

The Quranic Reflection of the Concept of Social Integration in Imam Ali's Nahj al-Balagha: A Discursive Analysis

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Abstract

The present study is conducted discursively on the reflection of the Holy Quran in the philosophy of Imam Ali in regard to the concept of social integration as it is argued in Nahj al balagha. Such a concept has been tackled from different perspectives: literary, linguistic, cultural, historical, rhetorical, philosophical, and political. However, it is still a subject of ongoing polemic debates. It has rarely been analyzed through a linguistic lens of Western theoretical insights. Hence, this study is an attempt to bridge the gap between discursive strategies, from a Western theoretical perspective, and selected texts from Nahj al balagha. Discursive strategies are adopted in this study to spell out how language could shape meaning and social interactions. This study is qualitative in nature describing, interpreting, and explaining a variety of discursive strategies concerning the act of social integration. Selected texts from Imam Ali's Nahj al balagha are the primary data of the current study which employs Wodak's (2005) taxonomy of discursive strategies to investigate the intricate network of social integration by means of which individuals can be incorporated into a larger community. Via the given discursive strategies, the study has arrived at certain conclusions: a) western theoretical foundations could be helpful enough to deal with non-western philosophical and texts, b) based on various linguistic devices and discursive strategies, Imam Ali endeavors to make individuals feel a sense of belongingness which can elaborate overall well-being, economic stability, social cohesion or inclusion, and cultural exchange, and C) there is interdiscursivity between the Holy Quran and Nahj al belagha, both texts are immersed in a variety of profound themes on all aspects of life.

Key Words: Imam Ali, Nahj al Balagha, Social Integration, Discursive Strategies

الانعكاس القرآني لمفهوم التكامل الاجتماعي في نهج البلاغة للأمام علي (عليه السلام): دراسة خطابية

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المستخلص:

تم إجراء هذه الدراسة بشكل خطابي حول انعكاس القرآن الكريم في فلسفة الإمام علي فيما يتعلق بمفهوم التكامل الاجتماعي كما هو مذكور في نهج البلاغة.

لقد تم تناول هذا المفهوم من زوايا متعددة: الأدبية، اللغوية، الثقافية، التاريخية، البلاغية، الفلسفية، والسياسية. ومع ذلك، لا يزال هذا الموضوع محور نقاشات جدلية مستمرة. نادراً ما تم تحليل نهج البلاغة من خلال عدسة لغوية تستند إلى الرؤى النظرية الغربية. وبالتالي، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى سد الفجوة بين الاستراتيجيات التداولية كمنظور نظري غربي والنصوص المختارة من نهج البلاغة. تم تبني الاستراتيجيات التداولية في هذه الدراسة لتوضيح كيف يمكن للغة من تشكيل المعاني والتفاعلات الاجتماعية.

تعد هذه الدراسة نوعية في طبيعتها، حيث تصف، تفسر، وتشرح مجموعة متنوعة من الاستراتيجيات التداولية فيما يتعلق بفعل التكامل الاجتماعي. النصوص المختارة من نهج البلاغة للإمام علي هي البيانات الرئيسية لهذه الدراسة التي تستخدم تصنيف ووداك (2005) للاستراتيجيات التداولية للتحقيق في الشبكة المعقدة للتكامل الاجتماعي التي من خلالها يمكن دمج الأفراد في مجتمع أوسع.

: (أ) يمكن أن تكون الأسس النظرية الغربية مفيدة بما فيه الكفاية للتعامل مع النصوص الفلسفية غير الغربية. (ب) بناءً على تنوع الأدوات اللغوية والاستراتيجيات التداولية، يسعى الإمام علي إلى جعل الأفراد يشعرون بالإحساس بالانتماء، مما يمكن أن يساهم بدوره في تعزيز من خلال الاستراتيجيات التداولية المعطاة، توصلت الدراسة إلى استنتاجات رئيسية معينة الرفاه العام والاستقرار الاقتصادي والتماسك أو الشمول الاجتماعي والتبادل الثقافي، ج هناك تداخل خطابيا بين القرآن ونهج البلاغة في كثير من الأفكار حول جوانب مختلفة في حياة الإنسان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الامام علي، نهج البلاغة، التكامل الاجتماعي، الاستراتيجيات الخطابية.

