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Chapter 14: The Mutual Relationship between the People and the Government (Part 5)

The People Government Relationship Subjection and Domination or what?

The subject of our discussion is the relationship between the people and the government in Islam. In this session, we shall examine the issue from a different angle and then spend the remaining time by entertaining questions.

In principle, the relationship between the people and the government can be conceived in different forms. Of course, these various forms are not mere mental conceptions; rather, something which existed in the annals of history and does exist more or less. One type of relationship is that the government is the master while the people are the subjects.

Throughout history, most of the governments we know became dominant by force and have forced themselves on the people. Their expectation from the people was to obey them unconditionally and unreservedly. If in some cases they used to act contrary to this expectation, it was because they wanted to win the people's hearts and stabilize the condition of their respective countries so as to rule easily.

Otherwise, their expectation has been for them to give order and the people to act upon them, and the relationship between them and the people is that of sovereign and subject. The expression *sovereign*, which, in our Persian literature, is used for the government, is not inappropriate for this way of thinking. Of course, I was not able to obtain a statistical record and examine the different governments in the various parts of the world, and to see what percent of them are like that. At any rate, what we know in history is that almost all governments have been like so.

Contrary to that type of government, other inclinations can be found at the margin of history in which the

case has been the opposite; that is, the people have defined their own duties, dictating their wills to the government. In other words, instead of the government imposing its orders upon the people, in this type of government it is the people that dictate the rules and regulations to the government and the government is the implementer and agent of their demands. Of course, I am not a historian and in studying historical documents I do not know to what extent the authenticity of a certain subject is.

Nevertheless, it is narrated that it has been like that during the ancient periods in China, India, and more or less, Greece. In Greece, the people's inclination toward government existed centuries before the birth of Christ ('a) and for some decades that the government existed in Athens it had been like that. It is said that democracy originated and came into being there.

So, these are two opposite tendencies; one is that the state is the master while the people are the subjects, and the other one is the opposite.

The third type of relationship that can be assumed is the people–government relationship that is beyond master–subject relationship. For example, it can be assumed that a kind of mutual contract between the people and the government is in force and in reality a sort of division of labor in which a set of tasks is performed by the government while another set is shouldered by the people. As to which specific form for this model of government can be imagined which performs this division of labor between the people and the government and in which none is the master can be imagined in different forms.

In any case, there is no phase in history which shows that this third type of government-people relationship has even existed. The first two types have different sub-classifications. There have been despotic and dictatorial rulers who do not abide by any rules and the law is that which is according to monarchial approval. There have also been organized systems in which a set of moral and social principles were observed and finally, the order was with the ruler and the people were the subjects.

The salient feature of this type of government is that if it is supposed that the ruler is the master and the people's only role is to obey, in this case if the ruler gives an order or enacts decrees, rules and laws which are inconsistent with the will of the people, they are forced to obey them even if all people oppose them because they are just "people" after all and not government, and to order is the prerogative of the government. Here, the government gives order and the people have to obey. Whether the people agree or not, whether those who oppose are in majority or minority, in any case the position of the people is to obey while that of the government is to order.

Meanwhile, in the second type in which the people are supposed to be the masters and enact the laws, and in summary, the will of the people is supposed to reign supreme in society, in this case the government has no right to enact laws and rules contrary to the will of the people. On the contrary, the people have the right to abolish the government anytime they want. In this administrative model, the government is the people's agent, and in other words, their proxy. So long as the people like, it can serve as their proxy and whenever they do not like anymore, it shall be removed. In such a system, the will of the people, whatever it is, is what is credible even if it is against moral and divine values. The

government has no right to say that since your will or vote is contrary to such-and-such moral principle or divine law, I shall not abide by it. The government has to act in accordance with the will of the people and if it would not like to do so, it has to resign.

