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<u>Home</u> > <u>Investigations And Challenges</u> > <u>Chapter 13: The Mutual Relationship between the People and the Government (Part 4) > Questions and Answers</u>

Chapter 13: The Mutual Relationship between the People and the Government (Part 4)

A Review of the Discussion in the Previous Session

The subject discussed in the previous session and about which there was a discourse as far as the time permitted was the relationship between the people and the government from the viewpoint of Islam. The summary of the previous discussion was that this issue can be examined in two methods: one in the form of a historical approach and another in an analytical method.

In the historical method, this issue is examined—in the Muslim world, how the relationship of those who have governed in the name of Islam with the people has been; similarly, in the Western world, how the relationship of those who have governed with non–Islamic ideologies has been.

We have stated that unfortunately, in both the Muslim world and the Western world, there are abundant criticisms and problems. We all know that only a few decades had passed after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) when there were those who used to govern under the name of succession [khilafah] to the Prophet (S) and even in the name of vicegerency of God and did things which were rare even in a non-religious government. The works the Umayyads and after them the 'Abbasids did only show the absence of the Islamic government, but they were rulers in the name of Islam anyway.

Therefore, if anyone wants to examine the government's relationship with the people from the perspective of the history of Muslims, he will naturally not arrive at good results. This is because the government's relationship with the people in almost all cases has been that of a master–servant relationship. Of course, sometimes at the margin there had been some movements and to some extent the laws and values of Islam had been raised, but generally the government's relationship with the people, like all monarchial systems, was a master–servant relationship.

One could hardly find the distinct difference between the government of the Umayyads, Marwanites and 'Abbasids and that of the Persian kings and Roman emperors. Even the outward forms of the acts had

reached a point wherein those who governed as the successors of the Prophet (S) had an assembly of impolite singing, drinking of forbidden drinks and carousal, and the same practices had been used to be done in courts of other kings.

In relation to the people, they did not refrain from committing oppression whether against Muslims or non–Muslims. Under the name of Islam, they started to pursue expansionism and conquering countries. Instead of behaving with the people on the basis of the ordinances of Islam and invite and guide them to the divine religion, they fought with them under the pretext of being infidels; they thus killed them and took as captives their wives and daughters and became a source of ignominy for Muslims.

The bitter memories of these military expeditions still remain in the minds of many and have become the source of abnormalities in the relations between Muslims and Christians. Nowadays, one can witness an example of such frictions in the events in the Balkans. In any case, historically we are not satisfied with the relationship between the governments that used to govern under the name of Islam and their people, and we have no proof to acquit them either. We have no proof or motive to present them as the original and real examples of the Islamic government. Similarly, there were those in the West who used to govern under the name of Christianity and were not behind these and perhaps worse than these. Those who launched the Wars of Crusades or those who formed the Inquisition were no better than the other kings.

Therefore, the examination of the government–people relationship from the ideological viewpoint of Islam or the Western ideological viewpoint through the study and examination of the actual and empirical examples of the governments that claim to be Islamic or democratic is not a proper method and the discussion will arrive at no conclusion. What can be concluded from these examinations is what has happened in the government of those who have ruled under the name of Islam and what relationship has existed between them and the people, or what has transpired in the government of those who have ruled under the name of Christianity in the West and what relationship has existed between them and their people as well as what happened during that time until it ended to the period of Renaissance and then to the period of modernity and the contemporary time in which the liberalist thought is dominant.

A Comparison of the Mutual Relationship between the People and the Government in Islam and the West a Descriptive Approach

Meanwhile, the other method in examining the government-people relationship is the analytical one; that is, to examine what the intellectual and theoretical foundations of Islam or the intellectual and theoretical foundations of the West require. Of course, we have to bear in mind that in the West there have been no fixed intellectual foundations for the past fourteen centuries. Many developments have happened in the history of the Western thought, while we regard the Islamic thought as fixed. Differences of opinion on

some secondary matters have come up but the principles and foundations have not changed. Today, the Islamic thought about politics and government is the same that existed during the time of the Holy Prophet (S), and what we know as Islam is that which comes from the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and the life conduct [*sirah*] of the Prophet (S).

If we want to compare the theory of Islam with that of the West, it must be specified with which part of the Western thought we want to compare. Do we want to compare with Christianity which has been expelled for centuries from the page of social life in the West, from the political scene in particular? Should we compare the ideas during the Renaissance and after it, i.e. the period of modernity and postmodernism with Islam? What is most asked is the latter part; that is, if we want to compare Islam with the West, we have to do so with the present West and not with the West thousands of years or many centuries ago. That discussion does not have much use for us. Today, the dominant idea in the Western political and social circles is the liberalist thought. Therefore, it is better for us to compare these two thoughts, viz. Islam and liberalism.

