

مفهوم انسان در نهج‌البلاغه

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چکیده

متون مقدس ادیان مختلف تا حدودی تصویری گوناگون از ماهیت واقعی انسان ارائه می‌دهند. با توجه به گستردگی موضوع، این مقاله به بررسی مفهوم و ماهیت انسان از دیدگاه امام علی (ع) پرداخته است. در انجام این کار، مهم‌ترین منبع، یعنی نهج‌البلاغه مورد مطالعه قرار گرفته است. نتایج بررسی بیانگر آن است که به نظر امام، انسان برترین مخلوق و محور و خلاصه آفرینش الهی است. او غایت و میوه خلقت است. در میان تمام مخلوقات در آسمان و زمین، تنها او دارای بسیاری از ویژگی‌های ممتاز است. انسان دو بعد دارد. همراه با بعد مادی دارای بعد الهی است. برتری انسان نسبت به سایر موجودات به همین بعد الهی برمی‌گردد. طبیعت و فطرت خدایی انسان مانند بذره‌های بالقوه‌ایی است که آغاز خلقت در او به ودیعت گذاشته شده است که باید شکوفا گردد. انسان باید در قبال همه فعالیت‌های خود احساس مسئولیت نماید. هر انسانی پاک از گناه بدنیا می‌آید و از حق آزادی برخوردار است مشروط بر اینکه آزادی او حق دیگران را نقض نکند. همه افراد بشر برادران نوعی یک دیگر هستند. برتری یک فرد بر دیگری تنها بر اساس تقوا و وظیفه شناسی است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: قرآن کریم، امام علی (ع)، نهج‌البلاغه، مفهوم انسان، وضعیت انسان.

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The concept of man in Nahj al Balagha

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Abstract

The concept of man in the different religious scriptures gives somewhat a diverse understanding towards what is the true nature of man. Due to the vastness of the topic, this paper would like to limit the paper in discussing what human nature is all about from Imam Ali's perspective. In doing so, it will refer to the most important source, namely the Nahj al-Balagha. According to the teachings of Nahj al Balagha man is the highest creature and the center of the visible universe. Man is the epitome of creation. He comes at the end of creation. Among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man has been bestowed with many distinctive qualities. Human being has two dimensions. Along with the material he has a divine dimension as well. Excellence of human being to other creatures returns to the same dimension. Man's God-given nature and colour are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path. The great position of human being is to take the responsibility in all major and minor works, overt and covert activities. Every human being is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the law of God or desecrate the right of others. All human beings are brothers to one another. The superiority of one individual over another is only on the basis of his piety and dutifulness to Him.

Keywords: Holy Quran, Imam 'Alí, Nahj al Balagha, concept of man, Status of Man

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Introduction

The research on man and the attempts to answer many of the intricate questions related to his creation and existence which started in the ancient past is still on-going. Ever since man existed on this earth he has been trying to know himself. Human nature has been studied by many branches of knowledge from different angles. He has been a topic of discussion in philosophy, anthropology, sociology, etc. Therefore, Human being has been the concern of philosophers and religious thinkers. It continues as relevant topic in all streams as long as human being exists.

The knowledge on human nature is very important in understanding man and his disposition. This knowledge can help him overcome many of the complexities of his life. As such, parents, teachers, psychologists, counselors and other professionals who come to the rescue of man, need to equip themselves with this knowledge so that they can render better advice and services to those who are faced with problems in their life.

Human nature is a widely and popularly discussed topic not only in the philosophy but also in the religion. This topic has drawn people from diverse backgrounds of knowledge to explore and investigate who or what man is in relation to his Creator and other creations that exist in the universe.

Man being the best creation of Allah the Almighty has been a topic of discussion in philosophy, anthropology, sociology, etc.

The concept of man in the different religious scriptures gives somewhat a diverse understanding towards what is the true nature of man. Due to the vastness of the topic, this paper would like to limit the paper in discussing what human nature is all

about from Imam Ali's perspective. In doing so, it will refer to the most important source, namely the Nahj al-Balagha.

