

The Value Implications of the Sermons of Imam Ali (Peace Be Upon Him) in Nahj Al-Balaghah

Salim Hawass Ali¹, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Rasoul²

¹Psychology, College of Arts, University of Baghdad

salimalsaadi.sa@gmail.com

²Psychology, College of Arts, University of Baghdad

salimalsaadi@yahoo.com

Abstract

The content of something refers to its essence or what it contains. The content of a book refers to its material and what can be understood from it. The content of a feeling at a specific moment is the sum of psychological phenomena it encompasses and consists of. (Saliba, 1982, p. 386).

Keywords: Content, Values, The Book of Nahj al-Balagha, Imam Ali (peace be upon him), Content Analysis

Values:

1. White's Definition (White, 1951, p.13):

White defines a value as a *goal* or a *standard of judgment* that, within a specific culture, is considered either desirable or undesirable for its own sake. According to White, values encompass both goals and standards of judgment, and the term "value" is limited to what is deemed desirable—or undesirable—within a given culture.

2. Dodd's Definition (Dodd, 1951, p.646):

Dodd defines a value as anything that is desired or chosen by an individual. Operationally, it is defined as "what the respondent states they want."

3. Bills' Definition (Bills, 1951, p.237):

Bills defines a value as a characteristic an individual believes desirable.

4. Albert's Perspective on Values (Albert, 1956, pp. 221-222):

Albert points out that values can be either positive or negative and describes them as follows:

1. Active Elements:

Values play an active role in determining what is desirable or undesirable regarding means, goals, and actions.

2. Implicit or Explicit:

Values may be implicit or explicit. They can be directly expressed through value judgments or inferred from verbal and non-verbal behaviors that indicate agreement or disagreement, such as blame, praise, rewards, punishment, support, or repression.

5. Al-Hamdani's Definition of Value: Al-Hamdani defines a value as a category of signaling functions that determine what is desirable among the available means, forms, and goals of behavior. The term "signaling function" refers to the cognitive and perceptual nature of what is desirable. (Al-Hamdani, 1960, p. 1).

6. Iskandar and Others' Definition of Value: Iskandar and others define a value as a term used to indicate an evaluation process carried out by a person. This process concludes with a judgment being made about an object, subject, or situation. (Iskandar et al., 1962, p. 11).

7. **Williams and Albert's Perspective on Values (Williams and Albert, 1963, p. 283):** Williams and Albert suggest that values can be considered as concepts of what is desirable. These values influence the process of selecting behavior.
8. **Zahran's Definition of Value:** Zahran defines values as structures of significant cognitive and emotional judgments about meanings, objects, and forms of activity. (Zahran, 1966, p. 132).
9. **Kluckhohn's Definition of Value:** Kluckhohn defines a value as an explicit or implicit concept by which an individual or group distinguishes what is desirable. Values influence the process of choosing among available forms of action, their means, and their ends. (Kluckhohn, 1967, p. 59).
10. **Chaplin's Definition of Value:** Chaplin defines a value as a goal or social objective whose attainment is considered desirable. (Chaplin, 1971, p. 521).
11. **Defleur's Definition of Value:** Defleur defines values as the fundamental rules or standards through which members of society shape their goals and ideals. (Defleur, 1977, p. 444).
12. **Stewart's Definition of Value (Stewart, 1978, p. 576):** Stewart defines values as attitudes and standards of judgment regarding what is meaningful, correct, and desirable in things.

This study adopts White's definition of value, as it is considered the most suitable for several reasons:

- The content in *Nahj al-Balagha*, including sermons, letters, and wisdom, can either be seen as a goal that Imam Ali (peace be upon him) intended to achieve, or as a standard by which he judged his actions and those of others, even though he was infallible and free from error.
- White's definition of value encompasses both goals and standards of judgment.
- White's classification of values is used in the process of analyzing what Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) wrote in *Nahj al-Balagha* for this study.

It is important to note that White states there is no clear distinction between goals and standards of judgment, as values often appear as goals in some contexts and as standards of judgment in others. (White, 1951, p. 13).

The researcher can make modifications to White's classification by eliminating the distinction between the domains of goals and standards of judgment. This adjustment is made in this study, which aims to *diagnose values*, not simply *point out values* that are considered goals or standards of judgment. The researcher believes that this removal of the distinction is permissible based on White's assertion that there is no clear separation between goals and standards.

