. Her forbearance with her husband in the financial affairs of her home, even to the point of bearing some difficulties.

2.13 Lady Fatima's diligence in housework

Imam Ali told a member of Bani Sa'd, "Should I enlighten you about myself and Fatima – the daughter of the Prophet of God, the dearest part of his family to him and my wife? She ground so much wheat with her hands that they blistered, brought so much water in the *mashk* (leather bottles used to carry water at that time) that the marks of the bottle remained on her back, worked in the house and swept the floor so much that her clothes became worn out, and lit so much fire in the furnace until she became ill."[40]

2.14 Lady Fatima – the truthful, the martyred

Imam Kazim has said, "Surely, Fatima is *Siddiqah* (the most truthful) and *Shahidah* (the martyred).[41] The title *Siddiqah* is given due to honesty and truthfulness in her actions, words, and beliefs; moreover, she was in fact martyred.

3) Fatima in the words of Fatima

Though describing Lady Fatima's persona is no simple task, it is possible to deduce some aspects of her personality and merits from her own words.

3.1 Heaven is the reward of one who sends peace and blessings to Lady Fatima

A narrator says, "I once visited Fatima and said 'salam' to her. She replied to it and then said, 'During his lifetime, my father said to me,

[40] Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 65, section 88, hadith no. 1/ Ibne Jozi, 1401 (A.H.), p. 280/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 63.
[41] Majlisi, 1363 (A.H.), vol. 5, p. 315, hadith no. 2.

'Whoever sends peace and greets us in three days, Heaven is his reward.' The narrator asked, 'Is this limited to the lifetime of you and Prophet or does it also apply after you and he have passed away?' She replied, 'It does not make a difference whether it is during our lifetime or after our death.'"[42]

3.2 Lady Fatima is pleased with what pleases God

When Imam Ali came to the Prophet to ask for Fatima's hand in marriage, the Prophet consulted Fatima and said, "My daughter Fatima! Your cousin Ali has asked for your hand in marriage; what is your opinion? She replied, 'My pleasure is in whatever God and His Prophet are pleased with.'"[43]

3.3 Lady Fatima's contentment

She said to her husband Ali, "I feel ashamed to ask you for something that you cannot do."[44]

3.4 Lady Fatima's attachments in this world

Lady Fatima has said, "I love three things in this world: To spend in the way of God, recitation of the book of God, and gazing at the face of my father, the Prophet of God."[45]

3.5 Lady Fatima's excellence in the words of the Prophet

Lady Fatima narrates: "When the verse from the chapter *Light* (Nur 63) was revealed – *'Make not the calling of the messenger among you as your calling one of another'*[46] - I was afraid to address the Prophet of

[42] Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 292, hadith no. 410.
[43] Mar'ashi Najafi, 1417 (A.H.), vol. 23, p. 477.
[44] Shustari, 1391 (A.H.), vol. 10, p. 323/ Qandoozi Hanafi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 236.
[45] Shaykh al Islami, 1419 (A.H.), p. 161, hadith no. 93.
[46] لا تجَعَلُواْ دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُم بَعْضًا

God as "father." The Prophet turned away from me and said, 'My daughter, this verse is not for you or your family or progeny. You are from me and I am from you. This verse is for the selfish and arrogant oppressors from among the Quraysh. You address me as father, because this is more beloved to me and it pleases God.'"[47]

3.6 Lady Fatima: A member of the household of the Prophet

Fatima narrates, "One day I went to visit the Prophet of God and he spread a cloth for me to sit on. After a while Hasan came and he also had him sit on that cloth. Husayn came as well and he too sat. Then Ali joined the group. After this, the Prophet held another piece of cloth over their heads and said, 'O God! These are the members of my household and I am from them. My Lord! Be pleased with them as I am pleased with them.'"[48]

3.7 Lady Fatima: An intercessor of the Day of Judgement

Regarding her intercession, Lady Fatima says, "I will intercede for the sinners from among the ummah of my father when I am raised on the Day of Judgement."[49]

Conclusion

This paper offered a description of Lady Fatima by the Prophet, the Imams, and herself. The Prophet introduces Fatima as the leader of the women of the world; she is one of the few perfect women in this world, an angel in the form of a human being perfumed with the scent of Heaven. If virtue had a face it would be in the form of Fatima and indeed, even greater than that person. She is the bright star of guidance and a part of the Prophet; she is his joy, her children the apple of his

[47] Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), pp. 292-293, hadith no. 411/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 462.
[48] Qandoozi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 305.
[49] Shustari, 1391 (A.H.), vol. 10, page 367.

heart, and her husband - Ali - the light of his eyes. Friendship and enmity with Fatima is friendship and enmity with the God and the Prophet and her pleasure and displeasure is God and the Prophet's pleasure and displeasure.

The Imams too have spoken of her deep understanding of the Prophet as well as her great wisdom and knowledge. She was the dearest person to Prophet; and she too loved him greatly. They have also referred to her as someone who has implemented the best modest dress (*hijab*). She was pure of all evils, and when she stood in prayer, her light would shine upon the inhabitants of the skies. She is the leader of the women of the world and showed her immense love for others, especially during her prayers. She was modest in front of her husband Ali and diligent when performing her household duties.

She describes herself as someone whose pleasure is that of God's, as someone who loves the Prophet greatly, is a part of his household, is an intercessor on the Day of Judgement and loves three things from this world: spending in the path of God, reciting the book of God (Qur'an) and gazing at the face of the Prophet. The Prophet and Imams deeply comprehended Lady Fatima for her noble qualities and roles as a daughter, wife, and mother; indeed, she was the ideal Muslim woman as she served the most perfect example for all.

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The Special Deputies of Imam Mahdi (as)

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ABSTRACT: Little is found in early Shi'a sources regarding the special deputies of Imam Mahdi during the Minor Occultation. While in various Shi'a sources various people are referred to as envoys of Imam Mahdi, his four prominent deputies are 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, and Ali ibn Muhammad Samari. 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, who was an agent (*wakil*) of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan 'Askari, was his first deputy in the Minor Occultation, and his deputyship can be corroborated in many ways. After him, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman was chosen by the Imam as his second deputy. Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, an influential figure of his time, served as the Imam's third deputy for about 21 years. Finally, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri was the last deputy, who in the Imam's famous letter to him declared the start of the Major Occultation.

Statement of the Problem

The inception of Imam Mahdi's Occultation in 260 A.H. is considered a new chapter of the relation between the Imam and Ummah. The Shi'a community, which for years was accustomed to the direct relation with the Imam, now was to adjust itself with the new state of affairs. Hence, those who could not understand the situation abandoned the Shi'a school of thought. By plan of Allah, the Wise, the Prudent, at first the connection of people with the vicegerent of God was not severed completely. For this reason, the Shi'a name it *The Minor Occultation*,

during which people were in contact with the 12th Imam through his deputies.

Generally, the issues of his Minor Occultation are seldom discussed. They include the issue of deputies of Imam Mahdi in that period of time. Its significance is revealed when we consider that first, many claimed to be Imam Mahdi's deputy during that era; secondly, there is no consensus in Shi'a sources regarding the definite number of his deputies. Nevertheless, among the Shi'a it is well-known that the following four people were his deputies: 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, and Ali ibn Muhammad Samari.

This paper briefly offers the biographies of the above-mentioned deputies as well as the reasons for their deputyship.

The First Deputy: 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri

The first special deputy of Imam Mahdi was 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, who was also the representative of the two previous Imams and trusted by them.

'Uthman ibn Sa'id: The representative of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan al-'Askari

In this regard, there are a number of narrations, some of which are as follows. Some hadith narrators reported from Harun ibn Musa Tal'ukbari, who through his own chain of narrators quoted Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qumi as saying:

> One day I went to Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi and told him: 'I am not always here, and whenever I am here, sometimes I cannot come to you and ask my religious and legal questions. Whom should I obey?' The holy

> Imam answered, 'This Abu 'Amr ('Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri) is a reliable and trustworthy person. I trust him, and whatever he tells and gives you is from me.' After martyrdom of Imam Hadi, once I went to his son, Imam Hasan al-Askari, and asked him the same question. The 11th Imam repeated the answer of Imam Hadi, saying, "Abu 'Amr was trusted by the previous Imam and is trusted by me now and after my death, also whatever he tells and gives you is from me.' This word of the 11th Imam spread among Shi'as and 'Uthman ibn Sa'id was always respected by them.'[1]

Likewise, Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qummi quoted Imam Hadi as saying, "Amri and his son are trusted by me, so whatever he gives and tells you is from me. Listen to them and obey them."[2]

The reasons for his being a deputy of Imam Mahdi

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-'Askari, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri assumed the responsibility of performing the ritual bathing of the body of Imam, enshrouding and burying him. Afterwards, he became the deputy of Imam Mahdi. He moved from Samarra to Baghdad, and settled in the district of Karkh, where the Shi'as lived. Until his death, he ran the office of deputyship there. Like his routine in the time of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan al-'Askari, he delivered the letters and religious taxes the Shi'as gave to the 12th Imam.[3]

The reasons for 'Uthman ibn Sa'id's being deputy of Imam Mahdi are as follows:

A. After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan 'Askari , a group of the Shi's from Qum and other parts of Iran brought some religious taxes to Imam

[1] The History of Occultation, p. 287
[2] Shaykh Tusi, al-Ghaybah, p. 360
[3] The History of Occultation, p. 289

Hasan al-'Askari in Samarra. When they reached there, they were told of the martyrdom of the 11th Imam, and some people introduced Ja'far as the successor of the holy Imam. Ja'far asked them for the money, but the Qummis made this request contingent on his answering some questions. He could not reply to them, so they took the money and left. Outside Samarra, a secret messenger guided them to Imam Mahdi. He told them about each and every feature and sign of the money, and they gave it to him. Then the holy Imam told them, "Do not bring your money to Samarra anymore. From now on, give it to my deputy and representative in Baghdad, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id."

B. The letters of Imam Mahdi were delivered to the ordinary and elite Shi'as via 'Uthman ibn Sa'id and his son, Muhammad. These letters include the Imam's orders and prohibitions and his answers to the Shi'as' questions. The handwritings used in the letters exactly resembled the one used in the letters of Imam Hasan 'Askari, and Shi'as agreed on the justice of both 'Uthman ibn Sa'id and his son.[4]

Several letters of Imam Mahdi to 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri

1. After the demise of 'Uthman ibn Sa'id's father, Imam Mahdi issued a letter about his death; this letter included some sections. One part of it reads as follows, "We belong to Allah, and to Him is our return. We are submissive to His orders and content with His decree. Your father lived in salvation and left this world well."[5]

2. When some Shi'as quarrelled about the successor of Imam Hasan 'Askari, a letter was issued by Imam Mahdi to 'Uthman ibn Sa'id as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

[4] Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, pp.290 & 363.
[5] Ibid, p.361.

> May Allah protect you from seditions, grant you certitude, and keep you immune from a bad end. I received the news of your doubts about the issue and your puzzlement at your leaders. I was sad with regards to this issue for your own sake, and not for my own because I am right and do not need others.[6]

***The date of demise of 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri*[7]**

Although 'Uthman ibn Sa'id played a vital role in Shi'ism, the date of his demise was not specified. In this regard, Hashim Ma'ruf Hasani wrote, "The deputyship of 'Uthman ibn Sa'id lasted until 265 A.H." However, he did not cite any reference for his word.

According to some, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id passed away sometime between the martyrdom of Imam Hasan 'Askari and 267 A.H., because it was in the time of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, the son of Uthman ibn Sa'id, that the false pretender to the deputyship, Ahmad ibn Hilal, opposed him and did not accept his deputyship. Ahmad ibn Hilal died in 267 A.H. Thus, Uthman ibn Sa'id must have passed away before Hilal's death.

As for the burial place of 'Uthman ibn Sa'id, Shaikh Tusi wrote:

> I saw his burial place where Abu Nasr Hibatullah Mahmud mentioned. A building that included the prayer niche of a mosque has been constructed on it. We went there and paid a visit to his grave easily. From 408 A.H., when I came to Baghdad, to 430 A.H., it was in this condition. However, Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Faraj destroyed the building, made the grave exposed and put a box on it. Then, there was a roof over the grave, and everybody could enter the structure and visit it. All

[6] Abbas Rasikhi, The Envoys of the Imam (a.s.), p. 71.
[7] Ibid.

> people in the neighborhood who were all Sunni tried to be blessed by visiting his grave, saying, 'He was a righteous man.' Sometimes, they say, 'He was a descendant of Imam Husayn's wet nurse," but they do not know the truth. The grave has been in the same condition up to now; that is, 447 A.H.'[8]

The second deputy: Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri

The second special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri. After his father's death, he succeeded him and was appointed as the representative and deputy of Imam Mahdi.

Like his father, he was a genius of his time. He was also of great piety, God-wariness, and moral virtues. His epithet was Abu Ja'far, and he was also called 'Amri, 'Askari, and Zayyat.[9] In his lifetime, he offered many services to Shi'ism, such as writing books on Islamic Jurisprudence, and gathering the material of his books from the teachings of Imam Hasan 'Askari, Imam Mahdi, and his own father, whose source was these holy Imams, too. Based on his will, this book was handed on to the third deputy of the Imam, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti.

Among his other services was struggling against and defeating the false pretenders to the deputyship. Muhammad ibn 'Uthman was the special deputy of Imam Mahdi for about 40 years, and false claims to deputyship were rampant then. Under the guidance of Imam Mahdi and his letters, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman could struggle against and defeat them.

[8] Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 358.
[9] Somebody who sells oil is called Dhiyat. It was Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's job.

Like other deputies, his other works included addressing people's problems, answering their legal problems, and delivering people's letters to the 12th Imam and getting his responses to them.