Of course, the first principle is that the will of all people is the criterion of credibility, yet since it is impossible to arrive at an identical will of all people, they set the basis of the majority will instead of general will of the people. In other words, since particularly in the extended and complex societies of today, direct democracy in which the people directly get involved in their destiny and express their opinions is either impossible or difficult, they resort to the idea of indirect democracy. In the indirect democracy, the elected representatives of the people make decisions in lieu of them.

In the democratic system, the government is actually the implementer of the wills and orders of the people who pay its salary as their employee. Here, the people enact the law, determine the agent and administrative institutions, and provide the government's budget so that it can serve them. It is like an employer hiring an employee with the only difference that instead of a person, an institution is hired.

The general notion is that the administrative model must be one of the two types; either the people are the rulers while the government is the worker, servant and, in a simpler term, the slave, or on the contrary, the government is the master, sovereign and commander, and the people are the slaves. The heart of the discussions made in the philosophy of politics as well as in the different schools of thought and academic forums can be traced to the same two types of government, but they have weaknesses and strengths, flaws and strong points.

It should not remain unsaid that the model of mastership and commandership of the government has had many diverse forms. Among its forms has been the theocratic government in which the popes used to regard themselves as the masters of the people while the people are their servants in a sense. Of course, they claim that they had this right from God and it is God Who has given to them the right to rule over the people and these servants of God are their servants by the will of God.

The Status of the People and the Ruler in Islamic Political Thought

In interpreting the Islamic government, many people who imagine that the government is confined to one of the two mentioned types are questioning which model this government is. Does the Islamic government belong to the category of democratic governments in which the people are the masters of their own destiny and have the right to enact any law they like? In other words, are the Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imam ('a) or the jurist–guardian who in our opinion is the deputy of the Imam of the Time ('a) the agents, proxies and servants of the people in such a manner that the people have the prerogative to enact the law by themselves and determine its implementer? If that is not the case, it follows that it has another form; that is, if the Islamic government is not democratic, it follows that the

people are servants of the government and the government has the authority over the people who have to obey it unconditionally.

Some people argue that the government has only two types, and the Islamic government as acknowledged by its designers and theoreticians is not democratic. So, it must be a dictatorial government! Since the adopters of the jurist's guardianship say that the jurist–guardian is authorized by God to rule and the people do not designate him to that position, it follows then that in the government based on the theory of *wilayah al-faqih*, democracy does not exist. Once it is not democratic, it must be dictatorial, and it will imply that like a dictator, the jurist–guardian has the right to enact laws and give orders, while the people are his servants and they are under his command. For the sake of respect to them or considering some expediencies, he may not explicitly say to them, "I am your master while you are my servants," but that is really the truth of the matter.

Yet, is it true that there are only two types of relationship between the people and the government, and the truth of every type of government is mastership and servitude and the only difference is who the master or servant is?! The fact is that the government is not confined to these types and our claim is that the Islamic government is none of these two mentioned types. According to the theory of Islamic government, the people and the government are not two classes, meaning one is high and the other low, or one is the master while the other the servant; rather, all including the ruler and the subject are one and equal before the law.

At the time of birth, the title "ruler", "jurist-guardian", "king", or "president" is not written on anyone's forehead, and the officials of the government are from the same people and are not different from others. In the Islamic government, the government–people relationship is not that the government is the master while the people are the servants nor the contrary. Instead, all are equal. Here, what is actually done is a sort of division of labor and the one who gives order is higher than all of us. As such, neither the state and government nor the people are the sovereigns. Instead, the real commander is God, the Lord of the people.

In our opinion, the divine government is a third type of government. It is neither the democratic model nor the dictatorial or monarchial; it is rather designed by God. Here, the sovereignty belongs to the Creator–God Who has authority over all people. Before His decree, all people are equal, whether the Prophet, Imam and jurist–guardian, or the masses. Even if a slave has a dispute over a legal matter with the Prophet, Imam or jurist–guardian as the leader of Muslims, once they refer to a judge, they have to sit together and the judge has to speak to them equally. The judge has no right to practice discrimination in issuing a judgment and, for example, to address the former with the title "His Holiness the Prophet" and the latter with "O wretched servant." In fact, he has to look at them equally. If he wants to address them with a title of honor, he has to address both of them with their respective titles, and if it is with epithet, he has to address them with their respective epithets and to listen to them impartially. The fact that this one is the Prophet and that one is a slave does not make any difference in this case.

