Extremism and Yamani Claimant's Movement's Undue Readings of the Religious Elements

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Abstract

cultural and social risks. It's now a long time since researchers have pointed out numerous problems of extremism with all the differences they have had in all ages and eras. Extremist flows that are rooted in ignorance and arrogance use various means to realize and express individual and social violence, the most obvious of which is the incorrect reading of religious components. The movement of Yemeni claimants, which has emerged in Iraq in the last two decades, has promoted religious extremism among religious communities with its various claims in the field of Mahdism, with superficial, extremist, and exaggerated interpretations of verses, traditions, and the lives of prophets and imams. This article has been done with a descriptive-analytical method and based on library and virtual sources with a half-view of the history of religious extremist culture in Islam, it has explained the extremism of the Yemeni movement through the undue readings of religious issues. The results indicate the extremisms of this movement in religious, practical, and social matters, which are in the form of believing in the incarnation of God, the Lordship of the Prophet and Imams, polytheism of the Prophets and Imams, excommunication of Shias who do not believe in this claimant, and the promotion of desecration of their property, encouraging uprising and armed violence, socio-political challenges, extremism in social interactions and destruction of jurisprudence, etc. are visible.

Keywords: Yamani claimant's movement; Ahmad al-Hassan; extremism; religious subjects; religious readings; social challenges.

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Introduction

The history of Islam is adorned with beautiful and shining pages, which, as a result of the mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, and his eternal miracle, the Quran, has been inscribed towards the expansion of human freedom from the cruelties and prejudices of ignorance. These pages have drawn their illumination from the cessation of the final divine revelation. However, alongside all this splendor, sorrowful lines catch the eye, which have been brought about by personal misinterpretations and deviation from divine ordinances in the form of improper readings and misuse of religious elements, coupled with extremism. The clearest manifestation of this issue can be observed in early Islam in the movements of the hypocrites and the usurping caliphate during the era of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, and the movements of the Kharijites during the just rule of the Alawi government.

After that, extremism remained a fundamental challenge, especially as a means of colonization. One of the best ways to destroy or deviate from religions has always been the deployment of undue readings of them, which in Islam has resulted in effects such as murder, plunder, violation of the sanctities and properties of Muslims, and the expression of violence against them; a matter that has inflicted irreparable blows on the body of religion. The adoption of this type of thought and understanding of religion in Islamic countries has led to the emergence of jihadist Salafism, Wahhabism, Babism, and Baha'ism, and in recent decades, to the emergence of Al-Qaeda, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the Companions' Army, and ultimately to ISIS. As a prominent example, as we see in the written works of Babism and Baha'ism, contrary to human appearances and humane actions, these two flows have had exceedingly extremist ideological and practical readings, the consequences of which have been horrific challenges such as excommunications, violence, and bloodshed. (Nuri, n.d: 8 and Kashani, 1910 AD: 10-8), matters that still haunt our society and other Muslim communities today. The Yamani Claimant Movement, led by Ahmad Ismail, known as Ahmad al-Hassan, which emerged in Iraq in late 1999 AD, with incorrect readings of religious elements in a pattern similar to the mentioned movements, has had extreme sectarian beliefs and sometimes blameworthy actions, and with the fundamental violence hidden in his readings, he excommunicates those who do not believe in him and considers them outside the religion; a process whose prognosis indicates fundamental challenges that will follow in Shia communities. Rejecting sciences such as jurisprudential theory (usul al-fiqh), fiqh, and rijal (evaluation of the chain of transmissions) on one hand, and citing select parts of ahadith and incomplete quotation from fuqaha on the other, he presents a false reading of religious elements and

doctrines that has led to extensive extremism in the realms of beliefs, legal rulings, and social ethical interactions. Therefore, independent research on this matter is essential.

This article tries to identify and explain their incorrect readings of religious elements to the extent possible and within the framework of this, using available library resources as well as works shared by them in cyberspace, and providing them to relevant researchers and social activists to prevent future challenges.

Our main question in this article is what extremism and neglect they have had in their readings of religious elements that nothing but violence in the real world and deviation have ensued from them. Therefore, some theoretical concepts are first examined, and in the next section, their incorrect readings of religious elements are examined in terms of doctrinal, jurisprudential, and socio-ethical dimensions.

However, historically, numerous scientific studies have been carried out in the form of books, theses, articles, websites, and social media channels about this movement and its leader, although they have greatly assisted us in writing this article, their perspective has not been about the extremism of this movement and potential future challenges. Among these works is the book The Way and the Erroneous by Nasrollah Ayati about ways to recognize the Imam with a critical approach to the Yamani, The Path of the Myth by Mohammad Shahbaziyan, and Opposing the Sun by Hojjat Heydari Charati about introducing the leader of this movement and criticizing his proofs, the article A Review of the New Movement of Yamani Claimant by Mohsen Heydari and Hojjat Heydari Charati with an overview and criticism of the claims of Ahmad Ismail, the book Restless Dream by Shahbaziyan and Dreamer by Seyyed Mehdi Mojtahed Sistani about the study and criticism of dreams and visions as one of their main proofs, and The Antichrist of Basra by Ali Kurani on studying the appearance of antichrists in Iraq, especially Ahmad al-Hassan claims.

