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Shi'ite Social Theology

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Introduction

Social theology is a synthetic discipline composed of various branches such as social hadith, social exegesis, social Kalam, social jurisprudence and social ethics. Its subject matter includes both the religious texts on human social life and the related features, implications and consequences such as family and spouse selection, occupation and business, state and government, education, discrimination and justice.

Furthermore, this discipline includes both primary religious texts, i.e. the Qur'anic verses and hadiths, and secondary religious texts, i.e. the collection of exegeses, and interpretations made by scholars of hadith, exegetes, theologians, jurists, and ethicists.

Thus, the human collective life and the related issues – as put forward in Islamic and especially Shi'ite exegeses – constitute the subject of this discipline. Naturally, this subject has conventional and abstract unity rather than internal and real unity (Mutahhary, [n.d.], vol. 2, pp. 16–7).

The method of this discipline is a composition of the methods common in sciences of hadith, exegesis, theology, jurisprudence and ethics, dealing with the chain of authorities of the texts (authenticating them) and with interpreting and analyzing their contents. For example, social Kalam employs the method common in theology, and social jurisprudence employs the methods commonly used in jurisprudence.

Therefore, this discipline, just as theology itself, aims ultimately at defending religious doctrines, claims and laws; in other words, satisfying and justifying pious people, explaining, teaching and preaching to its audiences, and overcoming its opponents.

Accordingly, this discipline is on the same track as what is commonly called modern theology, except for being more limited in scope of its subject. The field of modern theology encompasses all religious texts – whether related to divine world or material world, to social life or historical life; social theology, however,

encompasses only the texts related to collective activities of human beings.

Though not taught in the form of an independent course in local and non-local educational institutes of Iran, social theology has been undoubtedly of great importance, especially after the Islamic Revolution.

If Islam is a social religion having a philosophy for social life and its consequences, it must be taught in this way in academic centers so that the collective reason seeks and finds the solution to the problems of humanity and society. Social theory is thus born, and Muslims' social science develops along with their other sciences.

In any case, to limit the scope of the subject, the present article deals with a review of Shi'ite works, deferring a detailed discussion of the subject to another study. Accordingly, a brief discussion on each of these five subcategories is presented, so that in the end a clear-cut picture of the notion of Shi'ite social theology is provided for the reader.

1. Social Exegeses

By social exegeses, we mean the body of exegeses, explanations, inferences, and analysis presented by exegetes under the social verses of the Qur'an throughout centuries. Social verses are those verses dealing with human's social life and its features and consequences. These are numerous and various, extending from marriage to war and peace; therefore, the related verses constitute a large part of the Qur'anic verses. Some examples are as follows:

A) Commenting on the verse 3:200:

"O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that ye may prosper",

'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (d. 1360 S.A.H) in his well-known exegesis entitled Al-Mizan1, has presented an extensive discussion on "mutual relationship in Islamic society". He studies fifteen subjects such as human, society, history, politics, evolution and freedom in a philosophical and analytical manner.2

Under the title "Islam recognises both individual and collective relationships", he writes:

Human beings, though [personally] numerous, are [naturally] unique; the persons' actions are also multiple in number, but unique in nature. These are collected together and integrated with one another, just as a specific amount of water poured into different containers.

Here, though we have numerous [containers of] water, their nature remains the same: multiple characters while of a unique nature; and the more the water collected in a specific place, the stronger its character and more effective it would be…this real relationship between the individual and society would

necessarily lead to the emergence of another being in the society, of course to the extent to which the individuals assist it with their existence, characteristics and effects.

Another being – similar to the individual in its nature and characteristics – thus emerges in the society, and this is evident; accordingly the Qur'an recognizes for all nations the following: existence, life, book, consciousness, understanding, practice, worship and disobedience, saying:

"To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (***an hour***) ***can they advance*** (***it in anticipation***)***."*** (***7:34***)***.***

It also says

"every nation shall be called to its book" (***Surah Jathiya 45:28***)***,***

and that

"Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings." (***Surah Anam6:108***)

Thus we see the Qur'an paying special attention to the history of nations as well as the biography of individuals.3

He supports his theories of "individualism and collectivism" in the Qur'an by saying:

… and on the whole, as mentioned earlier, social faculties and forces are [quite] powerful so that they overcome the individual effects and forces in case a conflict arises, as attested by experience and common sense both for effective forces and affected ones; therefore, the collective will does not allow for any resistance on the part of the opponent individual wills in cases of social conflicts. So the individual/part would not have any choice other than following the society/whole and moving in its path to the extent that the whole deprives the parts from their thought and common sense.4

B) Commenting on the verse 49:13: ***"O you men! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most pious",*** Murtadha Mutahhari (d. 1359 S.A.H) writes:

In this glorified verse, while giving a moral injunction, the Qur'an refers to the social philosophy of human's special creation, saying that human beings were created in the form of different national and tribal groups; in this way, it is possible for people to recognize one another through ascription to different nations and tribes – this being a necessary condition for social life; that is, if there were no such ascriptions (which are on one hand a point of similarity and on the other hand an element of distinction for individuals), it would be impossible for people to identify one another, and this would make social life based on human relations impossible.

It is these features and the like, such as difference in appearance and colour, that gives any individual his personal identification; if all persons were of the same appearance, colour and form, and if there were not different relations and ascriptions among people, they would be like uniform products of a factory, unable to distinguish between one another; so their social life based on relations and exchange of thoughts, services and goods would be impossible. Ascriptions to groups and tribes have thus a natural goal and philosophy, i.e. distinction among individuals and their identification which is an inevitable condition for social life; these ascriptions are not for ostentations and pomposity, for it is piety that counts as honour and dignity.5

C) Commenting on the verses 10:49 and 7:34, Muhammad Baqir Sadr (d. 1358 S.A.H) states:

The notions 'term' (ajal) and lifetime ('umr) are related to community (ummah) in both verses, i.e to a collective body of people and not to this or that individual. Here, therefore, there is a 'term' for social existence of people beside the limited and certain lifetime for each person; this is for ummah, i.e. the community with some relations and bonds among its members based on a host of thoughts and wishes originated from a series of faculties and capacities. This community referred to as ummah in the Holy Qur'an has its own term, an end, a lifetime, a motion; just as a person moves as he/ she is alive, and then dies, the community is similarly alive and then dies out; and just as a person's death is based on a rule, the community's end is also based on rules; it has its own specific and recorded term.6

D) Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi states:

One of the so-called sociological precepts is that if most members of a group or a social stratum perform a particular action, it would affect all members (not the majority of them). This sociological rule has been referred to in numerous cases in our religious texts. In the verse 7:96 we read:

"If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth".

This means if most members of a society become believers and pious, earthly and heavenly blessings would considerably increase for them, such as the following: in-time and ample rainfalls; increase in crops, livestock, and removal of pests and plagues; physical health; mental peace and comfort; and social security.

The opposite situation is also possible; that is if most members of a society move in the path of disbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, oppression, and debauchery, the natural undesirable consequences of these attributes and actions would afflict all members of the society, even the believers and virtuous people; just as if most members of a society do not observe the sanitary principles, this would lead to an outbreak of diseases which would afflict the minority as well:

"And fear tumult, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong..." (8:25).

The rule that the attributes and actions of most individuals would have consequences afflicting the minority as well is related neither to individual psychology nor to social psychology. It reveals, while having no reference to the existence or unity and real character of the society, a real and natural relation, not a conventional one. This natural law must be regarded a sociological law.7

E) Naser Makarem Shirazi in his exegesis on the verse 8:53: "That is because God never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing", after a discussion on philosophy of history under the title "The Causes for Nations' Life and Death", deals with a subject in the same field entitled "Determinism Forbidden in Destiny, History and the Like" and writes:

Another issue clarified in the abovementioned verses is the fact that human beings have no predetermined destiny and they are not influenced by "determinism of history", "determinism of time", and "environment"; rather, the formative factor of history and human life is the variations made by his own will in his way of life, morality, thought and spirit.

So those who believe in predestined dispensation, holding that all events occur according to God's mandatory will, are condemned by the abovementioned verse; and the material predestination which regards human as a plaything in the hands of his immutable instincts, or the environmental predestination which regards him as convicted by the economical and production conditions are both valueless and wrong convictions from Islamic and Qur'anic viewpoint.

