



## The Position of Imam Ali's (AS) Human Justice in Nahjul-Balagha

Dr.maher alsuh<sup>1</sup>, Seyed mohamad karim rezvan karimi<sup>2</sup>

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Correspondence:

Krezvankarimi1987@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

The subject of justice (fairness) and human justice is one of the important topics of the holy religion of Islam, and its most important source is the Quran and Sunnah. Among the various Islamic sects, divine justice and Imam Aliate are considered as the principles of their religion. Even if the state were to stand on its own feet, if they have not put to work justice, judgment, and fairness, they would easily weaken. Imam Ali (AS) considers justice not only a divine duty and obligation, but also a divine honor for our world and the hereafter. The fair view of Imam Ali in Nahjul-Balagha has been considered as a philosophy of life or a social, political, and economic theory. In this research, the justice of Imam Ali and the related materials in the Nahjul-Balagha was studied and the concept of fairness and true justice was identified from Imam Ali's perspective by using the benefits of his justice and judgment in the society of the Islamic government and conveying the rights of the people by linking promise to action and opposing anyone who neglects the rights of the people so that people can enjoy life in comfort and ease and stay away from undesirable things. These are the principles of religion that Imam Ali (AS) has considered part of life.

<sup>1</sup> Damascus University

<sup>2</sup> Imam Hossein University

## Problem Statement

Justice literally means equality and balance, and in the social sense, whenever the right of every right holder is given to him, it is said that justice has been observed. Therefore, justice is a social concept that serves humanity and achieves equality and human justice among the layers of society.

This social justice brings the pleasure of God Almighty and establishes contentment among the members of society, although speaking the truth is not an easy task for those who seek the world and love the appearances of life. That is why Imam Ali (AS) emphasized that although people knew that falsehood was in contrary to the truth, they did not follow that statement until Imam Ali said: "I know what is good for you and what will support you, but I do not see your goodness in the corruption of my soul. May God make your cheeks blemish and your ancestors miserable. You do not know the truth as you know falsehood, and do not invalidate falsehood as you invalidate the truth" (Sermon 69, Nahjul-Balagha). I do not consider it permissible to speak to correct those who are not familiar with the truth and approve falsehood, because if you were believers, you would accept the word of truth.

Justice is one of the concepts whose dimensions and greatness have made all human beings admire it. Ever since human has known himself and society, he has realized the necessity of the valuable presence of justice in life for the advancement of his society. The issue of justice has long been one of the most important issues and concerns of human beings, divine religions, and political thinkers. Among the rulers and judges of history, Imam Ali (AS) has paid the most attention to justice, and he has raised it well at various stages of human life. This is well illustrated by the fact that Imam Ali (AS) never tolerated or condoned, and he stood firm against all political incidents and adversities, and he defended the right and insisted on implementing justice, and the realization of true justice. Imam Ali said in his sermon: "True justice is being

truthful in your word and promise, and act justly among creatures, and act justly with them in your ruling" (Sermon 185 of Nahjul-Balagha).

## The definition of fairness in the view of Imam Ali (AS)

The literal definition of fairness is "giving to the person and taking from him what is due to him", (fairness means equity and giving to each person what is due to him and taking from him what is due to him). Imam Ali (AS) says "justice puts everything in its place (Wisdom 437), and justice is the guardian of all people, justice is that you consider respecting the rights of the people a duty.

## Imam Ali (AS) the symbol of divine fairness and justice

Imam Ali (AS) is undoubtedly the symbol of divine fairness and justice on earth. The good work brings one closer to God Almighty, provided that people weave a strong chain to achieve a successful life. "So the duty of the people to the ruler is right, and the ruler's duty to them is the dignity of the right between them, and the establishing the religious principles and the moderation of the signs of justice, and the punishment for the humiliation from the traditions, so that to make peace at the time, and seek the survival of the state, and hostile the desires of the enemies" (Sermon 216, Nahjul-Balagha). This is what would have made the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) stable, and the people's lives improved. For this reason, the people would make great efforts to ensure that the blessing of divine justice remains with Imam Ali, so that the enemy would be disappointed in his desires.

