

# The Essence Of Thoughts

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**Yousef Saanei**

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This text is a brief collection of thoughts of Yusef Saanei on various issues pertaining ethics, religion, youth, politics to acquaint the reader with his views

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## Foreword

Anytime within today's rough and unstable world, when loneliness fills my whole being, when I see that some people, led by hypocrites, attack the splendor of Islamic civilization and Shiism, and see religion as a source of terror and terrorism, pain overtakes my whole being. At such moments, I am reminded of God and the innocent Shi'ite Imams and of the men and women who, throughout history, have showed patience and struggled but have not surrendered and have directed criticism at all the powers.

In the storm of events, it is only the thought of God and the Peacemaker, who will come and who will bring with him peace and justice and humanity, which makes me calm; the Peacemaker who will save the world and bring humanity and intellect to their perfections, and thus, fulfill man's dreams.

## Biography Of Ayatollah Sanaeei

His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Saanei was born to a clerical family in Neekabad, Isfahan Province in 1316 Hegira (1937). His father, the late Hojat-ul-Islam Sheikh Mohammad Ali Saanei, acclaimed for his piety and quality of virtue, was a cleric.

His grandfather, Ayatollah Hajj Mulla Yusef had been among the devout and highly respected clerics of his own time. Hajj Mulla Yusef was tutored in divine philosophy by the well-known Iranian philosopher, Jahangir Khan, and in jurisprudence, he had been among the pupils of Grand Ayatollah Mirza Habibullah Rashti. Hajj Mulla Yusef was a disciple and propagator of the great Mirza-ye-Shirazi, the man who led the "tobacco movement" in opposition to the monopolistic concession, which the government of his time had granted to a British firm. His grandfather, an ardent advocate of Shirazi's views, was known for his love of freedom and objection to social injustice. He never hesitated to stand up against the way people were treated in the hands of some feudal landlords and other agents of oppression.

Encouraged by his father to devote his life to the pursuit of seminary studies, the young Saanei entered the Isfahan Seminary in the year 1325 Hegira (1946). While being in Isfahan, he attended the lectures and tutorial sessions held by seminarians there. And upon the completion of the preliminary studies in divinity, he entered the Qom Seminary in the year 1330 Hegira (1951).

Sheikh Saanei as an industrious student of canonical principles (Kharij) and a keen learner of the intensive and conclusive research works of Imam Khomeini, actively and successively attended the seminary sessions held by His Eminence for several years, which according to Mr. Saanei himself “led to the perception of the principles rather than mere knowing and learning them.”

Apart from Imam Khomeini’s classes, Ayatollah Saanei also attended the courses given by such illustrious seminarians as Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi, Grand Ayatollah Mohaqeq Damad and Grand Ayatollah Araki (May God give rest to their souls).

The combination of his inborn God given gift and devotion to learning enabled Sheikh Saanei at the age of 22 to reach to the rank of Ijtihad (the authority to deduce independently the religious laws) in the year 1338 (1959).

In the year 1354 Hegira (1975), he began his formal career as a lecturer in divinity. He offered courses on the Book of Zakat at the Haghani (the Twain Martyrs) School of Divinity. His lectures, compiled by two of his pupils at the School, are extant as a proof of his command of the subject and the clarity of his teaching.

When he began to teach the Kharij (an advance level at seminary school, equivalent to post graduate studies at any given university independent of any text or prescribed text) courses, a number of seminary students and lecturers attended his classes, among whom are a number of the most distinguished seminary researchers and Mujtahids (Islamic Jurisprudents) of our time who are active either at the seminaries or in governmental agencies having important roles in the affairs of the Islamic Republic.

He died in Qom, on the 12th of September 2020, at 82 years.

## **Man And Human Rights Viewed From Grand Ayatollah Saanei’s Perspective**

From the Islamic point of view, men irrespective of status color, race, and doctrine are all equal in that they are all human. In Islam, the spirit of freedom seeking, justice, equality, and human rights are predominant. Islam places value on all human beings, and in this respect, there is no difference between Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, etc.

## Some of the Grand Ayatollah Saanei's Jurisprudential Views

1. Masculinity is not a condition for being a religious authority
2. Masculinity is not a condition for occupying any ruling and governmental position.
3. Masculinity is not a condition for serving as a judge.
4. Man and women are equal in blood vengeance and retaliation for wounds
5. Man and woman are equal in blood money and compensation for injury.
6. If a man does not have any heirs other than his wife, the wife will inherit his entire legacy after his death.
7. When a man dies, his wife will inherit from all his property.
8. It is not forbidden for a woman to leave the house and go out without his permission as long as it does not threaten the man's dignity and provided that it does not violate his right of enjoyment and pleasure from his wife.
9. It is not necessary for a woman to obtain her husband's permission for making a vow as long as the vow concerns the woman herself or if she is financially independent and possesses her own property; however, this will only be the case if her vow does not violate the husband's right of enjoyment and pleasure from his wife.
10. The authority to divorce is in the hands of the husband but if a woman forgoes her dowry in return for getting divorced, it will be obligatory for the husband to divorce her.
11. Temporary marriage pertains to special circumstances and it is not considered as parallel to permanent marriage.
12. The life and property of a non-Muslim are respected just as those of a Muslim.
13. Muslims and non-Muslims are equal in compensation and blood money.
14. Muslims and non-Muslims are equal in retaliation.
15. Just as fathers, mothers are also exempted from retaliation for murdering their children unless it is committed for personal purposes such as enmity, greed for possessions and power, or preventing them from revealing their crimes and betrayals etc. where the general rule for retaliation will apply to both mothers and fathers.
16. In the absence of a father, the mother will be the guardian of the children and their property and she

takes precedence over their paternal grandfather in this regard.

## Introduction

Today's world with all its different types of information and data, is like a small village which is capable of reflecting, in the shortest period of time, the smallest and biggest of peripheral problems, and make apparent all our social, political, and cultural actions and reactions; but this same village with all its grandeur and glory which it has accommodated in itself, is still left incapable of depicting a picture of history, and national and religious identity of the people. It has even been seen that, in some occasions, the information presented for the new generation and the non-Islamic world has been accompanied with confused, disorderly, and conflicting thoughts.

This trend of the exchange of information and various movements should be combined with what there is and take advantage of the synthesis of tradition and modernity, and not get digested and devoured in the age of globalization, and put to good use all the capabilities and possibilities of the electronic world and the written history of nations.

With this same perspective, looking at today's world where written text has given way to the electronic kind, and books have not as yet found their way into the Iranian families' shopping baskets, we should abstain from excessive talk and instead, attend to problems which can help us comprehend the roots of human thought with a single glance. It is on this same basis that the Cultural and

Publications Office of the *fiq'h-ul-Thaqualain* Institute, with respect for all that has taken form in the abstract world of today's young generation and while safeguarding the eternal inheritance of the glorious history of the Shi'ite and the learned and freedom-seeking scholars, has engaged in the compilation and arrangement of what is an extract of the thoughts of the modern thinker and religious authority, His Excellency, grand Ayatollah Saanei, and in line with this movement, attend to what has been the thoughts of this religious leader familiar with the suffering of man, and particularly after years of study and being in the discipleship of Ayatollah Khomeini and practicing in the history of religion and religious studies, all these valuable achievements has been put together and presented as a summarized collection for the lovers of knowledge and freedom.

While we were preparing this collection, we were reminded of a phrase from His Excellency who said, "Whenever, in today's rough and unstable world, loneliness fills my whole being, when I see that some people, being led by hypocrites, attack the splendor of the Islamic civilization and Shiism, and see religion as a source of terror and terrorism, pain overtakes my whole being. At such moments, I am reminded of God and the innocent Shi'ite Imams; reminded of the men and women throughout history who have struggled and showed patience but have not surrendered, and have directed criticism at all the powers. In the storm of events, it is only the thought of God and the Peacemaker, who will come and will

bring justice, peace, and humanity with his coming that makes me calm and reassures me.

I think to myself, in the face of all that self-sacrifice of our ancestors, what can be done by me? I must either be silent or, in some manner, make my voice be heard by the entire world, that the reality of Islam is not what you hear and has been depicted for you. On the other hand, I have no executive power, and am deprived of any specific tribune. So, what should be done? I have reached the conclusion that in my contacts with scholars and the media, lawyers, and those who seek freedom and those who are interested, I should talk of Islam, awareness, and liberty; talk of the beauty and delicacy of religion; say that, from the Islamic point of view, men irrespective of status, color, race and doctrine are equal in that they are all human beings.”

His Excellency continued, “In the storm of events, it is only the thought of God and the Peacemaker, who will come and who will bring peace, justice, and humanity, that makes me calm, and it is only with this sense that I say to all visitors that the Peacemaker and liberator of the world is one who will lead the world and our rationality to perfection and one who will realize the ideals of humanity. He is the one who will bring our hearts closer to each other and like the Honorable Prophet of Islam who is known as “Mercy to the nations,” He will bring for us the gift of mercy, peace of mind, love, and humanity.

This Shi’ite man of religion is a modern thinker and while reminding us of his pains, sufferings, and worries, ratifies this kind of work and has given us His blessings as we tread this path. We, in turn, with the same thought and sense of responsibility, have set out arranging and putting together this collection. It should be mentioned that the sources used by this office, have been the interviews, lectures, and Out-of-Text Discussion (OTD) courses of His Excellency, Ayatollah Saanei, which exist in the office of this institute. We hope that, in our future editions, any shortcomings will be overcome, and with studying His thoughts in other fields, we may be able to present a more complete collection.

