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Section Two: The Rights and Duties of Women in the Form of Questions and Answers

Introduction

Divine decree requires that life continue within all echelons of creatures and animals. This was not feasible with a single sex, rather, pairs were necessary. The two genders were essential for the propagation of the human species. Meaning that some must be 'male' and others 'female'. Thus, women and men were created in conformance with the noble designs of creation with similar human and natural characteristics, but plainly different physical, emotional, and spiritual traits, and accordingly with particular rights and duties.

Islam views both men and women from the perspective of their humanity and regards both as noble and superior beings for whose creation God Almighty has praised Himself. According to the exigencies of human creation and for the continuance of human existence, He has put various responsibilities upon us. However, these differing obligations and the varying rights based upon them have produced some ambiguities for us; such that the minds of some perceive a number of these laws as prejudiced and regard others opposed to freedom.

In the previous section I have replied to these controversies and have discussed freedom, *Hijab*, marriage and divorce, inheritance, *Mahr*, *nafaqah*, and other topics from various aspects. However, in this section I shall employ a different method. Specifically, using questions that were asked of me, I shall directly address the questions of my readers and answer some of their questions regarding the status and standing of women, their social, political, and cultural activities, housewifery, art, freedom, lifestyle, natural and acquired rights, and other issues in the hopes that they will be beneficial.

● *Why are most of your works oriented around the character and status of women?*

Reply: Basically, my strategy in choosing the subject for each book I have written is twofold: one is societal necessity, which I understand from appraising the society, and the other is the lack of a good book on the subject that can resolve this necessity. It does not happen much that I see a good book on a subject and desire to write a book on that subject. I go after subjects that are needed and do not have books available or if they do, they are somehow incomplete. Almost all my books are such.

The first book I wrote was *Dadgustar-e Jahan* (*The World's Executor of Justice*), which I wrote in the year AH 1346 (AD 1967). In those years, the issue of the *Baha'i* and the campaigns against them was prevalent. There were questions regarding the Imam of the Age ('a) which was an especially important issue for youth. I became aware of this need at the time and gathered and read the existing books on the matter. I realized that even though there were good books on the topic, there was no complete work which could answer the needs of youth and seekers of knowledge. Thus I thought of writing the book.

The books I have written on the subject of women include *Ayin-e Hamsardari* (*The Art of the Marriage Relationship*), *Ayin-e Tarbiyat* (*The Art of Training and Edification*), *Islam va Ta'lim va Tarbiyat* (*Islamic Education and Edification*), *Intikhab-e Hamsar* (*Choosing a Spouse*), and *Banu-ye Nimunah-ye Islam* (*The Model Woman of Islam*). These books are specifically about women and issues regarding women.

As for my motives for these works, regarding the book, *Ayin-e Hamsardari* (*The Art of the Marriage Relationship*), which was written in AH 1354 (AD 1975), it was that while I was a young theologue [*talabah*] and because of the close contact I had with people, I was witness to the people's—and my own family and relatives'—marital issues and problems and some came to me with their difficulties.

This caused me to strive to compile the book and communicate various issues in this regard. First of all, I collected books regarding these issues, which were very few. While studying them, I realized that they could not appease the needs of the society. That is why I decided to write *Ayin-e Hamsardari*. The book had many readers and was useful. Naturally, after that I was consulted much regarding family problems. I did not brush off my consultees; in fact, I welcomed them and I took pleasure from the fact that I could help resolve family problems.

After three to four years, in which I had first-hand experience with these issues, I realized that most family conflicts result from the lack of correct edification of girls and boys within the family. Hence, I thought about writing a book regarding training of children. Regarding this issue also, I collected and studied relevant books and realized that, incidentally, there were no adequate books on this subject either. Of course, there were some books—some that were not based on Islam and others that were too scientific and not suitable for the masses.

Therefore, using the experience I had gained, I employed myself in preparing *Ayin-e Tarbiyat* (*The Art of Training and Edification*). Simultaneously, I asked a friend of mine in Tehran who held conferences for women, and explained issues regarding training and edification, to ask the women about their problems and questions. I received over two hundred letters in this manner, which went far in helping me to

identify problems and write the book. Of course, in this regard, I also read various magazines and newspapers.

As for the book *Intikhab-e Hamsar* (*Choosing a Spouse*), while reviewing family problems, I became aware that a lot of problems also arise from the fact that many young men and women do not marry judiciously and wisely and thus, they are later afflicted by various difficulties. It seemed that knowing the process of choosing a spouse was a pressing need for youths. After considerable investigation, I did not find any satisfactory books on the matter. There were some books that discussed the problem in a very subsidiary manner; however, they were not helpful to young women and men. This prompted me to write *Choosing a Spouse*.

In the meantime, because I participated in many seminars, I felt that there was need of a more scientific book regarding Islamic education and edification that could satisfy the needs of the academic community. As a result, while writing *Intikhab-e Hamsar*, I started with another book named *Islam va Ta'lim va Tarbiyat* (*Islamic Education and Edification*). Though, before these books, I had written *Banu-ye Nimunah-ye Islam* (*The Model Woman of Islam*).

In this book, I tried to incorporate moral aspects in a behavioral aspect as opposed to historical. At the time, all these books were needed. Even now, besides the work I do in seminars and on television, one of my jobs is resolving family conflicts, which I perform as much as I am able, and I enjoy it. However, I am sorry that I do not have more time to spend in these issues. Even so, I do not refrain from these activities unless I have no choice.

● *How can families be made more knowledgeable regarding conjugal relationships?*

Reply: I believe that the mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines must give more weight to the matter of marriage and safeguarding the institution of family. I feel danger for the future of families in Islamic Iran. Of course, the mass media have some programs and writers write about these issues, but it is not enough. There is need of much more than this. Books are one of the important media of information.

However, many couples do not read them. It would be good if charitable people would make books regarding family education available with lower prices, or charity organizations, such as the Imam Khomeini Charity Committee, which holds marriage ceremonies for several thousand young men and women each year, would make these books freely available. I wish that, in addition to the household appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, and televisions they donate to young couples, they would also give them a book on morals and behavior. This is easily achievable. The price of a two dollar book is nothing compared to the price of the dowry they donate to the bride.

Additionally, I feel that seminars and workshops must be held in order to prevent family troubles and make marriages more successful. Unfortunately, we are deficient in this area. When a company hires someone for teaching or any other job, they do not let them work until the new employees take part in a

period of training and instruction. *However, marriage, which is the most fundamental issue in the lives of young women and men, is performed without knowledge of how to consort with one's spouse.*

These issues are neither given regard in study books nor are there classes held for this purpose. If our Islamic government would require all couples who wish to marry to take part in a one month training course, in which family issues were correctly examined and taught and then give them permission to marry, I believe that there would be many fewer problems. Theologues and learned people should especially support this matter and implement it into their schedules. Some theologues have started programs in some cities, but it is not enough. In any event, an extensive program must be started by all those who work in social services, advertizing and publication such as the clergy, writers, television and radio personnel, etc.

● *What do you think about the freedom of women in Iran?*

Reply: There is no doubt that throughout history, women have been oppressed and their rights have been disregarded. While today European countries give women much ostensible and superficial freedom, their history shows that they greatly oppressed them in the past. This problem caused the advent of the feminist movement in the early 20th century, which was honestly an apt movement because it provoked many intellectuals and public-spirited people into giving women consideration. Needless to say, many women and men gave the movement good reception and propagated the campaign.

The issue they advanced at the time was that men and women must be equal in all aspects and that no difference exists between women and men. Women are human and men are also human. Two humans have equal rights and just as men are free in possession of personal property, work, and other issues, so also women must be free. Anyway, an extensive campaign, which was outwardly a good movement began. They greatly promoted the matter; however, the movement had the following drawbacks:

First, in this movement, the issue of family was disregarded and only the call of freedom could be heard. Unfortunately, what this freedom and equality would do to the institution of family was not regarded in the least!

Second, when they wanted to propound the matter of liberty and equality, no heed was given to the fact that women have a differing genetic and spiritual makeup from men. With the pretext that women are human they asserted that women should have the exact same place as men.

Negligence of these two facts resulted in women entering public work because the defenders thought that if women have financial independence, men can no longer oppress them.

Consequently, at the time, there was the matter of industrialization and development of factories and such, and naturally, they needed workers. The owners of these factories completely used this opportunity with the realization that women would enter the workforce and they could be employed with

lower wages. Thus, tycoons and industrialists also welcomed this innovation. Naturally, women felt that they had gained some rights and an income and this made them happy.

Little did they realize that some of these jobs were not suited to women and their special genesis. In short, the proprietors of businesses, those same males who before had exploited women within their homes, again became predominant in exploiting women outside their homes. In addition, men used women to attract customers and gain profit. In this manner, some women were brought into offices, advertising, cinemas, and theaters in order to provide men with pleasure. In the long run, the effect of this so called 'equality of women and men' is what we see in the Western world.

In the West, families are truly shattered. Even those that are not completely shattered, have many problems. When I went to Australia, they said that a high percentage of marriages result in divorce. There was a high tally of unofficial offspring. Bachelor life was extensive and there were many other problems. For example, having illegitimate children is something that is no longer considered indecent or improper.

They jest and call one another illegitimate and no one becomes offended! Now, as a result of a movement it has started itself, the West is in very bad shape. Due to rapid communications, countries have become closer and the danger is that something that occurs in one place, quickly spreads everywhere.

Here, I will point out our situation before the victory of the Islamic Revolution. At that time, women were oppressed just like the women everywhere else, and their rights were greatly ignored. Some men abused women. Men would make unjust restrictions for women and unfortunately, they put Islam at fault for many of these restrictions, even though they had nothing to do with Islam. This was until the movement that started in Europe slowly propagated to Iran though various books, writings, and other media of communication.

This produced a parallel movement in Iran with the backing of the former regime with the tag of defending the rights of women. Therefore, an identical movement to the one in Europe stared in Iran. The matter put forth at the time was the equality and liberty of women, like in the West. This movement was the mainspring of perversion among women in Iran, and brought about abolishment of *Hijab* and other problems.

At the time, some men attempted to preserve the previous state in their homes, and they kept up their bad behavior and solidified bigotry. Others, who were supporters of the new situation 'did as the Romans' and perversion thrived and greatly threatened the institution of family until God Almighty did a kindness and the Revolution occurred. Even if the Revolution had not transpired, we might not have become like the West, but the situation of our women and society in general would have become very bad.

Naturally, after the Revolution, without much propaganda or restrictions, the women themselves

observed *Hijab* for a period and the situation had become extremely good. With his wise recommendations, Imam Khomeini (may Allah have mercy upon his soul) bought women into the society. Maybe if someone else was the helmsman of the Revolution, women would not have become active in the society so quickly. In his speeches, Imam greatly encouraged them, such as in issues revolving around the war. Finally, this resulted in severance of traditional chauvinist men, who would not let women enter the society.

This was a good opportunity and wonderful atmosphere because those who previously had unreasonable freedom were now relatively happy that they had freedom to be present and work in the society. Those who were under restrictions because of some men's narrow-mindedness, for which Islam was sometimes faulted, now entered the society. Ultimately, nearly ideal circumstances were produced for women in order for them to attain their true rights and be saved from their previous problems.

However, this opportunity was not used very well. It was befitting that women enter their true paths; the same path that Islam had set for them. They should have entered the society with foresight and received their rights, but this has not happened in many cases. In the past, many people were prejudiced—they would not let their daughters go to school. Now the path has been paved for them to go to school and enter universities. However, education alone cannot resolve the predicament of women.

Of course, it is good and there is no doubt that women must also learn, vote, become candidates for election, enter the senate and ministries, create works of art, etc. These are all good and well, but are the problems of women limited to these issues? Women are encouraged in sports and the ultimate goal of some women might be to take part in international games and win. Taking part in sports is permissible for women; however, these are not the pivotal affairs of women. Women should have traveled on their true paths and pursued their real rights. Which of the basic problems of women do professional sports solve?

In performing the things we did—many of which were done recklessly—we disregarded two issues: First, we did not reckon whether what we did would cause strengthening of the family or its weakness or whether the number of divorces would plummet or skyrocket. In our plans of action, we did not think of the instability or fortification of the family institution while we should have regarded it in all programs as a criterion. Family is a reality that, through its strength, the society becomes strong.

The endurance of the family is to the advantage of both women and men, and its fragmentation harms both men and women. Regrettably, the tally of divorces not only has not become less, it has soared. Even though in our Islamic regime divorce, which is the most hated of the permissible things in Islam, should reach its minimum, it has sadly reached an all-time high! This is a result of our inexperience and greenness.

Sadly, I see too many people who should themselves be the ones to resolve the family problems of others, but who do not even act correctly with their own families.

Another issue that was tragically disregarded in the plan to bring women into the society was their special genesis. Jobs that were well suited to women wherein they could both fulfill their God-given responsibilities and also have an influence in the society were not well thought out. It is vital to discover what types of work are suited to the needs of women. If we do not contemplate the matter well, I fear we shall be afflicted with the same fate as the West. I sense the peril of this truth.

Nonconformance of Publicity and Education

Unfortunately, we do not have coordinated communication and organization in cultural issues, albeit this deficiency is not specific to women alone, and when communication is not coordinated we cannot arrive at a desirable outcome. In fact, we may even get an opposite result. What I mean by coordination is that all people and organizations must work synchronously in cultural decisions: television and radio, writers, magazines, publishers, speakers, etc. If all walk the same path, all will be very successful.

For example, in the eight year imposed war, we publicized the culture of *jihad* and martyrdom[1] among the people and we were successful. At the time, we were all harmonious, from Imam Khomeini to all administrators, the clergy, and the media. Thus, even with an abundance of problems, we were miraculously triumphant and we were able to defeat all the powers that were behind Saddam, even though we were empty-handed and alone. The reason for this victory was that we spread this culture and because *jihad* and martyrdom were the greatest of values.

When youths went to the frontlines, they welcomed martyrdom. The tradition of martyrdom could be seen on all fronts. In sermons, speeches, eulogies, and poems there was talk of self-sacrifice, *jihad*, and proximity to Allah. Back at the Friday Prayer, I addressed eulogists and said that throughout the years of battle against the previous regime, eulogies and poems regarding Imam Hussain (‘a) had a wonderful color and other types of poem were moot.

With the rise of the Revolution, poems changed and addressed the path of martyrdom, *jihad*, and related matters. However, when the war was over, the poems returned to their previous style and higher values were ignored. Now, look in our newspapers and art and literature media and see what values are prevalent and what is rewarded.

In this turbulence, if someone wishes to spread a tradition, they will not be successful. Changing or spreading a custom requires a common and united movement such that at least seventy percent of administrators and organizations are coordinated and the other thirty percent follow their lead. Unfortunately, we have done no such thing and do not presently have it in our culture.

At the beginning of the Revolution, women willingly accepted *hijab* along with the flow of the Revolution without intimidation or discipline. However, we should have used this opportunity to vitalize the tradition of *hijab* with coordinated publicity and educating principles. Women must believe that *hijab* is in their own interests. When this value came without effort, we did not appreciate it. Women’s acceptance of

hijab was truly a miracle considering the situation of the society. We could have undertaken much cultural education, but we did not. Then the surge of the Revolution and the term of the imposed war passed and still we did nothing.

