

Allamah al-Hilli on Imamate in his Kashf al-Murad, Part 2

Translated by Karim Aghili

Abstract

An Imam who surpasses all people in every honourable quality whether it be knowledge, courage, piety, or wisdom, and who leads justly leads people and guides them towards morality is a blessing and grace of God. In Shi'i Islam, the concept of Imamate refers to the necessity of having a divinely-appointed leader who will lead the Islamic nation after the Prophet's death.

The previous part of this series displayed the responses to objections raised against Imamate from prominent scholar Allamah Hilli's *Kashf al-Murad*, expanded on from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* – the first treatise on Shi'i theology. *Kashf al-Murad* is one of the most widely read of Allamah al-Hilli's publications as it is the first commentary written on Allamah al-Tusi's work. This part continues with discussions on the proofs for the Imamate of Ali, his superiority to the companions, the Imamate of the eleven Imams after him, and rules concerning those opposed to his leadership.

The Sixth Issue: The Imam or successor after the Prophet is Ali

Al-Tusi: God said,

"Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle." (5:55).

The specific characteristics in this verse are combined only within Ali. [1](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: This is another proof for the Imamate of Ali, as God says,

"Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the

zakat (alms tax) while bowing down” (5:55).

This verse will be used as a proof and to draw a conclusion from it hinges on some premises:

The word *innama* (only) is used for restriction (hasr), which is affirmed both textually (naqlan) and rationally ('aqlan). All the Arab lexicographers are unanimous that it is used for restriction. As for the rational proof, since the word *innama*, is made up of *inna* (affirmation) and *ma* (negation); and its combining forms denote the same meanings in its compound form based on the principle of *istis-hab* (presumption of continuity)² and based on the unanimous agreement of the Arab lexicographers that *inna* and *ma* have the same meanings in their compound form. It is incorrect to assume that these two words denote the same meaning. They do not include those who are not mentioned in the verse and negate those who are mentioned. The meaning of *hasr* (restriction) refers to affirming those who are mentioned in the verse and negating those who are not mentioned.

The word '*wali*' (guardian) refers to a person who is most qualified to exercise authority (*tasarruf*)³, which is demonstrated by the lexicographers as seen in the following examples: A king is a guardian who has no guardian, or the avenger of blood, or the guardian of the one who is dead. Another example can be cited from Imam Ali, who said, "If any woman gets married without the permission of her guardian (*wali*), her marriage is invalid."⁴

"...the believers..." (5:5) refers to a few believers, because God characterizes them with such impeccability that they are exclusive to some of them. If the verse refers to all the believers, then the guardian (*wali*) and the one under the tutelage of the guardian (*mutawalli*) would have been one and the same; each of the believers would have been both the guardian and the one under the tutelage of the guardian.

Given the above-mentioned premises, we conclude that:

1. It is Ali who is intended in this verse, because it is unanimously agreed that those who allocate the verse to some of the believers say that what is intended by some of the believers is surely Ali. Therefore, interpreting the verse as referring to someone other than him would amount to a violation of the consensus.⁵
2. Either Ali is the only one meant or he is part of it. The latter has been refuted.
3. All the commentators of the Qur'an agree that Ali is indicated in this verse, because it was revealed when he gave his ring in charity to a beggar while bowing down during prayer.

Al-Tusi: The repeatedly and widely transmitted Hadith (tradition) of Ghadir.

Allamah al-Hilli: The Hadith of Ghadir is another proof for the Imamate of 'Ali. It is reported that the Prophet said on the Day of Ghadir when he returned from the Farewell Pilgrimage: "O Muslims, do I not have a greater claim [more authority] on you than you have on yourselves?" They said, "Yes." Then he

said, "For whomever I am his master, Ali is his master. O God, be the friend of whoever is Ali's friend and the enemy of whoever is 'Ali's enemy; love whoever loves 'Ali and hate whoever hates him; help whoever helps him and forsake whoever forsakes him."⁶

This tradition has been narrated by all the Muslims as an authenticated hadith, although there is difference as to whether it indicates the Imamate of 'Ali.

The Imamate of 'Ali in this hadith is proven with the word "mawla," which means having a greater authority (awla'). In the beginning of the hadith "O Muslims, do I not have a greater claim on you than you have on yourselves?" indicates this meaning. And with regard to both linguistic convention ('urf al-lughah) and usage of mawla, the word mawla has been repeatedly used as it is used in the verse: **"[Your abode is] the Fire: That is the proper place to claim you."**⁷ that is, it has a greater claim on them.