The reasons for Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's being deputy of Imam Mahdi

In addition to being pious and trustworthy, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman had a good record, being at the service of the Prophet's Household and an active member of the representation network during his father's lifetime. The reasons for his deputyship include the following:

1. As mentioned before, in a letter, Imam Hasan 'Askari introduced him and his father as reliable people and trusted by himself.[10]

2. In addition to considering Muhammad ibn 'Uthman reliable, Imam Hasan 'Askari referred to his being representative of his son, Imam Mahdi, "Bear witness that 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri is my representative, and his son, Muhammad is representative of my son, Mahdi."[11]

3. He gave people some letters from Imam Mahdi. These letters were in the uniform handwriting and with the same characteristics as the previous ones. Thus, the agents or representatives could find out about his truthfulness and connection with Imam Mahdi.

4. Sometimes he prepared the ground for some agents or representatives' visiting with Imam Mahdi, and the holy Imam always told them, "Muhammad 'Uthman is my deputy."[12]

Some extraordinary acts of Imam Mahdi's second deputy

[10] 'Amri and his son are reliable.'
[11] The Textbook of Occultation, p.27.
[12] Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 362.

Imam Mahdi's second deputy, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, is said to have performed many extraordinary acts. For example, Abi Nasr Hibatullah ibn Muhammad is quoted as saying, "Once there was some money with my father from people of Qum and its suburbs. He was going to deliver it to the 12th Imam. When my father met Abi Ja'far (the second deputy) and gave him the money, he told my father, 'There is still some money left with you.' My father thought but could not recall any other money. So he said, "I have delivered all money with me, and there is nothing left.' But Abi Ja'far told him where money was. When my father followed it up he could find the money. Then, he gave it to Abi Ja'far. This was very strange, because nobody knew of that money."

The third deputy: Abul-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti

The third special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti. He worked as an agent for the second deputy and in the last few years of his deputyship, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman appointed him as the head of network of the agents, and he acted as an intermediary between the second deputy and other agents. Husayn ibn Ruh enjoyed a high social status among the Shi'as in Baghdad. Even high-ranking government officials were considerably under his sway and respected him. Also, the government was not sensitive to him.

In the lifetime of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh was chosen as his successor and the third deputy by Imam Mahdi. Muhammad ibn 'Uthman introduced him to the Shi'a elites and the 12th Imam's agents.

Reasons for Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti's being deputy of Imam Mahdi

1. According to Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's daughter, Umm Kulthum: For many years, Husayn ibn Ruh was the agent of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman and in charge of his lands. Husayn ibn Ruh used to transmit my fahters's

secret messages to the Shi'i leaders and was my father's close companion. Hence, the Shi'a took Husayn ibn Ruh to their hearts since they knew he was a close companion of my father. In the lifetime of my father, the arrangements for his deputyship were made. Then, on orders of Imam Mahdi, my father introduced him as his successor. There was no disagreement and doubt about his deputyship, and I know no Shi'a who is doubtful about his deputyship.[13]

2. Another reason for his deputyship is the letters sent to him by Imam Mahdi on various topics, including legal issues and answers to the Shi'as questions, as well as letters in which the 12th Imam condemned some of those who went astray, such as Shalmaghani.

3. Still another reason is that in the start of Husayn ibn Ruh's deputyship, the servant of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman took some belongings of Abu Ja'far such as his cane, key, and casket to Husayn ibn Ruh, and told him, "Abu Ja'far told me to deliver these to you after his burial. This casket contains the signets and seals of the holy Imams."

Finally, Husayn ibn Ruh, who – for about 20 years – was the deputy of Imam Mahdi from 305 A.H. to 326 A.H., passed away on Sha'ban 18th 326 A.H. His body was buried in Baghdad in Shurjah Bazaar, and his tomb attracts the Shi'a who seek blessings when they visit it.[14]

The fourth deputy: Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri

The fourth and last special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri. After the demise of Husayn ibn Ruh, he was appointed as the deputy by Imam Mahdi. As of Sha'ban 18th 328 A.H., he assumed this responsibility.

Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri was from a devout Shi'a family, and was renowned for offering valuable services in the representation

[13] Shaykh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 372.
[14] Allameh Majlisi, Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 51, p.358.

organization of the Infallible Imams. Due to his good previous record, reliability, and trustworthiness, he faced no problem in his being accepted as deputy by the Shi'as and agents of the representation network. Representatives and elite Shi'as recognized him as the true deputy of Imam Mahdi, and they gave the religious taxes to him to be delivered to the Imam. Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri did not have much opportunity for his activities. Due to both his short period of deputyship and special political situation, he could not take considerable measures. And if he managed to do so, because of his dissimulating and taking precautions, few of his measures have been passed on to future generations. What stands out in the period of his deputyship is the last letter sent to him by Imam Mahdi.

The last letter from Imam Mahdi

Imam Mahdi issued his last letter to Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri six days before his demise. In this letter, the 12th Imam predicted the time of his demise and told him not to appoint any other deputy as his successor, because with his death the Minor Occultation would end and the Major Occultation would begin. The letter reads as follows:

> *In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*
> O' Ali ibn Muhamad Samuri! May Allah give you and your companions high rewards! You will die within six days. So prepare yourself, and do not appoint anybody as your successor, since the second occultation has started. Thus, my reappearance will not be realized but with permission of Allah, and after people become heartless and merciless and the earth is replete with oppression. Also, some Shi'a will claim they have seen me. Whoever claims this before the appearance of Sufyani and the cry from the sky is a slanderous liar.

> There is neither might nor strength but in Allah, the High, the Great.[15]

Shaykh Saduq quoted Abu Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ahmad Maktab as saying:

> In the year when Ali ibn Muhamad Samuri passed away, we were in Baghdad, and went to him some days before his demise. He showed us this last letter of Imam Mahdi. We made a copy of it and left him. The predicted day came; we went to Samuri and found him on his deathbed. On the verge of his death, he was asked, "Who is your guardian (*wasiyy*)?" He answered, "The divine providence will happen by His will." He then passed away.[16]

Analysis of the Imam's letter

1. Foretelling the day of the last deputy's demise by Imam Mahdi shows that this letter was really from the 12th Imam.

2. This letter states the time of the end of the Minor Occultation and the start of Major Occultation.

3. The reappearance of Imam Mahdi is with Allah, and we do not know when it will happen.

4. The letter tells us of two indications of Imam Mahdi's reappearance: the appearance of Sufyani and the cry from the sky.[17]

Conclusion

The special deputies of Imam Mahdi lived fruitfully in a time when the Shi'a suffered extreme hardship. Above all, the absence of the Infallible

[15] Shaykh Saduq, Kamal-u-Din, p. 516.
[16] The History of Occultation, p. 300.
[17] Ibid, p. 301.

Imam occurred for the first time. On the other hand, Sunnis and followers of the deviant schools of thought took advantage of the absence of an Imam; they leveled false unfair accusations against the Shi'as, questioned their beliefs, and considered them misled. However, it was the special deputies who under the guidance of Imam Mahdi overcame the difficulties, saved the Shi'as from confusion and disunity, and kept them in the clear path of truth. They were among the most pious, clever, and shrewd people of their time; and due to earning Allah's satisfaction, they were risen to the high rank of deputyship.

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A Glimpse at the Major Shi'a Seminaries
part I

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ABSTRACT: The previous articles in this series touched upon the subjects of fiqh and usul of fiqh - with a glance into its history and sources - as well as Hadith studies, Qur'anic sciences, the Science of Exegesis, and the Science of Ethics. The next few parts give a glimpse into the historical origins of some of the most important religious seminaries in the Shi'a world. Islamic seminaries are the most affective institution in propagating the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt, and have moreover triggered a unique culture in the scientific, social, and even political spheres. One significant role of seminaries was the rise of knowledgeable and pious Shi'a scholars who pursued *ijtihad* with the use of the Qur'an, sunna, and reason to respond to legislative needs and guide the Muslim community with their contemporary issues. This part focuses primarily on the Islamic seminaries of Basra, Baghdad, and Najaf. The Seminary of Basra was known for its major role in the Science of Narration (*'Ilm-e Hadith*); the Seminary of Baghdad was recognized as the center of scholarly discussions as well as bringing about new advancements in principles of jurisprudence, theology, deductive reasoning (*istidlal*) and independent reasoning *(ijtihad)*; and the Seminary of Najaf was one of the most important institutions of academics and ijtihad in the history of Shi'a academia.

Introduction

Throughout Shi'a history, Islamic seminaries have been the most stable and affective societal institutions. Three issues, that is, learning, developing and publishing authentic Islamic teachings that have been manifested through the Holy Book and the teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s) and his rightful successors requires the establishment of an organized and systematic institution that pursues these goals. In pursuit of these goals and in response to this calling from the Almighty God "…*But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them,…* (9:122)," a group of people have been steadfast against all hardships and have washed their hands of all worldly and materialistic affairs in the quest for gaining religious knowledge and spreading it. Initially they made great efforts to collect the sayings of the Infallibles, and with the formation of study circles, they pondered and reflected on them to gain access to - and comprehend - the underlying secrets of the Divine Book. Eventually, they taught and published their works as a form of invitation to the faith and through this, the first seminaries were established in various geographical locations.

In the Arabic language '*hawzah*' means 'area', 'complex,' and 'central location', and in a more specific terminology amongst the Shi'a, it refers to a center similar to a university for pursuing Islamic education, or for learning Islamic sciences. Having access to valuable teachings from the Prophet and his family, a unique culture has been left behind in the scientific, social, and even political fields.[1]

During the time of the infallible Imams and specifically during the time of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq, the first Islamic seminaries and study circles were organized under the supervision of the holy Imams. Over a

[1] *Shi'a Encyclopedia*, under Bahaoddin Khorramshahi and others, vol. 6, p. 549.

thousand students from the Shi'a school of thought and other sects participated in the classes held by the two Imams. Soon afterwards, each student became prominent in various sciences, such as transmitted knowledge (*'ulum naqli*), intellectual knowledge (*'ulum aqli*), and natural sciences (*'ulum tabi'i*). With the inception of the twelfth Imam's occultation, that which held the highest priority was gathering narrations and protecting the legacy that was left behind by the Infallible Imams for those seeking the pure teaching of Islam. For this reason, the study of prophetic narrations held a great value. Shi'a scholars traveled to various regions, and after hearing narrations from their original sources, they presented authentic collections of narration, the most significant of them being *The Four Books of the Shi'a.*

At the beginning of the major occultation, the twelfth Imam's priority was to assign a vicegerent with the three characteristics of being scholarly, righteous, and holding the guardianship of the Imams as his model. This brought a very critical and heavy responsibility to the attention of Shi'a scholars and seminaries; it led them to pursue *ijtihad* with the use of key religious sources - the Qur'an, Sunna, and reason - to respond to legislative (*shar'i*) needs and to guide the community (*ummah*) with the existing issues of their time. The rise of great scholars, who were prominent in their level knowledge and God-consciousness (*taqwa*), was an important operation of the seminaries during the time of occultation and throughout their history.

Now after the passing of almost fourteen centuries from the beginning of constructing the first seminaries, there currently exists various active institutions all over the Shi'a world. Throughout history, with the training of open-minded individuals who are aware of their time and have a broad and expanded understanding of the pure gnostic knowledge of the family of the Prophet, they have been able to satisfy the religious and scientific needs of the followers of Islam. They have also been able to introduce the Shi'a faith to the world as an authentic viewpoint in Islam and as one of the sects that holds remarkable views

in various religious sciences such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*), philosophy (*falsafah*), theology (*kalam*), and exegesis (*tafsir*).

This section expounds on some of the most prominent Shi'a seminaries most influential in the growth of the Shi'a sect and in the training of the greatest Shi'a scholars. Although citing the number of active scholar-training seminaries during the course of history is beyond the constraints of this paper, only some of the most well-known and influential of them will be mentioned. We refer those who are interested to research in this area to more comprehensive works.[2]

1. Islamic Seminary of Basra

The Islamic seminary of Basra is one of the oldest publication centers of Shi'a theology in Iraq and is cited as the major seminary in the science of Prophetic Narration (*Ilm-e Hadith*).

Basra is a city in Iraq built after the conquest of the Hira region during the Islamic era in the year 15 A.H. Up until the year 36 A.H. - the time when the Battle of the Camel took place - the people of this city were mainly Uthmani. However, after the Battle of the Camel and Imam Ali's victory in that war, the Imam appointed Ibn Abbas as the Governor of Basra and Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali as the city judge. Due to the hard work of these two well-known figures of virtue and courtesy, and the people of Basra became more acquainted with the biography of Imam Ali that they started to lean towards Shi'ism. Ibn Abbas would spend all day at the main masjid teaching the Holy Qur'an, Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic commandments (*ahkam*), and when he would leave Bara to see Imam Ali and to take part in the battles of the Imam, he would assign Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali as his deputy in Basra.[3]

[2] Kabari, Sayyed Ali Reza, Shi'a Seminaries across the World.
[3] Encyclopedia of Shi'a, vol. 6, p. 346-344.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali, the devotion of the people of Basra to the Imams continued; they were eager to understand the presence of the Imams and convey their narrations. This devotion was a desire beyond explanation. It led the people to gather many companions (*sahabi*) and narrators (*muhaddith*) which then formed into the seminaries and centers for publishing narrations from the Prophet and the infallible Imams. It was the formation of these institutes that led narrators from other cities to travel to Basra to hear narrations from the Prophet through his companions, and through this they created an educational atmosphere in the city.[4] [5] The growth flow in Basra leaned towards the Sh'ia sect in such a way that taking into consideration the number of narrators during the time of Imam Baqir, one could claim that during the second century Hijri calendar, Basra became a Shi'a-populated city.[6]

After the major occultation of the twelfth Imam, Basra continued to be the center where narrators gathered and where the devotees of the Infallibles traveled to and settled in pursuit of learning the Ahlul Bayt's message.

