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The Objective of the Imams' Struggles

Political struggle is neither a theological debate nor is it an armed struggle, rather it is a struggle with a political objective. What is the political objective of this struggle? The political objective of this struggle is the establishment of an Islamic or an ALAWI government (a righteously government similar to that of Imam ALI's).

From the departure of the Prophet of Islam until 260 hijra the Imams tried to establish a divine government in the Islamic society. This was their main contention. However, it does not mean that every Imam tried to establish an Islamic government in his own time. They had an eye on the long-term, amid-term and short-term opportunities to accomplish this goal. For instance, Imam Mujtaba (as) tried to establish an Islamic government in a short-term span.

The answer of Imam Mujtaba to the questions of people like Musayib and Ibn Najbah who used to ask the reason for his silence, indicated that he had planned for the establishment of an Islamic government in the future. He used to tell them: "We do not know; it might be a test for you and a promise for the future." While in my opinion, Imam Sajjad's (as) struggles were planned in a manner to achieve their goal within the framework of an amid-term plan.

There are certain clues and evidences that underline this issue. Most probably Imam Baqir's struggles were designed in a way to attain their objectives in the short run. After the martyrdom of the Eighth Imam, the struggles of the Imams aimed to accomplish their objectives in the long run. In sum, although the question of setting up an Islamic government varied from time to time, this issue had always been present in the struggles of the Imams.

Except the spiritual activities of the Imams which are related to man's self-perfection and his proximity to God, their other activities, including their teaching, traditions, theology, debates with the scientific contenders, support and acknowledgment of certain groups, or rejection of a group, etc. were all directed towards this goal, that is, the establishment of an Islamic government. This was the bone of contention.

Of course, this issue has been, and will remain, controversial and I do not insist that my understanding of this issue must be accepted by others. But, I insist that this clue should be carefully followed and the

issue should be studied from this perspective while reviewing the history of the Imams' lives. We have tried over the past few years to prepare a reasonable, rational history of the lives of the Imams – both, their lives as a continuous stream and the life of every individual Imam.

Of course some of the proofs are general ones. For instance, we know well that Imamate (Islamic leadership) is the continuation of Nubuwat (Prophethood), and that the Prophet is an Imam as well. Imam Sadiq (as) has been quoted as saying: "Verily, the holy prophet of Islam was an Imam..." The Messenger of God rose in order to set up a system based on the divine teachings and justice through his continuous struggles. He safeguarded the system as long as he was alive. Hence, the Imam, whose leadership is the continuation of the Prophet's leadership, does not neglect the system, which had been established by the Prophet (S).

This is a general argument, which can be followed through lengthy discussions and careful attention to its various aspects. Some other arguments are inferred from the statements of the infallible Imams, or are based on their precept and lifestyles. In fact, a thorough study of the prevailing conditions of the Imams' time would decisively help the understanding of their eras.

When imprisoned in the dark cell of a jail, one can easily understand the following statement, which is said about Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (the 7th Imam of Shiites): "One who was tortured in the depth of cells and darkness of dungeons and his legs carried the wounds of shackles."[1] However, this is the direction and the line I would like to discuss and offer my own understanding in this honorable meeting.

1. Bihar-ul-Anwar, Vol. 102, P. 17

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