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Governments

With governmental support, tenets of religions and schools of thought could be implemented in society. Because of this, every group wants to establish a government in order to attain and implement its own objectives. Islam, which is the most superior heavenly creed, also pursues the establishment of an Islamic government and it considers the formation and preservation of the government of truth as one of the highest religious duties.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) exerted all his efforts in establishing an Islamic government and strove to lay its foundation in the city of Medina. After his death—despite the inspiration of the infallible Imams ('a) and the distinguished '*ulama*' to continue this Islamic government—the governments that came into being, with the exception of a very few cases, have not been divine, and till the time of the advent of Hadrat Mahdi ('a) most governments will be based on falsehood.

The *hadiths* that have been transmitted to us from the Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a), describe the governments prior to the uprising of al-Mahdi ('atfs) in general terms. We will now point out some of their characteristics.

The Despotism of Governments

One of the ills which human society will suffer before the advent of the Imam ('a) is injustice and tyranny perpetrated by governments against the people. In this regard, the Messenger of God (S) said: "The world will be filled with tyranny and injustice such that there will be fear and war in every house."¹

Hadrat 'Ali ('a) said: "The world will be filled with tyranny and injustice such that there will be fear and grief in every house."²

Imam al-Baqir³ ('a) said: "Hadrat Qa'im⁴ ('a) will not rise up except at a time full of fear and dread."⁵

This fear and dread will mostly stem from the rule of despotic and obstinate rulers in the world before the advent of al-Mahdi ('a).

In this regard, Imam al-Baqir said: “The Mahdi (‘a) will rise up at a time when the helm of affairs would be in the hands of tyrants.”⁶

Ibn ‘Umar said: “(At the end of time) a noble man having wealth and children will wish for death because of the suffering and adversity he will experience from the rulers.”⁷

It is worthy of note that the followers of the Prophet (S) will suffer not only from the aggression and encroachment of alien powers but also from their own despotic and self-centered governments in such a way that the earth, notwithstanding its expanse, will become too small for them. Instead of experiencing a sense of freedom, they will feel that they are in bondage. Even now in the Muslim world many leaders in Muslim countries are not on good terms with Islam and the Muslims are alien to them.

In this context, it is thus narrated in the *hadiths*:

The Noble Messenger of Islam (S) said: “At the end of time, a great calamity—greater than which has not been heard of—will be experienced by my *ummah*⁸ in such a manner that the vastness of the earth will become narrow for them, and the earth will be filled with injustice and despotism to such an extent that the believer will not find a sanctuary in which he could seek refuge.”⁹

Some *hadiths* have emphasized the Muslims’ entanglements with self-centered leaders and give glad tidings of the advent of a universal savior after the rule of oppressive rulers. This set of *hadiths* has made mention of three types of government that will emerge after the Noble Messenger of Islam (S). These three types of government are the following: the caliphate, the emirates and kingdoms, and finally the tyrants.

The Noble Prophet (S) said: “After me the caliphate will rule; after the caliphs the emirs will come, followed by kings, and after them tyrants and oppressors will rule, then the Mahdi (‘atfs) will reappear.”¹⁰

The Composition of States

If those who administer the government are righteous and efficient individuals, the people will live in comfort and ease. However, if unworthy individuals rule, the people will naturally experience suffering and agony. It is exactly the same condition which will prevail in the period prior to the advent of Hadrat Mahdi (‘atfs). At that time, states will be formed by treacherous, transgressing and oppressive individuals.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) said: “A time will come when rulers will be oppressors; commanders will be treacherous; judges will be transgressors; and ministers will be tyrants.”¹¹

The Influence of Women on Governments

Another problem that is discussed concerning governments during the end of time is the dominance and influence of women, who will either directly rule over the people or subject the rulers under their sway. This subject has various ramifications. In this regard, Hadrat 'Ali ('a) said: "A time will come when corrupt and adulterous individuals will live in coquetry and bounty and the ignoble will acquire position and status while the just men will become weak." It was asked: "When will this period come to pass?" He said: "It is at the time when women and bondswomen take charge of the affairs of the people and youngsters become rulers."¹²

The Rule of the Young

Rulers are supposed to be well-experienced and good managers in order for the people to live in comfort and ease. If, in their stead, youngsters or feeble-minded people would take charge of affairs, one should seek refuge in God from the evil of the sedition (*fitnah*) that will arise.

In this regard, it will suffice to mention two *hadiths*:

The Noble Prophet (S) stated: "Seek refuge in God from the first seventy years and the rule of youngsters."¹³

Sa'id ibn Musayyib said: "A sedition (*fitnah*) will come to pass and its beginning will be the game of the young."¹⁴

The Instability of Governments

A government with political stability is the one capable of serving the people of a country, for if it is in a state of continuous change, it would be incapable of undertaking great tasks in the country.

