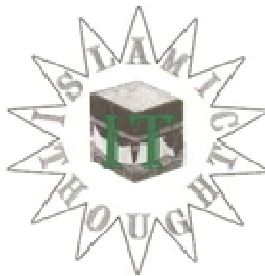


ACADEMIC NAHJUL BALAGHA CONFERENCE

Sunday 30th September 2012

at
Marriott Hotel
Peterborough, UK



ISLAMIC THOUGHT
Organisation for Islamic Information

Programme

SESSION I

10:30 am	Registration and refreshments
11:00 am	Qur'an recitation and welcome speech
11:15 am	Speaker 1: Imranali Panjwani
11:40 am	Speaker 2: Professor Liyakat Takim
12:00 pm	Speaker 3: Dr Mohammad Khalid
12:25 pm	Speaker 4: Sheikh Mohammed Ali Ismail
12:50 pm	Speaker 5: Professor Rodney Shakespeare
13:15 pm	Session I Speakers Q&A
13:30 pm	Lunch

SESSION II

14:30 pm	Speaker 6: Dr Rebecca Masterton
14:55 pm	Video Message (Professor George Jordac)
15:15 pm	Speaker 7: Dr Ian Williams
15:40 pm	Speaker 8: Revd Frank Gelli
16:05 pm	Speaker 9: Dr Sajjad Rizvi
16:30 pm	Speaker 10: Sayyed Mohammed al-Musawi
16:55 pm	Session II Speakers Q&A
17:10 pm	Concluding speech
17:15 pm	Book exhibition and refreshments

Foreword

Nahjul Balagha contains the sermons, writings and short sayings of that entity, a wise and learned man, about whom the Holy Quran says: "He who possesses knowledge of the Book." And the Holy Prophet of Islam says: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate." Ali himself proclaims (pointing to his bosom) "Look, here is a heap of knowledge. I wish I could get someone to bear it." (*Saying 147, Nahjul Balagha*)

"The universe of the Nahj al-Balaghah includes numerous worlds: the world of zuhd (abstinence, piety) and taqwa (God-fearing), the world of 'ibadah (worship, devotion) and 'irfan (mystic knowledge), the world of hikmah (wisdom) and philosophy, the world of moral preaching and guidance, the world of eschatology (malahim) and mysteries (mughayyabat), the world of politics and social responsibilities, the world of heroism and bravery." *Shaheed Mutahhari, Glimpses of Nahjul Balagha.*

"Valiant in battle, wise in counsel, eloquent in speech, true to his friends, magnanimous to his foes, he became both the paragon of Muslim nobility and chivalry and the Solomon of Arabic tradition, around whose name poems, proverbs, sermonettes and anecdotes innumerable have clustered." *Phillip Kuri Hitti (Professor of Semitic Languages at Princeton University), History of the Arabs, London, 1964, p.183.*

"With him perished the truest hearted and best Moslem of whom Mohammadan history had preserved the remembrance." *Robert Durey Osborn (Major of the Bengal Staff Corps.), Islam Under the Arabs, 1876, p. 120.*

"As for this young Ali (a.s.), one cannot help but like him. A noble minded creature as he shows himself, now and always afterwards, full of affection, of fiery daring. Something chivalrous in him; brave as a lion; yet with a grace, a truth and affection worthy of Christian knighthood." *Thomas Carlyle- Scottish (historian, critic and sociological writer), On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, 1841.*

The compilation of selected words of Imam Ali was completed by Sayed Razi in 400AH. During the period of Sayed Razi's life, the Nahjul Balagha became a renowned book. Scholars began to write commentaries on the Nahjul Balagha which continues till today. Hundreds of books have been written on Nahjul Balagha. A Sunni scholar Ibne Abil-Hadid who wrote 20 volumes of commentary of Nahjul Balagha, writes about Sermon 218, "In 50 years, I reread it 1000 times." The Christian scholar George Jordac has mentioned that he has reread the Nahjul Balagha up to 200 times.

Unfortunately, in the English language these wonderful pearls of eloquence have not been conveyed to the extent they should have. However scholars are trying to fulfil this, a few of whom have quoted Ali's sayings and also translated the entire Nahjul Balagha. Today in any British library two PhD studies of Nahjul Balagha can be found under the titles of "A critical study of Nahjul Balagha" (Syed Muhammad Waris Hassan,

University of Edinburgh, 1979) and “Early Islamic Politics and Government in Nahjul Balagha” (Reza Nazarahari, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1995) amid other works.

It is the aim of Islamic Thought to convey the wisdom of these entities to the seekers of knowledge. Islamic Thought has printed both the English translation of the Nahjul Balagha and “Glimpses of Nahjul Balagha” by Shaheed Mutahhari. In this way, this conference is another step in delivering the message of Imam Ali (a.s.) to those with a thirst of knowledge. Islamic Thought has called upon a few renowned scholars – Christians, Hindus and Muslims - to write papers on an international level. We have presented their titles and abstracts in this booklet, some of whom will be presenting their papers at this conference. All papers will thereafter be published in a book. “Your messenger is the interpreter of your intelligence while your letter is more eloquent in expressing your true self.” (*Saying 301, Nahjul Balagha*)

Islamic Thought is grateful to all the scholars whose efforts in this field have been extremely beneficial to us up until today. On behalf of Islamic Thought, we are thankful to all those who have supported the organisation of the Nahjul Balagha Conference, especially the youths with whose help this good work has proceeded. Many thanks particularly to Dr Talib Warsi and Dr Imran Husnain. To all the writers, speakers and attendees we express our thanks. We hope we have contributed to the understanding of this great entity and by acting on his words, we can experience success in our lives and deliver this message to others.

Islamic Thought

SESSION I

Imranali Panjwani

(Tutor and PhD Candidate in Theology & Religious Studies, King's College London)

Letter 31 of 'Ali b. Abi Talib in Nahj al-Balagha: Building a Holistic Model of Education for *Madaris* and Beyond

Nahj al-Balagha is often regarded by Shi'i Muslims as a source of literary and intellectual pride. Moreover, several notable commentaries have been written in Arabic on the authenticity and content of Ali b. Abi Talib's sermons. Ironically however, very little research has been done on Nahj al-Balagha as a compilation which can inspire universal frameworks to solve social, ethical, political and educational problems of humanity. Despite Sharif al-Radhi's intention of making Nahj al-Balagha a source of inspiration, it has not really been used to formulate concepts and models. One area which I would like to focus on is how letter 31, written by Ali b. Abi Talib to his sons before his death, can offer diverse principles to develop a holistic model of education for madaris in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Currently, there is a divide between spiritual and secular education and the worldviews of 'Islam' and the 'West.' Whilst there is now discussion on these issues and late scholars such as Mohamed Arkoun have been recognised for their contribution in this field, a coherent model of education has not been put forward. In universities, at least in the West, education has been streamlined into modular teaching thereby fostering a reductionist attitude to learning which is done in parts and disconnected from other subjects. There is no focus on spirituality and life skills and in schools, this is very apparent where there is a divide between the young mind and his/her participation in the local community – hence rising problems in knife and gang crime. In *madaris* (schools), whether in the Shi'a or Sunni community, the same approach to teaching Islam in terms of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tajweed* (recitation) *akhlaq* (ethics) and *tarikh* (history) has been occurring since Muslim migrants came to the West. This model is now stagnant because it fails to capture the essence of Islam and instead focuses on externalities of the religion. The Qur'an is not really understood and subjects such as *aqaid* (theology), *al-akhlaq al-amali* (practical ethics) and literature are not taught. The beauty of letter 31 is that Ali b. Abi Talib makes no distinction in worldviews or geography; rather he combines different systems of learning which range from the secular and spiritual to life and personal moral training.

