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Knowledge of Allah and Religion according to Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) in Nahj al-Balagha

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Abstract

This research focuses on a topic of great significance in the life of a Muslim individual, which is the knowledge of Allah and religion according to Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) in Nahj al-Balagha. Understanding Allah is the foundation of belief and affirming His messengers and their message. It is the means of establishing monotheism, which is the right of Allah upon His servants. Knowledge of Allah instills tranquility and contentment in the hearts, leads to submission and devotion to Him, and brings forth love, reverence, and fear of Allah. Additionally, it necessitates living a righteous life and attaining eternal happiness. Those who know Allah during prosperity will continue to recognize Him during adversity and express gratitude during ease. Therefore, Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) has been chosen for this study due to his profound knowledge, understanding, jurisprudence, eloquence, and superior expertise in interpreting the noble Quran. All of these distinguished traits in his personality are firmly grounded in his understanding of Allah and religion. Thus, this humble study sheds light on the insights of this remarkable personality concerning knowledge, which is a fundamental and vital aspect in matters of faith and religions. It aims to explore the sources, limits, and levels of knowledge in this context.

Keywords: knowing God–Debt–Imam Ali–Nahj al-Balaghah

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad, and upon the pure and virtuous household and companions. And after this In this humble study, we have addressed a topic of utmost importance and profound impact on the life of a Muslim, which is the understanding of Allah and the religion according to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in Nahj al-Balagha. Knowing Allah (Exalted and Glorious) and His religion and receiving His messages is not readily accessible to an ordinary person except through a mediator between the Almighty and His servants. Hence, the messengers came as bearers of glad tidings to those who obey Allah, and as warners to those who disobey Him and transgress His commands. Therefore, it was the duty of the messengers to acquaint the people with their Creator and their religion, so that they may fulfill their obligations towards Him and express gratitude for being brought into existence from nothingness. This instructional duty continued after the prophets through their successors, who followed their guidance in directing people and inviting them to their Lord. Among these successors was Imam Ali (peace be upon him), who took upon himself the task of disseminating divine knowledge and religion among the people, guiding them to know their Lord and obey Him without transgressing His commands. Thus, the research plan is as follows: (Al-shiblawi et al., 2023).

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Introduction

In this section, the importance of the topic and the research plan are discussed.

Preliminary Section: An introduction to the life of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and his book, Nahj al-Balagha.

Chapter One: Defining knowledge and religion linguistically and semantically.

Chapter Two: Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) perspective on knowing Allah through his sermons.

Chapter Three: The limits of knowledge.

Chapter Four: The path to knowing Allah.

Lastly, the conclusion: Highlighting the most significant findings.

Finally, a list of sources and references used in the research.

Preliminary Section: An Overview of the Life of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and Nahj al-Balagha

First Topic: A Summary of the Life of Imam Ali (peace be upon him).

Firstly: His name, epithets, titles, lineage, and upbringing. He is Ali ibn Abi Talib ibn Abdul-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy. (Al-Basri, 1377 AH; Quiroz-Gomez et al., 2022). He was also known as Abu al-Hasan, Abu Turab, Al-Murtadha, Asadullah, and Bab al-Tilm (Al-Suyuti, 911 AH, p. 485; Al-Khatib, 463 AH; He held numerous titles, including Amir al-Ghur al-Muhajalin (Al-Hasani, 1413 AH, p. 560; Shams al-Din, 2007) and Amir al-Mu'minin (Al-Kulayni, 1388 AH, p. 3; Martiningsih et al., 2023)

Regarding his lineage, he is traced back to the Prophet Isma'il ibn Ibrahim, and his mother was Fatimah bint Asad ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf. It is said that she was the first Hashimi woman to give birth to a Hashimi (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1992, p. 1089; Fernández et al., 2022).

Secondly: His birth and upbringing. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was born on the 13th of Rajab in the year 30 of the Elephant (approximately 23 years before the Hijrah). His birth took place inside the Kaaba (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1376 AH; Zhang, 2022), as it was decreed by Allah in his sacred house (Al-Qari, 1989, p. 59; Al-Arbili, 1433 AH; Rida, 1939, p. 5; Hussein, 2023). He was raised and brought up in the household of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from the age of six. He remained in his company wherever he went (Majlesi, 1993, p. 44; Liu et al., 2022).