The researcher will not deviate from what is allowed within White's content analysis classification. Additionally, values that overlap between goals and standards will be grouped together under one category or umbrella. For example, combining or merging the two groups of health and safety into one. This approach allows for both a simplification and an adjustment to the classification. This procedure has been followed in previous studies and will be further explored in Chapter Three of this research, including the methodology.

White's classification was chosen for the analysis and study due to several reasons, including its ability to encompass a large range of values, its semi-integrated system that allows for modifications, its suitability for use in content analysis studies, and its comprehensiveness. White's classification includes over fifty values and twelve value groups, eight of which are for goals and four for standards. Because of the significant effort and accuracy required for this, the researcher may adjust it if necessary, during the study, as outlined in the methodology in Chapter Three, God willing.

Nahj al-Balagha: Its Clear Path

1. Linguistic Definition of Nahj:

The plural forms of "Nahj" are *Nuhuj* and *Nuhuj*. It is derived from the verb "Nahaja."

1.1. "Salah Nahjan Wadihaan" (Taking a clear path):

This means taking a road or a clear course.

1.2. "Yaqtunu Fi Nahj" (Living in a path):

This refers to living in a way or a place such as a street, alley, or lane.

1.3. "Saar Ala Nahjih" (Following one's path):

This means following someone's example or way. For example, "He followed his path, and his matter became straight."

1.4. Nahj al-Balagha:

Refers to its clear path of eloquence.

(Reference: Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Volume 13, p. 314, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2009).

Nahj in Terminology:

- **Nahj:** A clear path, similar to *manhaj* or *minhaj*.
- **Nahj:** Refers to the breath, the sequence of breathing, and the action of breathing, such as *nahija* or *nahaja*.
- **Anhaja:** To clarify or make something clearer.
- **Anhaja al-Dabba:** To drive an animal in such a way that it becomes exhausted or overwhelmed.
- **Istanhaja Fulaan Sabeel Fulaan:** Refers to someone following the same path or method of another person.

(Reference: Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Volume 13, p. 413, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2009).

Eloquence (Balagha):

The word *balagha* is derived from the Arabic root *balagh*, which means to reach or attain something. For instance, *balagha* refers to something that has reached or ended. A person who is described as *balegh* is one who is eloquent, articulate, and expressive. (Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Volume 13, p. 144, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2009).

As for the term *balagha* in linguistic terminology, it is defined by Al-Qazwini in his book *Al-Iyadh fi 'Uloom al-Balagha* as: "The alignment of speech with the requirements of the listeners' conditions while maintaining eloquence." Ibn al-Athir, in his book *Adab al-Katib wa al-Shair*, also pointed out that eloquent speech is called so due to the combination of both linguistic and meaningful qualities, emphasizing that eloquence includes meanings, not just words. (Kahil, 2013, pp. 3-4).

Furthermore, Al-Rumani, in his book *Al-Nukt fi I'jaz al-Qur'an*, defined eloquence as: "The use of the best forms of words to convey and solidify the meaning in the listener's heart." (Qasim & Dib, 2003, p. 11).

It is also important to mention that Abdul-Rahman bin Hassan Hanbeka al-Maydani, in his book *Al-Balagha al-Arabiyya*, identified six key elements that constitute eloquence.

The Six Elements of Eloquence (Al-Maydani, 1996, pp. 131-132):

1. Adherence to Grammar and Morphology:

Ensuring the correct use of grammatical and morphological rules, with careful selection of eloquent vocabulary.

2. **Avoiding Mistakes in Meaning:**
Ensuring that the conveyed meaning is accurate and free from errors.
3. **Avoiding Unnecessary Complexity:**
Refraining from any verbal or conceptual complexities that do not contribute to the intended meaning.
4. **Selecting Words with Sensibility and Beauty:**
Choosing vocabulary that evokes beauty and conveys a strong emotional impact.
5. **Selecting Beautiful Ideas and Meanings:**
Choosing meaningful and beautiful concepts, then expressing them through words that carry an aesthetic quality.
6. **Enhancing Speech with Rhetorical Devices:**
Strengthening the speech by using rhetorical figures of speech that beautify the content and captivate the listener.