Imam Ali (AS) spared no effort to implement justice. How good it is that we encounter the justice and fairness of Imam Ali (AS) from his own words in Nahjul-Balagha and it points out an important turning point for the reality of our lives. In the sermon 126 of Nahjul-Balagha, we read that after the death of the Prophet (PBUH), some people said to Imam Ali: "People are attached to the world, Muawiyah attracts them with gifts and

abundant money. You should also give public property to the nobles and nobles of Quraysh and stop dividing the public treasury equally, so that they will turn to you." Imam Ali replied to them, "Do you order me to use oppression over the Islamic nation over which I have guardianship to gain victory? I swear by God! As long as I live, day and night continue, and the stars rise and set one after the other, I will never do such a thing! If this property were mine, I would distribute it equally among the people, how about that it is part of God's property! Be careful! Giving wealth to those who do not deserve it is excessive and wasteful. It may raise the status of the giver in this world, but it will degrade him in the Hereafter. He may be honored by people, but he is despised and humiliated in the sight of God. Whoever spends his wealth in a way that God has not permitted, does not give it to anyone other than its rightful owners, except that God deprives him of their gratitude and turns their friendship towards someone else".

The justice of Imam Ali was widespread, and he was a just judge against those who did not judge fairly and deceived the people, and he returned everything that was looted from the treasury to its original owners, because justice is an opening for the public. "Whoever is oppressed by justice, it is harder for him to bear oppression" (Sermon 15 of Nahjul-Balagha).

### **The level of Imam Ali (AS) justice among the society people**

The justice of Imam Ali (AS) is such that he avoids giving privileges to his poor brother and even treats him harshly. What a beautiful and noble description we encounter of the justice of Imam Ali, as he said in his sermon 224: "By God! I saw my brother Aqeel who was extremely poor and asked me to give him one Man (an ancient weighting unit) of wheat from the public treasury. I saw his children whose hair was disheveled due to hunger, their color darkened, as if they had been dyed with indigo. They kept visiting me and repeating their request. When I listened to his words, he thought that I was leaving my religion

to him, acting according to his wishes and abandoning my just way. One day I heated an iron rod in the fire and brought it close to his body to test him. So he cried, like a patient crying from pain, and was about to be burned by its heat. I said to him: O Aqeel! They will cry over you, you cry over the heat of iron that a human being has heated with his plaything? But you call me to the fire of hell that God Almighty has melted with His wrath? You cry over insignificant heat, while I do not cry over the heat of the divine fire?"

And what is more amazing than this incident is that someone came to visit us at night, and he had a covered container full of Halwa, and there was a mixture in that container, I hated it so much that it was as if it had been mixed with the saliva of a poisonous snake! Or its vomited! I asked him, is it a gift? Or Zakat or Sadaqah? Because both of these are forbidden to us, the household of the Prophet (PBUH). He said, it is neither Zakat nor Sadaqah, but a gift. I said: Let the women with dead child cry over you. Do you want to deceive me from the path of religion? Or is your mind is disturbed? Or are you delirious? By God! If the seven worlds and what is under the heavens were given to me to disobey God and take the skin of a barley grain from an ant, I would not do so! And this polluted world of yours is inferior to me than a chewed leaf".

What does Ali have to do with perishable blessings and fleeting pleasures?! We seek refuge in God from the slumber of reason and the ugliness of mistakes, and we seek help from Him.

Therefore, Imam Ali (AS)'s justice is such that family relationships have no place in it, and he strongly opposes injustice. For example, Imam Ali (AS) advised the tax collector to not enter anyone's house in any region he went to, and to stay near a spring, because being a guest may affect the collection of taxes from the people. " By God, if I were given the seven regions and everything under their heavens on condition that I disobey God by robbing an ant of its barley, I would not do it. Your world is more insignificant to me than a leaf in the mouth of a locust that is

chewing on it" (Sermon 224 of Nahjul-Balagha). This example of Imam Ali's justice and the light of the path of Muslims, would have granted equality among them and would have eliminated injustice.