The liberalist thought is dealt with in the form of democracy in the political and administrative scene. The origin of liberalist thought is an extensive one that covers the different economic, political, moral, legal, and other domains, but in the political domain, it is portrayed more in the form of democracy. The intellectual foundations of democracy are not identical with that of liberalism, but nowadays these two have practically become synonyms? Wherever the government is democratic, it is based on the liberalist ideas, and vice versa. For this reason, in our comparative discussion, we will tackle this issue what relationship between the government and the people the Islamic thought chooses and reciprocally, what relationship between the government and the people the liberalist–democratic thought prefers.

The Government People Relationship in Western Thought

First, we will take a look at Western thought. In the Western thought, "God" is absolutely not discussed. It does not mean that it is negated. (For, sometimes they criticize the statement that Western thought is atheistic for there are also many faithful people there. We do not deny this fact.) What is meant is that in this totality of ideas, from the foundations to its superstructures, nowhere is it said that one should believe in God and divine revelation, observe the religious law, and make the laws of God prevail in politics, society, ethics, and other domains. In liberalist thought, belief in God is not a great deal.

Even if a person believes in God, it is mentioned merely as a personal communion with God for, in the realms of politics, society, law, and social rights and relations there is no room for God, religious law and religion. This is the meaning of secularism. Of course, among the seculars there may be believers in God and they go to church, but their religiosity is only their personal and emotional relationship with their Lord, and has no relation to their sociopolitical affairs.

That we say, "The dominant thinking in the West at the present (that is the same liberalist thought) is an atheistic thought," means the absence of religion. In such an outlook, politics, man and all values

mentioned for him have emanated from man himself, and the originator of values is man. Therefore, in this outlook a place for God and the Hereafter has not been taken into consideration. If ever there are those who have liberalist thought believe in God and the Resurrection, this belief of theirs has no influence on the organization of their social relations and it is regarded as a totally personal affair.

The humanist thought had been advanced centuries ago (more than 25 centuries ago) by the Sophists in ancient Greece. They used to regard man as the barometer of everything including ideological, political, legal, moral, and other issues. Its simple formula is that whatever the people accept and vote for is credible; and nothing has credibility unless it is accepted by people, be it in the spheres of law, ethics, or social matters. If ever we say, "So-and-so is credible," it is because the people say so. If we also say, "It is not credible," it is because the people say so.

For this reason, it is possible that a certain thing is credible in one society but not in another society, because the people of the former society accept it while the people of the latter do not accept it. So, the only criterion is the vote, wish, acceptance, and will of the people. And since acceptance differs among people, it naturally follows that values will become relative. The first outcome of the West's humanist thought is that we can never talk about a universal and fixed value because we know that the tastes of people differ from one another. Based on this perspective, to talk about all–encompassing universal values has no logical underpinning unless someone says that some values are common in all societies and have been accepted by all peoples.

Of course, the existence or nonexistence of such values is questionable and worthy of reflection. A simple example which is usually cited is that everybody accepts that truthfulness or honesty is good, but this claim is not true and this case is not acceptable to some others, such as the Marxists who explicitly declare that truthfulness or honesty is actually not always good.

The Marxists used to say that stealing is not always bad; rather, it may be good sometimes. If there is a time when stealing has effect on the establishment of the communist system and the dominance of the proletariats over the bourgeoisies, in this case it is good, because the end justifies the means. The objective is to make supreme the "modern level" system in the world and all people equal in terms of class distinction. Whatever assists in the realization of this objective is valuable. If one day the means of realization of this objective is to steal, there is nothing wrong with it.

Of course, nowadays, nobody explicitly says so, but there are those who believe in it in practice. In the name of freedom, in the name of peace and in the name of human rights, they do things that the natural human disposition abhors. They commit the most grievous crimes against humanity, yet they name it human rights advocacy. One of its most vivid manifestations can be witnessed in the Occupied Palestine. Although the most horrendous and grievous crimes have been committed there against humanity for many years, we can see that the powerful states in the world who are alleged defenders of human rights and are at loggers with the entire world over this issue are totally supporting Israel. Outwardly, they say that peace is good and human rights are preeminent and respectable, but they say

so while they in practice do not believe in it.

First Criticism to this Theory

Our first criticism to them is that based on this notion that all "musts and must-nots" as well as values whether in the domain of law (including civil law, penal law, international law, commercial law, and all other branches) or in the domain of ethics depend on the will, acceptance and approval of the people, we cannot have fixed values in the whole world and expect all people to accept a certain value from us. The first outcome is that we should strike a red line over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

So, to say that everybody must acknowledge human rights because the Declaration deals on universal values is idle talk. Based on their notion, have they not said that values are based on the will of the people? Therefore, if some people do not approve this declaration, rejecting it, and their taste is something else, what is the reason that this declaration acquires universal value and must be imposed upon everybody? If one day certain people accepted and approved this declaration but the next day changed their mind, why should they be compelled to follow it? Have they not claimed that values are in accordance with the will of the people? Thus, if one day (the people of) a state decided to approve the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but after sometime, they changed their decision, saying, "We are in regret and from now on, we do not accept it," what is your right to condemn them and take into consideration punishments for them?