The Prophet (S) has no right to dictate whatever he likes to the people such that one day it would be said that since the people have not elected him and the government is inconsistent with the will of the people, it follows that the government is a dictatorship while the ruler is a dictator! Neither the Prophet nor anybody else has any right at all to issue a single word of decree against the decree of God. He and all Muslim rulers are the implementers of the law, yet not the law of the people, but of God. He is a subject but of God. He has no will of his own:

Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta. (69:44-46)

That is, "If the Prophet attributes a lie to Us regarding a law which We have not enacted, saying, 'It is the law of God,' We shall deal with him severely: "We would have surely seized him by the right hand." The right hand denotes power and the meaning of the above verse is that "We shall deal with him with utmost severity. "And then cut off his aorta." That is, "We shall cut off the aorta of his life." He who is a prophet of God has no right to speak of himself, let alone the Imam or jurist–guardian. If he wants to enact in some cases of specific administrative rules (administrative decrees), he has to do so with the approval of God the Exalted.

Thus, in relation to God, all are His servants, obedient to and equal before Him. Responsibility and mission are given to the Islamic ruler to implement the divine laws on earth. Even this is because of the fact that in view of the necessity of the existence of government in the society, the existence of a set of rules and regulations is indispensable and in implementing the laws and solving disputes to happen in understanding and acting upon the law, every society is in need of an implementer who can say the final word in practice and the law that solves disputes.

If every person is supposed to say, "In my opinion, the law is what I say and this is my interpretation of the law," disputes will not be solved. The one whose word is the law and has the final say does not speak out of his own will and carnal desire; rather, his word is either a direct revelation of God (if he is a prophet), or a divine inspiration (if he is an infallible Imam), or an authoritative and credible understanding of the content of the revelation and word of the Infallible (when there is no access to the Prophet or an infallible Imam). Anyway, it is because of this that all are equal before the law and there is distinction among them.

Islamic Political Thought: The people and the Ruler as Responsible before God

Now, given this explanation, is the Islamic ruler a dictator? The answer is negative. He cannot dictate

something out of his own desire. Is the Islamic ruler the servant and slave of the people and their agent? Again, the answer is negative. The people have dominance over him in saying, "We do not like you and thus remove you from this position," because God has made him ruler over the rest of people. Is he a servant and mercenary of the people? No.

God has determined the salary of the ruler from the public treasury. God the Exalted has made it incumbent upon the people to place a portion of their wealth at the disposal of the Islamic ruler. In addition, He has placed at the discretion of the Islamic ruler the spoils, assets and incomes belonging to the society in general. In any case, the determiner and endower is God, and the Islamic ruler does not stoop to the people's favor nor live under their expense.

Such a person can implement the laws promulgated by God the Exalted even if it is not pleasing to the people. If the ruler is only a servant or proxy of the people, he has no right to impose on them what they do not like, nor order things which all people or the majority of them do not accept. Meanwhile, does the Islamic ruler have the right to give such an order? Yes, because it is the order and ordinance of God.

Therefore, in the Islamic government the divine law must be implemented. Even if one day most of the people do not like it, the Islamic government has the right to and must implement the law of Islam including the *hudud*³ which is not acceptable to the world today. The people may desire to make some things permissible and free which God the Exalted has not sanctioned. In this case, the Islamic ruler has to forbid it and put restraint on its practice and not allow the people to practice it even if most of them want to do so. The reason behind this is that the Islamic ruler is not the people's agent; rather, he is a functionary from God to implement the divine laws.