We hope that Muslim and non-Muslim men and women and especially the young generation, while becoming familiar with His Excellency’s perspectives, learn more about the world of deception and illusion of the enemies of Islam and humanity, and day after day, get closer to the high and clear horizons of Islam.

**The Publications and Cultural office of Fiq’h-ul-Thaqualain Institute**  
**October, 2008**

## **The Essence Of Thoughts**

## God The Compassionate And The Mercifull

Man can be a true subject and obedient to God once he can perceive that he has a loving God, a God that is all compassion and His mercy overpowers His anger. Such a person can serve society and put the guidance of man in the forefront of his thoughts, and his death shall be an honorable one.

## Islam

The religion of Islam is one that claims to be global; therefore, we have to introduce it in such a way that can be easily accepted by men. Islam is based on simplicity and not on severity and terror as our Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “Allah appointed me with an easy and forbearing religion,”<sup>1</sup>.

## The Real Face Of Islam

I am waiting for a day when I will be able to stand in front of lawyers both, criminal and civil, intellectuals, academics, and personalities who are thinkers on a global level, and talk about Islam and familiarize them with Islam’s humane dimensions and the liberating face of Shi’ite.

I will prove to them that democracy, freedom, justice, equality, and human rights flow in the spirit of Islam.

Islam, in addition to safeguarding the rights of all humanity, pays attention to the rights of animals. Islam advocates friendship, love, and peace and has never waged war or made enemies of individuals. Islam is a collection of laws and rulings which are very easy to perform. There has been no complicated law prescribed for people in Islam, and it is against any kind of aggression and injustice. So long as this religion is well explained, all men will find it easily acceptable.

## Qur’an And The Nature Of Man

The Holy Qur’an is in harmony with the nature of man, and the nature of both man and Islam are against oppression and violating human rights. The nature of Islam is a logical one and one which centers on speaking and listening. All of the Qur’anic verses, except the “Bara’at” verse, scream out that the rulings of the Qur’an are that of love, compassion, and ease:

“Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you,” (Al-Baqarah, 185),

and also, “We did not send you but as a mercy to the nations,” (Al-Anbiya, 107).

Treating man with contempt has no place in Qur’anic culture and the culture of Imams (‘a). The Holy Qur’an clearly stipulates that in talking to people, kindness and good conduct must be taken into consideration:

***“and speak kindly to people,” (Al-Baqarah, 2:83).***

In jurisprudential references, it has been said that being insolent to people even though they may not be Muslim, carries its own punishment, let alone insulting divine religions.

## **Hajj**

During hajj, people take themselves to the place of sacrifice and look to see whether they are capable of shedding everything off and go towards God cleansed. Hajj is the great legacy of Abraham and Muhammad (S) which allows all God-seeking individuals to understand that if one seeks to be a man in the true meaning of the word, come towards us, take distance from yourself and become Godly. Hajj is the base and platform of Abraham, the breaker of idols, and Isma'il the submissive, the devoted Hajar, Muhammad (S), Ali ('a), Fatimah Al-Zahra' ('a). A hajji goes around the house and says, “here I am,” one who wants to throw off the dress of selfishness, and like Isma'il, throw himself lovingly at the altar of love, and with knowledge and wisdom, with pleasure and purity, turn toward the objective of giving everything up in a sense with the intention of sacrifice. Otherwise, it will only be a superficial act and the relinquishing of duty and they will not take any other benefit of such a Godly religion held as holy and sacred.

## **Medina And The Baqi'**

When you walk in the maze of Medina's lanes, you can still smell the scent of the Prophet (S), Ali ('a), and Fatimah('a). If you have love in your heart, in the lanes of Medina, you can breathe in the scent of Salman, Abu Dharr, Miiqdad, and Ammar. When you enter Medina, when your glance falls on the Baqi' cemetery, the alienation and innocence of the family of the Honorable Prophet (S) entangles you within yourself, and your eyes are filled with tears and your heart starts to pump faster; your footsteps are weak and shaky, but your eyes are fixed on the far horizon and you think to yourself, “Is it possible to forget all that innocence, oppression, and injustice?” Is it possible not to hear the cries and moans of the Pure Zahra ('a) and not to see how Ali ('a) kept his silence and remained house bound, and the martyrdom of Husayn ('a), and the prayers of Zayn al-Abidin and His Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyyah, which is a world of Islamic teachings in the language of prayer? Is it possible to forget how these great men educated as their disciples such learned men as Zurarah and Ibn Muslim, and in this way handed down to us the word of God? Is it possible to forget His Excellency Imam Al-Baqir ('a) al-Ulum and His son Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq ('a) who established the platform of Ithna Ashari Shi'ite and Islamic science, and who, after bearing much torture, humiliation, and imprisonment, kept that education alive for us until today? Again, is it possible to forget the patience and resistance of Zeynab Al-Kubra ('a)?

These are all our past and identity, and we live with them all and endow our love onto them and the events they lived through, and we make the dust of their tombs the light of our eyes. It is at such moments that one feels like screaming out the loneliness and innocence of the Prophet's family and the

will to absolute power of the Bani Umayyah and the Bani Abbas dynasties, and shout out loud at all those who have oppressed the innocent throughout history, but you cannot and it is here that the lump growing in your throat bursts and out of sheer desperation, tears slowly fall down your cheeks and under your breath, you start to pray and take up the Ziyarat Jami'ah Al-Kabirah and Ziyarat Amin Allah for your soul to be cleansed.

And all these are indications of your struggle against the manifestations of blasphemy and oppression. Is it truly possible to bury all of that under a cloud of forgetfulness?

## **The Honourable Prophet's Paths And Ways**

The Holy Qur'an has told of the path the great Prophet of Islam (S) and His followers would be taking, in the Chapter of Yusuf ('a). The Holy Qur'an with its clear, beautiful, and flowing language has ordered the Honorable Prophet of Islam (S) to tell others that His way is one of invitation on the basis of insight:

***"Say, this is my way. I summon to Allah with insight, I and he who follows me," (Yusuf, 12:108).***

This means He invites us to a world of perfection and absolute knowledge.

The Qur'an insists that the followers of Allah should take on such a path "I and he who follows me", meaning the way of the Prophet (S) and all the followers of the Honorable Messenger for invitation towards God must be with insight, otherwise, invitation based on aggression and force would only lead to despotism, conflict, and suffocation, and this is not the way of God, His Prophet, or the Shi'ite Imams.

The messenger brought his teachings to the people, with benevolence, wisdom, and good counsel. The Qur'an has acknowledged the Prophet as "mercy to the nations"(21:107), He who, during the 23 years of His prophetic mission, was submitted to all kinds of insult, injury, annoyance, and inconvenience at the hands of His enemies. But He never even once cursed or imprecated them, but instead, asked God for their guidance. So what factors have played a part and been the cause of depicting a kind and compassionate Prophet as Muhammad (S), as a harsh and aggressive figure? Could their reasons have been anything than creating animosity, and their only aim to profit from such actions?

## **The Goal Of The Prophets**

The aim of God's messengers and the coming of heavenly books has been the establishment of justice. Treading the path of the prophets must be in such a way as to make people truly accept their rights from within and be content. Islam is a religion wherein people themselves must become the upholders of justice:

***"Certainly, We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that mankind may maintain justice," (Al-Hadid, 57:25).***

Islam is the religion of the people and the religion of mercy. All the followers of heavenly religions and

the wise have a duty to rise and stand up for justice, fairness, peace, and the rights of man, all of which mean establishing justice, and take maximum advantage of every opportunity to make humanity pay attention to God and His prophets' goals. The Qur'an says, "We have certainly sent our prophets and messengers and heavenly leaders with sufficient and clear and live reasons, which are the proofs of their prophetic mission." God has sent His prophets with a heavenly program, divine laws, and wisdom in order that people, from within their souls and conscience and their religious belief, become the followers of justice.

## **Divine Religions**

Based on our perspective, it is not the business of Godly religions to create war and conflict, but conversely, their business is the guidance of man. Of course, it should not be forgotten that defense is a lawful right that all humanity accepts. All Godly religions accept as the means to human happiness the perfection of reason and thought and chronologically speaking, the first thing that God created was reason and thought. From the point of view of all Godly religions, all human beings are the children of Adam and Eve and therefore, enjoy equal human rights.

So, the more we give thought to the grounds of equality of human rights, the greater service we have done to both religion and humanity. We say lying is bad, oppression is bad, to mean your neighbor harm is bad, and all other religions are of the same belief. We say that people should vote and people themselves should decide on their rights. They, too, are of the same opinion and say the same thing. So, we have no differences with other religions.

## **The Islamic Society**

A society can be called Islamic whose people decide personally on issues concerning them and thus they rule over their own destiny. A society can be called truly Islamic that can claim to have nurtured thinkers and wise men and women for the purpose of furthering science and knowledge, where belief and real commitment to religious and human values may be crystallized therein. In such a society, flatterers, and those who would fight reason, shall give their place to intellectuals, philosophers and theologians and those who are capable of rational criticism.