There is no doubt that the topics within *Nahj al-Balagha* were presented during the practical realization of the Islamic society under the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Therefore, as long as social life persists, *Nahj al-Balagha* will remain alive, offering clear and illuminating solutions to rescue humanity from all forms of misguidance and confusion. A brief review of the noble knowledge contained within it reveals that this book can be described by other valuable names such as: the path of happiness, the path of eloquence, the path of politics, the path of life, the path of governance, the path of righteousness and reform, and the path of values and nobility.

The compiler of *Nahj al-Balagha* approached the Imam's speeches from a rhetorical perspective. However, researchers can also observe its other aspects, understand its valuable dimensions, and extract them. These dimensions are not confined to a specific era, generation, or society. Rather, they are always beneficial and applicable to all human societies.
(*Nahj al-Balagha Website*, 2016)

The Chains of Narrations and the Strength of Nahj al-Balagha:

There are still limited minds and corrupt consciences that continue to criticize *Nahj al-Balagha* and question its attribution to the Imam of the Pious, Ali (peace be upon him). They claim that it is newly created speech, fabricated or falsely attributed, supposedly created by a group of eloquent Shiites. These doubts remain in their minds, sometimes out of hatred, sometimes out of envy, and other times due to ignorance and a complete lack of knowledge.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid, however, addressed this issue with in-depth research, investigation, knowledge, and scholarship. He was one of the great scholars in jurisprudence, judiciary, philosophy, history, hadith, principles of jurisprudence, and the science of narrators. He said:

Many people of biased views claim that much of *Nahj al-Balagha* is newly invented speech created by a group of eloquent Shiites, and they might attribute some of it to al-Ridha, Abu al-Hasan, or others. These individuals, blinded by sectarianism, have strayed from the clear path, taking detours of ignorance and misunderstanding of speech styles.

I will briefly clarify the mistake in this thought by saying: It must either be that all *Nahj al-Balagha* is fabricated and forged, or that only some parts of it are.

The first claim is inherently false, because we know through continuous transmission (tawatur) that parts of *Nahj al-Balagha* are authentically attributed to Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Scholars, both hadith scholars and historians, have transmitted many of these sayings, and they were not all Shi'a, so they could not have had a sectarian motive.

As for the second claim, it supports what we have said. Anyone familiar with speech, rhetoric, and some aspects of eloquence, who has developed a taste in this area, will undoubtedly distinguish between weak and eloquent speech, between eloquent and more eloquent, and between the original and the newly formed. If someone comes across a single book containing speeches from various orators, or even from just two, they will easily distinguish the difference in style and manner. For example, when we know about poetry and its critique, if we browse through Abu Tammam's anthology and find a few poems or even one that doesn't align with his style, we will recognize, by taste, that it doesn't belong to him. Likewise, scholars have removed many poems attributed to him because they contradicted his poetic style. The same has been done with the poetry of Abu Nuwas.

When you look at *Nahj al-Balagha*, you will see that it is one unified entity, with one style, one spirit, and one approach—like a simple body where no part contradicts the essence of the others. It is similar to the Qur'an, where the beginning is like the middle, and the middle is like the end, and each surah and verse has a consistent approach, methodology, and structure. Had some parts of *Nahj al-Balagha* been fabricated and others authentic, this unity would not exist. Therefore, it is evident by clear proof that those who claim that this book or parts of it are fabricated and not from Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are misguided.

Be aware that those who make such claims are bringing trouble upon themselves. If we open this door and allow doubts to creep in, we could never trust any narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), and it would be easy for anyone to cast doubt and say: 'This hadith is fabricated, this speech is forged.' This would apply not only to the Prophet's sayings, but also to those attributed to Abu Bakr, Umar, and others—anything that could be used as a foundation for narrations from the Prophet, the rightly guided caliphs, companions, followers, poets, writers, and orators. The same way the supporters of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) would be ready to defend what is attributed to him in *Nahj al-Balagha* and other sources." (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 1, Introduction, p. 9).

Nahj al-Balagha is thus a selected compilation of the words, letters, short maxims, counsel, covenants, writings, and sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him). Some of these were collected by the scholar al-Sharif al-Radi in the late 4th century Hijri (10th century CE), completing the compilation in the year 400 AH.

