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Mohammad Ali Shomali

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Authors(s):

Mohammad Ali Shomali [1]

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This paper is the second part of a series of three papers on the subject, initially conceived as part of a series of lectures delivered by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in Muharram 1433/November and December 2011, entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala."

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Abstract

No doubt all the Imams are connected to each other and reflect the same light.[1]

However, there is a special connection and affinity between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi, that is, Imam Husayn is very clearly connected to what will happen in the End of the Time (Akhir al-Zaman) when Imam Mahdi comes. Part I included verses from the Qur'an and hadiths to demonstrate this connection. This part explains why there is such a close connection between the two and why Imam Mahdi refers to Imam Husayn in his universal mission for establishing justice.

Imam Husayn as a central theme in Imam Mahdi's movement

Imam Mahdi's universal mission will include Imam Husayn's case at the top of his agenda. Imam Mahdi is not only for the Middle East, Arabs, Iranians or people from subcontinents; he is going to lead humanity.

The question is why does the demand for the blood of Imam Husayn stand out in the agenda of a leader whose mission is universal?

If Imam Mahdi appeared today and asked for the revenge of both the killers of Husayn and those who approve of the murder, this discourse would not apply to a major part of the world.

Many people have nothing to do with this. How many people today are either pleased with or involved in killing Imam Husayn? Most do not even know about him, let alone be for or against him, and therefore they have not made any position in favour or against him.[2]

So what changes are going to happen in the world that would make Imam Mahdi's central reference to Imam Husayn's case relevant to the global community?[3]

Thus another question arises What should be done today for Imam Husayn to become well-known so that almost everyone would take a stand either in favour or against him? That type of world is the world which is near to the time of Imam Mahdi's advent. The following is my humble understanding. Before I say what my understanding is, we should see how important it is in Islam to have justice.

The Importance of Justice in Islam

Justice is not a value or virtue equal in merit to other values or virtues. In Islam, especially in the school of Ahlul Bayt, justice is the most

important value and the central virtue. Divine justice is a principle of our faith, but it does not just remain as a matter of theology or something that we should know and believe about God; rather divine justice is to be translated into personal and interpersonal justice.

According to the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt, justice is a condition for every important social position. A political, spiritual, or prayer leader[4] – especially the Friday prayer leader[5] – must be just and knowledgeable. Judges and witnesses in a court must also be just.

It should be noted that Muslim and many non-Muslim ethicists hold that there are values that are always good and there are values that may have exceptions. For example, kindness is a virtue although there are cases in which it is unwise to display it, such as a parent showing kindness when his or her child is eating something which is harmful to his health or is watching a game instead of revising for a test.

Constant kindness to children may result in spoiling them, thus harming their personalities. Though kindness is an admirable trait, it should be controlled, as with other good traits.[6]

However, there is one value that all our scholars believe that has no exception and that is justice. Injustice and oppression is never allowed.[7]

In Islam, justice must be established within and without. Other schools of thought restrict justice to

interpersonal relations I have to be just with you, and you have to be just with me. The government has to be just. The leader has to be just. However, in Islam, it is both interpersonal and intrapersonal.

People are to be just from within, with respect to themselves. If a person commits a sin, he has been unjust to himself:

"He who violates the boundaries that Allah has drawn and goes beyond them has oppressed himself."[8]

And this is why we say ***"Our Lord, we have oppressed ourselves"***[9]; or in Dua Kumayl referring to our sins we recite "**I have done injustice to myself**."

We do not have the right to be unjust even to ourselves whether it is harming our bodies, wasting our talents, or damaging our own reputation. And then we are to refrain from doing any injustice to others, with unbiased treatment

"...ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair" (***5:8***).

For example, if the murderer of Imam Husayn were here today and put on trial, our responsibility is to be just with him, even if he is an enemy

"Be fair; that is nearer to Godwariness" (***5: 8***).

