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Part Six

Dunya : The World And Worldliness Renunciation Of Dunya In Nahjul-Balagha

Of the frequent themes of Nahjul-Balagha is strong warning against the dangers of worldliness. Our preceding discussion about zuhd (asceticism) and its aims also serves here to shed a light on the meaning of worldliness because zuhd, which is strongly enjoined, is the very opposite of the worldliness which is severely condemned. To define and explain any one of them is to define and explain the other. However, in view of the tremendous emphasis laid in Ali's moral sermons upon the warning against the dangers of worldliness, we consider it appropriate to devote a separate chapter to this topic with a view to further explaining this concept so that all ambiguities in this matter are removed.

The first point to be investigated is this: Why has so much attention been given to the concept of zuhd in the sayings and sermons of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) to the extent that no other issue has been so much underscored by him nor by the Holy Prophet (S) nor has any other Imam spoken as repeatedly about the deceptions of worldly life, its ephemeral and temporal nature, the disloyalty of its slippery comforts and the dangers of wealth, affluence and immersion in and complete surrender to worldly pleasures and comforts?

The Danger Created By War Booty

This was not a matter of accident. Rather, it was something related to the conditions that came into existence during Ali's epochs, that is, during the days of the caliphs who preceded him, especially during the caliphate of Othman. A series of serious dangers visited the world of Islam in the wake of the influx of huge amounts of wealth and riches.

Ali (as) sensed its dangerous consequences and struggled against them. This struggle is reflected in his practices and policies during the period of his caliphate, in the course of which he ultimately gave up his life. This struggle, at the ideological level, is also reflected in his sermons, letters and sayings.

The Muslims were blessed with great victories in battles that diverted huge amounts of property and wealth into the Muslim world. However, instead of being utilized for public benefit or distributed justly among the people, the wealth fell into the hands of a few individuals and an elite class.

Especially during the days of ‘Othman, this imbalance became greatly pronounced. Individuals who possessed nothing only a few years ago appropriated for their own personal use fabulous amounts of wealth. This was the time when worldly tendencies gained momentum in the Muslim society: The Muslim umma started on a course of moral decline and degeneration.

It was following the awareness of this great danger to society that Ali (as) raised his cry of protest to warn the umma of Islam. Writing about the days of Othman, al-Masudi says the following: “Othman was a man of extraordinary generosity (of course, it was exercised at the cost of the public treasury).

The government officials and the people followed his example. He was the first among the caliphs to build a mansion of stone and mortar with wooden doors made of teak and juniper. He amassed other properties such as gardens, orchards and springs in Medina. When he died, there were 150,000 dinars and a thousand thousand (million) dirhams in cash with his treasurer. His property in Wadi al-Qura, Hunain and elsewhere was valued above 100,000 dinars. His legacy consisted of a large number of horses and camels.”

Then he writes the following: “During his reign, a group of his associates also hoarded similar amounts of wealth. Al-Zubayr ibn al- Awwam built a mansion in Basra which still stands intact in the year 332 H. [al-Masudi’s own time]. It is also well known that he built similar mansions in Egypt, Kufa and Alexandria. When az-Subayr [ibn al- Awwam] died, he left 50,000 dinars in cash, a thousand horses and thousands of other things. The brick, mortar and teak mansion which Talhah ibn ‘Abdullah built in Kufa still exists and is known as Dar al- Talhatayn. Talhah’s daily income from his properties in Iraq was one thousand dinars. He had one thousand horses in his stables. A one-thirty- second (1/32) part of the wealth that he left at his death was estimated at 84,000 dinars.”

Al-Masudi mentions similar amounts of wealth in the possession of Zayd ibn Thabit, Ya’li ibn Umayyah and others. Evidently, such huge amounts of wealth do not emerge from under the ground nor fall from the sky. Such immense riches are never amassed except by the side of extreme and horrifying poverty. This is why Ali (as), in sermon 129, after warning the people of the dangers of worldliness, says the following: “You live in a period when virtues recede and evils advance step by step and Satan becomes greedier in his eagerness to ruin human beings.

Today, his equipment have been reinforced, his traps are set in every place and his prey comes easily. Look around; you will see either a poor man hardly able to breathe in extreme poverty and penury, or a rich man who has transformed Allah’s blessings into his own infidelity, or you will see a miser who makes stinginess in discharging the obligations imposed by Allah a means of increasing his own wealth, or you will find the rebellious whose unruly hearts are deaf to moral admonition. Where are the virtuous,

the righteous among you? Where are the free men and the magnanimous? Where are those who avoid every trace of deceit in their dealings and pursue piety and honesty in their ways?

Intoxication Of Affluence

Amir al-Mu'minin (as), in his utterances, has used the phrase sakarat al-ni'ma, meaning intoxication induced by comfort and affluence, which is inevitably followed by a vengeful disaster. In sermon 151, he warns them thus: "You, O people of Arabia, will be victims of calamities which are drawing near. Beware of the intoxication induced by affluence and fear the vengeful disaster which will follow it."

Then he describes the misfortunes caused by such immoderation. In sermon 187, he foretells the future calamities that were to befall the Muslim society. He says the following: "This will happen when you are intoxicated, not by drinking wine, but by wealth and affluence."

Yes, the flow of immense amounts of wealth into the coffers of the Islamic domain and the unjust distribution of this wealth, together with nepotism and partiality, infected the Islamic society with the disease of worldliness and the race for affluence.

Ali (as) struggled to save the Islamic world from this grave danger. He was severely critical of those who were responsible for the infection to set in. He set an example of an altogether different life style in his own personal way of life and, on attaining caliphate, he gave the top priority to the campaign against these dangers in his revolutionary program.

General Aspect Of Ali's Warnings

This prologue was intended to cast some light at the particular aspect of the warnings of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) against worldliness as a specific reaction to a particular social phenomenon of his time. Yet, aside from this particular feature, there is a general aspect to Ali's words that is not confined to his own time and applies to all times and all people as an essential part of Islamic teachings. This specific logic emanates from the teaching of the Holy Qur'an which is followed up in the sayings of the Holy Prophet (S), Amir al-Mu'minin (as) and the rest of Imams (as), as well as in the writings of great Muslim sages. However, it is a logic which needs a detailed analysis. In the present discussion, our concern will be more with the general aspect of the discourses of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) in the sense that in them, Ali (as) addresses himself to all human beings of all times.

Every School Has Its Own Terminology

Every school of thought has a terminology which is specific to it. In order to understand the concepts and issues of a certain school, it is essential to be familiar with its terms. On the other hand, in order to understand its particular terminology, it is necessary, in the first place, to understand its general view of the universe, life and man, that is, its Weltanschauung.

Islam has a clear view of being and creation. It has a particular way of looking at man and his life. One of the fundamental principles of the Islamic world outlook is the notion that there is no duality of any kind whatsoever in being; that is, the world of creation is not divisible into two domains of good and evil. That is, it is not true that some existent beings are good and beautiful and should have been created, whereas some others are evil and ugly and should not have been created but nevertheless exist. Such a view is regarded as kufr in the Islamic world outlook and is considered contrary to the principle of tawhid. According to Islam, the creation of all things and beings is based on goodness, wisdom and beauty:

***"You see no imperfection* [*whatsoever*] *in the creation of the all- Merciful One"*(*Qur'an, 67: 3*).**

***"He knows the unseen and the seen,* [*He is*] *the Almighty, the all- Compassionate Who made everything He created good"*(*Qur'an, 32: 6-7*).**

Accordingly, Islam's condemnation of the world does not apply to the world of creation. The Islamic world outlook rests on the foundation of pure Tawhid and lays great emphasis on the Unity of the Acting Principle; it does not admit the existence of any partner who would share Allah's sovereignty. Such a world outlook can never be pessimistic. The idea of an evil world abounding in crookedness and wickedness is not Islamic. Then why does it denounce the world?

Condemned World

Commonly, it is said that attachment to the world is condemned and disapproved by Islam. This is both true and false. If what is implied is an emotional attachment, it cannot be true because man, in relation to the total system of creation, has been created with a series of congenital emotional attachments and inclinations. In addition, he does not acquire these inclinations, nor are they superfluous or incongruous.

Even as in the human body there is no superfluous organ not even a single nerve ending so also there are no redundant congenital tendencies of attachment in his nature. All innate human tendencies and aptitudes have a purpose which is wise and sagacious. The Holy Qur'an regards such tendencies as the signs of the Divine Wisdom and the Creator's consummate design:

***"And* [*some*] *of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses so that you may repose in them and He has set between you love and mercy"*(*Qur'an, 30: 21*).**

These attachments and sentiments form a series of channels of communication between man and his world. Without them, man would not be able to pursue the course of his development. Consequently, it should be said that the Islamic world outlook, even as it does not permit us to denounce and reject the world, it also does allow us to regard the natural attachments and the channels of communication as superfluous, useless and breakable because such sentiments and tendencies are a part of the general pattern of creation. In fact, the prophets and the awliya were endowed with these sentiments and emotions to a high degree of exuberance.

The truth is that what is implied by 'attachment to the world' are not these natural and innate inclinations; instead, what is meant is bondage to material and worldly things/affairs and total surrender to them, which leads to spiritual stagnation and inertia, depriving the human spirit of its freedom of movement and buoyancy and making it immobile and dead.

This is what Islam calls worldliness and has severely campaigned against it as something contrary to the evolutionary system of creation. Not only this, Islam considers this struggle as being in tune with the laws of the evolutionary processes of creation. The expressions employed by the Holy Qur'an in this regard are miraculous, as we shall explain in the following sections.

Relationship Between Man And World

As made explicit in the last chapter, that which is disapproved by the Holy Qur'an and by Nahjul-Balagha is neither the world-in-itself, nor the natural and innate human urges and attachments. In the view of Islam, neither has the world been created without a purpose, nor has man strayed into it aimlessly.

