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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

On the eve of 5th victorious anniversary of the glorious Islamic Revolution of Iran, and having gone through five years of struggles and achievements, we are witnessing great triumphs over all the colonizing plots of both eastern and western Superpowers and their mercenary agents, and are celebrating the Ten Days Dawn in a most splendid manner. The revolutionary Moslem people of Iran have triumphantly smashed down all the obstacles and bore all the problems imposed upon them by the criminal big powers which wanted to weaken and break down the Islamic Revolution. The revolutionary Islamic nation continues to resist like a firm mountain inspite of suffering the loss of so many martyrs in various scenes of combat imposed by stubborn murderous enemies of the Revolution. The committed Iranian people steadfastly follow their reviving Islamic way-the way which has now become a model for all Moslems and oppressed nations and have created an Era of Spirituality that has severely terrified the arrogant world powers. This year, just as the preceding years, the Council for Ten Days Dawn Celebrations, on this auspicious occasion and for the purpose of presenting a lucid portrait of the Islamic Revolution and its Islamic and political lines, offers a number of books and pamphlets in various languages to the dear readers. The present book-pamphlet is one of the said works and is offered to all whom it may interest and concern. We convey best wishes for the final victory of Islamic and Moslems in all arenas and forecast an ultimate defeat of the sinister international powers, while we pray for liberation of all oppressed and dominated peoples.

Council for Ten Days Dawn Celebrations

**In the Name of God
the Merciful, the Compassionate**

Translator's Note

The book Lessons from the Nahj-ul-Balagha by the great Islamic scholar, Seyyid Ali Khamene'i, one of the leading theologians and politicians of Iran and presently its president and the Friday Ritual Prayer leader of Tehran, is a precious book presented to the world of Islam as a brief introduction to the vast phenomenon of prophethood as it appears in the Nahj-ul-Balagha of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali, peace be upon him. The efforts made in translating this book were aimed at providing the Muslims, and even non-Muslims, outside the country, who communicate in the English language, with a valuable interpretation of Ali's sayings concerning the issue of prophethood. It is hoped that this aim has been achieved with this translation. Readers, however, are kindly asked to observe the following points;

1. The translator has adopted the method of „blank verse" in rendering the author's views into English. However, on many occasions, an exact, word by word translation has been employed.
2. In some rare cases, unnecessary or repeated parts of the original text have been omitted in translation.
3. The source for the translation of the Sermons of the Nahj-ul-Balagha has been Seyyid All Radis translation of it (1979, Tehran).
4. The Qur'anic verses have been taken from Marmaduke Pickthall's "The Glorious Koran".
April 1983, H. Vahid Dastjerdi

**In the Name of God,
The Merciful, The Compassionate**

Introduction

It is necessary, at the beginning, to provide our brothers and sisters with a brief introduction to the Nahj-ul-Balagha. As you know, the Nahj-ul-Balagha is a collection of Sermons, Letters and miscellaneous Sayings left as a memorial from the Master of the Pious, the Commander of the Faithful, All, peace be upon him. This book is divided into three sections of Sermons, Letters and short Sayings or 'wise Sayings' (hikam), as they are usually called, some of which have been selected from among the Sermons and Letters.

The Nahj-ul-Balagha dates back to about one thousand years ago when the late Seyyid Radi compiled these Letters and Sermons at the end of the third and the outset of the fifth century (400A.H.) the Hejra after. It is, thus, a one thousand year old book. It is to be noted, however, that before Seyyid Radi made efforts in compiling All's Sermons and Sayings, they were scattered in the books of the Traditions' and history. Other scholars had also begun to perform this task in one way or another, but no one succeeded in accomplishing what Sayyid Radi did. Therefore, we are indebted to the endeavors and initiatives of this great scholar who left the Nahj-ul-Balagha for us.

Another point to be noted here is that, in addition to the contents of the Nahj-ul-Balagha, a number of Sermons, Letters and short Sayings of Ali, peace be upon him, can be found in different books which recent scholars have tried to compile and introduce as appendices to the Nahj-ul-Balagha. Therefore, in addition to the Nahj-ul-Balagha which is, in itself, a rich and invaluable treasure, here are some other books of All's Sayings which shall later be introduced to the readers in detail so that they may obtain a general acquaintance with the bibliography of the Nahj-ul-Balagha and its related books.

Another point to note about the Nahj-ul-Balagha concerns the invalidity of this book, a claim made by some people over the years. The motive behind such a claim can easily be surmised, that is, the subject matter of the Nahj-ul-Balagha threatened the interests of some groups or classes of people who therefore found the best device, to be discrediting the book itself. It is also true of the personality of individuals, and for this same reason those who considered the personality of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, to be against their personal or group interests, naturally tried to distort it. In the same manner, they claimed that the Nahj-ul-Balagha was invalid on the grounds that they said it was without any authority (sanad).

It is clear that the Nahj-ul-Balagha is in the category of Traditions upon which we depend for the understanding of Islamic teachings, as well as the Traditions of the Prophet and the Book (the Holy Qur'an). There is no doubt as to the authority of the Holy Qur'an, but as to the Traditions, valid authorities are needed to remove any doubts, i.e., the narrators of a certain Tradition, including the Imams and the Prophet, should be known and trustworthy. This has always been the main concern of our great narrators and jurists in eliciting and understanding the divine ordinances. Thus, we have the 'science of rijal' which deals with the recognition of narrators of Traditions and the 'science of diraya' which concerns the recognition and analysis of Traditions and which determines the correct and the unreliable Traditions. Thus, this attention to detail that a Tradition must have an authority and that authority must be valid, is necessary. It is because of this that today great emphasis is put on expertise in understanding Islamic sciences. An individual, who is not an expert, accepts the Traditions which accord with his own intellect, understanding and mental background and rejects all others. This leads to the weakening of the religion.

When an expert wants to rely on a Tradition, he first tries to acknowledge its authority and validity through his special expertise. This necessity has been taken care of by our jurists in their recognition and understanding of Islamic laws and regulations. Now, some people asserted that the Nahj-ul-Balagha, as a collection of Traditions which should be based on valid authorities, was without any authority and, therefore, was invalid and unreliable. As a matter of fact, in one way these people were telling the truth for no chain of narrators are mentioned in the Nahj-ul-Balagha in any of the Sermons so that they can be attributed to the Commander of the Faithful and the truthfulness of such narrators could be sought. However, in the books of Traditions such as Vasa-al-Shi'a, al-Kafi and the like, as well as in the old history books. such as those of Tabari, ibn Athir and Ya'qubi, no chain of authorities can be found concerning the contents of the Nahj-ul-Balagha.

Firstly, although the Nahj-ul-Balagha itself does not mention the chain of authorities and narrators, this can be checked in the Shi'ite and Sunni books of Traditions where from the Sermons, Letters and Sayings of this book have been extracted and compiled. Several years ago, one of the Arab writers wrote a book entitled Madarik Nahj-ul-Balagha wa Masanidu (The Documents and Authorities of Nahj-ul-Balagha) which may later be introduced to the readers in an analysis of the books written about the Nahj-ul-Balagha. In this book, the writer has quoted the authentic authorities of the Sermons, Letters and Sayings of the Nahj-ul-Balagha from the books of the Traditions. It is therefore, concluded that the content, of the Nahj-ul-Balagha should not be considered to be without authority on the mere ground that the book itself does not mention any authority.

Secondly, although the authorities of Traditions are proper means of reliance or vice versa, the text of Traditions can also be a means of obtaining confidence for one who undertakes research, i.e. when you study a text and find its contents miraculous (as you will, God-Willing, observe when interpreting Ali's words), when you see that in one sentence the writer has referred to something beyond the prevailing mentality of his own time, which others have been able to understand only in the course of centuries, when you are faced with a saying that predicts future events which cannot be presaged except by the likes of Amir al-Muminin who are in contact with endless divine knowledge and, in addition to all these merits, when you observe the highly eloquent words and expressions of the writer, it becomes quite clear to you that he is not an ordinary human being and that his saying cannot be but those of an immaculate Imam.

Based upon this, Seyyid Radi states that certain words and expressions of the Nahj-ul-Balagha, are matchless in human expression, something which has never been opposed, in the course of one thousand years, by eloquent writers, Islamic thinkers and even the adversaries of Islam. These people have always accepted that some statements of the Nahj-ul-Balagha are superior to human expression and beyond the ordinary level of the human being's knowledge at that time. The conclusion is therefore drawn that, despite the absence of the chain of authorities and narrators in the Nahj-ul-Balagha, this book is undoubtedly that of the Commander of the Faithful and reliable as such.

Thirdly, as you know and as we mentioned previously, the Nahj-ul-Balagha consists of the Sermons (i.e. lectures, not the sermons delivered in the Friday ritual prayers, although the book may have included some of these sermons as well), Letters and short Sayings of Ali, peace be upon him, which he expressed and wrote as a teacher, ruler and an Islamologist. Thus, in addition to reflecting the general lines of Islamic thought, these Sermons and Letters also cover daily matters, i.e. the current problems and difficulties of Amir al Muminin's life.

In our own time, that is, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, many similar aspects can be found between our social situation and that of Amir al-Muminin's time, although our situation is more similar in many respects (i.e. enemies, enmities and other problems) to the Medina social situation at the time of the Prophet's migration. The difference, however, between the social situation of Ali's rule and that of the Prophet lies in the fact that under the Prophet's rule, the enemy had a clear and well-known position, that is, not even one single group of the adversaries of Islam shared an aspect common to the Prophet. The atheists among the Quraish, the Jews of Medina, the western and eastern superpowers of the time and the Christians of Najran, each had slogans of their own. In fact, there was no organized group to cry the same slogan as that of the Prophet and, at the same time, to stand openly against him in fight. Accordingly, the Prophet suffered a great deal but never felt the heavy sorrows that All ibn Abi Talib tolerated during his reign.

There were hypocrites at the time of the Prophet as well but, first of all, they were not organized; secondly, they did not have a manifest position against the Prophet and they did not use the same slogans as those of the Prophet so that the people might doubt as to whether the Prophet was truthful or his rivals. Thirdly, the hypocrites were more or less known to all the people. For instance, everyone, including his own son, knew that Abdullah ibn Ubaid was the head of the hypocrites and even his son suggested to the Prophet to kill his father or prevent him from entering Medina if the Prophet permitted.

On the contrary, at the time of the rule of Amir al Muminin, those who fought him used exactly the same slogans as his. Moreover, they were among the distinguished personalities of the time, with long, past records. For example, the group of the Nakithin (the breakers of allegiance or the front in the 'Battle of the Camel' comprising Talha, Zubair and Ayesha) fought the Commander of the Faithful with his own slogans - slogans in favor of Islam and the truth. The group of Qasitin, (the front of Mu'awiya, the Damascus front), too, pretended in such a way that the impartial

observers fell in a state of doubt as to which group was telling the truth. When you study Mu'awiya's letters to Ali, you find exactly the same words as those of Ali to him. For example, Ali addresses, „From the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib to Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan", and Mu'awiya writes, „From the Commander of the Faithful, Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan to All ibn Abi Talib".

Mu'awiya does not introduce himself as 'the commander of the faithless' or 'the commander of the polytheists' but, exactly like Ali, as the Commander of the Faithful. Then Ali advises Mu'awiya, for instance, to be pious to fear God and to refrain from wasting the blood of Muslims, and Mu'awiya uses the same advice for Ali. Therefore, the problem of Ali is that his enemy is not a manifest enemy in the eyes of the people, for whatever he offers is also offered by the enemy and, as a result, he cannot show the real character of the opposing front to the people. It is true, of course, that Ali had a great deal to say but not all the words spoken can necessarily be understood by those who hear and this was Ali's constant sorrow. Perhaps this was the reason why he used to sit beside a well and speak into it about his grievances. In fact, other than a group of people who were completely faithful to Ali for a special reason, and not because they observed his doings and prayers or they heard about Mu'awiya's evil deeds, others were always in doubt as to which side was telling the truth, for they witnessed, as an example, that in the Battle of Siffin, both sides performed the congregational ritual prayer with humility and modesty.

Thus, a hypocritical atmosphere was characteristic of society during the time of Ali. This does not imply, however, that all the people were hypocrites. Even the followers of Mu'awiya were a group of honest, tribal Arabs, from the area around Damascus, who had, from the very outset of their conversion to Islam, seen and known no governors except Mu'awiya and his family.¹ They knew Islam through the words of these people. They had heard so many good things about them - that they were scribes of the divinely revealed Book, that since Mu'awiya's sister was the Prophet's wife and thus called 'Umm al-Mu'minin (mother of the believers), Mu'awiya was Khal al-Muminin (maternal uncle of the believers)² - that they supported Mu'awiya and fought against All with the best of intentions. So they were not hypocrites. However, unlike the time of the Prophet, society enjoyed an air of hypocrisy, about which more explanation may, God-willing, be provided when discussing the words and sayings of the Commander of the Faithful.

This atmosphere of hypocrisy is also a peculiarity of our own time, although from the point of view of social conditions, enmities, manner of opposition, hostile parties and so forth, our time is more comparable to the time of the Prophet. Today, the so-called followers of 'progressive Islam' in our society are those groups who oppose each other quite openly. Also, those who claim to be followers of the 'line of the Imam' sometimes draw swords against one another. Those who claim to act for the benefit of the Islamic Republic or to follow the policy of 'neither East nor West' are often so divided among themselves that nothing but a hostile relationship can be attributed to them. In fact, it cannot be said that they have differences of opinion, for they are exactly at the opposite side of one another. Therefore, taking into account that each of these groups finds some followers for itself, we see that our society resembles the society at the time of Ali.

The importance of the Nahj-ul-Balagha then lies in two dimensions. First, it speaks about the fundamental of Islam such as the matters concerning God, the human being, Islamic views of humanity, prophethood and its position in human history, the dignity and prophethood of the Prophets and other matters which are today, a means of understanding Islam and thus necessary for us to study. Secondly, the Nahj-ul-Balagha refers to the social problems of a hypocritical society with which we deal today. Accordingly, this book can be a source of Inspiration for us as regards the social and political problems of life and the possible solutions to them.

The fourth point about the Nahj-ul-Balagha is that a great number of its sermons are unfortunately incomplete, i.e. either from the beginning or from the end of each sermon some statements have been omitted. Even, in some cases, Seyyid Radi has omitted statements from the middle of a sermon and then continued the rest of it with the phrase "and from that", which is what the journalists and reporters do repeatedly today. Now, we know nothing about the omitted parts and this creates some difficulties in interpreting the content of the Nahj-ul-Balagha. The reason why Seyyid Radi has made these omissions is that the Nahj-ul-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), as its name indicates, has been compiled from an artistic point of view, i.e. eloquence of expression. This does not mean, however, that he has been heedless of the subject matter and has merely paid attention to the artistic aspects of Ali's Sayings. Yet', this eloquent man, one of the great Arab poets of his own time, has dealt with the Nahj-ul-Balagha with a poetic outlook. He has endeavored to pick out All's most beautiful and eloquent words and statements just as one tries to

choose the best distich of a sonnet. This is why a type of semantic disconnection is observed among the statements of some Sermons.

It is to be noted, of course, that both the highly eloquent and non-eloquent Sayings of Ali carry very magnificent purports, and it is these purports which make us appreciate the Nahj-ul-Balagha, now, in the fourteenth century (A.11.) more than a great scholar of the fourth century (Seyyid Radi) did. As a matter of fact, the human being has naturally faced so many hardships in the course of centuries that he or she understands Ali's words and message and the call of Islam from his tongue more easily than those who lived centuries ago.

It is important, as well, to know that when Seyyid Radi was compiling Ali's words and sayings, there were few people who valued All and his words as much as you value them today. Thus, Ali's lines of thought were only followed by a minority.

On the other hand, those people who took care of All's Sayings and tried to compile them, attached more (or at least equal) importance to the form and beauty as to the content of his statements and omitted some parts which they considered less beautiful than others. Hf you were Seyyid Radi you would definitely not treat Ali's words in this way. You would instead, try to benefit more from the contents of Ali's sayings. This is why we believe that today Ali and his words are more appreciated than hn the fourth century, and this is why history is moving towards All and his message, something that we should accelerate.

The main subjects of the Nahj-ul-Balagha which we are going to discuss in this book `re as follows:

Fundamental Beliefs

@ part of Nahj-ul-Balagha is about monotheism, humanity, the Last Day, prophethood, Imamato and other fundamental principles of Islam. Of course, contrary to the manner of the dialecticians in the third and the fourth centuries, these subjects have been discussed in the Nahj-ul-Balagha with a kind of mystical and spiritual approach. Thus, the words of All about monotheism, for instance, are quite different from the words of Nasir al-din Tusi and other Islamic philosophers and theologians.

Social and Political Matters

These matters consist of both general and specific social affairs including the administration of or Islamic country, the relation between governors and subordinates, letters to the rulers of different states (the famous letter to Malik Ashtar, for instance), the way of facing the enemy, decisiveness free from improper hate and revenge, treating both friends and enemies exactly as they deserve, being not subjected to credulity and naivety and many other social matters of that time and of the whole history.

Morality

The training and purification of the human being's soul are among other subjects discussed in the Nahj-ul-Balagha, which we shall, God-willing, talk about in the coming pages.

Peace and the mercy of God be upon you.

Prophethood (nubuwwah) Prophethood (nubuwwah) Prophethood (nubuwwah) Prophethood (nubuwwah)

Prophethood is among the subjects which have been dealt with in the Nahj-ul-Balagha and a discussion about which can help us understand one of the basic principles of Islam. In fact, it is not only a subject which can be followed throughout the Nahj-ul-Balagha but one of the most important and fundamental principles of Islamic ideology. I have repeatedly mentioned in various discussions that in order to analyze and understand the numerous matters of Islamic thought and ideology, the principle of prophethood is an axis around which these matters can be discussed as well. As -to the principle of monotheism, we believe that its social and revolutionary dimensions can only be clarified when we discuss it within the vast spectrum of the matters concerning prophethood. Accordingly, our method in this chapter is to point out and analyze the different dimensions of prophethood and to support our discussion with an explanation of Ali's ibn Abi Talib's sayings wherever necessary. In this manner, two aims will be fulfilled, i.e. some important sections of the Nahj-ul-Balagha will be translated and interpreted, and an issues among the basic Islamic principles will be made apparent.

It is to be mentioned at the beginning that in the discussion about prophethood, revelation and its relevant matters will not be discussed. Rather, prophethood will be viewed as a historical reality and an unquestionable event. Undoubtedly, prophethood has existed as a phenomenon in the history of mankind. There is no difference of opinion in this regard between us and those who disbelieve in it. However, the difference lies in the interpretation of this event and the message it conveys. In fact, no one denies such personalities as Moses, Jesus and other Prophets whether or not the history of their lives be more or less known or vague. History reports that all of them have existed.

Therefore, prophethood will be considered as a historical event in our discussion and the following questions will be answered in the analysis which follows:

1. What was the social background (social, temporal and historical situation) when this event occurred?
2. Where did this event originate? Did it appear among the kings, the oppressed, the scholars and thinkers... which class of people?
3. What position did it enjoy? Was it to the benefit of a special class of people? Was it directed towards material advantages? 'Was it directed towards mystical and spiritual aspects of life? What was its social and intellectual direction?
4. What was the pros and cons when the Prophet first offered his message? Who were those who opposed it and to which class of the society did they belong? What were their motives and means of opposition? Who were in favor of it and to which class did they belong? What were their motives and how did they assist the Prophet?
5. What was the aim behind the message of prophethood? Was prophethood aimed at material welfare? Was it aimed at class distinction? Was it aimed at enhancing the level of people's knowledge and understanding? Was it aimed at opposing or accounting for the powers of the time?
6. Did the Prophet call the people? Was it 'monotheism' with its social, political, economic and revolutionary dimensions?

Answering these questions, with regard to Islamic texts and records, will shed light on different aspects of this social reality and will acquaint us with a vast scope of Islamic thought. Of course the Nahj-ul-Balagha will be the axis of our discussion, although different verses of the Holy Qur'an as well as mental reasoning may be of great help both in answering the questions and in interpreting All's words.

The first question which is relevant is "What grounds were available for the manifestations of prophethood?» What was the social, economic and historical setting for the appearance of the Prophets? And among which class of people have they appeared? The Nahj-ul-Balagha has answered these questions on several occasions. In the first sermon, speaking about monotheism, the creation of heavens and the earth, the angels and other matters, the appearance of the Prophets and the background to prophethood in general are discussed as well.

We read the preceding sentence so that the connection to this matter is made clear.

From his progeny (Adam) God chose prophets and took their pledge for His revelation and for carrying His message as their trust. In the course of time, many people perverted God's trust with them and ignored His position and took partners along with Him. Satan turned them away from knowing Him and kept them aloof from His worship. Then sent His messengers and series of His prophets towards them to let them fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them his bounties....³ The last part of this quotation reveals some peculiarities of the community in the 'Age of Ignorance', in which Prophets were sent by God to people. These peculiarities are hereunder explained.

It says that 'in course of time many people perverted God's' trust. The Holy Qur'an speaks about 'ahd on several occasions, examples of which are given below,

„Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him ... " (17:23) „Made I not covenant with you, children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan - surely he is a manifest foe to you ... ?" (36:60) „... and God made them testify concerning themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?

'they said,' Yes, we testify ... " (7:172)

These verses imply that God's covenant ('ahd) is to abstain from servitude to Satan, that man's servitude should be exclusively for God and that human beings have primordially admitted that they are servants of God and should serve Him alone.

This is the meaning of 'ahd (trust and covenant)to which the Commander of the Faithful refers in the Nahj-ul-Balagha. In fact, he says that most of the people broke their allegiance with God and disobeyed His commands by worshipping idols, taking partners (holders of power and possessions) along with Him, imposing themselves on other people as worship-deserving idols and perverting the divine decree through ignoring or exclusive obedience to God. It was under these conditions, the Commander of the Faithful asserts, that God brought about prophethood and appointed His Prophets. This is also emphasized in other statements of the first Sermon after describing the appearance of the Prophet of Islam and not the appearance of the prophets at large, although the social conditions and mental atmosphere in which all the Prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others, have appeared have been the same, and thus what is said about the Prophet of Islam fits other Prophets as well.

„The statements run as under the people of the earth at this time were divided in different Parties, their aims were separate and their ways were diverse. They either likened God with His creation or twisted His Names or turned to other than Him. ...,"⁴

It says that the Prophet was appointed to prophethood at a time when people were divided in groups with different ways of thinking, i.e.. a universal mentality did not govern the is minds of all people, which indicates the lack of an acceptable culture at that time, separation among people and, finally, ignorance. It continues with the statement that 'their aims were separate'. This has two implications. The simple one is that in different parts of the community or in different corners of the world people enjoyed desires and manners of their own. The members of each community or class of people favored something which the members of other classes and communities despised. In fact, the society at large lacked a common aim and aspiration, which shows the decline of that society.

The second implication is that there was not more than a few poles of power throughout the world at that time, and they were Sassanian Kings, Roman Emperors, Ethiopian Sultans and other despots, dictators and idols who stood at the peak of their communities, ruling over the people with tyranny and according to their own aims, desires and self-centeredness. The existence of insufficiencies and oppression in the Iranian community, the existence of impenetrable classes among the people, the boundless mastery of Brahmans, aristocrats and soldiers over the lower classes and the existence of moral, cultural, economic and class tyrannies, the pressure of which tortured the people, were all a manifestation of the sensuality and selfishness of the idols (kings) who possessed the leadership of the Iranian community. Thus, the whims and desires of a minority dominated all the affairs of a majority of mankind.

„They likened God with His creation". It implies that those people who, according to their nature and spiritual feelings, believed in the existence of a diety and a creator, found it in the form of creatures and small, imperfect beings. Some of them worshipped cows as their gods. Others worshipped stone or wooden idols. In fact, all the people were in some way or another worshippers of God as their nature demanded but they were devoid of a perfect knowledge concerning God. This was the most manifest perversion.

"They twisted His Names or turned to other than Him». This was a kind of mental deviation prevailing among the believers of God. They were actually so involved in the Name of God that they could not take step beyond it. In ancient times, for example, those who had a vague view of God in their minds, being unable to know God perfectly,

turned to His Names Allah, Mannan or Ilah and worshipped them. They were ignorant of the reality of God. Another example can be observed in the extremist ideologies of today. Advocates of these ideologies claim to believe in God but if they are asked what God is, they cannot explain the true concept and meaning of this word. Rather, they take the 'whole existence', the rules governing nature and the cause and effect, conventions current in nature and history to be a god. They lack the ability to know the real meaning of God, i.e. to know Him as an independent 'Necessary Being' who is undoubtedly the Creator of this universe rather than being Himself the universe. They cannot perceive this reasonable, philosophical concept. Thus, they are confused about the Name and the real Being of God.

Naturally, wisdom, love, knowledge, spiritual attractions and moral Attributes, all of which originate from monotheism and a knowledge of God, do not develop in them and, therefore, prayers, incantations and the wise prayers of Imam Sajjad, peace be upon him, for example, become meaningless to them. Accordingly, what such people worship is 'God' as a word without being concerned with its meaning and concept. This is a sign of the decline and deviation of religious as well as a characteristic of the people who lived at the time when Prophets appeared.

In the second Sermon, the Commander of the faithful has more detailed statements concerning the social background to the appearance of the prophets. They run as follows „At that time people had fallen in to vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilegied, systems had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passages were dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed. God was being disobeyed. Satan was given support and Belief had been forsaken. As a result, the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexen, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house with bad neighbors. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were in a land where the learned were in bridles (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honored."5

This is a very beautiful and artistic picture (in the form of an ordinary lecture from the pulpit) of the social conditions in the age of ignorance, in which the Commander of the Faithful portrays the adversities, deficiencies and disorders casting shadows over the people's life- the people who were mentally bewildered and perplexen and who did not know the aim and purpose of life.

We can easily and clearly understand the meaning of these words of his, because they provide us with an exact portrait of the situation of our own time, when the Iranian nation was severely oppressed and fell victim to the tyrannies brought upon it by the Pahlavi executioners and American mercenaries. In fact, what in this Sermon and other Sermons has been expressed about the background to the appearance of the Prophets (which the writer used to interpret consciously in connection with the situations of strangulation at the Pahlavi time conforms exactly to the conditions under which we lived during the Pahlavi rule).

In those days, especially in the last three years of the Pahlavi reign, the people were so mentally deceived and misled that they got on the buses and trucks in many cities, applauded, played the flute and shouted, „Long live the Shah". Meanwhile, the awakened conscience of a group of people was severely wounded; yet, this was not the common conscience of our community, for even those who refrained from participating in such shows, whether they were government employees, clergymen of other classes of people, accepted the ways and procedures of the ruling regime by their indifferent and apathetic behavior towards the prevailing situation. The people were actually bewildered and dead. No one was aware of the aim behind his daily labor. They worked day and night but they were ignorant of the aim, aspiration and the future for the achievement of which human beings endeavor. The similitude of them was the like similitude of the 'mill donkey' who constantly moves in a circular direction and never reaches an end. They were endowed with the best dwellings and lands, having all the God-given bounties and with the territory of human conscience, faculties and beauties which have been hidden but now have bloomed in our revolutionary boys and girls, fathers and mothers. In fact, such a blessed background existed in people but the 'neighbors were bad' in the words of the Commander of the Faithful, i.e. the rulers and holders of power were incompetent and dishonest. On the whole, under such conditions which he recounts in the above-quoted statements, and we experienced in our

own time, the Prophets were appointed to prophethood. We shall, God-willing, give more details about the background to prophethood, as pointed out in the Commander of the Faithful's words, which are very important so far as the philosophy of history is concerned, and which is misunderstood by some deviated individuals who draw wrong, material conclusions on the basis of their incorrect analysis in this regard.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is the difference between prophethood (nubuwwah) and appointment to prophethood (ba'tha)?

A. Appointment to prophethood is the sudden resurrection and awakening of an individual or a community of people who have plunged into the sleep of negligence, ignorance and bewilderment. Prophethood is the principal factor of the appointment, i.e. after the necessary competence and readiness is found in someone to connect with god and the Divine revelation then he is appointed as a prophet. Thus, the appointment is the consequence of prophethood.

Q. Is Ali's view a universal one, applicable to all communities such as the corrupt western ones? Are these communities subject to destruction without anyone saving them?

A. Yes, it is applicable to all communities at all times. But it should be added that at a time when the chain of prophethood ends in the Last Prophet and no one is appointed to prophethood any longer, it is the religious scholars as heirs of the Prophets who will lead the people and save human communities from destruction.

Q. Are, the signs which Hadrat Ali provides us for the appearance of the Prophets the same as the signs which we have received concerning the appearance of Hadrat Mahdi?

A. Concerning Hadrat Mahdi, mention should be made of the fact that before his reappearance the world will achieve a relative perfection. In fact, the universal government of Mahdi would be a perfectly just government. Half of this justice should be provided by you and the coming generations before his reappearance. Today, due to the establishment of the Islamic government of Iran, which conveys a remarkable percentage of the message of Islam in this strategic region of the world, we have approached nearer to the reappearance of Hadrat Mahdi.

Q. It is true that all these signs are existent in our Revolution and in the whole world. Is the reappearance of Hadrat Mahdi possible in this period?

A. Yes, it is possible. But another thing which is quite possible is the decline of the superpowers of the world and the appearance of new movements and resurrection which we have pointed out repeatedly. This is because the world has entered a new period with the advent of our Revolution, a period in which the deprived of the world and the weak nations will no more remain indifferent to the tyrannies of the great powers, will stand against them and will finally demolish them as a small animal can destroy a huge elephant by mounting its back and biting its ears.

BACKGROUND TO PROPHETHOOD

In the previous lesson, the background to the appointment of the Prophets was discussed with regard to a few statements of the Nahj-ul-Balagha. This lesson is aimed at completing what was mentioned before by analyzing in detail the peculiarities of two periods which are of concern in our discussion, i.e. the pre-Islamic period or the 'Age of Ignorance' (the period before the appointment) and the Islamic period (the period after the appointment).

The Age of Ignorance

According to Ali's words, in the Age of Ignorance, the people suffered from two kinds of inadequacies: material and spiritual.

Material Inadequacy

In this period, the level of social welfare and security was very low. This is explicitly expressed both in the Nahj-ul-Balagha (in different sermons) and the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an refers to the Age of Ignorance saying (106:4)

Spiritual Inadequacy

Spiritual inadequacy is the very ignorance and bewilderment of the people, i.e., they are devoid of a clear way of living and an aspiration for life. It is, in fact, a great suffering for man and society not to seek a sublime aim in life but only to try to provide for the daily requirements and necessities. Unfortunately, this state of living was characteristic of the 'time of strangulation' (Pahlavi reign), when life was without any aspiration and the best and most active individuals, in the eyes of people, were those who made their utmost effort to enjoy a life of welfare or those who did not have any involvement at all but spent their time in lewdness and buffoonery.

Generally speaking, the middle class, i.e., traders, workers, housewives, university students and others were all endeavoring to provide for the ordinary requirements of their lives. The similitude of them was the similitude of the car which refuels from one gasoline station to another gasoline being a means for it to constantly go from station to station.

In fact, the people worked in order to gain their daily bread which enabled them, in turn, to work again. They actually spent their lives in eating bread and gaining bread. This state of living cannot be perfectly felt by the idealist youth of today who have specific aims and aspirations in mind, who work for the establishment of the true Islamic government and who seek the fall of the superpowers. It is the existence of these aspirations in the society of today which reveals the spiritual inadequacy (lack of aims and aspirations) of the society during the Pahlavi rule.

Society during the 'Age of Ignorance', i.e. before the appointment and revolution of the Prophet, was likewise an aimless and deviated society. The people were bewildered. They turned round themselves just like the 'mill donkey' that permanently turns round the millstone, perhaps traversing ten or fifteen kilometers a day, but never moving more than a short distance away from the mill. They were ignorant but more ignorant than them were those who followed destructive aims and aspirations which, if realized, would destroy themselves as well as the whole community.

In this regard the Holy Qur'an says, „Hast thou not seen those who exchanged the bounty of God with unthankfulness, and caused their people to dwell in the abode of ruin?-Gehenna, wherein they are roasted,- an evil establishment!" (14:28-29)

In fact, all the holders of power and authoritative rulers of the world, all the great capitalists who commit any crime to establish their vast economic networks and all those who have brought about great corruption upon the earth in the course of history can be categorized among the spiritually deviated people with destructive aims and aspirations. To say the least, it was in such a deviated society and among such a misled people that the Prophets were appointed to prophethood. The most outstanding characteristic of such a society is the alienation of man which causes the development of material aspirations in a group of people who follow the aim of making material, monopolies and increasing the rate of material products which, in turn, results in the poverty of other people.

The Commander of the Faithful says, „I never saw an ample blessing (wealth) unless beside it I saw a trampled right." Poverty gives rise to class distinctions which bring about deeper gaps among the different classes of people and causes other problems such as the unjust division of social authority under which rich classes gain more power than others, although money is not always efficacious in gaining power, but sometimes social power, too, is effective in making use of money and creating material monopolies.

Thus, both social and economic factors are influential in the appearance of tyranny, exploitation, ignorance and deceit in a society where perverse and destructive aims have replaced noble aims and aspirations.

This is where Islamic analysis and material analysis come face to face, for according to materialists, mental possessions, beliefs and whatever comprises one's soul, mind and thought originate from one's 'class position' which includes the social, economic and even the cultural dimensions of life, whereas the Islamic viewpoint is that the origin of all pressures and adversities existing in a society results from the dominance of ignorance and alienation in that society. Islam says that it is alienation which brings about class distinctions and which divides society into two classes, i.e. the oppressed and the oppressors.

Spiritual alienation is, therefore, an outstanding characteristic of the Age of Ignorance and the Prophets appear, in effect, to lead the people to the straight path and to remove their spiritual depravities. This is what the Commander of the Faithful emphasizes in the second Sermon of the Nahj-ul-Balagha which was previously mentioned and which is hereunder reviewed and explained in detail.

He says, „I also stand witness that Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, is His slave and His Prophet. sent him with the illustrious religion, effective emblem, written Book, effulgent light, sparkling gleam and decisive injunction in order to dispel doubts (shubuhah) present clear proofs ... „ Shubuhah is the plural form of 'shubha' and means doubts and differences of opinion which exist in the human mind and thought as regards truth and falsehood. These doubts and differences appear, as far as the people's beliefs are concerned, when the society at large goes astray. In fact, society comes to believe that it lacks reality and to disbelieve the most manifest realities.

For instance, during the rule of the previous regime, the people had come to believe in and accept 'monarchy' which was an untrue phenomenon, and had completely forgotten a clear and undeniable reality named, 'Imamat'.

Thus, the Prophet was sent by God to remove mental doubts and errors and to "present clear proofs," as the Commander of the Faithful says i.e. to save people from the perplexity of philosophical reasoning by offering them clear proofs. This does not mean, however, that such reasonings are basically useless and philosophy must be abandoned. Some people today, find fault with Islamic philosophy, the classic philosophy of Islam on the false basis that it is mixed with Greek philosophy. They insinuate that Islamic philosophy is mixed with Aristotelian philosophy. They do not realize that Islamic scholars and philosophers, centuries ago, cleansed Islamic philosophy of Greek philosophy. Moreover, they are unaware of the fact that a philosophy with a heavenly world-view cannot be mixed with a philosophy having a material world-view, although they may share some common aspects.

Thus, philosophy should not be abandoned, although philosophical reasoning is not very effective in awakening and provoking people at a time when a revolution is to be conceived. At such a time, only the clearest proofs and reasonings can make the people aware of the prevailing

situations, the wrong ways upon which they step and the right path they should choose.