Coordinated cultural education is very important. The truth of the matter is that cultural administrators should have made a united decision about women. What is their correct path? What are exemplary values concerning women? If this had been done, they would have more easily accepted their worthy path. Instead of coordinated work, we undertook scattered and preferential projects and focused attention on cultural scenes such as Friday Prayer, while many newspapers, books, and cinemas became battlefields of the whims. These incongruities and differences in inclination retarded cultural education.

● Is the position of family in the moral and jurisprudential system of Islam an immutable affair?

Reply: The matter of family is one of the difficult issues of sociology and its complete analysis requires extensive discussion. However, in short, I can say that the importance of family is hidden to none and sociologists agree on this. The institution of family is held to be the best and most secure place for the tranquility and ease of husband and wife and for correctly rearing children. If families are healthy, so is the society and if families shatter, there will not be a healthy society.

Islam puts much importance upon family. It has legislated its laws such that the institution of family remains intact and strong. Thus, in Islam, preserving and fortifying the family is considered a chief principle. However, the rules and regulations and the rights and privileges governing families can be adapted and changed with respect to varying prevailing conditions.

● What are the main points of difference in criterion between your views, which are religiously based, and other views?

Reply: The positions some religious persons took regarding the defense of women's rights did not consist of a unanimous, clearly thought out Islamic strategy. It did not start with regard to the special genesis of women and the necessity for preserving and strengthening the institution of family. It was not coordinated. Among the advocates of women's rights, differing and sometimes conflicting positions were taken. Some liberalist individuals, who preferred the situation of Western women, propounded the issue of freedom and equality of rights and responsibilities for women and men.

Without giving heed to the special genesis of women and the necessity of upholding and bolstering the institution of family, they endeavor to drag Muslim women down the same path of Western women—upon which Western women have incurred much loss. This is a dangerous task. Conversely, others attempt to keep women in the previous traditional situation and attribute their incorrect ways to Islam. They are not willing to impartially accept the true views of Islam and give women their canonical freedom and rights.

I believe both these parties have gone to extremes. Regarding the positions I take regarding women's issues, I seek to understand and follow the true opinion of Islam. I take into account the special genesis of women and reinforcing the institution of family. Accordingly, the main criterion for my views is 'moderation'.

● What is the rank and stature of women in the Islamic perspective?

Reply: The status of women as stated by the Quran and Islam is the status of 'humanity'. It is very interesting that around one thousand and four hundred years ago, when women were mostly considered a weak and inferior gender and some even doubted the humanity of women, Islam does not even directly address the issue; rather, naturally, it encompasses both women and men when it speaks about humans. Therefore, in order to clarify the status of women in Islam, we must investigate the status of humans in Islam.

Even though this issue requires a comprehensive discussion, in a nutshell, I can say that Islam regards humans as an elect being composed of a body and soul, superior to all material things. Humans are eternal beings that have a lofty purpose for their creation. This purpose is spiritual perfection, and bliss in the anthology of life, especially otherworldly bliss. Islam regards humans as superior life forms, the noblest of creatures [*ashraf–e makhluqat*] and due to this nobility, various duties have been placed upon our shoulders. Of course, this is a summary of a matter which requires much more thorough discussion. Through this discussion, the status of women may be illuminated.

The Quran and Hadith has put much emphasis on this issue. As an example, this noble verse:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَ حَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ وَ رَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَ فَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً

In this verse, God Almighty states: '***Surely We have exalted the children of Adam*** [meaning that God has promoted humans—both men and women as children of Adam—above other material beings] ***and We gave them means of transport on land and sea, and We provide them with good and pure things, and We have elevated them much over many of those We created***.'[2] Of course, many exegetes state that other than material creatures and angels, there may be other lofty creatures over which humanity has been exalted, but Quranic verses and Hadith clearly state that humanity is superior to the angel race.

Thus, it seems that the minority to which humans are not superior are a few specific sublime creatures. In any case, by citing this verse I intended to show the elevation of the children of Adam over many other creatures and that regarding the designation 'children of Adam' women and men are equal as humans. If women were not lofty, it would be said: "We have exalted men."

Again, there is another verse that states:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

"Surely We have created humanity in the best formation."[3]

This means that the spiritual and corporeal formation of humans is the best possible form. Exegetes state that this 'supremeness' means that humans can do many things that other beings cannot. Humans can even do things that angels cannot. Here also humans are at issue, not men. Men and women are generic in their humanity. The creation of humans is detailed in the Quran. God Almighty declared to the angels that He intended to create a trustee [*khalifah*] on the earth. The trustee was not only man, but all humans; the children of Adam and all humans throughout history are the trustees of Allah—men and women are no different in this regard. The rank gained by Adam ('a), who was able to learn the 'Names' God Almighty taught him, was due to his humanity not his maleness. Because he was human, he was able to understand them and answer questions regarding them. Women are also such. When the angels saw that Adam ('a) could answer when they could not, they bowed and made obeisance to him:

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلآئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ

"Thereupon, all the angels made obeisance, bar none."[4]

In truth, the obeisance of the angels was due to this ability and potential, and women and men are no different in this manner.

Some may argue: Considering the following facts, how can the name Adam be generalized to the whole of humanity? The Quran employs the name of Adam ('a) in various verses such as وَ عَلَّمَ آدَمَ الأَسْمَاء كُلَّهَا (and He taught Adam the Names, all of them...[5]) and وَ إِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ (and when We said to the angels: prostrate yourselves unto Adam...[6]). Moreover, the name Adam ('a), which is a proper noun used as opposed to Adam's wife such as in the verse يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَ زَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ (O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Garden...[7]), is used specifically to indicate the first man.

In answer, we must say: True, here Adam is the addressee. However, sometimes Adam is addressed as a person and sometimes as a human. Here Adam is addressed as a human. It is not true that God intended to designate a certain man as His *khalifah* upon the earth. Also, it was his human soul that enabled him to understand the 'Names'. The angels bowed to Adam because of his humanity not his personage or gender. Additionally, some Quranic verses also use the term 'the children of Adam'.

Consequently, the understanding the angels voiced in their question regarding this new creation (Why do you want to create a creature that will cause corruption and spill blood on the earth?) was the creation of the human kind as opposed to Noble Adam the person. Their understanding was that because this creature is material, it can cause corruption. The corruption, they presumed, involved both genders. This humanity is where we derive our characteristics.

The fact that Islam has not separated males and females is very interesting; it means that it is an indisputable fact that does not even merit a discussion. Especially in times that some cultures doubted the humanity of women, Islam did not see any need to defend the issue. Islam never says women are *also* human, because it is taken as a given fact.

It is also interesting that no verse in the whole Quran can be found that regards women as less than men or indicates the possibility of deficiency or weakness in their intellect or social behavior. No part of the Quran reproaches women due to their femininity. It does reproach women, not because of their womanhood but due to their deeds, just as it also reproaches men on account of their deeds.

● What are the common duties that Islam has put upon both men and women?

Reply: Humans are superior beings among the creations of God. One of their responsibilities is that they must preserve their species because the extinction of humankind may cause great harm. They are complete beings who are magnificent and are the purpose of Creation. Thus, the first duty of humans is self-preservation and reproduction.

Of course, God has also implanted the instrument for this, which is sexual desire, in the nature of both men and women. In his exegesis 'Allamah[8] Tabataba'i states: Providing this sexual drive in humans is a veil for the reality that the Creator wants humans to sustain their race; this duty has been put upon the shoulders of both women and men and both are the source of the race's perpetuation. The Quran has also stated this issue; for example in this noble verse:

...يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَ أُنثَى...

"O Humans! Verily We have created you from a male and female..."[9]

First, this verse addresses humans [*nas*], which comprises both women and men. Then it states, We have created you from one male and one female. Again it mentions them both together and does not differentiate. Near the end of the verse it states:

...إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

"Surely the dearest of you to Allah are the most righteous of you..."[10]

Here also there is no distinction between men and women. Woman can be just as pious as men and both can deviate from the correct path.

The second common duty among humans is to perfect their souls, use this world to gain a better place in the next, and improve and develop both their worlds. This mystical quest, spiritual perfection, and

improvement of worldly and otherworldly life are common responsibilities upon all humans, regardless of whether they are male or female. There are many verses on this issue, some of which I shall enumerate.

...مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَ هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً

"Whosoever performs a good and righteous deed, whether they be male or female, while they are a believer, We shall certainly vivify them with a good and pure life..."[11]

Good and pure life [*hayat–e tayyibah*] is congruous in both this world and the afterworld [*akhirat*]. Life in this world and the next is not separate. One enters pure and good life in this world and continues it in *Akhirat*. The verse ends thus:

وَ لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ...

"...and We shall recompense them with a reward according to the best of what they used to do."[12]

Again it is made clear that any man or woman that does good deeds shall be given *hayat–e tayyibah*.

Another verse states:

...أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ...

"...I shall not waste the work of any agent among you, whether man or woman; you are all members of the same race..."[13]

The last statement is very interesting: بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ (i.e. some of you are from some others). This can mean some women are from other women; some men are from other men; or that some men and some women are from each other. Regardless, it is saying that men and women are the same in this respect. It seems that it wants to say that you are all together, have to continue this life together, and work together to attain human perfection.

Just as the Quran has praised some men for their faith and righteous deeds, so also it has praised some righteous women. For example, it beautifully eulogizes Saint Maryam ('a):

وَ إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَ طَهَّرَكِ وَ اصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاء الْعَالَمِينَ

"And* [*remember*] *when the angels said: O Maryam! Verily, Allah has chosen you and purified you and preferred you above the women of the worlds."[14]

This is a great excellence. Or the example of Asiyah, Pharaoh's wife, who is also thus. She has been extolled in the Quran:

وَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اِمْرَأَةَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَ نَجِّنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَ عَمَلِهِ وَ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And Allah has set forth an example for the believers, Pharaoh's wife when she said, 'O Nourisher! Build for me, in your presence, a house in Paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his deeds, and deliver me from the evil doing people."[15]

It is interesting that God Almighty has cited Pharaoh's wife as an example for the believers: لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا–meaning all believers, men and women alike. It wants to say: Look! This is a woman who has gained such rank. It shows great excellence for the Quran to give a model woman as an example for all believers.

Another common merit and duty for humans is gaining knowledge. God Almighty has created humans such that they can acquire both intellectual and empirical knowledge and their greatness is due to this ability. The worth of humans is due to their knowledge, and women and men are similar in this respect. God Almighty has given both men and women the matching ability to learn and acquire knowledge.

The fact that He has given humans this capacity means that we must use it. God has anticipated a purpose and end for everything he has given to humans. If women were not supposed to obtain knowledge, surely God would not give them the capacity to do so. Therefore, they must endeavor to learn and they are completely identical to men in this regard.

Moreover, it is evident that the Quran does not give any special preference to men when speaking of knowledge and women also have these merits. There are many Hadith that instruct us to acquire knowledge, such as this well-known Hadith of the Prophet (S):

«طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم.»

Seeking knowledge is a duty for every Muslim.

As I have said, the term 'Muslim' equally refers to both females and males, but some citations also state this Hadith specifically with the words 'Muslim' and 'Muslimah':

«طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم و مسلمة.145»

However, even if it did not contain the word "Muslimah" it would be sufficient for this purpose. Also:

«.الا ان الله يحب بغاة العلم»

Allah loves seekers of knowledge.

Thus, I deem it necessary to succinctly state that if women and men both have the capacity for knowledge and if Islam expects it of both and if the Quran does not differentiate between men and women, then one of the important things to which women must pay attention is the acquisition of knowledge and completing their erudition.

Women must strive to obtain the rights that God has given them. It is with knowledge that humans attain civilization, development, and advancement, and scientists and scholars have delivered humanity to the current state of development and advancement.

Humans are responsible for their own advancement; both men and women—it makes no difference. Women consist of approximately half the population. They should try to become self-supporting because half of the society is women. Naturally, half of universities and schools must be for women and it would be better for them if they governed them, meaning that all the people involved should be women; including the drivers, janitors, teachers, professors, etc. Because half the society consists of women, half of the hospitals, laboratories, and other medical centers must be run by women.

This is due to the fact that women have needs just like men. It is proper that women be independent in these fields; that is, they must have professors, doctors, specialists, nurses, etc. from themselves and be independent of men in this regard. Half of doctors in Iran should be women—no, even more than half; because women usually consult doctors more than men. The wife of one of my students was ready to give birth. He said to me, 'She was not inclined to let a man help deliver the baby. When I told this to the person in charge, they gave only women responsibility over the necessary tasks and services.' It is very noble and dignified of a woman to decline to allow a man to examine her. These are truths that women must seek for themselves.

Women also need to learn religious issues, religious jurisprudence, religious precepts, and theology. Half of religious centers must be held by women. Half of preachers must be women. They must hold classes, discussion forums, and lectures for themselves. In fact, they understand each other better and their own words influence other women better. It is very delightful for women to say, 'We are capable and independent and we wish to be independent in religious issues also. We will train and provide teachers and specialists in this field ourselves. We will do research, write books, make speeches, we will do it by ourselves.' Why should women not be able to do these things?

Why should we not have enough educated women to teach in schools so that men do not have to teach in women's high schools?

Why should women be secretaries and men doctors? There should be female specialists with female

secretaries and they should perform injections and other services themselves. It is not in a woman's dignity for her to be a man's secretary or a male surgeon's assistant in an operation. A women's dignity is much greater than this, and they should not be content to be only nurses. True, the work of a nurse is very noble and women are quite competent in such work, but cannot women also be competent as specialists in medicine? We have many talented and brilliant women. They must go after these jobs; this is what gives them greater character.

It would be good if women would reveal the greatness of their character to men. They can if they desire to. I have seen women who are great in various sciences or jobs—even better than men. Unfortunately, the arrogance of men sometimes keeps women from attaining greatness. I have heard that many male specialists do not accept women as their students to become specialists, maybe because they fear that by becoming specialists, women will take over their jobs. I believe that, with regard to statistics, we should lower the number of men that are accepted in medical universities so that more women can enter these fields and the ratio of men to women balances out.

Then woman may say, 'We have strived for our own independence and now we have really attained it.' Development and independence is not in sports. Sports are a good thing; however, it is deceiving women to over-promote sports among women because women are similar to men in this respect and can do sports on their own. It is not a merit for which men can hold women under obligation that, 'we let women do sports'. It would be of much worth if they were to become experts or intellectuals.

I am amazed at women. They sometimes ignore their true rights and dignity and go after inferior things. They say, let us work—but where? They choose second-rate jobs like being a secretary for a male doctor? Women are far more worthy than this. This is also true of the clergy and religious schools. I truly believe that if we want to do it right, if we plan correctly, half of theologues must be women.

However, it is evident that they must learn particular studies that are appropriate to them and hold female-specific specialties, which can help them become more independent. Of course, it is also a matter for debate that even though women have the right to study in any field, is it to the advantage of women and the society in general for women to study in all fields and are not some fields better suited to women? In any event, we should not disregard the femininity of women, the specific situation of women, their families, and even the society.

● Why do you emphasize medical fields so much for women's employment?

Reply: My stress on medical professions and their dependencies for women is due to the facts that such fields are always needed by everyone and in order to diagnose an illness an examination is necessary, which usually entails observing and touching the body of the patient. Islam has prohibited both men and women from viewing or touching the body of non-*mahram* persons because this is a preliminary for deviation. Thus, we should strive to bring about the prerequisites for preventing deviation so that we may easily carry out divine commandments and maintain the interests of religion.