In this way, despotism, dictatorship, and tyranny by one person will have no meaning and instead, good will and consultation will find meaning everywhere and the running of affairs will be carried out in a better manner. The ideal Islamic society is a society in which rights of all men are well presented and people are free to reach those rights, equality and justice rules, and no amount of pressure is brought to bear on them. The ideal society is one in which Islamic and human values are well preserved, and where the collective wisdom shall rule over that of the individual's.

## **Islamic Measures**

For us, Islamic measures are of the utmost importance. On this basis, we believe that the masses should be given an opportunity to give their opinion on matters concerning them and their destiny. If the masses are not present in a direct or indirect vote, then in my opinion, this is against the measures and against the title of republic as such.

## **Islam And Christianity**

The Qur'an is the most important and the most glorifying religious document which has made a full-fledged defense in favor of Christ and His Holy Mother Mary The Pure ('a), and has made their purity and holiness among millions of Muslims crystal clear and has made it part of the culture of religion and belief. So, how is it that some people allow themselves to make provocative words and apparent lies the basis of their judgment?

Throughout the world, Christians who are believers must look at Islam's illuminating rulings which are based on reason, peace, pleasure, and love for humanity, and set up on kindness. They should not allow any harm to come to the sincere relationship between Muslims and Christians, and to the value and respect that the great men of Christianity and the past leaders have bestowed on Islam and Christianity. They should not aggravate the condition which has risen from the aggression caused by terror and terrorism, and not pave the way for insolent remarks to be made against what the believers of divine religions hold as sacred.

## **Jesus, The Messiah, God's Great Prophet**

Jesus Christ ('a), like all God's prophets, is a herald of peace. He went among the people with a message of friendship, love, and worship of the One and only God, and so invited the people to accept the unity of God. Jesus Christ lived with His Pure and Holy Mother among people who were incapable of understanding His great message. After He was appointed as a prophet, bearing much hardship and pain, by the will of God, He ascended to the heavens. We believe that in order to complete his mission, and to invite humanity towards moral soundness, after descending to earth, He will follow the savior of the world of humanity Imam Mahdi (May God Hasten His Advent) and He will walk on the side of His Excellency.

## **Islam, The Religion Of Coexistence**

From the day the Christians came to Medina and the religion of the prophet became the subject of debate, there has always been the talk of logic, reason, and discourse and placing value on all that is sacred for each other because Islam is a religion of coexistence.

## **Islam: Knowledge And Virtue**

Just as Islam backs peace and justice and is against any kind of aggression, oppression, and insult of humanity, in the same manner, it backs knowledge, virtue, rationality and wisdom. Basically, one of Islam's valuable foundations next to the Holy Book and tradition is reason.

Today, we can be proud in the face of the civilized world that we are the followers of a religion whose foundations are set up on the basis of reason and wisdom.

## **Islam And The Subject Of Thought And Reflection**

In Islam, thought must be answered with thought and pen with pen. From the point of view of Islam, prisons can only be an effective answer in case that comprise civil crimes such as theft, murder etc. In Islam, all subject matters are open to question and criticism and even giving advice to those in government is desirable and necessary.

## **Islam And The Negation Of Close-Mindedness, And Backwardness**

Rigid and inflexibility of minds and thoughts is to sow the seeds of discord upon Islam's appearances and it will inhibit the growth and exaltation of Islam. If we look at the future of Islam with the same wisdom and insight that the finding fathers of the Shi'ite jurisprudence possessed, it would be most desirable and exalting. Having a backward and reactionary outlook will have no incentive for development. Basically, the advancement of Islam without taking note of rationality is not acceptable.

## **Islam And Superstition**

The propagation of superstition can only rise from and is promoted by small and petrified minds, and the rich culture of Islam has no need of it. But, of course, there are always those who would plan such deeds and follow it based on a preplanned and aim orientated objective. We, too, must promote the right Shi'ite and Islamic trends of thought and as far as possible frustrate their plans. But, of course, this is not a job without its harassments since struggling against superstition means a struggle against backward thinking and blind ignorance.

Islam is disgusted with such imperceptibility and groups such as the Khawarij (ignorant seceders). we must acknowledge this religion as a religion of freedom, and not a religion of slavery which counts the people as children in need of guardianship because, based on the noble Qur'an and what we read in the Ayat al-Kursi, people only need one guardian and that is God. So, we have to tell the people that in the order of Islam, the only law is the law of God that rules.

If, at any time, science and free thinking is withheld from the people and they cannot or are not allowed to follow the true Islam and make use of true Islamic teachings, it is only natural that instead of tending towards rationality, science, and religion, the people will be inclined to go towards superstition, and, in fact, move against reason and religion, and this is something which has existed all through the history of Islam.

## **Islam And Differences In Thinking**

The basis of human advancement has indeed been those differences in thinking.

Basically, if we close the possibility of having differences of opinion among the clergy, we have committed the greatest betrayal towards science and Islamic culture. Just as if we restrain the existence of differences in thinking within the society of men, science and knowledge, research initiative and innovation would be condemned to death and the advancement of man would be halted and the doors of all universities, libraries, and centers of scientific research and hundreds of other centers would be closed. This would lead to mental dictatorship, while in differences of thought lies the freedom of thought.

## **Islam And Joy**

Islam is not a religion that would tie one up with all kinds of obligations, but it is a religion of freedom and joy. It is for this reason that joyful worship and prayer has greater spiritual reward than prayers which is said with grief and sorrow.

## **Islam, Youth, And Beauty**

The youth must be given greater freedom and for solving their problems, there is a need for building the appropriate cultural tools, so that the youth themselves may avoid going towards deeds which are against the norms of religious values. Creating the right cultural atmosphere for the young who are seeking after novelties and beauty is more effective than applying force or making threats. Basically, Islam seeks after beauty just as it is in man's nature to seek after it.

Fundamentally, Islam puts great value on the worship of the youth who were among the first to follow the Prophet (S), and even one of the complaints levied on Muhammad (S) was the accusation that he had taken the youth away from their elders and was the cause of their corruption since they had accepted Islam.

During the course of the Iranian Islamic movement too, at first it was the educated youth who joined the ranks of the revolutionaries before any other group or population, it was the students who came forward.

I am of the opinion that today's generation of youth is thirsty for Islamic truths. If we could introduce

these facts to them as they truly are, they would easily accept them. If any difficulties exist for our young, it is because we have been unable to introduce them to the real Islam as it could have and should have been done. That is, in practice and in words and to acknowledge Islam as an easy religion, we should introduce Islam as a religion of wisdom and rationality, and allow the young generation to ask questions and be ready to answer those questions.

## **Islam And The Youth**

Islam puts great value on the worship and devotion of the youth to Islamic values. I am personally of the opinion that today's youth, thirst after the true Islamic values. If we could show them the realities of religion, they would accept Islam with open arms and with full understanding.

Otherwise, it is our problem if we are incapable of being successful where the youth are concerned. In other words, if we are capable of introducing Islam which is a religion of ease, wisdom and rationality, and allow questions to be asked in order to clear up any doubts that may exist, then we could easily familiarize the young with the proper Islamic measures.

## **Islam And The Cultural Identity Of The Youth**

Our youth must become familiar with their cultural identity, and they must come to know and believe that they are God's rulers on earth, that they are Iranian and must be proud of who they are. If our young generation truly gets to know this culture, then no other culture can take away their proper and noble values.

Having a proper understanding of the Islamic culture can be a positive thing. So long as one is able to know what is precious in one's own culture, and at the same time not become influenced by the praises of others, then his own identity will not be compromised or distorted.

## **Islam And People**

Today, if people see that a religion of such grandeur and magnificence has become a tool within the hands of certain powers, and entangled in a web of cheap words spoken by the weak-minded, they will turn away from such a feeble religion. Religion can harmonize itself at any time and with any culture. The foundations of Islam stand on human values, the rehabilitation of justice and the safe guarding of people's rights.

Islam is a religion of logic, rationality, and wisdom, but that which can always lead to the metamorphosis of religion and its corruption is power, not people and human beings. People in Islam play a major role in safeguarding their own rights. In Islam, an individual wisdom cannot rule over the collective wisdom. In Islam, the words "I say" meaning "I order" are of no value.

The aim of Islam is to make human beings from within and this goal cannot be reached through pressure and war. Islam says, "Come and let us oppose injustice and oppression."

## **Islam And Man**

I believe, based on the Shi'a school, where the principle is based on generosity and forgiveness, there will be a day fulfilled by justice for man, where the oppressors will either be banished by society or come to their senses, and all thought which goes against freedom and human justice will be annihilated. Also the trend of world events, especially after the Second World War and the drawing up of the charter of human rights and the rights of nations, are signs which back up our claim.

Based on the reasoning in the Qur'an, we believe that a time will come in which only justice, friendship, love, and forgiveness will rule the day.

## **Islam And The Freedom Of Human Beings**

If anyone, through the use of freedom, should inhibit the freedom and the rights of others, mean them harm and injustice, then he has, in fact, taken away their right to freedom and this is against the very principle of freedom itself.

Those in power should take note that what is needed today for the purpose of making amendments or bringing about reform is, in fact, freedom itself; freedom of speech, idea, and the freedom to write, and most importantly, freedom after speech, which must be accommodated by those in power. The Qur'an pays specific attention to man's basic freedoms. So long as security is established in a society, it can realize its potentialities and its talents will blossom. While with the prevalence of fear, pressure, force, and persecution, all kinds of social and ethical evil and corruption will take over the society.