This is an important question and a valuable discussion. We have mentioned one of the outstanding characteristics of the just Imam. Why did Imam Ali (AS) accept the allegiance after all the injustices that were committed against him? Imam Ali would never have accepted it if he did not consider it necessary to eradicate corruption from the country and the strong easily would take away the rights of the weak. The presence of a just Imam who considered it necessary to divide people equally was necessary: "Be fair to God and be fair to people, from yourself and from those within your family, and from among your subjects whom you have a similar interest in. For if you do not do so, you will be unjust" (Letter 53 of Nahjul-Balagha). Because if you do not love your cotter you would not observe justice and commit injustice. Imam Ali (AS) had emphasized justice several times.

### **Nahjul-Balagha and the issue of government**

One of the most important issues that Imam Ali (a.s.) considered most important in Nahjul-Balagha is the discussion of justice and fairness among people: "I swear by God! I will take justice from the oppressor, and I will restrain the oppressor, and I will bring him to the source of truth, even if he is unwilling" (Sermon 16 of Nahjul-Balagha). This was the power of Imam Ali in fighting against the kings and the rich who did not treat the people fairly, therefore the Imam's roar against their oppression was raised and He ran to save the people in need. This is the sign that Imam Ali will establish justice and he will hold those who are guilty accountable.

Anyone who studies Nahjul-Balagha will see that Imam Ali (AS) was particularly sensitive about governance and justice, and he attached great importance and value to them. Accordingly, he considered justice to be one of the branches of faith. "Ask about faith, and he said: Faith is based

on four pillars: patience, certainty, justice, and jihad" (Wisdom 31 of Nahjul-Balagha). "God Almighty has imposed Imams the fairness (truthful) to value themselves with the weakness of people so that poverty may not lead them to poverty" (Sermon 209 of Nahjul-Balagha). This is the duty of a just leader in discussing and being fair in the affairs of all people whose lives were governed by a just Imam.

Imam Ali (AS) was raised in the holy embrace of the holy Prophet of Islam. The Prophet took him from his father as a child, raised him in his own home with his own special education and upbringing, taught him the symbols of Islam, and instilled in his soul the principles and branches of Islam. Doesn't the Holy Quran say: "We have certainly sent our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that people may act justly, and We sent down iron, in which is great force, a benefit for people. And Allah knows who will help Him and His Messengers in the unseen. Indeed, Allah is Strong and Mighty" (Surah Al-Hadid, verse 25).

Imam Ali (AS) recommended to fairness "Use justice and beware of oppression and injustice, because oppression leads to destruction, and injustice leads to the sword" (Hikmat 476). It is justice and fairness that increase the bond between people "And with justice, the followers increase" (Hikmat 224). In the Holy Quran, the Almighty said: "Indeed, Allah commands justice and kindness" and in Nahjul-Balagha, Imam Ali said: "Fairness is giving justice and avoiding oppression, and kindness is a peaceful thought. "Justice is fairness, avoiding oppression and kindness" (Hikmat 231).

### **Strategies for administering justice in an Islamic government from the perspective of Imam Ali (AS)**

After explaining the importance and definition of fairness and justice, the most important issue is how to administer justice in an Islamic government. Ali (AS) presents several factors as tools for administering justice as follows:

### **The existence of just and pious rulers and officials**

Imam Ali (AS) paid great attention to the existence of just and pious rulers and officials in society and monitoring their personal and social behavior. It is obvious that if the officials of any society are just and justice-seeking individuals and first apply this issue in their personal lives and those of their relatives, they will gain the trust of the people and will be followed and respected by the people in society as a useful model. Muslim rulers must administer justice for all people in society without discrimination between different classes. Ensuring the rights of the oppressed from the oppressor is also one of the important duties of an Islamic ruler, which was strongly emphasized by Imam Ali (AS). In Nahjul-Balagha, Imam Ali (AS) considers the purpose of accepting the caliphate to be the realization of the rights of the oppressed. In this regard, on the second day of his caliphate in 35 AH, he says: "By God, I will return the looted treasury to its original owners wherever I find it, even if people have used it to marry or buy a slave girl, because in justice there is openness for the general public. The one for whom justice is difficult, it is harder for him to bear oppression" (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 15).