There have been some schools of thought which view the world with pessimism. In their view, the existing order of the universe is far from being perfect. There have existed other schools which considered man's entry into the world of existence to be the result of some cosmic error, as if man had strayed into it!

According to them, man is a total stranger in this world with which he has no ties of consanguinity and is a prisoner of existence. Like Joseph, he has been thrown into the black hole of being by his evil brethren where he is confined and his every endeavor should be aimed at finding an exit from such an abyss.

Obviously, when the relation of man to the world and nature is regarded as the one between a prison and its prisoner, an abyss in which one is entrapped; one's ultimate aim cannot be anything but seeking deliverance from it.

Logic Of Islam

But from the Islamic viewpoint, the relation of man to the world is not that of a prisoner with his prison, or that of one entrapped in a well with the well. Rather, it is the kind of relation that exists between a peasant and his farm[1], or a horse and the racecourse[2], or a merchant and the marketplace[3], or a devotee and his temple[4]. The world, from the Islamic point of view, is a school for man, his training ground and the place where he can acquire perfection.

There is an anecdote narrated in Nahjul-Balagha of a man who condemned the world in Amir al-Mu'minin's presence. Ali (as) rebuked him for his confusing the world which is condemned by Islam with the actual physical world and informed him about his error[5]. Shaikh Farid al- Din Attar has rendered this

incident into poetry in his Musibat nameh thus:

In the presence of the Tiger of Providence,

A man denounced the world with vehemence.
The world, exclaimed Hayder, is not to blame.
Wretched are you, being far from wisdom.

The world, son, is a farm To be tended day and night.
Whatsoever is of the honor and riches of faith,
And in all it is to be acquired from this world.
Tomorrow's fruit is the blooming of today's seed;
And one who is idle here shall taste the bitter fruit of regret.
The world is the best place for you,
Where in you can prepare provision for the Hereafter.
Go into the world, but do not get immersed in the ego.
And prepare yourself for the other world.
If you act thus, the world will suit you,
Hence, befriend the world just for this aim.

Nasir Khusrow Alawi, justifiably considered as a philosopher among the poets (hakim al-shu'ara'), is one of the most profound and truly religious among Persian poets. He has composed a praise about the world, simultaneously highlighting both the good and the evil qualities of it, which is as much in conformity with the Islamic outlook as it is extraordinarily beautiful from the artistic viewpoint. This praise appears in his collected poetical works (diwan) and is included in his book Jami' al-hikmatayn. He says the following:

O world! How apt and essential you are!
Even though you haven't been loyal to any.
Sick and wretched you appear to the afflicted eye,
Yet fine and healthy if one looks at your inside.
If sometimes you have broken a robust man or two,
Many a broken one you have joined and restored.
You are filthy to the unclean,
To the pure unstained.
If any one should blame you, say,
You know me not.
You have grown out of me.
If you are wise,
Why blame the tree of which you are a branch?
The Master made me a path for your ascending journey,

And you have settled down on this lowly road.
Allah planted a tree from whose trunk you have grown;
If you grow out straight, you will be saved,
And if crooked, confined to the flames.
Yes, everyone burns crooked branches,
And asks not “Is it teak or walnut?”
You are the arrow of Allah aimed at His enemy,
Why have you hurt yourself with this weapon?!

Now it is evident that man’s relation to the world is similar to the one that exists between the farmer and his field of cultivation, the merchant and the marketplace, the devotee and the temple. It is not possible for man to alienate himself from the world or sever his ties with it or develop a kind of relationship which is wholly negative. There exists a design and intelligent planning
behind every natural urge. Man has neither come to this world by cheating or fraud, nor should he go from here cursed.

There is a general force of attraction and gravitation that encompasses the whole universe. All the particles in it attract each other according to a set pattern. This pattern of mutual attraction and absorption is determined by a judicious design. Moreover, the force of attraction and love is not confined to man alone. No particle in the universe is devoid of this power. The difference, however, is that man, contrary to other beings, is aware of his own leanings and inclinations.

Wahshi Kirmani says the following:

Every dancing particle is permeated with the same force of attraction
That draws it towards a certain specific goal. It carries one Rower to the side of another,
And urges one spark to pursue the company of its likes,
From fire to wind, from water to dust,
From underneath the moon to the top of the heavens,
From flock to flock and from horde to horde,
You will observe this attraction in every moving thing ,
From heavenly spheres to the terrestrial bodies.

Accordingly, from the Islamic viewpoint, the world is neither without a purpose nor are the human beings created by any error, nor are man’s innate tendencies undesirable and evil. Then what is meant by the world that the Holy Qur’an and Nahjul-Balagha regard as undesirable and condemnable?

Before embarking on the issue, a few preliminary principles need to be clarified. It is characteristic of man that he is inherently an idealist and a lover of perfection. He is in pursuit of something with which he wants to develop a relationship closer than an ordinary attachment. In other words, he is by nature a devotee and a worshipper in search of something which is the ultimate object of his desire and the end

of his entire being.

However, if he is not rightly guided, or not on his guard, his relationship with things and inclination towards them is transformed into a relationship of reliance and attachment, changing means into end and an association into bondage. As a result, his spirit of mobility, freedom and ability to pursue are transformed into inertia, complacence and captivity.

This is what is undesirable and contrary to the perfection-seeking order of the world. It is a defect and a kind of non-being, not a merit or a positive mode of a being. It is a dangerous malady and a disaster for man; the Holy Qur'an and Nahjul-Balagha warn against it.

Without any doubt, Islam does not regard the material world and life in it even if it involves the greatest material achievements as a fitting goal of man's highest aspirations. This is so because, firstly, from the Islamic world outlook, this world is followed by the eternal and everlasting world of the Hereafter where conditions of life will be determined by the deeds, good or evil, of a person in this world. Secondly, the value of a human being is too great to warrant his surrender to the slavery of and servitude to the material aspects of life.

This is why Ali (as) so often points out that the world is a good place but only for one who knows that it is not a permanent abode, only a road, a caravanserai: "What a good abode it is for whoever would not want to make it a home!"[6]

"This world is, indeed, a transit camp, whereas the Hereafter is a place of permanent abode. So take from the transit what you need for your destination."[7]

From the viewpoint of humanistic philosophies, there is no doubt that everything which binds man to itself and immerses him completely within itself violates his human identity by making it inert and frozen. The process of human perfection knows no limit or end. Every halt, delay and bondage is injurious to it. As we find no reason to controvert this view, we accept it without any argument. However, there are two other points that need to be discussed here.

Firstly, does the Holy Qur'an and following it Nahjul-Balagha confirm such a relationship between man and his world? Is it true that what the Holy Qur'an condemns is attachment and bondage to the world when taken as the ultimate end of life, an attitude which retards man's movement towards perfection and represents inertness, stagnation and non-being? Does the Holy Qur'an abstain from absolutely condemning worldly ties and sentiments so long as they do not become man's ultimate goal of life, stalling his progress?

Secondly, if it is admitted that human attachment to beings other than himself causes bondage and servitude and retards the development of human personality, does it make any difference if that being is Allah or someone/something else?

The Holy Qur'an negates every form of bondage and servitude and calls upon man to welcome every kind of spiritual and human freedom. It does not, however, condemn servitude to Allah; it does not invite man to liberate himself from Allah in order to acquire absolute freedom. Instead, the invitation of the Holy Qur'an is based on liberation from everything besides Allah and complete surrender to Him and only to Him. It is based on the rejection of obedience to anything except to Him and the acceptance of such a submission to Him.

The expression La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god except Allah) is the foundation of the Islamic faith. It implies simultaneously a negation and an affirmation, a rejection and an acceptance, kufr and iman. It signifies the negation, the rejection, the renunciation and the kufr in relation to the non-God, and the affirmation, acceptance, submission and iman in relation to Allah. The essential testimony required by Islam is neither just a AYes nor merely a ANo; it is a combination of both a "Yes"and a "No".

If the needs of the growth of the human personality demand that man should liberate himself from every kind of bondage, servitude and submissiveness to anything whatsoever, that he should rebellion against everything that compromises his absolute freedom, that he ought to say No to everything as the advocates of Existentialism claim what difference does it make whether that "thing" is Allah or something else? And if it is to be decided that man should renounce his freedom and adopt slavery, servitude and submission to someone/something, what difference does it make, after all, whether it is Allah or someone/something else?

Is there a difference between accepting Allah as the supreme ideal and accepting some other thing as the *Summum Bonum.* Does it mean that only Allah is such that servitude to Him is freedom in itself and that losing of one's self in Him is identical with the realization of one's self and the recovery of one's true identity and personality? And if this is true, what is the basis of this claim? How can it be justified?

In our opinion, here we arrive at one of the most subtle, profound and progressive teachings of Islam and one of the most glorious of human ideologies. It is here that the sublimity of the logic of Islam and the insignificance and pettiness of other ideologies becomes evident. We shall answer these queries in the following sections.

The World In The Holy Qur'an And Nahjul-Balagha

In the last chapter, we said that what is execrable from the viewpoint of Islam with regard to man's relationship with the world is that it should grow to the extent of becoming a malady and an affliction of the human soul. It is the bondage and the enslaving attachment to the world against which Islam has waged an unrelenting struggle, considering it as undesirable, not the mere relationship with and attachment to it. It is the life of captivity that is condemnable, not the life of freedom. The world is rejected as a goal and objective, not as a way or a means.

If the relationship of man to the world develops into his servitude and subjugation, it leads to the

negation and obliteration of all higher human values; man's worth lies in the greatness of his pursued ends and objectives.

Obviously, if, for instance, his ultimate objectives do not go beyond filling his belly to satisfaction, and if all his efforts and aspirations were to revolve around his stomach, his worth will not surpass that of his stomach. That is why Ali (as) says the following: "The worth of a man whose only aim is to stuff his belly is equal to that which is excreted from it.

