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Speech 3: Paradise of Wilayat

The Wilayat of An Individual

While discussing Wilayat there are two points worth noting:

a. Abridged awareness of people and society holding Wilayat
b. The character and manifestations of a society holding Wilayat

Based on reflections on Qur'anic verses and the struggle of Ahlul Bayt (household of the Prophet) regarding Wilayat and the consequences, we have concluded that there are several manifestations of Wilayat. One is that Islamic society should not be affiliated with elements foreign to its own existence and the non-Muslims. We have already explained that it is one thing not to be affiliated and it is another to have no contact. We are not at all saying that the world of Islam should isolate itself politically and financially from the rest of the world and should have no links with any non-Muslim nation, country and power. What we are saying is that it should not be bonded and subjugated to them. It should not merge with the other powers. Instead, it should stand on its own feet and defend its sovereignty.

The other sign of Wilayat is the deep internal unity and affiliation between different elements of Muslims; in other words, being united and one and only one. As is narrated in the traditions of the Prophet and the Infallibles:

"مَثَل الْمُوْمِنِينَ في تَوٰادِّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ الْجَسَدِاِذاشْتَكَي بَعْضُهُمْ تَدٰاعي سٰائِرُهُمْ بِالسَّهَرِوَالْحِميٰ-"

The believers are like a single body and a single building. They should be fused together and be united against the obstacles and enmities from others. [1]

Same point is inferred from the verse:

اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَي الْمُومِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَي الْكٰفِرِيْنَ

Humble with believers and dignified in front of infidels[2]

Another Qur'anic verse elaborates it further:

"مُحَمَّد رَّسُوْلُ الله وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَہ اَشِدَّآئُ عَلَي الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآئُ بَيْنَهُمْ۔"

Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah and those who are with him are extremely harsh with infidels and very kind to each other. [3]

When they are in front of the external opponents, you will find them strong, sturdy and not willing to accept any external influences; yet, they are very kind to each other as there are no groupings among them. The different organs of this great body of Islam inspire each other and affect each other. They summon each other to goodness and beneficence; they advise each other to follow the truth; they counsel each other to persevere in truth's way. They take care of each other.

Just like the example we gave earlier of ten mountain climbers who are busy in climbing a mountain. They are scaling treacherous mountain tops. If any of them loses a rock under his feet, it would be enough to toss him head first down deep in the crevice. In such circumstances there is only one way of surviving for all of them. They tie their waists securely with one rope; hold each other's hands and keep calling from time to time, "are you OK; you are not lost, are you? Have you fallen back? Are you hungry".

Similarly the members of Islamic society stay fully aware of each other. They stay vigilant to ensure that none of their members is weak ideologically, materially and in recognizing the truth. If they find someone like that among themselves, they try to guide him and put him back on the right track. In short, put together a household where everyone is totally sincere to the other person.

This was one of the manifestations of Wilayat found in an Islamic society.

Need for a Wali (Guardian) in an Islamic Society

Another manifestation of Wilayat that is the most important and that ensures the existence of Wilayat itself, is the presence of a strong central leadership in the society. The rationale is that the Islamic society should be like a single body whose different organs are connected and bonded to each other and act like a closed fist against external elements. Such unity and focus cannot be achieved without a central force that organizes them.

So if different segments of the Islamic society are governed by different and independent forces, the organs of this body will be separated from each other and will cease to stay focused on one path. It will be as if the nervous system of a human body is controlled by two centers – one for the right side and the other for the left side. In this situation to achieve anything the right and left sides will not work together. As an example, to lift a weight, right hand will be ready but left hand may not be ready and it may clench

its fist. Hence, if the human nervous system receives commands from two separate controls, the body will be disturbed and to do anything or to survive an enemy's attack, it will acquire a humorous posture and will not be able to stay safe from an enemy's wickedness.

Similarly if Islamic society wants to survive an enemy in a timely manner, its command center must be secure. And if the society wants to fight the enemy, it behooves on all the groups of this society to become one to face it and be united to hit the enemy hard. It must not happen that every group works on its own, because in such a situation what will take place is like the three people going to a grape orchard as related by Mulla and the enemy will conspire to finish them off – just like it has happened so many times in history and the Islamic history.