1. Concepts

To enter into a discussion, it is necessary to examine concepts such as extremism, religious elements, movement, and readings from religion, along with the intended meanings.

1-1. Incorrect Readings/Interpretations

The combination of "incorrect readings" in our discussion, as we mentioned previously, conveys the meaning of the word reading. Reading/interpretation here means understanding religion. Islam has sources and constants that the leader of this movement himself believes in; matters that sometimes are deemed necessary for religion. However, the understanding and interpretation provided by this movement are incorrect, extremist, and fundamentally false, which in

many cases deny the essentials of religion.

1-2. Extremism

In Persian, extremism (افراط‌گرایی) means exceeding the limit and exaggeration, and extremism refers to a tendency toward such behaviors and extremism in political, religious, and other issues. (Moein, 2007/Amid, 1996). The Arabic term for extremism is "تطرف" and in English, it is "extremism."

However, various definitions have been presented regarding its conceptual meaning. Ahmad Mukhtar defines it in *Mu'jam al-Lughat al-Arabiyya* as political, religious, sectarian, or intellectual extremism, which is a dangerous and destructive method for individuals and society. (Ahmad Mukhtar, 2008) Roger Scruton also considers the final adoption of an idea without considering its regrettable consequences, impracticality, and incitement of emotions towards it, not only to confront but also to destroy opponents, intolerance of opposing views, and the use of tools for political purposes and disrespect the lives, property, and human rights of others as extremism. (Scruton, 1982) Other scholars have also elaborated on this definition by adding elements such as prejudice and deviation in both religious and worldly matters, resorting to force and targeted violent behavior with strong ideological and identity-based backgrounds. (Al-Qahtani, 2007, Jamali, 2011) Therefore, our understanding of extremism here encompasses the general concept of exaggeration or fault in beliefs, baseless prejudices, deviant rulings contrary to the Quran and narrations, and indicative of disrespect by non-believers towards the Yamani claimant and also includes violent behaviors with ideological background of his movement.

1-3. Religious Elements

The concept of religious elements is also clear and refers to the constituent part or component of something that without it, that thing cannot be analyzed or understood. Religious elements, as the term suggests, are the elements that when combined form religion. Therefore, it includes elements of belief, ethics, and practical rulings, which, of course, have numerous sub-branches and sub-elements.

1-4. Movement

The meaning of movement also refers to a specific organized community or group that, in addition to intellectual foundations, has a particular social behavior. (Khosropanah, 2009) The Yamani Claimant Movement, which identifies itself as Ansar al-Mahdi or the Yamani movement, has this characteristic; meaning it has both organization and community and intellectual foundations as well as special social behaviors.

Therefore, our intention regarding extremism and incorrect readings of the

Ahmad al-Hassan movement from religious elements, beliefs, perspectives, theories, and extremist statements beyond the limit is that these are the constitutive elements of the manifest religion of Islam, which by employing these readings have deviated from religion, excommunicated, and inflicted religious and social violence, endangering the lives, property, and rights of others, especially their opponents.

2. Challenges/Extremisms of Ahmad al-Hassan and the Yamani Movement

2-1. Extremisms in Beliefs

The collection of works of the Yamani Claimant Movement, which revolves around doctrinal discussions with keywords such as monotheism, prophethood, the biography of prophets, Quranic interpretation, and hadiths, is replete with incorrect readings and extremism. Some examples of enumerated cases are presented below.

2-1-1. Undue Interpretation of Monotheism: Exaggeration (Ghuluw)

2-1-1-1. Divinity of the Infallibles: Deification

The Yamani Claimant Movement considers extremism in beliefs as disbelief and polytheism towards the Almighty God: "For anyone who equates divine proofs (hujjas), prophets, and righteous individuals with others, has considered the Face of God and His good names equal to other creatures ... Thus, considering them equal to others is associating partners with God in all levels and ranks, just as denying them is considered disbelief in all levels and ranks." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015) This is while he considers himself equal to the Infallibles and acknowledges their positions for himself; meaning, he has become subject to this ruling himself and has fallen into extremism in belief.

