Spiritual Education According To Imam Amirul Muʾmineen Ali (Peace Be On Him): Prerequisites And Challenges

Dr. Abbas Ali Shameli[1] , Dr. Seyed Zuhair Al-Mesilini (Tunisia)[2]

[1]Scientific Department of Quran and Hadith Studies, Golestan Representative Office, Al-Mustafa International University, Gorgan
Orchid code: 0000-0002-9741-5303
Email: aashameli39@gmail.come
[2]Scientific Department of Islamic Theology, Golestan Representative Office, Al-Mustafa International University, Tunisia Orchid code:0009-0008-1335-7267
Email: zohir_mesilini@miu.ac.ir

Abstract

In this article, the findings related to the field of spiritual education focus on recognizing and presenting the prerequisites and challenges it will face based on the research method of text review along with content analysis and educational re-understanding of letter 31 of Imam Amirul Muʾmineen Ali (peace be on him) in the Nahjul Balāgha and a rereading of a part of his behavioral and verbal conduct have been obtained in two forms, through printed works and software. These findings provide extensive guidelines that educators must inevitably be aware of in their educational give and take with the learners and employ them correctly and in a timely manner. The conceptology of spirituality and spiritual education, probing into the techniques and methods of spiritual education taking into account its prerequisites, and unveiling the challenges faced by spiritual education are the main concerns of the researchers of this article. A review of Imam Ali (peace be on him)'s spiritual education of in his youth at the hands of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him and his household), a rereading of the verbal and behavioral conduct of Imam Ali (peace be on him), and the dual-layered construction of belief and moral foundations are the most important findings of this article regarding spiritual education in the Alawite conduct which have been drawn from the thirty-first letter of the Imam in the Nahjul Balāgha.

Keywords: spirituality, spiritual education, Alawi conduct and example, prerequisites of spiritual education, challenges of spiritual education.

Introduction

The field of mystical and spiritual education in comparison to other fields of education, on one hand, has the cognition of God as its subject matter, closeness and fanāʾ fīllāh (annihilation in God) as its goal, and specific methods that lead to the actualization of mystical unveiling and intuition and is considered alongside other educational fields; however, from another perspective, since the goal of this field is the final conclusion and goal of all other educational fields, it is linear compared to them and considered their most central aspect and peak; that is, the goal of the realization of all educational fields is to attain cognition of God and experience monotheistic Godly spirituality in life.

Mystical and spiritual education is obtained after the learners have passed at least three levels: cognition, love, and obedience. Learners must first reach the highest and most profound level of cognition of God. Following this cognition, love towards God and His manifestations, names, and attributes manifest in them. If this love is true and real it will compel the servant to obedience and submission before legislative lordship. This process denotes the interweaving of religious legislature, ṭarīqat (spiritual path), and ḥaqīqat (reality), as, based on the verse of the Quran: "I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me,"[1] and narrations that interpret this verse, achieving the main philosophy of the creation of human beings is cognition of God which leads to servitude and submission. From this perspective, mystical spiritual education is, in reality, a flourishing, deepening, and development of the innate theistic inclination based on self-knowledge which has been indicated in Allama Misbah Yazdi's anthropological theory of the psychological pyramid. It must not be left unsaid that in the area of spiritual and mystical education, the teachers and learners are faced with two types of cognition. The first type of cognition is the share of the cognition of the essence, names, and attributes of God which can lead to the faith of every individual who possesses this cognitive share if the motivational prerequisites are provided and prepared. Faith itself is the root from which the obligation to the laws of God and good

---

[1] [51: 56]. Qarai

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

(All translations of Quranic verses will be from Qarai unless specified otherwise. Translations are retrieved from www.tanzil.net/)

deeds arises. Persistence on this obligation or servitude will result in positive feedback and the strengthening and elevating of faith and cognition. This illuminative cycle can ultimately lead to a level of cognition of God which we consider the peak of all educational fields in the system of Islamic education and training.

Based on the content of some verses and narrations, the fruit of mystical and spiritual education does not blossom in all learners and its realization is gradational even among those who attain this bestowal. The main reason for explaining and clarifying the process of mystical and spiritual education in this article is due to the extreme practices and perspectives that have occurred concerning wayfaring, self-purification, self-refinement, and seeking spirituality throughout history and particularly in the present age. The teachers and representatives of spiritual education must strive to guide their students toward the main goal of knowing Islam and the goal of creation which is servitude and cognition of God.

This important matter depends on conceptology, expressing goals, principles, and methods of mystical spiritual education. In this article, only the conceptology and a part of the prerequisites and probable challenges that will be encountered have been mentioned.[2]

Conceptology

Conceptology of Mysticism
The lexical meaning of ʿirfān (mysticism) is cognition and knowledge.[3] This word has at least six applications all of which include various explanations and interpretations. These six usages are as follows: mysticism as a teaching, experience, knowledge,

---

[2] Respected readers may refer to the book *Dar Āmadi bar Niẓāmname-yi Tarbiyati-yi Jāmiʿat al-Muṣṭafa al-ʿĀlamiyya* [An Introduction to the Educational Code of Al-Mustafa University] to follow up on the aforementioned components

[3] Cognition can be obtained through reason and narrative sources or through the heart; however, mystical cognition is that which is obtained through internal esoteric intuition and inner perceptions even though rational and narrational prerequisites are inescapable in that. That is to say, the wayfarer and knower of God must inevitably benefit from rational and argumentative foundations and narrative and revelatory teachings in his spiritual and theistic wayfaring so that he may be able to open the window of mystical unveiling and intuition towards himself.

path of salvation, type of specific cognition, a process of change and transformation.[4]

Mysticism as a kind of knowledge is itself divided into the two branches of practical and theoretical mysticism. Practical mysticism refers to the necessary religious instructions to combat base desires and attain spiritual ranks of presential and intuitive cognition of God. Theoretical mysticism includes a system of inner perceptions through mystical unveiling (of realities) and intuition regarding the system of creation which is perceived by those who possess the required conditions and the mystic explains those perceptions through the language of arguments and proofs.

In other words, practical mysticism refers to a category of teachings that include the method of wayfaring and doctrine of behavior. However, theoretical mysticism depends on concepts and knowledge that have issues and proofs.[5]

However, in the present article, mysticism refers to the following: a type of direct, presential, meta-sensory, and meta-rational cognition resulting from mystical unveiling and intuition. More precisely, mysticism is the intuitive cognition of God that is obtained for the wayfarer through the self-refinement of the soul and inner purification.

Avicenna believed that one who has turned his thoughts to the spiritual realm so that the light of God may continually shine upon his inner self is known as a "mystic (ʿārif)." [6] And Mulla Abdul

---

[4] This study recognizes the secondary and incidental components and features of mysticism and provides a perspective of the conceptual network of mysticism. (*Cf.* Kakaie and Movahhedian Attar, Negāhi Padidār Shenāsane be Karburd-hayi Mafhumi-yi ʿIrfān [A Phenomenological Perspective on the Conceptual Application of Mysticism], Movahhedian Attar, "the concept of Irfan", chapter 1, part 2).

[5] *Cf.* Abdollah Javadi Amoli, *Taḥrīr Tamhīd al-Qawāʿid*, Qom, Isra Publication, pp. 598-601, 13, & 158.

[6] One who turns away from the wares of the world and its blessings is known as a *zāhid* (one who is not attached to the world). And one who perseveres in performing acts of worship such as standing in prayer, fasting, etc. is known as a worshipper. And one who continuously devotes his thoughts to the Almighty for the light of God to shine inside him is known as a mystic (Avicenna, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* [Remarks and Admonitions], section 9, chap. 2, p. 57).

Razzaq Kashani states: a mystic is one to whom God has shown His essence, attributes, names, and actions. Therefore, cognition is a state that arises from intuition.[7] Based on an Alawite narration[8] a mystic can be considered as someone who does not see anything without seeing God before and with it.

Conceptology of Spirituality

The term spiritual (maʿnawī) is attributed to connotation and is in contrast to denotation. This word has been applied to other meanings as well, such as the following: real, true, principle, essential, absolute, esoteric, and sacred and, in the Islamic mystical context, a spiritual person refers to someone who is engaged in non-material matters and deals with a reality beyond matter and attributes himself to God.