1. Introduction

Imam Ali's views on justice and leadership are a point analysis and discussion by the French philosopher Roger Garaudy who accentuates that Imam Ali is unprecedented in his vision of fairness, society construction, and governance (Garaudy, 1986). Being revolutionary for his time, he had a unique concept of freedom as he went beyond the basic opposition to slavery to start on more profound issues such as the freedom of speech and thought, and the right to live with full dignity (Momen, 1985). During his reign, he was a leader who not only called for justice but he also practiced it. People were treated evenly, whether they were friends, enemies, Muslims, or non-Muslims (Nasr, 2006). Compared to the high standards of Arabic literature, his rhetoric remains unmatched. That he had remarkably eloquent, persuasive, and rational discourse made him one of the most influential speakers of his time because his discourse (Leaman, 2002).

Nahj al Balagha, or the "Peak of Eloquence," as it is translated, can be defined as a collection of sermons, letters, and sayings attributed to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. In Islamic thought, the significance of this collection is due to its rhetorical grace, wisdom, and depth of content (Amir-Moezzi, 2011). The book was compiled by Sharif Razi in the 10th century (Khalidi, 2009). Ever since, it has been thought of as a

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masterpiece of Arabic literature. It involves three main components: sermons (covering topics like justice, governance, faith, and spirituality), letters (texts that are addressed to individuals such as governors and friends, providing varied and broad insights on leadership, integrity, ethics, and conduct), and wisdom (a representation of Imam Ali's perspectives on governance, life, and human nature) (Momen, 1985). By and large, *Nahj al Balagha* has been a key source for scholars and devotees alike; this is due to its profound insights into philosophy, ethics, state governance, and politics (Esposito, 2003).

2. Research Questions

1. What are the discursive strategies and linguistic devices employed by Imam Ali in *Nahj al balagha* to promote the concept of social integration?
2. In what ways can Wodak's taxonomy of discursive strategies be applied to non-western philosophical texts, namely Imam Ali's *Nahj al balagha*?

3. Research Objectives

This study attempts to arrive at the following objectives:

1. To identify the discursive strategies and linguistic devices used by Imam Ali in *Nahj al balagha* to advocate the principles of social integration.
2. To examine the applicability of Wodak's taxonomy (as western theoretical foundation) in analyzing non-Western philosophical text.

4. Statement of the Problem

Although the concept of social integration has been studied from various perspectives, it has rarely been highlighted through a western linguistic lens by using Western theoretical framework. This gap creates a challenge in understanding how western theoretical moves, as Wodak's discursive strategies, could be helpful in analyzing non-western philosophical text, such as the discourse of Imam Ali, to understand how language can shape the public mind and public perception concerning concepts, such as the concept of social cohesion and integration.

5. Theoretical Perspectives:

Discursivity, as a term, is used by Wodak(2005) to refers to the modes of thinking, speaking, and writing which are structured and produced through discourse. Based on such perspective, she proposes five strategies:

1. Nomination: How social actors, groups, or events are named and categorized is the target of this strategy. For instance, the use of labels such as warriors, hypocrites, tyrants, dictators, terrorists, persecutors, democrats, and republicans are just a few examples (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Against such a background, it is worth mentioning that naming entities has the power to shape public perception (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Calling someone a dictator could invoke a negative connotation, whereas calling him/her a democrat may evoke sympathy or support (Wodak, 2009).
2. Prediction: This strategy involves attributing qualities, traits, or characteristics to social actors, objects, or events (Fairclough, 1992). Describing a social actor as powerful, truthful, lazy, indifferent, or dangerous are examples of this strategy, which has the effect

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of shaping public perception by emphasizing certain aspects of an actor while downplaying others (Van Dijk, 2008).