A while back, a distressed final year medical student came to me and said, 'I wish to change my field.' I asked why and he replied, 'Because after graduation if I want to not take female patients it would be problematic and if I do accept them, I would have to examine them which would entail a *haram* act. So it seems that it would be better for me to just change my field now and save myself from this problem.' Women also have this problem. Those that are religious and wish to observe their Islamic duties cannot see a male doctor save in necessity. As long as there is a female doctor in town who can perform examinations, woman cannot canonically consult a male doctor. Also, under such conditions, male practitioners of medicine do not have the right to examine women. Therefore, I feel that there is an extreme need for women to be more active and become independent in this regard.

Islamic laws engender circumstances in which individuals and society do not deviate from and are not stunted on the path of development, advancement, and the lofty purposes of the human race. Regardless, the nature of men and women is such that they feel attracted to one another. When the seeds of inclination and tendency are sown in a person due to undisciplined association and contact, they may deviate which would be deplorable. If they do not alleviate themselves or are religious and do not desire to perform a sin, they will slowly become mentally or spiritually ill. In addition, the situation may also cause other complications; for instance, the person may lose the affection and love they previously felt for their spouse, which may cause family problems. This is why Islam emphasizes this issue.

Another benefit of women's independence in this matter is that they may freely prove their worth and virtue in their own regard. Moreover, women who seek medical advice in independent medical centers that belong to women are more at ease, because they look on it as their own and take pride in it and are peaceful there; for example, a patient laying on a bed in such a center is at peace because she knows that no male doctor or nurse will frequently come up to her to examine her or take her readings. Also, men will not be worried or anxious because of their wives' or daughters' presence in such environments. This is better and lovelier for the whole community. If these things happen, we can even be an example for other countries and prove the excellence of women.

● Must we accept the separation of men and women that is implemented in some facilities? Does not this separation make men and women more sensitive toward each other? Some say that the sensitivity that women and men have toward each other in Islamic societies is not so intense in Western cultures and this is because of the attitude and restrictions that must be religiously observed. Do you confirm the more intense attraction between men and women in Eastern and Islamic communities and do you believe that this is its cause?

Reply: Women and men are naturally attracted to one another. If this attraction is unrestrained, it usually brings about illegitimate relations, and moral and social corruption. However, in Western cultures, due to complete unrestraint in the relations among men and women, they do not regard these corruptions as corruption. They have become addicted to the immoral by-products of uninhibitedness in morality,

spirituality, and the society. It has become normal to them. Sometimes when a person has never seen health and well-being, they become accustomed to their deformity and contortion. However, another related fact is that geographically, sexual arousal is less severe in humid environments as opposed to torrid climates.

This separation is not bias, it is independence and independence does not entail bias. There was bias in the past and we intend to prevent it. If women become self-reliant it is to their own advantage and they can prove their excellence and freely progress. Besides, I do not mean that women must not go to men's hospitals or vice versa. There is no problem with women being self-sufficient; they can have hospitals, medical universities, and such for themselves and be independent. And if a woman wishes to visit a male doctor and her illness does not require contact or observation of the body, what is the problem?! There is no problem. By separation I do not mean that men and women should not even see each other; rather, it is to prevent interactions that are religiously prohibited.

● What is your opinion about other fields of study?

Reply: Women have the aptitude for all types of knowledge and if they are inclined to choose any field of study, there is no prohibition or proscription. There is no doubt about this and women can study in any field they wish. However, regarding the fact that education is usually for employment, I do not deem some fields suitable for women. I do not say that some fields are prohibited (*haram*), just that I do not deem them suitable because women will have problems when they wish to go to work. There are some fields of work that are not appropriate for women, such as heavy mechanical fields, mining, seamanship, and so on. First, beauty, exquisiteness, and elegance are great merits of women and the more they are able to retain these characteristics, the more they are successful in life. If a woman wishes to have influence in the heart of her husband she must endeavor to maintain her beauty. Regardless of how much income certain experts have, vigor and cheerfulness have great influence in the family. Hence, Islam emphasizes for women to adorn themselves and apply beauty products for their husbands, wear lovely clothes, and maintain their beauty. We even have a Hadith that states:

«المرأةُ ريحانة و ليست بقهرمانة.»

A woman is a beautiful and fragrant flower [*riyhan*], not a champion.

Also, various Hadith state that women must not be committed to tasks beyond their endurance.

Thus, women must place sufficient importance on preserving their beauty. There is no problem with women working in the society, though it is good for them to find work that will not harm their beauty. Consider a woman who is an engineer whose work is in the desert where she has to endure the sun and sweat. Or a woman who works in crude oil extraction or similar jobs with all the hardships such jobs have. Her beauty cannot endure. Even though such jobs have good incomes, she may not keep her

attraction for her husband. Therefore, I do not consider professions with such conditions in the interest of women and the institution of family.

We regard preserving the family a truly fundamental issue and a societal necessity. The institution of family and rearing children is the foremost role of men and women. Having children is a fact of life and it is a need that both women and men have. Women must have foresight and think ahead about whether their intended field of study is compatible with the cohesion of their family. It should not be a job that shatters the family or makes them unsuccessful in training their children.

It is an undeniable truth that children do not need their fathers as much as their mothers. Fathers mostly provide their living expenses, but it is the affections of a mother, and her patience, forbearance, and method of training that is very important for a child. This is not a shortcoming but a perfection that women have an emotional makeup that can sustain children.

There is a saying in Persian that in ashes (poverty) a mother can manage her children such that a father cannot, even in richness and comfort. Women must choose a field in which they may also tend to their children. If she chooses a line of work in which she must be on a ship for six months of the year or travel for days at a time, naturally, her children will have problems. Therefore, they should choose a job that will not harm their beauty, the solidarity of their family, and training of their children.

In general, I believe that some fields are quite suited to women, like educational and training fields, in which women are usually more proficient than men, such as education, psychology, sociology, mathematics, IT, and other fields that are suited to the nature and situation of women.

I must also state that sometimes if women do not work, the household cannot be managed (their work is necessary for the family's livelihood). Among nomads or in rural, farming, and animal husbandry communities women work as much as or sometimes even more than men. They also do household tasks and jobs like carpet-weaving. Naturally, help in providing such income is not a problem; in fact it should be considered one of the merits of women.

However, I advise men not to expect women to perform tasks that interfere with the cheerful home atmosphere and the training of their children unless absolutely necessary; because according to Islam, a woman is like a *riyhan*, a fragrant and delicate flower, and as such they must be cherished and not forced to do taxing jobs. I council men that it is in their own interests to refrain from asking their wives to perform heavy work. However, if women wish to work and are able at the same time to observe religious regulations, there is no problem with them working.

It would be befitting for the government and related organizations to promote a culture in which heavy jobs are not given to women. I see that sometimes very arduous jobs are given to women, in some places of Iran, such as in some northern regions. It can be seen that men are mostly unoccupied while women perform difficult occupations, such as farming, and when they come home, again men do nothing while the women do household duties. Truly women endure many hardships. Women's hardships should

become fewer and men should take care of and accommodate the women.

● Is there any ban, reproof, or criticism regarding the education of women in Islam?

Reply: Essentially, the ability to acquire knowledge is an aptitude that has been given to all humans—whether man or women. In truth, this aptitude gives them license to seek knowledge.

Hence, learning is one of the natural and human rights of women. In addition, Islam confirms this right and there are many Quranic verses and Hadith that emphasize the necessity to learn and women and men are no different in this regard. I shall enumerate several verses:

...قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ...

"Say, 'Are those who know and those who know not alike?'"[16]

The verse leaves the answer to our inner selves, our human nature and instincts; it is an evident and indubitable fact that a knowledgeable person is not equal to a person without knowledge. Here it is clear men and women are no different. Just as a male scientist cannot be compared to an ignorant man, women are the same.

Or this verse:

...يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ...

"Allah exalts those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge to great ranks."[17]

In this verse Almighty God regards those who believe—both women and men—to have high ranks and those with knowledge are even higher. Again men and women are the same in this.

Many verses of the Quran advise people to think, contemplate, and acquire knowledge. Such as:

...أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

"Have they not traveled upon the earth so as to have hearts to understand with...?"[18]

Here, the Quran enjoins travel so that our minds open in order that we may better think and understand. Or for example this noble verse:

...وَ يَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ...

"And He places uncleanness (sin and unbelief) upon those who think not."[19]

These verses indicate that knowledge and the quest for it is a great virtue for a person and women and men are similar in this respect. Elsewhere, God Almighty declares:

...وَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ

"And He has made submissive to you that which is in the heavens and that which is in the earth, all these are from Him."[20]

All creations are compliant to humans and ultimately humans must subjugate them. There is no distinction between men and women.

From these verses I conclude that Islam regards learning and acquiring knowledge a great virtue in humans due to their humanity. Islam greatly underscores that we must not be ignorant people—on the contrary we must be intellectuals and scholars. We also have many Hadith in this regard. Because learning is a natural and human right, Islam accepts it, emphasizes it, and condemns the contrary.

Therefore, we understand that Islam intends that women also seek knowledge. In opposition to these strong arguments, if one resorts to some narrations with weak credentials [*sanad*] and denotations [*dilalat*] it is an inappropriate and useless act. I believe that such weak narrations cannot stand up to the previous strong and secure reasoning.

There do exist around six or seven narrations on similar matters, which do not prohibit women from learning per se, but do seem to prohibit writing; they say not to teach women writing and penmanship. There is no prohibition regarding learning.

Women can seek knowledge, but regarding script there are a few narrations that are either weak or are only attributed to one Infallible (ʻa) and do not have strong denotations or credentials. For example, the most clear of them is a Hadith in which the Prophet of Allah (S) declared:

«لا تنزلوا النساء الغرف و لا تعلموهن الكتابة و علّموهن المغزل و سورة النور.»

Do not quarter women in upper stories [*ghurfah*] and do not teach them writing. Teach them spining and Surah Nur.[21]

I have investigated the credentials of this Hadith and even though it is clearer than some other similar Hadith, it does have weak credentials. In addition, it says do not accommodate women in upper stories! Has such a thing ever been practiced or has any religious authority ever decreed that women must not live in upper stories?! Then writing has been mentioned. If two things are to be banned in one statement,

they should be cohesive and similar; residing in upper stories and writing?!

Maybe if they had detrimental consequences they would be disapproved [*makruh*] due to their harm and if there is no harm in them, they cannot even be considered disapproved. Also, the following statement is in an imperative mood; does anyone consider learning to spin yarn and mastering Surah Nur to be obligatory in order that we may, based on this dictum, consider the previous injunctions to imply prohibition or *haram*?!

Anyway, with such narrations, which are indeed few and weak, one cannot stand against our previous strong and solid arguments; especially regarding the fact that writing is one of the definite necessities and preliminaries to studying.

I believe that there is no problem in this matter and some people unreasonably adhere to the forms of these narrations and seek to bar women from studying. In addition, this was never the custom of women from the time of the Prophet (S) until now. In the age of the Prophet (S) there were many erudite women who sought knowledge; such as noble Zahra' ('a), and two of the Prophet's (S) wives 'Ayishah and Hafsah. Various narrations indicate that in addition to knowing how to read, Hafsah also knew how to write and would narrate Hadith just like many other women who were narrators of Hadith. Therefore, these Hadith cannot inhibit the decree to learn. Hence, I do not deem it necessary to scrutinize each and every one of these Hadith and to inspect their context, meaning, and credentials.

● What is your opinion about Hadith regarding deficiency of reason and weakness of faith in women?

Reply: In books of Hadith there are instances where the faculties of intellect and reason of women are considered weak. First, the numbers of such Hadith are few, maybe around ten. Second, they are both debatable in denotation and credentials. A Hadith that is in a book is not reason enough to follow that Hadith. In the science of Hadith, Hadith are divided into several types. For instance, a 'correct' or 'sound' [*sahih*] Hadith is a Hadith whose chain of narrators up to an Infallible consists of only righteous persons. A 'trustworthy' [*muwaththaq*] Hadith is a Hadith whose narrators are not righteous but are trustworthy and a 'weak' [*dha'if*] Hadith is one that at least one of its narrators is neither righteous nor trustworthy.

Sometimes a Hadith is *Marfu'*, which means that it is attributed to an Infallible ('a) but its chain of narrators is vague and is thus set aside. Also, a Hadith may have no credentials at all; meaning that its chain of narrators is completely unknown. Among these, only 'correct' Hadith are considered authoritative. Some people consider 'trustworthy' Hadith to be authoritative also. However, other narrations are not proof. Now the problem is that we must go through and inspect these ten or twelve Hadith to see if there are 'correct' and 'sound' Hadith that can be considered authoritative among them or not.

On the other hand, sometimes we are sure that a Hadith is from the Prophet (S) or an Imam ('a); for example, we were witnesses ourselves or have definitive evidence that this Hadith has surely been stated by an Infallible ('a). Such Hadith are surely authoritative and substantive. However, sometimes a

Hadith is not definite, and such are divided into *mutawatir* and non–*mutawatir* Hadith. A *mutawatir* Hadith is one that has so many parallel narrators from the Prophet (S) or Imams (‘a) that it would normally be impossible for them all to collectively conspire to lie and forge the Hadith; for instance, a Hadith might be narrated by fifty or one hundred persons who directly heard it from the Prophet (S) or an Imam (‘a).

If a Hadith has so many narrators, anyone would accept that there is no possibility for it to be a lie; especially when the narrators are from different cities and professions. Not many conspiracy theorists could come up with the probability that all of the narrators could come together and forge such a Hadith. Such a Hadith is considered ‘*mutawatir*’ and, because it brings about conviction, it is considered authoritative.

Sometimes the utterance of a Hadith is not *mutawatir*, however, the narrators of the Hadith report the same thing using different words from the Prophet (S) or the Imams (‘a) in a *mutawatir* manner. If such narrations are so numerous that they could not have been forged, they are also considered *mutawatir*. In addition, there is another type of Hadith that is called a ‘singular report’ [*khabar–e wahid*]. This does not necessarily mean that there exists only one report of the Hadith; rather, that there are so few reports that they do not cause conviction and certitude as to its veracity; in this case, it is still considered a ‘singular report’. Even so, it must be noted that most of our Hadith are singular reports.

Another method for investigating Hadith is through their content; for example, we can realize from the utterance whether the Hadith is correct or not. The late Ayatullah Burujirdi, God’s absolution upon him, would say: Sometimes we see a Hadith of which the text clearly shows that it is from an Infallible (‘a) and sometimes we see a statement that, even though its credentials seem to be correct and reliable, obviously does not correspond to the dignity and status of the Prophet (S) or one of the Imams (‘a) because they were the most eloquent of people. It is also such in various supplications [*du‘a*]; for instance, the *Supplication of Kumayl*, the *Supplication of Abuhamzah*, or the *Khamsah ‘Ashar Supplication*–other than an Infallible (‘a) who could form such eloquent phrases?!

Of course, this ability of discernment[22] can only be gained by a person who persists sufficiently in studying Hadith and becomes an expert in the field in accordance with their sense of the science of Hadith and their knowledge of other religious disciplines; not through their own personal taste and partiality. In any event, almost all of our religious authorities consider ‘singular reports’ to be valid and authoritative; of course only those that are *correct* (*sound*), not those that are *weak*, *obscure*, and the like.