Al-Akhtal, the Loquacious⁸, also says using the word mawla: "You became its master (mawla)⁹ from among all the people. It is more befitting that the Quraysh should revere you and praise God."

The Arabs also use the word mawla with the same meaning:

The master (mawla) of the slave ('abd) refers to a person who is worthier of having authority (tasarruf) or control (tadbir) over the slave.

Mawla is a homonym shared by certain meanings, none of which is intended here except awla, or 'having a greater authority'.

Either only awla or other meanings of the word mawla are intended; it is not possible that awla is not intended, because the meaning 'having greater authority' truly applies to the word mawla in this hadith.

Al-Tusi: The widely transmitted Hadith al-Manzilah (Hadith of Rank).

Allamah al-Hilli: Another proof for the Imamate of Ali is the following hadith, Hadith al-Manzilah: "O 'Ali, your rank (al-manzilah) in relation to me is that of Aaron to Moses except that there shall be no prophet after me"¹⁰. Though this hadith is mutawatir by the Muslim scholars, there are differences as to whether it refers to the Imamate of Ali.

10

All the positions of Aaron in relation to Moses are possessed by 'Ali in relation to the Prophet, because the view that only one position is intended in the hadith is refuted here, because the word al-manzilah is a common or generic noun designating a whole kind or genus. Moreover, the reason for this refutation is that exception (istithna) is characterized by plurality (al-kathrah) and generality; and non-generality (ghayr al-'umum) is not intended in the hadith because of the excluding exception (al-istithna al-mukhrij), which excludes the thing excepted (al-muthtathna) from the general term, i.e., that from which

the exception is made (*al-muthtathna minh*). If it had not been for the exception, the rank of prophethood would have been necessarily included.

An example can be given of a number. If one says: "I owe him twenty pounds except one, that from which the exception is made is 19 and that which is accepted is one." The main point is that the rank of prophecy is not shared by Imam 'Ali, and one who holds that plurality without generality intended in this hadith is rejected because all the ranks of Aaron are intended. If it had not been for the excluding exception, it would not have been possible to understand what was meant by the hadith. One of the ranks of Aaron was the succession to Moses after him if he had lived after Moses, as he was rightfully the successor to Moses during his life. [11](#)

Al-Tusi: Ali was appointed by the Prophet as his deputy in Medina in which Muslim scholars unanimously agree on.

Allmah al-Hilli: The Prophet appointed Ali as his deputy in Medina, although the hypocrites spread false rumours about this. When Ali heard them, he went to the Prophet and said, "O messenger of God, the hypocrites thought you had appointed me as your deputy because you found me to be a burden and wanted to get rid of me." The Prophet said, "These people are liars. I left you in Medina to represent me in my absence. So return and continue to be my deputy. Are you not content to be to me what Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no prophet after me?" [12](#) His deputyship in Medina continued; no one else became the deputy of the Prophet in Medina. It is unanimously agreed that whenever the deputyship of the others in Medina was renounced, by the same token their deputyship in other cities was renounced as well. Ali's task as a representative was established.

Some may object by saying that the Prophet appointed a group as deputies in Medina and other cities; however, they are not Imams from Shi'a point of view. The Prophet deposed some of his deputies during his lifetime, and no one among the Shi'as and the Sunnis believed in the Imamate of the others who had not been deposed except in the Imamate of 'Ali, rendering Ali as distinguished from others.

Al-Tusi: The Prophet said, "You are my brother, executor, and the successor after me; and the judge in my religion." [13](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: This hadith is an explicit specification on the authority and succession of 'Ali.

Al-Tusi: After the Prophet, Ali was the most meritorious (*al-afdal*) in the Muslim community, and the Imamate of one who is less meritorious is rationally unacceptable. [14](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali was more meritorious than the others, and therefore he deserved to be the Imam, because the preference of the unqualified over the qualified is irrational.

Al-Tusi: Because of Ali's miracles, such as pulling the gate of Khaybar off its hinges [15](#), conversing with a snake [16](#), lifting a rock from the mouth of the well [17](#), fighting the jinn [18](#), sending back the sun [19](#) and so

forth, he is true in his claim to the Imamate.

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali worked many miracles; thus he alone is entitled to Imamate. He is true in his claim.