Human is free and creates his destiny with his own hands. In view of the principle we find in the abovementioned verses, human being has his time of destiny and history at his disposal, preparing the ground for his victory or his fall. His pains and cures are due to his own actions; unless he makes a change in his condition and varies himself through self-making,
there will be no change in his destiny.8

2. Social Hadiths

This section encompasses a wide range of Islamic hadiths: from the most serious realms of humans' social relation – i.e. the relations pertaining to power and wealth – to the most popular realm – i.e. the family relations – as well as the most peripheral one, that is the free time and entertainments. A selection of the hadiths related to politics and power relations will be presented and explained.

A) Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni (d. 329 AH) in his glorified book entitled Al-Kafi under "Taqiyyah" mentions about 23 hadiths in favour of taqiyyah (concealing one's true religious beliefs) and its formative function for the survival of the Shi'ite community. One example is as follows:

Habib b. Bishr quotes Imam Sadiq as reporting his father's saying to the effect that "I swear God that there is nothing more favourable to me than taqiyyah". Imam Sadiq then says: "Oh Habib! Verily, anyone

who performs taqiyyah would be elevated in position by God. Oh Habib! He who refrains from taqiyyah would be debased by God. Oh Habib! People would live in peaceful coexistence through taqiyyah. Then when that event [Imam Mahdi's uprising] happens, this [taqiyyah] would be put aside.9

No doubt, this hadith offers a peaceful, safe and prudent policy to Shi'ites, discouraging any fanatic approach and overt warlike activity, as would be done by Alawis and Zaidis of that period.

B) Sheikh Muhammad b. Hasan Hurr 'Ameli (d. 1104) in the sections devoted to jihad and enjoining good in his Wasa'il al- Shi'ah opens a chapter on "Obligatory jihad through Imam's permission and forbidden jihad without a just ruler" containing ten hadiths on permissibility of war only in the presence of a legitimate ruler.

For example, he quotes: Bashir said I told Imam Sadiq that "I dreamt I asked you whether fighting alongside a ruler whose obedience is not obligatory [because of his illegitimate rule] is forbidden just as [eating] carcass, blood and pig's flesh; and you answered [in dream] yes, that's right". Imam Sadiq said: "That's right…that's right".10

C) Hurr 'Ameli quotes seventeen hadiths on denunciation and prohibition of armed rising in the Age of Occultation in a chapter on "Rising with sword before Imam Mahdi's rising". For example, he quotes:

Ibn Basir quotes Imam Sadiq as saying "every flag of uprising displayed before Imam Mahdi's rising belongs to an unjust leader, and [in that uprising] someone other than God is worshipped".11

In any case, the abovementioned example stresses avoidance of any warlike approach and military activity, attempting to form a non-extremist, moderate and realist political character for Ja'fari Shi'ites.

D) Sheikh Muhammad b. Ali b. Babawayh known as Sheikh Saduq (d. 381 AH) in his 'Ilal al-Sharayi' quotes a hadith under the topic "the causes for the prolongation or shortening of a king's rule" to the effect that Imam Sadiq said: God Almighty has determined a time span for every ruler, with fixed days, nights, years and months; if those rulers act justly among people, days and nights, months and years would pass slowly by God's order so that his rule will be prolonged; and if the ruler acts unjustly and oppressively, days and nights, months and years would pass more quickly, and verily God will fulfil his promise about them very soon.12

This hadith clearly shows a cause and effect relationship between just and equal policies of a government and its political lifetime, and also between oppressive and discriminatory policies of a government and its short lifetime. This provides a positive guideline for political activists and parties, whether inside the government or outside it.

3. Social Kalam

Theology deals with issues from human's social life as well, and theologians explain the necessity of

God's (guiding) relation with human and human communities as well as prohibition of leaving human to himself (without guidance). Theologians attempt to rationalize for their audiences those religious texts related to God's law on human in history – usually called legislative guidance and the law of sending prophets – through rational and philosophical reasoning as well as historical and empirical evidences.