Second Criticism

Secondly, based on this outlook, you have to grant right to the people to regard their choice as respectable whenever they change their mind, while this issue has repercussions to which no country or government is bound, and none of those who have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could abide by it. Among these repercussions is that if a group of people in a country living in a province, a city, or even a village say, "We want to live independently and to have independence on sociopolitical issues," no country can have any right to hinder them because it is the will of the people.

Yet, is this observed in practice? Many wars in the Balkans and other parts of the world have occurred because the people of those regions said, "We want to be independent." So, why do the claimants of sovereignty on the basis of the will of people not pay heed to these people?! No state, as much as it can, will permit a section of its people to gather and form a separate state. This is while the intellectual foundation of the West does not permit so, and in fact, they have to submit to the will of the people.

They had been saying, "We want to have a single state." But now, they want to have two separate states. In consonance with the foundation of liberal democracy, one should yield to the will of the people. In practice, however, wherever this music is played, under the pretext of insurrection and that a number of troublemakers are planning to disintegrate the country and endanger the national independence and territorial integrity, the central government suppresses them. Based on the intellectual foundation of the

liberal democrats, this should not be done. Yet, according to another foundation, we may grant such a right to the states and governments, but based on the thought acceptable to the West, they have no right to hinder the realization of the will of the people whatever it is.

Third Criticism

The third criticism to this way of thinking is that if one day the people changed their choice, saying, "Yesterday, we voted for so-and-so. Today, we realized that we were wrong," or "Yesterday, we wanted that thing, and today we want another thing and to change our vote," they are supposed to be able to do so. Yet, nowhere in the world are such people given that permission. It is said to them, "You were supposed to be aware from the very beginning."

To claim that "They deceived us," or "We were mistaken," or "We wanted it yesterday but now we do not like it" is not acceptable. The question is: What hinders the people if yesterday they wanted something and cast their votes on the basis of it but now they want to retrieve it? They say, "It is the law." But the crux of the matter is exactly here. The law is anchored in the will of the people and the same people say that they do not like it. Does this thought not claim that if a people approve a law, the following day they have the right to amend it?! Everywhere in the world, it is said that even the constitution is amendable.

What does it mean by amendable? It means that yesterday the people ratified this constitution and tomorrow they will say, "We do not accept it." If the people have such a right, why if one day they voted for a president but tomorrow they have no right to say, "We do not like him?" In reply to this question, it may be said that during the presidential election it is said that to whomever you will vote for shall be the president for two, four or seven years, and on the basis of that they have cast their votes. The reply is that such was their will on that day and today they like another thing, and based on the liberalist thought the criterion is the will of the people.

Fourth Criticism

The fourth criticism is this: Where can you find in the world a place in which the will of the people is a hundred percent identical and one?! In all countries there are always minorities. Perhaps it is unprecedented in the world the formation of a government like the Islamic Republic of Iran in which ninety-eight percent of the people voted for it, but this high percentage still means that a small percent of the people did not accept it. If the criterion is the vote of the people, what shall be done in this case with respect to them who do not accept the law or the government? When two percent is faced with the ninety-eight percent, in practice they are forced to yield and can do nothing. Yet, this is something which your theory is not conforming with. If the criterion is the will of the people, it follows that these minorities have a right to form a government of its own.

In reply to this criticism, the liberal democrats argue, "We do observe the rights of the minorities under

the aegis of democracy." It is however clear that this answer is wrong because these people labeled as "minority" do not want the essence of this government. Ten percent of the people say, "We do not like this government at all," and yet you say to them, "We will observe your rights under the aegis of this government!" Those people do not like the basis of this government. Does the credibility of this government not depend on the votes of the people?! Is this group not part of the people?! This minority constitutes ten percent of these people and they say, "We do not like you," and still you make this promise: "We respect the minority," but the government runs on the basis of the will of the majority.

Therefore, in the democratic government the will of the minority remains unanswered, and for the minority to submit to the majority while keeping view of the basis that the criterion is the will of the people has no logical justification. If the minority says, "We do not like this government" and assuming that the credibility of this government depends on the vote of the people, what right do you have to oppose it?

These and similar criticisms have no logical answers and are true with respect to this theory. The last answer they will give is this: "We do not know a better way and in the evolution of theory on the government and its form, we have reached the point that liberal democracy is the best form of government."