Thirdly: His marriage. In the month of Safar in the second year of the Hijrah, he married the daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Fatimah, and did not marry any other woman during her lifetime. The marriage of Fatimah to Ali was divinely ordained, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had entertained various proposals for her hand but turned them down until the command came for her to marry Ali (Al-Tabarani, 1983, p. 193; Tran & Hoang, 2022).

Fourthly: His Martyrdom: While Imam Ali was leading the Muslims in the Fajr prayer at the mosque in Kufa, he was struck with a poisoned sword by Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam. Despite this, Imam Ali uttered his famous phrase, "I have succeeded by the Lord of the Kaaba. (Ibn al-Athir, 630 AH)" After his passing, Abdullah ibn Ja'far, along with Hasan and Husayn, washed his body and laid him to rest Ibn al-Athir, 630 AH, p. 496).

Second Topic: The Status of the Book Nahj al-Balagha and the Opinions of Scholars Regarding it: Nahj al-Balagha is the title given by Al-Sharif Al-Radhi to a compilation of selected speeches,

sermons, and judgments of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. The book contains a substantial collection of sermons, admonitions, treaties, letters, judgments, advices, and etiquettes, totaling 238 sermons, 79 letters, and 489 sayings (Al-Asfour, 2015; Dahash et al., 2022).

Kashf al-Ghita, in his book, described Nahj al-Balagha as follows: "Our belief in the book Nahj al-Balagha is that everything it contains in terms of sermons, writings, advice, judgments, and etiquettes is akin to what is narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his household in authentic reports and reliable books." (Mirajhani, 1905, p. 191; Noerhadi, 2022)

First Topic: The Definition of Knowledge and Religion Linguistically and Terminologically

First Sub topic: The Definition of Knowledge Linguistically and Terminologically

Knowledge Linguistically: Al-Azhari said, "Knowledge is a source of knowing, recognizing, and being aware (Al-Harawi, 2001, p. 207)". The term "knowledge" with a kasrah on the letter "raa" denotes the perception of a thing as it is. (Omar, 2008, p. 1487). This is the focus of our discussion. Knowledge has various meanings, among them being the following explanations by scholars: Al-Raghib al-Isfahani (1424 AH, p. 560) described it as "perceiving a thing through contemplation and pondering over its effects."

Al-Tusi (1976, p. 66) defined knowledge as "conception or simple apprehension." Al-Askari (2018, p. 80) stated that "knowledge is the distinction of information."

Knowledge Terminologically: Scholars have provided several definitions for knowledge in its terminological sense:

Al-Kafawi (2018, p. 868) defined it as "the perception preceded by ignorance. It is also used for the second perception when ignorance is interspersed with it. It is the partial or simple order." From a philosophical perspective, it is defined as "the result of the interaction and connection between the perceiving self and the perceived object. It differs from the rest of sensory data by virtue of simultaneously involving the close association and union of these two entities. (Mathkour, 1983, p. 187; (Saleh, & Miyah, 2021))"

Based on what has been presented – and Allah knows best – we can summarize the linguistic and terminological definition of knowledge as follows: Knowledge is the perception or conception of a thing through contemplation, pondering, or acquiring information through experiments and experiences.

As for the terminological definition of knowledge of Allah, the Almighty, it is as follows:

Al-Kafawi also stated, "In the theological sense, knowledge of Allah, according to the people of theology, is the knowledge of Allah without how or resemblance."

Some others defined it as "the outcome of monotheism (tawhid), which means the recognition of Allah, the Almighty, with His essential attributes while affirming His uniqueness and transcending any possibility of likeness to Him. It is an accurate knowledge arising from definitive evidence. (Al-Dardir, 1963)"

The second proposition: Defining "religion" in language and terminology

Religion in language has several meanings. It can refer to "retribution," as in the phrase "May God repay them on the Day of Judgment," meaning that God will reward them accordingly

(Al-Farahidi, 1989, p. 73). It is also used in sacred sayings, such as “O son of Adam, be as you wish, for as you do, so will be done to you, (Al-Kulayni, 1388 AH, p. 36)” implying that one will be treated as they treat others.