## **Theo-Democracy**

Theo-democracy can be applied to a government which is based on respect for human rights, and all its citizens live in security, freedom, and social welfare, whereby the values and their religious wants and wishes may be freely advertised.

In Theo-Democracy which is freely formed on the basis of religious thought and rationality, corruption, false accusation and dictatorship have no place and all men benefit from a healthy, joyful, and creative life.

## **Islam And Democracy**

In Islam, democracy exists in its full shape and form since what is basic in a democracy is the observance of all people's rights, and Islam has already taken account of all the people and no one

group or minority has been left out. If, incidentally, there are any shortcomings, it would be the fault of those in charge of the operational arena. We must put our efforts into showing the world that Islam and Shiism is the source and defender of democracy, freedom, and human rights, and against terrorism.

We must show that anyone, anywhere, irrespective of color, race, and religion who has put their efforts in getting the people their rights, is favored by Islam and by all men in general. I emphasize that, from our point of view, democracy means the achievement of everything through people's votes, and if there appears to be a problem in the proper realization of this, it is due to the fact that the right Islamic culture and laws are not in operation, because freedom can never cause any harm to religion. Islam is not a religion of force and imposition. We must educate people in such a way that they will operate correctly by themselves.

## **Islam And Terrorism**

It is really regrettable to see that, in the west, Islam is viewed as a religion which backs terrorism. It is regrettable to see that they judge Islam like this while Islam is all justice and affection.

Islam does not allow us to harm anyone, not even an ant, then how can it be claimed that Islam is a defender of terror and terrorism?

In all my interviews with the foreign media, I have said repeatedly that Islam is against terror and terrorism. But what can be done when the great powers of advertising operate in favor of the terrorists and prevent our voices from reaching the world. But the supporters of terrorism will not succeed either. People are not in favor of murderers and so they can never succeed and gain ground.

We all have a duty to promote the exalting idea that Islam is a religion of peace and enjoyment and promotes peaceful coexistence as its hard and fast belief. From Islam's view, the powerful should operate in such a way that makes them popular among their own people and others alike.

## **Islam And Martyrdom**

Martyrdom is not confined to Islam, but it is an eminent truth that man has felt since the beginning of time and it has been a certainty that man has lived with. When the defense of one's motherland, honor, and dignity turns into meaningful ideals, martyrdom will be something much more than mere death. In fact, it is the defense of one's culture, religion, and beliefs, and it is dying while upholding such beliefs that turn mere death into martyrdom.

Such a person, a martyr, is forever alive and watching over his people. Martyrdom is a personal affair and is entirely the outcome of man's freewill. It is an intelligible concept which God has left as a deposit in man's being.

Martyrdom and seeking martyrdom with full knowledge and freewill is an event in acknowledgement and

recognition of the goals and the high ideals of man in defense of humans and humanity, the safeguarding of those ideals, and being steadfast in the path of watching over human honor and human dignity.

A martyr will keep as the queen of his ideals, the revival of freedom, justice, equality, and the stabilization of the rights of man. Martyrdom is an act of self-sacrifice which has as its source an exalted and honorable goal.

A martyr shall never die, being a witness and watching over his society.

## **Islam: A Religion Of Rationality**

Islam is a religion of logic and reasoning. It is thus that the Holy Qur'an tells the Prophet (S) to invite the people towards God with kind words and wise ways, not by the force of the sword and power.

In spite of all that, these humane dimensions of Islam have not been enthusiastically received by other religions and some think that Islam is a religion of violence.

On the other hand, we live in times when humanity is going towards world peace and our own respect, authority, and future may be guaranteed through reason and reflection.

## **Islam And Human Rights**

Islam is a religion of human rights. In religion, all the religious and legal rights of individuals are observed, and the Holy Qur'an as the heavenly book of the Muslims puts value on all human beings since God, after the creation of man as the noblest of all creation, admires Himself: "So blessed is Allah, the best of creators." In this sense of admiration, the concepts of race, religion, nationality, and geography are of no consequence. My own understanding of Islam, too, is based on the conformity of religion to the rights of man.

In the culture of Shiism, when the concept of man is used, it is meant human beings in general. For example, in our prayers we recite, "O God! Make all the poor rich, feed the starving, and free all the slaves." In this prayer, our religious outlook takes account of all human beings of different beliefs and religions. Is not such a perspective itself the height of the observance of the rights of man everywhere?

In Islam, the observance of democracy and human rights is, in fact, even greater than that the supporters of human rights define. Islam has even called for the observance of the rights of animals. The basis of democracy in Islam is based upon people's behavior towards the government; to the effect that people should be in favor of those in power and like them, and those in power, too, must act in a manner which reciprocates that fondness. That way, there will be no place for any kind of oppression and dictatorship since their relationship will be humane.

The charter of human rights was drawn up after world war two, but the rights of man in Islam were written fourteen centuries ago, and in days that man still had a primitive culture. The charter of Islamic human rights was drawn up at a time when men buried their daughters alive. At such times you can see that the foundation of human rights in Islam is based on the greatness of man's soul and his generosity towards others, and therefore, race, religion, nationality, and geography played no part in it. Human rights in Islam place no prejudice on race, sex, or geography and men of all religions and beliefs are granted certain rights.

## **Islam And Economy**

Islam backs a healthy economy; an economy which secures people's welfare. Islam is a serious defender of science and knowledge in all circumstances of man's existence and does not accept the rule of capital over the people. Nor does it accept the appointment of rulers by the owners of capital because it is a certainty that, in time, those in power will rule in favor of the rich and against the weak.

## **Islam And Sanitation**

Having access to health and sanitation services is a certain social and individual right, and securing both mental and physical health is not only a tool for man's growth and evolution, but also from an economical perspective, it is of a great deal of importance and Islam insists upon its observance.

## **Islam And Population Growth**

Although the clear and true religion of Islam has already ratified population growth, it is obvious that the generation which has been favored over others by the Honorable Prophet of Islam (S), is one that has worthy and righteous children, and if the greatness in numbers should prove to be an obstacle in the good training and healthy upbringing of those children, it will certainly not be acceptable for Islam.

Of course, the existing conditions, today, are completely different to those that existed at the time of the Prophet (S), and in many countries of the world at present, an increase in their population will neither strengthen nor give them increased power and authority, but it would, in fact, be the cause of weakness and debility since the unwarned increase of a population will only bring with it increased poverty, sickness, and illiteracy.

## **Islam And The Rights Of Animals**

Islam forbids the ill treatment of animals and neglect in their grooming, and even strictly forbids putting extra loads on them to carry. This law was passed centuries before the law for the protection of animals was issued worldwide, and, indeed, its Islamic version is much deeper and more complete. In this law, there are hidden measures which even take into account the feelings and moods of animals. Now, is it

possible and truly feasible in logical and rational terms that such a religion, with all its exalted and glorifying rules and customs, be a propagator of aggression?

## Islam, A Religion Of Peace And Tranquility

The Islam that we know heralds peace and tranquility and negates aggression, violence, and oppression. Islam is a messenger of justice and a supporter of knowledge and rationality. Such a religion, therefore, cannot be the cause of fear for others; thus, we see in the life of the infallible Imams (‘a) that non-Muslims worked for them in their households, and history is witness to the affection they held for our Imams.

## Islam And Social Laws

All human beings see acting upon laws and rulings as something that assures happiness and prosperity for man. We say, “Come and let’s follow those laws everywhere.” We should bring all those who have committed crimes against humanity, such as war criminals and murderers, to international tribunals of justice. This has nothing to do with people’s beliefs and ideologies. We must make acting upon the law something all-encompassing that follows naturally from within, so that all will regard it as respectable.

Countries can enjoy particular respect and authority through the observance of social rights in the international arena since acting upon the law and respect for it is placed at a high level, and here is where we look for real power and not in atoms and missiles. We see power in peace, sincerity, and humanity.

## Islam And The Negation Of Violence

In Islam, aggression towards people does not exist and the Holy Qur’an as an Islamic constitution tells us to act favorably towards all men: **“And speak kindly to people,” (Al- Baqarah, 2:83)**, and if a few have been mistaken in this respect, it is due to a wrong interpretation of certain verses and religious traditions which has presented the non-Muslims as infidels, while I believe that a non-Muslim is by no means an unbeliever, and an infidel is a non-Muslim who knows Islam to be in the right but, at the same time, chooses to act with enmity towards it.

I have recounted these questions in the presence of some of the Sunni religious scholars and they, too, have accepted this point of view. Today, if we manage to clarify this subject in the world of Islam, even the few seeds of animosity will be banished.

Based on the logic of Islam, all men are respected and worthy except those who knowingly and practically act with vengeance against Islam.

## The Basis Of Shiism

The fundamentals of Shiism are based on kindness, love, and affection as well as avoiding aggression, oppression, and crime. Man felt the detrimental effects of world war two with all his being and became disgusted with aggression, violence, and all that had been the cause of torment and persecution. Man has tasted the sweet nectar of justice and the observation of human rights. In the Shi'ite school, geographical borders, race, religion, etc. is of no importance, but man himself is under the focus of attention in the true sense of the word.

This is apparent in our prayers too: "O God! Make rich all the poor, free all the slaves". In this prayer, it is well evident that neither religion and geographical frontiers, nor race and sex are of importance here. This prayer is a clear manifestation of the Shi'ite Imams' policy, and it is something that the Shi'ite culture is proud of. We must act and speak in such a way so as not to destroy all that glory with our own hands and take larger steps towards the stimulation and the correct advancement of the Shi'ite school.

