

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

Allāh exalts those of you who
believe and those who are given
knowledge to high ranks

Holy Qur'ān (58 : 11)

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies
Vol. 8, No. 3, Spring 1424/2003

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Published by:
The Ahl al- Bayt ('a) World Assembly

Address:
Keshāvarz Blvd., Corner of Quds St., Opp. Laleh Park

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 14155-3831
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax:
+98-21-8950882

Email:
forughi@ahl-ul-bait.org

Website: <http://ahl-ul-bait.org>

Subscription Rates		
	Per Copy	One Year
Iran	4,000 Rials	15,000 Rials
India & Pakistan	50 Rs.	200 Rs.
Other Countries	8 US\$	30 US\$

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1. To provide a forum for scholars to make analytical studies of Islamic topics and themes.
2. To advance the cause of better understanding of the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) contribution to Islam.
3. To publish English translations of Arabic and Persian works of Muslim scholars.
4. To endeavour to find Islamic answers to questions relating to the contemporary social, political, and moral problems.

* * * * *

Scholars and writers from all over the world are invited to contribute to this journal.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

CONSONANTS:

ء	'	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	s	ن	n
ث	th	ض	z	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	t	و	w
ح	h	ظ	z	ی	y
خ	kh	ع	'	Persian Letters	
د	d	غ	gh	پ	p
ذ	dh	ف	f	چ	ch
ر	r	ق	q	ژ	zh
ز	z	ک	k	گ	g

VOWELS:

Long:	ا	ā	Short:	ـِ	a	Doubled	ـِـِ	یـِـِ	iyy (final from i)
	و	ū		ـُ	u		ـُـُ	وـُـُ	uww (final from ū)
	ی	ī		ـِـِ	i		Diphthongs:	ـِـِو	او or او
				ـِـِی	ای or ای				

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The *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a)

By Muhammad ‘Alī Mahdawī Rād

Translated by Zahrā Shujā‘ Khānī

References to the “*Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a)” can be found in many *ahādīth* (Prophetic Traditions) some of which are of irrefutable authenticity and, thus, no one can claim to harbour any doubts concerning the actual existence of the mentioned *Mushaf*. We shall begin our discussion by citing some of these *ahādīth*.

Muhammad bin Yahya quotes Ahmad bin Muhammad, who quotes Ibn Mahbūb, who in turn quotes (‘Alī) Ibn Ri‘āb, who says Abū ‘Ubaydah has reported that one of Imam Sādiq’s (‘a) followers enquired from him about the *Jafīr* to which the Imam (‘a) replied:

“The *Jafīr* is an ox hide covered with knowledge”. The man asked what the *Jāmi‘ah* was, to which the Imam (‘a) replied: “It is a scroll, 70 cubits long and with the width of an animal hide that is as thick as a fat camel’s thigh (when rolled up), containing all that people need to know; (it contains) all affairs including the compensation for as much as a scratch”. The man then asked: What is the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)? The Imam (‘a) remained silent for a long time and then replied: “You are

asking questions about things that you need to know as well as what you do not need to know. Fātimah (‘a) lived for a period of seventy-five days following the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (S) and was in deep grief for her father (S). Gabriel would come and console her on the grief for her father and would calm her down. He informed her of her father and his position and gave her the information on the fate of her descendants after her. ‘Ali (‘a) would write this down and this is the (those writings are) ‘*Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)’¹.

A Glance at the *Sanad* of this *Hadīth*

‘Allāmah Majlisī has referred to the above *hadīth* as a *sahīh* (authentic) one.² A brief glance at the *sanad* of the *hadīth* proves the conviction of the ‘Allāmah’s opinion regarding its authenticity.

1. Muhammad bin Yahyā al-Attār is a *thiqah* (trustworthy narrator of *ahādīth*). Najāshī has mentioned him with titles such as *thiqah* (reliable), ‘*ayn* (witness), and *kathīr al-hadīth* (the narrator of numerous Prophetic Traditions).³

2. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin ‘Isā, is from among the reliable narrators.⁴

3. Ibn Mahbūb is either Hasan bin Mahbūb or is Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Mahbūb, and both of them are reliable narrators.⁵

4. Ibn Ri’āb is ‘Ali bin Ri’āb regarding whom Shaykh Tūsī has said: “... He is reliable, and of honourable character.”⁶

5. Abū ‘Ubaydah is Ziyād bin ‘Isā Abū ‘Ubaydah al-Khaddā.⁷

Thus, it becomes evident that this *hadīth* is from among the *sihāh* (authentic) ones and has been narrated by reliable and eminent narrators.

This *hadīth* indicates that Gabriel had dictated the contents of the *Mushaf* for the purpose of consoling the pure soul of

Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), and Imam ‘Alī (‘a) put it down in writing. As briefly mentioned, the *Mushaf*, among other things contained information on the fates of Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) descendants after her. There are a number of similar *ahādīth* with slight variations which is the reason why this *hadīth* has been subject to debate and discussion. We shall now quote another narration on this topic.

Husayn bin Abī al-‘Alā says I heard Abā ‘Abdullah Imam al-Sādiq (‘a) saying:

I am in possession of the ‘White *Jafr*’. I asked him (‘a) what does it contain. He replied: The Psalms of David, the Torah of Moses, the Evangel of Jesus, the Scriptures of Abraham and (the explanation of) every *halāl* and every *harām*, as well as the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), which does not contain anything from the Qur’ān. It (the White *Jafr*) contains everything regarding (which knowledge) people depend upon us – and we are not dependent upon anyone – (it includes) even the punishment for a whiplash, half a whiplash, the quarter of a whiplash, and the compensation for (as much as) a scratch.⁸

Such *ahādīth* as this one, first and foremost highlight the greatness, the magnificence, and the uniqueness of Hazrat Zahrā’s (‘a) personality. Needless to say, repeated mentions of the greatness of her personality and her lofty status have been recorded very frequently in the Islamic teachings and the *sunnah* and there is hardly any need to refresh our memories on that front.

Another aspect of the greatness of the personality of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) – to which we will make a reference at the end of our discussion since it is intrinsically related with our subject – is the visits paid by the Archangel Gabriel to her.

The *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and Related Discussions

Let us begin our discussion on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) by drawing our attention to the following points with reference to the *Mushaf*:

1. What was the *Mushaf*?
2. Who dictated its contents?
3. Who noted down its contents?
4. What happened to the *Mushaf*?
5. Its size and volume.

The Meaning of *Mushaf* in Literary Arabic Terminology

Before proceeding any further, it needs to be emphasized that the very fact that Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) book is entitled the *Mushaf* does not in any way indicate that it was just one more among the other *masāhif* (pl. of *mushaf*) that were written in those times like the *mushaf* of ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, the *mushaf* of ‘Ayishah, the *mushaf* of Ubayy bin Ka‘b and others. Moreover, some of the narrations that will be quoted hereafter should not be an excuse for some people to revive the old and baseless allegations against the Shi‘ites claiming that by believing in the existence of the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), the Shiites believe that the Glorious Qur’ān has been distorted and that according to their beliefs, a part of the original Qur’ān has been destroyed. We emphasize on the point that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) has never been regarded on par with the Glorious Qur’ān, neither in the sense of its meaning in the Arabic terminology nor in the views of the scholars and exegetists. It is interesting to note that the term *mushaf* was also used to refer to the Qur’ān and particularly in the period following the advent of Islam. On the basis of the definition of lexicographers the term *mushaf* refers to “a collection of written

material which is bound between two covers”. In order to verify our point on this issue, let us refer to one of the oldest dictionaries that defines the term *mushaf* as:

The reason it is called *Mushaf* is that it has been collected as a written text between two covers as a book.⁹

A glance at the practical usage of this term in the *ahādīth* indicates its literal meaning. Moreover, if the Qur’ān has occasionally been referred to as the *mushaf*, it is also in this context. To cite an example, let us take a look at the following narration of the noble Prophet (S) who said:

Whoever recites the Qur’ān in the *mushaf* (bound between two covers) will receive two thousand merits and whoever recites it without the *mushaf* – I think he said (sic) – a thousand merits.¹⁰

It is upon this basis that any written text that was bound between two covers was called a *mushaf*. Let us also take a glance at the following historical text that says:

Abi Ishāq al-Fazārī says: I asked al-Awzā’i. He said: We found *Mushaf* from the *Masāhif* of the Romans in their lands.¹¹

It may be worth mentioning that Awzā’i was born in the year 88 AH and died in the year 157 AH.¹² Therefore, the above-mentioned historical text indicates that in the 1st century AH, this term was used in a general sense and was employed to indicate any written text with the mentioned characteristics. To quote another instance, Abū Sa’id Khudrī was asked to write a *hadīth* to which he replied: “I will not write anything. Do you want to make the Qur’ān like the other *masāhif* (pl. of *mushaf*) that you read?! There were people among you who would narrate *ahādīth* for us and we would memorize them; you should do the same and memorize (the *ahādīth*) like we did.¹³ It is evident that by using the term *masāhif*, what Abū Sa’id meant

was “books” in general, and not the Qur’ān, in particular. In the same manner, this term was used by the earliest scholars like Jāhiz who has written thus regarding the division of his book:

The first *Mushaf* (part) has been completed and the second *Mushaf* of *Kitāb al-Hayawān* follows it.¹⁴

In his valuable book, *Masādir al-Shi’r al-Jāhili*, Nāsir al-Dīn al-Asad writes:

In was in this manner that they employed the term *mushaf* for the compiled book and they meant ‘books’ in general and not only the Qur’ān.¹⁵

Therefore, if people like Qusaymī come across the title *mushaf* and read that it was many times the size of the Qur’ān – as we shall mention later on – and conclude it to mean that the Shi’ites believe in the distortion of the Qur’ān, their belief is undoubtedly either out of sheer ignorance or out of malice combined with a sickness of heart.¹⁶

Who Wrote Down the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)

First and foremost, it is important to know who had taken down the *Mushaf* in writing. The *hadīth* mentioned in the beginning of this article removes any doubt in this regard. It clearly states *wa kāna ‘Alī yaktubu zālik* (‘Ali would write this down...)¹⁷

There are other *ahādīth* that state the same truth in different phrases. For example, while describing the *Mushaf*, Imam Sādiq (‘a) has said: And the Commander of the Faithful would write the words he heard until whatever he recorded became a *mushaf* (book bound between two covers).¹⁸ In yet another *hadīth* it is mentioned: and (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) wrote in his handwriting.¹⁹

Therefore, all the *ahādīth* that have in one way or the other mentioned the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) are unanimous in

attributing its writing to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (‘a). As against all the existing narrations there is only one narration reported by Ibn Rustam Tabarī that states that the *Mushaf* was brought to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) by the angels in a written form and does not mention the dictation of its contents to Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and its being written by him. In the words of the narration:

When Allah willed that the *Mushaf* be sent down to Hazrat Zahrā (‘a) He commanded Gabriel, Michael and Isrāfil (Seraph, the angel who would blow the final trumpet of death) to carry it down. In this way, on a Friday eve – in the night when it was in its two-third – they descended when Hazrat Zahrā (‘a) was occupied in her late midnight prayer (*tahajjud*). After she finished her late midnight prayer, they greeted this noble personage and placed the *Mushaf* upon her lap.²⁰

Needless to say, that by indicating the phrase “they placed the *Mushaf* upon her lap”, Tabarī meant that it was the complete book itself that was sent down and not merely its contents, a statement which clearly contradicts the *ahādīth* mentioned above earlier. Thus, in order to resolve this contradiction, we would need to either interpret the above-mentioned phrase as meaning its “dictation” so as not to contradict the fact (based on the reports of many narrations) that the *Mushaf* was written down by Imam ‘Ali (‘a) – or the other option would be to refute this narration altogether and on the basis of some evidence consider it as invalid. Moreover, it is important to note that in the chain of the narrators of Tabarī’s *hadīth* we come across the name of Ja‘far bin Muhammad bin Mālik Fazārī who has been accused of “creating corruption in religion,”²¹ forging *ahādīth*, quoting through vague sources, lying,²² and exaggeration, and on the basis of the report of Ibn al-Ghazā’irī, “all the flaws of the weak ones have collected in his personality.”²³ It would therefore be more appropriate to refute and discard this

narration.²⁴ Therefore, based upon this consideration, it is the other narrations that retain their authenticity and the answer to the question of who wrote down the *Mushaf*, beyond all doubt, is Imam ‘Alī (‘a).

Who Dictated the Contents of the *Mushaf*

It was earlier indicated that the contents of the *Mushaf* were dictated by Gabriel and it was Imam ‘Alī (‘a) who put them down in writing. The narrations that have reached us on this matter are, however, not quite identical. We shall now quote several of these narrations regarding who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf* in order to examine as to how it would be possible to reach a conclusion about the varying contents of these narrations.

1. Allah, the Almighty:

Some narrations have explicitly stated that the *Mushaf* was dictated by Allah. A narration quoted by Abū Basīr, from Imam Sādiq (‘a), states:

Indeed this thing, it is the dictation of Allah.²⁵

2. An Angel:

Some narrations have mentioned that it was an angel who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf*. Hammād bin ‘Uthmān has quoted Imam Sādiq (‘a) as having said:

Then Allah sent to her an angel to console her grief and to speak to her. She would calm down and the Commander of the Faithful told her: If you experience such a feeling and hear a voice, tell me and I will act accordingly. The Commander of the Faithful wrote down all that was heard. Whatever he recorded became a *Mushaf*.²⁶

This narration clearly proves that Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was present when the angel dictated the contents of this text and that

he actually heard the angel himself as he took down the contents.

3. Gabriel:

There are some narrations that directly refer to Gabriel as having been the one who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf*.²⁷ A narration by Abū ‘Ubaydah from Imam Sādiq (‘a) which is regarded as an authentic narration by the Islamic scholars states:

Gabriel would come and console her on the grief for her father and would calm her down. He informed her of the fate of her descendants after her. (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) would write this down and this is (those writings) the *Mushaf* of Fātimah.²⁸

This narration directly refers to Gabriel as the one who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf*. According to another narration, ‘Umar bin Yazīd is quoted to have said that he said to Imam Sādiq (‘a):

What Gabriel dictated to (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) was the Qur’ān?
He said: No.²⁹

4. The Messenger of Allah:

There are also some narrations and sources that refer to the Messenger of Allah as the one who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf*. Some of these narrations are as under:

Imam Sādiq (‘a) is quoted to have said: And with us is the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a). As for its contents, by God, it is not the wording from the Qur’ān but is the dictation of the Messenger of Allah in the handwriting of (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a).³⁰

The noble Imam (‘a) has also been quoted to have said:

And with us, by God, is the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a). It does not contain any *āyah* of the Book of Allah (Qur’ān). And indeed, it is the dictation of the Messenger of Allah in the handwriting of (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a).³¹

Some scholars have included another narration among the narrations pertaining to the *Mushaf* according to which it was the Messenger of Allah who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf*. However, it seems this narration does not apparently refer to the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). The text of the narration is hereunder:

And indeed, with us is the book dictated by the Messenger of Allah (S) and in the handwriting of (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a). A scripture which contains (laws pertaining to) all the *harām* and the *halāl*...³²

These narrations indicate that Prophet Muhammad (S) dictated the matter and Imam ‘Alī (‘a) wrote it down.

Let us now ponder over these varying narrations in order to reach a proper understanding of this matter and see if it would be possible to resolve the apparent contradictions in them. It is clear that there is no contradiction between the first three categories since they mention that Allah dictated the *Mushaf*, through an angel, who could be none other than Gabriel. However, there is a clear contradiction between the narration that states Gabriel as the one who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf* and the one that refers to the Prophet (‘a) – i.e. if we take the term the “Messenger of Allah” as meaning Prophet Muhammad (S). Now let us set out to resolve this apparent contradiction. However, before any attempt at resolving this contradiction there is an important point that should be taken into consideration which is vital to this discussion; that is, it would not be possible to easily discard the narrations that refer to Gabriel as the one who dictated the contents of the *Mushaf* since, on the one hand, as stated earlier some of these narrations have reached us through authentic chains of narrators, while on the other hand, these narrations explicitly state that the dictation, the writing, and the compilation of the *Mushaf* had taken place after the Prophet’s (S) departure from this world and during the

short span of time that Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) had lived after him. Thus, the claim that it was Gabriel who had dictated the contents of the *Mushaf* to the Prophet (S) who in turn had dictated it for Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) cannot be valid.

The Various Probabilities in Helping Resolve the Contradiction

1. The *Mushaf* is a Book of Varying Contents:

It may be argued that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) was a book of varying contents, a part of which was the knowledge that was dictated by the Prophet (S) while another part of it was dictated by Gabriel. Although this is not a very improbable claim, it is not commensurate with the terms used in the mentioned narrations since the text of the narrations indicate that it was one person who dictated the entire *Mushaf*. To cite some examples, let us present the following narrations:

Gabriel would come to her ... inform her of her father ... and this is (those writings are) the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)³³

An angel was sent to her to console her grief and to speak to her and the Commander of the Faithful wrote down all that was heard until this *Mushaf* was recorded.³⁴

It is clearly evident that there are some similarities in the two narrations that prove that Gabriel (the Archangel) had dictated the entire content of the *Mushaf* and, thus, dividing the contents of the *Mushaf* into two sections that were dictated by two “different people” falls in contradiction with the matter of the text of the narration.

2. Two Different *Masāhif*:

‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhsin Amin al-‘Amili believes that Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) possessed two different *masāhif*; one

dictated by the Messenger of Allah (S) and the other dictated by Gabriel (the Archangel).³⁵ Although Sayyid Amīn considers this as a strong probability, he does not provide any evidence to substantiate his claim. However, on the basis of the fact that Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) did possess a couple of other books, Sayyid Amīn’s claim could be taken into strong consideration. One of these books has been referred to by Imam Sādiq (‘a) in his explanations on determining the weight of a dirham over which there was a disagreement. On being questioned by the governor of Medina and by ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan al-Muthannā bin Imam Hasan (‘a) the Imam (‘a) had provided an answer that contradicted what was commonly accepted in those days, and in justification to, his answer, he had referred to the ‘Book of Fātimah (‘a)’ as containing the evidence for the answer provided.³⁶ In another narration, too, the Imam (‘a) has made a reference to the ‘Book of Fātimah (‘a).’³⁷ Particularly since, as will be discussed later, the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not directly contain matters regarding religious laws (*ahkām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), thus proving that what the Prophet (S) had dictated to her was something other than the *Mushaf* under discussion. However, this possibility will weaken if we paid attention to the fact that these narrations do not speak of two different *masāhif*. They actually mention two written collections, whereas whenever the narrations have spoken about the dictation of the *Mushaf*, they refer only to one *Mushaf* and not two.

3. The Title “Messenger of Allah” (*Rasūlullāh*) is a Reference to Gabriel:

This is the most acceptable probability, especially if we examine the following narration quoted by Muhammad bin Muslim from Imam Sādiq (‘a) that says:

And Fātimah (‘a) left behind the *Mushaf*, and that is not the Qur’ān. But it was the word from the Wording of God sent

down upon her through the dictation of the Messenger of Allah and in the writing of ‘Ali (‘a).³⁸

On the face of it, the narration presents a contradiction because in one sentence it says “Word from the Wording of Allah sent down upon her.” This indicates that whatever descended upon Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) was without any intermediary, while another sentence in the same narration mentions that it was “the Messenger of Allah who dictated” (the contents of the *Mushaf*). It is evident that if the term the “Messenger of Allah” refers to the noble Prophet (S), then these two sentences would contradict each other because if, both, the one who dictated the contents as well as the one who brought them down were the Prophet (S), then the statement, “sent down upon her”, would not make any sense. Thus, it is possible to say that the term “messenger of Allah”, here, refers to Gabriel in which case the apparent contradiction will be resolved. Therefore what Imam Sādiq (‘a) meant by the above-mentioned narration is as follows:

Fātimah (‘a) left behind a *Mushaf*, which was other than the Qur’ān. However, it was the ‘Word of Allah’ that was brought down to her, was dictated by Gabriel, and was written down by Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

Based upon what was mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, the supposition of ‘Allāmah Majlisī can be strengthened. This means that it is acceptable that the term, the “messenger of Allah” refers to the Prophet (S) – which was also emphasized upon by Sayyid Muhsin al-Amīn – but the referred argument would suffice for not taking the narration in a very literal form. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the term the “messenger of Allah” has frequently been used to refer to the angels, in both the Qur’ān and in the *sunnah*. To validate our

point, let us present some verses from the Glorious Qur'ān hereunder:

“Allah chooses messengers from among the angels and from among mankind; surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing.” (22:75)

“All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Maker of the angels, messengers flying on the wings...” (35:1)³⁹

“They said: O Lot! We are the messengers of your Lord; they shall by no means reach you.” (11:81)

Let us also present some *ahādīth* in reference to this context:

Abū Basīr quotes Imam Bāqir (‘a) and Imam Sādiq (‘a) as saying:

When Gabriel said, ‘We are messengers from your Lord’, Lot (‘a) said to him: O Gabriel! Hurry up!⁴⁰

Imam Rizā (‘a), through his forefathers quotes from Imam ‘Alī (‘a) who in turn has quoted from the Prophet (S):

They angels are also the messengers of Allah.⁴¹

Furthermore, Imam Bāqir (‘a) through Imam ‘Alī (‘a), has quoted the Prophet (S) as having said:

O ‘Alī! by Allah, whatever I narrate for you, I have heard with my own ears, have perceived with my own heart, and have seen with my own eyes. And what I have not received directly from Allah, I have received from His messenger, Gabriel; therefore never disclose my secrets and my hidden aspects.⁴²

There are a large number of narrations in which the angels as well as Gabriel have been referred to as the “messengers of Allah” and only a few examples from those narrations have been quoted above. Keeping this fact in mind, ‘Allāmah Majlisi’s

view as regards Gabriel being the “messenger of Allah” in this particular context holds strong ground, in which case, the contradiction in these narrations is eliminated and the various narrations that indicate that the *Mushaf* was dictated to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) after the departure of the Prophet (S) from this world, stand valid.

The Contents of the *Mushaf*

The various narrations quoted from the Infallible Imams (‘a) as regards the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) also make clear references to its contents. These narrations have, on the one hand, negated certain things while on the other they have proved some facts regarding the *Mushaf*. In other words, they have emphasized that certain matters are not included in the *Mushaf* under discussion; and all this emphasis was probably indicative of the fact that in those days, people held a pre-conceived notion of the term *mushaf* or there were probably also efforts towards introducing an undesirable concept of this term into the minds of the people. The Imams (‘a) kept this trend in mind and insisted upon rejecting those distortions. At the same time, the Imams (‘a) have also revealed to us, certain details as regards the contents of the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). Let us now take a glance at the contents of these narrations.

1. The *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not contain the Qur’ān:

In almost all the narrations related to the *Mushaf*, it has been clarified that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not at all contain the Qur’ān. It appears that all the emphasis and clarification was due to what was discussed in the above paragraph. The narrations that have been quoted from Imam Sādiq (‘a) about the *Mushaf* contain phrases that negate the

claims that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) contained the Qur’ān. Some of these narrations are as follows:

And with us is the *Mushaf* of Fātimah , but by Allah, it is not what is in the Qur’ān.⁴³

Husayn bin Abī al-‘Alā quotes Imam Sādiq (‘a) saying:

I do not believe the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) contains anything of the Qur’ān.^{44&45}

Muhammad bin Muslim, too, narrates thus from Imam Sādiq (‘a):

And the *Mushaf* of Fātimah which does not contain anything from the Qur’ān.⁴⁶

In another narration quoted from both Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) and Imam Sādiq (‘a) it is emphasized:

And Fātimah has left behind the *Mushaf* which is not the Qur’ān.⁴⁷

Yet another narration is as follows:

No *āyah* of the Qur’ān is in it.⁴⁸

Imam Mūsā bin Ja‘far (‘a) too, has been quoted to have said:

I have the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a), in which there is nothing of the Qur’ān.⁴⁹

That which has been quoted above is but a handful of the narrations negating the claims that the *Mushaf* contained the Qur’ān. There are many other narrations that have clearly emphasized upon this point.

It is now imperative to stress that by keeping in view what was quoted above and by examining the narrations – many of which are authentic or *sahīh* – that have categorically refuted that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) contained the Qur’ān, we

can consider invalid and ignore any report contradictory to these narrations. One such invalid narration is quoted here under:

Muhammad bin Sulaymān Daylamī quoting from Abū Basir attributes a report to Imam Sādiq (‘a) that he recited the first and second *āyahs* of *Sūrah al-Ma‘ārij* with the addition of the phrase *bi wilāyah ‘Alī* after ‘*lil-Kāfirīna*’ in the second *āyah*, saying he found it in such a style in the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a).⁵⁰

The work that ‘Allāmah Majlisī has quoted this narration from, which he refers to with the code *Kanz* is a book entitled the *Kanz Jāmi‘ al-Fawā‘id*, which according to the ‘Allāmah Hilli is a selection from the book, *Ta‘wīl al-Ayāt al-Tāhīrah* of Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Husaynī Istarābādī, that the author or maybe another scholar – perhaps ‘Alī bin Sayf bin Mansūr – has summarized.⁵¹ It appears that the quotation of Majlisī is the brief version of a detailed narration from the book, *al-Kāfi*.⁵² The part of the narration quoted by ‘Allāmah Majlisī has been given by Sharaf al-Dīn Istarābādī under the explanations of the mentioned verse in two different forms but containing the same matter.⁵³ The narrator of all these quotations that are more or less from a similar chain of narrators is Abū Basir Muhammad bin Sulaymān al-Daylamī. Daylamī who has at times been referred to as “al-Basrī” and at other times as “al-Nasrī”⁵⁴ is, according to the unanimous views of scholars of *rijāl* (the branch of learning related with who’s who in Islamic studies), an unreliable narrator whose words cannot be accepted. Ibn al-Qazā‘irī refers to him in the following words:

Weak in *hadīth* transmission, sectarian tendency, cannot be counted upon.⁵⁵

Najāshī says regarding Abū Basir: very weak (in *hadīth* transmission), cannot be trusted in anything.⁵⁶

Shaykh Tūsī refers to Abū Basir as one of the companions of the seventh Imam (‘a) in the following words:

“Muhammad bin Sulaymān al-Basīr al-Daylamī, he has a book, accused of exaggeration”⁵⁷

Tafrishī, too, in his valuable book has mentioned Abū Basīr in the words: “al-Daylami is very weak (in *hadīth*), cannot be trusted in anything”⁵⁸ After reporting on the views of the *rijāl* scholars, Ayatullah Khu’i too, has mentioned some points regarding Abū Basīr, an example of which is given below:

Indeed, Muhammad bin Sulaymān cannot be counted upon in his narrations since Najāshi and Shaykh Tūsi have considered him weak as confirmed by Ibn al-Ghazā‘iri.⁵⁹

Thus, the narration quoted by Abū Basīr is invalid and totally rejected. Over and above what was discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, a contradiction between this narration and many other authentic narrations is evident.