The Islamic seminary of Basra's outstanding status in the science of narration, its geographical location of being situated on the route to Mecca, and the path the pilgrims take to The Sacred House (Bayt al-Haram)[7] was a great opportunity for Islamic scholars to enter the city and assist with issues regarding science and narration. Moreover, books related to great Shi'a scholars refer to numerous scholars who resided

[4] For example, we can refer to Bukhari, the author of one of the six books of Sunni Islam, where in his memoir it mentions he would travel to various regions for long periods of time in search of narrations. On one of his trips he went to Basra, where during his fifteen-day stay he recorded over fifteen thousand narrations. Ibn Abi Ya'li, Layers of Hanbalis, vol. 1, p. 276.

[5] Shi'a Seminaries across the World, p. 203.

[6] Ibid, p. 203.

[7] Hakim Mulla Sadra Shirazi, passed away in the city of Basra in the year 1050 when traveling bare foot on a trip to hajj for the seventh time. Mokhtari, Reza, Visage of Scholars (*Simayeh Farzanehgan*), p. 164.

in this city from the fourth to the eight century Hijri.[8] Some of the great narrators of the fourth century are: Abdul Aziz bin Yahya bin Saeed Basari, Muhammad bin Ibrahim Ishaq, Sharif Abu Talib Mudhaffar Basari, and Muhammad bin Omaro bin Ali Basari, all of whom were teachers (*mashayekh*) of Shaykh Saduq in which he narrated hadith from. This movement continued in the next few centuries, although they did experience periods where the Islamic seminaries of Basra experienced relative declines in the branch of narration.

As a witness to this matter, we can look at Aghabozorg Tehrani's report. He was a narrator residing in Basra from the fourth to the eight century Hijri. In the fifth century, he reports nine Shi'a students in Basra, where their numbers drop to five people in the sixth century and in the seventh century it falls once again to three people. In the eight century he only reports two Shi'a students, and in the ninth century he does not mention any Shi'a scholar at all. However, in the tenth century he introduces an individual named Muhammad Tulani; in the eleventh century the number of scholars in this city reaches six people, which it seems to have relocated to Basra from other seminaries, such as Ahsa; and in the twelfth century Hijri, he recounts five Shi'a scholars, where some moved from Bahrain to Basra.[9]

2. The Islamic Seminary of Baghdad

The city of Baghdad - which was the center of caliphate during the rule of the Abbasids - was the most important center of gathering and interchange amongst the dominant sects of Islam; it was also the center where debates and the exchange of ideas amongst their great scholars in various topics - primarily in issues regarding theology - took place. The presence of the Shi'a Imams in Baghdad and in Iraq, after Imam Sadiq, became a means for Shia scholars, jurists, theologians, and narrators to

[8] Tehrani, Aghabozorg, *al-Shia 'Alam Tabaqat*, vol. 5, p. 83.
[9] Shi'a Seminaries across the World, p. 205.

learn and train under the supervision of the infallible Imams. They later were able to debate with other religious scholars and use the intellectual environment of the city to defend the true Shi'a beliefs in various theological issues and to promote pure knowledge of the Ahl-ul-Bayt and the Prophet. The extent of academic work carried out by the Imamiah scholars was to such an extent that some researchers have recounted the number of students of Imam Kadhim and his narrators in Baghdad to reach over six hundred people.[10]

After the passing of the era of the Imams' presence and the approach of the minor occultation of Imam Mahdi, the city of Baghdad experienced a new dynamic time period, and that was due to the presence of The Four Deputies of the Imam, namely Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Asadi, Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Uthman, Abul Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, and Abul Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samarri. With the use of religious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and through direct guidance and instructions from the Imam, these pious and well-known scholars sought to protect the Shi'a entity and become the intellectual leader of the Shi'a people. By responding to the religious misconceptions and receiving religious taxes, they turned Baghdad into the biggest Shi'a center in the world.

Another period of academic growth of the city of Baghdad and the Islamic seminaries was simultaneous with the major occultation of the twelfth Imam. Some of the important events of this period were the political upheavals and the coming to power of the Shi'a Buyids (*Al-e Buye*)[11] in Iran and Iraq; with proving the grounds for theological discussions, it created change in the prevailing atmosphere upon the Shi'a seminaries after the time of Imam Askari, which were engaged in gathering narrations and were rigorous in reaching a surface level

[10] Atardi, Azizullah, Musnad of Imam al-Kadhim, vol. 3, p. 569.

[11] Al-e Buye, Iranian Shi'a dynasty, attributed to Abushoja' who between the years 322-448 Qamari ruled a large part of Iran, Iraq, and the peninsula until the northern boarders of Damascus. Sajjadi, Sadiq, "Al-e Buye", Islamic Encyclopedia, vol. 1, article 377.

understanding. It also provided the means for theological discussion revolving around ideological issues to be prepared for in the Islamic seminaries of Baghdad. It was in such an atmosphere that great Shi'a personalities such as Shaykh Mufid, Sayyid Radi, and Sharif Murtadha with reviving the intellect as a source in the acquisition of Islamic teachings, on one hand were to guide the Ja'fari Jurisprudence towards comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence (*fiqh istidlali*) and *ijtihad;* on the other hand, with addressing intellectual issues, they revised the Shi'a theological viewpoint in regards to ideological topics under scrutiny at the time. In what follows, we will consider the biographies of two great scholars of the seminary of Baghdad, namely Shaykh Mufid and Sayyid Murtadha.

Shaykh Mufid (336-413 A.H.) was one of the great scholars and prominent theologians of the fourth and fifth century Hijri. He taught renowned scholars such as Sayyid Murtadha, Sayyid Radi, and Shaykh Tusi. Ibn Imad Hanbali, a renowned Islamic historian, in regards to the events that took place in 413 A.H., writes:

> During these years Mufid passed away. He was one of the great Shi'a scholars who published many books and writings. He was also a leader of the people…"[12] Likewise, Ibn Abi Tayy states in *The History of Shi'a*, "Mufid was the greatest amongst the well-known Shi'a scholars and is their representative. He was wise in the fields of theology, jurisprudence, and mentoring debates and during the Buyid Dynasty he would debate the supporters of various vocations and beliefs with a certain aura of dignity and grandeur; he also assisted the less fortunate on multiple occasions. His humility and reverence was great, his prayers and fasts numerous; he wore clean and pleasant clothes; well-known people

[12] Ibn 'Imad Hanbali, *Shadhrat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahaba*, vol. 2, pp. 199-200.

> such as Azad-ud-Daulah Dilami - the governing authority of the Buyids - would visit Shaykh Mufid on numerous occasions. He lived for 76 years and wrote over two hundred books and dissertations (*risalah*). In the month of Ramadhan, year 413 A.H., he passed away and eighty thousand people participated in his funeral.[13]

In addition to bringing new advancements in principles of jurisprudence (*usul*) and theology, Shaykh Mufid also expanded in the area of jurisprudence and gave rise to deductive reasoning (*istidlal*) and *ijtihad* and with not being satisfied with just the external meaning of narrations. He benefited from thinking freely and having a systematic understanding and logical interpretation of the narrations. In the field of political jurisprudence (*fiqh-e siyasi*), through writing books and academic debates, Shaykh Mufid clarified the status of leadership (*imamah*) in political philosophy in Islam and the idea that the Shi'a Imams and their deputies must be the ones responsible for governing and leading the Islamic society. The books *Awa'il al-Maqalat* and *Tashih I`tiqadat al-Imamiyyah* in the science of theology, *al-Muqni`yah* in the field of jurisprudence, and the books *al-Irshad*, *Fusul al-Mukhtarah*, and *al-Amali* are amongst some of his works.

Abul Ghasem Ali bin Husayn Musawi, popularly known as, *Sayyid Murtadha* and entitled as, 'Allam al-Huda,' was another great Shi'a scholar of the Islamic seminaries in Baghdad, who was Shaykh Mufid's[14] student and Shaykh Tusi's teacher. He was born in Rajab in

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibn Abu al-Hadid, in his description of the Peak of Eloquence (*Nahjul Balagha*), he quotes from Sayyid Abdul Karim bin Tawoos Fakhar Musawi, that one night in his sleep, Shaykh Mufid sees Hadhrat Zahra (as) who brought her two sons, Imam Hasan (as) and Imam Husayn (as), and said to teach them the science of jurisprudence (*ilm-e fiqh*) and Islamic commandments (*ahkam*). They day after, as usual, Shaykh Mufid was busy teaching at Buratha Mosque when he noticed a woman enter the mosque with the utmost dignity, holding the hand of two children. She came up to him and said, "I am Tahir Dhu al-Manaqib's wife and these two children (Sayyid Radi and Sayyid Murtadha) are my sons. I have come to you so that you may teach them the science of jurisprudence and Islamic

355 A.H. in Karkh area of Baghdad. Sayyid Murtadha's financial capabilities enabled him to arrange the seminarians' financial conditions while spending all of his time in lectures, discussions, and composing. He set a certain monthly wage for every student in accordance with his academic activities and research, and set all the interests of a village that was under his management to provide paper for the scholars; he did so with an inalienable religious endowment (*waqf*).

Sayyid Murtadha had a unique accomplishment in the science of narration and rational sciences and in jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, theology, narration and exegesis, literature, poetry, and terminology. He owned written works, which include *al-Masa'el al-Naseriyah* in jurisprudence, *al-Dhuri'ah fi Usul al-Fiqh, al-Shafi fi al-Imamah*, *al-Mukhalas fi Usul al-Deen*, and *al-Dhakhirah fi Ilm al-Kalam wa al-Intesar fi ma Anfardat bihi al-Imamiyah*.

Another key action Sayyid Murtadha took to provide for the academic needs of those who travelled to Baghdad from various parts of the world and joined his seminary, was that he dedicated a part of his house that he was residing in for the students' classes and discussion circles, popularly known as, "*Dar al-Ilm*." He also left his personal library, which had over eighty thousand books that were bought with his personal funding, at the disposal of the seminarians.

The Islamic Seminary of Baghdad and The Four Books of the Shi'a

Amongst the feasible blessings of the Islamic seminaries of Baghdad was its role in writing and creating the *Four Books of the Shi'a*, namely: *Kitab al-Kafi*, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*,

commandments. And it was through this means that Shaykh Mufid enthusiastically accepted to teach and educate them, till those two brothers became the greatest minds and the most famous scholars of their time. Ibn Abu al-Hadid, Description of the Peak of Eloquence, vol. 1, p. 41.

and *al-Istibsar*. All of them replaced the valuable series, *Usul al-Arba'ma'ah*[15] in gathering narrations from the Infallibles and it overcame the scholars' and mujtahids' need in methods of deducing Islamic commandments.

The collection *al-Kafi* was the deceased Muhammad bin Ya'qub Kulayni Razi's[16] work, published in Baghdad after twenty years of research, examination, and traveling to various Shi'a populated cities while gathering authentic narrations. The late Kulayni who spent his earlier years in his birthplace - in the suburbs of Rey - initially moved to Qum to seek Islamic knowledge. Afterwards, he travelled to the seminaries of Nishabur, Kufa, and Baghdad. Throughout these trips, along with meeting well-known Shi'a narrators and great narrators of the infallible imams, he gathered parts of the chapter of jurisprudence and narration. After migrating to Baghdad, he properly organized his work and wrote the collection, *al-Kafi*. *al-Kafi* is composed of two volumes: *Usul al-Kafi* (theology), five volumes of *Furu al-Kafi* (jurisprudence), and one volume of *Rawdat al-Kafi* (various topics). In total, it comprises 16,199 narrations which are from the Prophet) and the infallible Imams.

The second book from *The Four Books of the Shi'a* is *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, written as result of the efforts of the renowned scholar, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali bin Babiwayh Qummi,[17] also known as Shaykh Saduq. Shaykh Saduq, who had a history of travelling and a residing at the seminary in Rey, Nishabur, Khorasan, and Bukhara, entered the Islamic seminary of Baghdad in 355 A.H. where he taught and trained the students. Shaykh Mufid is of those who participated in his lecture sessions. After some time, he traveled to

[15] Usul al-Arba'ma'ah is a series of 400 works which has been written by the companions of the infallibles in various fields such as, belief (*itiqad*), jurisprudence, exegesis, ethics and other. After the time of presence of the Imams, the authors of the Four Books started recording them in their books.
[16] Died 329 A.H.
[17] Died 381 A.H.

Balkh, and there through the request of one of Imam Kadhim's children, he wrote a book on jurisprudence that clarified the religious duties (*shar'i*) of the Muslims in regards to jurisprudence and various religious laws. Similar to Razi's book on medicine, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Tabib*, he named his book on jurisprudence *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*.[18] This book comprises 5,963 valuable narrations from the Imams. Even though - according to Shaykh Saduq's own statement - he essentially quoted the writers opinions and rulings,[19] considering the credibility of the narrations, it is one the most reliable books of narration and has been used as a source by scholars and *mujtahids* all throughout the history of Islamic jurisprudence.[20]

Tahdhib al-Ahkam and *al-Istibsar* are the third and fourth books from the Four Books of Shi'a and have been written by Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Hasan bin Ali Tusi[21] predominantly known as Shaykh Tusi. Shaykh Tusi migrated from Toos to Iraq in the year 408 A.H. when he was 23 years old. He participated in Shaykh Mufid's classes in Baghdad and after a short period of time reached the level of *ijtihad* and in that young age published the book *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* which was an explanation to Shaykh Mufid's book on jurisprudence. The book *Tahdhib* is comprised of 13,590 narrations which are presented in 23 jurisprudential books and 393 chapters.

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[18] Shaykh Saduq, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 1, p. 2.