“Religion” can also mean “obedience.” For instance, it is said, “They obeyed so-and-so,” indicating that they followed his commands (Al-Farahidi, 1989, p. 73). Similarly, in sacred sayings, it is used in various contexts, like “Knowledge is a form of worship, (Al-Radhi, 1990, p. 36)” signifying that obeying God involves seeking knowledge.

Regarding the term “religion” in religious terminology, scholars have proposed different definitions, including:

1. “Divine legislation encompassing principles and branches.” (Yaziji, 1856, p. 215).
2. “Actions of obedience and avoidance of prohibitions. (Department of Kalam at the Islamic Research Foundation in Mashhad, 1415 AH)”
3. “Divine guidance that leads rational beings to virtuous choices. (Islamic Research Institute, 2015, p. 149)”.

Thus, the most prevalent definitions of “religion” could be summarized as the belief in the sanctity of a higher power and the adherence to behaviors that reflect submission to that higher power.

Topic Two: Imam Ali’s (peace be upon him) Perspective on Knowing God and Religion

The efforts to understand Allah Almighty differ significantly from the endeavors to acquire other forms of knowledge. The one seeking knowledge about a particular subject treats it as a subject of study to arrive at various truths related to it. However, the one striving to know Allah Almighty seeks to reach the ultimate truth and any conclusion after the truth is nothing but misguidance. As Allah, the Exalted, has said: “So, that is Allah, your true Lord. After the truth, what is there except error? How then are you turned away?” (Quran, Surah Yunus, 10:32).

Hence, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) became upset when a questioner asked him to describe Allah as if the questioner could perceive Allah with their senses (Al-Radhi, 1990, p. 89). The ultimate aim of any knowledge is to attain its truths. Consequently, Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him), provided us with a clear guidance in the realm of knowing Allah Almighty. He did so through some of his sermons in “Nahj al-Balagha” (The Peak of Eloquence). In the first sermon, he elucidates the knowledge of Allah, saying: “The essence of religion lies in knowing Him.” (Al-Radhi, 1437 AH).

Ayatollah Sheikh Makarem Shirazi commented on this sermon, stating: “There is no doubt that ‘religion’ here encompasses beliefs, obligations, duties, and ethics. Therefore, the knowledge of Allah represents the first step on the path to understanding the entirety of the religion and its branches, and this religion lacks vitality without this knowledge.” (Shirazi, 1426 AH, p. 50).

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) further expounds: “Knowledge of Allah constitutes the foundation of religion. In other words, investigation is the prelude, and the knowledge of Allah is the initial phase of that prelude. (ibid)”

Abdulhamid ibn Habibullah says: “And the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) intended the first and foremost obligation in religion to be the knowledge of the Creator, the Exalted. As for his statement, ‘And the perfection of knowing Him is to believe in Him,’ one’s knowledge of Him may be incomplete or complete...” (Abu Hamid Al-Din, 656 AH, p. 53).

Therefore, it can be inferred from Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) sermon – and Allah knows best – that religion is that comprehensive system, based on beliefs and ideas, which starts from a single point. Once it sets off from that point, it rises strongly as a devout system. That starting point is the knowledge of the Divine Self. Thus, knowing God is like the first letters of the religion; one who knows Allah can read and understand the religion's teachings.

Likewise, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: "All praise is due to Allah, who veiled the hidden matters, indicated them through the signs of revelation, and refrained from the sight of perception. So, no eye denies Him, for it does not see Him, and no heart firmly believes in Him, for it does not perceive Him..." (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 49). This means that those who have not seen Him do not deny Him based on The absence of His visual manifestation. And those who firmly believe in Him cannot fully comprehend His reality (Abu Hamid Al-Din, 656 AH, p. 99).

