

Self-Management as the Foundation of Governance: An Islamic Perspective Based on the Teachings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him)

Abstract

This article explores the profound connection between self-management (Tahdhib al-Nafs) and effective governance in Islamic thought, particularly through the teachings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him). Drawing primarily from Ghurar al-Hikam, Nahj al-Balagha, Bihar al-Anwar, and other classical sources, it examines how the capacity to govern others is intrinsically linked to an individual's ability to govern their own self. The article analyzes the nature of the Nafs (self/soul), the stages of self-purification, the concept of Jihad al-Nafs (struggle against the self), and the practical implications of these principles for leadership and public administration. It concludes that Imam Ali's teachings establish self-management as the indispensable foundation for just, effective, and benevolent governance, with the leader's inner discipline directly translating into external justice and public welfare.

Introduction

The relationship between self-management and effective governance is a central theme in Islamic thought, particularly in the teachings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him). Imam Ali (peace be upon him) explicitly stated,

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ سَاسَ نَفْسَهُ أَدْرَكَ السِّيَاسَةَ

"He who is able to manage his own self truly understands management."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 8013)

This statement establishes that the ability to govern a state or a community is intrinsically linked to an individual's capacity to manage their own self.

This principle is extensively elaborated in Imam Ali's famous letter to Malik al-Ashtar, his appointed governor of Egypt, which is considered a "golden document" and a "charter for just rule," providing a comprehensive framework for ethical governance based on Islamic principles. The letter serves as a practical blueprint for administration rooted in the leader's internal self-mastery.

The Nature of the Nafs (Self/Soul)

Definition and Quranic Usage

In Islamic teachings, the term Nafs (النَّفْسُ) is a multifaceted concept that refers to the human "self," "soul," or "ego." It represents the complete individual, encompassing both spiritual and physical aspects, and its meaning can vary depending on the context. The term and its derivatives appear over 250 times in the Quran, denoting the individualization of an essence.

The Nafs functions as the interface between the independent Ruḥ (spirit) and the physical body. While the Ruḥ is described as an independent, non-physical spirit that exists eternally, the Nafs describes the aspect of the spirit that interacts with the body. Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) clarified that

الإمام الصادق (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): إِنَّ الْأَرْوَاحَ لَا تُمَازَجُ الْبَدَنَ وَلَا تُوَكِّلُهُ ، وَإِنَّمَا هِيَ كِلَلٌ لِلْبَدَنِ مُحِيطَةٌ بِهِ

"Verily the spirits neither merge with the body nor are they independent of it. Rather they are like a thin veil surrounding the body." (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 61, p. 40, no. 11).

The Dual Nature of the Nafs

The Quran describes the human Nafs as having a dual nature: an inherent inclination towards both wickedness (fujoor) and piety (taqwa). Surah Ash-Shams (Quran 91:7-8) states: "And [by] the soul and [by] Him who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness". This verse profoundly reveals that Allah has instilled within the Nafs both the inclination towards fujoor (wickedness/immorality/transgression) and taqwa (piety/God-consciousness/righteousness).

The verse does not imply that Allah placed the means of committing fujoor and taqwa as separate inherent forces inside the soul. Instead, it signifies that Allah inspired and taught humanity these two facts—the knowledge and discernment to distinguish between piety and impiety, right conduct and wrong ways in life, by means of one's 'wisdom' and 'primordial nature' (fitrah).

The Three States of the Nafs

Islamic ethical discourse identifies three primary states or levels of the Nafs based on its moral development:

1. **Al-Nafs al-Ammarah (The Inciting/Despotic Soul)** : This is the lowest state, described as "the despotic soul which leads one to commit evil and vicious acts." It urges human beings to do evil to satisfy their desires, passions, and

lusts. If not controlled by faith and reason, it can lead to a person's downfall. The Quran states: "Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy" (Quran 12:53).

2. **Al-Nafs al-Lawwamah (The Reproaching/Self-Accusing Soul)** : This is the "reproaching soul" or conscience, active when a person blames and scolds themselves for committing a sin or crime. This self-reproach often leads to seeking repentance and apology. The Quran mentions it in Surah 75, verse 2: "And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]." (Quran 75:2).
3. **Al-Nafs al-Muṭmainnah (The Peaceful/Tranquil Soul)** : This is the highest state, characterized by a soul " [To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul, " (Quran 89:27). This peaceful soul is found in prophets and those truly trained by them, who seek Allah's help when surrounded by unbridled passion and ignorance.

An-Nafs al-Mulhamah (The Inspired Soul)

A crucial dimension of the human soul is An-Nafs al-Mulhamah, the Inspired Soul, which refers to the innate faculty that enables a person to discern between good and evil, and between virtue and vice. This concept is explicitly mentioned in the Quran, particularly in Surah Ash-Shams (Quran 91:8), where Allah states that He has endowed the soul with the faculty of discerning right from wrong.

The term "ilham" (inspiration) signifies that the human soul, in its very essence, drinks and engulfs the subject matter of divine inspiration. This implies a profound, intuitive understanding implanted by God within the self, enabling it to receive guidance. Inspired souls naturally praise the fulfillment of promises and condemn the breaching of agreements; they admire peace, justice, and trustworthiness, and condemn war, oppression, and deception.

Self-Management (Tahdhib al-Nafs): The Essence

Definition and Scope

Tahdhib al-Nafs, meaning the cleansing and refinement of one's soul, is a fundamental concept in Islamic teachings focused on spiritual self-improvement. It is a deliberate and continuous process aimed at transforming the human self (Nafs) from its lower inclinations towards a state of purity, virtue, and closeness to Allah.

The concept encompasses two primary aspects:

1. **Emptying of Vices (Takhliyah)** : Removing negative traits, harmful thoughts, feelings, and actions from the soul. This includes purging lowly traits such as gluttony, loquaciousness, anger, jealousy, niggardliness, love for authority, love for this world, arrogance, and self-praise.
2. **Adorning with Virtues (Tahliyah)** : Cultivating and embodying positive human attributes and moral values. This involves replacing bad habits with good ones and striving for personal growth.

The Three Stages of Spiritual Refinement

The process of Tahdhib al-Nafs is structured into three main stages, often likened to preparing and beautifying a house (the soul):

1. **Takhliyah (Cleaning Out)** : This is the initial stage of "cleaning out" or purification. It involves actively removing bad qualities, indecent moral conduct, and sins from one's heart and character. The angels do not enter a house in which dogs are kept, implying that if hearts are aggressive like a dog, ill tempered or diseased, divine light and angels cannot enter.
2. **Tahliyah (Adornment and Nourishment)** : Following the cleansing, this stage focuses on "adornment," "nourishment," and "perfection." It entails furnishing one's heart with good character, acquiring higher learning, attaining moral excellence in conduct, and undertaking righteous deeds.
3. **Tajliyah (Shining)** : This final stage of "shining" happens automatically after the first two stages are completed. It signifies the gradual manifestation of the human self's hidden potentials and development towards its ultimate perfection.