Denotatively, spirituality (maʿnawīyyat) is a pseudo-infinitive derived from the word spiritual. Spirituality has had various applications throughout history. In the early fifth century, the term spirituality – considering the application of the Bible – referred to anything that was associated with the church and clergy. At the beginning of the twelfth century, spirituality was taken to mean the opposite of corporeality and materiality. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the use of this meaning declined and in the modern era, spirituality completely separated from the concept presented in Abrahamic religions and comprises a concept that is mostly used by humanist psychologists and is defined as: an introspective characteristic that leads to the prosperity and development of individual esoteric experience. This term only applied once again to its original religious and devotional meaning at the beginning of the twentieth century and gradually to special and various matters through the vital renewal that occurred

---

"المعرض عن متاع الدنيا و طيّباتها يخصّ باسم »الزاهد«. و المواظب على فعل العبادات من القيام و الصيام و نحوهما، يخصّ باسم »العابد«. و المنصرف بفكره الى

الج .بوت، مستديما ل رشوق نور الحق يف سره يخصّ باسم »العارف«"؛

[7] "A mystic is one to whom God shows His essence, names, and actions; therefore, cognition is a state that arises from intuition" (Kamal al-Din Abdul Razzaq Kashani, *Iṣṭelāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 106).

"العارف من اشهده الله ذاته و صفاته و اسمائه و افعاله، فالمعرفة حال تحدث من شهود"

[8] I have not seen anything but that God was before and with it (*Derakhshān Partū-yi az Uṣūl-i Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 53).

ما رأيت شيئا الا و رأيت اللّ قبله و معه

mostly with the help of French Catholic writers.[9] Nowadays we are facing changes in the meaning of this word and it refers to meanings such as focus, creating a sense of mindlessness, tranquility attained from the provision of material needs, the meaning of life and its purpose, etc.

However, in the present article, spirituality is defined as: a divine illuminative and esoteric state that is created in human beings as a result of servitude and obedience to the commands of God and abstaining from impurities.[10] In teachings derived from the Quran and the School of the Ahlulbayt (peace be on them), spirituality refers to the ability for spiritual and mystical connection and expressing poverty and dependence[11] and seeking aid from God in the form of prayers, supplications, offering praise, invocation, etc. The pure and infallible Ahlulbayt (peace be on them), particularly Imam Ali b. al-Husayn (peace be on them) in the Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādīyya has gifted human society with the sweetest and most attractive method of acquiring society through the various prayers and supplications he has presented which connect a human being to their God in the highs and lows of life. Preceding these spiritual and mystical sources, the Noble Quran, as the book of life and manual for human beings to connect to God, has provided human beings with the best and most perfect teachings and methods for reaching the peak of spirituality. As stated by Imam Khomeini, these two great sources, that is, the Quran as a revealed book and prayers as the ascending Quran, connect the people of the world to the heavens and heavenly realm.

The Connection between Ethics, Spirituality, and Mysticism
Ethics, spirituality, and mysticism are three stages or steps of ascension and reaching the peak of the position of closeness to

---

[9] Refer to articles on humanist psychology such as the following: Ali Husayn Ranjbar, Nisbat-i Maʿnawiyyat va Ravānshenāsī [the relationship between spirituality and psychology] from the site of the Baqirul Uloom Research Center known as Pazhūhesh-hayi Maʿnawī (http://pmbo.ir/)

[10] That is to leave behind the apparent realm and connect to the spiritual realm, belief in the Hereafter, and the intellectual and divine realms

[11] [35: 15]

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى الۖلِ ۖ وَالۡلُ هُوَ الۡغَ ۖىُّ الۡحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and

409

Allah—He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable.

God in this article. In the first step, the students or wayfarers adorn themselves with the ornaments of virtue and refine themselves from the ugliness of vices by entering into the arena of divine ethics. This moral perfection elevates the learners to the peak of the domain of spirituality and honor of connection to the divine realm. Attaining this peak is ultimately the capital of the wayfarer to reach the peak of mysticism, cognition of God, and divine closeness.

Conceptology of Spiritual and Mystical Education

Spiritual and mystical education is defined as: preparing for the flourishing and elevation of spiritual needs and capacities of the learners in the framework of religious legislation and preparing them to traverse the levels of wayfaring and attaining cognition of God and witnessing the truth. Therefore, in mystical and spiritual education, firstly, one must first seek to make the learners aware of their spiritual needs and capacities and then guide them to benefit from the ways to cultivate their inner abilities by distancing themselves from the veils of the soul and the base degrees of the world of sensation and matter, freedom from the grasp of the soul that calls to evil (al-nafs al-ʿammāra), strengthening faith and sincerity in the framework of religious standards, and achieving love towards God. Finally, the learners strive to realize raptures, opportunities of divine grace, and spiritual states while traversing the stages, states, and stations and achieving annihilation in God and subsistence with God.

Assessing the Relationship between Mystical Education and Similar Concepts

Considering the description that is presented by some of the Muslim thinkers nowadays regarding religion and divine upbringing,[12] religion includes at least three areas of beliefs, moral values, and behavioral laws and, based on these three areas, three domains of doctrinal, devotional, and moral education are formed. Spiritual and mystical education is considered the spirit and inner

---

[12] Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, Karāmdī-yi Dīn dar Niẓām-I Jumhūrī-yi Islāmī [the efficiency of religion in the Islamic Republic system], prepared by Qasim Shabanniya, extracted from Ayatollah Misbah's lecture in the 'Az Dīn-i Jahānī be Jahān-i Dīnī [from the universal religion to the religious world]' Conference, University of Shiraz, 16/08/2006 (25/05/1385 SH). Published in 2010, *Maʿrifat*, 124, p. 5. (Can be found at: www.marifat.nashriyat.ir)

layer of each of these domains; as, in doctrinal education, the learners are helped in arriving at well-established and rational beliefs, in moral education, they are pulled to the cognition and internalization of moral values, and finally, in devotional education, beliefs and values are linked to each other and yield the fruit of obedience, worship, and submission to the laws of God. The result of being trained in the three domains which are collectively considered as religious education and provided that it is accompanied by intuition, mystical unveiling, and divine love, is the esoteric aspect and essence of religious education, that is, mystical and spiritual education.

Theoretical Role Model of Spiritual Mystical Education

Spiritual and mystical education which is the best and most transcendental type of education in the Islamic system of education and training is the result and fruit of all the educational domains and, in other words, it is considered the concentration of religiosity, commitment to religion, and lifeblood of divine religion. This perception applies when the religious learner has successfully traversed the previously mentioned domains and has arrived at the height of cognition of God and intuition of the actualization of Unity of Actions and complete divine Lordship.

In the area of spiritual mystical education, the educators strive to guide their students to the essence of religion and esoteric aspects of religious doctrine and prepare the grounds for their elevation to the peaks of cognition of God and the station of servitude which is the philosophy and essential secret behind the creation of humankind. Spiritual and mystical education is, in reality, an aid to the students in attaining cognition of God through intuition and mystical unveiling. Intuition and mystical unveiling are the fruits of the refined spirit and mirror-like innate nature of the students.

In this article, the researcher considers the realization of spiritual and mystical education to be subject to ascending the three steps of cognition, love, and obedience. If we remind ourselves of Allamah Misbah Yazdi's theory of the anthropological psychological pyramid – which the author believes is the theoretical foundation of all educational fields in Islam – we will find that spiritual mystical education rests on the three pillars of cognition, love, and power. Based on the explanation that the

author has presented in another article,[13] regarding his theory, his anthropological and educational finding is that the psyche of human beings, which is the part of human beings that is beyond material and is the divine essence of their existence, is equipped with three schemas of self-knowledge, self-love, and self-authority due to its transcendental nature. These three schemas result in the love of God, theism, and obedience to God if they flourish and develop. Therefore, the main focus of the educators in this educational field is the preparation of the learners to transfer from self-love, self-knowledge, and self-authority to love of God, theism, and obedience to God. From another perspective, we consider spiritual mystical education to be the product and result of all the religious teachings, that is, the pyramid of beliefs, moral values, and legislative values and laws. Spiritual mystical education in the theoretical model of the psychological pyramid refers to aiding the learners to move from the point of self-love toward building beliefs, establishing, correcting, and elevating the three main tendency schemas, that is, seeking immortality, seeking perfection, and seeking pleasure (seeking happiness).

If educators can help their students in this educational journey, the students will have become closer to the peak of the perfect human being which is the rank of God-likeliness. In narrations such as the Hadith al-Qudsi known as 'Qurb al-Nawāfil'(closeness achieved through recommended acts of worship)[14] and other narrations

---

[13] Shameli, Abbas Ali & Yousefi, Shahnaz, "The Theoretical Model of Human Psychological Pyramid: A Proposal for Theorizing the Process of the Formation of Human Motivations", Tendencies and Behaviors In an Islamic Approach, *Fundamental Research on Humanities*, 7, spring 2019, no. 1 (consecutive no. 22), pp. 11-40.