A Summary of the Criticisms to this Theory

In any case, there is a series of logical criticisms and objections which have still remained unanswered. Regarding the criticism of the intellectual foundation of liberal democracy, hundreds of books have been written by the Westerns themselves. If a government based on such an idea is formed, these contradictions exist there, among which is that the minority must be oppressed! It is their right not to approve this government but it is imposed on them. This basis requires that if tomorrow the vote of the people for their elected officials changes, it shall have credibility. If today they vote for a president and tomorrow they say, "We do not like him," this must be given importance because the vote is the vote of the people and their will. Yet, is such a thing possible? Naturally, no one will do such a thing because in this case the government will experience many instabilities and regarding everything, it should always be through a referendum as to whether the people want it or not.

It may be said that the representatives of the people come, cast their votes and enact laws. The problem with this is that the representatives themselves may change their votes. Today the representatives confirm something, and it happens frequently that they change their votes afterward. The law changes as easy as such. In addition, the main problem is this: If tomorrow the people reject these representatives and their enacted laws, what should be done?

These fundamental problems exist in this way of thinking and it has no logical answer. Here, the relationship between the people and the government changes into a relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor in numerous cases. Even according to this very outlook, in many cases the right of the people is not given to them while their votes and views have no bearing at all. In some cases, very

The Government-People Relationship in the Islamic Thought

Meanwhile, according to the Islamic thought, the basis of the rights, laws and values is the real interests of human beings and the one who is aware of all those interests is God the Exalted. As such, God acquires the right to sovereignty over man. On the other hand, He is the Creator of all human beings. The entire universe belongs to Him and all human beings are owned by Him. He thus has the right to enact laws for His creatures. What right can I whose eyes, hands, life, existence, intellect, and common sense belong to Him have over Him except that which He grants to me?!

According to such an outlook, all those criticisms and objections will find logical answers and justifications. Concerning personal ownership, does anyone have no right to do whatever he likes to his property? You may fold a sheet of paper which belongs to you and put it in your pocket, or write something on it with a pencil or ball pen, or give it to someone, or draw on it, or solve a mathematical problem on it. You may do whatever you like to do with it because it is yours. None can complain to you, saying, "Why did you write on it with a pencil?" or "Why did you write on it with a ball pen?" or "Why did you draw on it?" or any other "why" because it is yours and you wanted to do what you did to it. Does ownership mean other than this?!

Once we accept that everything belongs to God, there is no more point in asking this question: "Why has God enacted such laws?" God is not in need of such laws. Whatever law He enacts is for your and my interests.

So, on one hand, we believe that the criterion of credibility and backing for the value of law is a real affair, and they are the good and bad things existing in a subject. On the other hand, the one who has the right to bid and forbid human beings must be their Owner and such a being is no other than God the Exalted. Therefore, God Who knows what is good and bad better than all, and He is the Absolute Owner of man and the world, has the right to do whatever He likes to them. Of course, all these utilizations and expropriations are meant for the interests of man and God does not acquire any benefit.

In some cases, the people themselves need to enact rules and regulations under certain circumstances. In such cases, God has given the authority of legislation in a certain way and to specified individuals. They are those who know the divine values better than the rest. Similarly, they possess the necessary God-wariness [taqwa] so as not to sacrifice these values before the altar of personal interests, and have the needed talents in ratifying and implementing the laws in the realms of individual and social affairs.

These individuals are no other than the jurists [fuqaha']. The jurist–guardian [wali al-faqih] is the person to whom God the Exalted grants the right to enact unfixed laws and decrees and bestow religious and legal credibility to them, and it is incumbent upon others to act upon those laws. Who has the right to order that obedience to those laws and the jurist–guardian is obligatory? It is God Who has created man,

this jurist-guardian and the entire earth and heavens. This theory has no logical loophole.

God the Exalted can enact numerous general and universal values because there may be good things which are identical for the whole mankind. Are all humans not identical in terms of humanness? So, they may have common interests. One set of these interests is related to the humanity of man, and as such, so long as man is human, these interests are fixed and permanent.

Hence, the existence of absolute and fixed values in the human society is possible. Also, the global culture can exist only on the basis of such an outlook. In a sense, we are followers of a universal culture, but this universal culture which shall be established on the basis of the real human values through the hands of Mahdi ('a) is different from the values which should be imposed on others on the basis of the whims and caprice of some great powers.

The result is that these fixed and absolute values can exist under two conditions: (1) They must be related to the humanity of man, and (2) they must be conveyed by God. With these two conditions, we can have fixed and absolute values, and the culture, which should be established on the basis of these values, can become the universal culture. For example, the universal culture means that all people worship the One and Only God. Our ultimate dream is that such a day will pass:

It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse. (9:33)

The value–system of this universal culture is not subservient to the will of the people: "...though the polytheists should be averse." That is, it is not subservient to the pleasure and displeasure of others. Even in the presence of aversion of the polytheists, this religion will reign supreme and spread its values. This is the promise given by God and it will certainly be fulfilled. Based on the Western outlook, there is no sense that a value is against the will of the people. Based on the divine outlook, values which are actually meant for the real interests of the human beings are determined by God. Of course, some cultural elements and particles are not necessarily universal. We do not expect them to be so, nor does Islam want so.