They attempt to persuade their readers that human communities in their historical circulation have never been derelict; rather, they have enjoyed support, orders, deprecations, guidelines, injunctions, praises, blessings and so on in different historical junctures. Discussions on divine actions are certainly theological ones in nature. However the theologian is connected with the social philosopher and theology is connected with social philosophy. Some examples are cited which support this idea:

A) Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nu‘man ‘Ukbari, known as Sheikh Mufid (d. 413 A.H) has enumerated a range of social issues including prophethood, Imamate, justice, taqiyyah, enjoining good and forbidding evil, participating in the government of oppressors and assisting them in three of his books entitled Al-Nukat al-I‘tiqadiyyah, Tashih al-I‘tiqadat al- Imamiyyah and Awa'il al Maqalat (Mufid, 1413 S.A.H, no. 4, pp. 32-45; idem 1317 S.A.H/ 1413 A.H, no. 6/ pp. 101-105 and 137 & 138; idem, 1413 S.A.H., no. 8, pp. 63 & 64 and 118-121). On “enjoining good and forbidding evil” he says:

I would say enjoining good and forbidding evil through talking is a general obligation (Wajib-e Kifa’i), provided that it is needed, i.e. if through warning, the unaware person is informed, or he is assured of advisability of this enjoining and forbidding. But the carte blanche is in the hands of the ruler/ government. He commissions or accredits someone for this, and it is not allowed to change this condition. This is dependant on believing in justice and Imamate, nothing else.[13]

Sheikh Mufid also adds:

Assisting oppressors (= the unjust rulers) to achieve one's right and what is in their disposal, is permissible and even obligatory; but choosing them as companions is forbidden. Working with them is not permissible, unless Imam Mahdi permits and it is according to conditions determined by him, and this idea is just specific to Imami Shi‘ites (and due to reasons too long to be stated here); following their order, however, is permissible in cases where there is apparently no harm to the Shiites' faith and entails no sins; nevertheless it is permitted to earn money from them (based on what described above); and it is also permissible, though doubtful, to use their properties, of course for those believers whom we call 'elites of the believers' not for other people; but what is at the disposal of those oppressors from believers' properties, if certain, is not permitted to be optionally used; and if one is forced to use them, it would be permitted just as it is in the case of compulsory eating of carcass flesh and blood. However, as mentioned before, one must not exceed the limitations in such cases. This opinion is peculiar of Imami Shi‘ites and I know no one agreeing to this idea among Sunnis.[14]

B) Sheikh Abu Ja‘far Muhammad b. Hasan Tusi (d. 460 A.H) in his Tamhid al-Us□l commenting on Risalat Jumal al-‘Ilm wa’l- ‘Amal by Sayyid Murtadha ‘Alamu’l-Huda (d. 436 A.H) in a chapter on

“Necessity of headship” in justifying the need for government, writes:

Forming government is an obligation for any legally competent non-impeccable person…; for when people have a fully authorized ruler who governs them and their affairs, protects the weak persons from abuse by the strong ones, punishes the oppressors, and confronts the enemy, then goodness is promoted and corruption is reduced while he is present, but corruption is spread out and goodness declines while he is absent.[15]

C) ‘Allamah Hilli (d. 726 A.H) in his well-known commentary on Tajrid al-I'tiqad by Khaja Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672 A.H) entitled Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I‘tiqad explains the argument of Khaja for the necessity of Imamate as an implication of divine grace as follows:
The author writes on the necessity of appointing an Imam that Imam is a grace, and bestowing a grace is an obligation for God.

The minor premise is clear for the intellectuals; for we understand necessarily that when wise people have a ruler who protects them from wronging each other, takes them away from sins, prepares them for performing obligatory tasks and doing justice and fairness, then they would be closer to goodness and farther from corruption, this being an axiomatic premise not doubted by any wise person; as for the major premise [the obligation of divine grace], we have already clarified the point.[16]

D) Sheikh Muhammad Ridha Muzaffar (d. 1384 A.H) in his ’Aqa’id al-Imamiyyah has discussed social issues under the titles such as: “Our opinion on oppression”, “Our opinion on assisting the oppressors” and “Our opinion on the absolute right of a Muslim”. In the discussion “Our opinion on working in an unjust government”, he writes:

Knowing that assisting the oppressors (even if by giving them a palm date, or being interested in their survival) is among the most important practices forbidden by our Imams, what would be the case for those who participate in their government, governmental services, administering the provinces, or those who take part in establishing their state, or those who are among the pillars of their dominion and established rule?

The reason for this prohibition is that the authority of the unjust ruler would lead to abusing all truths and reviving all vanities and publicity of oppression and corruption. The same thing has been stated by Imam Sadiq in a hadith narrated in Tuhaf al-‘Uqul.