My presentation aims to extract core teaching and learning principles from this letter using the case study of madrasah education in the UK. By using this approach, one may be able to see the practical and contemporary value of Nahj al-Balagha within a problem scenario and more importantly, create a set of coordinates for a vision for madrasah education that meets today's educational, moral and social challenges.

Imranali Panjwani obtained his LLB in Law from the University of Sheffield. Thereafter, he underwent seminary training in Islamic Studies & Arabic at Al-Mahdi Institute, Birmingham. Concurrently, he attended the College of Law to study on the Legal Practice Course. He is currently completing his PhD in Theology & Religious Studies at King's College London. He is the editor of The Shi'a of Samarra: The Heritage and Politics of a Community in Iraq (I.B Tauris, 2012).



Professor Liyakat Takim
(Sharjah Chair in Global Islam, McMaster University, Canada)

Spirituality in the Nahj al-Balagha

This paper will examine the spirituality of ‘Ali as reflected in the Nahj al-Balagha. In today’s world, we are in continuous search for godly individuals who can inspire us to and through whom we can feel the presence of the divine. The Qur’an constantly reminds us of “those who believe and act righteously”- that is, those who assent to God’s existence and then become godly in their life. Imam ‘Ali embodied such a personality. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that spirituality was the key to the personality of ‘Ali. Imam ‘Ali did not just worship God, he adored him. It is from ‘Ali that we can comprehend the quest to experience God in the present world, to feel His majestic presence and to remove the veils that separate human from the divine.

The paper will also examine how, as the heir to the Prophet, Imam ‘Ali exemplified the living paradigm of the prophetic ideal. Emulating the Prophet in every possible way was an indispensable means to attaining holiness and experiencing the divine in the same way that the Prophet had. It will go on to discuss the twin notions of piety and asceticism and the spiritual stations articulated in the Nahj al-Balagha.

Professor Liyakat Takim is the Sharjah Chair in Global Islam at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. A native of Zanzibar, Tanzania, he has spoken at more than eighty academic conferences and authored one hundred scholarly works on diverse topics like reformation in the Islamic world, the treatment of women in Islamic law, Islam in America, the indigenization of the Muslim community in America, dialogue in post-9/11 America, war and peace in the Islamic tradition, Islamic law, Islamic biographical literature, the charisma of the holy man and shrine culture, and Islamic mystical traditions. He teaches a wide range of courses on Islam and offers a course on comparative religions.

Professor Takim’s second book titled Shi’ism in America was published by New York University Press in summer 2009. His first book, The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi’ite Islam was published by SUNY press in 2006. He is currently working on his third book, Ijtihad and Reformation in Islam. Professor Takim has taught at several American and Canadian universities and is actively engaged in dialogue with different faith communities.



Dr Mohammad Khalid
(Lecturer, Al-Mahdi Institute, Birmingham)

Politics in the light of Nahjul Balaghah

It is indeed a rare privilege to me to elaborate on the crucial but amazing topic, the nature of the politics in the light of Nahjul Balaghah. No doubt, Nahjul Balaghah is a great monument in the history of literature containing the most outstanding sermons of Imam Ali pertaining to almost all major topics guiding humanity to the right direction, with obviously no exception for politics. We may find numerous khutbat (sermons) of Imam Ali dealing with the politics, governmental policies, good management and the qualities of successful leadership. The current work is going to focus on the same areas with a view to comprehending the fundamental rules and instructions expounded by the Imam as had been preserved in the treasure trove of Nahjul Balaghah. A humble attempt has been made to elucidate briefly on the politics, government policies and the basic human rights in the light of Nahjul Balaghah.

The Quran not only lays down principles of morality and ethics, but also provides guidance in the political, social and economic fields. For example it prescribes for certain crimes and enunciates principles of monetary and fiscal policy (Quran, 2:178-179, 5:31-34, 38-39, 45, 6:152-155). These cannot be translated into practice unless there is a state to enforce them. In the Quran we can find numerous instances of governments and states established by the prophets and their successors (Quran, 27:15-44, 38:17-40, 12:56-62, 20:80-99).

Imam Ali was a great authority after the Holy Prophet in all aspect of life especially in the field of politics and good governance. His teachings and instructions issued on different occasions are paramount and are preserved by the pages of Nahj al-Balaghah. He beautifully expounded the importance and need of politics, good governance and establishment of social justice. To him, the sanctity of justice was so important that it is considered the aim of all prophetic missions.

Imam Ali always stood by his ideals even in the most critical circumstances where everyone is succumbed to compromise with expedience, with a view to saving him and his mission from failure. Ali's position as a ruler is greatly misunderstood and people including historians try to compare his reign with his predecessors - when they find no success in terms of conquests, rather they see horrendous civil war, it leads them to the conclusion that Ali was not successful as a ruler. We cannot agree with this conclusion as it is the work of merely one side whereas the other side of the case is entirely sidetracked. We may try to comprehend the case of Imam Ali from the other angle; and that is, suppose, if Ali were given the same support that was enjoyed by his three predecessors, what would the result have been? Furthermore, had the three previous caliphs been betrayed by their followers exactly as Ali had been and dragged into civil war, could we have still seen the same result of magnificent conquests during their time?

Dr. Khalid has received an MA from the University of Birmingham and a PhD from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Prior to this Dr. Khalid received an MA in Islamic Studies from Merkez-e-Uloom Islamiyah, Pakistan, and a BA in Islamic Studies from Idara Ishaatul Uloom, Pakistan. For over twenty-years he has been Minister of Religion and has been a visiting lecturer in local schools.

Dr. Khalid also holds the post of a senior consultant in Islamic issues and had extensive experience in community-wide issues. Furthermore, he has also written articles for a leading Urdu newspaper 'Daily Jang London' on the topics of education, problems of Muslim youth, Islam and extremism etc. He also writes articles and features in English for the 'Azan' magazine and Naveed-e-Sahar, on the topics of Muslim youth and education, youth and crimes, Islam and terrorism community related issues etc. Dr. Khalid's research and teaching interests include; History, Hadith Studies, Ulum al-Quran, Ulum al-Hadith.