2-1-1-2. Types of Polytheism (Shirk)

Polytheism means considering someone as equal to God. Polytheism is divided into obvious and hidden, with hypocrisy being the hidden form of polytheism. (Allamah Majlisi, 1984) For this division, the leader of this movement divides polytheism into three categories: obvious, hidden, and psychological. He considers the most hidden type of polytheism to be psychological polytheism, which is the intention and attributes it to one of the Imams. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016) He considers achieving liberation from this type of polytheism for the general public as creating good morals and thinking, but the only way to achieve liberation from this type of polytheism, to which he was exposed and testified, is martyrdom (shahadah). (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016)

This is while none of the Shias, and even the Sunnis throughout history, have believed in their polytheism, and being a standard, the absolute immunity and

purity of Imam Hussain according to the consensus is confirmed. (Quran, 3:61; 33:33)

2-1-1-3. Extremism and Exaggeration in the Essence of Monotheism

Like his predecessors such as Ali Muhammad Bab (the leader of Babi and Baha'i sects), after baseless claims about his positions, he went further and claimed the manifestation of God's essence in a perfect human being, or other words, his incarnation. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2017) He refers to a narration from the book of Tawhid by the late Saduq: "God created Adam in His image." However, by referring to the text of Saduq's Tawhid, we find that this sentence is presented in the form of a question to Imam Ali (Peace be upon him), asking about the common narration that God Almighty created Adam in His image. Amir al-Mu'minin, in response to this question and explanation, says: This is the face that has been created and made, and God has chosen it and compared it to other different faces He Has created; therefore, He attributed that face to Himself as He attributed the Kaaba to Himself and said: "My House," "I blew into it of My Spirit." (Saduq, 2019)

2-1-1-4. Claiming the Lordship of the Prophets and Ahl al-Bayt

One of their beliefs is that the Prophet of Islam is divine. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015; 2016; 2017) In the interpretation of the supplication *Samat*, he writes: "The radiant light of God in the form of Jesus Christ and the manifestation of God in the Paran in the face of the Prophet Muhammad has been realized." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2017) In the book of *Tawhid* regarding the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, he writes: "That prophet is God in creation, and the Ahl al-Bayt are in a lower position than the rank of the Prophet, peace be upon him because they are the crystallization of God in creation." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015c: 97-98)

This is while Allah is the name of the essence of the Necessary Being and the comprehensive of all His perfect attributes, and is not applied to anyone other than God, neither literally nor metaphorically; (Hawzah, 2010) and it was Pharaoh, Nimrod, and the likes of them who considered themselves as the creators of people. (Quran, 2:258; 79:24)

Furthermore, these statements convey a transgression of limits set by the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt for us in describing them, which not only gives the odor of extremism but also paves the way for the formation of violence and social extremism thereafter. Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) said in this regard: "... Make us servants who are created." (Saffar, 2002, Vol.1:241)

2-1-2. Misinterpretation and Negligence Regarding Prophethood

2-1-2-1. Denial of the Necessity of Miracles

From a rational perspective, and in agreement with all scholars, one of the

primary signs of recognizing the authority of God, or in other words, the sole criterion for distinguishing between a truthful claimant and a false one, is miracles. (Hilli, 1992:350) The history of prophets and the Holy Quran testify to the numerous miracles brought forth by divine prophets to substantiate their prophethood to the people. (Quran,7:120;3:49;20:20) However, this faction not only does not consider presenting miracles necessary to prove their legitimacy, but they regard requesting miracles as a sign of ignorance.[1] (Abu Hassan, 2015:54) According to Ahmad Ismail, the reality of miracles (whether it be Moses' staff, Jesus' miraculous healing, or the Quran itself) is accompanied by some doubt and concealment and is aimed at subjugating those who do not recognize anything beyond materiality. In his view, this level of concealment is due to the open path of faith in the unseen. Otherwise, if miracles were overpowering and devoid of doubt, there would be no room left for belief in the unseen, resulting in a coerced belief that is not truly faith and lacks any essence of Islam. It is a submission that is not pleasing to God, and He does not accept it. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a:26-28,2015:150-157)

This is in contrast to the fact that miracles serve as evidence, not coercion, and they do not negate free will; they are evident, not hidden or obscure. Indeed, what contradiction exists between believing in the unseen and evident miracles? Precisely these evident miracles, originating from a supernatural source, lead to belief in the unseen.

Moreover, such a foundation contradicts the firm assertions of Quranic verses. Was the miraculous appearance of the she-camel unclear or concealed? Could this miracle have compelled the people of Thamud to believe? If it were coercive, pursuing it and the subsequent punishment would have been meaningless. (Quran,91:11-15) Where was the ambiguity and concealment in the cooling and peace upon Ibrahim (Peace be upon him)? Did this miracle compel faith? Fundamentally, did the Quran, the eternal divine miracle, truly force belief? Then why have there been so many disbelievers and hypocrites during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and even today? The sorcerers, in

