

# Introducing Imam Husayn to Humanity: Spiritual Advice for Organizations

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is based on a lecture given in the city of Mashhad, during the gathering with representatives of the WhoIsHussain global campaign, which aims to educate and inspire humanity on Imam Husayn, the third Imam, and the values he stood for; as well as bringing positive changes at the grassroots level from helping the homeless, to feeding the hungry, to donating blood. In this lecture, Huj. Sh. Mohammad Ali Shomali praises the group for their efforts, and acknowledges this project as an exceptional one, due to the importance of reaching out and making Imam Husayn known and beneficial to humanity. He also gave gentle and thought-provoking ideas and reminders to the group regarding the importance of being far-sighted in our approaches, being genuine in our love for people, being sincere and disinterested in power and position, uniting the Ummah rather using our institutions to divide it, increasing in our humbleness when we witness success, and focusing on moving towards the truth and serving it rather than egotistically bringing it to our side. In this way, we uphold Imam Husayn's principles, which is ever more needed as we approach the time of Imam Mahdi (aj).

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a lecture given on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 2016 by the author in the gathering of the representatives of whoishosseins from different continents in Mashhad.

It is a great blessing from Allah to be here near the shrine of Imam al-Riḍa (a) and in your presence to talk about Imam Husayn (a) in the way that our love for him can help us prepare for the coming of Imam Mahdi (a). I thank Allah and I thank all of you, and the *Who is Husayn* team and volunteers, including those who were unable to be here; for sure their hearts are with us. We remember them and pray for them insha-Allah. There are few things I thought we need to remind ourselves of today, so I will try to be brief and I pray to Him to remove the blockage from my tongue so as to do justice.

First of all, we are not only interested in showing our love to Imam Husayn and gaining some reward (*thawaab*) from it, though it is definitely part of the reason for the *Who is Husayn* campaign. But I think what motivated you is more than that.

Unfortunately, we sometimes become very selfish, even when it comes to religion and spirituality. Sometimes we just want to add to our reward—like a businessman—although instead of money we want a reward. And sometimes the pleasure of Allah becomes secondary. Gaining rewards seems to be the main thing for many, though we sometimes forget that there can actually be a greater reward for something from which you do not expect a reward for. In your work, business, and overall lives, many times you have been blessed during unexpected times.

An important example is in the Qur'an regarding Prophet Moses. When he was traveling with his family in a dark and presumably cold night he

saw a fire.<sup>2</sup> He told his family to wait where they were while he goes to check, which indicates that the fire was not in front of them. Because if it was in front of them, they would have been able to see it. He saw the fire on the side and went himself to check it. A leader does not take the entire community where he is unsure. If there is any risk, the least he can do is examine the area and environment; and if there is proof of overall goodness, it can be offered to the rest of the community.

When Prophet Moses checked, an unbelievable event occurred: God addressed him for the first time. God spoke to him and told him that He had chosen him and has a mission for him. The story is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

*Did the story of Moses come to you, when he sighted a fire, and said to his family, 'Wait! Indeed I descry a fire! Maybe I will bring you a brand from it, or find some guidance at the fire.' So when he came to it, he was called, 'O Moses! Indeed I am your Lord! So take off your sandals. You are indeed in the sacred valley of Tuwa. I have chosen you; so listen to what is revealed.*  
(20:9-13)

Did Moses expect this to happen while he was traveling? No. Perhaps his maximum expectation was to travel safely with his family and arrive at their destination. But Allah blessed him with something unexpected.

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<sup>2</sup> I say dark and cold because that's when fire becomes more interesting. He said to his family, 'Wait, I see a friendly fire'. Sometimes a building is on fire, but the one who sees this fire would not say "ānastu nāran." But this was a friendly fire, a fire that was not harmful, not even producing heat when it was already hot, or giving light when already bright. For this reason I think it was cold in a dark night.

And it is important to note that if Moses had all his qualities and practices, but failed to be alert at that time, he would have missed this opportunity. He was not only farsighted, but he was also broad-sighted. He saw right and left; behind and front. This is what a leader must do. Because he was alert and did not dismiss anything, he went and checked and saw the most beautiful thing awaiting him.

Thus, we should be very alert and careful so that we do not lose what is unexpected, as well as great opportunities that await us. In an interesting hadith, we read that Imam Sadiq (a) said:

كُنْ لِمَا لَا تَرْجُو أَرْجَى مِنْكَ لِمَا تَرْجُو فَإِنَّ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ ذَهَبَ لِيَقْتَنِسَ  
لِأَهْلِهِ نَارًا، فَأَنْصَرَفَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَهُوَ نَبِيُّ مُرْسَلٌ

With respect to what you have no hope for, be more hopeful than what you have hope for. Truly Moses (a) went [just] to bring a brand of fire to his family, but he returned to them while he was a Prophet and Messenger.<sup>3</sup>

I hope Allah (swt) would bless your activities throughout your lives, and in particular the activities you do for Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi, and surprise you with many blessings, including those you did not expect. But that needs alertness. That needs openness. Do not limit Allah's blessings to merely come through the channels that *you* define for Allah. Ask Him to bless you in every possible thing. There are many projects in the community, but I very much like projects like *Who is Husayn* because these are exceptional ones that we as a community have

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<sup>3</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 5, p. 83.

come to realize to be responsible for to reach out. Most of our projects, especially what we do for Imam Husayn (a) merely or at least primarily serve our internal needs. But this is one of those exceptional projects that aim at reaching out and is based on the understanding that we have a historical duty which, unfortunately, has not been sufficiently and adequately dealt with in the past. It is embarrassing to know that after 14 centuries there are people in the world who still do not know Imam Husayn. Really embarrassing. There are contemporary figures like Nelson Mandela, Gandhi and Mother Theresa that almost every educated person knows about and respects. And this took only a few decades. For almost fourteen centuries, Imam Husayn has been a gift for humanity and yet many still do not know him. Who is responsible? Who should feel embarrassed? We should.

This project is to undertake the responsibility of reaching out and introducing Imam Husayn to humanity. Not because we are Shi'a. Not because we love Imam Husayn. Not because we want to gain something. No. Because we feel humanity needs Husayn. We want to benefit humanity.

In all your activities, it is very important to always be genuine in the love you show for people. Do not do anything merely for publicity. Only do things with unconditional love. The Qur'an says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind. (3:110)*

This verse tells us that to be the best means to be the best people God has brought about for mankind, and not over people (*li-naas*, not *'ala al-*

*naas*). We are not interested in power or position. We want to serve. We want to serve humanity without any expectation. We do not want to be thanked or praised or to have status and power, or marginalize any sect in Islam. We just want to help. The Qur'an says:

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا

*We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks. (76:9)*

If we do anything, we just want to please Allah; we do not even want to be thanked or praised.

We want to serve humanity by introducing Imam Husayn to them. Because we believe that in all ages and corners of world humanity always needs people like Husayn to inspire. Husayn is not a man that can be limited to a particular time, place, or even religion. Real servants of God are those who are absorbed, taken by the light of God—they move beyond the geographical boundaries, beyond time and space. In the same way God is not bound to time and space, Godly people also can travel beyond time and space.

Imam Husayn—by emptying himself from ego as much as he could—and then by God having a special plan for him to purify him further (33:33), is a man of God. You do not find any trace of ego in Imam Husayn, nor with his true companions. These people had the quality of becoming universal. Husayn is a universal figure. Especially when we read our hadith and reflect on it about Imam Mahdi, we see there is a message, a direction, an instruction there that we perhaps we didn't notice beforehand.

Imam Husayn plays a special role in paving the way for the coming of Imam Mahdi, and moreover, for the success of Imam Mahdi. Many of the hadiths about the End of Times mention Imam Husayn. I firmly believe that without mention of him, Imam Mahdi would not be able to succeed. Maybe people think Imam Husayn was more known when we approach the time of his martyrdom and we should try to remember him so that he is not gradually forgotten. There are personalities with respect to whom you need to be very careful so that passage of time would not affect them or make them 'outdated,' but this is not the case about Imam Husayn. Imam Husayn is meant for the future, not merely for his own time. The passage of time and human experiences, especially the challenges humanity faces throughout the centuries, more so sparks people's curiosity about Imam Husayn and the values he stood for. The best time for people to know and understand Imam Husayn is close to the time of the Imam Mahdi's reappearance. But this is not a miracle that we should wait to happen. This requires our effort. Something will happen but who is going to ensure that it does in our time? This is us. If not us, there will be others. But then we would be denying ourselves this blessing.

Imam Husayn is a universal figure who has the solution—the medicine—from God for humanity. And this man is ever more needed as we approach the time of Imam Mahdi.

I would like to refer to one hadith, when Imam Husayn in night of Ashura quoted from the Prophet:

قد قال جدِّي رسول الله (ص): ولدي حسين يُقتل بطف كربلاء غريباً وحيداً  
عطشاناً فريداً فمن نصره فقد نصرني و نصر ولده الحجة

My grandfather, the Messenger of God, said: “My son Husayn will be killed in Karbala while he is a stranger, alone, thirsty, and without help. Whoever helps him has helped me and has helped his son, the Hujjah [al-Mahdi].”<sup>4</sup>

There is no way to help Husayn properly, with understanding, unless you would strengthen Islam and the Ummah. Those who think they can promote the cause of Ahlul Bayt and their teachings by dividing the Ummah—making Shi‘a against Sunni, Sunni against Shi‘a—are wrong. Anything properly done for the Ahlul Bayt would strengthen the Prophet and the Ummah. Islamic unity is very important for us. How can anyone serve Islam and the Ahlul Bayt by dividing the Ummah or humanity? It is impossible.

The Prophet also said that not only has he helped me (which you may say it is easy to understand because Imam Husayn saved Islam) but he also said, “Whoever helps Husayn has helped his son, the Hujjah [al-Mahdi].”

This is important. Anything we do for Imam Husayn with knowledge (*ma‘rifah*), with insight (*basirah*), with sincerity, in right direction would help Imam Mahdi, whether we know it or not; whether we mention the name of the Imam or not. We do not need to merely repeat the name of the Imam. Anything we do—our words and actions—that resemble the message of Imam Husayn or upholds his principles helps. Sometimes you may mention the name; other times it may be unwise

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<sup>4</sup> *Ma‘ali al-Sibtayn*, vol. 1, p. 208.



depending on the context. Either way, anyone who promotes the values Imam Husayn exhibited in the best way is indeed helping Imam Mahdi. So there must be dynamism in our works for Imam Husayn. Unfortunately, some are static in their efforts for Husayn. They lose the vision of the future. They enjoy remembering the Imam and cry for him, yet without completing this process by drawing lessons for both the present and the future. The Prophet's saying reminds us that Husayn is a point of direction in the past and future: if we understand what to do with respect to Imam Husayn, we would be continuing the efforts put forth from the beginning of Islam until the end of the world. All would be all harmonious.

We must always remember this. Merely having a good intention, or undertaking a noble cause, is not enough. There are many aspects to consider and we constantly must reflect on the requirements of this great task. Moreover, we are to consider how to improve, especially when there are signs of success:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

*When Allah's help comes with victory, and you see the people entering Allah's religion in throngs...*

If you see victories come from Allah and you see people flocking towards His path in masses, do not sit back, nor praise yourself, nor forget how much Allah has blessed you. That is the time that you are to have maximum reliance on Allah. When you see success, praise and glorify God and ask for forgiveness. Do not let self-conceit and arrogance seep in, as that would be the end of any success. In a well-known hadith, Imam Sadiq (a) is quoted as saying:

مَنْ دَخَلَهُ الْعُجْبُ هَلَكَ

The one into whose heart self-admiration (*ujb*) permeates is destined to be destroyed.<sup>5</sup>

If any person, organization, or nation take the blessings of Allah for granted and want to take credit for themselves, that is the end of it. When you see success, do more worship (*ibadah*) and ask more for forgiveness (*istighfar*):

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

*Then celebrate the praise of your Lord, and plead to Him for forgiveness. Indeed He is all-clement. (110:3)*

These people do not see any success from themselves; their only worry is whether (and how much) they have narrowed the channels of mercy of Allah. Let me honestly tell you: most of the time, we act as barriers for Allah's mercy to come. If we are experiencing good days, with good understanding, we merely let the mercy of Allah come without adding to it, without attracting more light. All you and I need to do is try not to narrow the channels of Allah's mercy. This requires stepping on our ego, as ego is big problem.

I wish we had time to reflect more on some passages of *Dua Makarim al-Akhlaq* especially concerning the lessons organizations can take from it. I will mention a few. Imam Zayn al-Abideen says:

وَأَعِزَّنِي وَلَا تَبْتَلِيَنِي بِالْكِبْرِ

Exalt me and afflict me not with pride.

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<sup>5</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 313.

Oh Allah, please give me honour and dignity. Perhaps the most important message for humanity from the life and message of Imam Husayn is honour and dignity. I think more than anything else Imam Husayn can be introduced as an icon of honour and dignity. That is what humanity needs, especially when basic needs are already met. Food, shelter, and clothing are their basic necessities, although gradually these things will be provided. However, honour is the most important. If you have physical life without honour and dignity, there is no value.

But we are to be cautious; when Allah gifts us with honour and dignity in the eyes of the people, do not think that you are special. Do not suffer from ego.

وَأَعِزَّنِي وَلَا تَبْتَلِيَنِي بِالْكِبْرِ

Exalt me and afflict me not with pride.

Please give me honour, and not arrogance. It is difficult to have one without the other. When people praise us, and there are signs of success, we are at risk for thinking we are special or privileged. We may think it to be due to our talents, hard work, or a secret goodness in ourselves. And even wondering why others do not possess the same. We tend to forget that our good reputation and successes can be a test, a trust, rather than our own achievements.

وَعَبِّدْنِي لَكَ وَلَا تُفْسِدْ عِبَادَتِي بِالْعُجْبِ

Make me worship Thee and corrupt not my worship with self-admiration!

Oh Allah, please make me your servant and use us for your purpose. We do not have a personal purpose. Why are we in this gathering? Are

we after anything for ourselves? No. We are here to think, discuss, and pray to Allah to help us understand how we can best make the most out of what He made available to us.

O Allah, please do not let my services to you be corrupted by self-admiration. Even good services can be corrupted after the action through self-admiration ('*ujb*). If there is no sincerity before the action, then it is already useless.

And then Imam reaches this point after a few sentences:

وَلَا تَرْفَعْنِي فِي النَّاسِ دَرَجَةً إِلَّا حَطَّطْتَنِي عِنْدَ نَفْسِي مِثْلَهَا

O Allah, raise me not a single degree before the people without lowering me its like in myself.

If my position and respect in the society increases by 10% please add 10% to my humbleness to remain balanced. So if you were completing successful projects before with 50% humbleness, your humbleness must increase afterwards. So if you are as humble as you used to be, it is not enough. You need to be humbler. Otherwise, you would become arrogant.

وَلَا تُحَدِّثْ لِي عِزًّا ظَاهِرًا إِلَّا أَحَدَّثْتَ لِي ذِلَّةً بَاطِنَةً عِنْدَ نَفْسِي بِقَدْرِهَا

...and bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure.

Please do not create for me any external honour unless you give me internal humbleness proportional to that. This is very important for individuals and organizations. Sometimes institutions think that because they are to promote the institution, they can forget about, or

compromise, humbleness. They may mistakenly think humbleness is for the individuals; promoting an organization is something else. But this is wrong. You must promote your organization, but in a humble way. And that can be tested in the way you interact with other organizations.

My last sentence to remain in our mind: haqq (truth) and bātil (falsehood), always oppose each other. Like light and darkness. These two would never be separate from each other. We are to ensure that we are on the side of haqq, and not bātil. It is not about ‘Bringing the truth to *my* side’. This is the problem. Many want to be the truth and think ‘Look at me; I represent the truth. I am the voice of the truth. I am a representative of the truth’. No. You must *move* towards truth. You must be a mirror of the truth. Do not think or say, ‘I represent the truth’. Who are we to represent the truth? Who are we to represent Islam or the Ahlul Bayt or Imam Husayn? Our responsibility is to try to move towards the truth to reflect it. We never would be able to claim that we are certainly and entirely on the side of the truth. It is a matter of struggle—lifelong struggle—to ensure we will be with the truth. It is only a few people for whom this has been confirmed. For example, we read about Imam Ali:

علي مع الحق والحق مع علي

Ali is with the truth; and the truth is with Ali.

That is for Ali. Not for us. We must never think we are on the side of the truth and take it for granted. Yes, maybe in a few aspects we can be right; in many things we can be wrong. So first, we have to struggle to always to be on the side of the truth.

Secondly—please remember this point, a result of my life I am sharing with you—haqq can never be served, or promoted, by using the means of bātil. We cannot spread light by using means of darkness. We can never serve Allah by doing Satanic things and thinking we are clever; no lying, dishonesty, selfishness, jealousy, or the like can help you in your sacred struggles.

One of the greatest victories of bātil is to convince the people of haqq to use the means of bātil. This is impossible to work. How can you serve Allah by being immoral or sinning? Look at Imam Husayn. When he was challenged—and I do not think there is any way to be challenged like Imam Husayn—in those few days, especially on Day of Ashura, it was more than what one person can be challenged within 100 years. For example, sometimes people in their entire life lose one, two or ten loved ones and they feel completely frustrated and life becomes miserable for them. No one has lost in such a short time so many family members and companions, in addition to being treated so badly. And they did this to Husayn in the name of Islam, in the name of the Prophet.