Shaykh Mohammed Ali Ismail
(Lecturer, Islamic College for Advanced Studies, London)

Understanding the Qur'an in the Light of Nahj al-Balāghah

The Holy Qur'an exists on multiple levels and as a result, the meanings embedded in its verses can be understood at different levels. At one level, everyone can comprehend the meaning of the verses; however, the highest level of meaning is accessible only by those who have the purest of souls: the Ahl al-Bayt (A). This select group are therefore best positioned to interpret and explain the contents of the Qur'an. People vary, however, in their ability to fully grasp the profundity of the Ahl al-Bayt's (A) expositions and therefore, the Ahl al-Bayt (A) do not explain the meanings of the verses to everyone in the same way.

This essay examines the aforementioned matters in light of the words of Imam 'Alī i. Abī Ṭālib (A) in Nahj al-Balāghah. It also investigates the most fundamental principles that must be observed in order to arrive at a correct understanding of the Book of Allah as elucidated in Nahj al-Balāghah, and special attention is given to the position of Imam 'Alī (A) as 'interpreter' of the Qur'an. The essay concludes by emphasising the need to refer to Nahj al-Balāghah in order to know more about the nature of the Qur'an, the meanings of its verses and how we can better understand it.

Shaykh Mohammed Ali Ismail, from Peterborough, graduated in Law. He then went to Qum, Iran where he studied in the Hawza for ten years, specialising in Qur'an and Hadith Studies. While in Qum, he regularly taught on short courses and was Manager of the World Federation Islamic Education Board's Qum Office for three years.

Having graduated from the Hawza in 2007, he went on to qualify as a professional teacher by completing the Post Graduate Certificate in Education at the University of Portsmouth. He then

moved to Damascus, Syria where for two years he taught and trained future Ministers of Religion at the Islamic Institute for Post Graduate Studies.

Shaykh Mohammed Ali resettled in the UK in 2010 and is BA Hawza Studies Programme Leader and a lecturer at the Islamic College. He also conducts Personal Development Courses in Islamic fields of study and lectures in Islamic centres.



Professor Rodney Shakespeare
(Professor of Binary Economics, London)

Economic Justice, Zakah and Imam Ali

The Nahj al-Balagha is a treasure trove of insight and help given by Imam Ali (a.s.). In particular it expresses Ali's sense of humanity and justice. On being asked as to which is superior, justice or generosity, Ali upheld justice which gives a permanent, structural solution to poverty whereas generosity is, at best, a temporary alleviation.

Muslims, therefore, should try to go beyond the temporary alleviations provided by Zakah/Khums and find a permanent solution to poverty.

This paper provides a permanent, modern, private property, true free market solution in which all citizens are enabled, over time, to build an independent economic base.

Rodney Shakespeare is Visiting Professor of Binary Economics at Trisakti University, Jakarta, Indonesia. He is a Cambridge MA; a qualified UK Barrister; a regular broadcaster on Press TV, IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) and Al Alam TV and other channels; and recipient of the (Martin Luther) King-Kelso Award.

Rodney's main website is www.binaryeconomics.net and he is a co-founder of the Global Justice Movement (www.globaljusticemovement.net) and a member of the Christian Council for Monetary Justice. He is also Chair of the Committee Against Torture in Bahrain.



SESSION II

Dr Rebecca Masterton
(Lecturer, Islamic College for Advanced Studies, London)

Humanity in Nahj al-Balagha

Islam is essentially about humanity; it is a science that seeks to train us to be both human and humane. This discussion looks at the issue of humanity in Nahj al-Balagha from a number of different perspectives: it examines Imam Ali (as)'s own asceticism in light of his compassion for those whom he governed, then turns to his perspective on man, beginning with Prophet Adam (as), where he highlights man's psychic composition, the composite nature with which he has been created and how this has determined the course of human history. Imam Ali (as) writes about how Islam has come to man to raise him up out of his wretched state and to restore his essential humanity, which is inherently linked to the cosmological aspect of his existence. Imam Ali's definition of humanity can be seen in his letters to his comrades, where he exhorts the strong to support the weak. We conclude with the Imam's lamentation at the lack of humanity in those he sees around him and his prediction that the guardians of humanity will in future be hidden, such will be the instability and darkness of the days ahead; but there is also a note of hope, which is that divine mercy is always present in the lives of those who strive to be humane.

Dr Rebecca Masterton graduated with a PhD in Islamic mystical literature of West Africa from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She is Senior Lecturer at the Islamic College, teaching on both Islamic and Western Mysticism and has also lectured at other institutes, such as Birkbeck College. She has combined research and writing for academic journals with working in media, presenting for Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Press TV and Ahlulbait TV. Her research interests include the Shi'i roots of Islamic mysticism; comparative literature and comparative philosophy. She has also published a collection of short stories entitled 'Passing Through the Dream...'



Dr Ian G. Williams
(Lecturer, Markfield Institute of Higher Education/University of Gloucestershire)

Najhul Balagha and Multiculturalism in Contemporary UK and Europe – a text for the times?

The standard definition of 'multicultural' is that it refers to a society characterised by the presence of many different cultures, where 'culture' stands for ethnicity, religion or 'race'. But the term 'multiculturalism' has been associated with a positive value position in relation to the presence in a society of such diverse factors. Parekh for example,

argues that the ‘celebration of diversity’ theme at the heart of contemporary multiculturalist discourse dates back to early Christian theologians (Augustine, in the 4th c, Aquinas, in 13th c CE), and that it was promoted by Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and others in the Enlightenment tradition (Parekh 2000).

Multiculturalist discourse emerged in the 1960’s in the UK in the context of the introduction of practical policies for the elimination of racial discrimination couched in terms of a philosophy of the social integration of ethnic minorities. But it has always been the subject of intense controversy.

This paper will examine the vision of a “multicultural” society found in the discourses of Imam Ali laid out in *Najhul Balagha* and its applicability to the context of the modern UK and Europe.

Dr Ian G. Williams teaches Islamic Studies with supervision of doctoral students at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education / University of Gloucestershire. He previously taught at the Universities of Chester, and Derby, and Birmingham City University.

Ian’s doctoral research focussed upon contemporary perceptions of ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib amongst Sunni and Twelver Shi’a traditions in the UK. He has published and given papers at international academic conferences on his current research into the work of a modern Turkish Religio-Social Movement with a global network of schools and universities, media, relief agency and inter-religious dialogue activities.



Revd Frank Julian Gelli
(Anglican Priest, UK)

Imam Ali: Hero of Immanence and of Transcendence

This paper considers some key events and episodes during Imam Ali’s Caliphate and discusses their meaning in the light of the key spiritual and theological category of transcendence. Furthermore, this paper picks out some key passages and sentences in the *Najul Balagha* in order to consider a fundamental question: granted the high role and status of Ali ibn Abi Talib in his personal, close relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, and in connection with the rise of Islam in general, how can we properly understand the severe tests and trials which marked his caliphate?