This has been the manner of all Prophets of God. They called people to the belief in the One God. They called them to their nature and to their natural beliefs, without exposing them to ordinary, spiritual reasonings

In the case of the Islamic Revolution of Iran the reasonings of the intellectuals for fighting the West never contented the least number of people because the intellectuals themselves were not satisfied with their own reasonings due to the fact that they never made their appearance in the battle arena, whereas the words and lectures of the Imam Khomeini, which contained clear realities concerning the dependence of the tyrannical regime of Pahlavi on the superpowers and the prevention of the society from practicing their religion (Islam), doctrinal beliefs and worship, could be perfectly understood by the people, and finally resulted in that great movement in our society. It can be concluded, therefore, that the Prophets presented clear proofs and reasonings which not only elicited but also which the middle class of people could understand and then follow naturally.

The Commander of the Faithful continues to enumerate the tasks of the Prophet saying, administer warning through signs and to warn of punishments.» In fact, he means that the Prophet came to acquaint the people with the signs of chastisement and with the punishments which happened to the past nations in the course of history, and to tell them that they would also be afflicted with the same punishments if they followed the manners of those nations.

Then he portrays the situations during the Age of Ignorance (before the appointment of the Prophet) and points out the troubles and calamities which endangered the minds, hearts and the spirituality of the people, which blocked the ways of guidance to them and which led them astray - the troubles which did not have anything to do with the material life and apparent welfare of the people.

He says „... At that time, people had fallen in to vices, whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of

belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilegied, systems had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passages were dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed. God was being disobeyed. Satan was given support and belief had been forsaken. As a result, pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay."

The general message of these words is that the society in which the Prophets were appointed to prophethood was devoid of guidance and the Prophets' mission was to lead the people to the straight path so that they could forsake the state of indifference prevailing among them and seek good aims and aspirations.

As was mentioned before, should a motive more sublime and nobler than eating, drinking and providing for the ordinary requirements of life become dominant in the people's efforts and endeavors and should destructive aims and aspirations forsake society, then social, political and economic conditions will prosper, class distinctions will vanish and the idols of wealth and power will be smashed.

This was experienced during early Islam, at the time of all the Prophets and even in our own revolutionary society (if the opponents let us finish this experience). This is why we believe that our Islamic Revolution has rendered useless all the social, political and revolutionary formulas which support the idea that movements and revolutions originate from material motives, class distinctions and class quarrels in societies which have apparently political systems of their own and which are not subject to colonial rule (like Iran during the Pahlavi regime). What happened in Iran was exactly the experience of the Prophets, i.e. the people who lived in a mentally-perverted society were awakened by factors of guidance and hurried towards their natural promise to worship naught but God, to appreciate God's plentiful blessings and to believe in their own social power.

Guided in such a way, these people who had for many years been subjected to the oppression and coercion of the so-called masters and kings, suddenly arose, revolted by the millions and brought about the Islamic Revolution. Today, to continue the Revolution and to guarantee its survival, it is necessary to keep the people's mental guidance intact in order to deepen their belief in God and Islam and to make them more aware of their human dignity and responsibility.

The Commander of the Faithful continues his Sermon with the following statements, providing more details about the mental and spiritual atmosphere of the Age of Ignorance (before the appearance of the Prophet). He says „ ... People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them, Satan's emblems flew and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexen, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house with bad neighbors. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes ... ".

In fact, he believes that the origin of all adversities, oppressions, corruptions, sufferings, disorders and crimes existing in society during the Age of Ignorance, resulted from obedience to the satans of the time who, with reliance on their social authority, i.e. wealth, power and deceit, wasted God's noble blessings and devastated the plentiful, vital resources of the time with unthankfulness and the transient lives of the people or exploited them for their own benefit, regardless of what happened to the real owners of those valuable resources. It was on the basis of such obedience that the people went only the ways which the masters and dominant groups showed them, the ways which ended in no desired destination, which brought them nothing but increasing poverty, ignorance and captivity and which provided the dominant groups of society, i.e. the creators of evil, corruption and decadence, with their personal interests.

In the Islamic world-view, the human being is considered a thoughtful, innovative and independent creature. From these three characteristics, the power of thinking of the human being is more important than others, for it provides one with awareness which enables one to move and make progress.

Thus, the most significant and fundamental factor for the movement of history and society are the knowledge and awareness which stimulate human beings to action. It is awareness which induces humanity to move and act. In the course of history spontaneous actions and movements have never resulted in a Revolution.

Maxim Gorki in his book, *Mother*, endeavors to prove that it was the labor movements which gave rise to the October Revolution in Russia, whereas a careful study of his book indicates that these blind movements could obtain no results. In fact, without the existence of awareness and guidance, the spontaneous movements brought about in the history of revolutions could never end in the desired aims.

Thus, class conflicts and wars which materialists emphasize as the origin of all movements and revolutions have not been effective at all.. Rather, the most significant factor for the movement of history and society have been understanding, guidance and stimulating awareness. Without these, all actions and endeavors have usually ended in undesired effects which can be observed in a great number of the revolutions throughout the world.

Now, since awareness is the main source of inspiration in societies in which ignorance is dominant, the antihuman elements (holders of corrupt authority), in order to retain their tyrannical system, have always tried to stifle any liberating thought by exposing people's minds to stupefaction and poisonous instructions and to destroy the origins of consciousness.

As a result, in such societies, the people follow only the desires of these satans, learn only what they teach and, like sheep, go only towards the water to which they are led by these treacherous shepherds („they sought water from his watering places”).

It is quite painful that, in the light of the sacrifices and endeavors of the oppressed people, those who stand against the oppressors and criminals are usually defeated and killed, while the chiefs of the atheists are rarely killed. For instance, Mu'awiya, the manifest example of blasphemy, never accepted Ali's call to challenge him in person because, as a Satan, his emblems flew through the deprived people who have always been employed in the course of history as a ladder which the arrogant have climbed to approach their self-centeredness, dominance and power.

The life of the deprived has always been blended with fear, anxiety, confusion, poverty, hunger, ignorance, disgrace and lack of awareness. This has been an out standing characteristic of the ages of ignorance. But according to the principles of our religion and Islamic ideology and according to the Holy Qur'an which says, „We have honored the children of Adam ... >”, human beings are honorable. In fact, the belief in the Oneness of God is followed in Islamic thought by the dignity and worth of human beings.

Generally speaking, those societies in which human beings are honored because of believing in God and having will-power, and not on the basis of their social positions, move towards perfection and prosperity; while those societies which grant no worth to human beings and their thoughts do not tread the path of improvement and goodness and are usually administered through dictatorship. Today, other than the Iranian community upon which Islam has shed its light, all human communities throughout the world are ruled either by black strangulation (such as the socialist communities in which the Proletariat dictatorship is dominant and the so-called supporters of the labor classes, i.e. their leaders, have never felt the hardship and poverty of the laborers) or by despotism prevalent in such despotic countries as Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and so forth.

There are, however, other communities (Western ones) which are ruled by the stupefaction of the people, i.e. keeping the people amused with passions, sexual matters, alcoholic drinks and other means of corruption and adversity.

Ht is only the Islamic community which establishes equal rights for all the people, whether they be workers, physicians or peasants. But that very Islamic community will keep aloof from Islam, should decision-making, judgment and awareness be confined to a special class of people (whoever they might be) and others be compelled to follow them blindly.

On the whole, what the Commander of the Faithful says is that in societies which are dominated by ignorance and alienation, although humility and worthlessness cast shadows over all human aims and aspirations and hunger, horror, disease, captivity, corruption and bewilderment threaten the society, the people are surprisingly tolerant and in agreement with the oppressors. This is what he calls sedition and calamity (fetna), something which brings a person to the state of consternation and deception, which causes damage to one's heart and mind and which destroys one's life completely. It is, in fact, under these circumstances that the Prophets appear.

They do not appear merely to remove poverty, to establish social welfare, to eliminate ignorance and to teach the people how to read and write. But each of these is a part of a great whole which comprises the aims of the Prophets. The Prophets' aim is to eradicate human deviation, alienation and bewilderment and to give one spiritual elevation. The realization of this aim will, however, be followed by material welfare, social security, eradication of ignorance and class distinctions and so forth.

Questions and Answers

Q. You said that alienation gives rise to class distinctions. Now what are the causes of alienation?

A. The cause of alienation is the lack of the use of the power of thinking, for this faculty can be effective only if it is trained, educated and used properly. It is just like a very powerful projector which can offer its sparkling nature only if it is clean and not covered by dust and mist. The power of thinking may lose its usefulness under the influence of various factors, the most important of which being whims and passions. Of course, other spiritual factors as well as the holders of worldly power are also effective in this respect, but material and economic factors alone should not be regarded as a basis for lack of thinking and alienation. Thinking is the faculty by which the human being analyzes different matters and comes to a general conclusion. It is, therefore, independent and can provide people with reasons concerning their doings.

Q. In one of his sermons, Ali says, „I shall bring out the truth from falsehood.» How do you interpret the leftists' justification of the 'dialectic conflict' on the basis of this statement?

A. 'Dialectic conflict' cannot be justified by this statement. By this statement he implies that he can analyze a collection of saying in which right and wrong have been mixed, distinguish the right from the wrong and introduce it to the people. This is the `rt nf `ll the thinkers who jnow the truth.

Q. What is ` classless, monotheistic society? Are monotheism and class not two contradictory notions?

A. A classless society is one in which there is no legal distinction among different groups of people and all the individuals are provided with equal rights and opportunities. In such a society, every individual makes efforts in accordance with one's physical and mental faculties and whatever one earns belongs to one's self. No one has the right to ask another for a part of what one has earned. Of course, if an individual kept a long distance from others, that person would be advised to assist them. Islam holds equal possibilities and opportunities for all individuals. Every one has the right to educate one's self, to enhance one's knowledge, to take one's desired job, to work in the best possible manner and so forth. At the same time, lazy people are not permitted in Islam to have a share in what hardworking people acquire. In Islam the people are free to work and endeavor for themselves, contrary to socialist communities in which all productive jobs and services are a monopoly of the governments and thus being wrongly called classless.

As to the 'monotheistic society', it should be stated that it is a society in which all the people stand at the same level so far as legal, judicial and social laws and regulations are concerned. In a monotheistic society, there is no difference between the ruler and a layman before the law. A Jew and a Muslim are equally treated (the judge calls Ali and the Jew to his presence and addresses both of them in the same manner).

A monotheistic society is an Islamic society and a classless one is also Islamic but only within the limits which were explained above. We do not believe in the classless society which Marxists define. We do not believe in what they call class, classlessness and class war. These are all Marxist concepts which the group of so-called Mujahidin (the anti-Islamic group of hypocrites) have mixed with Islamic notions to deceive people. To say the least, society should either be called 'monotheistic', which is in conformity with Islamic culture, or classless (as defined by the Mujahidin) which reminds one of Marxist ideology.

Q. Are all human beings equipped with equal talents and faculties?

A. No, not all human beings enjoy the same talents and faculties and not all of them are equal in understanding different matters and performing various tasks. In fact, every individual has a talent for certain types of work and no one is found to be devoid of certain gifts and talents.

TO WHICH CLASS OF SOCIETY DO THE PROPHETS BELONG?

In this chapter we are going to discuss the social origins of the Prophets themselves, i.e., to find out the social class to which the Prophets belonged. We are going to see whether they belonged to the rich people, aristocrats and holders of worldly power or to the poor, the needy and the deprived. It is, in fact, very important to know the social and economic classes from which the Prophets have arisen in the course of history, founded monotheistic movements and revolutions and provided the masses with divine words and messages.

The Holy Qur'an, the Traditions and the Nahj-ul-Balagha are rich sources which can help us in the analysis of this matter, but here the emphasis is only on the words of the Nahj-ul-Balagha. In the long and famous sermon of al-Qasi'ah (the Sermon of Disparagement) there are statements which deserve careful reflection and which offer information concerning the matter being discussed.

The statements run as follows: „Certainly, if God were to allow anyone to indulge in pride, He would have allowed it to His selected prophets and vicegerents. But God, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and liked humbleness for them. Therefore, they laid their cheeks on the ground, smeared their faces with dust, bent themselves down for the believers and remained humiliated people (they were from the oppressed people). God tested them with hunger, afflicted them with difficulties, tested them with fear, and upset them with troubles.”⁶

Here, the Commander of the Faithful speaks about pride and vanity and emphasizes that since God disliked these two qualities, He misrepresented them in the eyes of His Prophets and righteous beings. Therefore, the Prophets hated self-deceit and superiority complexes, but liked humbleness and humility. Thus, they bent themselves down for the believers, lived among the lowest classes of the people, rubbed their faces with the dust (in prostration) before God and refrained from indulging in haughtiness. They did, in effect, what the Holy Qur'an orders to be done to the parents. It says: „... and lower to them (one's parents) the wing of humbleness out of mercy ... ” (17:24)

The Prophets, according to the Commander of the Faithful were from the oppressed masses of the people. They knew the pains and agonies of the needy. They felt, for instance, what hunger was, because God had tried them with hunger. The Holy Qur'an quotes Moses, peace be upon him, to have said, „Oh God! I need what you shall send me.” According to narrations, Moses, peace be upon him, was hungry and implored God in this manner to send him bread so that he could satiate his hunger. Thus, the Prophets felt the pains of hungry people. They had tasted the sufferings of life. They knew well the troubles of hard physical labor in cold and hot weathers. They understood the meaning of hardship.

Timidity and the state of being fearful are characteristics of the oppressed. They are usually fearful of the future, poverty and the dominance of a powerful hand over their destinies. They are always worried and in a state of mental disturbance, concerning the existing situations and the coming conditions. They expect at any moment to be put under pressure by a Powerful oppressor. Likewise, the Prophets suffered from such fears and anxieties and, to say the least, were so surrounded by hardships and difficulties as to become pure in the same way as gold derives its purity under the pressure of very hot temperature. In fact, the Prophets were not pampered individuals to suddenly come Out of their Palaces and call the people to make a revolution.

There was a close link between them and the common people. They had, like all members of the society been subjected to ignorance, tasted the pains and sufferings of life and then became worthy to be called 'Prophets'.

The Definition of the Deprived (mustad'af)

A society dominated by ignorance is always made up of two groups of people. One group consists of those who make Plans, administer society and have total authority over all affairs. The other group consists of the subjects and subordinates who have nothing to do with different affairs of society. They work hard (and thus they are not good-for-nothings as they are usually called, compared for example, to the amount of work Pharaoh performed with the slaves in building the Pyramids), but they have no right to apply their will, personality and points of view in the administration of the affairs of their society.

The first group is a minority consisting of the powerful families and dynasties with various degrees of authority over

society. They are called 'the arrogant' (mustakbirin). The second group are the common people and the masses who are regarded as the weak and who are devoid of authority whatsoever. They are called 'the deprived' (mustad'afin). Our own country, during the corrupt regime of Pahlavi, was administered by a limited number of individuals, with the Shah at the head of them. It is true that an institution named the 'National Consultative Assembly' existed but all the decisions were made by the Shah and his American advisers and dictated to the members of the Assembly, who had no will of their own.

At the lower levels, decisions were made by the big money makers who acted in collusion with governmental personages, by governor generals and so forth. In fact, the total authority was centralized in the hands of one person, the Shah. If all the ministers, Assembly members, director generals and the like agreed on something, but the Shah opposed; it was his will and decision which prevailed. The rest of the people, i.e. the masses, had no authority (even over their own destinies) to interfere with the affairs pertaining to foreign relations (with Russia and America, for instance), internal industries, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. let alone matters concerning religion and morality. They had no right to meddle with the total course of affairs of their society due to the absolute lack of democracy, voting and elections in the country.

This state of affairs is nowadays an obvious characteristic of all socialist countries but in a more respectable form, i.e. one party (the Communist Party) possesses the total power and authority in administering the affairs of these countries. In fact, all the affairs of these countries are determined by the high governmental cadres, supreme councils and the general secretary himself. Other people have no right to express their viewpoints, and their will and decisions are not taken for granted. Thus, mental development is repressed in such countries, and perhaps this is why the youth usually engage in Sports and physical training and blossom out as the first rate athletes in international competition such as the Olympics as we observed in the recent Olympic games held in Russia.

In western societies, too, the situation is more or less the same (mostly in the so-called civilized countries of America and Europe where 'freedom' and 'democracy' have widespread literal application). Nowadays, there are unfortunately some people who try to transform freedom and democracy to western conceptions of freedom and democracy, without knowing that the West itself is bereft of real freedom; (in America, West Germany and the likes, people imagine that they elect their representatives freely whereas the reality is that it is specific currents which lead them to one side or another to cast their votes in favor of one party or another. Recent elections in America and the conflicts between the Democratic and Republican parties are the best evidence, verifying this reality).

Generally speaking, in all countries of the world, people are divided into two classes: the deprived and the arrogant. The deprived masses are themselves two groups: the needy and the non-needy. In fact, a poor and wretched peasant who performs fifteen hours of physical labor a day under the difficulties of rain, snow and hot weather and one who lives an ordinary life, being a shopkeeper, or employee, etc., without suffering so much, are both in the category of the deprived, because both of them are considered to be worthless and good-for-nothing and are devoid of the right to participate in the administration of their society.

According to the Commander of the Faithful in the quoted Sermon, the Prophets belonged to the deprived classes and, like them, have been deprived of the authority to carry out a responsibility in their society. A historical review of the life-accounts of Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, and other Prophets will clarify this matter further.

Moses, peace be upon him, was born to a deprived family among the children of Israel who lived under severe pressures. But after birth he was brought in a completely arrogant house and became a favorite with the Pharaoh's family although he had not been born of the Pharaoh's wife.

He was brought up under the best living possibilities, the most delicious food and different kinds of luxuries (as a perfect aristocrat). Then, when Pharaoh noticed that he was nourishing an enemy within his house, Moses decided to escape. In fact, Moses had begun his invitation and calling people to God, had started his revolutionary propagations within the royal palace and had succeeded in converting the Pharaoh's wife to submission to God when Pharaoh experienced a feeling of danger and decided to prosecute him. Moses escaped to Egypt.

To say the least, Moses became a Prophet and invited the people to make a revolution when he was within the royal house and at the peak of arrogance (this biographical account of Moses is narrated in the Qur'an, and no use was made here of the Traditions).

Our Prophet, Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants was born in a tribal house of high rank. He was the grandson of and a favorite with 'Abd al-Muttalib, the chief of Mecca (although he was, unlike Pharaoh, a pious, chief and a believer in God). When his father, Abdullah, who was one of the dearest children of 'Abd al-Muttalib, died in youth, the latter brought up Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, until he became four years of age (although Moses was the favorite with a great emperor and Muhammad with a tribal chief, both of them enjoyed the favor of highly respectful families). Then 'Abd al-Muttalib passed away and Muhammad came under the guardianship of his uncle Abu Talib who did not enjoy the same respect as his father, 'Abd al-Muttalib, but who was himself a distinguished personality, not belonging to the masses.

Abu Talib acted as a good guardian for a period of time and then he was afflicted with poverty. Thus, Muhammad lost the (financial) support of his uncle at this time. But before long he married Khadija, a rich woman. He first acted as a functionary to Khadija but later on, (fifteen years before his appointment to prophethood) he married her, thus becoming a relatively rich man in Medina.

The very financial state remained with him until he became a Prophet at the age of forty (this is why it is said that Islam advanced through Khadija's wealth and Ali's sword).

Accordingly, the Prophet of Islam was born to an aristocratic family and lived a comfortable and affluent life until he was appointed to prophethood by God. After the appointment, however, due to the high expenses of propagation and calling people to monotheism and due to the lack of opportunity for conducting business, he became poor. Other prophets, too, were more or less wealthy. It is in the Traditions (although there is no clear, historical accounts available) that Job, for example, possessed lands, gardens and trees which were destroyed when God wanted to test his belief. David, too, had a rural origin. He was a commoner. Yet he became a commander and a ruler. Solomon was born in the house of this commander (David). In fact, this chosen Prophet of God (although there is no difference between him and Moses as far as his purity, piety, revolutionary spirit and prophethood are concerned) was the son of a ruler. Abraham was born in the house of an idol-carver, and the history of nations and religions reveals that idol-carvers were not only not among the low, deprived classes but were also considered to be saintly and respectable.

We come to the conclusion, therefore, that a considerable number (not all of them) of the Prophets have been brought up among affluent and powerful families. Thus, we have two points here to be considered along with each other: First, in the Commander of the Faithful saying that Prophets have belonged to the deprived and humble masses of the people. Second, the Prophets (some of them), as we see above, have been born among the socially, comfortable families of high ranks.

Are these two realities incompatible? No It is not the main point here to see whether they are compatible or not, The main point is to nullify the (communists') imaginary legend that all the revolutionary agents have originated from the proletarian, bare-footed and needy classes. What is essential is that a revolutionary person (be he a leader of the revolution or a commoner) should be dressed with revolutionary morals and Attributes. Materialists and the interpreters of Marxism, in fact, hold a wrong belief that only those individuals can enjoy revolutionary morals and Attributes who themselves belong to the poor, bare-footed or proletarian classes, for man is always and everywhere a human being and thus corrigible. He can, like the Prophets about whom Ali says, „They were from the deprived people," equip himself with correct, revolutionary habits and with the attributes of the deprived.

It is true that aristocratic training and education entail no result but an aristocrat human being, yet it is untrue to believe that such an education (in a person who is brought up in an aristocratic atmosphere) is unchangeable and indestructible. In fact, should divine guidance (either in the form of thinking, meditation and the awakening of conscience of the individuals themselves or through training and purification of the soul by the teachers of morality, i.e. the Prophets) enlighten the sick bodies of those who are under the influence of aristocratic habits and training, they would come out of their spiritual depression and become dressed with revolutionary dispositions.

SUMMARY

Two points are perceived when the social origin of the Prophets is put to discussion: First those who are appointed to prophethood are dressed with the Attributes of the deprived, revolutionary morals and combative spirit against the existing class systems of the arrogant, i.e. at the time of the appointment (and even before it) they have an anti-arrogant position in support of the deprived.

Second, having these Attributes does not necessarily imply that all the Prophets belong to the deprived classes. They can either belong to these classes or not but, as was mentioned before, even at the time of appointment to prophethood and at the beginning of their revolution they may belong to the arrogant strata, having a comfortable life. There is no need for them to have suffered from forced labor and hard work before the appointment. Of course, they should have felt pain and distress but this does not necessarily mean that they should curtail the bonds of relationship with their social class and their (comfortable) life.

Spiritually-exalted Beings Have Understanding as Well as the Feeling of Sympathy.

Subsequent to the discussion concerning the arrogant and the deprived, it should be added here that such a class division does not exist in monotheistic societies. It is, in fact, the exclusive characteristic of societies suffering from ignorance and alienation. We have of course, rulers, ruling classes, caliphs, holders of religious authority and governments in monotheistic societies but none of them are arrogant enough to manage the affairs of these societies on the basis of personal beliefs. Also, there are commoners in such societies, consisting of workers, businessmen, peasants, bricklayers, government employees and so forth, but none of them arrogant either. Each class has, in fact, some authority over its own social affairs in proportion to the total number of its members.

For example, under the present situations of Iran (although Iran is not a 100% or even 50% Islamic society at the present time), every individual has some authority and the right to vote as a member of a society with thirty-six million individuals. It is on this basis that the great movements and even the political affairs of our country are nowadays managed and led by the people themselves, although it may be considered wrong so far as the prevailing patterns of politics on the international level are concerned. The truth is that if the people were not inclined towards certain actions and policies, connections and disconnections, the government (itself consisting of Muslims belonging to the low classes of people) would not dare take such positions as it does today and perform such courageous actions. This is indicative of an Islamic country (although Iran is still not a perfect Islamic country).

When Islam shall, God-willing, shed its light on our society in all its dimensions, the role of every individual in the administration of the whole country will be to the extent that he or she (although being the lowest in social position) can act and promise on behalf of the Islamic community. Today, if a given government or a certain action be condemned in the sermons of the Friday ritual prayer in front of a multitude of people, or if a treaty between our country and a given government be orally made (or violated) in such sermons, neither our own government nor the addressee will take care of it.

But in a perfect Islamic community, there is no irresponsible individual. In such a community, in which Islamic culture and education are perfectly dominant, every individual (being a businessman, a housewife and so forth) can conclude a treaty or announce an agreement for the cessation of hostilities or a special occasion and the Islamic government is obliged to take it into account, although that individual not be a minister, an army commander or a diplomat. In fact, every individual can decide for the whole community on specific occasions, and his or her decision is accepted by all.

This is not, however, practicable under the present culture and habits of our society. But as the society gets closer to Islam and its teachings, this is more likely to be accomplished. It should be added, of course, that when we say something is not for the time being practicable, it does not mean that Islam as a whole cannot be materialized. It can, but only when the world has complete readiness for its acceptance.

Questions and Answers

P. You said that Khadija's wealth and Ali's sword made the progress of Islam possible. Does this not lead to a deviating concept that wealth and material things have been the only factors for the spread of Islam?

A. We do not believe that wealth alone played a role in this regard, but the truth is that wealth, too, had certain roles and this is undeniable. It was, in fact, necessary for the satiation of the newly-converted people's hunger as well as for providing the expenses of those who were sent here and there by the Prophet. This does not negate the influence of the spirituality and dynamism of Islamic thought and ideology, since the very dynamism is in need of material things when acting and making progress in the same way as it needs physical labor and activity.

Q. You defined the deprived in its social and political aspects. Is it not necessary to explain the economic and cultural aspects of it as well?

A. The economic activities of the deprived (as previously defined) are also under the influence of the powerful, i.e. economic activities are usually centralized where power is centralized (under the previous regime of Iran, for example, no productive and economic activity took place except through the direct or indirect interference of the government). Therefore, economic aspects are dependent on political aspects. It may, however, be argued that political power originates from economic power. This is possible but it lacks universality. Sometimes political power is the cause for the absorption of money and sometimes money gives rise to political power. They are interconnected, but in a society wherein political power is centralized in a certain group, economics cannot grow and progress independently. The cultural aspects (culture in its prevailing, not in its revolutionary sense) of society, too, are affected by the opinion of those who possess political and economic power. Thus, when political oppression dominates society, the existing cultural and political aspects of the deprived are also influenced by it.

Q. Is the following tradition, narrated from the Imams concerning deprivation, authentic? „The deprived are those who endeavored in the way of God but could not achieve their aim in establishing the divine system. The highest of them are the Prophets and saints, next to them are the believers who make efforts in the way of God."

A. It may be authentic for all the Prophets and their true followers belong to the category of the deprived. It provides us with the definition of the deprived not with the concept of deprivation.

How are Prophets chosen?

What are the Prophets' responsibilities towards God? What is the social, cultural and intellectual background in which the Prophets appear? To answer these questions, we analyze the following statements of the first Sermon of the Nahj-ul-Balagha. „From his progeny (Adam), God chose (istafa) Prophets and took their pledge for His revelation and for carrying His message as their trust."

Istafa (to choose the best) is a very important and fundamental issue. In Arabic, not all selections are indicated by this word. Only when a pure element is recognized and chosen from amongst a collection of elements is the 'istafa' used. It is actually employed when the pure and the impure are separated in a collection of things and the pure portion is extracted.

As far as physical and spiritual aspects of humanity are concerned, the Prophets have been ordinary human beings but, at the same time, they have possessed the competence needed for gaining high ranks and positions. Accordingly, they have been selected, distinguished individuals, born of parents none of whom have been involved in polytheism and human Corruption Thus 'istqfa' in its general sense implies that a trained and educated Generation deliver a more trained Generation to society.

As an example, the Prophet of Islam was born in a pure and holy family, from a father and mother who were, in turn, distinguished from the point of spirituality and morals (and not on the basis of race, blood, wealth and aristocratic privileges). In fact, 'Abdullah was superior to all fathers and Amina was superior to all mothers. These two spiritually trained beings married and provided society with a child nobler to all children, a better spiritually-trained being.

So much is certain that the Prophets who appeared before Moses; peace be upon him, enjoyed lesser spirituality than those who came after him and after Jesus Christ, peace be upon him, for every Prophet has been the product of the training and education brought by the Prophets before him, i.e. the prevailing divine and spiritual training provided by past Prophets have been quite influential for the growth of the coming ones. Thus, the Commander of the Faithful uses the word 'istafa' to indicate that God has appointed those beings to prophethood who have had this spiritual training.

„... and took their ledge for His revelation and for carrying his message as their trust." Here the Commander of the Faithful mentions the Prophets' commitments and says that they are committed in two respects: First they have a commitment towards the divine revelation, meaning that they are obliged to say merely what they receive as revelation and not to intermix their personal views with the divine message. Second, they are obliged to deliver the message they have received and not to bury it with themselves.

„in the course of time many people perverted God's trust with them and ignored his position and took partners along with Him. Satan turned them away from knowing him and kept them aloof from his worship." In five short sentences, the Commander of the Faithful provides us with a precise account of the mental, practical, social and cultural background of the people at the time of the Prophets' appearance.

In the first sentence he uses the Phrase 'aktharu khalqih' (the majority of His creatures) to indicate that not all the people, but a great many of them, had perverted God's prescription and commands because absolute darkness or ignorance has never had dominance over a society, that is, in no age and era People have been left without heavenly guides, teachers and messengers who have themselves had some faithful followers. In tact he refers to a society and a time in which people ignored God's orders, changed the general principles delivered through the chain of prophethood and deviated the course and program of life determined by the Prophets through the application of prejudices, perversions and Personal grudges.

He continues with the phrase 'facahiluhagqah' (thus they ignored His Position), meaning that people forgot about God's power and providence in administering the affairs of society (the same situation is dominant today among the westerners who do not feel the absence of God in their lives, because they have remained far away from their true nature. They have forgotten the existence of God although they apparently believe in God and hear His name

repeatedly. They actually do not know God's Position and status in society).

What is God's trust and covenant (ahd)? Almighty God has provided human beings with a general pattern of life and a specific course within which people should move. This course or pattern is the very reality to which all the Prophets have invited people throughout history, i.e. monotheism, respect for humanity and moral, natural and legal quality of human beings. This is the divine program, a command and covenant.

Satans try to pervert this course and command and to induce people to obey and worship God's creatures instead of God. God calls people to honor the human being and satans invite them to humiliate and belittle him. Thus, the perversion of the divine covenant is to deviate from the mentioned course and pattern, to ignore God's position and to transform society into a satanic one in which partners are taken along with God.

Taking partners along with God is not merely confined to worshipping an object. But when God's position remains unknown and the people do not know that creation and Legislation belong to God (i.e. in the same way as the laws of creation - laws relating to the movement of heavens and the earth, day and night, man, birth and death - are in possession of God alone, Legislation or administration of the society and life, too, is under His authority. This is the meaning of God's position in human life). They accept certain lines of thought as their guide, certain human beings as their rulers and certain false customs and traditions as their manners of living. They thereby replace God with ignorance, unawareness and satans (which only in our limited minds are regarded as rivals to God for, in reality, God has no rival). For example, Egyptians were actually taking a Pharaoh like Anwar Sadat as a partner along with God when they left their destinies in his hands.

The Commander of the faithful continues with the statement, „Satan turned them away from knowing Him..“ to emphasize that when God's position remains unknown in a society, satans try to fill up the human mind, which is bereft of the knowledge of God in some way or other. Sometimes one lacks something and he knows that he lacks it, but more painful is the case when one lacks something and he knows it is not due to the fact that the empty place of what he lacks has been filled with something else of his thirst has been quenched with muddy water. (This is the greater oppression the victims of human beings, i.e. suppression of man's God seeking sense or imposition of unawareness on man). Later on we shall see that Prophets have the responsibility to remove this oppression and compensate for it.

It is to be noted here that Satan (shaitan), referred to in Ali's sermon, should not be mistaken for Iblis, the creature who, according to the text of the Qur'an, refused to bow down to Adam and then implored God to keep him alive till the Day of Judgment but God promised only to keep him alive, <until the Day of the Time Appointed>. This creature should not in any way be assimilated with other creatures. We should grow accustomed to accepting the exact concepts of the Qur'anic statements, and not merely what our prejudices warrant.

Satan has a different meaning. Generally speaking according to the Qur'an, it is applied to those forces which, create corruption, wickedness and deviation. On this ground, we have in the Qur'an "satans among men and jinns", i.e. satans among humankind who put on clothes, walk and do the like, and satans of the kind of jinns. These satans who sometimes dwell within the human being and are called selfishness, carnal desire, avarice, Aggression, negligence and so forth. Sometimes they dwell outside the human being and are titled king, ruffian refractory, corrupt religious leader, aphrodisiac scene, etc.

Now, should we not develop satans within ourselves, outside satans cannot influence us. For the very reason we cannot put the blame of our own deviations on social conditions or on those who have led us to negligence. It is in the Qur'an that the arrogant and the deprived will quarrel on the Day of Judgment. The deprived accuse the arrogant of having misled them but the arrogant deny it and argue that they themselves should not have listened to them. Both of them tell the truth and at the same time, both are condemned.

"... and kept them aloof from His worship." By this statement the Commander of the Faithful means that when human beings do not know God, it is quite natural for them not to worship Him and not to serve Him (servitude is submissive action before God).

Summary

- * God has chosen the best of His servants (istafa) as His Prophets.
- * He has bound the Prophets to two responsibilities: To tell people only what they received as revelation and to hide not any part of revealed matters.
- * At the time of the Prophets' appearance, the people had taken partners along with God due to lack of knowledge concerning Gods position, and thus satans had led them away from God - seeking course towards the negligence of God.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Prophets

In the previous lesson, it was concluded that the chosen Prophets of God have certain responsibilities towards God and the people. This lesson is aimed at discussing these responsibilities.

Our discussion here does not include such matters as the establishment of a monotheistic society and a prophetic government, not meaning that these matters have not been part of the Prophets' missions. They have definitely been aimed for and the Prophets have come to establish the ideal society for mankind). If fact, responsibility or mission here means the change that the Prophets bring about within the human being, for founding a just, monotheistic society is impossible without constructed human beings in the same way as a social revolution is inseparable from an inner revolution among people. This change and provocation originate from the heart of the Prophet, encompass the hearts of people and finally lead to inner explosions among the arisen and faithful individuals. Should the means of such provocation be available (for which the Prophets are responsible) then it would be time to construct society and establish the monotheistic system.

Now, we will study the Prophets' responsibilities in the following words of the Commander of the Faithful „Then God sent His Messengers and series of His Prophets towards them to help them to fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence ...”

With this general policy, the Prophets connected themselves with the people and their inner selves. i.e., with these aims and manners of developing human beings in their mind, they began their missions and on these same bases they tried to establish the Islamic community. Thus, in all dimensions of the Islamic community such as education, economics, government, human relations, etc., nothing contradictory to these aims should be found.

For example, if in an Islamic community something creates forgetfulness instead of 'recalling', that is against the philosophy behind the Prophets' appointment to prophethood. In fact, all the social signs of an Islamic system, i.e. all those things which constitute the minor and Major structures of an Islamic community, should induce people to „fulfill the pledges of His creation”.

These five programs (to which the Commander of the Faithful refers) were compensatory for the deficiencies existent among people during the age of ignorance when Prophets were absent - deficiencies and short comings mentioned in this same Sermon, which we analyzed before under the title 'mental, social and ... backgrounds to prophethood' („In the course of time many people perverted God's trust with them ...”).

What is this 'trust' or 'covenant'? It is the human being's absolute servitude towards God, the human being has a commitment towards God and that is worshipping none but Him. Worshipping other than God means submission to others, whether it be mental, physical, doctrinal or practical. The human being is actually responsible to submit to no one except God but this does not mean that one has accepted this responsibility without having had power and a free will to reject it. The human being's nature and one's inner mechanism conform to the servitude and worship of God. These are, in fact, hidden in humanity's primordial nature. The Holy Qur'an says "Made I not covenant with you, children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan - surely he is a manifest foe to you?... And that ye should worship Me, (for that) this was the straight way?" (36:60-61)

After appointment, the Prophets ask human beings to destroy the change and distortion which they have brought about in God's trust and to make contact with God on the basis of their covenant with Him ("fulfill the pledges of His creation,». This is the very removal of deficiencies of the age of ignorance, the age in which 'God's position remains unknown', the age when Prophets come to recall God's bounties to people.