Jihad al-Nafs: The Greater Struggle

Central to Tahdhib al-Nafs is Jihad al-Nafs, often referred to as the "Greater Jihad" (Jihad al-Akbar). This concept signifies the internal struggle against one's own self, specifically against desires, lusts, weaknesses, and negative tendencies that might lead one away from the will of Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) emphasized this when, upon returning from a victorious battle, he told his companions:

عن موسى بن إسماعيل، عن موسى بن جعفر (عليه السلام)، عن أبيه، عن آبيه، عن أمير المؤمنين (عليهم السلام) (أقل: إن رسول هلا) (صل هلا عليه وآله) (بعث سرية فلما رجعوا أقل: مرحبا بكم قضاوا الجهاد الصغر وبقي عليهم الجهاد الكبير، قيل: أي رسول هلا وما الجهاد الأكبر؟ فقال: جهاد النفس. وأقل) (صل هلا عليه وآله) (إن أفضل الجهاد من جاهد نفسه التي بين جنبيه

From Musa ibn Ismail, from Musa ibn Jafar (peace be upon him), from his father, from his forefathers, from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon them) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) sent a military expedition. When they returned he said: Welcome to people who have completed the lesser jihad, but the greater jihad remains for them. It was said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad? He said: The jihad against one's self (nafs). And he (peace be upon him and his family) said: The best jihad is one's struggle against their own self that lies between their sides.

(Wasa'il al-Shia, Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20216).

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام) : إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) بَعَثَ سَرِيَّةً ، فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا قَالَ: مَرْحَبًا بِقَوْمٍ قَضَوْا الْجِهَادَ الْأَصْغَرَ وَبَقِيَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجِهَادُ الْأَكْبَرُ . قِيلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَمَا الْجِهَادُ الْأَكْبَرُ؟ قَالَ: جِهَادُ النَّفْسِ . وَقَالَ (عليه السلام) : أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ الَّتِي بَيْنَ جَنْبَيْهِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) relates, "The Prophet (S) dispatched troops [to a mission]. On seeing the returning armies from the battlefield, he said, 'Blessed are those who have performed the lesser jihad, and have yet to perform the greater one.' When asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad?' the Prophet replied, 'The jihad of the self', and added, 'The best jihad is that of one who combats his own self that is between his two sides.'" (Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 160, no. 1)

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) (أن النبي ﷺ) بعث سرية فلما رجعوا اقل: مرحبا بقوم قضاوا الجهاد الصغر وبقي عليهم الجهاد الكبر، فقيل: اي رسول هلا ما الجهاد الكبر؟ اقل: جهاد النفس

From Al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) sent a military expedition, and when they returned he said: Welcome to people who have completed the lesser jihad and still have the greater jihad remaining. It was asked: O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad? He said: The jihad against one's self (nafs).

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20208)

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) instructed:

جاهد نفسك لتردّها عن هواها، فإنّه وجب عليك كجهاد عدوك

"Perform jihad against your nafs to repel it from its hawa, for this is a duty for you like jihad against your enemy." (Tuhaf al-Uqul, p. 399).

The significance of Jihad al-Nafs is extensively emphasized in Islamic teachings:

- It enables individuals to attain a higher level of spiritual awareness and closeness to God

- It enables individuals to overcome their weaknesses, desires, and flaws, leading to personal growth, self-awareness, and inner peace
- It is described as a foundation stone of Islam, a pillar of religion, and a door to Paradise for Allah's special friends
- Imam Mohammad Baqir (peace be upon him) stated,

الإمام الباقر (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) : لَا فَضِيلَةَ كَالْجِهَادِ ، وَلَا جِهَادَ كَمُجَاهِدَةِ الْهَوَى

"There is no greater distinction than jihad, and no jihad like combatting one's self." (Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 286)

Muhasibat al-Nafs: Self-Accountability

Muhasibat al-Nafs refers to the self-assessment or accounting of one's self. It involves an individual evaluating their actions, intentions, and thoughts daily to ensure they align with their values, principles, and the commands of Allah. This practice is considered essential for personal growth, spiritual development, and attaining eternal felicity.

The practice of Muhasiba involves:

- **Daily Self-Introspection:** Calling oneself to account every day, reflecting on one's actions, good deeds, and wrongdoings
- **Evaluation of Obedience:** Reviewing actions daily to evaluate whether one has been obedient or disobedient to Allah
- **Reproach and Criticism for Wrongdoings:** If the scale of acts of disobedience outweighs the acts of obedience, one should discipline oneself by reproach and criticism
- **Gratitude for Good Deeds:** If good deeds outweigh wrongdoings, one should thank God for the success and blessings
- **Making Amends and Seeking Forgiveness:** If disobedience is identified, one should seek forgiveness through Tawbah and make amends for negligence

Imam al-Kazim (peace be upon him) stated:

الإمام الكاظم (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ ، فَإِنْ عَمِلَ حَسَنًا اسْتَزَادَ اللَّهَ ، وَإِنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئًا اسْتَغْفَرَ اللَّهَ مِنْهُ وَتَابَ إِلَيْهِ

"The one who does not take account of himself every single day is not one of us. And when he performs a good deed, he should ask Allah to enable him to do more, and when he commits an evil deed, he must seek Allah's forgiveness and repent for it."

(al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 453, no. 2)

الحسن بن عيل العسكري (عليهما السلام) (في تفسيره) (عن آبيه، عن عيل) (عليهم السلام) (عن النبي) (صل الله عليه وآله) (قل: أليس الكيسين من حاسب نفسه، وعمل لما بعد الموت فقال رجل: أي أمير المؤمنين كيف يحاسب نفسه؟ قل: إذا أصبح ثم أمسى رجع إلى نفسه، وقل: أي نفسي إن هذا يوم مضى عليك ال يعود إليك أبدا، وهلا يسألك عنه بما أفنيته، فما الذي عملت فيه أذكرت هلا أم حمدته؟ أفضيت حوائج مؤمن فيه أنفست عنه كربه؟ أحفظتيه بظهر الغيب في أهله وولده؟ أحفظتيه بعد الموت في مخلفيه، أكففت عن غيبة أخ مؤمن أعنت مسلما؟ ما الذي صنعت فيه؟ فيذكر ما كان منه، إفذكر أنه جرى منه خير حمد هلا وكبره عدل توفيقه، وإن ذكر معصية. أو تقصيرا استغفر هلا وعزم عدل ترك معاودته

Al-Hassan bin Ali Al-Askari (peace be upon them) in his (Tafsir) from his forefathers, from Ali (peace be upon them) from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said: The wisest of the wise is the one who holds himself accountable and works for what comes after death. A man asked: O Amir Al-Mu'minin, how does one hold himself accountable? He replied: When he reaches evening after his morning, he returns to himself and says: O my soul, this day has passed and will never return, and Allah will question you about how you spent it. So what did you do in it? Did you remember Allah or praise Him? Did you fulfill a believer's need or relieve his distress? Did you protect his family and children in his absence? Did you protect his legacy after his death? Did you refrain from backbiting a believing brother? Did you help a Muslim? What did you do in it? Then he recalls what he did. If he remembers doing good, he praises Allah and glorifies Him for Obligation Of Self-Accountability Every Day, Observing It, Praising... enabling him. And if he remembers a sin or shortcoming, he seeks Allah's forgiveness and resolves not to repeat it.

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 1, Chapter 96, Hadith 21081)

This highlights daily self-reckoning as a distinguishing mark of a true follower of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Muraqaba: Self-Observation

Muraqaba (self-observation or supervision) is a fundamental practice in Islamic self-building, crucial for personal growth, spiritual development, and aligning one's life with divine guidance. It involves a heightened state of consciousness where an individual vigilantly monitors their inner self and external actions.