With the appearance of Islam in Mecca (Arabia) about 1,400 years ago, the name of Imam Ali is found along with that of prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in the books of Islamic history and other worldly literature concerning the genesis and growth of Islam in its first fifty years. Many of the traditions of the holy Prophet (PBUH) also contain the mentions of Ali reflecting the piety of his character, the height of his wisdom, the depth and vastness of his knowledge, the intimate relation with the holy Prophet and nearness to Allah, his services in the preaching and spread of true teachings of Islam through his virtuous words and golden as well as excellent and unsurpassed deeds. His personality stands as a pointer to the ideal believer in and follower of Islam in such a way that sometimes it appears that Imam Ali follows Islam and sometimes, it transpires that Islam in action may be understood through his life. (Nahjul-Balagha, 1997, p. 161)

The Nahj al-Balagha is the most famous sermons, letters, sayings, and narration attributed to Ali Bin Abi Talib. It was collected by a Shia scholar known as Sharif Razi. Its sermons, letters and documents are fresh and pure as a budding rose. They lead the world like a shining star in this dark world of illusions, cruelty and uncertainties. If the sayings are read, followed and acted upon, they will definitely enhance the human values in a person and make his life more practical. They will help inculcate these values in the minds of the forthcoming generations involving all castes, creed and gender. Considering Nahj al Balagha's intellectual and spiritual richness, it is not difficult to find in it answers to various problems and crises

which the humanity is facing, provided one is patient and sincere in his quest. Its message is universal and eternal. That man and his being occupy the central stage of its message, can hardly be over emphasized. Man here is an inclusive term taken to mean the human being or humankind in general. This article treats of man in Imam Ali's teachings, especially his Nahj al Balagha. He teaches that man is the highest creature and the center of the visible universe. Man is the epitome of creation. He comes at the end of creation.

Concept of man in Nahj al-Balagha

Different conceptions of human nature lead to different views about what we ought to do and how we can do it. If an all-powerful and supremely good God made us, then it is His purpose that defines what we can be and what we ought to be, and we must look to Him for help. We cannot entirely comprehend the nature of human beings unless we can reach into the inner dimensions of humanity, which far exceed the outer parts. As a great world in and of himself, a man is the quintessence (zubda) of the universe. In the Qur'an, human beings are referred to sixty-five times as insan and 230 times as nas – the plural form of insan.(Albayrak, 2006, p. 300)

Ali bin Abi Talib present concept of man in the light of Qur'an and connecting with the same to his own intellectual interpretation in Nahj al-Balagha attractively.

The way man views himself is one of the strongest influences in his *Tarbiyah* (upbringing). For this reason, Islam emphasized the importance of having man know himself very well; a

knowledge that is based on the divine source from the creator, The Most High, The One who knows who He created and He is The kind and The aware.

Knowing man is the pivot of the purposes and direction of Islamic culture. As seen from the perspective of the Islamic culture, man is a creature of both good and evil (Quran, 91:8). Quran does not arbitrate the nature of mankind as a whole as it has praised mankind and criticized it to an extreme. In praising mankind, it says: he is a creature chosen by the creator, caliph on the earth, with a nature familiar with the God, free, independent, keeper of the promises to the od, responsible for oneself and the world, dominant over the earth and the skies, wary of good and evil, whose being starts with weakness and moves to power and perfection but he only soothes with the prayer to God. His motives have no shade of material and nature. He has been given the right to us lawfully the bounties of god. In his criticism, "he is too oppressing and ignorant. He is very ungrateful to the creator and rebels when he sees himself rich, he acts hurriedly, and whenever we remove the challenges over him, as though such an event has no occurred yet. He is narrow-minded and the most aggressive creature. He has been created greedy. If he receives bad deeds he will be revengeful and if not he will be miserly wants to form the basis of a new community in which man is the only constituent. Then, based on the realities of the human it once criticizes and praises the man. Humans have both the Lavameh self and the Amareh self which blames and pushes him to bad deeds and evil things. Then, this being said, it is up to us if we pick one way of life as the prophet says: God has created

this strange being whose name is human as a combination of instincts and opposing feelings which strike a kind of duality in human appearance (see Motahari, 1373, pp.7-17).