In a nutshell, the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) did not in any way contain the Qur’ān nor did it contain any word or phrase from it. The many narrated texts in this regard are so lucid that they leave no room for any doubt. Alas! Why don’t those who make allegations against the Shi‘ite school, merely on the basis of such invalid narrations, refer to one of these authentic narrations⁶⁰ and like the renowned Egyptian scholar and exeget, Muhammad Abū Zuhrah, admit the truth of this matter and report it clearly? While discussing the distorted narrations and negating any possible alteration in the text of the Qur’ān and emphasizing upon the fact that the Qur’ān is tamper-proof, Abū Zuhrah also refers to a narration from the book, *al-Kāfi* on the *Jafr*, the *Jāmi‘ah*, and the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and writes as under:

“The text of this narration clearly indicates that what was brought down to Fātimah (‘a) by Gabriel never contained anything from the Qur’ān.”⁶¹

2. The *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not contain the *Ahkām*:

There is at least one narration that categorically states that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not contain matters regarding *halāl* and *harām* (lawful and unlawful). This narration is quoted hereunder:

The Commander of the Faithful wrote down all that he heard until was prepared out of it a *Mushaf*. Then he said: Indeed, there is nothing in it concerning *halāl* and *harām* but it contains ...⁶²

This truth is also apparent from the narrations that negate that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) contained the Qur’ān since the Qur’ān contains many jurisprudential laws, and thus, negating the former point would automatically result in the negation of the latter. We shall now quote the views of some scholars who believe that the *Mushaf* contained discussions regarding the “*halāl* and *harām*”. Perhaps, such scholars have not pondered deeply upon these narrations as well as upon the other clear narrations in this regard. For example the great Lebanese researcher, Hāshim Ma‘rūf al-Hasanī, while discussing such subjects as the *Jafr*, the *Jāmi‘ah* and the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and their contents has written:

The narrations that have made a reference to these subjects have clearly stated that ... the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) comprised *ahkām* and ...⁶³

Elsewhere, too, while discussing the mentioned subjects he has written:

As regards the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), it contains most of the *ahkām*, the fundamentals, and the basics of what people are in need of.⁶⁴

The great Iranian *hadith* scholar and researcher, Sayyid Muhammad Rizā Jalālī Husaynī, has mentioned the “Book” of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) in his discussion on the methodology of the Imams (‘a) in compiling *ahādith*, and by relying upon some narrations has made an effort to clarify the contents of this book. For example, based upon a narration quoted in *al-Kāfi*⁶⁵ he writes: “The Imam (‘a) explained the details of the *zakāt* of gold and silver by making a reference to this book”. Husaynī then adds that the ‘Book of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a)’ is nothing but what is commonly known as the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a).⁶⁶ However, we are of the belief that the Book of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) is different from the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and, thus, in our view two errors have taken place in this regard which need to be clarified here:

1. The Book of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) is not the same as the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a).

2. The *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) does not contain any jurisprudential laws (*ahkām*).

While giving a detailed report on the narrations related to the *Mushaf*, ‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhsin al-Āmin al-‘Āmili quotes a narration that categorically negates that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) contained the *ahkām* and the *halāl* and *harām*.⁶⁷ However, he proceeds to conclude that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) is the same as the Book of Fātimah (‘a) which contained *ahkām* and eventually accepts that the *Mushaf* contained the *ahkām* and the *halāl* and *harām*.⁶⁸ Holding true that the Book of Fātimah (‘a) and the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) are one and the same, ‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fazlullāh has written:

The most favoured conclusion from the narration is that the *Mushaf* contained matters pertaining to *halāl* and *harām* and

...

⁶⁹

The late Sayyid Muhammad Kāzim Qazvīnī, a renowned orator, too, in his valuable book on Hazrat Zahrā (‘a), besides mentioning her title *Muhaddithah* and after giving an account of the narrations related to the *Mushaf*, has written:

In conclusion to this discussion we say that the *Mushaf* of Fātimah Zahrā (‘a) was a thick book containing all the religious rules including the rules pertaining to punishments in Islam and
⁷⁰

It is surprising that such a detailed judgement has not been mentioned in any narration. And it is worth noting that this inference made by scholars is mostly based upon a narration quoted by Kulaynī in the book *al-Kāfi*. In the words of Kulaynī:

Husayn bin Abī al-‘Alā’ says I heard Abū ‘Abdullāh (Imam Sādiq) saying: “Indeed I have the white Jafar.” I asked him: What does it contain? He said: “the Psalms of David, the Torah of Moses, the Evangel of Jesus, the scriptures of Abraham, the *halāl* and *harām* and the *Mushaf* of Fātimah, in which there is nothing of the Qur’ān. In it (the White *Jafr*) are whatever mankind is in need from us and we are not in need from anyone. Even (the punishment of) a whiplash, half a whiplash and a quarter whiplash as well as compensation for a scratch (are mentioned in it).⁷¹

As per the apparent meaning of the narration, the Imam (‘a) has said: “We are in possession of the ‘*Jafr*’ and ... and the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), which does not comprise the Qur’ān. It contains whatever the people need and we are not dependent upon anyone, and it also contains the rules pertaining to punishment ...

Based upon this narration, the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) also contains the *ahkām* although this contradicts other narrations that categorically negate the possibility that the *Mushaf* contained the *ahkām* and the *halāl* and *harām*. Let us

now examine as to how such a contradiction can be resolved. In this regard ‘Allāmah Majlisi writes as follows:

Perhaps all the pronouns in this narration or at least the last two ones refer to *Jafr* and not to the *Mushaf*. In such case the contradiction gets resolved.⁷²

‘Allāmah Sayyid Ja‘far Murtazā al-‘Amilī believes that the phrase “whatever mankind is in need from us” does not refer to “in which there is nothing of the Qur‘ān” so as to indicate the contents of the *Mushaf*. Rather, this phrase refers to the Psalms of David (‘a), the *Torāh* of Moses (‘a), and ... In other words, the *Jafr Abyaz* comprises the Psalms of David (‘a), the *Torāh* of Moses (‘a), the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) and also contains the *halāl* and *harām* and whatever people are in need of. As an evidence for this interpretation he refers to the narrations that have discussed the contents of the *Jafr Abyaz* including a narration from ‘Anbasah bin Mus‘ab, which states that the “*Jafr* comprises the weapon of the noble Prophet of Allah (S), some books, and the ‘*Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a).”⁷³

Akram Barakāt, too, has conducted a parallel research on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and the *Jafr* and beyond all doubt believes that in the phrase “*wa fihi mā yahtāju* (and in it is all that is needed)” the pronoun refers to the *Jafr* and not to the *Mushaf*, and thus makes an attempt to provide certain evidences in this regard including the following:

1. Firstly, the text of this narration is exactly identical to another narration in which reference is made to the *Jafr* as comprising *ahkām*, more or less in the same words as the ones used in the narration under discussion. The narration then makes a reference to the *Mushaf*.

2. Secondly, in most cases, the term *Jafr* has been used in narrations to indicate a large container comprising, inter alia, the book *Jāmi‘ah* with such qualities as “and in it is whatever

mankind is in need of ... compensation for even a scratch” that have been repeatedly described in various narrations.⁷⁴

Keeping in view what was mentioned in the foregoing discussion, it can be said that the narration quoted by Husayn bin ‘Alā does not in any way imply that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) comprises matters regarding the *halāl* and *harām* or religious laws.

Some scholars, too, have relied on another lengthy narration in order to prove that the *Mushaf* under discussion contained *ahkām*.⁷⁵ According to this narration, the Abbasid caliph Mansūr Dawāniqī asked his governor in Medina to enquire from the people of this city, and particularly from Imam Sādiq (‘a) and ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan al-Muthannā bin Imam Hasan (‘a), as to why the ratio of the *zakāt* of wealth was 5 dirhams to 200 at the time of the Prophet of Allah while it was 7 dirhams to 200 in his times. Upon hearing Imam Sādiq’s (‘a) reply, ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan asked him as to where he had got the answer from, to which the Imam (‘a) replied:

I read it in the book of your mother Fātimah (‘a).⁷⁶

Some scholars have interpreted that by the term the Book of Fātimah (‘a), the Imams (‘a) meant the *Mushaf* and, therefore, the said *Mushaf* comprised religious laws.⁷⁷

We are of the opinion that in this narration the term “book” is not meant to denote the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a). As was mentioned earlier, it is either an independent book or the name “Fātimah” here does not refer to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and rather refers to some other person. The possibility that the Book of Fātimah refers to a collection other than the *Mushaf* has been presented by ‘Allāmah Majlisī. While writing a commentary on this *hadīth* he has mentioned that some narrations have categorically negated that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) contained matters regarding *ahkām*. In his words:

The possibility is that it indicates the non-inclusion of religious laws in a direct manner, in which case it does not contradict the narrations and the *ahādīth* while another possibility is that the Book of Fātimah (‘a) is a compilation other than the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a).⁷⁸

In our view, an acceptance of this narration negates the first possibility, because this narration contains a crystal-clear verdict and not a derived one.

The other possibility put forward by some scholars,⁷⁹ which keeping in view certain evidences seems to be closer to reality, is that the name “Fātimah” refers to Fātimah bint al-Husayn, the mother of ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan al-Muthannā and not to Hazrat Fātimah Zahrā (‘a). Imam Sādiq (‘a) had told ‘Abdullāh “I read in the book of your mother” and did not say “the book of you mother Fātimah Zahrā (‘a)”. He also did not use the words: *kitābi jadatika al-Zahrā* (the book of your grandmother [ancestress] Zahrā)”. The following two points could be inferred from Imam Sādiq’s (‘a) statement:

1. Perhaps Fātimah bint al-Husayn was in the possession of a book from her father Imam Husayn (‘a) or her brother Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a) that contained matters regarding the *halāl* and *harām* and Imam Sādiq (‘a) had referred to that book.

2. Based upon some narrations, prior to his martyrdom, Imam Husayn (‘a) had left the book, the *Jāmi‘ah*, in the custody of his daughter, the mother of ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan al-Muthannā, and in fact by asking ‘Abdullāh to refer to his mother, Imam Sādiq (‘a), on the one hand, highlights the status of the noble lady while on the other hand, most probably for political reasons and owing to the prevailing atmosphere, chooses not to reveal the importance and status of the book, the *Jāmi‘ah*.

Keeping in view the second point this possibility holds some validity.

Kulaynī has quoted two narrations stating that prior to his martyrdom, Imam Husayn (‘a) had given a written text to his daughter, Fātimah, who had consequently handed it over to Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a). And when Imam Sādiq (‘a) was asked about the contents of the book, he had said: “It contains all (knowledge) that people are in need of; even compensation for a scratch”. This description contains exactly the same characteristic that has repeatedly been mentioned in the numerous narrations in reference to the book, the *Jāmi‘ah*.

Similar narrations have also been recorded in *Basā‘ir al-Darajāt*.⁸⁰ To say the least, these types of possibilities certainly reduce the credibility of this narration to the extent that it cannot any longer be used as a reliable evidence to prove a claim. Therefore, it can be said that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) did not comprise matters concerning the *halāl* and *harām*.

The Contents of the *Mushaf*

Let us now enter into a discussion on the contents of this valuable compilation and attempt to discover what the divine messenger had brought down for the pure lady, Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), during those divine meetings. It was mentioned earlier that the narrations related to the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) have been recorded in numerous *hadīth* books, within many of which, including the authentic narration by Abū ‘Ubaydah, reports of its contents have been recorded.

1. Status and Fate of the Family

Abū ‘Ubaydah’s narration has mentioned:

In these meetings, Gabriel informed her [Fātimah (‘a)] about her father and his status (in heaven) and also informed her of the destiny that awaited her descendants after her.⁸¹

2. Future Events

Some narrations have stated that the compilation contains matters regarding future events and at times some of the Imams (‘a) have made a reference to it for many of their predictions. In a narration by Hammād bin ‘Isā, Imam Sādiq (‘a) is quoted to have said: “It does not contain anything about the *halāl* and *harām*, but it comprises knowledge of the future”.⁸²

Another narration states: “In it are events of the future”.⁸³

As mentioned earlier, some of the Imams (‘a) have occasionally referred to the *Mushaf*, including Imam Sādiq (‘a), in his prediction about the emergence of the *Zandaqah* and other events.⁸⁴

3. The Names of the Prophets (‘a) and their Successors

Some narrations indicate that the *Mushaf* comprised information regarding the names and the lives of the Prophets of the past and their vicegerents (*awsiyā*). Ibn Shahr Ashūb has recorded that Imam Sādiq (‘a) was asked about the claim to caliphate of Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh bin Hasan al-Muthannā bin Imam Hasan (‘a) and he replied:

There is no prophet and there is no *wasi* and nor is there any king (ruler) whose name is not listed in the book entitled the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a), which is in my possession. I have looked into it and did not find the name of Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh (mentioned in it).⁸⁵

Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh, popularly known as *Nafs Zakiyyah* (the Purified Soul), had revolted against the Umayyads and later against Abbasid rule during the times of Imam Sādiq (‘a) and had invited people to pledge allegiance to him. According to some narrations, he also asked Imam Sādiq (‘a) to acknowledge him.⁸⁶ The Imam (‘a) had, however, advised him against this revolt and had discouraged him from having a

confrontation with the Abbasid rulers, to which he did not pay heed. Thus, there were some naive people who believed that Muhammad Nafs Zakīyyah was among successors of the Prophet (S), but based upon the prevalent political atmosphere Imam Sādiq (‘a) replied the questioner in the manner that was mentioned above.⁸⁷

4. Names of the Rulers

The narration that was quoted earlier contained the following phrase:

As for the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) it contains the events of the future and the names of those who would rule till Doomsday.⁸⁸

The same phrase also appears in a narration quoted by Fuzayl bin Sakrah from Imam Sādiq (‘a). At the end of that narration, the Imam (‘a) makes a reference to the Book of Fātimah (‘a) and not the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a). However, this narration is of the same tune as the one quoted in the *Manāqib* in which it was refuted that Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh’s name was among the *awsiyā* (testamentary legatees) of the Prophet (S).⁸⁹

4. Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) Will

A large number of narrations mention that the *Mushaf* contained the final will of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). A narration by Sulaymān bin Khālid regarding the *Mushaf* includes the following phrase:

... And the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) will be brought out, for indeed it contains the will of Fātimah (‘a).⁹⁰

Let us now examine the contents of the will of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). Narrations relating to Fātimah (‘a) have mentioned the existence of two different wills. One of the wills is regarding some orchards and another is a political one describing the

manner in which she was treated by the rules of the time as well as some matters concerning her funeral and her burial. It seems that these were the only contents of her will.

Her Will Regarding the Orchards

Many narrations mention that Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) had left behind a written text containing her will. To quote an example:

From Abū Basir: Abu Ja‘far (Imam Bāqir (‘a)) said: “Should I tell you about Fātimah’s (‘a) will?” I gave a positive reply. He took out a case or a casket and brought out a book from it, on which was written: “In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is what Fātimah, the daughter of Muhammad (s) has willed ...”⁹¹

The contents of the will have been reported in detail, which comprised the custodianship of the “seven orchards” that the Prophet (S) had gifted exclusively to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). As per this will, she had given the custodianship of the orchards to Imam ‘Alī (‘a), followed by Imam Hasan (‘a) and Imam Husayn (‘a) and then to the eldest (surviving) son from the descendants of Imam Husayn (‘a).⁹²

Her Political Will

Following the passing away of Prophet Muhammad (S), there the course of political rule changed to something other than what the Messenger of Allah (S) had determined on the basis of Divine Commandments, and the robe of caliphate was donned by someone who was unfit for it. On seeing this injustice, Fātimah (‘a) arose in order to clarify the “right of leadership” or leadership of the righteous and endeavoured tirelessly in the course of this divine duty. At the same time, the new rulers who had changed the course of the caliphate in Islam to suit their own personal interests began to confront this noble lady (‘a) and subjected her to oppression, even setting on fire,

the door of her house in which the voice of Revelation still echoed. Surprisingly, they even rejoiced and took pride in all this perversion and recklessness. When Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) saw that their might and coercion had awed others she was left with no choice but to deliver a thought-provoking sermon. The gist of her poignant sermon was that the Muslims who at one point of time were at war with the infidel Arabs and who had risen against the warring communities and had fought their champions ... even though they now witnessed the legacy of the noble father of Zahra’ being plundered and saw her being oppressed, left their swords to rest in their scabbards and did not respond to her call for justice ... because wretchedness had taken deep root into their beings and wickedness had filled up their hearts.

In the words of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a):

She [Fātimah (‘a)] saw my right being attacked and violated, and in spite of all this I kept my patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throat.⁹³

Nevertheless, despite all the atrocities she, too, maintained patience in the manner of her beloved husband. However, in order to expose all these atrocities and in order to create questions in the minds of all the intelligent people of the world – for all times to come – the noble Fātimah (‘a) thought of a far-sighted plan and made an intelligent, thought provoking, and heart-rending will, instructing Imam ‘Alī (‘a) in the following words:

When I die, wash me with your hands, embalm me, shroud me and bury me at night. And so and so (persons) should not see me (be at my funeral).⁹⁴

Some narrations have mentioned that she used the words: “Do not allow those two persons that I have mentioned (to attend my funeral).” There are other versions too, all basically

containing the same matter and all of them highlighting upon Hazrat Fātimah's ('a) insistence upon having a secret and undisclosed funeral and burial in the dark of the night. Or in other words, this was the virtual declaration of her abhorrence, her tragic protest, and her wrathful stand against the rulership and the stance adopted by the rulers and ...⁹⁵

The Size of the *Mushaf*

Some narrations relating to the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) have also spoken about its volume. Abū Basir's narration, which was repeatedly referred to in this discussion states:

And indeed, we have the *Mushaf* of Fātimah ('a). What do they know about the *Mushaf* of Fātimah ('a)? The contents of the *Mushaf* are like the Qur'ān with you, three times (its size). By Allah! Not a single word is in it from your Qur'ān.⁹⁶

This narration categorically states that the size of the *Mushaf* is thrice the volume of the Qur'ān. The questions that could be asked as regards this subject are: "Through his statement, did the Imam ('a) mean to specify the exact 'physical' volume of the *Mushaf*?", or "Does the term thrice specifically mean to highlight the importance of this book?" Still "Is it used mainly in order to indicate the vastness of the knowledge contained in the *Mushaf*?" Finally, "Should this reference be taken in its literal sense?" These are some questions that are not answered by the narrations. The only conclusion that could be drawn is that its comparison to the volume of the Qur'ān is mainly quantitative in nature.

The *Mushaf* – A Lasting Legacy for the Imams ('a)

It can be inferred from numerous narrations that the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) was a great legacy in possession of the Imams ('a) and at the times of his departure from this

world the Imam of the Age (‘a) handed it over to the succeeding Imam (‘a). Abū Basīr quotes Imam Sādiq (‘a) as having said:

Abū Ja‘far (Imam Bāqir [‘a]) did not die until he took hold of (bequeathed) the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a).⁹⁷

It was mentioned earlier that Imam Sādiq (‘a) had once based his prediction about some future events upon the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) and in different narrations, too, the Imams (‘a) have been quoted as claiming, “It (the *Mushaf*) is with me” or “It is with us”, thus indicating that this valuable compilation has served as a great legacy for them. This is the reason that while enumerating the signs of Imamate, Imam Rizā (‘a) said: “... He (the rightful Imam) is in possession of the ‘*Jafr*’, the ‘*Jāmi‘ah*’, and the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)”.

It is, therefore, very evident that this invaluable compilation is presently in the possession of the 12th and last Imam (may Allah hasten on his reappearance) and this fact has been clearly stated in the following narration:

‘Abd al-Malik bin A‘yan is reported to have said:

Abū Ja‘far (Imam Bāqir [‘a]) showed me some of the books of (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) and asked me, ‘Have you reckoned why these books were written?’ I replied: It is obvious there was a purpose in it. He said: ‘Give me (a proper answer).’ I said: He knew, the day your Qā‘im (last Imam) will rise, will want to act according to whatever is mentioned in these (books). He (Imam Bāqir [‘a]) said: ‘You are certainly right’.⁹⁸

The great scholar Shaykh Aqā Buzurg Tehrāni has written:

The ‘*Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a)’ is the legacy of Imamate and is in the possession of our leader and guide, the Imam of the Age (12th Imam). This truth has been reported for us through the narrations from the Imams (‘a).

Thus, the *Mushaf* of Fātimah (‘a) is a compilation filled with divine truths that were brought down to her by a divine messenger and which were taken down in the writing of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Alī (‘a), and this compilation was left for her descendants as a parting legacy.

Concluding Remarks

To summarize this discussion, let us finally refer to one of the titles of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) which is, on the one hand, related to our discussion and on the other, highlights the reason why Gabriel descended in order to converse with this noble lady (‘a). As mentioned earlier, one of the great titles of Fātimah (‘a) was *Muhaddithah*. Imam Sādiq (‘a) has thrown light on this position of the greatest lady of all time in the following words:

Fātimah (‘a), the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (S) was a *muhaddithah* although not a prophet. She was called *muhaddithah* because the angels came down to her from the heavens and to address her in the same manner that they addressed Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān (mother of Prophet Jesus).⁹⁹

In this narration, on the one hand, Imam Sādiq (‘a) praises her for her title and on the other hand, gives a brief commentary on the title. Commentaries on the title *muhaddith* (the one who hears the voice of an angel but does not see him) have been given in different words in a number of narrations. To quote some examples:

Muhaddith is the one who hears the voice without seeing anything.¹⁰⁰

Muhaddith is the one who hears the words of an angel spoken to him without seeing it (the angel).¹⁰¹

Muhaddith is the one who hears the speech of the angels and their conversation without seeing anything, although (the talk) pierces his ears and enters his heart.¹⁰²

Based upon this very interpretation of the term *muhaddith* given in the narrations, the Imams (‘a) who were the testamentary legatees of the Prophet (S), and even some of the pious people like Salmān have been known as *muhaddith*.¹⁰³ Sunni scholars, too, have accepted the existence of *muhaddith* as part of Islamic culture, and in their exegetic and *ahādīth* sources, have recorded the same meaning for the term as used in the Shi‘ite narrations. Therefore, contrary to what some Sunni scholars have conjectured,¹⁰⁴ the term *muhaddith* is not a Shi‘ite concoction in order to extol or eulogize their religious leaders. The belief in this term is common among all the Islamic schools and mentions of it can be found in their *ahādīth* sources. ‘Allāmah Amīnī writes in this regard:

Both the Shi‘i and the Sunni scholars have accepted the existence of *muhaddithūn* (those who can hear the angels and receive inspiration from them) and believe that there must certainly be some human beings (other than the prophets) whose words and deeds are all according to the Divine Commandments and are approved of by Allah. The companion and confidant of such a person is the angel who is a mediator for Allah’s grace upon him and the *muhaddith* acts unerringly and dutifully according to the commands received by him. The Shi‘ites believe that that the Infallible Imams (‘a) are all *muhaddithūn*. The Sunni scholars, too, believe that after Prophet Muhammad (S) there must be some *muhaddith* with whom the angels converse and to whom they can show the pathways of truth and falsehood as per Allah, the Almighty’s command.¹⁰⁵

We mentioned earlier that this belief has been reported in the sources of both the Shi‘ite and Sunni schools. This belief of the Sunni scholars is based upon quite a few narrations including what has been recorded in the *Sihāh al-Sittah*. Both Bukhārī¹⁰⁶ and Muslim¹⁰⁷ reporting from the Prophet that among the Israelites and other nations there were persons, other than the prophets, to whom the angels spoke. The two then go on and attribute a saying to the Prophet that ‘Umar bin Khattāb was a *muhaddith*.

Furthermore, Muslim quotes Ibn Wahab who interprets the term *muhaddithūn* as *mulhamūn* (from *ilhām*) meaning those who are inspired or receive inspiration from the unknown. In his commentary on the *Sahīh* of Bukhārī, Qistalānī has written:

Muhaddithūn means people who always tell the truth even though they are not prophets.¹⁰⁸

He further quotes Khitābī as saying:

It means that something is inspired into his (the *muhaddith*) heart in a manner as though he is spoken to...¹⁰⁹

In his exegesis, Qurtubī, too, quotes some *hadīth* attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās as under:

A *muhaddath* (*mulham*) is someone who receives divine inspiration – the one who can perceive the truth; the one who receives truths in the form of inspiration and revelation from the higher realms; or (in other words), truth flows onto his tongue or the angels talk to him even though he is not a prophet or when he speaks and expresses a thought he is certain and definite as though he has been given that thought (from the higher realms) and he has been inspired from the heavens... this is a position that Allah bestows upon his righteous servants; it is an exalted status given to the friends of Allah.¹¹⁰

It is on the basis of such sayings that ‘Allāmah Amīnī has written the following in his everlasting work, the *al-Ghadīr*:

The Islamic Ummah is unanimous on the issue that like the earlier communities there will be *muhaddithūn* within the Islamic Ummah. What has been quoted in the *Sihāh* and in the sources of all the Islamic schools of thought clearly validates this reality.¹¹¹

We have earlier quoted Qurtubī explaining that the status of *muhaddith* is a divine endowment that Allah bestows upon his righteous and pious servants. Moreover, a glance at the *hadīth* sources of the Sunni schools reveals that many people like ‘Imrān bin Hasīn Khuzā‘ī (d. 52 AH),¹¹² Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Sālih (d. 427 AH),¹¹³ and others are supposed to be *muhaddithūn*. The question now is: Are those who make baseless allegations against the Shi‘ites because of their belief that the Infallible Imams (‘a) receive Divine Inspiration, unaware of these texts in their own source books and are they ignorant of what their own scholars have explained about the status of *muhaddithūn*? If such is the case, are they aware that they are falsifying what is in reality a pure trend of Islamic thought?

After a detailed discussion on this issue, ‘‘Allāmah Amīnī has written:

There have been people in this *Ummah* who were “*muhaddithūn*”, just as there were some among the earlier communities. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī (‘a) and the Imams of his lineage (‘a) were pious leaders and were ‘*muhaddithūn*’ but (they were) not prophets. This special status was not and is not restricted to them and their Imamate, and rather even the Prophet’s noble daughter Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) the ‘*Siddīqah Tāhirah*’ (the most truthful and pure lady) was a “*muhadditha*”. Salmān Fārsī, too, was a “*muhaddith*”. All the

Imams (‘a) from the Purified Household of the Prophet (S) were ‘*muhaddithūn*’, but not every ‘*muhaddith*’ is an Imam. A ‘*muhaddith*’ is a person to whom truths are inspired through the means specified in the narrations. This is what the Shi‘ites believe and nothing more. And this is precisely what has been quoted about the term ‘*muhaddith*’ in the sources of the various Islamic schools without any variance and the Shi‘ites have not claimed anything contradictory to what the others have also reported.¹¹⁴

The great ‘Allāmah then quotes the words of ‘Abdullāh Qusaymī and stresses that what he has said is sheer lies and he finally ends his discussion in his characteristic style with the following divine verse:¹¹⁵

“Only they forge the lie who do not believe in Allah’s communications, and these are the liars.”(16: 105)

We shall now conclude our discussion on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and pray to Allah, the Almighty, to grant us the wisdom required for perceiving the depths of the exalted personalities of the Infallibles of the Household of the Prophet (‘a) and the various dimensions of their teachings and to grant us a life based upon their *sunnah* – the Straight Divine Path.