So if the Islamic society wants to safeguard its interests and is desirous of staying out of harm's way, its different organs need to be mellow to each other and be united; and they should become a clenched fist and a single body while facing the enemy.

In short, if the Muslims want to live with the two manifestations of Wilayat mentioned above, it is imperative that they should have a strong command center so that all the active elements of the society seek their ideological, workable, enemy–bashing and friend–kind action plan from this center. This center should organize all the groups in the Islamic society; assign responsibilities to each one based on their capabilities; preclude any confrontation between them; and direct all forces in one direction.

Such a center and personality should come from God. He should be learned, aware and infallible. He should be someone who captures all the constructive elements of Islam. He should be a manifestation of Qur'an. Such a personality in our Islamic teachings is called a Wali (super guardian).

So based on the two above–mentioned aspects the Wilayat of an Islamic society demands the presence of a Wali.

This is another aspect of Wilayat.

Who possesses Wilayat?

The next questions arises. Do you and I hold Wilayat? It is possible that you and I have Wilayat. But does our society as a whole have Wilayat or not?

Someone may ask, "aren't the two – individual and the society – one and the same? Are they different from each other?" We will say, "First of all if an organ is intact on its own, it does not imply that the whole body is in one piece and secondly, if a whole organ is part of an incomplete body, it will not have all the qualities of a whole organ."

First we need to see what sort of a person possesses Wilayat so that we know, if you and I are holders of Wilayat or not. Once it is proven and clear that you and I have Wilayat, then we need to find out how

the society should look like so it can become a holder of Wilayat.

Nothing stops a society, devoid of Wilayat, from having an individual who possesses Wilayat.

Now we come to the issue. Is a person's responsibility over once he holds Wilayat? Is it enough that the individual possesses Wilayat even though the society is devoid of Wilayat? Is such a life a desired and likable life?

If someone personally holds Wilayat but lives in a society that is free of Wilayat and he does not feel any responsibility due to the Wilayat-free nature of the society, does his not feeling the responsibility not damage his own Wilayat and harm him as well?

These are the points that all Muslim men and women, especially, young Muslims need to ponder on. I probably will not have enough time. If I want to explain each and every point so it becomes clear, every point will require hours of discussion. I am sorry I just do not have the time. This is precisely why I am mentioning these points briefly and leaving them up to you to reflect on.

Now we will discuss first what sort of a person is someone who possesses Wilayat? Secondly, what should be the collective profile of people living in a society so that we could become the bearers of Wilayat? And under what condition will we not be the holders of Wilayat? Under what situation does a society become Islam's desired Wilayat-possessing society and under what condition and circumstances does it stay bereft of Islam-instructed Wilayat?

The third issue is - does the responsibility of a person who possesses Wilayat end with owning Wilayat by himself? And is he not responsible for making a society holder of Wilayat now?

The fourth problem is - if a person himself is holder of Wilayat but lives in a Wilayat-bereft society and does not feel responsible for making the society Wilayat-bearer, wouldn't his not feeling this responsibility harm his own Wilayat? Hasn't the fact that he does not have the mind-set to make others holders of Wilayat not weaken his own Wilayat?

These are some of the issues that we need to discuss and ponder.

Now we will describe some of these issues.

At the completion of this discussion you should compare the lofty and intellectual meanings of Wilayat told by Qur'an and Hadeeth with those imagined by lazy and ease-loving people who do not want to act, so that you notice the big difference between the two.

Some people think that a sign of someone having Wilayat is that when he hears a name from the Ahlul Bayt he says, "alahessalam (peace be on him)". They believe that holding Wilayat implies having love of Ahlul Bayt in their hearts. Indeed, it is obligatory to have love of Ahlul Bayt, to give utmost respect to their names, to hold congregations in their names, to learn from their happiness and sorrow; to recite

their trials and tribulations; to narrate their sad and happy events; and to shed tears on their persecution. However, all these things are not Wilayat. Wilayat is something higher than this. When someone sheds tears at a congregation of the Leader[4] of the martyrs, he does a good deed but he should not consider this shedding of tears sufficient to claim possession of Wilayat.