Asking people to fulfill their natural covenant with God is not a complementary matter. It has a general and, at the same time, absolute concept involving propagation through mere speaking, providing the addressee with final reasoning and teaching purification of the people through controlled behavior. In the Holy Qur'an we read", Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best ... » (16:125)

In this verse, God asks the Prophet to expose the simple minds of the people and the adversaries to wisdom at the beginning stages and after a firm foundation for reasoning is achieved, guide them by preaching. This results in the purification of the mind and soul and, as the final stage, prevent them from establishing wrong reasoning, argue with them and convince them.

Concerning their relationship with human beings, Prophets are obliged and responsible to remove mental obstacles. Thus, those individuals or regimes that bring about such obstacles are opposed and fought by the Prophets.

Accordingly, the Prophet's asking the people to fulfill their natural covenant ranges from wisdom and reasoning to the Islamic jihad (religious and spiritual struggle in the way of God for the removal of the obstacles).

The 'natural covenant' and humanity's primordial nature (i.e. worshipping God alone) are in conformity with the natural structure of the whole universe. Therefore, all the decrees and regulations of the Divine Law, which are incumbent on human beings, conform to human nature. This is clarified in several verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Examples are as follows, <So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith: (establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God ... >, (30:30)

In Sura Ar-Rahman, some of the verses speak of humanity's structure and Attributes and of the time of creation such as „(God) most Gracious! It is He who has taught the Qur'an... He has created mankind...”,

Some others refer to natural phenomena such as the following, " The sun and the moon follow, courses (exactly) computed; and the stars and the trees - both (alike) bow, in adoration. And the firmament that He raised high, and He has set up balance (of justice..." (55:5-7)

It should be noticed here that by 'bowing in adoration' the Qur'an implies that natural phenomena are in a state of submission towards God and move according to specific rules and regulations. It should also be observed that the < balance,> has nothing to do with plants, sun, moon, etc., but exclusively for humanity's good and evil deeds to be recognized and measured.

Then the Qur'an continues, "In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice..". This means that human beings should not violate the laws of creation (natural laws) and religious laws which are in a state of balance and conformity. Accordingly human beings are obliged to maintain this practical connection with nature (i.e. natural laws). Thus, when human beings or the community move against the Divine Law and regulations, they are actually moving against the primordial nature of humanity and the world. And the Prophets come to bring this 'natural covenant' (covenant with God which originates from humanity's heart and warrants a kind of harmony between one's actions and movements and the structure of the Universe) to the stage of action.

Another duty of the Prophets, according to the Commander of the Faithful is to recall to people the forgotten bounties of God. Human beings forget many of God's bounties and blessings, the most important of which being one's 'self' which is the axis for all God's blessings. We read in the Qur'an: "And be not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their proper selves". (59:18)

One's 'self' (that great but forgotten blessing), despite being not more than one thing, has various effects and manifestations. Thus, forgetting it is to forget those tools and means by which one can attain knowledge and recognition means of thinking, means of decision-making, means of innovation and means of accepting responsibility, the lack of each, damages one as a human being. By means of thinking and the power of analysis, one acquires knowledge and understanding and finds the ways. And through one's 'free will' one has the ability to choose.

Now when one distinguishes the right way from the wrong and chooses it, one can perfect the self through innovation and disclose the dead-ends. In fact, lack of innovation and initiative prevent one from going the way of perfection and making progress in the fields of culture, civilization, industry knowledge and morality. Finally, when one consciously chooses the way, one becomes responsible. A person confronts cases in which one should act as well as cases in which one should refuse to act. If one does not understand the case well and if one lacks free will to choose, one will have no responsibility. But if one understands it well and one has freedom of choice, then a person will be responsible.

On the whole, in an ignorant society, human beings forget one or all of these four characteristics, and the Prophets came to recall to them what they had forgotten. This is why the empty-handed and uncultured people who are reminded by the Prophets of their own 'self' and, as a result of their beliefs in God, they can stand firmly against the most stable political systems and gain victory.

The Commander of the Faithful enumerates the duties of the Prophets, saying, „to exhort them by preaching ...". The Prophet is responsible to propagate his message; otherwise, revelation remains a monopoly with him and, thus, two dimensions of prophethood are left unrealized. The Holy Qur'an affirms this "And remember God took a covenant from the people of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it ..." (3:187) Should the Prophet not fulfill this responsibility, the problems related to prophethood will remain unsolved. This is also true with an Islamic community in which propaganda plays a great role. In fact, it is not Islamic if a community falls short in propagating the message of God.

The Commander of the Faithful continues, «to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom», meaning that the Prophets should call people to thinking, contemplation and wisdom which all human beings possess in their nature. The power of thinking and contemplation may be weak in a community and land or among a Generation not necessarily because of geographical conditions, racial deficiencies or stupidity but due to the fact that powerful classes and seekers of dominance prevent people from correct thinking and stop the development of minds by different means (such as the wrong systems of education, prevailing nowadays in underdeveloped countries, which cause minds to be accustomed to various formulas and remain undeveloped due to lack of necessary practices). As was mentioned before, the power of thinking is a property common to all human beings. But sometimes it is buried (by customs and traditions or by ruling systems) and made a treasure from which no benefit is derived, a treasure hidden behind the curtain of whims and fancies, false imaginations, legends, distorted matters and absurd ideas under the name of religion, philosophy and science.

In fact, the holders of power, wealth and deceit (kings, priests, pseudo-theologians and the wealthy) dispossess human beings from the power of thinking or do not provide them with the means for the development of thought (this is the very colonial program enforced in colonialized countries).

This is where the Prophets arise and unveil the treasures of thought and wisdom, inviting people to contemplation. This is observed in the following verses of the Qur'an which call people to think about the most common phenomena of the world and to see in them the wonder which is usually hidden from the eyes of human beings. „Do they not look at the canals, how they are made?" (88:17), „Then let man look at his food (and how we provide it) ..." (80:24) "For what We pour forth water in abundance and We split the earth in fragments.." (80:25-26)

These events and phenomena to which the Qur'an refers are quite common and familiar to human beings, yet when they contemplate them, their minds gradually develop and become active. This development of the mind is clearly seen in the Islamic community during early Islam when Muslims arose 'n a short period of time from the depths of ignorance and short sightedness to such heights that they soon came to be known as the founders of experimental sciences and great universities.

Another task that the Prophets fulfilled and to which the Commander of the Faithful makes a reference is "and show them the signs of His Omnipotence", meaning that they provided the people with manifestations of the divine power. This is what he himself does in this very Sermon (Sermon No. 1), i.e. he refers to some examples of the heavenly signs to persuade people to think about them. He continues: <His Omnipotence, namely the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, means of living that sustain them, deaths that make them die, ailments that turn them old, incidents that successively betake them.>.

What is this ceiling (sky) over our head? It is a collection of air, space, stars and so forth, to which we have grown accustomed, yet something that provokes us to think what it really is and, as a result, provides us with understanding and recognition. Newton acquired the very recognition concerning a great reality by paying careful attention to a natural and very common incident to which no one before him had contemplated. He simply asked why the things did not go up but rather fell vertically down when they were freed in the air, and subsequently he discovered the powerful force of gravity. In fact, all scientific progress and developments in the field of astronomy have originated from the very attentiveness to which the Prophets always called the people.

What is this bed (earth) beneath man's feet? What has it been created from? What is beneath it? Where would we reach, should we excavate the earth? These are the questions from which such sciences as geology, mining, etc., originate.

What is the food which maintains life? How is it prepared? Why is it needed and why should we try to obtain it? What is living with all its aspects such as speaking, walking, eating, etc., and what is death and becoming lifeless and silent? What causes one to grow old? Why is one happy and glad at one stage of life and exhausted, weak and

disable at another stage? The answers to these questions and the careful study of such events and phenomena (life, death, youth, old age etc.) induce human beings to employ their minds and activate them. This is why the Prophets have to show the signs of God's power to the people.

The Continuity of Prophethood

Continuity is one of the main points in the discussion of prophethood. In the first Sermon of the Nahj-ul-Balagha, the Commander of the Faithful aims at picturing the line of prophethood as a consistent and continuous line in the course of history extending to the time of the Prophet of Islam. In fact, never in the course of history has there been a time or place devoid of a Prophet or signs of a Prophet in the past, i.e. either a Prophet has lived among people appointed by God to provide them with good tidings or to make them fear (God's wrath) or there has been something left behind by a Prophet, which the people obeyed as they obeyed the Prophet himself.

Thus, believing in the fact that the earth has never been devoid of a 'proof' (of God) does not necessarily mean that in a given nation or community, a Prophet has always lived who has been immediately taken, over by another Prophet at the time of death. It rather implies that after a prophet's death and before the advent of the next prophet there was something (a book or a faithful disciple) which the people followed and obeyed as the successor of the dead Prophet.

In the Arabian Peninsula, for example, it took a very long time before the Prophet of Islam appeared. There was a long transition between the disappearance of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him and the appearance of Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants. In Sermon No. 88 of the Nahj-ul-Balagha, the Commander of the Faithful points out this matter saying, „God sent the Prophet when the mission of other Prophets had ended and people had fallen into".

Now we pursue our discussion concerning the continuity of prophethood with regard to his words in the Nahj-ul-Balagha. In Sermon no. 1 he says, God never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet (nabi) deputed by Him, or a book sent down from Him or a binding argument (proof) or a standing plea.

The difference between nabi and rasul is that a nabi merely receives the message from God but a rasul in addition to receiving the message, has the mission to propagate it and deliver it to the people. This is, of course, not totally acceptable because the aim of receiving a message is nothing but propagating and the deliverance of it to others. However, we might suppose that a nabi takes the message but it is not the time to deliver it, just as the Prophet of Islam received the message (revelation) on the 'Night of Power' „We have indeed revealed this Message in the Night of Power." but it took twenty-three years before he could fulfill the duty of conveying it to the people.

In the Sura Ta Ha, verse 114, the Holy Qur'an addresses the prophet, saying: "... Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed .. » Accordingly, nabi mursal (the deputed prophet), as the Commander of the Faithful puts it, is referred to as a Prophet who actually conveys his message to the people.

What is the meaning of 'Kitabun munzal (a book sent down)? Does this sending down refers to a place? The fact is that to send down a book actually means to transform the book into letters and words (language) which humanity understands, i.e. to adapt the high heavenly concepts and realities to the level of one's thoughts and understanding. In fact, God, the exalted, inspired the Prophet with the highly complicated facts and learnings in the form of the most simple words and expressions which could be understood by all and which later came to be called the Qur'an, just as a teacher simplifies difficult matters and gives them to his students. This comparison may, however, be wrong, for in any case there is a logical and ordinary connection between a teachers' mind and heart and those of his students, whereas there is a great gap between an ordinary man's heart and the divine lofty teachings. The Commander of the Faithful asserts that in the absence of Prophets and heavenly books, there was either a 'binding argument' (an unfading proof by which people could convince the enemies) or a 'standing plea' (a clear and permanent way) on which people could depend.

On the whole, every nation in the course of history has enjoyed one of the following: First a Prophet (like Moses, Jesus, Abraham, etc.). According to a Tradition there has been 124,000 Prophets, the first of them being Adam and the last one being Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants.

Second, a heavenly Book, left behind by a Prophet. In this very Sermon (Sermon No. 1) he speaks of the Last Prophet, saying, „.... The Prophet left among you the same (the Book) which other Prophets lefts among their

peoples..." By 'Book' he means a collection of written teachings and commandments which all the Prophets possessed. Some of these books were, however, descended to the Prophets themselves (these are not more than a few) but others were those left behind by previous Prophets, either distorted or misunderstood, which the Prophets after them undertook to correct or interpret.

As an example, after Moses, the Torah was misunderstood by some, even mingled with polytheistic ideas, and thus such Prophets as Salomon, David, etc., who succeeded Moses, tried to provide the people with the true meanings and concepts of this Book.

This is also true with the Qur'an. That is to say that there is a considerable difference between our understanding of the Qur'anic teachings and that of the past generations (taking into account the fact that the text of the Qur'an and its concepts and realities have remained untouched). In the past, these teachings were considerably misunderstood because distorted matters and wrong ways of thinking obsessed the people's minds and prevented them from the correct understanding of the Qur'an. But today, the Qur'an is correctly understood and it is likely that in the future some Qur'anic realities be unveiled that we do not perceive today (According to some traditions, when eventually Imam-Mahdi reappears, he will introduce a new religion-the true Islam. Today, some Sunni and non-Sunni jurists have announced that the religion which people follow in Iran is not Islam. They tell the truth because this is not that Islam in which they believe-that distorted Islam which contains idolatry, polytheistic and anti-Islamic ' values. Our Islam is different from that Islam whose mosque is inaugurated by the President of America and whose Qur'an is printed by the Shah of Iran. There is a great and changing distance between these two forms of Islam).

The Books of the Prophets were, however, sufficient as long as they remained untouched, their concepts were rightly expounded and they were correctly interpreted. In the case of Moses, for example, his Book remained perfect and undistorted after he died, during the time when the Children of Israel were in a state of bewilderment and sought to reach Jerusalem, and guaranteed the victory of Israelites as well as the establishment of the Mosaic community. (This community, which was powerful and enjoyed a government, came into being after Moses' death. In fact, Moses made preparations for the revolution and provoked the people but he did not live long enough to witness the establishment of his ideal community, and it was the people who accomplished this task). The Torah was actually preserved and kept aloof from distortion by the successors of Moses (Yusha ibn Nun and Kalib ibn Yuhanna) who succeeded in pursuing that heavenly, Islamic and monotheistic dynamism, i.e. the genuine Torah.

Third, a fixed and undeniable proof. This can be seen in the period after Jesus Christ ascended to the heavens (he was not killed), during which time Christians were subjected to manifold oppression; namely, the oppression of the Roman Empire whose foundations were based on polytheism, which severely persecuted the followers of this progressed monotheistic religion; and the oppression of non-Christian Israelites (the Jews) who did not believe in the Message of Jesus Christ. As a result, Orthodox Christian Israelites lived for many years in concealment and in a state of strangulation without the opportunity to gather together or convey the prophetic legacy to one another freely. The famous disciples of Jesus Christ had to tolerate a great deal of distress in traveling between the cities and lands in order to propagate Jesus' Message.

To say the least, the prevailing state of oppression kept the true Bible of Jesus Christ far away different versions of this heavenly Book; namely, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, none of them containing the exact words, sayings and signs of Jesus Christ. Thus, the original Book (the Bible) was not among the people, yet the existence of the Torah's commandments, which Jesus Christ had announced to be valid and practicable if modified, the existence of the mentioned calamities and the existence of Jesus' guidelines were all an undeniable proof preventing people from refuting the prophecy of Jesus Christ and provoking them to transfer Christian teachings to the coming generations who could, in turn, move and act on the basis of such teachings.

Fourth, a clear and manifest way, i.e. the means and decrees which are not found in the Book but the people possess. It is in a Tradition related from Imam Hassan al'Asgari, peace be upon him, in which he has explained the qualities and Attributes of Islamic jurisprudents. Someone asked the Imam why the learned men of the Christians and the Jews (priests and monks) are reproached in the Qur'an whereas the learned men of Islam are praised. What is the difference between the two? The Imam gave a detailed answer, the epitome of which is that the learned men of Islam, too, are not unconditionally praised. They are praised provided they possess the Attributes that Islam has determined. But should they contrarily follow the same perversions and disgraces adhered to by priests and monks, they will also be blameworthy.

Priests and monks were actually dependent on the powerful and supported them. Although the realities had reversely been manifest in the people's eyes, they did not take action to provide the people with a true portrait of their religion. But the people could discern, on the basis of a series of natural (primordial) principles, the perverseness of the way to which they had been led. Basically, at any age there is a set of accepted natural principles among the people, resulting from the continuous instructions of the Prophets in the course of centuries, which enables them to distinguish the truth from falsehood (for example, when a religious scholar or a man of God compromises with the enemies of God, it can be said without reasoning that he is in the wrong. It is quite obvious and natural that he goes the wrong way, for one cannot obey God and His enemies simultaneously). People can, in effect, distinguish the right way from the wrong by a reference to their hearts and according to their intrinsic beliefs which are the very 'standing pleas' and manifest ways.

These four elements (this clear way) always existed in man's life before the advent of Prophet of Islam. It sometimes happened, however, that two Prophets were living at the same time in different corners of the world or two heavenly Books were followed by two different nations. But the important point was that heavenly guidance made its appearance in all places and at all times (even among the wild, primitive people). Yet, more important of the number of those who denied them never caused the Prophets to neglect fulfilling their obligations.

In Sermon No. 1 of the Nahj-ul-Balagha the Commander of the Faithful says, „These Messengers were such that they did of not feel little because of the smallness of their number or of largeness of the number of their falsifiers." In fact, none of the Prophets fell victim to disappointment but rather all of them succeeded in achieving their aims although the number of them was small (124,000 in proportion to the world population from the very beginning till now) and the number of their falsifiers was large. Falsifiers were the ones who spread out falsely the point that the Prophets' way, message and prophethood were wrong. They were great in number and in some cases they even killed some of the Prophets. yet the Prophets never fell short in pursuing their general and ultimate aim, i.e. prosperous community, and never became hopeless in accomplishing their mission.

They not only struggled for the spiritual elevation of the people of their own time but they also tried to attain the total prosperity and historical evolution of human beings as a whole. And they were successful in this respect. Even those Prophets who were killed had the opportunity beforehand to convey their message and introduce their heavenly lines of thought which although were kept hidden for some time, were finally unveiled and practiced again.

Muddarres, as a follower of the Prophets, had a message to convey at the time of the strangulation of Reza Shah's reign. He believed in the policy of, „Negative Equilibrium" or in his own terms "adami", meaning that we shall neither pay tribute to the West nor to the East. He said, „Religion should not be separated from politics." For the deliverance of such a social and political message, he was arrested, exiled and finally poisoned and choked by stuffing his own turban in his mouth (his grave is now besides a small farm in Kashmar).

He departed and was buried in the remote deserts, but gradually one of his beliefs, „Negative Equilibrium" (before the announcement of this policy by Muddarres, Russian and British governments were equally privileged in Iran. For example, in 1919, Vuthuq ad-Dulih granted the western part of Iran to Britain under a treaty. Russians objected to it, and he granted the north to them.«Positive Equilibrium») was revived eighteen or twenty years later, at the time of Dr. Mussadiq.

Muddarres, Seyyid Jamal (of Asadabad) and others, all being messengers of truth and justice and compassionate lecturers of their own time, were so devoted and courageous that they expressed their views and left behind their lines of thought. But it could be much better if they themselves could have the opportunity to materialize their messages in a better manner and could witness the overthrow of the Pharaoh and the freedom of the people after they had been exposed to so much trouble and distress. However, their names, actions and messages are recorded in history despite their untimely death. They did not neglect their aims and duties and history will not neglect them either.

Questions and Answers

Q. Will Jesus Christ appear after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi?

A. Yes, the Traditions attest this.

Q. We know that the Torah and the Bible have been subjected to distortion. Why has the Qur'an been an exception?

A. It has been proved with sound reasonings that not even a "," (and) has been deleted from or added to the Qur'an. During the time of the third Caliph (Uthman) someone recited the following verse of the Qur'an but intentionally omitted the «,» before „alladhin" which changed the meaning of the verse to a great extent, implying that only those priests and monks who bury gold and silver are condemned, whereas the verse refers to two groups of people - priests and monks who devour the substance of men in falsehood and the people(they may be by priests and monks or not)who pile gold and silver. The verse reads as follow, "O ye who believe! There are indeed many among priests and anchorites, who in falsehood devour the substance of men and hinder (them) from the way of God. And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God.- announce unto them a most grievous penalty ... » (9: 34)

At this event, 'Abdullah ibon Mas'ud, who was present there, put his sword on his shoulder and said angrily, „If you do not recite the verse with the "," you deleted, I will secede from Islam." They were this sensitive. They themselves had heard the Prophet reciting the verses of the Qur'an and had recorded them in their hearts and writings and, thus, they preserved them at the expense of their life. In this way, the Qur'an, which came down to the Prophet was preserved in the original form by the retentives and recitors who permanently recited the Qur'an and kept it from additions and deletions.

Q. What is the difference between „bayyeneh" and „hujjat"?

A. Bayyeneh is a clear and manifest proof which merely convinces a person but hujjat is a proof or reasoning by which a person disputes with his enemies.

The End of Prophethood

„... Among them was either a predecessor who would name the one to follow or the follower who had been introduced by the predecessor." (Sermon 1, Nahj-ul-Balagha)

In the previous lesson, we mentioned that human beings have never suffered from the absence of the Prophets or revealed Books. Here in the above statement, the Commander of the Faithful points out that all the Prophets have had the same direction, although their followers stand against each other today (Jews against Christians and Christians against Muslims ...) He actually means that there have been no dispute or quarrel among the Prophets, all of them traversing the same path, conveying the same message and knowing each other quite well. Everyone of them introduced the Prophet after him and talked honorably about the one before him. For example, Moses informed his followers that Jesus Christ would be his successor and Jesus Christ mentioned, in turn, the name of Moses. Thus, the disputes and wars running among the followers of the Prophets are quite illogical, originating from egotism and selfishness.

We see, therefore, that this situation (the successive coming of the Prophets, heavenly Books and the Prophets' followers such as the Imams) continued along with history and humanity's evolution till God appointed Muhammad peace and the mercy of God be upon him and upon his, descendants as the last Prophet.

In this regard, the Commander of the Faithful continues with the following words: «In this way, ages passed by and time rolled on, fathers passed away while sons took their places till God deputed Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants) as His Prophet, in fulfillment of His promise and in completion of His Prophethood.»

What has God promised which should definitely be fulfilled? The answer can be traced in the Qur'an where it gives good tidings, in the words of Jesus Christ, of the advent of Muhammad, saying: „And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said.- O children of Israel, I am the apostle of God(sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad. ...It is He who has sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may proclaim it over all religion ... » (61: 69)

Thus, God's promise is the victory of Mohammed's religion (or prophethood) over all of humanity's intellectual courses and social experiences. This does not mean, however, that during the Prophet's lifetime this aim should have been achieved (as it was not achieved in practice due to the Prophet's departure), nor does it mean that the Prophet of Islam should, in the long run, overcome all religions, nations and schools of thought (although this has been realized many times in history and the Islamic government has approached a worldwide extent)

The proclamation of truth actually has a more delicate significance. In fact, the thought and mentality of human beings and their creativeness, initiative and innovation increasingly provide them with new ways and manners. Ideologies come into being, grow up and become widespread in this way, and thinkers and philosophers (such as Plato Socrates and ...) make their plans for humanity's social life on the basis of these new ways and manners. Now, the path (school) of the Prophets will gain absolute victory over all the ways designed by human beings at a time when the whole content of the prophethood is given to the people. The path of Moses was certainly the path of God but no one claims that it was the most perfect path ever disclosed for humanity. It was quite appropriate for the time of Moses but it lacked that much capacity to encompass various necessities of human life at all ages and times. It is likely that such man-made schools of thought shall appear in the course of the coming centuries as to be more perfect than the school (religion) of Moses.

Thus, Moses' religion was not the one to overcome all other schools and religions because the line of prophecy had not come to an end and the cup of prophethood had not overflowed. Moses filled a part of this cup and Jesus filled another part but they could not go forward because human beings did not have the capacity to absorb more. The people were, in effect, mentally weak. Otherwise, God would have bestowed on them the whole message of prophethood through His first appointed Prophet.

But when the people got the essential readiness, God deputed His Last Messenger to provide them with all (the

knowledge and awareness) that could be contained in the human mind and to complete the culture of prophethood, fulfilling the divine promise and overcoming all religions and man-made schools of thought.⁷

The completion of prophethood speaks of the end of the line through which humanity connects itself directly with God, i.e. revelation. When this line comes to an end by the appearance of the Last Prophet there is no further need of revelation, Gabriel and so forth, because human beings themselves are thereafter capable of understanding new ways and manners of life and extracting them from what has been offered to them in a complete form by the Last Messenger of God, who stands at the end of the chain of prophethood.

Now, going back once again to the Nahj-ul-Balagha, we see that all the Prophets preceding the last, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and so forth, had a commitment to believe in him, as they anticipated his coming: The Last Prophet stood in effect at the peak of prophethood and other Prophets who were below him in rank had to await him, believe in him (i.e. believe in his prophethood and message) and love him.

The Commander of the Faithful says, "... God deputed Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants) as His Prophet, in fulfillment of His promise and in completion of His Prophethood. His pledge had been taken from the Prophets, his traits of character were well reputed and his birth was honorable."

There is, however, a subtler significance in these statements and that is that the Prophet's commitment was neither a written or an oral one. They had, rather, a natural and primordial commitment to heighten the thought and understanding of human beings and to make them ready for the advent of the Last Messenger. This commitment is similar to the commitment of the teachers of lower grades towards the teachers of higher grades, although they may not know one another. In fact, the former are responsible to train the students' minds in such a proper way that the latter can make the more advanced matters and more extended concepts easily understood.

The Commander of the Faithful continues that the Prophet's «traits of character», i.e. his physical, familial, spiritual and behavioural signs and characteristics were known to one and all and thus a few number of people such as Salman of Fars could unprecedentedly, and without being exposed to his later teachings and programs, know him and come to a perfect belief in his religion. As to the birth of the Prophet, the Commander of the Faithful uses the adjective „honorable" to indicate that there was not weakness regarding this matter, i.e. the Prophet's father and mother (were both chaste and pious. Also, his birth was honorable in respect to circumstances of time and place.

Questions and Answers

Q. Can people, other than the Prophets establish connection with God through revelation? If so, can we conclude that after the end of prophethood too, God inspires His pure beings with some mysteries?

A. The answer to this question lies in the difference between revelation and inspiration. Revelation is the descension of specific concepts together with their special wordings to a Prophet. The Holy Qur'an is, in the eyes of the Muslims, a revelation sent down to the Prophet of Islam through Gabriel. It is completely different from what ordinary human beings receive in their hearts or understand in an unusual manner.

There are inspirations that pure, faithful and sincere creatures of God occasionally receive. Thus, revelation is far beyond inspiration and there is no matter if some people are inspired with some secrets in the period after the end of prophethood.

Q. If all the Prophets have had the same line and direction why have their followers, who have to practice their commandments, not followed the same way?

A. The reason is that the followers of the Prophets were gradually deceived, that is, as time passed, malicious and ignorant hands were put to work, beguiling the followers and distorting the teachings of the Prophets.

Q. What is, vilayat-i-faqih (the guardianship of religious jurisprudents)? Is it among the „Essentials of Religion" or among the „Secondary Principles" of Religion?

A. „Vilayat" means the guardianship of the community and faqih is a jurisprudent or theologian. Thus, „vilayat-i-faqih" is the guardianship of the Islamic community by the religious theologians or jurisprudents in the period when the immaculate Imam is absent. It is one of the „Secondary Principles of Religion", a ruling system, and those who do not believe in it and deny it are disbelievers in Islam.

Q. What are common to monotheistic religions and what are their differences?

A. The doctrinal principles which they offer are common to all monotheistic religions (i.e. heavenly religions, for we do not have non-monotheistic heavenly religions), and the differences among them lie perhaps in the special decrees and commandments, each of them provides for that specific era in which it is founded.

Q. What is hjtihad?

A. Its literal meaning is «to try or endeavor» but in its technical sense it refers to a theologian's effort in understanding Islamic rules and regulations and deriving them from the Book (the Holy Qur'an), Traditions, etc. through the special skill he has acquired in his long course of discipleship under great Islamic experts and authorities. A person who has the ability to perform this job is called a «Mujtahid.»

Q. Why did the Prophet of Islam appear among the Arabs and not among the Persians, for example? Is it true that had he not appeared among the Arabs, the Arabian civilization would have been forgotten?

A. There is no definite reason concerning this matter but perhaps it can be argued that since Arabs were the most untrained and uneducated as well as the most quarrelsome nation of that time, and since they could more easily be affected and influenced than others, they possessed a proper background for the acceptance of the Prophet's invitation to Islam. Their lack of education and training was not, however, an obstacle to their acceptance of the invitation but, rather, caused more trouble and distress for the Prophet in attracting their attention. Perhaps if this religion appeared among other nations, it would be more difficult to convince them. Arabs, though fastened to the chain of superstitions, possessed certain privileges such as bravery, devotion, tolerance (against hardship) and freedom (not being under the rule of satanic powers) which made them the most deserving nation to be exposed to this heavenly religion of Islam.

As to the Arabian civilization it should be said that the Arabs, having a civilization, a culture and a history of their own, would not have been forgotten, had the Prophet not appeared among them, in the same way as the Turks, Tajiks, Spaniards and so forth have remained up to this day.

The Believer' Status Before, After and at the Time of the Prophets' Appearance

In another sermon of the Nahj-ul-Balagha known as „al-Khutbah al-Qasi'ah" (The Sermon of Disparagement), the Commander of the Faithful lays down and explains some of the matters which were quoted in previous from Sermon No. 1, concerning the status of the people during the Age of Ignorance, conditions of the time of the appearance of the Prophets and the situation of the people after the appointment of the Prophets to prophethood. He portrays, in effect, the conditions and circumstances which had naturally cast shadows over the people's lives in the Age of Ignorance as well as the victorious status the people gained after the appearance of the Prophets under the light of their efforts, struggles and endeavors.

A study of some of the statements of this Sermon (al qasrah) which adds to our mind concerning what we learned about the background to prophethood, the Prophets' responsibilities, etc., in previous lessons, would bring us to a sound conclusion for this book. In a part of this Sermon we read: «Think about the condition of people from among the believers who passed before you. What distress and trials they underwent:»⁸

It means that we should look deep into the circumstances of the believers who lived before us, not treating them in a perfunctory manner because we cannot learn much from the formal appearance of the past events. Only when one traces the causes of these events and contemplates them deeply will one perceive that the believers of the past have been under severe pressure' and that they have been subjected to such hardships as hunger, torture, imprisonment and so forth and greater hardships than those we suffer today, i.e. facing political problems and happenings and recognizing the true character of different groups and fronts and the stance they take.

The Commander of the Faithful continues with the following statements, „were they the most over-burdened among all the people and in the most straightened circumstances in the whole world?"

The true believers have always been the most overburdened, the most pain-suffering and the poorest creatures of God before the advent of the Prophets and the realization of Islamic revolutions (all the revolutions led by the Prophets have been Islamic in the sense that they have all been primarily aimed at submission to God). Why? First, because the believers have to provide for their own sustainance. In fact, the true believers, those who have touched the spirit of the belief in God, never compromise with oppressive powers. They usually refuse to enter their service and to help them should they not be able to fight them." Thus, under tyrannical governments, the believers are constantly face to face with hardships and inconveniences as far as their economic affairs are concerned. This can be traced in Islamic traditions. On the contrary, disbelievers compromise with the oppressors very easily, enter the service and thus enjoy a comfortable life.

Second, in addition to providing for their own living, the believers are usually obliged to shoulder the burden of the oppressors' impositions concerning their luxurious life. As an example, we all know that the overthrown regime (of Pahlavi) faced exorbitant expenses which had to be paid by those who did not compromise with it. Those who compromised with that regime were not subjected to such burdens and impositions. They themselves took advantage of the prevailing situations as well.

Third, the believers have to tolerate the political impositions of the oppressive ruling powers with whom they fight. Such powers do not let them express their beliefs and have their own free thoughts and opinions. They force the believers to accept their own oppressive thoughts. Thus, the prevailing strangulation in a society is a great burden on the shoulder of the believers who refuse to adhere to the thoughts and opinions imposed by the oppressive ruling powers. They are, in effect, the most combative people, always fighting the oppressors in order to eradicate calamities and corruptions.

It is narrated that the believer is always in a state of struggling in some way or other. Under unlawful and corruptive governments, he involves himself in organized hidden and underground battles and lives in a precautionary, dissimulative manner, and under lawful, legitimate governments, he deals with political, ideological and military involvements or fights the enemy to safeguard the way of God. Thus, the believer is always in a fighting state which is very troublesome. Fighting does not necessarily mean receiving wounds and bearing distress. It includes, in

addition to these, fears and failures, worries and anxieties. The true fighter is thus the one who does not surrender to these and who only fights for the sake of God and duty, not for the sake of victory. Accordingly, fighting is more troublesome and difficult than all the trials of life.

Finally the Commander of the Faithful says, that are the poorest and the most straightened people because they have to live in a state of strangulation, poverty, force and precautionary silence.

He continues to explain the believers' status in the following statements: „The Pharaohs took them as slaves. They inflicted the worst punishments and bitter sufferings on them. They continuously remained in this state of (spiritual) ruinous disgrace and severe subjugation. They found no method for escape and no way for protection."

The first statement implies that the believers were forcefully made to obey Pharaohs (holders of tyrannical power) or deities other than the One God, although they were servants of God by nature. Sometimes, of course, such deities or objects of worship believe in God themselves and, therefore submission to them is submission to God. But when they induce people to the worship of their own selves, submission to them is submission to non-gods. It has been narrated that „he who listens to a speaker, becomes his servant. If the speaker speaks of God, that person will be the servant of God and if he speaks of Satan that person will be the servant of Satan.»

And Satan is sometimes the very human 'self' and 'concupiscence' to whose obedience the Pharaohs forced the believers in God, who knew no way of defending their human dignity and getting rid of such servitude.

Such was the status of the believers in God and followers of the Prophets who dealt with satanic ruling powers before the victory.

The Three-Act Play of people's Status

The status of the people before, during and after the Prophets' appointment can be likened to a three-act play, the first act of which shows hardship and distress, the second speaks of resistance and perseverance and the third pictures, victory and freedom. In fact, the believers will never gain victory without resisting hardships and struggling for their aim. The Commander of the Faithful continues, „Till when God, the Glorified, noticed that they were enduring troubles in His love and bearing distress and of fear for Him, He provided escape from the distress of trials. So, He changed their disgrace into honor and fear into safety."

In these statements, the Imam shows that the direction of the believers' struggles is towards God and they tolerate hardships and undesirable problems such as hunger, torture, imprisonment, cudgel-punishments and so forth upon His way and for the sake of His love so that God, seeing their patience and perseverance, would reveal to them the ways of escape from nuisances and calamities, maintain their convenience and tranquillity, change their disgrace into honor and fear into security and finally their defeat into victory.

It should be added here that honor (i.e. not submitting to contempt) and safety (i.e. not fearing any enemy) are the most important things the oppressed people are concerned about. Under the rule of satans (tyrannical powers) the people are not immune concerning their lives, properties, morality and so forth, whereas under the rule of God and the oppressed people such worries and anxieties do not exist at all.

The Commander of the Faithful continues his discussion with these statements, „Consequently, they became ruling authorities and conspicuous leaders, and God's favors over them reached limits to which their own wishes had not reached," meaning that the whole community of believers, after God, bestowed victory upon them, became leaders (Imams, guides and patterns) and objects of imitation for other oppressed people and nations who followed their ways and manners and made movements. This is clearly observable in the world of today in which a nation of believers (i.e. Iranians), after having struggled for a long time and gaining victory over a tyrannical regime, has now become the leader of the whole world of the oppressed, and achievement which had never been imagined by Iranians.

They thought, in fact, about victory but they never imagined to become leaders and guiding patterns for all of the oppressed people of the world such as those of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, Persian Gulf countries, Africa and America, who have been greatly influenced and motivated by Iranians' achievements. And this is nothing but God's favor as he says.

Conclusion (Two General Points in the Sermon)

First, in this Sermon (No. 191) the emphasis is mostly on the spiritual aspects of the people's calamities and adversities.. In fact, such factors as strangulation, lack of security, the burden of mental impositions and the burden of providing for the satanic wishes of illegitimate governments, all of which cause humanity to suffer spiritually and invoke one to campaign, are more emphasized than such material misfortunes (or trials) as hunger for which the people rarely campaign. To say the least, human beings' honor and dignity are the dearest things to them, which stimulate them to seriously struggle and campaign. Hunger and the like can be removed in other ways. These are the points of emphasis in this Sermon.