Muraqaba progresses through various levels:

1. **Observing Actions:** The initial stage focuses on ensuring one's outward actions conform to Islamic teachings
2. **Observing Intentions:** This stage involves scrutinizing intentions, ensuring all deeds are done for Allah's pleasure
3. **Observing Deeper Causes:** Progressing further, one becomes aware of the underlying motivations and spiritual states that drive actions and intentions

4. **Continuous Remembrance:** The highest stages involve an unbroken state of God's remembrance

The Holy Prophet (S) elucidated this by advising:

رسول الله (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ): أَعْبُدِ اللَّهَ َ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

"Worship Allah as if you see Him, for although you may not see Him, indeed He sees you." (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 5250)

تفسير نور الثقلين : في قوله تعالى : «ومن أحسن ديناً ممن أسلم وجهه لله ِ وهو مُحْسِنٌ» :
رُويَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) سُئِلَ عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ ، فَقَالَ : أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ َ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ ، فَإِنْ لَمْ
تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

Hazrat Mohammad (SAWW): It is narrated in Nur al-Thaqalayn with regard to Allah's verse: "Certainly whoever submits his will to Allah and is a good-doer..."[Quran 2:112]: It is reported that the Prophet (S) was asked about good-doing, to which he replied, 'It is to worship Allah as if you see Him; for verily even if you do not see Him, indeed He sees you.' (Nur al-Thaqalayn, v. 1, p. 553, no. 579)

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said

عن إسحاق بن عمار اقل: اقل أبو عبدهللا (عليه السالم): اي إسحاق خف هللا كأنك تراه، وإن كنت
ال تراه افنه يراك، وان كنت ترى أنه ال يراك فقد كفرت، وإن كنت تعلم أنه يراك ثم برزت له
ابلمعصية فقد جعلته من اهون الناظرين عليك

"O Ishaq, fear Allah as if you see Him, and though you do not see Him, He sees you. If you think He does not see you, then you have disbelieved. And if you know He sees you, then you openly disobey Him, you have made Him the least important of those watching you." (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 14, Hadith 20324)

This encapsulates the highest form of worship and spiritual awareness, emphasizing continuous awareness of Allah's presence.

Self-Management as the Foundation of Public Governance

The Direct Connection

The connection between self-management and public governance is direct and indispensable in Imam Ali's philosophy:

1. **Prerequisite for Leadership:** The hadith "He who is able to manage his own self truly understands management" posits self-management as a prerequisite for comprehending and executing broader administrative responsibilities. A leader who cannot control their own self is deemed incapable of properly governing others or a state.
2. **Sovereignty as Efficient Management:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also stated,

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْمُلْكُ سِيَّاسَةٌ

"Sovereignty is [efficient] management." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 17)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): حُسْنُ التَّدْبِيرِ وَتَجَنُّبُ التَّبْذِيرِ مِنْ حُسْنِ السِّيَّاسَةِ

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Efficient organisation and avoidance of squandering is part of good management." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4821)

This equates governance with effective administration, and for administration to be effective, it must first be applied to the self of the leader. Without this internal efficiency, external governance becomes flawed.

3. **Impact on Just and Benevolent Rule:** The ability of a leader to control their desires and avoid personal biases directly translates into their capacity to uphold justice and act with compassion. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) instructed Malik al-Ashtar to

وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ، وَالْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ، وَاللِّطْفَ بِهِمْ، وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعًا ضَارِيًا تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَحَدٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِمَّا تَظِيرُ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ، يَفْرِطُ مِنْهُمْ الزَّلَلُ، وَتَعْرِضُ لَهُمُ الْعِلَلُ، يُؤْتَى عَلَى أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الْعَمْدِ وَالْخَطَا، فَأَعْطِهِمْ مِنْ عَفْوِكَ وَصَفْحِكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي تُحِبُّ أَنْ يُعْطِيَكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ عَفْوِهِ وَصَفْحِهِ، فَإِنَّكَ قَوْقُهُمْ، وَوَإِلَى الْأَمْرِ عَلَيْكَ قَوْقُكَ، وَاللَّهُ قَوْقَ مَنْ وَلَاكَ! وَقَدْ اسْتَكْفَاكَ أَمْرُهُمْ، وَابْتَلَاكَ بِهِمْ.

"Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, wilfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allah to extend His forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imam) is over you while Allah is over him who has appointed you. He (Allah) has sought you to manage their affairs and has tried you through them."

(Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53)

4. **Support for Subjects:** The outcome of good management, rooted in self-management, is the welfare of the populace. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said,

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): حُسْنُ السِّيَاسَةِ قَوَامُ الرِّعَايَةِ

"Good management acts as a support for one's subjects."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4818)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): حُسْنُ السِّيَاسَةِ يَسْتَدِيمُ الرِّيَاسَةَ

"Good management prolongs one's [term of] leadership."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 482)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): رَأْسُ السِّيَاسَةِ اسْتِعْمَالُ الرِّفْقِ

"The peak of good management is the employment of moderation."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 5266)

Leading by Example

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) emphasized:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ نَصَبَ نَفْسَهُ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا فَغَلِيهِ أَنْ يَبْدَأَ بِتَعْلِيمِ نَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ تَعْلِيمِ غَيْرِهِ ، وَلْيَكُنْ تَأْدِيبُهُ بِسِيرَتِهِ قَبْلَ تَأْدِيبِهِ بِلِسَانِهِ ، وَمُعَلِّمٌ نَفْسِهِ وَمُؤَدِّبُهَا أَحَقُّ بِالْإِجْلَالِ مِنْ مُعَلِّمِ النَّاسِ وَمُؤَدِّبِهِمْ

"He who appoints himself a leader of people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others. And his discipline of them must be through his own example rather than through his words. The one who teaches and disciplines himself is more worthy of esteem than the one who teaches and disciplines people."

(Bihar al-Anwar, v. 2, p. 56, no. 33).

محمد بن الحسين الرضي في نهج البالغة (عن أمير المؤمنين) عليه السالم (أنه اقل: من نصب نفسه للناس إماما فعليه أن يبدأ بتعليم نفسه قبل تعليم غيره، وليكن تأديبه بسيرته قبل تأديبه بلسانه، ومعلم نفسه ومؤدبها أحق بالجلال من معلم الناس ومؤدبهم

From Muhammad bin Al-Hussein Al-Radi in (Nahj al-Balagha) from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) that he said: "Whoever appoints himself as a leader for people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others, and his disciplining should be through his conduct before his tongue, and the one who teaches and disciplines himself is more deserving of respect than one who teaches and disciplines others."

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 10, Hadith 21213)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): مَنْ حَقَّقَ الْمَلِكُ أَنْ يَسُوْسَ نَفْسَهُ قَبْلَ جُنْدِهِ

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "It is the duty of a ruler to manage his own self before his army."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9333)

This principle underscores that personal conduct is the most potent form of leadership and instruction. A leader must embody the virtues they wish to see in their subjects, demonstrating integrity and commitment through actions, not just rhetoric.