But for the sake of Allah—correct me if I’m wrong or if I’m exaggerating—do not think we are Shi’a, or Sheikh Shomali is a Shi’a, therefore we must support him even if he errs. If you want to support me, correct me. Was Husayn immoral or did he compromise in the least any virtues, especially during the challenging time of war? Or do we witness Husayn (a) at the highest level of extra caution with regards to maintaining good virtues, especially during hard times? Did he ever lie or deceive his friends by making false promises, or lie to his enemies?

Did he show any sign of fear, selfishness, jealousy, despair, or any other vices you can think of? So, we must insha-Allah remind ourselves and each other that we must constantly and consistently struggle to follow the truth and use permissible and moral means to attain it. Nothing false or immoral can help us in this.

I ask Allah to bless all of you and all people in all parts of the world who try to follow the truth. May Allah enable us to be the generation that are preparing for the coming of Imam al-Mahdi. May Allah enable us to be the generation to set up a universal community of brotherhood under the banner of truth at the service of humanity which would be led by Imam al-Mahdi. May Allah grant all your requests while you are in this sacred city and grant recovery to all the illnesses of our bodies, minds and hearts. And may Allah remove any obstacles between us and Him.

# A Critique of the Works of Three Orientalists on Imam al-Kazim (a)<sup>1</sup>

Sayyid Qasim Razzaqi Musawi

Translated by Mahboobeh Morshedian

**Abstract:** For decades, orientalists have carried out studies on Islam with various motivations. However, western academic and systematic research on Shi‘ism is not older than a century. In recent decades, western Shi‘a studies have increased significantly, but their studies on the Imams are stagnant and are limited to few encyclopaedic articles and books on the history of Shi‘ism that discuss the Imams when the occasion arose. The purpose of this paper is to investigate three works, namely: “Imam al-Kazim” by Etan Kohlberg from the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the section on Imam al-Kazim in *Shi‘a Denomination* by Dwight Donaldson, and *Shi‘ism* by Heinz Halm. These three works are fairly comprehensive ones revolving around the Imam’s lifetime—from his birth to his martyrdom. The issue of Imam al-Kazim’s successor—that is, the disagreement among the Shi‘as over who succeeded the Imam and the formation of various sects, the social and political problems in his time, the Imam’s encounter with the caliphs and the his repeated imprisonment, the investigation of various reports of the Imam’s martyrdom and its consequences, and the investigation of the emergence of the Waqifites after

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<sup>1</sup> *Tarikhe Islam* (The History of Islam), Issue 53, Spring 2013, pp. 127-152.



the Imam's martyrdom – these are among the positive points mentioned in these western studies. On the other hand, the Imam's interaction with other sects, his stance on uprisings of the Alawites, his socio-political positions, particularly with the caliphs, and the Shi'as' communication with the Imam, especially regarding scientific and cultural issues, are among the topics not addressed by the abovementioned orientalists.

## Introduction

Compared to western studies on Shi'ism, their studies on Shi'a Imams do not have a long record. The oldest materials that specifically and scientifically deal with the Shi'a Imams can be found either in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* or in Donaldson's *Shi'a Denomination*. The early studies on Shi'ism and the Imams to introduce Shi'ism and its tenets were done largely on the basis of Sunni sources which are not without inaccuracies in its content. Of course, in the recent decades, considering the change in the western approach to Shi'a studies and their reliance on Shi'a sources, this shortcoming can be seen less frequently. Recently, due to the specificity of these studies, their address of challenging issues, and their new research methods, they have had useful and significant findings about the history of Shi'a Imams and their roles.

Imam al-Kazim is the seventh Imam of Twelver Shi'ism. Due to some problems in his lifetime, Shi'as were faced with a new condition. A new branching in Shi'ism and the formation of the Ismailiyyah sect (those who believed in Imamate of the eldest son of Imam al-Sadiq, Isma'ilis) are among the most important social issues. Orientalists, those who studied various topics related to Islam systematically and from an

outsider's perspective, have also addressed the personality of Imam al-Kazim from various perspectives as well. Considering the position and authority of orientalist in the scientific circles, it is necessary to examine their studies to familiarize ourselves on their views and findings of the Shi'a Imams, and to critique them from the Shi'a thinkers' perspective if necessary. This study addresses the western researchers' studies on Imam al-Kazim and his life.

Despite the large bulk of orientatists' research on Shi 'ism in recent decades, particularly after the victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran, few works on Shi'a Imams are available. The orientalist's works on Shi'a Imams and their lifetime are limited to articles in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* and some books and monographs on Shi'ism. About the 7th Imam, the following can be referred to: The article 'Imam al-Kazim' by Etan Kohlberg in Leiden Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition; *Shi'a Denomination* by Donaldson, which deals with the life of the Shi'a Imams in some chapters, including chapter 14 on Imam al-Kazim; and the article 'Imam Musa Al-Kazim and the Sufi Hadiths in the Islamic Culture' by Hamid Algar. Of course, there are numerous articles on other issues in which Imam al-Kazim was referred to as necessitated by the topic at hand; for example, the articles 'Haroon-a-Rashid', 'Al-Kazimayn', 'Husayn ibn 'Ali Sahib-e Fakhkf', and 'Hadi Abbasi (169-170)'. Likewise, some other books on the broad issues of Shi'a history have a brief discussion on the Imam's life, for example, the book 'Shi'ism' by Heins Halm, 'An Introduction to Shi'a Islam' by Mojan Mu'min, and 'Shi'ism throughout History' by Husayn Muhammad Ja'fari.

## Shi'a Imams in encyclopedias of Islam

The entries of Shi'a Imams in encyclopaedias of Islam are considered an area of Shi'a studies in the West. The compilation of small and large encyclopaedias of Islam dates to more than 100 years ago. The first English encyclopaedia of Islamic information is the *Dictionary of Islam*, compiled by American priest, orientalist, and Islamic researcher, Thomas Patrick Hughes, in India.<sup>2</sup> Following that, the first steps toward *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*<sup>3</sup> were taken in the late 1900s. In recent centuries, the Leiden University in the Netherlands has been a prominent centre of the oriental and Islamic studies. In 1895, in cooperation with the Academies International Union and the Royal Academy of the Netherlands, it launched some plans for the publication of a comprehensive and detailed encyclopaedia of Islam simultaneously in English, French, and German. Its English version, which was the outcome of Islamic research for more than two centuries, was published between 1913 to 1938 in four volumes. The compilation of its second edition containing numerous revisions started in 1950 under the supervision of Joseph Schacht, Levy Provençal, Kramers and Gabe, and its first collection was published in 1954. The following can be referred to as the newest dictionaries and encyclopaedias of Islam in English.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In 1885 A.D. (1303 A.H.)

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopedia of Islam.

<sup>4</sup> Murtada As'adi, *English Encyclopedias of Islam*, Cultural Keyhan, June & July 1995, issue no. 127.

<sup>5</sup> Another English encyclopedia of Islam in one volume was published in 1989 in London. This work which should not be confused with "The Abridged Encyclopedia of Islam" published in Leiden which was compiled by a Sunni Western Muslim called Cyril Glasse with Saudi Arabia's support. It

2. Islamic Desk Reference<sup>6</sup>
3. A Popular Dictionary of Islam<sup>7</sup>
4. The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World<sup>8</sup>

Among the articles in the above-mentioned encyclopaedias, the article 'Imam al-Kazim' in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* directly deals with the seventh Imam's life.

## **The personal life of Imam al-Kazim in the orientalist's works**

### **A concise introduction to the Imam**

The article 'Imam al-Kazim' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (EL2) which deals with different aspects of the Imam's life, was written by Etan Kohlberg,<sup>9</sup> and studied in a university of Israel and Oxford university. His thesis

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is not a specialised encyclopedia only to familiarise all non-Muslims with some facts in Islam, so it is not without its mistakes.

<sup>6</sup> "Islamic Desk Reference" by van Donzel, one of the editors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Leiden Encyclopedias of Islam in one volume. He summarised the entries, articles, and materials of both the first and the second editions of Leiden Encyclopedias of Islam in order to meet the urgent needs of the novice foreign students and reviewers. This work was published in 1994 A.D. by the "Braille Leiden Publications". The Arayeh publication published it in offset form in Iran, too.

<sup>7</sup> "A Popular Dictionary of Islam" by Ian Richard Netton was published in 1992 A.D. in London by Curzon. It includes a little information on Islamic concepts, people and topics, for example, the Quranic chapters, the prominent Islamic figures in the history, the people in the Quran, the most important events in the history of Islam, etc. Each topic has been presented in many lines and extensively so that all people could use it.

<sup>8</sup> "The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World" edited by John Esposito is a very important work in four folio volumes in two columns. It was published in 1995 A.D. by Oxford University. The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 A.D. which was a turning point in the Islamic studies and research on Islamic countries proved to the westerners how little information and understanding they have about Islam and Islamic societies. The main goal of the compilers of this encyclopedia was to define the position and significance of Islam in politics, culture, and economy of the Islamic countries.

<sup>9</sup> born in 1943 AD

title in Oxford was the “Attitude of Twelvers Shi‘a to the Prophet’s companions.”<sup>10</sup> Kohlberg’s main area of research was the sources, theories and history of Shi‘ism, particularly Twelver Shi‘ism. He was a professor of Arabic language and literature in Asian-African Institute of Anthropology College of Jerusalem Hebraic University. ‘Ibn Tawoos Library and his Life’ was his most well-known Shi‘a research, and was translated into Farsi. He also wrote ‘Aqidah and Jurisprudence in Twelver Shi‘ism’, and the entries ‘Imam Sajjad’, ‘Imam Baqir’, ‘Muslim ibn ‘Aqil’, ‘Return’, ‘Envoy’, ‘Martyr’, ‘the Second Martyr’, ‘Sulayman ibn Surad Khaza’, and ‘Amin-ul-Islam Tabarsi’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. After referring to the Imam’s titles as the First Abul-Hasan, Abu Ibrahim, and Abd-e Salih, the author considered the Imam’s exact date of birth as Safar 7th 128 A.H.<sup>11</sup> Of course, he referred other dates of birth, for example, Dhil-Hajjah 127 or 129 A.H. According to him, the Imam’s mother was named Hamidah (or Humaidah), the daughter of Sa‘id Barbariyyah (or Andulisiyyah) Umme Walad. She was bought from a barber slaver, and she was frequently known as “Musaffat”, or “Cleansed.”

In his book *Shi‘a Denomination*, Donaldson<sup>12</sup> introduced the Imam in more detail. Through historical comparison, he considered the birth of

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<sup>10</sup> The Attitude of the Imami-Shi‘as to the Companions of the Prophet, thesis, 1972 A.D.

<sup>11</sup> November 8th 754 AD

<sup>12</sup> The first serious and somehow thorough attempt to introduce Shi‘ism was made in 1933 A.D. Dwight M. Donaldson was a British researcher who lived in Mashhad, Iran for 16 years. His most important Shi‘a studies are “Shi‘ism or the History of Islam in Iran and Iraq” (London, 1933 A.D.), “The Idea of Imamate from Shi‘a and Salman Farsi’s Perspectives”, and “Prayer Niche in Imam Rida’s Holy Shrine in Mashhad”. According to Dr. Nasr, his book, “Shi‘a Denomination” is still a reference in Shi‘a studies. According to Donaldson, his reason for his Shi‘a research was the word by Edward Brown in his book “The History of the Persian Literature in the Modern Era”, p.418), he

Imam al-Kazim to happen amid conflict between the Umayyads and the Abbasids and pointed out that in the reign of Abul-Abbas Saffah,<sup>13</sup> he was only four years old. Comparing the reign of various Abbasid caliphs with events during the Imam's life, Donaldson also stated that for 20 years Imam al-Kazim was trained by his father, Imam al-Sadiq, who was martyred 10 years before the end of long rule of Mansur. Then he referred to the Abbasid Caliphs contemporary with the Imam as follows: the final ten years of Mansur's rule, ten years of Mahdi's rule, one year during Hadi's rule, about 12 years of the Haroon-u-Rashid's<sup>14</sup> rule. He also considered the Imam's mother as a barbarian slave-girl named Umme Walad, and considered her like Khayzaran, the influential wife of the Abbasid Mahdi.<sup>15</sup>

### **Imam al-Kazim's descendants**

According to the existing sources, Kohlberg considered the number of the Imam's children to vary between 33 and 60. He also referred to a narration in which the Imam declared his daughters' marriage forbidden (for some unstated reasons). Except for Umme Salamah, who married Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad in Egypt, the rest of his daughters did not marry.<sup>16</sup> Quoting from the book *Jowharah al-'Ilahi*,

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complained about the lack or shortage of Western sources on Shi'ism. Thus, Donaldson started to provide information on Shi'ism for those who have no knowledge of it.

<sup>13</sup> The first Abbasid caliph

<sup>14</sup> Donaldson, *Shi'a Denomination*, translated by Dr. Abbas Ahmad-wand, in press edition, chapter 14, Imam Al-Kazim, p. 190.

<sup>15</sup> Kulayni, *Osul al-Kafi*, the 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Tehran: Dar-ul-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1365 solar, vol. 1, p.476, "And his mother was Umme Wald called Hamidah."

<sup>16</sup> Ya'qubi, *Ya'qubi History*, translated by Ibrahim Ayati, the 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications, 1371 solar, vol. 2, p.415.

he said that Imam al-Kazim's descendants, who are known as "Musawi", now constitute 70% of Sadats<sup>17</sup> in Iran.<sup>18</sup>

## **Imam Musa al-Kazim's scientific and cultural life in orientalist works**

### **Orientalists and the moral and spiritual ranks of the Imam**

An important issue in the Imam's life is his moral and spiritual ranks, and this was not overlooked by orientalists, particularly Kohlberg. As for his spiritual rank, Kohlberg wrote that the Imam was known for his asceticism and piety. Then referring to the meeting between the Imam and Shaiq ibn Ibrahim Balkhi<sup>19</sup> in 149 A.H.<sup>20</sup> in Qadisiyyah, he quoted Shaiq as saying, Imam is a friend (*Wali*) of God from among Saints (*abdaal*).<sup>21</sup> The author also referred to the Imam's asceticism and extraordinary acts such as his talking in the cradle, knowing the language of birds and animals and all human languages.<sup>22</sup> Referring to the article by Hamid Algar, he addressed the way the Imam treated the famous Sufis contemporary with him such as Ma'rif Karkhi,<sup>23</sup> and Bushr Haffi (227A.H. / 841 A.D.).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Or those who are 'Sayyid', a title given to the descendants of Prophet Muhammad through his grandsons.

<sup>18</sup> E. Kohlberg, *EL2*, vol.7, p. 648; Amir Tahiri, *The spirit of Allah*, London, 1985, pp. 26-70.

<sup>19</sup> Demise: 194 A.H./809 A.D.

<sup>20</sup> 766 A.D.

<sup>21</sup> Tabari, *Dala'il-ul-A'immah*, Qum: Dar-ul-Dhakha'ir lil-Matbu'at, 1383 A.H., p.155.

<sup>22</sup> See Mufid, *al-Irshad fi Ma'rafah Hujaj-ullah 'Ala-'Ibad*, Qum, The World Congress of Shaikh Mufid Millennium, 1413 A.H., vol. 2, p. 289, the section Taraf min al-Akhbar 'an Mananqib Abi Ja'far.

<sup>23</sup> Demise 200 A.H. / 815 A.D.

<sup>24</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, *EL2*, P647: H. Algar, *Imam Musa al-Al-Kazim and Sufi Tradition in Islamic Culture*, I xiv [1990 A.D.], 1-14.

As for the Imam's personality, Donaldson wrote that the Imam was calm and patient and was known as Abu Salih and al-Kazim. Depicting the Imam's inclination to the acts of worship, he narrated a hadith that once at the sunset, the Imam entered Masjid-u-Nabi and prostrated before God, a prostration that lasted from that evening to the next morning. Likewise, he quoted ibn Khallakan about Imam al-Kazim's generosity as saying that when the Imam was told about an afflicted man, the Imam gave that man 1000 dinars in a bag. The Imam was known to give away 200, 300, or 400 dirhams in bags in Medina. This might have arisen the Abbasid Mahdi's suspicion of him.<sup>25</sup>

Donaldson also referred to the extraordinary acts and virtues of the Imam and his first extraordinary act, among the 21 acts attributed to him, that is, Abdullah's claiming to be an Imam. In this event, on the Imam's order, when firewood was collected and set on fire, the Imam went into the fire and came out intact. Afterward, he wanted Abdullah to do so if he truly considered himself an Imam. Upon hearing this, Abdullah's face went pale, and he left.<sup>26</sup> He also referred to another extraordinary act of the seventh Imam, in which Imam al-Sadiq told Ya'qub ibn Siraj to say "Salam" to his master Imam al-Kazim; when Ya'qub did so, the Imam told him, "Change the name you chose yesterday for your daughter because it enrages God." Imam al-Sadiq also told him, "Do what Musa told you because it is advisable to do so."<sup>27</sup> Likewise, he pointed out the Imam's extraordinary acts in healing the sick. Once he saw some children gathering round their mother crying.

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<sup>25</sup> Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p.194.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p.192.