It may be asked, "What does it mean to say that Islam brings about the universal culture? Does it mean that all should speak in a certain manner, have one script and language, and have uniform customs and ways of living?" Generally, the answer is negative. The universal culture we mean pertains to the moral principles of the culture and is expressed in its beliefs and values, but not on the customs and traditions. Most of customs and traditions are conventional. The manner of speaking is conventional. You speak Persian here but once you go to an Arab country, you have to talk in Arabic. Yet, will your identity change? When you go to an English–speaking country, you have to talk in English. Does your identity

change in this situation? No, because they have no role in the true identity of man.

The said universal culture is based on beliefs and values that make the true identity of man. This cultural unity is preserved through the conventional elements of culture. The cultural unity of society depends on its unity of beliefs and values. The diversity of conventional affairs under discussion includes the customs and traditions, and the different life conditions which are consistent with geographical, environmental, genetic, and so many other factors. There is nothing wrong at all in this diversity on conventional affairs. Islam does not want to eliminate this diversity. What is seriously given importance by Islam is to focus on the real beliefs and values which are actually the edifice of culture.

According to the Islamic outlook, the people's relationship with the government is that of the implementer of the laws of God with the rest of His servants. All people, including the ruler and the subject, are equal in servitude and none is different from the rest except in the level of God-wariness. All of them observe the same law and in the eyes of the law, the president is no different than the lowest of people.

Actual examples of this equality can be observed during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful ('a) cases even one example of which cannot be found in all the cultures of the world and all human societies. 'Ali ('a) who was the ruler of a magnificent Islamic empire encompassing Egypt, Sham,2 Iraq, Hijaz,3 and Iran as far as Marv and some parts of the Central Asian countries, came and presented himself before a judge whom he himself appointed. He had a legal dispute with a person belonging to a religious minority on matters of law and they agreed to go to the judge.

The ruler of a country or let us say, the president of a federal country with such a magnificence had a dispute with a subject belonging to the Jewish minority of his own government and both of them referred to the court for judgment. The judge said, "O Abu'l–Hasan [Father of Hasan]! What can you say?" 'Ali ('a) said, "Why did you say 'Abu'l–Hasan,' while you addressed this Jew by his name? You should not have addressed me by my epithet (which shows respect and appreciation). This is discriminating!" Once you addressed him by his name and said, for example, 'Ya'qub,' you have to address me also as 'Ali. You have no right to say Abu'l–Hasan. Even that amount of respect (by addressing a person by his epithet) from the viewpoint of 'Ali will lead to differentiation and discrimination. This is while that place is the presence of judgment and locus of the implementation of justice, and the two parties must be equal and treated equally.

We are very interested in the fact that someone can show us an example of this justice in a certain part of the world. This is the Islamic government's relationship with the people.

Of course, it is necessary to point out that here it deals with the theory and its consistency with its actual manifestations. And we have no claim whatsoever with respect to the so-called "Islamic" governments, for many of them have become directionless and deviants. We are talking about the theory in Islam. Just as we talked about the Western theory, we have no business with their activities. In this theory, all

individuals, even the ruler himself and one of the Infallibles ('a), are equal before the law. The station and greatness of an infallible Imam ('a) and a personage like 'Ali ('a) can never be discernible for individuals like us. In spite of it, when he had a dispute with a minority living under the protection of Islam, he would not talk in a position of strength and authority. He rather referred to a judge whom he himself had appointed. There in the court, when the judge showed the least respect to him (by calling him by his epithet), he complained to the judge and said, "You have no right to call me by my epithet while calling my adversary by his name. You either call us by our names or call us by our respective epithets!" This the government–people relationship based on the Islamic outlook.

Questions and Answers

Question: Please, explain about the statements of the eminent Imam (*r*) when he said that the vote of the people is the basis or 'The criterion is the vote of the people' and when he said that we overthrew the monarchial government based on the vote of the people.

Answer: The famous statement of the eminent Imam (*r*), 'The criterion is the vote of the nation' has a continuation which is usually not quoted. The Imam said, "The criterion is the vote of the nation and the nation wants Islam." Therefore, the emphasis of the eminent Imam is on the populism of this government which has been established in the name of Islam. In other words, in countering the propaganda of the Global Arrogance against our government that it is a government of force, a government of coup d'état and not accompanied by the will of the people, the eminent Imam emphasized that the Islamic Republic is a government with the will of the people and a majority of ninety-eight percent has voted for it. The eminent Imam wanted to prove to the world that we did not impose the government on the people; rather, it was based on their will.