Self-Knowledge (Ma'rifat al-Nafs)

The teachings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also link self-management to self-knowledge. This self-awareness is crucial for understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, which in turn informs effective self-governance.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) extensively highlighted the profound importance of self-knowledge:

- Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): مَعْرِفَةُ النَّفْسِ أَنْفَعُ الْمَعَارِفِ

"The inner knowledge of the self is the most beneficial of all such knowledge."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9865)

- Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

"He who attains inner knowledge of his self attains inner knowledge of his Lord."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 7946)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): نَالَ الْقَوْرَ الْأَكْبَرَ مَنْ ظَفَرَ بِمَعْرِفَةِ النَّفْسِ

"The one who attains knowledge of his own self has obtained the greatest victory indeed." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9965)

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ جَاهَدَهَا ، مَنْ جَهِلَ نَفْسَهُ أَهْمَلَهَا

"He who gains inner knowledge of his self combats it, and he who remains ignorant of his self, neglects it. (Ghurar al-Hikam, nos. 7855-7856)

- Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): كَيْفَ يَعْرِفُ غَيْرَهُ مَنْ يَجْهَلُ نَفْسَهُ؟

"How can one who is ignorant of his own self expect to know others?!"

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6998)

This profound connection implies that understanding one's own nature, including one's weaknesses, strengths, and spiritual condition, is not only crucial for personal development but also for comprehending the world, one's Creator, and consequently, how to justly lead and manage others.

Characteristics of Governance Rooted in Self-Management

Justice and Equality

Imam Ali's approach to governance, which is a practical manifestation of a leader's self-management, emphasized justice as the paramount principle. He worked to establish a society where all individuals were treated equally and without preference, ensuring allowances were distributed fairly, without favoring one group over another. This policy of perfect equality in all areas of governance reflects a leader free from personal bias and self-interest.

Key statements attributed to him underscore this belief:

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

أَلَا وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي أَلَا أُحْتَجَرُ دُونَكُمْ سِوَا إِلَّا فِي حَرْبٍ، وَلَا أَطْوِي دُونَكُمْ أَمْرًا إِلَّا فِي حُكْمٍ، وَلَا أُؤَجِّرُ لَكُمْ حَقًّا عَنْ مَجْلِيهِ، وَلَا أَقِفَ بِهِ دُونَ مَقْطَعِهِ، وَأَنْ تَكُونُوا عِنْدِي فِي الْحَقِّ سَوَاءً، فَإِذَا فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ وَجَبَتْ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمُ النِّعْمَةُ وَلِي عَلَيْكُمُ الطَّاعَةُ

"Now it is obligatory upon a ruler that the distinction he achieves, or the wealth with which he has been exclusively endowed, should not make him change his behavior towards those under him. Rather the bounties that Allah has bestowed on him should increase him in nearness to his people and in kindness towards his brethren.

Beware then that it is my duty towards you that I should not keep anything secret from you except during war, nor should I decide any matter without consulting you except with regards to the commands of religion, nor should I postpone the fulfillment of any of your rights nor desist until I discharge it fully. And that all of you are equal to me in your rights. When I have done all this, it becomes obligatory upon you to thank Allah for this bounty and to obey me."

(Sharh Nahjul Balaghah li Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v. 17, p. 16)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): مَا خَصَّنَ الدُّوْلُ بِمِثْلِ الْعَدْلِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, 'Nothing fortifies states like justice.'

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9574)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْعَدْلُ أَسَاسُ يَه قِوَامُ الْعَالَمِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Justice is the base that supports the whole world."

(Matalib al-Sa'ul, p. 61)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْعَدْلُ نِظَامُ الْإِمْرَةِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, 'Justice is the regulatory system of authority.'

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 774)

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِالْعَدْلِ حَصَّنَ اللَّهُ مَلَكُهُ

Amir al-muminin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever acts with justice, Allah fortifies his kingdom."

(Mizan al-Hikmah by Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Volume 2, Page 937)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْعَدْلُ قِوَامُ الرِّعَايَةِ وَجَمَالُ الْوَلَاةِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Justice is the support of the masses and the beauty [adorning] the governors." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1954)

الْعَدْلُ حَيَاةُ الْأَحْكَامِ

Amir al-muminin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Justice is the life of rules."

(Mizan al-Hikmah by Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Volume 3, Page 1839)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): مَا عُمِّرَتِ الْبُلْدَانُ بِمِثْلِ الْعَدْلِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, 'Nothing can cause nations to flourish like justice.'

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9534)

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): العدلُ جُنَّةُ الدُّولِ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Justice is the shield of the nations." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1873)

Adherence to Law

Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) system of government relied on the law, rather than personal will. His absolute loyalty to the Shariah meant he would not take any step that was opposed to religion, even if it meant going against his personal interests. This demonstrates a disciplined self that prioritizes divine commands over personal inclinations or worldly expediency.

Compassion and Inclusiveness

He urged leaders to show mercy and recognize human weaknesses, stating that all his subjects are equal.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي أَلَّا أُخْتِجَرَ دُونَكُمْ سِرًّا إِلَّا فِي حَرْبٍ، وَلَا أَطْوَيَ دُونَكُمْ أَمْرًا إِلَّا فِي حُكْمٍ، وَلَا أُؤَجِّرَ لَكُمْ حَقًّا عَنْ مَجْلِيهِ، وَلَا أَقِفَ يَهْ دُونَ مَقْطَعِهِ، وَأَنْ تَكُونُوا عِنْدِي فِي الْحَقِّ سَوَاءً، فَإِذَا فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ وَجَبْتُ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ النِّعْمَةَ وَلِي عَلَيْكُمْ الطَّاعَةُ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Now it is obligatory upon a ruler that the distinction he achieves, or the wealth with which he has been exclusively endowed, should not make him change his behavior towards those under him. Rather the bounties that Allah has bestowed on him should increase him in nearness to his people and in kindness towards his brethren.

Beware then that it is my duty towards you that I should not keep anything secret from you except during war, nor should I decide any matter without consulting you except with regards to the commands of religion, nor should I postpone the fulfillment of any of your rights nor desist until I discharge it fully. And that all of you are equal to me in your rights. When I have done all this, it becomes obligatory upon you to thank Allah for this bounty and to obey me."

(Sharh Nahjul Balaghah li Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v. 17, p. 16)

النَّاسُ سَوَاءٌ كَأَسْنَانِ الْمَشْطِ وَالْمَرْءُ كَثِيرٌ بِأَخِيهِ وَ لَا خَيْرَ فِي صُحْبَةِ مَنْ لَمْ يَرَ لَكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي يَرَى لِنَفْسِهِ

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said:

النَّاسُ سَوَاءٌ كَأَسْنَانِ الْمِشْطِ وَالْمَرْءُ كَثِيرٌ بِأَخِيهِ وَلَا خَيْرَ فِي صُحْبَةِ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْ لَكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي يَرَى لِنَفْسِهِ

"People are equal (in social rights) with each other like the teeth of a comb! An individual becomes a great society together with his (religious) brothers. It is not right to associate with one who does not wish for you whatever he wishes for himself" (Tuhaful Uqul, page 274.)

This broad, compassionate view stems from a leader whose self is free from prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

Integrity and Accountability

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

يَا عَلِيُّ: ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ لَمْ يَقُمْ لَهُ عَمَلٌ: وَرَعٌ يَحْجُزُهُ عَنِ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ عِلْمٌ يَرُدُّ بِهِ جَهْلَ السَّفِيهِ وَعَقْلٌ يُدَارِي بِهِ النَّاسَ. (تحف العقول ص7)

"Oh Ali there are three qualities so that who so ever does not possess these none of his practices will remain constant & firm for him. (His practice will not bring fruit & result)

1. The power of piety which refrains him from committing sin. 2. And the knowledge with which he may repulse the ignorance of the witless (foolish) persons. 3. Intellect with which he gets along courteously & moderately with the people)

(Tuhaf al-Uqul, Vol. 7.)

رسولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ): مَنْ خَفَّ لِسُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ فِي حَاجَةٍ كَانَ قَرِينَهُ فِي النَّارِ

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: "Whoever yields to a tyrannical ruler in any matter will be his companion in the Fire."

(Bihar al-Anwar, v. 76, p. 360, no. 30)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمامُ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): آفَةُ الْعُمَرَاءِ جَوْرُ السُّلْطَانِ (غُررُ الْحِكَمِ: 3954)

"The bane of civilization is the tyranny of rulers."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no 3954)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمامُ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): آفَةُ الْعَدْلِ الظَّالِمُ الْقَادِرُ (غُررُ الْحِكَمِ: 3953)

"The bane of justice is a powerful oppressor.'

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no 3953)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): أَفْضَلُ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ، هُدًى وَهَدًى، قَامَ سُنَّةَ
مَعْلُومَةٍ، وَأَمَاتَ يَدْعَةَ مَجْهُولَةٍ

"The most virtuous of Allah's servants according to Allah is a just leader, who is guided and guides [others], and who has established the known tradition, and abolished the unknown innovations." (Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 164)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) : لَا يَصْلِحُ النَّاسَ إِلَّا أَمِيرٌ ؛ بَرٌّ أَوْ فَاجِرٌ

"No one can straighten people other than a ruler – be he pious or wicked."

(Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 14286)

This commitment to integrity in governance mirrors the internal integrity achieved through self-management.

Public Welfare

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) believed in providing for the elderly, needy, orphans, and open government accessible to all citizens. His focus was on creating a people-centered system of governance that emphasizes inclusiveness, equity and moral accountability, rather than personal gain or domination.

He emphasized that the poor, deprived, and destitute must find their rightful place on the economic and public agenda before the government, which should play a pro-active and pro-poor role.

The Letter to Malik al-Ashtar: A Blueprint for Just Administration

Imam Ali's teachings on self-management find their practical application and comprehensive articulation in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, whom he appointed as the governor of Egypt. This letter is considered a "golden document" and a "charter for just rule," providing a comprehensive framework for ethical governance based on Islamic principles.

Connection to Self-Management

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

النبي (صل هلا عليه وآله وسلم) أنه اقل: الأعمال ابلنيات.

"Deeds are judged by intentions."

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 88)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صَوْرِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى أَعْمَالِكُمْ

Hazrat Mohammad (SAWW): The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"God does not consider the faces and properties, rather he considers your hearts and actions"

(Mohajjatol Beisae volume 6, page 312. Mustadrak AlWasail, vol 11, page 264. Aalamu AlDeen, page 201. AlAmali, page 535. Jami' Al-Akhbar, page 100. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 2, page 181. Makarim AlAkhlqa, page 469.)

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): كلُّ شيءٍ يحتاج إلى العقل، والعقل يحتاج إلى الأدب

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Everything needs the mind, and the mind needs good manners."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6911)

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): التفكير يدعو إلى البر والعمل به

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Thinking instigates goodness and action upon it."

(al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 55, no. 5)

اقل: إن هلا بكرمه وفضله يدخل العبد بصدق النية والسريرة الصالحة - في حديث - (عن أمير المؤمنين) عليهم السالم. الجنة

From Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon them) - in a hadith - he said: Indeed Allah, through His generosity and grace, admits a servant into Paradise due to sincere intention and righteous inner thoughts. Recommendation Of Good Intention And Determination Upon It (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 6, Hadith 117)

The letter commences with an implicit call for Malik al-Ashtar to internalize the principles of self-management before embarking on public administration. Imam Ali reminds Malik that people will judge his regime critically, just as he has judged others, and that a good and virtuous man is known and recognised by the good that is said about him and the praise which God has destined him to receive from others.

He then directly links this to internal control to make the mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts

ثُمَّ اعْلَمْ يَا مَالِكُ، أَنِّي قَدْ وَجَّهْتُكَ إِلَى يَلَادٍ قَدْ جَرَتْ عَلَيْهَا دُولٌ قَبْلَكَ، مِنْ عَدْلٍ وَجَوْرِ، وَأَنَّ النَّاسَ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ أُمُورِكَ فِي مِثْلِ مَا كُنْتَ تَنْظُرُ فِيهِ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْوَلَاةِ قَبْلَكَ، وَيَقُولُونَ فِيكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَقُولُ فِيهِمْ، إِنَّمَا يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَى الصَّالِحِينَ بِمَا يُجْرِي اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَلَى أَلْسُنِ عِبَادِهِ. فَلْيَكُنْ أَحَبَّ الدَّخَائِرِ إِلَيْكَ ذَخِيرَةُ الْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ، فَاْمَلِكْ هَوَاكَ، وَشَحْ يَنْفُسِكَ عَمَّا لَا يَجِلُّ لَكَ، فَإِنَّ الشَّحَّ بِالنَّفْسِ الْأَنْصَافُ مِنْهَا قَيْمًا أَحَبَّتْ وَكَرِهَتْ.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised to Malik al-Ashtar, his appointed governor to Egypt

"Then, know, O Malik, that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticise you as you criticised them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allah circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures. Therefore, the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds. So, control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes." (Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53)

This explicitly establishes self-mastery as the foundation upon which all other administrative virtues are built.

Key Principles of Effective Administration

The letter to Malik al-Ashtar outlines numerous principles for effective and just governance, stemming from a leader who has mastered their own self:

1. **Justice and Equity:** The paramount principle is a just and equitable approach, characterized by openness, compassion, magnanimity, and inclusiveness. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) emphasized,

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): مِلَاكُ الِ سِيَاَسَةِ الْعَدْلِ

"The yardstick of good management is justice."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9714)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): الْعَدْلُ جُنَّةُ الدُّوَلِ

"Justice is the shield of the nations." (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1873)

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحَكَمِ عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ النُّعْمَانِ عَنْ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ حَازِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ مَنْ تَعَصَّبَ أَوْ تُعَصَّبَ لَهُ فَقَدْ خَلَعَ رِبْقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ مِنْ عُنُقِهِ.

Muhammad b. Yahya from Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Isa from Ali b. al-Hakam from Dawud b. al-Nu'man from Mansur b. Hazim from Abu Abdillah (as) who said: "Whoever discriminates or supports discrimination, he has taken off the collar of belief from his neck."

(Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 123, Hadith #1)

There must be no discrimination of people on the basis of religion, tribe, wealth, and social status.