## The Shi'ite School

The Shi'ite school has consistently fought against oppression, cruelty and prejudice and has adopted a critical and an objecting stance towards oppressive governments, and in some instances, has confronted them through the channel of civil disobedience. The Shi'ite scholars, too, have constantly fought oppressors and dictatorial rulers. We have had such cases in the contemporary Iranian history including "the Tobacco Movement," "the Constitutional Movement," "the Movement for the Nationalization of the Oil Industry," "the Uprising on June 5, 1963," and the "Islamic Revolution." Even today, due to the fact that the Shi'a school is after establishing justice and freedom, it is confronted on all sides, with enmity on the part of those who worship power.

## Religious Jurisprudence In The Shi'ite School

In the Shi'ite school, the subject of religious jurisprudence is always open and it is due to this dynamism that it is received as a rich Islamic culture. In spite of the differences of opinion regarding religious pronouncements, the views the Shi'ite men of religion have always been respected and this has been the cause of movement and dynamism in the Shi'ite religious jurisprudence.

The interpretation of the Four Proofs namely the Qur'an, traditions, wisdom, and consensus of opinion by the Shi'ite men of religion, is varied and free, and jurisprudential deduction has never reiterated its own steps. It is in this respect that the Shi'ite jurisprudence has proven itself to be forward-going and dynamic in the world of Islam, shining like a sun in the sky of Islamic jurisprudence.

## Shi'a And Its Hate Of Terror

The great events in the history of Islam comprise the best reasons for the Shi'ite opposition to terror and the Shi'a hate for it: firstly, the terror of Imam Ali ('a), the first leader of the Shi'ites and the true manifestation of justice in the world of creation. His terror took place at the hands of Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam while He was engulfed in worship during prayer at the mosque. This terror is forever kept alive in the memory of Shi'ites and will always be a focus of hate and repulsion from terror and terrorism.

Secondly, in the course of the Karbala incident, when Muslim went to visit Hani ibn Urvah, one of Imam Husayn's ('a) companions, the plan to murder Ubeydullah ibn Ziyad was drawn up. If Ubeydullah had been killed, all the schemes of the Bani Umayyah would have been disintegrated, and Imam Husayn ('a) and His companions would not have been killed either. It can even be said that the terror of Ubeydullah could have changed the course of history itself.

But just at the time of carrying out this plan, Muslim wanted no part of it, and recounted a tradition from the Prophet who said, "Faith in God ties up terror in chains"<sup>2</sup>, that is, belief in God will not allow Muslims to commit an act of terror. On this basis, if anyone helps the terrorists in the slightest manner, they have, in fact, committed treason against religion and humanity since terrorists do not recognize religion, humanity, and frontiers.

## His Holiness Ali ('a)

We are the followers of Shi'ite Imams, and we know the guardianship of Ali ('a) as a great honor. We know love for Ali ('a) as a way of becoming closer to God and believe that if we are able to follow His example in personality and behavior, and perceive His high ideals, we can claim to be His real Shi'ites. It is so that Shiism becomes the manifestation of innocence of all times, just as our first Imam and leader is known to be the first innocent in all the world of creation.

Imam Ali ('a) is a man we must primarily get to know and understand. He puts us in the path to gaining real knowledge of our God and His messenger. If we are able to truly move in line with the Imam's perception, insight, and wisdom, the world would be envious of our intellect and rationality, and all those who seek peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world will become one with us in our cry since the excellent ideals of that Imam is the greatest guide for all humanity in their private and social lives.

During the five years of His leadership, He brought us the great gift of freedom and democracy; a gift that humanity, today, is still not capable of perceiving. Nor is man still capable of applying all that glory to his path towards gaining Ali's ('a) version of justice and democracy.

Part of that gift can be read in the treaty with Malik Al-Ashtar, a treaty that even acting upon one of its sentences can administer the safeguarding of people's lives and property, and democracy in its true meaning shall be realized: "Indeed, people are two groups; they are either your religious brothers or

those who are equal with you in the Creation”<sup>3</sup>

## **Fatimah Al-Zahra' ('a)**

Fatimah Al-Zahra' ('a) is the essence of feminine pride and chastity and the reflection of purity. She stands presenting a picture of the measure and comparison of truth and falsities. For all that in her ('a) we find the just presentation and introduction of her father, husband, Hassan, and Husayn, i.e. those mentioned in “Kisa” tradition.

Within her ('a) short life and with firm and painful sermons, she gave life to the culture of resistance and protest for generations to come and threw back the curtains, making visible for all, the essence of paganism and its ignorant thoughts and ideas. Fatimah ('a) is pure as the waters of paradise itself and the real manifestation of the innocence of a woman in two ages. Her belief in the Prophet (S) and Ali ('a) is as deep as the ages of history itself.

The daughter of Islam's Holy Prophet (S), in absolute innocence and at the height of loneliness, proved to all her followers that a woman, too, can rise up against oppressive rulers and dislodge the roots of discord and hypocrisy, showing humanity the real face of truth and justice. With her struggle and her constant outcries, she showed that in revealing oppression, there is no difference between the sexes. Zahra ('a), The Pure, grew up in an age of pain and suffering, and grieved in loneliness after losing her beloved father. Finally, with a wounded body, she left her adobe home in the hope of seeing her father and to console herself by telling him her sad story of her lonely life of struggle and her innocent martyrdom.

## **The Lessons Of Ashura**

One of the lessons of great importance and one that we recount enthusiastically with great affection and sympathy in ceremonies, assemblies, religious meetings, and congresses, is the event of Karbala; the manifestation of the ugliness of terror and terrorism, injustice and murderous crime. The stance taken here is one that Shi'ites all over the world take pride in, proving that not only Shi'ites do not recognize terror as a means of reaching their goal, but that they are absolutely and sincerely against such actions.

The events in Karbala and Ashura symbolize hatred for injustice and oppression. Affection for Ashura, dries up the roots of violence in the human world and kneads a love for the innocent into our whole being. The event of Ashura was a calculated political move on the part of Imam Husayn ('a), who, in response to the invitation of the people of Kufa, left Medina; His Excellency did not go for war, but a war was imposed upon Him and, in defense of the innocent and for the attainment of freedom, His Excellency fought against oppression. He went with open arms to His martyrdom; such a decision is so very precious! The Imam and His faithful followers chose to lose their lives, and with the blood they shed on this righteous path, they stood up against injustice and oppression so that others may live in peace and tranquility.

## The Peacemaker Of The World

All human beings await the one true Peacemaker who will fill the world with justice and peace. Today, humanity is going towards preparing the ground work for the advent of the coming of the Peacemaker. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important signs of His coming is the hatred men feel towards war and violence, and their support of human rights, justice, and peace.

That today Christian and Muslim scholars and indeed the scholars of other faiths alike, talk, in all sincerity, of the coming of a savior, makes one to come to the belief that this harmony of thought along the lines of the appearance of an absolute Peacemaker and the establishment of justice and peace on earth has not been purely accidental, and indeed any differences in that respect pertain solely to the name with which the Peacemaker is referred to, which is in itself a harmless thing.

That it is said that with the coming of the Peacemaker the number of the dead will increase, is certainly a false and incorrect theory. This is, in fact, nothing but slander directed at Imam Mahdi (aj). As witness and reasoning, we refer to religious traditions which talk of the ways of Imam Mahdi (aj), and it is said that His mannerisms are much like those of the Holy Prophet (S), in that He brings His ideals to man with kindness and good manners. The Holy Qur'an, too, has referred to this magnificent issue:

***“And indeed, you possess a great character,” (Al-Qalam, 68:4).***

## Signs Of The Advent Of Imam Mahdi (AJ)

The issue of a savior is one that comes naturally to man and the majority of people believe in it, all be it with varied interpretations. But, the important issue here is the appearance of signs referring to the Advent which is by far greater than before. One of the signs of the Advent of a savior is the hatred humanity feels for war and bloodshed. In that time, love of peace and dialogue and putting aside asunder differences while forming organizations and various committees, will be a worldwide movement which will be reaching its heights.

At the time of the coming of the Promised Mahdi (aj), there will be no sign of injustice and a democratic government of the people will be realized by His Excellency, and all humanity in the true and real sense of the word will become human. Another one of the signs of the Advent which has also been referred to in our religious traditions, is the evolution, or let's say the attainment of perfection in man's reasoning and perception; thus, the greater man's understanding and wisdom, the lesser his differences. So, persecution and violence will be wiped out and unity in its totality will be attained.

## Humanity And The Issue Of The Time Of The Advent

The accurate time of the Advent is known only to Almighty God Himself, and if anybody at the present time should claim to have knowledge of this, if he is powerful we can say that he is a deceiver, otherwise

he is simply uninformed and must be refuted. If those in possession of power should seek to take advantage of their position in the name of Mahdi (aj), it will be a great sin and treason against the great ideals and goals of the Savior (aj). Therefore, using the name of His Excellency as a tool is treachery committed against the Imam and against the justice that God has promised.

If justice and peace should prevail throughout the world and the basis for the development of man's mind is set, then no one will show enmity towards the coming of His Excellency the Imam Mahdi (aj).