[19] In the introduction to *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, Shaykh Saduq writes: "I set my goal in writing this book, to narrate those set of sayings that I am certain of their authenticity in being from the infallibles (as) and to be able to give a ruling and judgment on them and I believe these narrations and this deed will act as evidence between me and my Almighty God." Ibid.

[20] Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum writes the following in regards to the book *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*: "This book is one of the four books which based on its authenticity and popularity is excellent and distinguished and some of the great scholars prefer its narrations over the other four books. Some of the reasons why this work is preferred over others is because Shaykh Saduq was a *hafiz* and a recorder and that this work came after Shaykh Kulayni's book." Bahr al-Ulum, Sayyid Mahdi, al-Fawaed al-Rijaliyyah, Muktabaya al-Alamin al-Tusi wa Bahr al-Ulum, vol. 3, p.299-300.

[21] 385-460 A.H.

Shaykh Tusi's second famous work is *al-Istibsar*, which was issued after *Tahdhib al-Ahkam.* In composing this book, he made use of the two biggest libraries at the time in Baghdad, meaning Sayyid Razi's library and Abu Nasr Shabur's library. In the introduction of *Tahdhib*, he mentioned the presence of resentment and the existing differences in the Shi'a narrations that triggered outrage from opposing parties; since he believed that resolving differences was crucial, he introduced this issue using a practical approach in *al-Istibsar*.[22] It was through this that *al-Istibsar* became the first book of narrations that dealt with resolving differences in narrations.

In the mid-fifth century Hijri, the most unfortunate, bitter, and regrettable event in the history of Baghdadi seminaries occurred which resulted in the closing of the seminary. Tuqrul Bayk Saljuqi's attack on Baghdad and the seizing of the city in the year 447 A.H. led to not only the genocide of the Shi'a people, but also the burning of the biggest libraries in Baghdad such as the libraries of Sayyid Murtadha, Shaykh Tusi, Abu Nasr Shabur, Bahaud Dawla Dilami's vizier which in 381 A.H. in the Shi'a populated area of Karkh was built as The House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikmah*). Afterwards, the great scholars of Baghdad, including Shaykh Tusi, moved to neighboring cities.

3. Islamic Seminary of Najaf

The seminary of Najaf is by far one of the most important institutions of academics and *ijtihad* in the history of academia and Shi'a culture and has played an undeniable role in leading political change in various historical turns throughout Shi'a history. For a long period of time, this seminary was amongst the most important Shi'a seminaries and because of its extensive history and the presence of well-known scholars, and it continued to be the center of focus and assembly of great scholars and virtuous figures.

[22] Tusi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, vol. 1, p. 2-3.

According to historical reports, the basis for founding the seminary of Najaf was Shaykh al-Taifah Shaykh Tusi who relocated from the city of Baghdad in the year 448 A.H. to this city after the attack of the Saljuqs. Ibn Juzi writes in regards to the attacks made on Shaykh Tusi's house in Baghdad that a group of the Ahulul Sunnah attacked Abu Ja'far Tusi's house in Karkh and burnt his books, notebooks, his pulpit used when teaching, and other belongings.[23]

Even though this city was the residence of several Shi'a scholars and narrators before Shaykh Tusi's relocation to Najaf, it was with his arrival and the constitution of the Islamic seminary that Najaf became the center of Shi'a jurisprudence and an institute for educating and training great Shi'a scholars. It became a focal point where seminarians and researchers in Islamic sciences turned to, and under the supervision of Shaykh Tusi, were able to train and teach students various religious sciences such as jurisprudence and theology.

After 12 years of his fruitful presence in Najaf, Shaykh al-Tusi passed away in Najaf in 460 A.H.. After him, the leadership of Shi'a and the management of the seminaries which he had founded were passed on to his son, Shaykh Abu Ali Tusi, and afterwards to his grandson Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Abi Ali al-Hasan bin Abi Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Tusi.

The Time of Recession

The seminary of Najaf experienced a recession and relative decline from the sixth until the ninth century Hijra. Some of its reasons could be related to the expansion of the Islamic seminary of Karbala and Hillah. The academic activities and group study circles executed by great scholars such as Ahmad bin Ali Najashi, Abi Hamza Tusi, Sayyid Fakhar Musawi Haeri, Ali bin Tawus, Shams-ud Din Muhammad bin

[23] R.K. Faqihi, Ali Asqar, Al-e Buyah, First Shia Dynasty, p. 472.

Makki, (Shahid Awwal) and ibn Khazin Haeri in the seminary of Karbala were important in training students in religious studies. On another hand, with the spread of the House of Knowledge (*buyut 'ilmiyyah*) of Aal Idris, Aal Shaykh Waram, Aal Fahad, Aal Tawus in the city of Hillah, the Islamic seminaries of Najaf became increasingly marginalized.

Flourishing Once Again

The recession period of the Islamic seminary of Najaf continued until the ninth century Hijri. During this time, with the appearance of great figures such as Fadhil Miqdad[24] and Muqaddas Ardebili[25] it was rejuvenated and those who sought Islamic knowledge from other areas turned to this city. The features of this time period include the spread of the science of jurisprudence, comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence, and composing valuable books like *Ma'alim al-Din* a work of Hasan bin Zaid al-Din.[26] In this period along with jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, sciences like logic, Verses of Legislature (*Ayat al-Ahkam*), exegesis, theology, and biographical evaluation (*rijal*) started to spread and as a result, treasurable books were written in the fields.[27]

The eleventh century Hijri can be viewed as the new era in the history of seminaries in Najaf. The growth and activities of scholars that were present in Najaf and were under the radar were theological discussion and the method of *ijtihad*, which were of the most pronounced features of the Najaf seminaries. This continued until the migration of Waheed Behbahani from Iran to Iraq in the twelfth century and created a certain academic excitement in the seminary of Najaf. Of the renowned figures of this time is Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Bahrul-Ulum,[28] a student of

[24] Date of death: 826 A.H.
[25] Date of death: 993 A.H.
[26] Shaykh Thani's son
[27] Islamic Shi'a Seminaries, p. 290.
[28] 1155/1154-1212 A.H.

Waheed Behbahani and a splendid figure in the Shi'a world who had an extensive amount of knowledge and had travelled the different stages of a peripatetic journey towards God (*sayr wa sulook*); he was indeed respected amongst the Shi'a scholars of that time.

Graduates of the Islamic Seminary of Najaf

Because of its historical background, its unique academic dynamic, and the presence of sessions run by the most well-known and sought after scholars, the seminaries of Najaf were fostered by great scholars throughout history, all of whom have shined in Shi'a academia and *ijtihad*. Indeed, they have been the source of blessing in terms of the expanding of the Shi'a seminaries in different areas. Through studying the biographies and profiles of the founders of Shi'a seminaries in various areas, as well as the socially and politically influential personalities in Shi'a history, it is clear that participating in the Najaf seminaries and making use of its academic and spiritual merits is a common factor amongst its participants. In what follows are a few spiritual and knowledgeable personalities whom were present in this seminary:

-Ibn Idris Hilli, the founder and leader of the Islamic seminary of Hillah;
-Mirza Shirazi, who issued boycotting the use of tobacco and the leader of the Islamic seminary of Samarra;
-Hajj Muhammad Ibrahim Kalbasi and Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shafti the two leaders of the Islamic seminary of Isfahan;
-Hajj Shaykh Abdul Karim Haeri Yazdi, founder of the Islamic seminary of Qum,
-Mowla Ahmad bin Muhammad Ardebili, known as "Muqaddas Ardebili", a well-known scholar in the Shia world;
-Shaykh Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita', leader and great Shi'a authority (*marja'*);

-Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi, great jurist (*faqih*) and author of *Jawahir al-Kalam*;
-Shaykh A'adham Murtadha Ansari, the undisputable scholar in jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence;
-Mulla Muhammad Kadhim Khorasani, author of *Kifayat al-Usul*;
-Hajj Husayn Burujerdi, leader of the Islamic seminary of Qum,
-Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, author of the Quranic exegesis *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*; and
-Allamah Sayyid Sharafiddin Amuli, author of *al-Muraja'at*.

Jurisprudence in the Najaf Seminary[29]

Jurisprudence was amongst the sciences taught in Najaf and from its inception, the subject of focus amongst students via Shaykh Tusi. Until recent years, it was called the Science of Jurisprudence. Like other sciences, the science of jurisprudence underwent the process of development. After putting behind its introductory stages of narrated jurisprudence, it reached its highest level of accuracy – comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence – as well as the use of rules of deduction (*istinbat*) for extracting religious laws from firsthand sources. Although the Najaf seminary undertook periods of excellence in recounting and reporting, as well as periods of decline in the science of jurisprudence, comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence, and *ijtihad*, after the decline with the presence of *usuli* scholars, it returned to its previous station in comparative jurisprudence[30] and the science of jurisprudence. The seminary was able to present the great and well-known scholars of the Shi'a world.

We owe the turning point in comparative jurisprudence and ijtihad in the Najaf seminaries to the hard work of the prominent scholar Shaykh Ansari.[31] With his innovative outlook in the principles of *ijtihad*, he

[29] The book Shi'a Seminaries across the World was used extensively in writing this part.
[30] The method deriving legal laws
[31] **B**orn 1214 A.H. in Dezful; died 1281 A.H. in Najaf

made great changes in the science of jurisprudence; and with reviving principles of jurisprudence and its foundation, he was able to use it for deducing various branches and religious laws. Through this method, he brought Shi'a laws to a whole new stage. From amongst his works are two books, *Fara'id al-Usul* (known as Articles in the Science of Jurisprudence) and *Makasib* (a legal manual of Islamic Commercial Law) which have been taught in the seminaries for years. Ansari's his intellectual ideas in Shi'a law were then developed by his outstanding students, some of whom were Mirza Shirazi, Mirza Rushti, Ayatullah Kuh Kamari, and Akhund Khorasani. With introducing debatable topics in reasoning in the creation of new rules of fiqh and placing them in a new and innovated framework, Akhund Khorasani wrote *Kafayatul al-Usul*, which is used until this day as a seminary textbook.

The evolution and development of the science of jurisprudence after Akhund Khorasani continued through great intellectuals such as Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Isfahani, Ayatollah Agha Diya al-Din Iraqi and with Allamah Na'eni's insightful thinking and scrutiny, the depth of topics and content related to reasoning in new *fiqh* rules (*usuli*) increased and its status in Shi'a *ijtihad* and jurisprudence showed itself more than ever.

The composition of two very valuable books, with comprehensiveness regarding religious jurisprudential matter was another remarkable service of the Najaf Seminaries. One is *Urwa al-Wuthqa* by Ayatullah Sayyid Kadhim Yazdi[32] and the other *Wasilah al-Nijat* by Ayatullah Sayyid al-Hasan Isfahani.[33] With 3,260 jurisprudential issues, *Urwa al-Wuthqa* became a reference book in jurisprudence. Prominent jurists used its methods in writing legal books, and its fundamental legal topics are discussed in advanced jurisprudential studies (*dars-e kharij-e fiqh*) to such a point that today many commentaries and interpretations

[32] 1247-1338 A.H.
[33] 1277-1365 A.H.

have been written on it. Moreover, *Wasilah al-Nijat*, which contained most of the Islamic legal issues necessary for Muslims at the time, because of the skillful text it became the foundation of many jurisprudential books afterwards and many of the collections of juridical edicts (*risalah*) are written as a form of commentary on it.

Currently, the Islamic seminaries of Najaf continue to shine and have introduced judicial personalities and supreme legal authorities (*maraji'*) such as Ayatullah Sayyid Muhsin Hakim,[34] Ayatullah Sayyid Abul Ghasim Khoei,[35] and Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Sistani.[36]

Philosophy in the Seminary of Najaf

The appearance of philosophy and the spread of philosophical ideology in the Islamic seminaries of Najaf - and Iraq in general - are due to the migration of great scholars from Iran. This was structured around Islamic philosophy from long before. Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi's[37] trips to Baghdad between the years 662 to 672 A.H. and his meetings with Iraqi scholars set the grounds where intellectual ideas were spread in Iraq.[38] However, the widespread familiarization of the Najaf seminaries with philosophy was the migration of Akhund Mulla Husayngholi Hamedani to the holy Shi'a sites of Iraq, and his studies and instructions in the seminary of Karbala and Najaf. He himself benefited

[34] 1264-1390 A.H.
[35] 1317-1413 A.H.
[36] Born 1349 A.H.
[37] 598-672 A.H.
[38] Allamah Hilli was one of Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi's students who participated in his philosophy classes and in return Khajah would participate in his jurisprudence classes. When getting his certification (*ijazah*) he says the following about his teacher to ibn Zuhra: Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi was the most superior scholar of our time and had many compilations in intellectual and traditional sciences. He was the most noble of the people we have the honor of knowing, make God brighten his shrine. In his presence I read *al-Hayat*, Shafa-e ibn Sina, and tazkirehee dar hayat, which were that great scholars written works. Then after he parted this world and may God bless his soul. Murtazavipour, Akbar, The Biography of Iranian and World Mathematicians.

from Mulla Hadi Sabzevari's[39] classes in the seminary and made his own students familiar with Islamic philosophy, in which he found his perfect form in Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Theosophy* (***al-Hikmah al-****Muta'liyah*). He also promoted transmitted knowledge (*ulum naqli*) alongside intellectual knowledge (*ulum aqli*) and made efforts to spread it within the seminaries. Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, Sayyid Abd al-Husayn Lari, and Sayyid Ahmad Karbalaei have all been trained in the Najaf seminary.

Other philosophy teachers in Najaf include Agha Mirza Muhammad Baqir Istahbanati, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Gharuri Isfahani, Agha Shaykh Ali Muhammad Najaf Abadi, Agha Sayyid Husayn Badkoobehi, Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, and Shaykh Murtadha Taleqani, Allamah Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari's teacher.