[14] Based on this well-known and ṣaḥīḥ (a narration whose chain of narrators goes back to an Infallible Imam through a chain of reliable narrators who are of the Twelver Shia denomination (https://fa.wikishia.net/view/%D8%AD%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AB_%D8%B5%D8%AD%DB%8C%D8%AD)) Hadith al-Qudsi narrated by the Holy Prophet (peace be on him and his household), the most beloved way to seek closeness and God-likeliness for the servants is the commitment to performing the obligatory duties. Persisting in seeking closeness depends on the commitment to performing recommended acts of worship. Performing recommended acts makes the submissive servant beloved to God. This belovedness takes the wayfarer to the point where his ears, eyes, hands, feet, and inner and outer organs do God's work and with the permission of God can affect others apart from God. This position arises from the perfection of servitude; that

that call the servants to submission in the position of servitude and this submission is considered as the grounds and factor of God-likeliness or elevating to the position of the perfect human being.[15]

---

is, passing through the first line of servitude and commitment to obligations and entering into its final stage, that is, commitment to recommended acts and anything that has the lowest degree of belovedness before God. It is due to this that God calls the Prophet (peace be on him and his household) to commit to the Night Prayer and reminds him that attaining the Praiseworthy Station (*maqām al-maḥmūd*) depends on the adherence to the recommended prayers of the night in verse 79 of the chapter of al-Isrāʾ: "*And keep vigil for a part of the night, as a supererogatory [devotion] for you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station*" [17:79].

ومِن الليلِ فتهجد بِهِ نافِلة لك غسَ أن يبعثك ربك مقاما محمودا ﴿٧٩﴾

The Holy Prophet (peace be on him and his household) has narrated from God: "Whoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant it to him. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate offending him" (translation of this narration from: Ibrahim Ezzeddin & Denys Johnson-Davies (Trans.), *Forty Hadith Qudsi*, p. 104) and it is unavoidable for him." (*Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār Āal al-Rasūl*, vol. 10, p. 384).

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم: إن الله تعالى قال: من عادى يلى وليا فقد أذنته بالحرب، و ما يتقرب

إلى عبدي ب د   سء أحب إلى مما اف ريضت عليه، و ما يزال

عبدي يتقرب إلى بالنوآقل ح لن أحبه، فإذا أحببته كنت سمعه الذي يسمع به، و بصره

الذي يبصر به، و يده ال د ين يبطش بها، و رجله ال د ين يم د يس بها إن سأل ىا ين لأعطيه و إن استعاذ ىا ين لأعيذنه و ما

ترددت ىا يف د   يش د   أنا فاعله كـ ريددي ىا يف قبض نفس المؤمن يكره

الموت و أكره مساءته، و لا بد له منه؛

(Shaykh Bahaie has said **…** and it from among the well-known narrations among the common people and special servants and they have narrated it in their books ofṢiḥāh with a little difference such as… in his book *Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār Āal al-Rasūl*, vol. 10, p. 384).

[15] In this Hadith al-Qudsi too, complete and perfect obedience and servitude are the ways to achieve the rank of God-likeliness and effecting others apart from God such that the servants, like God, become possessed of the of the will and power of instant effect or the position of 'be and it is' (*kun fayakūn*): it has been stated in a Hadith al-Qudsi, My servant, worship Me so that I may make you According to the author of this article, the end goal of spiritual mystical education is to the reach the position of the perfect human being or the mystic who has attained (al-ʿārif al-wāṣil) union and is God-like. In spiritual and mystical wayfaring, wayfarers are divided into three main categories; a group who fall from the path of wayfaring and servitude and are pulled towards deviation and ruination. These wayfarers are those who suffer from eternity on earth and following their base desires. The Quranic example of this group is people such as Balam Baoora whose story the Quran narrates in the following way: "Relate to them an account of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he cast them off. Thereupon Satan pursued him, and he became one of the perverse. Had We wished, We would have surely raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his [base] desires. So his parable is that of a dog: if you make for it, it lolls out its tongue, and if you let it alone, it lolls out its tongue. Such is the parable of the people

who deny Our signs. So recount these narratives, so that they may reflect."[16] The second group are the wayfarers or mystics who are stuck in the ocean of cognition of God and have not gained the ability to rise to the domain of servitude and have cognitive come and go and far from action due to the conflict between perception and cognition. The third group who are the yields or those who have found the path of this domain are those who have correctly and based on prophetic training, traversed the three stages of 'cognition, love, and obedience,' 'belief, ethics, jurisprudential laws,' and belief and maturity in the three schemas of 'seeking immortality, perfection, and happiness' and we refer to them as the God-like mystics who have attained union.

Based on the theoretical model of the psychological pyramid, this third group is those in whom the abovementioned three schemas have flourished and actualized and they have the reached the

---

like me: I say to a thing: be, and it is and you say to a thing be, and it is… (*Biḥār al-Anwār* (Beirut), vol. 102, p. 166).

عبدى اطع ين ح لَّ اجعلك مثلى أو مثل أقول لل لَ يسء كن فيكون و تقول لل لَ يسء كن فيكون

16[7: 17ۿ 5-176]

وائل   علئهم نبأ الذي آتئناه آياتنا فانسلخ منها فأنبعهُ الشَّيطانُ فكان من الغاوين

﴿١٥٧٥﴾ ولوۿ شۿئنا   —كۿنه أخلد إلى الأرض۝ واتبع هوَاه ۝ فمثلهكمثلۿ الكلب إن تحمِل عليهِ يلهث أوۿتُبَكۿ يلهُثۿۿۿۿا لُۿلۿ كُۿلۿك ۝ مثل القوم الذين كذبوا بآياتنا ۝ فاقصص القصص لعلهم يتفكرون ﴿١٧٦﴾

position of the perfect human being; however, being perfect can be listed in the following five axes of their perfection:

1) Perfect in psychological findings and properties; 2) perfect in regulating and managing the quadruple relationships; 3) perfect in regulating and managing the relationship between one's inner and outer self; 4) perfect in all the mentioned domains in the Islamic educational system and 5) perfect to mean the attainment of the position of God-likeliness, that is, the manifestation of the divine attributes of majesty (jalāl) and beauty (jamāl) which is the content of the abovementioned Qudsi narration: "My servant obey Me so that…"

The Spiritual Education and Health According to Imam Ali (peace be on him) in the Nahjul Balagha Conference is, in reality, an excuse so that we may make Muslims and lovers of that personality become more familiar and closer to the educational school, character-building messages, and personality of Imam Ali (peace be on him) and in light of this familiarity, become the instances of a prayer which has been taught in religious sources in the following way: "O Allah, (please) make me live carrying the conducts on which You made `Ali the son of Abu-Talib live and make me die on the principles for which `Ali the son of Abu-Talib—peace be upon him—died."[17]

Those of us who believe in the mastership and Imamate of Imam Amirul Muʾneen (peace be on him) believe that he has opened an Alawite educational school in his behavioral and verbal conduct scope which is the most unparalleled and perfect educational school in the world. In the words of Ayatollah Khamenei, Imam Ali (peace be on him) is a complete role model for all. Therefore, it can be said that his vital youth is an example for Muslim youth and those who would like their life to be Ali-like.

To gain access to the view and insight of Imam Ali (peace be on him) regarding spiritual education, especially the spiritual education of the adolescents and youth, researchers usually suggest the following two ways:

---

[17] Translation retrieved from: https://www.duas.org/mobile/fajr-taqibat.html

اللهُمَّ احى ين على ما احييت عليه على بن ابيطالب(ع) و امت ين على ما مات عليه على بن ابيطالب(ع)

417

The First Way: Reviewing and Reconstructing Spiritual Education of the Youth

Imam Ali (peace be on him) Himself under the Prophet (peace be on him and his household)

For one who seeks to begin knowing Ali (peace be on him) from the view of Imam Ali (peace be on him) regarding the spiritual education of the youth, one way of achieving this goal is to look for the education foundation of the Imam and review and reconstruct the vital youth of Amirul Mu'mineen (peace be on him) himself.

However, at the onset of this path, we are faced with the following question before anything else: What is the infrastructure and foundation of the Alawite educational school? In short: the Alawite educational school is, in fact, the manifestation and consolidation of the Prophetic educational school.

This means that the prominent and obvious points in the educational school of Amirul Mu'mineen Ali (peace be on him) from both the theoretical and practical aspects are all the accomplishments and results of the educational works and measures that the Holy Prophet (peace be on him and his household) took concerning Amirul Mu'mineen (peace be on him). Amirul Mu'mineen (peace be on him) himself states the following in a long speech to Kumayl: "O Kumayl! The Prophet of God (peace be on him and his household) was taught by Allah – exalted be He – and my education was at his hands and the education of the believes is my responsibility and I will leave good manners as an inheritance for the noble."[18] In another narration he states: "And I showed you high manners through myself."[19] If you review the

---

[18] Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, (Nur al-Anwar software) (Qom: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Computeri-yi Ulum-i Islami), vol. 77, p. 269, hadith no. 1, chapter 11 & Muhammadi Rey Shahri, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 78, hadith no. 429.