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1. "Denying the necessity of miracles is not exclusive to the Yamani claimant movement. Before them, the leaders of the Bahá'í Faith also denied the validity of miracles because they lacked divine revelation and were incapable of producing miracles to support their claims. They considered the lack of connection between the claimant and the evidence as a reason to deny the necessity and validity of miracles. They state: 'If there is no connection between the claimant and the evidence, the desired positive conclusion will never be reached, even if the evidence is astonishing. For example, if someone claims to be a physician and their evidence is that they levitate or make stones speak, no scholar would ever consider this as evidence of the claimant's truthfulness. Because curing diseases and healing the sick is evidence of the truthfulness of the claim of medicine, not speaking stones or flying in the air; when there is no connection between the evidence and the claim.' (Golpayegani, 2015: 72)"

contrast to the miracles of Moses, prostrated themselves and believed, yet they renounced their faith. However, Pharaoh and Haman not only did not believe but intensified their disbelief and hostility. Was Pharaoh and Haman compelled to accept? (Quran, 20:47-79) Perceiving miracles as a tool for forcing belief contradicts the statement of Ali ibn Abi Talib (Peace be upon them), who said, "Do not deviate from this affair's owner, for your behavior will be harmful. Know that whoever adheres to the miracles of the guiding Imam and understands his guidance will not go astray." (Tabari,1994:404)

In addition to what has been mentioned, denying miracles is a direct contradiction to the correct interpretation of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt: it opposes a component of miracles. This is because it is evident from a collection of narrations that the main sign of recognizing the *Hujja (proof)* of God and the criterion for distinguishing truth from falsehood in claims is through miracles. (Saduq, 1983: 428 and 2006: 122) Therefore, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also, in the context of proving his authority and Imamate to a Jewish man, presented a clear miracle as evidence without labeling him as ignorant. (Saduq, 1983: 27)"

Furthermore, denying miracles to prove prophethood by this faction and its leader contradicts the narrations, as even Seyyed al-Hassani, when confronted with Imam Mahdi, requested a particular miracle for himself and a miracle similar to the miracle of the Prophet of God for his soldiers, and after that, he pledged allegiance and believed. (Yazdi Haeri, 2001:168) It seems that because they have failed to produce a miracle, they attempt to deny its necessity in proving their claims.

2-1-2-2. Denial of the People's Understanding of Miracles
After denying the practical utility of miracles due to their perceived unnecessary nature and the audience's inability to comprehend them, this faction also disparages the people. They claim that people, whether scholars or ignorant, are incapable of understanding the miracles brought forth by divine prophets, especially those of the Quran. He writes, "Without a doubt, I say most Muslims, whether scholars or ignorant, are incapable of understanding this matter." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016c:2021) In this claim, he not only deems ordinary people incapable of understanding miracles but also questions the understanding of scholars. He implicitly criticizes God and His messengers. In other words, he considers all the miracles brought forth by divine prophets to substantiate their claims as fruitless.

2-1-2-3. Methods of Proving Prophetic Claims According to the Yamani Faction and the Excommunication of Their Opponents
The Yamani claimant, after denying the practical utility of miracles due to their

perceived unnecessary nature and the audience's lack of understanding, presents several ways to recognize the *hujja* (proof of God) including dreams, good ethics, knowledge, and wisdom, and the appointment and standing with the sword, among others. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 205: 93-157) Among these approaches, two extreme approaches are mentioned below:

First. Dream:

Among the evidence he presents for his authenticity, he introduces dreams as the strongest, most definitive, and undeniable proof for those who witness them, and considers them a powerful incentive for others to believe in the authority of God. By interpreting Quranic verses based on his own opinions, he includes dreams among the signs and symbols of the divine realm. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016c:22-23)

They not only consider dreams as evidence of their authority, but they go beyond and, with an extremist view, label anyone who denies them as disbelievers. Ahmad Ismail writes: "But today we see that most people deny the reality of dreams and that revelation is from God Almighty, and this is because their evil soul denies God Almighty and does not believe in Him, but they do not know it themselves." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2017f, Vol.4:81)

Of course, such claims are not new among deviant sects and movements. Many fraudulent claimants of Mahdism had previously utilized this method and claimed to have met the infallible Imams in the world of dreams. Mohammad Noorbakhsh, the founder of the Noorbakhshiyya and a claimant of the Mahdism, claimed to have seen dreams of the Prophet Muhammad referring to him as the promised Mahdi. (Jafarian, 2012:704) Furthermore, Fazlullah Horufi (the founder of the Horufiyya, eighth century), (Farajallah, 2015:107), Seyyed Kazem Rashti (Khavari, 1949:41), Mirza Ahmad Qadiani (the founder of the Qadiani sect) (Qadiani, 1991:105), and other claimants of similar nature were among them. This is despite none of the infallible Imams or scholars ever affirming the validity of dreams, especially in matters of Islamic belief or practice, and there is no evidence of such in their practical conduct.