The next part of this series continues with information on the Islamic Seminary of Hillah – including its revival of ijtihad and its prominent scholars – and the Kadhimayn Seminary.

[39] Of the most popular hakims and philosophers of the thirteenth century and of the commentators of Mull Sadra Shirazi's written works and idea and his most important work meaning his book Mandhumah is a summary of the book *Asfar* written Mulla Sadra.

Qur'anic Themes in Minutes

By Muhsen Qara'ati
Translated by Howraa Safieddine

ABSTRACT: This article presents excerpts from Muhsen Qara'ati's *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes*,[1] a concise version of his renowned and award-winning *Tafsir Noor* – a 12-volume exegesis of the Qur'an. *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes* is a compilation of 200 subjects for readers to familiarize themselves with short-and-sweet subjects pertaining to morality in the Qur'an. The following topics were specially selected, some of which include subjects on sincerity (*ikhlaas*) and its signs; factors of peacefulness, anxiety, deviation; the hearts of the believer and unbeliever; arrogance and the arrogant; and humbleness.

What is Sincerity (Ikhlās)?

Sincerity (*ikhlaas*) is that which is done one hundred percent for God to the extent that if one percent or even less than that is for other than Him, his worship is either void or there is a problem with it. We are insincere if:

- We choose a place for prayer for other than God; for instance, if we intentionally stand in a place in order to be seen by others or so cameras can display us.

[1] Qara'ati, Muhsen. *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes*. Tehran: Farhangi Darsha'i az Qur'an Institute, 1390.

- We choose to worship at a specific time for other than God. For instance, we pray at the prescribed time to attract people's attention.

- If our form and countenance in prayer is for other than God. For example, slanting our necks downwards and changing our voices with a goal other than for the pleasure of God. In all these cases, prayer is void. We have also sinned for showing off.

In other words, ikhlaas is when we do not take our carnal desires, false deities, political inclinations, and other desires into consideration. Rather, our motive should be one thing: to obey God's commands and perform our duty.

Certainly, attaining ikhlaas is not possible without God's help. Verse 32 of the chapter *Luqman*, states:

> *When waves cover them like awnings, they invoke Allah, putting exclusive faith in Him. But when He delivers them towards land, [only] some of them remain unswerving. And no one will impugn Our signs except an ungrateful traitor.*

Becoming Sincere (Ikhlās)

In order to be sincere we must:

1. *Consider God's knowledge and power*. If we know that all glories, strengths, and provisions are in His hands, we will never go toward other than Him to gain honor, strength, and provision.

If we take note of the fact that all beings are created according to God's will and through it, everything will perish, and if we know that He is

the cause, while at the same time He can stop any cause He chooses,[2] we would not intercede to other than Him.

Hundreds of verses and stories in the Qur'an have invited people to God so that people might abandon other than Him and sincerely move toward Him.

2. *Take note of the blessings of ikhlās*. A person with ikhlās has only one goal: God's satisfaction. Someone whose goal is solely for God's satisfaction pays no attention to people's praises, is not afraid of rebukes, does not fear loneliness, does not retreat in his path, is never regretful, does not become preoccupied because of people's ridicule, does not despair, and has nothing to do with the most or least when traversing the right path.

The Qur'an says sincere warriors are not afraid of killing God's enemy or becoming martyred in God's way. Imam Husayn, in the threshold of his travel to Karbala, said, "We shall go to Karbala. Whether we become martyred or victorious, the goal is to fulfill our duty."

3. *Take into consideration God's grace*. Another approach that brings us closer to ikhlās is remembering God's favours. We should not forget that we did not exist. The embryo was created from earth and food and was positioned in the dark womb of the mother. It passed the stages of growth one after the other and came into this world in the form of a complete human being. During that time, it did not know anything – it had only one faculty which was suckling its mother's milk - a complete nourishment that supplies all of the body's needs. What's more, it comes along with the mother's love - a mother who was at its service 24 hours a day. Why should we sell ourselves to others who neither have any right over us nor have been kind to us?

[2] He caused a dry tree to produce fresh dates for Lady Mariam and transformed fire to a garden for Ibrahim

4. *Take God's will into consideration*. If we know that the hearts of the people are in God's hands and He is the '*Turner of hearts*,' we will perform our deeds only for Him, and when we are in need of the people's protection, we ask God to protect us.

In the hot deserts of Hijaz, Prophet Abraham raised the base of the Kaa'ba and asked God to incline the hearts of the people toward his offspring. Thousands of years have passed and every year millions of passionate people, filled with excitement, circumambulate around the house.

How many of us burden ourselves in order to satisfy the people though they still do not like us or remain unimpressed; and how many of us who, without expectations from people, entrust our hearts to God and sincerely perform our duties and while simultaneously have a great and special dignity in the eyes of the people? Therefore, the goal must be to please God and to ask Him to help us attain the people's pleasure.

5. *Take note of the remaining of deeds*. Deeds that are done for God persist and remain. And if the deed is not for God, the date of its utilization will end sooner or later. The Qur'an says, "*That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last*."[3] And no reasonable person prefers lasting forever over mortality.

The signs of a sincere believer

> *And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him.* (Yusuf, 106)

1. In charity: He does not expect reward or thanks from anyone: "*We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks*."[4]

[3] *Nahl*, 96
[4] *Insan*, 9

2. In worship: He does not worship anyone besides God: "*And not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.*"[5]

3. In propagating: He does not want reward from anyone other than God: "*My reward lies only with Allah.*"[6]

4. In marriage: He is not afraid of poverty and gets married trusting God's promise: "*If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace*."[7]

5. In meeting people: He puts everything aside except for God's pleasure: "*Say, 'Allah!' Then leave them*."[8]

6. While encountering the enemy in war: He does not fear anyone but God: "*And fear no one except Allah*."[9]

7. In kindness and love: He loves no one as much as Him: "*A more ardent love for Allah.*"[10]

8. In business and trade: He is not negligent in remembering God: "*…men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of Allah.*"[11]

Humbleness

> *Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from the people, and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed Allah does not like any swaggering braggart*. (Luqman, 18)

[5] *Kahf*, 110
[6] *Hud*, 29
[7] *Nur*, 32
[8] *An'am*, 91
[9] *Ahzab*, 39
[10] *Baqarah*, 165
[11] *Nur*, 37

In this verse, Luqman says to his son, "*Do not walk exultantly on the earth*." And in surah *Furqan*, humbleness is the first sign of the good servants of God: "*The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth*."[12]

One of the secrets to prayer, in which we place the highest point of our body on soil - every day at least 34 times in 17 rak'as of obligatory prayer - is staying away from arrogance and vanity, and being humble towards God.

Even though it is necessary for all of mankind to be humble, it is further necessary towards parents, teachers, and faithful Muslims. Humbleness toward faithful Muslims is one of the distinguishing signs of the people of faith: "*[who will be] humble towards the faithful*."[13]

Unlike the demands of the arrogant who wanted to distance the poor from the Prophets, the people of faith would say, "*But I will not drive away those who have faith*."[14]

Why does a weak and impotent man who was created from earth and sperm and who will be nothing more than a corpse in the near future behave arrogantly?

Is not his limited knowledge vulnerable due to forgetfulness?
Is not his beauty, strength, fame, and wealth likely to wane?
Has he not seen illness, poverty, and death in society?
Are not his strengths perishable?

Then why does he behave arrogantly? The Qur'an says, "*Do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed you will neither pierce the earth, nor reach the mountains in height.*"[15]

[12] *Furqan*, 63
[13] *Ma'idah*, 54
[14] *Hud*, 29.
[15] *Isra'*, 37.

Examples of the humbleness of the special friends of God

1. The Prophet would sit in a manner in which he did not have any privileges over others, and those who would enter the assembly (*majlis*) and not recognize the Prophet would ask, "Which one of you is the Messenger of God?"[16]

2. While on a trip, when it was time to prepare food, each person undertook a job. The Prophet also undertook a job and said, "I will take responsibility for collecting wood."[17]

3. Just as the Prophet saw that there was no carpet for some to sit on, he gave his cloak for them to sit on.[18]

4. Wearing plain clothing, riding a bare donkey, milking, sitting with and befriending the slaves, greeting children, patching shoes and clothes, accepting the peoples invitations, sweeping the house, giving a helping hand to all people, and not taking food lightly are of the conduct and lifestyle (*sira*) of the Prophet.[19]

5. Some of the Shi'a wanted to evacuate the pubic bath for Imam Sadiq. The Imam did not allow them and said, "There is no need; the life of a believer is simpler than these formalities."[20]

6. No matter how much the people insisted that Imam Ridha's table be separate from the servants, the Imam would not accept.[21]

7. A man in a public bathroom did not recognize Imam Rida and wanted help with washing the back of his shoulder and back. Without introducing himself, the Imam, with utmost dignity, accepted his

[16] *Bihar*, vol. 47, p. 47.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., vol. 16, p. 235.
[19] Ibid., vol. 16, p. 155 and vol. 73, p. 208.
[20] Ibid., vol. 47, p. 47.
[21] Kudak, Falsafi, vol. 2, p. 457.

request. When the man recognized the Imam, he began to apologize and the Imam comforted him.[22]

Accepting other people's suggestions and criticisms and sitting somewhere lower than one's own status are among the signs of humbleness and humility.

Factors of serenity and assurance

> *…those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah.' Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!* (Ra'd, 28)

There are many influences for attaining assurance and serenity, though awareness and knowledge stand at the head of them all and have a particular affect.

- Someone who knows that an atom's weight of his deeds is accounted for (*"…an atom's weight of good will see it"*[23]) is confident in his works and efforts.

- Someone who knows that he is created through God's mercy and grace (*"…except those on whom your Lord has mercy – and that is why He created them"*)[24] is hopeful.

- Someone who knows that God is in ambush of the oppressors (*"Indeed your Lord is in ambush"*)[25] is tranquil.

- Someone who knows that God is All-wise and All-knowing and has not created anything in vain (*"All-knowing, All-wise"*) is optimistic.

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[22] *Bihar*, vol. 49, p. 99.
[23] *Zalzalah*, 7.
[24] *Hud*, 119.
[25] *Fajr*, 14.

- Someone who knows that his path is clear and his future is better than the past (*"While the Hereafter is better and more lasting"*[26]) has assurance in his heart.

- Someone who knows that his Imam and leader is a pure being chosen by God and is infallible from any error (*"I am making you the Imam of mankind"*)[27] is at peace.

- Someone who knows that his good deed is rewarded 10 to 700 times, rather, infinitely more while with his bad deed, only one error will be taken into account, is contented. ("*The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains."*)[28]

- Someone who knows that God loves the virtuous ("*Indeed Allah loves the virtuous"*)[29] becomes confident with his good deeds.

- Someone who knows his good deeds are revealed and his ugly deeds remain hidden ("*O you who reveal beauty and conceal ugly things*")[30] is happy.

Factors of anxiety and worry

One of the most prevalent illnesses in the present century is anxiety and depression. Many reasons for these illnesses – which include symptoms such as isolationism, excessive introversion, feeling inferior, and feeling worthless – have been mentioned, such as:

- A person becomes depressed because he does not see everything according to his aspirations, whereas we should not stop and give

[26] *A'la*, 17
[27] *Baqarah*, 124
[28] *Baqarah*, 261
[29] *Baqarah*, 195
[30] From a well-known supplication

up altogether merely because we have not arrived at everything we want.

- A depressed person thinks to himself why no one likes him while this is not possible; he even considers God and Angel Gabriel as enemies. Therefore, one should not expect everyone to like him.

- A depressed person assumes everyone is bad, while it is not so and God answered the Angels who had this illusion.

- A depressed person assumes that everything unpleasant is external, while bitterness primarily comes as a result of one's own behaviour and conduct.

- A person with anxiety is worried from the beginning in his endeavours and feels afraid and alone. In order to eliminate this state, Imam Ali says, "When you fear something involve yourself in it, because fearing anything is greater than that thing itself."[31]

- A person with anxiety is worried about his future. This can be cured by having trust in God and perseverance.

- Because he has become disappointed with some undertakings, he is worried that maybe he will suffer this fate in all his affairs.

- Because he relies on people and unstable powers, with their precariousness, he becomes insecure and restless.

- In short, matters such as the failure to appreciate peoples' efforts, sin, fear, hasty judgments, aberrant expectations and misconceptions are all reasons for many depressions and anxieties. By remembering God and his strength, forgiveness, and kindness, this emotional state can be transformed into tranquillity and happiness.

[31] *Bihar*, vol. 71, p. 362.