إنّ رسول الله(ص) أدبه الله عز و جل و هو أدب ﯼ بن و أنا أؤدب المؤمن ﻟﯽ و أوتِ الادب المكرم ﻟﺎ

Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, (Nur al-Anwar software) (Qom: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Computeri-yi Ulum-i Islami), vol. 77, p. 269, hadith no. 1, chapter 11 & Muhammadi Rey Shahri, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 78, hadith no. 429.

[19] Ibn Abil Hadid, *Sharḥ Nahjul Balāgha*, (Nur al-Anwar software) (Qom: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Computeri-yi Ulum-i Islami), vol. 6, chapter 86, p. 373 & *Nahjul Balāgha*, Jafar Shahidi, Trans. (Persian), (Bashari software), (Qom: Daftar-i Tahqiqqat-i Yasin),

highs and lows of his life, you will see that all of it was lessons, not just the words but all the silences, stances, all of those were lessons and educating.

Elsewhere, he states: "If a man possesses a revealing quality wait and see his other qualities." [20] One excellent moral trait in an individual is bound to other similar traits. If you see a prominent point in a person, examine its roots and foundations. Traces of this point regarding Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him) takes us to the personality standards of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). In this regard, the Imam indicates the source of his personality traits and states: "I am certainly on clear guidance from my Lord (Allah) and on the path of my Prophet and I am on the right path which I adhere to regularly."[21] If you see valuable standards in my personality, these are all the result of divine training and walking on the path that the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) opened before me.

Again in another speech, Imam Ali (peace be on him) states in the Sermon of Qāṣiʿah regarding the experience of the days of his youth and of the time when he was thirteen years old when he had accepted Islam: "While I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it."[22] Perhaps it is due to this that when Asbagh b.

---

sermon 87, p. 79. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/qualities-faithful-believer.

و أرايتكم كرائم الاخلاق من نفسَ

[20] Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, ibid., vol. 69, p. 411, hadith no. 129, chapter 38. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/selections-sayings-and-preaching-amir-al-ؕ-mmؚ ؚ nin-ali__#hadith-n-445

إذا رأيتُم ؕ في رجل خلة رائعة فانتظروا أخواتها

[21] Ibn Abil Hadid, ibid., vol. 7, chapter 96, p. 71. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-97-although-allah-gives-timeؚؕ-oppressor

و انّؕعلى بينة منؕ رؚن و منهاجؕ من نبنؕ

[22] Seyyed Jafar Shahidi, ibid., sermon 192, p. 222. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-192-praise-be-allah-who-wears-apparel-honour-and-dignity

و لقد كنت اتبعه اتباع الفصيل أثرأمه يرفع لى ؕ فى كل يوم من أخلاقه علما و يأمرن

بالقتداء به

بالقتداء به

Nubata asked him about his relationship with each of the prophets as well as the Holy Prophet during the last moments of Amirul Muʾmineen's life as to whether he was superior or Adam? Whether he was superior or Noah? Whether he was superior or Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (peace be on them)? In response, the Imam considered himself superior than each of the Prophets until Asbagh asked: O Ali, are you superior or the Holy Prophet? How is your relationship with him? Asbagh narrates that when I asked this question of the Imam I saw that large beads of sweat appeared on the forehead of the Imam and while his cheeks and hands shook, he replied: Woe be unto you! I am a servant from among the servants of Muhammad"[23] (peace be on him and his household). The message that I am a servant from among the servants of Muhammad[24] is due to the religious standard that the personality of Amirul Muʾmineen had towards the Prophet and prophetic upbringing. Thus, for those who would like to recognize the vital youth and spiritual education of Ali (peace be on him) during this global conference of Spiritual Education and Health, one way is to review the conduct of the Imam and review and reconstruct the adolescent and youth years of the Imam with the Noble Prophet of Islam. In this way, one can process and regulate that reconstructed period and benefit from it for the spiritual training of the Muslim adolescents and youth.

The Second Way: Describing the Spiritual Education of the Youth

In the Behavioral and Verbal Conduct of Imam Ali (peace be on him)

In this method, which is also superior and shorter, the spiritual education of the youth, standards, and prerequisites can be studied not by reviewing the youth of Amirul Muʿmineen (peace

---

[23] *Cf. Al-Anwār al-Nuʿmāniyya*, vol. 1, p. 27 & *al-Lumʿat al-Beīḍāʾ*, p. 220. Retrieved from: https://hawzah.net/fa/Note/View/58271/

[24] *Cf.* Muhammad b. Yaqoub al-Kulayni, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, vol. 1, p. 89; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Beirut, Muassasat al-Wafa, vol. 3, p. 283; Tabarsi, *Iḥtijāj*, Mashhad, Nashr Murtada, 1403 AH, vol. 1, p. 210; Shaykh Saduq, *Tawḥīd*, Qom, Jamiat al-Mudarresin, 1398 SH, p. 174.

أنا عبدٌ من عبيد محمّد

This is a Hadith *al-Mursal* (a narration in which the name of a narrator is not mentioned in the chain of transmission); however, the experts of hadith have trusted this narration!

be on him) himself but rather from his words and behavior while describing the spiritual education of the youth.

In the study of the verbal and behavioral conduct of the Imam, it is clear that an important part of this conduct is related to the Imam's concern regarding superior and optimal education of children, companions, friends, and all those whose direct educational responsibility rested with the Imam.

It is good to know that even though the invaluable Nahjul Balāgha does not contain all the words that were recorded from him, not even from the period of his four-year and nine months of governance and only represents a very small part of the radiant thoughts of the infinite ocean of Alawaite teachings, however, referring to Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim, Nahjul Balāgha, and Danishnāme-hayi ʿAlawī and examining his sermons, letters, and short sayings which are filled with abundant educational concerns helps us become familiar with the educational conduct of the Imam to a certain extent and opens up luminous possibilities before us.

The Imam always warned everyone, especially the youth thus: "Opportunity passes away like the cloud. Therefore, make use of good opportunities."[25] The moments of our life and youth pass by like calm clouds and without human beings noticing and suddenly we turn back and see that all our life has passed by and it is too late to strive for any educational and self-refining measure. Indeed, how soon the opportunities for compensation become too late! Then we are forced to say to God, in the context of words such as I wish, if, unless that I wish those circumstances and vital, lively, and youthful days would be revived! Those days I was inexperienced and did not know how to take provisions from life and age!

Therefore, the second way to access the educational conduct of Imam Ali (peace be on him) is to see the description of the spiritual education process of the youth among the behavioral, verbal

---

[25] Ibid, short sayings, saying no. 21, p. 363. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/selections-sayings-and-preaching-amir-al-muminin-ali
الفرصة تمرّ مرّ السّحاب فانتهزوا فرص الخ ب

customs, and surviving letters and sermons of Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him).

You must definitely have heard or observed in your studies that the Imam, after returning from the Battle of Siffin in a place known as Ḥāḍirīn, entered the tent and spent a long time writing; that text must have been very important and crucial because it engaged hours of the Imam's time. When the Imam exited the tent, the companions saw a will or letter in his hands addressed to his son, Imam al-Mujtaba (peace be on him), at which time, according to historical documentation, he was thirty years old. In this letter, he outlined one of the best descriptions, clarifications, interpretations, and explanations of the attraction of youthful age, its sensitivities, the spiritual-psychological nuances of the youth, and the goals of religious and spiritual education that can be set for the youth and the youthful age and in which the necessary solutions for the educators who seek optimal educational connection with the youth have been explained.

The thirty-first letter of Imam Ali (peace be on him) in the Nahjul Balāgha, according to most of the experts of this book, is addressed to his son Imam al-Mujtaba (peace be on him). Although, some of them have also said that it is addressed to another one of his sons, Muhammad al-Hanafiyya. The reason for the difference is that the Imam states matters in this letter, not as an infallible but rather as a compassionate father and educator who is concerned with the education and future of his son and this itself is one of the great gifts and favors that the Imam has bestowed upon human society and lovers of Ali.

The thirty-first letter of the Nahjul Balāgha is a complete collection of teaching the principles and methods of religious and spiritual education and training and includes numerous discussions such as: the elements of education, obstacles of education, goals of education, prerequisites of education, types of education, religious education, political education, emotional and spiritual education, etc. In this article, I have only indicated some of the goals prerequisites, and psychological or educational nuances necessary to establish a spiritually constructive educational relationship between adolescents and youth using phrases from letter thirty-one of the Nahjul Balāgha.

Goals of Spiritual Mystical Education

The Ultimate Goal

The end goal of spiritual and mystical education is as follows: To help learners ascend the three platforms of cognition, love, and soul-power to the peak of cognition, love, and obedience to God. This ascension is attained through attaining perfection in the three main axes of religion, that is, beliefs, ethics, and jurisprudential laws, and the flourishing, consolidation, rectifications, and elevation of the three schemas of seeking immortality, perfection, and pleasurable happiness. By rising to these heights of perfection and closeness, the learners will possess God-like abilities and worthiness in the form of affecting everything apart from God and ascension to the position of the perfect human being.