Sheikh Kamal al-Din al-Bahrani also explained this sermon, stating: "This means that despite the absence of visual perception, His existence is evident in all His signs to the extent that one's innate nature witnesses to His presence. Yet, one cannot deny Him due to the lack of visual perception. And no heart can fully perceive Him, meaning that even if one believes in Him firmly, the heart cannot fully grasp Him." (Al-Bahrani, 2008. pp. 129-130).

The esteemed scholar Muhammad Taqi al-Tustari stated: "Denial is attributed to the heart, and vision to the eye, whereas, in reality, it is the opposite. It is not valid except through interpretation. For example, a man from the Khawarij once approached Al-Baqir (peace be upon him) and asked him, 'Whom do you worship?' He replied, 'Allah, the Exalted.' The man then asked, 'Have you seen Him?' Al-Baqir responded, 'Yes, but not with the eyes' visual perception. Rather, He is seen by the hearts through the truths of faith, not known through analogies, perceived through senses, or likened to others. He is described in the verses and recognized through the signs, but He cannot be fully comprehended through human wisdom. He is Allah, and there is no deity but Him.' The man left, saying, 'Allah knows best where to place His message.'" (Al-Kulayni, 1388 AH; Al-Tustari, 1418 AH).

Moreover, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) establishes the obligation of knowing Allah Almighty, as he says: "The intellects have not reached to define His attributes, nor have they been veiled from the duty of knowing Him." (Nahj al-Balaghah: 1/147. Sermon (49).

Sheikh Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah explains, "Nor have they been veiled from the duty of knowing Him" means that Allah, in His wisdom, has provided clear signs and proofs of His existence and greatness (Mughniyah, 2005, p. 525). These signs are the evidence upon which He challenges those who deny His existence and insists on the necessity of belief in Him, just as the same evidence is used by people to affirm the existence of things and believe in them in their daily lives." (ibid).

Thus, when Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says: "Nor have they been veiled from the duty of existence," he means that the reality of Allah's existence can be known through the traces of His presence in the entire world, and this can be realized through the intellect. (Shirazi, 2002, p. 37).

Chapter Three: The Limits of Knowledge

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) established practical and scientific boundaries for knowing Allah and religion. These boundaries are ascertainable and based on the fact that all creatures possess limited capabilities and capacities in all domains. Hence, Imam Ali (peace be upon him)

acknowledged the limited capacity of the human intellect to comprehend and grasp concepts. This notion has been supported by physiological studies and research.

Consequently, the Imam (peace be upon him) discourages delving into matters that the intellect finds difficult to comprehend or encompass due to its inherent limitations. He advises against engaging in issues beyond one's capacity, as it can lead to one's downfall (Al-Rikabi & Al-Zamili, 2020). He states, "Do not try to measure the greatness of Allah, for your intellect is limited, and doing so might lead you to destruction. (Nahj Al-Balagha, sermon, 91)". Scholars of Nahj al-Balagha unanimously agree that by this statement, the Imam (peace be upon him) meant that there is no way to fully understand the essence of Allah's attributes, just as there is no way to fully grasp the reality of His essence (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1964; Al-Bahrani, 2008).

In order to preserve sound judgment and maintain accurate and proper ideas, which result from the intellect being correctly engaged and used according to its limited capacity, the Imam (peace be upon him) advises, "Do not rely on opinions in these matters; you cannot fathom their depths, and your thoughts cannot penetrate them. (Nahj Al-Balagha, sermon, 87)". The limitations of the intellect's perception and comprehension negatively impact the heart's understanding as well.

Here, the Imam elucidates a scientific principle wherein the impact of the intellect on the heart becomes evident. Any deficiency or weakness in the intellect results in acquiring incomplete and confused information, leading to a negative effect on the heart's ability to comprehend and interpret this knowledge. Consequently, the heart becomes feeble and limited in its guidance, organization, and judgments regarding this knowledge. As he states, "The heart that closely follows the intellect becomes obscured" (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon, 64).