When he asked for the reason, she said, “The cow we made our living from died.” Imam performed a two-Ra‘kat prayer and put his hands on the cow and it became alive. The woman cried, “Look! He is Jesus Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Orientalists and the Imam’s scientific position**

Orientalists did not overlook Imam al-Kazim’s scientific position which shows its importance in their works. In his article, Kohlberg referred to two instances of the Imam’s capability.

1. The Imam’s debate with Abu Hanifeh, which ended in Abu Hanifeh’s silence [and the Imam’s success].
2. The Imam’s discussion with Christians, who approached to talk about religious issues and eventually converted to Islam. In the end of his article, Kohlberg referred to the way the Imam interacted with the *Ghullat* (Extremists) and considered his role as significant in fostering the their ideas.<sup>29</sup> According to him, Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar Ja‘fi visited the Imam in the Baghdad prison, took care of him, and claimed the Imam called him his second father.<sup>30</sup> Kohlberg also referred to Muhammad ibn Bashir, the founder of Bashiriyyah, who believed in divinity of the Imam and claimed the Imam had not died but disappeared and would return along with Imam al-Mahdi.

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>29</sup> This part of Kohlberg’s article deals with Ghullat (the extremists)’ relations with the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam. Of course, he did not investigate them but vaguely addressed the role of these relations in strengthening the extremists’ thoughts, and this can be criticised. Considering the Imams’ encountering the extremists and rejecting their extreme thoughts, it cannot be accepted that the extremists’ relations with the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam could positively contribute to the extremist thoughts. No doubt, the extremist ideas were rejected by the Imams and Shi‘as.

<sup>30</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Kazim*, EL2, p.647.

In the end, he discussed the Sunni view of the Imam's position. Sunni scholars consider the Imam as a trustworthy hadith narrator, but believe that the Imam narrated only a few hadiths. He pointed out that there is a book entitled *Musnad of Imam al-Kazim* and written by Abu-Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Shafe'i Bazzaz.<sup>31</sup> Of course, the Shi'as attribute many works to the Imam, and Kohlberg referred to some such as "Supplication, Answer to the Legal Questions, and Wasiyyah fi al-'Aql", addressed to Hisham ibn Hakam, etc.<sup>32</sup> When investigating the scientific position of the Imam, these orientalist have not addressed the Imam's debates and his scientific role.

### **Imam al-Kazim's socio-political life from the orientalist's perspective**

According to Kohlberg, there is not much information about the Imam's early life. Citing from a book by Zaidi Nasir Atroosh<sup>33</sup> and quoting Wilfred Madelung, Wibe talked of the Imam's participation in Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah's uprising against the Abbasids in 145 A.H. (762 A.D.)<sup>34</sup> and claimed that this can be also found in the Islamic sources such as *Maqatil a-Talibin*.<sup>35</sup> Donaldson referred to the Imam's encountering Haroon-a-Rashid and depicted the Imam's firmness and

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<sup>31</sup> Demise: 354 A.H. / 965 A.H.

<sup>32</sup> Kulayni, op. cit., vol.1, pp.13-20; ibn Shu'bah Harrani, *Tuhaf-ul-Oqul*, Qum: the Society of the Seminary Instructors, 1404 A.H., pp. 283-297.

<sup>33</sup> Demise: 304 A.H. / 917 A.D.

<sup>34</sup> W. Madelung. *Der Imam al-Qasim ibn Ibrahim*, Berlin 1965 A.D., p.160.

<sup>35</sup> Ab-ul-Faraj Isfahany, *Maqatil-a-Talibin*, researched by Sayyid Ahmad Saqar, Beirut: Dar-ul-Ma'rafah, no date. Investigating *Maqatil-a-Talibin*, the author of this article could not find anything clearly indicating this. Perhaps Madelung interpreted the Imam's conversation with Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah as follows: Considering Imam Sadiq's explicit opposition to this uprising, it is improbable that Imam Al-Kazim took part in it.

awe and how Imam took opportunities to advance the causes of Islam. It is narrated that once both Imam al-Kazim and Haroon were in Masjid-a-Nabi at the Prophet's shrine when Haroon resented the Imam's appropriate response to him. To show his kinship with the Prophet, he said, "Peace be upon you, the Prophet! O' my cousin!" But the Imam said, "Peace be upon you, O my father!" Embarrassed, Haroon-a-Rashid said, "O Abul-Hasan! What an honour you enjoy!"<sup>36</sup>

### **The orientalist's idea about the Imam's successor**

Disagreement on the successor to Imam al-Sadiq and the resulting divergence in Shi'ism was addressed by researchers and orientalists. Influenced by Isma'ili sources, Donaldson believed that Imam al-Sadiq appointed his son, Ismail, as his successor, but his death before the father's demise grieved the Shi'as, and this caused an area of contention about the nature of Imamate. He also discussed the emergence of two Isma'illiyyah sects and their beliefs. One group denied the death of Isma'il and thought he disappeared and would return, and God would hide him until his reappearance. Another group accepted his death and considered his son [Muhammad ibn Isma'il] as the Imam. Both groups who believe in the outward cessation of Imamate by death of Isma'il or his son are known as Sab'iyyah [those who have seven Imams].<sup>37</sup> According to him, in the Twelver Shi'ism, it is believed while Imam al-Sadiq introduced his eldest son, Ismail, as his successor, because he found him always drunk, he appointed his fourth child, Musa, as the

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<sup>36</sup> Donaldson, op. cit., p.196.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p.191.

next Imam.<sup>38</sup> According to ibn Khaldun, the conflict resulting from this measure split Shi'ism deeply and led to the formation of various sects.<sup>39</sup>

In this regard, Kohlberg also believed that Imam al-Sadiq's eldest son, Isma'il, who was appointed as his successor<sup>40</sup> died before the sixth Imam's martyrdom. His second son, 'Abdullah, also died shortly after his father. However, both had some followers which formed Ismailiyyah and Fatahiyyah.<sup>41</sup> He also mentioned another group called Sumitiyyah (or Samitiyyah or Shumitiyyah) who believed in the Imamate of another son of Imam al-Sadiq, Muhammad.<sup>42</sup>

He also referred to Twelver Shi'a's beliefs,<sup>43</sup> writing: "When a child, he was introduced as the successor by his holy father,<sup>44</sup> and such Shi'as as

<sup>38</sup> The early Imami sources indicate that Imam Al-Kazim's was appointed as Imam since his young age, not after Imam Sadiq had found out Isma'il used to drink wine, but there is no authority for this in Imami sources (Kulayni, op. cit., vol.1, p. 246; Shaikh Mufid, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 219; Tabarsi, *A'lam-ul-Wara bi A'lam-ul-Huda*, Qum: Dar-ul-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, no date, p.299). In another narration in *A'lam-ul-Wara*, it is written that:

هكذا الإسناد.. عن المفضل بن عمر قال كنا عند أبي عبدالله فدخل أبوإبراهيم وهو غلام فقال لي أبوعبدالله استوص به و ضع أمره عند من تتق به من أصحابك.

Also, according to another narration,

عن صفوان الجمال عن أبي عبدالله قال : قال له منصور بن حازم بأبي أنت و أمي إن الأنفس يعدى عليها و يراح فإذا كان ذلك فمن قال أبوعبدالله إذا كان ذلك فهو صاحبكم و ضرب على منكب أبي الحسن الأيمن و كان يومئذ خاسيا و عبدالله بن جعفر جالس معنا

<sup>39</sup> ibn Khaldun, *An Introduction to ibn Khaldun*, Qum, Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi Library, 1404 A.H., part 2, p.355.

<sup>40</sup> Influenced by Isma'ili sources, the view was advanced. According to Imami Shi'a beliefs, after Isma'il's demise, Imam Sadiq asked everybody to attest to Imamate of Imam Al-Kazim so that there would be no doubt about Imamate. He also talked of Imamate of Imam Al-Kazim on various occasions. See *Ikhtiyar Ma'rafah a-Rijal*, no place of publication, no date, p.355; Kulayni, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 246; Shaikh Mufid, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 219.

<sup>41</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, EL2, p. 545.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, EL2, p. 645.

<sup>43</sup> In this period, perhaps the followers of Imam Sadiq were not still referred to as "Ithna-'Ashari". The reason behind this title was that this group believed in the Imams which were introduced by the previous ones and which continued up to Imam Mahdi.

Husham ibn Hakam supported his Imamate,<sup>45</sup> but some other Shi'as refused to accept his Imamate for a while.<sup>46</sup> Kohlberg also included the measure of the Abbasid caliph, Mansur, who upon hearing the news of Imam al-Sadiq's martyrdom sent some spies to Medina to find his real successor and to kill him. He also underlined Imam al-Sadiq's prediction and solution; the sixth Imam introduced five successors (including Mansur himself and Imam Musa al-Kazim), and in this way he foiled Mansur's plot.<sup>47</sup>

### The Imam's policies and the caliphs' measures

According to Kohlberg, Imam al-Kazim adopted the policy of silence; like his father, he disseminated Shi'a beliefs and principles among his students, but he was not immune from Abbasid persecution. First, he was arrested on Abbasid Mahdi's orders. Shortly after, because of Mahdi's dream in which Imam Ali rebuked him for the arrest of Imam al-Kazim, the seventh Imam was set free.<sup>48</sup> Through the comparative, historical study of the available sources and according to a hadith stating that after being taken to Baghdad, the Imam was observed by Musaayib ibn Zuhair

<sup>44</sup> For more information, see Shaikh Tusi, op. cit.; Kulayni, op. cit.; Shaikh Mufid, op. cit., vol. 2 p.219; Tabari, op. cit., p. 299; ibn Sabbagh Maliki, al-Fosiul-ul-Muhimmah fi Ma'rafah-al-A'mmah, no place and no date of publication, vol.2, pp.933-934.

<sup>45</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, EL2, p. 645.

<sup>46</sup> The author refers to Zurarah's measure to send his son to Medina to get news on Imam Sadiq's martyrdom and his successor; this, of course, did not mean not accepting or doubting Imam Al-Kazim. Rather, the aim of this trip was to know the conditions better and to make sure about the selection of the true Imam.

<sup>47</sup> Kulayni, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 310

هَذَا كِتَابُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَلْيَانَ يُخْبِرُنَا أَنَّ جَعْفَرَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ قَدْ مَاتَ فَإِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ثَلَاثًا وَأَيُّنْ مِثْلُ جَعْفَرٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي أَكْتُبُ قَالَ فَكُتِبَتْ صَدْرَ الْكِتَابِ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَكْتُبْ إِنْ كَانَ أَوْصَى إِلَى رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ بَعَيْنِهِ فَقَدِمَهُ وَاضْرِبْ عَنْقَهُ قَالَ فَرَجَعَ إِلَيْهِ الْجَوَابُ أَنَّهُ قَدْ أَوْصَى إِلَى خَمْسَةِ وَاحِدِهِمْ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ الْمَنْصُورُ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ سَلْيَانَ وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَمُوسَى وَحَمِيدَهُ

<sup>48</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, EL2, p.645.

Zabbi,<sup>49</sup> Kohlberg stated that the date of the Imam's arrest cannot be between 163 and 166 A.H., that is, the years Musayyib was the governor of Khurasan. However, according to less reliable narrations, Musayyib was appointed as its governor in 166 A.H.<sup>50</sup> Thus, according to Kohlberg, the Imam was imprisoned for a short time.<sup>51</sup>

According to Kohlberg, the next arrest of the Imam occurred after the uprising of Husayn ibn Ali, Sahib-e Fakh, had been suppressed. Although the Imam did not support this uprising, the Abbasid caliph, Hadi, accused Imam al-Kazim of provoking the uprising and plotted to kill him, but the judge Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim dissuaded him from this decision, and shortly after Hadi died. Referring to Mahj-u-Da'awat by ibn Tawus, Kohlberg stated that the supplication known as "Jowshan"—to give thanks for his release from the prison—was left by the Imam.<sup>52</sup> Correctly, he pointed out that the Imam had stayed in Medina until Haroon came to power, and Haroon<sup>53</sup> imprisoned the Imam for nine years.<sup>54</sup> Donaldson also referred to Haroon's unkindness to the Imam, stating that during his caliphate, the Imam was unfairly under suspicion.

Kohlberg referred to different accounts of why the Imam was treated unkindly and ended up being arrested, including the following:

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<sup>49</sup> Demise: 175 A.H./ 791 A.D.

<sup>50</sup> See Khatib al-Baghdadi, *History of Baghdad*, no place and date of publication, vol. 13, p. 137.

<sup>51</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, EL2, p.645.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p.646.

<sup>53</sup> 170-193 A. H./ 786-809 A.D.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p.646.

1. After Haroon came to know the views of Husham ibn Hakam (i.e., the Imam's prominent student), he ordered his men to arrest the Imam because he found these views dangerous.
2. The Imam was the victim of the plot of Abbasid court, particularly Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki. According to this account, when Haroon put his son, Muhammad (Amin) under the auspices of Ja'far ibn Muhammad Ash'ath<sup>55</sup> and later the governor of Khurasan until 173 A.H. (790 A.D.), Harun's vizier, Yahya ibn Barmaki, feared that Amin would become caliph, Ja'far ibn Muhammad would then rise in rank, and consequently, Barmakis' pre-eminent position would be threatened. Thus, Yahya decided to discredit Ja'far by disclosing his relationship with the Alawids. In so doing, he received help from the Imam's nephew who was also Imam al-Kazim's confidant, that is, Muhammad (or Ali) ibn Isma'il ibn Ja'far, who gave Yahya some information about the monetary network of the Alawids. He gave some reports to Haroon about Ja'far's Shi'a identity, his keeping in touch with the Imam, and even his sending some gifts from all over the world to the Imam.<sup>56</sup>
3. The caliph was informed that people believed in the Imamate of Imam al-Kazim and that he intended to rise against Haroon. Of course, Kohlberg did not refer to the source of such narrations and raised this possibility based on his information.

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<sup>55</sup> The head of Khatam bureau from 170 to 171 A.H. (787-788 A.D.)

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.646.

He also mentioned that Haroon took the opportunity of ‘Umrah<sup>57</sup> or Tamatu‘ Hajj<sup>58</sup> and ordered his men to arrest the Imam. According to some sources, the Imam was sent directly to Baghdad. According to some more reliable narrations, first the Imam was sent to Basrah and was watched by its governor, ‘Isa ibn Ja‘far ibn Mansur. He refused to obey Haroon’s order to kill the Imam and sent him to Baghdad. There, the responsibility of watching the Imam was given to Fadl ibn Rabi‘, who was appointed as Hajib in 179 A.H. and treated Imam al-Kazim respectfully. It is narrated that in this period, Haroon released the Imam for a while because of his dream but arrested him again and assigned Fadl ibn Rabi‘ to watch him.

Another orientalist who studied Shi‘ism, Halm, said regarding the political situation of the Imam’s time and the caliphs’ policies that the increasing number of Shi‘as in Iraq who mainly gathered around Imam Husayn’s household worried the Abbasids. With caution, they brought all potential claimants to power to the court and put them under house arrest. According to some, the first person who faced such fate was Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far.<sup>59</sup> He also pointed out that in 177 A.H. (793 A.D.). Haroon took the Imam to Iraq and started watching him first in Basrah and then in Baghdad.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Rajab 179 A.H./ September-October 795 A.D. or Ramadan 179 A.H./ November-December 795 A.D.

<sup>58</sup> 179 A.H. / 796 A.D.

<sup>59</sup> Heinz Halm, *Shi‘ism*, translated by Mohammad Taghi Akbari, Qum: Adyan, 1385 solar, p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*



During his stay in Baghdad, the Imam could keep in contact with some of his followers, including ‘Ali ibn Yaqtin,<sup>61</sup> who had a high official position during the caliphate of Mahdi, Hadi, and Haroon. The Imam wanted him to cooperate with the caliphate and use his influence to help Shi‘as and solve their problems.<sup>62</sup> Kohlberg stated that ‘Ali ibn Yaqtin acted as the monetary agent of Imam al-Kazim and sent valuable gifts to him.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Imam’s martyrdom and its consequences**

There are different accounts of how Imam al-Kazim was martyred. Without referring to how he was martyred, Halm merely raised the possibility of his being poisoned on Haroon-u-Rashid’s order in 183 A.H. (799 A.D.).<sup>64</sup> However, with a thorough investigation, Kohlberg referred to various views and concluded that after Haroon had been informed of the Imam’s favourable conditions, he wrote a letter to Fadl, ordering him to kill the Imam. According to some narrations, Fadl disobeyed Haroon and was whipped 100 times as a result, and the Imam was given to the police head, Sindi ibn Shahak (the grandfather of Kushajam, the poet), and he martyred the Imam by making him eat the poisonous dates. Another narration attributed the Imam’s martyrdom to Fadl. According to the third account, they wrapped a carpet around Imam al-Kazim and trampled on him until he passed away.<sup>65</sup> According to Kohlberg, Tabari

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<sup>61</sup> Demise: 182 A.H. / 798 A.D.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> W. Madelung, *A Treatise of the Sharif al-Murtada on the Legality of Working for Government*, in BSOAS, xlii [1980 A.D.], pp. 17-19.