Another important point is that we cannot consider all *correct* reports as proof. Only a report that relays a decree or duty, gives commands or prohibits, proclaims an action as obligatory [*wajib*], recommended [*mustahabb*], prohibited [*haram*], or disapproved [*makruh*], and in short, assigns a duty to people can be considered proof. Obviously, we have duties that are revealed to us by the Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (‘a). We must make every attempt to know what our duties are and when there is no way to reach certainty in this regard, the probability we gather from such narrations is sufficient and is proof

enough for determining our religious responsibilities.

However, a Hadith whose accuracy is not certain and that Hadith is about belief and doctrine cannot be considered proof and credible unless one can become certain of its correctness because, regarding beliefs, we must reach conviction and certitude for it to be acceptable. Therefore, even though the Hadith may be *correct*, it is not certain and cannot be followed as a Hadith that reports a truth. Suppose according to a Hadith, an Infallible Imam (‘a) has instructed others to eat such and such fruit because it has a positive effect on the body. Such narrations, even if they are *correct*, do not cause certitude and are not jurisprudential; they are simply reports of various issues.

Accordingly, some of our Hadith are such. Hadith regarding women that state they are deficient in intellect or faith are of this sort. They are not proofs that bring about a duty or commitment; their issuance by the Infallibles is not certain or *mutawatir*; there are no sure indications of their accuracy; thus, they do not entail compliance. Hence, we cannot say that they are authoritative and must be put into effect. We cannot absolutely refute them, but we cannot accept them or attribute them to the Legislator [*shari‘*] i.e. God either. Because such Hadith regarding women are not *mutawatir* or cannot be credited to an Infallible (‘a) with certainty, we cannot state that Islam believes that women are deficient in intellect or faith. Based on a probability and likelihood regarding this important matter, no one can put such a thing into effect.

In places where we are not certain, we must investigate and research the matter. Thus, we should test women to see whether it is really true whether they are inferior in faith or intellect or not. These narrations can be considered as conjecture and we cannot impute these thoughts to Islam. Were women such as *Fatimah* (‘a), *Khadijah* (‘a), *Zainab* (‘a), *Sakinah* (‘a), *Maryam* (‘a), and *Asiyah* (‘a) who were great and some of whom the Quran has greatly exalted truly so?! Can we say that women throughout history who had greater minds than men and had great influence were weak in faith or lacking in reason?! No, we cannot say this. Therefore, the generality of this statement is impaired. If we wish to make a correct evaluation, we must say that among women there are those of weak minds and weak faith, just as among men.

Another aspect to this discussion is the question regarding the interpretation of ‘reason’ or ‘intellect’ that is spoken of in these Hadith? We have an ‘immanent intellect’ [*‘aql–e dhati*] that humans possess, but other animals do not, which is the point of excellence of humans over other animals. This intellect is the incorporeal soul of the human being and it provides humanity with the ability to think in abstracts, generalities, and the like. This immanent intellect is characteristic to all humans, both male and female.

Another type of intellect is ‘acquired intellect’ [*‘aql–e iktisabi*] which is also called the ‘social intellect’ [*‘aql–e ijtima‘i*]. It is the intellect that a person gains from social interaction. Everyone has an initial intellect that evolves and is perfected throughout their lives. The more a person acquires knowledge or gains experience, their intellect grows and becomes more complete. Acquired intellect is something that all human beings, women and men alike, can cultivate within themselves and perfect.

All humans are more or less equal in immanent intellect; men and women are no different in this; they are both human and sapient. We have previously cited various Quranic verses in this regard. Both can also have acquired intellect. If we keep a man in a closed and restricted environment he will not mature intellectually; however, if we give him responsibilities in the society, his mind will grow. If a man does not acquire knowledge his intellect shall be lacking and if he studies and learns, his mind will mature. Women are the same. If women are not active in the society and live in a restricted environment, it is evident that their minds will not become complete. On the other hand, if they play an active role in the society, their minds will become more complete.

Thus, we can state the case in this manner: Assuming the narration is correct, if for example the Prophet (S) identified women as deficient in mind and religion, he was referring to the women of that time; meaning that those women, due to their deprivation and lack of activity in the society were like that at that particular time. None of these narrations stated that women must stay like this; rather, Hadith encourage people to further their knowledge and faith. Women can become higher than men and experience shows that women who have roles in the society have more mature minds.

Naturally, this does not mean that any type of presence in the society develops intellects. There are many women in various societies that have much freedom and presence in the community; nevertheless, their minds do not develop. Minds develop comparatively in both women and men through social responsibility, acquisition of knowledge, etc.

Of course, there is no doubt that women have stronger sentiments and emotions; however, having stronger emotions is not a point of weakness. They are emotional, but emotions are not in opposition to reason and thought. A person may be emotional and also be very thoughtful. If you keep a woman at home and she only trains her children, her emotions will become stronger, and her intellect might not develop very much. However, if this same woman were to become a scientist or scholar, she will become strong in both fortes. Then she could be said to excel over men.

Regarding the fact of whether there is a physical difference between women and men, in short we must say: Women have no flaw in their genesis. The differences are not such that we can say women are ‘defective in mind’. This is something that is said of someone who essentially is not sane. It also cannot be said that women are weaker in intellect than men because experience has shown that wherever women have performed jobs, they have performed them as well as men.

Regardless, intellect itself, which is the incorporeal transcendent soul of humans, is equal in women and men. The characteristics of intellect which are understanding, reasoning, deduction, and such are possessed by both males and females. We cannot say that one gender is dispossessed of one; doubtless, women may be stronger in some abilities and men weak in the same, and vice versa. Even so, these differences are not reason for being considered flawed. One gender may be stronger in one aspect and the other gender stronger in another. Each gender is also the same among itself. For instance, sometimes a man may have a strong memory and other men may be stronger in intelligence,

art, humanities, etc. The same is true of women. We cannot consider diversity in capacities and abilities to be flaws.

● In Islamic texts and references, it seems that women are considered ignoble, second-rate, and subordinate creatures and in genesis and in familial and social life, men appear to be noble and superior. As examples, there are differences between women and men in inheritance, blood money [*diyah*], etc; women must obey men under some circumstances; as a condition for marriage, a virgin woman must have her father's or paternal forefather's permission; a wife may not exit her home without her husband's permission, and similar issues. Is this understanding correct?

Reply: There are various issues in the above question, each of which requires a discrete discussion and each must be clarified in its own place. There are some issues that cannot be attributed to Islam at all and we cannot judge Islam based on them; for example, there is a narration that claims: "المرأةُ شرّ كلّها" ('The whole being of women is evil'). Such narrations have no credibility for numerous reasons. There are issues regarding women such as the fact that women need their husband's permission to exit the house. This needs to be discussed. What does it mean? Under what conditions? Is it conditional or absolute? Inheritance, marriage, and such issues each require a separate and lengthy discussion.

There are narrations regarding the imperfection of intellect; or the verse 23...الرِّجالُ قَوّامُونَ عَلَى النِّساءِ which announces that men are the protectors and supervisors of women. It would not be right to add all these up and come to a conclusion without a comprehensive and in depth review of Islamic teachings and decrees.

Islam *does not* consider women subservient and second-rate creations and some people's conjectures in this regard are incorrect. They have ascribed things to Islam that have no proof or they have incorrectly understood various Islamic documents and references. They have judged Islam according to fallacious perceptions. In order to resolve these doubts and misgivings we must explain religious issues all-inclusively, purely, and completely in order to reveal all of Islam's rightfulness and beauty.

It is wrong to say that Islam is patriarchal. Islam has prorated duties and Islam prefers tasks that have been given to women. For example, training children is a woman's characteristic and men can never reach a women's level in this respect. In the society also some jobs are more suited to women and others to men. We cannot deny this suitability, as it is due to the discrete genesis of men and women. However, this does not mean that women must be underlings and men must have the last word. If women utilize well their abilities and the rights and privileges that Islam has given them, they have a fine situation and much dignity both in the society and within their families.

● Some Hadith prohibit men from consulting with women. Are such narrations correct?

Reply: We do have Hadith that prohibit consulting with women and some even say that if you are in doubt, consult with a woman and do the opposite.

Such a Hadith has been attributed to Amir al-Mu'minin ('a):

«.اياک و مشاورة النساء الّا مَن جُرِّبَت بكمال عقلٍ فانَّ رأيِهن يَجُرُّ الى الأفن و عَزمهن الى وهن»

I warn you of consulting with women, except those whose complete intellect you have experienced. Surely their opinions make a person timid and weaken their resolve.24

Regarding such Hadith, of which we have maybe ten or twelve, I must point out several issues:

First, as I have previously stated, all Hadith are not credible. Only *sahih* (correct or sound), *muwaththaq* (trustworthy), or *hasan* (good) Hadith are considered credible. *a'if* (weak), *mursal*, *marfu'*, *majhul*, *maj'ul* and such Hadith are not authoritative proof. Some Hadith are *dha'if* and as such are not credible even though some such Hadith may be right. Therefore, we cannot consider them certain due to their numerousness.

Second, among uncertain narrations, we only give credit to those that give us instructions not those that notify us of a fact. For instance as it says: Do not consult with women because it will make you weak. The tone of these Hadith is not instructive such that they entail a religious decree or duty; rather, they are recommendatory.

Another issue is that some of these Hadith are absolute and others conditional; for example, it excludes: «الّا مَن جُرِّبَت بكمال عقلٍ» meaning: Do not consult, save with a person whose complete intellect has been proven. If we wish to form a rational conclusion from these Hadith, we must say: At first do not accept the consultation of women, because their opinion is typically weak and makes one timid, except those whose competences have been proven. Thus, it is clear that one may consult with and act upon the opinions of wise women.

There are also similar narrations regarding men. There are narrations that recommend consulting with wise persons and not to consult with injudicious individuals. Thus, the same has been said of men. Ultimately, we can say that if a person wishes to consult with another, whether male or female, they should first get to know the person, whether he or she is benevolent, wise, and righteous and there is no difference between men and women in this respect.

The Prophet (S) and Imams ('a) themselves consulted with women on occasion. Such as regarding the *Peace of Hudaibiyyah* when the Prophet (S) signed the peace treaty with the polytheists, he and his followers had already put on their pilgrim's garb in order to make pilgrimage at Mecca and circumambulate the *Ka'bah*. However, according to the treaty, it was agreed that the Muslims would not do the *Hajj* that year. The Prophet (S) instructed his followers to become *muhill* (to take off their pilgrim's garb and withdraw from state of the pilgrimage).

This was very hard for his followers because when a person becomes *muhrim* (enters the state of

pilgrimage) they should only become *muhill* after they have circumambulated the *Ka'bah*. Withdrawing from the state of pilgrimage was not acceptable to them. Thus, even though the Prophet (S) himself clearly instructed them to become *muhill*, they did not obey him. The Prophet (S) returned to his tent.

Umm Salmah, his wife, declared, 'O Prophet of Allah! Why are you disturbed?' He replied, 'I gave this instruction and the people did not obey.' Umm Salmah suggested, 'O Prophet of Allah! Sacrifice a sheep, and transgress by becoming *muhill* and do not pay attention to what the people do. Thus, the Prophet (S) did this in their presence and everyone followed his lead.

There were also many instances where Ali ('a) consulted with Fatimah ('a). Regardless of such Hadith, the Imams ('a) would consult with women. However, due to the conditions of the time, because women were less active in the society and had less social experience it was advised that people not consult with women, because they were not complete in their social knowledge and understanding; however, these Hadith were not said for the purpose of keeping women from entering the society. The presence of women in the society leads to development of their minds and better judgment.

Another point here is that if we maintain that exceptions contain important meaning, when a narration instructs against consultation with women other than those with proven complete intellects, we can deduce that taking counsel from women with verified wisdom is not only not prohibited, but it is even recommended in Hadith.

Nevertheless, Islam does stress and endorses consultation and it is helpful for a person to consult with anyone who is competent and worthy. In addition, various Hadith advise consultation with women and children regarding their own affairs, because they know more about their own issues. Basically, if we wish to discuss narrations regarding deficiency of intellect and similar issues, we must individually scrutinize each Hadith on this issue.

● In various Hadith there are sayings regarding the undesirability of the presence of women at Friday Prayer, collective prayers, funeral processions, and the like. Is the presence of women in such activities absolutely prohibited or were these Hadith due to the circumstances of the time?

Reply: Such Hadith reject the necessity for women to perform actions that are sometimes difficult and arduous for them; for example, in a Hadith that Jabir ibn Ju'fi cites from Imam Baqir ('a) it is said:

> «ليس على النساء أذانٌ و لا إقامةٌ و لا جمعة و لا جماعة و لا عيادة المريض و لا اتباع الجنازة و لا إجهارٌ بالتلبية و لا الهرولة بين الصفا و المروة و لا استلام الحجر الاسود و لا دخول الكعبة.»

Adhan, *Iqamah*, Friday Prayer, collective prayer, visiting the sick, escorting funeral processions, saying *Talbiyah* loudly in *Ihram*, running between *Safa* and *Marwah*, touching and kissing the Black Stone [*hajar ul-aswad*] (in the Ka'bah), and entering the *Ka'bah* are not obligatory for women.[25]

Most of the narrations use similar wordings. My understanding of the matter is that because of various complications and preoccupations that women have, such as fostering and training children, Islam sympathizes with them; thus, Islam has released them of various obligations, but has not prohibited those actions. In this way, Islam has shown consideration for women. Consideration is not restriction. It does not say: do not; rather, you do not have to. If you can and it is suitable, you are able.

Of course, some Hadith are not like this. They might say, for example, a woman's prayer is superior at home. By considering all such Hadith, it seems that they intend to appease women so that they do not feel that they are sustaining loss if they cannot present themselves for collective prayer because it is greatly encouraged. If they had told women not to present themselves for collective prayer, women would surely become upset because they felt obliged to pray collectively.

These narrations wish to console women in that, if they have a problem or reason for not attending collective prayer, they can pray at home and God will bestow upon them the same reward and excellence. My opinion regarding all such Hadith is the same. Of course, I do not consider it unlikely that such Hadith were stated due to prevailing conditions and problems for the presence of women in such affairs.

The credentials of narrations that state that it is better for women to pray inside their homes must be investigated for their correctness and credibility. If their credentials are correct, that it is said to be better for women to pray inside their homes can be considered to be intended for times when women cannot attend collective prayer so that they are not upset because of the excellence and rewards they have lost.

In consequence, the presence of women in cultural and political centers such as mosques and various other assemblies, and their participation in social activities are desirable and advisable, and there is no problem with these things. In fact, they are responsible in these affairs as members of the society and must fulfill their roles. Women must perform these activities, such as participating in communal demonstrations and performing behind the lines support tasks, while observing the terms and conditions of such work.

● What is your opinion regarding social, political, and economic activities of women and their employment in current conditions?

Reply: Regarding social, political, and economic activities of women I should first say that like men, women can be active in all social, political, and economic arenas and there is no religious prohibition in any of these areas. There are however two points of controversy. One is the field of judgeship: some religious jurisprudents regard it permissible for women to be a judge, and others do not. Also there is disagreement as to whether women can hold high government offices such as the presidency. However, they are completely free and without restrictions in all other fields. Of course, keeping their characteristics in mind, women must choose a compatible and suitable job.