However, what if the heart is incapable of harnessing its capacities to guide and organize intellectual knowledge? If one's heart is scattered and confused, unable to unify its thoughts and information, then the Imam (peace be upon him) declares, "His heart is lost, his intellect disintegrated" (Nahj Al-Balagha, sermon, 233). Other forms of knowledge encompass sensory perceptions, and the limits of this knowledge are described by Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in the following words: "Not every hearer has the acumen to perceive, nor every observer the insight to perceive" (Nahj Al-Balagha, sermon, 87).

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) thus establishes a new boundary for human knowledge, unparalleled by any before him or after him. He presents a limit that cannot be surpassed. Hence, once you acquire knowledge, you are obliged to act upon it. Knowledge is exclusive to the individual who attains it and becomes aware of it (Al-Rikabi & Al-Zamili, 2020).

Chapter Four: Ways of Knowing Allah

The paths to knowing Allah Almighty, according to Imam Ali (peace be upon him), are diverse, including: reason and innate disposition (Sufayh, 2021, p. 13), the self, the horizontal signs (natural phenomena) (Hussein & Alwash, 2022) the intellect, and the heart.

Firstly, the self: (The self is the subtle and delicate essence, carrying the power of life, sensation, and voluntary movement. The wise one referred to it as the animal spirit).

The Quranic verses mention knowing Allah through self-reflection. For example, Allah says, "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (Quran, Surah Fussilat, 41:53). Also, "And within yourselves. Then will you not see?" (Quran, Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:20). These verses refer to the evidence of Allah's existence through introspection. Imam Ali (peace

be upon him) further emphasizes this concept, stating, “He who knows himself knows his Lord.” (Mughniyah, 2005, p. 142). The self is a delicate ethereal essence that employs the physical body to fulfill its needs, and it is the essence of man, endowed with knowledge.

Additionally, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) points out that if one is unable to know oneself, they are even more incapable of knowing their Creator. He states, “He who is ignorant of himself is more ignorant of his Creator.” (Al-Kashani, 1989, p. 44; Al-Reyshahri et al., 1421 H). Hence, it is emphasized that if a person cannot grasp the essence of their being, which is among the created entities, they will be unable to comprehend their Creator. The Imam warns that one who fails to understand their own faculties, such as hearing, seeing, smelling, speaking, and others, will be limited in their ability to truly perceive Allah (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1964, p. 292).

Therefore, when a person contemplates the signs within themselves, witnessing their own vulnerability to their Lord and recognizing their dependence in all aspects of existence, they discover a profound reality (Al-Suyuti, 2004, p. 291). They realize their profound connection to greatness and magnificence, tied to their existence, life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, will, love, and all other attributes and actions, exhibiting an incomparable splendor and beauty. They acknowledge the essence of existence, life, knowledge, and power, along with all other perfections (Al-Tabatabai, 2004, p. 291).

Consequently, all the narrations and sermons mentioned by Imam Ali (peace be upon him) urge individuals to refine their intellectual and theoretical abilities. He emphasizes the necessity of understanding these concepts, as they lead to a crucial goal: the knowledge of Allah Almighty (Al-Bahrani, 1970, p. 58).

Secondly: The innate disposition (fitrah) (Murshid, 2020, p. 103): Islam is the religion of innate disposition. (Innate disposition is the nature with which a newborn is created, acknowledging knowledge of its Lord Almighty) (Al-Qurtubi, 1964, p. 24). (The conclusion is that innate disposition in humans is their creation with a specific nature, encompassing a set of inclinations and knowledge. These inclinations and knowledge are deeply embedded within humans by virtue of their creation, making innate disposition an inherent aspect of their nature) (Khudair & Ibrahi, (2022, p. 43).

The Quran provides various verses that refer to the innate disposition, such as Allah’s words, “So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.” (Quran, Surah Ar-Rum, 30:30). It is also narrated from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in one of his sermons (Sermon, 1) that he said, “He created the creatures with His power, spread the winds with His mercy, and set the rocks as the foundations of His earth.”. Imam Al-Baqir (peace be upon him), when explaining this sermon, stated, “He created them with the innate disposition to recognize Him as their Lord. Otherwise, they would not know whom to ask about their Lord and Sustainer.” (Al-Huwayzi, 1965, p. 186; Al-Reyshahri, 1956, p. 780).