The goal of al-Sharif al-Radi in compiling this book was to select a group of sermons that embody eloquent literary speech, with particular attention to the elements of fluency and eloquence. The eloquence within this book reached such a high level that al-Sharif al-Radi took great pride in this achievement, even though he was a distinguished scholar, poet, and writer, having contributed a significant literary heritage that would be sufficient to grant him honor, prestige, and distinction.

I am constantly amazed by a man who speaks in the context of war with words that reflect a nature suited to the temperament of lions, and yet, in the same situation, when he wishes to offer advice, speaks in a manner that reflects a nature akin to that of monks who have neither eaten meat nor shed blood. At times, he appears as Bustam ibn Qays (*), and at other times, he takes the form of Socrates or the divine Christ, son of Mary. I swear by Him by whom all nations swear, I have read this sermon (**) more than a thousand times over the past fifty years, and every time I read it, it fills me with awe, fear, and counsel. It stirs my heart and chest. I never reflect on it without remembering the dead among my family, my relatives, and my dear friends, and I imagine myself to be the person described by Imam (peace be upon him) in his words. (Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili, 1987, Volume 11, p. 150).

(*) **Bastam ibn Qays:** A notable warrior from the pre-Islamic Arab era (died around 612 CE) (Al-Munjid fi al-A'lam, 26th edition, p. 128, Dar al-Ilm, Tehran).

(**) Refers to the famous sermon "Al-Hakam al-Takathur" (Sermon 216) in the arrangement of Ibn Abi al-Hadid, indexed in *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, edited by Subhi al-Salih.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him), through these sermons, wisdom, letters, covenants, and wills, called people to submit to the commands of Allah Almighty and avoid what He has forbidden. This is clearly evident in his letters to his governors and officials, stressing the necessity of upholding the rights of the people. As for the short wisdoms, they are a collection of wise words full of admonitions, literary language, psychological, ethical, constitutional, and political values, as well as the principles of state administration, which represented the pinnacle of eloquence.

The Contents of Nahj al-Balagha

The contents of Nahj al-Balagha include the letters, wisdom, sermons, covenants, wills, admonitions, and commands it encompasses. It is necessary to clarify the distinction between the concepts of sermons, letters, covenants, wills, and wisdom, as defined in the terminology section of the first chapter.

The three sections of Nahj al-Balagha, as established by al-Sharif al-Radi, are:

1. **The first section:** It includes the selected sermons and commands of Imam Ali (peace be upon him).
2. **The second section:** It contains the selected letters and writings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him).
3. **The third section:** It consists of the selected wisdoms of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), which also includes his responses to questions and brief statements covering various subjects.

Al-Sharif al-Radi clarified his method in compiling Nahj al-Balagha by stating that he began by selecting the finest sermons, followed by the finest letters, and then the finest wisdoms and literary works. He dedicated a separate section to each type, with detailed entries, to serve as an introduction for adding future material that may be missing or needed.

The researcher believes that the artistic features in the sermons, letters, and wisdom of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are not mere empty words or slogans stemming from individual emotions or self-love. Rather, these words are filled with sincerity, passion, seriousness, a sense of responsibility, equality, brotherhood, love, revolutionary spirit, standing against oppression, striving for the truth, preserving religion and Islam, renouncing worldly desires, and asceticism. These themes, among others, were addressed by Imam Ali (peace be upon him), in addition to the rhetorical styles that flowed naturally in his speech without pretension.

Features of the Sermons, Letters, and Sayings of Imam Ali (Peace be Upon Him)

First: A - Features of the Sermons: The sermons of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are distinguished by several characteristics:

1. **Elegance, Strength, and Clarity in Expression:** The words of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are marked by strength and clarity, with an inherent harmony in the choice of words. Each word fits perfectly in its place, contributing to the overall coherence of the sermon. The rhythm and flow of the speech reflect the intellectual depth and powerful delivery that characterize his eloquence.
2. You find in the subject of his speeches clarity, distinctness, soundness, proximity, and strength. Additionally, there is innovation, novelty, breadth, comprehensiveness, depth, and organization, with meanings derived from the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family).
3. The sermons of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are characterized by the equal spacing of pauses, preserving rhythmic balance and musical harmony. This is another aspect of expression that endears the listener and appeals to their sense of taste.

4. At the conclusion of his words, you find a comprehensive summary of the sermon's topic, expressed in just a few words.
5. His sermons are distinguished by presenting irrefutable arguments, raising logical issues, and employing methods of proof and persuasion, guided by the techniques of the Holy Quran.