Some critics have implied that Ali was somewhat lacking in political ability and cunning. Others have said that he was a victim of events beyond his control. Or that the Caliph was basically unlucky. Against such views, this paper argues that immanent concepts like political leadership and failure should be considered against the crucial background of transcendence. Thus, some conventional, critical judgments about Imam Ali’s rule ought to be qualified by reference to a total, spiritual and theologico-political picture of

his significance in Islam, particularly in Shia' Islam. This paper contends that Ali's deep religious piety, his military prowess and, above all, his sense of Islamic justice are among his greatest strengths. The exceptional honour and authority that important sections of Islam, both at the exoteric and the esoteric levels, assign to Ali point to a recognition and an affirmation of Imam Ali's overall virtues as a supreme champion and role model of Islam. Ultimately, however, Ali's vindication lies in the realm of transcendence.

The Reverend Frank J. Gelli is an Anglican Priest working on Religious Dialogue and Interfaith. He was born and raised in Rome where he worked as a journalist and theatre critic. He has degrees in philosophy, theology and education from London and Oxford Universities. He is the author of several books. The latest, recently published, is entitled 'Julius Evola: the Sufi of Rome' and is available on Amazon Kindle. He was Chaplain at the Church of St Nicholas, British Embassy, Ankara, Turkey, where he became especially aware of the importance of dialogue with Islam. He has lectured on philosophy, cultural criticism and religious dialogue in many countries, such as Britain, the US, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Qatar and Egypt. He is often interviewed by various Islamic TV Channels. He has just completed an MA in Islamic Studies at the Muslim College, London, and his MA Dissertation was on Islamic Eschatology. His weekly commentaries on religion and philosophy can be found online.



Professor Sajjad H. Rizvi
(Associate Professor of Islamic Intellectual History, University of Exeter)

Philosophical arguments in the Nahj al-Balagha

Ever since Aristotle, the dominant approach to knowledge and the classification and hierarchy of disciplines has placed philosophy, in particular the abstract 'science' of metaphysics at the pinnacle of human intellectual inquiry. It is philosophy that provides the basic categories and conceptual tools through which we make sense of ourselves and of our world. This privileging of the philosophical has been a key feature of Islamic learned cultures as well. Hence one finds oneself in the somewhat apologetic vein of trying to appropriate and claim major figures of the Muslim past for the philosophical project. The dominant intellectual trend of the ḥawzeh has also reflected this tendency by equating philosophical inquiry (ḥikmat to be sure) with a sophisticated and higher understanding of the faith itself – revelation both in terms of scripture as well as the person and utterance of the Prophet and the Imams was seen as a symbol and inspiration for the articulation of a complete philosophical system and hermeneutics that was central to the human legacy through Adam and then later filtered through Plato and Aristotle. Authors therefore wrote about philosophy in the Nahj al-balāgha, penned short monographs on the Imam and ḥikmat. This confluence of the sacred with the secular has led to responses from some uncomfortable with the determination of the teachings of the ahl al-bayt (their ma'ārif so to speak) as an expression of what the Greeks taught. The simple question that ought to be raised is this: does our equation of the Imam with the

philosopher praise and privilege the Imam or does it restrict him and his teachings? Is philosophy the totality and pinnacle of human intellectual achievement or merely one of a series of disciplines and approaches to our understanding of self and other?

To engage with these questions, I shall broach two well known sermons from the Nahj al-balāgha that seem to indicate an expression of philosophical issues and consider whether one ought to describe them as such. I argue that the multi-logical nature of the text can also be grasped as ḥikma once we conceive of philosophy is a rather non-Aristotelian sense of the term, as a set of practices, as a way of life and of an ethical and religious commitment that speaks of faith as the unfolding of wisdom guided by a sage within the community that perpetuates those practices of reading and being.

Professor Sajjad Rizvi read modern history at Christ Church, Oxford (1991-1994) where he developed an interest in philosophy and in particular Islamic philosophy. At the time, because his interests were in the modern world, he read Modern Middle East Studies for an MPhil, staying in Oxford (1994-1996), specialising with a dissertation on philosophy in 19th century Qajar Iran. He obtained his PhD in 2000 with a doctoral dissertation on the philosophy of existence in the thought of the Iranian Safavid philosopher Mulla Sadra Shirazi (d. c. 1635). He worked at the Quranic Studies unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, and then taught for two years in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Bristol. He has been teaching at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter since 2004.

Professor Rizvi's work is based on Islamic intellectual history, with particular interests in post-Avicennan philosophical, theological and mystical traditions, Quranic exegesis and textual hermeneutics. He has also advised various government departments and private sector concerns on Iraq, Iran, Shii Islam in the Gulf, and Islam in Britain and Europe.



Sheikh Sayyed Mohammed al-Musawi
(Chairman of WABIL - World Ahlul Bayt Islamic League)

ENDNOTE SPEECH : The Importance of Nahjul Balagha



Henceforth we present the abstracts of the selected papers that could not be brought to light in the constraints of a one-day conference, but are undoubtedly the basis of the lasting success of the second stage of this project. Following the conference, the full academic papers of all the abstracts in this booklet will be published and internationally distributed. We are privileged to have the expertise of all the esteemed scholars and academics who participated and joined us in our humble steps towards exploring the depths of the words of Imam Ali (a.s.).

If you would like a copy of the aforementioned book on its publication, contact us at maulana@islamicthought.co.uk

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‘The right and duties of the society governor in the light of Nahjul Balagha’	

Dr Hamid Hadji Haidar
(Honorary Research Associate, Department of Political Science,
University College London)

Imam Ali and Citizens' Rights

There is controversy as to whether or not the subjective sense of right (in the sense of a privilege claimable against an assignable person or persons) is found in the ancient time. It is definite, however, that in the 17th century Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694), and John Locke (1632-1704) made explicit attempts at conceptualising rights. The main claim of this paper is that Imam Ali (599-661), the most revered religious scholar among Shiite Muslims, made the first explicit attempt to conceptualise rights in the history of political thought.

I would present Imam Ali's political theory as a variant of 'welfare limited guardianship', which embodies several innovations made by him in the history of political ideas. The concept of welfare state, as well as the concept of publicly confirmed guardianship, registers Imam Ali as a definite original political thinker in history. Further, his concept of citizens' rights that guarantees his view of limited government should be received as another innovation in the history of political thought. Unfortunately, however, the influence of his original political theory should wait until Nā'inī (1861-1936), the political theorist of the 'Iranian Constitutionalist Revolution' (1905-1911) developed Imam Ali's political theory with a flavour of modernity.

Dr Hamid Hadji Haidar is currently Honorary Research Associate at the Department of Political Science, UCL. He completed a BA/MA in Islamic studies (Qom Seminary), a BA from Islamic Azad University, Tehran, an MA in Politics of Democracy (Royal Holloway - University of London), and a PhD in Political Theory at the University of Essex. He is author of 'A Theory of Religious Democracy' (2006) and 'Liberalism and Islam' (2008).



Lecturer Husayn El-Mekki Abdullah-Aziz
(Islamic scholar and writer, USA)

Dimensions of Self-Purification in Nahj al-Balāgha

This essay explores the concept and application of self-purification from the perspective of the teachings of Imam 'Alī. The sermons, letters and traditions of Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib as recorded in *Nahj al-Balāgha*, will be examined in an effort to derive methods and aspects pertaining to self-purification. Of course it is noteworthy to mention that this esteemed masterpiece has been analyzed from many angles by a variety of scholars. Even assemblies and conventions have been established to celebrate the renowned text

and to better analyze its various dimensions, including the mystical aspects. And the text is also studied in Islamic seminaries.