The Quran emphasizes that human nature inherently acknowledges the existence of Allah, without the need for external evidence, as the covenant was taken from them upon their creation (Al-Hashimi, 1984). Allah says, “And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes, we have testified.’ [This] – lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, ‘Indeed, we were of this unaware.’” (Quran, Surah Al-A’raf, 7:172).

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also refers to this reality in *Nahjul Balagha*, where he explains that the innate disposition inherently recognizes the divine truth and remembers the covenant taken from it. This includes what is mentioned in the sermons of the prophets, which are among the distinguished speeches. He states, “So He sent His messengers among them and revealed prophets to remind them of the covenant of their innate disposition and to remind them of the forgotten blessings.” (sermon, 1).

Thirdly: Knowledge of cosmic signs: The recognition of cosmic signs is evident in Allah’s words, “Indeed, those who have said, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then remained steadfast – the angels will descend upon them, [saying], ‘Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.’” (Quran, Surah Fussilat, 41:30) and “And in the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]. And in yourselves. Then will you not see?” (Quran, Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:20-21). These verses direct individuals to contemplate the external signs present in the earth and the heavens, including the fixed stars, mountains, seas, and other celestial bodies, referred to as “cosmic signs,” as indicated in the Quran (Al-Shirazi, 2005, p. 14).

This points to the importance of reflecting on cosmic signs, a practice that can only be achieved by pure minds and sincere hearts, as Allah says, “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.” (Quran, Surah Al-Imran, 3:190) (Al-Qustantini, 1903, p. 41). Imam Ali (peace be upon him) emphasizes this aspect in many of his sermons. For instance, he said, “We have received evidence of His omnipotence and the wonders that wisdom spoke of. We acknowledge that creatures are in need of Him, relying on the paths of His power. These provide undeniable proof of knowing Him, revealing marvelous creations and the flags of His wisdom. All of creation becomes evidence and a guide to Him, even if they do not speak, as His providence speaks and indicates the Creator.” (sermon, 91).

Sheikh Muhammad Maghniyah (2005, p. 13) states, “The meaning is that these entities, with their systems and their course towards their intended goal, serve as clear evidence for Allah against those who deny and resist.” He continues, “Each coherent and continuous system cannot come into existence without purpose, and when the purpose is beyond the natural proximate causes of this system, it requires an explanation that includes a concealed Being in the world of the unseen, bearing within itself the cause of its existence and continuity.” (ibid)

Similarly, Imam Ali stated in another sermon: “He established clear evidence of His exquisite craftsmanship and mighty power, which no minds can deny, acknowledge, or affirm without having perceived His manifestations and clear proofs.” (sermon, 165). Sheikh Kamal al-Din al-Bahrani (2008, p. 308) explains: “The purpose of this sermon is to draw attention to the wonders of Allah’s creations, urging contemplation on His dominion. The Imam emphasizes the concept of innovation (*bada’*), implying that non-existence eventually succumbs to non-existence, while the constant is like the earth, and entities with movement resemble celestial bodies. The phrase ‘witness of clear proofs’ refers to the visible signs of Allah’s sublime craftsmanship and His perfect power. These signs lead individuals to recognize and submit to Him, embracing His command. The phrase ‘neighed in our hearing’ symbolizes the emergence of those signs within the depths of the mind and their apparent evidence of His uniqueness and the diversity in His creation.”

Fourthly: Origination and Creation: Amir al-Mu’minin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him), said: “Praise be to Allah... The One who evidences the origin of His creation, and the origination

of His creation affirms His existence... He refers to the origination of things as evidence of His eternity and their being named by their inability to comprehend His power and their perishable nature.” (sermon, 1985).