One of the characteristics of women that I previously mentioned is their elegance, beauty, and

delicateness; these are some of their merits. Not only are these not deficiencies, they are perfections. Preserving these merits is to their own advantage, and to the advantage of their families and ultimately, the society. Accordingly, performing heavy jobs that are not compatible with these characteristics is not recommended, including coarse jobs such as trucking, desert jobs, road and building construction, long and taxing overnight jobs, and jobs in polluted environments that harm the beauty and delicateness of women such as ironworks, mine working, equipment mechanics, etc. Also, laborious agricultural occupations that put health at risk and blemish skin by long hours in the sun are also of this type. It cannot be said that such lines of work are prohibited for women; nevertheless, they are not in their interests.

Another quality in women is their emotionalism and this again is not a weakness but perfection. It can be a source of many beneficial effects. Of course, some men are also sentimental; be that as it may, women are more so. When choosing a line of employment, it is better that women refrain from professions that are not compatible with their emotionalism. A military commander must give the order to attack, kill, and destroy. Naturally, some people will get killed. There will be wails and screams. Hence, an emotional person might be influenced; their emotions will clash with their duties and will harm the well-being of the country. Also, professions that require execution of disciplinary punishment and sentences such as dealing lashes are not compatible with the delicate nature of women. They may violate their duties or suffer the loss or detriment of their emotions and mentalities.

Naturally, there are exceptions. Some women may not be like this, but most are. The Hadith regarding judgeship of women and jurisprudents that regard this profession unsuitable for women effectuate from this truth. It is natural that this profession is not suitable for women because, as a rule, one side will lose. A person who loses sometimes grieves, pleads, weeps, makes threats, sends people to beg their case or intimidate the judge, or exhibits a meek or oppressed attitude. Characteristically, due to their compassion, sympathy, and kindness women take pity and might be influenced. Even though there may be exceptions, the law must encompass the majority of circumstances.

Another attribute of women is that they are more and better prepared for training and edifying children. Of course, men also are fit for this and do have this duty; however, the tenderness and affection of women helps them to be more worthy for this task. Even though training children is a common duty of a father and mother, the important role of women in this affair cannot be overlooked. If there is no husband, a mother can still train her children but the opposite is extremely difficult.

Women must never forget this basic power and merit that they are prepared and able to train children. They must endeavor to choose a job that is not in conflict with this human responsibility and great service. There may be no work more important and influential for the welfare and happiness of the entire society than the profession of training human beings. A pivotal issue that women must anticipate is the perseverance and preservation of the institution of family. The responsibility to uphold the family is for both men and women. Men must choose jobs that do not harm their families. Women also must be

careful that their occupation does not clash with the perpetuation of the family.

Another issue is that it is not expedient for women to work in jobs that entail excessive contact and relations among males and females because in addition to causing mental pressure and work delays, immoderate mixture and relations of the sexes may bring about corruption and damage the delicate fabric of the families just as we witness in the West. In my opinion, these aspects necessitate that women observe restrictions in their work. Again, I underscore the fact that it must not be concluded from this discussion that some occupations are forbidden or *haram* for women; rather, heeding these issues prevents problems for women, their families, and their society while they can still work and have an influential presence in the community.

On the other hand, some jobs are completely suitable and even advisable for women. These include professions in teaching which do not incorporate any of the above hazards. Women can occupy jobs in all tiers of education and training, from the most elementary and rudimentary levels to the highest and if possible in completely independent and self-governed environs. These are the best of jobs which are compatible with their nature and elegance. As I have previously stated, some lines of occupation are necessities for women. Women must endeavor to be self-sufficient in all affairs regarding health and treatment, including education, administration, and implementation. There is no problem with them providing services for men also, but it would be very good if they were independent of men in this area.

Other fields of work that are suitable for women include scientific, literary, cultural, and artistic activities. Work such as scientific research in various fields, writing, painting, sewing, and carpet weaving are all quite appropriate for women. They are also compatible with housework and rearing children. Some people might think that carpet weaving is not an appropriate job—but what is wrong with it? It is a delicate and beautiful undertaking in which a person creates gorgeous works of art with their hands and also helps their own livelihood and their country. Nowadays, women can also do many interesting and useful tasks with a computer in scientific and artistic fields. Regardless, I suggest that women not stay unemployed. I would like to see all women work at their own leisure; however, they must observe the necessary criteria.

● What is your opinion regarding the profession of household management?

Reply: A policy of the previous regime was to annihilate household management as a profession and promote it as a type of unemployment and this lowered its status. Of course, this has changed to some extent after the Revolution. Even so, housewives are not considered as part of the workforce and are not influential in economic growth and development in official statistics and their output is not considered to be part of the gross national product! All in all, we might say that the role of housewives is disregarded in human and social development.

Housewifery is essential for the survival of families. It is not merely the performance of household services—it is a much more significant matter. Maintaining and managing this establishment, which also

includes human aspects such as taking care of one's husband and children which we could call *wifecraft* and *mothercraft* respectively, are primary and chief requirements of all societies. It is surely not frivolous or futile but exceedingly valuable and precious. If the internal affairs of a household are not managed well, the family is greatly harmed.

Normally, women take the responsibility of housewifery upon themselves. From a financial point of view, the cost of this occupation is considerable so that if neither the man nor the woman of the house takes it upon themselves to work at home, the management of the household will become crippled and someone else must be found to manage the home. In this case, a large salary must be paid for fulltime management of the household—and even so no hired household staff will make the same efforts as the lady of the house.

The matter of taking care of children is also entirely different. If a couple chooses to send their children to a childcare center in order that they care for them like a mother, the couple must pay a large portion of their salary for this. Therefore, housewifery has economic value and both men and women must keep this in mind. This is why I believe housewifery is a very important and respectable profession and men must appreciate the value of a housewife. Husbands must realize that due to the work of their wives, they are exempt from great expense and it would be good and worthy for husbands who are wealthy enough to give their wives the money that they save them.

In Iran it has been legislated that if a man and woman choose to divorce, half of the wealth the man has gained after marriage belongs to the woman. If we judge righteously, it is evident that this is mostly fair. Women must be optimistic and hopeful regarding their lives; they must know that they are truly partners of their husbands in life. Some women decide to work outside their homes because they fear that if their husbands choose to divorce them they will have to leave his house empty handed. Hence, we must respect women and truly appreciate the value of their work. I advise women to give top priority to the home and household management and, as long as there is no necessity, I recommend that they refrain from choosing occupations that harm the household management.

In general, housewifery can help the society in two other ways. First, the endeavors of a mother at home and her struggle to correctly train her children helps the children grow well in a family full of love and affection. A child that is saturated with proper love and is nurtured with proper training usually does not go after corruption and does not become tainted and can be useful to the society. Truly, housewives manage the future of the society. All the services men do for the society is a result of the endeavors of women. Imam Khomeini (q)[26] also stated, 'Men ascend to heaven from the laps of women'. This means that if men do something important and attain great ranks it is due to the services and training of their mother and this is no laughing matter.

Second, in addition to the fact that the work of women at home is, in itself, beneficial and necessary, it influences the quality of other people's work. If the husband and other members of the household live in a warm and congenial environment, they can be more successful in the society—in scientific research,

political work, economic endeavors, and everything in general. Thus, housewives are full partners in the activities and successes of their husbands.

If it were not for the support, sympathy, and hard work of women, Mr. President, Mr. Minister, or even Mr. Scientist who work outside would not be very successful. In truth, their wives have as much part in their success as they do; both regarding the social value of the activities and their outcomes. It is very delightful and beautiful for ministers to be able to consult their spouses at home on various issues, to gain morale and help from them and to depend on them.

Therefore, even if a housewife does not get out much but is able to have a good effect from her home, she is truly influential in the economics and politics of the society. She must not belittle her existence or think that success and service can only be achieved in jobs outside the home.

When 'Allamah Tabataba'i's (q) wife passed away, he wept much. One day I told him in private, 'We must learn patience and forbearance from you. Why are you so agitated?' He replied, 'The truth is that my distress for my wife concerns my feelings and devotion for her. This woman gave me such help and support that I can never forget her.' After a while he told me of his difficulties regarding the time he lived in *Najaf* until he got to where he said, 'In order to write my exegesis, sometimes I would concentrate and work for eight hours straight. Sometimes I would have to contemplate an issue for four hours.

On the one hand, I was tired and on the other hand if someone wanted to come to me and talk my train of thought would be broken. Then I would have to deliberate all over again. My wife understood this. She would always leave the samovar on and when I would go into my room to work in the morning, she would not disturb me. She would manage the house and do the housework.

At the outset of each hour she would bring me a cup of tea and without saying anything she would put it before me and leave. She would do this as long as I was in my workroom. If she had not helped me in this manner I would not have been able to perform my scientific research as I have. She was a partner in my work and that is why I am upset. Because how can I forget her kindnesses?' The lamented 'Allamah said this and started to weep.

The great thinker 'Allamah Tabataba'i considers his great exegesis, *Tafsir-e Al-Mizan*, indebted to the sacrifices and devotion of his wife who would correctly and wisely manage the household. If this woman was a discordant person how could 'Allamah Tabataba'i have performed his work?! Doubtless this woman is a partner in all the accomplishments of the 'Allamah; both in worldly aspects and otherworldly rewards. In a meeting where I was talking about the excellences of the 'Allamah I mentioned this story and said that we must also respect and be grateful to the 'Allamah's wife. May God bless both of them!

Managing the household is not an easy task. It is an art; an art that not all women have. Unfortunately, in our society the value of the profession of household management is not appreciated. This important job must be seen as an independent discipline and requires special research and training.

For example, there must be a class called household management in high school and boys and girls must study this as part of the curriculum. Many women wish to be good housewives but do not know how. I completely endorse that classes be established in high school and even university in which youths, both young women and men, can become experts and authorities on the subject. I have also said this before: it would be good if every man and woman attended a course regarding home management, *'spousecraft'*, and other necessary issues before marriage in order to lessen conflicts and so that they utilize their facilities and capacities in the best possible manner.

Women must observe precepts when choosing an occupation inside or outside the home and they should also be aware of the dignity of every position. For example, even at home it is not in the interests of women for them to do heavy or dirty jobs. The occupational laws of the country must adhere to these points and amenities must be prepared in the interests of women and families.

Some women are inclined to heavy-duty professions and disciplines and if we tell them that these are not in their interests they consider it to be a personal insult. This might be an extreme reaction to past restrictions, which makes them deem it of great value to take on jobs that are more suited to men.

However, the restrictions that we have in mind for women are not for the reason of belittling them or considering them weak or flawed beings. Our reason is that some professions are more suited to the special genesis of women. If a woman is prepared to endure hardships and become, for example, a mechanic of heavy machinery, well, that is her own choice and it is not *haram*. However, there are better jobs for her to do and they are more advantageous to her and the society.

The truth is women were very restricted in the past and they were prohibited from jobs that were suited to them. This caused an opposite reaction and now some women say that men think that they cannot. So they say: We will do these jobs to show men that we can indeed. In order to resolve this problem, first we must realize the true value of the jobs women do; for example, we must conduct extensive cultural promotion regarding the importance of housewifery. We must encourage, praise, and honor the profession of household management.

Second, as I have mentioned, men must realize the worth of women and consider them full partners in their income and provide them with their fair share so that women sense their true importance and feel secure and so they do not consider jobs suited to them restrictive or undignified.

Regarding the effect of unsuited occupations on the souls of women I must say: It is hard for a woman to preserve her female characteristics, delicateness, and spiritual elegance in strenuous and punishing conditions and coarse jobs and effectively put distance between impersonal work demands and the softness and calm that she must apply at home and in training her children. For this reason, it is better for men to perform jobs that entail such hardships, because they have more endurance in these areas. When each person takes up a part of an undertaking which is more suitable for their mentality and abilities, great works can be completed with the participation of both genders. Everyone has a part in

managing the society; however, women in one way and men in another.

If complete facilities are provided for women in areas that are suited to them and they are encouraged to become self-sufficient in these areas, it would be far better for their identity than seeking jobs that are not in their interests. Even though we will not ban these professions, it is not necessary for us to encourage them. If we express gratitude for the positive advances of women, they will think about these things themselves. For example, women can have positive roles in political arenas such as the parliament. They can perform cultural work and have influence although in my opinion there are some cultural jobs that are not in the interests of women.

● In what sort of artistic areas can women become active?

Reply: In general, women have the capability and ability for artistic work; however, every job is different. Some jobs are alright; such as painting, sewing, writing, etc. On the other hand, some jobs may sometimes be problematic for women. For instance, acting and the presence of women in some roles and stages and coming before millions of people can put the stability of their family life in jeopardy. I have seen time and again that the shared lives of such individuals has ended in divorce.

Sometimes actresses call me and talk of such problems. Here, I must advise women that even if their husbands agree with their artistic endeavors, they must completely perceive their husbands' feelings and when they choose to present themselves on stage, they must accept jobs that do not cause sensitivity. If their husbands are not satisfied, their common life shall be shattered. Their children will become motherless or fatherless. Regardless, great care must be taken in artistic and cultural work so that the talents of women are utilized but no moral, social, or familial problems arise.

These days, the inclination for artistic activities, especially acting, has risen among youth and young women in particular. Acting is one of the professions and fields that receives much attention and has many supporters. On the other hand, due to the points of moral vulnerability in these fields, which sometimes influence the workplace, naturally, religious persons look upon such fields with doubt and seek them out much less. This results in fewer religious individuals in artistic and cultural areas. This is a prevalent problem and under such conditions we cannot be successful in the cultural encounter with foreign countries.

We need films, cinema and television. We must defend the positive aspects of our culture. Many values have been weakened in the West. Modesty is a human value. We must do something to preserve our values while also providing for our needs and requirements. Adhering to religious precepts is very instrumental. For example, if it is necessary for a young woman to play a part in a movie, adherence to religious precepts results in less sensitivity. If moral issues and *Hijab* are observed, laughter and allurements that are out of place are avoided and matters of *mahram* and non-*mahram* are completely observed, it is evident that such acting will not result in calamities and negative effects in families and the society. If moral limits are honored it is both to the advantage of the actors and the society.

Performers must not think that viewers will get only what the actors intend. Viewers perceive more generally. Polite, reasonable, and honorable behavior between male and female actors teaches women and men who are watching the scene to act the same. On the other hand, an undignified and immodest performance between actors also sets a negative example for the society. Thus, we who wish to promote our culture and influence others must realize that film-making and acting are very delicate matters—much more delicate than we think. Sometimes artists pay less attention to such matters and desire more that their work be interesting or entertaining for viewers; whereas, if they conform to these issues, they can greatly help improve the morality of the society.

Naturally, negative roles are sometimes necessary in movies and observance of ethical and religious criteria ties the hands of the artists in fulfilling their roles as desired. Sometimes actors show demeanors that are not typical of the personality of their role; for example, they act tactlessly and perform rude and loathsome gestures in a *Chadur* and act dignified and pleasant in inappropriate clothing. Nevertheless, it seems that this issue requires special care and original methods and approaches must be formulated.

In this regard, I advise that positive aspects are shown as much as possible because whether we like it or not the negative aspects are influential. Even when the film-maker intends to criticize the negative points by presenting them, some viewers take pattern after these same negative points. The training background of some people is such that, for example, when they see actors swear, curse, and use foul language, they learn, imitate, and take pattern after them even if one's intention is to criticize this behavior. If a positive character and a negative one is introduced, some people incline toward the good protagonist and set that one as their role model and others, according to their temperament, lean toward the antagonist—the one that was intended to be condemned. Hence, I advise that negative aspects be used as little as possible and only where necessary.