Islam clarified to man his reality, his origin and the different stages of creation that he goes through. The same concepts are narrated in Nahj al-Balagha also. If the basic source of Islam, like Qur'an, depict the precise concept of man, Nahj al-Balagha characterize broad concept of man as it enter to one's mind deeply.

The Status of Man

Among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man has been bestowed with many distinctive qualities. As the recipient of these distinctive qualities from Allah the Almighty, man is placed on the highest pedestal in the hierarchy of creations. Some of these distinctive features are; man has been created in the best of forms (Qur'an, 95:1-4), provided with the creative intelligence (Qur'an, 2:31-34), given the power of speech and freedom of choice (Qur'an, 55:4; 76: 3). Due to the fact that man has been endowed with such noble qualities or for some other reasons only known to the Creator, man has been chosen to be His *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. Apart from that, man has been further honored in his stature and position when Allah made all things created in the heaven and earth to be of service to him. (Qur'an, 45:13; 17:70). (See: Abdul Razak, 1997, pp.171-173). Having said the status enjoyed by man in the Qur'an, the following will be an elaboration on the preceding points highlighted on Man.

The Islamic concept of human nature is a comprehensive and

all-encompassing one. According to the Islamic concept, among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man stands on the highest pinnacle to be called as the best creation of Allah the Almighty. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that God has created man in the most beautiful and excellent manner: "*We have indeed created man in the best of moulds*" (Qur'an, 95:4). This exalted position and stature makes man superior to angels and other luminous creations like the sun, moon, stars, etc. In another verse of the Qur'an, the special honour that has been bestowed on humans is clearly spelled out: "*We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation*" (Qur'an, 17:70).

The title *Khalīfah* places man in an honoured position to be Allah's deputy; administrator; representative, etc. on earth. His position as Allah's *Khalīfah* gives him power and authority to rule, manage and preserve the earth. Al-Maududi, in his commentary of the Holy Qur'an, explains that man's status as the *Khalīfah* of Allah does not make him the master of the universe, but only as a deputy who is allowed to exercise the delegated powers given to him by Allah the all Supreme. That is why Imam Ali emphasizes human high status and says,

"He who does not know his own worth is ruined" (*Nahj al-Balagha*, saying 149); or says that "Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth." (*Nahj al-Balagha*, Sermon 103)

And with reference to his superiority to the world, says

“Know that this world which you have started to covet and in which you are interested, and which sometimes enrages you and sometimes pleases you is not your (permanent) abode, nor the place of your stay for which you might have been created, nor one to which you have been invited, know that it will not last for you nor will you live along with it” (Sermon 173).

The creation of human being

The Qur’an is only for human beings, and it addresses not only Muslims but all peoples, including the members of other religions (Qur’an, 3.64). By the order of descent (nuzul), the first revealed verse of the Qur’an is about the creation of man, and this verse describes the human being (Qur’an, 96.1–2). Furthermore, the name of the seventy sixth sura of the Qur’an is insan, and this sura emphasizes that point that human beings have been sent into the world **to be tested**. According to the Qur’anic view, all human beings are of the same origin (mansha): ‘O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul ...’ (Qur’an, 4.1), or later ‘Achieving honour and high position in the sight of Allah is through righteousness (taqwa), not the superiority of race’ (Qur’an, 49.13).

According to Imam Alí, as a starting point, it has to be allowed that in the creation of man, God has some higher purpose. The book makes a reference to this at some places. For example, Allah has not created you aimlessly. (Sermon 63) Allah has not created you in vain (Sermon 85) Allah has not created you for naught and has not let you free (Sermon 194.). Regarding the creation of man, he says,