<sup>64</sup> Heinz Halm, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>65</sup> E. Kohlberg, *Musa al-Al-Kazim*, EL2, p.645.

referred to the Imam's martyrdom without explaining it, which implies that he passed away naturally.<sup>66</sup> This is the view of most Sunni writers which received attention from the contemporary researchers.<sup>67</sup> According to Kohlberg, the Imam was martyred on 25 or 26 Rajab 183 A.H. (August or September 799 A.D.).<sup>68</sup> The Imam was buried in Quraysh Tombs three miles west of Baghdad, which along with Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra, is considered as a sacred place for Shi'as.<sup>69</sup> His shrine was renovated many times throughout the Abbasid dynasty, particularly during the Safavid Era.<sup>70</sup>

### **The orientalist's' doubt about the Imam's knowledge about his martyrdom**

According to Kohlberg, what can be found about how Imam al-Kazim was martyred in Shi'a sources, made Imami theologians face theological (*kalam*) doubts. According to him, "If the Imam had known everything, including when and how he would be killed but had not done anything to prevent it, could he be considered 'the contributor to his death?'"<sup>71</sup> This way, he intended to challenge the Imam's knowledge in Shi'a theology (*kalam*) and depict it as vague by referring to concise and unconvincing responses by some Shi'as.

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<sup>66</sup> Tabari, *The History of the Prophets and the Kings*, vol. 3, p. 649.

<sup>67</sup> F. 'Umar in the article titled "Harun-a-Rashid", A. Clot, *Haroun al- Rachid et le temps de Mille et Une Unite*, Paris EL 1986 A.D., 2 , 91.

<sup>68</sup> Other possible dates, according to him, are 181 A.H. (797 A.D.), Rajab 182 A.H. (798 A.D.), Rajab 184 A.H. (July or August 800 A.D.), 186 A.H. (804 A.D.) or 188 A.H. (804 A.D.)

<sup>69</sup> EL2, vo. 1, pp 854- 856: It is connected with the west side of Baghdad, about three miles away. At the present day Al-Kazimayn is one of the four greatest sanctuaries of the Shi'a.

<sup>70</sup> A. Duri, EL2, vol.1, pp.894-908.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p.647.

Investigating the answer by Shi'a theologians to this doubt, he referred to three responses in the available sources:

1. A response attributed to Imam al-Rida is that Imam al-Kazim was aware of his upcoming demise and thought of the necessary precautions, but in a critical moment, God made him forget it (التي على قلبه النسيان).<sup>72</sup>
2. According to an account, three days in a row, Fadl ibn Yahya Barmaki brought poisonous fruits to the Imam, though he did not touch them. On the fourth day, the Imam said, "O God! You know that if I had eaten them before, I would have contributed to my death." Then he ate the fruits and became sick. They had a doctor visit him, but the Imam refused to see him. At the doctor's insistence, the Imam finally showed him his palm, which had turned green due to poison. The doctor told the Abbasids that the Imam knew he had been poisoned.<sup>73</sup> This implies that the Imam knew the exact date of his martyrdom, and despite this knowledge, he accepted to eat the poisonous fruit. Kohlberg added that Sindi ibn Shahak brought 80 chiefs of Baghdad and made them testify that the Imam had been treated properly. In the end of that visit, the Imam told them, "They had me eat seven (or nine) poisonous dates, I will become sick and pale-faced tomorrow, and I will pass away the day after tomorrow."<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Saffar Qummi, *Basa'ir-u-Darajat fi Fada'il Ale Muhammad*. Qum: Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi Library, 1404 A.H., p.438, section

في الأمة أنهم يعرفون متى يموتون : حيث ما بعث إليه يحيى بن خالد برطب وريحان مسمومين علم به قال نعم قلت فأكله و هو يعلم فيكون معينا على نفسه فقال لا يعلم قبل ذلك ليتقدم فيا يحتاج إليه فإذا جاء الوقت ألقى الله على قلبه النسيان ليقتضى فيه الحك

Majlisi, *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, Beirut: al-Wafa, 1404 A.H., vol. 27, p 285.

<sup>73</sup> Sheikh Saduq, *Oyun Akhbar-a-Rida*, no place and date of publication, vol. 1, pp. 86-88.

<sup>74</sup> Kulayni, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 259; Shaikh Saduq, op. cit., p. 79.

3. In another interpretation, the Imam was forced to eat the dates. Referring to some Shi'a accounts, Kohlberg considered Imam al-Kazim's martyrdom as the outcome of the wrong behaviour of his society. Citing Kulayni, he wrote, "God was angry with the Shi'as and told the Imam to choose between his being sacrificed for the protection of the Shi'as and Shi'as' being killed."<sup>75</sup> Likewise, in *Mir'at-ul-'Uqul*, 'Allameh Majlisi talked of God's anger at the Shi'as for their disobedience and disloyalty to the Imam and considered the Shi'as' quitting dissimulation as the reason behind the disclosure of the Imam's identity and ultimately his arrest.<sup>76</sup> After the Imam's martyrdom, Sindi (or Haroon) gathered the Hashimite and Talibi representatives and other prominent figures in Baghdad, removed the cover over the Imam's dead body, and forced them to admit there was no sign of murder or crime. Then his pure body was washed legally, enshrouded and buried in the cemetery of the Arab nobles in Northwest Baghdad (across from showaynizi or Quraysh Tombs) in Babu-Tin, which were later known as al-Kazimiyyah.<sup>77</sup> Halm also referred to the burial place of the Imam in the cemetery of the Arab nobles in

<sup>75</sup> Kulayni, op. cit., p. 260,

عن أبي الحسن موسى ع قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ غَضِبَ عَلَى السَّبِيْعَةِ فَخَيَّرَنِي نَفْسِي أَوْ هُمْ فَوَقَّيْتُهُمْ وَاللَّهِ يَنْفُسُ

<sup>76</sup> Allāmah Majlisi, *Mir'at-ul-Oqul*, no place and date of publication, vol. 3, p. 126.

<sup>77</sup> Kulayni, op. cit., vol.1, p. 476, مقبرة قريش ودفن بجغداد في حبيسه ودفن بجغداد في مقبرة قريش  
Shaikh Mufid, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 240.

نودي هذا موسى بن جعفر قد مات فانظروا إليه فجعل الناس يتفرسون في وجهه و هو ميت و قد كان قوم زعموا في أيام موسى أنه القائم المنتظر و جعلوا حبسه هو الغيبة المذكورة للقائم فأمر يحيى بن خالد أن ينادى عليه عند موته هذا موسى بن جعفر الذي تزعم الرافضة أنه لا يموت فانظروا إليه فنظر الناس إليه ميتا ثم حمل فدفن في مقابر قريش في باب التين وكانت هذه المقبرة لبني هاشم و الأشراف من الناس  
قديم

Le Strange, Baghdad, pp. 160-5; A. Duri, Baghdad, EL2, vol. 1, pp.894-908.

Northern Baghdad, and the fact that the Shi'as visit his and his grandson's holy shrine, al-Kazimayn, now a great holy shrine in Iraq.<sup>78</sup>

### **Shi'a division after the Imam's martyrdom**

Another issue raised in the article is the divide created among the Shi'as after the Imam's martyrdom. According to Kohlberg, the Imam's demise led to the split within Shi'ism; they denied the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam's demise, believed he disappeared and would return as Imam al-Mahdi. They are called "Waqifah" since they considered Imamate to have ended with Imam al-Kazim and argued against the transfer of Imamate to his offspring. Kohlberg pointed out that pejoratively they are known as Mamturah (short for Kilab Mamturah, meaning "cats that became drenched in the rain"). Investigating Waqifiyyah further, Kohlberg wrote that many Waqifis were Kufi who defended the theory of the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam's occultation in specific texts. The youngest Waqifi, Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Sama'i Sayrafi, died in 263 A.H. (876 A.D.).

Halm also believed that Imam al-Kazim's martyrdom led to a split within Shi'ism, and its teachings include some principles later completed in the Twelver Shi'ism. He regarded the Waqifiyyah as those who believed Imam al-Kazim had not passed away but disappeared and they waited for his reappearance as the Mahdi. He considered Waqifiyyah as the oldest example of the Seven-Imam Shi'ism that was integrated into the Twelver Shi'ism in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.H. (the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), and that Twelver Shi'ism adopted the Waqifi model of the last Imam's occultation.<sup>79</sup> Kohlberg did not agree with this analysis and maintained

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<sup>78</sup> Heinz Halm, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

that the Twelver Shi'a teachings of the minor and major occultations and Mahdism cannot have Waqifi roots.<sup>80</sup> According to him, this divide was possibly due to monetary rather than religious considerations because the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam had deputies in various areas, and after his martyrdom, some deputies refused to hand the money to Imam al-Rida, so they considered Imam al-Kazim as the last Imam. Among them are Mansur ibn Yunus, 'Ali ibn Hamzah Bata'ini (who had 30000 dirhams), Ziyad ibn Marwan al-Qandi (who had 70000 dinars), and 'Utham ibn 'Isa Rawasi (who, in addition to having a huge sum of money, had five or six slaves bought with the Imam's money).<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

Compared to their Shi'a studies, orientalists conducted few studies on the Shi'a Imams, while most of their works were devoted to the socio-political issues and Shi'a sects. The orientalists' studies on Shi'i Imams should be found in—and are limited to—the entries of "Imams" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, other issues related to the Imams (e.g., 'Ashura, Mahdism, Najaf, Mashhad, etc.), or/and some books on Shi'a history in which on some occasions, the Imams' lives are discussed. Investigating Imam al-Kazim's life and its consequences, these researchers sought to provide a complete picture of his life.

The wide range of these studies and references to the original sources (particularly in Kohlberg's article) are among the positive points of such research, especially the later studies. As a result of such references and

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<sup>80</sup> The issue of Mahdism had been first raised in the first century about Muhammad al-Hanafiyah. Thus, it cannot be accepted that Ithna 'Ashari Shi'as adopted Mahdism from Waqifiyah.

<sup>81</sup> For more information, see Shaikh Tusi, op. cit., pp. 499-500; Shaikh Saduq, op. cit., vol.1, p. 92.

their wide range, some important issues of this historical period received attention; for example, issues such as the Imamate of Imam al-Kazim, which were challenged by some Shi'as after Imam al-Sadiq's martyrdom and which led to the emergence of these sects: Isma'iliyyah, Sumaytiyyah, Fatahiyyah, and Nawusiyyah. Some of the Imam's virtues and extraordinary acts, the uprising of Husayn ibn Ali—Sahib Fakh, frequent arrests of the Imam and their reasons, 'Ali ibn Yaqtin and the Imam's permission to him to cooperate with the government, investigation of numerous accounts of the Imam's martyrdom in the available sources and its consequences, and the examination of reasons for the emergence of the Waqifiyyah after the Imam's martyrdom.

However, the orientalist have yet to investigate the Imam's personality and events during his Imamate, which lasted the longest. The Imam and the Shi'as faced various trends that did not receive the orientalist's due attention; for example, the consequences of the split within the Shi'a society, the emergence of the Isma'illiyyah sect and the Imam's interaction with this group, the Alawids' uprisings and the Imam's reaction to them, a comprehensive investigation of the Imam's socio-political stances and his interaction with the caliphs and its changes, the Shi'as' communication with the Imam as their guide, the scientific-cultural conditions of that period, and the Imam's role in this respect are all the important issues of the Imam's time, which were either disregarded or depicted imperfectly. About the Imam's scientific-intellectual life, there are some profound descriptions of him by the previous Imams or the scholars such as "the Knower of all the Scholars'

Knowledge” (عالم علم العلماء) by Imam al-Sadiq,<sup>82</sup> and “the most knowledgeable jurist of his time”.<sup>83</sup> Such a fully qualified person gives some comprehensive guidance to his Shi‘as which cannot be found in the western orientalist’s writings. Likewise, the Imam’s leadership style; for example, his permitting some elite companions, such as ‘Ali ibn Taqtin,<sup>84</sup> to cooperate with the government with the aim of supporting needy Shi‘as, and in contrast, prohibiting some other companions from it because their cooperation with the government did not benefit the Shi‘as. These were among his strategies to guide Shi‘as which require more attention.

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<sup>82</sup> Majlisi, *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, op. cit., vol. 48, p. 24.

<sup>83</sup> Shaikh Mufid, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 225.

<sup>84</sup> Majlisi, op. cit., vol. 28, p. 136.



# Imam al-Jawad's Spiritual Advice to One of His Companions<sup>1</sup>

Hassan Ardeshir Lajimi

Translated by Mahboobeh Morshedian

**ABSTRACT:** It was not unusual for laypeople to approach the Prophet Muhammad and the infallible Imams for advice during life's ups and downs, and on their journey to God. Receiving good advice helps us learn much about life and how to wisely approach any bumps on the road and to avoid mistakes. It also motivates people to put these thoughts and ideas into action. This paper is a brief explanation of one narration by the ninth imam, Imam al-Jawad (a), wherein a man asks him for advice, and the Imam advises him to five things: to rely on patience, welcome poverty, abandon desires and whims, and to have God-wariness.

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<sup>1</sup> Muballighan

Those who approached the Messenger of Allah and the Imams asked them for advice to tread the path of spiritual journey and mystical elevation, and could enjoy special Divine mercy by virtue of the Infallibles' wise words and light.

Advice plays an important part in our lives. Imam al-Jawad said, "The believer needs God's support, cautiousness, and advice from others."<sup>2</sup>

Imam al-Baqir also said, "The one for whom Allah has not made an admonisher from within him, people's advice will not benefit him."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the believers take advice only when they admonish themselves first; they are aware of their own faults before others.

In the book *Isharat (Sermon on the Mystics' Ranks)*, when Avicenna tried to rationalize mysticism, he said that the advice given eloquently by a righteous admonisher can play an important role in making the carnal soul obedient to the peaceful soul.<sup>4</sup>

### **Imam al-Jawad's Advice**

A man told the 9<sup>th</sup> Imam, "Give me a piece of advice." Imam al-Jawad said, "Will you take it?" He responded, "Yes, of course." The Imam said, "Rely on patience, welcome poverty, abandon carnal desires, and oppose whims. Know that Allah sees you, so be careful about how you act."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Tuhaf-ul-'Oqul, Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, corrected by Ali Akbar Ghaffari, translated by Ayatullah Kamare'i, the Association of Seminary Teachers, Qum, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 4041 A.H., p. 754.

المؤمن يحتاج إلى توفيق من الله و واعظ من نفسه و قبول لمن ينصحه

<sup>3</sup> Tuhaf-ul-'Oqul, Ibn Shu'bah Harrani, p.302.

و قال عليه السلام من لم يجعل الله له من نفسه واعظاً فإنّ مواعظ الناس لن تغني عنه شيئاً

<sup>4</sup> Sharh-ul-Isharat wa a-Tanbihat, Khajeh Nasir-u-Din al-Tusi, researched by Hassanzadeh Amuli, Bustane Ketab Publications, Qom, the 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1383 solar, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 1054.

<sup>5</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, Allamah Majlisi, Dar-ul-Ihya-a-Turath, Beirut, 1403, A.H., vol.75, p. 358.

In this pearl of wisdom, Imam al-Jawad mentions five moral principles:

## 1. Patience

Every moment of the believer's spiritual journey toward moral perfection takes form through patience in such a way that the farther he gets away from patience, the more imperfect his actions become. Hence, Imam al-Jawad said, "Make patience your cushion [rely on patience]." This metaphor refers to the fact that when one wants to rest, he leans on the cushion. Likewise, a believer needs patience to rely on to have peace of mind.

When the Prophet was asked, "What is faith?" he replied, "Patience."<sup>6</sup>

Also, according to Imam Ali, the way to the attainment of proximity to God is patience. He said, "Whoever practices patience [in order to reach God's proximity], he will attain it."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, patience in all its forms [e.g., to avoid sins and in afflictions] is the best way for faith to flourish.

## 2. Poverty

Among the issues that lower self-esteem or disrupt a believer's spiritual journey are poverty and financial problems. The Imam said, "O believer! Hug [welcome] poverty."

In other words, if one tolerates poverty, his self-esteem is boosted, and poverty will not prevent the mystical wayfarer's moral perfection.

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قال للجواد عليه السلام: رجل: أوصني قال عليه السلام، و تقبل؟ قال: نعم قال عليه السلام: توسد الصبر و اعتنق الفقر و ارفض الشهوات و خالف الهوى و اعلم أنك لن تخلو من عين الله فانظر كيف تكون

<sup>6</sup> Mizan-ul-Hikmah, Muhammad Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, translated by Hamid-Rida Shaikhi, 9731, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 690, p.2958.

<sup>7</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vo. 71, p. 90. من صبر على الله وصل اليه

According to the Divine wisdom and Islamic teachings given to us by the Ahlul Bayt, this sentence can be interpreted differently. That is, the mystical wayfarer is “by nature” poor compared to God, Who is “by nature” all-Rich. Accordingly, he considers himself needy, so he becomes cleansed of obstinacy and self-conceit. Imam Ali’s prayer in the Kufa mosque also indicates this: “O my Lord! You are self-sufficient, and I am poor; and who has mercy on the poor except the self-sufficient?”<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Refraining from carnal desires

A main principle in moral perfection is performing deeds void of carnal desires. Carnal desires involve selfishness and egotism and prevent man from acquiring true Divine teachings, while the believer’s security lies in his treading the Divine path. Thus, Imam al-Jawad said in his advice, “Abandon carnal desires.” In other words, the basis of a believer’s actions is God’s orders not his carnal desires.