Second. Armed Rising:

In no religious logic or rational decree is war fundamental. Therefore, neither in the Quran nor in the narrations can one find a reason for divine authority to necessarily involve armed uprising; just as the content of the infallible Imams did not engage in armed conflicts, nor did this conflict contradict their Imamate. However, this movement, like the Khawarij and Zaydis, counts armed rising with the slogan "pledging allegiance to God" and fighting against anyone who claims authority for the people and through elections as a sign of divine authority on earth. Among them, Ahmad Ismail sees the leadership of this uprising and struggle solely in the hands of the successor of the Prophet (who he

claims to be at present), and he regards scholars who have brought the flag of elections and democracy into motion as tyrannical and deceiving the people, considering the battle against them from the viewpoint of the Ahl al-Bayt as completely clear, citing the blood of Imam Hussein in Karbala as evidence. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2017c, Vol.3:77-78) Encouraging people to take up arms by them, with such slogans, bears a striking resemblance to the ideology and movement of the Khawarij at the forefront of Islam, with flags inscribed with "There is no ruling except by God."

2-1-3. Violent Readings and Interpretation of Prophetic Biography
Ahmad Ismail presents violence as an inseparable part of the prophets' mission, viewing his movement in this light. Below are some of his interpretations of the prophets' biographies, reflecting this approach.

He introduces Prophet Ibrahim's mission in three parts: 1. Dealing with intensity and harshness devoid of softness, employing destructive weapons such as the axe in his confrontation with idolaters, and considering the resulting severity of behavior as a manifestation of divine mercy upon him. 2. The absence of any moderation or leniency in the call, but rather a harsh and swift approach with events unfolding rapidly one after another. 3. Disregarding material scales and worldly means in this goal, sufficing with the manifestation of such aggressive behaviors while the goal remains clear. (Ibid. Vol.1: 15-17)

He regards the phrase "لا قوة الا بالله" (There is no power but with Allah) and the act of standing alone against millions without considering their numbers sufficient for himself and his movement. By referring to the hidden confrontations (violent) rather than the apparent ones of Prophet Ibrahim in his call, he considers the faith of Prophet Lot as one of its results. (Ibid.)

They have also delved into violent readings of non-ultra-determined prophets (non-Ulu-Adhm ones) like Prophet Joseph. (Ibid. Vol.3:7) He presents Prophet Joseph's movement against the Egyptian king as a harsh and swift action. According to him, neither imprisonment nor being under the surveillance of Pharaoh's police had the slightest effect on him. Joseph shows no leniency or weakness, relying on material means to achieve his goal to the extent that he considers Prophet Joseph associating himself with hidden polytheism by saying, "Remember me with your lord" (Quran 12:42; Ahmad al-Hassan, Vol.3:46-47).

Examining the history of the prophets, we find that they defended themselves, when necessary, in the event of war or violence against them, sometimes resulting in the killing of enemies and infidels. However, understandably, these defensive actions were not invitations to violence. Nevertheless, Ahmad Ismail considers the initiation of Prophet Moses by killing one of Pharaoh's soldiers an ultimately intense and severe action. (Quran, 28:15) According to him, the reason for employing such violence Moses is, on one

hand, Pharaoh's detention from looting, plundering, and the oppression of the people of the land, and on the other hand, encouraging the Israelites to revolt against Pharaoh and his soldiers, preparing the people for the revolution of Prophet Jesus, and manifesting himself as a person who stood against the oppression of Pharaoh and his soldiers, thereby removing the accusation of Moses being a friend of Pharaoh due to his adoption by Pharaoh. (Ibid. Vol.1:21)

This argument of his is made while referring to the collections of Quranic interpretations indicating that these movements were mostly defensive and aimed at liberation from injustice and oppression, rather than as a call for violence, to the extent that even the altercation of that Copt with one of Moses's followers is considered the result of Satan's action and not what Prophet Moses did. (Majlisi,1982, Vol.11:80)

2-1-4. Insufficient Evidence for Claims

One of the characteristics of extremist movements, including the movement claiming Yamani, is the lack of sufficient evidence to prove their claims. Deception and sometimes exaggeration of weak evidence with repeated emphasis, blurring the true understanding and interpretation are tactics of this movement. For example, regarding the hadith of the "Twelve Mahdis," which is a single and contrary to the famous opinion (Majlisi, Ibid. Vol.53:148), Ahmad Ismail has repeatedly used it in rhetoric and titles to the point where it has been added to the common salutation among Muslims and Shia. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016f, Vol.4; Abu Hassan, Vol.1: 114-116) In their various works, they repeatedly refer to such reports to be called a frequently transmitted hadith (mutawatir) until both the audience and themselves believe that these hadiths are truly frequent. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015:203; al-Aqili,2015:9-12; Abu Hassan, Vol.2:89)

The lack of sufficient evidence for establishing legitimacy has sometimes led them to present what is not considered evidence for any Muslim or non-Muslim in matters of belief. For instance, non-infallible dreams or *istikhara*, which are by no means valid evidence in matters of belief, have been considered primary arguments and proofs, even surpassing the Quran and Sunnah. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015d, 21-23; n.d.:52-70) They also consider denying the validity of dreams or seeking guidance as denying the validity of the Quran and Sunnah and interpret them as indications of belief in Satan incarnating in the bodies of the Infallibles (Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt). (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016c:22, 2016f: 7; n.d.:55-56)

2-1-5. Contradictory Positions and Weakening the Expectation of Relief (Intiẓar al-Faraj)

After destroying the position of the prophets, contrary to the Quranic and

Islamic beliefs, they weaken the concept of awaiting relief and combine the signs before, during, and after the reappearance into one person, stating that everything has already happened before the reappearance. That he is both a Yamani, the son of Imam Mahdi, and a messenger of his, one of the three hundred and thirteen close companions of the Imam, the next Imam and his successor, and the first of the Twelve Mahdis. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a:39) In other words, they have tried to attribute every sign and personality that Shia expectations of the reappearance imply to one person to challenge Shia beliefs.