Notes:

¹ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)* Vol. 1, pp. 59-60.

² *Mir’āt al-‘Uqūl*, Vol. 3, p. 59.

³ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, p. 353.

⁴ *Hidyah al-Muhaddithīn*, p. 157.

⁵ *Rijāl al-Tūsī*, p. 334; *Muntahāi al-Maqāl*.

⁶ *Al-Fihrist*, p. 151.

⁷ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, Vol. p. 388 (Shubayrī, p. 170).

⁸ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 240; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 150.

⁹ *Al-'Ayn*, Vol. 3, p. 120. Also refer to *al-Sihāh*, Vol. 4, p. 1348; *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol. 9, p. 186; *al-Mu'jam al-Wasit*, p. 508.

¹⁰ *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 546.

¹¹ *Kitāb al-Masāhif*, p. 177.

¹² *Al-Tabaqāt*, Vol. 7, p. 488; *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol. 17, p. 315.

¹³ *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p. 36.

¹⁴ *Al-Hayawān*, Vol. 1, p. 388, Vol. 2, p. 375, Vol. 3, p. 395.

¹⁵ *Masādir al-Shi'r al-Jāhili*, p. 139.

¹⁶ *Al-Sirā' Bayn al-Islām wa al-Wathaniyyah*, Vol. 1, p. d. To know about them and their works refer to *Difā' 'an al-Kāfi*, Vol. 2, p. 353.

¹⁷ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 241.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 240.

¹⁹ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, Vol. 5, p. 153. Also refer to Vol. 14, p. 155; Vol. 19, p. 157; Vol. 33, p. 161.

²⁰ *Dalā'il al-Imāmah*, p. 106.

²¹ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, Vol. 1, p. 302.

²² *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Hadīth*, Vol. 4, p. 117.

²³ Ibn Ghazā'iri, *al-Rijāl*, p. 48.

²⁴ While conducting discussions on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) and its contents, some scholars have reported this narration along with other ones, without paying attention to the fact that their contents are contradictory. For instance, see the book *Fātimah al-Zahrā ('a): Bahjah Qalb al-Mustafā (S)*, pp. 173-175. Surprisingly, deriving from the narrations, this honourable scholar has mentioned some points at the end of his discussion on the term *fā'idatān* that include the statement: "It can be inferred from the narrations that the *Mushaf* existed

during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S)". This statement is quoted, despite the fact that at the beginning of the discussion (pp. 173-174) he has also presented the narrations claiming that the *Mushaf* was presented to Hazrat Fātimah ('a) by Gabriel, after the passing away of the Prophet of Allah (S) and has mentioned that this the first and foremost advantage of referring to narrations. The other point is that like many other scholars he, too, believes that the *Mushaf* comprised religious *ahkām*, a subject that has been dealt with in details in this discussion.

²⁵ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, Vol. 3, p. 152; *al-Wāfi*, Vol. 3, pp 579-580; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 39. In the "*Basā'ir al-Darajāt*" it has been mentioned as "dictated by Allah" which is apparently incorrect. This sentence does not exist in the *al-Wāfi* and it is probable that it has been missed out at the time of copying.

²⁶ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p 245; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157.

²⁷ *Mir'āt al-Uqūl*, Vol. 3, p. 59.

²⁸ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p 241; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 153-154.

²⁹ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 43.

³⁰ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 46.

³¹ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 153; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 47, p 271. It is quite obvious that this narration is about the *Sahifah*, which is altogether a different subject.

³² *'Awālim al-'Ulūm*, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 11, part 2, p 839.

³³ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p 240.

³⁴ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 177; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 44.

³⁵ *A’yān al-Shi’ah*, Vol. 1, p. 314, third reprint, al-Insāf Printing House, 1991. The author has quoted a considerable number of narrations relating to the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and has also given discussions on the one who dictated it and its contents. In the latest reprint that has taken shape under the supervision of the author’s son, Sayyid Hasan al-Amīn, except for some narrations, the other things have been omitted! An important part of the beginning of the book, the *A’yān al-Shi’ah*, is related to Shi’ite history, culture, and civilization as well as the culture of the Shi’ite governments and states, etc. This section has been published by the Markaz al-Ghadir lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, undertaking a new research, under the title *al-Shi’ah fi Masāri’ihim al-Tārikhī*. Researchers have taken this part from the latest reprint. However, in this edition too, the discussion of the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) is incomplete. It would be more appropriate for the researcher to refer to the original edition published during the lifetime of the author himself in order to include the entire discussion on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a).

³⁶ *Al-Kāfi (al-Furū’)*, Vol. 3, p. 507. Refer to the commentary on this narration in the *Masābīh al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 436.

³⁷ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 242; *‘Ilal al-Sharā’i’*, p. 207.

³⁸ *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 155.

³⁹ The *sūrahs al-A’rāf*: 37; *al-An’ām*: 61; *Hūd*: 69 and 77; *al-Hijr*: 15 and 61; *Maryam*: 17, 18, and 19; *Tāhā*: 20.

⁴⁰ *‘Ilal al-Sharā’i’*, p. 551, chapter 340; *Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, Vol. 3, p. 306.

⁴¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 59, p. 322

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 306

⁴³ *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 151; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 38 and Vol. 47, p. 270.

⁴⁴ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 150; *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p240; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 37, p 38.

⁴⁵ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 154; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 45; *'Awālim al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 11, p. 836.

⁴⁶ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 155; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 41; *'Awālim al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 11, p. 835.

⁴⁷ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 46; *'Awālim al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 11, p. 839.

⁴⁸ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 153; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 47, p 271.

⁴⁹ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 154; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 18; *'Awālim al-'Ulūm*, Vol. 11, p. 843.

⁵⁰ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 37, p 176.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p. 13.

⁵² *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 8, p. 57

⁵³ *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Tāhirah*, Vol. 2, p. 723.

⁵⁴ Ayatullah Sayyid Abā al-Qāsim Khu'ī emphasizes that all these titles refer to one thing. Tafrishī, too, stresses the uniformity of the titles used. (*Mu'jam al-Rijāl al-Hadīth*, Vol. 17, pp. 135 onwards; *Naqd al-Rijāl*, Vol. 4, p. 221; *Muntahā al-Maqāl*, Vol. 6, p. 62; *Qāmūs al-Rijāl*, Vol. 9, p. 298)

⁵⁵ Ibn Ghazā'irī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 91.

⁵⁶ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, Vol. 2, p. 269.

⁵⁷ *Rijāl al-Tūsī*, p. 343.

⁵⁸ *Naqd al-Rijāl*, Vol. 4, p. 220.

⁵⁹ *Mu'jam al-Rijāl al-Hadīth*, Vol. 17, p. 138.

⁶⁰ It is very surprising that despite seeing these narrations and knowing about their contents, some writers have preferred to overlook the truth. Qifārī, who has written one the most spiteful books against Shi'ite thoughts and beliefs, has included a section on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) which is based on the said narrations and has concluded that the narrations on the *Mushaf* are contradictory and hastily thus, the very concept

of the *Mushaf* is delusive and baseless. In the course of his discussion he sometimes says that the *Mushaf* comprises *ahkām* and at times refutes that it comprised the Holy Qur’ān and eventually, by making a reference to a forged narration, he tries to show that some scholars have conceded that it comprised the Holy Qur’ān. At times he even goes to the extent of saying that since the Shi’ites believe that the *Mushaf* is thrice the size of the Qur’ān, it means that they consider the Holy Qur’ān to be less (important) than the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a)! In the opinion of the writer of this article these inferences are only indicative of the mental illness of the author. Qifārī’s book entitled the *Usūl Madhhab al-Shī‘ah al-Imāmiyyah al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah* is full of misinterpretations and incomplete and distorted narrations. Fortunately, the section on the Glorious Qur’ān has been critically evaluated by Dr. Fathullāh Muhammadi (Najjārzādīgān) in which the distortions made by Qifārī in the narrations and the views of the Shi’ite scholars have been highlighted. (*Salāmah al-Qur’ān min al-Tahrīf*, Fathullāh Muhammadi, Tehran, Payām-e Azādi, 1420 AH).

⁶¹ *Al-Imām al-Sādiq, Hayātuhū wa ‘Asruhū*, p. 256. Although we praise Abū Zuhrah for his correct understanding of the narration on the *Mushaf* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), we also consider his comments on the great scholar, Shaykh Kulaynī, to be dark blemish in his scholarly records. In this book he very rightly defends the glorious Qur’ān, and by conceding to the existence of narrations in the books of the *fariqayn* indicating distortion, rightly emphasizes that these narrations are forged by the enemies of Islam and Qur’ān. He tries to say that the Sunni scholars do not accept these narrations and have attempted to clear the Islamic religious beliefs from such narrations. He then alleges that, there are however some Shi’ite scholars, despite having a high status in the field of *hadīth*, have quoted such *ahādīth* and have emphasized upon their authenticity; the

foremost being Abū Ja‘far Kulaynī. (*al-Imām al-Sādiq, Hayātuhū wa ‘Asruhū*, p. 255). The author has written the same things in a concise form and with a softer language in his other book, the *al-Imām Zayd Hayātuhū wa ‘Asruhū*, pp. 350-351. In this regard it is important to note the following:

a) His quotes from *al-Kāfi* are incorrect, especially the first one which is a mixture of a few narrations. As a matter of fact he has taken a part of the first narration from the *Bābun fī Dhikr al-Sahīfah wa al-Jafr wa al-Jāmi‘ah wa Mushaf Fātimah* (‘a) and has mixed it with the second narration and has then attributed it to Kulaynī.

b) He says: Kulaynī has quoted Imam Sādiq (‘a) saying that “the Qur’ān compiled by Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was thrice the size of the Qur’ān, even though it does not contain even a single word from your Qur’ān and ...”. It is really a matter of surprise, because none of Kulaynī’s narrations contain such quotes.

c) It seems that Abū Zuhrah criticizes his own interpretation about Kulaynī and imagines that the narration indicates that what was brought down to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) was not related to the Qur’ān and “was perhaps *Jafr*...” It is obvious that based upon what has been discussed in this paper, Abū Zuhrah’s perceptions have proved to be invalid.

d) Finally, Abū Zuhrah and people like him should be reminded that Kulaynī’s narrations that have been quoted by them have nothing to do with the alleged distortion of the Holy Qur’ān. Moreover, Kulaynī has never claimed that his works contain purely authentic narrations and in fact, notwithstanding his twenty years of painstaking research, he has not ruled out the possibility of the unintentional inclusion of some inauthentic narrations in his books (*al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 8).

e) The great scholar, Tawfiq al-Fukayki, has evaluated Abū Zuhrah’s writings in this regard in a research paper. By emphasizing on the difference between narration and insight he

proves the fact that what Kulaynī has narrated are merely quotations and do not necessarily imply that he believed in everything that he narrated and in this way defends Kulaynī. (*Risālah al-Islām*, Majallah Islamiyyah, 'Ālamiyyah, published by Dār al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyyah, Cairo, 12th year, Vol. 1, p. 65 onwards).

A similar critical evaluation has also been written by 'Abdullāh al-Subaytī on some parts of Abū Zuhrah's book including what was mentioned above. (*Ma'a Abi Zuhrah fi Kitāb al-Imām al-Sādiq*, particularly pp. 211-218).

f) In a scholarly research work, 'Amīdī has quoted al-Kāfī's narrations in this regard and has discussed each of them on the basis of their documentation and has vindicated Kulaynī of such allegations. (*Difā' 'an al-Kulaynī*, Thāmir Hāshim Habīb al-'Amīdī, Markaz al-Ghadir lil-Dirāsāt al-Islamiyyah, Qum, 1416 AH, Vol. 2, pp. 336 onwards)

⁶² *Al-Kāfī (al-Furū')*, Vol. 3, p. 507; *Mir'āt al-Uqūl*, Vol. 3, p. 57.

⁶³ *Dirāsāt fi al-Hadīth wa al-Muhaddithīn*, pp. 301-302.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 301-302.

⁶⁵ *Al-Kāfī (al-Furū')*, Vol. 3, p. 507.

⁶⁶ *Tadwīn al-Sunnah al-Sharīfah*, pp. 76-77.

⁶⁷ *A'yān al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁶⁹ *Al-Zahrā al-Qudwah*, pp. 191-195.

⁷⁰ *Fātimah al-Zahrā min al-Mahd ilā al-Lahad*, p.96.

⁷¹ *Al-Kāfī (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 240.

⁷² *Mir'āt al-Uqūl*, Vol. 3, p. 57.

⁷³ *Ma'sāt al-Zahrā*, Vol. 1, p. 109. Also refer to *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 154-156; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 27, p 271.

⁷⁴ *Haqīqat Mushaf Fātimah 'Inda al-Shi'ah*, p. 199, *Haqīqah al-Jafr 'Inda al-Shi'ah al-Imāmiyyah*, pp. 88-95.

⁷⁵ *Tadwīn al-Sunnah al-Sharīfah*, p. 77; *al-Zahrā al-Qudwah*, p. 193.

⁷⁶ *Al-Kāfi (al-Furū')*, Vol. 3, p. 508. The explanation for this narration has been taken from the commentary by the late 'Allāmah Shaykh Abū al-Hasan Sha'rānī, who wrote his work on the basis of a narration by Fayz Kāshānī. *al-Wāfi*, Vol. 6, pp. 225-228.

⁷⁷ *Al-Arba'in*, p. 560.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 559-560.

⁷⁹ Sayyid Hāshim Hāshimī, *Hiwār Ma'a Fazlullāh Hawl al-Zahrā*, p. 181. This book has been written in a scholarly style in order to critically evaluate what had been said by 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fazlullāh, but the language used is confrontational and full of sarcasm and contains undue allegations. It would be more appropriate if the author revised the book and cleansed this scholarly work from spiteful remarks.

⁸⁰ *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 148.

⁸¹ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, pp. 59-60; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 153.

⁸² *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 59; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 157; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 144; *al-Wāfi*, Vol. 3, p. 580.

⁸³ *Rawzah al-Wā'izin*, Vol. 1, p. 211; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 18.

⁸⁴ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 241; *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, p. 138.

⁸⁵ *Al-Manāqib*, Vol. 3, p. 373; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p. 32.

⁸⁶ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 358.

⁸⁷ Muhammad bin 'Abdullāh known as *Nafs Zakīyah* (the Purified Soul) was a great Shi'ite personality. In his book *Iqbāl*, Sayyid bin Tāwūs has a detailed discussion on 'Banī Hasan', has emphasized that he and the other descendants of Imam Hasan ('a) rose for establishing the truth and did not claim Imamate.

Sayyid bin Tawūs then quotes Ibrāhīm bin ‘Abdullāh’s words about his brother Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh and then rejects the allegations against him regarding the claim to *Mahdawīyyat*. (*al-Iqbāl*, pp.87-89). ‘Allāmah Amīnī, too, has written the same things about *Nafs Zakīyyah* and has considered his uprising as rightful one. (*al-Ghadīr*, p. 378). Knowing the fate of this uprising, Imam Sādiq (‘a) warned Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh about it and after he and his brothers were martyred, the Imam (‘a) praised them. (*Maqātil al-Tālibīyyīn*, p. 239). Also refer to *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, Vol. 1, pp. 98 onwards, researched and published by Shaykh Muhammad Bāqir Mahmūdī; *Qiyāmhā-yi Shī‘ah dar ‘Asr-i ‘Abbāsī*, Muhammad Kāzīmī Pūrān, pp. 99 onwards; *Sīrah Rasūl Allāh (S) wa Ahl Baytiḥ (‘a)*, Vol. 2, pp. 304 onwards; *Mawsū‘ah al-Imām al-Sādiq (‘a)*, Bāqir Sharīf al-Qurashī, Vol. 7, pp. 132 onwards).

⁸⁸ Rawzah al-Wā‘izīn, Vol. 1, p. 211; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 18.

⁸⁹ *Al-Imāmah wa al-Tabsīrah*, p. 50 (p. 180, researched by Jalālī), *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 242; *Ilal al-Sharā‘i*, p. 207; *al-Wāfi*, Vol. 3, p. 584.

⁹⁰ *Basā‘ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 157-158; *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 241; *al-Wāfi*, Vol. 3, p. 583; *Mir‘āt al-Uqūl*, Vol. 3, p. 58.

⁹¹ *Tahdhīb al-Ahkām*, Vol. 9, p. 169; *al-Kāfi (al-Furū‘)*, Vol. 7, p. 48; *Da‘ā‘im al-Islām*, Vol. 2, p.343.

⁹² *Ibid*. Also Look at *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 7, p. 47, the section on *Sadaqāt al-Nabī (S) wa Fātimah wa al-A‘immah*, 5-6; *‘Awālim al-‘Ulūm*, Vol. 11/12, pp. 1060 onwards. The researcher Muwahhidī Abtahī has reported this Will in different forms in the ‘*mustadrakāt*’ of this book.

⁹³ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon No. 3.

⁹⁴ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 103, p. 185; *Ma‘ānī al-Akhhār*, p. 357; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, pp. 159, 182-183, and Vol. 78, p. 255.

⁹⁵ The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) performed the funeral and burial service in the middle of the night, with a grieved heart and when he was asked as to why Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) was buried in the middle of the night he uttered these words. Amālī Sadūq, *Majlis* 94; *‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i*, p. 185. Also look at *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, pp. 28-29; *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, Vol. 3, p. 208; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 5, pp. 29-30; *Sahīh Muslim*, Vol. 3, p. 1380, *I‘lām al-Warā*, Vol. 1, p. 300, *Rawzah al-Wā‘izin*, Vol. 1, p. 153; *al-Zurriyyah al-Tāhirah*, Dūlābī, p. 152.

This writer finds it appropriate to present here, Dr. ‘Ali Shari‘ati’s beautiful words on the will of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a):

Fātimah (‘a) ... lay peacefully in her bed, turned towards the *qiblah* and waited. Moments passed by ... A cry arose suddenly from the house. She had closed her eyelids and had opened her eyes to her Beloved Who was awaiting her. The grief-stricken candle from the house of ‘Ali (‘a) had gone off. And ‘Ali (‘a) was left all alone with his children. She had requested ‘Ali (‘a) to bury her in the dark of the night so that no one would know where her grave lay and that those two Shaykhs do not attend her funeral. And ‘Ali (‘a) abided by her last wishes – but no one knows how; and no one still knows where! Was it in her own home? Or was it in the Baqī‘? It still remains unknown! It is for the researchers to discover but I am not a researcher; I do not wish to research (upon this subject); I do not want to uncover the exact place of her burial. Her grave should always remain unknown so that her message stays alive. She wished that her grave remained unknown; and that never and no one (should know about its secret) – such that everyone is left with the question: Why?! (*Fātimah is Fātimah*, pp. 199-200)

⁹⁶ *Basā‘ir al-Darajāt*, p. 152.

⁹⁷ *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 158; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 47.

⁹⁸ *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 162; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 26, p 51; *Ithbāt al-Hudāt*, Vol. 3, p. 520.

⁹⁹ *‘Ilal al-Sharā’i’*, Vol. 2, p. 182; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p 78; *al-Ikhtisās*, p. 329.

¹⁰⁰ *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 369-370.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 371.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 368. Also look at *al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, pp. 176-177, 243; *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 322, 368-374; *al-Ikhtisās*, p. 328-329; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 11, p 41 and Vol. 26, pp. 74-82.

¹⁰³ *Al-Kāfi (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, pp. 176, 243; *al-Ikhtisās*, p. 328-329; *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, pp. 328, 319-372; *al-Khisāl*, Vol. 2, p. 476; *Ma’ānī al-Akhhār*, p. 102; *al-Ghaybah (Nu‘mānī)*, p. 60; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 25, p. 77, Vol. 26, pp. 66, 72, 74, Vol. 36, pp. 272, 383, 393... For further information on the subject of Salmān being a *muhaddith* refer to *Amālī al-Tūsī*, p. 407, *Tartīb al-Amālī*, Vol. 2, p. 497; *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 322; *al-Kharā’ij wa al-Jarā’ih*, Vol. 2, p. 830. *Raṣhshī*, too, has narrated matters indicating this truth using such phrases as “Salmān was a *Muhaddith*”; also see the phrase “Allah sent an angel to her who whispered in her ear and she said: ‘I hear, I hear’” in *Ikhtiyār Ma’rifah al-Rijāl*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-Sirā’ Bayn al-Islām wa al-Wathaniyyah*, Vol. 1, p.1 and Vol. 2, p.35: Quoted from *al-Ghadīr* Vol. 5, p. 79.

¹⁰⁵ *Fātimah al-Zahrā (‘a)*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁰⁶ *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Vo. 5, pp. 77-78. (*Kitāb al-Manāqib, Bāb Manāqib ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb*).

¹⁰⁷ *Sahīh al-Muslim*, Vol. 4, p. 44

¹⁰⁸ *Irshād al-Sārī*, Vol. 7, p. 482.

¹⁰⁹ There are a number of narrations in the Sunni sources. Abū Ja‘far Tahāwī, too, has quoted this narration in different

versions and has then said that: “‘Umar spoke with inspiration” and quotes one such inspiration from Anas bin Mālik that ‘Umar bin Khattāb said: “On some occasions Allah sent his verses on the basis of my views; for instance, I once told the Prophet that good and bad people come (in the presence of) your wives and thus, it is more appropriate to order them to cover themselves and after that the verse on ‘*hijāb*’ was revealed...” (*Mushkil al-Āthār*, Vol. 2, p. 257). As rightly stated by ‘Allāmah Amīnī, if such concoctions begin to be considered as “Divine Inspiration” then we should prepare for the funeral of the true message of Islam. It would be more appropriate on the part of the Sunni scholars to dissociate such sayings to ‘Umar since they only belittle the status of the Prophet, ruin the greatness of prophethood and are caustic towards the Messenger of Allah (S). (*Al-Ghadir*, Vol. 5, pp. 69-70).

¹¹⁰ Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-Ahkām al-Qur‘ān*, Vol. 2, p. 53.

¹¹¹ *Al-Ghadir*, Vol. 5, p. 67.

¹¹² *Al-Tabaqāt*, Vol. 4, p. 288; *al-Isābah*, Vol. 4, p. 585; *Usud al-Ghābah*, Vol. 4, p. 269.

¹¹³ *Safwah al-Safwah*, Vol. 2, p. 280; *al-Muntazam*, Vol. 17, p. 82.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹¹⁵ Commenting on some of the views of the Sunni scholars about the qualities of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and proving these qualities on the basis of the Sunni sources, ‘Allāmah Amīnī has also had a profound discussion about Imams (‘a) being *muhaddithūn* (*al-Ghadir*, Vol.5, pp. 67-80) also quoting the narrations regarding Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) being a *muhaddithah*. (Please refer to ‘Allāmah Amīnī, *Fātimah Zahrā (‘a)*, with preface and commentaries by Muhammad Amīnī, pp. 223-237).

Women Narrators of the *Ahādīth* of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a)

*By: Nihlah Gharawī Nā’ini**

The term *hadīth* refers to the sayings and the acts of an Infallible (*Ma’sūm*) and since, based upon the “Verse of Purification” (*Ayah al-Tathīr*) of the Glorious Qur’ān¹ as well as the *hadīth* narrated by Umm Salamah² who was a wife of Muhammad (S), Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) is one of the Infallible Members of the Household of the Messenger of Allah (S), and her sayings and actions are also regarded as *ahādīth* according to the sense explained at the onset. Therefore, in order to procure a deep sense of the *ahādīth* narrated through this great lady of Islam, whose words and deeds serve as exemplars for every Muslim man or woman, it is necessary to introduce the narrators of her *ahādīth*.

A perusal of the Shi’ite sources in the Islamic science of *rijāl* (a branch of science dealing with the study of the narrators of *ahādīth*) reveals that there is apparently no mention of the

* The author is an associate professor at the Tarbiyat Mudarris University, Tehran.

narrators of Hazrat Fātimah's ('a) *ahādīth* in these sources although she is one of the narrators of the *ahādīth* her father the Prophet of Allah (S). In the Sunni sources, too, Hazrat Fātimah's ('a) name appears among the narrators of *ahādīth* and those who have quoted her narrating her father's *ahādīth* include Imam 'Alī ('a), Imam Hasan ('a), Imam Husayn ('a), Umm Salamah, Salmā Umm Rāfi', Fātimah bint al-Husayn ('a), 'Ayishah, and Anas bin Mālik.³

Nevertheless, this author has always believed that like the other Infallibles ('a), Hazrat Fātimah ('a), too, must have had some *ahādīth* that were narrated through others. A research undertaken on *hadīth* sources verified this belief and the author managed to discover the names of a few personalities who were the narrators of Hazrat Fātimah's ('a) *ahādīth*. The purpose of this paper is, thus, to introduce the women narrators of the *ahādīth* of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) in order to get more acquainted with her sayings and acts as well as to highlight the role played by women in narrating the *ahādīth* of the Fourteen Infallibles ('a) that were forgotten among the Muslims. These women were close to this unique "jewel of creation" and were more acquainted with her life.

In this paper, we shall briefly look at the lives of these narrators – based upon what is available through reliable Islamic sources – and shall also quote some of the *ahādīth* narrated by them.