B - Types of Sermons:

The sermons of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are divided based on their purpose and objectives into the following types:

1. Intellectual Sermons:

These are sermons that address matters of faith such as monotheism, prophecy, leadership (Imamate), resurrection, and what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, as well as the manifest blessings He has bestowed. These sermons are considered an important source of Islamic culture, as they encompass many sciences, including astronomy, geology, biology, zoology, and physics. They also contain knowledge related to unseen beings, such as angels, jinn, and devils.

A. Characteristics of Intellectual Sermons:

A - Length of the sermon.

B - The predominance of the intellectual aspect over the verbal expression.

C - Starting with the concept of monotheism, as it is the foundation, followed by a discussion of other matters such as prophecy, leadership (Imamate), and the afterlife.

2. **The Sermons of Admonition (Wa'ziyyah):**

These include the sermons focused on moral and ethical guidance, which Imam Ali (peace be upon him) directed towards his governors, companions, and his teachings on death.

Imam Ali's Method in Admonition:

A - Emphasizing the reality of death, what one will face in the grave, and what comes after death.

B - Reminding of the importance of seeking forgiveness and the responsibilities that a sinner must bear.

The Characteristics of Admonitory Sermons:

These sermons are usually brief and summarized in a few words. They have a profound impact and resonate deeply within the soul. The admonitory sermons are among the shortest, and this brevity can be observed in the "Nahj al-Balagha."

3. **Sermons of Reproof (Taqree'):**

These are sermons aimed at reforming the human self. The sermons of reproof are characterized by the following:

A- Harsh words and phrases that have a strong and intense sound on the listener's ears.

B- The purpose of a sermon of reproof is to provoke human emotions and stir the feelings of the audience or those being addressed.

C- The intention behind a sermon of reproof is education and discipline. Reproof is considered one of the methods of nurturing and guiding others.

4. **Sermons of Incitement (Tahreedy):**

These are sermons in which the Imam urges his companions to engage in jihad and encourages them to fight.

Methods of Incitement Sermons:

- A. Using the style of reproach and condemnation; this is a method of urging the people to go to battle, as some may not respond to advice or guidance alone.
- B. A method of encouraging jihad is to arouse a spirit of honor and bravery by highlighting what the enemies have done to them.
- C. One of the methods used by Imam Ali (peace be upon him) for incitement and urging action was to confront the enemy with similar tactics. If the enemy attacks, logic calls for an appropriate response, rather than silence or inaction.

5. **Sermons of Prophecies (Malhamah):**

These are sermons in which Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) speaks about what will happen in the future. They are called *Malhamah* (battles or great conflicts) because the Imam addresses future events, including the trials, wars, and disturbances that occurred during his time, as well as those that will occur later. They are referred to as *Malhamah* to highlight the strife and turmoil discussed.

Characteristics of the Sermons of Prophecies (Malhamah):

A - These sermons act as a warning bell, struck by Imam Ali (peace be upon him), to alert the people to the evil actions they are committing.

B - The style used in these sermons is one of admonishment, analysis, scrutiny, and the reading of future events.

C - The goal is not to reveal the future for its own sake but to warn the people of the consequences of their actions.

D - The sermons of *Malhamah* are not a matter of idle speculation about the future; rather, they carry the most profound purposes, as Imam Ali (peace be upon him) aims to place the community before its responsibility.

E - Not all the news in the *Malhamah* is negative, sorrowful, or full of grief. Some of the news is uplifting, as the Imam shares with his companions to strengthen their resolve, reinforce their determination, and make them more capable of facing the enemies.

6. **Sermons for Seeking Rain (Istisqā):**

These are the sermons Imam Ali (peace be upon him) delivered to seek rain. The sermons for seeking rain are distinct from other types of sermons and have the following characteristics:

A - The words are delicate and tender.

B - There is a blend of supplication and admonition.

C - The sermon includes a request for mercy, declaration of repentance, seeking forgiveness, and turning to Allah.

D - It emphasizes human helplessness in the face of God's will and power.

E - The sermon reminds people of the realities of life related to seeking rain.

F - It explains the purpose behind the rainfall, how it falls, and its secret.

