



Imam Ali (‘a) and the World Peace

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Preface

The Story of the Beauty of the Sweetheart

I wrote this paper in about 1344 AH in response to a request made by one of my friends who intended to publish it in a few pages in a collection called *Imām ‘Alī (‘a)* on the occasion of this great man’s birthday. I was, however, a little hesitant in complying to his request because, on the one hand, the title of “*‘Alī (‘a) and World Peace*” was an absolutely new and pure one, which had been chosen by the publisher rather than the writer, and, on the other hand, I doubted my own ability to accomplish this task. Nevertheless, I gave in to my friend’s insistence and accepted to write this paper in the hope that the sublime soul of that great Imām and the Holy Spirit accompany and help me in the process of doing this task.

I took up my pen with shaky hands and a doubtful mind, but with a heart full of hope for enjoying the emanation and blessing of the helping spirit of that liberal man. Surprisingly, although I made every effort to write about him in brief, I lost control of my restless pen and passionate heart, and the few pages that we had initially agreed upon on this subject turned into this lengthy paper.

However, it remained for a long time under the dust of forgetfulness in the course of this eventful life, until some of my friends who thirsted to know Imām ‘Alī (‘a) asked me to publish it. Hence, I recovered it from under the dust, and since it was the story of the beauty of a sweetheart whose face had never been touched by a beautician, and also because I did not have enough time, I decided not to revise it so that it remains as it is. Nevertheless, I am well-aware that this work suffers from some defects in both content and form. I take full responsibility for all the shortcomings and would appreciate it from the depth of my heart if readers provide me with their insightful critical ideas of this paper as soon as possible.

Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei

Introduction

For a man who does not yet know about the depths of his innermost, it is very difficult to accept that, unlike other existents, he has more than one soul, character, and conduct. In fact, within this cover, called the body, that embodies him, certain different and incompatible existents are hidden and coexist in a not very friendly fashion. They make the machine of the body work together and, in this way, continue their life.

It is hard for us to understand that this active and visible “self” consists of several “selves”, some friendly and some unfriendly, that create a scene of ceaseless fight, escape, attack and defense in our apparently calm interior. We assume that, if we are at war with anything, we are at least at peace with ourselves, and peace exists in us and dominates us. In other words, at all times we are at war with the outside and at peace with ourselves.

However, a philosophical and Islamic psychological analysis, or even a normal and simple psychological one, introduces us to the fact that in the chaotic and tired interior of every individual there are contradictory and various factors which comprise one’s “souls”, in the philosophical sense of the

word, or one's "self" or "I", in the psychological sense of the word.

The Holy Qur'an also refers to such variety of interior natures and talks about three types of soul: the despotic soul, reproachful soul, and peaceful soul.

Teachers of ethics have always warned us against the "soul", in other words, ourselves. Some have even said that this malicious soul is "incapable of turning to Islam". That is, they have called it a dark-hearted disbeliever, although the owner of that disbelieving soul might have been a Muslim in the real sense of the word. We should admit that we, too, sometimes fight ourselves, talk to our souls, lose our patience before their wicked acts, complain against them, advise them, and sometimes punish them a little. Now, one might ask, what are these internal and various "natures", "souls", "selves", and "I"s? What do they do? Which events and phenomena originate in them?

Generally speaking, if we ignore some of the accurate divisions of the human's internal natures and souls, we must agree that there are at least two different natures in human beings: one is the nature that administers animal and vital instincts (shared with other animals) and upon which depends our material life and "eating, sleeping, and becoming angry or passionate"; the other is a higher nature which is responsible for our spiritual life and controls our true happiness and mental and scientific growth. In fact, the latter distinguishes us from animals.

Each of these two inner natures has its own requirements and carries out its own tasks and duties. Unlike the poetic interpretations of teachers of ethics (who say that this vicious disbeliever is incapable of turning to Islam), none of these natures is a disbeliever. Rather, they have surrendered to the divine command, follow the rules of their own essence, and carry out their own natural duties seriously and honestly.

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The point here is that, although a combination of these two natures creates an external “I” and an individual, one of them is always dominant, and the other is defeated and captivated by the other. The outcome of this victorious – defeated relation is the appearance of a single nature in human beings which we call “conduct” or “character”.

One might ask, why are some people angel-like and some monstrous? Why are some the sources of “good” and some others the sources of “evil” and in contrast to good? The answer is that the nature that man shares with animals and creates lust and anger has beastly attributes and can be called the “animal nature”. In contrast, the nature enjoying opposing attributes and features can be called the “human nature” and is exclusively for human beings.

* * *

War is a beastly phenomenon and is rooted in the animal nature. According to philosophers, it originates in the animal “wrath faculty”. However, defense – which sometimes turns into fight – is a greatly approved human duty, and lawful defense is considered a religious and ethical must. Moreover, pushing corrupt people and offenders away is a righteous and benevolent act. Nevertheless, here we are talking about a nature that equips human beings with wise and human drives. Unlike the “animal nature”, human nature is against a war which does not follow sublime human purposes and is a peace-lover and peacemaker.

Depending on which of these natures gains dominance, one of these two phenomena – war or peace – will arise. On the other hand, when a revengeful and malicious battle starts, we can infer that there is an animal soul behind it creating the fire of war. Similarly, if true peace and friendship is established, we can infer that there is a human nature behind it.

It is to be noted that criminals and advocates of war are inspired by an existent which is invisible to the human eye and, like a malicious spirit, moves around human beings and resides within them. This existent is nothing other than Satan; an existent which is capable of transferring its wicked temptations and deceptions from near and far to the human mind. In this way, those who succumb to its temptations will be deceived and provoked to do evil acts and refrain from good conduct.

Wherever there is corruption, war, chaos, poverty, and pain; wherever there is false and mirage-like pleasure and joy; wherever there is disease, conspiracy, and disaster; wherever there is no remembrance of God; and, in sum, wherever there is evil and viciousness, Satan is at work. This is an amazing truth which few people pay careful attention to, but simply ignore.

Accordingly, we must say that where there is warfare, we can see Satan's footsteps. The main actor of this scene is always that vicious spirit and greatly mischievous existent on earth. It is he who plays tricks on the ignorant war-lovers of the world, brings suffering, death, mourning, hatred, and wickedness with himself, and causes destruction and wandering.

The war that acts like plague upon the human soul and we talked about is one which is rooted in unfounded ambitions and love of the world. It is motivated by a display of power and the thirst to dominate others. It also originates in the fire of greed or internal anger of rulers or revenge. Such a war leads to the destruction of a great number of people or even entire generations, the annihilation of lands and property, as well as depriving nations of peace and quiet. All of this is so that the warmonger, who is in no way more virtuous than others or superior to them, can take the seat of power and ruin his rivals on the battlefield.

However, it must be added that war itself is sometimes the last remedy that the healers of humanity recommend for the

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treatment of the corruptions and fatal diseases of society. In the world of medicine, they remove the organ whose corruption leads to the corruption and death of the whole body or burn a scar whose cure is being burnt with a blazing object.

The motive behind such a war, unlike the previous one, does not lie in the “self”, the despotic soul, and sensual desires; rather, it is intended to protect others, uproot all wars, establish peace, maintain physical health, and defend the security and health of human society. That is why the definition of war does not apply to this war, and Satan and evil and selfish people do not favor it. The focus of our attention here is not war in the sense of cure; rather, we focus on a destructive and anti-human war which is started for the sake of personal interests. Likewise, when speaking about peace, we do not mean one which leads to inferiority, weakness, and misery. Rather, we intend one that removes misery, frees people from inferiority, and establishes true faith.

A satanic peace is also a kind of peace; however, it is for the sake of war and is even worse than war. A divine war which is fought by the believer in Truth aims for peace, justice, good, a better life, as well as to send Satan into exile and dominate the animal nature of beastlike enemies.

Therefore, one should not shake any hand that is stretched towards him¹ because not every peace is to the advantage of humanity. Likewise, one should fight alongside each and every fighter. That is why the heavenly and *fiṭrī* religion of Islam maintains that both war and peace with satanic people are allowed only with the leader’s (Imām’s) permission.

Therefore, although war is essentially bad, one must see who is fighting it, and although peace is always good, one must see what the purpose behind it is, and who advocates it. Even if fighters put the pages of the Qur’an on the tip of their spears and

1. Rūmī, *Mathnawī*.

demand peace and use this heavenly book as an intercessor, one must still see who is working behind this mask, and which vicious spirit has hidden behind the body of their commander. Then one can make a sound judgment and recognize the good and bad of peace or war. It is at this point that we must accept Imām ‘Alī (‘a), the Commander of the Faithful, as the criterion for good and evil. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) always said, “The truth and ‘Alī (‘a) are always with each other and necessary for each other; the truth is known through ‘Alī (‘a) in the same way that the truth of people is always known through the Truth.”

This is a great praise that can hardly be used for any existent other than Almighty God, His Heavenly Book, the Holy Qur’an, or His Prophet (ṣ). On the one hand, we must pay attention that the above statement was made by God’s great Prophet (ṣ), who is far from idle talk, exaggeration, and false ideas. He would never tell lies, and his tongue was incapable of telling anything other than the truth. On the other, we know that a human being, who is at all times tempted by internal and external evils to stay away from the truth, is not that which should be considered as capable of staying with the truth for a lifetime unless there is an exception in creation who claims to be of equal status with angels, follows in the footsteps of God’s great Prophet (ṣ), and before him perish satanic desires, whims, and instincts and evils like leaves in the fall.

These exceptions in creation are none other than Imām ‘Alī (‘a), the Lady Fāṭimah (‘a) (the Prophet’s daughter), and their offspring, whom the Prophet (ṣ) frequently referred to as “Ark of Salvation” and the “People of the House”. He also praised them by using words which he never used even for angels.

The truth is that Imām ‘Alī (‘a) never separated from the truth, and neither did the People of the House or the Prophet’s descendants. Otherwise, they would not have been members of

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Ark of Salvation, since no salvation and rescue can be attained unless through being with the truth and in the truth.

A war on which the prophets and their descendants never turned their backs was one that was fought based on the truth and for the truth and for the purpose of mankind’s salvation and defending humanity. It could also be a war that was fought due to the decree of the intellect and primordial nature in order to defend people’s lives, property, honor, and independence and to protect their freedom. Moreover, they fought against Goliaths, devils, and Pharaohs (in the Qur’an the Pharaoh represents evil) when they blocked people’s way of faith and happiness. Otherwise, war – i.e. employing force in order to attain animal whims and instincts and sensual desires, giving in to satanic temptations, causing bloodshed, and advocating revenge – has always been unpleasant and an object of disgust for God, the prophets, religions, heavenly books, and even the wise, philosophers, and thinkers. The primordial nature of those who enjoy sound judgment and a free heart hates war and keeps away from it, and the human essence always desires peace. Islam is an intrinsic (*fiṭrī*) religion and the religion of primordial nature (*fiṭrat*). Imām ‘Alī (‘a), following the Holy Prophet (ṣ), always gave this message to people and sought peace: peace at home, peace in society and among people, and peace in the world community and among peoples.

We know about peace, and this knowledge cannot be attained without knowing about the importance and pillars of “war”. In fact, war is a social disease the roots of which must be known and for which a cure must be found. Social psychologists, sociologists, and researchers of international law have always believed that war is not a wild and self-growing phenomenon. Rather, it has certain causes and roots. However, there is no agreement concerning their nature.