Elements of deviation

> *On the day that He will muster them and those whom they worship besides Allah, He will say, 'Was it you who led astray these servants of Mine, or did they themselves stray from the way?'* (Furqan, 17)

The factors which cause misdirection and deviation have been introduced in the Qur'an in the following manner:

1. A bad friend: "*Certainly he led me astray.*"[32]

2. Desire: "*And do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of Allah*."[33]

3. Deviated scholars: "*[They] write the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah.'*"[34]

4. Misguided leaders: "*Pharaoh led his people astray*."[35]

5. Satan: "*Indeed he is an enemy, manifestly misguiding.*"[36]

6. The misdirection of the majority: "*If you obey most of those on the earth, they will lead you astray from the way of Allah.*"[37]

7. Misguided parents: "'*We found our fathers…and we are indeed following in their footsteps.*'"[38]

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[32] *Furqan*, 29
[33] *Sad*, 26
[34] *Baqarah*, 79
[35] *Ta Ha*, 79
[36] *Qasas*, 15
[37] *An'am*, 116
[38] *Zukhruj*, 23

The hearts of the believer and the unbeliever

> *(Musa) said, 'My Lord! Open my breast for me. Make my affair easy for me. Remove the hitch from my tongue,*[39] *[so that] they may understand my discourse.'* (Ta Ha, 25-28)

The heart of a believer and unbeliever can be described as follows:

The Heart of the Believer	The Heart of the Unbeliever
Life: *Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life.*[40]	**Sick**: *There is a sickness in their hearts*.[41]
Healing: *And heal the hearts of a faithful folk.*[42]	**Ruthless**: *(We) made their hearts hard*.[43]
Purity: *Whose hearts Allah has tested.*[44]	**Rejection**: *Allah made their hearts swerve.*[45]
Tolerance: *'My Lord! Open my breast for me.'*[46]	**Sealed***: The ones on whose hearts Allah has set a seal*.[47]
Guidance: *Whoever has faith in Allah, He guides his heart.*[48]	**Dark:** *Their hearts have been sullied*.[49]

[39] That is, *'Grant me clarity of speech.'*
[40] *An'am*, 122
[41] *Baqarah*, 10
[42] *Tawbah*, 14
[43] *Ma'idah*, 13
[44] *Hujurat*, 3
[45] *Saff*, 5
[46] *Ta Ha*, 25
[47] *Nahl*, 108
[48] *Taghabun*, 11

Spiritual Dimensions of Mourning for Imam Husayn (a),

Part III: How True Mourning Can Lead to the Goodly Life

Mohammad Ali Shomali

ABSTRACT: People are to strive to purge themselves of the superficial aspects of this world. Once we do so, a new life – or the "Goodly Life" – is guaranteed to those who believe, purify themselves, and perform righteous deeds. Because the effect of good deeds counts for very little in this long journey, God, with His infinite mercy, provided shortcuts by endowing us with immaculate male and female role models to assist people on this path to prosper in life and achieve everlasting bliss. Sincerely sharing in Imam Husayn's grief and mourning over the magnitude of his hardship during the Battle of Karbala is one the quickest ways to achieve the Goodly Life. Those who enjoy this status develop their understanding, actions, and determination through firm faith and righteous deeds that must stem from being truthful. This part of the series further delves into the spiritual essence and outcomes of grieving for Imam Husayn, as well as the duties of the speakers, reciters, and participants of gatherings for mourning. All in all, true mourning attracts divine blessings, mercy, and forgiveness, which eventually removes the veils of darkness and moves us into the light.

God, the Almighty, has granted humanity life – an incredibly valuable gift. This life needs to be respected, protected, and regulated according to God's will. People are not permitted to commit suicide or even harm their health. We cannot eat something that could possibly make us ill, even if it does not make us fatally ill. However, what is much more important than physical life is the Goodly Life (*al-hayat al-tayyibah*) which can be achieved through faith and righteous deeds. In this part, we will further examine the act of mourning for Imam Husayn and how true mourning can lead to the Goodly Life. Those who attain this go beyond the limitations that ordinary people face with regards to their understanding, power (or action) and will (or determination). In other words, they will grow in all three major elements of life: 1) understanding, 2) power, and 3) will.

Understanding: The understanding of a person who lives the Goodly Life will go beyond the material world; his understanding would not be limited to what he sees, hears, or touches. He perceives what other people cannot perceive, and this can happen in different ways. Sometimes God sends a message directly to someone's heart and that person would perceive further layers of meaning from the same message others superficially understood. And sometimes it is possible that several layers of meaning envelop one's form of expression. For example, we agree that when I ask you for water, you will bring it to me along with checking my car in the parking lot. So if I ask you for water, other people will understand one meaning, though you will understand my second message as well. I might have made another agreement with someone else that when I ask for water, he also makes a phone call. Others will only see that someone asks for water, though they are unaware of the additional messages.

God has put many multi-layered meanings in His Qur'an. According to a hadith, the Qur'an has an inward layer (*batin*); and that inward layer has

another layer inside it, and this continues up to seven layers.[1] Of course, the key to reach its inward and esoteric meanings is its outward and exoteric meanings. Exegetes who provide commentaries on the Qur'an that are not in agreement with its outward appearance are incorrect. However, although more can be understood from the actual appearance of the verses, the laymen cannot do this. Only those who live the Goodly Life receive these messages. Others will only understand the apparent meaning of the words, and they might even find some passages irrelevant to their lives and perhaps deem it boring. Those with Goodly Life find clear and powerful messages in every verse to apply to their day to day lives.

A faithful person understands messages in a person's speech that laymen may not understand. As the Iranian proverb goes, "What an elderly (wise) person sees in a mud brick, a young person would not see in the mirror." We understand the literal meaning, although an insightful person understands much more.

Thus, those who enjoy the Goodly Life might perceive, for example, from a person's speech, either through direct inspiration or through intuition and insight, what others might not. To a lesser degree this might sometimes happen to us. You might have experienced that when you are looking for guidance and suddenly an adult or child who does not know the matter in hand says something that solves the problem. If the soul is not perceptive, even the clearest words would not be understood. A perceptive soul receives implicit messages. However, this topic requires further study and is beyond the constraints of this paper.

In the famous divine saying (*Hadith-i Qudsi*) of proximity to God through voluntary recommended acts (*qurb-i nawafil*), God says:

[1] For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 89, p. 91, where Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi narrates from Imam Baqir:

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ الْجُعْفِيِّ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ ع عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنَ التَّفْسِيرِ فَأَجَابَنِي ثُمَّ سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْهُ ثَانِيَةً فَأَجَابَنِي بِجَوَابٍ آخَرَ فَقُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ كُنْتَ أَجَبْتَنِي فِي هَذِهِ الْمَسْأَلَةِ بِجَوَابٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا قَبْلَ الْيَوْمِ فَقَالَ يَا جَابِرُ إِنَّ لِلْقُرْآنِ بَطْناً وَ لِلْبَطْنِ بَطْنٌ وَ لَهُ ظَهْرٌ وَ لِلظَّهْرِ ظَهْرٌ يَا جَابِرُ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَبْعَدَ مِنْ عُقُولِ الرِّجَالِ مِنْ تَفْسِيرِ الْقُرْآنِ إِنَّ الْآيَةَ يَكُونُ أَوَّلُهَا فِي شَيْءٍ وَ آخِرُهَا فِي شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ كَلَامٌ مُتَّصِلٌ مُتَصَرِّفٌ عَلَى وُجُوه.

> None of My servants can seek proximity to Me by that which is dearer to Me than things that I have made obligatory on him. Then, with the performance of *nawāfil* (the recommended acts), he continuously attains proximity to Me so that I love him. When I love him, I will be the ear with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, and the hand with which he strikes. If he calls Me, I will answer his call, and if he makes a request, I will grant it.[1]

If God becomes the ears by which we hear, there will be no limit to understanding the facts. Such a person sees many hidden things, so much so that when you visit him or her, they might see into your heart or read your mind. Prophet Muhammad said, "Be careful about the piercing eyes of the faithful, because they see [everything] by the light of God."[2] Therefore, when you stand before a spiritual person, say to God, "O Coverer! (*Ya Sattar!*)" if you prefer to conceal the problems that may exist in your heart. Then, if God wants, that faithful person will not see into your heart.

Power: The Goodly Life increases our understanding as well as our capability. In the abovementioned hadith, God will be the person's hand by which he strikes. Prophet Abraham, who was asked to break the idols, could not do so single-handedly; it was God who gave power to Abraham's hand:

> *You did not kill them; rather it was God who killed them; and you did not throw when you threw, rather it was God who threw, that He might test the faithful with a good test*

[1] *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, pp. 352 & 353.

[2] For example, see *Bal-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 218, where Mohammad ibn Muslim narrates from Imam Baqir (a) that the Prophet Muhammad (s) said:

> عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِنَّ فِي ذلِكَ لَآياتٍ لِلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ قَالَ هُمُ الْأَئِمَّةُ ع قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص اتَّقُوا فِرَاسَةَ الْمُؤْمِنِ فَإِنَّهُ يَنْظُرُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى إِنَّ فِي ذلِكَ لَآياتٍ لِلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ.

> *from Himself. Indeed God is all-hearing, all-knowing.* (8:17)

When we throw an arrow that hits the target, we shouldn't give ourselves the credit. Although this might be clearer in unusual and extraordinary circumstances of success, the faithful should understand that all good actions and successes come from God. Then God enables those closest to Him – those who have emptied themselves of their ego and selfishness – to perform the wonders laymen are unable to do.

Stronger will: A person who enjoys the Goodly Life becomes very powerful, and through his will and determination he is able to do what others cannot. God says in a Hadith al-Qudsi:

> My servant, obey Me. [If you do so] I will make you an example of Myself. I am alive and will never die; and so I make you alive and never die. I am rich and never become poor, and so I make you become rich and never poor. Whatever I want I say "Be" and it is, so I make you in the way that whatever you want you also say "Be" and there it will be.[1]

Human beings can reach such a position, though we do not usually come across such people on a day-to-day basis; it is hard to believe they exist. Nonetheless, humankind can reach such a position. They can reach it in this world, as in the case of the Prophets and Imams, and is certainly possible for the inhabitants of Paradise, where everything a person wishes is available.[2] The Goodly Life is similar to life in Paradise. Whatever one wishes for will be ready and at hand, though such a person would not

[1] *Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah fi al-Ahadith al-Qudsiyyah* by Hurr 'Amili, p. 284.

[2] The Qur'an says:

> *Enter paradise, you and your spouses, rejoicing (they will be served around with golden dishes and goblets, and therein will be whatever the souls desire and eyes delight in) and you will remain in it [forever]. That is the paradise you have been given to inherit for what you used to do.* (43:70-72)

expect anything and everything to be ready at his disposal. The person living a Goodly Life works for the pleasure of God and eventually achieves firm determination.

A person who lives an ordinary life might be engaged in eating, drinking, and the like, but the desire of one who achieves the Goodly Life is spiritual and radiant, as he emits light and energy to the world. He is far-sighted and loves to bring everyone close to God.

For the person who reaches this stage, one of the most complex and difficult matters is to preserve at least some attachment to this world. This is because he becomes so inclined towards the Hereafter that it is difficult for him to look at this world and simultaneously do justice regarding worldly affairs. For this reason, some of those who do reach this level may not pay much attention to worldly affairs. Indeed, they are obliged to heed to such matters, but because they are not perfect or are still new to this type of life, sometimes they may fail to do justice to them.[1] However, this is also a transitional stage, and if a person progresses further, he would eventually do justice to this world as well. This is when such a person becomes like Imam Ali, who, in the middle of his prayer, without neglecting God, gave his ring to a beggar who approached and asked for help. In any case, it is difficult for those who have recently entered this stage to embody the two attributes together. Perfection is to be at the peak of spirituality and otherworldliness as the Prophet was and yet still do true justice to worldly affairs in a meticulous way. For example, such a person should always be neat and tidy by looking in the mirror or should be careful about the way he greets people or welcomes guests and visitors. His mind might be inclined towards the next world while simultaneously doing justice to this world.

[1] For example, grandson of a great contemporary philosopher and mystic, whose name I do not want to mention told me that this great scholar was so focused on non-worldly things that could not even find his daughter's house! Why? Because he was so inclined towards the next world and spiritual matters that such things did not matter to him.

However, sometimes the attention of some spiritual people is deflected away from this world. Some mistakenly think that these spiritual wayfarers lost their senses, though they are simply inclined towards the next world. During his final days, Allamah Tabatabai did not speak with anyone, and turned his face away from the food that was brought to him. He simply sat near the window and gazed outside. Ayatullah Amini says, "During those moments I asked him about for advice on self-purification and he answered, 'Surveillance (*muraqabah*). Surveillance. Surveillance!' meaning: 'Observe your soul. Watch your self!'[1] He did not talk as if he was not aware of anything.

The late Ayatollah Ahmadi Mīaneji said about the Grand Ayatollah Hujjat, one of the Islamic authorities in Qum, "Shortly before his demise, the Grand Ayatollah Hujjat refrained from speaking with anyone, and even if someone talked to him, he would not respond, even to such as, 'Sir! Are you alright? Would you like some tea or food?' He would not say a word. Then one man cleverly asked, "What is the Islamic ruling on eating burnt bread?" Since it was the Ayatollah's duty to respond to questions on Islamic issues, he finally spoke. Though he avoided any talk, he answered that question. Such events in the life of such great personalities speak volumes.

Ayatullah Imami Kashani said that Imam Khomeini did not talk to anyone during the last hours of his life, as if his soul already left this world. Imam Khomeini was thought to be unaware of things happening around him. Ayatullah Kashani said, "When it was prayer time, I reminded Imam Khomeini about it. And for a long moment his eyes had been shut without having said anything, though suddenly his lips moved." The soul might be detached from this world and oblivious to material matters, but if it relates to the spiritual aspect, then the soul might heed to it.

[1] This is what I heard myself from Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini in his visit to Manchester.

How to achieve the Goodly Life - The Goodly Life can be achieved in this world through faith and righteous deeds: *"Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life..."* (16: 97)

There is no alternative way or any magic formula. We are only to obey God and do righteous deeds. Why do we look for complexities when we can simply perform our major duties? We tend to make it difficult for ourselves. This is similar to the Israelites' questions stated in the Qur'an. When God ordered them to sacrifice a cow, they pestered Prophet Moses with questions such as, "What colour should it be?" "How much should it weigh?" "Should it be fat or thin?" It would have sufficed had they sacrificed the first cow they saw. God puts it simply: *"Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life..."* (16:97)

Thus, we should be inclined to performing righteous deeds. What is a righteous deed? Simply performing your religious and moral duties and having faith, and you will then achieve everything.