Asmā' Bint 'Umays

Asmā' was the daughter of 'Umays bin Ma'd bin Hārith who belonged to the Khuth'amiyyah tribe. She was the sister of Maymūnah, the wife of the Prophet of Allah (S). She was also the sister of Lubābah (Umm al-Fazl), the wife of the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās, and was the sister of Salmā (the wife of Hamzah, another uncle of the Prophet). She married Ja'far Tayyār (the

elder brother of Imam ‘Alī [‘a]) and after embracing Islam migrated to Abyssinia with him, only to return to Medina on the day of the conquest of Khaybar. After Ja‘far’s martyrdom she married Abū Bakr (a companion of the Prophet of Allah) and gave birth to Muhammad. After Abū Bakr’s death she married the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Alī (‘a). Asmā’ was one of the first women who swore allegiance to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S). She was a sacrificing, hard-working housewife with a great sense of responsibility.⁴

From the time she entered Medina, she committed herself to the service of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) like a compassionate mother and, thus, Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) passed on her final will to this loyal lady and on her request Asmā’ made a coffin in order to conceal her body at the time of her funeral. Moreover, as per Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) wishes, it was Asmā’ who helped Imam ‘Alī (‘a) wash her body after her demise.⁵ Asmā’ was one of the witnesses of the Fadak episode and was one of the people who rejected the alleged statement attributed to the Prophet: *Nahnu ma‘shar al-Anbiyā’ lā-nuwarriṭh, mā-taraknāhu sadaqah* (We the community of Prophets are not inherited, whatever we leave is charity). However, Abū Bakr did not concede to her testimony. This political move on her part and the bravery that she exhibited before the caliph were very valuable moves that only a handful of people have the power to attempt. Supporting the truth and standing up against oppression were acts that many women of those times did not avoid. The Prophet of Allah (S) had on many occasions praised her and her sisters and is known to have said: “May Allah shower His blessings upon the sisters who have secured heaven; viz., Asmā’, the daughter of ‘Umayy, Umm al-Fazl and Salmā”⁶

In his discussion on the life of Muhammad bin Abū Bakr, Ayatullāh Khu‘ī quotes Kashshī who in turn quotes from Ibn Qūlawayh through ‘Abdullāh bin Sanān from Imam Sādiq (‘a),

saying: “Muhammad bin Abū Bakr had inherited his nobility from his mother Asmā’, the daughter of ‘Umays”.⁷ Many other *rijāl* books have enlisted her among the companions of the Prophet of Allah (S) and the narrators of his *ahādīth* and have quoted a large number of Prophetic Traditions through her. Tabarānī has quoted from her over forty *ahādīth*, the texts of many of which are similar to each other.⁸ Bukhārī, too, has recorded some *ahādīth* through Asmā’ bint ‘Umays.⁹ The people who have quoted *ahādīth* through her include Imam ‘Alī bin Husayn (‘a), ‘Abdullāh bin Ja‘far (her own son), Qāsim bin Muhammad bin Abū Bakr, Umm ‘Awn bint Muhammad bin Ja‘far, Sa‘id bin Musayyib, ‘Ubayd bin Rifā‘ah, Abū Bardah bin Abī Mūsā, Fātimah bint Imam ‘Alī (‘a), ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullāh bin Shaddād, Abū Zayd Madanī, ‘Umar bin Khattāb, ‘Urwah bin Zubayr, Abū Mūsā Ash‘arī, ‘Awn bin Ja‘far (her own son) and many others.

Imam Rizā (‘a) through his father and forefathers quotes his ancestor Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a), who quoted Asmā’ bint ‘Umays as saying:

I was with Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) when the Messenger of Allah (S) entered and saw that she (‘a) was wearing a gold necklace that Imam ‘Alī bin Abi Tālib (‘a) had bought for her from his share of the spoils of war. The Prophet of Allah (‘a) said: “O Fātimah! Would people not say that Fātimah, the daughter of Muhammad, has dressed up like the arrogant?” Fātimah (‘a) removed the necklace and sold it and with its money freed a slave. The Prophet of Allah (S) was very pleased with this act of hers.¹⁰

Elsewhere, Imam Rizā (‘a) quotes Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a) on the same chain of authority that Asmā’ bint ‘Umays served as midwife for Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) at the time of the birth of Imam Hasan (‘a) and Imam Husayn (‘a). In this narration Asmā’ (who it seems was in Medina on brief visits

from Abyssinia where her husband had been granted permission to stay by King Negus because of persecution of Muslims in Mecca) mentions how she handed over the newborns to the Prophet of Allah (S) and the manner in which the Prophet (‘a) chose their names.¹¹

‘Allāmah Majlisī quotes the following *hadīth* from the Irbilī’s *Kashf al-Ghummah* (who quotes from the much earlier source, *al-Dhurriyyah al-Tāhirah* of Dulābī) narrated by Asmā’ bint ‘Umays, mentioning that Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) on her deathbed had said:

I dislike the manner of the funeral of women in which the deceased is covered by a cloth and her body can be seen by people. To this Asmā’ said: “O daughter of the Messenger of Allah! May I show you what I saw in Abyssinia?” She then asked for a palm branch stripped of its leaves and arranged it (like a coffin) and covered it with cloth. On seeing it Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) said: “How fine and beautiful it is! It is (now) not possible to distinguish (the body of) a woman from a man.”¹²

Umm Anas (Umm Sulaym)

Umm Sulaym was the daughter of Milhān bin Khālid Khazrajī Ansārī whose seventh ancestor is ‘Adī bin Najjār. She is the same person as al-Ghumaysā’ or al-Rumaysā’ and was also known as Sahlah, Ramiyah, Anfiyah, and Ramithah. Her mother was Malikah bint Mālik and her sister was Umm Harām.¹³ She married Mālik bin al-Nazr and gave birth to Anas bin Mālik (later to be the Prophet’s servant). After Mālik’s death Umm Sulaym remained unmarried for some time after which she embraced Islam and swore allegiance to the Prophet (S). After some time, Abū Talhah Ansārī proposed to marry her but since he was a non-Muslim Umm Sulaym rejected his proposal and instead invited him to Islam. Abū Talhah was impressed by Umm Sulaym and embraced Islam. She then married him and

gave birth to Abā ‘Umayr who died in infancy, and later to ‘Abdullāh, the father of Ishāq. Umm Sulaym died in the year 25 AH.

Her Bravery and *Jihād*:

Ibn Sa’d, quotes Anas as saying: “On the day of the Battle of Hunayn, Umm Sulaym had armed herself with a dagger in order to kill the unbelieving enemies.” Elsewhere he writes: “On the day of the Battle of Hunayn she participated while she was pregnant. She had earlier participated in the Battle of Badr, fetching water for the thirsty and taking care of the wounded.”¹⁴

Her Patience:

It has been narrated that when Umm Sulaym’s infant son Abā ‘Umayr died following an illness she performed the religious ceremony of ablution, shrouded his dead body and then covered it with a piece of cloth, and without making any hue and cry asked others not to inform her husband, Abū Talhah. She then, very patiently, informed him about the death of their son.¹⁵

Her Wisdom and Insight:

Umm Sulaym was a wise and intelligent woman. The depth of her wisdom can be fathomed from the following narration:

When Abū Talhah proposed to her she said to him: ‘Do you not know that the god you worship is made from the plants that grow from the earth?’ When Abū Talhah replied that he was aware of this fact, she added: ‘Aren’t you ashamed to worship a piece of wood?’¹⁶

Honoured by the Prophet (S):

The Prophet (S) repeatedly honoured Umm Sulaym and even went to visit her. Ibn Sa’d narrates the following from Anas as well as from others:

Anas bin Mālik told me that the Prophet of Allah (S) went to visit Umm Sulaym and took for her parts of whatever he received as presents. Besides the homes of his own wives, the Messenger of Allah (S) only visited Umm Sulaym’s house. When he was asked about it, he replied: ‘I feel compassionate towards her because her brother was with me when he was killed.’¹⁷

Elsewhere, the Prophet (S) is quoted to have said:

I entered heaven and heard something move. Then suddenly I saw Ghumaysā’, the daughter of Milhān.¹⁸

This *hadīth* has also been recorded by Bukhārī and Muslim.

Ibn Sa‘d also narrates from Anas that whenever the Messenger of Allah (S) went to Umm Sulaym’s house she paid respect to him and served him with dates and oil and at times she and her son (Anas) took buckets of dates for the Prophet (S).¹⁹ Taking into consideration the above-mentioned *ahādīth* about Umm Sulaym there remains no doubt that she was one of the followers of the Household of the Prophet (‘a). Her husband Abū Talhah, whose real name was Zayd bin Sahl from the Bani Najjār tribe, was one of the nobles of his tribe and had participated in the Allegiance of ‘Aqabah and had also joined in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, as well as other events and is considered as a man of repute among the *rijāl* scholars.²⁰

Anas bin Mālik is quoted to have said:

I once asked my mother about (the characteristics of) Fātimah (‘a) and she replied: She was like the full moon, or the sun when it emerges from behind the clouds. She was fair and slender.²¹

Umm Salamah

Hind (Umm Salamah), daughter of Abū Umayyah Makhzūmī and the wife of ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abd al-Asad Makhzūm, was one of the earliest people who embraced Islam and was one of the first women migrants of Islam. She migrated with her husband to Abyssinia. She was very faithful and compassionate in her family life.

Her husband Abū Salamah died in the year 4 AH. After some time Abū Bakr proposed to marry her to which she did not agree. ‘Umar bin Khattāb was the next person to propose to her, but in vain. Subsequently the Prophet of Allah (S) married her with the simple dowry of ten dirhams, a hand-mill, two water pots, a pillow filled with coir, a quilt, a bowl, a cooking vessel, and a large wooden tray. The Prophet (S) had great respect for her.²²

Following the death of Fātimah bint Asad, the Prophet of Allah (S) left his daughter Fātimah (‘a) in the custody of Umm Salamah which was a great honour for her. Umm Salamah repeatedly said: “People think that I am training Fātimah, while it is the opposite and she is in fact my teacher.” Umm Salamah always supported Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), and because of her testimony on Fadak in favour of the Prophet’s daughter, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar withheld her share from the *bayt al-māl* (the public treasury) for one year.²³ However, this attitude of the two caliphs did not stop her from supporting the truth. Imam Sādiq (‘a) called her the “noblest of the wives of the Prophet of Allah (S) after Khadijah (‘a)”²⁴

Umm Salamah was a confidant of the Household of the Prophet (S). She was loyal to Imam ‘Alī (‘a), and after him to his sons Imam Hasan (‘a) and Imam Husayn (‘a), as the rightful successors of the Prophet.²⁵

The Prophet (S) had told her all about the future of his Household (‘a) and had informed her about the manner in which

they would be martyred. He had even given her some of Imam Husayn’s (‘a) *turbat*. It has also been narrated that before Imam Husayn (‘a) left for Iraq, Umm Salamah said to him that the Prophet had informed her that his younger grandson will be killed in a land called Karbalā by the swords of oppressors and tyrants.

Umm Salamah had accompanied the Prophet (S) to the Battle of Khaybar, the peaceful surrender of Mecca, the siege of Tā’if, the Battle of Hawāzin, the Battle of Thaqīf, and during the *Hajjah al-Widā’* [the Prophet’s (S) final *Hajj* pilgrimage]. This loyal confidant of the Household of the Prophet (S) could read but she could not write.²⁶ It is noteworthy that Umm Salamah had advised ‘Ayishah against going to war with Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and had even sent her a letter in order to dissuade her from taking this step. In his commentary on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ibn Abī al-Hadid has recorded her eloquent sayings.²⁷ The modern Egyptian writer ‘Umar Rizā Kahhālah has recorded her advices to ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān and her letter to Mu‘āwiyah.²⁸ It has been reported that on gaining certainty that her advice to ‘Ayishah had gone heedless, she wrote a letter to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) from Mecca and handed it over to her son ‘Umar, saying: “Take this letter to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and stay at his side and be at his command.” In her letter, after narrating all that had taken place between her and ‘Ayishah, she added: “O Commander of the Faithful! If the Messenger of Allah (S) had not commanded us to remain at home, I would have surely accompanied you. Instead, I have sent my son to be at your command.”²⁹

She advised people against pledging allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah describing it as a deceitful act and when Mu‘āwiyah had ordered his people to curse Imam ‘Alī (‘a) from the pulpits, she wrote him a letter, saying: “You curse ‘Alī and his followers while I testify that Allah and His Messenger (S) love him.”³⁰

At the time of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a), Umm Salamah was extremely aggrieved and wept bitterly and it is said that she did not survive long after the Karbalā tragedy and left for her heavenly abode in the year 61 AH at the age of eighty-four. In her will, she had insisted that Marwān (the governor of Medina) should not perform the prayer over her dead body.

Rijāl sources have mentioned Umm Salamah as one of the narrators of the *ahādīth* of the Prophet of Allah (S) and she has been quoted by many narrators. Authentic Sunni and Shi‘ite sources have recorded that she had narrated a number of *ahādīth* from the Messenger of Allah (S) and Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). Some of the *ahādīth* narrated by her from Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) are quoted hereunder:

Ibn Athīr quotes ‘Abdullāh bin Sanān who quoted Umm Salamah as saying:

Once Fātimah (‘a) came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and he whispered something to her that made her weep. He then whispered to her, a second time, and she smiled. I later asked Fātimah (‘a) as to what the Messenger of Allah (S) had whispered in her ears and she replied that he informed her that he would depart from the world that year and I wept and then he gave me the tidings that I will be the first person from among the family to join him (in afterlife) and I rejoiced.³¹

Majlisi quotes Umm Salamah as saying: “Fātimah (‘a) resembled the Messenger of Allah (S) more than any other person.”³²

Tabarānī while explaining the *Ayah al-Tathīr*, which refers to the occasion when the Prophet (S) gathered under his cloak Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Imam Hasan (‘a) and Imam Husayn (‘a), quotes Abū Sa‘id Khudrī who quoted Umm Salamah as saying:

The verse “*Allah desires to keep away uncleanness from you, Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.*” (33:33) was revealed in my house. I was sitting beside the door and asked the Messenger of Allah (S) ‘if I was also among his Ahl al-Bayt’, to which he replied (after a negative indication that she was not): ‘You are although on the right path’.³³

Shaykh Saffār quotes Umm Salamah as saying:

During the final illness that resulted in his passing away, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Send for my friend.’ ‘Ayishah sent for her father but when he (Abū Bakr) entered, the Prophet (S) covered his face and repeated: ‘Send for my friend’. Abū Bakr returned perplexed. Hafsa sent for her father but when ‘Umar entered, he again covered his face and said: ‘Send for my friend’. ‘Umar returned perplexed and Fātimah (‘a) sent for ‘Ali (‘a). When ‘Ali (‘a) entered, the Messenger of Allah (S) sat up and covered him with his robe. (The narrator of this *hadīth* says that) ‘Ali (‘a) later said: (The Messenger of Allah) narrated a thousand *ahādīth* for me, each of which opened up a thousand doors for me. This continued until I began to sweat and the Prophet (S) sweated.³⁴

Barrah Khuzā‘ī

Barrah Khuzā‘ī was the daughter of Umayyah, a companion of the Messenger of Allah (S). A *hadīth* quoted by ‘Allāmah Majlisi from Barrah Khuzā‘ī regarding the births of Hasanayn (‘a), as extracted from Ibn Shahr Ashūb’s book, the *Manāqib*, reveals that she was from among the devotees of the Household of the Prophet of Allah (S). She has narrated several *ahādīth* from the Messenger of Allah (S) and from Fātimah Zahrā’ (‘a). The following is an example of a *hadīth* narrated by her regarding Fātimah (‘a):

When Fātimah (‘a) was pregnant with Hasan (‘a), the Messenger of Allah (S) left home for some work, telling her: Gabriel has informed me that you will give birth to a son. Do not feed him until I come to you.’ When I (Barrah) went to visit Fātimah (‘a) next, she had given birth to Hasan (‘a) three days earlier and she had not given him any milk. I asked her (‘a) to give me the baby for a feed and she replied: ‘By no means!’ Then her motherly instinct got the better of her and she fed him. When the Prophet (S) returned, he asked Fātimah (‘a), ‘What did you do?’ She replied that she was overcome by her motherly instincts and had fed him. He then said: ‘Allah Almighty approves only of His Own Will’.

When Fātimah (‘a) was pregnant with Husayn (‘a), He (the Prophet) said: O’ Fātimah! Gabriel has informed me that you will give birth to a son. Do not feed him until I return to you; even if it takes a whole month.’ She replied: ‘I shall do that’; and the Messenger of Allah (S) set out for some work. Fātimah (‘a) gave birth to Husayn (‘a) and did not feed him until the Messenger of Allah (S) returned and asked: ‘What did you do?’ She said: ‘I did not feed him’. He took Husayn (‘a) into his arms and put his tongue into his mouth and the baby sucked on it until the Prophet (S) said: ‘O’ Husayn! O’ Husayn!’ thereafter adding: ‘Allah Almighty approves only of His Own Will’. This Imamate will remain with you and your children.³⁵

Zaynab Bint Abī Rāfi‘

Zaynab, the daughter of Abū Rāfi‘³⁶ - a freed slave of the Messenger of Allah (S) - had served both the Prophet (S) as well as his beloved daughter Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). Abū Na‘im quotes Ya‘qūb bin Hamīd through Ibrāhīm Rāfi‘ī on the authority of Zaynab bint Abi Rāfi‘, saying:

I saw Fātimah (‘a) the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (S) come to her father, along with her sons during the final illness that resulted in his passing away. I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! These are your (grand) sons, leave them some inheritance. He [the Prophet (S)] said: ‘As for Hasan (‘a) my awe-inspiring grandeur and nobility for him, and as for Husayn (‘a) my courage and generosity for him.’³⁷

Zaynab, Bent Imam ‘Alī (‘a)

Zaynab al-Kubrā (the Elder) was the daughter of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) and Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). She was born during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) and she earned the epithets of “Umm al-Masā’ib”, “Umm al-Razāyā”, and “Umm al-Nawā’ib” because of her heroic role in Karbalā’ and in the aftermath of history’s greatest tragedy.³⁸ Her father married her to his nephew, ‘Abdullāh bin Ja‘far, and she had five children named ‘Alī, ‘Awn Akbar, ‘Abbās, Muhammad, and Umm Kulthūm.

The exact date of this great lady’s death and the place of her burial are not clearly known, even though some historians including Zirikli have mentioned that she died in the year 62 AH.³⁹

Based on the views of these two scholars this noble lady of Islam died in the month of Rajab in the year 61 AH.

The virtues of Hazrat Zaynab (‘a) are so well known that they hardly need to be emphasized. Her auspicious name was brought down by the archangel Gabriel, and the Prophet (S) said: “My will to those who are present as well as to all others is to hold this girl in high esteem. Verily she resembles Khadijah al-Kubrā.”⁴⁰ Everyone acquainted with the world of eloquence admits that whenever she spoke it was as though Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was speaking. In the footsteps of her own mother, Zaynab (‘a)

was a lady of such high levels of modesty, purity, intelligence, and knowledge that no pen is able to put her virtues down in words.

Hazrat Zaynab (‘a) was so dedicated to such qualities as austerity, purity, devotion, and generosity that no woman of her times could be compared with her. She had inherited these virtues from her noble parents. She disregarded the wealth and comfort of her husband’s home and accompanied her brother through the deserts in order to fulfill her duty. Most of her nights were spent in worshipping Allah the Almighty, and in reciting the glorious Qur’ān. Even on the night of 10th Muharram, and despite all the hardships, torment, and agony that she had gone through, this great lady sat in worship. In this regard, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a) is quoted to have said: “That night I saw my aunt sitting on her prayer mat and worshipping Allah.”⁴¹

She had inherited patience and grace from Khadijah al-Kubrā (‘a), purity and modesty from Hazrat Fātimah Zahrā’ (‘a), eloquence from Imam ‘Alī (‘a), tolerance from Imam Hasan (‘a), and bravery from Imam Husayn (‘a)!

Hazrat Zaynab has quoted narrations from her father Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), Asmā’ bint ‘Umays, and Umm Ayman persons, like Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh al-Ansārī, Fātimah bint al-Husayn, ‘Ibād ‘Amirī, ‘Atā’ bin Sāyib, and Muhammad bin ‘Amr have quoted *ahādīth* from her. She narrates her mother’s sermon on Fadak in the following words:

Fātimah (‘a) said in her sermon on the significance of Fadak: By God, he (the Prophet) brought a covenant unto you and an heir that he has left behind for you.⁴² The Book of Allah whose perspectives are clear, its insights are clear and its proofs apparent and bright (indisputable). Its hearing is gentle and pleasing for mankind, it leads its adherents to heaven and

guarantees salvation for its followers. In it are manifest the brilliant authorities of Allah, delineated are His prohibited decrees and mandatory His virtues ...^{43&44}

Ibn Qūlawayh has recorded on the authority of Qudāmah bin Zā’idah, who narrates from Imam ‘Alī bin al-Husayn (‘a) that Hazrat Zaynab said:

Umm Ayman has related to me: One of the days when the Messenger of Allah (S) visited the house of Fātimah (‘a), I prepared for him *harīrah* (a porridge like dish) and served him on a tray with dates. Then I placed before them a bowl with yogurt and butter. The Messenger of Allah (S) ate it along with ‘Alī (‘a), Fātimah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a).⁴⁵

Shaykh Mufīd quotes from Zaynab bint Imam ‘Alī (‘a) through ‘Isā bin Mihrān and Sulaymān Hāshimī as saying:

When Abū Bakr decided to deprive Fātimah (‘a) of Fadak and ‘Awālī, Fātimah (‘a) was very disappointed and went to the grave of her father, the Messenger of Allah (S), and threw herself on it and wept and complained about the manner in which people had treated her. She mourned and wept so bitterly that her tears dampened the soil of the Prophet’s (S) grave.⁴⁶

Salmā Umm Rāfi‘

Salmā Umm Rāfi‘ was a maid of the Prophet of (S) and in some sources it has been recorded that she was a freed slave of Safiyyah bint ‘Abd al-Muttalib. She was the wife of Abū Rāfi‘ (a servant of the Prophet) and was known as Umm Rāfi‘. Salmā had played midwife to Hazrat Khadijah (‘a) and Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) when they gave birth to their children. She even served as a nurse to Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) during her illness and helped Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Asmā’ bint ‘Umayy in performing the ablution of

her body. During the Battle of Khaybar she accompanied the Messenger of Allah (S).⁴⁷

Rijāl scholars have recorded her name among the companions of the Messenger of Allah (S) and the narrators of his *ahādīth*.⁴⁸ Ibn Habbān has recorded her among the *thiqāt*.⁴⁹ The people who have narrated *ahādīth* through her include ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Alī Rāfi‘ (her nephew), Abū Rāfi‘, and Ayyūb bin Hasan bin ‘Alī bin Rāfi‘, while Tabarāni, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmizī, Ibn Mājah, and Ahmad bin Hanbal have quoted her in their books. Ibn Sa‘d quotes from Salmā through Abī Rāfi‘ as saying:

Fātimah (‘a), the daughter of the Prophet of Allah, fell ill. On the day of her passing away, ‘Alī (‘a) had left the house (for some work). Fātimah (‘a) said to me: ‘Pour some water and help me wash myself’. I poured water and she washed herself thoroughly. She then said: ‘Bring me my new clothes’. I gave her the clothes and she wore them and said: ‘Spread out my bedding in the middle of the room.’⁵⁰

Fātimah Bint Imam Husayn (‘a)

Fātimah was the daughter of Imam Husayn (‘a) and the wife of Hasan Muthannā the son of Imam Hasan (‘a). Her epithets included Umm ‘Abdullāh, Fātimah al-Sughrā, and Fātimah Nabawiyah. She accompanied her father Imam Husayn (‘a) to Karbalā, along with her husband, and after the incident of Karbalā and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a) and his companions was taken to Damascus and return to Medina. Following her husband’s death she put a tent next to his grave and spent the days fasting and the nights in prayer for one whole year.⁵¹

Fātimah was a very pious and faithful believer. In a narration quoted from different narrators Ibn sa‘d writes: “She (Fātimah) had made a string of beads with which she praised Allah.”⁵² She was from a very noble family and was very virtuous. She was older than her sister Sakīnah and from among all the other members of her family, she resembled Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) the most.

She witnessed the martyrdom of her father, her brothers and other relatives as well as the atrocities inflicted upon the Household of the Messenger of Allah (S) and took refuge in her aunt Zaynab (‘a). She was so grief-stricken by the calamities that she and her family had gone through that her tears had dried up and her voiced had choked. She was taken, along with the other members of her family, as a captive to Kufa. The manner in which they were treated by the people of Kufa added to the grief that she and her family had gone through and she, too, delivered a speech after her aunt Zaynab (‘a). It has been narrated that she made a powerful speech with deep conviction and exposed the atrocities of the Umayyads, bringing tears to the eyes of all those who were present. After her speech some people told her: “O daughter of the purest people! You tore our hearts apart and put fire into our souls.”⁵³

Fātimah was the custodian of the secrets of the Imam of her Age [her father Imam Husayn (‘a)]. He gave her a written will to hand over to her brother Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) after his martyrdom⁵⁴.

Fātimah bint al-Husayn has quoted a number of narrations from Hazrat Zahrā (‘a) and many people, including her sons ‘Abdullāh, Ibrāhīm, and Husayn, as well as her daughter Umm Ja‘far and other people like Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar bin ‘Uthmān, ‘Ayishah bint Talhah, Hishām bin Ziyād,

‘Imārah bin ‘Azmah, Yahyā bin Abī Ya‘lā, and Shaybah bin Na‘āmah have quoted narrations.

Tabarī quotes from Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) through Shaybah bin Na‘āmah and Fātimah Sughrā saying: “Every Prophet had left behind an ‘Usbah (agnation), and Fātimah is my ‘Usbah and belongs to me.”⁵⁵

Imam Sādiq (‘a) has quoted a *hadith* from Imam Bāqir (‘a), from Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) from Imam Husayn (‘a) from Imam Hasan (‘a), which reads:

I saw my mother Fātimah (a) standing in her prayer niche on the eve of Friday. She did not cease bowing and prostrating (to God) until the break of dawn. I heard her praying for the believing men and the believing the women by mentioning them and beseeching (God) wit fervour on their behalf, but not supplicating anything for her own self. I asked her: O mother! You did not pray for your self as you prayed for others. She replied: O my son! First the neighbour then the household.⁵⁶

Fizzah Nawbiyyah

It was the Messenger of Allah (S) who had appointed Fizzah as a helper for Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). Fizzah was famous for her faith, piety, austerity, and her love for the Household of the Prophet (S). She was also noted for her eloquence. She was not merely a maid in Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) home but was rather her student and a constant companion to her.