Of course we have hadiths quoted from Imams in which the authority of the unjust ruler is permissible provided that justice is protected from abuse, divine limits are observed, good treatment of believers is widespread, and enjoining good and forbidding evil are promoted. Verily, there are some people in the courts of the oppressors, through whom God clarifies the proof, giving them authority in all lands, whereby protecting His friends from dangers and ordering Muslims' affairs…; and the same points appear in a hadith from Imam Musa b. Ja‘far.[17]

Regarding Muslims' unity he then says:

The Prophet's Household are well-known for their insistence on survival of Islamic manifestations and calling to Islamic glory, Muslims' unity and brotherhood among them, and removing boredom and animus from their hearts. Imam Ali's position compared to his preceding caliphs is memorable: while dissatisfied with them and holding that they were usurpers of caliphate, he would tolerate them and treat them peacefully, not referring to his right of caliphate [through the Prophet's order].[18]

4. Social Jurisprudence

By social jurisprudence we mean that part of jurisprudence dealing with the precepts related to social issues and collective relations; it states the positive and situational precepts; it clarifies legal and illegal jobs, activities, laws, contracts; it expounds obligatory tasks, unlawful activities, approved duties, and undesirable actions by states, communities, groups, and companies; and determines the ownership scope and discretionary license of representatives and advocates of the community (governments, mayoralties, ...) through the very common method of legal reasoning. Social jurisprudence is formed when the scope of a jurist's professional activity goes beyond setting the individual's obligations and extends to the scope of collective and social activities. Two examples related to social jurisprudence are as follows:

A) Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini (d. 1368 S.A.H) while discussing Jurist's Authority (Wilayat-e Faqih) in his Kitab al- Bay' writes on the necessity of establishing Islamic state:

Islamic precepts – including economic, political and legal precepts – are in force and irrevocable up to the Resurrection Day. None of the divine laws has been abrogated and this necessitates a system which ensures the validity and enforcement of those laws, for it is impossible to enforce divine precepts without establishing Islamic state.

Otherwise, the society would lead to anarchy, dominated by disorder and perturbation. Since preserving the society's system is among the emphasized divine obligations, disorder and turmoil in Muslims' affairs being improper and reprehensible, and since it is quite clear that this would not be achievable without Islamic state, there remains no doubt in necessity of establishing a government. Besides, protecting the frontiers of the Islamic country from foreigners' invasions and preventing invaders' dominion are both rationally and religiously obligatory.

This also is not possible except through the Islamic state. Verily those very reasons proving the necessity of Imamate after the Prophet does also prove the necessity of [Islamic] government in the Occultation Period. Establishing a state in order to promote justice, education, preserving the society's system, removing oppression, protecting the country's frontiers and preventing foreigners' invasions is among the most axiomatic premises, there being no difference between the period of Imam's presence and the Occultation Period or between this and that country.[19]

Replying to a letter written by the Iranian president of that time (Ayatollah Khamenei), Imam Khomeini expounds his own jurisprudential views on the theory of Jurist's Authority as follows:

From what you said in Friday's prayer, it seems you do not accept the government as meaning the absolute authority relegated by God to the holy Prophet, being one of the most important divine precepts, and prior to all divine religious laws; and your reading of my saying that 'government is authorized in the scope of divine laws' is completely opposed to what I had said. If the government was authorized in the scope of secondary divine laws, the divine government and the absolute authority relegated to the Prophet would be a meaningless phenomenon.

I should refer to its consequences which nobody can be obliged to observe. For instance, constructing avenues which requires seizure of a house or its surrounding is not in the scope of secondary laws. Military service and forcible dispatch of individuals to the fronts, preventing [illegal] import and export of foreign exchange or any other kind of goods, forbidding hoarding, tariff and taxes, preventing extortion, setting prices and preventing spread of drugs as well as any kind of addiction (except alcoholic drinks), taking any kind of arms, and many other examples which are in the scope of the government's jurisdiction would be out of the scope of Jurist's authority according to your reading.

I must say that government is a branch of the Prophet's absolute authority; it is one of the primary precepts of Islam, prior to all secondary precepts, even prayer, fasting and Hajj. The [legal] ruler can destroy a mosque or a house which is in the street path, paying the money to the owner; he can close a mosques if necessary and destroy a mosque which belongs to the hypocrites (in case no other choice is available).