Those whose minds have been influenced by the ignorant or intentional teachings and instructions of either foreign agents or certain interest groups' elements, should pay close attention so that later they may not say that someone is opposed to crying for the Leader of the martyrs.

We say that many a times weeping for the Leader of martyrs can be a source of salvation for a nation, just the way the *tawwabeen*[5] went to the grave of Imam Husayn and did nothing but shed tears for two to three days. The outcome was that they pledged to die together in the battlefield and not come back alive. This is the result of shedding tears for Imam Husayn; no one is opposed to such weeping.

No human being is against narration of the greatness of Husayn Ibn Ali and Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Anyone who knows them testifies that their name should be taken with utmost respect. This is a house whose inheritance is martyrdom; whose dearest asset is self-sacrifice; and whose total existence is for God. One should mention this house with reverence. This matter has nothing to do with being Shi'ah or non-Shi'ah. I can assure you that if you go to Europe, America or any other non-Muslim land and relate the life of Ali Ibn Abi Talib in front of people, you will see that they will be proud of this man who garnered all possible honors in his life; they will clap for him, give him respect and will save his name in their minds as a gift from you.

It is not exclusive to Shi'ahs based on which one might think that Wilayat is nothing more than love for Ahlul Bayt; however, this is one segment of Wilayat that can lead one to paradise and is counted as a very important aspect of Wilayat.

There are some people who, based truly on ignorance and God willing not based on some vested interest, limit Wilayat to crying over Imam Husayn and other superficial issues regarding Shi'ah and it is odd that they criticize those who truly understand and possess Wilayat for these very issues.

The meaning of Wilayat found in man's nature is that he is closely associated with the Wali in ideology as well as practical matters and his attachment keeps growing.

Search for the Wali. Identify the Wali of God. Get to know the true Wali of the Islamic Society. Then on individual basis, bond with him in ideology, in practice, in emotions and feelings in such a manner that your efforts become his efforts; your struggle becomes his struggle; your friendship becomes his friendship; your enmity becomes his enmity; your ranks become his ranks. Such a man is the true bearer of Wilayat.

A person, who recognizes a Wali; who understands the ideology of the Wali and associates with it; who identifies the actions of the Wali and matches his own actions with those of the Wali; who follows the

Wali and who bonds himself with the Wali in ideology and practice is the possessor of Wilayat.

The truth of the matter is that we have limited Wilayat to just having love of Ali in our hearts and shedding a few tears for the Commander of the believers; whereas, our actions are opposite to the actions of Imam Ali and our thinking is contradictory to the thinking of Imam Ali. We have turned Wilayat into a myth and an antiquated story while soothing our hearts with the belief that we are holders of Wilayat; and we are happy that we absolutely and truly deserve the accolades reserved for those who have Wilayat.

God knows that it is an extreme tyranny and cruelty to Ali Ibn Abi Talib. It is an injustice to Islam because Wilayat has a relationship with Islam.

In the eyes of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq action is important for Wilayat. He says, "The one who acts is our Wali (friend) and the one does not act is our enemy."

This is how Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq explains the meanings of Wilayat because his view of Wilayat is different from that of an ignorant person or someone driven by vested interest who is after worldly gains in the name of the Imam. We should go deep into the meanings of Wilayat; otherwise, while hoping for paradise all our lives, we will not get close to even smelling it after death. A man's holding Wilayat implies complete attachment and bonding with the Wali.

Wilayat-Bearing Society

How does an Islamic society with Wilayat look like?

A Wilayat bearing society is one that has first identified a Wali; secondly, the Wali is the center of all powers, practices and activities in the society and is the source of guidance. He is a point where all the streams of the society meet; he is a center from where all orders and commandments are issued; he is the creator and enforcer of all laws; all eyes are on him; all obey him; he starts the engine of life and he is the commander-in-chief of the life's caravan. Such a society will be called Wilayat-bearing society.