Ibn Athir quotes Mujāhid who in turn quotes Ibn ‘Abbās on the cause of revelation of the verse, “*They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide*” (76: 7), saying: “(One day) Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a) fell ill. The Prophet (S) and all the people prayed for their health and asked the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī (‘a) to take a vow for an offering (*nazr*) for (the recovery of) his sons. Imam ‘Alī (‘a)

took a vow to fast for three days. Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) and Fizzah, their maid, too, took a similar vow and they fasted for three days. Every evening, at the time of breaking their fasts, some poor man (a destitute, an orphan and a freed captive) appeared at their doorstep to ask for food. They gave whatever food they had to them and broke their fasts with plain water. Three days passed by in the same manner. On the third day, the Messenger of Allah (S) came to their house and witnessed their physical weakness and it was then that the *āyāhs* 7 to 9 of the *Sūrah al-Dahr* were revealed.”⁵⁷

Ibn Hajar reports from Imam Sādiq (‘a), through his ancestors, quoting Imam ‘Ali (‘a) saying:

The Messenger of Allah appointed a maid for Fātimah (‘a) whose name was Fizzah and who baked bread. The Messenger of Allah (S) taught her the following supplication to recite when fatigue overcame her: “*Yā Wāhidun laysa kamithlihī ahadun, tumītu kulla ahadin wa Anta ‘alā ‘arshika Wāhidun lata’khdhuhū sinatun wa lā nawmun*” (O the O’ the only one, beside whom there is no one; You make every soul die and You are the only One on Your throne, whom neither drowsiness overtakes nor sleep.)⁵⁸

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) prayed for Fizzah in the following words: “O Allah! Shower Your abundance upon our Fizzah.”⁵⁹ Fizzah was so devoted towards her mistress (*mawlā*) that she remained hungry when her mistress was hungry, remained thirsty when she was thirsty; she would avoid sleeping when her mistress did not sleep, and would even fast whenever she fasted. She constantly took care of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). When ‘Umar bin Khattāb went to Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) house, Fizzah was the one who answered the door and objected to the behaviour demonstrated by him and his accomplices. In

his letter to Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Umar admitted: “When I went to ‘Ali’s (‘a) house it was their maid Fizzah who came out first and objected to me. Then I slammed the door on Fātimah (‘a) and she cried out so hard that I thought Medina had turned into ruins. She then called Fizzah and said: ‘O Fizzah, help me! I swear by Allah that what I was pregnant with has been killed’.”⁶⁰

Majlisi quotes Waraqah bin ‘Abdullāh Azdī saying: “I asked Fizzah to speak to me about Fātimah (‘a) after her father’s passing away. She wept and said:

When the Messenger of Allah (S) departed for his heavenly abode every one, young and old, from among his Household, his companions, his relatives, his friends, and even strangers was deeply grieved; (they) lost their patience and wept bitterly. However, none from among all the people on the face of the earth and his close relatives and companions was more grief-stricken and sorrowful than my mistress Hazrat Fātimah (‘a); and her grief increased and her weeping became more bitter (as each day elapsed). Seven days passed by and each day her weeping was more than the previous day. On the eighth day, she revealed her real grief and the sorrow that she had so far managed to withhold. Women and children had gathered from everywhere and wept and cried with her. The lamps were not on and it was not possible to distinguish (man from) woman, and, thus, the ladies thought that the Prophet (S) had risen from his grave. Hazrat Fātimah (‘a) called out to her father with woe and sorrow and said: ‘O father! O the chosen one! O Muhammad! O Abā al-Qāsim! O the cause of the happiness of the poor and the orphans! Who is there now to deserve the *qiblah* and the *mihrah*? And who is there to console and comfort your grief-stricken daughter?’⁶¹

‘Ayishah

‘Ayishah, a wife of the Messenger of Allah (S), too, has narrated some *ahādith* about the personal life of Hazrat Fātimah (‘a). ‘Allāmah Majlisi quotes from the book *Manāqib* that:

It is recorded by Abū Na‘im in his *Hulyah al-Awliyā’* and by Abī Ya‘lā in his *Musnad*, that ‘Ayishah said: I have not seen any more truthful than Fātimah, besides her father.⁶²

Ibn Sa‘d, too, has narrated some *ahādith* from ‘Ayishah about Hazrat Fātimah (‘a), including the following that has been quoted from ‘Urwah bin Zubayr through Ibn Shihāb stating that ‘Ayishah had said to him:

After the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (S), Fātimah (a) the daughter of Messenger of Allah (S) asked Abū Bakr as to why he was not giving her the inheritance felt to her by the Messenger of Allah (S) as decreed by God. Abū Bakr said to her: The Messenger of Allah (S) once said: No inheritance, whatever we leave is charity, Fātimah (a) was displeased and lived only six month after that.⁶³

Ed.: Fātimah (‘a) actually lived at the most 75 or 95 days after the passing away of her father and departed from the world, a martyr. She challenged Abū Bakr to bring witnesses to his claimed *hadith* that prophets do not leave inheritance and when he failed to do so, she quoted passages from the Holy Qur’ān where God says: “*Solomon inherited David*”. As for Fātimah’s (‘a) displeasure, the following famous Prophet (S) is worth noting:

Fātimah (‘a) is part of me, whoever displeases her has displeased me and whoever displeases me has displeased Allah.

Conclusion

An attentive study of the sources of both the Sunni as well as the Shi'ite schools could certainly provide us with some more *ahādīth* that could be added to the ones quoted here. These honorable ladies of Islam had been inspired by their exemplar and role model, Hazrat Fātimah ('a), in all aspects of their personal and social lives. By narrating the sayings and reporting the actions of this great lady of Islam, Hazrat Zahrā' ('a), they have contributed immensely towards the immortalization of the virtues of the daughter of the Prophet of Allah (S) in the annals of history. And how well they have delivered upon their duty!

Notes:

1. "Allah desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, *Ahl al-Bayt* and to keep you pure can be." (Holy Qur'an, 33: 33)

2. This *hadīth* is recorded in the authentic books of both, the Sunni as well as the Shi'ite schools, which report that Umm Salamah said: "This verse was revealed in my house and then the Messenger of Allah (S) sent for Fātimah ('a), 'Alī ('a), Hasan ('a), and Husayn ('a) and said: 'These are my Household'. I then asked: 'Am I not a member of your Household?' He replied (indicating in the negative): 'You are (also) on the right path'." (Ibn Athīr, *Usud al-Ghābah fī Ma'rīfah al-Sahābah*, Vol. 5, p. 589; Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*", Vol. 23, p. 249).

3. Ibn Hajar, Ahmad bin 'Alī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 6, p. 608; Mazī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, *Kitāb al-Nisā*, p. 247.

4. Ibn Sa‘d, Muhammad bin Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 282.

5. *Al-Istī‘āb*, Vol. 4, p. 1897.

6. Shaykh Sadūq, *al-Khisāl*, Vol. 2, p. 363, *Bāb al-Tis‘ah*, *Hadīth* No. 55.

7. Khu‘i, Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim, *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth*, Vol. 14, p. 230.

8. Tabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, Vol. 24, pp. 132-157.

9. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 12, p. 389.

10. Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 81.

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 43, pp. 238-240.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 43, p. 189.

13. The *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* has not enlisted the name “Malikah” among the various names of Umm Sulaym, whereas other books like the *Usud al-Ghābah*, the *Tanqīh al-Maqāl fī Ahwāl al-Rijāl*, the *A‘lām al-Nisā’*, and *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah* have mentioned it among her names. At the same time it is known that the name “Malikah” belongs to her mother.

14. Ibn Sa‘d, Muhammad bin Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 425.

15. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 343; Mahallātī, Zabīhullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 3, p. 408.

16. Māmaqānī ‘Abdullāh bin Muhammad Hasan, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl fī Ahwāl al-Rijāl*, Vol. 3, p. 73, *Bāb al-Nisā’*.

17. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, pp. 427-428.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 430.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

20. Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī'ah*, Vol. 3, p. 407; al-Amin al-'Amili, Sayyid Muhsin, *A'yān al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 2, p. 307.

21. Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 6.

22. The custom among the Arabs was such that the dearer a wife was, the higher would her dowry be. However, despite her simple dowry Umm Salamah enjoyed a special status with the Messenger of Allah (S).

23. Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī'ah*, Vol. 2, pp. 25 & 294.

24. Shaykh Sadūq, Muhammad bin 'Alī, *al-Khisāl*, Vol. 2, p. 419.

25. Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 22, p. 223; al-Saffār, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, Māmaqāni, *Tanqih al-Maqāl fī Ahwāl al-Rijāl*, *Min Fazl al-Nisā'* Vol. 3, p. 72.

26. 'Umar Rizā Kahhālah, *A'lām al-Nisā'*, Vol. 5, p. 227.

27. Ibn Abī al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 2, pp. 77-80.

28. 'Umar Rizā Kahhālah, *A'lām al-Nisā'*, Vol. 5, pp. 224-226.

29. Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī'ah*, Vol. 2, p. 301.

30. 'Umar Rizā Kahhālah, *A'lām al-Nisā'*, Vol. 5, pp. 224-226.

31. Ibn Athir, *Usud al-Ghābah*, Vol. 5, p. 523.

32. Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 55.

33. Tabarāni, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, Vol. 23, p. 249.

34. Al-Saffār, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, *Basā’ir al-Darajāt*, p. 313.

35. Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 254.

36. He was a faithful servant and a companion of the Messenger of Allah (S). His sons, too, were all close companions of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Alī (‘a).

37. Ibn Athīr, *Usud al-Ghābah*, Vol. 5, p. 467; Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalānī, Ahmad bin ‘Alī, *al-Isābah*, Vol. 4, p. 310.

38. Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 3, p. 46.

39. Zirikli, Khayr al-Dīn, *al-A‘lām*, Vol. 3; *Zaynab the Heroic Lady of Karbalā* (Translation), p. 172.

40. Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 3, p. 38.

41. *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 62.

42. The term “covenant” indicates the “Book” while the term “heir” is probably meant to indicate Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and the ‘*Itrah*; in the same sense as is mentioned in the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*.

43. “Prohibited decrees” refer to “the acts that are unlawful” and “virtues” refer to “the obligatory and recommended acts”.

44. Shaykh Sadūq, *Man lā Yahzuruhu al-Faqīh*, Vol. 3, p. 567. This is one of Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) sermons, the excerpts of which are given in this paper. Also see ‘*Ilal al-Sharā‘i*’, *Ihtijāj al-Tabrisī*, and *Rijāl al-Kashshī*.

45. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārah*, p. 263. A translated version of this *hadīth* has been recorded in the book, the *Ahādīth* of Umm Ayman.

46. Shaykh Sadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 40. “Fadak” was a rural region in Hijāz and was located at a travel distance of about two to three days from Medina. In the year 7 AH and following the Battle of Khaybar and the conquest of its fortresses, Allah, the Almighty granted it to His Messenger (S).

47. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 227; *Tārikh al-Tabarī*, Vol. 2, p. 178.

48. Māmaqānī, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl*, Vol. 3, p. 80; *al-Istī‘āb*, Vol. 4, p. 1862; Ibn Kathīr, *Usud al-Ghābah fī Ma‘rifah al-Sahābah*, Vol. 5, p. 478.

49. ‘Umar Rizā Kahhālah, *A‘lām al-Nisā’*, Vol. 2, p. 254.

50. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 27; Majlisī Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 187. A similar *hadīth* has also been recorded in Māmaqānī, *Tanqīh al-Maqāl*, Vol. 3, p. 80 and Majlisī Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 172.

51. Shaykh Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, p. 197; *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tabaqāt Rabbāb al-Khadūr*, p. 261.

52. Ibn Sa‘d, Muhammad bin Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 474.

53. For more information on the text of Hazrat Fātimah’s (‘a) sermon see Mahallātī, Zabīhullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 3, p. 185.

54. Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī (al-Usūl)*, Vol. 1, p. 303, *Kitāb al-Hujjah*.

55. Tabarī Shī‘ī, Muhammad bin Jarīr, *al-Dalā‘il al-Imāmah*, p. 87; Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, p. 230; *Tarājīm al-Nisā’*, p. 276.

56. Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Second reprint, al-Wafā’ Publications, Beirut, 1403 AH., Vol. 43, p. 81

57. “They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: We only feed you for Allah’s sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.”

58. Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalāni, Ahmad bin ‘Alī, *al-Isābah*, Vol. 4, p. 376; Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 2, p. 322.

59. *Ibid*, pp. 325-326; Kulaynī, *Rawzah al-Kāfī* (quoted from Mahallāti, Zabihullāh, *Rayāhīn al-Sharī‘ah*, Vol. 2, p. 161).

60. Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 8, p. 230.

61. *Ibid*, Vol. 43, pp. 175-179.

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63. Ibn Sa‘d, Muhammad bin Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol. 8, p. 28.

An Approach to Islamic Religious Experience

By: Sayyid Athar Husayn Zaydi & Ja'far Razi Khan

Religious Experiences have been variously identified, such as the awareness of the holy, which evokes awe and reverence; the feeling of absolute dependence that reveals the human being's status as a creature; the sense of being at one with the divine; the perception of an unseen order or of a quality of permanent rightness in the cosmic scheme; the direct perception of God; the encounter with a reality.

The sense of the presence of a transcendental power, or in other words the experience of God, as in the striking case of the Prophets of yore (many of them mentioned in the Old Testament), has been seen as a critical judgement on man and as the disclosure of his separation from the holy. Those who identify religion as a dimension or aspect of experience point to man's attitude towards an overarching ideal, to a total reaction to life, to an ultimate concern for the meaning of one's being, or to a quest for a power that integrates human personality. As a matter of fact, in all these cases, the attitudes and concerns in

question are directed towards an ultimate object beyond man that justifies their being called religious. All interpreters are unanimous that religious experience involves what is final in value for man and it concerns belief in what is ultimate in reality.

All religious experiences can be described in terms of three basic elements: (1) the personal concerns, attitudes, feelings, and ideas of the individual who has the experience; (2) the religious object disclosed in the experience or the reality to which it is said to refer; and (3) the social forms that arise from the fact that the experience in question can be shared. Although the first two elements can be distinguished for purposes of analysis, they are not separated within the integral experience itself. Religious experience is always found in connection with a personal concern and quest for the real self, oriented toward the power that makes life holy or a ground and a goal of all existence. A wide variety of individual experiences are thus involved, among which are attitudes of seriousness and solemnity in the face of the mystery of human destiny; feelings of awe and of being unclean evoked by the encounter with the holy; the sense of a power or a person who both loves and judges man; the experience of being converted or of having the course of life directed toward the divine; the feeling of relief stemming from the sense of divine forgiveness; the sense that there is an unseen order or power upon which the value of all life depends; the sense of being at one with the divine and of abandoning the egocentric self.

Religious experience is thus, the disclosure of divine or sacred reality or its purpose to mankind. In the religious view, such disclosures may come through mystical insights, historical events, or spiritual experiences that transform the lives of individuals and groups. In some non-Muslim theological circles the concept of revelation is rejected on the assumption that it is

bound up with mythological and anthropomorphic conceptions and introduces an inassimilable element into the history of religions. It would seem, however, that the concept can be purified of these mythical elements and still be usefully employed. In the sphere of religion, wisdom is often best sought through privileged moments of ecstatic experience and through the testimony of those who have perceived the sacred or holy with unusual purity and power. The self-disclosure of the divine through extraordinary experiences and symbols is fittingly called revelation. Because of the pervasiveness of the idea of revelation in the world's religions and because the various religions have had to cope with similar theological problems concerning revealed knowledge, revelation has become a primary theme for dialogue among the great religions of mankind.

“Religious experience” was not widely used as a technical term prior to the publication of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) by William James, an eminent psychologist and philosopher, but in Christianity the interpretation of religious concepts and doctrines in terms of individual experience reaches back at least to the 16th-century Spanish mystics and to the age of the so-called Protestant Reformers. A special emphasis on the importance of religious experience is found in the works of such thinkers as Jonathan Edwards, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Rudolf Otto. Basic to the experiential approach is the belief that it allows for a firsthand understanding of religion as an actual force in human life, in contrast with religion taken either as church membership or as belief in authoritative doctrines. The attempt to interpret such concepts as God, faith, conversion, sin, salvation, and worship through personal experience and its expressions, opened up a wealth of material for the investigation of religion by western psychologists, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists as

well as by theologians and philosophers. A focus on religious experience is especially important for phenomenologists (thinkers who seek the basic structures of human consciousness) and Existentialist philosophers as well.

As we are now in the twenty-first century of the Christian Calendar, few challenges loom larger in the search for justice and world peace than the achievement of mutual understanding among nations, cultures, and religious traditions. For people who profess faith in a sovereign God, few responsibilities are more urgent than that of moving toward a sympathetic appreciation of other faiths. The more our world grows, the more rapidly it seems to shrink, so that we must at the very least learn to cope with the fact of diminishing religious and cultural elbowroom.

One of the increasingly visible features on the international landscape is the religion of Islam with its almost one and half billion adherents. A major question for religions with respect to Islam is this: How can they begin to learn about so massive and expansive a phenomenon without resorting to the convenient but unjust stereotypes one hears so often, caricatures that amount to little more than a new form of religious bigotry or racism?

Three more specific questions present themselves. First, what do Muslims have in common with other avowedly religious people across the world? Second, how do Muslims define themselves as a distinct community of faith unique among religions? And third, what possibilities for spiritual growth has Islam offered historically to the individual believer? The image of a spiritual journey will provide a framework within which to respond to these questions.

As citizens of the world, Muslims discern God's signs in nature, the broad terrain on which they journey. As members of a unique community of faith, they discover God's signs

preeminently in their scripture, the Qur'ān –regarded by them as the final revelation to mankind. In their history, this scripture maps out for them the “straight and unwavering path” (*sirāt al-mustaqīm*). As individual believers, Muslims look for God's signs within themselves, where these signs mark the path each person must walk before God. In all three instances the light of God's All-Encompassing Revelation illumines the signs. Therefore, believers strive to respond to that revelation by taking one more step across the terrain of creation, down the “straight road” of Islam's special history, and along the path of personal sanctification and self-knowledge, all in a journey back to the Lord of the universe.¹

Both the figurative description of God's revelation and that of journey and light are rooted in the Qur'ān.

“We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in their very selves, until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth” (Holy Qur'ān, 41: 53)

“On the earth there are signs for those of firm faith; And also in your very selves. Will you not then see?” (Holy Qur'ān, 51: 20-21)

In addition, the Arabic term *ayah* that is used for “verse” of the Islamic scripture also means “sign”, thus suggesting that the Qur'ān also is one great sign replete with more specific signs. In response to each of the three questions we have posed, we will cite more *ayahs* of the Qur'ān that unite all three elements of the figurative description of journey, sign, and light.

If readers are willing to accept the possibility that God has spoken, and continues to speak, to human beings, let them read on. The premise here is that, for reasons known only to the Creator, God has desired to make His word known to a faith community whose members call themselves Muslims. He is not some “other” God Who chooses the medium of Arabic, Persian,

Turkish, and a host of other languages that Muslims speak all over the globe. For the Arabic word “Allah” –although it is the most exalted name of the Creator without equivalent in any other language – also signifies the commonly accepted English term “God,” the very Lord to Whom we pray.

Now to the first question: How do Muslims perceive and respond to God’s signs on the horizons?

Signs on the Horizons

“Behold, in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe. And in your creation, and all the wild creatures He has scattered over the earth, are signs for a people of firm faith. And the alternation of night and day, and the sustenance that God sends down from the sky, quickening thereby the earth after her death, and the ordering of the winds – these are signs for a people who understand. (Holy Qur’ān, 45: 3-5)

Divine revelation in nature appears in the Islamic scripture as the “terrain” on which the journey of humanity takes place – the heavens and the earth as alluded to in the word horizons. We may characterize “human response” at this level as a universal or cosmic experience expressed in creation – the inspired language and system of symbols that describe the journey of all creation from God and back to God. According to a *Hadīth al-Qudsī* (Divine Saying addressed to the Prophet but not part of the Holy Qur’ān), God once said: *“I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known, so I created the world.”*

In this world all non-human creatures are essentially “Muslim” because they “surrender” to God by their very nature, but human beings (who have been granted intellect, free will and power of speech) must make the choice as to whether they will surrender. Once they choose to submit and respond gratefully (human beings rather naturally express their response in ritual

and symbol that are at once common to other religious traditions and also distinctively Islamic) they become Muslims through their response of Islam. In themselves these practices are not uniquely Islamic, but they bear an Islamic stamp to the extent that they are integral to the faith-response of a community explicitly gathered by God's revelation as delivered through Prophet Muhammad (S) in the Qur'ān. This aspect of Islamic religious experience we will take up in the next segment of this discussion. First let us cast a glance at some of the ritual and symbolic ways in which Muslims express their response to the "signs on the horizons."²

Fasting is almost a universal religious practice. Each year, during the lunar month of Ramazān, Muslims break their regular life-patterns by abstaining from food and drink from dawn to sunset each day, a period that averages twelve to seventeen hours (depending on the season and geographical climate). The discipline of refraining from the lawful means of sustenance is a reminder of one's greater need of God, a need that even creation itself cannot fill. It presupposes that one is also refraining from forbidden words and actions and thoughts, such as envy or hatred. Compassion for those who habitually suffer from hunger, greater ability to go against one's own less noble tendencies, and the removal of obstacles in one's relationship to the Creator, are among the most desired effects of the fast.

Almsgiving likewise is commonly practiced among religious people the world over. Muslims have the conviction that creation is not a permanent possession but merely given to humankind as a "loan". That conviction prompts the response of sharing the wealth given by God with fellow humans. Muslims "give God a loan" in return and seek a reward by giving freely what they have freely received. The root meaning of the word for almsgiving in Arabic, *zakāt*, is "to purify oneself," in the sense that one must strive never to lay claim to what belongs

only to God. One must not “overflow one's banks” by imagining he or she is the source or owner of created goods. Almsgiving is therefore meant not to give a person the good feeling of being generous, but to remind the Muslim of who first gave all to him or her.

Before each of the five daily prayers, Muslims perform a ritual ablution (*wuḡū*). It is another facet of the purification that almsgiving presupposes. The action involves the use of that universal symbol of cleansing – water. But if water is not available, one may use sand. The important thing is to make use of some earthy object as a physical reminder of the overall, inner and outer, purification that is itself an integral part of a proper relationship with God and His creation.

The orientation toward Mecca during the ritual prayer is another way of expressing a right relationship to the created world. Mecca is a symbolic axis of the world, a spiritual centre, and the focal point between heaven and earth from which all creation radiates. Orientation to one of the cardinal points of the compass or to a particular “spiritual center,” is evidenced in many major religious traditions. When Muslims pray together on Friday at noon, or whenever they gather in a mosque for congregational prayer, they express their right relationship with each other by lining up in rows as they face Mecca. Finally, the five daily ritual prayers sanctify time as well as space, as a round of constant reminder that morning, noon, and night are all gifts of God.

The *Hajj* or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, ideally to be made once in a lifetime if one possesses good health and sufficient means, is meant to acknowledge the unity and absolute equality of all. It is the symbol par excellence of the journey of creatures of God back to the source. This journey, which includes such rituals as donning of a shroud like white garb (*ihrām*), cutting of hair (*halq*) and moving in unison, gives

physical expression to the need for a change of heart and mind. Pilgrim goals vary from one religion to another, but they are all symbolic of the journey to the centre of creation and the being cognizant of the signs of God on the horizon. As the Holy Qur'ān says:

“Those who reject Our Signs are deaf and dumb and in profound darkness; whom God allows to go astray; and whom He pleases He places on the Straight Path.” (Holy Qur'ān, 6: 39)

One of the Qur'ān's most beautiful images provides both a background and a foreground against which to appreciate the Muslim response to signs on the horizons, as is evidenced from the following passage:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as a Niche [the symbol of orientation to Mecca in every mosque, as well as a symbol of the human heart] in which there is a lamp. The lamp is within a glass; the glass is as it were a star shining bright, enkindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of East nor West, the oil whereof almost glows forth (of itself) and (even) though fire touches it not. Light upon Light! And God guides to His Light whomever He wills. And God sets forth parables for all people; and God is All-Aware of all things (Holy Qur'ān, 24: 35)

The Qur'ān as Sign

These are the signs [verses] of the clear Scripture. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān. Perhaps you will understand. (Holy Qur'ān, 12: 1-2)

Muslims believe, as do Christians, that the most significant events in human history are precisely those events

that define their history. If the “signs on the horizons” describe the terrain in which God reveals Himself, the historical fact of the Qur’ān as revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) is for Muslims the opening to the main road on which they as a community journey. “*Lead us along the Straight Way,*” (1:6) Muslims recite the opening *sūrah* of the Holy Qur’ān during the five-times-a-day ritual prayer as well as on many other occasions. One might describe Muslims’ response to God’s revelation in “an Arabic Qur’ān” as a communitarian experience expressed in a confessional (or kerygmatic) language and symbol-system. Their experience is that of being Muslims in a world where some others are not. Terms of membership are definitive; although there is a good deal of latitude in practice, for we are talking about a tradition that crosses many ethnic and cultural boundaries, they call for a deliberate choice either for or against membership.³

How do Muslims define themselves as a unique ummah or community of faith? What is distinctively Islamic about Islam?

The answers are obvious. Reduced to the most fundamental terms, to be a Muslim is to adhere to God’s revelation in the Qur’ān as spoken by the Prophet Muhammad (S):

“We have sent a Messenger into your midst and from among you, to recite [that is, make a Qur’ān, a recitation] to you Our Signs... and to teach you the Book and Wisdom...” (Holy Qur’ān, 2: 151).

For the information of our readers, if the matter were all that simple, we would probably not have written this article, and surely no one would be reading it. History has a way of making life enormously complicated.

During the course of nearly fourteen centuries, Islam has come to embrace a remarkable variety of cultural and ethnic entities. As the world of Islam expanded, it appeared to Muslims that neither the apparent text of the Qur'ān, nor the paradigmatic words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (S) enshrined in the community's collective memory, corresponded item for item with the new issues that surfaced with changing times and circumstances. Therefore, the two prime sources of Islamic teachings, the Scripture and the Prophetic Example (called the *sunnah*), had to be seen in a new light and interpreted continually. Islam's religious history is the composite story of how these dynamic interpretations have unfolded.

In order to appreciate something of the Islamic experience of unity in diversity, it will be necessary to explore some of the implications of the evolving of the understanding of Muslims, first, in relation to Prophet Muhammad (S) and the issue of leadership and authority after him; and second, of the Qur'ān and the need to implement it in daily Islamic life. We shall introduce each of these considerations with an appropriate text from the Qur'ān, so as to situate both the Prophet and the Qur'ān in the context of our journey, sign, and figurative description. We turn, then, to the role of the Prophet and the question of community leadership.

“He [God] is the One Who sends down manifest signs to His Servant, so that He may bring you out of the darkness (of infidelity) into the Light (of faith)....” (Holy Qur'ān, 57: 9)

“O you who believe! Be mindful of your duty to God believe in His Messenger, and He will bestow on you a double portion of His Mercy: He will provide for you a

Light by which you shall walk and He will forgive you...
(Holy Qur'ān, 57: 28)

It was one thing to believe in God's Messenger and trust his words while he lived; it was yet another to abide by his instructions after his passing away and know whom to trust as the Prophet's (S) successor. The Prophet's physical departure from the world – even though as commanded by God he had settled the issue of succession – gave rise to self-interested motives and thrust the young Muslim community into a protracted debate over the criteria of legitimate succession, a debate that gave rise to a diversity of opinion that would also have serious implications for the practical implementation of Qur'ānic legislation, as we shall see shortly.

What we have said thus far is but a cursory glance at some immensely intricate historical developments; but we must move on to consider the Qur'ān.

“It is not fitting that God should speak to a human being except by inspiration [wahy, the technical term used for revelation, the medium of divine contact with a Prophet], or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal, by God's leave, what God wills. Surely He is the Most High, the All-Wise.”

“Thus We have revealed to you Our guidance by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor the Faith. But We have made it [the Qur'ān] a Light by which We guide such servants of Ours as We will; and surely you [Muhammad] guide them to the Straight Path.”