7. **Military Sermons:** These are the sermons delivered during wars to encourage soldiers to fight, obey, follow orders, and uphold military laws and customs. They are characterized by the following features:

- A. They are delivered to a large group, stirring the listeners with fervor and energy.

- B. They are eloquent speeches containing noble ideas and values that ignite the spirit of soldierhood.

- C. They are clear and easily understood, allowing the soldier to grasp and respond to them without difficulty.
- D. They are brief, preventing the soldiers from becoming weary, with the words coming out of the speaker's mouth like blazing fire, and the listeners receiving them like arrows, unable to control their eagerness to confront the enemy.

Purposes of Military Sermons:

- A - **Combat teachings and fighting techniques:** These sermons contain the rules, strategies, and all aspects of psychological warfare.
- B - **Magnifying the sin of fleeing from battle**, portraying it as one of the gravest sins and major transgressions.
- C - **Stimulating the spirit of martyrdom** in the fighters.
- D - **Boosting the morale of the fighters** by describing them with the best qualities.
- E - **Military sermons are not only directed at the fighters**, but also at the enemies, warning and cautioning them about the consequences of their actions if they persist and fail to heed advice and guidance.

8. Political Sermons:

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) addressed political sermons and topics related to the Islamic state, the journey of the ummah, and the factors behind its advancement or decline. The key topics include:

- A. **His rightful claim to political power and leadership.**
- B. **The qualities of a ruler as seen by him.**
- C. **His role in strengthening Islam, spreading it, and the accomplishments during his reign.**
- D. **Public policy**, which includes the principles of his political methodology in governance.
- E. **Praising the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet, peace be upon them).**
- F. **Responding to deviants and refuting their arguments.**
- G. **Political history** and his analytical perspective on history to draw lessons and guidance for his companions.

Characteristics of Political Sermons:

- A. **Choice of words and expressions** that clearly express a political stance or describe a situation or person. These words convey their meanings without ambiguity or confusion.
- B. **Conciseness**, as political sermons tend to be much shorter than intellectual or religious sermons, aligning with the nature of political situations.
- C. **Using brief references and quick insights** without delving deeply into words, phrases, or examples that are typically employed in other types of speeches.
- D. **Preparation with words and Qur'anic verses** to support the message effectively.
- E. **Appealing to both the mind and emotions** in political sermons, as addressing the intellect alone is insufficient. This is why political sermons are mixed with moral teachings and reminders of the afterlife and death. (Al-Asadi, 2006, p. 39-46).

Second: Features and Types of Letters:

A – Features of the Letters:

The letters of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) are distinguished by several aspects:

1. **Consistency and strength** in style, with a well-structured and coherent flow.
2. **Logical organization of ideas**, where each point follows a clear and rational sequence.
3. **Use of evidence, arguments, and logical proofs**, emphasizing intellectual support for the points made.
4. **Brevity with strength**; most of his letters tend to be concise but carry powerful expressions.
5. The **length or brevity** of the letter is related to the nature of the message or subject.
6. Letters containing **military orders to commanders** are particularly brief, as they are focused on the specific task at hand.
7. **War letters** stand out for their powerful wording, compact structure, and precise meanings. This is because words used in the context of war have a profound impact on the emotions and morale of the audience.

B – Types of Letters:

1. **Letters Sent to Governors:** These are either for the purpose of accountability and admonishment, advice and guidance, military and administrative instructions, or informing them about what is happening in the country.
2. **Letters of Debate and Legal Arguments:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) used various debating techniques to refute the arguments of his opponents, such as **entrapment, mockery, sarcasm, clarification**, and countering the opponent's claims.
3. **Letters of Mobilization and Incitement.**
4. **Letters Similar to Political Declarations.** (Al-Asadi, 2006, p. 47).

Third: Characteristics of Sayings and Wisdom:

They are characterized by the following:

1. **In terms of style**, his (peace be upon him) wisdom has a distinctive style based on brevity, intensity, and focus, where a few words convey a great deal.
2. The sentences are powerful in their forms and metaphors, sometimes relying on **rhythm**, and at other times on **parallelism and balancing**.
3. They sometimes depend on **antithesis and contrast**.
4. Fundamentally, his wisdom is based on unity of means and goals, and it despises opportunism in all its forms and fields. It presents a radical approach to issues, grounded in deep philosophical thought, insight into social life, and understanding of its realities and developments.
5. The words have a profound impact, strong meaning, and are characterized by **elegance**, ease of pronunciation, beautiful sound, and the ability to evoke the appropriate emotional atmosphere for their content.
6. Most of the sayings and advice are extracts from the sermons and letters, which were selected by the esteemed **al-Sharif al-Radi** and made into an appropriate collection for the time. He extracted these fitting expressions and gave them an aura of independence.