There are certain stages at which one needs special advice, and God will undoubtedly provide us with it afterwards. Regarding Ayatullah Ansari Hamedani,[1] when asked why he journeyed from Hamedan to Pakistan, he answered, "A person who had reached a high level of spirituality was in need of help, and I was ordered to assist him." God states in the Qur'an: *"As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths..."* (29:69)

God will indeed guide whoever strives on this path. We might think we need someone to push us to strive, yet that is similar to someone who will not put food in his mouth until someone else feeds him. We know we are responsible for working hard. If we do our best and then face a situation in which we do not know what to do, God will definitely help us. It is

[1] A great contemporary mystic and the teacher of Ayatollah Dastgheyb and Ayatollah Nejabat.

impossible that such people are not guided. We are to employ and increase our capabilities rather than living carelessly. We are to strive to have faith and perform righteous deeds: *"O you who have faith! Respond to God and the Apostle when he summons you to that which will give you life." (8:24)*

This verse is a clear, unambiguous one. On the Day of Resurrection, we will be so sorrowful, thinking, 'Such verses were simple and clear; since my youth I knew that I was to tell the truth, respect my parents and elders, pray on time, and give alms. I was aware of the importance of these deeds, although I did not carry them out.' Perhaps one reason the Day of Resurrection is called "*Yawm al-Taghabun*" (The 'Day of Loss') and "*Yawm al-Hasrah*" ('the Day of Regret') is that people will realize they did not practice what they knew, especially for actions that were not difficult to carry out.

As said before, God has also provided role models – the Prophet and his Household – whom we should constantly refer to. This is why we say in the chapter *The Opening* (*al-Fatiha*), *"Guide us on the straight path; the path of those whom You have blessed; such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray."* (1:6-8) As said before, Imam Husayn is one of the blessings God has bestowed upon us to find the path; he is also the Light of the Guidance (*Misbah al-Huda)* – there is neither doubt nor darkness in it. Imam Husayn is not like Prophet Khidr whom even Prophet Moses could not understand. He is the Light of the Guidance, in that even the layman – religious or not – can understand. Through enduring a great tragedy, Imam Husayn opened a shortcut to all people. Moreover, he is the Ship of Salvation (*Safinat al-Najat*), especially if we remember that among the Ahlul-Bayt, the Ship of Husayn is the fastest and the largest.

How do we join Imam Husayn by benefiting from his light and guidance?
As explained in the first part, the key is to share in Imam Husayn's hardship:

> *I implore Allah to give me because of my suffering in you the best which might be given to an afflicted person, for*

the sake of your place before Him and your rightfulness
and also the hardship I endured in your way.[1]

The first condition in expressing our grief is through having piety, or awareness, of God. Moreover, to sincerely mourn, we are to be truthful.

Truthfulness: God is the Truth and all true things are from Him: *"That is because God is the True..."* (22:6) He is real and all realities depend on Him. On the other hand, falsehood does not belong or relate to Him. Our actions must be in harmony with reality and with the truth, since the Truth is what exists and must be acted upon accordingly. For example, it is cold here. This is a fact. So, we have to turn on the heater; but if it is warm we should not do so. You won't say, "I will turn on the heater regardless of it being hot or cold." A wise person would not talk like that.

The expression "*God is the True" (al-Haqq)* does not merely refer to God's existence since other beings exist as well. But we cannot consider ourselves *the True* (*al-haqq*) since God is the only True One, that what is true depends on Him. All that complies with God and with the generative or legislative will of God will also become true: *"We sent you with Truth."* This verse means, 'Your mission is to be at the service of the Truth.' The message of God cannot be modified, as said in the Qur'an: *"Had he faked any sayings in Our Name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta" (69:44-46).*

This is very strong statement and warning since the Prophet would not do such a thing: "*Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught save a revelation that is revealed*." (53: 3-4) The Prophet only says what God wants and thus God is in fact telling us to be aware. You – the clergy, propagators, Muslims – those who speak in the name of Islam, while sometimes not knowing much about it. Be careful.[2]

[1] An excerpt from Ziyarat Ashura.

[2] In 1999, during my first trip to Rome, I asked one of our hosts who had invited hundreds of Muslims from around the world after inviting Jewish community, "What is the difference between

Nowadays, we frequently face situations in which people of relatively little knowledge, although many times with good intentions, speak in communities and even at universities and academic institutes as the representatives of Islam, and it has created serious problems.

God says that even if the Prophet himself says something wrong, He will cut his aorta. Indeed, this arterial supply for the Goodly Life is cut due to vain speech though we may not realize it. Prophet Muhammad said:

لولا تكثير في كلامكم و تمريج في قلوبكم لسمعتم ما اسمع و لرأيتم ما اري

> If you did not indulge in useless talk and harbor vain thoughts in your heart, you would be able to hear what I hear and see what I see.[1]

This does not mean we would become the Prophet; rather, our inner eyes would open to see the unseen. The faithful would also have broad vision and insight. It is not necessary to be the Prophet to do so. The more we engage in vain talk, the Goodly Life is bound to fade away. If we watch our words and the ideas in our hearts and minds, and put our knowledge into practice, we will move very fast towards perfection. In this atmosphere of piety and surveillance (*muraqabah*), our daily prayer can uplift us beyond our imagination.

Allamah Tabatabai frequently quoted Ayatollah Qadi as saying, "If one performs his prayers on time and does not achieve spiritual positions, he can curse me." This means that is not difficult to progress spiritually. We tend to look for secrets, but the reality is that we do not need anything mysterious. If we preserve our original purity, divine nature, and the light God has given us, our few acts of worship will become both important and

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us and them?" He mentioned two points. The second point he mentioned, and this was very shocking to me, was that he said, "Every Muslim speaks in the name of Islam. Every Muslim says: 'Islam says this or that'. But when members of the other faith community spoke, they always said, 'We cannot speak on behalf of our faith. I am merely giving my own opinion.'"

[1] *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, vol. 5, p. 270, cited from Sunni sources.

powerful. Our prayers, alms, fasts, and our love for the Household will uplift us very quickly.

The problem is that we do good things, but our pure and free soul is hindered or halted due to the poisonous sins committed and the vain talk we engage in. Similar to the stomach's reaction when we eat junk food, we harm our our souls when we speak vainly or listen to nonsense. Thus, we are to speak when necessary; moreover, we are to speak truthfully.

How can we be truthful? We have to be truthful in our words, deeds, beliefs, and even thoughts. God tells His Prophet, "*Indeed, We have sent you with the truth*" (2:119) – in other words, 'Your mission has begun in the service of the Truth!' The Imams were also fully committed to the truth, as they never committed any wrongdoing. Both Shi'as and Sunnis have quoted the Prophet Muhammad as saying, "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali."[1] Imam Ali's was exceptional because he was in harmony with the truth; he fully observed it, and anyone who doubts the truth should refer to him. His value is not due to God's fondness for him so much that even if he commits wrong, it would be alright. The Friends of God are not permitted to do everything merely because they are close to God; indeed, they never want to do so, since they comprehend the ugliness of committing sins. There are religious communities who hold their leader at such a high level that they deem it acceptable when he indulges in vicious deeds such as drinking wine, gambling, or refraining from prayer. Such people have not understood the right concept. The requirement of servitude – or a true servant of God – is valuable in this world for his commitment to the truth.

God says that He has sent His Prophet with the truth ("*bi'l-haqq*" - 2:119), but He also warns that "*Had he faked any sayings in Our Name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta*"

[1] For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 30, p. 352 where Allamah Majlisi writes:
وَ قَدْ رَوَوْا جَمِيعاً أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ قَالَ عَلِيٌّ مَعَ الْحَقِّ وَ الْحَقُّ مَعَ عَلِيٍّ يَدُورُ مَعَهُ حَيْثُمَا دَارَ.

(69:44-46). Of course, God says about the Prophet, "*Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught save a revelation that is revealed*" (53:3-4). There remains no place for anyone to be careless about the truth. When Ali's honour is with the truth, how is it be possible that I, the follower of Ali and Husayn, think I can do or say what I please – or commit sins knowing that Imam Husayn will make it all right – because my masters are great? Your own master, the Apostle, is told that if he says a word in vain, he will be dead. How is that possible or even logical? Is this in agreement with a world based on Truth in which there is nothing false? It's impossible. What is true is that "*Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life...*" (16: 97). Have faith and perform righteous deeds, and do not think too much about our natural shortcomings, that our good deeds are few and imperfect. Strive to be in harmony with the Truth; only then will you be given a helping hand and raised up. But this will not happen if we say, "We will do what we wish and Imam Husayn will make it alright!" Imam Husayn won't – and cannot – do so. We must follow Husayn and let him colour our thoughts and deeds with the colour from God, indeed "*Whose colour is better than Allah's*?" (2:138).

Imam Husayn – conditional upon our obedience to God, seeking, telling, and hearing the truth – takes hold of our hands. We must live in such a way that when ordinary people and wise people look at us, they say, "This person reminds us of Imam Husayn. He or she must be his follower." It would not be enough that a person is a so-called follower of Imam Husayn while his deeds are not similar to his. So if we observe all those points on mourning for Imam Husayn and we share in the hardship he suffered for justice and seeking the truth, we will be rescued and given a high status in sharing in this hardship.

How to be truthful in our mourning

Duties of the speakers and reciters

The first duty: The propagators must speak the truth while preaching. Mirza Husayn Nuri[1] in his *Lu' Lu' Wal Marjān* revealed the many lies said regarding the Battle of Karbala. In a chapter entitled "*On the Etiquettes of the First Step of the Pulpit*," he emphasizes on the importance of truthfulness of the speakers, reciters, and writers in their narration of the events to ensure that nothing false or baseless is said.

What does truthfulness in speech require? Does it suffice to refrain from fabricating stories or hadiths, and repeat what we have heard or read? That's far from demonstrating one's commitment to truth. According to a hadith, the distance between truth and falsehood – between what is seen and heard – is the width of four fingers, the distance between one's eye and ear.[2] What we hear from others can be wrong but what we actually see for ourselves is right. We cannot rely solely on what we hear. We must check from whom we have heard it from. We are to ask ourselves 'Who is that person?' 'What is his source?' 'How careful have they been?' 'How much do they read and investigate the authenticity of the source?'

The second duty: Speaking about a particular issue must be 'with the truth' (*bi'l-haqq*); speaking about it must be correct, appropriate, beneficial, and advisable within the correct context to serve the truth since *truth* is a broad concept. Saying something true amongst the Muslims may not be wise if said in a non-Muslim setting, although it would not be a lie. Something said on a pulpit in downtown Tehran may not be right if said in Manchester. No principle states that expressing every fact is advisable,

[1] Author of *Mustadrak Wasā'il al-Shi'a* and the teacher of Sheikh 'Abbas Qummi

[2] *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 16, p. 379, where Hurr 'Amili narrates from the *Nahj al-Balaghah:*

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ الرَّضِيُّ فِي نَهْجِ الْبَلَاغَةِ عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع قَالَ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ مَنْ عَرَفَ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَثِيقَةً فِي دِينٍ وَ سَدَادَ طَرِيقٍ فَلَا يَسْمَعَنَّ فِيهِ أَقَاوِيلَ الرِّجَالِ أَمَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ يَرْمِي الرَّامِي وَ تُخْطِئُ السِّهَامُ وَ يَحِيكُ الْكَلَامُ وَ بَاطِلُ ذَلِكَ يَبُورُ وَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ وَ شَهِيدٌ (أَلَا إِنَّهُ مَا بَيْنَ الْحَقِّ وَ الْبَاطِلِ) إِلَّا أَرْبَعُ أَصَابِعَ وَ جَمَعَ أَصَابِعَهُ وَ وَضَعَهَا بَيْنَ أُذُنِهِ وَ عَيْنِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ الْبَاطِلُ أَنْ تَقُولَ سَمِعْتُ وَ الْحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُولَ رَأَيْتُ.

even if it proves harmful for people in general or for the faithful in particular. Is it right (*bi'al-haqq*) if I teach physics in a meeting held about ethics? Is it acceptable to do so and justify it by merely saying that whatever I claim is true? Is it right to suddenly tell a mother that her child has just died and describe the entire accident to her? Would I not be guilty if she dies of a heart attack? Is not backbiting – one of the greater sins – expressing a true fact about a faithful person who does not want it to be known? It is misleading to think that every fact can be said to everyone and everywhere. What is said must be correct and useful, and it should fulfil a need.

There are facts about the Household's hardships that must not be said just anywhere since some aspects may be misconstrued. This point is to be taken into consideration for meetings held in non-Muslim countries or non-Shi'a environments. Of course, today communications have become so easy that even if one makes a speech or recite a eulogy, he must be aware that it might be broadcasted throughout the world, since privacy is no longer guaranteed. Nowadays, even information and intelligence agencies cannot keep certain facts or data secret. Today we must be very careful to say what is right, truthful, appropriate, beneficial, and advisable.

Duties of the participants: A participant in a gathering for mourning must truly mourn. We must not sit and watch indifferently when people are mourning; or stare at the speaker only to be distracted from the subject. If we can't cry, the least is to look grief-stricken and feel sad. Crying is the best way to know if we are really connected to Imam Husayn or not. This is a test. You would not cry for someone for whom you feel no pity. Crying can only happen when you're truly sympathetic. You can easily smile or laugh for someone's success, but to cry for someone's suffering needs strong sympathy. It should also be noted that there are people who can cry and even shed tears falsely. For example, it is mentioned in the hadiths that one of the characteristics of the hypocrites is their ability to cry whenever they like. So when you see a crying person, do not instantly think, 'Wow! What a great emotional state!' Of course, there's no need to

be concerned with him, nor assume he is a hypocrite. We are expected to be concerned with our own feelings. Moreover, at the time of mourning, it is better to sit next to unfamiliar people.