### 4. Opposing whims

The most difficult step in the acquisition of moral virtues is the struggle against whims. The Prophet made it clear by calling the struggle against whims “The Greater Jihad.”<sup>9</sup> This issue is so important that he also said, “Your greatest enemy is your whims within you.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Mafatih-ul-Jinan, the acts in the Great Mosque of Kufa, Imam Ali’s prayer, published in Nobugh Publications, p. 707. مولای یا مولای! انت الغنی و انا الفقیر و هل یرحم الفقیر الا الغنی.

<sup>9</sup> Jami’ al-Saghir, Jalal-u-Din Suyuti, corrected by Ahmad Sa’d Ali, Cairo, 1373 A.H., the 4<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 2, p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vo. 68, p. 64. أعدی عدوک نفسک الّتی بین جنیبک.

In another hadith, the Prophet referred to the struggle against one's ego as the most virtuous struggle, saying, "The best jihad is to struggle against your ego and whims for the sake of Allah, the Almighty."<sup>11</sup>

In this regard, Imam Ali said, "The first thing you dislike about jihad is to fight against your ego."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the opposition to carnal desires and abandonment of whims pave the way for attaining proximity of God.

## 5. Being in God's presence

The most important thing for the spiritual wayfarer is to not neglect for a moment the fact that he is always in the presence of God, Who sees his actions. Imam al-Jawad said, "Know that you are seen by Allah, so be careful about your actions."

Regarding this, Imam Khomeini said, "The world is considered the presence of God; do not commit sins in His presence." Thus, a factor in committing sins is the neglect of one's being in God's presence.

The spiritual wayfarer should get help from *mystical contemplation*, a practice by mystics who consider it a means of salvation and necessity in the spiritual journey; they constantly feel themselves in God's presence everywhere and under any circumstances to keep away from negligence which prepares the ground for committing sins.

Imam al-Sadiq told Ishaq ibn 'Ammar:

<sup>11</sup> Mizan-ul-Hikmah, Muhammad Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, vol. 2, p.854.

افضل الجهاد أن تجاهد نفسك و هواك في ذات الله تعالى

<sup>12</sup> ibid., vol. 2, pp. 850-851. أول ما تنكرون من الجهاد، جهاد أنفسكم آخر ما تنقدون مجاهدة أهوائكم و طاعة أولى الأمر منكم

“O Ishaq! Fear Allah as if you saw Him even though He might not see you. Of course, if you believe He does not see you, no doubt you have associated somebody else with Him. And if you know He sees you, and then you commit sins in His presence, undoubtedly you consider Him the most valueless observer.”<sup>13</sup>

O Lord! Let me know Your light and bestow upon me Your light-creating beauty.

O’ Lord! When You are present, who else should I seek? And now that You are the observer, what should I say?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Osul Kafi, Kulayni, corrected by Hassanzadeh Amuli, Maktaba-tul-Islamiyyah, Tehran, 1388 A.H., vol. 2, p. 55.

يا إسحاق خف الله كأنك تراه وإن كنت لا تراه فإنه يراك فإن كنت ترى أنه لا يراك فقد كفرت وإن كنت تعلم أنه يراك ثم برزت له بالمعصية فقد جعلته من أهون الناظرين عليك

<sup>14</sup> Elahi-Nameh, Hassanzadeh Amuli, the 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Bustane Ketab, pp.3, 4.

# **The Socio-Political Measures of Imam al-Jawad to Guide the Shi'a<sup>1</sup>**

**Abul-Qasim Shakir<sup>2</sup>**

Translated by Mahboobeh Morshedian

**Abstract:** Although the Shi'a Imams attained the rank of Imamate at different ages, they guided the Shi'a as best as their time requirements necessitated because their knowledge was God-given, and they were infallibles. This article offers a brief biography of the young and brilliant Imam al-Jawad and addresses his role in guiding the Shi'a community. It also touches upon the Imam's God-given knowledge, extraordinary acts, wise political measures taken against opposition, and educational training of scholars.

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<sup>1</sup> Hasoon

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## Introduction

Every religion needs a guide for its continuity and progress of its adherents towards the truth. Islam considered such guides after the Prophet to be necessary and introduced them to the Islamic Community to guide people to the right path.

The 9<sup>th</sup> guide introduced by the Prophet was Imam Muhammad Taqi, who assumed the guidance of—and policy-making for—the Islamic community after his fathers, despite his young age. In spite of the doubts and criticisms from his enemies due to his age, by his God-given knowledge, he overcame the despotic Abbasid rulers, Ma'mun and Mu'tasim, and could guide his followers and save them from being trapped by the false claimants of the caliphate. In this article, the character of Imam Muhammad Taqi and his socio-political measures will be addressed.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Shi'a Imam, Imam al-Jawad, was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Rajab in 195 A.H. in Medina. His birth delighted his father, Imam al-Rida, and his followers, while disappointing the enemies of Imamate, particularly the Waqifiyyah.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding Imam al-Jawad's birth, Imam al-Rida said, "This is the baby more blessed than whom there is no new-born for the Shi'as."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Waqifis are those who believed that Imamate stopped at Imam Kazim, and they did not believe in Imamate of Imam Rida and the rest of Imams.

<sup>4</sup> *Osul Kafi*, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulaini, translated by: Mustafawi. Tehran, 14 Infallibles Mosque, no date, vol. 2, p. 106.



His epithet was ‘Abu-Ja‘far’, and his most famous titles were al-Jawad and al-Taqi. His mother, Kheyzaran, came from the tribe of Prophet Muhammad’s wife, Mariyah Qibtiyyah.<sup>5</sup>

The Shi’a who were concerned about the enemies found fault with the 8<sup>th</sup> Imam for not having any children. However, giving the glad tidings of Imam al-Jawad’s birth, who would assume the Imamate after Imam al-Rida, eased their worries.

Before that, a Waqifi, ibn Qiyama Wasiti, had written a letter to Imam al-Rida and asked, “How is it that you are an Imam and you do not have any children?” In response, Imam al-Rida wrote, “How do you know I will not have any child? By God, very soon He will grant me a son by whom He will distinguish between truth and falsehood.”<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere Imam al-Rida told ibn Qiyama, “By God, He will grant me a child [a son] by whom He will prove the right and support its followers and eradicate the falsehood and its followers.” One year later, Imam al-Jawad was born.<sup>7</sup>

The Waqifis plotted, raised doubts, and spoke out against the Imamate of Imam al-Rida and Imam al-Jawad.<sup>8</sup> To consider that Imamate stopped at Imam al-Kazim undermined Shi’a beliefs. Imam al-Rida referred to Imam al-Jawad as a blessed new-born for the Shi’a because all enemies’ plots would be foiled by his birth and his being a Shi’a leader after the 8th Imam.

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<sup>5</sup> Manaqib Ale Abi-Talib, ibn Shahr Ashub, Beirut, Dar-ul-Okhuwwah, 1412 A. H., vol.4, p. 410.

<sup>6</sup> Usul Kafi, Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub Kulayni, vol. 2, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.105.

<sup>8</sup> Waqifis considered the Imamate up until Imam al-Kazim.

Yahya San‘ani said, “In Mecca, I went to Imam al-Rida and saw him peeling a banana and giving it to his son. I asked him ‘Is this the very blessed new-born?’ He said, ‘In Islam, there is no more blessed baby for the Shi‘as than him.’”

Imam al-Jawad’s late birth rendered the enemies happy as some had doubted his birth, although it eventually disappointed the enemies and eased the worries of the Shi‘as. Thus, he was a blessed Imam for the Shi‘as because he would assume the Imamate of the Ummah after Imam al-Rida.

It is narrated that some people went to Imam al-Rida in Medina. Upon leaving, Imam al-Rida told them, “Go to Abu-Ja‘far; send your greetings to him,” and they said gave their greetings to Imam al-Jawad, who was a child then.<sup>9</sup>

As the Prophet and other Imams emphasised the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad, the eighth Imam also affirmed it on many occasions to introduce him to Shi‘a so that there would be no doubt about it. Safwan ibn Yahya said, “I told Imam al-Rida, ‘If something happens to you, who will assume Imamate?’ The Imam pointed to Imam al-Jawad besides him. I asked him, ‘This three-year-old son?’ He said, ‘Why not? Jesus Christ was also three years old when he became God’s Hujjat.’”<sup>10</sup>

### **Imam Muhammad al-Jawad’s measures to guide the Shi‘a**

As it was the first time that a child became an Imam, naturally this unprecedented event was disputed, along with the doctrine of Imamate

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

and the tyrannical caliphate taking opposing views. Hence, while profoundly comprehending the politico-cultural conditions of society and the plots of Ma'mun and other enemies of Imamate, Imam al-Jawad took the following politico-cultural measures in guiding the Shi'a and foiling the enemies' plots:

### **A. Emphasizing his Imamate**

The question of the possibility of the Imam's Imamate before adolescence was one of the theological issues on Imamate in that era.

This theological issue worried, distressed, and disunited the followers of the Ahlul Bayt. To resolve their doubts, some approached Imam al-Rida's brother, Abdullah ibn Musa, although he was unable to answer their questions; others joined the Waqifis; and still some others considered Imam al-Rida's brother, Ahmad ibn Musa, as the Imam—their reasons being that Imam al-Jawad was too young. To them, maturity was a prerequisite for Imamate.<sup>11</sup>

Some truth-seeking Shi'as went to Medina to find out for themselves. Upon meeting the Imam, their worries were relieved. Posing numerous questions to the Imam, they received correct answers from him, thus becoming certain about his Imamate.<sup>12</sup>

Imam al-Jawad introduced himself to the people—as well as to the opposition—as the leader of the Ummah and God's Hujjat on the earth. In the Prophet's shrine, Yahya ibn Aktham came across the Imam and

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<sup>11</sup> See *Dala'l-ul-A'immah*, Muhammad ibn Jariri Tabari, Qum, Manshurat Sharif Radi, no date, p.205.

<sup>12</sup> See *the 14 Infallibles' Conduct*, Muhammad Muhammadi Eshtehardi, Tehran, Mutahhar Publications, 1383 solar, p. 774.

asked him some questions. At the end, he said, "I want to ask you something, but I feel ashamed to do so."

The Imam said, "Before you ask your question, I will inform you of it. You are going to ask me about the present Imam." He said, "Yes, by God." The Imam replied, "I am that Imam." Yahya said, "Show me a sign." Then the cane in the Imam's hand started to speak and said, "He is my master, [people's] leader and God's Hujjat right now."<sup>13</sup>

## **B. Revealing his God-given knowledge**

One feature of Imamate is the Imam's knowledge. Considering Imam al-Jawad's young age, it was necessary that the Imam revealed a drop of vast sea of his divine knowledge for the people to determine his Imamate. After his father's martyrdom, he went up the pulpit in Masjid-al-Nabi and said:

I am Muhammad ibn Ali a-Rida al-Jawad. I am fully aware of every person's lineage. I know your overt and covert situations and your future. This is the knowledge God gave us before creation, and we will enjoy it even after the destruction of the heavens and the earth. If it were not for the followers of falsehood, the government of the misguided, and the sedition of the doubtful against us, I would mention [things] that would surprise both the people of the past and the future.

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<sup>13</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Beirut, al-Wafa Institute, 1403 A.H., vol. 50, pp., 53, 68.

Then he put his hand on his mouth and said, “O’ Muhammad! Keep quiet like your forefathers.”<sup>14</sup>

The Imam was asked numerous questions – either because he was being tested or because he was simply teaching. And his answers in one session at the age of nine<sup>15</sup> indicated his mastery of different sciences.

### **C. Performing extraordinary acts**

One way the Imams guided society and removed any doubts was through extraordinary acts. There are many acts reported from Imam al-Jawad; most of them were to strengthen people’s beliefs as doing so was a sign of his Imamate and successorship to the Prophet. ‘Ammar ibn Zayd reported, “I asked Imam al-Jawad, ‘What’s the sign of the Imam?’ He said, ‘He should be able to do this’: he put his hand on the ironstone in such a way that there were his fingerprints on it. I saw him imprint his ring on the ironstone without melting it.”<sup>16</sup>

His extraordinary acts were mostly done to save his companions and followers from oppressors and setting them free from prison.<sup>17</sup>

### **D. Adopting a negative stance against the Caliphate**

Although Imam al-Jawad was exiled to Baghdad—the capital of the caliphate—by Ma’mun after the martyrdom of Imam al-Rida, he always stated the truth, defined his Imamate, revealed his God-given knowledge specific to the Divine leaders, took negative stances against the

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 85, 100.

<sup>16</sup> *Dala’l-ul-A’immah*, Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, p.211.

<sup>17</sup> *The 14 Infallibles’ Conduct*, Muhammad Muhammadi Eshtehardi, pp. 794-796.

Caliphate, and expressed dissatisfaction with his presence in the Caliphate's court to reveal his political views to his followers.

The Imam's opposition to the tyrannical rule was revealed in his wise sayings and actions. Sometimes these stances were manifested in his delineating true Islamic jurisprudence and his falsifying the moneymaking jurists' ideas. This was especially seen in the debates between the Imam and Yahya ibn Aktham, a renowned scholar during that time.<sup>18</sup>

A companion of the Imam, Husayn Makkari, said, "While Imam al-Jawad was living in Baghdad wealthily, I went there, thinking now that he lived prosperously, he would not return to Medina. The Imam raised his head while he turned yellow with sorrow, and said, "O Husayn! I prefer barley bread with half-ground salt in the city of Prophet Muhammad to this situation."<sup>19</sup> The Imam was greatly upset with his exile to Ma'mun's court and disregarded the luxury life.

### **E. Policy-making and guiding the Shi'as**

Imam al-Jawad endeavoured to preserve the Shi'as in various cities in the Islamic land during his forceful stay in Baghdad and then in Medina. He answered religious and legal questions of Shi'as through agents such as Ali ibn Mahziyar, Kheiran Khadim, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Hamadani, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Isa, and Salih ibn Muhammad ibn Sahl. In his letter to Ibrahim ibn Muhammad

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<sup>18</sup> Analytic History of Islamic Leaders, Ali Rafi'i, Qum, Yaqut Publications, 1382 solar, p. 210.

<sup>19</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, vol. 50, p. 48.

Hamadani, he said, "I have no agent there except you. I wrote to my friends in Hamadan to obey you."<sup>20</sup>

## F. Struggle against deviated ideologies

Throughout Shi'a history, the enemies plotted to disunite the Shi'as through forming religious sects. In his time, Imam al-Jawad fought the sects deviated from Imamate and guided the Shi'as to take an appropriate stance against them. The most prominent deviated groups were Mujassamah, Waqifiyyah, Zaydiyyah, and *Ghullat* (Extremist Shi'as).

To oppose them, the Imam prohibited paying zakat to them and having them as public prayer leaders. He wanted his followers to dissociate themselves from them because God dissociates Himself from them.<sup>21</sup>

## G. Training religious scholars

The Imam trained a group of students to become religious scholars to benefit the society, as sometimes it was difficult to benefit from Imam al-Jawad's knowledge directly, and people needed answers to their legal questions from reliable sources.

Shaykh Tusi referred to 113 people who were the Imam's companions and the reporters of his hadiths, including prominent ones: Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr Bazanti; he was considered as the one of the people of consensus (*ashāb al-ijmā'*)<sup>22</sup> and a jurist; Ahmad ibn Ishaq

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Wasa'il-u-Shi'a, Muhammad ibn Hassan Hurr 'Amili, Tehran, Maktabatul-Islamiyyah, no date, vol. 5, p. 390.

<sup>22</sup> This is a common title for some of the great narrators of hadiths whose narrations are very highly regarded by scholars of hadith.

'Ash'ari, who was the 'Shaykh of Qum'; the 'Qummi' people's representative who received the Imams' legal rulings and orders, and then gave them to the people; Zakariyya ibn Adam Qummi, who Imam al-Jawad prayed for and considered a grateful, loyal companion; Ali ibn Mahziyar Ahwazi, an elite agent of the Imam who prayed for him and talked of him as a matchless figure; Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Bazi', who like Ali ibn Yaqtin, albeit a vizier in the Abbasid court, was a reliable supporter of—and a refuge for—the Shi'as, and was at the service of Imam al-Kazim, Imam al-Rida, and Imam al-Jawad.<sup>23</sup>

Like his forefather Imam al-Sadiq, Imam al-Jawad helped his companions and students infiltrate into every circle; they even attained high positions in the court. Nuh ibn Durraj was at first the judge of Baghdad and then Kufa. Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Bazi' and Ahmad ibn Hamza Qummi reached a high position in the government. Muhammad ibn Ash'ath, Ahmad ibn Bahil, Hussain ibn Ali Misri, and Isma'il ibn Musa ibn Ja'far paved the way for the spread of Shi'ism in Egypt by migrating there. Through his agents, the Imam led and guided a vast network in faraway lands. This network of agents—which also prepared the ground for political and cultural guidance of the Shi'as and prepared them for the Age of Occultation—was expanded by the next Imams and later took a particular form by the four special deputies of Imam al-Mahdi.<sup>24</sup>

## H. Imam al-Jawad's political marriage and his martyrdom

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>24</sup> *Analytical and Political History of Islam*, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Culture Dissemination, 1379 solar, p.258, as cited in *Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol. 50, pp. 7-9; *Manaqib*, vol. 4, p. 380, *Dal'il-ul-A'immah*, p. 208; *Irshad*, p.326.