In any case, if an incorrect conclusion is deduced from this statement of the Imam (*r*), this is because of negligence of a very important point; namely, it is different to say, "The criterion of credibility, legality and legitimacy of this government is the vote of the people" from saying, "This government is consistent with the vote of the people; the criterion is the vote of the people." The meaning of the latter statement is that since the people have cast their vote for it and approved and demanded for this government, it is because of it that we are here governing them.

These two issues are different from each other. This is the same issue discussed in the philosophy of politics is the criterion of legitimacy the same acceptability of the people, or is the criterion of legitimacy something other than the acceptability? Detailed discussions in this regard have already been made and the correct viewpoint is that the criterion is the legislative will of God the Exalted. Of course, the activity of this government, which acquires its legitimacy from God the Exalted, is realized under the aegis of obedience and will of the people. Its vivid example is in the case of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) and his statement:

If people had not come to me (and paid allegiance to me), and supporters had not exhausted the argument [huijah], I would not have ruled...

I would have cast the (camel's) rope of caliphate on its own shoulders.4

This is a literary expression. Once the camel is set free and its rope is placed on its shoulders, it is no more a concern of the owner and it can now go wherever it wants. The Imam ('a) said: Had it not been for the will and allegiance of the people, I would have cast the camel's rope of caliphate on its own shoulders and set it free.

In our belief, the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) had been designated by God. 5 Thus, once he ruled, his government had legitimacy from God. But when was the argument exhausted for him and it became obligatory for him to rise up for the realization and setting up of the Islamic government? It was the moment when the people supported him. At the time when the people had not yet supported him, the argument was not yet exhausted. To say that prior to the support of the people, the argument for him was not yet exhausted means that he had the right to form the government but had no obligation to do so.

Based on the right granted to him by God, it was his right to rule and the legitimacy of his government originated from God but so long as the people did not pay allegiance to him, it was not obligatory for him to establish the government. When the people came and paid allegiance to him, promising to support him, the argument was then exhausted for him and it became incumbent upon him to take steps in setting up the Islamic government. His right to rule and its legitimacy have not emanated from the people; rather, based on firm and numerous proofs we have, God has given this right. Among these proofs is this statement of the Holy Prophet (S):

Of whosoever I am Master [mawla], then 'Ali is also his Master. 6

Therefore, when the eminent Imam (*r*) says, "The criterion is the vote of the people" and since the people wanted us to rule means that since the people wanted it, the argument was exhausted for me and thus, I have to come forward and endanger my life, be exiled for sometime, imprisoned, and even die, but move in order to establish the Islamic government. There was no distance between him and martyrdom. It was God's will that they changed their decision and banished him. They were afraid that

with the martyrdom of the Imam, a revolt throughout the country would occur which they would not be able to control. In fact, the decision of the regime was to martyr him on that very day of Khordad 15.7

Their fear and apprehension started when they saw that as the Imam began to deliver a speech, the people expressed their support. If it were like other reform movements which experienced the sluggishness or heedlessness of the people, the arguments would not have been exhausted for him. (It was like what happened to the late Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim in Iraq. He also initiated a movement but the Iraqis did not support him and as a result, Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Husayn became dominant while he was deeply afflicted, suffered from the failure and passed away. The argument was not exhausted for him because the people did not support him.) But the noble people of this country gave a positive reply to the call of the Imam. Thus, the argument was established for him.

The other point which can be put in connection with the statement of the eminent Imam is as follows: In the science of logic, there are two types of reasoning; one is called "proof" [burhan] while the other is "disputation" [jadal]. Both types of reasoning are correct, but depending on the discussion and situation, at a certain time we use one type while at another time, another. In the noble verse:

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best, (16:125)"

it is stated that apart from wisdom [hikmah] and good advice [maw'izah], one has to dispute [jadal] also. But it must be "in a manner that is best." That is, to dispute is one of the ways of inviting (others) to the way of the Lord, but it must be in the best manner. In the Qur'an, the two types of reasoning have been used. In proving religious instructions and conveying the truth, God the Exalted has reasoned out through proofs as well as disputation. In some verses, God the Exalted has resorted to disputation in refuting the belief of the polytheists and infidels. For example, He says:

Are you to have males and He females? That, then, will be an unfair division! (53:21-22)

The explanation is as follows: As you know, the Arabs hated their daughters while loving their sons very much. On the other hand, they believed that the angels are God's daughters. God thus reasons out and says to them: Why do you allot for yourselves the things you like and love, but you associate the things you do not like to God? What logic is this? This is an unjust division: *That, then, will be an unfair division!*" That is, this division is illogical and baseless.