Those who follow a uni-dimensional approach when viewing phenomena believe that war originates in certain

elements including the search for power and superiority, the desire for capturing others' lands, property, and wealth, the love of revenge and animal character, the thirst for murder, apartheid and racial discrimination, ethnic prejudice, and the like. Some people also believe that all or some of these factors lead to wars. The truth is that in most wars all or a combination of some of them can be seen.

Some writers have divided these factors into two groups: "external factors" and "internal factors". Moreover, they can be divided into two groups of "positive and negative" and "useful or efficient and harmful or destructive" factors. However, what can be called an accurate, scientific analysis of the issue is one that divides the factors underlying war into the following two groups: "ethical and *fitri*" factors and "emotional and animal" factors.

In other words, all war-related factors, even the external ones, return to human beings' internal and mental factors. Human nature enjoys two features: on the one hand, it thinks about power, superiority, and capturing others' property and removing rivals. On the other, it appreciates the supreme human and ethical values and, at least, self-defense and protecting its land and people. Therefore, war is of two types: animal, corrupting, and destructive war and corruption removing war. The latter has been called just war (*Bellum justum*) in Western philosophy and law, and the writers and social or religious philosophers of Medieval Europe are quite familiar with it.

Hence, here we also divide the factors leading to war into 4 groups:

1. Beastly, illogical, and coarse behaviors that are rooted in anger, revenge, seeking superiority, and love of looting and ravaging others.

2. Inevitable, automatic, natural, and reactive behavior. Sometimes, we also see certain kinds of imposed wars that are

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rooted in fear and appear in the form of defense and resistance in weak but willful groups or peoples.

3. False human factors which like those of the first group are accompanied with violence and destruction. However, in appearance, they follow certain goals such as the honor and glory of the government or the dissemination of an ideology and school, etc. The evil nature of such factors is naturally obvious to the wise and people with free hearts.

4. Noble human factors which lead to freedom-seeking and freedom-giving wars, which are constructive and compatible with the human primordial nature and divine traditions.

As mentioned before, Islam is essentially against war unless it is intended to bring about peace and justice, uproot cruelty, and attain supreme human and true goals. This is the very essence of holy war and one of the conditions for its being just. Christian thinkers apparently talked about this holy and just war in the past; however, none of its rules were observed in any of the European Christian wars.

The analysis of the concept of war from an Islamic point of view is extremely complicated and delicate and must be done with thorough attention to the depth of human emotions and nature and rational principles. It will surprise researchers to learn that, according to Islam, the phenomenon of war must always be provoked by a difficult internal conflict. An Islamic leader gives the order for war only when he has attained victory over himself in his internal battle. This is what amazes everyone.

In order to clarify this psychological process, we must know that before each external war, on the one hand, the forces of logic, wisdom, conscience, the divine law, and the divine commands, which are called religion, come together in an internal front in man's nature. On the other hand, the forces of animal instincts, such as revenge, wrath, seeking power, ambitiousness,

imposture of power and will on others, and other evil and destructive motives unite there in order to oppose the other front.

In this way, truth and falsehood stand against each other: religion and Satan sing the song of battle for each other; the powerful army of animal instincts that is armed to the teeth rises against the army of faith, religion, and supreme human values; and the soldiers of both sides start fighting each other in a continuous and bloody war. When the human values and divine and ethical principles dominate beastly and wild drives and, in other words, divine forces defeat Satan, the victorious sirdar of the divine spirit residing in human beings rises out of the body and commands the holy battle against Satan and satanic acts and behavior.

In other words, first, he kills Satan and satanic goals in himself or throws them out of himself and then attacks the devil that has penetrated others and raised the flag of war in order to defeat him. In fact, an Islamic war never takes place unless for the purpose of conquering Satan.

A famous example in this regard is the display of an internal war in Imām ‘Ali’s battle with ‘Amr (‘Abdewud), the well-known champion of the Quraysh, who attacked Medina in the Battle of Khandaq with a big army and besieged it. The first encounter of the two armies, one being a human one and at the service of the truth and the other being an absurd and evil one, was a man-to-man fight between Imām ‘Ali (‘a) and ‘Amr, which ended in the latter’s death. When the victorious champion – Imām ‘Ali (‘a) – sat on the defeated champion’s chest, he spat on Imām ‘Ali’s face. However, instead of becoming angry and trying to get revenge, he behaved in a holy manner. The members of the two armies saw that an angry Imām ‘Ali (‘a) left the chest of ‘Amr and took a few steps to the side. After suppressing his anger, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) returned and killed his enemy.

This great spectacle of humanity and Islamic ethics is an example of an internal war between the divine, Islamic and human self and the animal and instinctive self, which originates in inferior feelings of anger and revenge. A weak and normal person fights under the influence of anger, revenge, or other inferior feelings. However, a pious Muslim is never motivated to begin a war by such emotions, the love of power, or great ambitions. First, he fights such feelings in his interior and overcomes them, and, then, if he finds out that the principles of ethics and religion and the Divine Will oblige him to fight against the external enemy, he will do it. That is why war is sacred in the Qur’an and is equated with worship.

War in Islam must be in the form of *jihād* (holy war) to be justified. Islam is against war; however, it allows it and even considers it necessary when it is based on *jihād* or **strife**, which means fighting for God and divine purposes. In this war, one should fight not only against one’s beastly and inferior internal attributes and drives but also against external anti-human elements. Evidently, the first battle is much more difficult than the second one.

Accordingly, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) after a very difficult war told the believers that it was a minor *jihād* and they must start a major one. The believers asked in surprise if there were any wars more difficult than what they had already had, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said that there was: a *jihād* against one’s own instincts and animal and egocentric drives.

* * *

Considering the above explanations about the Islamic view of war, we will return to our main point and repeat that Islam is against war. Nevertheless, this opposition is not an absurd, purposeless, and illogical one or a shortcoming under the cover of ethics. Rather, it is intended to protect people’s

peace, comfort, and security. Of course, Islam is not absolutely against war because sometimes peace and reconciliation lead to the destruction of lands, disruption of comfort, endangering people's lives and property, and the annihilation of independence and freedom.

Silence, keeping peace, and not fighting back invaders, who interpret peace as weakness, enslave peace-lovers, and invade people's property and even lives, are illogical, irrational, and against what God likes. It is, rather, the same as ignorance and foolishness.

Here, Islam allows a brave and defensive war. It is a war that is started in order to establish "justice" and uproot cruelty and oppressors. It is this war which enjoys holiness and Islam calls *jihād*, not war.

Some of the writers of the laws of war² believe that war – or the same *jihād* – in Islam is a kind of "mainly religious war" and view it as being different from "just war" – a name that the Christian scholars of the Middle Ages had given to their own religious wars.

Of course, we need a lot of time to explain the above mistake; however, what was mentioned previously could function as a short explanation here. We must pay attention to the fact that the title "religious war" is basically a defective and ambiguous one. This is because even wars that begin between the advocates of two religions with the purpose of defending their religious prejudices and selfishness – and, in fact, their whimsical desires – or the wars that European Christians began under the title of the Crusades in order to loot Muslims' wealth and property and, in this way, blackened the face of the history, were not religious wars. Rather, they were wars motivated by whimsical desires and the love of power, riches, and domination of others. As we know, as a true

2. Frankel, J., 1973, *Contemporary International Theory and the Behavior of States*, Oxford University Press, p. 304.

heavenly religion, Islam is against such wars and considers it a kind of defense of one's pride, selfishness, and beastly desires. Moreover, it has nothing to do with those who, in the name of Islam, have started such wars and ruled Muslims under the titles of caliphs and commanders.

According to Islam, a war is religious when it is based on justice and intends to spread justice, introduce the way leading to happiness to people, and help them walk on the right path. A religious war also leads to the perfection of people's souls and spirits and saves them from the swamp of passions and animality. Finally, a war is called religious, in the sense of holiness and divinity when it is intended to protect pure values, establish the principles of humanity, and disseminate the true concepts of value and humanity. Otherwise, it will be nothing more than a childish battle or a beastly fight which only suits predatory animals.

A war motivated by animal instincts and whimsical passions such as anger, lust, revenge, hatred, greed, ambition, or murder, rather than human values and supreme purposes and complying with the divine command, is against human nature and remaining a natural and wise human being. Therefore, we never expect a special servant of God and a follower of pure Islam, particularly Imām 'Ali ('a), to take part in such wars.

That is why the Commander of the Faithful, Imām 'Ali ('a), in spite of being a veteran soldier of Islam and a brave and unique sirdar, who never ran away from the enemy in any battle, and whom no opponent could ever run away from, as well as being the unrivalled king of the vast lands of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and all the realm of Islam, was still against war and enmity and sought peace at all times and in all places.

True human peace means granting friendship and health to society and establishing freedom, independence, and human values there, while animal peace means weakness,

defeat, and humility. In order to establish the former, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) had a plan that is illustrated by his life, conduct, and acts and not merely by his tongue and pen. However, his philosophical words and advice are also very useful in this regard.

Following ‘Ali (‘a) and listening to him means retrieving the human self and “finding the self”. Here, we are referring to the same “self” or “I” which is called the **self-accusing soul** (*nafs-i lawwāmah*) or **peaceful soul** (*nafs-i muṭma’innah*) in the Qur’an. It is an invisible self which has thousands of enemies lying in ambush; a self the finding and knowing of which means finding, perceiving, and knowing “God”. As we read in the *ḥadīth*, “Whosoever knows himself has known God.”

Now that we have learned about war and peace and perceived their complicated relation with human beings, it is the right time to deal with the main theme of the book, which is Imām ‘Ali’s conduct and his method of government. In this way, we will learn about his explicit views of war and peace, their roots, and the best way for reaching a true and permanent peace and grasp a better understanding of this great human legend.

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World Peace

Nowadays, world peace is one of the most important issues that interests all nations and governments. Even those who actually play with it and look for an excuse to begin a war or invade other countries, still show an interest, at least in appearance, in the establishment and maintenance of peace and security in the world.

In order to secure permanent peace in the world, protect nations against annihilating wars, and prevent clashes between invading countries, legal experts, philosophers, and politicians have proposed a number of scientific plans, theories, and principles based on international law and with the intention of limiting the power of governments. However, none of them have been successful in removing the danger of disrupting peace or establishing it in the real sense of the word.

The reason for the uselessness of such theories and suggestions is that, apart from lacking a spirit of sacrifice, honesty, and love of humanity, in their formulation attention has only been paid to superficial aspects of the issue rather than fundamental ones. Moreover, no serious effort has ever been made to establish a firm basis for permanent world

peace, and none of the theories provided has the necessary efficiency.

The present book is an attempt to reveal a small part of Imām ‘Ali’s knowledge and study the complicated problem of peace in the light of this great leader’s behavior and words. Moreover, it aims to analyze the related basic solutions that are embedded in the methods and words of this noble Imām hoping that one day all nations of the world follow the goal of securing true peace, and this longstanding wish of humanity is realized by the hands of people themselves.