● What is your opinion regarding political activeness of women?

Reply: The presence of women in political arenas can have a decisive role in the society. If women congregate they can be very influential in various orientations. In the demonstrations at the time Islamic Revolution and also arenas after the Revolution such as war and elections, women proved that they are very influential in some areas. When we see the votes of the elected, we see that women had great unity and presence in order to bring about such results and this is very important. Women can have a fateful role in choosing the president and can cause the election of a president other than the one men might have chosen.

This is no small matter. There is no problem with women having more presence than men in the parliament. Their presence on the seats of the parliament has been satisfactory until now. The important thing is: How active are they? If women can bring representatives that truly have authority and influence, and are indeed active it would be very good because all members of the parliament are not so active. Only a minority are truly active, so if women can increase the active members by sending in active and thoughtful women, this can greatly help them defend their rights even though nowadays many men do

defend the rights of women, even more than women themselves.

Another issue is the organization of women. Having organization is very good because people work better when organized, especially when they spread their organization throughout the country—they can both select better representatives and better demand their desires from their representatives. This can be very influential and cause men to think higher of them. I believe the organization of women must be thoroughly thought out. First, it should not be like a union or be gender-biased in that they only think about themselves and about defending their own rights because if it is like this it will only restrict them.

Second, in addition to supporting the true interests of women, they should have a hand in the main affairs of the country. Women must know who to choose and they must keep in mind all economic, cultural, and religious issues of the country. If women do not restrict themselves to only women, and work for the whole society, they will have more influence and this organization will cause them to gain power and lead to men counting on them more.

● Can women also hold positions of judgeship or government rule?

Reply: The two issues of judgeship, government rule (women being at the head of the government), and such are religious jurisprudential issues that have been analyzed and explored in books on religious jurisprudence [*fiqh*]. Jurisprudents have varying opinions regarding these matters. Some declare them permissible, others *haram*, others *makruh*. This is a matter of controversy. First we must note that these issues are matters of *taqlid* (following a religious jurisprudent or *faqih*).

Our tradition is one of *taqlid* and religious jurisprudence. In *taqlid*-related issues we must refer to the religious jurisprudent that each of us has accepted and ultimately they shall give the decisive opinion. Therefore, when it is stated in a speech or magazine that something is permissible or not permissible, some become confused. In effect, all disciplines have experts and the experts of these issues are religious jurisprudents.

The second issue is that my recommendation to religious jurisprudents is that they should see that times have changed and many things are different from the past. Fundamental changes have been made. Iran is not separate from other countries. Women are not apart from other societies. We can no longer govern women like in the past. The people of our society have become acquainted with the conditions and thoughts of other people of the world and their expectations have risen.

We expect the great *faqihs* to examine women's issues with a wide-ranging and liberal view and to clarify our responsibilities regarding these matters based on solid and substantial jurisprudential sources of reference so that there is no need for the opining of non-authoritative and possibly unrighteous persons.

Of course, other scholars can, if they are well-versed in religious jurisprudence and heed such issues, discuss these subjects. Such discussions can be useful for religious jurisprudents and might influence

their religious opinions. However, the ultimate decision belongs to religious jurisprudents and the bounds of the tradition of religious jurisprudence must not be broken in jurisprudential issues.

1. – In Islam, those who go to jihad are considered victors whether they live or die because if they live, it is because they have defeated the enemy and if they 'die', they attain the rank of martyr [shahid], which is one of the highest ranks one may attain in Islam. According to the Quran, the shahid is not dead, but lives on even though we cannot perceive them. [trans.]
2. – Surah Isra' 17:70.
3. – Surah Tin 95:4.
4. – Surah Hijr 15:30.
5. – Surah Baqarah 2:31.
6. – Ibid 2:34.
7. – Surah Baqarah 2:35.
8. – Allamah is a title imparted upon only those with extensive knowledge in many diverse fields. [trans.]
9. – Surah Hujurat 49:13.
10. – Surah Hujurat 49:13.
11. – Surah Nahl 16:97.
12. – Ibid 16:97.
13. – Surah Al 'Imran 3:195.
14. – Ibid 3:42.
15. – Surah Tahrim 66:11.
16. – Surah Zumar 39:9.
17. – Surah Mujadilah 58:11.
18. – Surah Hajj 22:46.
19. – Surah Yunus 10:100.
20. – Surah Jathiyah 45:13.
21. – Usul-e Kafi, vol. 5, p. 516.
22. – The ability to understand a true Hadith due to its divine eloquence (ed.).
23. – Surah Nisa' 4:34.
24. – Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 100, p. 250.
25. – Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103, p. 254.
26. – This is short for quddisa sirruhu, which means may his grave be sanctified. [trans.]

Common Rights of Women and Men

● What are the common rights of men and women?

Reply: Islam does not regard women and men any different in their humanness and it considers this principle so obvious that it does not feel the need to openly stress this issue in the Quran or Hadith. Hence, whenever a Quranic verse or Hadith addresses humans, both men and women are intended. At the advent of Islam even in 'civilized' nations there was a controversy as to whether women were human or not or perhaps half-human.

The case of human rights has only become global for about a century. Assuredly, Islam has discussed

this topic from the very beginning and has determined and validated various rights. The issues I shall subsequently discuss regarding women's rights are the same that are sometimes discussed as human rights, which are common among women and men. Here I shall itemize several of the most important points:

1. The Right to Live and Exist

As living beings, humans have the right to continue their lives and no one has the right to take this right away from them without religiously and legally legitimate grounds.

2. The Right to Freedom

Every person, man and woman, has been created free and this freedom has been ingrained upon every soul. No one has the right to deprive any person of this freedom unless it causes conflict with the freedom of others or divergence from their own or the society's interests.

3. The Right to Utilize Natural Resources

We live in a world that requires of us various needs: water, air, food, clothing, etc. We must be able to consume food, oxygen, and the like. Resources such as mines, forests, jungles, and seas belong to the people and naturally, humans have the right to utilize them. No one has the right to prevent us unless this right conflicts with the rights of others. It is the same regarding the right of residency.

Because humans require a home, naturally, they have the right to obtain a home for themselves within the boundaries of their country or city, or anywhere else for that matter. Of course, it is established that this must be according to a specific regulative system, which is a necessity for social life and required for providing public interests.

In all of these points, we state that due to our human nature and according to primary principles, we have such rights. Naturally, if our use of these rights entails violation and infringement upon the rights of individuals or the society, they must assuredly be restricted. For example, the right to live of a person who performs acts of aggression against the lives of others or puts the security of the society in danger cannot be said to be respectable and secure. In fact, such persons divest themselves of this right and civil law, whose rank is just after human rights, shall determine what must be done regarding them.

4. The Right to Health Care and Sanitation

In order to protect their lives and health, as humans, women and men have the right to enjoy a healthy and hygienic environment and make use of what they require for treatment and eliminating illness. This is a natural right of all humans and no one can legitimately obstruct them from it.

5. The Right to Employment

A prerequisite for providing living expenses is work. Thus, in order to resolve one's needs, men and women have the right to work and the fruits of every person's toils belong to themselves. Whoever works for another person must receive fair wages. Fair wages means compensation for the amount of work that is done, regardless of whether the employee is man or woman, black or white.

Every person has the right to receive compensation for the work they do. One cannot say to their employee: because you are a woman you must receive lower wages for the same amount of work. Islam is completely against this. According to Islam, if a woman works at home or anywhere else, she must receive the same income that a man receives. In my opinion, women are oppressed in this regard all over the world because usually others take advantage of the needs of women and employ them and instead of a fair income they give them less pay than a man.

Unfortunately, this is also true in the West and women are used as an inexpensive workforce. The concept of just rights is not the same as equal rights. Each person must receive as much pay as the value of their work. A female worker might work as much as a male worker or even more and she must receive an equivalent amount of pay for the work she does. Gender must not be a criterion—the work, its conditions, and its yield must be the basis for a person's salary.

A Sympathetic Word

In current conditions, we have hundreds of thousands of university graduates in various disciplines, many of which are women who are usually inclined to work. With the pretext of the equality of the rights of men and women, those in charge prefer to employ women rather than unemployed young men because they are content with less pay and are more compliant. With the current high rates of unemployment, the numbers of unemployed young men rises every day.

Women are not willing to marry unemployed men and every day the number of young women and men who cannot marry increases. The age of marriage has skyrocketed and many people are completely deprived of marriage, forming a family, and raising children and must live their whole lives in solitude. Single life is very hard and has many detrimental side effects.

With the current situation, the foundations of family are in great jeopardy. Government officials must find a remedy for this problem. Also, women must not neglect the issue of timely marriage and formation of a family when choosing a university field and job. They must cooperate with men otherwise they will have many regrets.

6. The Right to Possession and Enjoyment of Property

When a person works legitimately, they become the owner of the proceeds of their work. The results of

one's work do not belong to anyone else. By way of example, if a woman works and her husband or father takes her income, this is oppression. Of course, if she chooses to spend her wages for her family she may do so.

However, due to the fact that the property belongs to her as a result of legitimate means, whether through work, inheritance, donation, etc., she has the right to enjoy or dispose of her properties in any way she likes and her femaleness does not result in the restriction of her right to possess and utilize assets.

If a woman obtains some goods and chattels and chooses to give it as a gift, start a business, hoard it, or donate it for God, she is free to do so. However, there are some things that neither men nor women may do even with their own money, such as if a person wishes to set fire to their own wealth, utilize it in an illegitimate manner, or make use of it in a way that is harmful to the society. Such usages are forbidden and there is no difference in this whether one is a woman or man.

7. The Right to Security

A person who wishes to live in the society—whether man or woman—needs security. This means that there must be an environment in which their lives, possessions, honor, and standing may be safe and in which no one interferes with their legitimate rights, affairs, and liberties. Security is the greatest and most important desire of every person.

For women this need must be provided for both in her husband's home and in the society. If their security is violated, they have the right to approach righteous courts with their complaint in order to receive their rights. If it does not cause a conflict of interest or disorder in the society, she may directly defend herself and demand her rights. Men and women are no different in this respect.

Women can advance complaints, take necessary legal steps, hire a lawyer, speak in court, defend themselves, and perform any necessary actions their defense might require such as travel or perform any other legitimate action. In addition to the fact that Islam has not denied this natural right, it is also obvious that the way of the women at the advent of Islam was so and the conduct of noble Fatimah (ʻa) confirms this.

In order to get her rights, Fatimah (ʻa) made speeches, performed debates and gave logical reasoning. She spoke in the presence of a great gathering of people in the Mosque of the Prophet (S) and interpellated government officials in order to obtain her just rights. These are clear and apparent issues in Islam.

Women must not say that they are embarrassed to speak out for justice and others must not say that it is shameful and indecent for women to demand their own rights! Why is it indecent?! Even others must help in this regard so that women may better and easier rise to obtain their just rights.

8. The Right to Legislation and Living in the Presence of Laws

The existence of laws is one of the indispensable items of human social life. Men and women both have the right to have a part in legislation and naturally, they have the right to live in the presence of laws and benefit from the advantages of such laws. No one has the right to have bias and for example deny the right of women to have a part in legislation or deprive someone of the protection of the law because they are a woman.

9. The Right to Participate and Associate in the Government

It is definite and certain that the society requires government. The prerequisite for enforcing laws is that there be a government that has the responsibility for bringing order to the society. Women and men alike, as citizens who have the right to participate in choosing their futures, can have a part in the government and its determination. Naturally, presence in the prerequisites of this affair is also everyone's right.

Establishment of unions and political parties, participation in various groups, taking part in elections and other political activities are several of the rights of all people, including women.

Women may form groups and defend the rights of men, women, and their whole country. They must not only think of their own affairs. They must also take the rights of the oppressed into consideration. If they think of these things also, they shall be much more successful. The useless rivalry and separation between men and women must not be provoked. While preserving religious and legal criteria, women must act in the interests of the whole society and all humans.

10. The Right to Choose a Spouse

Just as men have the right to choose who to marry, so also when women arrive at the age of marriage, they have the right to choose a husband for themselves. A woman is free to choose a husband and no one may force her to marry or bar her from marriage. No one has the right to force a woman or maiden to marry a certain person. Fathers, mothers, relatives, nor any other person or persons may force her into an imposed or arranged marriage. Humans are completely free in choosing a legitimate spouse and there may be no coercion or compulsion involved.

11. The Right to Have and Raise Children

Having children is a natural need and right. Humans regard having children as a method of perpetuating their existence. Women and men have the right to have children. If a man tells his wife that he does not want children at all, he can say that but that is only his side of the matter; the rights and desires of women must not be disregarded. Therefore, civil laws must preserve both their rights in some manner.

Every man and woman has the right to train their children as they deem fit—in a legitimate manner. This is a natural desire and feeling that exists in all women and men. This issue requires a lengthier and clearer discussion in the area of family rights and I shall end it here.

12. The Right to Think and Have Opinions and Beliefs

Women are sapient and so are men. Having reason and thought is a characteristic of both. When God gives someone a blessing, they have the right to make use of it. It goes without saying that as a consequence of thought, people arrive at an opinion or belief. This belief may be about issues spiritual and otherworldly or social and worldly. In any event, a person's belief is respectable, regardless of the way they are achieved.

True, others may give them advice and ask that they revise their beliefs. They may debate and refute their beliefs, but they cannot force them to change their views. For example, a person believes in God and someone tells them not to. Or a person has not yet apprehended the existence of God. No one may put others under pressure and condemn and imprison them because they could not accept their beliefs!

So, they could not accept them, so what? They can bring them logical reasons, guide them, and encourage them to think in a certain manner in order to rectify their beliefs. However, if ultimately the person says, 'I do not agree with what you are telling me', one cannot punish the person because they do not accept our views or are uncertain regarding them.

I must declare that some people protest Islam's decree regarding apostates [*murtad*] and maintain that it conflicts with freedom of belief as one of the natural rights of humans. They say: If a Muslim becomes skeptical regarding the righteousness of their religion or one of its pillars and cannot accept it, why do you deny their right to live?

In short, I must say that this issue does not concern a natural right; rather, it goes back to the social and political rights of humans. Just as individuals have rights, the society also has rights that must be preserved. For example, at the advent of Islam some unbelievers would instruct their friends to accept Islam and then renounce and repudiate it after they were known as Muslims. This was a conspiracy for weakening the faith of the people and harming the society of Muslims. This is one of the motives for this decree.

The beliefs of people must be respected. Men and women are the same. However, if it goes beyond just believing and grows into expression of belief—meaning if a person intends to harm the beliefs of others, whose beliefs are also respectable, by promoting their own individual beliefs—civil rights and laws must determine the boundaries of freedom and naturally, special restrictions and regulations are necessary.

All human rights are such that when they attain social manifestation, like it or not, they are faced with conflicts. These conflicts prevent them from being realized in their pure forms; rather, they require

special molds and channels. The spirit of these principles must be introduced in the form of constitutional laws and civil rights so that all people may benefit from the highest amount of rights and freedom possible and so that nobody's freedom debars the freedom of others.

