

Aims of the Prophets

Prophets in the capacity of their appointment by Almighty Allah followed some aims, which are mentioned in verses of the Holy Quran and traditions, but all of them could be summed up in two general points:

First aim: Calling the attention of the people to the value and significance of their spiritual life and their guidance to matters, which results in the perfection of self and proximity to God; and guarantees the success of the hereafter. Similarly they explain and warn about the causes and reasons for decline of the self and misfortune in the world of the hereafter. In this regard, pay attention to some important points as follows:

1. Recognition and faith in the One and only God, proofs of the qualities of perfection for that Holy being and purifying Him from the defective traits was the basis of the call of the prophets and the first of their proposals and most of the verses of the Holy Quran are also in connection with this subject:
2. Calling the attention of the people to faith in resurrection and life after death and belief in Paradise and bounties of the hereafter; as well as Hell and its chastisements was a part of their message. Prophets in proving the world of the hereafter emphasize on its rewards and punishments and a large number of verses of Quran are also about this.
3. Testifying the past prophets and calling the people to accept the new laws and Shariah and to follow his own prophethood.

These three acts were the basis of the call of the prophets. The Holy Prophet (S) in his call to his relatives said:

“Praise is only for Almighty Allah. I praise Him and ask help from Him and I have faith and reliance on Him. And I witness that there is no god except Him and that He has no associate. Then he said: The leader does not lie to his followers. By Allah, except whom there is no god, I am the messenger sent especially to you and generally to all the people. I swear by Allah, just as you sleep you would die and

you will rise up just as you wake up. You will have to account for your deeds as a result of which you will either get everlasting Paradise or everlasting Hell.”¹

4. To motivate people to assume good manners and ethics and to warn them from improper acts. By explaining the worldly and other worldly effects of good ethics, prophets invited the people to good behavior and by explaining to them bad consequences of evil behavior they warned them. Therefore purifying and disciplining of the selves can be considered as an important aim of the prophets; just as Almighty Allah says:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them an Apostle from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.” (3: 164)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“I advise you to follow good manners and ethics as Almighty Allah has raised me for the same purpose.”²

Imam Ali (a.s.) has narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) that he said:

“I have been sent for the perfection of morals and improving the manners (of people).”³

5. Motivating people to the worship of one God and submission to His commands. Prophets have introduced a number of different types of worship acts and they consider them as causes of perfection of the self and gaining proximity to Almighty Allah. Their performance is very much effective in the success of man in the life hereafter. So much so that it is mentioned that the aim of creation of man is not but the worship of God as mentioned in the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle saying: Serve Allah and shun the Shaitan.” (16:36)

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me.” (51:56)

By showing such a program to the people, the prophets called them to get assured success in the

hereafter.

Second aim: Reforming the social conditions and worldly life of people. The prophets also paid full attention to reforming the social and economic circumstances of the people. They called people to acquisition of knowledge, gaining from natural resources and making efforts and putting in hard work as well as to observe justice; on the other hand they warned about injustice and oppression. They conveyed to the people rules and regulations to prevent injustice and oppression and to establish social justice; they also described the rights and duties as well as penalties and punishments in order to usher complete governance and they also struggled to establish this system. They confronted injustice and tyranny and supported the weak and the deprived.

By studying and researching the laws of Islam, it becomes absolutely clear that the religion of Islam is perfectly concerned about reforming the worldly affairs and social conditions of the people.

From some verses, it is also concluded that it was one of the aims of the prophets. For example it is said in Quran that:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

“Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity; and We have made the iron, wherein is great violence and advantages to men, and that Allah may know who helps Him and His apostles in the secret; surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.” (57:25)

In another verse it is said:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed; and none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves; so Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed and Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path.” (2:213)

The final aim of the prophets

We say that prophets in their divine office follow two general aims: One is the recognition of God and His

worship and proximity, which is related to the spiritual life and success of the hereafter of human beings and the second is the establishment of justice and equity and negation of injustice and prejudice, which is related to the worldly life of man.

Now the question arises that whether the prophets were inclined to two aims in their messengership? That is, did they pursue the above two aims separately? Or did considered one of them as primary and the other as secondary? If we suppose the latter, which is the primary aim and which is the secondary? At this point, there are a few possibilities:

1. Some are of the opinion that the main aim of the prophets is to assure the worldly success of man and establishment of justice and equity. The prophets came with the aim to restrain differences and oppositions and to make human life peaceful and prosperous. If with regard to the need of recognition and worship of Allah they stressed on resurrection, rewards and punishments of the hereafter, moral values like justice, favor, sacrifice, forgiveness, and defense of the deprived and weak, it was with the aim that they should maintain social justice and that it should be effective in negating injustice and prejudice. It is said: Unity of view and recognition of God is in itself of no benefit and whether we recognize God or not, whether we worship or do not worship, it is of no use to Allah. They should be considered as mediums of social unity and establishment of a just society.