Adopting a special policy, Ma'mun pretended to love the Ahlul Bayt with the intention of drawing support from their followers and building friendship with them. This was clear in his measure to invite Imam al-Rida to Khurasan. After Imam al-Rida was martyred by Ma'mun, he acted deceitfully again by having Imam al-Jawad marry his daughter, Umm-ul-Fadl. Ma'mun pursued the following goals through this political marriage:

- To express love for Imam al-Jawad to deny the accusation of killing Imam al-Rida.
- To pacify the Shi'as and receive their support after the martyrdom of Imam al-Rida.
- To control the supporters of Imamate through watching their coming to Imam al-Jawad and to be immune from the Alawids' uprising.
- To make Imam al-Jawad succeed Imam al-Rida as the religious and scientific authority for him to answer people's religious questions.
- To secure his own political position, particularly after his killing his brother, Amin, and his removing Qasim from power.
- To exonerate himself from any role in the martyrdom of Imam al-Rida.
- To claim to have an intimate relation with the Prophet's household—for demagoguery—through this marriage. This eventually did not pay off.

Finally, Mu'tasim al-Abbasi called the Imam to Baghdad, and following in his corrupt forefathers' footsteps, he poisoned Imam al-Jawad through his niece, Umm-ul-Fadl. Imam al-Jawad was martyred in Dhil-Qa'dah 220 AH at the age of 25 and was buried besides his grandfather, Imam Musa al-Kazim. His Imamate lasted for 17 years.<sup>25</sup>

Every Shi'a Imam acted on the basis of the requirements of the time and guided his followers in with wisdom. The important role of Imam al-Jawad in that critical era, facing such deceitful rulers as Ma'mun and Mu'tasim, can be referred to as an example. Although he was very young, he guided the Shi'as well and foiled the enemies' plots.

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<sup>25</sup> *Manaqib Ale Abi-Talib, ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 4, pp. 410-411.*

## **An Analysis of the Causes of Mental Illness, Part II**

**Habibollah Taheri**

Translated by Mahboobeh Morshedian

**ABSTRACT:** Anxiety, depression, mental disorders, and worries are among the predicaments of human society in the present century. In recent decades, the factors contributing to, preventing, and curing these illnesses have been addressed from different angles. The resulting achievements are various cognitive, behavioural, psychological, psychodynamic, and biological theories that, of course, led to valuable outcomes. The previous paper addressed this issue from two perspectives: the psychological perspective and that of the Qur'an and hadith. This paper delves into some of the general symptoms of mental illness, symptoms mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith, and the stages of mental illness according to the Qur'an.

## General Symptoms of Mental Illness

Below is a brief list of symptoms of mental illnesses from a psychiatrist's perspective.

- Symptoms that disrupt bodily functions, such as the following:
  - Sleep

You have difficulty sleeping. You often lie awake in bed and worry about why you cannot sleep. Sometimes you wake up and cannot fall back to sleep, and occasionally you stay awake all night, rendering you in a bad mood the next morning. These disorders may occur alone or together. Other sleep disorders include nightmares, talking in your sleep, and sleepwalking.
  - Appetite and eating

You either have no appetite and eat less than usual, or you have a healthy appetite but do not enjoy eating. On the flip side, you may gain extra weight by overeating, which may become a psychological obsession.
  - Sexual desire and sexual activities

Among the symptoms can be a lack of sexual drive, impotence, or premature ejaculation, or an increase in libido, masturbation, and sexual perversion. Unconsummated marriage, which is not uncommon, is primarily due to psychological issues rather than physical ones.
- Symptoms that impair psychological functions in the following:

- Behaviour

Your behaviour may disturb family members and others or put them in a very difficult situation. This behaviour may be unpleasant, obsessive, or dangerous to yourself and others. You may be hyperactive, restless, and aimless; you may beat or harass others with no apparent reason. Being stubborn, nagging, aggressive, showing anger, and throwing objects are among some of the common symptoms of mental and psychological problems in adolescents and children. Sometimes you may become dejected, reclusive, shy, quiet, and inactive by sitting or lying down in one place for hours.

- Talking and thinking

You either speak unnecessarily and excessively or become reticent or completely silent. Sometimes your words are irrelevant and cannot be understood. Sometimes you express incorrect beliefs that are not approved of by others. For example, you may say things like, “I’m bewitched,” “I’m a prophet,” “There is a worm under my skin,” “Whatever food I’m given is poisonous,” or “Someone from the heavens is connected to me.” These strong and false beliefs that others do not approve of is known as delirium.

- Emotions

You may, under certain circumstances, be extremely (and unnaturally) emotional. You may laugh, cry, or be exceedingly angry for no apparent reason. Sometimes your

feelings may be expressed inappropriately, such as laughing or crying in a gathering for no apparent reason; or you show no emotion, such as sitting motionless. You may also show unreasonable sadness, depression, elation, fear, and anxiety for long periods of time.

○ Perception

You have an impaired understanding of the signals that you receive from your five senses, receiving them incorrectly or misinterpreting them. You may experience hallucinations—such as seeing things that do not exist, hearing sounds, or feeling things on your skin. Auditory hallucinations, such as hearing voices calling you, ordering you, or insulting you, can frequently be observed in the mentally ill.

○ Memory

You may experience memory loss and forget important events; in other words, you forget what you saw, heard, or did a few minutes prior. You have trouble with your short-term memory (e.g., you cannot remember where you put your money, clothes, and so on), and may also have a hard time remembering whom you visited in the last few days or weeks. Experiencing long-term memory loss (e.g., you have a hard time remembering your children's names and your relatives' addresses) is also a symptom. Sometimes you may lose your way as well. Memory loss can occur due to old age, dementia, stroke, a brain disorder, emotional states, and stress. It is noteworthy to mention that normal people and

students' frequent complaints about forgetfulness are not usually considered to be a memory disorders; rather, their concentration is disrupted by everyday stresses and worries or by anxiety and depression.

- Common sense and judgement

With some mental illnesses, your intellect and common sense are impaired, and your reasoning skills are weakened. You make mistakes often and cannot do simple mathematical calculations or learn new things. In other words, you may come across as acting foolishly (i.e., mental retardation and dementia due to ageing).

- Level of consciousness

With some psychiatric disorders, mostly caused by organic brain lesions, you may have a reduced level of consciousness; you have difficulty recognising your family members and cannot tell where you are and what time it is. Constant drowsiness and coma are the next stages of the disturbed consciousness. An impaired level of consciousness can be seen in people with medicine and alcohol poisoning, seizures, and sudden awakening, as well as after surgical anaesthesia.

- Symptoms that disrupt certain behavioural activities, such as:

- Individual activities

You disregard your physical needs and personal hygiene; you do not take a bath, cut your hair, and eat. In the developed stage of the disease, you may go around barefoot or nude.

○ Social activities

You display inappropriate or strange behaviours towards your family, friends, classmates, and others. You insult and harass people and act inappropriately in a way that surprises them and disturbs gatherings. Sometimes you may act so recklessly that it upsets and ridicules others or makes them laugh. Disruption of family structure, communication, and management is also prevalent.

○ School activities

Difficulty studying, lack of concentration, trouble learning and remembering (thus trouble taking tests, academic failure, inability to participate in group activities), and conflicts with peers and teachers are all not only symptoms but also consequences of mental illness. Sometimes these are either immediate or gradual symptoms.

### **Symptoms of mental illness in the Qur'an and Hadith**

The symptoms of mental illnesses referred to above were based primarily on medical research. However, the Qur'an, as well as religious leaders, talk about symptoms of mental illnesses that are not usually regarded by psychiatrists in general. For example, a disbeliever, a



hypocrite, and an oppressor are all regarded as patients with mental imbalances whose cure is to believe in God and abandon those vices.

The symptoms of mental illnesses can be inferred from Qur'anic verses and hadith. Some of the symptoms include disbelief; hypocrisy; oppression; deviation from the divine path; committing sins; a tainted heart; envy and rancour; arrogance; vanity and selfishness; self-importance; doubt and hesitation; pessimism about God, the universe, and others; disappointment; pathological guilt; ingratitude; emptiness; suspicion and mistrust; temptations; inferiority complex; unlawfully satisfying sexual desires; hard-heartedness; and not understanding realities.

According to the Qur'an and hadith, individuals with these characteristics are considered mental patients, and religion's role in mental health is to cure such psychological ailments. The following chapters address the methods to cure these diseases.

### **Stages of mental illness according to the Qur'an**

By studying the Qur'an, one can understand that, as with physical disorders, there are stages to mental illness. The Qur'an gives different interpretations of psychological disorders and points out their severity. The stages of mental illness according to the Qur'an are as follows:

#### 1. Deviance

*“As for those in whose hearts there is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation and courting its interpretation”* (Qur'an 3:7). See also 9:117 and 61:5.

#### 2. Sullied hearts

God says about those who deny His signs and consider the Qur'an to be the legends of their predecessors, *"No indeed! Rather their hearts have been sullied by what they have been earning"* (Qur'an 83:14).

### 3. Doubtfulness

*"Only those seek a leave [of exemption] from you who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts are in doubt (ريب), so they waver in their doubt"* (Qur'an 9:45).

### 4. Hard-heartedness

*"So woe to those whose hearts have been hardened to the remembrance of Allah. They are in manifest error"* (Qur'an 39:22). See also 5:13, 5:43, and 57:16.

### 5. Locked hearts

*"Do they not contemplate the Qur'an, or are there locks (أقفال) on the hearts?"* (Qur'an 47:24).

### 6. Unconverted hearts

*"And they say, 'Our hearts are faithless (غافل).' Rather Allah has cursed them for their unfaith [so they do not understand anything], so few of them have faith"* (Qur'an 2:88).

### 7. Veiled hearts

*"Indeed We have cast veils (أَكْفَتْنَا) on their hearts lest they should understand it, and a deafness into their ears [so that they cannot hear the call of truth through their inner spiritual ears]; and if*

*you invite them to guidance they will never [let themselves] be guided*" (Qur'an 18:57). See also 17:46.

#### 8. Sealed hearts

*"Thus does Allah seal (يطمع) the hearts of those who do not know"* (Qur'an 30:59). See also 7:100-101, 9:87&93, and 63:3.

#### 9. Closed hearts

*"Allah has set a seal (غشاوة) on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them"* (Qur'an 2:7). See also 45:23.

#### 10. Blind hearts

*"Have they not travelled over the land so that they may have hearts by which they may apply reason, or ears by which they may hear? Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but the hearts turn blind —those that are in the breasts!"* Qur'an 22:46).

#### 11. Diseased hearts

*"Yet you see those in whose hearts is a sickness rushing to them [i.e., to make friends with the Jews and Christians], saying, 'We fear lest a turn of fortune should visit us [and we may need their help].' Maybe Allah will bring about a victory [in favour of Muslims], or a command from Him, and then they will be regretful for what they kept secret in their hearts"* (Qur'an 5:52).

See also 2:10, 9:125, 24:50, and 74:31.

Except for the eleventh category, which encompasses all mental disorders, each of the above categories signifies one type of spiritual disease (i.e., mental disorder). They can be categorised as follows:

First, the disease of the inner heart deviates. In the next stage, deviation from the right path sullies and darkens the heart. Since the heart of the deviated is tainted, it doubts all divine facts and doctrines, and the words of the prophets, “*so they waver in their doubt*” (Qur’an 9:45). The sceptic cannot adhere to facts or truth and thus cannot be guided. The sullied, doubtful heart is now hardened and is inflexible about the truth—sometimes becoming harder than stone since it’s possible for water to gush forth from a stone. Hard-hearted people are in error and never reach their goals. Concerning the story of the cow of the Israelites and the dead person coming back to life, God says:

*“Then your hearts hardened after that; so they are like stones, or even harder. For indeed there are some stones from which streams gush forth, and indeed there are some of them that split, and water issues from them, and indeed there are some of them that fall for the fear of Allah. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do”*  
(Qur’an 2:74).

So far, with the first four stages, willpower was involved. But eventually, due to a person’s deviated beliefs and improper actions, God disrupts their perception—that is, they lose their senses one after the other—in which they neither hear the call of truth nor understand it; and they will have no way out of this stage. As long as the spiritual disease of the inner heart is in one of the first four stages (i.e., deviance, sullied heart,

doubtfulness, or hard-heartedness), one can be cured and saved from a risky situation. However, when the inner heart is in any of the latter stages—particularly the stages of the sealed or closed hearts—there will be no rescue, and nothing but a painful punishment awaits them. A sealed or closed heart leads to complete blindness for which there is no guide. In other words, those with such a heart have wilfully broken their cane and have made their guide detest them, thus abandoning them.

In short, like physical illnesses, mental illnesses can either be curable, stagnant, or incurable: The first three stages of the heart are curable diseases, stages four to seven stagnant, and stages seven to ten incurable. The last stage, the diseased heart, is general and encompasses all the other stages. For those looking for a more in-depth understanding of the symptoms of the eleven stages of the spiritual disease of the inner heart, please refer to the commentaries and hadiths of the verses mentioned.



# **Salman al-Farsi: A Great Companion of the Prophet Muhammad**

**Mohammad Reza Javaheri**

Translated by Sanjeedeh Abedi

**ABSTRACT:** Salman al-Farsi was the first Persian to convert to Islam. He was raised as a Zoroastrian, then converted to Christianity, and then after meeting the Prophet Muhammad, he converted to Islam, and played a fundamental role in promoting Muslim unity. After becoming Muslim, Salman grew under the guidance of the Prophet and Imam Ali until he reached the peak of faith and was the best of the Ahlul Bayt's companions. This article delves into the personality, character, and faith of Salman as seen in the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt, as well as several Sunni sources.

## Salman's personality

Familiarizing ourselves with Salman al-Farsi's personality has many advantages; attention to them clarifies the importance and need of it.

1. Some of the Prophet's companions could succeed in being "Mohammadi" or being "like Mohammad." By accepting Islam through believing in God and the Qur'an entitled the Iranian Salman al-Farsi to "Salman Mohammadi" who ranked as a highly faithful companion of the Ahlul Bayt. Therefore, "Mohammadi" and the "Alawite" (pertaining to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib) behaviour are not out of our reach in our developmental progress.
2. Acquainting ourselves with the life, virtues, and manners of Salman al-Farsi as a loyal companion of the Prophet is a life guide for those fascinated with the true divine path. Recognizing Salman al-Farsi's characteristics are a step in the path of recognition of attaining good qualities in the school of the holy Prophet, who himself was the greatest role model for humanity.
3. Knowing Salman al-Farsi is an endeavour in the path of the Shi'a's recognition during the Prophetic mission. Considering Salman, Ibn Abil Hadid, the Mutazilite Sunni writes: "Salman was Ali's Shi'a." Proving Salman al-Farsi's Shi'a belief clears the deep rootedness of Shi'ism. Salman's existence during the Prophet's life lights the connection of the Shi'a sect with the Prophet and the establishment of Shi'a sect by the Prophet's aid conveyed to him by the divine revelation. At the beginning of his political divine will, Imam Khomeini writes: "We are proud



of following the religion that the Prophet established based on the Almighty's command." Salman al-Farsi's Shi'ism is a clear sign of its truth, a formation of which goes back to the Prophet's time in Medina. Salman was a Muslim before Islam's emergence in Iran.

4. Salman al-Farsi's Islam is an example of the conscious, voluntary and freely chosen Islam of majority of Iranian nation, chosen thoughtfully with reason, knowledge, and insight, alone with a humble spirit seeking the truth.
5. Salman al-Farsi is the forerunner in combining the "Iranian Civilization" with "Islam". Iranian intelligence, talent and skills were first used in serving Islam and helping Muslims when the Iranian Salman al-Farsi converted to Islam. Salman's service in Khaybar and Ahzaab Battles in providing aid for the Prophet's companions are the ring leaders of numerous services of Iranians to Islam. The Islamic Republic of Iran's achievements for Islam and Muslims in contemporary political history is the result of contemplating Iranian talent and knowledge in the path of defending Islam in the present time.
6. Salman al-Farsi's Islam reminds us of the reality that Islam is not limited to geological areas of Mecca and Medina, and is not specified to the Arab race. Salman al-Farsi accepted the Prophet's invitation and believed him out of his truth-seeking nature. The Prophet also confirmed his Islam and faith. Islam is a universal religion: a religion for humanity.

7. Salman al-Farsi is a multi-dimensional and complete person. All dimensions of his personality are based on reliance in God and the Ahlul Bayt. His individual and religious behaviour mingled with spirituality and morals, social and political approaches, leadership and management, knowledge and belief, creativities, eloquence, and wisdom. His discussion and debates with rulers all had religiously based reasoning approved by the Prophet and his family. Throughout Salman's life are numerous hidden lessons in individual, social, political, moral, cultural and educational arenas.

### **Salman in the Infallible's words**

Salman is best known through the narrations of the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt. Through this study, we come to realize the dimensions of Salman's life and personality.

### **Salman al-Farsi in hadith literature**

Shi'a hadith compilations report the behavioural and moral characteristics of Salman, some of which are as follows:

1. Salman wept upon the demise of the Prophet.
2. He was present in the prayer performed for her highness Fatima al-Zahra (s.a.)
3. Practicing the divine commands gained him closeness to the Prophet's family, the Ahlul Bayt. He was known to be persistent and loyal.