Thus, we can conclude from the characteristics of the sermons, letters, and sayings the rhetorical features that Imam Ali (peace be upon him) distinguished in **Nahj al-Balagha**.

First: The selection of the most appropriate words with all their nuances and connecting them in the most beautiful way, forming strong artistic structures that add beauty upon beauty.

Second: With the use of **rhyme**, there is the sweetness of the words and the beauty of their smooth flow, increasing the musicality's charm and brilliance. You also find contrast, order, coherence, and connection in the sentences.

Third: The **musical cadence** and the beauty of the rhythm are perceptible to those with an artistic taste.

Fourth: The **rhetorical devices** in a superb pattern, from **paronomasia** to **antithesis**, **repetition**, **inversion**, etc., enhance the beauty and complete the elegance of the structure.

Fifth: The **metaphors** and **allusions** are presented in a refined manner and an exquisite form.

Sixth: The images of artistic beauty are reflected through the **theme**, **musical rhythm**, **imagery**, and **movement**, all intertwined and harmonized in a single text.

Seventh: The artistic beauty shines through the interaction of **spiritual** and **artistic** characteristics, blending together in the entire text. (Al-Asadi, 2006, p. 48)

Chapter Two

The Selected Sermons of Imam Ali (Peace Be Upon Him) and Their Number: 241 Sermons

From his sermons (Peace Be Upon Him):

A sermon of his (Peace Be Upon Him) in which he mentions: the creation of the heavens and the earth, the creation of Adam, and it includes a mention of the Hajj. It contains praise for Allah, the creation of the world, the creation of the angels, the selection of the prophets, the mission of the Prophet and the Quran, and the divine laws (Sermon 1).

Praise be to Allah, whose praise cannot be reached by the praisers, whose blessings cannot be counted by the enumerators, and whose rights cannot be fulfilled by the diligent. He is the One whom the distance of high aspirations cannot comprehend, and the depth of intellect cannot grasp. His attributes have no defined limit, no existing description, no measured time, and no extended term. He created the creatures by His power, spread the winds by His mercy, and secured the foundations of the earth with rocks. The essence of religion is the knowledge of Him, the perfection of knowing Him is belief in Him, and the perfection of belief in Him is His Oneness. The perfection of His Oneness is sincerity toward Him, and the perfection of sincerity toward Him is the negation of attributes from Him.

Creation of the World: He created the creation with a creation that began from nothing, without prior contemplation or any experience from which He benefited, nor any movement He initiated, nor any restlessness of the soul that disturbed Him. He assigned everything to its destined time, reconciled their differences, implanted their instincts, and bound them to their counterparts. He knew them before their creation, encompassing their limits and their endpoints, understanding their signs and their hidden natures. Then, He, Glorious is He, created the voids of the heavens, split the realms apart, and formed the air currents. He caused a turbulent stream of water to flow in them, with a strong current and surging wave. He carried it upon the back of the fierce wind and the violent storm, commanded it to return, controlled its strength, and bound it to its limits. The air beneath it was a chasm, and the water above it was a flood.

The Creation of Angels: Then He split apart the expanse of the highest heavens and filled them with various forms of His angels. Among them are those who prostrate and never rise, those who bow and never stand upright, those who remain in perfect alignment and never drift apart, and those who glorify Him tirelessly without weariness. They are never overtaken by the sleep of eyes, the distraction of minds, the fatigue of bodies, or the negligence of forgetfulness.

Among them are those entrusted with His revelations, those who serve as tongues to convey His messages to His messengers, and those who execute His decrees and commands. Some are the guardians of His servants; others are the keepers of the gates of His gardens. Among them are those whose feet are fixed in the depths of the lower realms, those whose necks stretch into the highest heavens, and those whose limbs extend across the farthest horizons.