2. Researches and real scholars of Islam, consider training of selves and reformation of spiritual life of man as the final aim of the prophets. Therefore in order to reach this aim, they consider theoretical monotheism, faith in resurrection and prophethood, worship and submission before the One God, purification and discipline of the self and following good ethics as necessary and effective. We mention some points to support this view:

A) It is concluded from Islamic philosophy, verses of Quran and traditions that man with regard to the ethereal soul is an abstract being and is superior to matter; he is everlasting and never annihilated or destroyed by death. On the contrary, he is transferred from this world to the world of the hereafter, so that he may see the good and bad consequences of his deeds. Man in the dimension of his ethereal soul is moving to perfection; by nature he is searching for God and perfection, he struggles for success and well being in the recognition of God and in His worship and proximity and his original life will also be like the spiritual and other worldly life.

B) In some verses and traditions, it is explained that life and worldly affairs do not have any value and the real and valuable life of man is the spiritual life of the hereafter. For example:

أَمْالٌ وَالْبُنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَقِيَّةُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمْالًا

“Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and better in expectation.” (18:46)

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهْبِجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ / سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

“Know that this world’s life is only sport and play and gaiety and boasting among yourselves, and a vying in the multiplication of wealth and children, like the rain, whose causing the vegetation to grow, pleases the husbandmen, then it withers away so that you will see it become yellow, then it becomes dried up and broken down; and in the hereafter is a severe chastisement and (also) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure; and this world’s life is naught but means of deception. Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and to a garden the extensiveness of which is as the extensiveness of the heaven and the earth; it is prepared for those who believe in Allah and His apostles; that is the grace of Allah: He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.” (57:20–21)

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“And whatever things you have been given are only a provision of this world’s life and its adornment, and whatever is with Allah is better and more lasting; do you not then understand?” (28:60)

In numerous traditions, this world is mentioned as a place of short stay and a station on the journey and the harvest field of the hereafter and that the everlasting life of the hereafter should benefit from it. For example, Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

“Know that this world, which you have started to covet and in which you are interested, and which sometimes enrages you and sometimes pleases you, is not your (permanent) abode, nor the place of your stay for which you might have been created, nor one to which you have been invited.”⁴

In the same way, he said:

“Certainly this world has not been made a place of permanent stay for you. But it has been created as a pathway in order that you may take from it the provisions of your (good) actions for the permanent house (in Paradise).”⁵

And he said:

“O people! The world is a place of transient stay and the hereafter is the place of permanent stay. Thus you should take advantage from the temporal place for the place of permanent stay. Do not raise the veils from those who know your secrets. Take out your hearts from the world before your bodies are taken out of it. Thus you will be tested in the world and you are created for something other than it.”⁶

From these verses, and traditions and their like it can be concluded that the actual life of man in the view

of Islam is the spiritual life and life in the hereafter. And the life of the world is a medium of guaranteeing the success of the hereafter.

That is why, it can be concluded that the final aim of the prophets also was to entrust to man, ways of gaining divine proximity, perfection and attainment of success and salvation; as they had learnt from Almighty Allah. Any other person cannot introduce such a method. Prophets introduced faith in God, resurrection, prophethood; worship of One God and taught that attaining good ethics is the only way to salvation.

That is why, the second view is supported and the first view; that is the reformation of livelihood of people is disproved to be the final aim of the prophets as also opposed by verses and traditions.

But our aim is not that prophets paid no attention to reform the worldly life of man and to establish justice and equity and to oppose injustice, prejudice and differences. On the contrary, in order to attain these aims also they struggled as much as was possible. They introduced this same topic as a genuine value and one of the best channels of perfection of self and proximity of God. They considered efforts and service for the people and observance of justice, provided they are accompanied with sincerity, as the best worship acts. Since through this the social life of man is possible and through this may be achieved the purification and training of selves as well the worship of the One God.

This is a perfect refutation for one who says: Prophets were dualist in their aims and they paid equal attention to the affairs of the world and the hereafter as explained by them. Because the world in the view of the prophets was only having the value of a preface; that is, it was the harvest field of the hereafter.

According to them it is possible to gain spiritual perfection and success for the hereafter in this world. Therefore the prophets did not consider hereafter to be absolutely divorced from this world. On the contrary, they tried make worldly affairs as means to perfect the soul and to secure success in the Hereafter.

- [1.](#) Al-Kamil fit Tarikh, Vol. 2, Pg. 41.
- [2.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 69, Pg. 375.
- [3.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 69, Pg. 405.
- [4.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 173.
- [5.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 132.
- [6.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Saying 203.

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