Of course, all people are obliged to implement the ordinances of God but the ruler is particularly commissioned to make the law of God incumbent upon them and to punish the violators. To punish the violators is a divine decree. Thus, the Islamic ruler is not a dictator who decides by himself and orders whatever he wishes and makes it incumbent upon the people to implement. He is not a servant and proxy of the people to abide by whatever they dictate to him.

In the Islamic government, all are equal before the law, and as such, the governors and the governed are not different from each other, and we have no higher and lower classes. 4 Here, there is no room for "first-class" and "second-class" citizens. The "first-class" and "second-class" citizens are meant to compare the original citizens of the Islamic state with those who live under its protection whose life, property and honor are basically protected. Examples of such citizens are the People of the Book [ahl al-kitab] and the non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Islamic government.

Since these people are not Muslims, the main decrees of Islam shall not be implemented to them and the main taxes of Islam (*khums* and *zakat*) shall not be levied to them. They pay *jizyah* instead. In return for this insignificant amount of taxes, their life, property and honor are legally protected under the auspices of the Islamic government. Because of some legal distinctions that Islam has set for them,

these people can be called as "second-class citizens" but beside these distinctions, in most of the rights, the ruler and this non-Muslim citizen do not have the least difference with each other.

For this reason, both of them can be regarded as "first-class citizens." The ruler has no right to say that he is higher in rank compared to the common citizen on the ground that he is the president, prime minister, or jurist-guardian, as the case may be. He is a servant just like the other servants of God. At most, he has a special responsibility. 5 This is a characteristic of every system which the head or administrator has, and finally owing to his superiority, skill and merit, one person has to administer that group and organization while the rest have to pay attention to his orders. Yet, this does not mean that here we have "first and second-class citizens."

A Summary of the Discussion

In Islam, neither the ruler is the master and the people subjects, nor the people are the masters and the ruler a subject, servant and worker, or in a more polite expression, proxy or any other appellation.

The rights and duties of both parties are determined by God, Who has set two proportional rights for the people and the government—a right for the people over the government and another for the government over the people. The determiner of right is He Who has created both parties. The people have no right to set rights for themselves, because they are not the owners of their selves and their existence does not belong to them. For the same reason, they have no right to decide a set of rights for others. Similarly, the government has no right to set a right for itself or others. The ruler is one of the servants of God, and his existence, like that of everybody and everything else, is from God and belongs to Him. However, since God the Exalted is All–wise, He has set balanced rights for both the government and the people. Due to the service it renders to the people, the government has rights over them while they have rights over it.

This is another model of government and mutual relationship of the people and the government which is not so known and comprehensible to the minds accustomed with the Western culture. As such, whenever the term, "divine government," "Islamic government" or "religious government" is mentioned, many people imagine that it is the same democracy of the popes which is a type of dictatorship whereas it has no connection with it.

Let us forget that as far as we know, an example of democratic government does not exist in the world at all. There has been either the government of the bullies, tyrants, swordsmen, feudal lords, and the like, or as today's government of the capitalists. When they outwardly say, "So-and-so is elect" or "He is not elected," behind its curtain is the disputes between two groups of capitalists; for example, between the owners of firearms manufacturing companies and that of oil and petrochemical industries. They are ostentatiously parties. At times, one party comes to power while at another time, the other party does.

In reality, money and assets of the capitalists is the actual determinant and ruler. Those who decide

behind curtains and give campaign funds so as for a party to win are the owners of capital. The natural and usual trend is that whoever campaigns more will win in the election. Yet, the masses are in difficulty providing for their daily life expenditure, let alone spending for election campaign huge expenses with spiraling figures which are spent in the European and American countries for election campaigns. Perhaps, you might have heard or read that, for example, the deposed Shah of Iran was among those who assisted in the Republican Party in the elections of America. The helpers who are more known in the world and whose assistance is the determinant are the Zionists and their capitalists. The actual determinants of the American governments and similar to them in some other countries are the same Zionist capitalists.