Intermediate Goals

Based on what was said at the beginning of describing this large field of education, mystical spiritual education is secured upon the three pillars of cognition, love, and obedience. The order of the goals, principles, and methods of this field is based on this structural pattern. In this model, the educators strive to help the wayfarers attain the gifts of cognition, love, and obedience and help them find the path to the peak of human perfection which is to find God and God-likeliness. The process of spiritual and mystical education passes through a winding and dangerous path which requires the supervision of the educator and the self-vigilance of the wayfarer. The smallest bit of carelessness or inattentiveness of the educator or wayfarer will result in deviation and falling into Satan's traps. In the contemporary age, with the emergence of deviant mystical schools, this vigilance and watchfulness are doubly necessary and prompt experts to provide a smooth and reliable roadmap for this important matter. Spiritual education also requires attention to and preparation of important prerequisites which will be explored below.

The First Prerequisite: Necessity of Establishing Lateral and Equal-Footed Educational Relationships

Based on the Alawite educational school, in the process of spiritual education, educational interactions with adolescents or youth must be lateral, mutual, and accompanied by an understanding of the feelings and circumstances of the addressee not linear so that it is instilling, dictating, and forced. In educational interactions, encounters that occur from the top down and the educator strives

to establish an educational relationship with the learner based on his/her own understanding or expectations are usually cliché and prejudiced encounters. Since learners consider these types of encounters to be forced, ambiguous and top-down and usually reject them. The educator cannot have a linear and top-down relationship in his/her educational relationships with adolescents and youths. Rather, he/she must have a lateral, equal-footed relationship which is the result of mutual understanding. Many measures can be taken to create this lateral educational environment and we will indicate some of them.

Some contemporary educational educators and philosophers believe that the best process of education, especially in connection to adolescents, occurs when this relationship is preceded by a lateral emotional relationship, one in which the educator and student understand one another and above that, the educator, beyond making an impression, considers himself as a student and learner as well. However, because the Imams are themselves infallible, self-refined, and possess the best type of awareness, their role is to direct and guide the learner; however, before this, they strive to establish a lateral and emotional connection with him. Due to this, at the start of the letter, the Imam describes both himself as well as the addressee and he begins this feeling of mutual understanding thus: "From the father who is (shortly) to die, who acknowledges the hardships of the times, who has turned away from life… to the son who yearns for what is not to be achieved, who is treading the path of those who have died…"[26] by starting the written relationship in this way, the Imam shows that he knows both the other person and also introduces himself to that person in such a way that the learner knows the commonalities and differences between himself and the educator.

In the process of education, beyond recognizing and accepting the commonalities that are attained through establishing an emotional connection, recognizing differences also make education more qualitative and one of the subtleties of the words of the Imam is that he pinpoints one of the psychological subtleties of the

---

[26] Ibid, letter 31, p. 295. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

من الوالد الفان المقرّ للزمان، المدبر العمر، المستسلم للدهر... الى المولود المؤمّل ما لايُدرك، السالك سبيل من هلك...

psychological environment of adolescents and youths and states: "who yearns for what is not to be achieved…" Youths are persons whose psychological environment is a city of hopes, a city of aspirations; the youth are citizens of a city of hopes. The most prevalent and strongest tendency among adolescent and youthful tendencies is being visionary and even idealistic. The first window to a correct educational connection will open when the learner is certain that the educator recognizes him and his existential and personality subtleties as they are.

One of the solutions to creating a lateral connection is to build a familiar, friendly, and warm environment with the learner. The Imam has taken his emotional connection steps in some parts of this letter by employing terms such as "ya bunayya" (which though in the English language would be translated simply as O my son; however, in Arabic, it has a certain subtlety that conveys a greater depth of emotion). This term has been repeated around thirteen times in his letter! The words "ya bunayya" are used to invite the love and emotional tendencies of a son in Arabic language and literature. The Imam could have simply said O my son! Or O the one I brought up! O my child! Or use a term that carries no message. However, he established the most subtle emotional connection with his son in this way: O my darling, O my dear, O someone whom I love "my little/dear son (an affectionate way of calling a child in Arabic), because I have put many years behind me and have become weak, I have been preemptive in making this will to you."[27] Therefore, the educator who can create a connecting bridge of mutual understanding and lateral such that the learner feels that the educator not only possesses the knowledge of educating but also recognizes and understands well the existential aspect and subtleties and position of his own student and can easily and warmly form a connection with him is one who is successful. Experts of education and educational psychologists have named this important prerequisite of education as the cognition and cognitive and emotional expressive balance of the learners!

The Second Prerequisite: Cognitive Aiding of the Learner
The adolescent and youth age is one in which many of the potentials and abilities of the adolescents and youth have not yet

---

[27] Ibid, p. 297.

أي بُنَيَّ إنّي لَمّا رَأَيْتُنِي قَدْ بَلَغْتُ سِنّاً، وَ رَأَيْتُنِي أَزْدَادُ وَهْناً بَادَرْتُ بِوَصِيَّتِي إلَيْكَ

blossomed. They have not yet tasted the sweetness and bitterness of life and the cold and warmth of life and need countless research, discoveries, and awareness to traverse the path of future life and understand the self and dos and don'ts.

There are two main ways to obtain information and awareness:

a. The First Way: The Method of Trial and Error
Some scholars of natural sciences state that the best way to conquer and control nature and natural resources is to use the method of trial and error, to go towards nature and test the consequent and dependent variables and find cause and effects or the correlative relationship and finally, choose the best ways that yield results and provide for our needs.

b. The Second Way: Benefitting from the Pure Experiences and Knowledge of Others
 Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him) states in this letter that the life of adolescents and youths is more precious than to be spent in repetition and re-experiencing bitterness. One of the concerns that educators must have is that they must provide cognitive aid to the learners through their knowledge and personal experiences as well as that of others and make them needless of repeating each sweetness and bitterness and highs and lows. The Imam states this matter in the following way: "O my son, even though I have not reached the age which those before me have, yet I looked into their behavior and thought over events of their lives. I walked among their ruins till I was as one of them. In fact, by virtue of those of their affairs that have become known to me, it is as though I have lived with them from the first to the last. I have therefore been able to discern the impure from the clean and the benefit from the harm. I have selected for you the choicest of those matters and collected for you their good points and have kept away from you their useless points."[28] Even your father's age is not as long as that of the people on this earth, I have pondered about the stories of the lives of the inhabitants of this earth, it is as

---

[28] Ibid, pp. 297-298. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

أي ب ين أ إن و إن لم أكن عمرت عمر من كان قبلي فقد تظرت يف أعمالهم و فكرت ف أخبارهم، و سرث ف آثارهم حن عدت كأحدهم. بل كأن كما إنت   يه إ يل ر من أمورهم قد عمرت مع أولهم إلى آخرهم، فعرفت صفو ذلك من كدره، و نفعه من ضره، فاستخلصت لك من كل أمر نخيله

though, through this reference and retrospection, your father is a remnant from the time of Adam who has been a witness of events and highs and lows up until now. Due to this contemplation, reflection, and thought that I have done regarding their victories and defeats, it is as though I have been with all the ages and generations from the time of Adams's fall to the earth. I have sorted this information and differentiated the clear from the ambiguous and the beneficial from the harmful and separated for you the elite of everything and leave it as an inheritance to you.

The cognitive help of the educator is complete when he/she first obtains the knowledge themselves and then reviews and filters it and finally provides the learner with the filtered and selected information. As the Imam states that I offer you the essence and concentrate of the most purified information and knowledge related to people of the past. My knowledge and wisdom are not disordered and confusing; they has been well categorized and also provide direction.

Cognitive aid in education is usually well done when the educator possesses superior prestige and dignity in the eyes of the learner and, as a result, is influenced by the educator due to this feeling of trust and reliability and listens to his/her words. It is because of this that the Imam first places himself in a situation where his student and learner realize that the person opposite him is not a normal person, he is not an uninformed and inexperienced person; rather, he is someone who possesses the best and most filtered educational knowledge. Therefore, the second principle and prerequisite for creating a connection with adolescents is to offer the purest and most refined necessary knowledge and awareness to the new generation to make them needless of repetition and re-experiencing the sweetness and bitterness that we and those before us have gone through. This matter is more usually smoothly achieved after gaining the trust of the learner.