The question is: What kind of relationship is appropriate between the human being and the world and what form should it have? In one kind of relationship, his personality is effaced and sacrificed to things, and since the worth of anyone in pursuit of an objective is lower than the objective itself, he is, to use a Qur'anic expression, bound to sink to the level of 'the lowest of the low' (asfal al-safilin), becoming thereby the most abject, degenerate and contemptible creature in the world. He, then, loses not only his higher values but also his human identity.

In the other kind of relationship, the world and worldly things are sacrificed at the altar of his humanity and are used to serve man while he reclaims his higher ideals. This is why it has been said in one qudsi hadith:

O son of Adam! I have created everything for your sake,
But I have created you for My Own Self.

We have already cited two passages from Nahjul-Balagha indicating its status in denouncing the degenerate and distorted kind of relationship between man and the world of nature that leads to man's servitude and bondage. Here, we shall quote a few verses from the Holy Qur'an to endorse this viewpoint and return to Nahjul-Balagha for further relevant references.

The Qur'anic verses relevant to man and the world are of two kinds: The first group of verses is of an introductory nature; that is, it lays the ground for the second group of verses. In truth, the first group can be regarded as representing the major and the minor premises of a syllogism of which the second group constitutes the conclusion.

The first set of verses consists of those which emphasize the changeability, the inconstancy and the ephemeral nature of this world. In these verses, the reality of material objects is depicted as being changeable, fleeting and transitory. For instance, the world is compared to the vegetation that sprouts from the ground. In the beginning, it is green and flourishing, but little by little, it turns yellow; it shrivels and ultimately dries up. The n the elements break it into bits and scatter it into the wind. Such is life in the present world.

Obviously, whether man likes it or not, his physical life is not much more durable than that of the reed and is subject to a similar fate. If man must base his outlook on reality, not on fancy, and if it is only through the discovery of truth, not by flight of imagination and hallucinations, that he can hope to attain

felicity and true happiness... then he should not forget this fact.

This set of verses constitutes a sort of a background argument for denying the importance of material things as ultimate ideals worthy of man's adoration. These verses are followed immediately by the reminder that man should know that there exists another world which is eternal and everlasting. Do not imagine that the present life is everything. Since it is not worthy of man, do not conclude that life is futile and meaningless, they remind.

The second set of verses illuminates the solution to the problem of man's relationship to the world. It can be clearly seen from these verses that the execrable form of relationship is one that grows to the extent of becoming a bondage, requiring man's submission, willing surrender and servitude to the transitory things of the world. It is in these verses that the crux of the Holy Qur'an's logic comes to light:

Wealth and sons are the adornment of the worldly life; but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness (***which survive one's death and continue to benefit other people***) ***are better with Allah in reward and better in hope.*** (***Qur'an, 18: 46***)

This verse, as can be seen, speaks of the ultimate aspiration of man. His ultimate aspiration is the thing for which he lives and without which life has no meaning in his eyes.

Surely those who look not to encounter Us and are well- pleased with the present life and are at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our signs, their refuge is the Fire, for that they have been earning. (***Qur'an, 10: 7-8***)

In this verse, that which is considered execrable is the absence of hope in the next life and the satisfaction and contentment with material things.

So turn from him who turns away from Our remembrance and desires only the present life. That is [***the extent of***] ***their attainment of knowledge.*** (***Qur'an, 53: 29-30***)

They rejoice in this world's life, and this world's life is nothing compared with the Hereafter but a temporary enjoyment. (***Qur'an, 13: 26***)

They know an outward part of the present life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless. (***Qur'an, 30: 7***)

There are many other verses which have a similar meaning. In all of them the same theme recurs, that is the negation of the world as the goal and ideal of man's highest aspirations and the ultimate object of his desire and the only source of his happiness and delight. It is held that this form of relationship between man and the world, instead of putting the world at man's disposal, sacrifices man to it and dispossesses him of his humanity.

In Nahjul-Balagha as in the Holy Qur'an we encounter a similar twofold argument. In the first set of

statements the transitory nature of the world is depicted in profound, forceful metaphors, allegories and parables put in precise and elegant phrases which follow one another in an absorbing rhythm. In the second category, conclusions are drawn which are exactly the same as those derived by the Holy Qur'an.

In Khutbah 32, people are at first divided into two categories: The worldly and the otherworldly. The worldly people are again divided into four groups.

In the first group are put those who are meek and tractable like sheep. They are the most innocuous of creatures, never seen to commit any overt injustice or aggression, or covert deceit or subversion. Not that they detest such things but because they lack the power and daring to carry them out.

To the second category belong those who possess both the power and the daring to carry out such ambitions. They muster their will to amass money and wealth, to acquire power and authority, or to occupy important posts and offices and do not stop short of any degree of perverseness.

Those belonging to the third group are wolves in the skins of sheep. They are slaves of the world in the garb of the otherworldly and the pious. The y, sanctimoniously, hang their heads in affected humility, walk with the slow steps of a sage and dress like the devout. Through their hypocrisy they win the confidence of the people and become their most confident trustees.

To the fourth group belong those whose hearts burn regretfully with the fire of ambition but their feeling of inferiority has forced them to retire to seclusion. They put on the dress of piety and zuhd in order to conceal their deep sense of inferiority and dejection.

All the four kinds of people, regardless of the diverse degrees of their success and failure, are regarded by Ali (as) to constitute, spiritually, a single class on account of their commonly shared attitude: worldliness. Why? Because all of them have one common characteristic: They are like the unfortunate birds whom the world has made its prey one way or another. Captured, they enjoy no longer the freedom of flight. They are slaves and prisoners of the world.

In the same sermon, Ali (as) describes the qualities of the other- worldly, the opposite group and says the following:

Evil is the barter of those who purchase this world at the cost of their souls.

In the eyes of Ali (as) the whole world with everything in it is too inferior to be the price of a man's humanity; hence it ends in the great loss of one who exchanges it for his human identity. Nasir Khusrow has the same theme in mind, when he says the following:

Never shall I fall an easy prey to the world,
For no more do its woes burden my heart.
In fact, I am the hunter and the world my prey,

Though once it did pursue me on its hunt.
Though many a man has fallen pierced by its arrows,
The world could not make me a target.
My soul flies over the world's tides,
And no more do I worry about its waves and tides.

This theme that one should never sacrifice one's humanity for anything in the world is a theme that recurs a lot in the sayings of the leaders of the Islamic faith. Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as), in his famous will to Imam al-Hassan (as), which is included in the section of Epistles (letters) in Nahjul-Balagha, says the following: "Keep your self above every contemptible thing because, whatever it may be, it is not worth the compromise of your self.

In Tuhaf al-Uqul, the following tradition is recorded:

Imam al-Sajjad (as) was asked, "Who is the most important among people?" He replied, "The one who does not regard the whole world to be equal to his worth.

There are many traditions which deal with a similar theme, but we shall abstain from quoting more for the sake of brevity.

A close study of the Holy Qur'an, Nahjul-Balagha and the sayings of other religious leaders will reveal that Islam has not depreciated the world; rather, it has elevated the station and worth of the human being as compared to it. In Islam, the world is for the sake of man and not the other way around. It aims to revive the human values, not to disparage the world.

Freedom And Bondage

Our discussion of the meaning of "worldliness" in Nahjul- Balagha has become somewhat drawn out. However, one issue, which cannot be omitted, remains unanswered. We raised it earlier in the form of a question which we had promised to answer later. The question was this: If attachment and bondage to anything is a kind of unhealthy condition that leads to abandonment of human values and causes stagnation, inertness and inertia of the human personality, what difference does it make whether that thing is something material or spiritual, this worldly or otherworldly, or, as goes the saying, "the Master or the apple"?

It may be said that if the aim of Islam, by prohibiting attachment and by warning against bondage to temporal things, is to safeguard the human being's identity, to rescue him from servitude and to protect him from stagnating and vegetating in life, it should have encouraged man to acquire absolute freedom and to consider everything that compromises and confines it as kufr, for such is the standpoint of some modern schools of philosophy which consider freedom to be the essence of man's human identity.

These schools of thought equate man's human identity with his capacity to rebel, disobey every form of

servitude and assert his absolute freedom. Accordingly, every manner of bondage, confinement and submission is, according to them, inconsistent with man's real identity and leads to self- alienation.

They say that man realizes his true humanity only by refusing to submit and surrender. It is characteristic of attachment that the object of love absorbs man's attention and compromises his self-awareness. This results in his forgetting his own self and, subsequently, this aware and free being called man, whose identity is summarized in his awareness and freedom, becomes a slavish creature devoid of freedom and self- awareness. In forgetting his own identity, man also becomes oblivious of his human values.

In such a state of bondage and servitude, he ceases to progress, edifying himself and becoming stagnant, frozen at some point. If Islam's philosophy of struggle against worldliness aims at the resurrection of the human identity and personality, it should oppose every form of servitude and liberate man from every form of bondage. Such, however, is not the case for Islam, undeniably, advocates the liberation from materialism for the sake of spiritual servitude. Freedom from the world is acquired for the sake of the fetters of the Hereafter and the apple is renounced for the sake of the Master.

The 'Urafa' who advise absolute freedom from attachments, however, do allow an exception. Hafiz says the following:

I am the slave of the magnanimity of Him
Who is free of the taint of attachment to anything under the blue sky
Except the love of the moon-cheeked one,
The joy of whose love redeems all sorrows and woes.
Openly do I declare and am delighted to proclaim:
I am the slave of Love and am free from both the worlds
Except for the Beloved's Name inscribed on the slate of my heart,
The teacher did not teach me another word.

From the viewpoint of irfan, one must be free of both worlds but should surrender totally to love. As Hafiz says, the tablet of the heart must be clean of every name except that of the Beloved One. The heart should be cleansed of every attachment except the love of Allah Whose love brings redemption from all sorrows and woes.

