

Youth-Centeredness in the Governance of Imam Ali (Peace Be Upon Him): A Model for Social Justice (Characteristics and Criteria)

Abstract:

Proponent (Hujjat-ul-Islam Mohammad Javad Purdil): The aim of this presentation is a comparative examination of Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) youth-centered approach in his governance model and how the distribution of governmental positions reflects this strategy. The approach adopted is descriptive-analytical, aiming to define youth and offer strategies for their identification. It discusses the use of young individuals in various areas of governance and, based on historical reports, outlines the Imam's strategy for appointing young officials to achieve social justice. Additionally, a set of thirteen guidelines for determining the age of the Imam's appointees is presented, showcasing his commitment to utilizing young people and referring to their characteristics as reasons for their selection. Results indicate that out of 136 appointments made by the Imam, 42, equivalent to 31% of the total appointments, were to young individuals. Thus, the significant number of appointments in the governorship, as the highest governmental position, highlights the importance of this sector. The active presence of young people in all administrative parts of Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) government demonstrates the Imam's special attention to this age group, alongside the involvement of middle-aged and elderly individuals. This balance not only reflects the realization of social justice and the maintenance of security in the Imam's government but also serves as the key to the government's survival by training and replacing young forces.

First Critic (Hujjat-ul-Islam Ali Akbar Zakeri): The perspective from which you have approached the topic is very valuable and beneficial, and it can serve as a model for society. As you noted, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in *Nahj al-Balagha*, in his short sayings, mentions that the opinion of an elder (someone advanced in age) is more preferable to him than the actions of a young person. When you develop this paper and discuss youth-centeredness while presenting examples, this statement by Imam Ali seems to challenge the entire paper. When discussing youth and youth-centeredness, this contradiction needs to be addressed, and a solution should be provided. Criteria should be outlined, but your paper does not address these criteria. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) has mentioned criteria in a letter to Malik al-Ashtar, where the age of the individual—whether young, middle-aged, or old—is not a primary concern; what matters is these criteria. In "Sunan al-Nabi" Volume 10, page 193, it is explained why Imam Ali made that statement about youth and elders. It states that someone came to Imam Ali asking to appoint his son as his successor, and that is when the Imam made that statement.

Second Critic (Professor Nasser Baqeri Bidehendi): The title should be unambiguous; it would be appropriate to change the title or resolve its ambiguities. What practical outcomes can this discussion have today, and what issues can it address in our society? A justice-oriented government is not solely about appointing youth in positions or cabinets; meritocracy is the standard that Imam Ali emphasized, as "experience is above knowledge and the opinion of an elder is preferred over the strength of youth." Although young people, due to their vigor and readiness, may advance tasks more effectively, youth-centeredness has not always proven successful. We see that in some countries like Ukraine, Saudi

Arabia, and France, young leaders are in charge, and the current conditions in these countries are marked by significant discontent with their unseasoned policies. We cannot impose this issue on Imam Ali's governance and claim that his success in achieving social justice was due to his use of young individuals. This is a superficial argument; governance is highly sensitive and requires individuals with high capability and sufficient experience who can make wise decisions in crises and difficulties. Achieving social justice requires specific strategies. Is youth-centeredness still valuable if experienced and knowledgeable elders are available? If a young person has expertise and commitment, like Martyrs Tehrani Moghaddam and Baqeri, this issue is acceptable. However, your focus has been on official appointees, while youth are not limited to these positions.

Session Chair (Hujjat-ul-Islam Farhad Pourkiwan):

At the end of the session, after addressing questions from the audience and other points raised by the critics, the presenter responded to the criticisms and questions. With a summary by the session chair, the meeting concluded with the recitation of blessings upon Muhammad and his pure family.