“The Path of God, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Be it known that unto God (alone) shall be referred all affairs.” (Holy Qur'ān, 42: 51-53)

The light of the Qur'ān's guidance is the primary touchstone on whose basis Muslims must judge the authenticity of their faith and action. Certain *āyahs* of the Holy Scripture provide explicit regulations regarding matters of personal and social morality as well as ritual. But the Qur'ān is not primarily a legislative handbook. Very early in Islamic history, local communities faced issues and claimed that the Book gave no specific ruling in this regard. The most pressing problem for the community was then, as now, how to interpret the sacred text in such a way as to preserve its spirit and still respond to new needs. In the subsequent centuries (because of the failure to heed the Prophet's instructions concerning his Ahl al-Bayt whom he placed on a par with the Holy Qur'ān in the famous and unanimously accepted *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*), the ummah as a whole began elaborating various interpretative principles and procedures. Schools of thought, each with its own peculiar emphasis on one or another aspect of legal reasoning, began to take shape. All agreed that the Qur'ān and the Prophet's *sunnah* were fundamental; but the schools differed in the relative stress they placed on community or scholarly consensus, private opinion, and analogical reasoning – because of the inability to comprehend the prime source of the *sunnah*. By the end of the 3rd century several distinct methodologies constituted legal – by the Abbasid court with its own dubious claim to exercise political authority over the ummah – had come into being.

All things considered, we may say that the Islamic Religious Experience of God's signs in the Holy Qur'ān revealed (unlike the earlier scriptures) in the full limelight of history through the personage Muhammad (S), has been mediated through the community's ongoing experience of interpretation as required to keep the spirit of both the

primordial revelation and the paradigmatic leader alive and growing.

Signs Within the Individual

On the terrain of creation, God lays open the main road of the Muslim ummahs unique and exclusive history. Believers discover and set out on that road in the company of others. But Islamic tradition has not denied the individual person either the right and exhilaration or the requirement and risk of exploring and journeying alone before God. The ummah supports the individual's desire to acknowledge God's signs, for God has created an affection between the hearts of believers such as all the riches on earth could never effect (Holy Qur'ān, 8:63); but the choice must be made and renewed in the solitary heart.⁴

The individual experiences the light of faith, which God has cast into the core of his or her being, as a personalized gift, often articulated in mystical language and the symbol-system. The expression is "mystical" in the sense that it describes, in Hodgson's definition of mysticism, an "inward personal experience, more or less transitory as an event but enduring in relevance, which is felt to express or lead to a special authoritative and normative relation between individual and cosmos."⁵ The term includes much more than ecstatic experience, but it does not rule out experiences that are usually associated with the "great mystics" of any religious tradition.

An important element in Islamic tradition has been the Gnostic Path – at times *'irfān* (gnosis), which is self-awareness of God on a higher plane overlaps with *tasawwuf* or Sufism (mysticism). Although Sufism has witnessed the development of a great variety of formally constituted religious orders, the Sufi Path is not itself an institution. It is the personal counterpart to

the main road of the revealed law (called the *shari'ah*), which circumscribes the Islamic ummah as a whole. Both in the more technical handbooks on Sufi doctrine and practice and in the intensely personal poetry of some of Islam's "great mystics," the individual appears as a wayfarer on a course designed uniquely for him or her. It is the journey of a love relationship between servant and Master, creature and Creator. Authors of mystic manuals elaborated a number of psycho spiritual typologies to describe the various "stations" and "stages" along the path. But they all agree that intimate knowledge of God is the crucial ingredient in the experience. (We must point out here that we know of no clear connection between classical forms of Islamic mysticism and the "Sufi Numbers" or "Anagrams" that seem to have gained some popularity in recent years.)

Guidance along the path for an individual comes ultimately from God, as does the ummah's guidance along the main road. Sometimes, however, the wayfarer needs counsel tailored to individual temperament and gifts. The theory and practice of spiritual direction in Islam are highly developed. That topic would require its own separate treatment, but it is definitely a matter religion, especially Gnosticism, for a profitably explore.

Sufism's emphasis on individual religious experience, on the ability to recognize and interpret the "signs within the self," has had some influence – whether positive or negative – on the broader range of Islamic popular piety. Whether for good or ill, the esteem of certain early Sufi leaders has transformed some of them into saints in the eyes of the people.

However, what has been proposed here is a synthetic model. Nowhere do the primary Islamic sources analyze Islamic Religious Experience precisely this way. This model is therefore

a reconstruction; but the materials – the language and imagery of journey, sign, and light – are Islamic in inspiration. So long as one is aware of the limitations inherent in such models, they can be drafted appropriately into service as vehicles for cross-cultural understanding. Even so, the reader may as yet see no realistic way of setting out on the journey described in these pages

Notes:

1. Marshall G. S. Hodgson: *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). The author has suggested a three-part model for understanding the Islamic Religious Experience. He describes three “components in devotional religious experience and behaviour.” Here we have amplified his scheme, associating the components with foundational texts from the Qur’ān and integrating the components with the Qur’ān’s figurative description of journey, sign, and light. As Hodgson says of the three components, they “are not mutually exclusive – indeed, they presuppose each other – but they mark different moments of spiritual experience. Each of these components [corresponding to the three questions we have posed] may be determinative in a devotional tradition, or even in an individual devotional life, and the other two subordinate to it; and to the extent that it is so, that component determines the overall mode of the devotional experience and behaviour” (vol. 1, p. 363).

2. What follows corresponds to Hodgson’s “paradigm-tracing” component, in which “ultimacy is sought in enduring cosmic patterns, in recurrent nature (including social nature)”, vol. 1, p. 363. At this level, Islamic religious experience may be

said to include features common to all “religious experience,” such as a sense of sacred space and time, the use of rites of purification, natural symbols, myth, and so forth. A phenomenological approach to the study of religion might be inclined to describe Islam entirely in such terms.

3. Hodgson’s “kerygmatic” component, in which “ultimacy is sought in irrevocable datable events in history with its positive moral commitments” (vol. 1, p. 363). Whereas the first component relates to the level at which a member of any religious tradition can recognize experiences shared with virtually every other religious person on earth, the second refers to the experience of belonging to a specific confessional community. In this instance the community is that of Islam with its historical beginnings in the Qur’ān and the forging of a body of believers who pledged their exclusive allegiance to one another. This component is more important in the revealed religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) than in religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, though adherents to the latter also experience themselves as members of a more or less clearly defined community of faith.

4. This relates to Hodgson’s “mystical” component, in which “ultimacy is sought in subjective inward awarenesses, in maturing *selfhood*” (vol. 1, p. 364). Non-Muslims often assume that Islam is a mass-religion in which the individual founders in a sea of predetermination. That assumption is based on a caricature of Islam, a view that regards the “God of Islam” as a despot whose autocratic whims and arbitrary exercise of omnipotence make smoking stubble of human choice and responsibility. God does not despise the individual; for it is the individual Muslim who must make the choice of belief or infidelity and, in the end, account for that choice. Muslim

writers in modern times have been increasingly attentive to the issues of human freedom and moral responsibility.

5. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 396.

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A Critique of S.M.A. Sa‘eed’s Article “Ideological Reformism of Ayatullah Mutahharī”

By Javād Iqbāl Amīrī

Dr. S.M.A. Sa‘eed’s article entitled “Ideological Reformism of Ayatullah Mutahharī (1920-1979)” is a piece of trenchant Marxist criticism which is also mingled with elements of the liberal variety of Western political philosophy. The absence of any references makes it difficult to estimate whether the author has really read Mutahharī as a thinker in any depth or breadth. Coupled with this are the hasty generalisations and some of the false sort which render this work incapable of being judged on academic grounds alone.

In the very opening paragraph we descry the author’s complete inability to understand either Mutahharī or his point. For instance, Dr. Sa‘eed claims that Mutahharī’s sole concern appear to be the inseparability of religion and state. For those who have any acquaintance with Mutahharī’s writings and thoughts it will be clear that Mutahharī has no such obsession or monomania.¹ The common strand that does run through all his

works is Islam, Islam as it is quintessentially. But this is not taken as a monolith. Mutahhari presents the essentials of Islam not only in the context of jurisprudence and metaphysics, of both of which he was a master, but also in its sociological, legal and literary aspects.²

Dr. Sa'eed then expresses his surprise over what he thinks is Mutahhari's affirmation of the priority of the individual over the Ummah (Global Muslim Community. In the Turkic-Persian speaking world "*Millet*" is substituted for "Ummah"). Mutahhari does not at all do this. He, in fact, has a very balanced approach to this issue which he discusses in some detail in a number of places.³ If at all he does so it is on moral grounds and these grounds are themselves based on the Qur'anic view of man, society and the universe. The Qur'an in fact does not privilege either the individual or the society except on moral qualitative grounds.⁴ It is the Ummah's failure to realize that its own stature is not intrinsically sacrosanct which has led to paradigmatic tragedies like that of Karabala. In Karbala it was in Imam Husayn ('a), who as the archetypal moral individual symbolized the ideal Ummah, that the Ummah was able to find its saviour. There seems to be an unfortunate tendency to see faith in terms of quantitative superiority rather than as the quintessential moral bond that it is between God and man. It then leads to such mistaken notions.⁵ From this mistaken notion follows another. That of finding fault with Mutahhari's repeated stress on what the author calls, 'the psychological metamorphoses of individuals (page 2). This has to do with Mutahhari's view of the reality of self.⁶ Marxists, materialists and behaviourists would be hard put to find any merit in the notion of the inner therefore qualitative worth of individuals.⁷ To this key notion are related such significant concepts of Islam as Responsibility, Trust (*Amānah*), Resurrection (*Akhirah*) and Knowledge (*Ilm*).

In "Society and History", Mutahhari first presents four views about the relationship of individual to society and of the ontic status of both. Students of modern philosophy would classify the first under the heading of philosophy of mind. The second would depend on what ontological view of individual and reality was being relied upon. Classical Cartesianism believes in the essential independence of the human being as a disembodied mind and mind there is considered to be an immaterial substance. After David Hume's devastating criticism of the substantial concept of self's mind, Immanuel Kant modifies the Cartesian stand to espouse a presumed rational identity of self which *inter alia* makes knowledge possible. With Kant we come to the end of individualistic-rationalistic streak in modern European thought. G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx assert the primacy of society over the individual so that the individual comes out merely as a copy of the prevailing social characteristics. Ever since, philosophers in the Occident have been hard put to defend a substantive notion of personal identity while at the same time accepting the role of society and social factors in the formation of personality identity.⁸

Mutahhari seems to be aware of the essentials of this programme.⁹ His address however is here restricted mainly to the Hegelian-Marxist stand on the issue. Many of the Occidental ideologies that were being propagated when Mutahhari was writing had their roots in that variety of thought. Mutahhari's writings take those into account when presenting his own views based as they invariably are in the Qur'an. As is his wont Mutahhari presents four possible versions of the issue. These are:¹⁰

1. It is the individual who has primary existence, society is merely a hypostatized synthesis.

2. Society is an artificial rather than a natural compound. In the process of its formation, neither the identity of individuals

nor that of institutions is dissolved completely in the society as a whole.

3. Society is a real compound like the natural compounds. “But in the synthesis of society and individual – the plurality of individuals is not converted to a unity.”

4. Society is a real compound higher than a natural compound. The human being in his pure social existence is merely a biological being; only society invests the individual with what we now recognize as human traits, characteristics, aptitudes and tastes.

Mutahhari finds the third view to be congenial to the Qur’anic worldview. He points out that society evolves its own common consciousness in the process of pursuing goals and sharing a common cause, ideas and values. Yet his commonality does not nullify individual consciousness. On the contrary, when the society fails to take a scrupulous and intelligent stand on moral matters of moral concern it acquiesces in whatever sin or crime is being perpetrated even though that be of an individual. In this negative instance, it is an individual whose evil actions in being condoned lead to the destruction of society itself. On the positive, an individual may yet, for all the force and compulsion that social sanctions carry with them, resist society’s evils and discharge his personal duties and responsibilities to God and the universe. The example of first sort is that of the people of Thamood; that of the second is that of the Patriarch Abraham (A.S.) who stands out as a shining example of individual responsibility and goodness and is canonized by the Qur’an to the status of Ummah. It should be evident to those acquainted with the Qur’anic *weltaanschaung* that these distinctions are moral – qualitative through and through. Steeped as Mutahhari is in the Qur’an, he cannot fail to absorb this outlook from the Divine Book. It is on this that his views on social stratification, personal identity and of the nature of history are based. It is

unjust to accuse him of something which in fact we have failed to notice. As the essay proceeds we can discern its increasingly trenchant Marxist fervour. Mutahhari is accused of being opposed to class based social change. But this is not surprising. If Mutahhari is guilty of being obsessed with social change at least let us give him credit for not being guilty of favouring a change that is not indigenous to Islam's conception of society and social stratification.

Much is made about what Dr. Sa'eed calls Mutahhari's half-hearted support for liberalism (specifically "freedom") in society. Once again it bears repetition that Mutahhari's notion of freedom springs from the overall ontological economy within which he philosophises.

We would do well if we could at all grasp the fundamentals and the outlines of the system of thought which privileges "Principality of Being".¹¹

Dr. Sa'eed's notion of freedom would not be tenable in the materialist-Marxist framework from which he borrows most of his descriptive and evaluative terms. The other notions prevalent in the Occident suffer from a twofold defect. One, that they lack foundations; two, in aiming at welfulness they turn freedom into license thus robbing it of all its moral worth.

To claim to find a link, as Dr. Sa'eed does, between the *Shari'ah* and the limitation of human freedom (page 6) is to fail to understand both. The Shariah is certainly in its common conception¹² a list of dos and don'ts; yet the meaning of that is not exhausted by its common conception. Here again, the notion is inextricably linked in Islamic theosophy to ontology, philosophical anthropology and ethics. One ought rightly to expect academics to be aware of the deeper meanings and connotations of these terms. Nor can one claim ignorance of this given the profound works on this topic by people as diverse as Frijthof Shuon, Syed Hossien Nasr, S. Pervez Manzoor,

Ziauddin Sardar, Ali Shariati and Muhammad Asad. Only a complete ignorance of Islamic metaphysics can lead to such a claim. If however it is claimed despite all this that the *Shari'ah* because of its overwhelming moral tone is polar opposite of what is today taken to mean 'human freedom', then one must insist that never in genuine Islamic discourse – of whatever variety it might be – has human nature been conceived simply in terms of instincts, lusts and appetites nor has freedom simply meant licence. The modern distinction of fact and value is anathema to the Muslim mind both epistemologically and ontologically.

Dr. Sa'eed's espies Mutahhari's hand in the Iranian government's inimical stand towards pluralism in the political arena. For one thing, Mutahhari was martyred scarcely more than ten weeks after the overthrow of the Shah's regime. For another, there is nothing in Mutahhari's political writings to justify this baseless connexion that is being made between Mutahhari's thought and a supposed totalitarianism of contemporary Iran. Similar connexions are also sought to be made between Mutahhari's thought and the plight of the deprived strata of people in Iran. Perhaps the only proof that would be cited when asked for would be the tendentious reports of the Western media on Iran. This is truly pathetic. One expects much more care, effort and precision from an academic like him.

All one can say after reading this essay is that a disinterested and objective mind is a desideratum alongwith a sufficient knowledge of basic and accessible ideas. Both unfortunately are conspicuous by their absence.

Notes:

1. On this see Hamid Algar's introduction to Mutahhari's *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought – God, Man and the Universe*. (Mizān Press, Berkeley, CA, 1985).

2. There are many biographical articles and booklets which treat of the diversity and breadth of Mutahhari's work. A useful booklet is the one put out by the Cultural Counsellor of the Islamic Republic of Iran in April 1996. It is titled, *Inqilāb e Islāmī ka Fikri Sutoon – Shaheed Murtazā Mutahhari*.

3. See for instance's Mutahhari's (i) *Society and History* trans. Mahlaqā Qarā'i (IPO), Tehran, 1985) pages 7-17. (ii) *Man and his Destiny*. (Islamic Seminary, Karachi, 1985). (iii) "*Usūl-e Falsafah wa Rawesh-e Realism*", vol. III (Tehran).

4. *Society and History*, pages 14-17.

5. Mutahhari treats of this almost presciently as it were in his *Man and Faith* which is included Algar., op cit.

6. An excellent introductory work on this topic is Mutahhari's "*Human Being in the Qur'ān*", trans. Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi (IPO, Tehran, 1984). Several other works by Mutahhari discuss this in a more specialised way.

7. On this see, Mullā Sadrā *The Wisdom of the Throne* Trans. J.W. Morris (Princeton, NJ, 1981); and Guenon, Rene, *Multiple States of Being* (Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1990).

8. On this the excellent work by Charles Taylor in the Western tradition: *Sources of the Self: the making of modern identity*, Cambridge, CUP, 1992).

9. *Society and History* page 71.

10. *Society and History* pages 9-17.

11. Mutahhari's mention and treatment of freedom within this system are interpreted throughout a number of his writings. For instance, *Man and his Destiny*; *Divine Justice*; *Society and History*; *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought*; and especially *Usūl-e Falsafah wa Rawesh-e Realism*, 5 vols.

12. On this see for instance: (i) Schuon, Frijthof: *Understanding Islam* (Mandala, London, 1987). (ii) Nasr, S.H.: *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Mandala, London, 1979). (iii) Shariati, Ali: *Islamic View of Man* in his *On the Sociology of Islam* (Mizān Press, Berkeley, CA, 1980). (iv) Manzoor, S. Pervez – in *INQUIRY*, London (Vol. IV No. 1, January 1987). (v) Sardar, Ziauddin – *Islamic Futures – The Shape of Ideas to Come* (Croom Helm, London, 1985).

Interview:

The Principles of Liberalism

In Conversation with Dr. Muhammad Jawād Lārijānī

Q: Let's begin with the principles of liberalism. Taking into consideration the existing interpretations on liberalism what in your view are the basic principles of this school of thought if we intend to classify them into a few broad categories?

Dr. Lārijānī: In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Well, as a matter of fact, like Marxism, liberalism, too, is the by-product of Western modernity and these two ideologies can interact with other ideologies in various ways and aspects.

In order to comprehend the relationship between liberalism and Islam it would be best to first understand Liberalism without attempting to point out its differences or agreements with Islam. Having arrived at a suitable understanding of liberalism we could then make a comparison between liberalism and some of the Islamic teachings from various aspects.

There may be some points on which there is concord between the two and vice-versa and I shall elaborate on them later.

Keeping in view the fact that Marxism met with its end after a century or so, liberalism as an ideology, is somewhat unrivaled in the West at present, as a result of which the importance of understanding it has gone up considerably. But the vital question that comes up here is: Why is it crucial for us and our society to know and understand liberalism?

Although it was a Western ideology, during the period between the years 1950 and 1970 Marxism had influenced almost all the intellectuals and the educated sections of the world of Islam as well as the third world. In these societies if and when the educated youth attempted to express a sense of responsibility towards their society their first and foremost choice and option was Marxism. At the same time, another social phenomenon of those days was the kind of Islam that was presented by some people and groups and it was in fact nothing but "Islamized Marxism".

In my opinion, today, liberalism is playing the same role on the minds of the educated and the intellectuals of the world of Islam and of our country and, therefore, it is absolutely crucial to pay attention to this phenomenon.

The growth of liberalism was due to the views of a number of various great thinkers. Even though some of these thinkers were apparently opposed to this social trend, their very opposition somehow helped liberalism grow further. Perhaps if we were to name some of the key figures in this field we would have to refer to Hobbes as the greatest founder of liberalism, even though some people refer to him as a thinker of a dictatorial bent of mind. Nevertheless, it was Hobbes who first presented the theory of social contract and the secularization of the principles of legitimacy.

Hobbes' book *Leviathan*, which is on the origin and the ends of the state, is very powerful in expressing his ideas (of course from the liberalistic point of view). Jean Jacques Rousseau and David Hume are other personalities who have played a crucial role in the development of liberalism. Similarly Hume, who was followed by John Stuart Mill and Bentham, laid the foundations of classical liberalism. In the 20th century the most prominent figure was John Rawls (d. 2002) whose ideas have shaped contemporary liberalism. It could also be said that Robert Nozick and Durkheim contributed significantly towards the strengthening of the theoretical foundations of liberalism after Rawls.

To begin with, I would like to discuss the five principles of liberalism based on the views of John Rawls. The reason why I choose to emphasize on Rawls' views is that in case at any point it is argued that there are various interpretations of liberalism we are left clear that the basis of our discussion is Rawls' views. In other words, our discussion will be based upon the works of Rawls.

In my opinion there are five important principles that define the scope of liberalism as an ideology.

1. The Principle of Action: According to this principle man should be regarded as a hidden treasure and this treasure can only be discovered through man's action. In other words, during his life-time man performs a number of actions that determine his fate as a man and which build his identity and upon which actions, his salvation or his doom are based. Therefore, according to this principle, actions play a very significant role in shaping the human identity.

2. The Principle of Freedom: The first and foremost claim of this principle is that none of the general plans presented for man's felicity are reliable. Religions and other schools of thought have presented general plans for man's salvation, but

according to this principle it is best to leave the reins of one's felicity or doom in man's own personal control. This means that everyone should be authorized to design the plan of his own salvation and should be allowed to act according to what he feels is right and according to what ensures his happiness. According to this principle, this is what provides the highest chance for discovering the potential treasure in man. Liberalists argue that since the general plans for man's felicity are not specific, they are also subject to one's own understanding of them, which in turn, may not be foolproof and, thus, it would not be wise to shape one's life, from the beginning to the end, on a plan that is subject to error. Therefore, in order to avoid falling into this error or at least to reduce its possibility people should be given the reins of their own affairs.

Thus, the principle of freedom makes two major claims. Firstly, that the plan of one's felicity is personal and that there is no common plan for the salvation of one and all; and secondly, that every individual should be free to act according to what he thinks is right so that he is not deprived of his chance for salvation.

Having stripped off the general plans from their ability to ensure man's felicity, the principle of freedom stresses on two points:

a) Allow every individual to be in charge of his plan of salvation.

b) Allow him to do whatever he thinks is right.

3. The Principle of No Harm: According to this principle, if every individual were to act according to what he deems necessary for his felicity, the actions of the individuals would inevitably clash with each other. In other words, individuals would begin to have conflicts among themselves leading to what Hobbes referred to as a "natural condition", which means that there would be clashes between everyone,

thus defeating the very purpose of the previous principle. Therefore, according to liberalists, we should voluntarily forego a portion of our freedom; that portion of our freedom which would inflict harm unto others.

Thus according to this principle, in order to ensure an important social expediency i.e. to prevent conflict and insecurity in society we should pursue only that part of our freedom that does not inflict any loss or harm upon others. Of course this principle also defines the nature of what it refers to as “harm”. Anything or any act that deprives another person of having a control over the affairs that concern him would be considered as being harmful to him. For example, if a person has some money in his pocket which belongs to him, then he has the right to spend it according to his own wish. Now if someone takes this money away, he has violated the rights of its rightful owner and has, thus, inflicted a loss upon him, because he no longer has any control over spending that money. Another illustrating example is, suppose a young man is sitting in a park and a passer-by invites him to his home and serves him a cup of coffee and at the same time offers him some narcotics to consume if he wishes so. In this case, if the young man accepts his offer and turns into an addict after sometime, it would not be considered as a case of infliction of harm since the inviter had never deprived the young man of his control. A very important conclusion that is made from this principle is on the subject of the “freedom of expression”. The liberalists argue that when one expresses his personal views, he does not deprive anyone of the authority and control over his affairs and, therefore, there is no reason to restrict the freedom of expression. Thus, an important product of the principle of no harm is the freedom of individual expression. Please note that in this case, the freedom of expression has not been derived from the principle of freedom

and has rather been inferred from the principle of no harm and this is a very subtle and important point in liberalistic logic.

4. Principle of Security or Democracy or Social Contract: Security is a term that was first used by Hobbes for this principle. Later, Rawls preferred to refer to it as the principle of democracy and although Hume did not agree with the idea of social contract, he nonetheless, called it the principle of social contract. Nevertheless, since the terminology does not really affect the basic core of our discussion we will refer to it as the principle of democracy.

According to this principle, if the freedom of individuals is to be limited to the extent that it does not transgress the rights of other people there should be a law enforcing authority to ensure that people are confined within the limits of their freedom. This leads to the issue of the establishment of the state, meaning that people voluntarily enter into a collective contract and establish a state in order to ensure security.

Thus, the principle of democracy stresses on some important points:

a) The fundamental purpose of the existence of the state is to ensure security and it should thus be a limited government. In other words, the responsibility of the state is not to show the road to felicity; since felicity depends upon individual will. Rather, the responsibility of the state is limited and it is only meant to take care that no one steps into the limits of another person's freedom.

b) The legitimacy of the state arises from social contract. This means that the people make the decision for the establishment of the state.

c) An individual's abidance by the laws of the state is based upon the fulfillment of his individual pledge. Since people have themselves agreed to establish the state, they should, thus, remain steadfast to their pledge.

Of course, one of the biggest problems that liberalism is faced with is how to ensure the fulfillment of this pledge. This is because the fulfillment of a pledge is an ethical issue and this is a subject upon which liberalism has remained silent.

Therefore, as regards the principle of democracy three things should be kept in mind. Firstly, that the fundamental purpose of the existence of the state is to ensure security and it is, thus, a limited government in nature; secondly, that the legitimacy of the state arises from a social pledge or agreement; and thirdly, that the rationale for abiding by the state is the fulfillment of a pledge.

5. The Principle of Justice or Fairness: This is where Rawls steps in. According to Rawls, justice is based upon fairness. In other words, the fifth principle says that when the state draws the limits of individual freedom, the radius of these limits should be equal, which in turn means that no individual has a bigger claim to freedom than the others. This is the basis as well as the meaning of justice or fairness in the liberalist system.

By justice and fairness, liberalism does not imply there should be no poor person in the society. It rather means that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system for all. In other words, all people enjoy an equal level of freedom and that no one has any privilege over others except within the limits of his own affairs. If a person has money it does not bring him any additional state privileges. The state does not give any particular privilege to anyone. The responsibilities of the state are limited. It is not concerned with anyone's wealth and neither is it concerned with anyone's personal affairs. It only takes care that no one violates the limits of the freedom of other people. The radius of these limits is equal for everyone.

Q. We know that the modern liberalist philosophies talk about the “Welfare State”. Does this increase the role of the state beyond what you referred to as limited?

Dr. Larijānī: As a matter of fact, the term “welfare state” is supposed to guarantee the limited role of the state. In other words, even if the state somehow gets involved in such issues as helping the poor, et cetera, it is mainly for the purpose of ensuring security. If the number of hungry or deprived individuals were to increase in a society they would naturally turn violent. Thus, in order to ensure the overall security, the state helps the poor and not because it is the responsibility of the state to do so. Therefore, the limited government may get involved in welfare issues but this involvement is not due to any inherent nobility on the part of the state but is rather for the sake of ensuring security and for preventing insecurity. In my opinion, these are the five principles that justify the fundamentals of the liberalistic ideology in every way.

Q: Many people who do philosophical research on liberalism have been faced with questions on the inference of the mentioned principles. They argue that the liberalists would naturally have to substantiate these principles on some evidences. In other words, the basic question they are faced with is regarding the philosophical fundamentals of these principles?