2-2. Excessive Approach in Legal/Sharia Judgments

Despite rejecting jurisprudential interpretation (ijtihad) and believing that jurisprudence should be based on the Preserved Tablet (لوح محفوظ) and revelation (وحي), Ahmad Ismail has incorporated the jurisprudential book "Sharaye Al-Islam" by the late Muhaqqiq Hilli into his work, expressing his legal judgments in its margins as comments. He asserts that anyone who opposes the rulings issued by him has opposed Imam al-Mahdi, and he has expanded zealotry in various branches of jurisprudence. This includes areas such as jihad, the permissibility of seizing the property of Muslims, negating the principle of the Muslim market, and promoting a culture of slavery.

2-2-1. Jihad

Jihad is one of the branches of religion and obligations in Islam, extolled by the Quran and its traditions. (Quran, 4:95; Sayyid Radi, 1993:512; Saduq,1992, Vol.3:568) Independent chapters have been dedicated to it in narrative books, and its conditions and requirements, (Kulayni, 1986; Saduq,1992) such as capability or the status of the opposing party, have been enumerated in jurisprudential literature. (Tusi, 2008:154; Hilli, 1991. Vol.14:9; Najafi, 1983, Vol.21:3) The Yamani Claimant Movement, in the promotion of zealotry and violence, does not consider these conditions necessary. It deems a mere belief in the unseen, prayer, and supplication as sufficient conditions for jihad in the path of Allah, thus encouraging believers to engage in jihad, interpreted as war, without any resources or military equipment. It refers to Joshua son of Nun and Saul and his few companions from the Torah as examples of not needing individuals and war equipment. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016b:29,32-33,86) They consider Muslims who do not believe in Ahmad Ismail and the Mahdis as infidels and impure, and decree jihad against them. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2013, Vol.2:79)

From their perspective, jihad means the use of force and coercive power against oppressors, being the only way to confront arrogant oppressors. Ahmad Ismail mockingly designates jurisprudence for focusing more on worship rulings and neglecting the regulations of transactions in these books, thus labeling jihad

against oppressors as a movement attributed to the prophets and inviting the general public to armed uprising and violence with the phrase "There is no escape from armed jihad." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015b, 106-110)

2-2-2. Muslim Property Rights

From an Islamic perspective, the property, lives, and dignity of Muslims are respected. Contrary to all verses and traditions in this regard, the directive to confiscate the property of Muslims who do not accept his Mahdism and Yamanism is apparent. He writes: "Engage in enmity with the enemies of the Mahdis and their followers. Their property is not respected, and it is permissible for you to take all or part of it for yourself if this is possible for you and does not cause harm to you." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a, Vol.4, 115) He also writes regarding the unauthorized use of others' internet: "It is not permissible unless the owner of the network is in enmity with the Imams and the Mahdis; in that case, his property is not respected." (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a, Vol.2:180 q.137) He goes further and attempts to undermine all societal economic laws and decrees non-compliance with written contracts with the deniers of his movement. (Ahmad al-Hassan, Ibid, Vol. 6: 63-64)

2-2-3. Rejection of the Rule of Muslim Market Exchange

One of the most famous and effective economic rules prevailing among Islamic societies is the rule of Muslim market exchange. A rule that entails the permissibility of consuming slaughtered (or cooked) meat and clothing offered in the Muslim market. The existence of this rule has facilitated the lives of Muslims and prevented unnecessary scruples. However, Ahmad Ismail, while rejecting this rule adopted from traditions, insists on the necessity of ensuring that the sacrifice is slaughtered by a Muslim slaughterer, even if that sacrifice is offered in the Muslim market. He also specifies regarding the food served on airplanes in Islamic countries that in case of doubt, the person is obliged to refrain from buying and consuming. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a, Vol. 6: 65-66)

2-2-4. Revival of Slavery Laws and Promoting the Culture of Enslavement

Yamani Claimant Movement, like other extremist movements such as ISIS, is among the promoters of the culture of enslavement and the revivalists of its laws among the Islamic community. They even claim in the book "Sharayi al-Islam" the necessity of enslaving the violators of a covenant. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2013, Vol. 2: 91) In this regard, no distinction is made between men and women, children, and adults. (Ibid.:93)

The leader of this movement, besides advocating jihad and the slaughter of non-believers (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2018a, Vol. 1: 79) without considering the opposing population based on his interpretation of the life of Prophet Ibrahim (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016c, Vol. 1: 17-15), has decreed the enslavement of

women and children of non-believers to Yamanism; (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2013, Vol. 2: 84) the same action undertaken by ISIS in the region, where they take captives from Yazidis, Christians, and Shias.