The establishment of peace, whether local and regional or global, is a spiritual undertaking related to the souls of nations prior to being a material act. If people do not pay attention to the spiritual aspects of this issue, a single theory of roundtable discussions can never heal any wound. This is because, as a politician once said, peace is not something that can be placed in a mould like an industrial product and shaped as desired. It is not something that can be imported from, or exported to, another place, either. **Peace means the establishment of healthy thought, healthy politics, and healthy nations.**

The Nightmare of War

Man has long been familiar with the disgusting nightmare of war and seen the members of his own species captivated by it. For centuries man's hostile spirit has summoned this blood-thirsty monster in order to judge all sorts of clashes of ideas and conflicts in the arena of human societies. In fact, he has witnessed with his own eyes the disastrous view of this tragic event in every corner of history at all times. As long as humanity has existed, war has shown itself as an evident human attribute. As some say, being warlike is a part of human essence and nature.

Such a permanent concomitance of humanity and war has led some to consider war as a part of human nature and peace as a "new invention".³ However, this theory is undoubtedly

3. A German scholar once said that the basis of international relations consists of hostile relations (war), and peace is an accidental issue. Ibn Khaldūn believes that the essence of war is revenge on the part of one side and defense on the part of the other. According to Henry Maine, "War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern **invention**." (Tawfiq al-Fakiki, *al-Rā'ī wa al-rāi'yyah*)

wrong because war is totally absent from the essence of humanity. Indeed, the man who has always been the goal of the teachings of religious leaders, philosophers, and guides of humanity never needs war. This predatory feature belongs to animals; however, it is sometimes manifested in human beings, who are the master of all creatures, and makes them deviate from the pure path of their essence. Man's nature overflows with purity and is not compatible with darkness and predatoriness. War means man's giving up his purity and wisdom; it is the ominous legacy of animals.

By definition, man is a social (and, thus, civil) animal and, naturally, interested in security and comfort. Human beings, who resort to the demon of war when inferior emotions (revenge, pride, selfishness, etc.) and mental diseases arise, are essentially and normally in love with peace and comfort. Even the wildest and most warlike people of the world start fighting due to this internal feeling of the love of peace and comfort.⁴

It is because of this feeling that man flees from chaos and rebellion. Some scholars, such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, who believe that governments are the effects of the social contracts of the people in society, maintain that it is this very inner and instinctive feeling that motivates such contracts.

Therefore, considering man's peace-loving essence and nature, what causes wars and makes him become involved in something that he naturally does not favor? A careful study of the philosophy of wars, their underlying causes, and the bloody events of history reveals that, without doubt, the origin of all these calamities is one factor: the sinister seed of "disrespecting human rights".

"Freedom" is the first characteristic and privilege that man brings with himself to the world. It is because of this

4. It sometimes appears in the form of "self-defense" or "trying to provide for a living".

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advantage that he views his character as being respectable and perfect, values his own integrity, and is ready to defend it in every possible way. Where there is no freedom, man does not exist in the real sense of the word. This is because one of the pillars of his spiritual character has been destroyed, and his humanity has been trampled on. Therefore, in order to compensate for his lost pride and retain his respect, he continually tries to escape imprisonment and free himself from the humility of his “suppressed character”.

John Locke, the English thinker of the 17th century, defines freedom as follows:

Freedom in society means that no one takes the order of any ruling and regulating power unless out of personal consent. Moreover, no one can be dominated by any will and does not follow any rule unless the legislating power speaks for him due to the power of attorney that he has given to him.

This freedom from willful absolute powers is so necessary for man’s survival and so much connected to it that man cannot dispense with it without dispensing with his right of securing his life...⁵

Denying this God-given right to human beings is the main reason for all the corruptions and calamities in the world. A writer once said that the right to live is more necessary to humanity than food, water, air, and light, and all human beings must benefit from it equally. Basically, war rises where freedom is absent, or where some try to damage it. Peace and freedom are like the two sides of an algebraic equation; while being two different things, they are one and the same thing.

5. Quoted from Jamalzadeh, *Āzādī wa shakhsyyat-i insān (Freedom and Human Character)*, Dr. Sana’i, p. 93.

The power to dominate others leads to obstinacy and pride and, as a result, to the desire to violate the rights of others.

“Selfishness” leads oppressors to invade and violate others’ rights and freedom. However, this same feeling provokes those who have given up to invaders to rise in order to regain their true rights. They are greatly motivated to do so because they feel humiliated and have lost their freedom.

Ignoring people’s honor and dignity and disrespecting their rights lead to war, and, according to the senators of the “French National Assembly” in the period of the Revolution, “The authorities’ unawareness of these rights or not observing them is the only source and cause of all human societies.”⁶

This is a reality unanimously accepted by all scholars of sociology, philosophy of history, and social psychology. The evidence for it comes from the two world wars, the self-centered governments of rulers such as Alexander, Genghis, Attila, Timur, Napoleon, Bismarck, Hitler, etc. or the oppressive slavery systems of the Pharaohs, Tsars, Caesars, and the like.

Therefore, it is really necessary that all the lovers of “permanent peace” employ all their powers in order to maintain it, provide freedom for all, and dominate the Satan of war. If freedom is guaranteed, “equality” will automatically be provided. As human beings enjoy the gift of existence equally, they are also born with “equal” freedom and human rights. When all of them use their freedom and other natural and conventional human rights in a way not to invade other’ rights, equality in the real sense of the word will naturally be established. If powerful and wealthy people do not abuse their rights, if there is no exploitation and oppression, if weak people

6. The Introduction to the Declaration of Human Rights.

are not deprived of their freedom and natural rights (so that they can use the fruit of their work and efforts), there will be no class differences (inequality).

Depriving people of their lawful freedom and treating them on unequal terms, which is the source of all destruction, result in man’s failure to enjoy his material rights. Consequently, wealth will be concentrated on one side and extreme poverty and hunger on the other. This will lead to class differences and slavery. Moreover, governments or administrative powers will fall into the hands of a powerful individual or social class (that is, oligarchies and aristocracies will be established). Therefore people’s life and destiny will be controlled by cruel oppressors and mighty abusers instead of by themselves, and there will be no trace of equal social, financial, civil, and legal rights for people. The majority of people will be captivated by a minority who loot their vital powers and faculties. They will also be deprived of all the riches and resources on the earth, which belong to all, and anyone can benefit from, provided that he works and does not violate others’ rights in this regard. As a result, some people will die because of gluttony on one side, and millions will starve to death because of poverty on the other. In other words, a minority will live in absolute welfare, and a majority will never know the meaning of comfort.

Inequality truly leads to “poverty”, which is the origin of all miseries. It affects all human emotions, internal feelings, thoughts, and philosophies. It plays such an influential role in different aspects of people’s social life that the founders of communism consider it the basis of revolutions and social changes. Poverty is a mental cancer and the result of absolute inequality among people. In other words, it is the effect of

hoarding the riches of society by a minority, which leads the majority progressively towards destruction and annihilation.

Poverty, lack of welfare, and deprivation of freedom and other natural rights, more than any thing else, lead to insecurity, revolution, and war. Accordingly, the best way to maintain social security and peace and prevent war is to provide people with welfare and comfort and fight against their material and spiritual poverty. We must fight corruption at its source, i.e. guidance cannot be spread unless it is in the same way that perversion has been spread.

The influence of poverty on the great revolutions of the world and the annihilation of dictatorial governments is extremely obvious. This is because “hungry people” have always stood against complacent ones in order to obtain food, living space, and freedom and, as a result, changed the direction of history. As the saying goes, poverty is the same as disbelief, and disbelief is the same as restlessness and rebellion.

Poverty is a kind of frustration and the same as captivity and losing freedom. Based on people’s obvious psychological characteristics and the material physical law,⁷ one day it rises in the form of an overflowing and horrifying power. Man has witnessed several examples in this regard in various historical periods, such as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the heroic revolution in Algeria, the revolutions in African and Asian countries, all the anti-colonial revolutions in the world, and, the most famous of all, the French Revolution, which led to the dissemination of equality – and freedom – seeking thoughts and the abrogation of class privileges and social class differences.

7. A suppressed, strong, and concentrated potential power, such as that of water, is a strong force that, if not guided by religious psychological methods, will cause massive destruction.

In 1789 during the willful reign of Louis XVI and because of the obstinacy of the rulers and aristocrats, the dominance of some power-lovers and cruel people in the guise of religious men, and, worst of all, the existence of a powerful and privileged high class in the society, aristocrats, princes, rulers, and court clergymen dominated the majority of people, who were weak and poor,⁸ and sucked their blood. The French Revolution did not only belong to French people; rather, it was a universal revolution through which humanity, which had lost its patience with cruelty, poverty, and pressure, cried for freedom and demanded its lost rights. It was based on this revolution that the Republic of France was founded, and the Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up. Following this, lovers of humanity placed it at the top of all human laws and wrote in its Introduction as follows:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people, ...

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations ...

8. The majority consisted of 24 million people, while the minority only consisted of one million.

It was based on this human revolution that the League of Nations and, then, the United Nations were developed in order to maintain peace in the world. In the Introduction of the Charter of the United Nations, we read as follows:

**WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DETERMINED**

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in greater freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and
- to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

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- to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

However, in spite of all the words that have been said, we have frequently seen that weak individuals and nations have been suppressed, and powerful governments have shed their blood and ignored their rights. Moreover, this very United Nations Organization, which claims to be the guardian of the rights of human beings and nations, views all these catastrophes cold-bloodedly, justifies their acts by resorting to the rule of “the dominant is right”, and ignores people’s true rights.

Nevertheless, the authorities of this organization agree with us that the origin of all evil acts against humanity, bloodshed, and disrupting international peace means “heedlessness” of man’s fundamental rights and ignoring the value and station of human individuals.

Now, we should see whether it was only in the 20th century that someone thought about justice and equality, whether it was in the 18th century that some Western philosophers came with this idea for the first time, or whether it was Islam and its symbol, Imām ‘Ali (‘a), who, for the first time, strove to familiarize people with these concepts and establish them everywhere in the world. Today, after all the inhuman murders that have occurred in the course of history, there are just some words about human justice merely in

speeches and writings. However, fourteen centuries ago, Imām ‘Alī (‘a), the Commander of the Faithful, leader of humanity, and student of the school of Islam, not only talked about it, but also proved it in practice and left his ideas and experiences in this regard as a school to his children and true followers.

The Holy Way of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a)

It was destiny that the fertile plant of humanity came to fruition in the heart of the Ka’ba, in the dry and thirsty land of Arabia, and in the virtuous womb of Fāṭimah, the daughter of Asad. This was a fruit that, sooner or later, had to be presented as a gift to the world. This vast universe was in need of a typical “perfect man” who intended to prove that the creation of spheres, elements, the infinitely minute things, and the infinitely huge things was not in vain. In fact, he was the all-reflecting body of humanity in whom all the perfections, virtues, and good features were planted in abundance both secretly and visibly. He was a legacy for the people of the future as a symbol of the efforts of past people who, in order to nourish and preserve the truth and reality, perfection, and virtue, suffered great pains and fought many battles.

He was a chosen existent overflowing with humanity, the blood-money of victims of truth and martyrs of virtue, an

example of a “perfect man”,⁹ a unique man whose like the people of the world never found in the past and will never find in the future; this person is none other but ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a).¹⁰ In fact, no eye has ever been sharp enough to penetrate the depths of this man’s level of humanity, and no artist has ever been skillful enough to portray his face as it really was.¹¹ Imām ‘Ali (‘a) was a master and a supreme symbol of humanity and the leader of the great revolution of humanity for 63 years. He was the leader of a deep-rooted revolution for setting people free from darkness; a revolution the seed of which was planted by his inspiring master, the Prophet Muḥammed (ṣ), and which was watered by his brave son, Imām Ḥussein (‘a). It was truly a universal and glorious revolution.