"By God, this worthless shoe is more beloved to me than ruling over you, unless with its help, I stand up for what is right or to repel a wrong" (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 33). "By God, I will rescue the oppressed from the oppressor, restrain the oppressor, and lead the righteous to the righteousness, even if he is unwilling" (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 136).

"Cotter cannot be reformed unless their rulers are reformed, and rulers cannot be reformed except through the righteousness of their cotter" (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 126).

"I will never divide the property of the public treasury unjustly or give them a larger share to support the nobles and elders of Quraysh. Even if this property were mine, I would divide it equally

among the people, let alone the property of the public treasury" (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 126).

"Practice justice and beware of injustice and oppression, for injustice to the people displaces them and oppression forces the Muslim uprising." Nahjul-Balagha, Hikmah 476).

As can be seen from the words of Imam Ali (AS), the existence of just rulers whose main goal is to achieve the rights of the oppressed people is one of the principles of establishing justice in society.

### **Monitoring the actions and behavior of the authorities in society**

Imam Ali (AS), as the leader of a political system, always monitored the actions and behavior of his appointed rulers and reacted strongly to the mismanagement of public treasure and the lack of justice in society and reprimanded the rulers. Therefore, in his opinion, monitoring the behavior and performance of government officials is one of the duties of the leaders of society and a means of establishing justice. In this regard, many letters from Imam Ali (AS) to the rulers have been written in Nahjul-Balagha. Imam Ali (AS) writes in a letter to Ziyad ibn Ubayyah, the deputy governor of Basra: "Indeed, I swear by God that if they report to me that you have betrayed public funds, I will be so harsh on you that you will not even be able to provide for your own family." (Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 20).

Imam Ali (AS) writes in a letter to Muhammad Abu Bakr, the governor of Egypt: "Be humble with people. Be gentle and kind, be open-minded and smiling. In your glances and in your half-glances and stares at people, act equally so that the great do not covet your tyranny, and the weak do not despair of your justice" (Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 27).

Imam Ali (AS) writes to one of his rulers in the year 40 AH: "I have been informed that you have taken away the crops of the lands and taken what you can and have been betrayed with what you have, so send me the account of the property as soon as possible and know that the accounting of

God is more severe than the accounting of people." (Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 40).

Imam Ali (AS) says in a part of a letter he wrote to the governor of Basra: "I have been informed that you have plundered the property of the treasury, which was the share of widows and orphans, and fear from God. Return their property, and if you do not do so and God give me chance, I will punish you. By God, if Hasan and Hussain had done as you have done, they would not have been pleased with me and would not have achieved their desire until I receive the truth from them and destroyed the falsehood that had been created through oppression by them" (Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 41 of Nahjul-Balagha).

Imam Ali (AS) wrote in a letter to Masqala bin Hubairah Shaybani, the governor of Ardashir Khara (Firozabad) from the cities of Fars, Iran in the year 38 AH: "I have been informed that you have divided the spoils of the Muslims, which were obtained by means of their weapons and horses and whose blood was shed on this way, among the Bedouin people of your tribe. If this report is true, you will be humiliated in my sight and your value and fortune will degrade by me. Be aware, the right of the Muslims who are with me and your papacy is equal in the division of this property, they should all come to me and take their share from me" [(Nahjul-Balagha, Letter 43 of Nahjul-Balagha).

As can be seen in the letters of Imam Ali (AS), the existence of just and pious rulers is one of the principles of establishing justice and fairness in society, and monitoring their performance in relation to material and worldly lapses and, if necessary, dismissing them due to betrayal of the treasury is among the duties of the leaders of the Islamic society.

### **Mutual rights of people and justice-seeking rulers in society**

Realizing the rights of the oppressed in society and support of the people from the implementers of justice is another condition for establishing justice in society. It is obvious that whenever the

society is intellectually incapable of accepting truth and justice and does not support its justice-seeking leaders against the wicked, the implementation of justice in society will fail.