One of the necessities of freedom in belief is that if someone must perform specific rites and ceremonies as a result of their belief, it is their right and no one may obstruct them from or interfere with it.

13. The Right to Seek Knowledge

Liberty in seeking knowledge is a human right which has been extensively discussed previously. In short, women are as free as men in acquiring knowledge and there is no need to repeat the discussion.

14. The Right to Spiritual and Mystical Improvement

Humans have the capacity and ability for spiritual improvement and intellectual advancement. Thus, women and men have the right to strive for lofty spiritual ranks and attain spiritual perfection and transcendent refinement and no one has the right to bar anyone from this path.

This was a summary of the rights woman have as humans. All people are obligated to accept these rights. Not only must everyone refrain from subverting these rights, they must also struggle to help defend them. The government and others are responsible for the fulfillment of these rights and must provide the instruments for the attainment of women's rights.

● What is the meaning of 'natural rights' and 'acquired rights'?

Reply: Two types of rights can be conceived for humans: natural rights and acquired rights. Natural rights are rights whose source and provenance is the special genesis of humans. Such rights do not require laws or conventions. Every "natural capacity" is a basis for a "natural right". The reason that these rights are equal or equivalent for all humans is that no human is born superior, dominant, or subservient to others and the social systems of human life are not natural (inborn) or fatalistic. Jobs, posts, and responsibilities are not distributed by nature. Therefore, these rights belong to everyone and every human individual benefits from them according to nature. As these rights do not need to be formulated, no one can take them away and obstruct others from these rights. Regarding these rights, color, race, femaleness, maleness, or other differences or advantages are unimportant and no one is different. For example, the rights to learn or marry are rights that have been chronicled by the genesis of humanity and nature itself. Someone who attempts to prove such rights have nothing new to say. They can only recite obvious and definite truths. Correspondingly, those who attempt to deny such rights are in conflict with logic, nature, and the human genesis.

It is of primal importance to observe and honor the natural rights of others. Thus, constitutional and civil laws must be legislated based on natural and inherent rights and under no condition must they violate or

conflict with such rights.

If laws do not conflict with foundational rules and principles—some of which have been enumerated—their differences and temporal development must be considered a result of prevailing conditions and changes in circumstances. For instance, in a society it may be necessary to designate various restrictions and regulations for facilitating administration so that everyone may equally enjoy their natural rights, such as restrictions in familial marriage, birth control, conditions and manners of marriage and other contracts, labor laws, property laws, etc. These laws may differ from country to country. Even so, in similar circumstances, all humans who are subject to these laws have an equal right to benefit from them and the law itself determines exceptions, if any.

Another aspect that is usually regarded in the legislation of laws is that they must clarify what is to be done when rights are in conflict. For example, suppose some have a specific contagious disease in which case the law might bar them from marriage until they are cured. This deprivation of a natural right is because their enjoyment of their own right equals the divestment of others of some of their rights. Thus, the preference is that, in order to preserve the legitimate rights of the majority and to prevent their loss, the rights and liberties of a minority are restricted. The law must determine these limitations. It must secure the rights of the society while also respecting individual rights and liberties and attempting to further them.

To state matters differently, secondary and specific laws incorporate the factor of objective truths and adhere to securing and providing the natural rights of all citizens with respect to specific temporal and physical conditions. Here, the question exists as to whether, apart from humanity's natural needs and attributes and also the necessities of social life, there are any other factors involved in the formulation of laws?

In answer we must say: God, the Wise, the Glorified, has created humans for a specific purpose. He has ingrained some of the prerequisites for this objective in the nature and constitution of humanity. As an example, for the perpetuation of the human race, it is part of an individual's being to feel the need to marry and have affection for their children. When determining laws, we do not have the right to oppose this plan and ideal in a way that jeopardizes the continuance of humankind. This is one reason that the formation of a 'family' by two members of the same sex cannot be sanctioned.

In addition, each person must choose and pursue various objectives based on their own principles and values. The development and success of individuals and societies alike depend upon this. In addition to not deterring or impeding the journey towards advancement and salvation, laws must make such paths smother, easier to cross, and brighter. Of course, as a result of the limits in humanity's knowledge and differences in opinion among people, laws that human beings legislate differ from each other and sometimes even conflict.

Some people state that this discussion has a close and interlaced relationship with "the relationship of

truth and ideology", or in different terms "the relationship of truths and requisites". Can it be said that requisites (legislated laws) are completely derived from and based on realities?

This is a basic issue which the late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, Shahid Mutahari, and some others have discussed at length. Other authorities do not agree with their logic. I believe that requisites are based on realities. Humans have capacities and needs and as a result, they must fulfill them. As I have stated before, legislative rights and matters are a response to humanity's genetic needs and circumstances which cannot be denied or opposed. However, one point must be kept in mind: any "requisite" cannot be derived from any "fact".

If, for instance, science comes to the conclusion that such and such race is superior to another race in some abilities and features, we may conclude that each must develop their own greater points of capacity and their acquired rights must be determined based on their success and efficiency. We cannot conclude racial bias from such differences because racism is a formula that is based on an essential difference between races. If we regard the races different in their humanity, then we can differentiate their natural rights and merits.

However, because all are identical in their humanity, their natural rights are absolutely equal. Everyone has the right to freedom, self-determination, education, political activeness, health, hygiene, etc. and they must all have complete benefit of the facilities and rights that are the entitlement of all human beings. Then, if varying results are achieved after this equal benefit, each person must take their suitable place in the society and play a role that is most appropriate to their abilities.

Some assert that there exists equality among all humans in regard to natural rights. Racial and individual differences have no effect on these rights. However, because acquired rights are based on the capacities, endeavors, and circumstances of people, naturally they will not be equal or similar. Now that there is equality in this matter, is there a specific rule that can be considered the basis and criterion for acquired rights?

In answer I must say that one criterion is the manifestation of capacities. If a person works hard and attains competence in knowledge and science, management and leadership, or physical prowess, that person must be situated in his or her appropriate place in life so that their individual skills are wasted and impeded to the least extent possible.

Another criterion is that benefiting from individual rights must not cause damage or loss to others or violation of their rights. They must not even induce detriment in the persons themselves. Also, they must not cause disorder in or harm to the social system and must not conflict and cause discord with other human standards and criteria. The corpus of these criteria may be summarized in the word justice; meaning that no right may be inharmonious with the principles of justice.

If the use of a right entails injustice, it becomes unjust and loses its status as a right. It is not permissible or lawful for any woman or man to violate the rights of others with the pretext of benefiting from their own

rights. This is forbidden on grounds of rights abuse.

The Noble Zahra (‘a): The Epitome of Women

● What was your motive for writing the book *Banu-ye Nimunah-ye Islam* (The Model Woman of Islam)?

Reply: My second work was the book *Banu-ye Nimunah-ye Islam* which I wrote in the year AH 1349 (approximately AD 1970). For a long time I was thinking that we must provide the Islamic society with an ideal family as a paragon with which men and women can learn lessons for all areas of life. The best family that could be considered for this aim was the family of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) and Zahra (‘a).

This is because, among men, after the Prophet (S), Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) and among women, noble Fatimah (‘a) are the best of people and the great personages of Islam. Because they were Infallible, these two worthy personalities completely observed all their religious duties and lived by virtuous Islamic values. Thus, they can be considered models for families in marriage, social relations, and internal family relationships including *spousecraft*, raising children, household management, etc. Hence, I thought to inspect and examine this family and introduce it as a paragon.

In order to chronicle the family life of these two personages, two methods were available: One was investigation of their inherent virtues. Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) and noble Zahra (‘a) each possessed intrinsic virtues due to their infallibility and investigating these was, in itself, an extensive affair. The second method was illustration of the family and to some extent social behavior of these luminaries. This was my main purpose; even so, I also more or less engaged in the first focus though my intent for this was also to elucidate the practical program and behavior of these two great personalities.

At first I believed that our Islamic sources were very rich and profuse regarding the life of noble Zahra (‘a). However, during my research I realized that, in fact, we have very few references because the lifespan of *Hadhrat*[1] Zahra (‘a) and especially her married life was very short. In addition, due to her main responsibilities, a large portion of the life of this guiding light was played out at home and people are less notified of what goes on within the homes of others. Therefore, we do not have thorough information regarding the details of *Hadhrat* Zahra’s (‘a) behavior. Moreover, the women of that age were under various restrictions and the nature of these restrictions was that no one realized the details of their behavior. Basically, behavioristic matters were not considered important enough to mention. Although I was faced with such problems, I tried to use anything I could, however miniscule, and extract results.

As I advanced in the study, I became more interested and attracted to the issue; it achieved a spiritual aspect. The perfect character of noble Zahra (‘a) had greatly affected me such that many times I cried

while writing. I had become captivated. My inspiration to pursue the subject further would strengthen by the moment. At this juncture it seems suitable to reminisce about one of my memories:

When the book was finished I softly spoke to the *Hadhrat*: 'O Daughter of the Prophet! If this work is satisfactory and acceptable to you I desire a reward from you.' Due to the course of events, I was not able to go to *Hajj* because I did not wish to go as a caravan cleric or using similar titles, and I did not want to pay by installments. I also did not have enough money to go on my own. Naturally, I almost had no hope. Therefore, I said before the presence of the exalted Sadiqah Tahirah ('a): 'The prize I want from you is a *Hajj* pilgrimage. I want to go to *Hajj* with my own money and I want my pilgrimage to be successful.'

One day, I was walking home through *Safa'iah* street in Qum when a man that I was somewhat acquainted with pulled his car over to the side of the road and insisted that he take me where I wanted to go. I finally got into his car. He asked were my house was and took me there. At the door he said: We want to compile and author religious books for some Islamic schools in Tehran. We have the permission of the Department of Education and Training. I want to put you in charge of the work so that we may prepare a suitable book with the collaboration of some others.

Because I had not worked on children's books until then, the job seemed hard for me and I said that I could not. However, he insisted and when he left he was still adamant that I certainly accept the project. Then he put two, one thousand toman bills, which had recently entered circulation at the time, on the mantel and left. For a time, I endeavored to prepare the preliminaries for the job until he again came to my house. As much as I tried to evade the job he would not accept and he said: You are the only one for the job. Again before he left, he put two one thousand toman bills on the mantel. That made it four thousand tomans.

The job was forced upon me. At the time, they were registering people for *Hajj* in *Safa'iah* street. I took the four thousand tomans and signed up for *Hajj*. I do not remember where I got the rest of the money (five hundred tomans) that was needed for the pilgrimage. Anyway, that year I made a pilgrimage to the House of God. After that also I succeeded in making a few more pilgrimages in the most desirable manner to *Hajj*. In two of my journeys I was able to visit the interior of the *Ka'bah* and I do not see this as anything but the favor of the noble Zahra ('a).

It has been over 27 years from the first print of the book *Banu-ye Nimunah-ye Islam*. By the grace of Allah, the Almighty, the book was reprinted at least once almost every year. The fact that in the recent prints it is written 14th or 15th print is because in the past they did not write the print number and it is much more than that. Every year it has been reprinted at least once and sometimes even twice. It has also been translated to some foreign languages. Even though 27 years has passed from its authorship, it is still considered a new book and this is due to nothing but the special favor and grace of the lauded Zahra ('a).

I have continually tried to add on new content I found in Hadith or the Quran or things that came to my mind. Its file was always and still is open to amendment and improvement. Throughout these years I have made significant changes a few times and have added new content. This may have had influence in the continuing novelty and freshness of the book.

● What are the criteria for a model woman? Can the passage of time influence such criteria?

Reply: Temporal transition and transformations in the circumstances of human life do not remold the substructures and fundamentals of human life. Only superstructures, lifestyle, and forms of human communication change. The nature and constitution of humans is uniform in all ages and generations. The Traditions of Allah (i.e. the laws of existence), which includes the laws governing human life, are all constant and immutable. The relationships of humans with God, the society—including family—and nature are relationships that in their essence follow set principles and cannot change.

As a woman who was enlightened in these values and lived by divine and human standards, *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) can serve as a perfect example for all humans until the end of time. In other words, we can say just as religion is unchanging and constant, an exemplar may also be constant and eternal. We need not set details that are not values or basics per se and are direct results of prevailing circumstances as our paragon. Rather, we should accurately understand the measures and values derived from the conduct of the Infallibles (‘a) and execute them in our lives according to current states of affairs.

Can anyone claim that the essence of choosing and taking a suitable spouse, simplicity and unpretentiousness in living, reciprocal respect and mutual understanding among spouses, devotion and sacrifice, defense of the rights of the family, honesty and integrity, giving importance and endeavoring to train children, feeling responsibility towards the society, and similar issues are things whose righteousness and value transform with the passage of time? All these are seen in the life of the lofty Zahra (‘a) and people such as she can be a perfect paradigm for everyone for all time.

● What important and facilitating characteristic in the life of *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) has drawn your attention the most?

Reply: In truth, the lives of *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) and Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) are intriguing and perfect examples in all aspects. However, that which most enchanted me was their modest livelihood. *Hadhrat* ‘Ali (‘a) was the second personage of Islam and the Prophet’s (S) son-in-law. If it was not for the struggles and selflessness of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) Islam could not have easily attained such success. His was a superior character in all aspects. Fatimah Zahra (‘a) was both the greatest of women and the daughter of the Prophet (S) and as such she was honored by him. Even so, they lived in ultimate simplicity. They endeavored to keep their livelihood even below the usual and common level of the times. They endured the hardships of life more than others and *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) was completely willing and prepared for this. This is a very important matter because at the time the Prophet (S) kept the Islamic funds and taxes

and he could for example provide an extensive trousseau for his daughter or he could have given ‘Ali (‘a) great sums of money for his services to Islam to help him in his life. But he did not do this.

The noble Zahra (‘a) observed this value very carefully and endured all types of hardships with heart and soul and never made excuses or protests. One day the Prophet (S) saw a curtain in *Hadhrat* Zahra’s (‘a) house. When he left her house to pray Fatimah (‘a) felt that he got upset that she had a curtain. She gathered the curtain and sent her children to take the curtain to the Prophet (S) at the mosque. The Prophet (S) was elated and said: My daughter has done what I wanted. Their entire life is imbued with simplicity and in my opinion this is very important.

● Why is simplicity in livelihood and abstinence from consumerism and luxury considered a value? Is this recommendable for everyone or only officials, leaders, and their families?

Reply: It is a general principle that wealthy and prosperous people should help the weak and needy classes. In addition, they must not live in such a manner that the inclination for luxury is intensified and fortified among the various social classes and causes the unhappiness of the lower classes. Islam in no way endorses competition for luxury. That which one wants to spend for luxury must be spent for social affairs and helping the poor. However, officials and those that, spiritually or politically, possess elevated statuses or are great personages must pay special attention to the matter. If they even wish to live luxuriously with their own personal and legitimate property and be bound to welfare, others will also follow this path and the lives of those that are not economically endowed will become more difficult.

Another detriment to the society in this area is that fundamental beliefs and values in the minds and hearts of the people will become undermined. They will say: When our personages act in this manner it is evident that the cardinal purpose is money and materiality and spirituality has no real credence.

Even if there were no poor and disadvantaged people in the society and the extravagance and profligacy of the prosperous did not have a detrimental effect on others, simplicity in livelihood would still be a value and duty. This is because Islam is opposed to wastefulness and prodigality and deems these things indecent even if there are no poor in the society. Instead of using wealth for luxuries and formalities, it should be used on the path of growth and perfection of the society so that the people and society advance in all areas and become powerful.