However, from the viewpoint of the so-called humanistic philosophy, the freedom of the arif, being only relative, does not take us anywhere because it is freedom from everything for the sake of a total surrender and servitude to One Being. Servitude is, after all, servitude, and bondage is bondage, regardless of the agent towards which it is directed.

This is the objection raised by the followers of modern humanistic philosophies. In order that the issues involved may be further illuminated, we are compelled to refer to certain philosophical issues.

First of all, one may point out that to assume that there exists a kind of human selfhood and identity and

to insist that this identity should be safeguarded in itself amounts to the negation of movement, progress and development of this selfhood because, motion and change necessarily result in alienation from this selfhood. This is so because movement means becoming: that is, becoming something one is not; it implies a continuous transcendence of selfhood and the embracing of otherness.

Obviously, if we accept this view, it is only by the means of immobility and stagnation that one can preserve his identity. The development necessitates self-alienation. For this reason, some ancient philosophers defined motion in terms of otherness and self-estrangement. Accordingly, to assume that there exists a certain kind of human Aself and to insist that this self should be safeguarded and protected from becoming Anon-self and to speak of movement, progress and evolution in the same breath involves an unresolvable contradiction.

Some people, in order to free themselves from this contradiction, have said that man's identity lies in being devoid of any kind of self whatsoever. Man, they say, is a creature absolutely undefined in his essence and free from any kind of limit, form or essence. His essence lies in his being without any defined essence. Man is a creature devoid of a fixed nature and essential necessity. Any attempt to define, limit or confine him amounts to depriving him of his real self and identity.

Such a view may be aptly considered poetry and a flight of imagination rather than a philosophy. The absolute absence of a fixed form and essence is possible in one of two cases: Firstly, such a being should possess infinite perfection, pure and unlimited actuality; that is, it should be a being unlimited and unconfined, encompassing all times and places and predominant over all things and beings in existence, such as the Being of the Creator.

For such a Being, movement and growth are impossible because motion and development involve overcoming of defects and imperfections, whereas such a being cannot possibly be supposed to possess any imperfection. Secondly, it may apply to a being devoid of every kind of actuality and merit. That is, it should be a pure possibility and sheer potentiality, a neighbor of nothingness, existing only on the remotest frontiers of existence.

It should be devoid of any innate reality and essence though capable of assuming any form or essence. Such a being, which itself absolutely undefined, is always associated with a definite being; though shapeless and colorless in itself, it exists in the protective shadow of a being possessing form, shape and color. Such a being is what the philosophers call the primal matter.

It occupies the lowest status in the hierarchy of existence and stands on the extremity of being, even as the Divine Essence, being the absolute perfection, stands on the other extremity of existence with the difference that the extremity occupied by the Divine Essence circumscribes all the contents of being. Man, like all other creatures, is situated somewhere between these two extremes and cannot lack any defined essence. Admittedly, he is different from other creatures but, unlike them, there is no limit to his movement towards perfection. Whereas other creatures remain confined to certain definite limits which

they cannot transcend, there is no end to the possibilities of the human development.

Man possesses a special kind of being. But contrary to the view of the philosophers who believe in the precedence of essence and reduce the being of everything to its quiddity and who deny the possibility of transcendence and essential change as being self-contradictory and consider all changes to occur at the level of accidents, the existential nature of man, like that of any other material thing, is fluid, with the difference that its movement and fluidity know no final limits.

Some commentators of the Holy Qur'an, in their explanations of the verse: "O people of Yathrib! There is no abiding here for you (Qur'an, 33: 13), have generalized it to cover all humanity. They hold that man is a creature which does not move to a certain and definite stage or halt; the further he moves the greater are the possibilities open to him. Here we do not wish to indulge in discussing the legitimacy of imposing such interpretations on Qur'anic verses; we only intend to demonstrate that Muslim scholars have thought about man in such terms.

In the hadith about the Prophet's Ascension (al-mi'raj), Gabriel, who accompanies the Prophet (S), at a certain point gives up his journey declaring: "I will get burnt if I move an inch further, while the Prophet (S) leaves him behind and moves further."This is an allusion to the truth mentioned above.

Also, as we know, there is a debate among Muslim scholars about the salawat (Benedictions) upon the Holy Prophet (S) and Ahl al-Bayt (as), which we make as a prayer to Allah to shower greater blessings upon them. Now the debate is whether the salawat is of any benefit to the Holy Prophet (S), who is the most perfect man. In other words, is there any possibility of ascension in the Prophet's station? Or does the salawat benefit only the person who pronounces it and beseeches Allah to bless the Prophet (S), a favor that has already been granted?

The late Sayyid Ali Khan opened this debate in his commentary on Al-Sahifa Al-Kamila. A group of theologians believe that the Holy Prophet (S) is always ascending and climbing higher and higher in his station and this movement is never halted.

Yes, such is the station of man. That which makes man as such is not the absolute absence of a defined essence but a certain kind of essence which is ordinarily referred to as the human nature and other such expressions.

Man does not have any ultimate limits, but he has a path. The Holy Qur'an lays a great emphasis on what it calls the Straight Path, which is an unambiguous path before man. Man is not constrained by stages so as to be forced to stop at every stage in his journey. Instead, there is an orbit in which he should move. This is the orbit of human perfection which is different from those of the animals. This means the movement in a specified orbit is orderly, not haphazard.

Existentialist Viewpoint

Existentialism has been rightly criticized for its refusal to acknowledge any kind of determination or definition of the human nature, for its considering every determination (even in the form of a path or an orbit) as contrary to his humanity and for its emphasis on his absolute freedom and capacity for rebellion. This philosophy necessarily leads to the breakdown of social morality and the negation of the individual's commitments and responsibilities.

Does Evolution Involve Self-Alienation?

Now, returning to what we said earlier, does movement and evolution necessitate alienation from one's self? Should every being, in order to remain itself, abstain from change and evolution? Does it mean that either man should retain his human identity or, if he chooses an evolutionary course, become something alien to his essence?

The answer is that the true evolution of anything is a movement towards the perfect state which conforms to its nature. In other words, the transformations during movement on the straight path of nature by no means necessitate any loss of a specific identity.

That which constitutes the real self of a being is its existence, not its essence. Accordingly, any change in essence does not imply mutation of the Aself' into a Anon-self. Mulla Sadra, who is the champion of this philosophy, holds that man does not have any definite essence; rather, every developing being passing through the stages of its evolution is not a single species but a plurality of species.

The relationship of an imperfect being with its ultimate stage of perfection is not a relationship of otherness; rather it is a relationship of the thing to itself. It is the relation of an imperfect self to the perfect self. A thing while evolving toward its perfect state is in movement from its self to its self. In a sense, it can be said to be in movement from the non-self towards its true self. A seed that breaks the ground and sprouts leaves and sends out branches and flowers does not move from the self to the non-self. If it were aware of itself and aware of its ultimate evolution, it would not feel self-alienated.

This is why the love of true perfection is the love of a higher self; a praiseworthy love is in itself a desirable and praiseworthy egotism or self-love. Shaikh al-Ishraq Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi has an elegant ruba'i on this subject:

Beware lest you lose the wisdom's thread,
And lose your self for the sake of water and bread.
You are the traveller, the way, the destination,
Beware lest you lose the path from the self to the self.

On the basis of what has been said it can be surmised that there is a great difference between desiring

Allah, the movement towards Allah, the love of Allah, the attachment and the servitude to Allah and submission to Him and the love, the submission and the servitude to other things. The servitude to Allah is freedom itself.

It is the only relationship and tie which does not stagnate the human personality or make it inert and immobile. It is the only kind of worship which does not imply self- forgetfulness and self-alienation. Why? Because He is the Absolute Perfection, the Ultimate Goal and the Destination of everything in existence:

"And unto your Lord will be the end of all things (***Qur'an, 53: 42***).

Now we have reached a point from where we can proceed to explain the status of the Holy Qur'an that forgetting Allah is forgetting one's own self and the separation from Allah is absolute annihilation.

Forgetting And Losing The "Self"

I remember that about eighteen years ago, while discussing the exegesis of certain verses of the Holy Qur'an in a private gathering, for the first time the point struck me that the Holy Qur'an very often employs typical expressions about a certain group of human beings such as those who lose, forget, or sell their selves. For instance, it says the following:

They have, indeed, lost their selves [***souls***] ***and that which they were forging has gone astray from them.*** (***Qur'an, 7: 53***)

Say: "Surely the losers are they who lose their selves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. (***Qur'an, 39: 15***)

Be not as those who forgot Allah and so He caused them to forget their selves; those-they are the ungodly. (***Qur'an, 59: 19***)

The question might occur to a mind with a philosophic bent. Is it possible for a man to lose his self? The loss of anything necessitates two things: The loser and the thing lost. Now how is it possible for a human being to lose himself? Is this not self-contradictory?

Likewise, is it possible for a man to forget himself? A living human being is always immersed in itself and perceives everything as something other and additional to its own self; its attention is, before everything else, focused on itself. Then what is meant by forgetting one's self?

Later I realized that this matter occupies a significant place in Islamic teachings, especially in the prayers and some traditions as well as in the writings of Muslim Urafa. It shows that often man mistakes Anon-self' as his self, regarding non-self as his real self. Then, imagining the non-self to be his self, he treats the non-self and takes care of it as he would have treated and cared for his true self.

The true self, as a result, falls into neglect and oblivion and occasionally undergoes a metamorphosis. For instance, when man imagines his body as representative of his total entity, all his endeavor revolves around his body, it means that he has forgotten his self conceiving the non-self to be his real self. Such a man, in the words of Rumi, is like the one who owns a piece of land somewhere; he carries building materials and hires masons and workers to build a house for him.