The common people are not very familiar with a leading candidate in an election. They only witness the profound magnitude and wide scope of his propaganda. Usually, their participation in the elections is very weak such that in most cases, below fifty percent of the eligible voters participate in the elections and even that is through the force of propaganda generated with the money of the capitalists. This shows that the government in reality belongs to the capitalists. Also, this subject is not a claim which is advanced by me only. In fact, Western writers and researchers have acknowledged it and written numerous books and articles in this regard.

Theoretically speaking, what is customary in the world is that either the people are subdued by and are subjects of the governments, or the government and the ruler are under the domination of the will and demand of the people. We explained that in Islam, the government is something else. The third alternative is that both the people and the ruler have the same Master; namely, God. Both are servants before God, but before each other, both are masters and each has rights over the other.

Examples of the Mutual Rights Between the People and the Government in the words of the Commander of the Faithful

Considering that this year is the Year of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and His Conduct, for this occasion I shall read to you a part of *Nahj al–Balaghah*. It is a lengthy sermon of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) in which he says:

So now, Allah the Glorified, by placing me over your affairs, has created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. 6

Examine closely the expression of the Imam ('a). He does not say, "You have granted a right to me." He rather says, "God has granted it. He has right to me as well as to you." It is not the case that the right has been given exclusively to the ruler while the people are subjects and condemned before him, nor is it the opposite. Thus, the determinant of right and duty is God the Exalted, for, as we explained at the beginning of this series of discussions, once a right is set for a person over another person, automatically a duty for the second person will come into being. Once the ruler has right to give order,

the people are duty-bound to behave in accordance with the order. In cases where the people have rights, the government is obliged to observe their right because right and duty are proportional and correlative.

The continuation of the sermon is a very interesting and detailed passage. I wish we can divide the sermon into different parts, and in every meeting, I can deal with each part of this blessed speech. This radiant speech contains very lofty and instructive subjects. It also consists of knowledge that is considered the solution to many issues on the philosophy of ethics, law, politics, and all practical philosophies. At this moment we shall deal with some other lines of this sermon:

Then, from His rights, He, the Glorified, created certain rights for certain people against others.

As He has rights over His servants, God the Exalted has set rights for some people over others based on His right, which essentially belongs to Him and no one is supposed to grant it to Him; namely, right of Lordship. Since He is God and the Creator and Master of all things and people, and the existence of the entire universe emanates from him, He has such rights over His servants. Based on that Essential right God has over His servants, He has set rights for some of His servants over others.

He made them so as to equate with one another.

The rights He has set for some people over others are balanced. Balance and proportionality mean that once He sets a right for party A, He also sets a right for party B so as for these rights to become proportional to each other. It is not the case that this side is heavy while that side is light. The Arabic word *tatakafa'* means equal and alike, and these rights are also equals.

Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others.

The existence of some of these rights requires a right for others. This right cannot be obliged unless a right is proved for others. These rights are balanced and of the same weight. So, right should be determined by God and this emanates from the rights of Lordship and Godhood He has.

The greatest of these rights that Allah the Glorified has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler.

Yet, the highest and greatest right that God has set for a servant over another is the right that the government has over the people and that of the people over the government. There are also other rights such as the right of parents over their child and the right of the child over his/her parents, the right of the spouses over each other, as well as other rights which God has fixed for the people. However, among the greatest rights that God has set for organizing the relationship among people is the right of the ruler over the people and that of the people over the ruler.

He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection, and an honor for their religion.

These rights that God has divided among people and made balanced have secrets. It is not the case that He has just given these rights without any reason, justification and philosophy behind them. There is a secret behind His granting specific rights to the ruler and certain other rights to the people. One wisdom behind the creation of these proportional rights between the people and the government is to make firm and steadfast the unity and solidarity between the two. Once this party has right over that party and that party over this party, a kind of mutual attachment between them is established and each becomes dependent on the other. If this right were only unilateral and one–sided, one's detachment from the other would become easily possible. But the bilateralness of the rights fortifies the intimacy, unanimity, affection, sincerity, and unity among the members of society.

