

Preface

Since antiquity, the question of *'idalah* and equity has been man's most fundamental concerns and most his important ideal on the planet earth. *'idalah* has been among the issues each and every high-minded individual has given careful attention to. Discussions about *'idalah* and equity, its nature and quality as well as the procedure for its materialization and enforcement in human societies and within man's soul have always been regarded as primary needs in man's life. Moreover, the tendency to *'idalah* and *'idalah* seeking are not merely a demand and a need sought by man; they are, in fact, an aspect of man's natural and rational predispositions without which his humanity cannot find meaning.

'Idalah is a virtue on which an improvement in man's life and human societies is dependent. This virtue engenders perseverance and temperance in man as an individual and steadfastness, equality, moderation and freedom in human societies as well.

The absence of *'idalah* in society leads to discrimination, oppression, corruption and deficiency of public concord, consequently transforming a healthy society into one resting on inequality, injustice and incoherence.

By looking into the sacred scriptures and history of Divine religions, we come to realize that prophets (peace be upon them) had been delegated to dispense *'idalah* and equity in society. Their mission was aimed at helping people rise up for *'idalah* and equity. Therefore, one of the noblest goals of divine religions had been the dispensation of equity and *'idalah* in the human society and in man's self-succeeding the prophets, the Immaculate Imams (A) and reformers have endeavored to materialize this significant concept.

A survey of the history of political thought since time immemorial up to the present day is expressive of the fact that the optimal ideals and genuine aspirations of the world's great thinkers and philosophers have been to explicate *'idalah* and dispense it in human society. Hence, it can be admitted that equity and *'idalah* is a principle that injects life and meaning to human society. It is like water that invigorates the tree of man's existence (individual) and his collective existence (society) keeping them alive, stable and verdant. Without *'idalah* they wither and lose freshness and life. As such, every vigilant and liberal thinker has been, one way or another, in quest of the attainment of the real meaning and concept of

'idalah and its materialization in society. From the theoretical aspect, the subject of *'idalah* has been treated as an important question in political thought, in general, and political philosophy, in particular, in the Islamic, oriental and occidental world.

Many of the prominent ancient philosophers, particularly the Greek philosophers, defined *'idalah* as putting things in their proper natural place and station. Consequently, just and natural properties were looked upon by most of them as synonymous and equal. Moreover, they thought of this natural position and status as being desirable and ideal.

In contemporary Western liberalistic thought, *'idalah* denotes retaining and preserving the individual's fundamental rights, assuming a descriptive aspect, resulting in a type of utilitarian mentality. In this attitude, therefore, one may perhaps take a just and humanistic attribute as synonymous with each other. In a socialist thought and attitude, the concept of social *'idalah* (justice) is maintained as fundamental pillars and principles, yet socialists propound distributive *'idalah* as *'idalah* in the distribution of products, resources and outputs. In more precise terms, the question of *'idalah* in this mentality assumes a purely economic aspect and is settled simply by rational economy.

'idalah in this perspective is inclined towards the just and equal distribution of wealth. This notion of *'idalah* is inspired by need and countenances the negation of private ownership in absolute terms. The Socialist outlook eclipses and immolates the freedom of human beings and fails to materialize and dispense social *'idalah* in practice.

In the world of Islam and the sphere of Islamic thought and civilization too, different theories and viewpoints have been put forward on the question of *'idalah* and its implications. Shi'ah and Sunni schools, *Ahl al-Hadith* (traditionalists)¹ *mafovedeh*² and *qadarites*³ have presented varying viewpoints. Generally speaking, in Islamic thinking, *'idalah* has been maintained as the foundation and fundamental axis of all social affairs. In contrast to other religions as well as Greek philosophers, who had given a personal, individual and, at times, natural tint and dedicated their energy to individual salvation and deliverance, Islam has devoted most of its attempts to the provision of social and human *'idalah*, the public salvation and deliverance of human beings.

Of course, all religions and most of the philosophers eventually seek the individual's salvation, deliverance and happiness. However, in Islam and Islamic theosophy, individual salvation and happiness actualize in society in light of the realization of virtue, particularly *'idalah* and equity. Generally speaking, from the Islamic viewpoint, man will become happy when he dedicates himself to the service of public interests by dispensing *'idalah* and equity in society.

The present collection unfolds before the esteemed reader in three chapters drawn up in view of the necessity and fundamental standing of *'idalah*, the quality of its dispensation in society and individual and the presentation of an epitome of the viewpoints on the subject. The first chapter presents a compendious study of the viewpoints propounded on the theory of *'idalah* in ancient times, the orient and

modern west.

The second chapter dissects the different dimensions of the concept of *'idalah* in Islam in view of its noble source, the Holy Qur'an. The third chapter attempts to expound on the viewpoints of one of the greatest and most striking contemporary thinkers and political leaders of the world of Islam, Hadrat Imam Khomeini (r), providing an overview of the issue of *'idalah* within the frame of a special theory.

The Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works International Affairs Department

- [1.](#) A title given to a group of 'ulama (religious scholars) in the early centuries of Islam. This group adopted a method of their own for the collection of ahadith (plural of hadith meaning narration) and attached special significance to the teaching of the ahadith and acting accordingly. Despite the diversity of methods for the collection of hadith, this group subscribed to the fact that in treating religious sciences, narrative sources such as ahadith and works served as their main source of research.
- [2.](#) The followers of tafvith contend that God has devolved man's actions upon him and given him full freedom of action as against mojbere (people of jabr or fatalism) who maintain that man has no freedom in his actions.
- [3.](#) An Islamic sect contending that man is free in his actions and that God has granted man free choice to act. They believe that God has no role in the causes of actions and introduction of incentives in man. This sect developed at the time of the Bani Umayyad and paved the ground for the emergence of Mutazelites.

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