In order to attain this purpose, we must lessen our material attachment because the more attachment we humans have to the world the farther we get from spirituality. However, worldliness is not just having wealth, welfare, or excellent facilities it is also extreme affection to such things. A person may be poor not because of their lack of interest in the world but because even though they were overly fond of the world they were not successful in attaining wealth or a person may have very few worldly possessions but love them dearly and be extremely attached to them.

These human spiritual inclinations may also be influential in the methods and strategies of acquiring riches. A person who has great love for worldly chattel seeks it in any way and does not refrain from

injustice, unfairness, oppression, or sin. On the other hand, persons who are not greatly attached to the world do not see illegitimate paths open before themselves and abstain from violating the rights of others.

The great Zahra (‘a) was daughter to the Prophet (S) and wife to the vicegerent of God. The conformance of the life of this luminary with the values and slogans of the Prophet (S) and *Hadhrat* ‘Ali (‘a), her simple livelihood, her attention to spirituality, and her high regard for the interest and benefit of the society were things that can be considered the secrets of the Holy Prophet’s (S) success.

Of course, the value of simple living is not limited to the time of the Prophet (S). The people expect all those who claim to be good Muslims, those who support Islam, those who have gained renown as Islamic personages or proponents of the Islamic government to live like the Prophet (S), Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a), and Fatimah Zahra (‘a). If the people observe simplicity and lack of attachment to the world, they will become fond of religious authorities, the Islamic government, and officials. On the other hand, if they see attachment and lavishness and a chasm between words and deeds, they lose hope in these things.

The trustworthiness of a savant that describes the life of Fatimah Zahra (‘a) and ‘Ali (‘a), praises the justice of ‘Ali (‘a), speaks of the underprivileged and downtrodden but has a luxurious life—albeit through legitimate wealth—comes into question. The people say the Prophet (S) and *Hadhrat* ‘Ali (‘a) worked and surely their great intelligence and incredible foresight brought them great benefits. Even so, whatever they obtained, they would give it to the poor. The people also expect the same nowadays from government officials.

Thus, religious personages and officials of the Islamic government have a great responsibility in that they must be very careful of their behavior and that of their families and those close to them. If they live correctly they are in effect propagating Islam.

Some women encourage their husbands to prodigality, overindulgence, and luxury-living in order to “keep up with the Joneses”. They must take example from the life of noble Zahra (‘a) and know that if they perform an offence and desist from observing their status and station they are harming the Islamic government and are answerable in the next life.

● Regarding her social relationships and activities, which characteristic of *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) has entranced you the most?

Reply: *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) was present in political and social activities in various manners. Participation in war related issues, even direct participation in behind the lines activities, spiritual and mental cooperation and aid of Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) in matters of *Jihad*, holding meetings for education and edification, and similar tasks. However, I believe that the most important issue for Fatimah Zahra (‘a) was defense of the right and vicegerency of Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) which she worked on as a social duty in any form possible. For instance, regarding the *Fadak* affair the basic essence and reason for her

deeds and persistent follow ups was the defense of right and vicegerency.

Even her last effort in which she willed that her husband hold her funeral and bury her in the middle of the night and conceal the grave was an extension to *Hadhrat* Zahra's (‘a) political and social presence. It shows the intensity of her purpose and greatness because everyone likes others to attend their funeral procession and burial and honor them, they like others to come to their graves and remember them. However, this great woman sacrificed all this for the purpose and message that was her duty to convey.

● Without taking into account her infallibility, what individual, familial, social factors and influences in her background helped determine the formation of Fatimah Zahra's (‘a) virtues?

Reply: *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) had a superior familial position. She was born into the house of a father who was the best teacher and guide of all of humanity. Her mother was also not an ordinary person. In a time that women were subject to great deprivation, Khadijah (‘a) was a woman who was able to establish and manage a great commercial firm and dispatch grand commercial caravans to other countries.

This shows the intrinsic worthiness of this woman. In my opinion, even more important than this was the correct determination, deep understanding, and exact insight in human character of this woman who had great wealth and social standing that caused her to propose marriage to a person who did not have a great financial standing in the society and was an employee in her business. This shows how subtle and sharp-sighted she was in apprehending lofty human values which she decisively and faithfully chose and preferred over material values.

Also, after the fact, when the Prophet (S) was appointed by Allah, she put all her belongings in his control to use for furthering Islam. *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) grew up and was trained by such a mother and father. She matured in a family that was immersed in religion and perpetual struggle for the faith. Later, when she entered her husband's household, she lived with a person who was the spiritual son of and had been trained by the Prophet of Allah (S) and who was the essence of human virtues. And all these people and events had roles in the formation of the superior character of Siddiqah Tahirah (‘a).

Fatimah (‘a) was the daughter of the Prophet (S) and Khadijah (‘a), the wife of ‘Ali (‘a), the mother of the two Hassans (‘a) and the two Zainabs (‘a)... But, I must say that the most expressive word is that: "Fatimah was Fatimah". Sometimes the character and prestige of a person is due to their kinship with their father, mother, or others. However, in addition to having these merits, the character of *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) was because she was Fatimah and due to her inherent personality and greatness.

The fact that in some prayers handed down by the Infallibles (‘a), noble Zahra (‘a) is addressed using her relation to others is because it is necessary to emphasize these relationships to people so that they are made aware that these are the *People of the House* [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (S) and so that they remember what was written in the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (S) regarding the dignity and status of the Ahl al-Bayt.

There are many instances in history where the Imams (‘a) emphasized this aspect so that even if the people could not comprehend their other merits, they would not forget this merit and know them through this. Another issue is that when we address the noble Zahra (‘a) as the “Daughter of the Prophet of Allah (S)” [*binta rasul allah*], this means the true daughter of the prophethood. This is different from saying, for example, daughter of Muhammad (S). When we say Daughter of the Prophet of Allah (S) the person and physical relationship is not intended; rather, it is the character and spiritual relationship of the person we intend.

● What expectations did *Hadhrat* Fatimah (‘a) have of the people in her historical speech in the Madinah Mosque and what was the reason for her anger?

Reply: The momentous and sensitive speech *Hadhrat* Fatimah Zahra (‘a) made in the Mosque of the Prophet (S) and among his followers was a very interesting occurrence which showed the depth of the character of her eminence. Such a brilliant and meaningful oration by a bereaved and pained woman and in such times with their problems and limitations shows her great social commitment, precise power of analysis, and boundless spiritual and mental prowess. In this lecture, the *Hadhrat* (‘a) referred to the people’s shining record of service to the Prophet (S) and then maintained that their current behavior was opposed to prior expectations.

It is a fact that from her childhood *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) was witness to all the sufferings of her father. She experienced the Shi‘b of Abitalib,[2] she saw the torture Muslims were subject to, she felt the hunger and pressure the Muslims bore for the advancement of their religion with her whole being, she was witness to all the steadfastness, struggles, emigrations, and martyrdoms of the Muslims. She remembered the history of Islam from a time of conditions that caused Muslims not to be able to perform their religious rites and ceremonies in peace, up to the time when the Muslims attained greatness and the advancement and development of Islam gained great momentum.

Hadhrat Zahra (‘a) had much hope for the future of Islam and it was not far from reality for the light of Islam to illuminate the whole world. All these triumphs were due to the endeavors and leadership of the Prophet (S) and the sacrifice, selflessness, and unity of the Muslims. However, on that day, against all expectations, she saw a new problem for the advancement of Islam.

There was neither a trace of continuing divine leadership nor unity of the Islamic community [*ummah*]. Thus, she was upset: What happened to all my father’s advice about holding fast the rope of Allah [*habl Allah*]? She knew of the knowledge, infallibility, piety, and management abilities of ‘Ali (‘a) and she saw that the people disregarded all the guidance and divine sayings of the Prophet (S) regarding ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a). The deep sorrow of Zahra (‘a) arose from observing the great distance and gaping chasm between that which should have been and that which was.

● Sometimes the characters and lives of *Hadhrat* Fatimah (‘a) and the other Infallibles are introduced as entirely composed of sadness and sorrow and blended with lamentation and grieving. Is this correct?

Reply: That which is discussed as the greatest element regarding the character of the Infallible Imams (‘a) and noble Zahra (‘a) is that their thoughts, morals, and mannerisms must be examples for the people because we can easily declare that Islam was absolutely manifested in their existence. Our love for our Infallible leaders is love of completely perfect manifestations of Islamic commandments, beliefs, and values.

Our duty toward the leaders of our religion is that we must love them as perfect divine examples, understand their thought, execute their instructions, and structure all aspects of our lives by their intended standards. The exemplariness of the Prophet (S) which was stated in the Holy Quran is a principle and it teaches us that we must, more than anything, see the Infallibles (‘a) in this perspective.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ...

“Surely you have in the Prophet of Allah a good example...”[3]

The Holy Prophet (S), Pure Imams (‘a), and Fatimah Zahra (‘a) were each afflicted with various worldly tribulations and adversities and it is a truth that due to their emphasis and decisiveness in righteousness and extraordinary intransigence before evil, they were treated with animosity, oppression, and spite by antagonists. We must join in their sadness, sympathize with them, and shed tears for them. This is a necessity for being their allies and followers.

However, that which is of greater import and which essentially must be the soul of mourning and lamenting is that we must learn from them, from their words, their deeds, and their whole lives. Our mourning gatherings must be held for this purpose. However, with utmost regret we see that the situation has changed; meaning that instead of accepting them as our role models and learning from their lives, we have lost everything about the leaders of our religion and only remember their calamities and mourning.

What I mean is that Imam Hussain (‘a) did not go to Karbala to die so that we might cry for him and go to heaven. He had a purpose for going to Karbala and our chief duty regarding this great man is to *follow his objectives*. This is the best service and task that will both make Imam Hussain (‘a) happy and have the most rewards and recompense for us in the afterlife. In fact, this is the true meaning of Imamate and Vicegerency [*wilayat*].

It is the same regarding the other Infallibles (‘a). We must realize the reason for *Hadhrat* Zahra’s (‘a) stance and behavior, why she made those speeches, why she was insistent on the affair of Fadak, and so on. We must know our duty as Shi‘as and followers and friends of Zahra (‘a). We have erroneously let go of all this and have held fast only to the weeping.

Of course, various Hadith state that crying for Hussain entails much otherworldly reward [*thawab*], and this is true. We might cry for Imam Hussain (‘a) because he was surrounded by enemies in Karbala and

was killed while he and his children were thirsty and parched. These tears do not have the true value that must be sought. However, if we cry for Imam Hussain (‘a) because this grand man rose up in defense of Islam, stood against evil with his whole being without the slightest doubt or hesitation for God, wholeheartedly accepted all the hardships of this path, and was ultimately tyrannously martyred due to the naïveté, insensateness, derangement, negligence, nonchalance, sybaritism, and greed of those who regarded themselves the Ummah of the Prophet (S) and followers of his religion, such tears have value; such tears mean alignment and unity with Hussain; such tears mean being Shi‘a.

If we cry for Fatimah Zahra (‘a) because she was an eighteen year old woman who took no pleasure from life and was oppressed and her Fadak was misappropriated and the like, this has no real value. Crying for *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a) has value when we know and realize that she was undeviating and adamant for her purpose and because of this she endured many hardships. We can cry in two ways for a *shahid* (martyr). One way we can cry is because they died unfulfilled or unmarried and took no pleasure from life, which is worthless.

However, sometimes the magnificence, beauty, and greatness of their act causes our hearts to tremble and tears to flow. We cry–for why should evil have power in the world so that it may overcome righteousness in such a manner? Such tears are constructive motivators. They strengthen the passion and eagerness for Godly deeds within the souls of humans and thus, they have value. It is a great tragedy that we have lost this aspect and have fallen into other paths. All of us have the duty to remedy this occurrence. As long as we do not rectify this affair, many of our problems shall endure.

● In your opinion what are the roots of these problems?

Reply: Those who propagate these things more than anyone else are eulogists and tragedians. They must be made knowledgeable so that they can perform their duties correctly. They must be perfectly acquainted with Imam Hussain (‘a), *Hadhrat* Zahra (‘a), and noble Zainab (‘a) and introduce them accurately. Eulogists must be made to realize that they must incorporate useful purposes into their poetry. If eulogists pay attention to these aspects and delineate, realistically and properly, the personalities of the Saints of God in their mourning ceremonies and pay the most attention to learning from them, these problems will resolve themselves and they must be resolved because the current state of affairs is truly not right.

The people should be made aware that listening to and orating eulogies and attending ceremonies of Imam Hussain (‘a) can only be useful when, through them, they are enlightened with the aims and teachings of this luminary. Mourning him is only useful when it is for the path and purpose of Imam Hussain (‘a). The people must be careful that they not accept everything that is said in such ceremonies. In order to make the people cry, some eulogists present many weak and untruthful materials. Sometimes they say things that reduce the status and personality of those great individuals even lower than normal people.

In any event, the laws of supply and demand also hold true here. Because the masses want tears, eulogists and preachers take more to this path to make people cry even with untrue attributions to the Imams (‘a)! We should not neglect the fact that fabrication is a sin and *haram* and lying about the Imams (‘a) is even worse. Without having competence in this area, some have entered the field and have gained renown. Thus, they imply incorrect duties regarding the greatness of the Imams (‘a) and the people’s responsibilities towards them, and wrongly present various issues such as some aspects of intercession [*shafa‘at*] to the people. They also promote styles of lamentation that are not without fault.

In my opinion, religious authorities have the greatest responsibility in guiding these programs. Religious authorities must analyze the facts correctly and inform the people. They must not dissimulate [*taqiyyah*] before the people. Just as Shahid Mutahari—may God bless him—has put forth some great materials in speeches that were gathered into a book called *Epic of Husaini Valor* [*hamasah-ye husaini*]. In times that were very different from today, he had the courage to say words of righteousness.

Nowadays the path has been widened and paved because the people are more enlightened. It is the certain duty of religious authorities to provide insight. Religious authorities should not be public-oriented in that they verify and follow any custom or way that becomes common is the society. In revealing righteousness one should not fear the anger or dismay of others. All religious authorities, writers, mass media—everyone must perform their duty; otherwise the situation will become worse day by day.

At the decline of the previous regime and the apex of the religious Movement our religious societies were much better. I remember that because preachers could not plainly state regime and government matters, they would assert these issues by analyzing the uprising of Aba ‘Abdillah al-Husain (‘a) and its objectives.

However, now, instead of in depth analysis of such issues, the main issue is forgotten and we have returned to where we were before. If we want to hold a ceremony or do something in the name of religion, it should be according to religious precepts. A deed worthy of rewards is not something we can just make up by ourselves. We must see if there is a religious reason behind it or not; if it is congruous with religious principles, values, and aims or not. However, can just anyone do these things?

Again only religious authorities can and must. They must examine the methods and styles of mourning and their content to find from where an innovation [*bid‘at*] stems, why it exists, what effect it has on the society, and if, God forbid, there are deviations they must be corrected. Especially programs that are broadcast by the Television and Radio Department of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be scrutinized and it must be determined whether the thoughts and deeds of the people that make the programs are sound.

1. - This is an honorific title that precedes the name of great personages. [trans.]
2. - This is an area where the unbelievers of Mecca banished the Muslims for several years. [trans.]
3. - Surah Ahzab 33:21.

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