After much toil, the house is made ready for living; the doors and windows are painted, the floor is carpeted, curtains are hung and the house is furnished beautifully in every way; however, one day, when he prepares to move into the new house, all of a sudden he realizes his mistake. To his dismay, he notes that instead of erecting the house on his own land, he has constructed it on a land that belongs to someone else, while his own plot lies abandoned elsewhere:

Don't build your house on the land of another,
Work for your own self and toil not for the stranger.
Who is the stranger except your own earthen frame?
On whose account are all your sorrows and woes?
So long as you nurse and pamper your body,
The soul would not prosper, nor would it become sturdy.
At another, place Rumi says the following:
You, who have lost your self in a losing encounter,
Distinguishing not the other from your own true self;
At every shadow you are quick to exclaim:
Ah! This is me! By Allah it is not you!
Isolate yourself for a while from the crowd,
And immerse yourself to the neck in thought.
Indeed you shall find that you are one with the One,
Beautiful, serene and blessed is your self.

Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) has a saying in this regard which is as profound as it is elegant: "I wonder at the man who searches for his lost things but doesn't care to recover his lost self [soul]."[8]

Losing oneself and forgetting oneself is not confined to man's error in recognizing his true identity and essence such as the ordinary man's self-identification with the body, or the arif's occasional identification of himself with his barzakhi body. We have said in the last chapter that actually every being in the natural course of its development moves from the self to the self; that is, it moves from a lower, weaker self to a self which is powerful and higher. Accordingly, the deviation of every existent from the path of its perfection and development is the deviation from the self towards the non-self.

Man, more than any other creature, being endowed with a free will and the freedom of choice, is subject to this deviation. By choosing a deviant objective as ultimate for himself, in reality he replaces his true self with the non-self, mistaking the non-self to be the self. It is on this basis that the human being's

total immersion in material aspects of life has been regarded as condemnable.

Therefore, the adoption of devious goals and ends is one of the factors of self–alienation that leads man to forget his true self and finally to lose it.

Devious goals and objectives not only result in the disease of self– loss, they ultimately lead to the metamorphosis of man's human essence, a metamorphosis that is determined by that particular devious goal. A significant part of Islamic teachings is devoted to drive home the point that on the Day of Resurrection, every human being shall be resurrected together with the object of his love. Our traditions declare the following unequivocally:

Everyone, on the Day of Judgement shall be resurrected in the company of his object of love, whatever that may be, even if it is a stone.[9]

With attention to the indubitable and unequivocal Islamic teaching that on the Day of Judgement, man will be resurrected in the form of what he acquired in this world, it becomes clear that the reason for a person's resurrection together with the objects of his love is that the love and attachment for that object make it the ultimate goal of the path of his becoming. However devious that object may be, it causes the soul and the inner reality of a person to transform into it.

This subject has been given a great attention by Muslim sages and philosophers who have made great many interesting observations in this regard. For brevity's sake, we shall quote only one rubai on this topic: The seeker of a mine of diamonds is himself a mine; the seeker of the spirit is himself the spirit; I will divulge the secret of this matter: You are whatever you seek; you are the object of your quest.

Discovery Of The Self And Of Allah

The rediscovery of the self, in addition to the above two, requires to fulfil one more condition: The realization and knowledge of the cause of one's creation and existence. That is to say, it is impossible for man to recognize himself and know himself by viewing himself in separation from the cause of his creation. The real cause of every existent is prior to it and nearer to it than it is to its own elf:

"And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein"*(*Qur'an, 50: 16*)*;

"And know that Allah stands between a man and his heart"*(*Qur'an, 8: 24*)*.

The Muslim mystics have laid a great emphasis on the point that the knowledge of the self (ma'rifat al–nafs) and the knowledge of Allah (ma'rifat Allah) are not separate from one another. To experience the spirit, which, according to the Holy Qur'an, is Allah's 'breath', is to experience the Divine Essence. Muslim mystics have raised severe objections against the statements of other Muslim philosophers regarding the problem of self–knowledge and consider them to be inadequate.

Shaikh Mahmud al-Shabistari was sent a series of diverse questions by someone from Khurasan. His poem Gulshan-e raz is the reply which he gave to those questions. In one of the questions, the inquirer asks:

Who am I?
Inform me about myself.
What is meant by a Journey within thy self?

The Shaikh's reply is elaborate. There, he says the following:

Forms and spirits, from the same light are derived,
Reflected of mirror or beaming from the lamp.
AI, the word, is everywhere in all your speech.
It refers to the soul, the spirit. "I" and "You"
Are greater than the body and the spirit,
Which are together parts of the self.
Go, then, my good man, first know well your self,
And remember: edema is different from robustness.[10]
Leave one of them to soar over the undulations of space and time,
Abandon the world in order to become a world in yourself.

A further elaboration of this theme will take us outside the scope of our present discussion. To be brief, it should be said that the gnosis of the self is inseparable from that of Allah. This is exactly the meaning of the famous saying of the Prophet (S) and the same theme recurs in the recorded statements of Imam Ali (as): "He who knows his own self knows his Master.

In Nahjul-Balagha, it is reported that Imam Ali (as) was asked by somebody: "Have you seen your God? Ali (as) replied: "Would I worship what I have not seen?!" Then he elaborated on his answer thus: "He is not visible to the eyes but the hearts perceive Him through (the factual experience of) faith (iman)."[11]

An interesting point that is implicit in the verses of the Holy Qur'an is that man is in possession of himself as long as he "possesses" Allah. Only through the remembrance of Allah does he remember his self and become fully aware of it; to forget Allah is to neglect one's own self. Forgetting Allah is accompanied by self-forgetfulness:

***"Be not as those who forgot Allah, so He caused them to forget their own selves* [*souls*]*"* (*Qur'an, 59: 19*).**

Rumi, following the verses quoted above, says the following:

Even if the body should lie amidst fragrance and musk,
On death it will petrify and give out its stink.

So scent not the body, but perfume the soul with musk,
What is such musk but the Name of the Glorious Master?!

Hafiz says the following:
Hafiz, if you desire presence,
Do not be absent from Him.
If you desire His rendezvous,
Abandon the world and forget it.

This shows why the remembrance of Allah is essential for the life of the heart; it awakens and illumines the heart and gives peace to the soul; it revives, purifies, refines and humbles the human conscience and fills it with delight. How profound and beautiful are Ali's words in Nahjul-Balagha where he says the following: "Certainly Allah Almighty has made His remembrance a means for cleaning and polishing the hearts. It makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and it makes them submissive to guidance after being stubborn and resisting." In all periods and times, when there were no prophets, there were individuals to whom He whispered through their thoughts and spoke to their intellects. As a result, they were enlightened with an awakening in their hearts, vision and hearing.[12]

Worship And Rediscovery Of The Self

There is so much that can be said about worship that if we were to elaborate, we would have to devote scores of chapters to this subject. Here, we shall make a brief reference to the value of worship in the rediscovery of the self.

As much as the bondage to material matters and immersion in them severs man from his true self and induces self-alienation, worship helps him in recovering his own self. Worship awakens man from his spiritual slumber. It rescues him from drowning in the sea of self-neglect and forgetfulness and saves his identity from being lapsed in the world of material things. It is in the mirror of worship and Allah's remembrance that man can observe himself as he really is and become aware of his failings and faults. It is in worship that he acquires the true perspective of being, life, space and time, like watching a city from a high mountain and perceives the insignificance, pettiness and abjectness of his materialistic hopes, desires and ambitions. It is in worship that a yearning is awakened in his heart to attain to the very core of being.

I have always marveled at the following words of the famous scientist of our age, Albert Einstein. What adds to my amazement is that he was a physicist and a mathematician, not a psychologist, theologian or philosopher. After dividing religion into three stages, he calls the third stage of religious experience as the one arising from cosmic religious feeling.

He describes this religious experience in these words: "The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world

of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole.[13]

William James, writing about prayer, says the following: “The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that while the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a self of the social sort, it yet can find its only adequate socius (its great companion) in an ideal world. Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to it in their breasts. The humblest outcast on this earth can feel himself to be real and valid by means of this higher recognition.[14]

Iqbal also has something profound to say about worship and prayer and their value for the rediscovery of the self. He writes the following: “Prayer as a means of spiritual illumination is a normal vital act by which the island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole of life.[15]

We conclude our discussion of this extensive subject right here.

Some Relevant Issues

Now that our discussion about the concept of the “world”[dunya] in Nahjul–Balagha is nearing its conclusion, I want to clarify some issues with attention to the principles discussed above.

Life In This World Versus In The Hereafter

Some Islamic traditions seem to imply that there exists a kind of conflict between the world and the Hereafter. For instance, it is stated that they are like two rival wives who can never be reconciled, or it is said that they are like the East and the West: one cannot approach any of them without moving farther from the other. How should one interpret these statements in order to reconcile them with what has been said above?

The answer is that, firstly, as has been expressly stated in most Islamic traditions, a reconciliation between winning the world and the Hereafter is not only possible but is a necessity of the Islamic creed. That which is impossible is their reconciliation as ultimate ends and goals.

The enjoyment of the good things of the world does not necessarily require deprivation from the blessings of the Hereafter. That which deprives one of the rewards of the next life is a series of mortal sins, not the enjoyment of a wholesome, comfortable life and the availing of pure and lawful bounties provided by Allah. Similarly, that which leads to deprivation in the world is not taqwa or righteous deeds or the endeavor for the Hereafter; a number of other factors are responsible for it.

Many prophets, Imams and pious believers, whose virtues and piety are indubitable, have been among those who benefitted greatly from the legitimate bounties of the world. Accordingly, even if it is assumed that the religious texts do imply irreconcilability between the enjoyment of the world and that of the Hereafter, they would not be acceptable because of the incontrovertible testimony to the contrary.

Secondly, if we scrutinize such traditions closely, an interesting point comes to the surface in whose light we observe no contradiction between them and the incontrovertible principles of Islam.

