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The Possibility of Error on the part of the Supreme Leader

Question: What happens if the Supreme Leader makes a mistake?

In the event that it is confirmed that the Supreme Leader has made a mistake, he can be appraised of it, since:

1. According to our religious beliefs, it is only the prophets (AS), Sayyida Zahra (SA) and the twelve A`immah (AS) who are infallible. Therefore, no one else can claim that there is no possibility of the Supreme Leader making a mistake in his actions or his opinions! There is a possibility of error and mistake in the Supreme Leader and it is possible that others may notice it.[1]

2. In the Islamic system and governance of the religion, each and every person is responsible and answerable to the laws laid down.

3. The principle of Amr bil Maruf wa Nahi anil Munkar or 'enjoining the good and forbidding from the evil' is a responsibility of every person – even the Jurist who fulfills all of the requirements (of being followed) – including the Supreme Leader! This responsibility (general supervision and that of commanding to good and forbidding from evil) is obligatory upon the people.[2] Therefore, based on this, we are permitted to appraise the Supreme Leader if he makes a mistake.

According to the teachings of the faith, one of the rights of the leader which he has over the people is the necessity to show sympathy and wish the best for him (the leader). This right has been mentioned under the heading of 'Admonishment to the Leaders of the Muslims' (النصحية لأئمة المسلمين) in the books of ahadith.[3] However it should be noted that the meaning of 'admonishment' as is mentioned does not refer to counsel and advice. Rather, it means to have sympathy and wish the best for the leaders of Islam.

Therefore, not only is the act of appraising the Supreme Leader permissible, rather it is a religious obligation which rests upon the Muslims and the interests and benefits of a person or group of people must not get in the way of enacting this obligation.[4] (AS)

1. Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, Questions and Answers, vol. 1, pg. 69, question 11.
2. Ayatullah Abdullah Jawadi Amuli, The Governance of the Jurist: Governance of Jurisprudence and Justice, pg. 496.
3. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 34
4. Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi Questions and Answers, vol. 1, pg. 69.

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