Secondly, the Imam emphasizes here that in a community of believers, when the arrogant government is overthrown, it is the oppressed who take it over another arrogant group. As an example, after the revolution of Moses and destruction of Pharaoh, it was the believers themselves and the masses who became rulers and established a true government. Also, during the lifetime of the Last Prophet, as well as during the reign of the rightly guided Caliphs, the people themselves were masters of their own affairs and played significant roles in resolving the matters which came about. They loved the Prophet and accepted what he said but not blindly and under propagandic pressures. They freely accepted his decisions and they themselves made minor decisions. Unfortunately, as time has passed, people's participation in and contribution to the ruling affairs of the Islamic communities have gradually decreased and these communities have turned out to be, like the communities predominated by ignorance, consisting of two classes of people - the arrogant and the deprived; whereas a true Islamic community consists only of one class of people and they are the believers.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) When Damascus was conquered by 'Umar, the second Caliph, he appointed Yazid bin Abu Sufyan the governor of that region and when Yazid died, his brother Mu'awiya took over. Thus, the people of the region came to know only Mu'awiya and his family from the very beginning when they embraced Islam.
- 2) This title is still found in many books of our Sunni brethren.
- 3) Ash-Sharif Ar-Radi, the of Ali (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1979), part one, page 19.
- 4) Ibid. p. 20.
- 5) Ibid. p. 30.
- 6) Ibid. part two, page 406. parenthesis is the translator's.
- 7) For a better understanding of this matter, refer to Martyr Murtada Mutahhari's The End of Prophecy
- 8) Nahj-ul-Balagha of Ali, part two, page 410.
- 9) In the terminology of the Qur'an and in Islamic usage „trial" (bala) comes to mean a bitter and severe incident. Through these incidents, the human heroes have always been tried in the course of history and one cannot claim to be a perfect human being unless one exposes.
- 10) Akhavan-i-Thalith, one of the forerunners of modern Persian poetry, wrote a poem entitled „Wolves and Dogs" in which he pictures the status of rebellious believers with all hardships and calamities they suffer and their battle against oppressors as well as the status of the peace-seeking disbelievers and hypocrites who compromise with tyrants and do not refuse to be subjected to meanness. Akhvan likens the believers to wolves which keep distance with the affluent and expose themselves to great sufferings for a loaf of bread, and compares the disbelievers with dogs which always serve faithfully, collar on the neck, in order to receive what is left over the master's table.

THE LEADER OF THE REVOLUTION'S VISIT WITH A GROUP OF YOUTH ON THE OCCASION OF YOUTH DAY

* How do you feel when you meet the youth?

* What is the first thing do you have to say to them?

When I am accompanied by youth and when I am exposed to a youth environment, I feel the like one who is breathing in the fresh morning air. I feel a freshness and vitality. The first thing that normally flashes into my mind that I have thought about a number of times, is that “do they (youth) know that a star is shining on their foreheads” I see this star, but do they see it too? The star of youth is very bright and full of good fortune. I think if the youth discover this valuable and unique asset in their lives, they will make use of it in the best way, God willing.

* How did you spend the period of your youth?

Indeed, the situation those times was different from that of today and it was very bad. The youth environment was not a desirable one, not only for me as a student of theology but for all the youth as well (I would like remark that I was student of theology simultaneous with my primary- school period). Attention was not paid to them. A lot of potential was destroyed and we witnessed this phenomenon with our own eyes. I even saw it in the of school theology as well as in the universities (because I had had contact with university students and I was very close to them for many years).

There were lots of shining potential, and there were also lots of people who probably did not possess enough ability for the courses in which they were studying but it is possible that they could have been masters in other fields but nobody were aware of them and nobody understood.

As “Mr. Mir Baqheri” pointed out, which he expressed correctly that before the revolution I had spent the entire period of my youth with them. When the revolution achieved victory I was about 39 years old, by then, I had spent most of my life from 17 or 18 to 39 with the youth, whether with students of theology and religion or with outside the field of theology. I felt that Muhammad Rida Pahlavy’s regime had done something that youths deviate toward decadence, toward moral decadence as well as decadence in their identity and in their very personality. Of course I can not claim that regime had deliberately planned to encourage our country’s youth toward lives of decadence, it may or may not be so, but what I can say with certainty is that they had planned and were running the country in such a way that it necessitated that one be totally distant from matters of politics and of life.

Would you believe me if I say that people like me, in their 20’s were not aware of who were the people in the ruling government? And nowadays, do you know anybody in this country who does not know who the education minister is? Or who is the minister of economy and finance? Or is there anybody who does not know the president (Muhammad Khatami)? Even people in the farthest reaches of the country are aware. In that era all layers of society –especially the youth were unconscious of political affairs. Youth were mostly occupied with daily affairs, and some of them had to work very hard just to get a piece of bread to eat; of course a part of their earning was not only spent on eating they were spending it on other things as well.

If you study the books at that period on Latin America and Africa- “frantz Fanon” and others who were writing books at that time which have remained in vogue up till today because of their own validity -you will find out that our situation was exactly the same. No one dared to write about Iran, but one could easily write, for instance on Africa, or Mexico or Chile. Reading these books, I found out that our situation actually is the same as those countries.

I mean, that young worker who after working very hard just to earn some pennies, would spend half of his pay on sensuality, pleasure seeking and things such as these. These were the same things that we read about in those books

and we saw that in reality the same conditions prevailed in our society. It was truly very bad. Youth environment was not a good environment. Of course within their hearts it was different; because fundamentally the young is full of joy, hope, excitement and so forth.

I myself, personally had a very exciting youth, both before the outbreak of the revolution my literary and artistic activities gave some excitement in my life. And also after the outbreak of the struggle in 1341 -at that time I was 23 years old- naturally we found ourselves at heart of the basic excitement of the country, I was imprisoned twice in 1342,- detention, investigation –you know how all this can excite a person. Afterwards, being released, a person would feel even more excited on seeing huge masses of people interested in such things, and being a witness to a leader like Imam Khomeini guiding them and correcting their actions and thoughts, the excitement increased even more. This is how life was for people like me who were living and thinking in this category it was extremely exciting, but it was not so for everybody.

Of course, youth naturally gather together because it gladdens their hearts.- I mean there is a kind of happiness in their nature. They enjoy eating and speaking, looking in the mirror, and they enjoy holidays. You (youths) will not believe that, when a person had passed his youth he will not enjoy, for example, delicious food as much as you do. At that time, sometimes our elders -who were at the same age as I am now- said some things that made us astonished, we asked ourselves, why did they think like that? Now I understand that those poor people were not too wrong. Of course I have not separated myself totally from youth and even now I feel something of the youth within myself which I will not let myself lose.

But those who were subject to old age, as a matter of course did not feel the enjoyment that a youth feels in all aspects of his \ her life. It was like this at that time. I do not claim that an atmosphere of grief dominated, but there was an atmosphere of negligence and of unawareness and of a lack of identity.

That is why we, who were thinking seriously and deeply in affairs of struggle, put our efforts (extricate the) youth as far as possible out of the circle of the cultural influence of the regime. For instance, I myself used to go to the mosque to teach tafsir, preach to the people after prayers and at times I would go to other cities and give lectures. The main point of my attention was to take youths out of cultural noose of the regime. I considered it an “invisible noose”. I said “there is an invisible noose which is taking all of the people in a particular direction” and I would have to tear this lasso away and release the youth as far as possible.

Whoever got rid of that mental noose –which first of all required piety and secondly conversion toward Imam Khomeini’s thoughts- would become sort of immune. It was like this in those days. This very generation got the basic fundamentals of the revolution. Now, when I look at our society I can identify many of those individuals, whether they were related to me or not.

At any rate you are in a better period now, the atmosphere is better. Of course I do not say that our youth are provided with everything and that everything is running as it should, but in comparison to that time, today’s situation is better. In my opinion a youth can afford a good life today and find his or her human identity and personality if he or she wants.

*** What is your definition of a Muslim youth and what are his or her characteristics?**

*** How can a youth reach his goals in the course of life?**

Of course it cannot be easily traversed. The condition that you put makes it very difficult for me to answer you. Actually nor every important and serious work could be done easily. If a man wants to realize valuable goals, he has to undergo lots of trouble and effort - this is inevitable Basically, amongst the important characteristics of youth, I consider three as the most evident, and if these are identified and directed in a right direction it will be feasible to answer question. These three characteristics are as follows:

Energy, hope and innovation. These are the three most salient characteristics of the youth. If the media – be it a religious lecturer, a lecturer in cultural and intellectual affairs, T.V and Radio or schools- as cultural assistance can direct these three main characteristics, I think, it will be very easy for a young person to find the Islamic path because that which is required by Islam is for us to put our potentials into effect.

The Qur’an contains a very basic point and it is not bad that I express it for you dear youth in that it focuses upon

piety. When individuals want to see themselves in terms of piety, prayer, fasting, servitude, worship, thikr and du'a come to their minds. It may be that they may all be a part of piety but none of them, themselves mean piety means being careful of oneself. Piety means that human being should know what he is actually doing, and that he chooses his every movement in accordance with his own will, thought and decision; it is like a person who is riding a tame horse, horse, holding its bridle and knowing where he will be going; this is piety. A person who does not have piety does not have control over his movements, decisions and future. According to words of the Nahjul Balagha" he is like one who is placed on a refractory horse,- without having any control over it. Having the bridle in his hands, he does not know where he will go and his no choice but to go wherever horse goes and there is no saving him.

If we take piety with this meaning in mind, in my opinion it will be easy to travel this path of course, not very easy however. It is feasible for a youth to find the Islamic way of life; if one is religious, one has to be careful about one's deeds, about this venture, this word, this friendly relationship this lesson and work, this Action and thought, are they correct or incorrect? This very thinking about the correctness or incorrectness about one's actions is piety.

If one is not religious, but is however in that very state he will be guided towards religiosity.

The Holy Qur'an says: "it is a guide to those who guard (against evil)" it does not say: "A guide for those who believe: ".

The first expression means that a non- religious person could be guided by Qur'an if he has the piety, (it is possible for a non-religious person to be pious in the meaning we have outlined). But if a believer does not have piety, probably he is not firm in his faith and its existence will depend upon his situation: If he is located in a favorable environment his faith will stay with him.

Therefore if we utilize these three characteristics in the context of piety and guide them, it will be very easy for them to live in the way advised by Islam, this will be especially so in our country which is an Islamic country. It is very important point to note that the government- the national authority-is under the auspices of Islam. The people who have authority in this country, believe deeply in Islam, and faith has deep roots in the souls of the people as well. Therefore the way is paved to be a Muslim and live like a Muslim I will give a short example and conclude my answer to your question.

During the imposed war which, unfortunately, were not able to experience its upliftment -of course the fact that you had not experienced war is no cause for regret; but what someone will regret are those unique features associated with it in this regard- youth exactly like you now, eighteen and twenty years old from the point of view of spiritual purity were on the same level as agnostic who had spent forty years travelling on the path to God. We sensed this in their very being and such individuals were by no means few.

When I come face to face with such youth, I felt a real humility and it is not that I wanted to pretend to such humility. You have seen that when man is in the presence of greatness and witnesses its perfection's he comes to understand his own weakness. I observed that same feeling in Myself when in the presence of a young Bassiji and a young combatant. Such was the atmosphere that could change a normal youth in such a manner.

You know how youth are in the world with "RAP" groups and the like and with all kinds of mental and moral calamities. Youth in the world are really suffering from a thousand misfortunes of this kind. "RAP" groups and groups similar to them existed in our time too. In our time the "Beatles" were famous, I have heard they have become old men now.

Some time ago I read about them in a foreign magazine talking about where they were and what they were doing. Those spiritual troubles and psychological complexes made them end up in these things. Now those people who imitate them in backward and remote countries do not understand what an illness had afflicted these poor unfortunates.

What they consider as progress is in fact decay and decline. But while the world was in such a state, our youth was in another situation entirely, in Iran the youth was bubbling, enriched honored, in the depths of their hearts they were happy, they had a sense of responsibility and they were clear about their objectives, what they were doing and for whom.

*** As female students how can we pattern ourselves on Hazrat-e- Zahra's life?**

*** Who were your own role models during the period of your youth?**

That's a good question. First of all I must say that no role model should be presented to us and then we be told that it is our role model. This type of stipulated and imposed Pattern role model is commonplace and uninteresting. We must find the role model ourselves, that is we must scan the horizon of our thoughts then we would see that among all of the figures that come to mind, that which comes to our minds more often, that is our role model. I believe that it is not difficult for a Muslim youth especially one who is acquainted with the lives of Infallible Imams, the family of the Prophet and of the early Muslims of Islam to find a role model, of which there are quite many.

You yourself fortunately mentioned Hazrate-Zahra's name in this context. I would like to say a few words on sacred existence of Hazrat-e-Zahra. Perhaps, if seen against the background of the infallible Imams and other great personalities it will provide a lead.

You, madam living in an era of technological, industrial and scientific progress, in a big world a materialist civilization with a multitude of new phenomena in life, you settle on a role model, for example, who lived 1400 years ago in what area would that role model be analogous to your present situation that could be useful for you. For instance you want to know how went to university? Or how she thought on world political affairs? These factors would not be found.

Each human being has a number of fundamental characteristics that you should clarify and search for your role model in them. How do you suppose, for instance, a human being should act when faced with events in the environment? Events in the Environment can sometimes be related to the era of the train, the subway, the jet or the computer and sometimes it is related to an era where none of these things exist. Nevertheless it is something which engulfs man.

Man can confront this matter in two different ways: one way is with a sense of responsibility and other in an apathetic manner.

Having a sense of responsibility is of various types and divisions:

With what mentality and with what kind of perception toward future should he have? Man has to search for these basic lines in a person who can be his pattern and follow them.

Once had spoken about this matter in a lecture. Sometimes in our lectures no attention is paid to noteworthy words and we miss them.

Look, Hazrat-e-zahra, for instance, was about six or seven years old that event of the Sheb-e-Abitaleb occurred. The Shu'ab-e- Abitaleb was a very difficult period in the history of Islam The public call of the Holy Prophet had begun, he had openly proclaimed this call and little by little, the people of Mecca, especially the youth and slgradually gravitated towards the Holy Prophet. Leaders of the Tagut such as Abu-Lahab, Abu – jahl, and others had no other choice but to exile the prophet and those around him and so they did. A large number of people consisting of tens of families among whom were the Holy prophet and his family, Abi-Talib -who himself was one of the leaders of the Quraish's heads –children and others were exiled from Mecca, but where could they go? Abi Talib had some land –some miles away from Mecca– which was located in a mountain fissure and was known as Sheb-e- Abi Talib ("sheb" means fissure of mountain or narrow valley). We from Mashad call it "Bazeh", an original Persian word.

Abi –Talib had a "Bazeh" or "Sheb" and they were told that it was better to go there" Now think about it, in Mecca it is very hot in the day and very cold at night quite an intolerable situation, and they lived there for three years only God knows what hardships and hunger they suffered.

This was one of the most trying times for the Holy Prophet. In this period he was not only responsible for managing a society, but he had to support himself as well as the people who were suffering from severe hardship.

When a situation is pleasant, the people who have gathered around a leader are satisfied they say "God bless him that provided us with such a nice situation, but in hardship and in the face of uncertainty and they say "he guided us to this and we did not wish for such a situation" of course people with strong faith resist, but in the final analysis all the hardships are placed on the shoulders of the Prophet. In the midst of such a severe situation Abi-Talib who his supporter and hope and "Khadijah-e- Kubra" the greatest source of psychological support for the Prophet both passed away within a week, this unforeseen calamity left the Holy Prophet completely alone.

I do not know if you have ever been in charge for a work collective to know what responsibility really means? A

situation like this could make a man feel quite helpless. In such conditions take a look at Fatimah Zahra's role. When man looks at history he finds such instances pushed aside to the corners and unfortunately no chapter is opened for them.

Fatimah Zahra was like a mother consultant and nurse to the Holy Prophet. That is why she is called "the mother of her father" from the time she was only six or seven years old. In Arabia and other hot environments girls grow faster physically and mentally and the equivalent of her age would be like that of a girl of twelve in our environment, accompanied by a heightened sense of responsibility.

Couldn't this be a pattern for youth that can encourage them to quickly feel their responsibility toward matters in their environment, to quickly feel that joy? She expended that excitement, that valuable asset which permeated her existence in removing the dust of grief and displeasure from a father's face who was now about fifty years old and was almost old man. Could she not be a pattern for youth? This is very important.

The next example is that of a married life and having a husband when someone thinks about wife hood they think about organizing meals in the kitchen, cleaning rooms, making beds like in the old days, arranging the cushions and then waiting for the husband to come home from the office or store. Being a wife, however is not just this.

Just look at the married life of Fatimah Zahra (S.A.).

Fatimah and Imam Ali (a.) had been married for about nine of the ten years that the Holy Prophet spent in Medina. Had wars taken place almost sixty in most of which of Imam Ali had participated.

Now look here, here is a lady who stays at home while her husband is involved in fighting battles on a regular basis and without whose presence on the battlefield the struggle would be paralyzed, so much did success on the battlefield depend upon him.

At the same time they did not have an easy life, exactly as we have heard. It said: The same things that we have heard "Because of love of God they feed the poor, the slaves, the orphans, saying: truly we feed you for the sake of God alone".

Truly they lived a life of poverty although she was the daughter of a leader, the daughter of the Holy Prophet, and with a sense of responsibility as well.

Do you know what a strong spirit a human being needs in order to equip such a husband, to free his heart from the distractions of family problems, to reassure him and to properly educate the children? You may say that Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn (a.) were both Imams and had nature of Imamate (leadership), but Zainab (a.) was not an Imam. Fatimah Zahra had trained her during these nine years. After the Holy Prophet's demise she did not live very long. She was that kind of housewife, she was that kind of spouse in this way they managed the home and in this way this axis of family life is permanently written in history.

Can not this be a pattern for a young girl? A woman who is a housewife a lady who is honored as a housewife this is very important.

After holy prophet's demise she (Hazrat-e-Zahra) comes to the mosque and gives that startling lecture. Those of us who vocally give extempore speeches and lectures will understand how extraordinary that lecture was. A girl of eighteen, twenty or at most twenty four years old (of course her real age is not certain because date of birth is in dispute) experiencing those hardships and calamities comes to mosque and in the presence of a huge crowd of people she gives a lecture whose every word would remain in the annals of history.

The Arabs are famous for having good memories. A man might come and compose an elegy of eighty lines, and afterwards, ten people would write it. The elegies which have survived originated in this way. Poems were read in social gatherings and were recorded. Lectures and sayings were recorded in the same way, though memorizing or writing and they have remained with us until today.

Empty talk does not remain in history neither would any kind of speech, lots of words have been expressed, lots of poems have been composed, but none have survived and nobody pays to them any attention. That which history keeps in its heart and after 1400 years would fill anyone with humility when they consider it this demonstrates magnificence and in my opinion this can be a pattern for a young girl.

You are correct, the fault is with those of us who are in charge of these affairs. Of course by this I do not mean those in charge of governmental affairs I mean spiritual and religious affairs, that we have not offered them to the young generation as we would have liked, but you yourselves can do work in these areas. There are similar cases to be seen in the lives of our Imams, as well.

Imam Jawad's life is also a model. Imam Jawad (a.) despite his stature and his magnificence died when he was only twenty five years old; these are not our words but the words of history, a history written by non-shiites. This magnanimous man during his infancy and his youth attained a magnificence before the eyes of "Mamoun" and all the people. This is very important and could also be seen as a model for all of us.

Of course, in our time we have a model as well. Imam Khomeini (May his spirit be sanctified) is a model, these young volunteer forces are a model both those who had been martyred and those who are still alive to-day. Of course man's culture makes it easy to speak about people who have been martyred or have passed away. Just look and see what models we can find. We have seen people in the war who had left their towns or villages as very average people. I had noted previously that the previous regime could not elevate these potentials or even realize them. In the previous regime these people were normal human beings, but in this system they came to the battlefield which was a field of work and all of a sudden their potentials were realized, they became "major generals" and later they were martyred. Such cases are many.

Some years ago I was reading about them in a pamphlet entitled "My commander" recounting the memories of young men about their commanders on the battlefield. I don't know if this work was continued or not. They narrated very short stories or brief memories, memories that manifest the magnificence of such a personality to man. These could be patterns for us. And of course, in our scientific personalities, athletic personalities, literary personalities, as well as among our artistic personalities we may find patterns as well; personalities that are truly notable.

Of course man chooses his model in accordance with his own criteria. You may choose any pattern that you wish, but I ask you to consider piety as a criterion, piety is something that cannot be neglected. It is necessary for a worldly life as well as a spiritual one.

In response to your question as to what personalities had impressed me I must say that there were quite a variety. The person who impressed me very much in my youth was the late "Navab Safavi". I was about fifteen when he came to Mashad. I was really impressed by him. When he left Mashad he was martyred in a terrible way only after some months had passed. This deepened his impression upon us. Ladder Imam Khomeini profoundly impressed me. Before I left for Qom and before the outbreak of the struggle I had heard Imam Khomeini's name, I had not yet seen him but I was interested in him; because all the young men in Qom's theological school took great interest in his lectures which appealed to them. When I left for Qom I did not hesitate to go to his classes.

From the start I attended his sessions and I continued to attend his classes for as long as I stayed in Qom. He impressed me very much. My father and mother, of course, impressed me as well. My mother especially so, she impressed me deeply. She was quite an effective lady.

*** Considering your interest in art and literature, who among contemporary poets have you studied most and in whom are you more interested?**

I divide contemporary poets into:

Poets who composed lyric poems, poets who composed of satirical poems, and poets who composed modern verse. Each of these categories consists of some individuals in whom I was interested. Among the lyric poets there is the late "Amiry Firouzkouhy" who was a friend of mine and he took a great liking to me we were in contact with each other for many years after the Revolution. He passed away during my term as president. Besides "Amiry" there were, of course one or two other composers of lyric poems whose work attracted me; one of them is the late "Rahy Moayery" I did not have close contact with him, the other one is the late "Shahriar" I was very interested in his poems, and I was also acquainted with him, after the Revolution but we had no relation before the Revolution. One of the best among composers of satirical poems was "Malekashoara Bahar" whose satirical poems proved very attracted to me. The late "Amiry Firouzkouhy" used to compose a sort of satirical poem in the style of "Khaghany" a famous and noted composer of satirical poems, I was very interested in him.

There were two or three people in the area of modern verse, whose work I found very interesting; one of them is "Akhavan". We knew "Akhavan" and his poetry was very exceptional. There are two or three other people that are also notable but I do not wish to mention their names. During our youth there were individuals who were masters in the art of modern verse and I believe they composed modern verse even better than "Nima Youshij", although he

paved the way but in my opinion these people were better at composing more experienced and more noteworthy. Of course no one had the sincerity that “Nima Youshij” had neither did “Akhavan” nor the two or three people that have not mentioned. “Nima Youshij”- contrary to gossip – was a religious man. The late “Amiy” was his close friend and he told me that “Nima Youshij” was religious. He was interested in traditional poems, but he was also interested in this style modern verse as well. You know, of course that he imitated Europeans in this style.

Basically the style of our (modern verse) is not an original style in a real sense; it is a style of European poetry; with many of the characteristics that these poems possess, even patterns of English sentence structure has entered modern Persian poetry.

Among the poets we have today, we have some very good ones; we have also good lyrical poems and to be fair, among those whom we say are good poets; we have those who write modern verse as well. Among the poets of the Revolution, some are really good and gifted ones. Allow me not to get into commenting upon the contemporary poets at this time.

*** Today literature is directly mixed up with political viewpoints; consequently bewildering writers of the young generation. What is your opinion in this case?**

I do not understand what you are getting at when you say that literature has become mixed with politics. Does it mean that it has political content? For instance, suppose we say that, there is a poet who is in opposition to our current reasoning from the political point of view but he is a notable poet, if his poems found its way into the universities and attract attention it may be used, therefore it should not be so employed. Of course I do not know how such poetry is encountered with in the universities. If we really had a poet who had a high position from a poetic point of view so that a student in the university could really make use of his poetry I would not criticize him. Even if that poet was going against the revolution for coming into a class and being the subject to attention; but honestly I do not know any such a poet now.

You speak of the separation of modern poem and prose from the poems of the previous era. In that time when this so called notable poet composed this poem, we probably had ten other poets who may have had the same fame or more famous. Now this particular poet’s poetry, and I wish not to mention his name and will not do so, found its way into the university but Akhavan’s poetry did not and I do not think that his poetry was the best manifestation of the poetry of that period. “Akhavan” was a friend of mine; during my presidential term we had a warm relationship with each other After my presidential term.

Subsequent to return from a one year trip to Europe, he wrote me a letter and composed a poem, and soon after he passed away. Therefore there is nothing wrong with «Akhavan». In fact why shouldn’t we not gravitate towards such a man who could be so useful to us? In other words, if we really have great poets right now I see no problem in students of universities making use of their poetry and subjecting them to scholarly research, I see no problem in this, at least it is not prohibited on my part. I am not aware about any such programs but I do not know such poets. You should know that there are some people who have famous names, but really are not that great and their poems, too, are not that important. When exposed to criticism, and putting aside their status as poets in considering both good and bad in detail it then becomes clear that some of them are fakes. Usually I am not uninformed about these contemporary poets. Some of these so-called poets compose poems and claim that they are this and they are that, that they are the roots of poetry in this country, while we know they are nothing of the sort. At the time when it was best for their work they were second rate, some of them were third rate while there were many in the country who were much better than them.

Contemporary poems should be worked on. You will find no one in lyric poetry who is better than Rahy Moayeri during his time. «Rayh» is from the same generation that is connected to this period, and it is the same with the late Amiry Firouzkouhy, and these are quite noted poets, or the late «Gholam Reza Qodsi» or Mr «Qahraman» who is now in Mashad and is a very good composer of lyric poems; or for instance Mr. Sahebkar in Mashad who is not a well-known poet but his lyric poems are excellent. Or for example in Kermanshah there is Mr. Behzad. These are the poets of note in this period. The young poet of today will really not be able to find any pobetter than these. We have exceptional poets that unfortunately the young generation is not aware of. All of them are also good people.

People who are on the line of the Revolution, the system and Islam; the very line that the people support in Iran. There is no opposition or separation. They could be quite useful for us, but our youths are somewhat lazy in the fields of research, investigation and follow up. If it is not too presumptuous to the youth this must be said. If they search a little and be serious they can uncover very good sources. Right now in our own university in Tehran we have very excellent and noteworthy poets to whom people pay very little attention.

*** We have observed that in social and political affairs, some people take up extremist positions and also follow up on them. What is your guidance for young people in this regard?**

One should not be very afraid of variety in tastes. Variety in taste is not a bad thing. Now, for example, if there are two political orientations, and one youth believes in one of them and the other youth believes in the other it's no problem, what is harmful is action without thinking and without study jumping to quick decisions, becoming agitated and carrying out activities without proper study. I warn dear youths to beware of this attitude. Being young does not necessarily mean having speed in making decisions. Of course, youth means intrepidity in taking action, which means that man should not let himself be rendered helpless by the complications and complexities of the work that he wants to accomplish. It does not mean becoming, agitated and acting without methodology and without deliberation. Youth can act without deliberation but they can also work with deliberation which is to work completely, thoughtfully and with reflection. These characteristics that is, the characteristics of deliberation, of thoughtfulness of study and of seeking the truth all of them can exist in the youth. If some youth, for example can be seekers after truth which is, basically, part of their attributes there will be no objection at all to them having variety in taste and it will not be the cause of any error, at least it will not create any serious damage.

As regards to the attitude of denying the other side, such as in social affairs, a person taking up a position and saying that it is one hundred percent so and so and nothing else, is not right. It is not a good attitude to have. Of course, we must be so with regard to some of the principles of our religious beliefs that is, one must follow it thoughtfully and take stand on a fixed and well established point, and decisively say this is it and there is nothing else. In this case it is not bad to say so, rather, it's good but in social matters, in political matters and in various social encounters it is not right to say that (This is right and there is nothing else. In my opinion man should tolerate opinions contrary to his own, and concerning the effect upon his thoughts and his opinions, he must establish deliberation as the criterion and the basis of his work. In my opinion there would be no problem if such was the case.

*** So far, during the course of your activities, to what extent have you given youth responsibility and what is your experience in this regard? In your opinion, what is the responsibility of youth for scientific uplifting of the country?**

At the beginning of the Revolution, I gave youth responsibilities in areas of work that were in my control whether in the armed forces, working in the government or during my term as president. My experience is, that, if we put our trust in youth, that young person who has what it takes should be given that responsibility, he has the competency. This does not mean "every youth, every responsibility". Compared to others young people were better and more responsible in performing their jobs, they also progressed more rapidly, they would be more innovative and would deliver earlier; in other words they maintained a progressive method on the job. On the other hand, it was possible for non-youth to accomplish their actual tasks quite well, but they stopped short of progressing in practice, and usually such is the case.

When we were on the Revolutionary Council, some other friends and ourselves were objected against concerning this matter, there were older individuals, mainly sixty, seventy, seventy-five years old who also sat on the council and did not have much belief in the youth. They used to say why do you turn forwards the youth and put them to perform crucial tasks without proper warrant? They didn't like to give away too much ground to the youth. They certainly preferred that the youth obey and follow them. They used to say they are young and we are old so they should follow us. They were not quite ready to place their trust in young people, but we had been placing our trust in

them. With the practical experience they were having, we were giving them the answer, work was well done and progress was being made. As to the other part of your question, referring to the scientific advancement of the country. Bear in mind that the period of youth is the period of capability. How, for what can this capability be employed? In my opinion, it should be used mainly in acquiring knowledge, in purifying the soul, in instilling piety in oneself and in strengthening the body—namely through exercise. These three areas are fundamental, such that if in one short sentence I was asked, “what do you want from youth?” I would tell that person: acquiring an education, spiritual refinement and exercise. I think that the youth should go after these three special characteristics. Acquiring an education includes research as well as intellectual work. Because this ability resides in youth, they should strive very hard in acquiring an education. Nowadays, I have heard that youth are not willing to accept this heavy scientific responsibility. This is not good at all. How could we advise a young person who is not getting an education, his high school program left in the lurch and not attending university that he should go and study but not so advise a university student who is not studying hard in university at all? Really, what did you go to university to do? You should be going to University to advance knowledge. In my opinion young people should apply their energy which is, in reality, the power of their youth, in the pursuit of acquiring knowledge.

As to your question whether the gap between the advanced countries and ourselves is coverable or not, I believe so, I think it can definitely be covered. Of course it is possible that we cannot cover it by going the same route as they have gone, however, *ilâ mâsha Allah*, short cuts do exist in the world. We do not know very well this natural world that God has created. There are thousands of ways. One way is the very path that contemporary industrial civilization has taken, and after every step they have mapped out the steps to come. Why should we not be hopeful of opening a new door and making a new discovery. There was a time when electricity had not been discovered, I mean, it had been in existence in the world, but people had not been aware of it, suddenly, they came to know of it and to utilize it. Yes, they had known of steam power and long before that they did not even know about fire, however, later on, they came to know about it. So why should we despair of not coming to know of something hither to unknown once again, just as every day something otherwise unknown before becomes known? We must work in this area and reach a road, our road, that will make ready the rapid advancement of science. It's only remedy is for the youth to work hard especially those involved in science, education and research.

Once can accomplish whatever task one wants to do during our youth; especially in those three areas: knowledge, self purification and sport, which are best accomplished while one is young. Everyone certainly knows that exercise when one is older is not as effective to the some extent as compared to when one is younger. Most people, however, do not know about purifying the soul, imagine that when a human being grows old then is the time to practice worship and self. Purification exactly when self-purification is difficult, sometimes even impossible. In old age self-purification is a most difficult thing. In your time, however, the time of youth, self purification is very easy. At any rate, young people should take these three tasks very seriously.

*** With respect to fashion consciousness being regarded as a special characteristic of man, who, in some manner displays himself in such ways that include make up and dress. What is your opinion as to how one should confront such a subject? What has the state machinery done until now? Have they been successful?**

In answer to your question, what I can say now, is that the principle behind the inclination towards the beautiful, beautification and the love of beauty is something found in the essential nature of man (*fitrah*). Of course it may be a bit different from the concept of fashion consciousness. Fashion consciousness is something more general. The question of make-up, clothing and the like which you have mentioned is a particular category, that is, that man, especially the youth, like beauty and beautification and like to be beautiful themselves as well, there is no harm in this, it is something natural and normal and is not forbidden in Islam, what is forbidden is causing a disturbance (*fitnah*) and corruption.

Beauty and beautification should not be the cause for bringing corruption and decadence into existence in society. In other words it should not introduce moral decadence into society. How does it do so? His ways are clear. If male-female relationships are to be irresponsible, unconditional and unrestrained, it causes corruption. If fashion centrism assumes an extreme form you will get corruption. If the topic of beautification, cultivating external appearances,

clothing and the like become the primary occupation of life this leads to deviation and decadence. It will be like in the period of tyranny (taghut), when aristocratic women and those from among the nobility would sit behind the dressing table. And how long do you think they sat there for? Six hours! This is true, I have accurate information on the fact that they would sit there for six hours. A human being spending all this time because she wants, for example to go to a wedding and she has to do her hair or her face in some special way! If it comes to this, that is deviation and decadence. In itself, however, there is no harm in paying attention to your outward appearance and clothing, as long as it is not for showing off and for displaying one's charms (tabarruj).

Tabarruj is forbidden in Islam. Tabarruj means women showing themselves off in front of men in order to attract and encourage disturbances (fitnah). This is a kind of fitnah that carries a whole lot of problems along with it. A young man falling into sin with a young woman is not the only problem, that is only the beginning, I would dare say it is the smallest problem, it continues right into the family. Fundamentally, this type of unrestrained, unconditional and unrestricted relationship is a deadly poison for the foundations of the family, because a family with love is alive. In principle, love is the basis of the family. If this love -the love of beauty, the love toward the opposite sex- is provided for in a hundred different places then that strong support, necessary for the stability of the family will disappear and families would become unstable. Unfortunately today, the situation has indeed come to this in western countries especially in Europe and America. America is now severely afflicted with this problem, families are disintegrating and this has become a great calamity. The negative consequences of this disaster on it's most primary level, affects women themselves. It is, of course very hard for the men as well, but it affects women more so. Next, it affects the generation to be born. See what a criminal and delinquent generation we have in the world today and in America? All of them originate from there. It is the evil introduction and key... after which wickedness follows in succession.

Islam gives importance to the subject of beauty. We have quite often heard the saying: God is beautiful and loves beauty:

There are many narratives in our books of traditions (hadith) that treat especially of looking after our outward appearance. In the book of Marriage (Nikah) it is discussed in detail that man and woman must pay attention to their outward appearance. Some people imagine that men, for example, should shave the hair on their heads; no. In religious law it is recommended (mustahabb) that young men leave their hair, it is narrated that: "Beautiful hair is among the blessings of God, so treat it honourably or, for example, it is narrated that whenever the Honorable Prophet wanted to go among his companions he used to look into a container of water and properly fixed his appearance. In those days when mirrors as we know them today did not exist, Medina was poor too, so the Prophet had a container of water which he would use as a mirror when he wanted to go out among his friends. What is evident here is that looking after your outward appearance, putting on nice clothes and inclining towards beauty was a thing aimed at from the beginning of Islam. But that which is bad and harmful is that which become the tools for fitnah and tabarruj. As I had said before, the damage will hit their families and the generation that comes after them. Recently I saw mentioned a subject in one of the American magazines which was also reflected in our newspapers, that two boys of ten or twelve years old had took up ambush and gunned down a group of teachers and children with a machine gun! First of all they sounded the alarm so that the children would assemble, then they gunned them down. How truly bad and painful it is for a society to be in such a state. It was a cold-blooded and unimaginable criminal act, because of bad upbringing. All of this comes after that very unrestrictedness.