“look at man whom Allah has created in the dark wombs and layers of curtains from what was overflowing semen, then shapeless clot, then embryo, then suckling infant, then child and then fully grown up young man. Then He gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson (from whatever is around him) and understand it and follow the admonition and abstain from evil”. (Sermon 83) The conception of man envisages from the womb aim to active relation of parents as it is a fortune to get to serve aged mother or father and moreover it is his duty as a human being. Nahj al-Balagha took us to this peak point of love and affection by depicting the creation of man. In the views of Nahj, God gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk, and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson from whatever is around him and understand it and follow the admonition and abstain from evil (sermon 82) Then the man in the Nahj is one who has thoroughly knowledge about what happen around him, not one who foreshorten to himself. Islam provide him opportunities to think, not to blind himself, and the same way Nahj also encourage the man to think and build up the concept of man in the frame work of intellectual. Now the modern sense of man rises question how such a religion can restrict the intellectual discourse of its believer? Nahj al-Balagha prevent such allegation against Islam through same doctrines by placing Islam as religion of reason while it put some condition that such thoughts which follow the evil and bring closer it instead of ‘abstain from evil’(sermon 82) .

In other place he adds,

“O creature who has been equitably created and who has been

nurtured and looked after in the darkness of wombs with multiple curtains. You were originated from the essence of clay (Quran, 23:12) and placed in a still place for a known length (Quran, 77:21-22) and an ordained time. You used to move in the womb of your mother as an embryo, neither responding to a call nor hearing any voice. Then you were taken out from your place of stay to a place you had not seen, and you were not acquainted with the means of awaiting its benefits, or with who guided you to eke out your sustenance from the udder of your mother, and, when you were in need, appraised you of the location of what you required or aimed at. Alas! Certainly he who is unable to understand the qualities of a being with shape and limbs is the more unable to understand the qualities of the Creator and the more remote from appreciating Him through the limitations of creatures.” (Sermon 163)

He regards the creation of man as the best one and says:

When He has spread out the earth and enforced His commands He chose Adam (peace be upon him) as the best in His creation and made him the first of all creation. (Sermon 91)

Two dimensions of man

Based on the teachings of Islam, man has two sides which are negative and positive and they may influence the formation of one's life-style.

The origin of man is dust (Quran, 3.59; 30.20; 35.11) and the first human body was brought to existence by turning that dust into mud, and passing it through various stages (Quran,6.2; 7.12; 15.26, 28, 33; 32.7-8, 71; 37.11; 38.71-72; 55.14). The human being is thus a part of nature and all the elements that exist in

nature also exist in the human body. The soul of a person comes directly from Allah – the creator of all things – as a bounty (lutf): ‘So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of My spirit...’ (Quran, 15.29; 38.72).

Because of this breathing, the transcendent self is the one ultimate certainty that lies at the heart of the very existence of all of us.

Man is the only superior creature in the natural world whose superiority is indebted to the divine spirit.

Therefore, Islamic school makes effort so that Islamic scientists study all natural and metaphysical aspects of human and then define him. (Albayrak, 2006, pp. 300-301)

According to Imam Ali, human beings have two dimensions. Along with the material he has a divine dimension as well. Excellence of human being to other creatures returns to the same dimension.

Allah collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay which He dripped in water till it got pure, and kneaded it with moisture till it became gluey. From it He carved an image with curves, joints, limbs and segments. He solidified it till it dried up for a fixed time and a known duration. Then He blew into it out of His Spirit whereupon it took the pattern of a human being with mind that governs him, intelligence which he makes use of, limbs that serve him, organs that change his position, sagacity that differentiates between truth and untruth, tastes and smells, colors and species. He is a mixture of clays of different colors, cohesive materials, divergent contradictories and differing properties like heat, cold, softness and hardness. (Sermon 1)

Conflicting tendencies

Human being is a conflicted form of existence – that is, a human being carries the seeds of both good and evil. At an individual level, a person's character is marked by weakness, lack of perspective, ambition and narrow-mindedness (Quran, 4.28; 59.9; 64.16; 70.19–21 etc.). The evil tendencies in human nature stem from these traits. These traits are also the roots of personality deficiencies such as feelings of superiority, conceit and hopelessness (Quran, 17.67, 83). Man is hasty because of his weakness (Quran, Quran, 21.37; 17.11; 75.10–21). The greatest obstacle on the path of maturing and development of nafs is the nafs itself, for it gets buried in its subjective tendencies (hawa): 'Nor do I absolve my own self [of blame]: the [human] soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy...' (Quran, 12.53).