***The core and essence of mourning*:** The core of participating in Imam Husayn hardship if to feel sorrowful and heartbroken. We should thank God if we manage to cry; if we do not, we should still thank God that we at least feel grief, and then later reflect on why we cannot cry. There may be several reasons why we cannot cry: sometimes it is because of our love for the worldly affairs (*hubb al-dunya*), and sometimes it is for other reasons that might not necessarily be negative. People are in different emotional states at different times. In any case, grief is the most important thing. We must be very worried if we do not grieve. Of course, sometimes we cannot actually cry. Although this may be alarming, we should not let this by itself worsen our feelings. Be aware and be penitent.

How does one feel sorrowful? It comes through understanding. People may hit themselves without any understanding, but sorrow cannot come without some kind of understanding. A person would not have a burning heart nor would they cry unless they have understanding. However, he might be able to shout, hit himself, and tear his shirt off without knowledge. If there is grief, then the truth of mourning is revealed. And if someone cries, they can be sure that their grief has deepened. Sorrow that reaches perfection will make us cry. Now we can see why so much crying for Imam Husayn, or even pretending to cry, is advised. I cannot remember that beating oneself on the chest, or on the head or with a chain is ever advised in the hadiths. I do not want to attempt to disapprove these things. Actually, I am not going to approve or disapprove them. We might beat ourselves on the chest too (although, in a way which we think is rational). But what is mostly advised in the hadiths? To cry for Imam Husayn. Why? Because crying shows that we have arrived at perfect grief for Imam Husayn. The Ahlul Bayt have taught us that if you cannot not cry, at least pretend to, because it will show that you are sorrowful.

Thus, the core and essence of mourning is sorrow and its perfection is revealed in crying. This can take different forms and shapes in different cultures and ages, but they do not constitute the heart of mourning. Everyone does extra things based on his own customs. Based on their customs, someone might beat himself on the chest; others might sit or walk while mourning; others might recite elegies; and yet another might read texts. People do different things based on their customs. This is not a problem whilst they are not doing anything wrong and improper. But it will not be right if they do something against the Islamic law or morals. You can show your grief in whichever way we want, but be careful that it does not violate any rules of Islam. Do it correctly.

Crying is the sign of perfection of grief. Some years ago, I saw a video clip of Ayatollah Golpaygani about the last days of his life. He was sitting on a chair while listening to a lamentation. It seemed that he had recently come from a journey to another country for treatment (although he passed away a while afterwards). He remained absolutely still, while tears were streaming down his face. I thought to myself, 'How sorrowful this man must be, to cry without moving!' We normally move to be able to cry. Usually there must be a lamentation or recital by a professional lamenter or recite. Of course, this can be good if they say nothing wrong and it can also be helpful. But I saw that he was sitting completely still and his tears were flowing. You might remember Imam Khomeini bitterly wept the moment Hujjat al-Islam Kawthari described the tragic event of Karbala.

So the important point is grief, and its perfection is manifested in crying. If we do something more than this, it might be good, but we should unsure that everything is done in accordance with Islamic rulings. Do not consider the extras as the main point. Grief and sadness result from understanding.

Outcomes of mourning for Imam Husayn: In Part I of this series, we mentioned that those who truthfully mourn for Imam Husayn can expect the praised position in the Hereafter as said in *Ziyarat Ashura*: "I ask Him

to take me to the praised position (*al-Maqam al-Mahmud*) which you [the Ahl al-Bayt] have before Him."

So what we would achieve in this world? In a part of *Ziyarat Ashura*, we read: "O Allah, make me at this moment one of those who receive from You blessings, mercy, and forgiveness." This is what we can achieve right now, in this world. As we are sitting, standing, or mourning, we can achieve divine blessings, mercy, and forgiveness. If we want to know whether we have shared in Imam Husayn's hardship or not, or if we want to know whether God has accepted our mourning or not, we can reflect on whether we feel divine blessings, mercy, and forgiveness in ourselves.

Blessings: What happens when someone receives divine blessings (*ṣalawāt*)? The Holy Qur'an explains it as follows: "*It is He who blesses you, and so do His angels, that He may bring you out from darknesses into light* (33:34)." If God blesses us, we will leave the darknesses and move into light. Is this not the Goodly Life? The Qur'an tells us that the Goodly Life exists together with light: "*Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darknesses which he is not leaving? To the faithless is thus presented as decorous what they have been doing*." (6:221) Thus, you can achieve the Goodly Life if God accepts your mourning for Imam Husayn.

Another way to achieve light through divine blessings is to send salutations to the Prophet. The Prophet said, "Whoever asks from God blessings (*ṣalawāt*) for me, God will send him blessings." God gives blessings to those who recite a salawat and as a result, we will be bestowed with light.

True mourning for Imam Husayn should give us light. We should feel like we are coming out of darkness. We should gradually feel like our perspective on everything is changing – that our hearing, speech, mind, heart, behaviour, and intentions are all changing. And this may take time since our spiritual eye is not yet open. The person whose spiritual eye is

open will instantly realize that you have changed after a true mourning for Imam Husayn.

Mercy: We should also be able to receive God's mercy, the main factor in running this world in which the entire creation depends on. The creation of the universe is bound up with God's mercy. There is even mercy where God punishes. The phrase "O' One whose mercy exceeds His wrath!"[1] does not just mean that God will have wrath although His mercy exceeds it. One meaning of it is that because of this mercy, sometimes there is wrath. In short, it can be said that nothing happens without God's mercy. If you and I sit and talk continuously about God's mercy we will cover very little of it.

Among all God's qualities in the Qur'an, God's mercy is by far the most frequently mentioned one. It is a key point that God's mercy is mentioned far more than other attributes of God. After mercy, knowledge and power are the most frequently mentioned qualities. To realize the significance of God's mercy, it suffices to reflect on the Chapter *The Opening* (*al-Fatiha*). This short and concise manifesto of Islam describes the essence of Islam; it is the only chapter you cannot pray without: "There is no prayer except with the Opening" (*lā ṣalāta illā bi fātihat al-kitāb*).[2] In this brief account in which God wants to state the essence of everything, He begins with: "*In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds*" and after this again states: "*The All-Beneficent, the Merciful*". If we are to give a message in a short of time, we might think of cutting redundant parts. But in this short statement, God emphasizes on His mercy four times. And this is in addition to the fact that His lordship is also because of His mercy. Thus, the repetition is because of necessity. The expression "*In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the Merciful*" is the only phrase that has been repeated 114

[1] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 95, p. 232.
[2] *Mustadrak Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 4, p. 158.

times in the Qur'an. If we want to know God in Islam, the first aspect to know is that He is the all-Beneficent, the all-Merciful.

One function of God's mercy is that it saves and shelters humanity. The Qur'an says: "*And were it not for God's grace on you and His mercy, you would surely have been among the losers*" (2:64).[1]

In contrast, those who are far from divine mercy might commit sins very easily and severely. According to several verses in the Qur'an, 'curse' (*la'n*) refers to being far from God's mercy. It is frequently mentioned in various places that such people's hearts will be sealed, rendering them unable to realize the truth and eventually going astray. One verse reads: "*Indeed those who torment Allah and His Apostle are cursed by Allah in the world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them.*" (33:57) They will be far from God's mercy in this world; therefore, they are capable of doing any crime or mischief. When we curse the enemies of Imam Husayn, it is not us who withdraw God's mercy; it is mercy that was withdrawn from them to deserve such curses. If mercy had not been withdrawn from them, they would not have committed such hideous crimes. In the Qur'an, the People of Sabbath committed so many wrongdoings that they were cursed (5:13) and were thus transformed into monkeys. The People of Sabbath were not transformed into monkeys just in appearance; their spiritual state was worse. Thus, we should not be surprised by the acts committed by the enemies of Imam Husayn. If someone is not cursed, he would never do such things. So, we should not think that we are cursing them now, that we are informing them about their damnation. Thus, asking God to damn them indeed means that we

[1] In one hadith, concerning those whom are gifted with a son or a daughter, reads: *"A son is blessing (ni'mah) and a daughter is a good deed (hasanah)."* This means that we must take care of our sons because "*Then, that day [the Day of Judgment], you will surely be questioned concerning the blessings"* (102:8); however, a daughter will take care of you and brings Allah's mercy and reward to you. Of course that does not mean that we do not need to take care of our daughters. It means that a daughter attracts the mercy of God towards your family; therefore, your chance of being safe will increase.

acknowledge that they have already been away from His mercy. It also means that humanity is still suffering from their crimes and the crimes of their allies throughout the history; therefore, we ask God to withdraw His mercy and abandon them so that no further harm occurs as a result of their actions.

In the Qur'an we read: *"Indeed those who torment God and His Apostle are cursed by God in the world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them."* (33:57) Indeed, one way to torment Prophet Muhammad was to hurt his children, let alone kill them.[1] Those who fought and then killed Imam Husayn and other members of the Ahlul Bayt on the day of Ashura were cursed.

Thus, mercy protects us and it promotes people. The divinity of God is because of mercy. It is the opposite to damnation.

As said before, a request in *Ziyarat Ashura* reads, "O Allah, make me at this moment the one who receives from You blessings, mercy, and forgiveness." Saying "and forgiveness" is another way of asking Allah to forgive us, bestow light upon us, wipe away past sins, and protect us from committing further sins. If we truly mourn for Imam Husayn, our sins would be forgiven, we would be able to better resist against our lusts and lower desires, and we would express more eagerness to pray and do good deeds. This should start at the same time we are engaged in mourning as we read, "O Allah, make me at this moment one of those who receive from You blessings, mercy, and forgiveness."

Thus, the essence of mourning is grief; there are various ways to express it, though crying is the best form. These different forms and expressions can

[1] According to the hadiths narrated by both Shi'a and Sunni scholars, one way to upset Prophet Muhammad was to upset his daughter. Bukhari quotes Prophet Muhammad as saying:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْوَلِيدِ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي مُلَيْكَةَ، عَنِ الْمِسْوَرِ بْنِ مَخْرَمَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ: فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي، فَمَنْ أَغْضَبَهَا أَغْضَبَنِي

Fatima is a part of me, and he who makes her angry, makes me angry. (*Sahih* of Bukhari, vol. 5, Book 57, Hadith No. 61)

vary from culture to culture or from age to age, but the essence must remain the same and nothing against Islamic rulings should take place in the process. For example, we cannot mourn for Imam Husayn in a way that it could harm our body or damage the reputation and image of the school of the Ahlul Bayt.

Moreover, we must not forget Imam Husayn's advice about mourning. According to Abī Makhnaf,[1] Imam Husayn glanced at his sister and said, 'My sister, do not let Satan take your patience.'[2] Then Lady Zaynab again fell unconscious and afterwards regained consciousness. Imam Husayn sprinkled water on his sister's face and told her, "My sister, seek piety and have self-control through the assurance God has given to the patient ... My sister, I want you swear [notice the Imam makes his sister swear an oath] and be loyal to what I say: When I pass away, do not scrape your face and tear your clothes."

However, there is nothing wrong with crying. Imam Ridha told Ibn Shabīb, "Whenever you cry, [you should] cry for Imam Husayn."[3] No one criticizes crying; indeed, it is highly recommended. Unfortunately, some mourning sessions include inappropriate customs that should be avoided. Anything contrary to what Imam Husayn told his sister is wrong. Lady Zaynab is Umm al-Masā'ib [the mother of hardships], although Imam Husayn asked her to swear not to do such things. No further proof is necessary. Whoever they may be, no-one should do what Imam Husayn prohibited his sister from doing.

Such actions are unjustifiable; those who commit to such customs may not realize what they are doing and thus do not feel responsible. Before every

[1] *Abī Makhnaf's Maqtal* – which is the oldest and perhaps the most authentic chronology

[2] This is following the event where Imam Husayn recited the poem:

يـا دهـر أف لـك مـن خليل كم لـك بالإشـراق والأصيل
مـن صـاحب أو طالب قتيل والـدهر لا يـقنع بالبديـل
وإنمـا الأمـر إلى الـجـليل وكـل حـي سـالك سبيـل

and Lady Zaynab fell unconscious and then she awoke.

[3] *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 44, p. 285 & vol. 98, p. 102.

gathering – and perhaps one should leave during a session while being overcome with grief – we are to reflect, perform ablution (*wudu*), perform two units (*rak'ats*), and be conscious of our actions. God's says regarding prayer: *"...Do not approach prayer when you are intoxicated..."* (4:43) indicates that we are expected to think before we speak and act. Prayer is the pillar of religion. The verse continues: *"...until you know what you are saying..."* (4:43). Thus, we are expected to pray but at the same time we must make sure that we understand what we are saying, and this requires awareness. When I'm not conscious of my speech and feel my emotions are overpowering me, I should step down from the pulpit. Though it is alright to be overwhelmed with grief, the speaker should end the speech and recitation once he feels he might say or do something wrong, such as tearing his dress or injuring himself. He should not use the excuse of being overcome by his emotions to validate saying or doing unjustifiable things during a normal state of mind. We can't give ourselves the excuse by thinking it is done with pure intentions, for surely Lady Zaynab's intentions were pure, although Imam Husayn still asked her to swear not to cry in an inappropriate manner.

Therefore, mourning for Imam Husayn will bring light to our lives and bestow on us the Goodly Life. Though some say love for Imam Husayn has made them mad, love and mourning for Imam Husayn should actually render "mad" people intelligent, intelligent people wiser, help them cure the sick and bring humanity back to those who do not live a human life. Devotion to God and love for His true servants bring light, wisdom, knowledge, and life.

Imam Husayn is a great Divine blessing bestowed on humanity by God and we are responsible to refrain from anything that saddens Imam Mahdi. As Shi'as, we must not do anything that would displease or confuse a non-Shi'a person when he attends our gathering. If we are heedless about this and other inappropriate actions, we might dim the light of Imam Husayn. The light of Imam Husayn must reach every corner. Why are we becoming like veils covering that light?