*** How can a youth satisfy his need for excitement and make use of it?**

That's a good question. However it's also a difficult one, not among one of the most easy questions. See here, excitement is in a special area concerning those things in which excitement becomes evident, for example, sports, especially in some sports like soccer, which is an exciting event. Soccer is so by nature and it is different to other sports like volleyball and tennis; from the point of view of the fundamental nature of the game, it is constructed in such a way that there is a great deal of competitiveness, excitement, and the like. On the whole sports is an exciting thing, artistic works, also evoke excitement.

But excitement is not only confined to these areas alone. If a young person was able to find an area (whatever area)

that is attractive to him, he could easily satisfy that excitement in himself. I felt that excitement when I was younger and donned the garb of a religious student (talabeh). The dress and also the environment were restrictive, nevertheless, I was excited and it was also satisfying. How? I liked poetry. It may be hard for you to believe. There used to be poetry sittings with four or five friends who all were aficionados of poetry, where we would sit for two or three hours, just talking about and reading poetry. This is for a person who is interested in that sort of thing. It satisfies his excitable mood to the extent that it does for a soccer player or for fans watching a soccer match. As such it is not a restricted field.

Another example is related to the very example you gave about a university engineering student. You said that he studies but is not excited about it. When the name of study is brought up, someone would think that it is not an exciting thing. It is true that a classroom may not be an exciting place, however if you assume that a workplace is set up alongside the class, whether in the university or outside as is now in vogue with young people during their engineering program are put in relationships with factories. Such a young person would feel that this workshop would contain the possibility for him to initiate and pursue the innovations he desires or the ideas that come to his mind in that environment. Do you think he would be less excited? In fact he would be even more so.

As I was saying to the brothers, do research, research must be done with love and enthusiasm. Research in which you force someone, telling him "go research" will certainly be something dry, unexciting and useless also; but in the case of a field of study for which you have a great deal of love and affection, for which you have written your university entrance examinations, which you are now studying in university, where you have a good professor, and now, you have a well-equipped workplace within your reach where you can make the results of your ideas and your innovations into a reality, that's really great.

I would like to express it in this way, that we should not consider the matter of satisfying the sense of excitement of youth in such a way as to evoke it in the mind as something questionable or as a cause for concern, no. If the field of life is opened up in various areas, youth themselves will go into those areas where they have an interest in order to satisfy their excitement.

As the authorities as well as every person who is interested in this country- inclusive of governmental, and non governmental organizations and sections concerning youth in particular - we must open the field for healthy and proper youth activities. Now, for example, a youth may be interested in the area of literature, or economics. Normally, economics does not have laboratories, however, if all of a sudden it may be announced that such and such an economist, foreign or local, in such and such a place, is having a class or a seminar and is going to give a lecture. This is very meaningful for a young person who has such an interest. To get a ticket, to go there immediately and to put his questions to the professor, all this is excitement. With divine grace if the field of work and activity facing the youth is expanded -a trend that has progressed since the beginning of the Revolution- the youth will be able to satisfy this sense of excitement which is one of their blessings. Of course I concur that it has not gone as far forward as it should have because of the problems that have existed for nineteen years up till now.

In eight of these nineteen years there was a real war going on. In the first two or three years those in authority were lacking in experience, information and know-how, then, little by little we began to move ahead.

You are an artist, and all praises be to God, you are also well known, we have seen you on television. You artists are the ones most capable of serving the people. The people can learn from you. If the artist really possessed that piety that I was talking about, so that when you, are performing this role, when you are playing that part that you keep in mind that a number of youth, a number of children, a number of women and men will be looking at you and will be learning from you; if you plan it so that your work be well done and be of the highest excellence, I would imagine that you would be most capable of service.

Art has an expressiveness of language that no other language possesses, whether it be the language of science, that of ordinary speech, or the sermon. None of them has the expressiveness of the language of art. One of the secrets of the success of the Qur'an is its artistry. The Qur'an is very much at the pinnacle of art, it is quite extraordinary, in fact, it enchanted the people of that time; otherwise, if the Noble Prophet had sat with the people and without an artistic language spoke with them in a matter - of - fact kind of language, maybe he might have found a small group interested in what he had to say, but that thunderbolt, that thunder and lightning, that storm would never have been. It is art that does this kind of thing. Art has that kind of effect. Even now, when someone reads Hafiz's poetry, he could see a greatness in it. It makes an impression on you. At the same time, the influence of these performing arts

is much more rapidly felt compared to that of poetry and literature, however I don't know if they are more lasting or not. It is possible for someone to say that in certain areas it is or is not more lasting, but at any event its influence is quicker more decisive and more overwhelming.

You all (artists) can make an impression quite well. I want to ask those script writers, those who write screenplays, the actors, the directors, the set decorators, and the costume designers - which, by the way, is one of the most important aspects in artistic work, but is most overlooked, because the clothes you wear serve as a model for one group and is very attractive to them - I would like to ask them to be aware of what they are doing, that they should think about its end results. At any rate it is a very good field and, God willing, I hope you will be successful.

Why don't we see a strong policy in sports? And why isn't sports used as a powerful tool against the cultural invasion?

The subject you have mentioned concerning what is lacking in the affair of sports is absolutely correct. Not much has been done in sports. Turning our attention to sports we perceive two big deficiencies:

First, investment should be made in devising a massive program and in making crucial fundamental decisions as to the choice of sport. There is the demand, and the potential in Iranian society. Which sport should be placed under consideration? What should be the state of mind and how should it be followed up? In this very context, I had spoken in detail with athletes and national sports authorities one or two years ago. I believe that if we invest in this area and do some proper thinking and planning, without a doubt, the same thing would happen in the world sporting arena that had occurred in the war with our volunteer forces and military organizations who were all but cut off from the modern equipment of the world. You have seen what honour they brought. Even now, in volleyball for the handicapped and disabled war heroes, the same thing has happened; these brothers have consistently been bringing honour and glory; or, for example, in wrestling, you yourself (addressing Rasul Khadim, the Iranian wrestler) your brother and other brothers have really brought great honour to this country. We can be like this in every area of sports. There is no reason why we cannot enter the battlefield among the world's most distinguished athletes in soccer, volleyball, equestrian events or in some of our traditional sports like polo, or in martial arts or swimming. The reason for the situation being so disorganized at present is because there has been no programming applied to training or for advancement or utilization of relevant techniques. This is one problem. The second problem, which is very much related to the first, is the lack of a spiritual and cultural atmosphere in sports. It is not that our athletes are not good people, not at all, there are very good, believing, pious and abstemious people amongst them, however it must be more than just this. Our sports environment must be an environment of modesty. Modesty has a very intriguing and very wide meaning. It is the wholesomeness of the soul of a man where so ever he may be. The sports environment must be a modest environment; licentiousness disrepute, or any form of immodesty should not be seen in it, we must create this atmosphere in our sports environment and if this is so, it will shine in the world and our sports will become a star.

Look, right now, our films are entered into international film festivals, and the point that proves very attractive to the judges and the audience is the modesty that is now characteristic of Persian films. Some directors and filmmakers naturally go after this now, for some others, however modesty is something that is imposed, they have no choice but to portray women, men and family relations in a manner that is in conformity with the atmosphere currently accin the Islamic Republic. This is exactly what makes it stand out in the world.

Contrary to what has been imagined, the world does not like this unrestraint, and lasciviousness, it is tired of it. Islam has also recommended the very state of chastity, decency, wholesomeness and propriety which is so natural to Iranian society. We must make this dominant in the sports environment and in other areas as well, this will become the culturo-spiritual atmosphere of sports. It will be exactly as you are saying. For with regard to going into the battleground of the cultural invasion, we must hold on to our own culture, this is absolutely correct.

Therefore, if in the world of sports, the authorities pay attention to these two tasks; which are, on the one hand, getting the knowledge and drawing up a precise program in every respect, such as selection technique, work, training and exercise; and on the other hand in attaining a cultural atmosphere in sport, I believe that our sports environment will go forward which will be very good.

However, I would like to ask the youth that they should not wait for that day, and they should not say that when sports get like that then we would go and participate, no youth should exercise without exception. Now, when we say "youth" it does not mean that those who are not young should not participate in sports, they should also, however

sports contain a great deal that is attainable for youth, a subject which I wouldn't repeat since I've already spoken about it men and family relations in a manner that is in conformity with the atmosphere currently acceptable in the Islamic Republic. This is exactly what makes it stand out in the world.

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*** Why isn't there a special policy - making center in youth affairs? Why are the different sections concerning youth affairs - for example, marriage, not coordinated with each other?**

Of course, this has been accomplished to some extent, that is, with the establishment of the High Council for Youth, the first step has been taken in this direction, and I hope that this first step will also take us the rest of the way. Without a doubt some governmental organizations, for example the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education or that of Medicine are also related to youth affairs, however, with respect to the main center that can consider youth affairs in a comprehensive and exhaustive manner, is the very High Council for Youth. So far, in my opinion, the brothers have done a good job to the extent where their responsibilities apply. They should do the work of a headquarters and the task of executing the directives should be the work of the governmental organizations. The Youth Charter that some gentlemen had prepared last year and presented to me was very good, very comprehensive and useful and it could be a practical logical and excellent base for organizations to the Islamic Republic of base their work upon.

The government or even the High Council for Youth could, of course make deliberations on the subject of marriage which you had mentioned. The issue of marriage, however, is a completely individual and personal matter. Families must think about it and governmental and public organizations should give general recommendations. My own recommendation is that you should make marriage easy; do not make the mahr too high, jahiziehs (trousseaux) should not be heavy, wedding parties should not be too lavish and extravagant. These things should be put into practice. If would be very good if this was propagated through culture and art in order to get the people to adopt it. If this way is adopted, I think that marriage will be a very easy thing.

Also, the age at which individuals should marry should not be so that, on the one extreme, you have some people thinking that it must take place very early in youth. No, I disagree with this. There is no objection if someone wants to marry at a very early age there is absolutely no problem with this, but in this regard it is not necessary that we insist upon the matter.

Neither should it be the opposite extreme, like what westerners do, marrying at thirty or forty years of age. Of course, in my opinion, selfishness could be so dominating that a man or thirty, forty of fifty years would see no problem in marrying a young girl, I mean these upper years are those of grown men, but still he is after a young woman much younger than him with a great age difference between them, which is, of course, found over there (in the west), the very same place where insecure marriages take place, and so, you have a lot of single people in Western countries, people who, for their entire lives, have lived alone, something which, fortunately, is very rare in Iran and in other Islamic countries. At any rate, marriages should be made easy and should not be for chasing down

prestige so that it would be easier for the youth to reach the stage of getting married. This must come into existence within families, among the youth, and within the young men and women themselves. There should be no barrier to marriage. If the government could provide the facilities that would be very good. I have always been pushing for this, always advising the authorities regarding housing, loans and other living necessities for the youth; we presume all these things, however I would like to say that the first level of responsibility in this task is family and personal responsibility.

In your opinion what ways are there to protect the values and carry over the spiritual atmosphere of the war years to the youth of today?

You are quite right in every word you said. I also believe in the same point sir. I believe, and I am proud of people like you. It's a discussion, not about individuals, it is a discussion about states of mind, it's a discussion on intentions, on the renewed life and these difficult tests which this revolution has given to our country. In the circumstances surrounding the Fath (Victory) of "Operation Bustan" the Imam gave a message in which it was changed to "Fath al Futuh" (Victory of Victories). Some people imagined that the Fath al Futuh was the Battle of Bustan itself, however, the Imam did not say that, he was saying that the Fath al Futuh - the Victory of Victories- is the victory or the fashioning of these aware and awakened souls.

Indeed the biggest victory of the Islamic Republic was that it was able to take these youth to this level of greatness and spiritual exaltation so that they could believe in themselves, to be able stand up and defend the country, defend themselves and defend Islam against the great assault of a united world, which was manifest in the Imposed War, and which has continued up till now. Even now we are facing a worldwide attack.

I have noticed that some of the press, the newspapers, the man new on the scene who has no idea of what's going on are really uninformed, if not biased. These people seem to think that it is some kind of art to draw this country back to the state of banality that existed before the revolution, and they are, at present, actively trying to do this. How irresponsible. What a pity. Our young people, at the time of their youth were able to save themselves from the stupefaction that had prevailed in the country, they were able to move and deliver Iran. Iran was gone and we were lost. We were totally wrecked. The flood of western cultural sewage which marked the introduction of economic, Political and colonial domination in the real sense, of the word, really destroyed us. In the midst of all this, the powerful hand of the revolution and Islam, by means of these very youth, rescued the country. Now a group of people wants this proud period to be entrusted in the bosom of forgetfulness and the people to go back to that very state of stupefaction that existed before. Who wants that situation? The enemies of this country and this nation want it.

I think I have mentioned this in a speech before. Just recently, before Eid (Noruz) in an American magazine, a well known American writer wrote an editorial, which, in brief, said talked about the confrontation with countries like Iran, which he, by the way, referred to in a very derogatory manner, as an outlaw state - meaning that we cannot operate along economic and military lines. He said that those ways (economic and military) had been tried but had failed. He said "we must enter by cultural means", once again making it clear. You may ask, how can they enter? In the middle of that very page the picture of a totally naked woman was drawn, and he said that this was the way. He said that "we must promote this for us to be able to overcome them". He's right that's the way.

Unfortunately there are a number of people who have no idea what they are actually doing to the country, but certainly, with Divine might and power we will not let them and they will not be able to. We will not let this treachery take place against this country and against this Revolution and bring them to an end, however, they continue to indulge themselves in these whims and want to take the people back to those unfortunate days.

In my opinion, our youth today are godly, believing and good of heart. Take a look and see the university situation, our workers' situation, see what kind of environment prevails in our country. Look at those days when we hold demonstrations, like the 22nd of Bahman or the Day of Quds. Who are the majority of the people who flow into the streets like a flood? They are those very youth. Those very godly souls, that very zeal, that Divine thunderbolt which is still found in the country and is still quite active. This spirit once again will take this country to the shores of salvation.

Right now, there is no doubt that we have difficulties and problems in the area of economics and such, and they will come to an end one day, but that which will eliminate all these difficulties is nothing more than this spiritual attitude and holding on to Islam and the Revolution; nothing else will. Once again, it will be this young girl and this young

boy that will save this country. I have said time and time again that the young generation is the one that will resolve periods of great difficulty and suffering. When they come on the scene- and all Praise be to Allah they are now on the scene- problems both intricate and difficult will be solved. Our youth are believers (mu'min), religious they are fond of their country and Islam and oppose American and foreign domination. This is exactly what will be effective. These people are in the process of also hatching plots and weaving lies. It will have no effect, God willing. God - willing, God Himself will help. Hadhrat Baqyyatullah (our souls be sacrificed for him) would also support this path, this effort and these youth.

Finally there is one point I would like to bring to mind and that is that these efforts that the youth are making are not minor. Study itself, I'm saying, the very same work in research, working in art, sports, all of these are not small efforts. I implore you, those involved in these activities, not to think that your work is insignificant, no, this very work, among the enormous aggregates of the country, changes into a determining element. Assume, say a certain artist decides, by himself to do a great work of art, he can't say "I am now doing one individual work, I, myself, am alone, and this is but an insignificant work" not at all; this well - done work you did, even if one hundred other persons thought like yourself, that tremendous upliftment that same great work would take place all the same. It is the same thing in sports, study, in research and in the special efforts of the youth. This is exactly like that on a day of a demonstration. If we all say "Right now I am one person, what effect could I have?" this great flood of millions on the 22nd of Bahman or at the Friday prayer would not take place, however everyone still feels that he is fulfilling his duty at that moment.

I would like to emphasize and repeat that the individual efforts of these youth -everywhere and in every area that they are working, in the area of the Qur'an, scholarship, in education, in the theological school, in the university or in writing - is an important effort. The very effort that, God willing will elevate the country.

The Charter Of Freedom

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution addresses Students at the Graduate Ceremony of the Tarbiat Modarres University,

Tehran, Sept 3., 1998
in the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

This is, for me, a pleasant day. Of course, I had visited your university frequently during the terms of my presidency. But the present occasion has certain aspects which will turn it into a sweet, lasting memory in my mind: A few months ago, when I was informed of the holding of this student gathering, it was perhaps, expected by the honored chancellor that I would send a message about this occasion, or the students would come to have a meeting with me, but, I had made up my mind, from the very first moment, to attend this graduation ceremony to, personally, witness, the valuable output of this young university's activities for the past several years.

This university was founded on some great expectations and aspirations. Obviously our Revolution, our system, and the progress we have made, are indebted to all our universities for the services rendered to science and culture. Yet this university was a product of the Revolution, that was to grow and provide the academic brains and competent university teachers trained after the victory of our Islamic Revolution.

Perhaps today when, thanks to God, our universities have produced numerous faithful and revolutionary graduates, the importance of what I say, will not be fully, appreciated by many, but it was most meaningful in the first decade of the Revolution: The days when some university lecturers did not like to come and teach, some were not eager to cooperate with the Revolutionary movement, some had traveled abroad, and there were others who were not welcome by the students who often came to us and complained about their professor's lack of sympathy and devotion, and surely there were others who did continue their work faithfully and devotedly. All this meant that, for the improvement and expansion of our universities, we had to come up with some fundamental initiative, one such idea, was the foundation of this new university. And today, when I look around and see some several thousand students, young women and young men, graduated from this university, attending this ceremony, I am sure that this will be for me a durable and most pleasant memory.

Dear sisters and brothers! There's one thing I should emphasize to you in this regard: The university Generation today bears a special, weighty responsibility. Today, your country, your revolution and your honorable Islamic order are going through a phase which needs the cooperation of all responsible, administrative and able hands to enrich our system and our ideas; we have already left behind us some tough times, the war period, etc. Those were times of great hardships.

Today it's time to do away with every backwardness imposed on us during the long period of despotic rule in our country, through knowledge, science and scientific efforts, and to make up for those periods in our history when talents were not allowed to blossom, when the true and genuine identity of this nation could not be demonstrated, when, as a result of the importation of industrial commodities, themselves products of scientific and industrial progress in the West, we came to be dependent on the West in every field, when they also exported to us their intellectual and cultural goods. Their first and foremost attempt was to alienate our educated sections from their own selves, from their own culture, from their own customs and traditions, from their own knowledge and science, and from confidence in the abilities and talents inherent in the Iranian nation; and, of course, this lack of belief and confidence in ourselves did have its own adverse effects.

Clearly it was a long time from the moment that this idea of humiliating the Iranian people, entered our country until it took roots in the thoughts and minds of the elite strata in this country and for the West to reap its fruits, but, in the long run, they were successful, and the final consequences of this alienation and humiliation are the concrete examples of backwardness that we witness today in this country despite our human resources, despite our great material wealth, despite our singular geographical position, despite all the glittering backgrounds of scientific and cultural greatness, and our great heritage of scientific treasures! Yes, despite all those brilliant factors, our present status in the fields of science, industry and various academic achievements, is not at all what it ought to be.

Even in the areas of our history, literature and geography, much more research has been done by foreigners than by our own researchers, the genius of the Iranian people has not yet succeeded in removing the existing backwardness. Certainly since the inception of the Revolution, we have witnessed a miracle: that feeling of helplessness has been replaced by an unshakable belief in ourselves, but, we must still work on.

Well, in the early years of the revolution, and especially during the eight years of the war imposed on us, we were indeed facing numerous problems. But today, it is your undoubted duty to do your best, to struggle hard, and the aim of this struggle should be: To elevate and glorify Islam and to make your Islamic Iran really independent in every respect. Obviously by this, we do not mean that we should close our borders and block the entrance of beneficial goods, this is surely not wise, and nobody is inviting you to do that: In the course of history, every human being has benefited from the achievements of others, but there is a clear distinction, for the exchange of ideas and material things, between two equals and the humiliated begging of one from an arrogant donor; and this is how things were, more or less, before the Revolution.

You must take your country to the necessary, elevated status; this is the great mission of the enlightened, educated, young Generation of this country, and you, brothers and sisters, who have studied at this university, have, in my opinion, a heavier task to fulfill than the others, and, God willing, you shall meet with greater success.

Today I only meant to be among you, I did not intend to necessarily raise any issues for discussion; I was thinking of spending an hour or so with you, speaking with you and answering your questions, that would be most enjoyable and pleasant to me. Yet, there is an issue that is being currently debated, it is a useful discussion under the present circumstances in our country, and for this reason, I shall briefly speak about a few points I have noted down:

It's the question of freedom, which, as I said, is being enthusiastically discussed today in the press and among the thinking people in our country, this is a blessed phenomenon: for the principle and basic topics of the Revolution to be the objects of an exchange of ideas, and many people be persuaded to think about such matters, is something we, always waited for, and, of course, many other related issues are being debated too. Anyway, freedom is the point in question today, and I personally do read and study most of what is discussed or printed, and some of them I find quite useful. The ideas being expressed are various and oppositional, I mean, they are not following a certain line, they often oppose one another, and on both sides of the opposing views, you find many correct and truthful conceptions, and it is good to continue such trends, and I do hope that our scholars and specialists will be urged to engage in the provision of more instructive and thought provoking discussions for the benefit of the public. I have often encouraged you to further deepen the culture of the Revolution: attaining to those depths will require such previous debates.

There are two points, however, to which special attention should be paid. The first is this: In any discussion of the question of freedom, the concept of independence, which has been one of the three mottoes of the Revolution, must not be overlooked; not only that, but it must be seriously taken into account. This means: we must think independently, we must not follow a submissive and imitative mode of thinking. If we were to imitate others in this issue, which is a cornerstone of our progress, and if we only looked in the direction of the thoughts coming from the West, we would be making a big mistake, and bitter consequences would await us.

First of all, I should mention that the question of freedom, is one of the categories that are frequently emphasized in the Holy Qur'an and in the traditions of the Imams, Peace of God be upon them. Certainly our understanding of freedom is not that of absolute freedom, which I do not think, has any adherents in the world, I mean, I do not think there is any body in the world inviting people to absolute freedom. Neither is our understanding of freedom, a spiritual one, which does exist in Islam and throughout our sublime Islamic literature, no, that is not the question either: Spiritual freedom is something believed and approved by all the faithful, and we are not to debate it. The sort of freedom under discussion is in fact social freedom, that is, freedom as a human right, freedoms of speech,

thought, choice and the like. This interpretation of freedom has been lauded in the Qur'an and in the Sunna; verse 157 of the Sura Al-A'raaf says: To those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own Scriptures, in the Taura and the Gospel, for he commands them what is just and proper and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good and pure, and prohibits them what is bad and impure; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them." God says this, with regard to an important characteristic of the Prophet: he releases people from their burdens, that is, he relieves people from restrictions imposed on them; this has a vast, glorious meaning. If you look back at the religious or non-religious communities of those times, you shall see that this, releasing from yokes and burdens means freeing people from innumerable obligations and covenants imposed on people, many sorts of superstitious, primitive, crooked and wrong ideas and beliefs, and unlimited social bonds and chains imposed on humanity at the hands of despotism, distortion and deceit.

The famous scholar, George Jordaq, author of the book "The voice of justice", an investigation of Imam Ali's thoughts and manners, makes a comparison, at some place, between two statements uttered by His Imminence Omar, the second Khalif, and Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (Peace and Salutation of God be upon him). He says that in the region of Omar, some governors of the Islamic states, against whom certain complaints and reports of bad administration had been received, were in the Khalif's presence, and the Khalif, being angry at them, addressed them and uttered a lasting, memorable statement: You have turned the people into slaves, but God created them as free men. The other statement, also quoted in Nahj-al-Balagha, by Ali is: Never be a bondsman to other men, for God has created you free. Now, Geroge Jordaq, as I said, compares the two statements and opines that Ali's statement is by far the more preferred one, and he reasons in this manner: Omar is addressing governors who presumably did not value freedom and liberty, and freedom could not at all be guaranteed by them, because they were the very persons who, as Omar reproached, had brought people into bondage; Omar is actually telling them, You have turned people into slaves, but you must give them freedom. This is, of course, one way of expression. On the other hand, Ali is addressing all the people, the masses being put in bondage, advising them that only they themselves could guarantee their human freedoms and liberties: Do not be a slave of another, because God has created you free.

Well, in both of these Islamic statements, apart from the fact that in Ali's statement, the power of people themselves guarantees freedom', there are two fundamental features, one of which, in agreement with God has created you free, says that freedom is an innate Attribute of man; I shall touch upon this point in a comparison between the Islamic and Western ways of thinking in this respect.

Of course, today, I do not intend to enter into a detailed discussion of this subject, perhaps, I shall, if God will, at some future occasion, do that; as there are a lot to be said about the matter. Today, however, I shall only focus on the two points I mentioned, one of which is to think about freedom freely and independently.

Well, as I said, social freedom as defined today in the world's political lexicon, does in fact have a Qur'anic root. There is no need for us to turn to the 18th century liberalism in Europe and follow what Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill and others have said. We ourselves have a lot to say on this subject, logical and rational. And I shall tell you why it is that what the West says may not guide us to any straight paths.

I advise you to treat the issue of freedom as an Islamic subject. There are two groups, in my opinion, who are actually in league against the Islamization or nativization of the issue of freedom.

The first group consists of those who in their lectures or writings are incurably citing examples and illustrations by the philosophers of the West of the last two or three centuries and what they wrote on the question of freedom: so and so said this, such and such said that! These, of course, are supposed to be the gentlemen among this group, because they do mention the names of the philosophers they quote from, but there are other journalistic philosophizers" who copy from, say, what Mill has said, or narrate the opinions of some French, German or American philosopher, but never mention their names, they pretend what they are saying is indeed their own opinions! They simply cheat, but certainly they do to help create the impression that all free thinking and the whole concept of social freedoms are ideas coming from the West, that they are Western gifts bestowed upon us!

The second group ignorantly helping the first group, consists of those who, as soon as freedom is mentioned, panic seizes them, and cry out in frustration: Oh, God, our religion is lost, all is lost! No, sir! Religion is the greatest harbinger of freedom; how could religion be lost? Rational and decent freedom is the greatest gift of religion to any

community, to all nations, it is by the blessings of freedom that ideas grow and talents blossom, tyranny is the adversary of talent where there is tyranny, no talents bloom; Islam is for the enriching and fructifying of talents, great human resources must, like natural resources, be properly exploited, to enable mankind to make the earth prosperous. This is impossible without freedom, it is impossible by despotic ordering and regimentation. Therefore, this second group who fear freedom are also in error. These two groups, let's call them: The West-Orientated and the Conservatives are actually, without knowing, in close cooperation to drive the concept of freedom out of the domain of religion! But this is not true, the concept of freedom is an Islamic conception.

I should perhaps add a note here: Even the kind of freedom we've been discussing, that is, social freedom, is much more valued and respected than in different Western schools; of course, Western liberalism has its diverse interpretations, the Renaissance concepts, liberal ideas fostered in France and in other European countries, they all grew and led to the French Revolution, and later, in a distorted form, were exploited during the Independence movement in the United States leading to that famous American Charter. All these need a lot more time to go into, but, to put it in a nutshell, today we do have dozens of interpretations of liberalism, and there have been fresher ones in recent times, and the American ideologues or American-fostered theorists are most actively engaged in this field. You must also know that many such thinkers are not themselves American, but they do write under the patronage of American institutions, especially on the subject of liberalism, Books may be written in Germany, France or Australia and published in New York, and in other forms and places, but they are commercial orders by Americans, and that is another story. Despite all those different interpretations, I would like to briefly explain to you that the idea of freedom in Islam is superior to them all.

The Western thinkers are always facing big problems in putting forth some philosophy for freedom. What is the philosophy of freedom? Why should man be free? You must put forward some sort of logic, reason or philosophical principle for it . To solve this problem, they resort to all sorts of things: Utility, the common good, collective joy, individual pleasure and the like, or at its best, an item of civil rights. Well, all these claims may be refuted, and they are often engaged in, in the West.

If you were to look at what has been said and printed in our own country in recent years, on the subject of freedom or liberalism, you will also come across a good deal of time-consuming useless arguments, very similar to those pronounced on the topic of freedom in the Middle Ages! One person claims something, another one refutes him, and the first defends his position, so on and so forth; it is really not a bad entertainment for the intellectuals in the Third World! One intellectual becomes the proponent of one theory, another one defends another theory, the third approves of the theory of the first, the fourth writes an explanation for the theory of the second, and the fifth publishes one of the theories in his own name.

As I was saying, the maximum in the theories of the West on the origin or the philosophy of freedom is that it is a human right. Well, what Islam has said is far superior to this; as you noticed in the tradition quoted, it is innate in the human existence, and clearly it is aright, but a sublime, superior right as the right to life, the right to live; and I may not include the right to live in the same category as the right of voting or the right of having a decent housing, therefore, freedom is superior to other rights, and that is what Islam says about freedom.

Surely there are exceptions, this right may be suspended in certain cases. An example is the people's right to be alive, if a man kills another man, then there is the law of Talion, for him, when a person spreads corruption, he must be punished, the same is true in the case of freedom, yet these are the exceptions according to the Islamic outlook. Thus it would be absolutely wrong to imagine that the idea of social freedom was something bestowed upon us by the West, so much so that whenever some people mean to speak something nice and interesting on this subject, they would at once cite the name of a book written by somebody who sat down and wrote something in the atmosphere of the West. No, no, we must be independent thinkers, we must consult our own sources and authorities, our own Islamic references; a thinking man will obviously consult other people's thoughts for the purposes of explanation and clarification and for enlightening his mind, not for a parrot-like imitation; were we to imitate, we would certainly incur a great loss.

What I notice in this conflict relating to ideas and the press - which is an auspicious phenomenon, as I said - that many do not pay attention to this principle. Here I will mention two or three main points of difference between the Islamic and Western approaches to freedom. As I said, liberalism is the main source of all the viewpoints and tendencies relating to this approach. There might be some difference between some of these viewpoints and

tendencies in some regards, but together they make up liberalism.

In Western liberal thought, human freedom is a concept devoid of any such entity as religion or God. Hence they do not consider freedom to be something God-given. None of them says that freedom is something bestowed by God on man. They seek to find some other philosophical grounds and roots of freedom.

They have suggested some philosophical foundations and sources and have offered various interpretations.

In Islam freedom has a divine source and this is by itself a fundamental difference which is the source of other differences. Therefore, from the Islamic viewpoint any action injurious to freedom is one which is hostile to a divine value. That is, it gives rise to a religious obligation in the opposing party. Such is not the case with the Western notion of freedom. Some social struggles that are waged for the sake of freedom do not have any logical justification on the basis of Western liberalism. For instance, one of the justifications which is offered is 'the common good' or 'good of the majority.' This is considered the origin of social freedom. But why should I risk my life for the sake of the good of the majority? There is no logical justification for this. Of course, seasonal and short-lived passions drive many to the battlefield. But whenever any of those who have struggled under the banner of such notions - if, in fact, any struggle has ever taken place under their banner - emerge from the passing passions of the arena of struggle, they would have doubts about their avowed goal: Why should I get killed for its sake?

Such is not the case in Islamic thought. The struggle for freedom is a duty, for it is for the sake of a Divine goal. If you see someone's life being threatened, it is your duty to do and help him. It is a religious duty, something which if you fail to carry out you will be guilty of a sin. The same is true of freedom. It is a duty to struggle for its sake.

Other differences originate from this basic difference. As truth and moral values are relative from the viewpoint of Western liberalism, freedom is unrestricted. Why? Because someone who believes in certain moral values has no right to blame anyone who violates those values because it is possible that he does not believe in those values.

Accordingly, there is no limit to freedom from a moral and spiritual viewpoint. As a result freedom is unrestricted.

Why? Because there are no immutable truths. Because, in their opinion, truth and ethical values are relative.

In Islam freedom is not such. In Islam there are incontrovertible and immutable values and an unchanging truth.

Man's movement is towards that truth which consists of values and is value-generating and conducive to perfection. Accordingly, freedom is limited by those values. As to how these values are to be understood and attained is another matter. Some people may possibly make errors in understanding these values and some may have the right approach. That is outside the scope of our discussion. In any case, freedom is limited by values and truth.

Social freedom is a great value in Islam. But if this social freedom is used for purposes detrimental to the invaluable spiritual or material interests of a nation, it is harmful-exactly like human life. The Qur'an states: Whoever slays anyone, barring retaliation for homicide or the guilt of working corruption on earth, it is as if he had slain all mankind. In the logic of the Qur'an killing one human being unjustly is like killing all mankind. This is an amazing conception. Someone who murders a person is like someone who murders all humanity. That is, because his act is a violation of the sanctity of human life. But there are exceptions which consist of the penalty for murder or for working corruption on earth. That is, someone who has violated another person's right to life or has worked corruption forfeits his own right to life. Immutable and definite values and truths limit one's social freedom in the same way as they limit his right to life.

Another difference is that in the West the limits of freedom consist of materialistic interests. Primarily they have set certain limits on social and individual freedoms, and this is one of them. When material interests are endangered, they limit freedom - material interests like the power and prestige of these countries and their scientific hegemony. Education and dissemination of knowledge is one of the areas in which freedom is one of the most indubitable of human rights. Human beings have a right to learn, yet this freedom is limited in the major universities of the Western world. Science and high technology to certain countries is prohibited on the grounds that if this know-how is transferred it will go out of the monopoly of these powers and their material power and domination will not remain as they are. Hence frontiers are imposed on freedom. That is, the teacher has no right to communicate certain scientific secrets, for instance, to a Third-World student or research scholar from Iran or China.

The same is true of information and news. Today there is world-wide clamor for information and news, so that people become better informed. It makes one of the major points of the agenda of propagation of freedom in the West. However, in the course of the U.S. attack against Iraq, during the days of the presidency of George Bush, for a period of one week or more all information was officially censored. They declared proudly that no reporter has

any right to broadcast or publish any news or photographs about the U.S. offensive against Iraq. Everyone knew that the offensive had begun, and the Americans had also sent out the news. But no one knew the details, because it was claimed that this matter compromised military security. Military security limited the right to freedom. This was another material limit and restriction on freedom.

Consolidation of the foundations of the State imposes another limit. Four or five years ago a group emerged in the United States and the episodes [of the Branch Davidians] is known to all newspaper readers. I came to know about some more details at that time and the news of the episode was published by our newspaper. It was a group following a certain cult that set itself against the present U.S. government during Mr. Clinton's time. Certain security and military measures were taken against them which did not prove fruitful. At last they set fire to the building in which they were gathered. In this incident about eighty persons were burnt alive. Photographs of the event were published and the whole world has seen them. Among the eighty victims there were also women and children. Perhaps not one of them was a militia man. See to what extent the right of life, the right to belief, and the right to political struggle is curtailed. Hence freedom in the materialistic Western world has also limits, with the difference that they are of a materialistic character.

There moral values do not pose any limitation for freedom. For instance, the homosexual movement in the U.S. is one of their popular movements. They are even proud of it and hold rallies in the streets and publish their photographs in magazines. They mention with pride that such and such a businessman or statesman is a member of this group. No one is ashamed of it and no one denies it. Rather, some people who are opposed to homosexuality are severely attacked by some of these newspapers and periodicals and condemned as opponents of homosexuality. This means that ethical values pose absolutely no barrier to freedom.

Another example pertains to the European countries. For instance, they impose restrictions on freedom of expression and press on any propaganda in favor of fascism, which is again a matter of materialistic character relating to government. However, pornography, which is also one of their movements, is not restricted. That is, in Western liberalism, on the basis of its philosophy and philosophical grounds, the limits on freedom are materialistic not moral. However, in Islam there exist moral limits on freedom. In Islam there exist moral and spiritual limits beside material limits.