The higher philosophy and wisdom behind the creation of these rights is "honor for their religion." That is to say, "These rights are set and divided between the people and the government so that their religion earns honor."

It is not only meant to make their worldly life prosperous and well-organized as the effect of this solidarity; rather, the more important effect of this affair is for their religion to earn honor, and under the auspices of religion, the earned honor will lead them to eternal bliss.

In the rights set for the ruler and the subjects, their merits are not only the provision of life comfort, security and prevention of chaos and anarchy. This is one side of the story. Their more important aspect and higher secret is under the aegis of these rights set by God for the people and the government, the religion acquires honor. In other words, in this explanation and division of the rights and duties, two points are mentioned; one is the worldly and material welfare, while the other is the otherworldly and spiritual welfare.

Yet, this is contrary to what is considered in all political philosophies in the world. The ultimate thing they observe is security, peace, health, life comfort, and the like, but no political philosophy has ever treated the issue of spiritual advancement and proximity to God as the main goal. This point has been mentioned only in the philosophical views of the earlier thinkers. In the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, this subject has been touched on the ultimate felicity of man must be sought in his spiritual perfection; all his power, both spiritual and material, must attain perfection; the orientation of the government must be such that all these powers and talents would grow.

Of course, it must be noted that spirituality in the culture of Aristotle and Plato and their followers has its own meaning. As stated in history, they were not like us, monotheists and believing in the One and Only God and the heavenly religions. They rather believed in different deities and were afflicted with a kind of polytheism. Of course, in this regard I do not have a decisive claim. There is still room for more research.

In continuation of the sermon, Imam 'Ali ('a) says:

Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound

unless the ruled are steadfast.7

If the ruler is the commander and he is responsible for the welfare of the society while the rest are subjects, it follows that the responsibility for the society's welfare lies on the shoulder of the ruler. Wherever there is corruption, it can be seen from the eyes of the ruler because it is the orders of the ruler and the government which are implemented while the wills of the people have no role in the administrative laws and orders.

Wherever there is corruption, this is because the ruler fails to enact good rules and regulations, or fails to implement them well. In democracy, wherever there is corruption, it originates from the people themselves and the ruler has no fault at all because in this type of government whatever the people say and like shall prevail. So, wherever there is corruption, it is related to the people themselves. In the theory of Islamic government in which the responsibilities are shared, the ruler shoulders only a part of the responsibilities, and the people who have will, common sense and awareness have responsibility and duty as well.

If both the people and the government faithfully fulfill their duties, welfares will be ensured and the society will prosper. But if one fulfills its duty while the other does not, there is no guarantee for the prosperity of that society because the one responsible for the whole affairs of society is neither the people minus the government nor the government minus the people; rather, both are responsible. So, the prosperity of one depends on the prosperity of the other. They are like two bricks that lean against each other. Once we remove one of them, the other will fall. These two (government and people) should reform the society by leaning on and helping each other. If one of them is destroyed, weakens and breaks, the other one will also fall. "The ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound." Its opposite is also correct: "The rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast." The government apparatus will not remain good unless the people remain good and are steadfast in their responsibilities and duties.

In these two expressions of Imam 'Ali ('a), there is a subtle difference which is worthy to note. In the first case, he said, "The ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are *sound*." That is, the society will not be reformed unless the rulers and the government apparatus are righteous. In contrast to it, he says, "The rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are *steadfast*." In this case, he does not say that the goodness of the rulers depends on the goodness of the ruled; rather, he says that it depends on their steadfastness.

The expression "steadfastness" is used here to denote that in addition to the initial reform, there must be continuity. As such, the issue of steadfastness is more difficult than the initial reform. Perhaps, the secret behind the difficultness of steadfastness is that for the people to be merely righteous in the beginning and act upon their duty toward the government is not enough. Instead, this righteousness and virtuousness should be continuous.