Despite these negative traits, positive attributes are also in human nature. The animalistic side of humans distances us from God, but the spiritual side distances us from the world. In reality, a person should establish a balance between the physical and metaphysical worlds. For human behavior to be stable and bear beneficial fruit, it is necessary to achieve a balance between conflicting tendencies. The Qur'an makes it possible for people to increase awareness of Allah and purify themselves by changing their inner state. Allah has equipped humans with knowledge, free will (irada) and intellect (aql). Furthermore, conversing and reasoning are among the first attributes that make humans really humans; by them, man may acquire many divine attributes, such as knowledge, virtue, will, justice and mercy.

The Qur'anic description of human beings as 'cruel and ignorant' and yet also 'the most honourable of all creatures' (ashrafi makhluqat) is directly tied to man's creation from mud but in the image of God. The Qur'an talks of balancing these two extremities of man's dual nature by practicing moderation, and ultimately gives a positive view of humans, portraying them as creatures who have the ability to comprehend the relationship between conflicting tendencies and the ability to control them. (Albayrak, 2006, pp. 301-302)

According to Imam, man has mind and intelligence, which relates to his spirit-divine dimension; with which he can differentiate between truth and untruth.

It is enough if your wisdom distinguishes for you the ways of going astray from those of guidance. (saying 421)

The importance of the use of reason is emphasized by Imam 'Ali in the first sermon of *Nahj al-balaghah*, where he states that one of the purposes of the mission of the prophets has been to show them what is hidden in the intellects. Human reason is like a mine into which one must dig in order to extract its treasures, and that one of the purposes of the prophetic mission has been to show us where to dig (Amuli 1386/2007, p.77).

In another sermon from *Nahj al-Balagha*, Imam 'Ali says: "The intellects have not been informed of the extent of His attributes, but He has not concealed from them the knowledge they need of Him" (*Nahj al-Balagha*, Sermon 49).

Weakness of man

Despite his positive attributes, human being is a weak being. In

this regard, imam says, “How wretched the son of Adam (man) is! His death is hidden, his ailments are concealed, his actions are preserved, the bite of a mosquito pains him, choking cause his death and sweat gives him a bad smell.” (saying 419)

In another passage, Imam describe the weakness of man in confront with events as follow:

In man there is a piece of flesh attached to him a vein and it is the strangest thing in him. It is the heart. It has a store of wisdom and things contrary to wisdom. If it sees a ray of hope, eagerness humiliates it and when eagerness increases, greed ruins it. If disappointment overtakes it, grief kills it. If anger rises in it, a serious rage develops. If it is blessed with pleasure, it forgets to be cautious. If it becomes fearing, it becomes heedless. If peace extends all round, it becomes neglectful. If it earns wealth, freedom from care puts it in the wrong. If trouble befalls it, impatience makes it humble. If it faces starvation, distress overtakes it. If hunger attacks it. weakness makes it sit down. If its eating increases, heaviness of stomach pains it. Thus, every shortness is harmful to it and every excess is injurious to it. (saying 108)

Primordial nature (*fi rah*)

Among the creatures of the world, man is the only creature that needs to be highly interpreted. One of the questions about man is his nature because upon its acceptance, all the issues related to man can be reasonably interpreted. All the discussions and debates in the field of education, ethical philosophy, historical philosophy, Islamic ideas principles, etc. are based on nature. If

do not look for a series of characteristics in man, we will never be able to talk about humanism. If we deny natural tendencies in man, defending from humanity and its preliminaries will be nonsense. (Motahari, 2004) The word *Fatarah* has the same weight with *Falah*. This word is used in the Holy Qoran verses in different forms. (Of course, the word *Fitrat* (Nature) is used in the following verse about man.) (ibid:19)