But before this point is explained, we should examine three possible relationships between the world and the Hereafter: "The relationship between enjoyment of the good things of the world and enjoyment of the rewards of the Hereafter. The relationship between the world as the ultimate goal and the Hereafter as such. The relationship between adoption of one of these as the ultimate goal with the enjoyment of the other."

There is no conflict whatsoever involved in the first case. Accordingly, a reconciliation between the two is quite possible. The second case, however, involves a contradiction. There is no possibility of reconciling these two opposite goals.

As to the third, it involves in turn two cases: first, the adoption of the world as the ultimate end and the enjoyment of the Hereafter; second, the adoption of the Hereafter as the ultimate goal and the enjoyment of the world. The first case involves a contradiction, whereas the second does not.

The Primary And The Secondary

The conflict between the adoption of either the world or the Hereafter as ultimate ends and the enjoyment of the other is the kind that exists between a perfect and an imperfect end. If the imperfect is made the ultimate goal, the perfect is necessarily missed whereas, if the perfect were one's end and goal, it would not necessarily preclude the imperfect. The same is true of anything primary in relationship to its secondaries.

If something secondary were made as the aim, it would result in deprivation from the primary. But if the primary is made the aim and the goal, the secondary, being a corollary of the primary, is automatically included. This is most eloquently explained in Hikma 269 of Nahjul-Balagha:

There are two types of workers among the people of the world: (One type is represented by) the man who works in this world for this world, and his involvement in the world makes him forget the Hereafter. He is worried about those whom he shall leave behind (when he dies) lest poverty should strike them, as if he were himself secure of it (i.e. sure of not being poor in the Hereafter). So he spends his life for the (worldly) benefit of others [earning nothing for his own eternal life in the Hereafter].

The other type of man works in the world for the sake of the Hereafter and secures his share of the world effortlessly. Thus, he derives benefit from both and comes to possess both the worlds. As a result, he acquires honor before Allah Who grants him whatever he asks of Him.

Rumi offers an interesting allegory. He compares the Hereafter and the world to a caravan of camels and the trail of dung that it leaves behind. If one's aim were to own the camels, he would also have the camels' dung and wool. But if one wants only the dung and the wool, he will never come to acquire the

camels and will always be collecting dung and wool of camels which belong to others.

Hanker you after faith for its pursuit yields
Beauty, wealth, honor and good fortune.
Consider the Hereafter as a camel train;
The world is a trail of wool and dung in its rear.
If you want only the wool, you will never the camels own;
Yet if you own a camel train, isn't its wool your own ?!

That the relation of the world to the Hereafter is like that of a secondary thing to its primary. Worldliness, being a pursuit of the secondary, leads to deprivation from the benefits of the Hereafter. Other worldliness by itself ensures the benefits of the world. Such a teaching originates in the Holy Qur'an. Verses 145–148 of surat Imran expressly and verses 18 and 19 of surat al–"Isra' together with verse 20 of surat al– Shura implicitly present this view.

A Relevant Tradition

There is a well–known tradition found in the texts of hadith as well as in other books and is also mentioned in the last will of Imam al– Hassan al–Mujtaba (as). This is the text of the tradition: "In regard to the world, be as if you were going to live forever. With respect to the Hereafter, be as if you were going to die tomorrow.[16]

This tradition has been highly controversial in that it has led to contradictory interpretations. Some people interpret it as implying that one should deal with worldly matters with relaxed inattention and without hurrying. Whenever one is faced with an affair of worldly life, one should say to himself, "There is still a lot of time, why hurry?" But when performing good deeds for the Hereafter, one should imagine as if he were not going to be alive after tomorrow and say to himself: "There is not much time left; it is already too late."

Others with the conviction that Islam never recommends negligence and carelessness, which certainly has not been the practice of the leaders of the faith, have said that what is implied is that one should always approach the worldly affairs as if he were immortal, attend to them with attention and care and not perform them in a perfunctory manner with the pretext that life is fleeting.

Rather, they say, the works of the world should be done with firmness and great foresight and attention, as if one were going to live till the end of the world. The rationale for this is that if one were to die, others will derive benefit from one's deeds. The affairs of the Hereafter, however, are in Allah's hand; so think of them as if you were going to die tomorrow and there is not much time left for anything.

As can be noticed, the first of these two interpretations recommends negligence and lack of commitment towards the affairs of the world, whereas the second advises a similar attitude towards the Hereafter. Obviously, none of these two interpretations can be regarded as acceptable.

In our opinion, this, one of the most subtle of traditions, consists of an invitation to action, care and attention and avoidance of negligence and indifference, whether with respect to the worldly activities or to those which relate to the Hereafter.

Suppose a person living in a house knows that sooner or later he will have to move to another house where he will stay permanently. However, he does not know the day, the month or the year when he shall have to make to move. Such a person is in a state of dilemma with regard to matters relevant to his present home and his plans about his future house. If he knows that he will move tomorrow, he will not pay any attention to the repairs and upkeep of his present house and attend only to matters concerning the planned move. But if he knows that he will not be changing residence for several years, he will act in an opposite manner.

Presently, he will devote all his attention to the present house, knowing that there is much time left to deal with those relevant to his future residence.

Now this person, who is in a state of doubt about the exact date of his move, not knowing whether he will have to move in the near future or remain in his present house for years, meets a friend who wisely advises him to tend to the affairs of his present house as if he were to continue living there for a long time and not to neglect its upkeep. As to the other house, the wise friend advises him to get it ready as if he were going to move tomorrow and have it furnished as soon as possible. This advice will have the consequence that it will make him adopt a serious and active attitude towards both his houses.

Suppose someone wants to start an undertaking, such as writing a book or founding an institution or taking up a project which requires years of pursuit. If such a person thinks that he will not live long enough to finish his work, he might desist from starting it. That is why it is said that one must think that he will live for long. But the same person, from the point of view of repenting for his sins and compensating for the past excesses with regard to religious duties or the rights of the people which he has transgressed all of which require little time for their accomplishment given the will to do so may keep on postponing them every day so that the promised tomorrow may never come.

In such cases, contrary to the first kind of attitude, to assume that one has still enough time and there is no reason to hasten, would result in negligence and delay in the fulfillment of one's duties. Therefore, here one should assume that there is not much time left.

Thus, we see that in one case, to assume that one has enough time encourages action and endeavor and the assumption that there is no time left leads one to abstain from action and endeavor. In the other case, the result is quite the opposite. Here, the assumption that one has still a lot of time leads to negligence and procrastination and the assumption that there is not much time left leads to quick accomplishment of duties.

In the light of this, the hadith means to say that with regard to one kind of duties, one should assume that he is going to live on, and with respect to another kind, he must suppose that not much remains of

his life.

This interpretation is not baseless. There are several traditions which confirm the above interpretation. The reason that this tradition gave rise to controversy is that attention was not paid to such traditions. Safinat al-Bihar, under rifq, relates a tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) addressed to Jabir: "Indeed, this (i.e. Islam) is a firm religion. So (do not make it hard on yourself but) act in it with mildness. Cultivate like one who thinks he will never die, and work (for the hereafter) like one who is afraid he will die tomorrow.

In Volume 15 of Bihar al-Anwar (in the section on akhlaq, Ch. 29), it is related from Al-Kafi that the Holy Prophet (S) addressed Ali (as) saying: "This (religion of Islam) is a firm religion. So, work like him who hopes to live for long and be cautious like him who is afraid that he will die tomorrow. That is, when commencing a useful project that requires a long time for its completion, assume that you will live long enough to complete it. However, with regard to matters which you might postpone, thinking that you have enough time to handle them, assume that you shall die tomorrow, so that time is not wasted and delay is avoided.

In Nahjul-Balagha, it is related from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said: "Attend to the affairs of the world; but with respect to the Hereafter, be such as if you are going to die tomorrow."

In the same book, the Prophet (S) is related as saying: "Work like the man who imagines that he will never die, and be cautious like one who knows he is going to die tomorrow."

In another tradition, the Prophet (S) is reported to have said: "The mu'min is the most vexed of all men, for he must attend to the affairs of the world as well as to those of the Hereafter."

In Safinat al-Bihar, under nafs, one hadith by Imam Musa al- Kazim (as) is related from Tuhaf al-Uqul to the effect that: "He who abandons the world for his Hereafter or abandons his Hereafter for his world is not from us.

The above discussion, on the whole, underscroes our interpretation of the said hadith and also shows that this approach finds a recurring echo in the teachings of the leaders of the Islamic faith.

Concluded; walhamdu lillah!

What Is Shi'Ism?

1- Shi'ism in the Contemporary World

Nowadays, according to the latest statistics, there are more than one hundred and thirty million Shi'ites in different parts of the world. They are concentrated mostly in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Turkey, Caucasia, Egypt and other Muslim countries of North and Central Africa.

From the quantitative point of view, Shi'ism comprises about one fourth of the total Islamic community of the world. From the point of view of intellectual and scholarly activity, a notable portion of the intellectual treasures of the Islamic world has been created by Shi'ite scholars. Yet, unfortunately, there are still quite a few people everywhere who are not acquainted with the principles of Shi'ite ideologies. Even our Sunni brothers, who comprise three-fourths of the Islamic community and in many countries live along side by side with us, are not completely informed of our method of thought and beliefs.

For those who live in the East, this situation should not cause much surprise for the "agents of colonialism" who see the preservation of their interests in causing internal conflicts in this region, have explored every avenue possible to cause hatred and division between these two groups of Muslims. In order to achieve this end, they have even inverted the truth itself. As a consequence of this pessimism, there have been occasional fights between the two groups of Muslims, fights which have incurred nothing but loss upon the Islamic community. Yet, for those who had fixed their covetous eye on the extensive and vital resources of this vast region, such disputes were considered as a great victory.