What is widely transmitted is that he opened the gate of Khaybar, while seventy strong men could not put it back in place;

He conversed with a snake on the pulpit of Kufah. He asked Imam 'Ali a question. The Imam said that he was one of the rulers of the jinn, whom a case had confused, and the Imam gave him the answer;

When he headed toward Siffin, a terrible thirst came upon his followers, and he ordered them to dig a well near a hermitage. There they found a big rock they were unable to remove. Then Ali dismounted his horse and pushed it many yards away. The water then gushed out and they quenched their thirst.

Afterwards, Ali returned it back where it had been. During this moment, someone was observing this and approached Ali to embrace Islam. When Ali asked him what prompted him to become a Muslim, replied, "This hermitage was built to seek out the one who would remove that rock for water to gush out from underneath. A long time passed and those who had lived in this hermitage before me did not attain that knowledge."²⁰

Imam Ali fought the jinn and killed a large number of them when they intended to harm the Prophet when he set out against Banu al-Mustaliq. He also sent back the sun twice²¹. These and many other well-known events indicate the truth of the one who worked these miracles.

As for the second premise, widely transmitted because no one doubts that he claimed the Imamate after the Prophet.

Al-Tusi: Because of the previous unbelief of the others except Ali, they are not qualified for the Imamate²², therefore he is appointed for the Imamate.

Allmah al-Hilli: This is another proof for the Imamate of 'Ali; except him, those for whom the Imamate is claimed, such as Abbas and Abu Bakr, were unbelievers before the advent of the Prophet. Therefore, they are not qualified for the Imamate as God says: **"My pledge does not extend to the unjust" (2: 124)**. What is intended by "pledge" here is the pledge of the Imamate, because it is the answer to the supplication of Prophet Abraham.

Al-Tusi: According to the verse: **"...and be with the Truthful.."** (9: 119).

Al-Hilli: This is another proof for the Imamate of Ali²³, and it is the verse: **"O you who have faith Bewary of Allah, and be with the Truthful (9: 119)**. God commands being with the truthful, and this is a quality of the infallible; no one except him is known to be truthful, and it is unanimously agreed that there was no infallible except Ali after the demise of the Prophet.

Al-Tusi: According to the verse: **"...those vested with authority among you..."**²⁴

Allamah al-Hilli: This is another proof for the Imamate of 'Ali:

"O you who have faith Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you" (4:59).[25](#)

He commanded following and obeying those vested with authority, and what is intended by *ulu' amr* (those vested with authority) are the infallible ones, because no one else except the infallible one has the superiority (*awlawayyah*) which necessarily requires obeying him, and it is unanimously agreed that there was no one infallible except 'Ali after the demise of the Prophet.

Al-Tusi: According to the Qur'an: ***'...those vested with authority among you'***[26](#)

Al-Hilli: This is another proof for the Imamate of Ali. God says, "O you who have faith ***Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you***" (4:59).[27](#)

He commanded people to follow and obey *ulu' amr* (those vested with authority) indicating that they are the infallible ones, since no one other than an infallible possesses superiority (*awlawayyah*) that necessarily requires obeying him. And it is unanimously agreed that none other than Ali was infallible except Ali after the demise of the Prophet.

[1.](#) al-'Umdah, p. 167; al-Ghadir, vol. 2, pp. 47–52–53 and 59.

[2.](#) Translator's note: Juristically, *istishab* applies in a situation where a person was in a state of certainty about a certain state of affairs, and then doubts whether or not that state of affairs still holds true. The principle dictates that a person assume that state of affairs still holds true.

[3.](#) Translator's note: *Wilayat al-tasarruf* means the possession of authority which thereby entitles the wali (one who is more entitled to exercise authority) to act in whatever way he judges best, according to one's discretion, as a free agent in the management of the affairs of the community. The *wilayat al-tasarruf* can be exercised only by one so designated by al-wali al-mutlaq (the Absolute Authority–i.e., God) or by one who is explicitly appointed by the Prophet in the position of al-wali bi-al-niyabat (authority through deputation). Consequently, the Imam who is designated by the nass as wali possesses the *wilayat al-tasarruf* and is recognized as the ruler over the people.

[4.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 37, p. 239.

[5.](#) Tafsir (the Qur'anic commentary) of al-Thalabi in manuscript form, p. 74; *Manaqib* of ibn al-Maghazali, p. 311.