4. According to him, friendship of Ahlul Bayt was obligatory for every Muslim.
5. He was Ali's Shi'a who never disagreed with Imam Ali.
6. He consistently mentioned the brotherhood of Ali and the Prophet; in his will he spoke of Ali's authority (wilayah) and offered evidence.
7. Based on the divine commands, he believed obeying Imam Ali was an obligation; obeying the Ahlul Bayt was the same as obeying God and the Prophet.
8. He was not an apostate after the holy Prophet's demise.
9. He accepted the invitation of the Prophet's heir and came to action in supporting and establishing the government and caliphate of Imam Ali.
10. He warned the people that no one other than Ali is aware of the secrets of prophethood; Ali has knowledge no one else could attain.
11. He interpreted the Qur'an and shared the Prophet's hadiths. Imam Ali had also certified him.
12. He is one of the true believers who did not change after the demise of the Prophet. Therefore, using him as a role model, accepting his guardianship (wilayah) through following and referring to him is mandatory for all.

13. He followed Imam Ali and avoided the caliphate of Abu Bakr. On a Friday, next to the Prophet's pulpit, Salman objected to Abu Bakr and questioned him over and over.
14. God loved Salman and revealed it to the Prophet, who was asked to love Salman as well.
15. God loves those who love Salman.
16. If the earth's inhabitants, like the angels, love Salman because of his love for the Prophet Mohammad and Ali, and are enemies with their enemies, God will never punish them.
17. He was placed among the disciples of Prophet Mohammad.
18. Among the companions of the Prophet, he is like Gabriel among the divine angles.
19. He knew the greatest divine name of God.
20. Gabriel conveyed God's command to the Prophet to convey His regards to Salman.
21. Once Salman visited the Prophet and his highness gave Salman his own pillow and cushion to use.
22. The name "Salman al-Farsi" was changed to "Salman Mohammadi" and is one of the members of the Ahlul Bayt.
23. Salman narrated hadiths, and the divine angles spoke to him.
24. He was a sea of knowledge and possessed a high level of thinking and logical reasoning.
25. He had a position higher than the wise Prophet Luqman.

26. Several points in this hadith: Salman a) prioritized Imam Ali's commands to his own will, b) liked the poor and needy and preferred their company to the rich, c) liked scholars, d) was a virtuous man of God, e) was a sincere Muslim, f) the Infallibles leaders remembered him and spoke of him, titling him "Mohammadi Salman."
27. He possessed the greatest degree of faith and was the best of Prophet's disciples.

### **Heaven is eager for Salman**

The followers of the divine prophets endeavour to enter the heaven as it is the main aim and destination of the best, and the purest. The same heaven is eager for Salman al-Farsi's arrival. Anas has stated that the Prophet said, "Heaven is eager for three people, 'Ali, Salman, Abu Dharr, and Ammar Yasser'". The Prophet has also stated, "Gabriel informed me: 'O Mohammad! Heaven is eager for three of your companions: Ali, Ammar and Salman.'" In another narration, concerning all Muslims, the Prophet states: "Be aware! That heaven is eager for four of my companions: Ali, Miqdad, Salman, and Abu Dharr. Anas also mentioned that the Prophet said, "There are three people the heavenly angles are eager to meet: Ali, Ammar, and Salman."

These companions are the forerunners of the Shi'a whom are placed in the same group with the best companion, minister, heir of Prophet, and the first Shi'a: Imam Ali.

## **The beloved of God and the Prophet**

God has granted everybody with strength and ability for growth, development, and achieving prosperity. Some use these talents and achieve high levels of spirituality and happiness. One of the faces of this group is Salman al-Farsi. God likes this group of people and has commanded his Prophet to like them. Barideh stated that the Prophet said, “God commanded me to like and be friends with four people, and has informed me that he himself likes them: Ali is among them, and Abu Thar, Miqdad, and Salman.”

According to these hadiths, Salman has a special position. He is dear to God and God announced His liking for him to his Prophet through his loyal Angel. The public announcement of this reality through the divine Prophet is to convey the divine message to the people and invite them to like Salman. The one who is dear to God and his Prophet is to be dear to the people and the followers of the Prophet, and liking him is the duty of all Muslims and true believers.

## **Salman among the group of believers**

Every prophet had his own chosen companions. This group has a higher position, and their service to religion and supporting their prophet was well-known among the general followers of that Prophet. Salman al-Farsi is one of these companions. Prophet Muhammad mentioned his nobles and comrades and introduced them to Muslims. He states, “Every Prophet is granted with seven nobles and comrades and I am granted with fourteen.” As the hadith continues, fourteen names follow, and Salman is one of them. In another narration, the Prophet has said:

There has never been a prophet unless he was granted with seven chiefs, ministers, nobles, and comrades and I am granted with seventeen ministers, chiefs, and nobles; seven from the Quraysh and seven from the immigrants among immigrants.

Salman al-Farsi's name is yet again present in this hadith. In another narration stated by the Prophet, Salman al-Farsi is among the group of Prophet's special people. Being among the special comrades of Prophet of Prophet Mohammad is a great and high value not granted to many. The value of this superiority will be clearer by paying attention to its source which is a divine blessing and a choice made by God.

### **A pioneer in Islam entering heaven**

The first Iranian to convert to Islam during the life of Prophet was Salman al-Farsi. He is the imitating connector of the Iranian civilization and Islam. By Salman al-Farsi's conversion to Islam, the Iranian intelligence service to Islam, and with the Iranians' conversion to Islam, Iran's general service to Islam expanded. The Prophet introduced these forerunners in a hadith, saying: "I am the forerunner of the Arabs, Sahib is the pioneer of Rome, Salman is the forerunner of the Farsi speakers, and Bilal is the pioneer of Ethiopia."

Abu Emameh stated that the Prophet said, "I am the pioneer forerunner of Arabs towards heaven, Salman is the pioneer of Iranians towards heaven, Sahib is the pioneer of Romans towards heaven, and Bilal is the pioneer of Ethiopians towards heaven."

In another hadith in Salman's praise it is said, "Salman is respected among Farsi speakers." "Farsi" generally refers to Iranians. Abu Saeed stated that the Prophet stated, "Salman is an intellectual who is not understood." Abu Bakhtari says:

A group wanted Ali ibn Abi Talib to talk about the companions of the Prophet and introduce them. As they continued with their questions about the Prophet's companions, they asked about Salman's position. Ali Ibn Abu Talib said, 'Salman realized the first and last knowledge. He is a sea whose depth cannot be measured, and he is one of us - the Ahlul Bayt'.

In narrating this hadith by Ibn Abel Hadid Motazeli in praise of Salman's knowledge, it is said, "Salman is the sea that never finishes; he is one of us "Ahlul Bayt". These two Prophetic and Alawite maxims, narrated by Shi'as and Sunnis, remind us of Salman al-Farsi's vast knowledge. It is obvious that someone whom the Prophet and his caliphate recognize as a scholar and emphasize on the different dimension of his knowledge is definitely a great scholar and is a pattern and role model for intellectuals. Salman's knowledge was to the extent that even his enemies acknowledged it, such as Abu Saleh, who said, "I hope Salman's mother loses him; he's too vast in his knowledge."

### **One of Ahlul Bayt**

Even though Salman al-Farsi's conversion is years after some of the others companion's conversions to Islam, such as Abu Dharr; however, he acquired such a high level that he was considered one of the Ahlul Bayt. Being part of the Prophet's family is a credit only for those who



are Mohammadi in their behaviour and speech, and are no different in their words and actions to the Prophet. Amr ibn Ouf narrated that the Prophet said, "Salman is one of us Ahlul Bayt." Imam Ali also stated, "Salman is one of us. He is benevolent, so choose him as a friend." Imam Ali has also informed all Muslims about this great privilege, saying, "A human who achieves the great pleasure of being one of the Ahlul Bayt, is like the Ahlul Bayt: He is a role model for Muslims and following and referring to him is obligatory."

### **Salman's character**

Only actions done with sincerity are accepted and will be divine and eternal. Salman al-Farsi's actions were such. Abu Emameh said, "The day the Prophet was looking at the sky, we asked, "What are you looking at, O Prophet of Allah?" He answered, "I saw an angel was taking Salman's deeds to the sky." These words are a proof to Salman's purity of his words and deeds.

### **The heart of Salman**

If divine light shines in the human heart, one's knowledge and awareness will expand. Salman al-Farsi had a heart enlightened with divine rays; Abu Harireh heard the Prophet saying, "Anybody who wants to look at someone whose heart is enlightened with the divine rays should look at Salman." Salman al-Farsi is introduced as a man with a bright heart to the common people.

### **A hardworking, pious person**

Some do not have interest in acquiring divine faith and do not have a curious spirit with regards to knowledge and religion, and lack the

preparedness for sacrifices concerning their religion and achieving and maintaining faith. But some people have an unlimited thirst for achieving their divine faith and moving forward in acquiring the highest degree in their faith and religion. Salman al-Farsi was such a person. The Prophet has reminded us of this great character of Salman, saying, “If religion was in the sky, Salman would acquire it.”

### **Salman al-Farsi - Islam’s wise “Luqman”**

Even though the wise Luqman was not a prophet, he acted upon divine words and practices and reached a point where a chapter in the Qur’an is named after him. Regarding this, Imam Ali said, “Salman al-Farsi is the same as the wise Luqman.”

### **The companions sitting with the Prophet**

Salman al-Farsi was thirsty for the divine knowledge and made use of every opportunity for his awareness. He was a talented person and in search of completeness: day and night he looked for opportunities to speak to the Prophet. He was an intimate companion during the Prophet’s lonely nights and was an all-time associate of his. Their nightly meetings were long and consistent which led to objection of Aishah, the Prophet’s wife, saying: “There was an individual session for Salman with the Prophet held at night in a way that it was about to dominate my sessions with the Prophet.”

### **The freedom palms**

Salman al-Farsi—a freedom seeker—came to Arabia in search of knowledge and the true religion. In this travel, a group of Arabs caught him as a slave and sold him. After he accepted the Prophet’s words, he

wrote to his master for his freedom. They agreed to free him on the condition that he planted date palms, and he would be free when they began to bear fruit. The Prophet planted palm trees for Salman al-Farsi's freedom and with the divine power they quickly ripened and he was set free.

### **The virtuous ruler and upright commander**

Salman al-Farsi followed the path of his master Imam Ali in virtue and simplicity. He would say, "I do not like to eat unless it is with my own earnings." The second Caliph had set Salman's salary to six thousand dirhams; Salman spent his earnings for charity and earned his living with hard earned labour. He used his cloak both as a rug and as clothing. He was content with dried bread, salt, and water. As he had no home, someone asked for his permission to build him a house. Salman did not permit, saying, "I do not need a house." The man insisted, saying, "I'll build a house you would appreciate: a house in which whenever you stand up your head would touch the ceiling, and when you lie down your feet would touch the walls." Then Salman accepted. Amer bin Atiyeh said, "I realized Salman does not like food and eating. When I asked for the reason, he said, 'What I have heard is enough for me,'" indicating the wisdom he learned from the Prophet, who said, "The hungriest people in the Day of Judgment are the fullest in the world. Salman, this world is a prison for true believers and a heaven for infidels."

### **Salman's anger is God's anger**

Salman al-Farsi's virtue, sincerity and faith were to the extent that his anger was the criteria for the God's anger. One day, Abu Sufyan passed

by a group of Muslims, including Salman, Soheib, and Bilal and heard them say “The swords quenched their thirst from God’s enemy’s throat.” Abu Sufyan heard what they said. A companion angrily told them, “You are saying this about the sheikh and great man of the Quraysh.” The Prophet was told about what was said, and he addressed that companion, saying, “You were angry with them; if you make them angry, God would be angry with you.”

### **Salman: Islam’s child**

Salman al-Farsi labelled entering Islam as the best stage of his life. Even though he was an Iranian and was proud of his Iranian heritage, he labelled himself a child of Islam and placed Islam above everything else. One day there was a debate between him and Saad Bin Abi Vaqaaz. Saad told some of those present there, “Talk about your ancestors’ nobility” and they did so. When it was Salman’s turn, he said, “I do not know a father for myself in Islam. Salman is the child of Islam.”

### **Good end**

Salman al-Farsi is an Islamic universal personality in which all sects know him as a respected personality. The Prophet’s respect, including Ali, his companions, various Islamic sects and scholars’ respect for Salman is a factor for Muslim unity. Many religious privileges and Salman al-Farsi’s virtues are mentioned in the Prophet’s hadiths are included in both Sunni and Shi’a sources. The context of these hadiths in both sources is a sign of their being issued by the Prophet and therefore a cause of great respect for Muslims all over the globe.

## Community Building, VI<sup>1</sup>

Huj. Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali

**ABSTRACT:** Having a shared identity working towards a joint cause is vital for a healthy community. In doing so, a community must share specific qualities to be successful. This series of papers offers a glimpse into the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to implement it. Character traits such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, unity, moderation, humbleness, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter were illustrated. Another important quality of a successful community is their implementation of justice, also one of the principles of Shi'i Islam. The previous articles touched upon God's justice in the Qur'an, the necessity for establishing social justice, and having just leaders, as well as the status of rationality, knowledge and experience in an Islamic community. This article expands on the depth of our relationship with God, love for God's creation, acting as a channel for God's mercy in our daily lives in doing charitable work, being hospitable, and caring for the ill in the Islamic community.

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<sup>1</sup> This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

We have been studying the characteristics necessary for an Islamic Community. One of these qualities is that an Islamic community is a charitable one and which therefore shows the maximum amount of care possible towards its own members as well as those outside the community.

### **Depth of our relationship with God**

Before examining the various aspects of this quality, we should study the way our understanding of God and our relationship with Him form every aspect of our behaviour and conduct. Unfortunately, there are people who are believers in God but, because they do not have such a deep understanding of Him, they think the relationship between a human being and God is limited to, for example, the time spent worshipping God in prayer or fulfilling His commands, thus limiting the relationship to Him merely at a personal level. It is as if this is one part of their lives and the rest of their lives have nothing to do with God or their relationship to Him. They are completely forgetful of Him when it comes to other aspects of their lives.

However, from an Islamic point of view, our understanding of—and relationship to—Him should form and shape every aspect of our lives. To clarify, it can be said that if we believe in God as our Lord, Who has created us and Who exercised endless Mercy and Compassion towards us and towards His creation in general, we must therefore try as much as possible to resemble Him in His care, love, and compassion for His creation.

## All human beings are like the family of God

There is a divine saying (*hadith-i qudsi*), in which God says:

People are like My family. The dearest of them to me are those who are kindest to the others and make efforts the most to meet their needs.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Christianity, in Islam we seem not to have an example of God describing Himself as ‘father’ or ‘heavenly father’; however, the nearest thing we have is in this hadith where God describes the people He created as His family. In Arabic, *‘iyaal* means an individual or a group of people whose maintenance depends on a person’s support of them. For example, the wife and children of a man are his ‘iyaal, meaning the people who depend on him. A mother may look after her husband and children, or someone looks after their parents and then, those people are called their ‘aiyaal’. So it means those people who depend on someone for their livelihood, and indeed for their existence. It does not exactly mean family as such, but refers to whoever is under a person’s care and receives their financial support.

## God loves most those who love His people the most

God says that all of mankind are His ‘iyaal. They are like His family and in His view, the best people are those who show mercy and love to

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<sup>2</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 199. Divine Saying or ‘Hadith al-Qudsi’ is a sayings coming from God although not in the form of revelation. Sometimes God spoke to His prophets, such as Prophet Mohammad, Prophet Musa, and Prophet Isa, but not as part of the revelation of the Qur’an, Torah, or Injeel. Some of these conversations between God and His prophets are also conveyed to us and these are called ‘Hadith al-Qudsi’. There are technical discussions amongst scholars and in which they explain that in this case the meaning is conveyed, although not the actual letters and words, unlike Qur’anic or Biblical revelation.

His people more than other people do. For example, when a father sees that from amongst his friends and neighbours, a certain person shows the maximum possible care and attention to his family, he will then love him the most. God also expects us to be like this with regards to His people. If we want God to love us more, then we should implement more love towards other people. So, our love and compassion towards people is something which is required and demanded by our love for God.

### **Love for non-human creations of God**

This requirement also extends to non-human beings. When we look at an animal or a plant, we must realise that although they are not human beings, they are still created by God. They are signs of God, and according to the Qur'an, they glorify and praise Him, so we should love and care for them.

### **A believer should act as a channel for the Mercy of God**

It is not that necessary to mention Qur'anic verses or hadiths about being kind to the poor, elderly, parents and children, as will be explained later. Even if there were no hadith or verses on this subject, merely the above understanding of the world and the relationship that God has with His creation is enough to motivate us to be determined to show love and care towards everyone and everything. Therefore, a believer must be like a channel for the Mercy of God to be put into effect for the whole of creation.

### **Charity in the Qur'an and hadiths**



There are specific references to the principle of charity in the Qur'an and hadith. Firstly, we should define what is meant by charity, which is not only about giving money or financial support. In its fullest sense, charity includes caring for and loving others. If we really did so, we would realise that sometimes we need to give our money, sometimes our time, sometimes our attention, and sometimes making sacrifices.