Fortunately, as a result of the awakening of the East and the spread of means of communication as well as the disappearance of unworthy prejudices, this situation has changed almost completely nowadays.

This change is indicated by the fact that about 20 years ago, on behalf of the professors and directors of al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the leading centers of learning of the Sunni world, there was established a center called Athe center for rapprochement between Islamic schools with the collaboration of Shi'ite scholars. The aim of this center, as certified by its name, is to bring about familiarity and proximity between the Muslims of the world. Its members are comprised of well- known Shi'ite and Sunni scholars and by chance the general secretary is [presently] a Persian Shi'ite.[17] This Center publishes a scholarly journal called Risalat al-Islam in which scholars of both schools write articles based on sound proofs in order to illuminate the minds of the general Muslim public throughout the world.

The late rector of al-Azhar University and the Grand Mufti of the Sunnis, Shaikh Mahmud Shaltut, for the first time declared openly the official recognition of the religious teaching of the Shi'ite school. He permitted all Sunnis to perform their religious duties according to Shi'ite beliefs if they wish to do so. (Of course the background of this declaration had been prepared before by other scholars such as Shaikh Abd al-Majid Salim.). This declaration had a very good effect on the great majority of the Muslim public and was very effective in creating mutual understanding between the two groups. Only a few fanatically minded people were disturbed by it.

2- Centers of Shi'ite Learning

Shi'ism possesses several universities in different parts of the world where Islamic sciences can be studied. The most important among them are the centers of Najaf, Qum and Mashhad. Most of the outstanding leaders of Shi'ism come from these three centers, and they are all professors who teach in

these universities. In these and other centers of learning, there are numerous scholars, writers, propagators of the faith and preachers.

A relatively large number of students are studying in Qum, Mashhad and Najaf. The graduating students, after completing their studies, are sent to different regions as directors of religious affairs or religious preachers or, if necessary, they are called upon to become teachers and lecturers in the centers of learning.

An important segment of the scholarly and intellectual treasures of Islam has been written by Shi'ite scholars.

Also, according to reliable and trustworthy documents at hand, all or most of the Islamic sciences have been founded by Shi'ite scholars, that is, Shi'as have been the first to create and establish those sciences.

Shi'ite preachers are trained in such a way that, unlike other speakers, they can deliver from memory, and without any notes, instructive scientific and social lectures as well as warm and pleasing sermons, each exceeding one or two hours.

The late great leader and guide of the world of Shi'ism, namely Ayatullah Burujardi, expressed a great deal of interest in making Shi'ism known to the whole world. He was sure that if the beliefs of Shi'ite Muslims were to be made known to the world in a correct way, they would be rapidly accepted and people would find in them a shelter within which they can find solutions for the social and moral difficulties facing the modern world. Islam can provide an answer for the needs of the humanity of our century and of any other century. For this reason, he endeavored to send propagators of Shi'ism to Europe and America and sent competent preachers of the faith to these regions.

Unfortunately, the possibilities did not permit any more than this. In West Germany, specifically in Hamburg (on the bank of the beautiful Alster lake), plans were made for building a majestic mosque called the mosque of Persians. This mosque, the first Shi'ite religious building in the Western world, has been constructed on a four thousand square meter lot and with heavy expenses. A large number of Muslims, Shi'ite and Sunni alike, perform their religious rites in this mosque.

Tourists visiting Hamburg come to see this beautiful and interesting mosque in which are combined Oriental and Occidental schools of are and architecture and where the Oriental and Islamic aspects are very obvious.

In Shi'ite universities, especially those of Najaf, Qum, Mashhad and Tehran, there are large libraries most of whose books consist of works of renown Islamic scholars. It is also of interest to note that the great al-Azhar University of Cairo and the Islamic Qarawiyyin University in Morocco, which are among the eldest universities in the world, were founded by Shi'ites, the first by the Fatimide caliphs and the second by the Idrisid sultans.

3- Origin of Shi'ism

Occasionally, certain people, because of mis-information or ill- intentions, make it appear as if Shi'ism is something other than the religion promulgated by Muhammad (S) upon whom be blessings and peace, the great leader of the Islamic world and that Shi'ism came into being in later centuries.

The truth is that Shi'ism is nothing but Islam and Shi'ites consider as unworthy and without authority anything that has the least conflict with the religion of the Prophet (S) of Islam and the Holy Qur'an.

Altogether, it must be remembered that Shi'ism is not a special religion visa-vis Islam about whose origin one could debate. Shi'ism from its own point of view is none other than the sacred religion of Islam itself as founded by the Holy Prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (S). Only Shi'ism believes that the best means to know Islam and the teachings of the Prophet (S) is through his family who were the closest to him and were brought up in the atmosphere of revelation., therefore, the date of origin of Shi'ism is same as Islam itself.

The Holy Qur'an, according to Shi'ism, is the most important untouched source of Islam which has reached us without any change from the Prophet (S). For this reason the Holy Qur'an is made the criterion and means of judgement of the authenticity or falsehood of sayings which have reached us from the great leaders of religions, the means to judge between authentic sayings and those that are forged. Any saying that has been handed down, if it accords with the Holy Qur'an is acceptable and if not, rejected.

Taking these truths into view, there is no need to remind people that Shi'ism begins with the first instance when the revelation descended upon the Prophet (S) of Islam.

4- Shi'ites and other Muslims

What distinguishes the Shi'ites from other Muslims? the answer to this question is clear. The first point that distinguishes the Shi'ites from Sunnis is the question of succession to the Prophet (S). Shi'ism believes that the status of succession and vicegerency (caliphate) of the Prophet (S) is a sacred and responsible function which like that of prediction itself must be designated by Allah. A person who occupies this status is called the Imam. The first Imam who was chosen by Allah through the prophet was Ali (as) upon whom be peace. After him eleven other members of the family of the Prophet (S) were chosen for this status.

The first of them is Ali (as) ibn Abu Talib upon whom be peace. Ali (as) was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (S) and according to the confession of the scholars of Islam the most learned, self-sacrificing and courageous of the companions of the Prophet (S). He was the first man to accept the faith and never separated from the Prophet (S) throughout his life.

During the last year of his life the Prophet (S), while returning from pilgrimage to Medina in a place

called Ghadir Khumm, officially designated Ali (as) as his successor before a large gathering of Muslims.

Before this event also he had referred several times to this matter. Furthermore, the intellectual, spiritual and religious distinctions of Ali (as) were such that there was no one more worthy of becoming the successor of the Prophet (S) than he. However, after the death of the Prophet (S) political and tribal competition prevented him from becoming officially the caliph and leader of Muslims.

At the same time many of the outstanding personalities among the well-known companions and aides of the Prophet (S) remained faithful to him and were proud to follow him. But in order not to create any dissension or breach in the ranks of Muslims, they did not oppose openly the caliph of the time.

Twenty-five years thereafter, following the caliphate of three other men, Muslims turned to him again and selected him as their leader.

Without doubt the period of rule and caliphate of Ali (as) which was unfortunately short, having lasted about five years and which terminated with his martyrdom, was the most perfect and exalted example of just and truthful government and fight against all unjust inequalities.

This is a matter which no historian can deny. Today his meaningful and wise sayings have survived and make known his school. The Shi'ites of the world boast in having such a leader. Even the word Shi'a which etymologically means "partisan"or "follower"has come into being through the fact that the members of this group are the partisans of such a leader.

Shi'ites believe that after Ali (as), eleven of his descendants became consecutively the successors and vicegerents of the Prophet (S) and with Ali (as) himself comprise the "Twelve Imams (as)".

Their names are as follows:

1 - Ali ibn abi Talib (as).
2 - Hassan ibn Ali (as).
3 - Hussein ibn Ali (as).
4 - Ali ibn al-Hussein (as).
5 - Muhammad ibn Ali (as).
6 - Ja'far ibn Muhammad (as).
7 - Musa ibn Ja'far (as).
8- Ali ibn Msa (as).
9- Muhammad ibn Ali (as).
10 - Ali ibn Muhammad (as).
11 - Hassan ibn Ali (as).
12 - Muhammad ibn Hassan (as).

From these excellent leaders we have today available abundant legacies of Islamic sciences.

Shi'ism believes that the earth can never be without the special representative of Allah (the Prophet [pbuh] and his vicegerents). They have been ordered to guide, lead and train the people of the world and continue to do so. Shi'ism believes that the Twelfth Imam is right now alive and endowed with a long life.

This matter is neither beyond the power of Allah which all religious people believe in nor against the principles of modern biology.

Shi'ites, like all Muslims, believe that finally a day will come when mankind will reach an impasse because of injustice, struggles, wars and bloodshed. Then with a sacred spiritual revolution guided by one of the descendants. Peace, justice and faith in Allah will dominate everywhere and all peoples and nations will live in a lasting peace and tranquillity. Only, Shi'ism believes that the leader of this revolution will be none other than the Twelfth Imam.

5- Shi'ite Beliefs

Shi'ism believes that Islam is not only a series of commands or ceremonial regulations which man performs at particular hours or days of the week. Rather, it believes religion is comprised of a series of exalted instructions and beliefs and a group of life-giving regulations and laws which are intertwined with man's individual and social life.

The aim of religion is to provide felicity for man in all aspects of

The basis of Shi'ite beliefs like those of other Muslims, is threefold.

I-Unity Of God (Tawhid)

Shi'a Muslism believe Allah to be one without any associate or like or progeny. Shi'ism is violently opposed to every form of polytheism, idol worshipping and deviation from unity and also to all kinds of taking human being as masters beside Allah and addressing prayers to them. It believes that Allah is the creator of the whole universe and, therefore, holds that throughout the universe nothing is created but for a benefit and purpose.

Shi'ism believes that Allah is neither body nor matter. Rather, He is above all that is material and, therefore, has no specific place or location. He is omnipresent and omniscient. He is closer to us than ourselves. He sees everything and hears every sound but His vision and hearing are not in our case with eyes and ears.

