

## The Alavi Government

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### Abstract

Government in new political term means a organization which undertakes the management of a country. Legislate rules and their implementation is the main special work of the government.

“H K M” has been employed in Nahj-al-Balaghah as the “God’s commandment” and “Judgment” and also as the “government and executive management of the country”.

The concept of government in Imam Ali (a.s.)’s idea and life means to manage, keep a trust and to serve of the people”. Amir al-mumnin (a.s.) considers some duties for statesman, which is at the direction of proper administration of the country and reorganization of the people’s affairs. Imam Ali (a.s.) considers the God as the origin of the government who give will and administrating to humans, they should apply this right with regard to their own idea and belief. Amir al-mumnin (a.s.), considers the “legitimacy of the government” in the “selection of the experts”, "satisfaction and acceptance of the people” and “freedom of the people in allegiance” Hi considers the establishment of the right and removing the wickedness is the “aim of the government”. In Amir al-mumnin (a.s.)’s view, the person is qualified who is stronger in performing the command and is more knowledgeable towards the God’s command.

The method of the statesman’s treatment should be such that the citizens do not feel that he has considered an advantage solely for himself. The power should not make him proud but he should consider the power as a blessing which God has been granted to him and to become closer to the people and to be more affable towards them.

### Key Words:

Government, statesmanship, Origin of Government, Legitimacy.

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## Introduction

Government in new political term means a board which undertakes the management of a country, but in principle ‘command’ means to judge. In the holy Qur-an, “Allah’s Command” and its derivatives is the God’s command and when “command” is given to a prophet, it means judgment.

Maidah/42

*If thou judge, judge in equity between them*

Nisa/58

**And when ye judge, between people, that ye judge with judge**

Nisa/ 105

*We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightiest judge between people by that which Allah has shown thee, so be not an advocate for those who betray their trust.*

However, in the following verse, as symmetry to the word of “caliphate”, “command” could mean the society management.

**Sad/26**

O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth. So judge thou between men in truth (and justice)

In the new political term, government means both to command and also a set of institutions which execute the commands, so that it is a more objective concept as compared with the abstract concept of government. The main special work of the government is to legislate rules and their implementation. The division of duties among the governmental institutions depends on government re-organization. The administrative system or bureaucracy is considered a main part of government. In addition, the government and the new governmental institutions, with the exception of primary special work, i.e. to legislate and implement law to secure order, security and supply judicial justice, have undertaken some duties in developing and supplying social welfare too. To legislate and spend the public costs and budgeting, to supply governmental incomes from different sources and performing utility services, is a part of the government process in each society. (Bashiriyeh, 1387: 23).

As the concept of state and government in contemporary ages have been intermixed with

each other, so that the state has been also defined in this way:

State is the highest symbol of the relations between the power and sovereignty which has existed in all communities. Here, we employ the concept of state in a meaning broader than legislative and executive institutions of the government. The most important feature of state sovereignty is to legislate and implement rules in the society. (Bashiriyeh, 1387: 23). One of the European theoreticians has defined the government and state in this manner:

“ The term of government is one of the most regular concepts which is used as an equivalent to the concept of state. In fact, the word of government is much older than the term of state or administrative system”. (Vincent, 1389:33)

## Government in Nahj-al-Balaghah

Command in Nahj-al-Balaghah has been used in the sense of “God’s command”, “ judgment” and also “ government and the country administrative management”. AS in this paper, the first and second is not meant, so we will deal with the third case. But before that, a delicate point is pointed out which has created a confusion for some people and the Emir of Believers(a.s.) vividly reiterates it. After the event of “ Hakamiyat”(Judgment) at the end of “ Safein” war and awakening of a number of ignore people- later on termed as “ Khavarej” -, they came to this belief that caliphate has a godly command and human has no right to decide or judge about it, so using the verse:

(Anam:57; Yousef:40 & 60):

The command rests with none but Allah

They chanted the slogan: The command rests with none but Allah.

They sometimes used to say: لا حكم الا لله يا على لا لك

In one case, Emir of Believers( a.s.) replied them:

حكم الله انتظر فيكم

(Nahj-al-Balaghah, Speech 40).