Now, if they said that the angels are God's sons, was their statement correct and did they have right to say so?! It is obvious that the answer is negative. If this word of God the Exalted is a proof, they had a right to say so. Since the proof holds, "You associate to God that which you like," they say, "We like sons, so also do we believe the same for God." In this case, none could raise an objection.

Regarding the belief of the Christians that God has a son, the Qur'an says:

The heavens are about to be rent apart at it, the earth to split open, and the mountains to collapse into bits that they should ascribe a son to the All-beneficent! (19:90-91)

That is, the heavens are about to be rent apart and the earth to split open. Why? It is because the Christians believe that God has a son. Why does the Qur'an say that it is bad to say that God has a son? There it is the issue of disputation but here it is that of proof. Disputation means to talk with someone according to his basis.

When addressing the world and wishing to defend the legitimacy and rightfulness of the Islamic Republic, the Imam (*r*) also says, "Are you not saying that once the people cast their vote for it, the government has credibility? This government is legitimate based on the same foundation you accept because the people have voted for it." This is a question of disputation; that is, to prove a point based on the basis acceptable to the adversary though the same basis is not acceptable to the party. God said in the Qur'an that if a daughter is bad, why do you say that God has daughters?

This does not mean that once they say that God has sons, what they believe is right and what they say is correct because this is a question of disputation. Also, when the Imam spoke to you and me, he expressed himself in this manner: "By virtue of the guardianship vested in me by God, I do hereby appoint the Prime Minister." In all decrees issued by the Imam to the Presidents, he has either pointed out or stipulated that "I designate the President." If the criterion of credibility of the President is the vote of the people, what right has the Imam "to designate" him?

The Constitution stipulates that the jurist–guardian confirms the vote of the people, and does not say "designates the President." Yet, in all his decrees issued to every President, he has written: "I do hereby designate you," or "You are hereby designated." What does this mean? It means that what gives you legitimacy is my designation which is indirectly from God because I am designated by God. Therefore, in reply to this question, two points should be noted: One is the difference between acceptability and legitimacy while the other is the difference between reasoning by proof and reasoning by disputation.

Question: If one day the Islamic Republic, which is in accordance with the Islamic principles and has been materialized on the basis of them, is no more approved by the people and making a move against it they want to topple down this government, do we have to yield to it? What is our duty in this regard?

Answer: This question has been raised time and again and in different gatherings, and we have given reply to it, and it is also mentioned in the book on questions and answers. At any rate, in reply to this question, one of the ways is to refer to the life conduct of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). We all know that after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S), the Commander of the Faithful ('a) was supposed to assume the reign of government. Our belief is that he had the right but failed to get it because the people did not permit. We again know that after about twenty–three years he accepted to rule. Why? He himself said:

If people had not come to me, and supporters had not exhausted the argument... I would have cast the rope of caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one.8

That is, if until now I have no supporters, I will abandon the government, but as they gather around and paid allegiance to me, the argument has already been exhausted for me. Once I have supporters and I can establish the Islamic government, the argument is exhausted for me.9

Yet, sometime after the establishment of the Islamic government, some of the Companions and a cousin of 'Ali ('a) and those who had paid allegiance to him earlier than others initiated the Battle of the Camel. Talhah and Zubayr came to the Imam ('a), asking for their appointment as governors of Basrah and Kufah respectively. The Imam ('a) did not deem it appropriate to give them governorship. Following that event, they went to 'A'ishah, widow of the Prophet (S), brought her to Basrah and initiated the Battle of the Camel, the first battle against the government of 'Ali ('a). Mu'awiyah who was in Sham did not acknowledge the government of 'Ali ('a) either and prepared for war against him.

But how did the Commander of the Faithful ('a) behave with them? Did he say, "As this is what you want, come and let us share in the government. Iraq belongs to you. Hijaz belongs to me and Sham shall be in the hands of Mu'awiyah"? Under such circumstances, did 'Ali ('a) yield to these people? No, it was not so. Why? It is because the Islamic government had been established. The government of truth existed the government which was backed by the people. These people who had gone out of the Islamic state were dissidents and insurgents and 'Ali ('a) brandished his sword against them. During his rule, the Imam ('a) engaged in three battles against "those who broke their allegiance," "the deviants" and "those who missed the truth of the religion." He never said, "Come and let us sit together. Let us talk and make peace. Let us pacifically divide among ourselves the government and laugh together!"

The Imam ('a) drew his sword and as he said, "Verily, I have put out the eye of revolt, and did something which none could do except me (referring to the war with the Kharijites). 10 Imam 'Ali ('a) did not make peace with the Kharijites and conclude a peace treaty with them. Why? It is because the government of justice existed then and there were those who supported and followed the government of justice. Under such circumstances, one cannot submit to the enemies.