The near and remote past and future are alike for him and all things indifferently known and evident in His knowledge. He has even knowledge of thoughts that pass through our minds. He is one in every way and does not consist of parts. Even His Qualities, such as His power and knowledge, are identical with His Pure Essence. His Being has no beginning nor end.

It is pre-eternal and past-eternal (He exists from eternity to eternity). He is in every way Absolute Being. His Qualities do not resemble the qualities of the creatures for these are in all aspects limited whereas, He is in every way unlimited. Forgiving the sins of his servants is solely at his own absolute discretion and nobody even the prophet of Islam or the Imams can do anything for remission of the sins.

II-Prophethood: The Sending Of The Prophet (S) (Nubuwwa)

Shi'ism believes that Allah, in order to guide His creatures and lead them from the darkness of ignorance and misery to the light of knowledge and happiness, has sent a number of prophets. For Allah has created man for felicity and happiness and has created the means for the attainment of this end in the existence of the universe itself.

Sending prophets is also with the purpose of perfecting this goal. That is why the teachings of the prophets and the Divine Laws are always the supplement for creation organization of human being. Any law which is opposed to the primordial nature and creation of man is surely not revealed by Allah.

Shi'ism believes that the aim of the prophets has never been to propagate unintelligible matters such as the endurance of every kind of disagreeable situation and torture or sacrifice for the sins of others. Rather, their aim has been that same correct instruction and training, the strengthening of moral principles and the relation between men and the establishment of the principles of justice among mankind.

The Holy Qur'an in many verses has clearly reminded man of this truth.

Shi'ism respects all prophets of Allah without exception but believes that as a result of the passage of time their holy books have become mixed with kinds of superstitions and have suffered various forms of deviation. A living witness to this fact is the unjust and childish qualities mentioned in these books about Allah and His prophets.

According to Shi'ism all the prophets of Allah, even Muhammad (k), Moses and Jesus Christ (as) are recognized as the servants of Allah! but they were qualified as obedient servants to whom Allah inspired. That is, the convictions is that all of the prophets and Imams have neither committed any sin nor any omission or error during their life time.

III-Belief In The Day Of Resurrection (Ma'ad)

Shi'ism, like all other Islamic schools of thought, believes that in a determined time all men will be resurrected and in another world which is everlasting and eternal and will receive the reward or punishment of their good or evil works. The least good or evil action is accounted for and its account is preserved by Allah. No one will be treated with injustice or oppression.

Those who have performed good works shall go to eternal paradise in which is found every kind of spiritual and corporeal blessing and evil doers will be sent to the inferno unless they repent in this world.

Repentance means that one would seriously and cordially repent from his or her past sins and decide definitely not to adhere to such sins in the future, as well as indemnify and make good what would be deemed repayable and where he or she has infringed and violated the rights of other individuals, to restore and repair them to the rightful party.

6- Distinctions of Shi'ism

Shi'ism shares the three above-mentioned principles with other Muslims but there are two points which are its distinguishing marks:

1- Belief in the Twelve Imams who are the vicegerents of the Prophet (S) and whose account has already been given.

2 - Belief in the Divine justice. By this it means that Shi'ism believes Allah never deals with injustice or oppression toward others which is a sign of either ignorance or lack of power, whereas Allah is omniscient and omnipotent. As a consequence of this principle Shi'ism also believes that all human beings possess the freedom of will. No one is forced to obey or rebel. The destiny of each person is in his own hands. No one bears the weight of the sins of others nor is anyone punished for the wrong doings of others.

7- Sources of Shi'ite Religious Instructions

Shi'ism has received its religious instructions which concern all aspects of private and social life from the closest source of knowledge to the Prophet (S), that is, the household of the Prophet (S) (the Twelve Imams) who have received their knowledge either directly or through intermediaries from the Prophet (S) himself. In its method the Prophet (S) which all Muslims remember from him: "I am departing from you but I have among you two precious things: The Holy Qur'an, the Book of Allah and my household who will never separate from each other.

In order to discern and distinguish religious obligations Shi'ism follows, in addition to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S) and the Imams, that which meets the consensus of the 'ulema' (scholars) and also that which reason can judge with certainty. These four principles (the Holy Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet (S) and Imams (as), consensus of the ulema' and reason) are called the fourfold proofs.

Shi'ism believes that it is a duty of religious scholars to investigate these sources and deduce the religious obligations and instructions of Islam from them. Or one could say that the gate of ijtihad (giving judgement and opinion on religious matters) is open to all the 'ulema'.

In the principles of Islamic injunctions and laws there is no difference of opinion between Shi'ite and Sunni scholars.

The only difference of view is in certain aspects of the details of problems.

Shi'ism holds that Islam is an everlasting religion which is at the same time easy to accept and can be followed by one at all places. Shi'ite scholars have collected the individual and social duties and instructions of Islam in detail in books called the Abooks in jurisprudence (fiqh) and have created numerous sciences for the refinement and examination of these injunctions.

Shi'ism like all of Muslims believes that each Muslim must pray five times a day, fast one month a year during Ramadan and in case he or she possesses the financial and physical ability and means to participate once during his or her lifetime in the great Islamic congress, the Hajj, in Mecca and to perform special ceremonies that are full of majesty and spirituality with other Muslim brothers. Also each Muslim is obliged to pay to the public treasury to Islam a certain amount of his wealth (of course under special conditions) as Zakat in order to help the needy, perform charitable acts and defend the borders of Muslim countries.

Shi'ism also believes that in addition to this Islamic tax there is another tax described as Khums for individuals having financial ability according to special regulations.

Shi'ism also believes that in case Muslim countries are invaded by an enemy all who have the ability must take up arms and as a religious duty in the path of "defending their homeland"to fight with the enemy unto death. Martyrdom in such a path is considered as a great honor.

Moreover, all Muslims have the duty to act in a correct and logical manner to guide and instruct individuals who have perverted the right way toward the good and to combat individual and social corruption. This "great national supervision,"following the inspiration of the Holy Qur'an, is called amr bil maruf and nahy anil munkar.

8- Social and Moral Duties

Shi'ism believes that a true and conscientious Muslim is one who does not forget Allah under any condition, who is truthful, trustworthy, upright and friendly, who is aware of the condition of his brother Muslims and does not refuse any kind of help to them. (One must remember that Muslims address each other as brothers and this is the closest relationship that exists between two human beings on the basis of mutual respect and equality.

In this matter they have been inspired by the Holy Qur'an that has said, "All Muslims are brethren"). No racial, class or family distinction can cause one person to become superior to another. The only distinction is what pertains to piety and chastity. Therefore, from our point of view every form of racial discrimination is rejected.

Shi'ism possesses extensive teachings concerning rights which it has received from the Imams. Even the animals have rights. To assault them without reason is condemned. On the contrary they should be

protected.

Shi'ism asserts that no one should stop striving and trying in order to earn a livelihood and that no one should become a burden to society. At the same time striving to have a better life should not disregard moral principles and virtue.

Shi'ism prohibits alcoholic beverages, narcotics, pork, gambling, sexual promiscuity and usury and its like.

It considers the principle of cooperation as the most important basis of social life and the first duty of a Muslim toward others. Like other Muslims, Shi'ites consider human life as particularly significant so that for murder, blood-shed and injury upon others heavy penalties have been foreseen in Islamic penal codes.

Also special rights and much importance are held for the family, the upbringing of children, kindness towards relatives, even distant ones and neighbors.

Shi'ism like the rest of Islam respects the rights of women as a basic principle of the family and in contrast to many other religions gives complete economic independence to women.

Like other Muslims, Shi'ites are permitted to have more than one wife but not only is this matter non-obligatory but has heavy conditions imposed upon it. Taking these conditions into considerations, only in case one's wife cannot bear children or perform thematerial act or if a woman does not have someone to look after her and is in need of such care or in similar cases does marriage to more than one wife take place.

Contrary to what many westerners think the number of men in Islamic countries having more than one wife does not exceed one percent. It is obvious that this polygamy under stringent conditions is quite virtuous and cannot in any way be compared with the illicit and unconditional sexual relations of non-Muslim men with a large number of women.

Shi'ism believes that all Muslims should participate in all social and political problems that pertain to them and should pursue these problems with awareness. It is opposed to solitary life, retirement from the world and monasticism.

Shi'ism believes that Islamic societies should base their rule upon the teachings and laws of Islam and consider the welfare of the individuals with inspiration drawn from the teachings of Islam and according to the needs and requirements of the moment. They should try their utmost to advance in all spiritual and material domains.

1. This is a tradition of the Prophet (S).
2. This is in reference to a sentence from Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab, No. 28.
3. This is in reference to a sentence from Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam, No. 131

4. Ibid.
5. Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam, No. 131.
6. Ibid. Khutab, No. 223.
7. Ibid. Khutab, No. 203.
8. al-Amudi, al-Shurar wa al-durar, Vol. 4 p. 340.
9. Safinat ul Bihar, under hubb (love).
10. This reference to the famous words of Ibn al-Arabi about one who imagines to have known the mysteries of the self through the statement of the philosophers.
11. Nahjul-Balagha, Khutab, No. 179.
12. Ibid. Khutab, No. 222.
13. A. Einstein, Ideas and Opinions (London 1973) based on Mein Weltbild; ed by Carl Seeling, p. 38.
14. Muhammad Iqbal, The reconstruction of Religious Yought in Islam, Lahore 1971, p. 89.
15. Ibid. p. 90.
16. Wasail al- Shia, Vol. 2, p. 535 (Bab No. 82, hadith No. 2).
17. This statement may be labeled “out of date”now. The said center is now inactive due to the control of the Egyptian government of the management of the Al-Azhar Mosque and University, and prejudices against the Shi`as in Egypt and elsewhere are now rife. Ed.

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