In the verses 2:262-265, God mentions the importance of charity. Interestingly, in this part of the Qur'an, there are several verses related to the concept of 'infaq', the Arabic term for spending money on people who are in need.

### **Manners of giving charity**

These verses begin at verse 261, a beautiful verse explaining how sometimes God rewards 'infaq' seven hundred times more than the amount which has been given.

Then verse 2:262 starts:

*Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reproaches and affronts, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.*

This can be money given to the poor, as well as that which is spent for other Godly purposes, such as spending money on one's family or spending for charitable causes such as making a public school, a public place of worship, or a public hospital. All expenditure of money for the sake of God can be included in this.

Sometimes people give money to others but then always keep reminding them about having done this. It is not good to remind them in this way or to tell them something that hurts their feelings.

### **Reward for giving charity is only from God**

*Those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. (2:274)*

It means that it is only their Lord who can reward them. No one other than God can reward them or is expected to reward them. They do not expect any reward from people.

In Surah Insan, there are verses about the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn were once fasting and did not have much food with which to break their fast. Every night when they were close to breaking their fast, a needy person would knock on their door for help. On the first day there was a beggar (*miskeen*), the second day an orphan (*yateem*) and the third day a captive (*aseer*). They used to give all their food with which they wanted to break their fast to the needy, saying:

*We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks. (76:9)*

We are not giving to the needy person as such; rather, we are giving something back to God. Indeed, we are merely giving back to God what He has given us. These are not things which belong to us. They are all from God and now we are giving them back to Him. Therefore, we do not need people to thank us. Of course, it is the responsibility of people

who receive things to give thanks, but our responsibility as people who have given something is not to expect thanks.

Once, Imam Sajjad gave some charity to a person and then thanked the needy man, saying to him that he would be carrying the Imam's reward for him until the Day of Judgement because the money given to him now will be returned to the Imam on the Day of Judgement in the form of reward. So indeed, the recipient is carrying this for the Imam and helping him. Thus, the Imam said that he should be thankful to that person because he has given him not only the honour of being able to do something, but furthermore he will then receive recompense for this as reward on the Day of Judgement.

We should not expect anyone else to reward us and indeed no one else is able to reward us. Something which is done for the sake of God becomes so valuable that it is only God Who can reward us for it. Who can reward a pure act of charity? No one can reward it adequately and properly except God.

### **Benefit on the Day of Judgement for giving charity**

We see that in the verse 2:262, God says that these people would not have any fear nor any grief on the Day of Judgement. Furthermore, according to one interpretation, their fear and sadness will also go away in this life.

### **Manners of giving charity re-emphasized**

Then in verse 2:263, God continues by saying:

*An honourable word with pardon is better than a charity followed by affront. Allah is all-sufficient, most forbearing.*

Therefore, we are advised not to give charity in a way that by giving it would harm the recipient either by a) making them feel ashamed or b) hurting their feelings in the future by reminding them about what we gave. If this could be the case, then it would be better to use kind words with them, forgive their mistakes, or cover up or hide any faults they may have done.

Then again in verse 264 God talks about charity and asks us not to spoil it by reminding people about what we have given them or by hurting their feelings with unkind remarks. The verse reads as follows:

*O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts, like those who spend their wealth to be seen by people and have no faith in Allah and the Last Day. Their parable is that of a rock covered with soil: a downpour strikes it, leaving it bare. They have no power over anything of what they have earned, and Allah does not guide the faithless lot (2:264).*

Therefore, it is important to note from verses 262 to 264 the emphasis placed on giving charity without causing any kind of harm to the recipients, particularly regarding their feelings or sense of honour and dignity.

### **Multiple benefits of giving charity**

Then in verse 265, God continues talking about charity by saying:

*The parable of those who spend their wealth seeking God's pleasure and to confirm themselves, is that of a garden on a hillside: the downpour strikes it, whereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold: and if it is not a downpour that strikes it, then a shower, and God sees best what you do.*

We are like a garden, high up on a hillside, with fruit trees in it – an already fertile garden that becomes more productive with heavy rain. When we give charity, it is like rain pouring on this garden, enabling the trees to bear fruits either in a multiplied way or at least double the amount.<sup>3</sup>

### **Right of the needy over part of our wealth**

Furthermore, in praise of believers the Qur'an says:

*and in whose wealth there is a known right for the beggar and the deprived. (70:24 & 25)*

This verse beautifully describes the right of the needy (*haqqun ma'loom*). We may possess some money, but the needy have a right over that amount which can help them and save them from destitution. It might also mean that true believers fix a portion of their income for giving to the needy. So those who give alms should not consider that they are doing a favour.

### **Extra blessings for giving charity at certain times**

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<sup>3</sup> This discussion about charity (infaq) continues in the following verses, up to verse 274. So more than ten verses are gathered together in the same place describing charity and thus we can conclude that this is a very important principle in Islam.

Indeed, there are more fruitful seasons for giving charity, such as in the month of Sha'baan and the month of Ramadhan. Of course, it is important to give it throughout the year, but there are certain times and periods in which giving charity is more greatly rewarded by God. For example, there are some people who, on the night of Qadr, separate the amount of money they want to give throughout the year and put it aside so that the reward for this money will be calculated according to the reward given during the Night of Qadr, and then they gradually spend it as needed throughout the year.

### **Giving charity purifies us**

Giving money as charity is a way to purify ourselves:

*Felicitous is he who purifies himself, celebrates the Name of his Lord, and prays. (87:14 & 15)*

In another verse, God says:

*The one who gives his money seeking purity. (92:18)*

This is a very beautiful concept whereby we give money and then we are purified. God also says to the Prophet:

*Take charity from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby, and bless them. Indeed your blessing is a comfort to them, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing. (9:103)*

## **Charitable work**

There are other kinds of charitable work apart from giving money. For example, in an Islamic community, we are to care for people who are vulnerable or those who need moral support, respect, or attention.

## **Caring for the elders**

One way we can judge the value and strength of a community is to discover how much they care for the elderly. The elders of a community are those who have been doing their best for the community, families, and children throughout their lives, but are now no longer able to do many things, for example, to generate money or volunteer their physical help. So how should we treat them? Do we think them to be a burden and therefore try to somehow isolate them or rid ourselves of them? Or, on the contrary, do we show them maximum respect and understanding, as if precious gems of our community? This is of utmost importance. A community that does not show love and respect towards its elders is not a healthy community. Such a negligent situation deeply concerns people, even the youth, rendering some to wonder whether this is how they would be treated in the future. Some elderly folks share the times they were respectful towards their parents, although they are treated with disrespect by their own children. They then wonder about their future, and how they will be treated in turn by their own children. In the worst-case scenario, their own children will not even put them in a nursing home – they will instead abandon them on the street.

Therefore, it is very important to show love to our elders so that firstly God considers us as the thankful—as having thankfulness is not only shown by thanking God; it is by thanking anyone who has given us

help or service, and the elderly have helped and served the community. Secondly, it is also important that everyone feels a heartfelt sense of security. Thirdly, when we have elders in the family, we benefit from their wisdom and experience, and they bring the blessings of God into the family. Of course, in certain circumstances there may be a need for a nursing home, but this should not be the first choice we make as soon as our parents become old.

Prophet Muhammad (s) said, “It’s not one of us, the one who does not show mercy to our children and the one who does not respect and honour our elders.”<sup>4</sup>

From this—as well as from the vast corpus of hadith—we can conclude that a Muslim community is a community in which elders receive respect, and children receive love and compassion.

### **Caring for the sick**

Another group in a community that must receive care, love, compassion, and support is those who are ill. The first thing we can do is attempt to offer them some form of treatment. They themselves may be able to afford it, although for those who are unable, this then becomes the responsibility of the Islamic community, and therefore compulsory for other people or government officials to pay for the treatment. If we see that our fellow brother or sister in faith, or indeed any human being, needs treatment and cannot afford it, we all have a responsibility to pay towards the cost of the treatment.

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<sup>4</sup> *Mustadrak Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 8, p. 393.



The sick persons also have the responsibility of undergoing treatment. When we become sick, especially if a life-risking one, we must go for treatment; and if it is a serious illness, we cannot say we want to die and refuse treatment as this is comparable to committing suicide. We must try to find a way to be cured, and the society also has a responsibility to help anyone who is ill to receive appropriate treatment.

Furthermore, medical staff must not regard their work merely to earn money. It is an Islamic and human responsibility to help the ill. There are even some Shi'a jurists who say that a medical doctor cannot receive money from patients for their work in curing them because they are simply fulfilling their obligations, and we cannot ask people to give us money for doing an obligation. So these jurists say that what medical staff should do is to charge for those treatments which are non-essential, for example, in the case of someone who has a non-threatening cold, but for someone who, for example, has cancer and whose life is therefore at risk, it is the medical staff's Islamic responsibility to treat them, and they should not be charged for that treatment. However, in this case the government must pay the medical staff, instead of the patients.

### **Teaching the members of a community**

According to many jurists, just as doctors should not charge patients with serious illness, scholars (*ulama*) who teach people their obligations and religious duties should not charge as well.

Similarly, a teacher should not charge people for teaching them necessary subjects. They should only charge them for teaching that which is not obligatory. The suggestion is that only the government or

the Bayt al-Maal (the public treasury house) should be responsible. In any case, what is important is that medical staff and teachers regard their jobs as vocational as well as an Islamic and humanitarian duty; therefore, they do them with the intention of pleasing God.

### **Hospitals and schools can become places of worship**

Our hospitals and centres of education become like masjids because in our hospitals, medical staff are worshipping God by helping patients, and in our centres of education, our teachers are worshipping God by teaching. In addition, patients are accepting treatment because it is their responsibility; similarly, students are learning because it is their responsibility. Furthermore, if this is the understanding of the medical staff, patients, teachers, and students, then surely the chance of receiving healing or acquiring knowledge is much greater than when such work is merely regarded as a business.

### **Saving one life is like saving all of humanity**

In Surah al-Ma'idah, verse 32, God says:

*That is why We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, without (its being guilty of) manslaughter or corruption on earth, is as though he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves a life is as though he had saved all mankind.*

After referring to the story of Cain and Abel, God says that because of that event, He instructed the Children of Israel (the children of Jacob) that whoever kills an innocent person who has not committed murder or caused mischief, it is as if they killed all human beings. On the other

hand, if someone saves the life of another person, it is as if they have saved the lives of all human beings.

If we can help save the life of a single person, it is as if we have saved all of mankind because when we show respect to a human being simply because they are a human being, indeed we have shown our respect to all of mankind. On the other hand, if we treat one human being without respect we are indeed humiliating all human beings. This is a perfectly rational idea. For example, if we insult someone just because they are white or black or from the east or from the west, then we are indeed insulting all people in that category. If we insult a white person just because they are white, or a black person just because they are black, then we are insulting all white people or all black people because we had no personal issue with that person; they were insulted purely based on the colour of their skin. Therefore, it follows that if we insult a Muslim just because they are a Muslim or a Christian just because they are a Christian, so then we are indeed insulting all Muslims or all Christians.

In the same way, God says that if someone saves the life of one single person it is as if they had saved the life of all people.

### **Visiting the sick**

Just as it is important to help save sick people by treating them, it is also just as important to help them with financial or moral support. Sometimes people who are ill are not in need of us putting them in a hospital or giving them financial support, although they are very much

in need of moral support. There are many hadiths on the merits of visiting those who are ill;<sup>5</sup> the visitor will receive blessings and mercy from God. So when we feel that our heart is not soft enough or we are not in a good mood, we should visit someone who is sick to receive the His Mercy. We may also have someone at home who is ill and so we can show mercy to them.

There is also a hadith similar to a verse in the New Testament—in Matthew, Chapter 25, verses 31 to 46. Our hadith says that on the Day of Judgement, God will ask some people why they did not visit Him when He was sick, why they did not feed Him when He was hungry and why they did not give water to Him when He was thirsty. Then those people will ask God, “How could these things have happened to You? You are never in need of food or water and You never become sick.” Then God will reply, “Such and such a person was sick and you did not visit them. Such and such a person was hungry, and you did not feed them. Such and such a person was thirsty, and you did not give them water. Did you not know that if you had done so, you would have found Me with that person?” Therefore, if we visit a sick person or give food or water to a hungry or thirsty person, it is like doing these things for God, the Almighty.

Moreover, as mentioned in our hadiths, if a sick person prays for us and asks God to give us something, then it is very likely that this du’a will be answered. So it is very important for a sick person to pray for us.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, please refer to *Al-Kafi*, vol. 3, pp. 119-121.

## The importance of hospitality

Hospitality is very important in Islam. There is a mass transmitted (*mutawātir*) hadith—a hadith narrated by so many narrators throughout each generation that it is undoubtedly authentic—in which Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying:

Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, must treat his guest with respect and courtesy.<sup>6</sup>

This is extremely important and is a requirement of faith. If we have a guest, we must show them hospitality. It makes no difference whether the guest was invited or not: we must be hospitable. Of course, if a guest is invited then we are expected to be more prepared and to show more attention. However, even if someone is not invited, we must be happy and welcome. From the Islamic point of view, we do not need to put ourselves under great pressure in showing hospitality. For example, if someone cannot afford to provide their guests with luxurious food, or a luxurious bedroom, there is no need for that. We do not need to go out of our way to provide things; but whatever we have available to us we should provide. Imam Ali is quoted as saying:

The best act of generosity is to offer what is available.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, if we have nothing at all available, it is good to borrow a little to buy something for our guest, bearing in mind not to make things difficult for ourselves by, for example, spending a great deal of money. We should just do as much as we can, and more than anything else, we

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<sup>6</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 667.

<sup>7</sup> *Ghurar al-Hikam*, hadith no 8642.

should show respect, kindness, hospitality, and warmth so that the guest does not feel that they are a burden or that we do not like them to be there.

Prophet Muhammad was so hospitable that both foreign guests as well as the Muslims of Madinah visited him to gain from his knowledge and wisdom, so much so that they did not leave his house at a suitable time. However, the Prophet did not ask them to go because he was busy and had things to do. He used to sit with them as much as they wished. Then God revealed a verse saying:

*O you who have faith! Do not enter the Prophet's houses unless permission is granted you for a meal, without waiting for it to be readied. But enter when you are invited, and disperse when you have taken your meal, without settling down to chat. Indeed such conduct torments the Prophet, and he is ashamed of [asking] you [to leave]; but God is not ashamed of [expressing] the truth... (33:53)*

Therefore, a guest has the responsibility not to cause inconvenience to their host and on the other hand, the host has the responsibility to show respect, care, and love to their guest.

### **Guests of the community**

The guests of a community can be tourists, asylum seekers, refugees, and so forth. An Islamic community is a community in which tourists feel at home. If they go to a shop, take a taxi, or walk down a street, we must show them full respect and kindness because they are our guests.

This does not necessarily mean that they must come to your house, but they are to be considered as guests of the community.

If there are refugees who leave their towns or countries due to factors such as war, persecution, or natural disasters, then we must show them respect and help them as much as we can.

Thus, hospitality is an important characteristic of every community, and we should remember that God treats those who show mercy to their guests with His special mercy.

### **Importance of offering necessary and appropriate help**

It is important to be prepared to offer help to those in need, which is not necessarily always a case of giving money. Giving help includes giving advice, time, moral support, and sometimes intervening in a matter. For example, it is highly recommended to help a single man and woman to get married; if someone we know wants to get married and we know of a good family with a suitable young man or woman and it needs help to facilitate the situation, we can talk to the family of the young man or woman and refer them to a good person. We may give moral and practical support to help someone get married. It is a very important service to find good spouses for those who want to marry. It is not good that in a community there are people who want to get married and cannot find a partner. Moreover, we should have arrangements, especially to help women, because usually the families of women do not find it correct to propose themselves.

Another example is that sometimes people need to do paperwork or visit some offices or officials and we can help them by giving advice, speaking on their behalf, or writing an appeal for them.

Thus, if we have in our hearts this spirit of helping, then we would learn how to help others.

Prophet Jesus made a beautiful statement:

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ

*He has made me blessed, wherever I may be. (19:31)*

Imam al-Sadiq explains that it meant that God has made Jesus very beneficial [for people].<sup>8</sup>

This should be true about every one of us. Wherever we are, we must be a source of blessings for others. Wherever we are, whether it be at home, work, school, masjid or simply in the street or shops, we must try to be good and helpful to people, to be blessed so that we are a source of blessings to others.

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad said, “To believe in God and to benefit His servants are the two highest characteristics.” And in another hadith we read. “There are servants of God to whom people resort when in need. They will be safe from punishment on the Day of Resurrection.”

Therefore, when people come to us for help, we must not feel annoyed or feel our time is wasted or show exhaustion. If we can help, then we should be happy and should thank God that we have been given this golden opportunity. Of course, once again, we do not need to go out of

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<sup>8</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 165.



our way or, for example, disturb our family life in the process, but we should try to do so and serve them as much as we reasonably can.

Thus, it is clear that in Islam the principle of charity is very important and is a requirement of our love for God. When we love God, then we love His people and we love His creation. Since we want and expect Mercy from Him, then we should show mercy to others, because if receiving mercy is good, then we should firstly show mercy to others, so they receive it from us and then we can expect the Mercy of God to be directed towards us.