In Islam, piety and justice are inseparable with respect to ourselves, each other, and even with animals. Imam Ali, who earned his status as an icon of justice, says

If I am given seven continents and whatever is under their skies so that I would disobey Allah by taking the peal of wheat from the mouth of an ant I would not do it.[10]

When Allah speaks of the prophets' duties such as introducing religious practices such as praying and fasting, purifying people's hearts through character education and it comes to a universal value, Allah says that all the prophets have been sent to establish social justice

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

As implied in the verse, messengers were not sent to miraculously establish justice; they were sent to guide people with specific instructions to establish justice. Allah does not want to establish justice by miracles; miracles are to establish trust in people so that they believe in the Prophets, but then the believers have to strive to establish justice. It will not work in the way the followers of Moses expected, when they told him

"Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight. We will be sitting right here" (***5: 24***).

We have to get involved. The prophets were sent for people to rise and establish justice. This is the central position of justice.

Dignity

Another fundamental value is dignity. Although many believe the right to live is the highest right human beings possess – and even though the right to life is important – the highest right that we truly have is the right for dignity. A person's dignity is more important than his physical life, since life has no value with constant humiliation, such as being caged up, treated like an animal, and merely accepting the food thrown to us. In this condition, the most important right is definitely not life. More important than just living is to be treated as a human being with honour and dignity.

Therefore, justice is to give people what they deserve, and on top of everything to give them their honour and dignity. This is the most important right. This is something that Allah has planned to be finally achieved. Without this, the world will not come to an end. Without having a day at least in which humanity can live with justice and dignity the world will not come to an end. That must happen in this world. The kingdom of Allah must be established in this world before seeing it in the hereafter.

The Role Model for Establishing Justice

The one leader who will succeed in achieving a life of dignity for mankind is Imam Mahdi. Reiterating what was said before, rather than miraculously establishing it, we are responsible, otherwise we wouldn't be waiting. Though he will certainly be the leader, he will need helpers, people who are ready to establish justice.

These helpers will have first established justice in their own souls and hearts, then with their brothers and sisters within their community, then extend that justice to the larger social sphere, and finally to other living beings. Those who went out of their way to accomplish it can ask the Imam to include them in his movement, a movement that will establish worldwide justice.

When those who will strive for justice want to get inspiration and energy, when they want to realize that life has no value without justice and dignity, the best role model for them would be Imam Husayn. Those who want to help Imam Zaman and prepare for his appearance and then support him to achieve the justice that gives all people their honour and dignity cannot do this without remembering Imam Husayn.

Imam Husayn has shown that although life is important, there is more to it than physical life. Concerning dignity, the Imam said the following part of a poem on the Day of Ashura:

Death is better than losing you honor
And losing your honor is better than going to hell. 11

Yazid ordered the Imam to pay allegiance, and this could have saved the Imam's life and ensured him a

decent living, that of security and the freedom to teach and worship. However, Yazid had one condition the Imam was to pay allegiance to Yazid, to which the Imam said

A person like me does not pay allegiance to someone like him. 12

A person who dedicated his entire life to obeying Allah does not pay allegiance to Yazid, an openly immoral, unjust, and oppressive tyrant who was going to lead the society to adopt his ways. Imam Husayn believed that there is no value in one's life, even if one spends it worshiping Allah when one gives up one's dignity and honour by taking an oath of allegiance to a person like Yazid.

Far from us is disgrace. God does not accept this for us. The Messenger and the believers would not be pleased with that. And those pure laps (on which Husayn was brought up]. 13

Husayn, The Best Source of Inspiration

Those who want to establish justice need Imam Husayn. No revolution or reform occurred in the Shi'a world unless they referred to Husayn. People and groups such as Mukhtar, the Tawwabin, the uprising of the people of Fakh and to the overthrowing the Umayyad Caliphate all referred to Imam Husayn. Even non-Muslim reformers who knew Imam Husayn learned from him. Gandhi is quoted as saying, "I learnt from Husayn how to achieve victory while being oppressed."

The question arises Why is it that other reformers do not use Imam Husayn as their source of inspiration? Because they do not know him. It is our fault that a few non-Shi'as and non-Muslims know Husayn only by chance because there exists no systematic introduction of Imam Husayn's movement to all people.