## **Mahdawiyyah (Belief In Imam Mahdi) And Democracy**

Today, only those count as the true supporters of Mahdawiyyah (i.e. the concept of waiting for Mahdi, our savior, the twelfth Shi'ite Imam otherwise known as Imam Zaman, and Zaman meaning time) and the coming of the Peacemaker, who put their efforts in establishing world peace and are the promoters of democracy and human rights. Moreover their movement should be into the path of science and knowledge.

In the school of Mahdawiyyah, neither soothsaying and geomancy, nor dreams and superstition, but only freedom of thought and reason count as giving service to humanity and to the advancement of science and knowledge.

On this same basis, at the time of the coming of Mahdi (aj), the rule of the people and peace shall govern the day and anyone who should want to confront the freedom of thought and speech is, in fact, working against the coming of the Promised Mahdi (aj).

## **The Coming Of The World Peacemaker And Man's Aversion To War**

Hate and disgust of man for war and violence is something that is evident, and the Peacemaker can never begin His movement and bring His message for the realization and the ascertainment of peace and justice with war and violence. We believe that anyone who is in the business of paving the ground for war and warmongering is a criminal and a sinner.

The world of today is a world of reason and dialogue, and humanity has a particular disgust for war. We are hoping for a day when all weapons will be turned into moral soundness and merit. Such a day will be realized with the coming of the Shi'ite twelfth Imam, the Promised Mahdi (aj).

## **The Religious Schools Of Qom And Najaf**

The seminaries of Najaf and Qom count as one of the oldest and important platforms of Shi'ite, and in popular terms, it can be said that there exists no competition between them and both are following the same goal. The Qom and Najaf seminaries are like two large universities which have a healthy

exchange of scientific information and an exchange of professors and students. In fact, they are each completing the other, instead of being each other's rivals. Just as the school of Najaf has understood the personality and the dignity of Imam Khomeini, so the scholars who went from Najaf to Qom would show off their scientific standing. We ask of the Almighty and Benevolent God to revive the Najaf School as soon as possible so that the scholars may, as before, engage freely in holding lessons and discussions.

## **Unity Of The World Of Islam**

Unity will be achieved through non-engagement in adverse publicity against each other, and following the paths which lead to avenues of creating unity since Muslims all over the world have to follow similar and united paths to reach their interests.

The creation of enmity between Muslims is the result of the enmity of the colonialist powers with Islam. The enemies of the very concept of a united Islamic people, by resorting to abuse some uninformed people, seek to sow the seeds of discord and hypocrisy among Muslims, in this way plundering the resources of the world of Islam.

Just as Muslims circle the house of God in Mecca together and in harmony, they should keep this unity in other affairs too. Even further than this, they should become united with all humans alike since Islam is a religion of humanity and has come to guide all men.

## **Man, Religion, And Politics**

Politics does not mean deceit, trickery and lies! Those, who make promises in order to gain power and after achieving their aims fail to carry out their promises, cannot be called politicians and Islam is against them.

The union of religion and politics does not mean that religion can be used as a tool for the advancement of political interests. Religion does not impose nor will it tolerate any kind of pressure or injury being brought to bear by the owners of power on the people. Politicians with religious beliefs can never stand by and be witness to innocent people being subjected to persecution and torture. The union of religion and politics does not mean the holding of power by a special few, but that the support for laws and rules is given by those people's belief in religion.

The main part of religious laws and rulings is in relation to people's social relations with each other, and has been drawn up with respect to the administration of society. Therefore, in a religious society, it is meaningless to say that religion is separated from politics. But that which causes the lack of solidarity in such a union is that some, instead of using the methods of Islam, put their own deductions up for consideration and this is something that creates difficulties when it comes to the enforcement and execution of those laws.

## **Man And Religions**

In order to eliminate conflict at a universal level, there is need of putting down some cultural ground work on the part of intellectuals of all the various religions. We believe that just as Islam recognizes man's personality and integrity, other religions, too, have the same outlook. In Islam, man is born free and is no one's slave. Man is fully conscious of his own being and chooses his path based on rationality and reasoning. If the scholars and intellectuals of other religions wish to put an end to conflicts and stop terrorism, they must declare that all human beings are equal with each other.

## **Man, Freedom, And Justice**

Islam places equal value on all men alike and in this respect there exists no difference between Muslim, Jewish, Zoroastrian, atheist and even Marxist, as long as they don't engage in controversial disagreements based on differences in beliefs. Man is free and a seeker of justice, and anyone who defends their basic human rights, will never be thinking of discord and hypocrisy.

Man, born free and with an innate love for justice, is conscious of his own freedom and, therefore, thinks of his own kind with thoughtfulness and a will to unity.

Man who seeks justice will have thoughts of grand horizons and is hateful of war and terror, and his perspective on the world is one that takes into account justice, peaceful coexistence, and safeguarding the freedom of others, all of which are kneaded into his nature. Man in Islam is respectful of the rights of others and longs for social and psychological security to envelope the world in a cocoon of peace and tranquility.

## **Man, Change, And Evolution**

Evolution in the society of men has always been and will be in the future, the cause of change in the way man understands humanity's problems in general, and justice, at all times and places, has been a desirable thing, but how one understands justice changes with changes in times and this, in itself, is called evolution.

That which must change is the intakes and insights that due to developments in science and technology go through change, especially with regard to the conditions set by place and time. For this same reason, I believe that the understanding the seminary has of the problems and issues in Islam must change, just as the understanding of our scholars and students alike should become corrigible.

## **A Cultural Dialogue**

In the age of communications, each nation tries to achieve a positive response from other cultures, and sometimes precisely due to that nearness created by having closer communication with other cultures,

some negative effects take root in between nations, but we must take note that the principle here is cultural cooperation since we cannot close the avenues of cultural communication.

What is important is that, in the age of close cultural relations, how sensitive any nation and government is with regard to their own culture, and how active they are in its stabilization and to what extent they think of strengthening and deepening its roots. In advisory and counselor relations with other governments and nations, our own identity and integrity must be kept, and we should be proud of our religious and national scholars and men who are the cause of great honor for us. The world knows that the Iranian and the Islamic civilizations have been among humanity's greater civilizations and will continue to be so in the future.

## **Cultural Differences**

There are cultural and religious differences among many nations, and as long as this issue does not reach the window of politics, it is not so important. But when these differences get linked with politics, unfortunately, it is here where the danger of insecurity lies. On the issue of cultural differences, two subjects must be separately taken into account; firstly, does anyone who has a good intellect and possesses ideas of his own and knows his own culture to be on the right, have the right to talk of it with others or not?

The answer is positive and, basically, the heavenly prophets and the supporters of different schools of thought have been after the advancement of their own ideas. Therefore, it cannot be said that anyone who knows their own ideas to be right should not be allowed to promote, publish, and present them, but others be able and permitted to put forward their own thoughts and ideas.

Through the creation of suitable bedrock for thought and the production of a program based on the compilation of people's beliefs, such erroneous thoughts can be counteracted.

Secondly, the abuse of wrongful cultural beliefs of the people by the governing powers, solely for the purpose of misleading the general public, is an unforgivable sin, and from the point of view taken by our school of thought, it is an ugly and reproachable act, but, unfortunately, all through history human powers have usually acted with malice. Aggression and encroachment on the rights of other nations is the work of the ruling powers and not nations and cultures. I hope that humanity will reach a place where it can witness the rule of the right and humane thoughts, a way of thought that can climb the road to an ideal evolution towards the Promised Land, and that which is intended for man.

## **The Ways To Confront The Foreign Cultures**

The west's culture is not all wrong and misleading. We should draw distinctions between good and bad cultures based on logical reasoning since it is not possible to confront the foreign cultures by force and aggression, but rather, to prevent the foreign cultures from penetrating the society, we should introduce

the people to the right and appropriate culture.

We should know that the young generation is always looking for variety and new and modern issues. Showing the youth the right Islamic culture and getting to know their psychological and mental dimensions, are the best ways to enable us to confront the foreign cultures. Our sources of national and religious pride and honor are of such a high sanctity that if they are introduced deservedly, they will impress not only the young generation but also all humans.

## Culture And The Visual Arts

I am of the belief that all types of images and basically any type of visual art, is both permissible and right, and it is like all other kinds of art form, on the condition that it be meaningful and taken up to further humanity's character and identity.

Visual arts should help develop the freedom loving and justice seeking culture and not follow the path of exploitation and the enslavement of man and push culture to a point where it ceases to have any proper meaning and thus become as something trite and vulgar.

## Death In Islamic Culture

Death counts as a blessing for man, but Islam has allowed scholars, intellectuals, and scientists, and even recommended them to do their utmost in the prevention of death due to natural phenomena and disasters such as earthquakes and floods, and if they should have any shortcomings in that respect, the guilt will be on their shoulders to bear.

The Compassionate God does not want man to be preoccupied with problems and worries, but the bearing of certain hardships are at the same time a kind of test for endurance, and help to build up man's character and spirit. Death, in Islamic culture, is not total annihilation but it is a kind of return and a new form of life:

***“But the abode of the Hereafter is indeed life,” (Al-Ankabut, 29:64).***

## Change Within The Domain Of Thought And Intellect

The basis of humanity and humanism is on changes in ways of thinking, and advancement in the domain of thought and intellect is an issue that is accepted by Islam and in harmony with all other heavenly religions and nations. Islam recommends us to follow the best thoughts:

***“So give good news to My servants who listen to the word and follow the best of it,” (Al-Zumar, 39: 17–18).***

Today, we have reached a place where the dialogue of most of humanity is on peace and justice and

man has stepped from a tribal culture into a world culture. Today, everyone is after backing up thought and intellect and we owe all this to the guidance of our prophets, the saints, and the honorable men and women who have been the cause of glory for their nations.