[6.](#) al-'Umdah, p. 139; *Manaqib* of Ibn al-maghazali, pp. 25–26; al-Ghadir, vol. 1, pp. 14–151.

[7.](#) The Qur'an, 57:15.

[8.](#) Poet of the Umayyad period (661–750), esteemed for his perfection of Arabic poetic form in the old Bedouin tradition.

[9.](#) the master of the tribe of Quraysh.

[10.](#) al-'Umdah, pp. 173–185; *Musnad* of Ahmad, vol. 3, p. 32; *Fada'il al-sahabah*, vol. 2, p. 633; al-Ghadir, vol. 1, p. 51, and vol. 3, pp. 197–201.

[11.](#) Other positions that can be understood from the Qur'an are indicated in the following verses:

"Be my vicegerent over my people."(7:123)

"Appoint for me a minister from my family: my brother Aaron".(20:14)

"Through him, strengthen me."(20:31)

"Make him a partner in my mandate."

Imam Ali holds the position of vicegerent, minister, aid and partner, except for prophethood.

- [12.](#) al-'Umdah, pp. 173–185; Musnad of Ahmad, vol. 1, p. 177, al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 199.
- [13.](#) al-Shafi fi'l-imamah, vol. 3, p. 76; Masadir Nahj al-balaghah, vol 1, pp. 121–151; al-Muraja'at, p. 223 cited from Kanz al-'ummal, Musnad of Ahmad etc.
- [14.](#) al-Shafi fi'l-imamah, vol. 1, p. 326; al-Dhakhirah, p. 429, al-Iqtisad, p. 190, Risalah fi'il-imamah, p. 431; Anwar al-malakut, p. 206; al-Lawami' al-ilahiyyah, p. 261.
- [15.](#) Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 21; Tahqiq of Muhammad Abu'l-Fadl Ibrahim vol. 20; al-Irshad of al-Mufid, pp. 175–177; Tarjamat al-Imam 'Ali; Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, vol. 1, p. 156–226, nos. 218–290.
- [16.](#) Madinat al-ma'ajiz, vo. 2, pp. 40–41.
- [17.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 21; Tahqiq of Muhammad Abu'l-Fadl, vo. 20, al-Irshad of al-Mufid, p. 175.
- [18.](#) Madinat al-ma'ajiz, vol. 2, pp. 64–66; al-Bihar, vol. 39, pp. 175–177 cited from al-Manaqib, al-Irshad of al-Mufid; al-Kharaj, and Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, vol. 2, p. 361, no. 862.
- [19.](#) Fath al-bari fi sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 6, p. 168; al-Sawa'iq al-muriqah, p. 128; al-'Umdah, p. 435 nos. 665–666; al-Sirat al-halabiyyah, vol. 3, p. 44; Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, vol. 2, p. 283 no. 807; al-Ghadir , vol. 3, pp. 126–141.
- [20.](#) He later was martyred as a follower of 'Ali in the Battle of Siffin in Syria.
- [21.](#) al-Irshad of al-Mufid, pp. 181–183; al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah, p. 128; Tarjamat al-Imam 'Ali, Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, vo. 2, pp. 283–306, al-Manaqib of al-Khwarazmi, p. 306; Yanabi' al- mawaddah of al-Qanduzi, p. 138–139; Waq'ah Siffin, pp. 151–152, 1st ed. Cairo.
- [22.](#) al-'Umdah of Ibn al-Batriq, pp. 222 and 416; Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 6, pp. 143–144, Matabi' al- shu'ab, Beirut, 1378; al-Shafi fi'l-imamah, vol. 3, pp. 137–142, al-Ghadir, vol. 7, pp. 306–329.
- [23.](#) Shawahid al-tanzil of al-Hakim al-Haskani , vol. 1, p. 341, al-hadith 350–357; al-Durr al-manthur of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, vo. 4, p. 316.
- [24.](#) The Qur'an, 4: 59
- [25.](#) Shawahid al-tanzil of al-Hakim al-Haskani, vol. 1, p. 189, al-hadith 202, 203 and 204.
- [26.](#) The Qur'an, 4:59.
- [27.](#) Shawahid al-tanzil of al-Hakim al-Haskani, vol. 1, p. 189, al-hadith 202, 203 and 204.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol-16-no-1-spring-2015/allamah-al-hilli-imamate-his-kashf-al-murad-2/allamah-al#comment-0>