For 25 years after the demise of the Prophet (SWS) the reins of power were not in the hands of the Commander of the faithful, Ali Ibn Abi Talib. For 25 years the Islamic Society was without Wilayat. There were a few people who had Wilayat. As an individual Abu Dharr was a holder of Wilayat; so was Miqdad. There were a few more possessors of Wilayat. However, the Islamic society was Wilayat-less until Imam Ali assumed the reins of power and the Islamic society became Wilayat-bearing.

When the Imam is the source of "enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" in the society; when he has control over all matters; when in practice the management of the society is in his hands; when he is the one who issues battle orders; when he is the one who signs peace treaties; only then the society becomes Wilayat-bearing; otherwise, there is no Wilayat in this society.

If you live in such a society, then be grateful to Allah. If you have been bestowed with this blessing, then thank Allah as there is no blessing superior to Wilayat. If you do not live in such a society, try to establish it and set up Wilayat in your own personality as well as the society.

We should try to live like Ali; we should try to follow the footsteps of Ali; we should try to create a link with those Walis of God who are between us and Ali.

It takes effort; it takes struggle; it takes blood and sweat just the way our other Imams struggled and suffered after the martyrdom of the Commander of the faithful.

The Imams put in great effort to resuscitate Wilayat and to breathe life into the Islamic society so that what was planted in the name of human being on this earth and garden can be nourished with the life-giving water of Wilayat. The Imams struggled for this cause. Our struggle in order to establish Wilayat in the society should be to examine what we need to do to give strength to Islam's Wali.

As has been stated before, sometimes from Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Hasan Ibn Ali, Husayn Ibn Ali, Ali Ibn Husayn, all the way to the last Imam the Imams are identified by name and their qualities; and other times a Wali is not spotted by name but is recognized either through another Wali or through association of certain qualities. As state by an Imam:

اَمَّا مَنْ كٰانَ مِنَ الْفُقَهٰاءِ صٰائِناً لِنَفْسِهِ حٰافِظاً لِدِينِهِ مُخٰالِفاً عَلٰي هَوٰاىُّ مُطِيعاًلِاَمْرِمَولاٰهُ فَلِلْعَوٰامِ اَنْ يُقَلِّدُوهُ

When there is a theologian who is in control of his inner self, is protective of God's religion, opposes his carnal desires and obeys Allah's commandments, people should follow him. 6

A Wali has been identified by describing these qualities. And this identification comes from God. Yes, that Wali (Imam Ali and other Imams) was identified by name and this Wali has been pinpointed by his qualities. You must have figured it out, guessed it and searched a role model - we see Grand Ayatullah Brujardi.

When someone makes it his purpose in life to bring to life Islamic laws and Allah's commandments in the society just the way Wilayat demands it, he strives for this purpose and looks for ways and means. At this point our discussion does not cover the ways and means.

A society that adopts Wilayat is like a dead body that has been brought to life. Imagine a dead body. It has a brain that does not function; has eyes that cannot see; has a mouth that cannot swallow food; has a stomach and a digestive system that cannot digest food; has veins with blood but the blood does not run; has hands but cannot even remove a small ant from the body.

How is it so?

It is because the body is lifeless. But when life is breathed into it, its brain starts working; senses start

functioning; hands start grabbing things; mind starts to act; stomach starts digesting; the digestive system starts absorbing food; blood starts to run, provides energy to the whole body, keeps it warm and puts it to struggle and strife; man walks; fights with his enemy; pulls friends towards him and makes him as perfect a human being as possible.

Keep this example in mind to understand the importance of Wilayat in a society. Replace the dead body with the society. Put Wilayat in place of life and soul. A society that is bereft of Wilayat has abilities but of no use; they go waste; become extinct or worse they work to harm the person.