Many of us prefer to revel in our gatherings and do things we enjoy and keep him for us. Many of us think or at least act as if we have some kind of monopoly over Imam Husayn. And we are not serious in saying that we want to promote Imam Husayn. That is the last thing in our list. We first want to enjoy our mourning gathering in the way we are brought up with and we do not care much whether outsiders understand or not, whether it makes sense to them or not. 14

Imam Husayn is always a source of inspiration for anyone who is concerned about justice. Husayn would be chosen over other role models as one who sacrificed the most for dignity and justice. If Husayn is not revered, it is because he is unknown. If you know who Husayn was and what he did, it is impossible to take anyone other than him as an exemplar of genuine struggle for establishing justice and dignity. Who sacrificed for justice and dignity more than Imam Husayn? 15

For this reason, when Imam Mahdi wants to call for establishment of justice, he will refer to Husayn. This makes it clear what he wants and to what extent he is ready to sacrifice.

The Requirement

At this point, the following question arises What needs to happen for Imam Mahdi to start his universal movement by referring to Imam Husayn? When can he stand between Rukn and Maqam of Ka'ba to say, "I am calling for the blood of Husayn to be compensated?"

This will only happen when Imam Husayn becomes the central point of reference in the world, when everyone knows about him, when the conflict between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and good and bad people will take form around Imam Husayn. In other words, the movement will start only when people of the world will be polarized around Husayn.

There will be many non–Muslims whom due to their good–naturedness will take the side of Imam Husayn. There are many people in the west who will be among the best supporters of Imam Mahdi. Imam Mahdi would give everyone his right and would treat everyone with dignity; all people of good will would benefit, since Imam Mahdi will be establishing nothing but justice.

Sharing the Real Husayn with everyone

For Imam Mahdi's movement to start, Imam Husayn must become known to everyone. Everyone must develop an idea about him either loving Husayn for his stand for justice and dignity, or disliking Husayn as a result of being unjust to oneself and desiring to humiliate humanity. Those who commit injustice or usurp or violate rights of people will not be in favour of Imam Husayn.

When will this idea of people being either in favour or against Imam Husayn occur?

Not until the Imam is known to everyone. And it is not just a matter of publishing some books or booklets. We are to ensure that the true Husayn – not the Husayn that some of us currently show and represent – is exposed to press and eventually the people of the world. What is most important is to show the real Husayn in our actions, rather than in the form of propagation.

Imam Mahdi's mission to establish justice and equity is deeply connected to Imam Husayn's movement against injustice and humiliation by the oppressors. Before the advent of Imam Mahdi, almost everyone will know who Imam Husayn is and what he stood for; those who struggle for justice would refer to him as their role model, and those who fight against them would question Imam Husayn and his followers, and finally they would support and show their appreciation of what was committed by Yazid and his people and as a result associate themselves with the killing of Imam Husayn and his family members and companions.

In the next part, we will discuss how one can help Imam Husayn and trough that help the Prophet and Imam Mahdi. What is the real challenge for us today is to see how can we help Imam Husayn and through that help Imam Mahdi as he himself quoted from the Prophet saying "*Whoever helps Husayn*

has helped me."

1. Of course, because of the kind of condition they were put in, Imams can give us different lessons.

This is why we have the peace treaty of Imam Hasan and then the uprising of Imam Husayn. This does not mean that Imam Husayn is braver than Imam Hasan. They were put in different conditions and thus acted differently so that we have scenarios ready for all different conditions today. In addition to having the experience of twenty three years of life of Prophet Muhammad (s), the Shi'a the experience of leadership and guidance of the infallibles is extended up to 329 A.H, when major occultation if Imam Mahdi (a) started.

So we know what we should do in different conditions. We also have our scholars who specialize in understanding the teachings of the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt and lead the community when they lack direct access to the infallible leadership.