The governments at the end of time will be in a shambles, and sometimes a government will assume office at the beginning of the day and will be removed by sunset. In this regard, Imam as-Sadiq¹⁵ ('a) said: "How will you be when there would be no Imam to guide; would you remain without knowledge and learning; and be fed up with each other? (It will be) the time when you would be put to a test and the good and the bad from among you will be separated from each other and the chaff shall be separated from the grain. At that time swords will be sheathed and unsheathed alternately while war will be a blaze. A government will assume office at the beginning of the day and will be deposed and removed with bloodshed by the end of the day."¹⁶

The Impotence of Powers in Administering Countries

Before the advent of the Imam of the Time (*'atfs*), repressive governments will be weakened and this will pave the way for the people's acceptance of the global government of Hadrat Mahdi. In this regard, Imam as-Sajjad¹⁷ (*'a*) has said concerning the noble *ayah* (verse):

﴿ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا ﴾

*“When they see what they are promised, they will then know who is weaker in supporters and fewer in numbers.”*¹⁸

“The promise that has been given in this verse is related to Hadrat Qa'im (*'a*), his companions, supporters, and enemies. At the time when the Imam of the Time rises up, his enemies will be the weakest of enemies and will have the least number of forces and armaments.”¹⁹

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1. Ibn Abi Shaybah, Musannif, vol. 15, p. 89; Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 14, p. 584.
 2. Ibn Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 14, p. 584; Ihqaq al-Haqq, vol. 13, p. 317.
 3. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir: the fifth Imam from the Holy Prophet's Progeny. He was born in 57 AH/675 CE and spent most of his life in Medina, until his martyrdom there in 114 AH/732 CE. See Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi, The Life of Imam Mohammed al-Baqir, trans. Jasim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1999). (Trans.)
 4. Qa'im: one of the honorific titles of Imam al-Mahdi (*'a*), which literally means “the one who rises or stands up”. (Trans.)
 5. Shajari, Amali, vol. 2, p. 156. See also Nu'mani, Ghaybah, p. 253; Tusi, Ghaybah, p. 274; A'lam al-Wara, p. 428; Mukhtasar Basa'ir ad-Darajat, p. 212; Ithbat al-Hudah, vol. 3, p. 540; Hilyah al-Abrar, vol. 3, p. 626; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 23; Bisharah al-Islam, p. 82; 'Aqd ad-Durar, p. 64; Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar, p. 26; Muttaqi Hindi, Burhan, p. 74; Safarini, Lawa'ih, vol. 3, p. 8.
 6. Ibn Tawus, Malahim, p. 77.
 7. 'Aqd ad-Durar, p. 333.
 8. Ummah: the entire Islamic community without territorial or ethnic distinction. (Trans.)
 9. Hakim, Mustadrak, vol. 4, p. 465; 'Aqd ad-Durar, p. 43; Ihqaq al-Haqq, vol. 19, p. 664.
 10. Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, vol. 22, p. 375; Al-Isti'ab, vol. 1, p. 221; Firdaws al-Akhbar, vol. 5, p. 456; Kashf al-Ghumah, vol. 3, p. 264; Ithbat al-Hudah, vol. 3, p. 596.
 11. Shajri, Amali, vol. 2, p. 228.
 12. Al-Kafi, vol. 8, p. 69; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 265.
 13. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 326, 355, 448.
 14. Ibn Tawus, Malahim, p. 60.
 15. Ja'far ibn Muhammad (*'a*) entitled, as-Sadiq (The Truthful),” is the sixth Imam from the Prophet's Progeny (83–148 AH). Many Sunni and Shi'ah 'ulama and scholars attended his classes and seminars. Narrators of tradition have quoted the number of Imam as-Sadiq's students as four thousand. The socio-economic conditions of his time necessitated that great efforts be made by His Holiness in the areas of expanding authentic and original Islamic teachings and in the training and education of faithful students. For this reason the books of tradition and other books quote and cite more traditions from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq than from any other of the infallible Imams. See Shaykh Mohammed al-Husayn al-Muzaffar, Imam Al-Sadiq, trans. Jasim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1998). (Trans.)

16. Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 348.

17. As-Sajjad: It refers to 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, the fourth Imam from the Holy Prophet's Progeny, who is likewise known as Zayn al-'Abidin (Chief of the Worshipers) (658–712 CE). The son of Imam Husayn by the daughter of Yazdgird, the last Sassanid king of Iran, he was not able to carry arms at Karbala because of illness, and thus he was saved the fate of his three brothers. For most of his life he lived in seclusion in Medina, having contact with only a few select followers. His piety—which is reflected in his prayers whose compilation is known as Sahifah as-Sajjadiyyah—is proverbial. He is buried in the Baqi' cemetery in Medina. (Trans.)

18. Surah al-Jinn 72:24. In this volume, the translation of Qur'anic passages is adapted from Sayyid 'Ali Quli Qara'i, The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004). (Trans.)

19. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 431; Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p. 441; Ihqaq al-Haqq, vol. 13, p. 329; Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, p. 429; Al-Muhajjah, p. 132.

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