If one day history repeats itself and some people and groups want to rise up against the Islamic

government and dismember the Islamic state (who in this case are outside the pale of Islam and treated as insurgents), the Islamic ruler has no right to deal with them pacifically; rather, he has to defend the Islamic sovereignty in the entire territory of Islam and whole jurisdiction of the Islamic government. Yes, if the people are not on the scene and withdraw their support for the Islamic government, there is no point to insist on the preservation of the Islamic government because it is no more applicable and the government has no more supporters. If such circumstance occurs, as in the twenty-three year period of 'Ali's solitude, we have to be in solitude and suffer for failure. Of course, by solitude it does not mean being heedless of the government and for us to sit in a corner and shut the door.

In sum, in case of insurrection against the Islamic government and struggle to overthrow it, there are two situations: One is the existence of the Islamic government while the people voluntarily defend this government of truth. In this situation, it is incumbent upon everybody to struggle against the insurgents or secessionists. But if the people turn their backs or there is the leader of truth but he has no or not enough supporters to fight for the government of truth and its sovereignty, there is no obligation to maintain the government and keep the sovereignty through force and compulsion. Thus, the people have a pivotal role in the establishment of the government and so long as they support the government and leader of truth, the leader has to defend the jurisdiction of Islam, not yield to the secessionist movements and insurrections and not submit to the opponents. But if one becomes like Muslim, the envoy of the Doyen of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn ('a) in Kufah, without having any supporter and helper, what could be done?!

Therefore, the reply to the question is that if through the auspices of the support of the people the Islamic government was established (for, without the help and will of the people, the Islamic government will not be established), none has the right to engage in insurrection, sedition–mongering and secession after the establishment of the Islamic government. One has to wage war against those who will engage in those activities, and to fight them is one part of *jihad*. But if the people withdraw and reject the Islamic government except a few of them, there is no more argument for the leader and he has to withdraw.

Question: In reply to the previous question, you have said that after the establishment of the Islamic government, our duty is to preserve it, even though the people do not accept it. Now, the question is: What percent of the people shall be the criterion? If more than half of the people opposes, will the situation be the same, or will there be another one?

Answer: Quantity is not the criterion. The criterion is that the population who support the Imam or the legitimate jurist–guardian is such that they are able to preserve the government. Sometimes, the government can stand with only ninety percent of the people. At other times, it is possible with only eighty percent, or even fifty or forty. He is commissioned to preserve the government. If the individuals are so few that given that number they can no more preserve the government, the case will be like the time when the people had not yet paid allegiance to him and the argument had not yet been exhausted for him. There should be the existence of a helper and there should be someone who assists him in

preserving the government. If it was like the people of Kufah who dispersed from around Muslim ibn 'Aqil and deserted him, the Imam of the community could do nothing. So long as there are those who assist in preserving the central government of Islam, the duty of the Islamic ruler is to preserve the government and in this connection, the criterion is not quantity.

- 1. Sometime ago, it was reported in the news that a religious sect in America committed suicide in accordance with their faith and burned themselves. However, it was revealed later that it was committed by the government and they had been burned in arson.
- 2. Sham included today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. [Trans.]
- 3. Hijaz: the region in Western Arabia bordering the Red Sea that includes Ta'if, Mecca and Medina. [Trans.]
- 4. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 3 (Shiqshiqayah). [Trans.]
- 5. Among the proofs substantiating the designation of Imam `Ali ibn Abi–Talib ('a) to leadership of the Muslim community after the Holy Prophet (S) is the Verse of Conveyance [ayat at–tabligh] revealed during the event at Ghadir Khumm and addressed to the Holy Prophet (S):

- "O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah will protect you from the people." (5:67)
- <u>6.</u> Both Sunni and Shi'ah transmitters of hadith, through various chains of narration, have uninterruptedly reported that the Holy Prophet (S) took the hand of Imam 'Ali ('a), raised it and then said: "Of whosoever I am Master, then 'Ali is also his Master."
- 7. On June 3, 1963 (Khordad 13, 1342 AHS), Imam Khomeini delivered a historic speech in Qum, repeating former denunciations of the Shah's regime and warning the Shah not to behave in such a way that the people would rejoice when he should ultimately be forced to leave the country. Two days later, he was arrested at his residence and taken to confinement in Tehran. His arrest prompted a major uprising in many Iranian cities, which resulted in the deaths of no less than 15,000 people in the span of a few days when the Shah's troops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. The date on which this uprising began was the 5th of June, or the 15th of Khordad according to the solar calendar used in Iran, and became known as the uprising or movement of 15th of Khordad. [Trans.]
- 8. Nahj al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Sermon 3.
- 9. Literally, "The argument arises with the existence of the supporter." [Trans.]
- 10. Nahj al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Sermon 92.

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