2-2-5. Extremism in Ethics and Social Relations

2-2-5-1. Maximal Confrontation with Islamic Scholars with an Extremist Approach

2-2-5-1-1. Character Assassination

Both rationally and traditionally, humans are required to resort to scholars to understand truth and resolve their intellectual and societal dilemmas. This fact has been explicitly stated in narrations attributed to the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them). (Hurr Amili, 1988, Vol.27:131; Saduq, 1975, Vol.2:484) However, throughout history, religious scholars, as the inheritors of prophets, have been recognized as the greatest barrier against national, ethnic, religious, political, and other forms of extremism. Hence, movements like that of Ahmad al-Hassan, instead of focusing on the principles and issues advocated by scholars, attack the personalities of scholars. They do not differentiate between misguided and knowledgeable scholars and, by utilizing a collection of narratives condemning the following of corrupt scholars, they assault the religious scholarly community. They deviate public opinion from the significance of scholars in the era of occultation. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016e, 2015:376) This approach is common among all deviant religious factions.

2-2-5-1-2. Insults, Fabrications, and Labeling

Extremists, including this movement, label scholars who precisely elucidate religious realities as deviants, foreign mercenaries (Iran, America, and Israel), corrupt, Samaritans, Samaritan calf, etc. Through such actions, they divert public attention from legitimate discussions and discourage others from consulting scholars. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016e)

2-2-5-1-3. Irresponsible Generalizations

On one hand, the Quran is replete with criticisms of corrupt Jewish and Christian scholars, and on the other hand, narrations describe the characteristics of authentic Islamic scholars. This movement usually resorts to minimal or non-existent evidence and, by claiming equivalence among scholars and their commoners' judgments, creates confusion among the general public, portraying an ugly image of Islamic scholars to its audience. (Ibid. Vol.2:69) However, the attributes of genuine Muslim scholars and corrupt scholars are not only mentioned in religious texts but can also be discerned by people through their innate purity.

2-2-5-1-4. Necessity of Armed Struggle against Scholars

He condemns contemporary scholars ruling Islamic countries, considering them

useless and inactive. In his view, they are more dangerous than war-mongering infidels like Zionists and are essentially the reason for the existence of the US and Israel's dominance. According to him, these scholars, through their agents and supporters, kill thousands of Muslims in a day and derive pleasure from it, as they are the spawn of Satan. Therefore, Ahmad al-Hassan prioritizes the battle against them over the battle against Israel. (Ibid.:71)

2-2-5-2. Standing against the Public

2-2-1-2-1. Claiming a Type of Supernatural, Cryptic, or Divine Logic

They, by misinterpreting religious components like "revelation," similar to their predecessors such as Shaykhism, Babism, Baha'ism, and also Wahhabism, use these as grounds to argue for their own beliefs and actions, claiming a sort of supernatural, cryptic, or divine logic. They eagerly impose their will on others, resorting to censorship or silencing dissenters, attributing divine decree to their actions, and considering exploitation and appropriation of others' scholarly works, like the writings of the late Sharaye al-Islam, Mohaqqiq Hilli, and the torture of their opponents, as permissible. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2018a:12; 2015a, Vol.1:44)

The impact of such tactics on the general masses is that many people, when faced with such claims, hesitate to question them; believing these stem from a religious belief, as seen vividly in the case of the Samaritan calf during the time of Prophet Moses and the turmoil caused to people's lives and properties during the Babi movement (Nabawi Razawi, 2023); thus, they instill a kind of fear in them regarding any confrontation.

2-2-5-2-2. Intimidation

Contrary to their previous movements, the Yamani claimant group excels in intimidating their audience to coerce them into accepting their assumptions and conclusions. In their writings, they explicitly and implicitly portray their opponents as agents of Satan and helpers of demons. In doing so, by bombarding their audience with quotations from general and specific narrations without verifying the sources, and by dissecting the narrations and words of scholars, whom they consider innovators, they close the minds of their supporters and compel them to accept their false views, preventing critical scrutiny of their slogans and beliefs by their readers. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016a, Vol. 2: 64 and 68; n.d.: 15)

2-2-5-3. Claiming Virtue and Moral Superiority Over Others

The Yamani Claimant Movement, by drawing on complex interpretations of their messianic beliefs, ascribing them to Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), and attributing to him a special relationship with God and the

reformer of the earth, condemns vehemently any questioning or interrogation, like other deviant movements. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2018a: 12; 2015a, Vol. 2: 130)