2. Perhaps this is one way of understanding why Imam Mahdi does not come today.
3. It might be said that there are people today who seem to support Yazid. Either they praise Yazid today or, for example, they attack those who go for ziyarat of Imam Husayn. Thus, these are the people that are going to be the enemies of Imam Mahdi. However, I do not think this illustrates the entire picture. How important are these people? Although what these ignorant people who kill themselves to kill others do is wrong by any standard and in a sense they are supporters of Yazid and do like Yazid, this is not the main problem of the world today and these people are not the main forces of evil today. We must look at it in a way that can appeal to humanity.
4. Normally we do not find this in other schools of Islam. They believe they can follow the lead of someone they do not know in their prayers.
5. This is a distinction that many, if not all, scholars make. If you want to be the leader of a prayer it is enough if people believe that you are just, even if you are not sure about your justice or you do not believe that you are just. People can make the intention of congregational prayer and you make the intention of individual (furada) prayer. However, a Friday prayer leader must believe that he is just. If he does not find himself just then he cannot undertake the leadership.
6. Another example is about telling the truth. Sometimes maybe to tell the truth can cause serious problems and you have to hide the truth. And if not possible to do that sometimes you may be required to tell a lie. For example, if by telling the truth I put an innocent life into risk then I have to hide it or if it is not possible tell a lie.

Of course, this is to save an innocent life and not a criminal one who is going to see the justice. Or if two people like a husband and wife have problem with each other you should get involved to help and if it is only by telling lies that you can bring them together you can do so. For example, you can go to the husband and say your wife very much loves you and go to the wife and say something similar and bring them together.

Normally our jurists permit lying for reconciliation. This is different from what some people think and lie for everything and say it is allowed, because there was a maslahah or expediency involved. There must be something which in the sight of Allah is so important that it overrides the value of telling the truth, and these are very narrowly defined by jurists.

7. Sometimes people wonder why we pray to Allah not to treat us with His justice like the following supplication

O our lord, Treat us with your favour, and do not treat us with your justice.

This raises a question for them since they think this is an exception for justice while it is not. When we ask God not to treat us with His justice it does not mean that we want Him to treat us with injustice or be unjust to us. No one would want that. On the contrary, what is meant here is that we want something even more than justice. This is because justice has two levels. The first one is to give one exactly what one deserves and the second one is to give one what one deserves or more. In this phrase, the first meaning of justice has been used.

Thus, when we say do not treat us with justice it means that do not treat us as we deserve because we are worried that

what we deserve is not good. Therefore, we ask for more than what we deserve. Notice that it would have only been injustice if we had asked for less. So it became clear that this phrase is not an exception for justice where injustice is allowed. You do not find any case in Islam in which injustice is allowed. You always have to be just.

8. Qur'an 6: 51. The Qur'an also says

"And they did not wrong Us, but they used to wrong (only] themselves." (7:160; 2: 57)

9. Qur'an 7:23.
10. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 224 and Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 40, p. 163, chapter 107, no.57.
11. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 192, p. 196, vol. 45, p. 49 and p. 50 and vol. 75, p. 128.
12. Ibid., vol. 44, p. 324.
13. Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p. 300.
14. Unfortunately, some of us have kept Imam Husayn in prison of our own community. We have not let the light of Imam Husayn go and reach everyone. When people want to know who Husayn was what can they do today? For example if you live in a neighbourhood and someone wants to know about Imam Husayn what would they do?

He would probably decide to go to the gathering of the lovers of Husayn and see what they do. Do you think our gatherings are in a way that if an outsider comes would benefit or would understand what Husayn ideas are?

Or if for example he wants to know what was Husayn's idea about family life, do you think by looking at our families they will realize what Husayn wants? If he wants to see how a child must respect his parents can he look at our children and find that out? If he wants to know how Imam Husayn was saying about kindness and mercy towards your neighbours, would he see that if he looks at the Shi'a neighbours?

When we don't show the values of Imam Husayn and we say we are lovers of Imam Husayn we confuse people about Imam Husayn. We don't let them to have access to the true and original Husayn. They look at him through us and, instead of being mirrors to reflect the light of Husayn, we misguide people. Of course, this is not about everyone but some.

15. For example, today people from all over the world respect Nelson Mandela because he struggled for a noble cause. He spent 27 years in prison calling for justice. We too have respect for him, but can we compare what he has done for justice and what Imam Husayn has done?

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