If someone holds heretical beliefs it is not objectionable. When we say that it is not objectionable what is meant is that it is objectionable before God and before faithful human beings, but the government has no responsibility in regard to it. In a Muslim society there are Jews, Christians and persons belong to various religious creeds. They exist at present in our country also, as they existed during the early Islamic era. This does not pose any problem. But if someone holding corrupt beliefs should make encroachments on the minds of other individuals who do not possess the power to defend themselves and try to mislead them, such efforts are prohibited.

Here freedom is limited. Such is the case from the viewpoint of Islam. Or if anyone tries to propagate corruption in political, sexual, or intellectual matters, such as the pseudo-philosophers who write articles suggesting that higher education is not beneficial for the youth and enumerate the inadequacies of higher education-of course, most probably, it would not have any effect on ninety percent, but it may possibly affect a ten percent of lethargic youths-they cannot be permitted to discourage people from higher studies by the means of insinuations and lies.

There is no freedom to lie in Islam and no freedom to spread rumors and create alarm. I have a complaint that no reference is made to Islamic sources and fundamental in discussions relating to freedom. In the Qur'an, in the Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 60, it is stated that if the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is sickness and the alarmists do not desist, we will arouse you to take action against them. The alarmists are mentioned in this verse by the side of the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a sickness. The hypocrites are one group, those with sick hearts are a second group, and the alarmists are mentioned along with them. The alarmists are those who continuously intimidate the people. In a newly established Islamic society with so many enemies and the general mobilization brought about by the Qur'an and the Prophet everyone should be mentally prepared for the defense of the Islamic country and its great human and popular system. But a group of rumor-mongers, like a plague, assault the people and they are the alarmists. The Qur'an says that if the alarmists, who constantly create general anxiety and stop the people from mobilization, do not desist, God will arouse the Prophet to take measures against them. Here is a limit on freedom. Hence from the Islamic viewpoint, there is another difference, which is that freedom has moral and spiritual limits. There is yet another difference, which is that freedom in Western liberal thought is not consistent with duty and

responsibility. Freedom means freedom from all duty. In Islam freedom is the counterpart of duty. Basically, human beings are free because they have responsibilities, and if they were not responsible there would have been no need for freedom. They would have been like angels, in the words of Rumi:

A Tradition says that the Glorious Creator
Made the creatures of three sorts:

A group were blessed with intellect, knowledge and generosity,
Another, of angels, knew nothing except adoration...

It is characteristic of man that he is a collection of conflicting urges and motives. His duty is to traverse the path of perfection despite these various motives. He has been granted freedom to traverse the path of perfection. This freedom with its great value is for the sake of movement towards perfection, in the same way that human life itself is meant for perfection: We did not create mankind and the Jinn except for Our service. God created mankind and the Jinn for the sake of reaching the rank of servant hood, which is an exalted station. Freedom, like the right to life, is a prerequisite for God's service.

In the West they have gone to such lengths in negating duty and responsibility that they rule out all religious and non-religious ideas and ideologies which involve do's and don'ts, duties and prohibitions. In the works of liberal American and quasi-American writers and their disciples and followers in other countries, including unfortunately our own, it is observed that they say that free Western thought is opposed to the ideas of do's and don'ts and the notion of ideology. Islam is diametrically opposed to this position. The position of Islam is that it considers freedom to be necessary by the side of duty so that man can fulfill his responsibilities with the means of his freedom, make great achievements, and make great choices so as to attain perfection.

Accordingly my first suggestion to those who write and discuss issues is that, let us be independent in our understanding of freedom. Let us think independently, without aping others. My second suggestion is that freedom should not be misused. Nowadays some people consistently repeat the phrase 'newly acquired press freedom.' In my view it does not refer to any fact. It is something whose sources are hostile foreign radios. Of course, nowadays they write certain things in newspapers and periodicals and express hostile views. Some of these persons did not do this in the past. But some others did so in the past as well. In the past we have witnessed many instances of harsh criticism of the then president and various officials and even dissent with the principles of the Revolution itself. But nobody bothered them.

Yes, there were some persons whose background was dubious and their hands were tainted. They did not dare to express their views. Even if they had done it nobody would have bothered them. They could have said the same things that they say today. Nobody would have stopped them. But they themselves were afraid because they had bad records. Their enmity of the Revolution, of the Imam and the Imam's Islamic thought was known since long and they themselves lacked the courage to enter the field. However, after the last presidential elections they suddenly found the courage on the basis of a wrong analysis of those elections. That wrong analysis was that they thought that 30 million people had voted against the system and this made them glad, whereas those 30 million had cast their vote for the sake of the consolidation of the system. One of the things that constitutes a matter of pride for the Islamic system in that 18 years after the victory of the Revolution a 30 million out of 32 million eligible voters - that is, about 90 percent - participated in that election. However, they considered this strong point of the system as a weak point.

Of course, from the very first days of the elections, the foreign radios had raised a clamor in order to give a direction to those who were prone to this error, by insinuating that thirty million people has expressed discontent against the system. They wanted to project the system's strong point as a weak point and these poor guys believed it, worthy fooled themselves. They thought that a country where 30 million people were opposed to the system they too could also come and express their views. Now they have found courage and express their opinions whereas nothing in fact has changed. Had they committed any offense in the past and violated the logical limits they would have been prosecuted. The same is the case today and nothing has changed. Today also the same measures will be taken against those who work corruption and cause alarm. There has been no change. Accordingly, one should not say 'newly acquired press freedom.' We see that some officials repeatedly advise the press not to overuse their freedom because that would endanger freedom itself. What kind of logic is that? As much use as they make of freedom it is better. But they should not violate the limits. The more individuals make use of this God-given right, the nearer will it bring

the Islamic system to its goals. Our complaint against the writers has always been as to why they did not write, investigate, and analyze as much as they should.

The correct limits must however be observed. Of course, these limits are not something which a government or system determines in its own interest

Even if there should be governments in the world - and there certainly are - which lay down such limits, the Islamic system is not such. The system of the Islamic republic is based on justice. Should the leader violate the criteria of justice he is automatically dismissed from leadership without the interference of any other agent. In such a system there is no meaning in setting limits in the interests of any group or clique or for imposing the views of a particular kind. The limits are Islamic limits, the same things which are stated in the Qur'an and hadith and recognized as such by a correct understanding of Islam. These are valid, and they should be observed. If they are not observed, it is the duty of the authorities, judicial and executive, as well as Ministry of Guidance and others to monitor their observance. Should they fail to carry out this responsibility they will have committed an offense and sin. They are responsible to see that these limits are observed. Within these limits - which of course make the exceptions - it is the luminous principle of freedom which must be made use of. I do not like these irresponsible statements to be repeated.

To sum up, that which I wish to say today is that the concept of freedom is an Islamic conception and we should think about it in Islamic terms and have faith in its fruits as an Islamic movement and responsibility. We should consider as an opportunity that which exists today on the plane of society and make maximum use of this opportunity. Thinkers and scholars should increase their efforts. Of course, there are some topics which are of a specialized nature and journals and forums. But there are other topics which are of a general interest and all can benefit from such discussions.

I hope that God the Exalted will provide us with the opportunity to witness the blossoming of this system and the ever greater success of this great and dear nation, and it is hoped that you, university people, especially the youth, on whom the country's hopes and future depend, will play a great role in its blossoming.

Was salamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

Essence Of Tawhid , Denial Of Servitude But TO God

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The Prophet of Islam announced a slogan: "There is no god but Allah" - a pedestal in his profound message towards emancipation of man. The chieftains and the nobles of the tribes were the prime figures who rose in an alarm to confront him. In the beginning only mocking and censuring served to them as a primitive tool of animosity which later turned into so-called effective weapons in line with the progress of the movement of Tawhid (Divine Unity). The others under their influence were also goaded into enmity towards the Prophet and his believers. Here, the shameful episodes of history took place stretching a span of thirteen years which preceded the migration. This historical reality reveals a fact which deserves a cogent consideration towards a reacquaintance of Islam and specially Tawhid (an essential word of Islam, its first and its final).

One of the most pitiful events of our days is the distorted concept of Tawhid; and this should be regarded as a tragedy by all those who have a say in emancipation of man, because of the bearing of this distortion on the common and most fundamental concept of all the religions, as there cannot be found any other concept in the expanse of history that could have been so efficacious in the course of emancipation of man besides its being a harbinger of redemption for the oppressed masses.

In history, as far as we have known, the divinity prophecies were movements momentous towards the benefit of mankind, freeing the oppressed ones against atrocities, discriminations and encroachments.

The moral core of all the great religions according to Erich Fromm includes such ideals as: knowledge, brotherly love, minimizing human sufferings, independence and responsibility (Of course, comprehension of ideals still nobler, cannot be expected from a materialist observer). Indeed all these ideals are epitomized in Tawhid. Prophets while exposing their errand in the slogan, focusing at Tawhid, were translating it into reality, following the campaign issued by this slogan. It is, indeed, deplorable for those who believe in Tawhid and its outlook upon universe and those who are after the above ideals that the concept of Tawhid should remain unknown or become an enigma or else perverted or if at all conceived should not go beyond a cursory conception that too merely a mental one at a time when the said ideals are felt more and sought faster than ever.

The earlier confrontations that started with the dawn of Islam reveal an important fact with regards the concepts of Tawhid. That fact is this: the slogan, "There is no god but Allah", was in the very first place a blow fatal to those who had gritted their teeth of enmity against it and it were they the ruling class of the society with due power. The social orientation of a movement or a thought and the efficiency of such orientation can well be conceived through the adversary reactions to that movement or thought. The very faces of the enemies of a movement will well disclose, upon a study, the nature of their affiliations with social stratum and thereby the confrontation of that society as a whole in relation to that particular movement or thought. The strength of the enmity is the gage that determines the strength of the movement. Thus, the study of both the wings - one that of the supporters of the movement and the other that of its adversaries - becomes safe and sane to gain a true acquaintance with the Divine movements.

When we observe that those classes that are puissant in society have been the first to confront the call of religions and to do this they have done the best they could afford, we clearly realize that a religion or any religious movement in its nature is against these classes; it opposes to their lavishing either in power or in pelf, and basically to any classification that distinguishes them from others.

To ponder into the very concept of Tawhid from this angle, the angle of its opposition to the majesty over the society, we should necessarily know that Tawhid is not a mere theory either that of a philosophy or a noetic one, as it is a general error in common presumption; but it is the very foundation whereupon is edified man and the mammoth

mansion of the universe in addition to its being a social, economical and political doctrine too.

In the terminology of religion, or among other terms, a term could hardly be found to the extent that could be so fertile as to enfold so much of the revolutionary and constructive concepts, besides covering different aspects of man's social and historical life. It could, therefore, never be just fortuitous that all the Divine solicitations and Divine movements that are so profuse in history did hint and hit at one point, in their proclamations, and that is the Oneness of God and the Divinity is only His and to Him alone.

To describe the rays that a prism of Tawhid imparts, we could only epitome:

1) From the Point of View of its General Outlook upon the Universe:

a) It translates to the effect of a united world and homely uniformity of all its elements.

Since the Creator is one, and everything is originated from one source, since there have not been different gods and creators, creating and then running the world, then all the things are elements of one set and the whole world is one unit with one pursuit. God the Almighty challenges:

"Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any disorder. " (al-Mulk, 67:3)

Again says the Almighty:

"What, have they not considered within themselves? God created not the heavens and the earth, and what is between them, but on a just system, and with a stated term. " (ar- Rum., 30:8)

From this outlook, the world appears a caravan with a set-up connected to each other like a chain and heading towards one direction in unison with a common conquest so well organized that every item is carefully placed in its due position; or else it might have lost its usefulness. Thus, all are in a journey compact, consistent, constant towards consummation; each a necessity to the other while the rest rests on such a need as a whole thereby avoiding any sluggishness or deviation which, otherwise, would consequent in an upset of this whole set-up.

b) Tawhid can also be translated to the objectivity of the creation, and the planning and computed order in the world; to the existence of some sort of dynamism and purpose in all and each part of the world. Since the universe has a wise (wise in its most complete sense that could be a deserving description of the word Hakim [a name among the names of Allah]) Creator Who has brought it into existence, there is no way but being a wisdom, an ultimate purpose, and a pursuit in the very existence of the world as it is seen and sensed in most of its parts.

We created not the heaven and the earth, and whatsoever is between them, as playing and with no purpose. " (al-Ambiya', 21:16)

From this outlook the world seems to be a machine manufactured for a gain and not a thing lost in a wilderness of bewilderment. The very fact as to how it is, purports a meaning and portrays a purpose which is not to be sought in the origin. It is like a verse that can only be understood by probing into its content but never can be considered its existence as a matter of chance.

c) Tawhid, moreover cognates to obedience of all the things and the elements of the world before God. Neither a thing nor a regulation in this galaxy is at its own. The rules that run the world and everything existing under their guidance are all into a constant obeisance to the divinity of God. Therefore, existence of the rules and laws in this whole world cannot be considered as a reason to deny God's presence, divinity and His constant control over the world.

In this respect the Holy Qur'an says:

"None is there in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-merciful as a servant. (Maryam, 19:93)

"But to Him is what in the heavens and (in) the earth - all to Him (are) obedient. " (al- Baqarah, 2:116)

"They measured not God with His true measure. The earth altogether shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! He exalted above that they associate! " (az-Zumar, 39:67)

2) From the Outlook Consequented upon Studying and Judgment on Man:

a) It is in the sense of the uniformity and equality of human beings in relation to God. He is the Master of all people. Human nature is so even that it rescinds any particularity in his relation with God. No one has any kinship with Him. Hence, all are same and at parity before God. Also God is not a particular one of a particular nation or a group or a tribe; and, therefore, the absence of superior avoids the notion of inferior in the creation while leaves open the scope for elevation of the human values which is attainable only through righteousness, a platform whereon to perform good deeds in line with Divine's desire which is the only safe route or promising method for man to ascend to heights of perfection and prosperity. To quote from the Qur'an:

"And they said, 'God has taken to Him a son'. Glory be to Him! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will. (al-Baqarah, 2:117)

"And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, being a believer, no unthankfulness shall befall his endeavor; We ourselves write it down for him. " (al-Ambiya', 21:94)

"O Mankind! We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you. (al-Hujarat, 49:13)

b) It is also in the sense that man is equal in creation and is originated from a single source, this equality also runs in the very vitality of human beings. Those who belong to the various classes in a society are not created by different gods. Humanity is a single element that has been equally given to all individuals. So there is no difference in the pulp or in the creation provided to them. As such, there is no boundary between them that cannot be crossed. In other words, the Creator of the higher classes of society is not a God superior than that of the poor ones. All are created by one God and in creation all are at the same level and equally benefited from the element of humanity. To quote from the Qur'an:

"O mankind! Fear your Lord, Who created you of a single soul. " (an-Nisa', 4:1)

c) The equality among the human beings carries the same bearing upon the possibility of elevation and perfection of individuals too. The obvious reason is that the human gist is the same in all men while taking its root from one wisdom. This being so, no one is impuissant in his nature not to be able to pace the path of perfection. Accordingly, the Divine call is common to all irrespective of nations or classes. To quote from the Qur'an:

We have sent thee not [to a special group] except to mankind, entire. " (Saba', 34:29)

"And We have sent thee for the people a messenger. (an-Nisa', 4:79)

"O men, a clear guide has now come to you from your Lord; We have sent down to you a manifest light. As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and will guide them to Him on a straight path. " (an-Nisa', 4:174,175)

d) It can also be translated to the release of all human beings from servitude and yielding to anyone but God. This is another interpretation of the essence of complete yielding to God and worshipping Him. Some people, in some way or other, have yielded to the obscene yoke of submission to other than God', such as mental, cultural, economical, and political slavery. Considering the wide stretching sense of worship, we can well say that they are immured in service to others - like themselves - and, thus, have taken a rival or an associate to God. Here, Tawhid totally rejects such a way of life and stands firm and adamant to maintain the man a servant to God alone and emancipates him from that domination, under whatever pretext it be. Therefore, Tawhid is tantamount to denial 'of any power concealed under whatever colour or cloak, and an absolute submission to the absolute authority of God alone. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Authority belongs only to God; He has commanded that you shall not serve and worship any but Him. That is the right religion".(Yusuf, 12:40)

Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve and worship any but Him. " (al-Isra', 17:23)

e) As such Tawhid is to dignify man, the worth of man is so lofty that to become servile and resigned to others (but to God), and get dominated is in immediate contrast. an obvious opposition and a crisp contradiction with that worth.

There is no one to countenance this worth so as to be servile to him except God. He is the only Being, the only perfect Pulchritude in absoluteness that deserves a man to sit in an enchantment of praise and prayer to Him. The kingdom of God in the vast human life is invaded without a right and inroads are made upon the intellect of man by those idols - the living ones or the made-up ones who are, in fact, a product of evil while themselves wicked enough to throw the man from the zenith of humanity into the abyss of vileness discarding the human value and invalidating

its worth. It is upon man to shun from the shame of worshipping servitude to them.

Materialistic humanism has never been able to establish the originality of man in its due excellence with a delicacy that dashes into the depth and a lofty sense splashes therefrom, such as:

"And eschew the abomination of idols, and eschew the speaking of falsehood, being men pure of faith unto God, not associating with Him anything; for whosoever associates with God anything, it is as though he has fallen from heaven and the birds snatch him away, or the wind sweeps him headlong into a place far away. " (al-Hajj, 22:30, 31)

"Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt sit condemned and forsaken. (al-Isra', 17:22)

"Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt sit cast into hell, reproached and rejected." (al-Isra', 17:39).

f) In this category another meaning of Tawhid is that, a human life is a compound of mind and reality, thought and action. If one of these two, or partially both, got dominated by the anti-Divine powers; in other words, if the intellect lenient to God with an undivine reality, or a Divine desired reality with an intellect ignorant of God becomes espoused, then in the kingdom of human life duality has occurred and thus an associate is created in the servitude directed to God. In this case, the example of man will be like that of a needle, being in a magnetic field, besides the earth's one, if not deviated totally from the pole direction he would be oscillating. Deviation shall dictate departure from a straight path of God and shall doom him to a destiny that is not his. To quote from the Qur'an:

"What do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in other part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible chastisement? " (al-Baqarah, 2:85)

g) And finally, Tawhid, from this point of view translates the human coordination coherent with the universal milieu. The stintless vastness of the expanse of the universe is a ground wherein innumerable laws of creation are in action and reaction and so constant that any product of the universe, however small and little or trivial and trifle, cannot escape from the dart of the rays of this law. The law of creation is set on a keyboard of traditions and the strokes thereon is such a mercy as to bring out into audience a tune titivated with tucket in full tilt of the gamut of existence and thereby comes into being the pleasing and the portentous display of the universe that embarces the man too in its parcel so packed therein as to obey a general law while enjoying a law particular to himself; and, thus, remain congruous to the consequences as a whole. Indeed, the salient characteristic in a man (in contradiction to his other fellow creatures who pace towards their natural destiny with no choice) is his being open to option and his power to practice his choice - a criterion for his ascendancy to excellence and as well as a ground to go astray. To quote from the Qur'an:

So let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve. " (al-Kahf, 18:29)

Tawhid solicits the man to pace the way natural to him and congenial with- the universe. Man as he is the main part of this whole gets attached by his trudge in his pace and here consequents an absolute parity and a total oneness. To quote from the Qur'an:

What, do they desire another religion than God's, and to Him has surrendered whoso is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned. " (Ali-Imran 3:83)

"Hast thou not seen how to God bow all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth; the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind?" (al-Hajj, 22:18)

3) The Outlook from the Social, Economical, and Political Stands:

a) In the affairs, those of universal and those of human, the competency is to none besides God. Planning, whatsoever, and an independent direction is only to the competency of the Creator Who is All-knowing and All-aware of the needs and the possibilities. The hidden treasures of talents in a human body as well as those innumerable ones in the vast of the universe together with the relative potentialities in addition to the places of their display, and, furthermore, the conjugation in between them; all are in His sight and never apart from His wisdom. Therefore, it is He alone, the competent one, to fashion the life and plan a schedule of relations for man which is again at parity with the line of his pace in the system of the galaxy; and accordingly a system to be sketched for a society, it rests finally on His competency.

This right (as described above) is particularly His and to Him alone, because of the natural and logical consequence of His being God - the Almighty, the Creator, the Master. Therefore, any sort of interference from any in determination of a line to be practiced by a man or a destiny to be headed to, is an encroachment into the kingdom of Divinity and an inroad into the intrinsic exalted excellence of Divine. Thus, it is polytheism. To quote from the Qur'an:

"But no, by thy Lord! They will not believe till they make thee the judge regarding the disagreement between them, then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching thy verdict, but shall surrender in full submission. " (an-Nisa, 4:65)

"It is not for any believer, man or woman, when God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in the affair. Whosoever disobeys God and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error. (al-Ahzab 33:36)

b) The right of guardianship and supervision of a society and the leadership of a human life is rejected but to God. Government or a guardianship of a man over a man would necessarily carry tyranny as a concomitant; If considered as an independent right bare of any responsibility unless the leadership and supervision over the social affairs should be given by a higher power to an individual or vested into a ruling committee coasted with congenial responsibilities; then alone the recalcitrations, obstructions obumbrated by intransigence could only be leveled and slaked. According to the ideology of the religion such a might is Allah, whose knowledge has no bourne. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Not so much as the weight of (even) an atom in heaven and earth escapes from Him, (Saba 34:3)

His dudgeon among His qualities (Mighty Punisher, Strong Revenger) leaves no room for any deviation for His chosen and appointed ones. To quote from the Qur'an.

"Had he invented against Us any sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand, then We would surely have cut his life-vein. (al-Haqqah, 69:44-46)

The government of God is not like one appointed by a nation nor a majority that could be fooled and run, nor a party that could be abused as a means for oppressing and pushing the people's voice down. It is not like the one appointed by the aristocrats and wealth holders of the society that could be bribed or accepted as shareholders of their enterprises. To ponder further deep: if human life is indentured to terminate at a point alongwith all its accessory organizations and the thread of the things to be held by a most puissant hand - as it is, of course - then such a hand could never be but that of the Creator's. As such, it is a right especial to God Himself to govern the man which He does through those whom He appoints, those are best in line according to the standards established in Divine ideology. So, it is they who carry out the Divine decrees as they guard. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Say: 'Shall I take a guardian and a ruler other than God, the Originator of the heavens and of the earth, He who feeds and is not fed?' Say: ' I have been commanded to be the first of them that surrender to the command of God.'" And you should not be among those of the idolators. (al-An'am, 6:14)

Your guardian (authority) is only God, and His Messenger and those who believed, who perform the prayer and pay the alms while they bow down (in their prayer)." (al-Maidah, 5:55)

"Say: 'I take refuge with the Lord of men, the ruler of men, the God of men. ' " (an-Nas, 114:2-4)

c) Absolute possession and provenance of all the bounties and the stocks existing in the world goes to the belonging of God. Nothing is in an independent belonging of any in this world although everything in the use of man is a deposit from Divine so as to be beneficial towards the perfection and elevation of man. This is not in the sense that a man is at his own convenience to spoil - if he wished - the bounties of this world which, as a matter of fact, are the result of the toil of innumerable hands. Man is also not at liberty to enjoy the utilization of these bounties in the errands other than those of his own elevation.

Whatever is available for man, although for him, is given by God, therefore, should be utilized for what God (the Donor) has specified and willed, and in fact, should be used in its main and natural way. It should be benefited from in the same manner that it is created for. Consuming it in any other way is a deviation from its real use consequent in evil.

The role of man in this display of different and colourful bounties of God, is to utilize them in the right way; of course with first and foremost aim at their own perfection. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Say: 'Whose is the earth, and whoso is in it; if you have knowledge?' They will say: 'God's. 'Say: 'Will you not then remember?' (al-Mu'minun, 84, 85)

"It is He Who created for you mankind all that is in the earth. " (al-Baqarah, 2:29)

"Serve God! You have no god other than He. It is He Who produced you from the earth and has given you to live therein." (Hud, 11:61)

"And those who break the covenant if God after His compact, and who snap what God has commanded to be joined, and who work corruption in the earth, theirs shall be the curse. . ." (ar-Ra'd, 13:25)

d) The right in relation with the bounties of the world is at parity among men. The opportunities and the possibilities are equally open to all. Every man is quite free to have his share in congruity with the endeavour that he exerts. In this stintless expanse there is no precinct prescribed particularly to a person as there are no divisions such as those of creed, geographical, historical, and even ideological. All are in an open to toil and take their share. To quoted from the Qur'an:

"It is He Who created for you all [and not for a particular section of you] in the earth, (al-Baqarah, 2:29)

"And the cattle, He created them for you; in them is warmth, and uses of various, and of them you eat. And there is beauty in them for you, when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them forth abroad to pasture. And they carry your heavy loads... (an-Nahl, 16:5-7)

"it is He Who sends down to you out of heaven water. (an-Nahl, 16:10)

"Thereby He brings forth for you crops.... (an-Nahl, 16:11)

"And what He has created in the earth.... (an-Nahl, 16:13)

"God is He Who made for you the cattle that you may ride on some of them, and of them you may eat." (Ghafir, 40:79)

In these verses of the beginning of the chapter, an-Nahl, (The Bees), the address is to men and not to any particular group. The same can be seen in other phrase among the same verses:

"If He willed He guides you all. . ." (an-Nahl, 16:9)

"Your God is one God. . ." (an-Nahl, 16:22)

So far our discourse covers only a little of this uberous dimensions of the rich and deep concept of Tawhid. This little yet sufficiently ratiocinates that Tawhid is not a mere philosophical or noetic impracticable theory, that in no way does it care about the man's way of life, and nor interferes in determination of man's destiny as to what and how he acts to reach it. It is not just to substitute people's belief. But it is a way for comprehension of the universe. It gives a particular understanding of the universe and the man, of the position of man in cognition to other beings in the world, of the man's position in history, of his capabilities and needs which are always in him and with him, and finally of the direction and the high perch of his perfection.

On the other hand, it is a social doctrine. It is a design and sketch of the environment ideonous to man wherein he can easily progress towards perfection. It is a mould meant for the society, fixes a basical line and forwards a constructive principle. Whenever a society sinks into ignorance and tyranny and loses the character that is the distinction of man, the principle is there to check. It is a relief to ailing hearts, a frill to a fallen and a typhoon in a stagnant, marsh of the society so that it could rebuild itself; and it is such a change as to dislodge the foundations and wrench the stones from stones of the social and economical wrong setups, rescinds the value while reveals the true worth. In short, it is a protest in every constancy against the existing conditions contrived by tyranny. Tawhid is not a new answer nor with infinitude of practice. It is a way ever new and always green for a man. Although it leans to a theoretical and mental analysis, its main goal is to provide another method for man's active life.

Therefore, we believe that Tawhid is the radex of religion and a cornerstone whereon rests the pillars of its mansion. It holds a mammoth ideology, the backbone of Islam, as a social conduct. It is not just a delicate body to house a thesis of a moral or a judgment of a metaphysics.

There have always been those who in spite of their belief in God and Tawhid, have neglected the obvious, practical and specially social aspects of this belief, either deliberately or otherwise. These easy believers - regardless of circumstances - have always dwelt a life like that of non-believers; and their belief has ever been at failure to suscite any feeling in them that could forbid from inhaling the putridity of the polytheism.

During the dawn of Islam in Mecca, the capital of the renown idols of Arabs, there were also the supporters of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) upright religion. But Tawhid was so confined in their minds that its utmost influence was only limited to their individual conduct. Neither their presence curbed nor their absence gave reins to the conjectures of their society; such weightless was their existence and so it continued without ebb and flow. Furthermore, they, the so-called believers, let themselves adrift in the same current of life wherein the non-believers were at float and were

carried away by the lashes of the waves of the prevailing nefarious traditions. As such, in social sphere their role was nothing; upon society itself their existence was of no effect; and in the circumstance their presence was of no influence at all. So, what else could mirror best' the characteristic of Tawhid, the interpretation of which does not surpass the mind.

It was in such conditions that Islam introduced Tawhid - of course, as a thought, and the thought as strong as to promise, and the promise as fertile as to produce a frame that fringes the life and, as for society, give a new vogue and combs its disturbed hairs into a curled and crisp order.

So, with such a thought and such a promise it set foot on the ground of practice. Its very first pace revealed an invitation and the invitation disclosed a revolution which so distant and common that stunned its audience alike those who entertained, those who spurned - but all concurred in one thing that it was a Message with a new social, economical, political regulation and with a strange stubbornness to agree with the existing conditions. It denies a situation and determines another one!

Believers accepted the Message because of its clarity and openness. For this very reason, its opponents attacked it wildly and anxiously adding their pressure day by day.

This fact in history is the gage to determine the veracity of those who claim Tawhid; they are no better than their peers prior to Islam - no matter in what distance of events or at what spot of the place be they, their belief is no more than a bedlam. It cannot be but a fiction or a fake of the real Tawhid focused by the apostles, if it were to see eye to eye with the rivals of God. There never existed Tawhid in such a sense.

From this vista we can see the expansion of Islam in its earlier stages and judge the reactionary backwardness in later stages. The Prophet of Islam brought Tawhid to be the way for the people. Later, it became a matter to be debated. It was a new reckoning for the world. But it was turned into a topic to beguile the time. It was the skeleton of the structure of society, and the axel in the centre of all social, economical and political affairs; but later turned into a means of justifying the existing social structure, and still remains as an axel but only in some artistic and beautiful painting of social relations, and nothing in effective existence. How can we expect an active and constructive role from a just ceremonial idea?

From the preceding discourse it comes to light that Tawhid from a practical point of view is a mould for society while a method for life, and, as a whole, an Islamic system for the human life cogent towards the progress - and this forward march is only possible in the wealth of its shade. Also from a theoretical point of view, it is an idea which is considered to be the base and philosophical foundation of that system, and a justification and reasoning for it. With this ground in the fore and in the hind, we can revert back to the starting point of the essay and analyse the subject from a particular angle, that this article is viewing at.

We said the prime adversary to the slogan of Tawhid was the wealthy and the powerful class of the society. This evinces that the first and foremost blow of Tawhid is directed against the powerful and dominating forces of society - in the Qur'anic term, the arrogant (mustakbir) class. Also we said that the Divine calls of Tawhid made clear their stand in relation to the oppressor and dominating forces as soon as they became audible in society. Therefore, the Divine calls had to face two confrontations, one opposing the other, from two antipodal wings of society: recalcitration from the oppressors (mustakbirin) and acceptance from the oppressed (mustad'afin).

At last, we said that such a two sided reaction is, in fact, the characteristic of Tawhid. It is an irrefragable fact that whenever Tawhid had been or is proclaimed in its true sense, the reaction had been or will be the same.

Now, let us see which dimension among its several ones hidden in the concept of Tawhid, is in direct contrast with the interests of the oppressors ?

In other words, the class of oppressors do see a point in Tawhid; what is that point they are so much perturbed, and therefore, fight with such a determination ?

To recognize the oppressor in the Qur'an, shall be a great help toward comprehending this subject: Mustakbir in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an describes, on more than forty occasions, particulars of an oppressor from different angles such as: psychological, social Position, indulgence in power, post, and pelf. Studying the Qur'anic view of an oppressor we find him to have such characteristics as:

a) Although he (the oppressor) accepts God as a mental or ceremonial reality, or anything with a limited province, he rejects God as is described by the concept of the slogan, "There is no god but Allah." (The concept of his absolute

and exclusive authority and ownership.) To quote from the Qur'an:

"For when it was said to them, 'There is no god but Allah' they were ever waxing proud. " (as-Siffat, 37:35)

b) An oppressor considers himself above others and without having a rightful distinction. He declares such reasons as power and wealth to prove his claim:

"They waxed proud in the earth without right (to justify their position), and they said, 'Who is stronger than we in might ? " (Fussilat, 41:15)

c) Insisting in his false claim, he rejects the God's words which declare a new order and specify true measures:

"And when Our signs are recited to such a man he turns away, waxing proud, as though he heard them not, and in his ears were heaviness, so give him good tidings of a painful chastisement. " (Luqman, 31:7)

d) He brings forward excuse that, "Had it been correct we might have conceived it earlier, or that God should have addressed us directly." This he does while believing the Call of the Prophet:

"And the non-believers say as regards to the believers, 'If it had been tought good, they had not outstripped us to it. " (al-Ahqaf, 46:11)

"And when a sign came to them, they said, 'We will not believe until we are given the like of what God's Messengers were given. " (al-An'dm, 6:124)

e) The oppressor introduces the leader of the Call of Tawhid as one who indagates profit and a superiority and thus, leaning to old and reactionary traditions, tries to discredit him among the people:

"They said (to Moses), 'Art thou come to us to turn us from that we found our fathers practising, and that the domination in the land might belong to you two? We do not believe you two.' " (Yunus, 10:78)

f) Using force and tricks, and different methods of imposing and fooling an oppressor, pushing people in his path, which destinates to slavery, and unconditional servitude to him. Therefore, he forces them to resist and confront to any emancipating call.

"They [their followers on the Day of Resurrection], shall say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and great ones, and they led us astray from the way. (al-Ahzab, 33:67)

And the weak ones argue with the oppressors[on the Day of Resurrection], 'Why, we were your followers; will you avail us now against any part of the Fire? (Ghafir, 40:47)

"Said the council of the aids of Pharaoh, 'Surely this man (Moses) is a cunning sorcerer who desires to expel you from your land; what do you command? (al-A'raf, 7:109,110)

g) Finally, the oppressor comes into open and confronts the Prophet and his followers, who have uprised against the dominating order and are dedicated to a change, in a deliberate atrocious animosity and thought:

"Slain were the Men of the Pit, the fire abounding in fuel, when they were seated over it, and themselves were witnesses of what (tortures) they did with the believers. ". (al-Buruj, 85:4 - 7)

"And Pharaoh said (to his advisors),- 'Let me slay Moses, and let him call to his Lord (as he can). i fear that he may change your religion [which dominates the mind of the people], or that he may cause corruption (rebellion) to appear in the land. (Ghafir, 40:26)

This was a small part of particularities and characteristics of the arrogant (oppressor) in some verses of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an goes still beyond and classifies the arrogant (oppressors) in categories symbolizing each:

"Then We sent forth, after them, Moses and Aaron (Harun) to Pharaoh and his council with Our signs, but they waxed proud. " (Yunus, 10:75)

"And Korah (Qarun), and Pharaoh, and Haman (Haman); and Moses came to them with the clear signs, but they waxed proud in the earth. " (al- Ankabut, 29:39)

Pharaoh, all know him. Haman was his special advisor and a prime personality in the politics of Egypt after Pharaoh. The council of aids of Pharaoh are the chiefs in Pharaoh's regime who guide the affairs.

Korah was a rich boarder of wealth and the keys of his wealth stores were in such a bulk that it was a matter of bodily strength to hold or carry them.

In the light of these and several other such verses of the Qur'an the oppressor is he whose identity is: dominator of society, wields the political and economical power without reservation, to prolong his tyrannical power and the advantages therefrom; he even captivates the minds by imposing his ideology so as to keep riveted to the process that perishes them while provides possibility of persistence in oppression. Therefore, there is every reason for an oppressor to fight against every call that enlightens the minds of people and instigates to any revolutionary and changing call; else he has to give up what he has gained and lose what he loves.

Let us return to our original theme: How the prophets used to introduce Tawhid? Considering the method they used to bring forth this slogan, while revealing the most constitutional basics of their ideology, easily reveals what is the unbearable part in Tawhid for the oppressor. And secondly the reason of being so, and why this wing cannot bear Tawhid when it is so introduced?

We know that the slogan of Tawhid, had been the first rays of the call of all prophets. The sentence, "Say, there is no god but Allah, to prosper" is a well-known declaration of the Prophet of Islam. Also the sentence, "O people, worship Allah, there is no god to you beside Him", is repeated on several occasions in the Qur'an as the title of the call of the great prophets such as Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb, etc.