“And you Mohammad; directly accept Islam and always follow the God's way based on which he has created man's nature and no change shall be made in the creation made by God”. (Quran, 30, 30) Man's nature means the characteristics which are in the origin and creation of human. Real nature means the color used by God for the man's sole. Man's humanity is completed by nature. (Motahari, 2005:144)

In Islam, man is born with the *fi rah* (primordial nature). *Al-fi rah* in the Arabic language renders several different meanings that reveal the many positive and interesting dimensions of human nature. One meaning to the word *al-fi rah* explains that man comes to this world without any stain of sin. This Islamic concept of *al-fi rah* rejects the doctrine of the “Original Sin” as espoused in Christianity. The other meaning of *al-f trah* as stated in the Holy Qur’an explains that naturally man has been born as a believer in Allah the Almighty (30:30)

The best means by which seekers of nearness to Allah, the Glorified, the Exalted, seek nearness, is the belief in Him and His Prophet, fighting in His cause, for it is the high pinnacle of Islam, and (to believe) in the *kalimat al-Ikhlās* (the expression of Divine purification) for it is primordial nature and the establishment of

prayer for it is (the basis of) community... (Sermon 110)

Man's God-given nature and colour are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path.

Trial of man

Life of the material world is temporary. Analogously, human body is subject to decay. Death is a certainty. As the life in the world is a trial and one is enjoined to take from it nothing more than that which helps him to lead a life of subsistence and fortify himself with good works and piety, one transcends above the ever-changing demands of earthly life. In this world man is a traveler in motion. (Sermon 182) God has made this world for what is to come hereafter, and put its inhabitants to trial as to which of us is good in action, and we have not been created for this world, nor ordered to strive for it, but we have been made to stay in it to stand trial therein. (Letter 55)

He ordained livelihoods /67 | with plenty and with paucity. He distributed them narrowly as well as profusely. He did it with justice to test whomever He desired, with prosperity or with destitution, and to test through it the gratefulness or endurance of the rich and the poor. (Sermon 91)

Certainly, Allah tries his creatures in respect of their evil deeds by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and closing the treasures of good, so that he who wishes to repent may repent, he who wishes to turn away (from evils) may turn away, he who wishes to recall (forgotten good) may recall, and he who wishes to abstain (from evil) may abstain. (Sermon 143)

Man's responsibility

The great position of human being is to take the responsibility in all major and minor works, overt and covert activities. All spoken and unspoken words of a person render him responsible for all his deeds and thoughts. Responsibility is the effect of the human being upon himself and/or others. Thus, taking responsibility results in a high status for the person and it is the reason for his dignity.

Man is responsible for his activities while The God gave him freedom to choice in several things. So he emphasizes the importance of selection in social and political issues. Verily, The God, who above time and place, know everything about His creature. So we should believe in predestination. The Islamic man thus remains aware of the eschatological realities of the fact, that although he lives on this earth, he is here as traveler far away from his original abode.

Verily, Allah has not created you in vain nor left you unbridled nor left you alone in ignorance and gloom. He has defined what you should leave behind, taught you your acts, ordained your death, sent down to you "the Book (Quran) explaining everything" (Quran, 16:89). (Sermon 86) So take lesson, O creatures of Allah, and recall that (evil doing) with which your fathers and brothers are entangled, and for which they have to account. By my life, your time is not much behind theirs, nor have long periods or centuries lapsed between you and them, nor are you much distant from when you were in their loins. (Sermon 89)

Human dignity

Human being is very honourable in the Qur'an and higher than many other creatures. He is created by the best Creator in the best form. He is created by God and chosen by Him to be His representative on earth. God has taught him the names and breathed into him of His spirit, ordered the angels to prostrate before the human being and disposed the sun, the moon, the stars, and the day and night for him.

The secret for the honoring of mankind is that only the human being has to integrate and harmonize the various components of his existence by utilizing his physical body, intellect and soul. We find that the Quran describes the human as having been created from clay, the material part, in chapter two it talks about God teaching mankind his intellect, and in (Quran, 15:29) it talks about having the spirit of God within him and that God breathed into mankind of His spirit. Human being is Ashraful Makhluqat, and human life is important. Islam recognizes and respects this important basic human right.

