Comparison of Imam Ali's views on democracy and religious democracy

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Abstract---To handle its affairs, each country needs to form a government because man is inherently social and needs a social life. There must be a government in place to lead the society and prevent chaos; in the meantime, a government that, in addition to legislating and executing laws, engages its people in their destiny, is either a democratic government or a religiously founded democratic government. This article aims to investigate two types of governments and their characteristics as well as democratic failures and to describe the differences between democracy and religious democracy. It also uses Imam Ali's perspectives to reveal whether a religious democracy or a democracy prevails in an Islamic political system.

Keywords---religious democracy, democracy, Imam Ali, government, social affairs.

Introduction

Today, it is well established that each country requires forming a government to manage its affairs to prevent chaos and disturbance, which will be achieved through specific and regular mechanisms (Aghamolaei, M. A., et. al., 2020). However, most political systems suffer from setbacks and failures that would undermine the government because the government has links with the people of the society, as any inattention to their demands will render the government ineffective. This led theorists and politicians to plan a government to meet the public needsengage the masses in determining their destiny,engage the masses in determining their destiny, contribute to legislating, executing the laws, handling social affairs, and appointing rulers to direct the nation. The intended mechanism in each government and political system is known as "democracy," i.e., the government of people over people. The word *democracy* dates back to the ancient Greece of 2000 years ago, which has, since then, transformed into a political, social, and economic agenda, suggesting equality of opportunities and equal use of these opportunities for the public (Mokhber, A. 1999, 20). As a political

philosophy, democracy reserves the right for the people to engage in their affairs, monitor a competent government, and consider the state to originate from the public will. This term is interpreted as religious democracy in the Iranian-religious literature context, with religious democracy seen as one of the most notable areas of Islamic political philosophy. Thus, it is imperative to address democracy and religious democracy to measure the relevant components and specify the advantages of religious democracy over Western democracy in various domains. In the meantime, the views of Imam Ali (AS) on religious democracy are also examined. To answer the objective of the study, the following questions need to be elaborated on:

- What is religious democracy? How is it distinguished from democracy?
- Which one is recognized by the Islamic political system: democracy or religious democracy?
- In a religious government, do people rule over the government or vice versa?
- What are Imam Ali's (AS) views on the superiority of religious democracy over democracy?

Historical Background

Since the formation of the early political assemblies and the beginning of debates over politics, one of the most serious agendas has been about the role of people informing the prevailing political system, enacting laws, and handling social affairs. One of the oldest political schools is the school of democracy which contradicts the despotic and authoritarian systems. Even in its oldest use, this term did exist in Iran even before Greek philosophers. The Greek historian Herodotus maintained: "When fights broke out over succession to Cyrus, seven people of the Achaemenid tribes, who took part in a conspiracy against the tyrant Bardiya, began to consult about the future government of Iran. Otanes, one of the seven figures, attacked the dictatorial government, suggesting that the public affairs be entrusted to people themselves, arguing that no one should rule alone, for he, if a competent one, will become an authoritarian ruler because of the riches he will enjoy" (Jahan-Bozorgi, A. (1998:36). Government by people (or people-owned government) is an auspicious term that denotes equality of rights as people do not commit what the ruler does.

The appointment of state workers is based on a draw, with every division entrusted to an official and every decision referred to the parliament. Therefore, it is recommended to entrust governance affairs to the people themselves (Ibid, 37). In its modern sense, democracy is defined as peoples' government or popular government or a government of representatives and a direct-participation government. The most common definition of democracy is the equality of opportunities for the people in the community to enjoy freedoms and social values. In its narrow sense, it refers to the free participation of people in making decisions that positively affect the individual and social lives. Democracy has been divided into different categories; for example, Plato divided democracy into good and bad democracy, arguing that good democracy is the government that delegates power to people and governance is consistent with the laws. In contrast, bad democracy is the government that also delegates power to the people, but the governance is not based on the laws and is consistent with the public desires

(Plato, 2001, 1526/3). Generally speaking, Plato enumerates some features for democracy, including equality for all to achieve state positions, elections to choose political figures, and freedom of expression and action in education. However, as he suggested, democracy is far from an ideal government (Ibid, 1115-1113/2). In his book "Nicomachean Ethics," Aristotle, the prominent Greek philosopher, defines democracy to be a government of the majority where all people are equal" (Aristotle, 1999, a. 17). While his definition of democracy in the book "Politics" is not as clear as the above-mentioned book, democracy, for him, is the government of the poor, sometimes adding the adverb *majority* to it (Aristotle, 1999, b. 120). He also defines democracy to be the government of free men, with the ruling class, coincidentally, involving a larger number of people, though the adverb majority doesn't make any sense to it (Ibid, 161-162). Anyway, Aristotle does not classify democracy into ideal governments (Aristotle, 1999, b. 316). This understanding continued until the Renaissance era. However, democracy, in Modern times, was gradually realized as the best manner of governance, with undemocratic states seeking to represent themselves as democratic states (Hossein Bashiriyeh, 2001, p. 20).

Concept of democracy

Generally speaking, democracy denotes a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. It is government by people. This term was borrowed from the French word *D moderate,* originally the Greek *D emakratia*, consisting of *Demos* meaning people and *Krate* meaning government (David Hild, 1999, p. 362). To better explain the concept, democracy is defined as follows:

- Carl Cohen states: "Democracy is a collective government in which the members of the community are, both directly or indirectly, engaged in or can take part in making decisions that pertain to them" (Carl Cohen, 1994, p. 22).
- Carl Popper remarks: "By democracy, it is not an ambiguous and equivocal thing like the people government or the government of the majority. It is meant a set of entities which make it possible for the public to monitor over and oust the rulers, thus allowing the masses to achieve the reforms without violence, and even contrary to the demands of the rulers" (Carl Popper, 2017, p. 957). Thus, Popper considers two elements of monitoring over the rulers and non-violence to be the cornerstone of democracy, stressing that a democratic state should allow for the ousting of the government without shedding blood (Popper, 1990, p.120).
- In his book, "Democracy," Anthony Arblaster maintains that despite the vague semantic meaning of democracy, one would say that the idea of collective power is latent in the essence of the word democracy, as people are the ones who must be delegated the power and authority (Anthony Arblaster, 1999, 23).

To Abraham Lincoln, democracy is the people's government by the people for the people. Political researchers have also proposed other definitions of democracy, concluding that democracy is not the way to determine the government of the majority; rather the way to determine who should rule and for what goals. Also, democracy has been defined as a political regime and social philosophy that

embraces various opinions, more than any other regime or philosophies. It is an ideal where political power is practiced peacefully, aiming to meet the minimum welfare for all (Abdulrahman Alem, 1995, p. 269). New definitions suggest that democracy is a government that is usually administered by taking into account the majority's views through electing the representatives and forming a national assembly, with the government affairs being entrusted to the people who, by-laws, reserve the right to vote. Democracy, as suggested by another definition, refers to several entities that aim to minimize the faults committed by a political entity through increasing public participation reducing personal roles in political agenda, and having regard for the public's voting power in making decisions over the public affairs (Group of authors, 1996, p. 100).

A review of some democracy deficiencies

- Democracy is public governance because the majority vote judges various issues.
- In a democracy, wealth has great desirability, and this rule throws support behind the ruling class.
- Democracy is the costliest form of government, with large amounts of money spent on advertisement and holding elections without necessarily being judged by experts.
- Democracy is no longer the government of the majority because the number of votes the ruling party acquires is fewer than that of the opposition.
- There is doubt about the principle of representation in democracy. Democracy believes in electing representatives using state divisions. A parliamentary member who is elected from a certain constituency is said to represent all or a majority of the voters of that constituency. However, they are impractical to represent all people in all issues. They can only represent their profession or class in the best-case scenario.
- With all given the right to vote, and no one's vote is more valuable than others, this renders inattention to education and expert knowledge, which may make democracy the government of the foolish and incompetent.
- Democracy could lead to inappropriate civil education. Election campaigns are mostly hypocritical, and the realities are manipulated with, as the electors seldom understand the agenda of their parties and leaders.
- Democracy is generally conservative and inconsistent with the country's scientific progress. Any civilization that creates democracy is vulgar, moderate, and unpredictable. After all, it is always subject to the current situation of preserving the majority.
- Morally speaking, democracy makes people inferior and hypocritical, as highly-hypocritical and slanderous campaigns corrupt society.
- Democracy obstructs the path of free-thinking and wastes rationality.
- Struggle to acquire power and local support could generally inflict damages on the national interest, as representatives' focus on their constituencies could make national privileges null and void.
- In living creatures, the brain has a fixed and specific place, but in a democracy, the brain is everywhere, which prevents and contradicts with an inclusive development of the creature.

- Democracy entails government instability with the government experiencing turbulence.
- Democracy, by itself, wages class struggle in the society.
- In democracies, different and contradicting wills make decision-making difficult and lengthy (Abdulrahman Alem, Foundations of Politics, 304-311).

Religion and democracy

According to Islam, the religious-political system is a government whose overall framework and the main policy-making are adjusted by religion. In the era of the apostles, they were considered the divine rulers. In the post-prophethood era, the Shiite Twelve Imams, and in the Occultation era, the just clergies (practicing religious jurisprudence), representing the unseen Imam, reserved the right to rule (Rabbani-Golpayegani, 1999, 27). In the first stage, the government belongs to God, then to a person who abides by the divine laws and executes the religious justice, i.e., one God permits to rule. These are provisions set in the Koran (Anam, 60), suggesting any non-divine government is one of Satan, which ends up in astray and corruption. The Koran states: "*Those who fail to follow the divine rules shall be the disbelievers, oppressors and hypocrites*" (Ma'deh, 44, 45 and 47).

Thus, Islam prescribes a divine government over people, i.e., a government from people for people; however, democracy can be adopted in yet another form of Islam, meaning the people's engagement in forming an allegiance with their leader and to discuss the divine decrees. Imam Ali's (AS) government was confirmed by God and the prophet (PBUH); however, it required public support to be practically administered, as lack of public support would render it useless. In Shaghshaghye sermon, Imam Ali remarked stated: *Since a large number of people came together to help me rise against injustice, and God and the prophet threw support behind me not to remain silent against all the oppression, I embraced the government; otherwise, I would abandon the bridle of the caliphate (Shahid, 1997,* Shaghshaghye *sermon).*

In sum, one would conclude that in a divine government, 1- Laws are founded on divine rules than on human caprice; 2- the Islamic ruler of the society has his governance actualized using peoples' votes, though governance truly belongs to God and hinges on His commands; 3- all the people are equal against the laws; 4- people enjoy respectable and legitimate political, economic, social, economic and religious rights, and 5- there is no suppression machine, as the only prevailing criterion is Islamic commands (Jahan-Bozorgi, Ahmad, 1999. A. 138).   To compare the Islamic government and democracy, one would note that in a democracy, peoples' vote is the basis of legitimization and legalization of the government and leadership. In a democracy, leadership is appointed based on the aspiration of the people or their representatives. In a religious system, however, appointment and ousting depend on divine rules, and the leader is ousted when failing to set up justice and spread virtues. Thus, people need to set the stage for this ousting. The outcome is the relationship between democracy and Islamic government, which is one with overlapping but specifically inherent characters, as the Islamic rule is not essentially the kind of democracy, for the government, as consistent with actual monotheism, belongs to God, and the legitimate government is the one appointed by God, the prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (AS).

This kind of government is not aligned with the Liberal Democracy because the liberal rule denotes unconditional rule of people who choose the government; in other words, they can elect every government and choose a ruler, as there is no more way to lead the nation (perceived not be fully just) (Eshtehardi, Mohammad, Velayet-e-Faghih or Democracy? Pasdar magazine, 211, p. 79). However, a velayat-based government will not contradict another type of democracy: formative democracy. Political participation, equality of people against the laws, their enjoyment of social-economic and cultural freedoms, and the absence of a suppression machine share some common grounds, with the essential democracy believing in the criterion of the majority. In contrast, the religious or velayat-based democracy believes in the criterion of the divine rule (Jahan-Bozorgi, Ahmad, 1999, p. 171).

Here, the fundamental components of democracy are addressed, and religious democracy dimensions are discussed in greater detail. In this regard, the views of Imam Ali (AS) are described. Before defining religious democracy, religion needs to be briefly described: "Religion is knowledge about the Origin and the Hereafter and includes some individual and social laws set through revelation and prophethood" (Tabatabea, 431, 1/1360). For Islam, the political system and religious government are founded and structured by religion. In the Koran, God considers the government to be, first and foremost, the property of God or belongs to the one who is subject to divine commands and administers justice on earth (Anam, 60). However, a liberal democracy, which regards the principle of election as the human's absolute demands, is a non-divine and corrupt government (*Have you not regarded those who claim that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you? They desire to seek the judgment of fake deities, though they were commanded to reject them, and Satan desires to lead them astray into far error*) (Nesa, 60). In other words, Islam maintains that those who disobey the divine rules are disbelievers, oppressors, and hypocrites (Maede, 44, 45, and 47).

Basic components of religious democracy
Public participation in political issues and consultation with people

Public participation is a well-established principle in an advanced religious democratic society. This type of government is managed by the all-out participation of the people, as Imam Ali (AS) debates the election of the leader as follows: "The divine and Islamic rule oblige the Muslims not to step away from electing a leader following his death and to choose a pious and knowledgeable leader consistent with divine and traditional decrees to handle their affairs" (Majlesi, 1992, 143/33). Thus, people must take part in realizing one of the pillars of the government, i.e., designating a leader and need to engage in government affairs after casting their ballots actively. Unfortunately, most democratic systems do no oblige themselves to meet and consult the public's needs after taking votes from them; this is while God orders the prophet to consult people and cooperate with them (*Those who answer their Lord, maintain the prayer, and [conduct] their affairs by counsel among themselves, and they spend out of what We have provided them,* Shura, 38). Or God says: *It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So excuse them, plead for*

forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him (Al-Umran. 159). Whoever consults the other will be praised if the affair is made aright, and if not, there is no room for rebuke as he will be excused. One would suggest that a solid view is achieved through consultation. Imam Ali (AS) remarked: Compare the views to yield the right one. The leaders should consult the masses, especially the experts, for consultation will not entail regret (Shahidi,1997, 173). The prophet (PBUH) ordered Imam Ali (AS): "O' Ali, whoever asks God for a way out shall not regret it, and feel pleased for the consultation." Imam Ali was committed to the people's votes, insofar as he abstained from caliphate for 25 years, until the death of Usman, the third caliph when people themselves came to him to shoulder the responsibility of caliphate, and he just ruled for nearly five years. This indicates respect for the votes of the people. Upon seeing the people's consent, he accepted to rule over them. He is quoted as saying: "Be with the masses, for God spreads His hand to the masses" (Nahjulbalaghe, sermon 127, quoted by Ibn Hadid, 112/8). Also, he says: "Cling to what lays the bed for the masses."

In instruction to Malik Ashtar, Imam Ali says: "Find the middle way in policy-making, because discontent of the community will break down the demands of the favorites like a flood, but the discontent of the relatives can be ignored" (Sobhi-Saleh, 1999, p. 429). Furthermore, verses and narratives have stressed the importance of consultation and bidding to the good and forbidding from the evil, as these two components constitute the government and engagement of people in decision-making processes.

Freedom

Freedom may imply two meanings: one is authority/liberty, which humanity enjoys simply by being a human, as no human is thought of lack this property which is his inherently basic right, and no one, except for God, can restrict it. Divine decrees (biding and forbidding commands) are based on interests and corruptions revealed consistent with divine wisdom. Imam Ali (AS) advised Imam Hasan (AS): "Do not be a servant of the latter for God has created us free men" (Nahjulbalagheh, letter 53). He also remarked: "Man has been created as a free being, not as a servant. O' people, Adam was created not as a servant but as a free man" (Majlesi, 1995, 134/32 and 107/32). The other meaning refers to the right to a social practice that makes sense in the context of social and political life, as Imam Ali (AS) specifies a criterion called "public satisfaction" for the Malik Ashtar's deeds. For him, dissatisfaction of the minority can be excused against the majority's satisfaction. In his famous letter to Malik Ashtar, Imam Ali (AS) says: "Insist on respecting the right of the people and refrain from unlawful shedding of blood, for it is a major social ill that helps overthrow the government" (Shahidi, 1997: letter 53).

In his four-year reign, the Imam never punished anyone on the charge of convictions. For example, in the Battle of Saffein where the Moaviye and Amr As's policy of *the Koran on the spears* caused rifts within the Imam's corps, making some of the most intimate friends of the Imam his opponents, later known as Khavarej, who insisted on arbitration, the Imam had no choice but to accept the arbitration agreement upon insistence by the corps. The agreement was still being

concluded that the Imam was pressured to renounce his commitment and initiate the war again. However, the Imam, aware of the detrimental consequences of the agreement, said: "Yesterday, it was me who gave orders, and it is they who give orders to me today, it was you who imposed me the arbitration, and we signed the agreement. We should be faithful to and keep it" (Mohammad Dashti, 1999, p. sermon 208). In the Koran, God says: "*Fulfill Allah's covenant when you pledge and do not break [your] oaths, after pledging them solemnly and having made Allah a witness over yourselves. Indeed Allah knows what you do*" (Nahl, 91).

Khavarej did not attend the mosque and failed to perform the prayers but chanted stark slogans following this event. However, the Imam remained silent with forbearance and treated them out of passion, thus guiding two-thirds of them. In this connection, Ibn Al-Hadid says: "When the Khavarej chanted the slogan "there is no ruling greater than the Allah's ruling," the Imam responded: "This is the right word you have extracted a corrupt outcome from, suggesting that their arrival at the mosque would not be prevented and their rights not be cut, and they would not be fought until they rose against him" (Al-Balazari, 1986, 2/359; Jamali, 1999, 175). The Imam gave full freedom of action to the people unless they resorted to weapons.

Equality against the laws and non- superiority of government officials

Equality before the laws is a well-established Islamic principle. For religion, all groups of people reserve the equal right to use social, economic, and political opportunities, and no one is superior to the other, as the prophet's traditions and lives of the Imams confirm this. Imam Ali (AS) orders Malik Ashtar: "Beware of possessing a wealth which belongs to all" (Ibn Sho'beh Harrani, 2005, p. 243). For Imam Ali (AS), the material life of the leaders in the society must be like that of the destitute. It is required of the leaders to have food and clothes similar to those of the poorest, and not to enjoy what they [the poor] cannot afford so that the poor would be pleased with what God has given them, and the rich increase their humility and thanksgiving as they both groups see the leaders (Ali Bagher Nasr-Abadi et al. Familiarity with Imam Ali's Political Agenda, 36). He is also quoted as saying: "Make kindness to the people and their love and doing them a favor a slogan of your heart because they fall under two categories: they are either your brothers or the same as you are in creation" (Ibn Shobeh Harrani, 2005, p. 209).

This advice reflects the call for equality of the citizens. The Imam, having equally distributed the treasured wealth among people and not considered the issue of *overtaking* in Islam, was questions, but answered: "If it were my wealth, I would certainly divide it equally among all, let alone the public treasury" (Mostafa Zamani, 1999: 293). In this regard, in sermon 217, Imam discusses the infeasibility of granting a greater share of the public treasury to his brother Aghil to administer justice and equality of public property distribution (Ibid, 217). Imam states in his own instructions to Malik Ashtar: "Spend some of your time in the companion of the ones who need you most, sit with them in the assemblies and be humble to the God who has created you" (Shahidi, 1995: Letter 53). A group of relatives and friends usually consists of the rulers' companions. These people not only affect the views of the ruling class but also gain power and wealth, have

ambitions, plant the seed of animosity between themselves and the people, and thus cause the government to collapse by creating schisms.

Imam Ali (AS) prevented Malik Ashtar from having ambitions and seeking superiority over the issues people have a share in, advising him: "Refrain from allotting something to yourself which people have a share of, for what you seize is oppression" (Mohammad Dashti, 1999, 53). Another practical example of Imam Ali's behavior is shown in an alleged claim between Imam Ali (AS) and a Yemeni man when both presented to a judge for a referral. When the judge showed respect for the Imam, he demanded that the judge treat him quite equally like the Yemeni man, and when the ruling was issued against the Imam, he welcomed and accepted with open arms, demonstrating the equality of the rights of people before the laws (Imam Khomeini 1995, A, 2/11).

The legitimacy of the ruling political systems and peoples' satisfaction

People contribute to forming the ruling political system, and they cannot be imposed on a specific government pattern. Sociologically speaking, if a government is formed without popular acceptance and satisfaction, they suffer from setbacks and fail to be effective. For this, from the view of Islam, the ruler must be accepted by the people because the leadership will forfeit executive power and cannot enforce Islamic rulings (Mohammad Taghi Mesbahi 1999, p. 2/44). Despite reserving the Velayat over the community his right, and stressing that this right was transferred to him following the demise of the prophet, Imam Ali (AS) said: The Prophet (PBUH) made a covenant with me, stating: "O' the son of Abu Taleb, you have the right to spread your velayat over the people. If they convene with you out of consent and make you the ruler, get down to their affairs, but if they make disagreements about you, abandon them" (Seyed Ibn Tavous, n.d. 248). Accordingly, despite being elected by God to lead the nation, the Imam refrained from direct participation in social-political affairs andnd the caliphate for 25 years because people did not seek allegiance with him, and he was not ready to impose his government by force. Upon accepting government, the Imam said: "If it was not for the large number of people who asked me to be the ruler and if it were not for the sake of the poor, I would abandon the bridle of the leadership" (Mohammad Dashti, 1999, p. 49).

Allegiance in occultation era

Like the *present* era, allegiance in the *occultation* era plays both roles of covenant over the fixation of government pillars and presence in political scenes, with the difference being that it also contributes to designating the leader. According to the Shiite perspective, the leader in the present era is designated with some specific rules, while in the occultation era, it is practiced by the legislator with some general rules, led by the experts. Tleader's election is thus a mix of appointment and designation, i.e., appointment through a general description by the legislator, and designation through specific elections by people, also performed in the light of guidelines. The people identify those who are qualified via their experts and select those who are competent enough. Thus, what comes from the legislator is a guideline, and what comes from people is designation. Describing the divine legitimacy of the Velayat-e-Faghih, Imam Khomeini stated: "Unless the holy

Sharia legitimizes the government and all of its elements, most legislative, judiciary and executive affairs will be without a legitimate permission, and the organizations which, should work to the benefit of the people, will no longer function properly; thus, failure to follow divine Sharia will render the government a corrupt state" (Imam Khomeini, 1985, b. 47). Imam Khomeini also attached a major role for the people, stating: If people vote to the assembly of experts to designate a just leader to lead their government, his authority will be accepted by people, for he is the first choice of the nation and has an authoritative rule" (Imam Khomeini, 1985, b. 54). This is also echoed by Imam Ali (AS): The most deserving of people for leadership is the one who has two main attributes: first, to have great capability of leadership, second, to be the wisest of the people in following the divine rule. These are the two conditions (i.e., competency and political insight) laid for the leader in making policies over various agendas. The leader needs jurisprudence insights to be fully aware of the political and policy-making issues. Thus, to the Imam, it is the right of people to identify and elect competent and qualified individuals in the light of Shari-based guidelines.

Objective realization of justice

Consistent with Nahj al-Balaghah, justice has an objective, understandable and concrete meaning. Imam Ali (AS) wrote in a letter:

- "Those who live under my government and then joined the Umavian, they saw and heard justice and found it through their hearts but did not accept it" (Nahj al-Balaghah, letter 70); in other words, his opponents could feel and understand justice, indicating that a just government can reveal examples of justice to the people.
- For Imam Ali, justice helps establish social balance and peace between society and its unions, and this kind of society enjoys harmony. In paragraph 25 of the Malik Ashtar Covenant, Imam addresses the hierarchy of social groups and elaborates on the interactive and complementary relations of these groups, thereby specifying the position of each group (Malikashtar covenant, Paragraph 25)
- Governance in Imam Ali's political and economic justice is an end. To him, whoever undertakes the rule, if just, God will save him by his justice, and if oppressor, his rule will demise. In sermon 163, the Imam states: "God will send an oppressor leader, who has no supporter, and whose excuse will not be accepted, to the depth of the hell."

When the Imam was recommended to support some people to back up the Alawite government, he regraded this to be oppression and discrimination, as he suggests in sermon 126, that he would never do so. The second caliph, Umar Ibn Khattab, ordered to distribute the war booties based on the status of people, but Imam Ali considered this to be unjust, saying: "the people should be treated based on social justice. When the Imam succeeded the third caliph, he returned all the wealth to the treasury Usman had discriminatorily offered to people, where he suggests in sermon 15: "I swear by God, I shall take back the treasury money used for the marriage of the girls and women and distribute it among people equally." In letter 41 to his cousin, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Imam Al suggests: "I engaged you in my trust and made you confidant of my affairs; however, when the time changed, you

misused the opportunity and seized the public treasury for your own sake. Fear God and return the public wealth to them, for if you do not do so, I shall, by the help of God, tear apart your head with the same sword I tore apart the heads of the disbelievers". In sermon 215, he discusses his relationship with his brother, Aghil, and the molten iron on his body. In letter 20, he suggests to Ziad, representative of Abdullaah Ibn Abbas in Basreh, saying: "If I am informed of the violation of the public treasury, I shall get so tough on you that you become humiliated."

Renunciation of discrimination and observance of peoples' rights

In his remarks, Imam Ali does not speak of absolute equality among people and instead calls for justice to be met, saying: "Justice is the divine scales set for the servants and the establishment of the truth. He advises: "Do not disobey God's scales and refrain from opposing His reign" (Ghorar Al-Hekam, 1/222, No. 88). On renunciation of any kind of discrimination and observance of people's rights, he said: "Be humble to the people within your sphere of responsibility and embrace them with open arms and show flexibility; observe equality even at the turn of the eye and look and greetings so that the influential figures would not have a greedy look at you, and the incapable not to be disappointed by your mercy. They must all understand that they are equal in our government" (Shahidi, 1997, letters 46 and 70).

Justice as the guarantor of survival and security of the political system

The major issue in Imam Ali's traditions is that he never retreated from enforcing justice to the benefit of preserving the security of the political system and his authority; rather, he considered the observance of justice to be the guarantor of security and preservation of the system. For him, nothing protects the governments as justice does as it is such a solid shield which, if respected, helps continue the authority of the political system (Amadi, 1994: 396, 290 and 343/5). Nothing can reform man as justice can (Ibid, 354, 175, 138/1). The enforcement of justice eliminates the oppositions and creates affection, which greatly contributes to the prosperity of the economic development of nations (Ibid, 193/1). If justice is not executed in the society, it will be fraught with oppression, and chaos prevails, resulting in homelessness, misery, and violence. The absence of violence in the community helps the hearts get closer to each other and make people cooperate with the political system as the results will be love, affection, brotherhood, and stability and security. In surah Maryam (verse 190), God says: "God blesses those who are virtuous with love and affection and make their hearts closer to each other" (Maryam, 190). For Imam Ali, the greatest betrayal is one against Muslims. In short words No. 3, 53, 154, and 311, the Imam speaks of poverty and considers poverty to be greater than death, stating that poverty and destitution in religion also leaves a negative effect and mistakes reason for wisdom causing the man to be hated. For this, in letter 53, he orders Malik Ashtar to refrain from ambitions and debauchery, for it distances man from worship of God, and it will be contrary to social justice.

Conclusion

The following are key points of the article:

- In religious democracy, individual and social rights are combined, but in western-style democracy, individual originality is preferred.
- Religious democracy emphasizes laying the ground for spiritual development, including human rights, a subject long discarded in Western democracies.
- In religious democracy, a legitimate government must determine its true form in interaction with the people to work effectively in practice, as no government is allowed to impose its rule on the people.
- Religious democracy emphasizes human freedom, which denotes external or social freedom. Motahhari stated that no internal (spiritual) or external freedom will be possible without spiritual freedom.
- In religious democracy, all people are equal before the law. Therefore, there is no privilege for or discrimination against people. TThe rights citizens enjoy the same. The authorities must be similar to those of the poor, and more amenities should be provided to the destitute.
- People's companionship with the government entails more government actualized measures, and thus, a government with a lack of public support shall forfeit executive power and actuality. In sum, to be effective, a government must gain a more popular position in society to be supported by more strata of people.
- In religious democracy, governance and government are a means and not an end, and if the ruler in a religious democracy is a just one, God will help him using his justice, and if oppressor, his rule will demise. Observance of justice helps guarantee the preservation of religious democracy.

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