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) was the fruit of the tall tree of Islam and the spiritual struggles of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). He was the essence of the religion the messenger of which was Muḥammed (ṣ). We can, indeed, say that Imām ‘Ali (‘a) taught Islam to the people of the world. This is because, if he had not been there, Islamic teachings would not have appeared in their original and real form. It was Imām ‘Ali (‘a) and his method and behavior that enlivened the school of Islam and its lessons in the scene of the universe and helped people visualize them.

The fact is that not one child has ever been born in the history of Islam who has been as pious and brave as Imām ‘Ali (‘a). Even if he had been the only follower of Islam in history, his firmness, glory, and greatness would have been enough for it. He did not belong to this world because it never had the capacity for him. However, he lived, followed his

9. The perfect or the ideal man has always been a goal and at the center of ethics, gnosis, and spiritual and mystic sciences and held the first position in philosophical and scientific discussions.

10. Shebli Shmayel.

11. Michael Na‘imah, the Lebanese Christian writer.

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commitments, and suffered many wounds and great loneliness for 63 years in this world in order to teach the human-making religion of Islam to Adam’s offspring and lead them towards the peak of man’s happiness and well-being.

If he, apparently, accepted to rule a group of uncultured and unappreciative women, and if he, apparently, became the friend or enemy of a group of just images of real “men”, it was for humanity to have a teacher, trainer, leader, and guide all through its long life and for the human teachings and training of Islam to appear in a living and stable form.

* * *

Imām ‘Ali (‘a), the greatest man of all time, based his government of truth and justice on respect for individuals and human character; the same respect and grace that his Creator has granted human beings. He believed that at no time and on no condition can one ignore others’ humanity and respect. It was this very genuine respect that, automatically, led to the provision of ultimate freedom and equality for all.

In order to establish peace and friendship in the world, it was necessary that, in addition to real and correct “internationalism”, philanthropism be spread among various societies of the world, and people be introduced to the real concept of humanity, fraternity, and, as a result, “equality”. In fact, the best way to secure world peace, is to fight against corruption and destroy its roots. Whenever attributes such as selfishness, malevolence, and heedlessness of human characteristics are eradicated in human society and replaced with true respect for man’s truth, character, honor, and station, no one will even think about exploiting others and depriving them of their rights, which is in contrast to their human character. As a result, there will be no insecurity and war. It is only correct training and upbringing that destroys the origins of

corruption and creates a peaceful, healthy, polished, and orderly human society.

One of the lessons of Imām ‘Ali’s school of world peace was that, in addition to respecting people and observing their rights of freedom, equality, as well as their other rights, one must have spiritual training. He himself trained people in this regard and produced a typical and orderly person for whom there were no racial and religious boundaries, and since he also viewed others as human beings, he respected them and made himself observe their rights.

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) always addressed human beings and taught this to others as well. As we know, natural or political boundaries or racial and verbal superstitions never blinded the insightful eyes of prophets and great peacemakers, and they always talked to human beings and not to a specific nation or race. In order to train and guide people, our great Imām could not follow any approach but this one.

What was discussed above was a brief account of the method of the leader of humanity, Imām ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a). In order to learn more about his words and approach concerning the main elements of world peace, we require independent and extensive discussions. These elements include respecting the individual and observing his freedom, establishing equality and fighting against class differences and material poverty and exerting social justice, providing welfare and a better life for people, respecting the commitments resulting from contracts and conventions, and exercising forgiveness and being flexible in national and international relations.

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) and Respect for Humanity

Following Islam as a source of inspiration, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) was a supreme example of Islamic norms concerning words and conduct. He never ignored respect for human character and his station. This was no common and normal respect; rather, the same dignity and respect that God had for him himself. He always viewed people, irrespective of their poverty, wealth, goodness, and badness, equally as beings ornamented by Almighty God’s Grace and having the same father and mother (Adam and Eve). He was the follower of a school the magnanimous founder of which, the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ), said, “All people are members of God’s family; the most useful of them is the most favorite of them with God.”

People means all human beings and not only Muslims. That is why Imām ‘Alī (‘a) introduced the firm principle of fraternity to humanity. When all human individuals are equally seen as the members of “God’s family”, all class differences will inevitably disappear, and equality comes into being based

on humanism. He always tried to protect man’s station against potential threats and never allowed man’s true rights to be violated because his “religion” is against any kind of violation and does not allow anyone to ignore or tread upon others’ rights or deprive them from their freedom. Indeed, here and wherever religion steps in, exploitation must go away because religion is responsible for granting people’s rights to them and fighting against oppression and oppressors. Likewise, wherever there is oppression, there is no room for religion, and the expansionists and exploiters of the East and West of the world know this very well. That is why, in order to become successful and attain their goals, i.e. exploitation and oppression, first they fight religion and try to eradicate it.

Since Imām ‘Alī (‘a) loved God and worshipped Him, he also loved all of the members of His family, i.e. human beings. In other words, he loved the entire world for it belonged to God. In fact, his conduct and words testify to the fact that he had a passionate love for all human beings.

Imām ‘Alī’s humanistic spirit was the source of seeking peace, which was a sign of his human emotions and philanthropism. When the fundamental principles of government do not exist in a society, and the “ruler” violates people’s life and property and disrupts their peace and quiet, he himself will be caught in the storm of the anger of the powerful mass of people in society, and both the government and people will be deprived of the gift of permanent safety and peace.

Imām ‘Alī’s respect for humanity has two aspects: first respecting others and, second, respecting one’s own respect, character, and rights. According to *al-Qaṣaṣ* chapter: 77,

“But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor

forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.”

Therefore, it is necessary for man to prevent cruelty to himself and others and fight against it. This battle is based on an evident Islamic law, and the followers of Imām ‘Ali’s school believe that it is one of the firm principles of their constitution.¹² This is a point that even those who are against it and oppose it in practice confess. They say, “It is impossible to have a good life without freedom. However, people can only have a happy life relying on their will and by devoting themselves to freedom,” and “The responsibility for securing these freedoms is on the shoulders of free men, provided that they possess the spirit of a fighter to protect it.”¹³

Nevertheless, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) believes that bearing oppression is forbidden, and it is obligatory to protect one’s own respect and character, even if one is killed in this way. He says, “Of course the number of survivors after a war would have been more if they had not gone to war and been killed in the field.”

Moreover, he maintains that bearing cruelty means sharing the sin of those who are cruel to them: “An oppressor, his friend, and one who contends to his oppression are all partners and the same.” Then he promises victory in this holy *jihād* (sacred war), “I swear that if oppressors disperse you and

12. *Ash‘arites* believe that fighting against cruelty and oppressive rulers is forbidden, and they must be in fact obeyed.

13. From a speech by Truman, the Jewish former president of the USA, in the Society for Four-Fold Freedoms, 1953, quoted from Jamalzadeh, *Āzādi wa shakhsyyat-i insān* (Freedom and Human Character), p. 161.

break your unity, God will one day bring all of you together in revenge.”

It is because of his very philanthropic spirit and human emotion that he never accepts deceiving a human being, being shrewd to him, or misleading him. He also says, “Do not betray when you make a commitment. If deceit were not evil, I would be the smartest and most diplomatic of all people.”

Moreover, he writes to Mālik Ashtar Nakha‘i, his commander-in-chief in Egypt (may God greet him) “Have your heart accustomed to having mercy and love for people, be kind to them, and never be fierce with your people.”

Considering receiving tax from people, he orders, “Never hit anyone in order to obtain money from him, and never keep one standing when you are doing so. Never make anyone sell something to pay his taxes. Our order requires us to treat people with forgiveness.”

When we compare this method of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a), the Commander of the Faithful, with that of caliphs and later governments, you will see that, according to history, in order to take one dirham of tax, they hit poor people so much so that they either died or obtained the money from somewhere and paid them. In this way, the tax receivers had enough money to spend on debauchery and the pleasure-seeking of the people of their *harams*. This was the case at a time when the women in the caliphs’ courts, like all other people, walked with difficulty. However, their problem was due to the heaviness of the gold ornaments and jewellery they were carrying, while the people’s problems were due to poverty, hunger, and the difficult life they were living.¹⁴

14. In this regard we can refer to the story of the wedding of Zubaydah and Hārūn, as well as the daughter of Ḥasan Ibn Sahl and Ma’mūn. According

It was in relation to the same philanthropy of Imām ‘Ali (‘a) that the issue of “**supporting prisoners**” was propounded for the first time. Of course, now that two centuries have passed since the French Revolution and the Introduction of the Declaration of Human Rights, and there have been efforts and movements in order to sustain man’s station, this seems a simple and ordinary issue. However, we remember the conditions in the governments of that time or after that in the East and West, such as the situation of the Bastille prison in France or the Prison of Ḥajjāj Thaqaḫī, which are heartbreaking, we will understand the greatness and newness of Imām ‘Ali’s job.

He himself took food and clothes for prisoners in winter and summer and let them have fresh air. He even sent his own food to his murderer, Ibn Muljam, and did not let him suffer before his death. So much philanthropy is unprecedented and has never been seen in any time and era and even the present century in which making humanitarian claims has become such a fashion that it has resulted in the development of animal support organizations.¹⁵

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) had accepted the government and caliphate as systems to observe human rights, achieve them, and remove social misery. It was because he believed, “There is a need for a leader to take the rights of the weak from the powerful and the rights of the oppressed from the oppressor.” In this way, all good and kind people will be relieved from evil and malicious people. When pointing to his patched sandals, he

to historians, the brides’ jewelry was so heavy on the night of their weddings that they could not walk at all.

15. It would be much better if, instead of their imperfect and official ceremonies in relation to “supporting prisoners”, governments improved the conditions in prisons and did something about torture and, at least, adhered more to their constitutional law and other social laws.

told Ibn ‘Abbās, “I swear to God that this pair of sandals is dearer to me than ruling you, unless there is a government in which I can establish people’s rights or undo wrongs.”

Respecting “public opinion” is one of the manifestations of respecting man’s honor and the prestige of a society consisting of human beings. Heedlessness of public opinion, which is the unconscious mind of nations, means heedlessness of their character. We see a lot of this kind of respect in Imām ‘Alī’s conduct and words. In the Battle of Şiffiyn he did not agree with the arbitration proposal and knew that it was a trick; however, since some members of his army agreed with arbitration, he surrendered to it, and this resulted in the enemy army’s being saved. He said in this regard, “I will never make you do anything against your will.”

In his order to Mālik Ashtar, he said,

People are so concerned about your acts that you were regarding previous commanders, and the words of the public (public opinions) indicate that something is right or wrong.

Indeed, one of the worst characteristics of a commander in the eyes of good people is selfishness.

And if people assume that you are a cruel person, try to rectify it by good reasons and employ moderation and justice in your acts ... because people’s good opinion of you facilitates your job ... and the most favorite acts for you should be those that satisfy people.

This is because respecting public opinion, i.e. the **strong political and secret power of the nation**, is not only the religious duty of the ruler, but will also pave the way for the

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cooperation of the people and government and facilitate the interaction between the master and the servant.