With this speech, he recommends to those individuals that “Allah’s command” is His creation command about all creature and as you have taken a wrong way, I am waiting to see His command of merit annihilation and punishment about you to be made.

In another position, he sates:

كلمه حق يراد بها باطل، نعم انه لا حكم الا الله، و لكن هولاء يقولون: لا امره الا الله، و انه لا بد للناس من امير ير او فاجر.

In this speech, Emir of Believers (a.s.) explains that yes, the command or decree of destiny and providence which is the rule dominating the universe is only under the control of Allah and nobody else. This is the rightness of their words but their intention of chanting this slogan is not its real meaning but they want to say: There is no executive manager or ruler and leader or a guardian in the society unless he has the God's right. This is the wrong direction of their slogan. Because people needs to have an Emir to administrate their daily affairs either benevolent or wicked one. Thus, government and administrative management, under any name, title, form or method belongs to people and it is the peoples 'right. According to Emir of Believers' teachings, with regard to this point, the principles and foundations of the government is relied upon beliefs and ethics and their purposes is to perform justice and their executive methods should be in a humane method and at the service of people.

### **The concept of government:**

In Imam Ali's life and thought, the concept of government is the same management, trust and service to the creatures. In the beginning of coming into power (caliphate), in a letter to Ashas ibn Qeis, who had been appointed by Othman to rule Azerbaijan, he writes:

و ان عملك ليس لك بطعمه و لكنه في عنقك امانه.

(NahjalBalaghah; Letter 5)

And he writes to administrators:

فانصفو الناس من انفسكم، و اصبروا لحوادثهم، فانكم خزان الرعيه و كلاه الامه و سفرا الائمة.

### **Rulers and leader's duties**

Emir of Believers(a.s.) considers certain duties for ruler and manager of social affairs that all of them are directed at proper administration and re-development of the peoples' affairs.

He commands to Malek Ashtar:

هذا ما امر به عبد على امير المومنين، مالك بن الحارث الاشر في عهده اليه، حين ولاه مصر: جبايه خراجها و جهاد عدوها واستصلاح اهلها و عماره بلادها. (Treaty 53)

In this command, he has determined four duties for the ruler:

1. to collect tax and levy
  2. To fight against the enemy of the country
  3. To correct peoples' affairs from different aspects
  4. To flourish their lands and cities
- In another place, he enumerates the duties as follows:

فاما حفكم على فالنصيحه لكم و توفير فيئكم عليكم و تعليمكم كيلا تجهلوا و تاديبيكم كيما تعلموا.

### **Sermon 34**

Here, he has summarized the ruler's assignments in four things:

- A benevolent criticism which is in favor of people, to prevent them from wrong way and to bring them into right way, to supply and increase the public income and spending it for the welfare of people, to tech the people not to be illiterate towards the principles of beliefs, social affairs, public rights and to train people to be aware towards their own individual and social rights and duties.

The duties and obligations of a ruler or an Emir is not limited to these few duties, but there are other duties such as dealing with executive, judicial, cultural and economic affairs and other social aspects. The detailed explanation has been mentioned in Imam Treaty (Letters) to Malek Ashtar (Letter 53, Nahj-al-Balaghah).

### **The origin of the government**

There is much dispute about what and where is the origin of the government., Any political system considers the origin of government something and a place proportional with that system. Some systems believes that the origin of power is God and some of them considers the origin of the government as people. Some others also consider the parliament or party or something else. The Emir of Believers considers the God as the origin of the government which by granting will and expedience to humans, they should apply this right with regard to their own idea and belief. When the Emir of Believers (a.s) accepted the responsibility of his leadership and supervision of the people, he mentioned two reasons

and ground for his acceptance: The presence of people and awareness of the social status.

اموالذى فلق الحبه و برا النسمه لولا حضور الحاضر و قيام الحجه بوجود الناصر و ما اخذ الله على العلماء الا يقاروا على كضه ظالم و لا سغب مظلوم لا لقيت حبلها على غاربها و لسقيت آخرها بكاس اولها.