The people are more exposed to transformation than the ruler. In the Islamic government, the person to

be chosen as the ruler usually takes trouble for thirty or forty years, is well nurtured and has cultivated the spirit of piety and justice in himself. And naturally anyone who has nurtured his self for forty years and is God-wary will not change suddenly overnight. How probable is it that people like the Imam (*r*) will one day stray away from the path of piety?

The possibility for a person who lives for seventy years in asceticism, piety, devotion, and self–sacrifice and has purified his soul during his youthful years to become a worldly and sensual person is very insignificant. But this issue is different with respect to the people. The people have different classes and diverse levels of faith, piety and attachment to values. And the possibility of transformation in the people is high compared to the ruler. Therefore, regarding the people more than the initial probity has a role, and the perpetuity of this probity and its steadfastness acquires importance. But anyway these two virtues (probity of the government and the people) support each other. The society will prosper and be reformed provided that the government is righteous while the people are steadfast and persistent along the right path.

Now, if the people and the government perform their respective duties and observe each other's rights, what will be the outcome?

If the ruled fulfill the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfils their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the sunnah gains currency. In this way time will improve.

If the people perform their duties, there are benefits: Its first benefit is that truth will be held in high esteem in the society and in turn, falsehood will be weakened. The people and the government's fulfillment of the rights and duties will strengthen this spirit among individuals and gradually it will become a general culture of the society.

The other benefit is that in such a society, if a person wants to move along the path of falsehood, the society will not permit him to make such a move because it is against the current and accepted culture of the society.

Its third benefit is the implementation of justice: "signs of justice become fixed." That is, the signs of justice will appear throughout the society because justice and right are linked together, and in reality, justice is to give right to its owner.

Another benefit of it is: "the *sunnah* gains currency." That is, in light of fulfilling the duties, the divine traditions will prevail in the different segments of society.

And its final outcome is:

In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated.

Thus, in order to set up the government, the rights of the people and the ruler must be observed proportionately and according to the principles laid down by God the Exalted. If both cooperate with each other and fulfill the divine duties with each other's help and support, the society will be reformed and the enemies will no longer be interested in it. The opposite is also true. As the Imam ('a) says in the continuation of this sermon, if each of them does not discharge its own duties, this society will be humiliated; the enemies will cast an evil eye on it; the honor of religion will be destroyed; and finally, it will lead to the society's adversity.

We hope that God the Exalted will grant opportunity to all our statesmen and people to discharge properly their divine duties and observe each other's rights so that, God willing, our society will be reformed more and more every day and the enemies be hopeless [in their evil plots].

- 1. What we mean by state [dawlah], government [huk@mah], or ruler [hakim] is the ruling body or apparatus existing in a country and in charge of managing the affairs of society regardless of whether it is a despotic king and figure, establishment, or court, or a group in different other forms.
- 2. Based on reported traditions and teachings of the Infallible and pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the judge has to observe justice even in his outward glance. For example, in the letter of Imam 'Ali ('a) to Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr the governor of Egypt, it is thus stated: "And be impartial in staring and glancing at them." Nahj al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Letter 27.
- 3. Hud d (literally means boundaries or limits) in the Islamic law is generally applied to penal law for punishments prescribed for particular crimes whose extent is determined by law. [Trans.]
- 4. In this regard, see Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, 4th edition (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1362 AH), vol. 4, pp. 129–132 (chap. 12, under Sirah al 'Imran 3:200).
- 5. This is a well–known expression in the letters of the Master of the Monotheists and Commander of the Faithful; namely, Imam `Ali ('a), addressed to the people under his rule, governors, officials and workers of the State, military commanders, and even the heads of his sworn enemies (Mu'awiyah). His expression is as follows: "To a servant of Allah, 'Ali the Commander of the Faithful to…" See Nahj al–Balaghah (Faydh al–Islam), Letters 1, 50–51, 53, 60, 63, and 75.
- 6. Nahj al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Sermon 207.
- 7. That is, the people under a government will not become good and their works will not be set right except through the prosperity and goodness of the government while the government will not attain goodness and prosperity except through the steadfastness of the people (in action and supporting the truth).

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