Dr. Lārijānī: There are three important philosophical fundamentals, with the help of which (sometimes collectively and at times even singly), these principles are substantiated. The first fundament is that the concerns about truth and falsehood or right and wrong should be discarded and should instead be replaced with concerns about benefit and loss. Please note that discarding something is different from rejecting it. Marxism rejected the concerns over truth and falsehood, but liberalism does not reject them and instead advocates that concerns should be shifted to

benefit and loss. The liberalists are of the opinion that the philosophical inquiry about right and wrong may be interesting, but such an inquiry is time consuming and will not even bear results in the near future and in fact may not ever produce any conclusive results. They argue that the criteria for right and wrong are not located in a particular concrete place for us to refer to them in order to distinguish our actions and well-being. Moreover, liberalism does not advocate avoiding the search for right and wrong. It is neutral towards this subject, and instead merely professes that we cannot wait until the dilemma of truth and falsehood is solved and then begin our action from there. We have to start and act right now and for this purpose our scales should be sensitive towards benefit and loss rather than truth and falsehood.

It is argued that the point to note here is that right and wrong are not personal in nature but are rather universal issues. They are independent of “you” and “I” whereas benefit and loss directly concern you and me. The liberalists wish to replace “right” and “wrong” which is a measure covering a very large ambit with the smaller scales of “benefit” and “loss” which fall completely within the personal and individual purview. To give an example, during a land journey we may see a tall mountain and may try to move in the direction of that mountain. Here this mountain plays the role of the compass or the measure for right and wrong. The truth-seeking human being always sees the truth and aligns himself with it, but a liberalist does not see such a mountain and instead has a smaller compass that determines his personal benefit and loss. Every action that he takes is an effort to maximize his benefits and minimize his loss.

The second philosophical fundament that is resorted to by the liberalists is what they call "epistemological scepticism". In other words, the aim is to prove that any principle that is subject to epistemological scepticism cannot be a guide to actions of

certainty. Epistemological scepticism means that we cannot practically be sure if any part of our knowledge is erroneous or not. Thus, according to it, the entire human knowledge is subject to being proved as erroneous some day.

Q: Do you mean to say that a liberalist cannot be an epistemological realist?

Lārijāni: Yes that is what I mean.

Q: And what about ontology? In your opinion, can a liberalist be an ontological realist?

Dr. Lārijāni: He can be a realist at least to the extent of admitting that there is some reality out there. This fundament, which is known as the principle of perpetual fallibility of man is one of the most important philosophical fundaments of liberalism. Some arguments have also been put forward to prove this fundament. Some of these are common arguments that concern the historical evolution of science. They argue that Aristotle had developed a model for the motion of objects which Galileo proved as invalid. Similarly, Newton presented his model for motion which, too, was proved invalid by Einstein. Aristotle and Newton both thought that they had discovered the truth but it soon became evident that they were in error.

Their second argument in this regard is that since we do not possess any certain knowledge we are not qualified to write out valid prescription for others; meaning that we cannot, with certainty, ask anyone to do anything claiming it to be based upon true principles. When the validity of something is subject to doubt, the prescription made on its basis, too, is subject to doubt. Therefore, it can be concluded that there can be no general prescriptions.

It is interesting to know that this part of the fundament of epistemological scepticism is most detrimental (to liberalism) since based upon this argument it is not even possible to

establish a state. The state is expected to stop aggression and if the governor is supposed to determine whether an act is aggressive or not he may be subject to misjudgement based upon the above argument. The governor is expected to imprison the thief but how can we be certain that the judge has given a correct judgement. Thus, it can be concluded that it is not necessary for the results of our actions to be free from all kinds of doubt, and rather a certain degree of certainty is enough to justify our action. For instance, when you decide to travel by plane it is not necessary to be certain that the plane will safely land at its destination; such a thing is not possible. Rather it is enough to know that experience shows that as a general rule the plane is not subject to an air crash.

Thus, epistemological scepticism which has nowadays become a common concept among the advocates of liberalism in Iran is in fact a basis for justifying the idea that the plan of felicity is something personal.

The third philosophical argument put forward to prove the principles of liberalism is the application of Darwin's theory of evolution to all aspects of human life including man's spiritual perfection. As regards the human body, Darwin was of the opinion that the cells developed from a single cell and in the continuous struggle of species for survival, the fittest drove the weak aside and it so appeared that the fittest were the best, too. The liberal Darwinist thinkers took this theory beyond human physiology and applied it to human identity as well and stated that man goes through the same process in his spiritual growth. Therefore, "let us allow the various fields of human knowledge to clash so that the fittest and the best eventually survive". Since the fittest survived in the world of nature, we should allow individuals to act according to their free will and the fittest will survive. Or in other words, what survives is considered as the right.

This means that as regards the exchange of opinions and spiritual growth, too, we should allow the successful to be regarded as right. This aspect of liberalistic theory has been developed by philosophers like Richard Rorty. William James and Rorty were the two philosophers who developed what is referred to as pragmatism. The foundation of pragmatism is the application of Darwinism to the spiritual aspect of human life. The impact of this theory on the issue of human felicity is quite evident.

This attitude can be observed in the actions of the liberalist politicians of the West. When we talk to Western politicians they clearly speak about the superiority of the West over the rest of the world. When we enquire about the cause of this superiority they simply say that “it is an evolutionary process in which we overtook you and, thus, we are better than you”. As you can see, this is exactly the logic presented by Darwinism.

In my opinion these are the three philosophical fundamentals of justifying the liberalist ideology. This is very similar to the Marxist ideology which derived its philosophical justifications from dialectic materialism.

Q: If you were to critically evaluate the principles of liberalism and its philosophical fundamentals, what approach would you adopt and what would be the main focus of your criticism?

Dr. Lārijānī: I advocate truth orientation as against the benefit orientation advocated by liberalism. I am an ardent advocate of truth orientation and believe that we can never eliminate the concerns over truth and falsehood, over right and wrong. Concern over benefit and loss indicates indifference towards truth and falsehood. I wish to put forward two types of criticism. My first criticism of liberalism does not involve Islam and the second one is from an Islamic point of view.

If we were to critically evaluate liberalism we can criticize both, its five principles as well as the conclusions derived from these principles. For instance, in the fourth principle (the Principle of Democracy) it is claimed that since the limits of freedom are to be safeguarded we, therefore, establish a state with our own consent. Who does the term “our” refer to here? Let us suppose that we are a group of people living currently in a certain place. Did the state seek our consent for its formation or otherwise?

David Hume has criticized this principle beautifully. In one of his works, he refers to the story of the making of states as a funny one. According to him, it is like taking a sleeping man to a ship, who upon his waking up is told that “we have to elect a captain for this ship and the captain has already been elected and if you are unhappy with this decision you may very well jump out of the ship”.

Just imagine a farmer living in a village who says I do not want a state. He is then told that it is in his interest that a state is established. He insists that he wants to live in the mountains and that he does not need any state and that he does not even think it is necessary to have a state (since everyone is not to be given the same prescription). He is then told to go elsewhere and live as he thinks best. Now the question is: Where is he to go? He does not know any foreign language, does not have enough money, and nobody will give him a passport. What sort of right is this? In my opinion, the term “social contract” is an inappropriate one. Moreover, how would the “social contract” made by an existing generation concern the next generation? And if we were to say that a contract should be made at every point of time then no state would be established at all. Thus, it seems that the idea of social contract is not feasible at present.

To come out of this impasse some changes were made. People like Hobbes claimed that at a certain point of time in

history, humankind faced difficulty and, thus, decided to form a state, and from then on, this social contract has remained valid. Even if such a statement holds true and the contract made by the previous generation is transferred to the next generation, history has not recorded such a phenomenon. Thus, it is a baseless claim. This is merely what Hobbes claims and there is no evidence for its validity.

In order to compensate for this blunder they came up with the claim that the contract was an implicit one just like many other of our dealings. The question then is: Where is the evidence of such an implicit contract? In reply to this question it is stated that the very fact that an individual abides by the state implies that he has agreed to the said implicit contract. The next question then is: What would happen if he does not abide by the state? If we leave it to him from the very beginning to decide whether to abide by the state or not only then could it be concluded that he has agreed to the implicit contract. Eventually, some people like Bentham admitted that it is not a contract and it is rather a sort of an expedience, which means that it is in the people's interest to abide by these conditions and that there is no such thing as social contract. Rawls made an attempt to restructure the theory of social contract on the basis of this expedience and, thus, dragged us into another concept called the principle of interest. This principle eventually mars the theories of contract and satisfaction and destroys democracy.

Well, the issue is not whether you accept or not, rather the issue is that it is in your interest. Now, the question is about who is to decide that it is in people's interest! If an individual makes the decision then it should not be claimed to be in the interest of the public. If, however, it is insisted upon that it is in the interest of the public then another individual had made the decision and thus, the prescription for "my" felicity has gone out of my

control as an individual and this contradicts the principle that considers the plan for felicity to be a personal affair.

I believe that this is a very serious criticism. Of course, there has been a lot of patch work on it, but what I have put forward is the cream of the discussions that are fundamentally ongoing.

Again, as regards abiding by the contract, why should we abide by the state at all? Let us suppose that after we agreed to the so-called social contract we were to come across someone with a sack full of gold in a desert with no one to witness anything. If we were to think that since no one was around, we could kill this man, bury him, and take all his gold, such an act would definitely be against the contract; but the question is: Is this act not in alignment with the compass of personal self-interest? In reply to this, the advocates of liberalism say that if such an attitude became the general trend all of us would some day become its victims. Finally it is argued that such acts would not be committed publicly so the question of them turning into common trends wouldn't arise.

What about the principle of fulfilling one's promise? If the fundament is self-interest, in that case, it may be in one's interest not to fulfill upon his promise. Thus, the issue of the fulfillment of one's promise needs to be justified and explained on the basis of a principle other than social contract. And what would that other principle be? Does liberalism have another principle to justify it? It does not believe in ethics, nor is there a god as the witness in liberalism. How would the question of the fulfillment of one's promise make any sense? What I mean to say is that the commitment to abide by the state cannot merely be proved with the notion of the fulfillment of a promise.

Based on liberalist principles if one finds a man alone in the desert and takes his money after killing him without being seen by anyone, in order to make his own life, he has not - as a

rule - committed an irrational act. Whereas you and I know that no human being would approve of this idea. Thus, liberalism cannot justify man's action on the basis of the principle of self-interest.

As regards the principle of no harm, one must admit that it seems to be a valid point but where the question "loss" is concerned, even the liberals do not in practical terms follow what they claim to believe in theory. If they did, why would they then prohibit the sale of narcotics when the person who supplies narcotics to other people does not pressure them in any way?

The same applies in the area of views, because some views can upset the entire system of a country. In the recent elections in France when Le Pen was getting close to victory, the entire state and the facilities of the country were mobilized to ensure that he was not elected; whereas according to liberalism people are supposed to enjoy equal privileges. Le Pen was not allowed to campaign on any TV programme. All government facilities were used against him. Although all these actions were contrary to the liberalist principles of justice or fairness, everyone believed the best actions were being taken since Le Pen was a racist and were he to be elected, he would create mayhem in France.

Q: What happened in France or may happen in other countries is related to "what's so" whereas the truth about a principle is concerned with its definition of "what should be". Thus, it would not be possible logically to negate a definition on the basis of certain events. Had Bentham, Rawls, or even the other theoreticians of liberalism come across such cases they, too, would perhaps have criticized the French government for violating their views. In order to criticize a theoretical principle one has to find the flaws in the theory itself instead of basing the criticism upon certain events.

Dr. Lārijānī: If we were to discuss the prohibition of the sales of narcotics with the liberalists all of them would agree with it. Thus, if this prohibition is valid it is contradictory to the principle of no harm. All the liberalists of France and the world for that matter believed that Le Pen should be prevented from coming to power, or for instance, that Islamic fundamentalism should not be allowed to grow so much, to the extent that they believed that Muslim women should not even be permitted to wear the Islamic headscarves in their schools. Why? It is because they believe that such an act would lead to the growth of a school of thought that opposes the very foundations of liberalist thoughts. As a result, we cannot merely rely on the notion of whether an act deprives someone of his will or not in order to recognize benefit and harm. When the liberalist philosopher presents the fundamentals of liberalism it does not mean that he does not have other ideas in his mind. We evaluate a liberalist philosopher by taking into consideration everything that he believes in. He is supposed to put forward homogenous fundamentals. There is no liberalist thinker anywhere in the world who would allow narcotics to be distributed in his country on a large scale basis. It thus, becomes evident that the liberals even agree to things other than these principles. Otherwise the liberalist framework is unable to prevent losses. There are some losses that all commonsense would unanimously agree upon but they contradict the liberalistic views. Therefore, these principles are flawed and cannot justify our actions and hence our action should rely on something other than liberalist views.

The first principle i.e. the principle of action is acceptable. If this principle is presented before Islam you would find that Islam advocates exactly the same thing. According to Islam, it is our actions that shape us. Moreover, it is believed that our actions will even take physical form on the Day of Resurrection. We thus, agree that actions are very important. But when we say

that actions shape the human essence it is very important to make a distinction between good actions and bad actions. There is a wide gap between this principle and the principle of freedom. On the one hand, actions are considered to be the criteria that shape us and, on the other hand, liberalism professes the theory of doing anything one may wish. There is no alignment between these two principles.

If actions are so important that they shape us, then why is it not necessary to shape our actions according to certain principles? Our expectation is that after the first principle, they should come up and demand for some specific criteria for distinguishing between good and evil actions. However, the situation is to the contrary.

Let us now examine the principle of epistemological scepticism which claims that there is no common prescription for human felicity. The liberalists say that even if such a prescription were presented we could not act upon it since we have no certainty of the validity of its principles. This view contradicts truth-orientation. Let us here cite the example of physicists. Even if they were unsure about their perfect understanding of a certain physical phenomenon, they would not be dissuaded from presenting their theories and understanding of the phenomenon even if there was a risk of misinterpretation. There is no contradiction between the belief that there is a truth out there and that we are gradually getting close to it and the fact that there are some plans that can lead towards it. No human being can claim that since there is a possibility that Einstein's theory may prove to be invalid some day in the future, therefore, everyone should come up with his own theory. We cannot overlook truth-orientation in favour of epistemological scepticism. This principle is in contradiction with the principles of Islam. Islam proposes a perfect plan for human felicity and salvation. And even though the Muslims' perception of this plan

may be erroneous and even if they may occasionally commit mistakes, this does not negate the existence of a main plan.

My other criticism of this principle is that liberalism cannot overlook the questions that are facing human beings, for these are questions relating to our actions. Humankind is faced with a host of questions that are referred to as the most fundamental questions. These questions are not concerned with any particular religion and every human being could come across these questions. Liberalism asks us to discard all concerns about our being, the purpose of our creation, and our final destiny. However, the fact of the matter is that liberalism cannot create a distance between man and these questions. Liberalism keeps us preoccupied with other things and then asks us not to waste our time over these questions. This is a perfect example of political play. Liberalism or any other ideology for that matter that intends to debate upon human felicity has no other option but to provide answers for the mentioned fundamental questions. The liberalists cannot escape these questions.

This is the point where liberalism parts ways with truth-orientation because these fundamental questions are considered very important according to the school of truth-orientation. Why should anyone claim that the truth-based answers to these fundamental questions are all insufficient? And even if they are, it does not mean that we should discard these questions. Do we really understand the depth of an issue when we set out to find the external truths in physics? Our understanding of the motion of objects is limited to Newton's mechanics and yet we use this understanding to design and make cars, airplanes, and spacecraft. Thus, the argument about the possibility of error cannot distance us from seeking answers for the fundamental questions. Truth-orientation has no replacement. Unlike the Marxists, the liberalists are not honest in dealing with the

fundamental questions. The Marxists are at least sincere in claiming that there are no fundamentals at all. The liberals, however, escape this question and this is their biggest weakness.

A fundamental and deep-rooted ideology cannot distant itself from core human questions. This is the point at which truth-orientation and liberalism split apart. In the truth-orientation school of thought the starting point is to find answers for fundamental questions. Thus, according to Islam human being is truth-oriented while the liberalist human being claims to be pragmatic. The Islamic rationale is truth-based and, thus, Islam calls on man to be truth-oriented and I am of the opinion that it is for this reason that Islam cannot compromise with liberalism and approve of it.

Another point that I must add is that we have seen in the past decade or so that extensive efforts have been made to effect a compromise between Islam and liberalism and to come up with some sort of interpretation implying that Islam approves of liberalism. This in fact is as good as undermining Islam. In other words, those who made these efforts tried to undermine all religious knowledge and claimed that religious knowledge is completely based on other branches of knowledge and moreover, that religion is of course a personal affair. Anyone trying to make a compromise between Islam and liberalism has to project Islam as a personal religion. This interpretation of the religion may come to some compromise with liberalism, but it is most certainly not Islam. In order to perceive this point better let us go back to the principle, which as we mentioned earlier, speaks of a limited government.

What do those people in our country who believe that the state should have limited responsibility have to say about “*amr bil ma’rūf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar*” (the Qur’anic command for enjoining good and forbidding evil)? I think anyone with the least knowledge about Islam knows that these two principles

cannot be separated from Islam. The various phases of “*amr bil ma’rūf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar*” begin with advising people (to do what is good and to avoid evil) and do not end until evil actions are practically prevented. This is completely contradictory to the idea of the limited government. Thus, it is evident that Islam cannot be a personal affair and such an idea is contrary to the teachings of the Glorious Qur’ān as well as the practice of the Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams (‘a). Islam for sure is concerned about the society and cannot remain indifferent towards it.

In summary I would say that liberalism is itself completely an ideology. There are some people who use the liberalist “ideology” and yet claim to be against the propagation of any particular ideology. They say that everything should be non-ideological and yet they practically propagate the liberalist ideology. As an ideology, liberalism has many inherent contradictions and it is in no way similar to Islam. Islam rejects the liberalist logic in the same way as it rejects the Marxist logic.

Q: Dr. Lārijānī, we thank you for this interesting interview.

Dr. Lārijānī: May Allah bless you with success.

Book Review:

On Getting the Last Word In

(Part One)

Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen

● In *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), **Thomas Nagel** argues that the claims of reason have a certain kind of ultimacy or absolute status. The main line of argument he advances is rather popular: attempts to undermine reason are self-defeating. There is also an *ad hominem* to the effect that most of those who are attracted to some sort of skepticism, relativism, holism, postmodernism, or anti-rationalism are mush minded muddle headed good for nothings. He rightfully deplores the epidemic of skepticism in “the weaker regions of culture” as “crude” and “vulgar,” and is irritated by “a growth in the already extreme intellectual laziness in contemporary culture and the collapse of serious argument throughout the lower reaches of the humanities and social sciences.” But the extensive span of the denunciation, which targets all those who call for any sort of restriction on the absolute claims of reason and science, seems odd coming from the author of *The View from Nowhere*. I read *that* book as an attack on the idea that either the objective or the

subjective stance could claim any absolute status. Anyway, *I* certainly do not want to be accused of defending some form of mush mindedness! Down with vulgar relativism! But Nagel's attack on subjectivism seems rather sloppy, rather like saying that anyone who uses the sort of weapons we have must be in our army. What is given absolute status is not just any systematic form of thinking, but reasoning according to standard modern logic aimed at the absolute objective truth, without any relativistic or subjectivist qualifications. The fact that the critic of *our logic* uses elements from our logic in his attack on it need not generate any sort of self-referential paradox. A murderer need not commit suicide when he uses his victim's gun to kill him. (Page references to *The Last Word* are given in parentheses.)

Although the reflections prompted by Nagel's book offered here are mostly critical, I should confess to feeling myself quite indebted to his work—not just to this book (which seems to me to be a *really interesting* work, even if not his best), but to much of his writing, in which Nagel displays a courage to face up to conclusions that are unsavory. He has a sort of “let the chips fall where they may” attitude that I find admirable. What follows is rather long for a review, and it is something I've puttered with for some years. Let that be a tribute to the author, and even if some might misinterpret it as a rather backhanded compliment, it springs from sincere respect coupled with profound disagreement. In arguing against Nagel, I am also groping toward a response to the issues he raises that draws on the Islamic tradition of philosophy and spirituality, not necessarily in agreement with what Muslim thinkers of the past have written, but in an attempt to resonate with a modicum of their piety.

1. Introduction

● Throughout the twentieth century, logicians have constructed brilliant devices to avoid the paradoxes of set theory. One lesson to be learned from this is that self-referential paradoxes only show that naïve forms of set theory need revision, not that set theory is altogether wrong headed. Likewise, the self-referential paradoxes

of skepticism and relativism, etc., merely show that naïve forms of these positions cannot be sustained without revision. There is simplistic mush and sophisticated mush. Let's grant that all mush is intellectually insufferable. Still, it is important to see why the arguments against simplistic mush leave sophisticated mush unscathed. The paradoxes of self-reference are not sufficient to defeat all deplorable forms of subjectivism. One needs to provide reasons to suspect that any revision of subjectivism that avoids paradox will be vain. Nagel doesn't seem to get that far.

● Where there are deep disagreements, there is often no way to prove who is right. Michel Foucault held that such disagreements are disguised struggles for power. I think that in such cases there is often a right position, a position that is right independently of what anyone agrees upon, but that seeing what position is right often requires insight rather than *proof*. Insight requires purity of heart, because otherwise our views will more likely be expressions of our desires than of the truth. Foucault may be right about some of the deep disagreements among us when we fall short of purity of heart.

● The rationalist holds that reason is sufficient for grasping the truth. The irrationalist or subjectivist holds that the claims of reason merely disguise the lust for power. If the essence of reason, as Nagel observes, is generality, why should we expect perfectly general methods to suffice for grasping all reality? It would seem more likely that particular insights would be better suited than general methods, cut to fit, as it were. Generality is good for generating consensus, and consensus is a good way to check ourselves against our own biases and errors. Whenever someone disagrees with me, I have a *prima facie* reason to suspect that I may be in error. Because of its generality, therefore, reason is a useful tool for checking errors in our thought. Without assistance from insight, however, we should not expect much depth from reason.

● Nagel states (10-11) that when one challenges rational credentials, one must rely on methods not subject to the same challenge. This seems wrong. A subjectivist might claim that logic depends on culture, thereby debunking its absolute pretensions,

without denying that his own reasoning is culture bound. He can claim that we still need to be logical because there is no better alternative. One might hold that all norms are supervenient on social relations, including logical norms. This position might be wrong, but it is not insane. Just as I can challenge the credentials of a quack without claiming to be a physician myself, so too, I can challenge claims to the ultimate authority of reason without claiming any kind of ultimacy for my own reasoning.

2. Thought from the outside

● Nagel seems to think that there are only two alternatives: absolute objectivist rationalism and relativist subjectivist irrationalism. Unless my assertions aspire to objective truth, I must let anything go. This is clearly wrong. One can allow that nothing is absolute without giving license to everything. When I claim that even my own statement of the subjectivist position is not absolute, I am not claiming that it is false or a mere expression of whim, but only that it must be subject to certain subjectivist or relativist qualifications, such as that it only makes sense in certain social conditions. But Nagel says that if the claim, “Everything is subjective” is itself held to be subjective, then it must be a report of nothing more than what the speaker finds it agreeable to say. (15) Nagel assumes that there are only two alternatives: objective truth or arbitrary whim. Perhaps there are radical irrationalist subjectivists who state that all claims do no more than express arbitrary whims, but this *really* is mush mindedness. A more cogent form of subjectivism would be, for example, one according to which there are no language independent propositions and that language dependence is a kind of subjectivism. We might allow for objective facts on this view, but no objective truths, for truth is propositional.

● Nagel says, “the outermost framework of all thoughts must be a conception of what is objectively the case—what is the case without subjective or relative qualification.” (16) Why? The only argument given is the self-referential paradox argument. But that

argument is not sufficient to rule out *any* subjective or relative qualification. If I say that the truth of every statement is relative to the language in which it is asserted, including this very statement, there is no contradiction or paradox, even though it is self-referential. The very identity and existence of any statement is relative to its language. The same sonic form may be used to make different statements in different languages. This is a rather harmless form of relativism that I would expect Nagel to be willing to endorse, but Nagel's arguments against subjectivism are so general they would seem to apply even to this. It is this generality that makes Nagel's arguments subject to the counter-example of the harmless varieties of relativism. Suppose that Nagel responds, "OK. I'm only concerned with the varieties of subjectivism that fall victim to self-referential paradox." But this leaves plenty of room for moderate subjectivist views that deny the sort of objectivism Nagel champions.

This is the first aspect of what Nagel identifies as the independence of the authority of reason from subjective elements. The second is the claim that we attempt to bring our thoughts into an objective framework by invoking a hierarchy of general reasons. I think that it should be clear that not *all* criticism has such an aim. The burden is on Nagel to show that it is wrong to think none of it does. Certainly there is nothing unreasonable about holding a subjectivist theory of aesthetics and yet engaging in art criticism. Nagel even mentions aesthetics in passing as an area to which reason might someday be extended! He seems to assume that reason does not extend to it if its judgments are not objective. Later he states that aesthetic judgment is not a form of reason because it does not follow general principles. (25) If so, there are ways of thinking about things that are not forms of reason, ways to consider challenges and objections, to weigh competing considerations and make evaluative judgments. How are the aesthetic and rational methods to be balanced? How are their jurisdictions to be defined? Nagel seems to suggest that objective rationality must dominate over everything. There is a long line of protest against this

dominion of rationality from Kierkegaard's revolt against Hegel, to Gadamer's insistence that works of art are bearers of truth.

● No one engages in rational analysis constantly. Even rationalists tire and turn to television, sleep and other forms of life. How do we decide when to engage in rational analysis? One way to decide is to consciously seek the help of reason. One asks oneself, "Shall I continue to work on this paper, even though it is late, or should I go to bed?" If there is a pressing deadline, one may decide to sleep for an hour or two, with an alarm clock to insure that one does not sleep through the next planned round of work. More often, however, one flies on automatic. We find ourselves drawn into rational debate without having consciously decided to enter. We dismiss positions on the basis of the most readily available arguments without probing as deeply as we possibly can. We go to sleep when tired, without considering arguments for or against. The arguments of the subjectivist need not take the form of claims to the objective truth of the subjectivist position. They can be efforts to persuade us to give up.

● Not all forms of intellectual persuasion are rational. Intellectuals are often attracted to new ideas that turn out to have little real merit. Suppose a school of mush minded philosophers celebrates this fact in a defense of logical emotivism. The logical emotivists hold a non-cognitivist theory of logic. They claim that validity is nothing more than a particular form of persuasiveness associated with various formal properties of arguments. The elementary forms of arguments that are valid have a particular kind of charm by virtue of which their conclusions seem irresistible to those strongly attracted to their premises. Such logicians will most certainly make use of all the tools of standard logic in order to elaborate and defend their position, and in doing so they do not fall victim to any sort of self-referential paradox. They use the very principles of logic whose absolute status they deny in order to persuade us of the truth (or attractiveness) of their theory, but they do not do so because they cannot free themselves from the absolute

validity of standard logic, rather they do so because they believe that there is no more persuasive means to advance their position.