2. **Compassion and Humility towards Subjects:** A leader must exhibit kindness, compassion and love for your subjects.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السَّلامُ): فِعْلُ الْمَعْرُوفِ ، وَإِغَاثَةُ الْمَلْهُوفِ ، وَإِقْرَاءُ الصُّيُوفِ ، آلَةُ السِّيَادَةِ

"Performing common acts of courtesy, bringing solace to a grief-stricken person, and being hospitable to guests is the instrument of leadership."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6585)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised to Malik al-Ashtar, his appointed governor to Egypt

وَلْيَكُنْ آثَرُ رُؤُوسِ جُنْدِكَ عِنْدَكَ مِنْ وَاسَاھُمْ فِي مَعُونَتِهِ، وَأَفْضَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ جِدَّتِهِ يَمَّا يَسْعُهُمْ يَسْعٌ مِنْ وَرَاءَهُمْ مِنْ خُلُوفِ أَهْلِيهِمْ حَتَّى يَكُونَ هَمُّهُمْ هَمًّا وَاجِدًا فِي جِهَادِ الْعَدُوِّ، فَإِنَّ عَظَمَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ يَعْطِفُ قُلُوبَهُمْ عَلَيْكَ. وَإِنَّ أَفْضَلَ قُرَّةِ عَيْنِ الْوَلَاةِ اسْتِقَامَةُ الْعَدْلِ فِي الْأَيْلَادِ، وَظُهُورُ مَوَدَّةِ الرَّعِيَّةِ، وَإِنَّهُ لَا تَظْهَرُ مَوَدَّتُهُمْ إِلَّا بِسَلَامَةِ صُدُورِهِمْ، وَلَا تَصِحُّ تَصِيحَّتُهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَيْطَتِهِمْ عَلَى وِلَاةِ أُمُورِهِمْ، وَقَلَّةِ اسْتِنْقَالِ دُولِهِمْ، وَتَرْكِ اسْتِبْطَاءِ انْقِطَاعِ مُدَّتِهِمْ. فَافْسَحْ فِي أَمَالِهِمْ، وَوَاصِلْ فِي حُسْنِ الثَّنَاءِ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَتَعْدِيدِ مَا أُبْلِيَ ذَوُو الْبَلَاءِ مِنْهُمْ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الذِّكْرِ لِحُسْنِ أَعْمَالِهِمْ تَهْزُ الشُّجَاعَ، وَتُحَرِّضُ النَّاكِلَ، إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ.

"That commander of the army should have such a position before you that he renders help to them equitably and spends from his money on them and on

those of their families who remain behind so that all their worries converge on the one worry for fighting the enemy. Your kindness to them will turn their hearts to you. The most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas and the manifestation of the love of their subjects, but the subjects' love manifests itself only when their hearts are clean. Their good wishes prove correct only when they surround their commanders (to protect them). Do not regard their positions to be a burden over them and do not keep watching for the end of their tenure. Therefore, be broad-minded in regard to their desires, continue praising them and recounting the good deeds of those who have shown such deeds, because the mention of good actions shakes the brave and rouses the weak, if Allah so wills."

(Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): عَامِلُ سَائِرِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِنصَافِ، وَعَامِلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِالْإِيثَارِ

"Treat ordinary people with fairness and treat the believers with self-sacrifice."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6342)

Imam Zayn al-Abideen said:

فَأَمَّا حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَإِنْ تَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهُمْ صَارُوا رَعِيَّتَكَ لضعفهم قوتك فيجب أن تعدل فيهم وتكون لهم كالوالد الرحيم، وتغفر لهم جهلهم، ولا تعاجلهم بالعقوبة، وتشكر الله عز وجل على ما آتاك من القوة عليهم.

"The right of your subjects through authority is that you should know that they have been made subjects through their weakness and your strength. Hence it is incumbent upon you to act with justice toward them and to be like a compassionate father toward them. You should forgive them their ignorance and not hurry them to punishment and you should thank God for the power over them which He has given to you."

(Risalat al-Huquq by Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s), Book 1, Chapter 5, Hadith #1)

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said

حدثنا أبي رضي الله عنه قال: حدثنا محمد بن يحيى العطار، عن محمد ابن أحمد، عن عبد الصمد بن محمد، عن حنان بن سدير، عن أبي عبد الله، عن أبيه عليهما السلام قال: إن الامامة لاتصلح إلا لرجل فيه ثلاث خصال: ورع يحجزه عن المحارم، وحلم يملك به غضبه، وحسن الخلافة على من ولي حتى يكون له كالوالد الرحيم

(The compiler of the book narrated) that his father - may God be pleased with him - narrated that Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Attar quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ahmad, on the authority of Abdul Samad ibn Muhammad, on the authority of Han'nun ibn Sadeer, on the authority of Aba Abdullah as-Sadiq (MGB) that his father (MGB) said, "No one deserves to be a leader unless he has three characteristics: piety which would hinder him from doing the forbidden deeds; patience which would help him control his anger; and good deputyship over those whom he leads just as if he is their kind father."

(Al-Khisal by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 4, Chapter 77, Hadith #1)

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said

أفضل الملوك من أعطي ثلاث خصال: الرأفة، والجود، والعدل.

"The best of the leaders is the one given three traits: clemency, munificence, and justice." (Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 319)

3. **Prioritization of the Vulnerable:** The poor, deprived, and destitute must find their rightful place on the economic and public agenda before the government, which should play a pro-active and pro-poor role.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَنِي إِمَامًا لِخَلْقِهِ، فَقَرَضَ عَلَيَّ التَّقْدِيرَ فِي نَفْسِي وَمَطْعَمِي وَمَشْرَبِي وَمَلْبَسِي كَضَعْفَاءِ النَّاسِ، كَيَيْفَتَدِي الْفَقِيرُ يَفْقُرِي، وَلَا يُطْغِي الْغَنِيُّ غِنَاهُ

"Certainly Allah has made me an Imam for His creation, so He has made it mandatory upon me to take into consideration myself, my food, my drink, and my clothing like that of the weak people [of the community], so that the poor may follow me in my poverty and the wealth of the rich does not embolden them to intimidation." (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 40, p. 336, no. 17)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ عَلَى الْإِمَامِ إِلَّا مَا حُمِّلَ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ: الْإِبْلَاقُ فِي الْمَوْعِظَةِ، وَالْاجْتِهَادُ فِي النَّصِيحَةِ، وَالْإِحْيَاءُ لِلشَّيْءِ، وَإِقَامَةُ الْحُدُودِ عَلَى مَسْتَجِبِّهَا، وَإِصْدَارُ الشُّهُمَانِ عَلَى أَهْلِهَا

"Verily there is no obligation on the Imam except that which has been devolved on him by Allah, namely to convey exhortations, to strive to give good counsel, to keep the prophetic practice alive, to enforce penalties on

those liable to them and to issue shares [of taxes and charity] to those who deserve them." (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah li Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v. 7, p. 167)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى قَرَضَ عَلَى أُمَّةِ الْعَدْلِ (الحق) أَنْ يُقَدِّرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَضَعِفَةَ النَّاسِ، كَيْلَا يَتَبَيَّعَ بِالْفَقِيرِ فَقْرُهُ

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Allah, most High, has made obligatory upon the leaders of justice [truth] to equate themselves with the weak ones from among of people, so that the poor cannot be intimidated as a result of his poverty."

(Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 209)

الإمام عليّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى قَرَضَ عَلَى الْأَغْنِيَاءِ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ بِقَدْرِ مَا يَكْفِي فُقَرَاءَهُمْ، وَإِنْ جَاعُوا وَعَرُّوا وَجَهَدُوا قِيمَتِ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ، وَحَقُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُحَاسِبَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيُعَذِّبَهُمْ عَلَيْهِ

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: 'Verily Allah allotted to the rich their wealth in proportion to what would also suffice the poor from among them, so if they go hungry or are naked or exhausted, it is only because of the rich people's deprivation of them. And Allah has a right to take them to account for it on the Day of Resurrection and to punish them for it.'

(Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 16840)

الله الله في الفقراء والمساكين فشاركوهم في معاشكم

Amir al-muminin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Allah, Allah, with regards to the poor and the paupers, so share with them in your livelihoods."

(Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 198)

4. **Integrity and Accountability of Officials:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stressed the importance of selecting righteous and honest officials, avoiding those who had been ministers to the despotic rulers before.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised to Malik al-Ashtar, his appointed governor to Egypt:

شَرُّ وَرَزَائِكَ مَنْ كَانَ لِلْأَشْرَارِ قَبْلَكَ وَزِيْرًا، وَمَنْ شَرَكَهُمْ فِي الْأَثَامِ، فَلَا يَكُونَنَّ لَكَ يَطَانَةً، فَإِنَّهُمْ أَعْوَانُ الْأَثَمَةِ، وَإِخْوَانُ الظُّلْمَةِ، وَأَنْتَ وَاجِدٌ مِنْهُمْ خَيْرَ الْخَلْفِ مِمَّنْ لَهُ مِثْلُ آرَائِهِمْ وَتَفَادِيهِمْ، وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ آصَارِهِمْ وَأَوْزَارِهِمْ وَآثَامِهِمْ، مِمَّنْ لَمْ يُعَاوَنْ ظَالِمًا عَلَى ظُلْمِهِ، وَلَا آثِمًا عَلَى إِثْمِهِ، أُولَئِكَ أَخَفُّ عَلَيْكَ مَوْتَةً، وَأَحْسَنُ لَكَ مَعُونَةً، وَأَخْتَى عَلَيْكَ عَظْفًا، وَأَقْلُّ لِعَيْرِكَ إِلْفًا، فَاتَّخِذْ أُولَئِكَ خَاصَّةً لِمَخْلَوَاتِكَ وَخَفَلَاتِكَ،

"The worst minister for you is he who has been a minister for mischievous persons before you, and who joined them in sins. Therefore, he should not be your chief man, because they are abettors of sinners and brothers of the oppressors. You can find good substitutes for them who will be like them in their views and influence, while not being like them in sins and vices. They have never assisted an oppressor in his oppression or a sinner in his sin. They will give you the least trouble and the best support. They will be most considerate towards you and the least inclined towards others. Therefore, make them your chief companions in privacy as well as in public."

(Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53)

He himself demonstrated this principle by refusing to use public resources for private purposes and sharing state income with the poor.

5. **Ethical Economic Management:** Public resources should not be used for private purposes. Tax revenue should be primarily used for financing public welfare, and the development of lands and care for traders, workers, and industrialists are crucial for public prosperity. Efficient organization and the avoidance of squandering is part of good management.
6. **Moderation and Foresight:**

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): رَأْسُ السِّيَاسَةِ اسْتِعْمَالُ الزَّفَقِ

"The peak of good management is the employment of moderation."

(Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 5266)

Leaders must possess the greatest socio-political and socio-economical insight and understand the interdependence of various societal classes, viewing society as a closely woven net and reciprocal aspect.

7. **Servant Leadership:** Despite holding immense power, Imam Ali reminded Malik that all leaders are servants of a higher power and must act with humility and responsibility towards Allah and those they lead.

The Role of Leaders and Its Connection to Individual Development

Divine Mandate and Guidance

In Islam, leadership is a fundamental and divinely mandated concept, recognized for its crucial role in shaping the thoughts and actions of individuals and society. Allah has consistently appointed designated leaders, such as Prophets and Imams, to guide and guard humanity. This is encapsulated in the Quranic verse, "You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people" (Quran 13:7).

Leaders in Islam are entrusted with profound responsibilities that span spiritual, moral, social, and executive dimensions. Their role is not merely one of governance but of comprehensive guardianship and service.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) taught that

سَيِّدُ الْقَوْمِ خَادِمُهُمْ.

"The leader of a people should serve (the people)."

(Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, Vol. 4, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5791).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ): سَيِّدُ الْقَوْمِ خَادِمُهُمْ

"The chief of a people should serve them." (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 17517)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ): سَيِّدُ الْقَوْمِ خَادِمُهُمْ فِي السَّفَرِ

"During a journey, the chief of the people should be their servant."

(Makarim al-Akhlaq, v. 1, p. 536, no. 1866)

Reformation of Thoughts and Actions

Leadership is fundamental because of its crucial roles and effects in the reformation of the thoughts and actions of the individuals in the society. Leaders guide and guard humanity, saving individuals from going astray and providing the direction necessary for moral and intellectual growth. True leadership cultivates an environment where individual talents can flourish, whereas false leadership can demolish them.

Guidance by Example

A leader's conduct significantly impacts the behavior of their followers. Islamic teachings emphasize that "people are heavily influenced by their leaders." Therefore,

a leader must first educate and discipline themselves before attempting to educate others. As stated by Amir al-muminin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) that whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others; and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by the tongue. The person who teaches and instructs his own self is more entitled to esteem than he who teaches and instructs others.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

الإمام عليّ (عليه السلام): مَنْ نَصَبَ نَفْسَهُ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا فَعَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَبْدَأَ بِتَعْلِيمِ نَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ تَعْلِيمِ غَيْرِهِ ، وَلَيْكُنْ تَأْدِيبُهُ بِسِيرَتِهِ قَبْلَ تَأْدِيبِهِ بِلِسَانِهِ ، وَمُعَلِّمٌ نَفْسِهِ وَمُؤَدِّبُهَا أَحَقُّ بِالْإِجْلَالِ مِنْ مُعَلِّمِ النَّاسِ وَمُؤَدِّبِهِمْ

"He who appoints himself a leader of people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others. And his discipline of them must be through his own example rather than through his words. The one who teaches and disciplines himself is more worthy of esteem than the one who teaches and disciplines people."

(Bihar al-Anwar, v. 2, p. 56, no. 33)

وَأَمَّا بَعْدَ هَذَا، فَلَا تُطَوِّلَنَّ اخْتِجَابَكَ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِكَ، فَإِنَّ اخْتِجَابَ الْوَلَاةِ عَنِ الرَّعِيَّةِ شَعْبُهُ مِنَ الضَّيِّقِ، وَقَلَّةُ عِلْمٍ بِالْأُمُورِ، وَالْاِخْتِجَابُ مِنْهُمْ يَقْطَعُ عَنْهُمْ عِلْمَ مَا اخْتَجَبُوا دُونَهُ فَيَصْغُرُ عَنْدهُمْ الْكَبِيرُ، وَيَعْظُمُ الصَّغِيرُ، وَيَقْبَحُ الْحَسَنُ، وَيَخْسُنُ الْقَبِيحُ، وَيُشَابُّ الْحَقُّ بِالْبَاطِلِ، وَإِنَّمَا الْوَالِي بَشَرٌ لَا يَعْرِفُ مَا تَوَارَى عَنْهُ النَّاسُ بِهِ مِنَ الْأُمُورِ،

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised to Malik al-Ashtar, his appointed governor to Egypt:

"Then, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for a long time, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a kind of narrow-sightedness and causes ignorance about their affairs. Seclusion from them also prevents them from the knowledge of those things which they do not know and as a result they begin to regard big matters as small and small matters as big, good matters as bad and bad matters as good, while the truth becomes confused with falsehood. After all, a governor is a human being and cannot have knowledge of things which people keep hidden from him."

(Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53)

Fostering Holistic Growth

Islam, as the highest school of training, aims to nourish noble virtues and precious qualities in human beings. It fosters the development of a wholesome personality," characterized by strong thoughts, stability, moderation, harmony, and an inner

balance. Leaders contribute to this by providing guidance that aligns with God's will, fostering the development of the human soul, and guiding individuals in all dimensions of life.

Societal Impact of Individual Nafs Development

The Interconnectedness of Individual and Society

Islam views a profound and real relationship between an individual and society, where people contribute to society through their existence, powers, specialties, and characteristics. This interaction gives society its own independent entity and characteristics. The growth and development of an individual are direct indicators of the growth and development of society, highlighting that the individual cannot be separated from the community.

The Quranic declaration, "Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" (Quran 13:11), underscores that individual transformation is a necessary precursor to societal transformation.

Societal Transformation and Reform

When individuals cultivate spiritual growth, self-awareness, and live according to Islamic principles, society as a whole is reformed. Individual beliefs and actions are closely tied to the ideal society; by improving individual selves, a healthy social existence is nurtured. The beliefs, conduct, and destiny of a society are directly attributable to its members.

Strengthening Social Bonds

Islam emphasizes decrees and regulations that strengthen social bonds and promote social well-being. Individual actions, such as benevolence and helping the needy, directly impact the well-being of society. Kindness and generosity foster positive societal effects, while selfish or neglectful behavior can lead to negative consequences for everyone.

Fostering a Collective Ethos

Islam seeks to balance individualism and social issues, integrating both to create a harmonious society where individuals can grow and develop their skills. An Islamic educational program aims to expand social consciousness and intellectual horizons,

helping people emerge from selfishness. This program develops a collective ethos while strengthening the individual spirit, reconciling individualism with cooperativeness, ensuring individuals are neither hollow nor self-centered.

Cultivating Social Responsibility

Individual spiritual growth and social responsibility are closely interwoven in Islam. Being a devout Muslim requires both personal spiritual development and concern for society's welfare. Individuals are viewed as brothers, encouraged to observe peace, reconciliation, and mutual assistance in securing material and spiritual goods.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لَا يَهْتَمُّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَسْمَعَ رَجُلًا يُنَادِي يَا لِمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ . (بحارالانوار ج 74 ص 339)

"One who starts a morning in a condition that he does not make effort about the affairs of the Muslims is not one of the Muslims.

And a person who hears the voice of a man who calls the Muslims to his help but he does not respond him, is not a Muslim" (Bihar ul-Anwar Vol. 74, P 339)

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said

عَلَيْهِ بُنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ النَّوْفَلِيِّ عَنِ السَّكُونِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لَا يَهْتَمُّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ .

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from al-Nawfali from al-Sakuni from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) who has said the following: "The Messenger of Allah has said, Whoever wakes up without caring about the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."

(Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 70, Hadith #1)

عن محمد بن القاسم الهاشمي، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) اقل: من لم يهتم بأُمور المسلمين فليس بمسلم

From Muhammad bin Al-Qasim Al-Hashimi, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: Whoever does not care about the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim.

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 3, Chapter 18, Hadith 21700)

Balancing Individual Freedom and Societal Obligations

The Nature of Freedom in Islam

Islamic teachings define freedom differently from purely secular or liberal thought. While Western systems often limit individual freedom primarily by the freedom of others, Islam introduces additional dimensions:

- **Not Absolute:** Freedom in Islam is not absolute. It is inherently linked to responsibility and duty, with the understanding that true freedom involves liberating oneself from desires and living a life guided by moral principles.
- **Means to a Worthy Life:** Freedom is considered a means to achieve a worthy life, not an end in itself. It empowers individuals to choose their path and actions, but these choices are subject to divine accountability.
- **Emancipation from Servitude:** The Islamic perception of freedom includes emancipation from any form of slavery and the enjoyment of legal rights, provided these do not violate the rights of others. It also implies attaining independence from the service of any tyrant.

Three Categories of Rights

A core principle in Islam is the inseparability of individual rights and social responsibilities, with responsibilities often preceding rights. Islam divides rights into three categories: those of the individual, those of society, and those of God. Individual freedom is thus limited not only by the rights of other people but also by the rights of God and one's own body.

- **Rights of God:** These encompass adhering to divine commands and avoiding actions that are detrimental to oneself or society, as these are considered an infringement upon God's trust.
- **Rights of Society:** Individual actions must contribute to the well-being and order of the community, promoting cooperation and the common good over personal desires.
- **Rights of the Self/Body:** Islam holds individuals responsible even for the use of their own bodies, prohibiting self-harm or abuse. As the Quran states: "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned." (Quran 17:36).

Accountable Freedom

In Islam, freedom is always accompanied by accountability. Every choice an individual makes is met with divine accountability, leading to what is termed accountable freedom. This means using freedom in a way that is in accordance with Islamic laws and rules, controlling one's heart and mind.

The Individual's Role in Society

Islam views the individual as an integral part of the society, not an independent entity, with a profound relationship between personal actions and communal welfare:

- **Interdependence:** Individuals contribute to society with their unique existence and characteristics, and society, in turn, has a responsibility to care for individual interests. The growth of an individual reflects the growth of society.
- **Common Good Prioritized:** The interest of society often takes precedence over individual interests. Islam emphasizes working for the common good and serving Allah through a clean life within society.
- **Collective Responsibility:** While each Muslim is responsible for their own actions, there is also a shared, collective responsibility for the well-being of the community. This extends to defending the country's advantages and remaining aware of community needs.
- **Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil:** Individuals have obligations towards the Islamic message, including enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, which may sometimes require decisive actions to uphold Islamic principles.

Conclusion

The Islamic teaching that "He who is able to manage his own self truly understands management." (Imam Ali (peace be upon him), Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 8013) encapsulates a profound truth about the nature of leadership and the human condition. The capacity to govern others justly and effectively is inseparable from the capacity to govern one's own self.

The comprehensive framework of Tahdhib al-Nafs (self-management and refinement) provides the foundation for this capacity. Through the purification of the soul from vices (Takhliyah), the adornment of the soul with virtues (Tahliyah), the internal struggle against base desires (Jihad al-Nafs), continuous self-accountability (Muhasibat al-Nafs), and vigilant self-observation (Muraqaba), the individual develops the spiritual and moral qualities necessary for leadership.

Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) teachings, particularly in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, provide a timeless guide for leaders, emphasizing justice, mercy, humility, and self-discipline. His unwavering commitment to truth and justice, even at great personal cost, serves as the supreme example of a leader whose Nafs is fully submissive to the Divine Will.

The societal implications of individual Nafs development are profound. As individuals purify their souls and align their conduct with divine guidance, they contribute

directly to the spiritual, moral, and material advancement of their families, communities, and society as a whole. The collective success of a governed entity is directly proportional to the spiritual and ethical development of its individual members, particularly those in positions of leadership.

In essence, Islamic leadership is a divine trust, requiring profound self-mastery, unwavering commitment to justice for all, and a compassionate, inclusive approach to governance, all rooted in sincerity and adherence to Islamic principles. As Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated: "He who is able to manage his own self truly understands management" (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 8013).

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