### Sermon 3

Imam in this speech emphatically take an oath to say that the reason to accept the responsibility of caliphate was firstly due to the presence of people to swear allegiance and announcing assistance and support by them and secondly his commitment to his awareness of knowledge about the disorganized status of people and class gap, discrimination, and tyranny of the ruling and powerful class over the mass people.

The Emir of Believers (a.s.) considers this awareness as the commitment and responsibility of scientists towards the God and creature and the contract which has been concluded between the creator and the servants. When the ground is paved to perform this commitment, the informed and committed person does not delay even for a moment and stands to revolt against the class discrimination and shortening the hands of tyrannical people and monopolists.

### The legitimacy of the government

The issue of legitimacy of the government has been discussed since old time among the political philosophers and in the new age among the sociologists. Legitimacy is not merely connected to the legality of the government from legal point of view, but also to its social acceptance from the side of citizens. The topic of legitimacy refers to an older topic in the political philosophy, i.e. the topic of obligation, faithfulness, and political commitment or assignment of the citizens in obeying the government.

The legitimacy of political systems from this viewpoint depends on the sense of obligation and commitment of individuals to obey them. The most famous discussion about the legality could be found in the works of Max Webber, the German sociologist. In his view, state is the relationship of the dominancy of people over

people. It is a relation which is supported by a legitimate toughness. In order to have the continuity of the state, the individuals under dominancy should obey the authority which is considered by the existing powers for themselves. (Bashiriyeh, 1389: 42).

However, Imam Ali considers the legitimacy of a government in some issues:

### 1. Selection by the experts of the age

انما الشورى للمهاجرين والانصار فان اجتمعوا على رجل وسموه اماما كان ذلك لله رضى. (NajalBalaghah: Letter 6).

Council (To select the caliph at that age) is only and only the rights of Mohajeran and Ansar. So, if everybody came to census about the selection of a person and called him a leader, then that job will have the satisfaction of God. Imam has considered the council as a right only allocated to Mohajeran and Ansar, because they were the most aware people of qualification of an individual to be a leader of people of that group. As, Mohajeran and Ansar were one generation and determining a qualified leader for the people is a constant necessity. With this speech, the Emir of Believers (a.s.) has shown the characteristics of the members of a council in the course of history.

### 2. Peoples' acceptance and satisfaction

After the murder of Othman, people rushed towards Ali's house and proposed him to swear allegiance for caliphate with him. Imam explained the problems and disorder conditions of the social status for the people and refused to accept swear of allegiance. People insisted on their request and accepted the conditions of the Imam. When Imam was fully convinced, he accepted the offer. People wanted to swear allegiance there, but since all individuals were not present in Medina, he said:

فى المسجد ، فان بيعتى لا تكون خفيا ، ولا تكون الا عن رضى المسلمين. (Tabari, 1979:427/iv).

Imam told to the people to come to the mosque the day after and swear allegiance. Because firstly, the public are not present. Secondly, this news should be conveyed to everybody and

they could think about it tonight. If there is anybody reluctant to swear allegiance, then he/she should not come to the mosque because all people who will swear allegiance should be satisfied with that.

### 3. Freedom of people to swear allegiance

The people who swear allegiance with the leader, should do it freely. In a letter to the people of Kufa about people of Jamal, he explains:

بايعنى الناس غير مستكرهين ولا مجبرين، بل طائعين مخيرين.

Nahj-al-Balaghah, Letter 1

People swore allegiance with me without any force and reluctance but in a sense of obedience and freedom.

It is clear that the bases of government legitimacy, in each time and place and conditions are diverse. What was narrated here is related to the conditions of the time of the Emir of Believers in Medina, and those conditions should not be extended exclusively and frame like to times and places. The experiences of the wise people of the age determine these conditions.

#### The objective of the government

Some systems considers government as their objective and some others considers it as an instrument to achieve the power and dominancy over the people and some others to supply welfare, relaxation and security for the people. Emir of Believers (a.s.) is in the opinion that leadership is an instrument for a higher objective. Ibn Abbas says that in Ziqar (near Basra while moving towards war against the People of Jamal) I went to see the Emir of Believers (a.s.). He was patching his shoes. When he saw me, he said, "How much does this shoe cost?" I replied, "It has no cost". He said,

والله لى احب الى من امرتكم الا ان اقيم حقا او ادفع باطلا.

(Sermon: 33). So, the Imam's objective to accept the responsibility of leadership was to establish the right and remove the false.

In another place, he states,

اللهم انك تعلم انه الم يكن الذى كان منا منافسه فى سلطان، ولا التماس شىء من فضول الحطام و لكن لنرد المعالم من دينك و نظهر الاصلاح فى بلادك قيامن المظلومون من عبادك و تقام المعطلة من حدودك (Sermon 130).

Oh ,my God, you know that our efforts and Jihads have not been a competition to gain power and it has not been aiming at gaining greater benefit from this invalid world, but all our efforts and objectives have been to return to its true place of the signs of your religion and applying correction in your lands, so that in the light of it, the faithful people under tyranny could achieve security and safety and your ignored laws to be executed.

It is worth noting that all these points are not the objectives of the government but among the important objectives, there is the guardianship and leadership which Imam has stated about them in their own conditions.

#### The merit of government

Ruling and managing the society and implementing the laws and performing governmental duties are in need of knowledge and expertise on one hand and the power to implement them in specific conditions on the other hand. After acquisition of these two conditions, the nominee should selected or appointed on this position. Of course, the form of coming into power in the side of ruler in each system is different with other systems and the conditions of such an individual is different in each system. However, the Emir of Believers(a.s.) considers these features as the main conditions of the ruler:

ايها الناس ان احق الناس بهذا الامر اقواهم عليه و اعلمهم با مرالله

فيه. (Sermon 172).

The one who is the most qualified person to rule that he is stronger than others and the most aware people towards God's command.

In another case, he enumerates the shortages of a Muslim leader in this manner:

"miserly, ignorant, tough, one who wastes the public assets and prefers one group over the other group, the one who receives the bribe in public rights and discontinue the practice of tradition. (Sermon :130).

#### Observing the mutual rights:

Imam Ali (a.s.) emphasizes on observing the rights of ruler and citizens more than anything else. In a sermon which was presented in Safein land, the Emir of Believers(a.s.) reminds the mutual feature of rights and obligations even for the just capable

creating God. Then he enumerates the interests and process of observing and damages of lack of observing them.

As the text of the speech of Imam is in details, so the translation of this very section is presented in below lines:

“The greatest right which according to the Almighty God is obligatory to be performed, is the right of ruler by the citizen and the right of citizen buy a ruler. This is a duty which has been entrusted on each one by the Almighty God. Consequently, it is a system for solidarity and link and a base for the dignity and capability of their religion. Thus, the peoples’ affairs will not be met without being their rulers righteous and rulers (supervisors) will not achieve competency but through stability, of peoples on their rights and obligations.

Then, when people meet the rights of ruler (supervisor), and the ruler also meets the rights of people, right will become valuable and capable among them. The clear routes of religion will stand. The route pointers of justice will tend to equilibrium and traditions will run on their smooth routes. With such a method, the age will find an order. There will be hope in the stability of the government and the expectations of the enemy will lead to disappointment.

Whenever, the citizens succeed in not performing their duties, or the ruler perform tyranny over the citizens, then dispute will occur. The route pointers towards misleading will appear and wickedness and corruption will increase in the religion and the clear ways of tradition will be left out. Then, the desire of people will be practiced and the God’s commands will be halted and the rate of mental diseases will rise. On that event, there is no fear for ignoring a great right or there is no concern for the performance of a broad false. In such an assembly, the benevolent people will be despised and the wicked people will find a value and the consequence of punishment of God over servants will become great. (Sermon: 215).

#### **Method of behavior**

The ruler should have such a behavior in individual and social life that he could be as equal as the underprivileged people of the society, and the other executive agents could model him in life and method of behavior.

ان الله سبحانه فرض على ائمه الحق ان يقدرُوا انفسهم بضعفه الناس كيلا يتبينغ بالفقيرخ فقره. (Sermon: 208).

With no doubt, the Almighty god has obliged the ruler to stand a right and that is to consider themselves as equal as the incapable people, so that the poverty of a poor person not to make him upset and motivate.

In a letter to his agent, Othman Ibn Hanif, the ruler of Basra, The Emir of Believers (a.s.)reprimanded him for attending a party arranged by one of the rich people of Basra. He reminds him:

You should know that each follower has a leader to take model after him and use the light of his knowledge. Be aware that your leader is satisfied only with two old garments and two loaves of bread from this world. Of course you may not be like but, in one way or another assist me with chastity, piety and righteousness. (Letter: 45).

Guardianship and responsibility to administrate the peoples’ affairs in the views of Emir of Believers(a.s.) is a God sent which is given to a person by God. This grace should not make him/her proud such that he/she considers himself/herself superior to others but thanks to this grace, he/she should make himself/herself closer to people and to be more kind to them.

فان حقا على الوالى ان لا يغيره عن رعيته فضل ناله، و لا طول خص به و ان يزيد ما قسم الله له من نعمه ذنوا من عباده و عطفا على اخوانه. (Letter 50)

There is a right as a responsibility for the ruler not to distance himself from the people because of superiority and the blessing which is exclusive of him and not to be changed. It is worthwhile to make his proximity to God’s servants closer and adds to his kindness and attention towards brothers due to the graces which has been granted to him by God.

Ruler should not place a curtain between himself and citizens and should not avoid establishing direct contact with people. He should not conceal the problems and make suspicious and lack of trust.

In a contract letter addressed to Malek Ashtar, he writes: Hiding your face from your citizens should not last for a long time, because this act

of hiding in the side of rulers from citizens is a sample of intolerance and shortage of knowledge in jobs. Hiding oneself from people make people be unaware of what is behind the curtain. So that one great issue seems to them small and a small issue as great. They might consider a beautiful thing as unbeautiful and an unbeautiful thing as beautiful and mix right with false. (Letter: 53).

Ruler should not prefer his relatives and kinds in public facilities.

اياك و السئثار بما الناس فيه اسوه.

Do not make an exclusive selection in what all people should enjoy it equally.

Ruler and guardian should eye all people equally and to be kind and humble towards citizens. “ Spread the wing of humility under the feet of citizens and show tenderness and kindness towards them. In viewing the people, see them fully face to face rather from a corner of eye and in pointing to and welcoming, treat everybody equally, so that there would not be any greed for your injustice by selfish people and underprivileged not to be disappointed of your justice. (Letters :27 & 46).

### Other conditions of ruling

There are many qualification for ruling in the views of Emir of Believers(a.s.). As this paper may not contain all of them, so it will be sufficient to point out only some of their titles in Nahj-al-Bagha:

Tolerance: اعطهم من عفوك و فصحك Treaty: 53

Justice:

(Speech :15, Sermon :16, Treaty:53)

Compromise:

(Letter :27 & 46)

Equilibrium and Moderation:

(Sermon :16).

Order, discipline, organizing and planning:

(Letter: 31, Treaty:53, Will :47).

Taking responsibility and denying the dominancy

(Sermon :166, Treaty:53 & Loyalty towards treaty (promise)

Treaty :53

Consultation

(Sermon: 215, Treaty: 53).

And other terms which mostly has been stated in details in the Second Part of *Nahj al-Balaghah* addressed to Malek Ashtar.

### Conclusion and Wrap-Up

From this precise writing, it is concluded that the Emir of Believers(a.s.) consider the government in the sense of social management as a peoples' right. In a human society, either they believe in Islam or other schools of thoughts, they need to have a manager and a ruler out of themselves to administrate various jobs and the society could have an organized managerial system. In such a society, each person then could not issue a decree upon his personal view and specific reading of divine and religious commands and to perform individuals' desires instead of law in a selected way.

An acceptable law of each society should dominate on that assembly and the manager or ruler should make efforts to perform it exactly and in just. The objective of the ruler should be to establish flourishing state, to secure, to bring welfare and to supply material livelihood and to pave ground for the growth, dynamism and promotion of peoples' knowledge. All of them will be supplied when the ruler attaches value towards the peoples' freedom and awareness. Furthermore, when he considers these issues as the primary and granted rights of citizens and to prepare an opportunity in which people could try to redevelop their material livelihood and to try towards their spiritual growth and perfection and consequently to have a free and learned assembly.

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