The state can unilaterally abrogate legal contracts concluded with people if those contracts are against interests of the country and Islam and may prevent anything – ritual or otherwise – as long as it is against Islam. The state can temporarily recess Hajj – one of the important divine obligations – in cases it is against the benefits of Islamic country.[20]

B) Ayatollah Husayn Ali Muntazeri in his book Dirasat fi Wilayat al-Faqih states:

Those who refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah, whether Shi'ites or Sunnis, would clearly find that the Islamic precepts brought by the Prophet are not confined to individual rites; rather, they encompass all human needs in all stages of personal, family and social life; Islam not only contains knowledge, moralities, and ritual worships, but also transactions, politics, and economics. A survey in hadiths of Shi'ite and Sunni sources and their jurisprudential decrees in various subjects of Islamic law leads us to the idea that government and enforcement of governmental orders are parts of Islam; thus Islam is inherently both a religion and a state, is worship as well as economics and politics.[21]

Then under the title of "The importance of governmental jurisprudence and general social issues" he continues:

You should know that there have been two flagrant defects in Muslims' jurisprudential discussions (whether Shi'ites or Sunnis) in recent times: one in their quantity, i.e. there have been a decrease in the number of seminary schools and Islamic centres as well as skilful jurists due to efforts by colonialists and their agents; another in their quality, i.e. those discussions have just focused on ritual issues and individual religious precepts, neglecting public/ general issues afflicting the Muslim community and refraining from vocalizing Islamic precepts in such issues.[22]

In any case, Dirasat fi Wilayat Faqih is the most comprehensive work on Shi'ite political-social jurisprudence in modern times.

5. Social Ethics

A social norm is called adab (an etiquette), and social norms are called adab ijtima'i (social etiquette). The norms are the rules of behaviour in different situations, determining our duties in different situations, telling us what is right and what is wrong in those situations. For instance, greeting, being winsome and shaking hands when meeting others are among Islamic etiquettes, while refraining from greeting, being stern, and not shaking hands are regarded signs of impoliteness.

A large part of Shi'ite ethical books is devoted to social ethics. Moral advice has been offered sometimes generally on the human social life and sometimes individually on particular cases of social relations. Etiquette of fellowship, family and spousal ethics, neighbourly etiquette, professional ethics, judicial etiquette, war and peace ethics, power and rulership ethics are among prominent examples mentioned in ethical sources and texts.

A) Mulla Ahmad Naraqi (d. 1245 A.H) in his Mi'raj al-Sa'adah, in a chapter on earning illicit income, classifies different types of thieves and beggars, which is relevant here:

...as for the first class, i.e. thieves: some of them have a community in which they unite and do robberies in roads; they are bandits. Some others appeal to the kings, viziers and rulers, oppressing people and seizing their properties through companionship of great personages and dignitaries; still another group who have no share in people's properties through these methods, use other ways such as tunnelling, lassoing, picking pockets, entering people's houses and so on.

As for the second type, i.e. beggars, they are divided into several groups: some malinger, pretending to be blind, paralytic or ill, or have a child lie down on people's ways, pretending to be ill; some others cry and lament, and some proceed to insist and importune; some do strange things or say strange words to win people's helps, as some clown or say jokes or fool or flatter and hail; some tell stories and some are dervishes; a group read humorous poems or rhymed prose with an attractive voice, such as singers; and some others use prudery, imposture, wool clothes, heavy beads and litany for subsistence; some use studying and sitting in schools or panegyric of the martyrs or being prayer leader as a means for

beggaring.

Another group call themselves doctors or surgeons, gathering some useless plants around themselves to make admixtures and cheating women or other insane persons; some others are fortunetellers, stargazers, augurs or interpreters of dreams... All these cheat people in this or that way, leading a beggary life, and are negligent of origin and end of creation.23

B) Mulla Muhsen Fayd Kashani (d. 1091 A.H) in his famous book entitled Al-Mahhajjah al-Baydha devotes a large section to "the etiquettes of companionship", citing many moral hadiths in support of his ideas:

You should know that familiarity is the result of good character, and dissension derives from bad character. Good character leads to affection, familiarity and mutual agreement; and bad character results in enmity, jealousy, and mutual hate.