When rulers take no heed of public opinion, their character and station (because true rulership belongs to people, and each government acts as their representative in order to serve them), they will face rebellion and uprising and will finally fail. Therefore, we can clearly understand the bases of democracy in Imām ‘Ali’s government. Respecting public opinion, which means respecting people’s characters, is itself a sign of democracy and the rational duty of all rulers.

Carl L. Becker, the Western scholar, writes in a paper:

Democracy means having faith in the value, respect, and honor of people as human individuals and as beings with specific purposes and believing that brotherly good intention is more valuable than a selfish and quarrelsome spirit, that in the course of history all values have been inseparable from the love of reality and the unbiased search for discovering it, and that the power and knowledge that the discovery of the truth grants to man must be used for increasing the welfare and prosperity of all rather than securing the benefits of those individuals or classes to whom chance or intelligence granted temporary privileges.¹⁶

If we study Imām ‘Ali’s democracy, we might come to the belief that the well-known European thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, etc., had been inspired by him regarding their ideas of democracy. You will also be able to judge Mu‘āwiyah and the other political rulers of that period in terms

16. Jamalzadeh, *Āzādī wa shakhsyyat-i insān* (Freedom and Human Character), p. 35.

of their humanistic features by reading stories such as the one that follows:

Mu‘āwiyah gave Egypt and its people as a gift to ‘Amrū‘aṣ, his political and military councilor, in return for his political and military services. He truly gave him the “people” of Egypt and even, as a preventive measure, specifically referred to this point, i.e. giving Egypt and Egyptians to ‘Amrū‘aṣ, in the deed of sale and the order of the guardianship of Egypt, which is known in history books as “entrusting guardianship”. He traded Egyptians exactly in the same way that European serfs were bought and sold with the land they worked on.

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) and Respecting Freedom

‘*A* li ibn Abi Tālib, the great leader of humanity, had great respect for all human natural rights, particularly for the most important of them, freedom, and strove in order to protect it.

Man’s natural right of freedom has occupied the minds of the prominent and well-known social philosophers and law experts of the world since long ago. However, it has never gone beyond the level of a theory or hypothesis except in the time of Imām ‘Alī (‘a).

In his view, freedom was human beings’ true and natural right, and denying it was an unforgivable and great crime and invasion of people’s rights. Neither did he ever invade one’s freedom, nor did he allow anyone to commit such a crime. He always respected people’s personal freedom completely and never allowed anyone to ignore or violate it.

The word “freedom” had also been discussed and supported during his time and sometimes before him, and people had heard its resounding tune before. However, the

freedom they meant was totally different from the one Imām ‘Alī (‘a) believed in. According to the literary man, George Jordach,

The word freedom which was common among people referred to an imperfect concept limited to one’s not being a slave or servant to the other ... Nevertheless, the freedom intended by Imām ‘Alī (‘a) is something else ... It is something that makes civilizations, causes revolutions by human beings, and creates philanthropy and communication among people ... In his view, freedom is the basis for man’s other rights.¹⁷

Moreover, the freedom intended by Imām ‘Alī (‘a) cannot be compared with the one intended by “Liberalism”. In his culture, freedom is a rational phenomenon respected in the framework of “respecting others’ rights and freedom” because it belongs to all people, and one’s using his own right of freedom must not lead to denying that of another person.

Furthermore, Imām ‘Alī’s idea of freedom must not be equated with what Greek philosophers believed in. They said, “Man’s spirit is free, and no force and power can imprison it.”¹⁸ This is clearly wrong because man’s body is not separate from his soul. They said although one’s body can be controlled and dominated, his soul cannot be enslaved. However, this concept of freedom is not comprehensive enough to be compared with Imām ‘Alī’s idea of man’s freedom.

17. *Imām ‘Alī, Şaut al-‘idālat al-insāniyyah*, p. 174.

18. According to Liberalism, the only people who can use freedom (that is their own right) are those who have the power to gain it, i.e. the rich and not everyone. However, in Imām ‘Alī’s view, “Freedom is something which must be given rather than gained.”

There are several examples of this prominent feature of the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Ali (‘a). Here, we will content ourselves with a few narrations to illustrate it.

... One day, after dividing some money among people, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) called his servant but did not receive any response from him ... When he came out and saw that the servant was in a place where he could hear him, he asked in surprise why he had refused to answer him. The servant said, “Neither was I in the mood to answer, nor did I expect any kind of punishment!” Imām ‘Ali (‘a) said, “Praise be to God, who made me one of those whose servants do not fear.” In gratitude for this test, he freed that servant.¹⁹

A man who had lost his job in the time of Imām ‘Ali (‘a) and did not favor his rule asked him for permission to travel to Syria in order to visit his relatives and friends. Imām ‘Ali (‘a) granted him the permission, but his friends and companions who were well-aware of that man’s intentions, told the Imām that he intended to cooperate with Mu‘āwiyah, and his going to Syria would create trouble. However, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) said, “He knows better. Do not stop him.”

‘Abdullāh, the son of ‘Umar, and Sa‘d, the son of Abū Waghghāṣ, came to Imām ‘Ali (‘a), and said, “We do not like to swear allegiance to you, do we have to?” He said, “As long as you do not do anything against people’s good, you will be safe.” Then in a sermon, he told people:

19. *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 9, p. 519.

People you swore allegiance to me in the same way that you did to those before me. Everyone is indeed “free” to swear allegiance to me; however, after they do so, they are not free to cancel it. The Imām must be a pious man, and people must follow him. This is a general allegiance, and those who turn their backs to it have, in fact, turned their backs to Islam.

After fighting ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubair, Ḥajjāj Thaqaḥī came to Medina and started bloodshed in the Prophet’s Mosque and the streets of the city. One day, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar came to Ḥajjāj when he was writing his “Letter of Victory” and asked for his permission to swear allegiance to him. Thus, using a shaky voice and flattering tone, he said, “My Lord, give me your hand so that I swear allegiance to you in the name of the caliph, since I heard from the Prophet (s), ‘Whosoever dies without knowing his *Imām* has died an ignorant person.’” However, Ḥajjāj stretched his foot towards him and said, “Swear allegiance to my foot because my hand is busy.” He continued, “You, idiot! Was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib not an *Imām* that you did not swear allegiance to him!?”

The governor of Basrah asked in a letter from Imām ‘Alī (‘a), “Some flatterers here intend to go to Syria to Mu‘āwiyah’s court. What should I do with them?” The Imām said, “Let them go away because they cannot bear the equality dominating our government.”

These narrations and similar ones show that Imām ‘Alī (‘a) respected individual freedom so much that he even allowed his dangerous enemies not only to oppose him (freedom of political ideas), but also to conspire against him and to go to

Mu'āwiyah for their love of respect and wealth and to Syria in order to engage in sabotage (freedom of residence).

In spite of controlling the government and central power, he would never accept forcing people who had not sworn allegiance to him, but were afraid of him, to do so. Even his friends objected to this policy of his; nevertheless, Imām 'Alī ('a) would never deny an ant's freedom to it. They were "free" and could choose the path to heaven or hell themselves.

Although he was the ruler of a vast land (including all Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Turkistan, etc.) and required a big army, he would never force anyone to accompany him in wars after he notified them of their personal duties. Neither did he ever tempt them to go with him to war with the money and gold of his caliphate system (Mu'āwiyah and the like did not have even one tenth of that wealth, but ruled the people). In fact, he never used force and material or spiritual power in order to make people do anything because of his great respect for their freedom. When some superficial people objected to him in this regard, he said, "Do you expect me to gain victory through cruelty?"

At all stages of his rule, in order to gain people's understanding and friendship, he merely used clear and logical words and wise pieces of advice which were in harmony with the spirit of equality and fraternity. One day, one of the governors wrote to Imām 'Alī ('a), "It has been proposed to me to force the people of an area to work in order to fix a subterranean canal. This will mainly benefit these people themselves and their land. We will also receive more tax money. What is our duty in this regard?"

The Commander of the Faithful wrote, "No one can be forced to do anything unless he gives his consent. Moreover,

anyone who works must be paid, and...” The people of today’s world cannot believe that Imām ‘Alī (‘a) had so much respect for freedom, and his rule was so democratic. This is because such democracy and freedom have never been seen either in the past or in the present age in which humanity is said to have regained its lost rights, and the so-called democracy has spread in more than half of the world.

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) and Social Justice

1. Class Differences

By class differences we do not mean natural differences such as those pertaining to race and behavioral characteristics, which are necessary for the natural phenomena of this world. Rather, we mean those gaps that came into being as a result of accident and, to some extent, voluntary differences.

Therefore, it is not necessary to restate the theories of scholars such as Count de Gobineau, Ratzel, Keynes, Burg, Cumplovic, Sorokin, and Woodworth concerning class differences or discuss their origins, including force, dominance, heredity, environment, capitalism, proletarianism, etc. It will be more useful here to discuss the factors that directly lead to revolutions and rebellions, that is, the absence of social justice, the deprivation of a poor majority of social privileges, and the plundering behavior of the capitalist and powerful class.

Of course, class differences in the sense of natural differences, i.e. animal emotions and instincts, have always

existed, which, in turn, have always led to wars and revolutions. Justice, which means moderation and equality, is opposed to difference and inequality, which are both conventional acts. In contrast, seeking justice is an instinctive act and follows difference and inequality.

A material inequity (potential difference) necessitates the existence of a force which causes the formation of a current between two unequal surfaces in the form of an interaction. This principle is also true about spiritual issues because all natural laws apply to both material and spiritual affairs.

The absence of social justice is an inequality which inevitably provokes the deprived and unprivileged social classes to rise in order to attain equality and destroy class differences. In order to prevent clashes among different classes, the formation of various groupings among people, or revolutions, the duty of each clever and righteous government is to give equal rights to people, who must have equal shares of government, use of vital necessities, and social wealth and privileges (true socialism). For example, it must fight against poverty, which is a sign of a society’s death, and take from those who have more than what they need and give them to those who are in need. If a government believes in equality among people, it is a responsible one. According to Herodotus, the Greek historian, “We can prove with thousands of proofs that a government in which all people enjoy equality is the best of all governments.”

This sense of responsibility automatically leads to discipline and stability in society and the consolidation of its pillars; as a result, there will be no revolution or rebellion. Experience shows that, evidently, the best way to prevent uprising, war, and rebellion is to grant freedom to people, observe equality in human societies, and fight material poverty

wisely rather than vindictively, which is the method of Marxist and Fascist philosophies. On the contrary, in a society where there is no balance between social classes, where some people are deprived of their true rights to social wealth, laws, and freedom, and where national incomes and wealth are not equally distributed, there will always be some germs provoking rebellion and corruption. The existence of two socialist and capitalist blocks in the world clearly illustrates this point, and they will continue to exist until inequality among people, which is due to lack of social justice, is uprooted.

Peoples’ revolutions in France, Russia, China, Cuba, and the like were all motivated by such class differences and pressures on the deprived social classes (including workers, peasants, petty tradesmen, etc.).

2. Society in Imām ‘Ali’s View

Previously, we said that, in Imām ‘Ali’s view, each society consists of a number of human beings who have been born from the same father and mother (Adam and Eve). Whether they like it or not, they are brothers and sisters to each other and none of them is superior to the other. Thus rulers should view all of them in the same way, “The people of a society are equal to each other like the teeth of a comb...”