## **Imam Khomeini**

Imam Khomeini was a perfect Muslim, and he put great effort in the exaltation of his people's identity and their birthright as well as the rights of all other freedom-loving peoples, and in this path, he was prepared to sacrifice himself. His revolution was for man and the revival of humanity. He wanted no part for himself.

He knew everything to be of the people and for the people and was against any kind of oppression.

That distinguished character of the history of Islam, was a philosopher as well as a mystic, but at the same time, he was always present as a courageous and protesting figure.

While he had special talent for the perception of the fundamentals of philosophy, at the same time, he took pleasure in being of service to people and wished for all men to be freed of the chains of injustice and oppression. Imam Khomeini was the image of all that is good. A man of religion, philosopher, and a man of special wisdom who cried out loud and fought for the revival of religious values and the adjudication of people's rights and the freedom of all the weak and needy pulling them out of the bonds of the oppressor's supremacy, and he was never silent in the face of the manifestations of oppression and exploitation.

## **Imam Khomeini And Superstition**

When Imam began his movement and his revolution, he not only put a stop to superstitions but he also confronted all the other movements which were against the spirit of freedom and justice. He awakened humanity and made them aware of Islam and freedom, but certain elements bent on inhibiting social development and Imam's struggle for freedom, in order to stand up against Imam's movement, resorted to war-mongering techniques and creating internal conflict, and after him, they carried on this policy of challenging Imam ('a)'s people's revolution.

## **Imam Khomeini And Armed Struggle**

All through his struggle against the Shah's oppressive regime, Imam Khomeini never gave his permission for armed struggle and bombings and terror, and even if anyone would seek to get permission, he would disagree.

Imam never gave an order for armed struggle and blind killing, but he always abstained from such clashes and specially hated them. Imam's weapon was rather his tongue and he would never give his

consent for bloodshed of the innocent.

Imam gave new life to the discourse on martyrdom after years of silence, and gave a new meaning to the concept.

## **Imam Khomeini And The Principle Of Republicanism**

Imam gave new life to a forgotten principle in Islam, that is, the principle of republicanism and majority rule. Imam called the regime a republic, meaning the rule of the people, and the rule of the majority. He revived this Islamic principle and made it understood to all the short sighted and narrow-minded reactionaries, that people were well capable of making their own decisions.

## **The Heritage Of Imam Khomeini**

The most valuable heritage which was left to us by Imam and special attention must be paid to it, is the granting of value to men in deeds and in words. Although this valued heritage may be in conflict with the interests of some, but we hope that with the development of nations and the glory of Islam, it will take back its rightful place.

Another one of Imam's heritage is the rule of Islam accompanied by paying respect to people's freedom and votes. His ways and means were supported by his insistence on the freedom of people in choosing their own future and the rule of man within an Islamic framework. On the other hand he was a supporter of free speech and courage in actions and believed in giving clear answers to people, and he would act upon his promises. We should all be such men.

## **The Heritage Of The Islamic Revolution**

Freedom and the rule of the people over their own future is one of the heritages of the Islamic revolution.

Another such heritage is the development of people's political consciousness and general awareness. People know that they should be after the revival and reaching their proper rights, that is, the rule of the people in their own affairs. The Islamic revolution has given us confidence; it has made us understand that we can live with integrity in today's world and show initiative.

Today we can live with dignity under the banner of Islam, and at the same time as having cooperation with all of humanity, we can keep the lead in our own hands. That is why, as Imam used to say, we must not allow the unworthy and those who are against the Islamic revolution to find the upper hand on us.

## **People's Republic**

From Islam's point of view, for progress in affairs, the masses should all be involved. By "republic we

mean “the masses” and this is different to what is customarily known as democracy in the rest of the world that is, half plus one gaining the credit.

I believe that people can recognize this and will properly judge their affairs. It is these same people who at times of crisis will rush to defend their country and religious values, and show their Islamic honor. It is these same people who can exhibit the political grandeur of Islam and defend it.

Wherever the masses are not present, the principle of republicanism has not been observed, even if some may appear at the polling stations.

The imagination and interpretation of an individual or individuals who claim that the people or the majority are unable to have sufficient understanding of affairs is wrong, since the question of majority rule is part of Islam’s religious rulings and as such enjoys a privileged position.

Islam says, “Think, ponder, and then act and live with each other.” This means a republic; thus, no sensible mind would allow the will of a minority to have precedence over the majority. Just as the late Imam Khomeini insisted that the criterion should be the people’s vote and the real decision shall be taken by the people.

## **People And Elections**

Taking part in elections is the primary right of any human being, and any nation who sees that the elections are exclusively in the hands of a special few, will naturally not show any particular delight in taking part in such a rigged election.

On the whole, any sort of change that makes the people’s presence in the scene less evident is unhealthy. Any time the people witness acts going against Islamic measures and rulings committed by those in power, they will lose their trust and become suspicious of their actions, while people will respect and take delight in seeing a portrayal of real Islamic values which has as its motto justice and freedom for all.

## **People And The Government**

A government which does not do injustice and respects people’s rights is favored by the people, and no power can topple such a regime.

In a religious government, dictatorship and despotism do not exist, and for this same reason, Imam considered the vote of the parliament to be decisive and central to gaining progress in government affairs, and he did not see it simply as a formal entity. In Islam, even the personal views of the society’s wisest man of religion and sage are not favored over that of the people.

## **People's Votes**

A collective intelligence is never comparable to individual intelligence. It is the views of the masses which are respected and their votes form the basis of decision making.

Any government which is capable of acquiring people's trust and takes its maxim to be respect for people's wishes and their votes will be safe from any kind of threat.

In the system of the Islamic Republic, the principle is based on people's votes and views, and the enforcement of personal tastes and erroneous interpretations of the constitution will only cause mistrust of Islam and the constitution.

We believe that the people themselves should be the rulers of their own fate, and everything should be in their own hands, and governments should act in such a way that will attract people's fondness.

The legitimacy of the acts of government and the legality of its rule at the time of "the Absence" will be conditional to the votes of the people. Therefore, to be negligent towards the people's wishes and simply treating them as mere numbers is itself one of the clear proofs of infidelity and dubiety, as it will lead to despotism, dictatorship, glorification of personalities, and false flattery which will cause the denial of people's individual freedoms.

## **Intellect And Wisdom**

In today's society, it is not possible to simply give orders, but one must be able to verify their judgments to be wise and credible.

The world, today, is one of rationality and sound reasoning, and the criterion for speech must be logical thought and not so much futile talk and jargon with no proper intelligibility which is simply made for domestic use.

## **Knowledge And Research**

Research and the accumulation of knowledge is one of the fundamentals of Islam. In Islam, if the aims and views of all scholars in religious schools and seminaries and scientists in universities should become one and the same, then, the initiative for the acquisition of knowledge and research will be obstructed, and this is against the views of religion; differences of opinion must exist for science, research and knowledge to develop.

## **The Responsibility Of The Intelligentsia And The Literati**

All those who are proficient in the art of speech and literature and do cognitive work have a responsibility

in drawing people's thoughts closer together so that neither the west would be frightened of Islam, and nor Muslims be terrified of the west.

The cooperation and assistance of the men of wisdom and the men of science of various nations will be the cause of the development of the culture of humanism and humanity in different societies.

## **Reformism**

What we mean by being a reformist is the constructing of thoughts and ideas and their enrichment.

Reformism seeks to revive religious and humanitarian values in line with the freedom of man from the claws of despotism and exploitation and absolutism.

Reformism is a movement that started centuries ago by committed intellectuals and men of wisdom and learning for the reformation of the countries' current affairs and it has continued its aims to this day.

## **Pride And Power**

Pride arising from the will to power is prompted by man's carnal desire for power and it inevitably leads to despotism and dictatorship. If this should be undertaken in the name of Islam, then it will cause irreparable damage. History has shown that all self-willed and headstrong men have tended towards destruction, but the prophets and Imams' humility has always gained them a special place in the hearts of the people.

## **The Law Of Qisas, Human Generosity And Forgiveness**

The law of Qisas (just retaliation) is one of Shi'ite's most beautiful laws, which takes into consideration both, the freedom of the will and the emotions as well as the punishment of the criminal. I would like to insist on the fact that the intention here is not execution, but rather the safeguarding of human dignity, freedom, and his will to forgive while respecting his feelings and emotions.

Islam has not obliged the remaining family of the victim to punish the criminal, or it has not taken away their freedom in not showing any reaction at all, but it has, at the same time, taken into consideration the issue of human forgiveness and humanity while, on the other hand, it gives notice to the society and those responsible that in order to prevent the future occurrence of such crimes, what sorts of policy would be expedient.

## **Extremism And Aggression**

It is the responsibility of religious leaders and politicians to stand up to extremism and aggressiveness in the light of religious teachings.

## The Spirit Of Human Rights And The Call For Justice

The spirit of human rights and the call for justice can be abbreviated into one Islamic principle, and that is known as the concept of fairness. Fairness means, that which one finds desirable for oneself, should also be wanted for others, and that which one finds undesirable, one should also find as undesirable for others.