Imam Ali (AS) in a part of Sermon 92 of Nahjul-Balagha, which was stated after the murder of Uthman and the people's rush to pledge allegiance to him in the year 35 AH, states his unwillingness to accept the caliphate as follows:

"Leave me and find someone else. Because we are going to welcome events and matters that are colorful and divisive and have different faces, and hearts and minds will not remain stable on this allegiance".

In his sermon on Shaqshaqiyah (sermon 3 of Nahjul-Balagha), Imam Ali (AS) referred to the anarchy and opposition of the Naqitheen, Qasiteen, and Mariqeen against his just government.

Regarding the mutual rights of people and leaders, Imam Ali (AS) says in a part of Sermon 216 of Nahjul-Balagha: "And among the greatest divine rights is the right of the leader over the people and the right of the people over the leader. People are not reformed except by reforming the rulers, and rulers are not reformed except by the steadfastness and stability of the people. And when the people fulfill the right of leadership and the ruler fulfills the right of the people, the just is honored among them in that society, and the paths of the religion are stabled and the signs of justice are established, and the Sunnah (of the Prophet) is established. Then the time is reformed, and the people hope for the continuation of the government and the enemy is disappointed in his hopes. But if the people prevail over the government or the ruler oppresses the people, the unity of the word is destroyed, the signs of oppression become obvious, and deceit in religion becomes abundant".

Therefore, from the perspective of Imam Ali (AS), it is obligatory to observe the mutual rights of the people and the state. States have the duty to provide, within their jurisdiction, the

conditions for growth and advancement, the basis for social development and balance, and the fair access of everyone to their rights and entitlements. People also have the duty to fulfill their obligations to their rulers, to carry out the tasks of society, to be responsible, and to support governments and justice-seeking leaders for the stability of society. Individuals must know that individual behavior has a social dimension. The sum of individual efforts creates a great and continuous movement, which will lead to the organization of society and the realization of everyone's rights.

### **The necessity of simple living for Islamic rulers**

Imam Ali (AS) dislikes aristocracy and luxurious living and considers simple living to be one of the duties of Islamic rulers in an Islamic society that has poor people. In Nahjul-Balagha, this issue is recommended to rulers and governors:

Imam Ali (AS) in Letter 3 of Nahjul-Balagha, warns Shurayh bin Al-Harith, the judge of Kufa, who had bought a house for 80 dinars, about financial abuse. In a part of the letter, he says: "I was informed that you bought a house for 80 dinars and wrote a deed for it and witnesses signed it. O Shurayh, think carefully that you did not buy that house with the money of others or with forbidden money, because then you would have lost the house of this world and the hereafter".

Imam Ali (AS), in Letter 45 of Nahjul-Balagha, blames Uthman bin Hanif Ansari, the governor of Basra, for attending a party hosted by the nobles and wealthy people of Basra, where there were colorful and sumptuous foods, and advises him to throw away the foods he does not know to be halal or haram, and to consume what he is certain to be clean and halal.

Imam Ali (AS), in Letter 71 of Nahjul-Balagha, to Mundhir bin Jarud Abdi, the governor of Istakhr in the province of Fars, forbids him from living a luxurious and extravagant life and blames him. Therefore, the simplicity of life of Islamic

rulers and knowledge of the lives of low-income and poor people is also one of the characteristics of just leaders and officials in society, and Imam Ali (AS) considers it obligatory to observe it and believes that the simplicity of life of Islamic rulers provides the basis for implementing justice and establishing balance in Islamic society.

### **Conclusions**

Of course, the precious book of Imam Ali, which has been registered in the United Nations and one of the manuscripts of Nahjul-Balagha that was translated into English, is a selection of sermons, letters, and short Hikmats about global issues, especially issues such as the recommendation of peaceful coexistence with groups, observing justice and fairness in social and political relations, human rights, and defending the oppressed.

But unfortunately, their level of justice is not in line with the methods and paths of Imam Ali, then how can a nation claim to have democracy without having human justice?.

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