And we see, these slogans are focused to "denial of servitude but to God", and have introduced Tawhid from this point of view more than any. The prophets have admonished the people who were in the slumber of ignorance and sunk in a tyrant society to not worship to any pole of power except God. The call, started, indeed as a challenge to those who used to claim being deities and masters of the people.

Who does claim as such in a society? What does it mean to fight them? And what scene does this suggest to be the characteristic of a society promised by the prophets?

To hold a belief of being a deity is repudiated. The tyrants who wield power, political and social, used to convey to the people that since they were deities they hold in themselves a part of the spirit of God. On the other hand, the vastness of the concepts of 'worship', 'lordship', and 'divinity' in the Qur'an leads us to a conclusion that the claimers of being deities have even a wider scope in their pose and purpose.

The term 'worship' ('ibadah) in the Qur'an means to surrender or yield or obey to a man or any other being unconditionally. When we have resigned ourselves without any 'why' it is tantamount to say that we have worshipped him.

Accordingly, when an element of a power, whether inside us or from outside, has made us obedient and dependant and a tool to be used, we have become its 'worshippers and servants'; as it is evident from these Qur'anic verses, in the beginning of the call when Moses rebuked and censured Pharaoh:

"That is a Messing thou reproachest me with, having enslaved the Children of Israel." (ash-Shuara', 26:22)

The conversation between Pharaoh and the chiefs of his regime:

"Should we believe two human like us while their people are worshippers to us." (al-Mu'minun, 23:47) Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) addresses his father as:

"Father, serve not Satan; surely Satan is a rebel against the All-merciful" (Maryam, 19:44)

In a general address of God directed to all human beings:

"Made / not covenant with you, children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan; surely he is a manifest foe to you. (Yasin, 36:60)

Promise of God to all human beings who have a reckoning:

"Those who eschew the serving of idols (taghut) and turn penitent to God, for them is good tidings! So give thou good tidings to My servants. (az-Zumar, 39:17)

Who criticize the faithfuls and the belief in God and in His revelations; God says to them:

Whomsoever God has cursed, and with whom is on wrath, and made some of them apes and swines, and he who worshipped 'taghut, they are worse situated, and have gone further astray from the right way." (al-Majidah, 5:60)

From these foregoing verses it comes to light that the obedience to Pharaoh and the members of his regime, and to a tyrant or to a satan is interpreted as 'worship'. As such, in the sense of the Qur'anic term it means to follow, to resign, and to obey a power (other than God) in absoluteness; whether be it on a desire or under a pressure, and be it with or without a praise and sanctity. Anyway, one side turns to a worshipper while the other the worshipped. This concludes that the term 'divinity' and 'divine' (Allah) which is another interpretation of 'being worshipped', and 'the worshipped one' correctly translates to:

In an erroneously organized society wherein the people are divided into two classes, one that of oppressor and the other that of the oppressed. In other words, a dominator and a beneficiary class while the other a deprived one. This in itself is a paragon of a worshipper and the worshipped. Such an inconsistency between the two wings of a society is an indicator that points to the deities whom worship is directed to. To know the worshipped ones and divines in historical societies, one should not look for a sacred being either of a man, animal or a thing. The cardinal ones in these societies are those who with their dependence upon the oppressors have yoked the multitudes of the oppressed

ones.

In such societies, polytheism is the religion. Because there are idols, worshipped ones, and divines as many as there are poles of power that rule the people, and push them in their own desired path as if they'(the people) have neither eyes nor ears and exactly know not where they stand and what they do. Polytheism means accepting the divinity of others and obeying and worshipping them instead of God or leveling them with God. It means giving the control of life to others but God. It means surrendering to every pole of power other than God, seeking needs from them, and paving the path that they define.

Tawhid is an antipode to such a polytheism. It denies all the deities and obedience to them. It calls for a campaign against their domination. It asks for discarding their help. And finally Tawhid is to be dedicated in reminding them as it hails upon hearts to pursue their provider, God. The prime slogan of all the messengers of God was that 'no' to others, and this 'yes' to God. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a messenger, say' : 'Serve your God, and eschew taghuts [idols, anti-God forces].'" (an-Nahl,16:36)

'And We sent never a messenger before thee except that We revealed to him, saying, 'There is no god but /;so serve Me. (al-Ambiya', 21 :25)

Therefore, the messengers of God, by this slogan, have denied the corrupted and perverted system of society, and invited people to get in to a vast struggle against taghuts (oppressors) namely the guardians of the system, who had rebelled against the noble human values, those who had imposed some false values upon the people in order to keep their oppressing position. Denial of polytheism, in fact is the denial of all social, economical, and political foundations whereon the construction of that society rests and wherein the polytheism is housed as a rightful tenant and wherefrom keeps vigilance on the unstable situation. When the deities as such are denied and rejected, so, also all those who are dedicated to oppress the people and keep them down by imposing and fooling them, take a full advantage of all their capabilities to saturate their unlimited desires, are denied too.

Moses, by declaring the same slogan, and in direct talk with the Lord of the worlds had openly fought Pharaoh, and denied him. It is true that the aids of Pharaoh brought up many guilts upon Moses, such as his denial of idols. But they and Pharaoh himself were aware of those lifeless idols that were just a cover and a justification for their own divinity.

"Then said the council of the regime of Pharaoh [to Pharaoh], 'Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to work corruption in the land, and leave thee and thy gods?'" (al-A'raf,7:127)

The lifeless idols are just an excuse for imposing the divinity of live-idols. Therefore, it was quite logical that as a response to Moses' invitation towards God, the Creator of heavens and earth, the Lord of all, the Possessor of the east and the west; they treat him and his supporters to torture and death. To quote from the Qur'an:

"Said he (Pharaoh), 'if thou takest a god other than me, I shall surely make thee one of the imprisoned, (ash-Shu'ara', 26:29)

"Said he, 'We shall slaughter their sons and spare their women; surely we are triumphant over them. (al-A'raf, 7:1 27)

Pharaoh said to his magicians who had believed in Moses against his wishes:

I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you all together. " (al-A'raf, 7:123)

Such atrocities against the name of Allah, and the Messenger of Tawhid stand only because this emancipating message, means:

Acceptance of God to dominate the life.

Denial of all others who claim such with strife.

Proud declaration of servitude to Him alone.

Dependency to be cut upon all but upon Him sown.

This is the essence of Tawhid, and its most flashing dimension.

THE END

Iqbal , The Poet-Philosopher Of Islamic Resurgence

This is a translation of President Sayyid Ali Khamene'i's speech delivered at the opening session of the First International Conference on Iqbal, held at Tehran, March 10-12, 1986, on the occasion of the 108th birth anniversary of the poet of the Subcontinent.

I should admit candidly that today when I see that our country is holding a seminar for paying tribute to our beloved Iqbal, I am obliged to feel that this day would prove to be one of the most memorable and exciting days of my life. That luminous spark that washed out from our hearts the darkness of the days of suffocation and repression (through his impressions, poetry, counsel and teachings) and projected a bright picture of the future before our eyes, is now transformed into a bright torch to have attracted the attention of our people.

Our people who were the first foreign addressees of Iqbal were unfortunately very late to recognise him. The particular conditions in our country, especially the political domination of the colonialist powers during the last years of Iqbal's life in his favourite country, Iran, never allowed Iqbal to visit this country. This great poet of Persian language, who composed most of his poetry in Persian and not in his own mother tongue, could never breathe in his dear and desired climes. Not only that Iqbal never came to Iran, but the same politics with which Iqbal was at war throughout his life did not allow his ideas, his ideology and his teachings to reach the ears of the Iranian people, who were ever eager to receive his message. I have an answer to this question as to why Iqbal did not come to Iran.

At that time, when Iqbal was at the pinnacle of his fame and glory and was known all over the Subcontinent and all the renowned universities of the World recognised him as a great thinker, philosopher, scholar, humanist and sociologist (of course none of these titles corresponded to the title by which Iqbal desired to be known), in our country the politicians who ruled the country could not tolerate Iqbal and his ideas in any way. For this very reason he was never invited to Iran and the ground for his visit to this country was not prepared. Not only were none of his books published for years in Iran, even the titles of his books remained unknown to us. During the days when the literary works and culture alien to both the Iranians and Muslims were flooding this country like a devastating deluge, not a single poem or work of Iqbal was allowed to catch the public eye. Today the Islamic Republic (i.e. the embodiment of Iqbal's dream) has been established here, Iqbal, whose heart ached to see the Muslim people having lost their human and Islamic personality, and who viewed their loss of identity and spiritual poverty as the greatest danger to their existence and tried with all the power at his disposal to uproot this vicious weed from the human soul in general and from the inner being of the people of the East in particular and especially the Muslims, had he been alive today, he could have seen a nation standing on its feet, infused with the rich Islamic spirit and drawing upon the inexhaustible reservoirs of Islamic heritage, a nation which has become self-sufficient and has discarded all the glittering Western ornaments and is marching ahead courageously, determining its own targets and moving to attain them, advancing with the frenzy of a lover, and has not imprisoned itself within the walls of nationalism and racialism. I am glad to have this opportunity (though for a brief time) to introduce to our people this great figure, a great thinker, a great reformer of our age, a revolutionary and an unrelenting warrior. I would, of course, be pleased if my presence in this function be free from all formalities, so that, firstly, I may enjoy with satisfaction this commemorative ceremony and, secondly, I may be given an opportunity to give vent to a fraction of my emotions about Iqbal before the audience. I request the brothers and sisters to allow me to speak frankly like a person who for years had been a follower of Iqbal and has lived emotionally in his company, so that to some extent I can give him what is due to him on behalf of myself. Iqbal is one of the eminent personalities in the history of Islam. His is such a profound and sublime personality that it cannot be described and measured by only one Dimension of his life. Iqbal was a scholar and a philosopher, but at the same time other dimensions of his life are also so bright that if we consider him to be just a philosopher and a scholar, we feel that we have belittled him. Undoubtedly Iqbal is a great poet and is reckoned among the greatest. Those who know Urdu very well and have written about Iqbal's Urdu poetry maintain that Iqbal's Urdu poems are among the best in Urdu. Of course this may not be a great tribute to him as the poetic Tradition of Urdu is not so rich. But it cannot be disputed that his Urdu poetry made a great impact on

large numbers of people, on Hindus and Muslims equally, living in the Subcontinent during the early decades of the twentieth century, and motivated them to participate in the struggle (for freedom) that was reaching its climax. In his mathnawi (a long poem consisting of rhymed couplets) *Asrar-e khudi* (The Secrets of the Self), he refers to this point:

The gardener tested the force of my speech.

He sowed a verse of mine and could reap a sword from it.

I infer from these lines that he had been composing his Urdu poetry for quite a long time and was known to all Urdu-knowing people of the Subcontinent. But in my view Iqbal's Persian poetry is to be regarded as one of the miracles of poetry. We have a large number of non-Persian-speaking poets in the history of our literature, but I cannot point out any of them whose poetry possesses the qualities of Iqbal's Persian poetry. Iqbal was not acquainted with Persian idiom, as he spoke Urdu at home and talked to his friends in Urdu or English. He did not know the rules of Persian prose writing. A specimen of Iqbal's Persian prose is available to us in his prefatory note to his mathnawi, *Rumuz-e bikhudi* (The Secrets of the Selflessness) and *Asrar-e khudi* (The Secrets of the Self). If you read them you will see that it is hard for the people whose mother tongue is Persian to understand it. Iqbal never studied Persian at any stage in a school or college during the years of his childhood or youth. In his father's house he used to speak Urdu. Iqbal chose the Persian language as his medium of literary expression only for the reason that he felt that his ideas and themes could not be effectively expressed in the Urdu language. As such he was attracted towards Persian and he studied the collections of the Persian poets like Sa'di, Hafiz and Mawlawi as well as the Persian poets who wrote in Indian style like 'Urfi, Naziri Nishaburi and others. In spite of not having tasted the Persian way of life, never living in the cradle of Persian culture, and never having any direct association with it, he cast with great mastery the most delicate, the most subtle and radically new philosophical themes into the mould of Persian poetry, some of which are unsurpassable yet. In my view this is what can be explained as his poetic genius. When you compare his poetical works with those of other non-Iranian poets who wrote poetry in Persian, you will realise the greatness of Iqbal. Some of the ideas that he has expressed with ease in one couplet, if one tries to render them into prose it will take a long time and great deal of effort to do so. It is not an easy job even for us whose mother tongue is Persian. There can be no better introduction of Iqbal than his poetry. In no other way we can introduce Iqbal more truly. Some of the Persian poems of Iqbal are the most sublime pieces of Persian poetry. Iqbal's verses are in different styles, in Indian style, in Iraqi style, in Khurasani-style, and in various poetic forms, like mathnawi (poetry composed of distichs corresponding in measure, each consisting of a pair of rhymes), ghazal (sonnet), qat'ah, dobayti (couplets) and ruba'i (quatrains). Their themes as well as their renderings are sublime; notwithstanding, he did not know how to speak and write Persian (prose), and this needs extraordinary genius. At the same time to commend Iqbal as a poet is to belittle him, for he was a great reformer and a great freedom fighter as well. Though Iqbal's position and status as a freedom fighter and social reformer is very high, he cannot be regarded as a mere social reformer either. In the Indian subcontinent several Hindu and Muslim contemporaries of Iqbal were considered as social reformers, whose works are known and whose participation in the freedom struggle needs no introduction. Among the Muslims themselves there were great personalities like Mawlana Abu al-Kalam Azad, Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali, Mawlana Shawkat 'Ali and the late Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They also belonged to the same period and to the same Generation and were great freedom fighters; but the greatness of Iqbal's work cannot be compared with any of them. It does not mean in any way to minimise the great importance and value that we attach to Mawlana Abu al-Kalam Azad, an eminent figure in his own right, or to Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali and Mawlana Shawkat 'Ali (who were untiring Muslim freedom fighters who struggled for long years to drive out the British from their country), but Iqbal's ease is different from all of them. Iqbal's problem was not the problem of India in particular, but his concern was for the whole Muslim world in general. In his mathnawi, *Pas chi bayad kard ay aqwam-e Sharq*, he addresses himself to the Eastern nations and it indicates that his keen eyes had an all-inclusive view of the entire Muslim world. He was not concerned with the problems of India alone. Therefore, if I describe Iqbal as a social reformer, I will fail to cover his entire personality. I cannot find a proper term that can describe him. You can see that his personality, his greatness, his mind rich with ideas and the totality of his being, elude the power of comprehension of people like us.

To be true to ourselves we have to confess that we have been far away from Iqbal. As such this conference is one of the most useful things we have done so far. Even this is not enough. I would ask the honoured Minister of Higher Education and Culture and my brothers in universities to think about the possibilities of establishing foundations in Iqbal's memory, and to name , university halls and cultural centres in our country after Iqbal. Iqbal belongs to this nation and this country, and one of his famous poems is dedicated to the people of Iran which begins with the following verse:

I am burning like a tulip's lamp on your path,
O youth of Iran, I swear by my own life and yours.
And he says:

The man is coming who shall break the chains of the slaves,

I have seen him through the cracks in the walls of your prison.

This poem also strengthens my belief as to why Iqbal could not visit Iran. He considered Iran as a prison and addressed the people living here in the way the prisoners are addressed. There are plenty of poems in Iqbal's collections which show his dissatisfaction with India at least the India of his own time. It was for this reason that he turned his attention to Iran so that the flame that was burning inside his heart could be converted into a bright blaze in Iran. He was waiting for a miracle to occur here. This is Iqbal's due that we owe to him, and we should always remember our indebtedness to him.

If we wish to understand Iqbal and the significance of his message, it is necessary for us to know the conditions of the Subcontinent during Iqbal's lifetime - an epoch that culminated in Iqbal. Without this study we cannot understand the real meaning of Iqbal's message, the melody of his tone and the inner fire that kept him restless. The Subcontinent went through the hardest phase of its history during Iqbal's lifetime. Iqbal was born in 1877, that is, twenty years after the quelling of the Muslim's revolt against the English in 1857, when they inflicted a final blow upon the Islamic rule in the Subcontinent. A great revolutionary upsurge overtook the whole country and continued for several years, but four months (the middle of 1857) marked its culmination. The British used this opportunity for making an assault on Islam, which they were contemplating to make for the last seventy or eighty years, and they imagined to have uprooted Islam from the Indian soil.

They put an end to the Muslim rule that was breathing its last breaths. The only obstacle in their way of the total colonisation of the Indian subcontinent was the existence of the same rule, which they had succeeded in weakening during the course of time They liquidated its chief fighters and eminent personages in order to eradicate the deep-rooted Islamic civilisation and to completely uproot this corpulent and old tree which was shorn of any power of resistance at that time, and to make India a part of the British empire. The year 1857 was the year of absolute victory for the British in India. After having officially annexed India to Britain and named their country as the Empire of Britain and India, the colonising of India did not pose any problem, for India was treated henceforward as one of the provinces of the Great Britain. After that they took all possible precautions to crush every revivalist, nationalist or religious movement in that country. Their aim was to wipe out completely the Muslim population, as they knew it well that it were the Muslims who resisted them in India. They already had tested this. The Muslims fought with the English and their mercenaries, the Sikhs, who were serving them since the early nineteenth century. This was known to the English very well and to those who were acquainted with the Indian affairs, who used to tell them, that the Muslims were their real enemies in India and that they were to be eliminated. From the year 1857, which was the year of their victory, an extremely oppressive and tyrannical plan was chalked out to suppress the Muslims. If we go into its detail it will take a long time. Many books were written on this subject. The Muslims were subjected to economic pressures as well as to cultural and social discriminations. Collectively they were subjected to the worst kind of humiliations. As regard to the conditions of employment their declared policy was to recruit non-Muslims only.

The awqaf (endowments) that ran Islamic institutions and mosques were in large number and they were taken away. The Hindu merchants were motivated to lend money to the Muslims in order to seize their property in return for their debts. It was resolved that their relationship with the land be cut off and their sense of belonging to the land be uprooted.

This process continued for a long time. The Muslims were killed without reason and arrested for no fault of theirs. All such people who were suspected of carrying on any activities against the English were suppressed and eliminated ruthlessly. These conditions prevailed for several years. After one or two decades of this repression, which has no parallel anywhere in the world - not in any of the colonised countries were the people suppressed so severely as the Indian Muslims - ultimately some people began to think about the possible remedy for this Situation but of course the angry resistance against the English was not given up. India should never be forgetful of the fact that the Indian Muslims played the most vital part in the battle against the English. In fact it will be an act of thanklessness on the part of India to forget her indebtedness to the Muslims of India. The Muslims did never sit idle during the freedom struggle as well as during the great revolution that was brought about there.

During the years after the incident of 1857, when there was peace and calm everywhere, the militant Muslim elements were active in every nook and cranny. There were two courses of action open to them, that is, either the politico-cultural movement, or a purely cultural movement to meet the challenge threatening the position of the Muslims. One of the movements was led by the 'ulama' and the other was initiated under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. These two movements represented two cross-currents opposing each other, and this is not the occasion to go into detail concerning them.

The 'ulama' believed in waging war against the English. They resolved to boycott the English and their educational institutions and not to accept any grant from them. The course followed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan was in opposite direction. He believed in having good relations with the Englishmen, benefiting from their institutions and making a compromise with them. Unfortunately both of the two movements, though opposed to each other, ended in disastrous consequences for the Muslims. The first one that was led by the eminent Indian 'ulama', many among whom were distinguished historical figures. Their struggle was rightly guided and their ideology was also based on right thinking, but they tried to keep away the Indian Muslim community from acquiring the first and foremost thing they required and which could enable them to master modern developments in science and technology; for example, they did not include teaching of the English language in their school syllabi. Perhaps they were justified in doing so at that time, as the English language was to replace the Persian language, which had been the favourite language of the Muslims for centuries as well as the official language of the Subcontinent. They viewed English as an intruder. Anyhow, their opposition to the English language and their lack of interest in modern civilisation, which at any rate had to govern the modes of the life of the people, kept the Muslim Ummah out of modern sciences along with their benefits and advantages, which were ultimately essential for the development of a society.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's movement was more dangerous, and here I would like to express my considered opinion about him. (It is possible that some of the brothers may not agree with me.) Sayyid Ahmad Khan did not do anything positive for Islam and Indian Muslims. In my view, the movement initiated by Iqbal was a protest against the movement whose standard-bearer was Sayyid Ahmad Khan in India. Sayyid Ahmad Khan based his movement on friendly relations with the Englishmen under the pretext that after all the young Generation of the Muslims had to be acquainted with the modern culture and that they could not afford to keep them alienated from and ignorant of the new currents. In his view it was essential to reconcile with the Englishmen so that the Muslims might not be mistreated by them and the Muslim men, women and children might not suffer due to this antagonism. He was very naive to believe that he could win the sympathy of the English and could soften the hearts of those seasoned and villainous politicians by being friendly and humble towards them.

As a consequence, the English spared Sayyid Ahmad Khan himself, his associates and the intellectuals around him whereas the Muslims in general remained exposed to all sorts of victimisation till India won independence. Therefore, this policy of pleasing the Englishmen on the part of Sayyid Ahmad Khan proved to be harmful for the Muslims and brought disgrace and humiliation to them.

More than anything what helps us to understand the significance and worth of Iqbal is the knowledge of the general conditions of the Muslims in those days. For the Muslim masses, intellectuals, scholars and all those who entered the broader fields of social. life could acquire knowledge, master modern science and gain degrees and positions, but

were completely oblivious of their Islamic identity. Gradually the future hopes were lost for the colossal Muslim society of India that had the largest Muslim population in the world. (Even today we do not have a country that has such a big population of the Muslims as was at that time in Indian subcontinent.) A bleak future stared them in the face, they did not possess any awareness of their Islamic identity, and had lost all hope. They suffered to such an extent that in the existing world and all its occurrences they saw nothing but bitterness, frustration and darkness in store for themselves.

A sense of inferiority had gripped the being of the Indian Muslims, and a deep sense of humiliation and weakness had become a part and parcel of their personality. They could not think of any way out of this predicament. At that time, when Iqbal returned from Europe, well-versed in modern Western culture, and while his contemporary intellectuals, his friends and even those who shared the same ideas with him always looked towards, the West and Western culture, they were of the view that Westernisation of their individual lives and the assimilation of Western culture and the Western value system would add to their prestige and credibility. To be in the service of the British government which ruled India with an iron hand was considered to be an honour for the Muslims. The Hindus, who were several years ahead of the Muslims regarding the adoption of the Western culture and manners, and who were quicker than them in winning the confidence of the Englishmen had gained an advantageous position.

The Muslims must have been insulted and exploited by the Hindus also. Even the Sikhs, who were a very slim minority and had no religious or cultural traditions, considered it justified to oppress and insult the Muslims. Such was the state of the Muslim society during Iqbal's time.

The Lahore college where Iqbal received his education and obtained his bachelor's degree was bereft of all the signs of Islamic thinking which could inspire any future hope. The most respected book on Islam in those days was Sir Thomas Arnold's work entitled in Arabic *al-Da'wah ila al-Islam* (An Invitation to Islam), which has been lately translated into Persian also. The book was written by Sir Thomas Arnold during his tenure at the Lahore college. It is of course a good book and I do not want to condemn it, but the thing which is remarkable about this book is that he has made every effort to lessen the importance of Islamic jihad. The main theme around which the book revolves is that Islam advanced through *da'wah* (invitation) and not by means of the sword. These words sound to be good, but this English thinker has gone to the extent of considering the concept of Islamic jihad as a secondary issue. Sir Thomas is the person who is regarded as a sincere pro-Islamic writer and he was Iqbal's teacher also.

Here I would like to praise Iqbal's judiciousness in this regard. Despite his intimate relations with Sir Arnold, he was not unmindful of the political motives of his academic work. This point has been also emphasised by Mr. Jawid Iqbal in his biography of his father (one volume of which has been translated into Persian). He writes that Iqbal challenged his friend Sayyid Nadhir Niyazi, who believed Sir Thomas Arnold to be an Islamist. Questioning Arnold's credentials, he asked, 'Do you judge him by *al-Da'wah ila al-Islam*?', and answered himself, 'He works for the British government.'

Iqbal further told the same friend that when he was in England Arnold asked him to translate Edward Browne's 'Literary of History of Persia', but he declined to do it as he realised that it was written with political motives. Now you can see yourself how Iqbal evaluated Browne's book and compare it with the attitude of our writers who were Browne's friends and were proud of their relations with him. You can see how simple, naive and ignorant these people were, having no inkling of their political objectives, whereas Iqbal was perceptive and intelligent enough to understand the hidden implications of the colonialist politics in the works of Thomas Arnold and Edward Browne. This is an indication of Iqbal's greatness.

At that time the Muslims were in a very precarious Condition. The British administration and its main institutions were under the direct control of the British, and the secondary and less important positions were held by the Hindus. The freedom movement that was first launched by the Muslims was grabbed by the Congress party, and that too a prejudiced Congress party. Later on the Indian National Congress rendered great service to the freedom struggle, but during those days it was dominated by communal prejudices. It was predominantly an anti-Islamic, pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim communalist organisation. There were Westernised Muslim intellectuals who were infatuated with the Western values on the one hand, and on the other there were the poor Muslim masses, crushed under the burden of extreme poverty and drudgery.

The Muslim 'ulama' and religious leaders were isolated from the freedom movement (after their initial defeat) and were alienated from it (except those who were in the vanguard of the movement, leaders like Mawlana Muhammad

'Ali). Political isolation and economic deprivation ruled supreme. The Muslims were reduced to the state of being a superfluous part of the Indian society, without any guiding star on the horizon. In such crucial moments Iqbal kindled the torch of egohood. Of course, India was no exception; the above-mentioned conditions prevailed throughout the Muslim world. It was for the very same reason that Iqbal speaks about the whole Islamic world. Iqbal's day-to-day life in the city of Lahore in the colonised subcontinent of India led him to directly experience the pains and hardships of life. It was at this juncture that Iqbal raised the banner of his revolt. His was a cultural, political and revolutionary movement. The first thing that was necessary for Iqbal to do was to make the Indian society aware of its Islamic identity, Islamic ego and the Islamic personality, or rather the human dimension of its personality. He asks the people as to why they were complacent, why they were forgetful and why they had abandoned their real selves. He asks them to regain their Islamic and human identity. This was the first message delivered by Iqbal. But, could he succeed in awakening the nation of several hundreds of millions that had been subjected to severe exploitation and humiliation for a long time. A nation that was divested of the capacity to understand, to know and to hope against hope was now asked to assert existence and recover its identity as soon as possible. It was almost an impossible task, very difficult to be realised. In my humble opinion no one could convey this message in a better way than Iqbal did. With a view to attain this end Iqbal evolved his philosophy of the self (khudi). The philosophy of egohood in the sense of subjective philosophical views is not the subject of our discussion. The conception of ego which has human and social implications, was presented philosophically so that it could fit in a philosophical Tradition. As Iqbal wished to make it the central theme of his poems, ghazals, and mathnawis, this notion required to be based on a sound philosophical outlook. Iqbal conceived ego as the source of feeling and knowing one's individuality through contemplation, introspection, self-cognition and self-realisation. He explained this conception in philosophical terms.

In my view, in the beginning the idea of ego might have occurred to Iqbal as a revolutionary idea, and afterwards he made an attempt to philosophise it. It may be argued that ego is the same thing that was the most needed in the Indian society, and in general was missing in the entire Muslim world as well. In spite of having an Islamic value-system the Muslim peoples had become unmindful of it, and eagerly surrendered themselves to an alien system with full faith. It was, therefore, necessary for them to return to their own selves, that is, to the Islamic value-system. In this very sense Iqbal was trying to pursue it as a goal. Such a sociological concept could not be impressed on the minds of people without being expressed in a philosophical manner. Iqbal had to present it philosophically.

As said above, the idea of selfhood or ego at first was conceived by Iqbal as a sociological and revolutionary notion. In due course, after having witnessed the signs of degeneration and loss of self-identity of the Eastern nations, especially the Muslims, and after examining its causes, this idea became permanent and deeply rooted in his being. Afterwards he sought to provide a philosophical and subjective ground to it, and based this notion on a general conception of the self, something similar to the conception of existence as evolved by our philosophers - an essence which is shared by all beings but needs to be interpreted philosophically. Of course, wujud (existence) is something different from khudi (ego), and to interpret it as existence, as is done by some of the persons who have written commentaries on Iqbal's poems, is a great blunder in my view. The notion of unity in plurality and plurality in unity, which has been recurrently used in his *Asrar-e khudi* (The Secrets of the Self), is different from the metaphysical conception of unity in plurality and plurality in unity as interpreted by Mulla Sadra and others. It is altogether a different category. What Iqbal meant to refer to by this notion had cent per cent human and social connotation. When I say it is social, I do not mean that it is not applicable to individual. Why not? Ego needs to be strengthened in an individual. But this very egohood of the ego of an individual and the strengthening of the personality of the ego have social implications in Islamic framework. Unless the personality of the (individual) ego is strengthened, a strong and stable society in its real sense cannot come into existence. The meaning of the ego is different from that of the existence. At the first instance he speaks in the manner of mystics about the generality and the extent of the concept of self. The world of being is actualised through the manifestations of the ego. Each one of the phenomena of the universe is a manifestation of a particular aspect of the self. Of course, some of the themes that I have described in my own words have been differently presented by Iqbal in the headings of his poems. There are some other themes that are expressed far more beautifully in his poetry than their paraphrasing by Iqbal himself in the headings of certain poems.

The ideas, themselves produced by the self-consciousness, are the manifestations of the ego in every being. The

Affirmation of one's ego is also an Affirmation of others. When the presence of the ego in a human being is posited, it automatically posits the presence of egos other than one's own. Therefore there is self as well as the non-self, that is, the existence of other is also posited. Hence it may be inferred that the whole universe is contained as a possibility in the self. The ego is the source of hostility also. There are various selves that are at war with one another. This struggle, this perpetual conflict brings the world into existence. It is the ego which is responsible for the selection of the fittest and its survival as well. So often thousands of selves are sacrificed for the sake of one higher self. The concept of ego is a graded one and its grades vary in intensity and weakness. The degree of intensity and weakness of the ego in each one of the beings is the factor which determines their strength and firmness. In this context he cites the examples of various entities such as the drop, the wine, the goblet, the cup-bearer, the mountain, the desert, the wave, the sea, the light, the eye, the verdure, the candle, the silence, the candle-bearer, the gem, the earth, the moon, the star, the sun, the tree, etc. Each one of them is measured by the intensity of its ego; for instance, a drop has a particular strength of ego, while a stream has a different strength of ego. Similarly a gem on which an image can be engraved possesses an ego-strength different from that of a stone on which no image can be engraved. Finite ego is never absolute. It always refers to a graded essence, which is present in things and human individuals, as well as in cosmic elements in diverse measures. He concludes this theme with the following verse:

When ego embraces Elan Vital,

The stream of life is transformed into an ocean.

Afterwards he expounds his views about the pursuit of ideals and aspirations, something which was most wanting in the Islamic world in those days. It means that the Muslims did not have any purpose in life. They did not have any high aspirations either. Their ambitions were confined to day-to-day life. He holds the view that the human life is nothing without purpose and aim. The ego attains selfhood through moving towards the desired ideals: 'Verily the life is faith and jihad' (striving). He has expressed the same idea in a very comprehensive, profound, subtle and elegant way in his poetry. To desire for something and to strive unceasingly for attaining it is called purposiveness, without which life becomes synonymous with death.

It is desire that makes the universe throb with life. Nature is the shell and desire is the pearl. The heart which is incapable of cherishing desires is a bird with broken wings, unable to fly. It is aspiration which strengthens the life of the self, and transforms it into a restless sea eversurging. It is the joy of viewing that gives vision to the viewing eye. It is the fun of walking that gives feet to the pheasant. It is the effort to sing that is instrumental in endowing the nightingale's beak with melody. It is the piper's hands and the lips that breathe musical notes into reed, which was nothing but a mere straw in the reed-bed.

Science, culture, poetry, literature, law, everything is the product of human aspirations actualised through continuous struggle. Hence he says:

Our lives are sustained by the ideals we create for ourselves,

Our being is illuminated by the rays of our aspirations.

He reiterates the same theme in another verse:

Man is hot-blooded due to his burning passions,

This clay glows with the light of aspirations.

He considers love and passion essential for human society, and individual man, for it strengthens the individual as well as the social ego. He holds that the ego of an individual and the society cannot be strengthened without love. It is essential that the Islamic millah and all other human beings who desire to strengthen their selves should kindle the fire of love in their breasts. It is remarkable that he himself determines an object of love, a point around which the

Muslim Ummah has to rally. It is at this juncture that one feels how intelligently this man of awareness and insight comprehended the necessity of the unity of the Muslim world. His quest for the rallying point led him to believe that the love of the Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa (S) was the only passion that could motivate and rally the Muslim Ummah around a new consciousness:

The luminous point that is called the ego,
Keeps glowing the spark of life in our corporeal body.
Through love it becomes more lasting,
More alive, more fervent, and more luminous.
Through love its essence is blazed up,
And its, hidden treasures are evolved.
The ego acquires lire from love,
And learns how to illuminate the universe with this lire.
It is love that brings peace as well as conflict to the world.
Love is the Water of life as well as the well-tempered sword.
Learn the art of being a lover and aspire for loveliness,
Strive to attain the eyes of Noah and aspire for Job's heart.
Discover alchemy in a handful of mud.
And kiss the threshold of sublimity.
Subsequently he tells us as to who that beloved whom the Muslims should love devotedly is:

The beloved is hidden in Thy heart.
If thou art gifted with eyes, come, I will show thee his face.,
His lovers are lovelier than all the beloved of the world,
More beautiful, more elegant and more loveable.
Through his love the heart gains strength,
And the earth attains the exalted status of the Pleiades.
The land of N«id was made vigilant ingenious through his grace,
In a state of ecstasy it flew higher than the heavens.
The heart of the Muslim in the seat of al-Mustafa.
Whatever respect we command is due to his name.
Mount Sinai is nothing but dust that arose from his House,
His parlour is sacred even for the Ka'bah.
The mat is grateful to him that he prefers to sleep on it,
The Taq-e Kisra is trampled under the feet of his Ummah.
He retired to the privacy of the Cave of Hira',
And brought forth a nation, a constitution and a government,
Night after night passed by his bedside finding him awake,
So that his people could rest on the throne of Khusrow.
He gives an account of the Prophet (S) and his high qualities. Not only here alone, but throughout his poetical works we can see an unceasing stream of his love for the Prophet (S) gushing out wave after wave.
A contemporary Pakistani scholar has written a book about Iqbal entitled Iqbal dar rah-e Mawlawi (Iqbal on the Path of Mawlawi), in which he states that whenever a poem that contained the Prophet's sacred name was recited in Iqbal's presence spontaneously tears flowed from his eyes. Indeed he passionately loved the Prophet (S). Iqbal has made out a very important point. Where can the world of Islam find a personage more popular and dearer than the Prophet of Islam (S)? His personality is the focal point of the unity of the Islamic world. Iqbal, while narrating the

story of the daughter of Hatim al-Ta'i, says that in one of the battles the daughter of Hatim al-Tai was taken captive and brought in the presence of the Prophet (S). Her feet were chained and her head and body were bare. The disrespect showed to the daughter of a great and generous person like Hatim was so shocking that the Prophet (S) took out his cloak and flung it towards her so that she might cover herself. Iqbal concludes this story with the following verses:

We are more naked than the Lady of al-Ta'i.
We are stripped of our robe of honour before the nations.
He is the source of our credibility on the Day of Judgement,
In this world, too, it is he whose love covers our faults.
We, who do not recognize any boundaries and nationalities,
Like vision from the two eyes, are one in reality.
We may belong to Hijaz, Egypt or Iran,
But we are the dew-drops of the same laughing dawn.
The eyes of the keeper of the tavern of Batha' have intoxicated us,
We are like, the goblet full to the brim with this wine,
Like a hundred-leaf flower we smell alike,
For it is he who breathes life into this bouquet, and he is one.