The concept of fairness is the highest and finest moral principle in Islam, in that for what so ever purpose it may be used, it will indicate the safeguarding of human rights and the freedom of mankind.

## The Equality Of The Rights Of Man

In relation to the equality of the rights of man, we can refer to two basic principles: the first is that God for the creation of the human kind admired Himself saying, ***“Indeed Allah is the best of creators.”***(23: 14) Therefore, from a legal point of view, we cannot differentiate between men since it would go against the blessedness of creation. The second principle, on which particular stress has been made in Islam and in moral law, and, in fact, furnishes the underlying principle of morality and the rights of man, is that one should want for others what he wishes for himself, and that which he knows to be an enemy he should also recognize as the enemy of others.

Therefore, anyone who wishes to speak on behalf of the social rights of man with respect to this principle will not do what would be detrimental to others or anything that may prejudice their rights, and he will not recognize this inequality as part of God’s law or the rule of Islam.

## The Rights Of Others

Any movement or activity which is carried out for the benefit and happiness of the people will remain alive and standing. The fundamentals of Shiism, too, insist on the safekeeping and revival of the rights of men and women, and it is also based on the perception and understanding of time and space, and no danger can threaten Islam while it has and keeps a dynamic open-mindedness.

## The Rights Of Men And Women

My religious view – which is born out of a half century of deliberation and effort and while recalling the religious jurisprudence of Javaheri and durable methods of religious jurisprudence– is that the rights of men and women are equal in all affairs, and a woman can take up any and all government posts or very important religious positions. I also believe that just as men can be active in all social and intellectual affairs, women, too, can do the same.

How is it possible to believe that men can ascend to the heavens from women’s laps, but these same women are denied their basic social and individual rights?

So, women, too, can reach the highest echelons of society and occupy the highest governmental posts such as being the head of government and the leadership. I have proven that this is indeed a very real possibility, and from the perspective of our understanding of the Qur'an and Islam, there is no difference between men and women so long as entering politics or the employment market is concerned, and I have searched for the criterion in religious knowledge, purity, and piety, and not in the differences between the sexes.

## **The Existential Value Of Women**

I know Fatimah Al-Zahra' ('a) to be the real and rightful manifestation of a woman in a society lacking in emotion, rationality, and human reasoning in that particular time and age, and I believe it was as if God intended Fatimah to be the only inheritance of the Prophet, so that as a woman she be able to exhibit the existential value of womanhood and tell her story.

God, too, wanted the Prophet's only daughter to carry the heritage of Islam's humane values and teachings, and to leave human beings an inheritance of priceless jewels which would shine as long as mankind exists.

## **The Relationship Between Husband And Wife**

In my opinion, once a woman gets married, she does not become her husband's slave, and it is not as if all her moves and behavior must be with her husband's permission, but only those acts that may be incompatible with the husband's right to live and inconsistent with his right of enjoyment and pleasure from her, will need the husband's permission. But, for example, if a woman wishes to travel abroad and her journey will not create any kind of inconvenience for her husband and does not interfere with his rights, he cannot prevent his wife from going on her chosen journey. Also, if a man wants to travel and this will be inconsistent with their life together as man and wife and is also incompatible with the woman's rights, he, too, must acquire the woman's permission.

In simple terms, a husband and wife should behave with kindness towards each other and this is an issue that goes both ways, since marital life is a life shared between two people. Therefore, both parties should behave well towards each other so that they may have a calm and healthy life.

It is our religious belief that neither men nor women are each other's servants and marriage is not a type of employment, but it is a life shared. Thus, with respect to the protection of each other's rights, where it is necessary for a woman to get permission, then for the same reasons, it will also be necessary for a man to get his wife's permission.

## **The Powerful And Human Rights**

Those who have power do not have the right to interfere with others' business, just as we do not possess the right to interfere in the work of others. Basically, no man has the right to interfere with the others' fate since from the point of view of Islam, man is the ruler of his own fate and others do not have the right to supervise him in this respect.

One way for the powerful to gain popularity is to allow human rights to be applied in its true sense of the term in order to eliminate prejudice and injustice in society, and those in power are, in fact, the servants of the people and should not act as if the people were indebted to them.

## **The Powerful And The Right To Freedom**

Those in power should always use their abilities in favor of people's freedom and not for the protection of their own power. The rulers of society should be encouraged to support freedom of speech and freedom after speech so that they may witness its effects in the long term.

The right to freedom and the right to life are the highest rights of man, and if these two principles are observed, the problems of human society, too, will be eliminated. God has given man the right to life and the right to freedom, then how can we take these away from them? How can we make man live the way we like him to and accept the definition of freedom that we put forward? All these are cases of violation of the natural rights of man.

If we were to officially recognize these rights with all its aspects, then no man would be subjected to harm and physical persecution, and basically no one could deprive them of their rights.

When Islam officially recognizes the right of life for plants and does not allow the picking of plants without due cause, it is natural that this meaning, in its most excellent degree, is applied to humans and they are respected along with their needs and valued for their generosity and greatness.

## **The Charter Of The United Nations**

Drawing up the charter of the United Nations – especially after the destructive second world war– and following that the formation of organizations defending human rights such as Amnesty International and The War Criminals Tribunal, are all in line with the policy of uniting humanity as a whole.

## **Terrorism: The Offspring Of Poverty, Despotism, And Contempt**

All those who claim to be fighting terrorism must join hands and, in a joint effort, dry out the roots of poverty and dictatorship. The superpowers should know that the way to fight against suicidal missions is not through military operations.

Everyone should know that terrorism is the outcome of poverty, despotism, and the derogation of nations. The derogation of nations and insulting all that they hold as sacred has nothing to do with freedom and human rights, and the way to fight terrorism is not through the humiliation of the people.

I am in the rank of the clergy who are seriously in agreement with human rights and the freedom of man, but at the same time, one cannot easily overlook the insults thrown at all that which people regard as sacred, and the humiliation of nations, as these insults are no doubt against the very fabric of human rights and will affront the Muslims, sowing the seeds of aggression and contempt.

We must all put an effort in trying to dry out the roots of these intricate problems, and take more effective steps in administering justice in the hope that a day will come when there will be no sign of terror and bombings.

## **Terrorists Belong To The Depths Of Hell**

I, for my part, have time and time again protested and condemned terror and terrorism since the killing of any human being, from the Islamic point of view, is the greatest crime. Even those who carry out suicide attacks and kill the innocent, too, will end up in the depths of hell and there is no doubt about it.

## **Humanity, Aggression, And War**

The movement of humanity, today, is towards the truth and justice, and contrary to what has gone on in the past, where war and aggression were known as things one could be proud of and the cause of glory for those who fought in them. Today, the most hated subjects among men are war, aggression, and persecution.

Today, man has replaced aggression with the Charter of Human rights, and has set up tribunals in order to bring war criminals to justice, and all these are indications that man is going towards the observation of truth and justice.

## **Nuclear Energy**

Today, the discussion concerning the use of nuclear technology for peaceful means by human society and governments is an accepted fact; but as I have repeatedly said, whereas the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons will inevitably lead to the destruction of human beings, it is haram (forbidden by religion), and I further believe that even if our enemies should attempt to use nuclear weapons against us, we do not have the right to retaliate in kind since this will only cause further injustice to man and irreparable damage to future generations and all general life forms on earth. Assuming we should come to possess a nuclear bomb one day, our religion will not allow us to make use of it.

If the powerful in a country are liked by the people, their enemies will not be able to defeat them even if they use an atomic bomb. Therefore, the best way to rule a nation is by having a deep rooted relationship with the people based on mutual respect.

I personally believe that the best form of defense is the people's love of their government; therefore, policies must be drawn in such a way as to make the government popular with the people in which case no power even that of the atomic bomb will be able to cause it to fall.

## **Human Cloning**

From Islam's perspective, to simulate a complete human being does not present a problem per se, and Islam does not take it to be a crime, but due to ethical, moral, and legal reasons relating to this issue, except in cases of absolute necessity, making use of such techniques is deemed illegal since if this becomes an everyday and common affair, the nucleus of social life and the philosophy of creation (procreation through marriage) will lose its meaning and it will create enormous ethical, social, and legal problems.

But the simulation of the other parts of the body or other forms of life such as animals due to the great benefits they can have for mankind in alleviating needs and securing health, is not only unproblematic but it is even desirable and the specialists in this field may well be encouraged to provide the medical and nutritional needs of man through the use of these techniques.

## **AIDS And Creating Social Awareness**

It is the responsibility of those responsible for health care to make the general public aware of the facts about AIDS and how it can be spread, and by providing the right education, help the public to insure itself against this deadly and dangerous disease. If the appropriate education in issues concerning sexuality together with what is needed to safeguard chastity in the society is not provided, the increase in sexual contact, will cause the spread of the disease AIDS and some other diseases, which will certainly cause to a great loss to our society.

We must give the patient suffering from AIDS as much help as we can, while it will be futile to reproach them, but it will only cause the contaminated to become reclusive and there is even great possibility that the patient may try to commit suicide. Or even it is possible that the patient may retaliate and deliberately try to spread the disease. In that case the guilt of such a disaster will be upon those whose actions pushed him into seclusion.

1. Al-Kafi, Vol. 5, P. 494.

2. Awali al-La'ali, 2:241

3. Nahj al- Balaghah, 3:84

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