There is a brain; it thinks but about creating trouble, about destroying humanity, about annihilating this world, about ruining people, about exploitation, tyranny and conceit. It has eyes but sees what it should not see and does not see what it should see. It has ears but does not listen to what is right. Its senses provide the right stuff to its brain but the brain does not direct its organs to act based on what is right. The organs do not act based on truth. The worldly affairs do not allow the man to function based on truth.

In a Wilayat-less society the flame in a lamp does not rise and its light does not spread; even if there is a drop of oil in it, it dries up. The lamps that were fueled by the Prophet started to extinguish and you saw how they dried out.

You saw that after the passing away of the Prophet of Islam the flames in the lamps were high for a while, spreading the light and illuminating the environment because the Prophet had oiled them. However, since there was no Wilayat hovering above these lamps, their oil went to the bottom and dried up; it started to smoke; its light went down until the reign of Mu'awiyyah arrived who handed over the control of Islamic society to Yazeed and then you saw what happened.

The talks Fatima Zahra had with the ladies of Ansar (locals of Madina) and the Immigrants (from Makka), they ignored them; the prophecies she made, the ignorant people of the time neither listened nor understood, all came true. She had foretold about the blood-thirsty swords that were to butcher truth and nobilities; about the hands that were to strangle humans and humanity; as a matter of fact, before her the Prophet had informed about them. The people were watching, understanding, telling but the Islamic society did not get it; its ears were shut and deaf.

Today the voice of Fatima Zahra is echoing. O' sensitive and alert listeners listen! A society that has Wilayat becomes a society that nurtures human capabilities. All those traits that God has bestowed in man for his ascent to excellence and perfection are fostered by such a society. This society transforms the human sapling to a mighty tree; it takes humans to lofty heights; it gives strength to humanity. In such a society the Wali - the Ruler, the personality - that holds the reins of power puts the whole society on the path to God, makes remembrance of Allah an integral part of the society; distributes wealth fairly; strives to spread good in the society and uproot evil.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ نَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ لِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ

These people – whom We give power – establish prayer, pay elms, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong; with Allah rests the end of all affairs. 7

These people whom We give authority on earth, establish prayer. Prayer is a sign of remembrance of Allah and society's attention towards Him.

اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوة

Establish prayer. Take a step towards God; set their line of action according to the commands of Allah.

وَ اٰتَوُاالزَّكٰوة

Distribute wealth fairly; pay elms. According to Qur'an the spectrum of *zakat* (elms) is very broad. It covers all kinds of financial charity. This phrase as a whole demands balanced distribution of wealth in the society. There are other traditions regarding *zakat* that claim that it leads to equitable distribution of wealth in the society.

وَ اَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ نَهَوْعَنِ الْمُنْكَر

Proliferating good, fostering good deeds and eliminating evil are the qualities of these rulers.

Generally we think that "enjoining good and forbidding evil" only implies that I advise you to stay away from a certain bad deed and do a certain good deed; whereas, just advising is one of the many manifestations of "enjoining good and forbidding evil".

People asked the Commander of the faithful, Imam Ali, "Why are you fighting with Mu'awiyyah?" Imam replied, "Because enjoining good and forbidding evil is obligatory". Listen carefully and then draw your conclusion. At the Battle of Siffin Imam is being told, "Why bother with Mu'awiyyah? Just go to Kufa while he heads to Syria." Imam says, "God has made enjoining good and forbidding evil obligatory."

On leaving Madina Imam Husayn says, "I want to enjoin good and forbid evil."

Look, how broad the spectrum is of enjoining good and forbidding evil, whereas in our eyes the range is so small and narrow.

In any case, when there is Wilayat in a society, prayer is established there; elms are given; enjoining good and forbidding evil happens. In short, the dead body becomes alive.

1. Nahjul Fasaha, tradition 2712, p 561.
2. Ch. 5 Ma'ida, verse 54.
3. Ch. 48 Fath, verse 29.
4. Imam Husayn is called the Leader of the martyrs.
5. Tawwabeen were people who did not go to the battlefield with the Leader of the martyrs but repented afterwards for not doing so.
6. Wasayl ush-Shi'a, vol 18, page 95.
7. Ch. 22 Hajj, verse 41.

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