● Philosophers distinguish between following a rule and merely conforming to a rule.¹ Skeptics may conform to the canons of reason without agreeing that it is the way to the Truth. Anarchists conform to laws without accepting the authority of legislation.

● Suppose the skeptic tells the rationalist that he has a proof for skepticism. The rationalist replies that the very attempt to construct a proof is an admission of the authority of reason. The skeptic replies that his use of reason is intended as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*: reliance on reason itself leads to skeptical results, and this shows that reason is not reliable. Faced with this sort of reply, the rationalist finds it difficult to maintain his composure. His response has two parts. First, he denies that the skeptical arguments show that reason is unreliable. Secondly, he claims that the skeptic's use of the *reductio* form of argument is an admission of the validity of the concept of logical validity. But the skeptic admits no such thing. One can imagine such disagreement in the form of a dialogue:

S: When I reason, I'm using a faulty but persuasive tool, because I have none better.

R: If your own *reductio* could turn out to be false, you must admit that rationalist claims could be true, despite your argument.

S: I'm willing to admit that I might be wrong.

R: But if *reductio* is unreliable, then your argument shows nothing. It doesn't prove that rationalism is false. For your

¹ Philip Pettit explains the difference between conformity to a rule and following a rule in his article, "Problem of Rule-Following," in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Epistemology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 388.

argument to work, *reductio* must be objectively valid, but you are denying the objective validity of everything. This is nonsense!

S: I'm not trying to prove anything. I'm trying to persuade you that rationalism is worthless. *You* believe in rationalism, so *you* believe in the objective validity and impeccable reliability of *reductio* arguments. So, when you get one of these that shows flaws in the system—and by your own criteria, no less—then I expect you to lose confidence in your dogmas, even if nothing has been absolutely proven.

R: I'm not persuaded by your pseudo-arguments, and since you do not accept the universal absolute standards of reason upon which the possibility of any rational argument rests, it seems that I'm wasting my breath talking to you.

S: Come now! Let us sit together and read poetry. We will find no proofs in the poetry and no appeals to any absolute standards, but we may find valuable insights to share with one another.

● Nagel poses his problem as finding the boundaries between the subjective and the objective. For Kant, everything is subjective except the noumena. Nagel thinks that Kant's extremism here is a result of making absolute certainty a criterion for objectivity. He proposes that universality be substituted, and suggests that in so doing a sort of Cartesian rationalism becomes defensible. Perhaps it would be better to view the objective and the subjective not as two discrete realms, but as thoroughly intertwined, or as two faces of the coin of the real. In different contexts one aspect may be more prominent than the other, but the idea of purely objective facts, like the idea of purely subjective considerations, may be an exaggeration.

● One who says, "All is illusion," seems to be in trouble, because when the universal quantifier is taken to include this statement in

its range, paradox results. In response, the skeptic may retreat to something like, "Nothing is certain except that nothing but this is certain." A more interesting response is to consider pervasive illusion in a way that does not entail the negation of the illusory. In some admittedly vague sense, all human concepts are misleading, including the concept of being misled and the concept of illusion. In this sense, to call all things illusory is not to deny everything. It is only to say that nothing is perfect.

The sufis seem to combine both strategies. God is the big exception. Nothing is really real but Him. Nothing is really certain but Him. Nothing man knows is without flaw, except for some knowledge that occurs through union with Him. The Muslim corrects the skeptic: "Nothing is perfect but Allah."

● The importance of the method of systematic doubt applied by Descartes in his *cogito* argument is found in its being systematic, that is, rational. Even when heaping doubts upon doubts and entertaining the idea that God could even change the truths of mathematics, Descartes never steps outside the framework of rational method. Nagel thinks that reliance on reason, as the faculty that "generates and understands all the skeptical possibilities," is unavoidable. "[T]he point is that Descartes reveals that there are some thoughts that we cannot get *outside* of." (19) There are two claims here that are run together. One is that it is the use of the *faculty of reason* that cannot be avoided. The other is that particular *thoughts* cannot be escaped.

As for the faculty of reason, I assume that this is to be contrasted with other faculties of the soul, such as the faculty of imagination. In that case, it seems odd to claim that reason must generate the skeptical possibilities. Surely imagination is better suited to the generation of mere possibilities. If it is held that the faculty of reason is necessary for understanding possibilities, some caution is needed about what is meant by *understanding*. If *understanding* is taken to include *insight* and *insight* is taken as the

function of some faculty other than reason, then the faculty of reason is *not* necessary for understanding possibilities. On the other hand, if *understanding* is taken to mean the application of the science of logic, whether deductive, inductive or abductive, and the faculty of reason is defined so that among its functions is the application of these sciences to our ideas, then it will be true by definition that the faculty of reason is necessary for understanding possibilities, but this will not rule out the capacity for other kinds of apprehension, such as those provided by insight, so that the faculty of reason will not ultimately have the inevitable character Nagel ascribes to it.

As for the claim that it is particular *thoughts* that cannot be escaped, this is simply false. The thought, “I exist,” for example, might be wrong on two counts: first, because my concept of self may be flawed; and second, because my concept of existence may be flawed. It is not unreasonable to suspect that these sorts of flaws might be so serious that one would deny that the proposition in question has the status of an absolutely certain objective truth. It may be asserted with qualifications to the effect that we assume that the concepts involved are acceptable. But it is precisely this sort of qualification Nagel seeks to avoid.

Perhaps Nagel would be better off using a holistic strategy. Even if particular thoughts, such as the one expressed by “*Cogito ergo sum*,” do not force themselves on us, the whole network of our thoughts surely is something we cannot get outside of. Quine’s repeated allusions to the ship of Neurath come to mind, but Nagel is apparently not willing to get on board. While he insists that it is particular thoughts that cannot be qualified as subjective—he mentions simple logical and mathematical thoughts (20)—the argument he offers only applied to the framework in its entirety: “There is no standpoint we can occupy from which it is possible to regard *all* thoughts of these kinds as mere psychological manifestations, without actually thinking some of them.” [My

italics]. Later, (65), Nagel himself mentions the ship of Neurath: “No doubt, as Quine says, ‘our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body’—but the board of directors can’t be fired.” The board of directors, according to Nagel, is elementary logic. Even if the board cannot be fired, its members can be gradually replaced. This is the point of Neurath’s allegory. Logical principles can be incrementally nudged away from what is found in the standard textbooks toward any of the currently available alternatives.²

● The Cartesian philosophy of science Nagel upholds has been a whipping boy for most philosophy of science of the 20th century, but Nagel offers no convincing reasons that it should be otherwise. He baldly states that the enterprise of science has “a fundamentally rationalistic structure: It proceeds by the operation of methods that aspire to universal validity on empirical information, and it is an effort to construct a rational picture of the world, with ourselves in it, that makes sense of these data.” (22) How does Nagel know this? Is it an *a priori* truth? Does it describe science as practiced today or is it what Nagel wishes science were or thinks it ought to be? One of the most conspicuous features of contemporary science is precisely that it does not even try to provide a picture of the world. It is fragmented in such a way that technical expertise in any fragment precludes expertise in the others. Technological advance propels the disregard for any rational picture in favor of local solutions to the organization of a mass of data that far outstrips its remote origins in empirical observation.³

² See, for instance, Graham Priest, *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³ For an empiricist view of science that explicitly shuns the attempt to construct a comprehensive view of the world, see Bas van Fraassen, *The Empirical Stance* (New Haven: Yale, 2002).

● Nagel's foundationalism is ordered by *reliance* and *immunity*. Logic and the general methods of scientific reasoning are alleged to be fundamental as ordered by *reliance* because any criticism of them must make use of them. As a consequence, Nagel claims, reasoning is *immune* from skeptical criticisms to the effect that it is the product of fallible psychological or sociological factors. Nagel says, "one can't criticize the more fundamental with the less fundamental." (20)

In criticism several points may be noted.

First, there is no particular body of truths or specific method that is foundational with regard to reliance. Is the foundational logic that of Aristotle, Frege or Anderson and Belnap? Is the scientific method the method outlined by Bacon, Mill, Hempel or Glymore? This, to use MacIntyre's phrase, is the problem of 'Which rationality?'

Second, if what is meant is not any specific method of logic or science, but just rational method generally speaking, then even if use of rational method is unavoidable, this provides no reason to think that its particular forms and axioms should be immune from criticism.⁴

Third, if what is meant by criticism is rational criticism, then the claim that the criticism of rational methods must rely upon rational methods is trivial. The skeptic is free to use rhetorical devices of persuasion without endorsement of rational method. Religious inspiration may admit to being 'foolishness to the Greeks' (1 Cor. 1:23), and in so doing tacitly criticize absolutist claims for reason.

Fourth, reliance fundamentality does not imply immunity. I may rely on a map I know to be flawed because I have nothing better to go on. To claim that what I am forced by circumstances to rely on must be true is wishful thinking.

⁴ This point is also made against Nagel by Robert Nozick, *Invariances* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.

Fifth, the less fundamental may be used to criticize the more fundamental. Problems that arise in various subsidiary areas of applied physics may show that something is wrong with the pure physics that was needed to recognize these very problems. Certainly this sort of thing is well documented and it proves that Nagel's slogan is wrong; we can and we do criticize the more fundamental on the basis of the less fundamental. This is seen most clearly in the interactions between theoretical and applied physics and both with mathematics.⁵

● Not every challenge to reason implicitly authorizes reason. Some challenge reason as impiety. Some poets challenge reason as being cold and stale. A challenge to reason only leads one back to reason if one is loyal to reason. Treachery is an alternative, but even loyalists may find it wise to augment reliance on reason by paying attention to their feelings and by a healthy dose of fear of the Lord. When the romantic says that reason leaves him cold and asks, "Don't you feel that way, too?" he is challenging reason, but to respond to this challenge with an argument would be insensitive. One who would loyally defend reason from this sort of challenge had better put his rational arguments aside for a while and use other rhetorical devices designed to elicit more friendly emotions toward reason than those to which the romantic confesses.

● Consider another romantic whose principle is that all evaluations of what is appropriate must be intuitive. Could he respond to a skeptic with a defense of intuition along the lines suggested by Nagel's defense of reason? The skeptic will point out the historical and psychological factors that influence the formation of intuitions. The romantic responds that the assessment of the pertinence of these factors to intuition must itself be intuitive. There is no escaping the intuitive act upon which all judgment

⁵ See, for example, Morris Kline, *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge* (New York: Oxford, 1985).

depends, whether rational or otherwise. If the skeptic about intuitions is a rationalist, he might object that it is only rational intuitions that deserve our unqualified respect. The unavoidability of reliance on intuitions in general does not sanction all intuitions.

Now consider the subjectivist challenge to principles of reason as being determined by psychological or sociological factors. The rationalist responds with an unavoidability argument. If the subjectivist is sufficiently sophisticated he might object that it is only some uses of rational principles that deserve endorsement, such as those accompanied by appropriate commitments, feelings of solidarity, piety or whatever. Assuming, contrary to fact, that one must use reason to criticize reason, this does not imply that all uses of reason are worthwhile. There might be appropriate and inappropriate uses of reason, where this appropriateness depends upon factors external to reason itself.

● The problem with mush minded subjectivists is not that they fail to see the contradiction that arises when one attempts to step outside the bounds of reason to mount a rational offensive against reason. Subjectivism becomes vulgar when a slogan like, "It's all relative, anyway," becomes an excuse for a dismissive attitude, an excuse to flee from dialogue, to stop listening. The fact that the specific ideas we have of rational criteria are the product of historical development and differ from one culture to another does not imply that anything goes. This is what is vulgar in mush minded subjectivism. Nagel seems to be an accessory to the crime by focusing his attack on the antecedent and tacitly assuming that the conditional is valid.

● Nagel imagines the subjectivist responding to any argument with the comment that all arguments are manifestations of "contingent dispositions for which there is no further justification." (26) Nagel imagines that to reply to this sort of comment, the rationalist needs to show that his argument is more universal than

that, “that the methods internal to that form of inquiry have an authority that is essentially inexhaustible, so that their results cannot be bracketed or relativized in the way proposed.” (27) Nagel seems to miss the fallacy in the subjectivist’s challenge.

Consider the following parable. There are known to be three extant maps that show the way to the treasure. Each is known to be flawed in some respects. Despite these flaws, each may assist in finding the treasure. One of them becomes available to us through a variety of contingent factors that may even include subjective preferences of color and design. In response to our proposal to be guided by the map in hand, the mush minded objects that the proposal is merely the manifestation of contingent dispositions. The proper reply is that in present circumstances, there is no more plausible way to proceed.

Where reason demands respect, it does so not because of its absolute authority, and not because it is immune from subjective influences, but because it is the best guide available under the circumstances.

3. Language

● This chapter gets off to a promising start with a condemnation of the view that all philosophical problems boil down to linguistic affairs. Grammar may be used for the organization of thought because grammar is logical. This seems like a pretty good answer to the claim made by the Arabic grammarian who is reported to have responded to the philosopher who defended logic as needed to organize thought with the statement that grammar could do that well enough. But Nagel subverts his own position by making extreme claims: “No ‘language’ in which modus ponens was not a valid inference or identity was not transitive could be used to express thoughts at all.” (39) First, consider modus ponens. Modus ponens is one of the basic forms of the mixed hypothetical syllogism; namely, that in which the minor premise is the antecedent of the major premise and the conclusion its consequent.

Modus ponens is a generally valid form of argument with some, but not all, kinds of conditionals. Consider the following counterfactual. "If I hadn't stayed up so late last night, I wouldn't be so tired now." If it then occurs to the speaker that in fact he retired early the previous night, he will not draw the inference that he is not tired now, but that his fatigue has another cause. A language in which there were no conditionals of the sort that support modus ponens could function perfectly well to express thoughts. It is well known that the work of modus ponens can be equally well performed by disjunctive syllogism, so we need not even imagine a language with non-material conditionals to see this point—we could express our thoughts in a language without the material conditional, and hence without modus ponens, through negation, disjunction and the disjunctive syllogism. As for the transitivity of identity, it is not hard to find theories of contingent identity in which transitivity fails. A commitment to the use of logical systems with contingent identity and subjunctive conditionals does not render one incapable of expressing one's thoughts.

● Nagel writes, "What I deny is that the validity of the thoughts that language enables us to express, or even to have, depends on those conventions and usages." This seems to express sound intuition, but the problem is that to substantiate the claim one must be able to distinguish thoughts from the language in which they are embodied, and it is not clear how this is to be done. There is a rather famous argument that it simply cannot be done due to W. V. Quine.⁶ Consider the thought that cordates are creatures with hearts. Is this not a valid thought? Yet it seems to depend upon there being two terms in the language for creatures with hearts. Quine concludes that we must renounce propositions, Fregean thoughts, and meanings, in general. A less radical position would be that meanings are inextricably bound up with language. It is

⁶ W. V. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1-10.

only by abstracting from various features of language, as in translation, that a vague standard of synonymy is set and meanings are projected. Meanings are always relative to these standards, and the standards change according to the motives and aims of indirect quotation, translation, definition and other forms of explication.

Linguistic relativism goes wrong by suggesting that the validity of the thought is something determined by linguistic conventions, as though the thought gained validity by being brought into conformity with language. Nagel seems to make the same sort of mistake in reverse. Language expresses valid thought by conforming to it. It seems, however, that it is just as much an error to dismiss the reliance of some thoughts on language as it is to reduce thought to language. Language and thought appear to be inextricably intertwined in crucial places, and there is no clear boundary between those places and the others in which they are more readily distinguished. This means that the validity of our thoughts often depends on linguistic conventions and usages without thereby becoming arbitrary or matters of subjective preference.

● Nagel takes the moral of reflections of Wittgenstein and Kripke on rule following to be that a primitive intuitive notion of meaning is inescapable; so, he calls the thought that I must mean something by my words 'a Cartesian thought,' (44) for it, like the *cogito*, is allegedly inescapable. It seems to me, however, that this Cartesian thought is susceptible to the same sort of skepticism I mentioned earlier with regard to the *cogito*. Doubts arise about the *cogito* because our concepts of the self and existence may be so far off the mark that we should deny the truth of statements employing them. Eliminative materialists think that the language of folk psychology is no better than the language of the theory of phlogiston. While I would not endorse any sort of materialism, the view makes room for doubts about whether the concepts of the self and existence might not be better eliminated. Doubts arise about the idea that our

words have meaning because the concept of meaning may be so deceptively unwieldy that, along with Quine, we deny that there are such things as specific meanings in the possession of our words. The Wittgenstein paradox seems to be taken by Kripke to indicate that there cannot be any definite and distinct thing that we mean by any of our words. The argument is that for any finite set of instances, there will be infinitely many functions that agree on those instances, and any meanings we may intend must be extrapolated from finite sets of instances. It would seem that the natural conclusion to draw would be that what we ‘mean’ by a word cannot correspond to any particular function descriptive of the use of the word, or, if meanings must correspond to such particular functions, that we do not intend particular meanings.⁷ Once again, Nagel takes an all or nothing approach. He thinks that there must be specific intended meanings that are quite mysterious, because otherwise we should mean nothing at all by anything we say. Is this not an overreaction? Would it not be more reasonable to claim that our meanings are fuzzy, indeterminate, vague and cloudy, or, if meanings must be precise, that what we intend is not any specific meaning but rather a vague fuzzy set of meanings?

● Following Kripke, Nagel takes the irreducibility of meaning to stem from the fact/value gap:

Meaning implies the difference between right and wrong answers or applications. Behavioral, dispositional, or experiential facts have no such implications. Therefore the former cannot consist in the latter. It is a straightforward instance of Hume’s is-ought gap. (45)

⁷ The same sort of argument is made about the reduction of numbers to a particular version of set theory in the famous article by Paul Benacerraf, “What Numbers Could Not Be,” *Philosophical Review*, 74 (1965), 47-73.

Since there are many philosophers who have come to reject the watertight compartmentalization of fact and value, it would seem that Nagel's claims about the irreducibility of meaning would require more support than a reference to Hume. But even where reduction is not possible, subtler forms of dependency may obtain. Consider an analogue to Nagel's argument for physics. Physics implies the difference between right and wrong answers or applications. Physics can be incorrectly applied to various situations to obtain all sorts of nonsense. But physical facts and the experience of such facts do not have such implications. That's why theories are needed. So, physics does not consist in physical facts and experience. Theories cross beyond the implications of the data. Nevertheless, physics is based on physical facts and experience. Irreducibility does not imply independence.

Nagel thinks that meaning is primitive and linguistic practice must conform to it. He rejects the opposite view, sometimes ascribed to Wittgenstein, that there is nothing to meaning other than linguistic practice. It seems to me that both positions are rather extreme. Meaning depends on linguistic practice without being reducible to it, because it is relative to whatever the communicative circumstances happen to be—the circumstances of a particular translation, a given poetic tradition, etc.—in such a way that there is room for creative uses of language that will always leave any attempt at behavioristic reductionism far behind, while at the same time, as in any art, there is a reliance on the conventions and tradition that make possible any understanding of the new work, even if the new work is an attempt to move beyond the confines of the previous tradition.

4. Logic

● Nagel begins this chapter with a discussion of the unshakability of the truth of the proposition: $2+2=4$. Nagel's strategy is to focus attention on the point of view from within arithmetic. $2+2$ must be

4 because it couldn't be 3 or 5 or any other number. He seems to think that this sort of consideration suffices to block any doubts that might be raised from an external point of view. To back up his point, he scoffingly remarks that reflections on his love for his math teacher are powerless to dislodge his conviction that $2+2=4$.

There are external considerations, however, that have led reasonable people to deny that the theorems of logic and arithmetic express truths. For example, a materialist might reject the claim that ' $2+2=4$ ' is true because he thinks that to attribute truth to that proposition would be to commit oneself to an ontology of abstract objects. This seems to be the line of thought expounded in Hartry Field's *Science Without Numbers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980). Proponents of mathematical fictionalism and other forms of instrumentalism and pragmatism have seriously denied the truth of the theorems of arithmetic, no matter how simple, yet Nagel completely ignores such views. The real challenge to the claim that ' $2+2=4$ ' is true does not come from one who would propose that $2+2=5$, but from those who offer reasons for denying truth to any arithmetical propositions whatsoever. Nagel's certainty about mathematical truth may derive from his neglect of those who seriously deny it, and that neglect might even have something to do with Nagel's feelings for his second grade arithmetic teacher. Maybe he emulates her dismissive attitude toward those who would deny mathematical truth!

● The mush minded subjectivists will conclude that the fact that we affirm that $2+2=4$ instead of $2+2=5$ is due to the contingencies of human psychology. This is the sort of rubbish that seems to provoke Nagel's ire, and the criticisms I have offered might lead him to charge me with being an accessory to littering. However, like Nagel, I have no patience for mush minded subjectivism, intellectual laziness, disregard for sound reasoning or excuses based on patent sophistry. My difference with Nagel pertains to strategy. Nagel's strategy is to focus on the fact that no one of sound mind could ever seriously propose that we are mistaken in our affirmations of $2+2=4$ because we should be affirming $2+2=5$

instead. Nothing about psychology or sociology could ever persuade us to favor $2+2=5$ instead of $2+2=4$. Taking an external point of view cannot or should not dislodge convictions about right answers internal to arithmetic. From this Nagel would jump to the conclusion that arithmetic truth is absolute and in no way relative to psychological or sociological factors. The jump is illicit. External factors, even if irrelevant to questions within arithmetic, may be quite relevant to philosophical questions about how arithmetic is to be understood, including the question of whether arithmetical propositions should be considered true, but this by no means provides any endorsement of slogans like “anything goes” or “it’s all relative”.

● When Nagel claims that we cannot for a moment ‘bracket’ ground level logical ideas such as the validity of *modus tollens*, he has gone far beyond a reasonable defense of rationalism to a dogmatic exclusivist insistence that there is only one way to logical paradise. Within standard logic *modus tollens* must be accepted as valid, but it is quite possible to ‘bracket’ standard logic and to suppose that some non-standard logic might be superior. Nagel will protest that logic must be used in our thinking when we evaluate rival systems of logic. Granted. Likewise, in order to describe the descriptive capacities of various natural languages we might use one of the languages reviewed, even one whose descriptive capacities do not compare well with its rivals. Suppose we govern our thinking by standard logic when we review rival systems of logic and arrive at the conclusion that some non-standard system is better. No paradox arises as long as the reasoning used to arrive at our conclusion may be validated in both the standard and non-standard systems. Otherwise, we might re-evaluate the rivals using the non-standard system.

There are all sorts of reasons one might have for seeking to construct systems of logic without *modus tollens*. For example, there are the so-called paradoxes of material implication. The standard truth-functional conditional is considered true when its antecedent is false, regardless of the consequent, and when its

consequent is true, regardless of the antecedent. Since natural language conditionals normally do not work this way, and since virtually all people who have not been indoctrinated with modern truth functional logic find such conditionals unintuitive, logicians have been led to construct all sorts of ‘non-standard’ conditionals, for which many of the ‘standard’ rules of inference, including *modus tollens*, are not valid, or are valid only under certain conditions. Reflections of these sorts have inspired a considerable number of logicians such as Ackerman, Anderson, Belnap, Brandom, Dunn, Norman, Priest, Read, Resher, Routley, and others to develop paraconsistent and relevance logics.⁸

Nagel’s dogmatism is doggedly repeated. For example, in the opening page to chapter five, he blusters: “Nothing would permit us to attribute to anyone a disbelief in modus ponens, or in the proposition that $2+2=4$.” (77) There are, to the contrary, many situations in which it would be rational to attribute to someone a disbelief in modus ponens, and other reasons for doubts about the alleged truths of mathematics. One may disbelieve in modus ponens because one thinks that use of this rule causes one to overlook subtleties in the conditionals of natural language. Even if

⁸ W. Ackermann, ‘Begründung einer strengen Implikation’ (A Foundation for a Rigorous Implication), *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 21 (1956), 113-28. A. R. Anderson and N. D. Belnap, eds., *Entailment: The Logic of Relevance and Necessity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, 1992), 2 vols. J. M. Dunn, ‘Relevance Logic and Entailment’, in D. Gabbay and F. Guenther, eds. *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, vol. 3, “Alternatives to Classical Logic,” (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), 117-229. G. Priest, *In Contradiction*, (The Hague: Kluwer, 1987). G. Priest, R. Routley and J. Norman, eds. *Paraconsistent Logic: Essays on the Inconsistent*, (Munich: Philosophia, 1989). S. Read, *Relevant Logic*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). N. Rescher and R. Brandom, *The Logic of Inconsistency* (Totowa: Roman & Littlefield, 1979).

Nagel thinks this sort of idea is just crazy, he ought to be able to imagine someone holding such a view, and that should be enough to permit him to attribute it to someone. But it is not just crazy, and to uphold *modus ponens* in the face of this sort of doubt, rationality commands us to offer arguments, not dismissals. The same goes for elementary math. It seems reasonable enough to hold that statements of arithmetic commit one to the existence of immaterial mathematical objects, and it seems no less reasonable to have doubts about the existence of such objects, which would seem to lead one reasonably to the conclusion that the propositions of arithmetic are literally false, even if they are useful fictions, warrentedly assertable, or in some other manner tolerable.

● In his First Meditation, Descartes writes, “[H]ow do I know that I am not deceived every time that I add two and three, or count the sides of a square, or judge of things yet simpler, if anything simpler can be imagined?”⁹ Nagel claims that this thought is unintelligible, although he qualifies the claim in a footnote, remarking that although the idea that $2+3=4$ is not gibberish, and may play a role in certain forms of argumentation, “it is not possible to *think* that (perhaps) $2+3=4$.” Of course, no one can imagine what it would be like for two plus three to be anything but five, but that does not show that Cartesian doubts are unintelligible. Cartesian doubts may be wrong-headed, or mere ‘paper doubts’,¹⁰

⁹ Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, trs., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 147.

¹⁰ C. S. Peirce attacked Cartesian philosophy as unscientific because it pretends to make everything a matter of doubt. For Peirce, real doubt is a kind of mental unrest that associates itself with inquiry. His answer to skepticism is, “Dismiss make-believes!” See Peirce’s first two articles for *The Monist* (1905-06), reprinted in his *Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-35) 4.530ff., 5.411ff., 5.438ff., and in

but they are not unintelligible. They do not require that one be able to imagine how it would be, rather they turn on the idea that the way things really are may be unimaginable to us. But Nagel says that Descartes cannot even conceive that possibility without ruling it out. I do not see why this should be so. Certainly I can rely upon logic and math as I consider the possibility that what I am relying on may be flawed in unimaginable ways. I can stand on a ladder as I tremble with anxiety caused by doubts about its ability to continue to support me. I need not have perfect confidence in everything upon which I rely.

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