Emphasizing the human high status, Imam Ali says,

He who does not know his own worth is ruined.(saying, 149) or says that "Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth." (Sermon 103)

The reason why human beings are dignified is that they have free choice, and the potential for good and evil. Allah bestowed human dignity on every individual and this human dignity is the embodiment of the human freedom.

Freedom

Every human being is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited

inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the law of God or desecrate the right of others.

Freedom is granted to all people, the only criterion of lawful or unlawful is good and evil. Nahj al-Balagha, also emphasizes this concept, thus: "Allah has given inborn disposition to human minds to shape themselves towards good and towards evil"(Sermon 75). They were given complete liberty within world of thoughts and deeds to think as they like and do as they desire. Human beings are given healthy body and limbs with perfect senses to acquire knowledge of the external world, and also lights of reason and wisdom, so that they are able to exercise their freedom of thought and action (Sermon 86). The Merciful Lord has given His creatures complete freedom to do as they like, and they are prohibited from certain actions and commands carry in them the least trouble and lead us towards the most convenient ways of life.

Freedom of conscience and religion:

"There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become distinct from error (Quran, 2: 256). The freedom of conscience and religion is perceived from the point of the personal freedom of choice of an individual. Islam prohibits to compel or force a person to endorse a particular view, thought or theory. One can adhere to thought and theory only when it springs from ones free and inner conviction. The right to freedom of thought is given to all subjects with the condition that it should not be used for spreading evil and/or wickedness.

Hazrat Ali in line with the aforementioned philosophy of Islam, advised Malik al-Ashtar, Governor of Egypt: "Know Malik, that among your subjects there are two kinds (of people); either brothers in

religion or one like you in creation..." Ali in the same instrument advised Malik: "Do not reject the peace to which your enemy may call you ... because peace brings safety to your country ... fulfill your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it. ...and do not change interpretations to vague words after conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement) if an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification. "Surely fulfillment of pledge is the twin of truth. Regarding safety of non-Muslims, Hazrat Ali advised Malik: '-You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting for Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequences, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short life than shedding of blood without justification. This instrument contains principles of protection of Human Rights without distinction of religion or community, providing help to the destitute and the poor, and succor to the low and the down-trodden. From which, full guidance can be had for the peace and security and the prosperity and well-being of the people. "Allow the right to whomsoever it is due whether near you or far from you. In this matter you should be enduring and watchful even though it may invoke your relations and favorites, and keep in view the reward of that which appears burdensome on you because its reward is handsome". The holy Qur'an encourages Muslims to accept any offer of peacemaking by non-Muslims with the Divine promise that if they intend to deceive, Allah will protect Muslims.

Equality of human beings

The holy Qur'an proclaims: "O' you men! Surely, We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know

each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who is most careful of his piety." This declaration is addressed to all human beings including the Muslims. Thus, mankind, says Allah, has descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, families, race and nation are segmentation for convenience by which certain differing characteristics may be ascertained. But before Allah they are all one, and honour comes to an individual only if he is careful of his duty to Allah, As such, Islam recognizes absolute equality of mankind, irrespective of race, nationality, family background, status, etc. All human beings are brothers to one another. The superiority of one individual over another is only on the basis of his piety and dutifulness to Him.

He created all men and women from the same origin -Adam and Eve. The equality existing between man is, thus, expressed irrespective of race, sex, religion, age or status. Every human being is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the law of God or desecrate the right of others.

The principle of equality was established for the entire mankind as its birth right, forbidding inequality or discrimination on the ground of tribe, nationality and family, as mankind belongs to one universal brotherhood, "O' Creatures of Allah, I advise you to have fear of Allah", says Ali in the sermon of Ghurra (Sermon 81).

Hazrat Ali in the sermon of Ashbah said: "... the whole creation is His (Allah's) family" (Nahj al Balagha, Sermon 89).