The fruit is favourable as much as the root. The virtue of good character is clearly stated in religion and is the very thing because of which God has praised his Prophet: "Verily you have a great disposition" (68:4); and the Prophet says "two believers who meet one another are analogous to two friends one of whom washes the other; never do two believers meet but God bless one of them through the other",24

In Kashani's view, a religious community is a moral community with the following virtues and ideals:

● Its members are affable and sympathetic to one another; as Imam Ali (A.S.) says: "a believer is affable and there is no goodness in a person who is neither sympathetic towards others nor lets other[s] be sympathetic towards him"25

● They are winsome and genial; as the Prophet says: "Oh sons of 'Abdul Muttalib! You cannot attract people through your properties; but through geniality and winsomeness."26

● They are benevolent toward and advise one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: "It is incumbent upon any believer to be benevolent towards his religious brethren in their presence or absence."27

● They are witty and make one another laugh; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: "A person's smile [when] meeting his [religious] brother is a virtue, as it is in case of removing barb and tinder from him; and there is no worship better than cheering up the believers."28

● They talk well and positively to one another, avoiding mischief-making and aspersion; as the Prophet says: "the most favoured ones of you before God are those affable to others and make people be affable; and the most hated ones of you before God are those who are telltales and mischievous, causing friends to dissociate."29

● They treat one another with compromise and tolerance. The Prophet says: "My God ordered me to treat people with tolerance, just as He ordered me to perform religious obligations."30 The Prophet also

says: “treating people with tolerance is half of the faith and accompanying them is half of happiness and contentment.”31

● They try to preserve the secrets of one another, not exposing one another's faults; as the holy Prophet says: “the speeches of people talking in meetings are trusts and no one is allowed to reveal anything from anyone's talks if he does not like this”.32 He also says: “Any person who sees a fault in his [religious] brother and conceals it will be entered into paradise by God.”33(ibid, p. 375).

● They do not tease one another by their hands or tongues; as the Prophet says: “Do you know who is a Muslim? The Companions said that God and His Messenger know better. The Prophet said: ‘A Muslim is someone from whose hands and tongue Muslims are safe’. They asked: ‘who is a believer then?’ He answered: ‘One from whom the believers’ properties and lives are safe’. They asked: ‘Who is an Immigrant (muhajir) then?’ He answered: ‘One who is far from evildoing.’”34

● They attempt to fulfil the needs of one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “One who fulfils the needs of his [religious] brother is as someone who has served God in his whole lifetime.”35 He also says: “One who tries to fulfil the need of his [religious] brother and devotes an hour of the day or night to this – whether succeeds in fulfilling that need or not – will be given the reward of two months of religious seclusion by God.”36

● In transaction and relation with one another, they do not cheat or oppress; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “A believer is the brother of another believer, his sighted eye and his guide; he does not betray him, oppress, cheat or breach his promise.”37

● In quarrels and conflicts, they try to reconcile between two parties; as it is quoted from Imam Sadiq (A.S.): “When relations among people deteriorates, reconciling them is a charity God favours and when they separate, making them approach [is a charity God favours].”38

● And in case of illnesses, they go to visit one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “Any Muslim has some rights to be observed by his [religious] brother, including greeting him when meeting him, visiting him when he is ill, [and] being benevolent towards him when he is absent.”39

Conclusion

As attested by the present article, the Muslims’ social knowledge has its origin in the Qur’an. In the holy Quran and Islamic hadiths various issues of human social life have been mentioned, and these two illuminative sources have always been an invaluable treasure for informing and inspiring Muslim scholars in the realms of human and social sciences.

Historically speaking, social issues have always been mentioned discursively and unsystematically in texts on sciences of exegesis, hadith, theology, jurisprudence and ethics. These topics all together constitute social theology.

Social theology, in addition to primary social texts (social verses of the Qur'an and hadiths), include secondary social texts as well, i.e. the body of expositions, exegeses, inductions and inferences from primary social texts by exegetes, scholars of hadith, theologians, jurists and scholars of ethics.

Accordingly, social theology compared with two other Muslims' social sciences, i.e. social philosophy and sociology, have been affected more greatly and have been more considerably intimate with social passages in Qur'anic verses and Islamic hadiths.

This discipline is able to develop greatly due to its pure and fine sources, and it can be linked to the social issues of the modern times with the assistance of experts in social issues to be used in improving the condition of the society. In this way, an idea comes to a sharp-sighted theoretician's mind, and a social theory emerges from those priceless social doctrines.

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