Husayn El-Mekki completed the Farsi Language Course in Iran at a young age and graduated with honors before entering the field of religious studies at the Islamic Seminary (Hawzah). He returned to the the United States for secular education and after completing the Bachelor Degree program in Iran, he worked at several translation and educational institutes. Recently, he graduated in Islamic studies from the MA program of Islamic College for Advanced Studies in London.

He has worked extensively with the youth in the USA, teaching at several education centres and schools, founding an after-school company and helping establish a unique Islamic curriculum. He is a talented public speaker giving lectures globally, and engaging with the Muslim community in activities such as summer camps. He actively writes articles and poetry for multiple websites, magazines and newsletters locally and abroad. He currently resides in the Houston, Texas area and is on the Board of Trustees of the Muslim Congress.



Dr Muhammad Jamil Qalander

(Director Research, Translation & Publications, Markaz-e-Tahqiqaat al-Noor, Pakistan)

The Phenomenon and Noumenon of Kalam al-Imam being Imam al-Kalam

Nahj al-Balagha represents the zenith of excellence, breath, depth and height of superhuman knowledge, wisdom and vision with their rhetorico-literary, and artistic / picturesque articulation, and embodies Ali's metaphysical and cosmologico-sociological wisdom based on empirico-inductive principle in preference to hypothetico-deductive one as epitomized by Ali in his clarifying note: "I refer you as to what I am talking about of these things to what is based on direct observation, and not on a weak point in its support" – a stand that Ali adheres to even regarding such extremely abstract reality as God as evident from his answer: "Should I adore to that which I cannot see" to Ze'lab Yamani's question: "O Commander of the Faithful! Have you ever seen thy Rabb?" This stand logically and naturally follows from: (a) his concept of Man as a microcosm with the entire macro-cosmic universe enrolled therein, and (b) his concept of multiple-selfhood—an empirico-transcendental psychology in which Man is said by Ali to be "burking behind his tongue"- a psycho-analytic fact that he explains by sayings that man's "slips of tongue and facial expressions reveal what he conceals".

In cosmology, Ali subscribes to what anticipates theory of singularity with its successive cosmic trio of 'ratq', 'fatq' and 'shaqq' (of 'ajwa' and 'arja') that led to the mysterious emergence of space out of primordial gases with time conceived in terms of 'eschatological years' – a concept anticipating light years – all this with focus on huge masses of water surrounding our terrestrial geo-ship from all sides, stabilized in its plurality of motions with lofty and deep-rooted mountains pegged like anchors hanging deep into oceans and resting there in their beds.

Imam Ali points to the phenomenon of dragging and pulling circuit-fields of elementary particles whose velocity and position, as our present day physicist tell us, cannot be simultaneously determined, but are precisely known to God. In biology, Imam Ali subscribes to the theory of creative evolution of life with special focus on creatures like bat (together with mosquito and ant) and peacock indicative respectively of Divine creative art and aesthetic display.

Imam Ali envisions unity of religions in terms of oneness of all sharai' (religious canonical laws) with straightness of all religious paths leading to one and the same goal. He adopts and recommends a kind of higher benevolent asceticism in the sense of preferring the long term future success and happiness, here and hereinafter, of Man to the immediately given, present gains of life – an apparently other-worldly attitude and behavior that naturally and logically leads to the creation of an environment in this world wherein man is controlled from within by nafs-e-lawwama (moral sense) with less need for being controlled from without by legal measures and procedures, and, hence, human rights stay guaranteed.

In nutshell, Imam Ali's wisdom is the most feasible and durable solution to all human problems with guarantee of success and happiness here and hereinafter.

Dr. Muhammad Jamil Qalander completed an MA in Arabic, Persian and English Language & Literature in which he received a Gold Medal and a distinction. His PhD in Arabic Linguistics & Philosophy was on the 'Concept of Induction in the Quran'.

He has lectured as a Professor in Arabic at the Education Department, Peshawar and was Head of the Arabic Department at the National Institute of Modern Languages. At the International Islamic University, Islamabad, he was the Head of Unit of Translation & Interpretship and taught courses in Cosmology of Religion, Management Sciences and Post-Modernism. Dr Qalander is currently Director Research, Translation and Publications, at Markaz-e-Tahqiqaat al-Noor, Islamabad in Pakistan.

He has presented papers at several national and international conferences and written a vast number of research papers on educational, religious, mystical and literary themes. His interests lie in ancient and antique cultures & civilizations with their archeological-historical monuments, sciences and languages; comparative religions with their sacred books; interfaith dialogue and harmony in the light of Imam Ali's cosmologico-sociological wisdom; and environment/ecology.



Professor Latif Hussain S. Kazmi
(Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, India)

Principles of Good Leadership in the *Nahj al-Balaghah*

After the Prophet of Islam, Imam 'Ali's teachings and practices became the paradigmatic example of good leadership and governance characterized by such socio-political and

ethico-religious virtues as catholicity, equality, justice, tolerance, honesty, equality, kindness, humbleness, open-mindedness, steadfastness, generosity, love and goodwill. These virtues or qualities are essential for carrying out a judicious, balance and reasonable socio-political order within the parameters of spirituality and morality as well as Law (*Shari'ah*). Imam 'Ali's became a personification of all the ideals and values which define a good leadership.

A major portion of the *Nahj al-Balaghah* (a composition of Imam's sayings, letters and Sermons), powerfully deals with the virtues of good leadership and administration. Indeed, Imam 'Ali translated the Words of God and traditions of the Prophet (S) into action and left remarkable examples of great values of good leadership. The Imam has tried to explore the principles of good governance as explained in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (S). He was not only a spiritual guide for the people but also worked for their all-round development based on spiritual as well as material planes.

In the present paper, we shall concentrate our attention on the *Nahj al-Balaghah* (originally in Arabic) of Imam 'Ali regarding his approach to good governance based on good leadership, tracing out the main principles and ideals about quality leadership for better governance under Islamic *weltanschauung*.

Dr Latif Hussain S. Kazmi is an associate professor at the Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, UP, India. His fields of specialization are: Islamic Philosophy, Sufism, Iqbaliyyat, Existentialism, and Aesthetics. His works: Philosophy of Iqbal; Iqbal and Sartre on Human Freedom and Creativity and Studies in Islamic Philosophy have already been published in 1997, 2010 and 2011 respectively. Dr. Kazmi has published more than thirty-five research articles in Indian and foreign journals. He has participated in National and International Seminars/Conferences. His other works titled Islamic Art: A Spiritual Message, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan: Vision and Mission; Iqbal: Art and Thought; Ethico-Political Philosophy of Ibn Rushd and Studies in Classical Islamic Thought are under publication. He is the Executive Editor of The Aligarh Journal of Islamic Philosophy (India) and the founding member of the International Society of Islamic Philosophy (ISIP) and its Regional Officer for Central Asia (India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka).



Sh. Maulana Maqbool Hussain Alavi
(Chairman, Islamic Thought UK)

Attractions of Nahjul Balagha

The first commentary on Nahjul Balagha was written during the period of Sayed Razi's life. Up to this day such works have continued to be written with hundreds of books in the Persian and Arabic language on commentaries, writings on authenticity and footnotes of the Nahjul Balagha.

250 years after the writing of the Nahjul Balagha, it reached such an exemplary status in

literature which several people were unable to tolerate, leading to unplaced objections continuing till today. Why does the Nahjul Balagha have such a high level of attraction and importance? This is due to the fact that Nahjul Balagha is not based solely on one topic but rather it consists of hundreds of topics, some of which are contrasting and all of which are discussed fully. This is because the entity to whom these words belong was perfect in these very qualities. As a famous Arab poet Safiudin Hilli says “Within your great qualities many contrasting characteristics are present.”

Every life lesson can be found in this book. Sayed Razi in his preface mentions the numerous topics of the Nahjul Balagha. Several books have been written on the topics within the Nahjul Balagha. These include ‘Tasneeful Nahjul Balagha’ by the Lebanese scholar Labeeb Behzoon who divided the Nahjul Balagha into 10 subjects, ‘Al-Hadi’ by Ali Mishkini who divided it into 625 subjects, ‘Bahjus sabagha’ by Taqi Shushtari who divided it into 67 subjects, ‘Al Moajamal Mauzu’ by Uwais Karim Muhammad who divided it into 604 subjects and ‘Glimpses of the Nahjul Balagha’ by Murtaza Mottahari who divided it into 14 subjects.

Every subject that Ali touched upon, seems to be written as if the whole of Ali’s life was dedicated to this subject. In Sermon 191, when Ali preached about the fear of God it affected his companions to such an extent that it seemed that his soul had left his body. When he spoke about bravery in Sermon 11, it seemed as if this entity never had any connection with piety. In Letter 53, when he wrote upon the topic of politics it seemed as if Ali had dedicated his life to politics. When Ali spoke about death in Sermon 218, it seemed as if Ali himself had passed through the stages of death. A famous Egyptian scholar Muhammad Abdahu says in the preface of his brief commentary on Nahjul Balagha, “When Ali speaks of spirituality it seems his souls desires have been eradicated. And when Ali speaks of war it seems as if a predator bird had spread its claws to attack.” Ali became what he preached.

The great attraction of Nahjul Balagha is that the thirsty of any facet can satisfy his thirst through its words, the patient of any irremediable disease can seek their cure through it and the wounded of every age can seek the dressing of their wounds through it. My paper seeks to discuss further the topics present in Imam Ali’s Nahjul Balagha.

Sheikh Maulana Maqbool Hussain Alavi is the founder and chairman of the charity organisation Islamic Thought UK, organising youth events and seminars to promote Islam awareness within Muslim and non-Muslim communities. He studied at Islamic seminaries in Pakistan and Iran, and has a particular interest in Nahjul Balagha and Islamic ethics. He has published and internationally distributed many books on a variety of Islamic themes, including a recent publication of an English translation of Nahjul Balagha.



Professor Masud Anwar Alavi
(Department of Arabic, Aligarh Muslim University, India)

The Perfect Man in the Light of Nahj al-Balaghah

Since time immemorial, innumerable men have come and gone in this immortal world but no one has had the privilege of being held in the arms of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) right after his birth with the declaration of the Prophet (PBUH) that: "I and Ali belong to the same Nur (Light)".

Imam Ali is the "Gate of the City of Knowledge" and a beautiful combination of ethics and actions that is nowhere to be found in the history of men.

He was an amalgamation of noble and praiseworthy qualities whether it was intuitive perception and intellect to see things on a larger plane or knowledge and wisdom of a deeper meaning. He was at the helm of piety and abstinence as well as modesty and sanctity. Gentility and forbearance or restraint and endurance were his specific traits. He was a master of eloquence and rhetoric or speech and oration. He excelled in jurisprudence and diligence or Islamic law and had a fine memory and repartee. Whether it was a case of protection of rights or moral dealings, moreover patience, sacrifice, thankfulness, tolerance, contentment, justice, humility, affection, truthfulness, honor, courage, decency reason and benevolence, he was a store house of all possible noble qualities that can happen to men. Along with political acumen, defense arts, governance strategies, spiritual discernment and wisdom par excellence, whatever the area, it is not possible to encompass his attributes.

For a person of his caliber and wisdom, his oral renditions and lettered records are a rare and valuable asset for humanity to preserve and follow. Nahj al-Balaghah (the Way of Eloquence) is not just a collection of sermons, speeches, sayings and letters written in classical Arabic attributed to Hazrat Ali (AS), one of the first converts to Islam and closest to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in his following, but it is a complete way of life for guiding mankind towards the Divine purpose of Man being the Vicegerent of the Almighty on Earth. The prime attribute of the Perfect Man as depicted in the book, is the ability to nurture, cultivate and achieve a flawless persona of correcting oneself rather than others.

In today's agonizing, chaotic and perishing world we can see how true can his words be, spoken almost fifteen centuries ago by a man who held the highest office in the Islamic world and preferred to wear tatters just to keep himself away from pride and extravagance.

Professor Masud Anwar Alavi is the Chairman of the Department of Arabic at Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, India. He attained his PhD in 1986 and has since served academia of literature as a lecturer, reader and professor. He has written 25 books, winning 10 national

awards. He has authored more than a hundred papers and is an excellent oratory speaker, presenting his expertise in nationwide and international seminars.



Sh. Muhammad Amin Evans

(Director of Theology at Association Of British Muslims, Editor at Shia Affairs Journal)

Nahj al-Balagha: Life, symbolism and the sublime

Nahj al-Balagha is a work that never fails to impress and inspire English readers despite the vagaries of its translations to date. This is no more so in the sermons of Imam Ali (as) through which the inspired imagery, often referring obliquely or directly to the Qur'an or the example of Muhammad (saw), communicate both the message and the nature of the author in a manner that is extremely accessible to readers accustomed to romantic and post-romantic literature. It will be demonstrated that even if those readers have no prior knowledge of Islam or the Qur'an the symbolism and overall structure of the sermons mark them as works of spiritual greatness even in the poorest of available translations.

However, an increasing number of English readers have acquired some, or even great knowledge of the Qur'an and of the differences that surround the interpretation of events in the early history of Islam. For them Nahj al-Balagha may become a valuable collection of contemporary or near contemporary commentary upon events during the Khalifat ar-Rashidun and Prophetic Prophetic periods filled with the witting and unwitting testimony of a character central to those dramas. Yet, it is suggested, that within the sermons is a human spiritual narrative which many western Muslims will find more relevant to their lives. It is the narrative of a living tafsir in whom source and interpretation have modulated into an expression of the sublime. This will be demonstrated by investigating the use of Qur'anic allusions in the sermons with regard to Ali ibn abu Talib's famous claim during the Battle of Siffin to be the Qur'an.

Shaykh Muhammad Amin Evans is editor of the 'Shi'a Affairs Journal', Director of Theology for the Association of British Muslims, a Committee Member of the British Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom and a Consultant to the IARF Peace Commission.

Born in Birmingham, he completed secondary education and worked as a Laboratory Technician at a Technical School and later re-trained for Diesel & Hydraulic Engineering eventually designing and building earth-boring machines. Acknowledging his Islamic faith in his early forties he went on to study at the Al-Mahdi Institute graduating with an MA degree. He taught Introductory Islamic Law at the Institute, the Comparative Study of Religions and Research Methodology before becoming Director of the Information and Inter-Religious Affairs Department; Head of Al-Mahdi Summer School and a Member of the Admission Board. He is now engaged in independent research, consulting and has a busy schedule of speaking engagements at schools, colleges, mosques, churches and temples.

In addition to his qualifications in Islamic Studies he has a First in Humanities with Religious Studies that indulged his personal interests in religions, art, history, archaeology, urbanism and philosophy.



Raana Bokhari

(PhD candidate, Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University)

Imam Ali (a.s.) and Human Rights

The United Nations advised Arab countries to take Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (AS) as an example in establishing a regime based on justice and democracy and encouraging knowledge. The UNDP in its 2002 Arab Human Development Report, distributed around the world, listed six sayings of Imam Ali (AS) about ideal governance. Professor George Jordac's monumental work itself testifies to the human rights that Imam Ali sought to preserve and uphold.

The Quran gives the Muslim polity its first charter of human ethics in surah 17 verses 22-39. Apart from this, the Quran is replete with verses defining and sanctifying human rights. Concomitantly, Imam Ali's sermons and letters reflected this utmost need to preserve human rights. This paper will analyse the six sayings that the UN highlighted, and Imam's letter to Malik al-Ashtar before his governance in Egypt. I will examine how that discourse of fourteen hundred years ago is relevant today in both a theoretical and subsequent practical level, and conclude with remarks about the urgency of revisiting Imam Ali's caliphate and a thorough examination of his sayings, letters and sermons embodied in Nahjul Balaghah, to understand the ontological necessity of enshrining human rights in a time when they are rapidly being eroded in the modern world.

After completing an LL.B in law, Raana Bokhari trained as a solicitor, taught law at an FE college, then worked as a researcher at Lancaster University on 'education and social exclusion'. She has taught on several MA and BA programmes in Religious Studies. Raana has an MA in Religious Studies and is currently completing her PhD in 'Muslim Deobandi women's daily lives shaped by religious texts'. She is the author of several chapters in edited academic volumes and the co-author of four encyclopedias on Islam, including 'The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Islam'.



Saurabh Kumar Shahi

(Assistant Editor, International Affairs & Book Review, The Sunday Indian)

Nahjul Balagha is a humanist text and thus an essential read for non-Muslims too

The importance of Nahjul Balagha for the non-Muslims is paramount. It is unfortunate that most of them have first not heard of the text and second, even if they have heard of

it, they have not had the opportunity to be benefitted from its merits. The purpose of this paper of mine is to determine how Nahjul Balagha remains a pioneer text in social rhetoric irrespective of the religion. While it pushes Muslims to become good Muslims, it also pushes everyone, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to become great human beings. While there is hardly any text—sermons, letters or quotes alike—in this treatise that is not important for us Hindus, even the one exclusively for Muslims teaches a lot about the great religion of Islam and helps dispel the myths and preconceived notions from the minds of Hindus, for study purposes, I have selected a few to demonstrate the importance. In my view, Punjab was probably the only place in the world where the message of Maula Ali and Ahle Bait reached even before Islam made its advent in the region. Thus, the importance of Nahjul Balagha for the Hussaini Brahmin community is unparalleled. And I am one proud member of this sect.

On the practical level, there are several lessons to learn. The most relevant in today's concept is the way people in the west and east tried to grapple with the economic downturn. Even a cursory look at the data will reveal that there are far more numbers of suicide and homelessness in the west due to the economic crisis of 2008 than in the east. And the primary reason is the concept of family and kinship. The family as a support system helped many people avoid similar fate and restart afresh. Under the circumstances, it is rather troubling that since the advent of post-liberalization in India, one can see an evident departure from these values among the urban class. In the mad rush to copy the concepts of the west, youngsters are undermining the institution of family. Maula's sermon has warned against this long ago. The destruction of this institution will mean the destruction of the fabric.

It is known to everyone how much Mahatma Gandhi, our Father of the Nation, admired the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and Maula Ali. While I was going to the above mentioned sermon, it struck me how similar it was to the Gandhian concept of "end and mean". Although it has not been explicitly mentioned, I believe that Mahatma Gandhi was influenced by this very sermon of Maula Ali.

Saurabh Kumar Shahi covers International Affairs for The Sunday Indian weekly and specializes in West Asia Conflict, and Islamic Studies. In his very brief career of 6 years, Saurabh has reported from the various conflict zones in As Sulaimaniya, Tikrit, Tehran, Qom, Massad, Bandar Abbas, FATA, NWFP, Kunar, Vavuniya, Jaffna, Colombo, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Caracas, Tashkent, Istanbul, Astana, Dushanbe, Havana, Homs, Hama, Derra, Damascus and many more. He is a Hobbesian idealist and a staunch humanist, and lives in Delhi.



Hojjat al-Islam Sh. Seyed Jamaledin Dinparvar
(Head of Nahjul Balagha International Foundation, Iran)

Imam Ali, a Symbol of a Perfect Human Being

The 'perfect human being' is a title that has been considered for a long time and not only have scholars and philosophers discussed it, but it has been very attractive in public. Despite the fact that every day, industry and science discovers and creates novel inventions and offers new equipments, whenever man has the opportunity to escape the constraints of these tools and finds time for introspection, he wishes that even if he cannot reach this great position, he can at least come to realise the character of the perfect human being.

Most human schools of thought from Buddhism to Existentialism confess to the fact that human perfection is far beyond just eating, sleeping, rage and lust. Above all, there are divine religions, especially Islam, that consider human perfection. In this relation, Amir al-Mu`mineen Ali (peace be upon him) has more than 140 discourses.

In this paper, characteristics of a perfect human being will be summarized in light of three principles that are vital to society: virtue, knowledge and jihad. However, human perfection has various levels and degrees - what is important to consider are those people who reach the peak of the perfection and can be a model and guide for others to take inspiration and learn from his attributes.

Amir al-Mu`mineen Ali (peace be upon him) is an excellent example of the perfect human who was pre-eminent in the mentioned characteristics (virtue, knowledge and jihad). During his blessed life, especially the period of rule, he demonstrated this in the best way such that the result of this, i.e. social justice, has become famous in the annals of history.

Hojjat al-Islam wal Muslimeen Seyed Jamaledin Dinparvar is head of Nahjul Balagha International Foundation in Tehran, Iran. This centre aims to promote Imam Ali's (AS) teachings, carrying out scientific research and establishing cooperation with religious, cultural and scientific centres to foster the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah. Its past activities include publishing books (over 140 titles in Persian, Arabic, Urdu and English), holding annual seminars, establishing the Nahj al-Balaghah Correspondence School, preparing the 'Alawi Encyclopedia, founding the Nahj al-Balaghah Specialised Library, publishing thesis written by university students and inaugurating the Academy of Nahj al-Balaghah Sciences in Iran.



Nahjul Balagha: a source of guidance and inspiration for progress in the physical and natural sciences.

The book Nahjul Balagha is a collection of sermons, letters and sayings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), a leading intellectual and spiritual leader, and revolutionary from the sixth/seventh century CE. The necessity of seeking knowledge is a key theme in Nahjul Balagha. The Imam espouses knowledge to be a central tenet in the life of a human being. The ultimate aim of this process of learning is to reach a correct understanding or ‘truth,’ whether this be physical or metaphysical in nature, and thus enable the betterment of one’s self and society at large. The Imam also lays out a scientific methodology for the discovery and establishment of new concepts and principles. This involves sharing of ideas to facilitate rapid progress and avoid repetition in findings, an unbiased and critical appraisal of one’s own and others’ research, and experimentation to uncover knowledge that is ‘hidden’ (i.e., not self-evident or noticeable).

In this work, the importance and influence of the Imam’s teachings on the medieval Arabian society is discussed. A connection is made between the intellectual transformation of the early Muslim civilisation to a knowledge-based culture and the teachings of the Imam. His scientific theories and approaches are discussed in the context of his own intellectual prowess, as well as in providing guidance and inspiration to the early Muslim scientists. Finally, the role of the Imam in shaping the scientific revolution during the golden age of Islam (7th – 13th centuries CE) and in the establishment of the first universities is considered.

Dr Seyyed I. Husnain is a scientist at the University of Leicester. His research interests include genetics (gene regulation), protein structure and protein biochemistry. Dr Husnain also teaches undergraduate and postgraduate science and medical students. He has previously held appointments at the University of Texas (Houston) and the University of Sheffield. Over a number of years, he has cultivated a keen interest in the Islamic contribution to the physical sciences, as well as scientific discourses in the Qur’an and in the narrations from the Ahlul Bayt. He has delivered lectures and written articles on the subject for the benefit of youth communities within the UK.



Dr Syed Ali Kazim
(Research Officer, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, India)

Relevance of the Nahjul Balagha in the Indian Scenario

The *Nahj al- Balagah* of Imam Ali, one of the most neglected works of Islam in modern studies of Islamicists, on the pretext that it is not by Imam Ali but comes from the pen of its compiler Syed Sharif Razi, has stood the test of time in terms of its authenticity and historical, political and administrative importance. Further researches on *Nahj al- Balagah* have proved beyond doubt that most of the sayings compiled in this monumental work exists in texts antedating Allama Razi, secondly their style is totally different from the many books that have survived from Razi's pen.

Therefore, it is high time that the *Nahj al- Balagah*, a book which is most revered in Shi'ism after the Quran and prophetic sayings and has taught so many Arab writers how to write eloquent Arabic, should be brought to public discourse once again. This paper will look into the relevance of *Nahj al- Balagah* in relation to the present scenario in India where corruption in high places, nepotism and all pervasive decline in values have touched a rock bottom.

Dr Syed Ali Kazim is a Research Officer in the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (second series, Vol. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45), Teen Murti House, New Delhi, India. He obtained a BA and MA in History from Aligarh University, and was awarded a PhD in 2009 on "A critical study of the role and achievements of the Sayyid Brothers 1713-19" from the Centre of Advanced Studies, Department of History, A.M.U, Aligarh. He has vast lectureship experience and has published and presented several papers at a national and international level.



Dr. Syed Talib Hussain Warsi
(Physician, TV presenter)

Nahjul Balagha and World Peace

"Which of the two parties has more right to security and peace, tell me if you know."
(Qur'an, Sura Al-An'm, Chapter 6, verse 81)

"World Peace" are the two words every 'world leader' promises.' World peace' is every human being's desire and right but it has eluded them to this date. If we look around our world today can we find a leader who can truly deliver peace as assured by God Almighty?

Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson in his book 'Towards a meaningful life' states that a true leader sees his work as selfless service towards a higher purpose. He derives great

strength from his dedication to a purpose that is greater than himself. A leader who inspires absolute trust, who is totally dedicated to fulfilling his unique role. He rises above any individual perspective to take a global view, that we can rid this world of war and hate and ignorance, obliterate the borders that separates race from race and rich from poor.

Amongst the actions and words of The Commander of the Faithful, Hazrat Ali Ibn Abu Talib(AS), there are two very clear and unambiguous messages:

1. that Allah, who is all just, has bestowed upon us just laws in the last of His books, the Holy Quran; and
2. this book and this promise has been delivered for all of us, to all of us and for all times, by His beloved prophet infallible (masoom), Hazrat Mohammed Mustapha(SW).

Nahjul Balagha, The Peak of Eloquence clearly reflects the words of the Quran when Hazrat Ali (AS) states :-

"The greatest of these rights that Allah, the Glorified, has made obligatory, are the rights of the ruled over the ruler, not merely the rights of the ruler over the ruled . This is an obligation which Allah has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection and an honour for their religion." (Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 214)

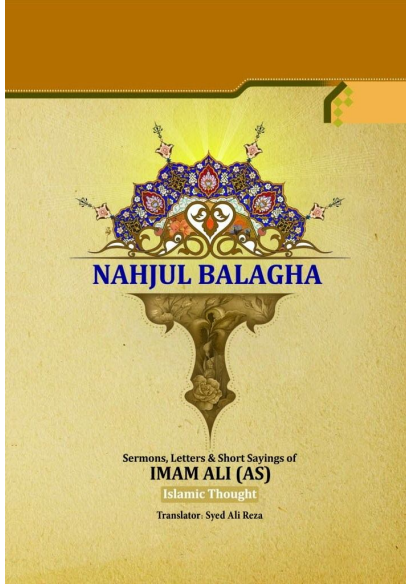
There is no peace in this world because the leaders of today believe in accumulating and controlling political power through their arsenal of weapons and economic power through capitalism.

Islam is against both these sources of power; they breed tyrants, dictators and ruthless rulers. Maula Ali's(AS) life is a biography of his battles against such unethical practices and Nahjul Balagha is the collected and recorded evidence for all of us to learn.

Dr. Syed Talib Hussain Warsi is a Muslim leader of faith and a doctor of medicine. He practiced in Derby, UK. A regular broadcaster and anchorman on radio and television, Talib presents weekly Islamic programmes involving news, Quranic lessons and studies on the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahlulbait. He also presents Interfaith dialogue with Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and others as well as interviewing important scholars and academic personalities.

Talib has long been involved in race relations and is an expert on apartheid in political, financial, cultural systems. He has attended many overseas conferences and has many papers to his credit. He also sat on the bench in this country as a Justice Of The Peace (Magistrate) for many years. He is active in the Committee Against Torture In Bahrain.





Copies of Nahjul Balagha are available now

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