In Imām ‘Ali’s eyes, there is only one class in society, and all the people are at the same level; no one is superior to another person in race, religion, or language (the second principle of the Declaration of Human Rights). He does not officially recognize racial privileges and racism. He believes that man is man, and the only thing that makes someone superior to someone else is his piety because, according to a certain Islamic motto, “The dearest among you to God is the

most pious of you.” They are only moral virtues that make one superior to another, “One is evaluated in terms of his good qualities”; “Honor and dignity lie in wisdom and courtesy, not in lineage and race”; “Dignity arises from high-mindedness, not from rotten bones”. Moreover, moral vices lead to one’s meanness: “Let it not be that you view the benevolent and malevolent in the same way”; “The meanest of all people is the least knowledgeable and the laziest of them”. Apart from the above, nothing makes one superior to another, “Beware that all the people are equal before the ‘Truth’”, “All human beings are equal in Our eyes: Arabs and non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims, black and white, and, particularly, the rich and the poor.”

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) hated all aspects and manifestations of “class differences”, particularly those pertaining to the differences between the poor and the rich. In a letter to one of his governors (‘Uthmān, the son of Ḥanīf), Imām ‘Alī (‘a) greatly blamed him because he had gone to a gathering which was merely attended by wealthy people and aristocrats and in to which poor people were not admitted. He had eaten delicious food there, while right behind the walls of that house some hungry people wished to have some food.

You, son of Ḥanīf, I have heard that a man from Basrah invited you to a feast. You accepted his invitation and hastily went there. They brought you bowls of broth one after the other and you drank them in one gulp. Then you ate meat as if you were a hungry orphan and licked its bones as if you were an old hyena offered colorful types of food in big bowls. I never thought of you as one who accepts the invitation of those who reject the needy and call for the wealthy. Look at what you are eating: if you are not certain if it is the right of the oppressed to

have it or not, throw it away and eat what rightfully belongs to you...

In his order of government to Mālik Ashtar, Imām 'Ali ('a) wrote, "... and people must be equal in your eyes in terms of their rights. I warn you not to own something that equally belongs to others"; "... neither are you different from others, nor are there any differences among others, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims."

In the same order, he says, "... and never be cruel to your subjects and never treat them fiercely; don't you ever value being brutal to them because people are of two types: they are either your religious brothers and Muslims or of the same species as you."

He also emphasizes that security and justice rightfully belong to all people, "Never be cruel to Muslims and never oppress non-Muslims." They are all equal to each other because they are human beings, and all of them are equal in their essential and primary rights. He also says, "Social justice is the right of all people, whether a friend or an enemy"; "Anyone who annoys a follower of the Bible (a Christian) has, in fact, annoyed me."

No pain was greater for Imām 'Ali ('a) than seeing a human being suffer! It is now useful to learn about the views of some of the great figures of Western philosophy and compare them with those of Imām 'Ali ('a). In his *Politics*, Aristotle (384-322 BC) wrote, "None of the Greek cities can follow the policy of capturing other Greek cities because the Greeks have 'naturally' been born free. However, the Greeks 'have the right'

to capture the cities of non-Greek ethnic groups.’²⁰ Apparently, this was because the Greeks merely considered themselves to be human beings and called others barbarians i.e. wild. St. Ambrose (339-397 AD), who is believed to be one of the founders of the international law, maintained that justice is man’s natural right. He also believed that man enjoys certain natural and divine rights. In the interpretation of his idea, he said that “pagans” (i.e. non-Christians) were not human beings and did not consider them as members of human society! St. Augustine (the seminal Christian thinker, 354-430) also believed that the human family and nations only consist of Christians.²¹

However, since the rule of the descendants of Imām ‘Alī (‘a) is based on the principle of respecting social justice for man, it is necessary to prevent any kind of social stratification and have equal human beings, whether a master or a servant. This is because when class differences and privileges exist in a society, the control of the majority in society falls into the hands of a minority from the class of wealthy people and aristocrats or powerful and oppressive individuals who only think about their own benefits.

As a result, a number of successful fame-seeking people will die on one side from eating too much, and millions of disappointed and unknown individuals in human moulds will die from hunger on the other! The government must be in the hands of all people so that peace, security, and the happiness of all of them is realized far from poverty and misery and in the light of attaining their rights.

20. Perhaps it was due to their philosophy of racial superiority that the ancient Greeks and Romans called their “civil rights” *Jus-Gentium*, i.e. human rights.

21. Safdari, *Ḥuqūq-i bayn al-milal ‘umūmī* (General International Law), vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

Islam is indeed opposed to feudalism, slavery, and depriving people of their freedom. Imām ‘Ali (‘a) would never allow a khanate government, like that of the Ottoman period and the last years of ‘Umar’s government, to be developed. He would also stand against political oppression and the rule of elders, as well as the dominance of feudalists and land owners so that they would not be able to suppress and enslave the servants of God. This is because their ownership of vast lands gave them the power to cruelly bring God’s servants into their own service more than ever before. They not only owned the product of their jobs, but also their lives, property, and wives (for example, in Medieval Europe, subjects and serfs were a part of the lands they worked on and were bought or sold with them). The greater the number of such lands, which encouraged oppression and suppression of peasants, the greater the abundance of wealth on one side and the more disastrous the poverty of a weak majority of people on the other. In other words, the difference between the two classes of feudalists and peasants increased day by day until there would be only two social classes on Earth: feudalists and slaves!

What was mentioned above concerned the role of land and the government of feudalists, which was completely against Islam.²² Thus Imām ‘Ali (‘a) would never allow this mistake to continue and would burn the roots of corruption. If ‘Uthmān had built up an aristocratic government, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) built up the “‘*Alawī* government” (that of his descendants), i.e. the rule of the truth and justice, on its ruins.

He was well aware that in a segregated society, in which power and powerful people are always in one line and

22. It was perhaps because of the significance of the role of land in human life that physiocrats believed in the principality of land in all their economic theories.

poor and miserable people in the other, social foundations are extremely shaky. The only society that can stand firmly and attain supremacy is one in which complete equality in human rights is observed, and there is neither any defeated or oppressed nor any dominant and oppressive individual. A healthy society is one in which every one enjoys equal social, financial, judicial, and civil rights. This is because it is in the light of this equality that lawful freedom is granted and institutionalized, and security and permanent peace spread their wings over everyone.

* * *

Imām ‘Alī’s social justice and fight against class differences are based on the fraternity of all individuals in society. This fraternity is much higher and more sublime than “equality”. Accordingly, the equality of people before social laws is necessary. Moreover, its absence or weakness is against *fiṭrah* (primordial nature) and the law of nature. According to one of our prominent leaders, “If the government in a society is based on compassion and mutual ‘friendship’, there would be no need to exercise justice.”

In what follows, we will refer to some important aspects of social justice and prevention of social stratification in detail.

Equality before the Law

*T*he law of each country is an ornament to its people because it originates in their culture and habits and represents their spirit and thoughts.²³ The law of every society belongs to its people, and the sultan (the law protecting the nation) is responsible to protect and enforce it. He is, in fact, at the service of his people and the law, rather than vice versa.

The most important issue in the permanence of a society is the consolidation and establishment of its laws, that is, lack of discrimination and observing equality in their execution. In his order to Mālik Ashtar, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) said, “People must be equal before you in terms of their rights.” Here, he is referring to all rights (right in the general sense of the word), and equality of individuals before the law completes their equality in terms of their rights. As mentioned before, the meaning of justice is moderation and observing equality among people. Here, the ruler himself is one of the individuals in society and is not superior to the law.

23. However, we see that most westernized Eastern and Muslim countries import the laws of Western countries along with their luxurious goods.

After Imām ‘Alī (‘a) made a pledge with people and his vicegerency was officially recognized, he said,

People, I am a man from among you. Any law that applies to you also applies to me. Beware that I will return all the lands that ‘Uthmān gave to his friends and relatives to the Treasury of Muslims. I swear to God... if I learn about the things that he gave as a gift to others, I will return them to their real owners, even if some women have married with those properties and riches and some slave-maids have been bought and sent to various cities...

Since discrimination in the enforcement of the law deprives some people of their rights and leads to criminal acts, he said in his order, “Do not let someone’s low social status make you see his small mistake as a big one, and another one’s high social status make you see his big mistake as a small one.” This means discrimination, and the government cannot discriminate among people because it will lead to injustice: “Because, when the ruler has different whims and desires, injustice occurs in several cases,” and “Be just for the sake of God so that neither you nor any of the people around you oppresses others; otherwise, you have been cruel to them, and anyone who is cruel to God’s servants, He will be his enemy in support of His people.” According to the Holy Prophet (ṣ), who was Imām ‘Alī’s teacher, “One who has ruled 10 people with injustice, will have his hands and feet in chains in the Hereafter.”

In order for a ruler to be well-aware that the law is equally applied to everyone and is justly executed, and that there is no oppression in his realm of power, he must be directly in contact with people and be available when they need him. He must not hide himself like robbers and murderers in shelters far

from people's access. Therefore, Imām 'Ali ('a) says, "There must not be a great distance between you and people because a ruler's hiding from people causes difficulties for them." Each difficulty imposes a pressure, and each pressure leads to an uprising and rebellion. He also told his governor,

You must give public audience so that the needy have access to you. You must also be humble to them and create a situation in which all the poor and wretched can complain to you without fear and talk about what they need. Your authority or the power of your companions must not frighten them because I have heard from the Prophet (s), "A land where the rights of the poor are not granted by the powerful is not pure".

One of the examples of complete equality before the law in Imām 'Ali's government which truly shakes us is the story of his behavior with the members of his family and his relatives.

One day, one of his daughters, in line with the customs followed by ordinary women, borrowed a necklace from the Treasury of the Muslims from her father's treasurer for one day because she had no jewels herself. She guaranteed to pay for it if anything happened to it. When Imām 'Ali ('a) learned about this, he greatly reproached his daughter and the treasurer and returned the necklace to the Treasury and told his daughter, "If you had not guaranteed the return of this necklace, I would have cut your hand like that of a robber." He also punished 'Abdullāh ibn Abi Rāfi', the treasurer of the Treasury of the Muslims.

Imām 'Ali's brother, 'Aqil, who was a poor man, asked him for a greater share of the Treasury for his master. However, Imām 'Ali ('a), who had a heart full of love for his brother, refused to ignore the equality of all people in terms of their shares of the Treasury and discriminate to the advantage of his

brother and for the sake of his heart. Therefore, he did not comply with his demand. It is said that one day he branded ‘Aqil’s hand (or threatened to do so) and made him understand that Imām ‘Ali (‘a) fears the other worldly torment, which is much worse than that, and will never do anything against the Islamic laws, the Prophet’s morals, the principles of wisdom, and human conscience.

The great men of the Quraysh enjoyed certain privileges in terms of their food rations and income during their lifetime. Nevertheless, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) considered equal rights in this regard for everyone and, in response to those who objected to him, said, “I will pay you exactly as much as you received in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) – i.e. equal to others.” They said, “We have served Islam”, and Imām ‘Ali (‘a) replied, “If you did your services for God, He will reward you in the Hereafter; otherwise, you do not deserve any reward.”

Taking people’s financial power in paying taxes and other tolls into consideration is one of the necessary factors in order to guarantee their equality before the law. Otherwise, many bloody rebellions and revolutions will happen in countries, as they have happened before (the most famous of them include the American Revolution, the French Revolution during the time of Louis XIV, the revolution in England, etc.).