2-2-5-4. Ahmad Ismail's Perception of Democracy and His Ambition for Monarchy

The Yamani Claimant Movement equates democracy with the rule of oppressors like Saddam and establishes the divine government on earth solely through enlightening the community and resorting to assassination and power, as opposed to democracy and negotiation. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016b: 50) He considers holding elections as participation in sin and sees his monarchy as the only salvation. This is even though authentic Islamic jurisprudence is devoid of such extremist thinking and considers dialogue as the best method of argumentation and encouragement to righteousness, and armed struggle only in the face of aggression. (Quran, 16: 125)

Despite officially declaring the obligation to fight against American occupation (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015a, Vol. 2: 85), in recent events, they have remained silent even to the point of condemning the martyrdom of the commanders of war against ISIS. However, according to field reports, the dagger of Yemeni Claimant extremism has targeted the throats of activists instead of sharpening against Islam's enemies. According to their leader, accepting democracy and elections not only has no connection to any divine religion but will result in disbelief in all religions and God's sovereignty over the earth. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2018b: 15) He considers fighters as enemies of God and enemies of the progeny of Muhammad, opposing the rule of God on earth and disbelievers, even if they express affection. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2015, Vol. 3: 165)

Yes! They not only take no practical action against the enemies of Islam but also, in the face of scholars' fatwas calling for general mobilization against Daesh and global arrogance, they stand against it, describing scholars as "more dangerous than oppressive rulers" because by issuing permits to join armed forces whose main goal is suppressing Islamic nations, weakening God's religion on earth, are trying to destroy it. (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016e, Vol. 2: 70) He has introduced such scholars as American scholars!! (Ahmad al-Hassan, 2016f, Vol. 1: 85)

2-3. Socio-political Challenges

This movement, like other claimant movements of Mahdism, has created multiple challenges and is susceptible to numerous challenges in global issues. We mentioned general challenges caused by these movements and ideologies in the first and second parts of this chapter. However, some of these challenges caused by the Yamani Claimant Movement briefly include:

2-3-1. Religious Tensions

The emergence of these self-proclaimed claimants can lead to religious tensions, such as challenges related to established religious leaders and differing interpretations of Islamic beliefs. This can lead to discussions and even violence among different religious groups.

2-3-2. Disruption of Unity

The claim of these Mahdi claimants, like other claimants, can divide Muslim communities and create debates between supporters and opponents. This weakens unity and cohesion within society, causing division.

2-3-3. Social Unrest

Followers of these Mahdi claimants engage in political and social activities and may even resort to armed rebellion, as they believe their claimed Mahdi will bring about social and political changes. This can lead to social unrest, protests, and confrontations with governments.

2-3-4. Security Concerns

When a large population follows these Mahdi claimants, natural security concerns arise. Officials in countries where these individuals are present are likely to view these movements as a threat to public peace and national security.

2-3-5. Misuse of Resources

Supporters and believers in these Mahdi claimants may invest their resources in furthering the goals of their self-proclaimed leader, rather than investing in education, health, and economic development. This can lead to misallocation of resources and disruption of economic security.

2-3-6. Global Attention

The lofty claims of these Mahdi claimants regarding saving the world can attract global attention and curiosity. This can lead to misinterpretations and emotional responses towards the leader of this movement at a global level; potentially misleading people and garnering emotional support for this movement and its leader.

3. Results

Ahmad Ismail, by claiming to be the ambassador of Imam Mahdi, his trustee, Mahdi, and Imam after Imam of the time, which he has been pursuing for more than twenty years, presents readings of religious components that are contradictory to what is mentioned in the Quran, the words of the Prophet, and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and are considered as the pillars of Shiism.

This movement, on the one hand, by presenting an ambiguous interpretation

of monotheism, greatly expands the circle of associating partners with God beyond what is mentioned in the Quran and the narrations, such as associating Imam Hussein and Prophet Joseph with polytheism, using the specific name of God, i.e., Allah, for the Prophet, and believing in their divinity in creation. On the other hand, by issuing verdicts contrary to the definite rulings of the Quran and narrations such as excommunication and cursing non-believers in the claimant Yamani and ordering their property, lives, and honor to be taken, rejecting the rule of Muslim Market Exchange (known as *suq al-Muslimeen*), along with social orders like the sanctity of democracy and elections, and ordering armed rebellion and violence, they have taken an extremist direction that was previously seen among hypocrites and Kharijites at the dawn of Islam, and in recent years among Al-Qaeda and ISIS; trend analysis of which indicates that, without sufficient attention and appropriate actions and enlightenment, it will lead to the same consequences as those pursued by the aforementioned movements. These are among the challenges we proved in this article that undue interpretation of Mahdism can entail.

   "The extremist readings of this movement from Mahdi components," "Investigating and analyzing the challenges of this movement for the future of the Islamic community," and "Similarities and differences between this movement and extremist movements like Kharijites and ISIS" are topics that, according to the authors, require independent research.

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