3. **Argumentation:** This discursive strategy is employed to legitimize claims, actions, or policies (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). It incorporates arguments to support a position or refute an opposition. An example of this strategy is arguing that eco-pollution laws are essential for global security or human safety (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Such arguments influence an audience's understanding of a particular issue and legitimize a certain course of action (Toulmin, 2003).
4. **Mitigation and Intensification:** The objective of this strategy is either to downplay or exaggerate the significance, consequences, or urgency of an issue or event (Wodak, 2009). For example, when climate change is mitigated by a politician calling it a natural fluctuation, or intensified by labeling it a global crisis, this strategy influences public perception by prompting the audience to prioritize certain issues (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Speakers use this strategy to minimize or amplify concerns about specific topics (Van Dijk, 2008).
5. **Constructing National Identity:** Speakers utilize this strategy to construct a sense of national belongingness by creating in-groups or out-groups (Anderson, 1991). Terms like "brave people" or "true people" are employed by politicians, for example, to delineate who belongs to the nation and who does not (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). By differentiating between groups, national identity can be solidified (Van Dijk, 1998). These strategies were adopted in analyzing certain texts from *Nahj al Balagha* to understand the underlying ideologies and power dynamics (Wodak, 2005).

6.Related Studies

Amir-Moezzi (2011) conducted his study entitled *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Belief and Practices* whereby he examined *Nahj al belagha* in the context of Shi'i spirituality, highlighting its philosophical and ethical dimensions. The study showed that a variety of discursive strategies and linguistic devices were manipulated by Imam to encourage ethical leadership and social justice.

The development of Islamic thought with a focus on Imam Ali's views about leadership as it was argued in *Nahj al belagha* was examined by Jafri, S. H. M in his study *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* in (1979). Historical and political overview on the discourse of Imam Ali was presented in this study. The findings revealed that Imam Ali put forward concrete theoretical foundations for leadership and state governance.

Khalidi, T. (2009) provided an analysis on the literary and rhetorical significance of *Nahj al belagha* in his study *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthropology*. The study came up with the account that diverse discursive strategies and linguistic devices were employed by Imam Ali to accentuate his views of the guiding principles of social justice, state governance, and human rights.

By the same token, Modarressi, H. (2003), in his study *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi'ite Literature* investigated the early Islamic literature involving *Nahj al belagha* and its impact on Islamic jurisprudence and governance. The findings of the study demonstrated that ideologies of justice, peace, and social inclusion shaped, reshaped, produced, and reproduced in Imam Ali's discourse have got universal appeal, that is in addition to their being rooted in the Quranic discourse, they are also aligned with the secular theories of the contemporary legal system.

7. Data Analysis and Discussion

Extract 1. Sermon 53

Letter 53 (excerpt), p. 427–432 [Arabic original]:

وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ وَالْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ وَاللُّطْفَ وَالأَلُفَّ بِهِمْ
وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ سَبْعًا ضَارِيًا تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ... فَأَتَاهُمْ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ

" Let the dearest of your treasures be the treasury of righteous action. Educate your people, for an ignorant population, is prone to be deceived and manipulated. The people are of two types: they are either your brothers in religion or your equals in creation."

It can be realized that Imam Ali, via the discursive strategy of argumentation, attempts to accentuate the immense values of education. He echoes the Quranic emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and education. Below are two examples of verses that underscore the value of education in human life: Surah Al-‘Alaq (96:1–5):

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ عَلَقًا الْأَكْثَرُ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Recite in the name of your Lord who created- created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous-Who taught by the pen- Taught man that which he knew not" (Surah Al-‘Alaq ,1-5).And in Surah Al-Mujādilah (58:11):

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

Allah will raise those of you who have believed and those who were given knowledge, in degrees. (Surah Al-Mujadila,11).