In Imām ‘Ali’s order to Mālīk Ashtar, reference has been made to two important and critical issues: first, “Take from those who can afford to give, and if they do not have the money, do not bother them”; second, “Spend what you receive from people for them and the improvement of their provinces.”

Equality in Possessions

Each society is like a single body, and its individuals function as its cells. All the rules governing a body are also true about society. The wealth and God-given gifts of that society, like the blood in a body, must be divided among all members in proportion to the amount of work they do in their society. In this way, we will not witness hoarding and inflation in one place and shortage in another. Such factors lead to the disproportionate growth of some organs and the retardedness of some others, and, as a result, the whole body will be destroyed. The disproportionate growth of a body organ will lead to fatal diseases, which, in turn, will result in death. Inflation and accumulation of wealth in a specific point in society and its shortage in other points will lead to the same death in society that we see in the human body. A society with a poor majority is like a body of which the greatest part is deprived of necessary nutritive substances.

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) is well-aware that such a society is condemned to annihilation, exactly in the same way that such a body is condemned to death. The cure here is nothing but equality and fair distribution of incomes and modification of

riches based on the divine law. In his eyes, like the cells and organ's of a living body, every individual in a society, is responsible for the activities of other individuals and their problems and diseases, "Every human being is the brother of another human being, worries about him instinctively, and provides for his needs." Moreover, following the mechanism of a living body, each member accepts the responsibility to do the job of another member when it breaks down or is absent. That is why Imām 'Ali ('a) divided wealth according to the Islamic law and considered it necessary in order to prevent the corruption of the poor members of society. In doing so, he began by dividing his personal possessions.

Unlike what seems to be the case, Imām 'Ali ('a) was a rich man and had a great annual income. Nevertheless, when the crops were harvested, he collected all of them in one place, called the poor people to himself, and, without taking anything for himself, divided the crops among them. Then, in order to provide for his own life, he worked (because a Muslim must work and produce and does not wait for charity and others' help). He even worked for Jewish land and garden owners for very little money. He pulled water from wells with this own hands and watered date trees and left a part of that day's pay aside for "the needy and the deprived".

When he needed a shirt for himself, he bought two shirts and asked his servant to choose anyone that he wanted. Then he took the other one for himself or sometimes even gave it to a beggar. He said, "All people are equal before the Truth." For him, slaves were also "people" and deserved to be equal with their Imām in their rights. He ate stale bread, and because he did not want his children to change it with fresh bread or rub some oil on it out of filial love, he kept it in a sealed leathem bag, since he wanted to be equal with the poorest of all people.

He said that if he wished, good food and beautiful clothes were available to him. However, are only names and

appearances enough in a government? Ruling a society in which no efforts are made in order to provide welfare and comfort for its people has no value, and it is better for it not to be there: “If I wished to have pure honey, fresh wheat, and silk clothes, all were provided for me ... but is it enough for me that people call me the Commander of the Faithful and then nothing else?”

He told his governor, Mālik Ashtar, “There is no difference between a ruler and a subordinate; don’t be proud of ruling Egypt”; “What happened to others will also happen to you; try not to be a pharaoh”; “Beware not to take for yourself what belongs to all people”; “Beware of saying that because I am the ruler, I must command and be obeyed”; “The Treasury of Muslims belongs to everyone, and all the people of the past and future have a share of it”; “All the property that belongs to you now belonged to others previously and will belong to others in future”; “Thus do not think that you are doing a favor to people when you give them their share of this wealth; give it to them without discrimination”; “Do not forget equality in the distribution of property; it is their right to have their own possessions, and their rights truly belong to them and must be observed, particularly, support the poor because this group of your servants need justice more than others”; “Moreover, fight against hoarding because it is against the nature, benefits, and good of society”, and “Do not allow anyone to store the necessities of the public and use them merely for his personal benefits.”

Imām ‘Ali ('a) himself knew the monster of poverty very well and tried to face it closely in order to learn better about its nature, effects, and consequences in society. He ate barley bread and spent summer and winter wearing the same garment. His hatred of poverty made him say, “If poverty appeared in the form of a man, I would kill him”; “Poverty brings the most terrible kind of death to man”; “Poverty is a stranger in its own house”; and “Poverty locks even the tongue of the most intelligent of people in their throat.” His knowledgeable master also said, “Poverty is perhaps the same

as blasphemy.” In addition, the truthful Abūdhar, who, according to the Prophet (ﷺ), was the most truthful of all human beings under the azure sky and was nicknamed the Pious, frequently cried, “I am amazed at a man who has no food at home but does not draw his sword at people in society.”

In other words, poverty necessarily brings about restlessness and corruption in a community, destroys its pillars, and disrupts its peace and security. Imām ‘Alī (‘a) was well-aware that if rulers do not fight against people’s poverty and misery, they have to fight people themselves. He also knew that, if a “better life” is not provided for them, they will lose not only their livelihood and resurrection, but also their security and peace. Accordingly, he emphatically ordered his governors to support peasants and poor people and take sides with them:

Observe God’s rules in protecting the weak: devote a part of the Treasury of Muslims and a part of the income of the farming lands of all regions of the country to them because those who are far from you have the same rights as those who are close to you.

You are responsible for protecting the rights of all people. Do not let the pride of your affluence make you forget them, and the doing of big jobs turn into an excuse for ruining small jobs. Beware not to ignore them and turn your back to them. Fix your curious eyes on the poor; those who appear small in the eyes of others and are humiliated by them. Send God-fearing and humble people to investigate their work and report what they find out to you. Then deal with them in a way that is acceptable in the Hereafter because this group of people deserve justice more than others...

Equality before Justice

A healthy judicial system plays a significant role in protecting peace and security in a country because the courts are the true representatives of governments' social justice and the deciding factor in spreading inequality and deprivation of freedom.

When the rights of a group in a society are suppressed and they have no other choice, they resort to the judicial system and, in order to restore their rights, they ask for help from it. At this point, if the judgment is correct and the rights of people are correctly observed, the battle will be over. However, if they are also disappointed at this final point and decide to avenge themselves, compensate for their loss, or fight cruelty, uproar, rebellion, and war, which disrupt peace and quiet, will begin.

History reveals many events that are the effects of heedlessness of establishing justice in favor of the oppressed and ignoring the rights of the weak. However, if these cases had been fairly dealt with, certain wars would have been avoided. If judicial centers and international non-judicial organizations had correctly performed their legal and human duty before the aggressions of powerful governments or superpowers against

weak nations and governments, and if the so-called Security Council, which consists of oppressive countries as members, instead of exercising discrimination and its powerful members' Right of Veto, had taken the necessary steps to protect security and peace in various regions or the whole world in time and far from unlawful and unethical groupings and political games, no war would perhaps have started in the world. Nor would the face of world peace have become red with the blood of human beings.

Imām 'Alī ('a), the knowledgeable man of the world of Islam, attached great importance to the role of judgment in society and chose judges with great care. This was because a judge is the guard of justice and has a very heavy responsibility in this regard. In his order to Mālik Ashtar, he said,

In order to judge among people and rule them, choose the best of subjects so that the ongoing events do not put him under pressure, and the sides of the case do not argue with him. Moreover, he must not bear violations of the law and, when he finds out about the truth, he must have the courage to follow it.

In Imām 'Alī's view, judgment is a means for establishing the rights of the oppressed and fighting cruelty rather than a tool used against them and exploited by the oppressor. That is why the oppressor and the oppressed, the accused and the accuser, whoever they are and to whatever social class they belong, must sit in the same row and be seen with the same eye. The guilty must be convicted and the right should be given to its owner. Some factors such as money, relationships, and contacts, which play such great roles in the judicial systems of our time, were useless in Imām 'Alī's time.

Once, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) had a problem with an Arab, so he took it to the second caliph to find a solution. Out of respect for the Imām, the caliph, following the Arab tradition, called him by his nickname (Abūlhassan) and not by his first name, ‘Alī (‘a). However, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) objected angrily to the caliph in the court of judgment because of this preference, since he did not want the equality between him and the other side be disrupted, even in his own favor.

During his period of vicegerency, one day he found his lost armor with a Christian man. He took him to the city court to the judge, Shurayḥ, and claimed that his armor was with that man, while he had neither sold it nor given it as a gift to anyone. Shurayḥ asked the Christian about the story, and he said that it belonged to him; however, he also emphasized that the Commander of the Faithful was not a liar. Then the judge asked Imām ‘Ali (‘a) about his proof for his claim. He said that he did not have any. There was really no proof to testify in favor of the Imām, but all three of them knew that he was not a liar. Nevertheless, the judge judged in favor of the Christian, and Imām ‘Ali (‘a) did not object to his judgment.

This was the quality of judgment and the “independence of courts” during the reign of the true democracy of Imām ‘Ali (‘a). Because of the importance of the role of judges in maintaining justice, he tried greatly to provide them with financial support and welfare so that they would not accept bribes, suppress anyone’s rights, or disrupt justice and equality out of need or poverty.

Two things make a judge accept bribes: need and friendship. This danger could arise from accepting invitations to parties, gifts, etc. Imām ‘Ali (‘a) fought both of these motives. Once he wrote such a reproachful letter to ‘Uthmān Ibn Ḥanīf (his commander), who had gone to the gathering of one of the

aristocrats of his time, which, when read, makes any reader shiver with shame and fear. In order to satisfy the financial needs of judges, he also made great efforts. One day, he wrote to his governor (Mālik Ashtar), “Be generous in giving to judges so that their problems are solved and their need of others decreases.” This is because poverty is truly the same as blasphemy, and, like anyone else, a judge is a human being vulnerable to committing errors.

War and Peace in Imām

‘Alī’s View

The ugly face of the monster of war and its depressing nightmare made Imām ‘Alī (‘a), who was a lover of “friendship” and sincerity, hate it and run away from it. He favored peace as much as the philosophy of philanthropism necessitated and so long as it did not embolden rebels and criminals to violate others’ rights, shed the blood of innocent people, or invade their property.

In fact, he advocated peace within the framework specified by God and his Islamic religion, and as long as it did not lead to *inẓilām*, i.e. bearing oppression and cruelty (because accepting oppression is forbidden in the religious laws of the brave, and Islam does not favor meanness and wretchedness for Muslims). That is why Imām ‘Alī (‘a) fought this phenomenon and kept away from it. Imām Ḥussein (‘a), the noble son of Imām ‘Alī (‘a), the leader of the brave and freedom-lovers, the greatest hero of martyrdom in the way of the truth and freedom,

and the student of his father’s school, said, “Beware that war is an evil that knows no limits and has a disgusting taste that is easily perceived.”

There were only three battles during the rule of Imām ‘Ali (‘a) (not those that started according to the order of the Prophet (ﷺ)): Jamal, Şiffiyn, and Nahrawān. The defense of the truth, i.e. the greatest service to humanity, was the motive behind all of them.

The fact is that Imām ‘Ali (‘a), the lover of peace and security, took part in battles because in Islam (the religion of loving peace) a war was intended to stop cruelty, prevent oppression (as opposed to *inẓilām*), and defend freedom and other human rights. This is because “defense” is a certain right, and any animal, let alone a human being, who is the highest of all creatures, instinctively rises in defense against danger. “War” and “politics” are the two means by which a country is protected and are considered two of the vital pillars of that society.

War is bad because it brings about misery, sadness, bloodshed, and the loss of lives of noble and honest people. However, if the same happens during the peace period, war means happiness and comfort; peace is intended to lead to welfare and well-being rather than captivity and suffering.