Ibn Abi al-Hadid (1964, p. 45) explains this in his commentary on the sermon: “The phrase ‘the One who evidences the origin of His creation, and the origination of His creation affirms His existence’ seems puzzling, as the speaker, when indicating the origin of His creation, enters into the scope of what is meant by existence. The Eternal is the existing and has never ceased to be. So why does the speaker revert to say ‘and the origination of His creation affirms His existence’? The responder should answer according to the method of our scholars, the followers of Abu Hashim, and say that proving the origin of material bodies does not necessarily entail the existence of an ancient being as a given. According to their beliefs, even a finite entity may possess intrinsic characteristics while being finite. Therefore, it does not necessarily imply a being with eternal knowledge and power to be existent. Rather, it requires additional evidence indicating that He possesses the attribute of existence. They argue that such evidence, as presented by them, establishes that He is an ever-living and knowing entity, thus entailing His connection to what is possible and known. Every related entity, when devoid of it, becomes detached, like will. If the transcendent is devoid, it cannot be related. Thus, the origination of material bodies signifies two different aspects: one, it necessitates the existence of a Creator, and this is the intended meaning by ‘His origin.’ (ibid)

Fifthly: Reason: (cause of knowledge) (Abtan & Khudair, 2023, p. 1009).

Islam has encouraged the use of reason in all matters, as it is the most important means for individuals to find solutions to their problems and answer their various questions (Al-Tamimi et al., 2023, p. 1266). Imam Ali (peace be upon him) prioritized reason over other means of knowledge. When a person grasps things, they become capable of truly understanding them. He states, “There is no knowledge like reflection,” (Fadlallah, 2001) meaning that you may learn what others have produced as knowledge, but that knowledge remains memorized. However, the knowledge that results from contemplation and leads to profound insights is far more enriching than mere memorization.

Moreover, he (peace be upon him) emphasized reason as the means to distinguish between right and wrong, stating, “Your intellect is sufficient to show you the way out of your ignorance. (sermon, 405)” He means that through intellect, one can discern between misguidedness and guidance, truth and falsehood in beliefs. Thus, a person is fully capable of fulfilling their obligations through reason alone, and there is no need to impose further burdens. The distinction between misguidedness and guidance extends to include experiences that impart valuable lessons and knowledge about worldly affairs and its inhabitants. Even the need for sharp insight and comprehensive intelligence to derive profound meanings in wisdom, engineering, and mysterious sciences is an additional virtue, which is not essential. If a person attains such capabilities, they have achieved perfection. However, if not, fulfilling their obligations and distinguishing between misguidedness and guidance is sufficient for their salvation. It involves attaining intuitive knowledge in the heart and understanding customary practices (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1964, p. 65).

Sixthly: The Heart: Imam Ali (peace be upon him) describes the heart, saying, “Through the heart of the discerning, they foresee the future, understand its hidden aspects, and discover its essence.” (sermon, 54) He assigns the heart a role that is not just one of the means of knowledge but a central control over all sources of knowledge.

Additionally, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) ascribes another role to the heart, and that is faith, stating, "Faith is the knowledge of the heart." Here, he indicates that knowledge of God and knowledge of His religion come through faith in the heart (sermon, 217).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the best discourse is concise yet profound, and the best action is one that concludes well.

In conclusion, after the course of this research, several significant results have been reached, including the following:

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) presents a clear vision and comprehensive understanding concerning the knowledge of God. He views that the essence of religion lies in the knowledge of God, and the foundation of faith rests solely on this knowledge. By starting from this point, one can rise strong and devout.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) asserts that God has not veiled the intellects from knowing Him, as he states, "The intellects have not been veiled from their obligation to know Him." He elucidates the ways to know God, emphasizing two primary paths: the path of self-knowledge and the path of recognizing the cosmic signs – which include contemplating the creation of the heavens and the universe as a means to understand His greatness. He further highlights that self-awareness is more beneficial than understanding the cosmic signs. The other paths include innate knowledge, the understanding of creation and the temporal nature of things, and the role of the heart.

Regarding the limitations of knowledge, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) defines realistic scientific and practical boundaries that can be verified. He acknowledges the intellect's limited capacity to comprehend certain concepts and advises against delving into matters that exceed the intellect's capabilities, as it could lead to its own destruction. These are the key findings of this research.

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