The Third Prerequisite: Acceptance and Belief in the Educability of the Youth

Even though in most educational schools of thought, educability is considered an accepted principle that prevails over the whole of the human lifespan; however, based on a phrase from letter thirty-one of the Nahjul Balāgha, according to Imam Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him) there is a great correlation between educability and the variable of age. Usually, when researchers make efforts in

a study to explore the degree and circumstances of correlation between variables, they say that the relationship between variables is significant when there is an above zero and below one statistical, quantitative, or qualitative correlation between them. According to the Imam, even though the principle of educability prevails over the whole of a human lifespan and every human being possesses the state of educability and affectability till the last moment of their lives; however, the highest level of correlation exists between educability and the younger ages, that is, the lower the age, educability is better, deeper, and more effective. The reason behind this correlation is that students at the younger ages are still untouched, uncultivated, unformed, and are like a sapling and we can direct in any way we wish. Considering this attitude, it can be said that adolescents and youth are the most ready and qualitative educational addressees in the educational school of Imam Ali (peace be on him). This message is taken from the following statement of the Imam where he says: "Certainly, the heart of the young is like uncultivated land. It accepts whatever is strewn on it. So, I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened."[29] The land of the heart of adolescents and youths is like an empty piece of land that has been plowed and is ready so whatever you scatter over it will quickly come to life and grow. If one wishes to plant saplings and flowers in a field, would plants and saplings grow faster in that plowed and empty land or in a field that has been occupied by planting another plant? Those obstacles would naturally not allow the proper growth of the seed and sapling that is of interest to you and your goal. This is also true of the educability of adolescents and youths. Adolescents and youths are can be educated much faster, easier, and without large and troublesome investments. This educability is faster, deeper, and more effective in all areas, especially in the area of spiritual education.

The Fourth Prerequisite: The Need to Refine the Educational Motivations of Educators

Imam Ali (peace be on him) similarly also states in this letter that an education process in which the educational motivations of the

---

[29] Ibid. p. 297. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

انّما قلب الحدث كالأرض الخاليه ما ألق فيها من شء قبلته، و بادرتك بالأدب قبل أن يقسو قلبك

educator are refined and polished is successful. The learner must feel that the educator's motivations in providing this help are those of benevolence, concern, and earnestness. In every educational measure, the child or learner must feel that his father, mother, or teacher cares about him and look to his future, are compassionate towards him, and wish to open a path of honor and respect before him.

The Imam has specified some codes and signs to understand and evaluate the motivational refinement of educators and we will indicate some of them by using points from the letter and the circumstances in which it was written.

The first code and sign of motivational refinement of the Imam is that the Imam wrote this letter at one of the most critical moments of his life. He had just returned from the Battle of Siffin, the bitterness of the grueling battle of Siffin and the arbitration event were still fresh, he had not yet entered the city of Kufa and had entered his tent in a region known as Ḥādirīn and stayed in it for a time away from those around him! But what important and concerning matter had occurred for the Imam? Was there another battle waiting to happen? Did the Imam seek to prepare a new plan? The Imam left the tent after a long delay and lapse of time and held this very letter thirty-one addressed to his son Imam al-Mujtaba (peace be on him) or Muhammad Hanafiyyah! Thus, the education of his child and wise measures for educational support and aid is the most concerning and stirring thought of the Imam!

The second code is that the educational concerns of the Imam in this letter include all the existential domains of the student. Nowadays educational educators say that education, even religious education consists of many subsets and sub-domains. Religious education in the domain of feelings and emotions, religious education in the domain of moral values, religious education in the area of spiritual and elevating issues, education in the domain of political, social, sexual issues, etc. are some of the areas that educators must attend to one or more of them in the process of education and take the necessary actions concerning them. It is due to this that experts of education say that education may have various aspects and dimensions. Education is sometimes political, sometimes moral, at times emotional, and sometimes even sexual and at other times spiritual as well. This distinction is, in reality, the very same separation of domains and areas of the

life-spanning process of education. Based on recent educational findings, the best and most effective method of education is holistic or wholistic education.[30]

The Imam's concerns in this letter are many and multi-dimensional and it seems his heart was occupied with all the educational domains of his child. However, his main focus was on the doctrinal, moral, devotional, and spiritual education of his child.

The third code is that the Imam gets into the matter of educational warning in a way that captures the emotions and feelings of the learner. Thus, after employing the term "ya bunayya" (O my dear son), that as after expressing his concern and worry for the future of his child, he states: "Here, I found you a part of myself, rather I found you my whole, so much so that if anything befell you, it was as though it befell me and if death came to you it was as though it came to me."[31] O my dear son! You are a part of me, you are all my being, I do not see you as separate and disconnected from myself. If something happens to you or endangers you, in reality, that danger targets me because you are my domain of existence and are me. This is how the Imam prepares his child through building these bridges and forming emotional connections so that he easily accepts his educational messages and adheres to them.

The Fifth Prerequisite: Leadership in the Education of Youths
The educational process of youths and adolescents must be quick, prompt, and without losing golden opportunities. The reason for speed in grabbing the opportunity of education is that the personality of the youth and adolescents still does not possess the necessary stability and cohesion and is very susceptible to harm. The Imam states that the educator must anticipate and be speedy in starting the process of education. In one of the phrases of this letter, the Imam states: O my dear son! O my child, when I noticed

---

[30] Holistic vs. Wholistic educational approach. See: https://www.dictionary.com/e/holistic-vs-wholistic/.   & https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066819.pdf.   & https://www.ijmra.us/project%20doc/2017/IJRSS_APRIL2017/IJMRA-11420.pdf

[31] Ibid. p. 296. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

وجدتك بعض بل وجدتك كلى، ح ين كأن شيئا لو أصابك أصاب ين، وكأن الموت لو أتاك أنا ين

I was of goodly age and noticed I was increasing in weakness I hastened with my will for you and wrote down prominent points of it in case death overtook before I divulged to you what I have in my heart… or forces of passions or mischief of the world overtake you."[32] O my son, when I felt that you have reached the necessary maturity and growth for education, I strove to offer you my will and advice. Why? Because I worry that before I take action, the sharp pull of worldly tendencies, religious and moral seditions, and harm come to you and paralyze you. I came to you sooner, before your mind and heart are exposed to contaminating and cumbersome thoughts and tendencies. Perhaps the educational message and content of these words of Amirul Mu'mineen (peace be on him) is the very same point that has been narrated from the offspring of Ali (peace be on him), Imam Sadiq (peace be on him) in Shaykh Tusi's Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām in which he addresses educators thus: "Reach out to and hasten to your adolescents and before people of other thoughts attack and fill their hearts."[33]

The Sixth Prerequisite: The Necessity of Self-Knowledge of the Learner
In the process of education, the first step is the student must obtain self-knowledge and self-discovery, and then strive for self- improvement. The personal trait and ability of self-control or piety which is considered the peak of the goal of religious and spiritual education in Islamic culture, is attained when the learner is successful in obtaining self-knowledge and discovery, recognizes the possibilities, limitations, and capabilities he has possesses and following that, strives to attain the trait of self-control. That is, in the Alawite educational path, internal protection and attaining piety are bound to having insight and self-knowledge regarding capacities and personality traits.

Since we presently live in the Age of Information Society and benefitting from external inhibitors cannot and has not been

---

[32] Ibid. p. 297. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-hi s-sons-after -returnin g-batt 1 e

أي ب ين أ ين لما رأيت ين قد بلغت سنا، ورأيت ين أزداد وهنا بادرت بوصي ين إليك، و أوردت خصالا منها قبل أن أنقص يف رأي ين كما نقصت يف جس يم، ... أو يسبقن إليك بعض غلبات الهوى وف ل لما الدنيا، ... فبادرت بالأدب قبل أن يقسو قلبك و يشتغل لبك

[33] Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, (software), vol. 8, p. 11, ha dith no. 30, chapter 36.
بادروا أحداثكم بالحديث قبل أن يسبقكم المرجئة

facilitated for individuals in society, especially for the adolescents and youths, it must be said that when youths are only insured against being the targets of the heavy waves of epistemological, spiritual, and doctrinal threats when they have obtained the lofty ability of religious and spiritual educational self-control. The youth have achieved the necessary readiness against information attack in the age of information assault when they have attained the traits and characteristics of stability of personality and internal self-control. And this personality trait and ability is usually possible after proper and complete self-knowledge and the flourishing of internal capacities.

The Seventh Prerequisite: Utilizing the Idealistic Tendency of the Youth

The Imam states that since adolescents and youths are idealistic regarding inclinations and tendencies and idealism is far from reality and realistic attitudes, one of the important and necessary techniques in the educational measures of educators in dealing with their students is to utilize the pull and force of the idealistic tendency as a motor and psychological energy to guide and direct them towards a successful albeit realistic life. Idealism is an internal divine gift that can guide one towards dissoluteness or piety. It is the educator who attentively and cleverly strives to direct this psychological energy towards piety and pleasure-driven self-control.