Imam Ali stresses the significance of education as it can shape individuals and societies in multiple ways. Educating people means enabling people to expand their knowledge, fostering their critical thinking, promoting their personal growth, gaining a deeper understanding of the world. It can also empower people as it grants them the knowledge and confidence that equip them to make decisions and take control over their affairs. By education, societies can foster innovation, equality, economic growth, and the sense of understanding among diverse groups. When people are educated, they can enhance their moral compass and promote values of empathy, justice, and respect for others.

By means of the strategy of argumentation, Imam Ali argues the significance of the social act of equality. Such significance is obvious through the use of the verb "educate" which falls under the directive speech act of command. An act which emphasizes the Islamic principle that seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim. He sees that people are equally the same regardless of their social, religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds. He presents logical reasoning to persuade his recipients via the two nominal phrases " your brothers in religion" or "your brothers in creation". He attempts to establish the thesis of "anti-discrimination" in that individuals are to

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be treated equally and fairly without being judged by religion or race. These two phrases represent a rhetorical strategy used by him to appeal to the audience's logic, ethics, and emotions.

Imam Ali is fully aware of the catastrophic consequences of discrimination which are mental and emotional harm, social inequality, economic disparities, social tension and division. He looked forward to having inclusive society where people from different racial and religious backgrounds could have equal access to life opportunities. Such a view of Imam Ali on human rights makes him be seen as a timeless figure in Islamic history and thought whose teachings and values transcend specific eras making him relevant to all ages. His principles of courage, justice, integrity, compassion, and humility are universal values that resonate across different generations. It is worth mentioning that Imam Ali's views, which are globally applicable, are timeless and can guide individuals of any era. His wisdom, courage, justice, and humility are values that resonate across different generations. It is worth mentioning that the concept of 'ingroupness' and 'outgroupness'-that is the construction of Us and Them- is broken down in his discourse. Imam Ali's employment of the word "people" in "people are of two types..... creation" accentuates the view that he tends to be a member of 'human community' rather than a member of 'Islamic community'.

Extract 2. Sermon 129

Sermon 15 (excerpt), p. 49 [Arabic original]:

...أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّهُ لَا يَسْتَعْنِي الرَّجُلُ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ عَنْ عَشِيرَتِهِ، وَدِفَاعَهُمْ عَنْهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَالسِّنِّتِهِمْ... ثُمَّ إِنَّهُ يُكَثِّرُ الْمُدَافِعِينَ عَنْهُ بِرَفْقِهِ بِهِمْ، وَيَلْزِمُهُمُ الْحُكْمَ بِالْعَدْلِ فِيمَا لَهُمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ

O people, no one can do without his community... They defend him with their hands and tongues... Good conduct and just rule increase one's defenders..."

By means of the discursive strategy of predication, Imam Ali tackles the social concepts of social cohesion whose means 'good conduct and just rule' is attributed as the strongest. Imam Ali sees that social cohesion cannot be constructed without the affiliation of 'good conduct' and 'just rule'. That social cohesion is the adherence to the 'good conduct' and 'just rule' indicates that establishing social cohesion is a dynamic process that cannot be shaped without the availability of these two layers: 'good conduct' and 'justice'.

It can be realized that Imam Ali's perspective on 'social cohesion' is rooted in the *Holy Quran*, as in: (Arabic Qur'an Text): Surah Al-Anbiya' (21:92)

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

" Indeed, this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship me" (Surah Al- Anbiya,92). It is a perspective that can be absorbed through his views on self-awareness, morality, and character. Such views emphasize that social identity, according to Imam Ali, is constructed primarily through an individual's inner virtues, ethical behavior, and his relationship with Allah.