The school of Pacifism is against war, whether it is invasive or defensive. However, this is not true in Islam and Imām ‘Ali’s view because bearing cruelty is much worse and uglier than a war against invasion. War is not a defect in itself; otherwise, all the movements of the oppressed against the oppressors and all other noble national revolutions and uprisings must be deemed vicious. According to a certain Islamic principle, “If people see an oppressor and do not stop

him, they themselves will also be oppressed by him after a short time.”

The manifestation of Imām ‘Ali’s spirit of avoiding war and bloodshed can be better studied in the scenes before beginning to fight and of war. His refusal to fight and being extremely interested in “negotiation”, as well as the sermons that he always gave before the battle in order to arrive at an understanding or agreement with his enemies, indicate that he never wished the blood of the people who, either unknowingly or based on foolish emotions, had come to war be wasted. Imām ‘Ali ('a) never took the first step in war and ordered his armies and commanders, “Wait until they begin the battle, and whenever, with God’s permission, they start running away, do not kill the fugitives and the injured people and never harm women in anyway”, and “Never invite anyone to a man-to-man fight.” It was centuries after these orders that philosophers and philanthropist politicians held some congresses (such as the Westphalia and Vienna Congresses) with the same maxims, and we know that they have arrived at many positive results following their endeavors.

At the beginning of each war, he hesitated so much that he himself became afraid that he might have acted against the Prophet’s religion. In two cases he said, “I analyzed the pros and cons of this job [fighting Mu‘āwiyah] that I could not go to sleep anymore. Thus I saw no other choice but to fight him or to deny Islam (a religion that our Prophet (ﷺ) has brought for us). As a cure, I found war easier than the torture of giving it up, and I found death in this world lighter than death in the other world.”

In another place he says, “I studied all aspects of it [war against Mu‘āwiyah], and I had no other choice but war;

otherwise, Muḥammed’s religion would have been harmed by atheism.” In other words, if it were not for fear of blasphemy, he would have never fought against him.

He hesitated so much in the Battle of Şıffıyn that people objected to him for being afraid of fighting. However, he said,

You say that all of this [delaying battle] is because of fearing death! I swear to God that it does not make a difference to me if I go towards death or if it comes towards me.

However, you said, “He had doubts about fighting the people of Syria! I swear to God that I delayed war for no reason but hoping that some of those who had been lost [friends of Mu‘āwiyah] find their way with my help and live under my protection. This is much more pleasant for me than killing them in their ignorance and when they are sinful”.

It is indeed obvious that Imām ‘Ali (‘a) loved peace. When we learn about his view of war, as explained above, his love of peace and the happiness of human beings, irrespective of their color, religion, and language, becomes clear to us. He wrote to his governor, Mālik Ashtar, “Never turn down your enemy’s request for peace”; “Peace guarantees the security of the country”; “Because peace brings calmness to the army and being free from sadness and worry guarantees the security of the country”, and “Those who plant enmity will be harmed themselves, and God has said that peace is necessary in order for countries to be immune from terror.”

In the Battle of Şiffīn, Imām ‘Ali (‘a) also told his army, “Pray to God and ask him to protect you against bloodshed and make peace between us and them...,” and “However, it is better to say, oh, God, do not let our blood and our enemies’ blood be shed and make peace between us and them.”

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) was someone who never went to war if it did not come to him itself. For him, war was the last act not the first one. The principle of “pre-war negotiation”, which is one of the international rules of war in our period and became common in Europe after the 19th century, was the basis of Imām ‘Ali’s practical decisions in relation to war. In this regard, he said, “I will not begin fighting in a war unless I first ask the enemy to arrive at an understanding ... If they change their mind and repent, I will accept, and if war is their only choice, I will ask for help from God and then fight them.”

When he had no choice other than shedding the blood of his enemies, influenced by philanthropic emotions, he forgave them as much as possible and ordered his commanders to follow his suit in this regard and not to kill anyone easily or for the most trivial excuses: “Never use your hand and sword against anyone for the sake of words” (Do not be influenced by your emotions in this regard), “I will never punish any one based on speculation and illusions”, and “I will never fight enemies unless I have previously entered into some negotiations with them.”

After gaining victory in war, his humanistic emotions made him feel extremely sorry in the depth of his hearth for the enemy soldiers who had died in the battle, but not out of diplomacy or pretension, and even said prayers for them (at the Battle of Jamal). That is why he describes his *Shi‘ism* as a peace-loving religion based on the ‘*Alawī* belief, praises it, and

says, “Our followers..., when they are angry, will never be cruel to others. They are the sources of blessing for their neighbors and live with them peacefully.”

Correct Training of Individuals

*T*he training and refinement of individuals, who are the makers of society, is a major purpose in a society. The effect of the spiritual and mental training of each nation is obvious in its peace, good, and well-being, as well as in the comfort of the people who are in contact with it. The effects of Islamic training on the nations that have dominated the world for a long time and made other nations happy and prosperous in the light of their justice is a perfect example of our claim here.

Imām ‘Alī (‘a) shows us that he pays great attention to the training of society, including the ordinary people and commanders, and believes that the keys to both happiness and misery of societies are hidden in this issue. That is why he never spares any effort in a thorough and all-inclusive training and philosophical upbringing of the human society.

The main and fundamental elements of his training school consist of familiarizing people with the station and character of human beings, piety, the worthlessness and meanness of the world, its instability and disloyalty to its

lovers, and the corruptions arising from loving this world: “Loving the world and losing one’s heart to it are the greatest of all mistakes and sins.” Since his true mission was to create a more profound relation between God and his servants, under the influence of divine fascinations and the enthusiasm for attaining that True Beauty, he frequently made references to the attributes of his Sweetheart Beloved and His eternal and pre-eternal attributes and encouraged people to love Him.²⁴

There are no words which can more clearly portray the ugly face of the world and its disloyalty to all people than the following statements of Imām ‘Ali (‘a):

What could I say about an abode the beginning of which is hardship and the end of which is destruction; there is always a reason for what is allowed there and torture for what is forbidden there. Anyone with wealth has a very difficult test before him in this place, and anyone who is poor suffers great sadness; anyone who tries to do more worldly efforts will lose the world more.

You, servants of God! Where are you going back to? Your only share of land will be a small piece of specific length and width (as big as your grave and body).

The world is indeed a dark place.

You, servants of God! I recommend you to give up this world ... Do not fight each other because of its

24. The impacts of theology and provoking supreme human emotions on sincerity, peace, optimism, social understanding, having good behavior with one’s fellow men, and avoiding material things in the real sense of the word is, in fact, the topic of an extensive paper.

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riches and glory and be careful not to be obsessed by its beauties and gifts.

They turned to a corpse the eating of which dishonored them and made them fight against each other. If someone loves something, it will keep his eyes closed and sicken his heart.

I warn you against the world because it is a temporary abode rather than a home for comfort; however, it has been ornamented with deception In God’s eyes, it is a worthless house in which the lawful and the forbidden, the good and bad, life and death, and bitterness and sweetness are mixed with each other.

Overindulgence is favored in nothing but piety.

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) also said, “Look at the world from the view of those who have given it up.” He frequently referred to “virtue”, which is the best attribute of human beings, like his most important testaments, in every single of his sermons, commands, and letters: “I command you to piety and fearing God”; “Thus fear God but intelligently”; “You, God’s servants! Take my advice”; and “You, servants of God! I command you to piety and fearing God, which are your only gains in the world.”

The above points and similar ones comprised the elements of “*Alawī* training”. If a society has the above characteristics, it will never humiliate and imprison its noble and priceless human substance because of a carcass such as the world. Moreover, it will never suppress the noble human rights for the short and worthless life of this world and will never shed

the invaluable blood of human beings who are God's vicegerents in the world.

In battles, everyone, under the influence of warlike, hostile, and beastly emotions and feelings, insults others. However, Imām 'Alī ('a) was so diligent in training people that he always ordered his people not to curse their enemies in reaction to their bad language. He said it was an unwise act which was beyond their character and was not favored by him:

I despise it when you curse; however, if you reveal your good deeds and remember their state, it will be better. Instead of cursing them and then having to apologize to God, ask Him, "Oh, God. Protect our and their blood and guide them from the wrong path to the right one so that those who do not know the truth learn about it, and those who seek the truth give up enmity and perversion".

Through mental training and practical guidance, Imām 'Alī ('a) creates a nation whose mental essence is based on correct principles and the moderately tender emotions that a human being can have. With correct and perfect training, he makes a man whose thoughts, acts, and healthy policy can spread a philosophy which is higher and more exalted than the philosophy of deceptive peaceful co-existence, i.e. a "brotherly co-existence" reflecting a father-child relation all over the universe. If he provides the basis for world peace and fights against wars and revolutions, it is because he wishes to destroy the roots of corruption and the factors leading to war, which brings nothing but misery to human beings. He stands against poverty and cruelty and provides welfare, happiness, and peace for people so that, in the light of comfort, they do not think about war. He would never add to their misery and would never

be the cause of their poverty, adversity, and calamity. In the same way, when people rose in order to rightfully defend themselves or enjoy their true rights, he would never shed their blood without any reservation or, under the pretext of opposing war, advocating peace, and protecting it, fight them or suppress them.

Imām ‘Ali (‘a) verily considered tolerating cruelty to be forbidden and rising and fighting against oppressors to be necessary; nevertheless, would it not be better if the monster of war, which is itself a huge blight, did not exist in society at all? Apparently, some believe that revolution, war, and bloodshed are the best cures for the cancer from which some societies suffer, i.e. the cancer of poverty, oppression, cruelty, and invasion.

According to the Syrian representative at the Bandung Conference:

Peace is not something that one can pour, like industrial products, into a mould and manufacture. It is not a product that can be imported or exported. Peace means creating healthy thought, healthy politics, and a healthy nation. Otherwise, how can the world secure peace when there are men who seek war and produce weapons?²⁵

Therefore, the only way of finding “world peace” and providing comfort and happiness for all nations of the world is the correct training of healthy thought and healthy people. This is the program that Imām ‘Ali (‘a) presented to all and followed throughout his life. However, those who create the “United Nations” for us today and use heavy budgets in order to advertise their ideas all over the world never think about

25. S. Gh., Sa’idi, *Khatar-i Juhūd* (Danger of Judaism).

creating healthy thought, healthy politics, and a healthy nation. Rather, they always create a mental war (the start of big wars). Apparently, they are only joking when they refer to their love of peace because as long as the people who control the government have no correct human training and, worse than that, as long as a number of beastly enemies of humanity are at the top of the powerful governments dominating the United Nations, the world will never see the face of peace.

What has been discussed so far presents a brief account of the endless ocean of Imām ‘Alī’s virtues and the issue of “World Peace in Imām ‘Alī’s View”, which was written in response to a request made by a respectable friend and publisher in a very short time. That is why a number of key issues such as the training of commanders and judges, respecting contracts and commitments, peace in societies, peace among societies, forgiveness and connivance in international policies, the truth of government in the view of Imām ‘Alī (‘a), and the effects of all of these factors on general peace are yet left to be discussed in future because, to be covered, each requires an independent and extensive book. Finally, it is hoped that in future other people write more about the infinite virtues of Imām ‘Alī (‘a) and open newer horizons in this regard before the eyes of man, who has lost his peace and happiness in the world of today.

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