The equality which is provided in Islamic law, should be taken as world model. There is no distinction between friend and foe, ruler and ruled, rich or poor. There was a case in which Amir al-Momeneen, Hazrat Ali was himself the plaintiff during his

Khilafat. It concerned armour lost by Hazrat Ali (PBUH) at Siffeen and picked up by a Christian. The Christian pleaded "not guilty" before the Qazi and Hazrat Ali was asked by the Qazi to substantiate his charge by producing witness. Hazrat Ali produced his son, Hazrat Hassan but the Qazi refused to accept his evidence being the son of the plaintiff. In the absence of any conclusive evidence, which the Caliph had failed to produce, the suit was dismissed". (Nahj al-Balagha, 1997, p. 189)

Humanity as one family

He considered humanity as one family where there should be tolerance for all irrespective of race, creed and colour, wealth or adversity. His humane attitude was more apparent when he was dispensing justice.

Hazrat Ali in the sermon of Ashbah said: "... the whole creation is His (Allah's) family" (sermon 89).

He created all men and women from the same origin -Adam and Eve. The equality existing between man is, thus, expressed irrespective of race, sex, religion, age or status.

Man has been created for the next world

You are like staying riders who do not know when they would be ordered to march on. Beware, what will he, who has been created for the next world, do with this world? (sermon 157)

O people, certainly this world is a passage while the next world is a place of permanent abode. So, take from the passage (all that you can) for the permanent abode. (sermon 203)

O creatures of Allah! Fear Allah and anticipate your death by

good actions. Purchase everlasting joy by paying transitory things- pleasures of this world. Get ready for the journey, for you are being driven, and prepare yourselves for death, since it is hovering over you. Be a people who wake up when called, and who know that this world is not their abode, and so have it changed (with the next). Certainly, Allah has not created you aimlessly nor left you as useless. There is nothing between anyone of you and Paradise or Hell except death that must befall him...So acquire such provision from this world while you are here with which you may shield yourself tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement). So everyone should fear Allah, should admonish himself, should send forward his repentance and should overpower his desire, because his death is hidden from him, his desires deceive him. (sermon 64)

Certainly this world has not been made a place of permanent stay for you. But it has been created as a pathway in order that you may take from it the provisions of your (good) actions for the permanent house (in Paradise). Be ready for departure from here and keep close your riding animals for setting off. (sermon 132)

Conclusion

Man being the best creation of Allah the Almighty has been a topic of discussion in philosophy, anthropology, sociology, etc. If the basic source of Islam, like Qur'an, depict the precise concept of man, Nahj al-Balagha characterize broad concept of man as it enter to one's mind deeply. Considering Nahj al Balagha's intellectual and spiritual richness, it is not difficult to find in it answers to various problems and crises which the humanity is

facing, provided one is patient and sincere in his quest. Its message is universal and eternal. That man and his being occupy the central stage of its message, can hardly be over emphasized.

According to the teachings of Nahj al Balagha man is the highest creature and the center of the visible universe. Man is the epitome of creation. He comes at the end of creation. Among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man has been bestowed with many distinctive qualities. According to Imam Alí, in the creation of man, God has some higher purpose.

In the views of Nahj, God gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk, and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson from whatever is around him and understand it and follow the admonition and abstain from evil.

According to Imam Ali, human beings have two dimensions. Along with the material he has a divine dimension as well. Excellence of human being to other creatures returns to the same dimension. man has mind and intelligence, which relates to his spirit- divine dimension; with which he can differentiate between truth and untruth. Man's God-given nature and colour are like seeds and potentials which are hidden in him at the beginning of creation and will flourish when man follows the right path. As the life in the world is a trial and one is enjoined to take from it nothing more than that which helps him to lead a life of subsistence and fortify himself with good works and piety, one transcends above the ever-changing demands of earthly life. The great position of human being is to take the responsibility in all major and minor works, overt and covert activities. Every human being is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and

ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the law of God or desecrate the right of others. The freedom of conscience and religion is perceived from the point of the personal freedom of choice of an individual. Islam prohibits to compel or force a person to endorse a particular view, thought or theory. All human beings are brothers to one another. The superiority of one individual over another is only on the basis of his piety and dutifulness to Him.

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