Today, philosophers of education believe that especially in the adolescent age, adolescent and youthful energy is like a flame of fire that can be propelled towards action, growth, and elevation or can cause a fire and destroy. Thus, in the spiritual educational process, the idealistic tendency must be utilized towards the growth and guidance of the youth to reach the peak of piety and self-control. Educators must use this idealistic tendency in their young learners to activate the spirit of optimism towards the future, self-confidence, selection of divine enduring and firm ideals, and establish the spirit of tawakkul (entrusting one's affairs to God and trusting His plan).

Therefore, one of the important actions that educators must take in the spiritual education process is that they must hasten to aid their learners in recognizing the lines between ideals and reality. Since the younger learners have yet to experience the sweetness and bitterness of the world at the start of the educational path and

cannot well distinguish the lines between realities and ideals, they need to recognize realities and educators must support them on the tiring slopes of education.

The Eighth Prerequisite: Strengthening the Spirit of Hope and Feeling of Having a Refuge against Problems and Crises
Crises, difficulties, and the hedonistic tendencies of life are so sharp and subversive that they exhaust the youth and pull them to submission. At this time, educators must treat them in a way that firstly, in the educational process, they must show themselves to be the first refuge before the learners. The sign of success in this educational measure is that when the youth encounter difficulties and the highs and lows of life they consider the educators to be the first and most accessible refuge for themselves.

Another point is that educators must aid their charge in attaining the belief of tawakkul and simple and speedy access to divine unseen aid. My educational understanding of one of the phrases of the letter is that educators must not only show themselves to be the first refuge but must also entrust their charges to divine unseen aid. The educational code for belief in the unseen and hope in divine aid has been described in the following way in the words of the Imam: "Know that He Who owns the treasuries of the heavens and of the earth has permitted you to pray to Him and has promised you acceptance of the prayer. He has commanded you to beg from Him in order that He may give you and to seek His mercy in order that He may have mercy on you. He has not placed any thing between you and Him that may veil Him from you. He has not required you to get a mediator for you to Him, and if you err, He has not prevented you from repentance. He does not hasten with punishment."[34] O my dear son! See what a generous Lord is our Lord! He has no veils, He desires no mediator, and we can communicate easily with him in every corner and part of life. It is never too late to return to Him either! Do not worry! Even if you err, return to Him! The path is never closed! There is always a

---

[34] Ibid, letter 31, p. 302.Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

واعلم ان الذى بيده خزائن السموات والأرض أذن لك فى الدعاء و تكفل لك بالإجابه وأمرك أن تسأله ليعطيك وتسترحمه ل بحمك. ولم يجعل بينك وبينه من يحجبه عنك ولم يلجئك الى من يشفع لك إليه، و لم يمنعك إن إسأت من التوبه، و لم يعاجلك بالنقمة

window open! The arms of divine Mercy are always open! Thus, following the strengthening of the spirit of self-knowledge and discovery, and optimal use of inner energy, according to the Imam, the learners need tawakkul and the utilization of unseen aid; that too, aid that is unending and is always available.

The Ninth Prerequisite: Immunity of the Youth against Opposing and Faith-Subverting Thoughts

The next strategic important point in the Imam's letter is that despite the need for providing the youth with cognitive and epistemological foundations and doctrinal beliefs in the process of religious and spiritual education, educators must be aware that this measure alone is not enough. Cognitive aid for young learners must be double-walled and two-fold. Making the foundations of religious beliefs and values two-walled is one of the innovations of Allamah Mesbah Yazdi (may God raise his status) in the process of religious and spiritual education. Regarding the immunity of the spiritual and religious education of adolescents and youth, he believed that educators must first aid their charges in attaining strong and enduring value and belief foundations. In the second step, the system of beliefs and values must be protected and maintained through building epistemological and spiritual strongholds. [35] Building belief and spiritual strongholds in the process of religious and spiritual education is that educators, beyond preparing a system of strong and rational beliefs, must increase their ability to answer and confront religion-subverting doubts, questions, and challenges. Among the unavoidable prerequisites in the process of spiritual education is the ability to actively participate in religious and spiritual discourses to authoritatively react to belief and spiritual attacks. The Imam (peace be on him) cleverly and subtly states in a part of this letter: "Then I feared lest you should get confused as other people had been confused on account of their passions and (different) views. Therefore, in spite of my dislike for you being so warned, I thought it better for me to make this position strong rather than leave you in a position where I do not regard you safe from falling into destruction. I hoped that Allah would help you in your

---

[35] *Cf.* First Session; "*Luzūm-i Faʿāliyat-i Kārsāz va ʿAmalī dar Pāsokh be Shubuhāt*" (the necessity of efficient activity in responding to doubts), Wednesday, 06/11/2019 (15/08/1398 SH). Retrieved from: https://mesbahyazdi.ir/node/7524/

straightforwardness and guide you in your resoluteness."[36] O my dear son! Even though I did not like to engage your mind and heart in the abundant doubts and delusions regarding beliefs that have occurred to the minds of others and they have been distanced from the right path of religion and innate nature; however, it is unavoidable since you will inevitably find yourself faced with the attack and invasion of these doubts and information. Therefore, I ask God to show you the right and true path in the form of the educational points in this will.

The Imam advises and suggests to the educators that the cognitive and epistemological foundations offered to the youth must have two aspects: to stabilize and establish in them religious and spiritual belief foundations that start from teaching the Book of God and familiarity with religious teachings as well as building protection around them and preparing them to confront intellectual and belief-related attacks which they will encounter later. Before the learners' awareness of doubts and the types of belief and faith attacks, the Imam states: "I should begin with the teaching of the Book of Allah, and its interpretation, the laws of Islam and its commands, its lawful matters and unlawful matters and that I should not go beyond these for you."[37] O my dear son! I made you familiar with the luminous teachings of the Quran and the interpretation and exegesis of its more profound layers. The term 'taʾwīl' (interpretation) points to the importance of making the youth aware of the complexity of the double and multi-dimensionality of Quranic teachings that may place him in the firing range of the intellectual and cognitive attacks of deviant and polluted thinkers. Thus, I provide you with the limits and laws of divine lawful and unlawful matters. If there was anything more efficient and beneficial than the Quran, Quranic teachings, and

---

[36] Ibid, letter 31, p. 298. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

ثم أشفقت أن يلتبس عليك ما اختلفت الناس فيه من أهوائهم و آرائهم مثل الذي إلتبس عليهم، فكان إحكام ذلك ع بلى ماكرهت من تنبيهك له أحب إ بلى من إسلامك إ بلى أمر لا آمن عليك به الهلكه و رجوت أنْ يوفقك الله فيه لرشدك و أن يهديك لقصدك

[37] Ibid, letter 31, p. 298. Translation retrieved from: https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle

و ابتدئك بتعليم كتاب الله عز و جل و تأويله و لسرائع الاسلام و أحكامه و حلاله و حرامه لا أجاوز ذلك بك ا ايلى غ به

recognizing the limits of the lawful and the unlawful in God's eyes for the guidance of human beings, God would have made that the criterion in his legislative Lordship and provided it to His servants in traversing the path of servitude. Following these teachings and preparations, I have strived to make you aware of the mistakes and slippery areas in beliefs, culture, and values that you may encounter from other cultures. This Alawite speech shows the importance of making the belief foundations of the learners dual-walled and double-fold in order to enable them to confront intellectual and religion-subverting attacks that threaten believers and their system of beliefs and values.

O Lord, by the position of Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him), give us the grace and blessing so that this global conference of Amirul Muʾmineen's Nahjul Balāgha studies may be a start in becoming familiar with and finding and traversing the Alawite educational school throughout the coming years and be a window to a wide horizon that may envelop our whole life, God-willing, and make us Ali-like and take us to the peak of religious spiritual health.

"O Allah, (please) make me live carrying the conducts on which You made `Ali the son of Abu-Talib live and make me die on the principles for which `Ali the son of Abu-Talib—peace be upon him—died."[38]

Findings and Conclusive Remarks
The author utilized the method of content analysis and focused on the thirty-first letter of Imam Amirul Muʾmineen (peace be on him) in the Nahjul Balāgha and strove to examine the Alawite approach regarding spiritual education from the content of this letter and found that spiritual education in the Alawite educational school can be relevant to cognitive preparation and motivational provision in the three domains of belief, values, and behaviors according to jurisprudential and religious legislative norms in the framework of religious teachings. Through this, he similarly found that the path of spiritual education requires being educated in the three areas of cognition, love, and obedience in the framework of

---

[38] Translation retrieved from: https://www.duas.org/mobile/fajr-taqibat.html

اللّهُمَّ احی ین علی ما احییت علیه علٰی بن ابیطالب(ع) و امت ین علی ما مات علیه علٰی بن ابیطالب(ع)

servitude and religious commitment in the framework of the principles and branches of the religion of Islam.

Another important finding was that discovering and preparing a spiritual education role model in the Alawite conduct can be discovered through two channels: reviewing the adolescent and youth years of the Imam (peace be on him) who was under the educational supervision and actions of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him and his household) on one hand, and analytically reviewing the behavioral and verbal conduct of the Imam on the other hand. Combining these two revealing paths lead the researcher to discover and present some of the important prerequisites of spiritual education and highlight the challenges and difficulties that educators may be exposed to in the path of spiritual education.

Speed and leadership in utilizing the opportunity of adolescence and youth for spiritual education measures, establishing a lateral emotional and loving connection with the learners, discovering and understanding the capacities and abilities of the learners in relation to spiritual education, possessing an acceptable scientific and practical position in the eyes of the learner, and strengthening double-fold the system of beliefs and values in the learners, are some of the more important prerequisites of spiritual education which were highlighted and pursued in this article.

Neglecting or inattentiveness to all or some of these prerequisites may expose the path of spiritual education to challenges and the goals of education may never be achieved or may remain incomplete.

Selected References

Persian References
1. Al-Anwār al-Nuʿmāniyya, vol. 1 (al-Lumʿat al-Beyḍāʾ). Retrieved from: https://hawzah.net/fa/Note/View/58271/
2. Avicenna (Ibn Sina). (1375 SH). Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt [Remarks and Adonitions], section 9, chapter 2 (fī Maqāmāt al-ʿAārifīn). Qom: al-Balagha.
3. Bahrami, Hajar. (1387 SH). "Maʿnā va Maʿnavīyyat az Dīdgāh-i Ravān Shenākhtī" [meaning and spirituality from a psychological perspective]. Rah-i Tarbiyat, 1, pp. 143-169.

4. Dāneshnāme-yi ʿAlawī (Minhaj al-Nour). (1392 SH). The largest electronic encyclopedia of the words of Imam Ali (peace be on him). 265 complete volumes regarding the Nahjul Balāgha.

5. Ezzeddin, Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies, Denys (Trans.). Forty Hadith Qudsi. Dar al-Shourouk. PDF version.

6. Holy Quran. (1374 SH). Mahdi Elahi Qomsheie, Trans. 1ˢᵗ ed. Qom: Shura-yi Nezarat var Chap va Nashr-i Quran-i Karim. Chapr-I Sherkat-i Taawoni-yi Nasheran va Ketabforoushan-i Qom.

7. Hoseini Hamedani, Muhammad. (1363 SH). Derakhshān Partuv-i az Uṣūl Kāfī. Qom: Chap Khane-yi Ilmiyya. 1ˢᵗ ed. Vol. 6.

8. Ibn Abil Hadid. Sharḥ Nahjul Balāgha, (Nour al-Anwar Software). Qom: Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences. Vol. 6.

9. Ibn Babwayh (Shaykh al-Sadouq). (1398 SH). Kitāb al-Tawḥīd. Qom: Jamiatul Modarresin Publishing Co.

10. Javadi Amoili, Abdullah & Parsaniya, Hamid. (1393 SH). Taḥrīr-i Tamḥīd al-Qawāʿid, vol. 1. Ali Islami, Ed. 3ʳᵈ ed. Qom: Isra Publications.

11. Kakaie, Qasim & Movahhedian Attar, Ali. (1384 SH). "Negāhi Padidār Shenāsane be Karburd-hayi Mafhumi-yi ʿIrfān [a phenomenological perspective on the conceptual application of mysticism]. Ethical Research, Quarterly Academic Journal, 2.

12. Kashani, Kamal al-Din Abd al-Razzaq. (1396 SH). Iṣṭelāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah. Tehran: Intisharat Mawla. Muhammad Khwajuy, Trans.

13. Kashi, Abdul Razzaq Jalal al-Din. (1379 SH). Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn. Ali Shirwani, Trans. Tehran: Nashr al-Zahra.

14. Kulayni, Muhammad b. Yaqoub. (1407 AH). Uṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

15. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. (1403 AH). Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 102. Beirut: Muassasat al-Wafa. 2ⁿᵈ ed.

16. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. (1404 AH). Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār al-Rasūl, vol. 10. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah. 2ⁿᵈ ed.

17. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. Biḥār al-Anwār. (Nour al-Anwar Software). Qom: Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences. Vol. 77.

18. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir.(1403 AH). Biḥār al-Anwār. Beirut: Muassasat al-Wafa. Vol. 3.

19. Mesbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi. (1385 SH). Karāmdī-yi Dīn dar Niẓām-I Jumhūrī-yi Islāmī [the efficiency of religion in the Islamic Republic system], prepared by Qasim Shabanniya, extracted from Ayatollah Misbah's lecture in the 'Az Dīn-i Jahānī be Jahān-i Dīnī [from the universal religion to the religious world]' Conference, University of Shiraz, 16/08/2006 (25/05/1385 SH). Published in 2010, Maʿrifat, 124, p. 5. (Can be found at: www.marifat.nashriyat.ir)

20. Muhammadi Reyshahri, Muhammad & Farzanegan, Hasan. (1391 SH). Mīzān al-Ḥikmah, vol. 1. Qom: Mussasa-yi Farhangi-yi Dar al-Hadith. Hamid Reza Shaykhi, Trans. Kamal Katib & et. al, Eds. 12th ed.

21. Nahjul Balāgha. (1374 SH). Compiled by Syed Razi Mousavi. Seyed Jafar Shahidi, Trans. Tehran: Elmi Farhangi Publishing Co.

22. Peterson, Thomas. (Abbas Ali Shameli, Trans.). (1389 SH). "Kāvushī darbare-yi ʿAvāmil va Rīshehayi Feqdān-i Rūḥ va Maʿnavīyat dar Amūzesh va Parvaresh-i Maghreb Zamīn" [an enquiry regarding the factors and roots of the lack of spirit and spirituality in Western education]. Maʿrifat, 69.

23. Ranjbar, Ali Hosein. "Nisbat-i Maāʿnavīyyat va Ravān Shenāsī" [the relationship between spirituality and psychology]. Retrieved from Baqirul Uloom Research Center site (Pazhuhesh-hayi Manawi): http://pmbo.ir/

24. Shameli, Abbas Ali & Yousefi, Shahnaz. (2021). "The Theoretical Model of Human Psychological Pyramid: A Proposal for Theorizing the Process of the Formation of Human Motivations, Tendencies and Behaviors In an Islamic Approach." The Interdisciplinary Quarterly of Fundamental Researches on Humanities, 7(1), pp. 11-40.

25. Shameli, Abbas Ali, et. al. (1397 SH). Dar Āmadī bar Neẓāmnāme-yi Tarbīyatī-yi Jāmiʿat al-Muṣṭafā [an introduction to the educational code of Al-Mustafa University]. Qom: Markaz-i Baynol Milali-yi Tarjuma va Nashr-i al-Mustafa.

26. Tabarsi. (1403 AH). Iḥtijāj. Mashhad: Nashr-i Murtada. Vol. 1.

27. Tusi, Muhammad b. al-Hosein. Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām. (Nour Software). Vol. 8

Sites

1. http://pmbo.ir/.
2. https://hawzah.net/fa/Note/View/58271/
3. https://mesbahyazdi.ir/node/7524/

4. https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-31-advice-one-his-sons-after-returning-battle
5. https://www.dictionary.com/e/holistic-vs-wholistic/. & https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066819.pdf. & https://www.ijmra.us/project%20doc/2017/IJRSS_APRIL2017/IJMRA-11420.pdf
6. marifat.nashriyat.ir

English References

1. Peterson, Thomas. (1999). "Examining loss of soul in education". Education and Culture. Vol. ×V, Nos. 1-2.

2. Ahmad Ghaderi, & others. (2018). "Explanatory definition of the concept of spiritual health: a qualitative study in Iran". J Med Ethics Hist Med.

3. https://www.wespath.org/health-well-being/health-well-being- resources/spiritual-well-being/the-basics-what-is-spiritual-health

4. The Basics: What is Spiritual Health?

5. https://wellness.ku.edu/seven-ways-improve-your-spiritual-health

6. SEVEN WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH. See:
7. http://stories.illinoisstate.edu/student-affairs/health-promotion- and-wellness/7-ways-improve-spiritual-wellness/

8. Khoshbakht Pishkhani M, & Others. (2019). "Spiritual Health in Iranian Elderly: A Concept Analysis by Walker and Avant's Approach". Iranian Journal of Ageing.; 14 (1) :96-113.

9. Shaghayegh Kamian, & others. (2014). "Evaluating Effectiveness of Spiritual Health Education on Increasing Hope among Breast Cancer Patients". Iranian Journal of Health Education and Health Promotion, 2(3): 208-214.