He puts forward key strategies to the establishing of 'identity construction'. Corbin(1963, p. 57) identifies them as: 1. self-knowledge: Imam Ali famously said, " He who knows himself, knows his lord." This highlights the importance of self-awareness and introspection. Understanding one's inner-self, strengths, weaknesses, and moral responsibilities appears to be the foundation of the social act of identity construction in his discourse, 2. moral character: he places great emphasis on building a virtuous character. Qualities like justice, truthfulness, and kindness are cornerstones of a person's identity. He sees that the individual's moral conducts are the real access to defining who

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he is, not the external factors like wealth, power, or social status. 3. spirituality: he stresses that it is the relationship with Allah which plays a central role in shaping one's identity. Through devotion, sincerity, and reliance on Allah, a person can transcend worldly influences and focus on developing an identity that is rooted in faith and righteousness, and 4. social responsibility: according to him, identity is a by-product of one's actions within a society in that individuals have a duty to uphold justice, help the oppressed, and contribute positively to their communities. This sense of responsibility towards others would shape a person's public and social identity. By and large, identity is seen by him as something that is deeply connected to inner virtues, ethical behavior, and one's relationship with Allah, rather than to merely external roles or labels.

Extract 3. Sermon 185-Page 303:

"Sermon 3 (excerpt), p. 303 [Arabic original]:

...حَيِّ قَلْبَكَ بِأَلْمَوْعِظَةِ، وَأَمْتُهُ بِالزَّهَادَةِ، وَقَوِّهِ بِالْيَقِينِ، وَتَوَزَّهِ بِالْحِكْمَةِ، وَذَلِّلْهُ بِذِكْرِ الْمَوْتِ

"Revive your heart with the life-giving elixir of sincere counsel, letting it shed the weight of worldly desires as autumn leaves fall away. Strengthen it with the unyielding rock of certainity, ignite it with the radiant flame of wisdom, and humble it with the ever-present shadow of death, as twilight tempers the brilliance of day.

The strategy of 'intensification' is employed by Imam Ali in this sermon to intensify the significance of 'learning' as a base of 'holistic consciousness' in establishing the social act of 'social harmony'. The ruler, according to Imam Ali should have a sense of 'holistic consciousness' which is a state of awareness that integrates all aspects of existence. Such aspects, which are mind, body, spirit, and the external world, are to be integrated into a unified perception of reality. Such a sense, that a ruler should have, emphasizes interconnectedness, self-awareness, and a deep understanding of one's relationship with the universe (Corbin, 1963, 57). The verbs "revive" "strengthen" and "ignite", the nominal phrase "sincere counsel", the nouns "certainty" and "wisdom" are the discourse markers of the strategy of 'intensification' employed by Imam Ali to mark the importance of 'holistic consciousness' which is supposed to be the main characteristic of a ruler. A characteristic via which public peace and social order can be achieved. It is noteworthy that the state of 'holistic consciousness', based on learning, as seen by him, is fundamental to a peaceful, cooperative, and productive society.

In essence, social harmony, as a process based on the 'holistic consciousness' of the ruler, is critical for creating a society where people can coexist peacefully, work together, and enjoy a better quality of life. It is the foundation for progress, peace, and stability as it reduces conflicts and tensions within communities. It could encourage cooperation as it prompts people to work together towards common goals, strengthen societies by building strong communities where individuals support one another, improve quality of life, encourage tolerance and diversity as it promotes willingness to accept and respect differences of views, beliefs, and characteristics, and boots economic and social development which make individuals more likely to be engaged in productive activities and economic growth. The *Holy Quran*, from which Imam Ali inspires his views on life, emphasizes the significance of learning- the foundation of 'holistic consciousness'- in promoting the act of social harmony whereby people can lead a just and peaceful life. A view that can be found in the following quranic text:

Surah Az-Zumar (39:9)

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

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"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only they will remember who are people of understanding' (Surah Al-Zumar, 9) 39:9) expounds that the knowledgeable are more prepared to act positively for social harmony and social justice.

Extract 4 (Letter 53 to Malik al-Ashtar) Page 579:

Letter-53-(to-Mālik-al-Ashtar) Subhi al-Salih ed., p. 427-432 [Arabic original]:

وَأَنْصِفِ النَّاسَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَمِنْ خَاصَّةِ أَهْلِكَ ... فَإِنَّكَ إِلَّا تَفْعَلْ تَظْلِمُ

"Treat people fairly and justly so that they do not lose faith in your justice".

The imperative verb "treat" in the sentence "Treat people fairly and justly" suggests the significance of the social act of fair and just treatment which as a foundation of trust, peace, cooperation, and progress in a society. By means of such treatment, as seen by Imam Ali, strong, harmonious, and prosperous society can be established since social justice can promote social security, confidence, and integration. Equally enough, fair and just treatment can reduce conflict and tensions because resentment and anger would be minimized when people are treated equitably. Fair social system encourages mutual respect and trust between individuals and their governors and make them all feel empowered and motivated. Meanwhile, social justice brings communities together under the umbrella of inclusivity, cohesion, and harmony. In this sermon, Imam Ali argues that "fairness" and "justice" are the cornerstones of social cohesion and integration. Via the discursive strategy of argumentation whereby leaders, as social actors, are addressed, Imam Ali talks about the social act of "equality" as being crucial for social integration. It is the inherent equality that is based on the premise that all humans are created from a single origin; henceforth, no one is superior by birth, social class, gender, color, or ethnicity. A concept that is highly affirmed in the *Holy Quran* as in: Surah Al-Hadid (57:25)

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

"We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice...." (Surah Al-Hadid, 25). Against such Quranic background, Imam Ali sees that governors should seek to apply justice without bias or favoritism and to ensure that everyone is honored and dignified.

Extract 5. (letter 53):

Letter-53-(to-Mālik-al-Ashtar).Subhī-al-Ṣāliḥ,ed.,pp.427-432[Arabic original]:.

وَأِيَّاكَ وَالْاِسْتِثْنَاءَ بِمَا النَّاسُ فِيهِ أُسْوَةٌ

Avoid discrimination and favoritism, for they divide the people and lead to corruption.

To emphasize the point that 'discrimination' is a serious social, moral, and illegal act that affects individuals and societies on multiple levels, Imam Ali employs the discursive strategy of argumentation accentuated by the imperative verb "avoid" to indicate a directive speech act of command. By means of this strategy, Imam Ali touches upon one of the most serious issues, threatening the life of human beings all over the globe, which are discrimination and favoritism. As an Islamic governor, al-Ashtar was addressed by Imam Ali to shun policies of discrimination and favoritism as they could divide people and tear up their social fabric. A perspective that is stemmed from the Quranic verse: Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

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"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is knowing and Acquainted" (Surah Al-Hujrat, 13).

Imam Ali believes that by avoiding discrimination, the social acts of "corruption and division" can be eliminated. By the strategy of argumentation, he tries to bridge the gaps between people whether these gaps are financial, religious, or racial. He sees that part of the ethical leadership of governors is to fight inequity and prejudice as they promote division and segregation, erode trust, fuel social inequality, encourage conflict and hostility, weakens social cohesion, reduce empathy and understanding, and undermine national unity. By combating discrimination, a sense of inclusion and shared identity among diverse communities can be fostered.

Extract 6 (letter 53)

In *Nahj al-Balāgha* (Letter 53) according to Subhī al-Ṣāliḥ, pp.427-432 [Arabic original]:

...وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ ... فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَحَقُّ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ

A ruler must be like a caring guardian for his people, treating them all with fairness and compassion.

By means of the discursive strategy of nomination, Imam Ali analogizes a ruler to a 'caring guardian'. The nominal phrase "caring guardian" is employed by him to spell out that the social act of integration cannot be achieved if a ruler is not a "caring guardian". 'Caring guardian', as social actor, can be realized as a protector who looks after the well-being of others. He is legally in charge of managing the affairs of people and ensuring that their needs are met with compassion and responsibility. He, in such a context, typifies qualities like protection, care, responsibility, and compassion and can contribute to social integration by assisting those who are under his care to get more smoothly into society. When he is aligned with individuals to navigate diverse social settings, people can practice harmonious and cooperative interactions, and ;therefore, be encouraged to participate in social life as well as be stimulated to adopt promoted dialogue and understanding whereby rationalism and moderation can be the stereotypical mode of thinking. The concept of 'caring guardian' is underscored in the *Holy Quran* which stresses the importance of compassion and consultation in leadership emphasizing that a good leader is that who should care for the feelings and needs of the people: Surah Al-Imrān (3:159)

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَنْتَ لَهُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ فَوْقَ غَلِيظِ الْقُلُوبِ لَنْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

So be mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude in speech or harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. (Surah Al- Imran, 159).

Extract 7 (Letter)

Letter-53-(to-Mālik-al-Ashtar).Subhī al-Ṣāliḥ ed., pp.427-432 [Arabic original]:

... وَأَنْصِفِ النَّاسَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ

Be fair to all people, regardless of their social status or background.

Throughout the discursive strategy of argumentation, structured by the imperative phrase "Be fair", Imam Ali intends to accentuate the significance of social fairness in establishing a long-term

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societal well-being and success. He sees that it is a moral imperative which can underpin ethical governance and society building. Fair legal systems, according to Imam Ali, could enhance trust in public institutions. Against such backdrop, it is worth mentioning that societies are more likely to thrive when people believe that institutions work for the common good, not just for the privileged few. He argues that inequality and unfairness often leads to social unrest, tension, and conflict. Innovation, productivity, and economic growth can be arrived at when all individuals from all cultural backgrounds are treated fairly. Imam Ali stems his intellectual background on social justice from the *Holy Quran* which stresses that Allah commands fairness in judgment and treatment regardless of an individual's social status or background: Surah Al-Ma'idah (commonly verse 8):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۖ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

" O you who believe ! Stand out firmly for Allah, as just witnesses, and let not the hatred of a people make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety. (Surah Al- Maidah, 7).

Against such backdrop, it can be realized that justice, the Quranic term, is a divine mandate that upholds social justice and prevents oppression.

Extract 8, Letter 17

In Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 53 ,pp. 427–432 [Arabic original]:

...وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعًا ضَارِيًا تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ

Ensure that the weak people are not oppressed, and that the strong people do not exploit their power.

Via the discursive strategy of prediction, wherein the adjectives "weak" and "strong" are utilized, Imam Ali emphasizes the point that every human being has inherent dignity and worth. Hence, oppressing the weak is a flagrant violation of human rights. When the weak are mistreated by the strong, the social cohesion is undermined, and inequality and instability are increased. Oppression, as seen by Imam Ali, destroys justice and creates a culture of exploitation and tyranny which can harm the weak. Such a stance is stemming from the Quranic principle that oppressing the weak is explicitly prohibited and condemned by Allah: Surah Al-Ahzab (33:58)

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغْيٍ مَّا اكْتَسَبُوا فَذَرُوهُنَّ أَوْ يَكْفُرْ بَغْيُهُنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَاتِبُ الذُّنُوبِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ مُّذِلٌّ

"And those who harm believing men and women undeservedly have burdened themselves with a slander and manifest sin" (Surah Al- Ahzab, 58). Oppressing the weak, which is unjust and destructive, is a grave sin with terrible consequences both in this life and the hereafter. Those who have powers ,henceforth, should advocate a responsibility to protect and uplift the weak. Societies thrive when governors weighs ethical responsibility and compassion over domination and exploitation. Imam Ali sees that governors who value compassion over oppression could create societies where kindness and support become a norm.

Extract 9

In Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 52 , pp. 425-436 [Arabic original]:

العدل ميزان الله سبحانه الذي وضعه في الخلق ونصبه لاقامة الحق, فلا تخالفه, ولا تعارضه في سلطانه.

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Justice is the balance of Allah, which He has set among His creation and established for the fulfillment of truth. So do not oppose Him in his balance, and do not challenge His authority.

Employing the discursive strategy of argumentation, echoed by the noun "justice" and the nominal phrase "the balance of Allah", Imam Ali touches upon the crucial role that justice plays in social order. When the social act of 'justice' is consolidated by a governor, cooperation and collaboration can be established in a community. Against such backdrop, both the governor and the individuals can trust each other and work together towards common goals. In a society where people and governor trust one another, they are more likely to cooperate and collaborate leading to stronger social bonds and collective success. Such bonds, founded on justice, may strengthen social cohesion by creating a sense of belongingness and shared responsibility. They help to bridge the gaps between different social groups, fostering unity and reducing the likelihood of social fragmentation. They lead to greater compliance with laws and regulations. Not only this but they also maintain social order through persuasion not coercion. They resolve conflicts between people through dialogue and negotiation rather than through violence or unrest. They encourage people to promote positive interactions, cooperation, and adherence to societal norms and laws. Such text is related to the Quranic foundation in Surah An-Nisā (4:58):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ

" Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice". This verse emphasizes that rulers are entrusted with authority and have to utilize it justly and fairly.

Extract 10

In *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 54, pp. 327–332 [Arabic original]:

إِنَّ مَالَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ إِذَا جَاعَ جِيرَانُكَ

Your wealth is not yours if your neighbors are hungry

Imam Ali, by means of the strategy of argumentation structured through the manipulation of 'conditionality' wherein one event depends on another, looks upon the social act of integration. He touches upon the idea that true wealth and well-being is not only an individual possession but it is also a mutual ethical commitment, that is to care for those who are in need for the basics of living. It emphasizes the moral or ethical obligation to help others, particularly those in need, rather than hoarding wealth for oneself. The idea suggests that one's wealth should be shared or used to uplift the community, especially when others are suffering or lacking the basics of life like food. It promotes compassion, generosity, and social responsibility. Such an act can result in the reduction of inequality which can lead to social instability, unrest, and tensions between social groups. In other words, it can reduce gap and shape a more harmonious and stable society. Raising the living standards of the poor can lead to greater overall prosperity. It strengthens the social fabric, where everyone, regardless of their financial status, feels valued and supported. Helping the poor contributes to a more sustainable and secure society.

8. Conclusion

This study has undertaken a discursive analysis in Imam Ali's *Nahj al balagha* by applying Wodak's (2005) taxonomy of discursive strategies. It successfully applies Western discursive framework, Wodak's approach, to analyze the concept of 'social integration' in *Nahj al balagha*. As such, it shows how language can construct identity and social interaction across different cultural contexts. Through strategies such as nomination, prediction, argumentation, mitigation, intensification, and the construction of national identity, Imam Ali produces his vision about a society that could be grounded in fairness, equality, and collective well-being. The study focuses on the fact that the Quranic reflection in *Nahj al Balagha* serves as a powerful tool to inspire both individual and societal transformation. Imam Ali's discourse not only addresses the moral and ethical responsibilities of leaders but also emphasizes the importance of education, justice, and social cohesion for achieving a stable and prosperous community.

It is worth noting that the notion of 'ingroupness' and 'outgroupness' – the social distinction between 'Them' and 'Us' – is deconstructed and challenged in the discourse of Imam Ali. He interacts across religions and races. His discourse stresses a sense of globalization in that the clear-cut boundaries between groups are less rigid. He appears to be a member of humanity rather than a member of a specific social group. He advocates inclusion, diversity, social justice, solidarity, and shared humanity. He intends to shape community where markers of nationality and ethnicity are less central. His perspectives still play an important role in shaping societal relations namely in the context of politics, identity construction, and conflict.

The study shows that there is interdiscursivity between the *Holy Quran* and *Nahj al belagha*. This interdiscursivity refers to the way wherein these two texts are engaged in a deep interconnected dialogue via themes and linguistic styles. The findings of this study also indicate that Imam Ali's discourse is a reflection of the Quranic principles and it offers interpretations to various aspects of life. *Nahj al balagha* remains a foundational text in Islamic thought, offering timeless lessons on different aspects of life.

Future research could further explore comparative studies between Western and Islamic rhetorical traditions. This might help enrich our understanding of how language functions as a tool for promoting justice and social harmony across diverse cultural contexts.

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