On so many occasions Iqbal has composed verses expressing his deep love for the Prophet (S) that it is not possible to quote all of them here.

In *Asrar-e khudi* (The Secrets of the Self) he tries to awaken the sense of selfhood, that is, the sense of human identity in the individual as well as the society. A separate section in 'The Secrets of the Self' deals with the idea that the selfhood is weakened by entreating. When an individual or a nation stretches its hands in need before others, this act weakens the individuality of a person or the nation and consequently the process of deterioration sets in.

As a sequel to the problem of ego Iqbal elucidates the problem of selflessness. While discussing the problem of the self, the notion of the strengthening an individual's identity should not be interpreted in the sense of imprisoning one's being within the walls constructed around the self and living in isolation, cut off from other human beings as independent egos. Neither it means that one should lose his identity among other selves in the society. Rather an individual should live in close relationship with the society. This is the real meaning of the selflessness. The book *Rumuz-e bikhudi* (The Secrets of the Selflessness) is the second book of Iqbal that was composed and printed after *Asrar-e khudi* and is illustrative of Iqbal's ideas about the Islamic System. Iqbal's ideas about establishing an Islamic order are more elaborate and clearer in *Rumuz-e bikhudi* than any other of his works. On the whole, the problems elucidated in *Rumuz-e bikhudi* are among the issues relevant to the establishment of an Islamic society and ought to be taken into consideration.

While going through the themes of the secrets of the selflessness, we notice that Iqbal paid attention exactly to the same questions that are predominant in our Islamic society today. The foremost among the most exciting ideas of Iqbal is his emphasis on the mission of the followers of tawhid. He believed that the Muslims and the Islamic Ummah are bound to spread the message of Islam and they should not rest unless they perform this duty.

It would be interesting, at this juncture, to quote a few selected verses of Iqbal in this regard. In these verses he says that the formation of an Islamic society and the emergence of an Islamic Ummah in this world have not been a simple matter. The world had to wait for ages and history had to undergo countless experiments in order to reach the conception of tawhid and to arrive at a stage where an Ummah inspired with the ideal of tawhid and a people faithfully following Islamic thought could have evolved:

This ancient body called the world
Is constituted by the intermixing of the mother elements.

A hundred reed-beds were cultivated to produce a single melody;
A hundred gardens bled for ages to make a tulip bloom;
Thousand and thousand images were conceived, carved, and erased
So that thine image could be engraved on the tablet of being.
Countless whimpers and tears were sown and nurtured in the soul
To let a prayer-call blossom out.
Since ages the world was at war with the noble souls,
And it favoured the worshippers of false gods.
At last the seed of faith was implanted in the earth,
And the word of tawhid found expression through thy lips.
The centre of the cycles of the universe is la ilah;
The ultimate end of all action in the world is la ilah.
It is the force that keeps the heavens rotating,
It is what gives the sun its light and life,
It is the force that gives birth to pearls in the ocean's womb,
And keeps the waves surging and moving all the time.
Its morning breeze transforms the soil into flower,
Its fire breathes a nightingale's song into a handful of feathers;
Its flame runs through the veins of the vinegrape;
Its heat makes the goblet-clay to glow as a spark;
Its tunes are asleep within the strings of being
Waiting for thy plectrum to fill the air with music.
Thine existence shalt vibrate with a hundred songs -
Arise and strike thy plectrum at its strings.
As takbir is the secret of thine existence,
The purpose of thy creation is to preserve and spread the message of la ilah.
Unless the world echoes with the vibrations of the call of Truth,
If really a Muslim, thou shalt not rest.
Hast thou not read the verse in the Mother of books
That bestowed upon thee the title of the Just Ummah?
Thou art the lustre of the visage of time,
Thou art made witness to the deeds of all the nations;
Extend thine invitation to all who are punctilious.
Thou hast to disseminate the treasures of the knowledge of the Ummi (S),
Whose words were not polluted with lust of any kind,
Whose words interpreted the meaning of the verse:
"Whose comrade erreth not, nor is deceived".
He washed the tunics of his garden's tulips clean
And purified them from all impurities.
After elucidating the all-embracing nature of Islamic teachings (which has been done a hundred times in his work),
Iqbal addresses the Ummah of tawhid declaring that they are the standard-bearers of Islam, and appeals to them to
march forward with the purpose of delivering the message of Islam to the world. Subsequently he asks them to break
into pieces the new idol carved by the swindlers of the West. What is this new idol?

Thou who hast the Book under thine arms
Should step forward in the arena of action.
The human mind is always after carving a new idol;
Man's quest for a new image has not ceased in any age,

Again he has rebuilt the temple of Adhar (the idol-maker),
And has moulded a god, newer than others,
Whose joy lies in shedding the blood of his worshippers.
His are numerous names: colour, country and race.

It is implied in these verses that nationalism, racialism and narrow patriotism draw boundaries to isolate peoples and countries. These imprisoned loyalties cause wars between one nation and another in the name of nationality, community, race and colour:

Humanity is being sacrificed like a sheep
At the foot of the unholy idol.
Thou, who hast drunk from the goblet of Khalil (the idol-breaker),
Thy veins are throbbing with the wine of the passion of Khalil.
Thou hast to strike the sword of "nothing exists except Him
Into false-hood disguised as truth.

Let thy face shine on the dark horizons of time,
And spread the perfect message that has been revealed to thee.

Iqbal's idea of propagating the message of Islam and breaking all the artificial boundaries drawn to divide nations leads him to expound certain other notions that are predominant in his philosophy of bikhudi (selflessness), that is, the unification of the individual with the society and his absorption therein. According to him nubuwwah (prophethood) is the principal source of the organisation of the Ummah. It does not mean that a millah is formed by the merely gathering together of many individuals. A particular mode of thinking and an ideology is essential in order to weave different threads together to form the fabric of a nation. For this purpose the most fundamental and the best of all the ideologies is the one that was propounded through nubuwwah, the prophetic mission, and it was propounded by the messengers of God. This is the best of all the foundation-stones upon which a nation is built. This mode of thinking imparts reasoning, faith, discipline and perfection to a nation.

Another concept upon which Iqbal's system of thought rests is the negation of servitude - servitude to the demigods sitting on the throne and standing at the altar.

Man worshipped man in the world.
He lived as a non-entity, as a non-being and as a subordinate
Under the heavy yoke of the Khusrows and the Qaysars.
And his neck, his hands and his feet were chained;
The Popes and the priests and the kings and the lords -
A hundred hunters after a single prey!
Both the king and the priest
levied taxes on his devastated harvest.

Whatever was left after paying taxes to the King's officials was grabbed by the tax-collectors of the Pope. This had been a customary practice all over the world, as Iqbal says:

Bishop, in the name of allotting apartments in the Paradise,
Set a trap in the church to catch him;
The Brahmin plucked the best roses of his garden;
The Magi's children made up their fire by adding his harvest to it
His human qualities were debased by slavery.

At last came the trustworthy, who restored the lost rights,
And entrusted the throne of the Khans to the slaves.

Iqbal's poetry and philosophy - aimed at humanising the world - are very rich in the themes of human and social significance, such as the Divine mission of the Prophet (S) of Islam, the equality of man, the Qur'anic doctrine of judging a person according to his taqwa (piety): ... „The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the best in taqwa", and many other similar issues that are indicative of his concern for higher values and the service of mankind. We cannot propagate these ideas in our country without making popular and public the works of Iqbal. This is a task to be carried out in Iran and Pakistan as well as in the countries where people understand Persian and where people are prepared to learn the language.

The poetry of Iqbal, the major part of which is in Persian, needs wider circulation. Out of the fifteen thousand couplets. composed by him nine thousand are in the Persian language. This shows that his works in Urdu are fewer than those in Persian. Rather it can be said that the best and the finest part of his poetry is in our language, and, therefore, we are obliged to devote best of our energies to understand it. For the first time when I read Iqbal's poetry I felt that many of his verses could be understood only with the help of detailed explanatory notes and comments, and regretfully I could find such commentaries nowhere. It is essential to compile such annotated editions. Even the Persian speaking people are in need of such commentaries in order to fully grasp the ideas and themes dealt with by Iqbal. Today the major part of Iqbal's teaching directly concerns us, and some part of it is also relevant to the world that has not gone our way so far and has to understand it in the same manner as we did.

Our people have translated into action his doctrine of the selfhood. They have invigorated it and have brought it into action in the world of actuality. Now our people do not have to be asked to recover their selfhood. Today we are perfectly aware of being on our feet. We are proud of our culture and our cultural heritage, and are confident that we can develop it further on the basis of our ideology and thought. Of course for a long time we were made to depend upon others regarding the material aspect of our life, but we are trying to get rid of these foreign fetters gradually and this process is going on. The Muslim peoples are anyhow in need of comprehending the meaning of selfhood; especially the eminent Muslims, whether they are politically active or culturally creative, need to embrace Iqbal's message. They have to realise that Islam in itself, in its essence and in its nature, possesses the richest potentialities of conducting the affairs of the individual lives and human societies, and does not need to look towards others. We do not advocate for summarily dismissing other cultures and close our doors to them. We should assimilate them, but in the manner as a living body absorbs the elements that are essential for its life, and not like a dead and unconscious body which is injected by others whatever they desire to inject into it. We have the capacity of assimilating from other cultures whatever is relevant to us. As Iqbal has said repeatedly, we can learn the modern science and philosophy from the West, but the ardour and zest for life can never be borrowed from others:

Wisdom we have learnt from the teachings of the Western thinkers.

Ardour for life we have acquired in the company of men of insight.

It means that the Western society and culture is wanting in ardour and fervour, and Iqbal was quicker than any other person in perceiving this phenomenon. He could anticipate the dangers inherent in the Western civilisation and its materialistic culture, and warned the people in advance that it was devoid of the spiritual elements essential for human welfare. Fortunately, today the consciousness of selfhood and Islamic identity is abounding in our country among the people. Our policy based on the principle of "Neither the East nor the West" is in conformity with what Iqbal advised and wished to be pursued. Our policy of self-reliance is identical with Iqbal's views. We, in our love for the Prophet (S), in our commitment to the Qur'an, in our emphasis on learning the Qur'an, and in our conviction that the Qur'an and Islam are to be made the basis of all the revolutions and movements, are exactly following the path that was shown to us by Iqbal. At that time, nobody was attentive enough to pay heed to Iqbal's counsel. In those days there were not many people who could understand Iqbal's message and his language. Iqbal's books are replete with complaints and remonstrances - remonstrances as to why people do not understand his message and look towards the West for guidance. In his introduction to Rumuz-e bikhudi also he remonstrates with the Islamic Ummah.

Thou wert appointed to be, the seal of all nations,
Thou wert destined to be the end of all the beginnings;
Thine 'ulama' were made equal to prophets;
Thy martyred comrades could breathe life into the hearts.
Why art thine eyes enchanted by the beauty of the church?
Why hast thou fallen away from the path of the Holy Ka'bah?
Believe me. The dust of thy street rises to form heavenly spheres;
O thy visage attracts the eyes of the entire world.
Why art thou rising and falling restlessly like a wave?
What is that spectacle thou art going to behold?
Learn the secret of living passionately on your own from the moth;
Build thy nest amidst the tongues of flames.
Kindle the fire of love from within thy soul;
Restore thy bond with the spirit of al-Mustafa.
I have left the company of the church-goers,
To see to it that the veil is raised from thy face.
O my comrade, thou art bewitched by the charm of others
And singing odes to praise golden locks and rosy cheeks.
Here, by the epithet hamnawa (comrade) Iqbal means to refer to his contemporaries and those who were of late introduced to the Western culture and were intoxicated with the Western value-system. He compares their attitude with that of his own:

He rubs his forehead at the foot of the Saqi,
He is lost in the story of the Magi's children,
While I bleed, struck by the crescent of thine eyebrows,
Happy that my blood is soaked in the dust of thy street.
My art has been over and above eulogising worldly lords,
My head never bowed before imperial courts.
He reminds the Muslim Ummah that it has never been his custom to sing praises, but he eulogised her so passionately because of his deep love for Islam:

Poetry bestowed upon me ability to make a mirror out of words,
And it has freed me from asking Alexander's favour.
I hate to be burdened by the favours of others.
My lips are purses and hands shut like a bud in the garden.
After giving free vent to his feeling of disdain and indifference to the worldly attainments, Iqbal, who never humbled himself by prostrating before anybody, kneels down on his knees in front of the Muslim Ummah, and begs them to realise their own worth and pay heed to the words of the Qur'an:

At thy door my soul is bleeding to beg a small favour of thee,
In return it offers thee all her ardour and pathos.
A river comes down trickling from the blue sky,

Its water is distilled through my burning heart,
And I direct its course through channels thinner than rivulets,
To make it steadily flow and water thine orchard.

This was just a brief account and a short glimpse of our dear Iqbal's personality, who was undoubtedly a bright star on the horizon of the East. We hope that we shall acknowledge our indebtedness to him and would be able to recompense for the delay made by our people in recognising Iqbal's worth during the span of last forty, fifty years. I request the researchers, poets, orators, writers, publishers, the government organisations, the Ministry of Culture and Advanced Learning, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, each of them, to do their best to reintroduce and revive the spirit of Iqbal in the manner befitting his memory. I propose that his poetry and his writings be reproduced and compiled in the form of books, and his poetical works like Asrar-e khudi (The Secrets of the Self), Rumuz-e bikhudi (The Mysteries of Selflessness), Gulshan-e raz (Garden of Mystery), Jawid nameh (Pilgrimage to Eternity), etc. be reprinted and each of them published separately. This work has been done in Pakistan to some extent, but the people of Pakistan cannot be fully benefited from those ideas as today the Persian language is not in currency there as in the past. I wish this gap also to be filled. It is further hoped that our Pakistani brothers present in this meeting as well as the writers of the Indian subcontinent realise their responsibility and rise to the occasion to resist the vicious policies of the past governments regarding the Persian language, which possesses great treasures of Islamic culture and in which the major part of Islamic culture is preserved. They should give currency to this language in the Subcontinent where there are great numbers of Muslims; especially in Pakistan this work needs to be done with a sense of urgency.

In our own country also the publication of Iqbal's books should be carried out on a large scale and the artists should illustrate Iqbal's works with suitable paintings, the musicians should sing his poems set in popular tunes in order to render them effectively and bring to the tongues of the young and the old. I hope that God Almighty will enable us to repay the debt that the Muslim Ummah owes to him.

Wa as-salam 'alaykum wa rahmat Allah wa barakatuh.

Human Rights In Islam

Delivered on the occasion of the 5th Islamic Thought Conference 29-31st January, 1997

Published in the book "Human Rights in Islam", edited by: Sayid Khadim Husayn Naqavi, Tehran 1410 a.h. / 1989

The issue of human rights is one of the most fundamental human issues and also one of the most sensitive and controversial. During the recent decades, this problem was more political than either ethical or legal. Although the influence of political motives, rivalries, and considerations have made difficult the correct formulation of this problem, but this should not prevent thinkers and genuine humanists from probing into this problem and ultimately obtaining a solution.

In the West, though the issue of human rights was raised by the thinkers of the post-Renaissance period, it is only since the last two hundred years or so that it became an issue of prominence among the political and social issues of the Western society and an issue of fundamental significance. Perhaps, when we examine the causes of many social changes and political upheavals, we will find the marks of its presence and its principal ideals. During the last decades this emphasis reached its climax in the West. With the formation of the UNO after the Second World War and the subsequent drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a concrete model came into existence as a result of this emphasis that can serve as a criterion and basis of our judgement and analysis of the ideals voiced in this regard during the last two hundred years and especially in the last few decades.

We Muslims, of course, know it very well that if the Western world and the Western civilization have paid attention to this matter in the recent centuries, Islam has dealt with it from all the various aspects many centuries back. The idea of human rights as a fundamental principle can be seen to underlie throughout Islamic teachings. And this does not need any elaboration for a Muslim audience. That the verses of the Quran and the traditions handed down from the Prophet (SA) and the Imams of his Household (AS), each one of them emphasizes the fundamental rights of man something which has caught the attention of men in recent years- is known to Muslims, and there is no need for the scholars to be reminded about this fact. However, I would say, that today it is big responsibility on the shoulders of the Islamic society to make this reality known to the world, and not to allow those essential teachings of Islam to be lost in the storm of political clamor and ballyhoo.

There were some questions which can be raised in this regard, and to answer them is my principal aim today. Of course, in the course of the conference you scholars would carry on useful and profound discussions on various aspects of human rights, which will itself serve as a source of information for the Muslim world and enlighten them about the viewpoints of Islam in this regard.

The first question is Whether the efforts made during the decades since the Second World War, in the name of human rights have been successful in their purpose or not. The addresses, the assemblies and the sessions held in the United Nations, and the claims made regarding human rights have they succeeded in bringing men closer to their genuine rights, or to at least the major section of the deprived humanity? The answer to this question is not so difficult; for an observation of the present world conditions is enough to prove that these attempts have not been successful till now. A glance at the conditions of the underdeveloped societies of the world, who form the major part of the human population, is sufficient to reveal the fact that not only the major part of humanity could not achieve their true rights during the last fifty years, but the methods of encroaching upon the rights of the deprived nations have become more sophisticated and complex and more difficult of remedy. We cannot accept the claims made by those who claim to be champions of human rights, while the bitter realities of the African and Asian nations and the hungry millions of the human race are before our eyes, and watch the constant spectacle of violation of the rights of several nations. Those who have been outspoken in advocating human rights during these last forty years, have themselves grabbed the most fundamental of human rights from the people of the Third-World countries. It is with

their connivance that certain governments and regimes that deny men their most primary rights have managed to survive. The dictators of today's world and also the despots of the last fifty years in Asia, Africa and Latin America—none of them could have established and preserved their dictatorships on their own without reliance upon the big powers. These big powers are exactly those who have coined most of the slogans concerning human rights; it is they who have brought into being the UNO, and even today the UN is at their service.

The economic poverty, hunger and loss of life in several countries of the world are of course the result of intervention, repression, usurpation on the part of the big powers. Who has caused Africa, the land of plenteous resources to see this day? Who has kept the people of Bangladesh and India for years and years under exploitation, and, despite their natural resources and great potentialities, has brought them to the point that today we hear people die of hunger in those countries? Who has plundered the wealth and resources of the Third-World countries, and has brought about hunger, poverty and misfortune for these nations, procuring sophisticated technologies and immense wealth for themselves? We see that the organizers of the United Nations Organization and the principal drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those who even today shamelessly claim to be the supporters of this declaration are the real authors of those misfortunes. Otherwise there is no reason as to why Africa, the land of exuberance and bounties, Latin America with its natural wealth, and the great India, and many other Third-world countries should have lagged behind and remained backward in spite of sufficient man-power and natural resources. Today, the system of political domination of capital and power prevails in the world, and there is no doubt in it that this system of dominance of capital and power is controlled and steered by the same people who the fathers of the Declaration of Human Rights. Under their wheel of capital, power and machine we see the nations of the world being crushed and struggling helplessly. The UN is the most outstanding product of the efforts made for human rights, yet what has it done in the past for the nations of the world, and what is it doing today? What active role could the UN play in solving the basic problems of nations and in relieving them of the calamities that befell them? In what instance did the UN emerge as a deliverer of the oppressed from the oppressor? At what point could the UN persuade the big tyrannical powers to refrain from making unjust demands? The UN has even lagged behind most of the nations in this regard. Today, despite all those claims, we are witnesses to the Apartheid regime in South Africa and to many instances of racism and racial discrimination in the advanced countries themselves. Therefore, it is clear that the UN despite its being the most outstanding example of the endeavor for human rights, has not done anything in this regard. It has intervened in international problems in the role of a preacher or priest. The Security Council is one of the principal organs of the UN, and functions as the main decision-making body; in it the big powers have the right of veto. That is, every decision that is taken in the UN and in the Security Council against the real agents who handicap the nations, the same agents themselves, the big powers, are able to veto it. The United Nations and its organs, agencies and organizations, whether they are cultural, economic or technical, all of them are under the influence and domination of the big powers. The US pressures over its cultural agency like the UNESCO and others are known to everyone. Since a Muslim was the chief of the UNESCO who desired to maintain his own independence as well as that of the agency, you witnessed how the US subjected the UNESCO to pressures during these last two years. Consequently, we feel that the UN as the most significant outcome of the endeavor for human rights has proved to be an ineffectual and impotent element, which has been created as a consolation for nations that has no practical benefit. On account of the interference on the part of big powers, in cases it functions as their feudatory. We do not of course reject the UN; we believe that this organization ought to exist, and it must be reformed. We ourselves are its member. However, what I mean to say is that after all that effort, after all that clamor and the hopes that were attached to this organization, you can see how inadequate and ineffectual this organization has remained in securing human rights in the world today. Hence, the answer to the first question has become clear. We can say that the efforts made for procuring human rights and the claims made in the name of human rights through the last several centuries and especially during the last few decades did not bear any fruit; they have failed to secure human rights.

The second question is whether, basically, these efforts had any sincerity? This question is of course historical in nature and may not have much practical value. Hence, I do not intend to discuss it at length. It suffices to mention here that, in our view, these efforts were not sincere. It is true that there were philosophers, thinkers and social reformers among the exponents of human rights, but the arena was dominated by politicians. Even the efforts of those thinkers and reformers were taken into the service of the politicians. If, in the annals of history thinkers,

sages, apostles of God, mystics and men are seen to raise the cry for rights of man, today when we behold politicians and statesmen to raise this cry vociferously, we are justified in serious doubting their sincerity. Look around and see as to who are those who plead the case of human rights. The ex-president of the US projected himself as the defender of human rights during his election campaign, and won the election on account of it. In the beginning, from some of the speeches he made and steps that he took, it appeared as if he was serious in his intention; but we have seen that ultimately he stood by the cruelest, the most barbaric and tyrannical of rulers, and the most adamant opponents of human rights in this region. He supported the Shah and the tyrants of occupied Palestine and other infamous dictatorships of our days. Even now those who plead the case of human rights, the statesmen and politicians who vociferously voice their support for human rights in conferences and international forums are not more sincere than their former counterparts. We do not find any signs of sincerity in their efforts. Those who drafted the Declaration of Human Rights, and at their fore the USA, their aim was to extend their domination and hegemony over the world of that time. Their problem was not to safeguard the rights of men, the kind of rights that they had violated during the war, they are the same people who have wiped out tens of thousands of human beings by an atom bomb. They were the same persons who in order to fight a war which had nothing to do with the Asian and African nations had recruited the majority of soldiers from India, Algeria and other African and non-European countries. We do not believe that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin and their like had the smallest consideration for human rights in the true sense of the word and were sincere in forming the United Nations and drafting the Universal Declaration of human Rights. Accordingly, the answer to the second question is also clear: No! We do not believe that the efforts made by the politicians and the most vocal advocates of human rights were sincere at all. The third question, which is the most basic of them all, is, what was the reason for the failure of these attempts? This is the point to which more attention should be paid, and I shall discuss it briefly here. I believe it is the most basic point, because whatever has presented in the name of human rights is done within the framework of a defective and crooked system, a system of dominance which is repressive and tyrannical.

Those who have created the UN and have drafted the Universal Declaration of human rights, and those who most vehemently and vociferously plead for it today, regrettably the majority of them are statesmen and politicians who believe in the system of dominance and have accepted it. The system of dominance means that a group of men dominates and should dominate another group of men. The system of dominance is backed by the culture of dominance. Today the world is divided into two groups: one is the group of those who dominate and the other is the group of the dominated. Both the groups have accepted the system of dominance, and the big powers believe that this system should be maintained. Even those who are dominated have accepted the system of dominance and have consented to its continuity. This is the biggest flaw in the existing world situation. Those who do not accept the system of dominance are those individuals or groups who are not satisfied with the social order in their countries or with the social and political state of world affairs, and rise in revolt against this system. The revolutionary groups who revolt against the global status quo or revolutionary governments are very few in number and are constantly subjected to pressures and victimized. The most illustrative example of it is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has rejected domination in all its forms, and has not accepted anybody's domination. The East as well as the West are the same for it in this respect. It does not give any priority to the powerful of the world or to its rich, while making decisions. The whole world is witness to the kind of pressures it had to face during the period of the last eight years since the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. It was subjected to political as well as military and economic pressures, and the pressures of world-wide propaganda launched against it. The cause of such pressures is clear. It was all done for the reason that the Islamic Republic has taken a clear and independent stand against the system of dominance. If some progressive governments have resisted Western and US domination, in majority of cases, there were observable signs of acceptance of and surrender to Eastern domination. Of course, all of them are not the same in this regard. Some of them have completely surrendered themselves to the Eastern bloc and the USSR while some others show signs of independence in some cases. But if there is a government and a society that has never yielded to any pressures, it is the Islamic Republic, which has totally rejected the system of dominance.

Wherever in the world there is any pressure, high-handedness and unjust demands made upon a certain nation by a big power in the world, we have made clear our stand and have openly and bluntly expressed our definite views without any reservations. But the majority of the world's nations have accepted this system. You can see that unfortunately the governments of the same countries which are subject to domination do not have the moral courage

and guts to resist and oppose the domination of the big powers and fight them, while in our view it is quite possible. We believe that if the poor countries, the countries that have been under domination and in spite of their resources have been forced to fulfil the unjust demands made by the big powers- had they wished to stand against them, they could do so. No miracle is needed; it is sufficient that the governments should rely upon their own people. Unfortunately, the weakness of will to resist, and more than weakness the treachery on the part of heads of some states in some cases, did not allow them to rise against the system of dominance. This system of dominance prevails over the world economy, culture, international relations and international rights. Naturally the issue of human rights has been posed within the framework of this system of dominance and developed in the background of this system and its outlook. As a result the very persons who strive to secure freedoms, opportunities and means of welfare for their citizens in European countries in the name of human rights, they bomb and kill human beings in other countries by thousands. What does it mean? Does it mean anything other than this that in the view of the culture of domination which prevails over the world, human beings are divided into two categories: the human beings whose rights are to be defended, and the human beings who have to rights whatsoever and it is permissible to kill, destroy, enslave and subjugate them and to seize their belongings. This system is prevalent all over the world and the conception of human rights is also the product of such a culture.

This is the framework of the system of rights in the world of today. Within this cultural and legal framework the superpowers constantly widen the gap between the weaker nations and themselves, and exert more and more pressure on them. The greater the rate of advancement in technology and its speed accelerates, the more are the weaker countries and nations threatened and subjected to mounting pressures. No one asks the big powers today as to what right they have to put greater pressure on other countries and nations than ever before with their greater advancement in technology and industrialization. Today the satellites launched into the space by the big powers are moving in their orbits around the globe, and gathering minutest details and probing into the secrets of other countries. Why? What gives them right to do that?

Today, most of the communications between people on the global level, especially those between statesmen and heads of states, and political and scientific communications are accessible to those who possess sophisticated technology. Why? Does anyone ask them? Does anyone raise any objection? Since the US has launched those satellite and possesses the means of gathering and benefiting from intelligence, it is given the right by all to obtain that information. Doesn't the eavesdropping on the communications between the world's people amount to a violation of their rights? Does anyone put this question to the US, USSR, UK, France and Germany? When this question is raised, will anyone affirm that such a question should be raised? No, everyone says to himself: they are strong so they can do it; they are capable of doing it, so they must use the opportunity. Today, the problem of atom bomb and the use of nuclear weapons is an issue all over the world.

The superpowers themselves raise it because they are afraid of each other. They wrangle over it and each tries to dupe the other by limiting the nuclear arsenals of its rival while equipping itself with more and more. But, have the smaller countries ever thought of opposing the makers of nuclear bombs, by declaring that unless these bombs are destroyed and defused and unless peace of mind is restored to humanity, which is exposed to the nuclear danger every moment, they shall not have any relations with them, nor any trade nor any cooperation in any matter? Have the Third-World countries, the non-aligned nations and other countries of the world- have they ever thought of making use of some kind of leverage against the race for nuclear arms? No. If you suggest this idea to them, they will say that it is an advanced technology, they possess it; they can, and so must produce such weapons.

It means that they have accepted the logic of dominance. The absence of balance in the present world conditions has equally been accepted by the oppressor as well as the oppressed nations. The culture of dominance has been imposed on the minds. When we denounce the East and the West in international fora on account of their acts, we clearly perceive the astonishment of heads of the states and representatives of countries. They consider it something odd and rash, whereas it is a natural stand by an independent nation. All the nations and states should behave in a like manner, but they don't. The conclusion that we draw is that today the prevalence of the culture of dominance has become the biggest evil. It is something which has been greatly detrimental for the weaker nations, and encouraged the big powers to violate human rights.

Whether it is the US's aggression against Grenada, or the massacre of defenseless Lebanese civilians by the US supported Israel, or the ruthless suppression of the black population- who are the real masters of the land- by the

government of South Africa, which is backed by the US and some European governments- all these violations of human rights are easily tolerated. But when a frustrated individual infuriated by this state of affairs in some corner of the world does something, if an explosion takes place or something happens, it is deplored as an act of terrorism. But the US's aggression against Libya, the bombardment of the residence of the president of a country and the violation upon its territory, is not condemned by the world. Whenever there is a mention of terrorism, mostly that which comes to the minds of people is some desperate act of a youth, a victim of oppression fed up with life, from Palestine, or Lebanon, or some African or Latin American country, rather than the acts of such big powers as the US, the UK, and others. This is nothing but the result of the culture of dominance, the culture that unfortunately dominates human mentality all over the world.

In the culture of dominance, words also acquire peculiar connotations that suit the system of dominance. For instance, 'terrorism' is defined in a way so that the US's aggression against Libya, or its intimidation of Nicaragua or the invasion of Grenada, etc. does not come under the definition of 'terrorism'. This is a big flaw in the present state of affairs. Therefore, the failure of the attempts made in the name of human right- even on behalf of those who are sincere and earnest- is on account of the nature of the framework within which they want to lay down and declare the rights of the human beings- something which is not possible. This framework is to be broken and the system of dominance to be condemned. States, nations and countries should resolutely reject the unfair and unjust domination of the big powers so that human rights may be understood, pursued and restored.

Lastly, the fourth question: what is the remedy? In our view, the answer is return to Islam, and recourse to Divine revelation. This is a prescription equally valid for Muslims as well as for non-Muslims. For this, the Islamic societies do not have to wait for anything. Return to Islam, revival of the Quran and of Islamic mode of thinking in society, recourse to Islamic sources (the Quran and the Sunnah) in legal matters -these are the things and that will enable us to understand the meaning of human rights and help us to identify the those rights and guide us in our struggle to secure them. For the purpose of securing human rights, it is necessary once and for all to give up giving advice and lecturing, since they are of no use. The Quran says: "Take by force that which we have given you." (2:63). God Almighty has granted these rights to mankind, and they should secure these rights by force. The Islamic nations should resist the unjust demands and dominance of the big powers by relying upon the Islamic ideology. These are not the words of an idealist who speaks about Islamic issues and Islamic ideals from the corner of a theological seminary. These are the utterances of a revolution which has gone through experiences and has felt the actualities. Our revolution is an experience that is available for study to all the nations. I do not say that we have solved all our problems. We haven't. There is no doubt that a great many problems have been created for us on account of the Revolution and on account of its Islamic character. But we have solved the problem of dominance. Today the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic can claim that they have rid themselves of all domination and powers and that they can decide for themselves. Of course, when a nation tries to do away with all the forms of dependence, it has a long path to tread. And relations if not accompanied with domination, pushing around, and unjust demands are something natural and tolerable. It is quite obvious that our revolution and the Islamic Republic inherited the legacy of a decadent society, a shattered economy, and a degenerate culture. What was handed down to the Revolution by the rulers of the past centuries, especially of the last fifty or sixty years, was an Iran beleaguered from all sides. It is not to be expected that the Revolution will be able to lead this dissipated heritage in a short time to the heights of cultural, ethical and economic achievement and scientific and industrial advancement. We do not make such claims, but, of course, we do anticipate a good future. We believe that it is possible for a nation to reach a high level of material advancement only through independence, self-reliance and by using its manpower and material resources. But what we positively claim today is that the Islamic Republic is not under any political pressure or domination of any power whatsoever. Political pressures do not influence it to change its course or alter its decisions; it does not change its path or its momentum on account of any consideration for some superpower. It means that we have freed ourselves and our people from the domination of the big powers.

This is an experience, which, we believe, underlines the significance of the most basic and precious of human rights in Islam: the right to live, the right to be free, the right to benefit from justice, the right to welfare, and so on. These and other such fundamental rights can be secured in an Islamic society. They can be derived from the Islamic sources and Islam has incorporated them in its commands to Muslims and drawn man's attention towards them, much before Western thinkers gave thought to these rights and values. It is essential to return to Islam.

Muslim thinkers are charged with the responsibility of thoroughly examining and studying the subject of human rights or rather the general structure of the Islamic legal system. This is also the mission of the present conference, which, I hope, will be a new step taken in this direction, and, God willing, this work would continue. The nations of the world can benefit from the sublime outlook of Islam in this regard in coming closer to securing these rights. The Islamic governments may of course help their peoples in securing their rights, but on condition that they should have no reservations in regard to the big powers. Unfortunately, today we do not see such a state of affairs. Most of the regimes governing Islamic countries are under the influence of the big powers. The majority of them are dominated by the West and under US influence. Therefore, their actions and decisions comply neither with the Islamic principles, nor with the needs of Muslim nations.

A ready example in this regard is the conference held recently in Kuwait. You have seen that in this conference, instead of considering the basic problems of Muslims, what kinds of problems were discussed and what kind of resolution was passed. It was by no means compatible with an Islamic approach to the problem. Instead of rejecting over Iraq's aggression against a Muslim country and its waging of a war against an Islamic revolution, they should have denounced it and expelled it from the Conference. Instead of revealing the part played by the imperialist powers in igniting the flames of this imposed war, they came out with a hollow and insipid demand for peace, and even expressed their satisfaction for Iraq's positive response to the call for peace. They did it without going into the core of the problem, without appreciating the fact that a nation's resolve to defend its own rights is something commendable, and without recognizing that the willingness of a government and a regime to be influenced by the pressure of imperialist powers in creating obstacles in the path of a revolution is something condemnable.

Of course, these resolutions, decisions and opinions are much invalid and weightless as they are remote from Islamic principles and values. Accordingly, there is no nation or country in the world which looks forward to knowing what step the Islamic Conference takes in Kuwait so as to welcome it or be disappointed with it. It means that these decisions and resolution are so much so removed from reality, alien to the basic Islamic criteria, and the aspirations of nations that they remain completely indifferent to these. You will not find a single country in the world whose people should be waiting eagerly to know as to what the Islamic Conference has to say, so that its resolution promises a sense of obligation or the pleasure of receiving some good news. What is the reason? Why should a gathering of forty-six Islamic states organized on the highest level of heads of states and leaders be so ineffectual and so much devoid of consequence and content? It is on account of the unfortunate fact that most of these regimes are under the influence of the big powers. As long as this domination of the big powers and their awe and fear remain in their hearts, the affairs of the Muslim nations will be in disarray. If we wish to deliver the Muslim word from its present-day disarray and confusion, the first thing that is to be done is to drive this fear and awe from the hearts, as God Almighty has said: "...So fear not mankind, but fear Me..." They should not be afraid of anyone except God. If this happens, the condition of the Islamic nations will move towards betterment.

I conclude my speech with the hope that, God willing, this Islamic Thought Conference, during the few days that it will hold its sessions, will be able to make a significant contribution towards the understanding of the Islamic verities regarding human rights. Besides, the exchange of opinions between the Iranian and non-Iranian brothers will help the communication of the experience of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic and their better understanding by the non-Iranian brothers. It will provide them the opportunity to study that experience, so that other nations may view the revolution brought about by their brethren in Iran as a model and as a new path that can be possibly trodden.

Wassalam 'alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh.