

## مدارای مذهبی و برادری جهانی

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### چکیده

هدف این مقاله بررسی مفهوم و اهمیت مدارای مذهبی و اخوت و برادری جهانی در آموزه‌های امام علی(ع)، به خصوص در نهج‌البلاغه است. اسلام آزادی اندیشه، آزادی بیان عقاید و اعمال قضاوت مستقل در مسائل دینی را تایید می‌کند. آن همچنین مدارای مذهبی در میان پیروان ادیان، جوامع مذهبی، اقوام و ملل را تصدیق نموده و به درک متقابل و همکاری میان تمامی مردم استدلال می‌نماید. حضرت علی(ع)، در راستای آموزه‌های اسلامی، مردم را برادر در دین یا خلقت می‌داند. بنابراین، او به حفظ امنیت همه مردم، به خصوص غیرمسلمانان معتقد است. او اصل برابری برای تمام مردم به عنوان حق مادرزادی تاکید ورزیده و نابرابری و تبعیض مبتنی بر قبیله، ملیت و خانواده را ناشایست می‌داند. او به برادری همه انسان‌ها به عنوان آفریدگان خدا توصیه می‌نماید. این جهان شمولی بر روی سه پایه استوار است، یعنی جهانشمولی پیام حضرت محمد(ص)، یگانگی خداوند و در نتیجه وحدت ادیان و وحدت بشر. خدا پیامبر را فرستاده تا دستورات او را آشکار کرده و به ذکر خدا فرا خواند. امام علی معتقد است که فرمانروا باید با رحمت و مدارا با همه افراد تحت حکومت خود رفتار نماید.

**کلید واژه‌ها:** امام علی، مدارای مذهبی، برادری جهانی، نهج‌البلاغه، اسلام

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## Religious Tolerance & Universal Brotherhood

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### Abstract

The purpose of the present paper is to survey and analyse the concept and significance of religious tolerance and universal brotherhood in Imam Ali's teachings, especially his Nahj al Balagha. Islam admits the freedom of thought, free expression of opinions, and exercise of independent judgment in religious matters. It also acknowledges tolerance among religions, religious communities, nations and tribes and commands mutual understanding and cooperation among all people as we shall demonstrate with clear proofs. Hazrat Ali, in line with the Islamic teachings, regards the people either brothers in religion or one like you in creation. Therefore, he believes to regarding safety of all people, especially non-Muslims. The principle of equality was established for the entire mankind as its birth right, forbidding inequality or discrimination on the ground of tribe, nationality and family, as mankind belongs to one universal brotherhood. This universality is based on three pillars which are first the universality of the Muhammad and Message and second the Unicity of God and therefore the unity of religions and third the unity of mankind. He sent the holy Prophet to manifest His commands and speak about His remembrance. Consequently, he fulfilled it with trustworthiness, and he passed away while on the right path. Imam Ali believes that the governor must rule with mercy and tolerance towards all his subjects.

**Keywords:** Imam Ali, Religious Tolerance, Universal Brotherhood, Nahj al-Balagha, Islam

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## **Introduction**

Humanity lives today in a “global village” where no people or nation can live in isolation from and indifference to what goes on elsewhere. Our world is so interdependent and so inter-related that peaceful coexistence has become an imperative.

Followers of religions comprise nearly majority of the world’s population. The nature of the relationship of them is of considerable significance for the welfare of the whole human family. Religions have played a crucial, if ambiguous, role in the history of humankind, particularly in regard to conflict. Religions have justified, motivated and mandated violence and war. At the same time they have encouraged the resolution of conflict, tolerance and the need to create conditions of global peace. So, Understanding the role of religion, both as a source of conflict and of peace, is indispensable. Although religious differences often seem to aggravate conflict in the modern world, many people hope that the moral values that are shared by people of faith can provide the basis for communities and nations to live together in a more peaceful and harmonious way. (See: Elmi, pp. 63-64)

Throughout the history of Western and Islamic worlds, one finds persons who were profoundly affected by experiences of social, political, and religious division and searching for peaceful coexistence and a virtuous humanity.

But in early Islam it was left most of all to ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib to expound, on the basis of the Word of God and the teachings of the Prophet, the concept of peaceful coexistence. Imàm ‘Alí (‘a), the greatest man of all time, based his government of truth and justice on respect for individuals and human character; the same

respect and grace that his Creator has granted human beings. He believed that at no time and on no condition can one ignore others' humanity and respect. It was this very genuine respect that, automatically, led to the provision of ultimate freedom and equality for all. This article studies the concept and significance of religious tolerance and universal brotherhood in Imam Ali's teachings, especially his Nahj al Balagha.

The cooperation between religions and different religious communities in different historical ages can be briefly sketched in four successive stages: 1- Fanaticism and lack of tolerances, 2- Negative tolerance, 3-Mutual understanding and communication, and finally positive cooperation.

The first stage which historically comes first, is ruled by indiscriminate prejudice, bigotry and lack of tolerance, which result from ignorance and blind faith in general. This stage is specifically characterized by obstinacy, stubbornness and hardness of relations to prejudice, bias, hatred, rancour, and personal grudge, sometimes bursting into riots, revolutions and wars. Many examples, can be given both from ancient and medieval history: for example, the Roman persecution of Christians, the religious wars in the Islamic Spain, the Crusades and so on.

Sometimes this religious fanaticism occurs among the different sects or denominations of one single religion, which frequently causes internal strife and sometimes sectarian wars, as was the case with the protestant movement in its early phase, or with the denominational wars among different sects in Christianity or Islam.

Examples of religious intolerance and fanaticism are not

lacking in contemporary modern history. We can see religious fanaticism and bigotry in the Zionist movement in Palestine and in its semi-political aspect between the Catholics and Protestants of North Ireland today.

But in spite of that, one cannot deny the change of attitude which has taken place in the Modern Age, when there is a tendency to discard this extreme form of fanaticism, to adopt a kind of religious freedom and its concomitants such as tolerance remains negative at first, because it is surrounded by caution, circumspection, lack of confidence and fear of cooperation.

Then in the next stage some racial and ethnic developments necessitated mutual understanding, communion and rapprochement between different religions and creeds, and this was due to the diffusion and propagation of science and the advance made in the means of transportation and communication, the commercial and cultural relations, all resulting in the establishment of rational discourse and peaceful dialogue among nations.

Finally in the last stage, this dialogue, in its turn, ushered in an essential change in the situation. The stage of negative tolerance based on reserved caution, suspicion and fear, gradually gave way to a kind of positive cooperation based on mutual understanding and good intentions. This fact indisputably is in accord with the spirit of true religion which commands love, friendship, righteousness, charity, and mutual cooperation among human beings. From what we said it is evident that the point of agreement and convergence among diverse religions are much more than the points of disagreement and divergence and that the way of mutual understanding and cooperation is much easier than of discord and dissension.

The danger confronting all religions does not come from one religion to another. It rather comes from the modern materialistic schools of philosophy which challenge all religions. Therefore, it is incumbent on all religions to preserve their common heritage and their purity and originality. Islam and Christianity, in particular, should collaborate in order to follow a common path which unites them in their precious spiritual ideals and values, so that they may serve the human kind under the banner of one single God, Lord of all creatures.

### **Precedents in Religious Collaboration**

The world congresses held to realize and promulgate these exalted and lofty objectives, are decisive proofs of the justness of the latter stage, which is one of mutual love and universal cooperation.

Recent developments in the dialogue between religions are best depicted in the papal declaration issued on 28 October 1965 by the second Vatican Assembly concerning the relations of the Catholic Church with non-Christian religions. It aims at “strengthening the ties of unity and love among all people,” because “all nations make one single family.” It summons all “to avow the spiritual, literary, social and cultural values found among the devotees of other religions, to promote and cultivate them by way of dialogues and cooperation and in accordance with love and wisdom.”

In this declaration it is particularly mentioned that the church “esteems highly all the Muslims, who worship one all-living, self-subsistent, merciful, compassionate, omnipotent and

omniscient God, who created the heavens and the earth and has spoken to men through revelation. They submit themselves with all their souls to the commands of God, even if they do not understand His hidden intentions, as Abraham in whom the religion of Islam takes honor, and to whom it affiliates itself, surrendered himself to the command of God. Muslims, even if they do not confess the divinity of Jesus, honor him as a Messenger and honor in extreme the Virgin Mary, to whom they supplicate in prayer with faith. Moreover they believe in the Day of Judgement in which all the dead are resurrected and are rewarded or punished according to their merits. Therefore, they highly appreciate the eternal life and worship God, particularly through prayers, almsgiving, charitable deeds and fasting.”

The declaration also states that: “even if in the course of history there have been many dissensions and enmities between Christians and Muslims, the Assembly requests them all to forget the past and to work earnestly to achieve mutual understanding among themselves and to protect and procure for all people, social equity, spiritual values, peace and liberty.” (*The Acts of the Second Vatican Assembly*, 1966, Vol. 1, PP.185-8)

This is a very clear example of repudiating fanaticism and religious bigotry and encouraging tolerance and understanding and cooperation among all people who were created by one single God as members of a single family.

As to the Islamic Shariah (Divine Law) it admits the freedom of thought, free expression of opinions, and exercise of independent judgment in religious matters. It also acknowledges tolerance among religions, religious communities, nations and

tribes and commands mutual understanding and cooperation among all people as we shall demonstrate with clear proofs.

Scholars of Muslim jurisprudence have applied these principles in their treatments of non-Muslim believers in the Islamic community, and the pioneers of modern jurisprudence, such as Al-Afghani (Asad abadi) and Muhammad Abduh and others, have declared them openly.

Jamal-ad-Din–Afghani abhorred the Sunnite-Shi`te dichotomy and said that there was no cause for such division in the Islamic community. He maintained that this division was brought about by the covetousness and avarice of the rulers and the ignorance of the common folk (*The Memories of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani*, 1931, P.167.). What he said harmonizes well with the following verse in the Holy Quran: “As to those who sunder their religion and become schismatics, no concern at all hast thou with them.”

Moreover, Al-Afghni held that the three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were unanimous in their objectives and intentions and that their scriptures were in agreement concerning their essential doctrines. In his opinion differences between different religions do not rest in their doctrines, nor in their scriptures. They are the fabrications of religious scholars who make religions a sort of merchandise and sell the verses of God cheaply (Ibid, PP.217 and 213-14).

In the same spirit of humanity, Sheikh Muhammad’ Abduh fought against blind dogmatism and summoned all people to friendship and cooperation as in a single community.

He said: “What a calamity has befallen man! He has changed his natural institutions. He has altered his peaceful habits. He has



dissolved his natural relations. Man comes from one single origin, from which a single family has descended, whose members are united through common habits and morals. This situation has had tremendous influence upon the majority of reasonable men who tend to serve human kind without showing prejudice to a particular race or religion or sect. So when man turns back to his primordial centre he regards the totality of mankind as the inhabitants of a single mansion who share their common interests equally and who find the boons and blessings of the earth enough to protect them from fanaticism and make them desist from dissension and discord” (Rasheed Rida, 1913, vol.2, P.203).

### **An Appeal for Peace**

We should reiterate here once more that an appeal for the cause of Islam should follow the way of persuasion and exhortation which are emphasized in the numerous verses of the Holy Quran: “The Messenger has no other charge than to deliver the manifest message (Quran, 24/,25). “Then remind them, thou art only a reminder, thou art not charged to oversee them” (Quran 88,/21). “Call thou to the way of the Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way, surely the Lord knows very well those who have gone astray from His way and He knows very well those who are guided” (Quran 16/,125). “Thou art not a tyrant over them, therefore remind by the Quran him who fears My threat.” (Quran 50/, 45)

Then the Holy Quran clearly prohibited any kind of coercion and compulsion in conveying the message of religion: “No

compulsion is there in religion, verily truth has become clear from error” (Quran, 2/, 255). “And if the Lord has willed, whoever is on the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Wouldst thou then constrain the people until they are believers?” (Quran, 10, /199). “Say, the truth is from your Lord; so let whoever will, believe and let whoever will disbelieve.” (Quran, 18, 25).

Moreover, the Holy Quran has emphasized, time and again, the diversity of religions and God’s judgement concerning them: “To you your religion and to me my religion. “(Quran,109/.5). “But had God willed, He would have gathered them to the guidance. So be not thou one of the ignorant. Answer only those who will hear. “(Quran, 6, /35). “Truly to Us is their return; then upon who will hear. “(Quran, 6/, 35). “Truly to Us is their return; then upon Us shall rest their reckoning”. (Quran, 88/, 25). “Surely those who believe and those of Jewry, the Sabeans, the Christians, the Magians and the idolators, God shall distinguish between them on the day of Resurrection; assuredly God is witness over everything. “(Qurna, 22/, 17) “Say! O God, thou the Creator of the heavens and the earth who knowest the Unseen and the Visible, Thou shalt judge between the servants concerning what they are at variance.” (Quran, 39, /47).

From the quoted verses and many other verses of the Quran it is evident that the Holy Prophet ordered to convey his message by giving glad tidings and warnings and by way of reminding rather than through domination and compulsion. But as to belief in his message, it depends on the free choice of man and there can be no sense in a faith which is contaminated with coercion.

In any case, the reckoning of men's deeds depends on God who will gather all together on the Day of Resurrection and will reward or punish them according to what they have done.

Hazrat Ali, in line with the aforementioned philosophy of Islam, advised Malik al-Ashtar, Governor of Egypt: "Know Malik, that among your subjects there are two kinds (of people); either brothers in religion or one like you in creation..." (Letter, 53). Ali in the same instrument advised Malik: "Do not reject the peace to which your enemy may call you ... because peace brings safety to your country ... fulfil your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it. ...and do not change interpretations to vague words after conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement) if an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification" (Ibid.).

Concerning the nature of Islam he says, "Praise be to Allah who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to its columns against any one who tries to overpower it. So Allah made it (a source of) peace for him who clings to it, safety for him who enters it" (Sermon, 105).

### **Controversy with the People of the Book**

When talking about religious freedom, tolerance toward the followers of all creeds and dialogue and cooperation among them, we should make particular reference to the veneration and respect which Islam shows to the people of the Book (ahli-al-kitab) such as Christians and Jews, who believe in one God and in the hereafter and do righteous deeds. This is evident from the following verse: "Those who believe (in that which is revealed to

thee) and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabeans – Whoever believeth in God and the last Day and doeth right- Surely their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.” (Quran,2/,62).

The Holy Quran has recommended the believers to treat the people of the Book in the best manner possible and if they happen to be their neighbours, to be kind and genial to them. “And dispute not with the people of the Scripture, unless it be in a way that is better, except for those of them who do wrong. “(Quran, 39/4). “Say: O, people of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: That we shall worship none but God and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him and that none of us all take others for lords besides God. And if they turn away then say: Bear witness that we have surrendered ourselves unto Him. “(Quran,3/,64). “And if they dispute with thee, O, Muhammad, then say: I have surrendered my face to God and so have those who follow me. And say unto those who have received the scripture and those who read not: Have you surrendered? If they surrender, then they are rightly guided and if they turn away, then it is the duty to deliver the Message (unto them) and God sees His servants.” (Quran,3/20).

The Holy Quran has especially commended Christians and particularly referred to their leniency and compassion and the high spiritual rank of their divines due to their humility and lack of conceit and arrogance: “Then we sent, following in their footsteps, our Messengers: and wed sent, following Jesus, son of Mary, and gave unto Him the Gospel. And we set in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy. “(Quran,

57,/27). “And thou wilt surely find the nearest of them in love to the believers, those who say, we are Christians; that is because some of them are priests and monks and they wax not proud, and when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, Thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize...” (Quran,5,/82).

Regarding safety of non-Muslims, Hazrat Ali advised Malik: '- You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting for Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequences, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short life than shedding of blood without justification. This instrument contains principles of protection of Human Rights without distinction of religion or community, providing help to the destitute and the poor, and succor to the low and the down-trodden. Form which, full guidance can be had for the peace and security and the prosperity and well-being of the people. "Allow the right to whomsoever it is due whether near you or far from you. In this matter you should be enduring and watchful even though it may invoke your relations and favorites, and keep in view the reward of that which appears burdensome on you because its reward is handsome" (Letter, 53).

### **Religious Brotherhood**

On the basis of the equality of all men, and of religious cooperation and tolerance, Islam has emphasized the religious brotherhood of all believers on the one hand and the human fraternity of all people on the other. The brotherhood of Muslims is of a total and perfect type. It is based on the unity of faith and

religion. The congregational prayers of Muslims and their orientation towards a single direction (Ka'ba); their fasting in a single month at an appointed time, their Holy pilgrimage to Mecca in a determined period with an equal pace; the payment of tithes by the well-to-do in the interest of the poor, are all practical examples of Muslim unity and fraternity, this in an addition to the love, affection mutual confidence and cooperation which religion demands.

Muslims all over the world are considered one single community, whose pillar is religious solidarity and the spiritual brotherhood which the Holy Quran has so much emphasized: "The believers are indeed brothers... "(Quran, 49/,10). "Surely this community of yours is one single community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. "(Quran, 21/,92).

This bond of brotherliness is confirmed by the following Holy Tradition of the prophet: "Muslims have but one *dhimmah* (covenant, responsibility, debt); None of you is a true believer unless he loves for his brother, what he loves for himself." "The believers, in their sympathy, mercy and affection are like the organs of a single body; when one limb suffers from pain, the other limbs are overtaken by sleeplessness and fever." "Believers are like unto pillars which support each other." (Suyuti, *Al-Jami al-Saghir*, vol.2. Nos 994 and 8155. See also suyuti, *al-Fath al-Kabir*, vol.3. P.251).

### **Universal Brotherhood**

We should stress the fact that the religious brotherhood in Islam is an aspect of a more general one, that is, the universal

brotherhood of human kind. According to Holy Quran all the prophets are the brothers of the people, whether the believers or non-believers. This point has been emphasised in 8 verses. In the verses although the addressee of some prophets are non-believers, nevertheless Quran has included them as the brothers. (see:7/65&72&85-11/50&61&84-27/45-29/36).

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

### **Three pillars of Universal Brotherhood**

This universality is based on three pillars which are first the universality of the Muhammad and Message and second the Unicity of God and therefore the unity of religions and third the unity of mankind.

#### **1- The Universality of Muhammad's Message**

This universality is confirmed by the Holy Quran and the prophetic traditions. The Message of Islam is not confined to the Arab race, nor to a particular nation; it is a universal message addressed to all men. "And we have not sent thee (O, Muhammad) save as a bringer of good tidings and a warner unto all mankind; but most of mankind know not." (Quran, 34, /28).

He sent him to manifest His commands and speak about His remembrance. Consequently, he fulfilled it with trustworthiness, and he passed away while on the right path.

He left among us the standard of right. Whoever goes further from it goes out of Faith, whoever lags behind it is ruined. Whoever sticks to it would join (the right). Its guide is short of speech, slow of steps, and quick when he rises. (Sermon, 99)

Then Allah deputized Mohammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p) as a witness, giver of good tidings and warner, the best in the universe as a child and the most chaste as a grown up man, the purest of the purified in conduct, the most generous of those who are approached for generosity. (Sermon, 104)

## **2- The Unicity of God and the Unity of Religion**

Islam teaches the doctrine of the unicity of God and veneration and respect for all prophets and faith in all sacred books. It considers all people to make one single community which is broader in scope than the community of believers, where belief in one God unites them all.

This is all clear from the preceding and the following verses; “And hold you fast to God’s bond, together and do not scatter; remember God’s blessings upon you when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together so that by His blessing you became brothers” (Quran,3/,103). “Unto this call thou, and go straight as thou hast been commanded; do not follow their caprice. And say, I believe in whatever Scriptures God has sent down. I have been commanded to administer justice among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. We have our deeds, and to you belong your deeds. There is no argument between us and you; God shall bring us together and unto Him is the return.” (Quran, 42,/15). “Dispute not with the people of Scripture, save in a way



that is better, except for those of them that do wrong; and say: we believe in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one and to Him we have surrendered.” (Quran, 29/46).

We have the same meaning reiterated in the holy saying of the Prophet: “O, you people! Verily the Lord is one, The father is one and the religion is one.”<sup>1</sup> “O, ye our Lord and the Lord of everything, we are witness that your servants are all brothers (Shatibi, 1332, vol. 1, p.288.)

So God the Almighty shall bring together all people to His one single religion and by His mercy shall protect them from division and separation. He will bring their hearts close together and will shower upon them the blessings of brotherhood and his other boons and blessings and in the end will all return to Him.

Regarding the comprehensive compassion of God to all creatures and all people, Imam Ali says, “Everything submits to Him and everything exists by Him. He is the satisfaction of every poor, dignity of the low, energy for the weak and shelter for the oppressed. Whoever speaks, He hears his speaking, and whoever keeps quiet, He knows his secret. On Him is the livelihood of everyone who lives, and to Him returns whoever dies” (Sermon, 108).

### **3- The Unity of Humanity and Justice**

Islam has unambiguously declared the equality of all men without making any discrimination between them with regard to

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1. Muhammad Rasheed Rida, *Al-Wahy-al-Muhammadi* (The Muhammadan Revelation), P.231, quoting from Ibn Asakir). In the Holy tradition about *Hajjat al-Wida'* (The last pilgrimage of the Holy Prophet to Mecca) we have the following version: “Verily your Lord is one, All of you come from Adam and Adam is made of clay.” See, *Al-'Iqd al-Farid*, Vol. 2, PP. 357-59.

religion, nationality, race, colour and lineage. This is one of the consequences of the unity of mankind which binds them all, and the unity of universal justice which organizes all their relations.

In addition to the foregoing proofs which corroborate this fact, it is also well expressed in the following verse! "...For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had God willed, He could have made you one community. But that He may try you in that which He hath given you (He hath you as you are). So vie you one with another in good works. Unto God you will all return and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ." (Quran,5/,48). In the same vein, the following tradition (prophetic saying) has come down to us: "He is not one of us who calls people to 'Asabiyyah (tribal partisanship and bigotry); he is not one of us who fights for 'Asabiyyah; he is not one of us who dies in 'Asabiyyah." (Al-Jami' al-Saghir, vol. 2, No. 7682, quoted from the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud).

Moreover the Holy Quran has alluded to the unity and solidarity of human beings in their humanity and considers the saving of one life to be the same as saving all lives and to transgress one is to transgress all: "Whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption down on earth, shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whose gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether..." (Quran,5/,32).

Islam does not permit racial discrimination, narrow tribal chauvinism or blind sectarian religious partisanship. It does not recognize any kind of enthusiasm except the consolidating and unifying religious enthusiasm. It does not accept any

competition, except in the arena of charity and good works. It does not impose any limits thereto, except the limits imposed by the all-comprehensive essence of humanity which embraces all men and gathers them in the field of good works and vouchsafes for them absolute justice.

The unity of human nature and justice, together with the universality of Islamic revelation and the unity of God and the unity of the divine religions are all foundations of the universal brotherhood of men which alongside the fraternity of religious faith have been so much emphasized in Islam. There is no doubt that this brotherhood is the ideal archetype which international laws should imitate.

### **Universal Brotherhood in Imam Ali's Nahj a-Balagha**

When Imam Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib(656-661) appointed Malik Ashtar as a governor of Egypt , he explained in a declaration some of his duties. He clearly say:

“Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation.” (Letter, 53)

Following is the text of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement on the fiftieth anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, delivered on 10 December 1997, at the University of Tehran that is available from the UN website (<http://www.un.org/rights/50/dpi1937.htm>).The Former Secretary General: Kofi Annan , said the following:

“Human rights are universal not only because their roots exist in all cultures and traditions. Their modern universality is founded on their endorsement by all 185 Members of the United Nations. The Declaration itself was the product of debates between a uniquely representative group of scholars, a majority of whom came from the non-Western world.

They brought to this historic assignment the recent memories of world war and the ancient teachings of universal peace. The principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are deeply rooted in the history of humankind. They can be found in the teachings of all the world's great cultural and religious traditions.

Imam Ali, the fourth Khalifa after Prophet Muhammed, instructed the governor of Egypt to rule with mercy and tolerance towards all his subjects: "Let the dearest of your treasuries be the treasury of righteous action... Infuse your heart with mercy, love and kindness for your subjects. Be not in the face of them a voracious animal, counting them as easy prey, for they are of two kinds: either they are your brothers in religion or your equals in creation."

Arab Human Development Report is an independent report sponsored and conducted by the United Nations Development Programme. The report targets policy makers, leaders and those activists who are looking for a brighter future throughout the Arab World.<sup>1</sup>

The Arab Human Development Report 2002: *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, is comprised of 8 chapters

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1. "About the Arab Human Development Reports," United Nations Development Programme, <http://www.arab-hdr.org/about/intro.aspx>, (January 11, 2015).

explaining and analysing the Arab World societies from different facets, including population, education, healthcare, technology, democracy and etc.

At the last section of its 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, *using human capabilities: towards a knowledge society*, the report provides a table summarising Imam Ali bin abi Taleb's rescript to his governor in Egypt as to point out criteria of good governance.<sup>1</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Followers of religions comprise nearly majority of the world's population. The nature of the relationship of them is of considerable significance for the welfare of the whole human family. Religions have played a crucial, if ambiguous, role in the history of humankind, particularly in regard to conflict. Religions have justified, motivated and mandated violence and war. At the same time they have encouraged the resolution of conflict, tolerance and the need to create conditions of global peace. So, Understanding the role of religion, both as a source of conflict and of peace, is indispensable. Although religious differences often seem to aggravate conflict in the modern world, many people hope that the moral values that are shared by people of faith can provide the basis for communities and nations to live together in a more peaceful and harmonious way.

The cooperation between religions and different religious communities in different historical ages can be briefly sketched in four successive stages: 1- Fanaticism and lack of tolerances, 2-

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1. "Arab Human Development Report 2002: *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*," United Nations Development Programme: p. 82, [www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2002e.pdf](http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2002e.pdf), (January 11, 2015).

Negative tolerance, 3-Mutual understanding and communication, and finally positive cooperation.

The danger confronting all religions does not come from one religion to another. It rather comes from the modern materialistic schools of philosophy which challenge all religions. Therefore, it is incumbent on all religions to preserve their common heritage and their purity and originality. Islam and Christianity, in particular, should collaborate in order to follow a common path which unites them in their precious spiritual ideals and values, so that they may serve the human kind under the banner of one single God, Lord of all creatures.

**The world congresses held to realize and promulgate these exalted and lofty objectives, are decisive proofs of the justness of the latter stage, which is one of mutual love and universal cooperation.**

As to the Islamic Shariah (Divine Law) it admits the freedom of thought, free expression of opinions, and exercise of independent judgment in religious matters. It also acknowledges tolerance among religions, religious communities, nations and tribes and commands mutual understanding and cooperation among all people as we shall demonstrate with clear proofs. We should reiterate here once more that an appeal for the cause of Islam should follow the way of persuasion and exhortation which are emphasized in the numerous verses of the Holy Quran.

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

religion or one like you in creation..." Regarding safety of non-Muslims, Hazrat Ali advised Malik: "You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting for Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequences, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short life than shedding of blood without justification. This instrument contains principles of protection of Human Rights without distinction of religion or community, providing help to the destitute and the poor, and succor to the low and the down-trodden".

The principle of equality was established for the entire mankind as its birth right, forbidding inequality or discrimination on the ground of tribe, nationality and family, as mankind belongs to one universal brotherhood.

This universality is based on three pillars which are first the universality of the Muhammad and Message and second the Unicity of God and therefore the unity of religions and third the unity of mankind. He sent the holy Prophet to manifest His commands and speak about His remembrance. Consequently, he fulfilled it with trustworthiness, and he passed away while on the right path. Imam Ali believes that the governor must rule with mercy and tolerance towards all his subjects.

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