The Description of Adam's Creation:

Then the Exalted One gathered a mixture of soil from the earth, from its hard and soft parts, its sweet and saline areas, forming a clay that He purified with water until it became refined, and moistened it until it became cohesive. From this, He shaped a form with curves and joints, limbs and segments. He left it to solidify until it held together and hardened until it produced a ringing sound when struck, all for a designated time and predetermined period.

Then, He breathed into it from His spirit, and it became a human being, endowed with minds to contemplate, thoughts to navigate, limbs to serve, tools to manipulate, and understanding to distinguish between truth and falsehood, as well as between tastes, smells, colors, and kinds. It was fashioned from a mixture of various clays: diverse in hues, harmonious in forms, and composed of opposing elements.

The Selection of Prophets:

He, glory be to Him, choose from among His children prophets from whom He took a covenant to reveal the revelation and to deliver the message from them, when most of His creation changed the covenant that God had given them, and they were ignorant of His right, and took rivals with Him, and the devils led them astray from His knowledge, and cut them off from His worship. So He sent among them His messengers, and sent to them successive prophets. To fulfill their covenant of His nature, and remind them of His forgotten blessings, and argue with them by conveying the message, and raise for them the hidden treasures of reason, and show them the signs of power from a ceiling raised above them, and a bed laid beneath them, and livelihoods that give them life, and terms that destroy them, and afflictions that make them old, and events that befall them one after the other.

The Mission of the Prophet

Until God, glorified be He, sent Muhammad, the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), to fulfill His promise and complete His prophethood. A covenant had been taken concerning him from the prophets, his traits well known, and his birth honorable. At that time, the people of the earth were divided into scattered sects, their desires dispersed, and their paths divergent—some likening God to His creation, some deviating concerning His name, and some pointing to others besides Him. Through him, God guided them out of misguidance and saved them from ignorance through his presence. Then God, glorified be He, chose for Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) to meet Him, and He was pleased for him to receive what is with Him. He honored him by removing him from the abode of this world and spared him from the trials of life. Thus, He took him to Himself in a noble manner (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). He left among you what the prophets left behind among their nations, as they did not abandon them without a clear path and a standing guide.

The Qur'an and Its Legal Rulings

The Book of your Lord is among you, clarifying its lawful and unlawful, its obligations and virtues, its abrogating and abrogated verses, its permissions and mandates, its specific and general instructions, its lessons and parables, its unrestricted and restricted provisions, and its clear and ambiguous verses.

It explains what is concise and clarifies what is obscure, distinguishing between knowledge that has a binding covenant upon its understanding and that for which ignorance is excused among the servants. It contains what is established as obligatory in the Book and known as abrogated in the Sunnah, what is obligatory in the Sunnah to adhere to, and what is permitted in the Book to leave aside.

It distinguishes between what is obligatory for a certain time and ceases afterward, and it separates its prohibitions: whether grave sins for which He has threatened with His Fire or minor sins for which He has prepared His forgiveness.

It also delineates what is acceptable at its minimum and expansive at its maximum.

And Among Them, Regarding the Mention of Hajj

He made it obligatory upon you to perform the Hajj to His Sacred House, which He has made a direction (qibla) for humanity. They come to it as livestock come to water, and they are drawn to it as doves are drawn to their sanctuary.

He, glorified be He, made it a symbol of their humility before His greatness and their submission to His might. He selected from among His creation those who would listen and respond to His call, affirm His word, stand in the stations of His prophets, and emulate His angels who circle around His Throne.

They secure profits in the marketplace of worship and hasten toward His promised forgiveness. He, glorified and exalted, made it a symbol for Islam and a sanctuary for those who seek refuge. He ordained its right, made its pilgrimage obligatory, and prescribed its visitation upon you.

He says, glorified be He:

"And [due] to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House— for whoever is able to find a way to it. And whoever disbelieves— then indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds."

(Surah Aal Imran, 3:97) (References: Al-Mu'tazili, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 58; Al-Radhi, 1416 AH, Vol. 1, pp. 13–26)

**The Selected Sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him)
From a will of his (Peace be upon him):**

1- "O son of Adam, be the guardian of yourself, and act with your wealth in a way that you would want it to be handled after you."

Explanation:

There is no doubt that a person would prefer to allocate their wealth after their death towards acts of charity, piety, and good causes in order for them to receive the reward for it. However, they are reluctant to spend their wealth on such causes while they are alive, due to their love for worldly pleasures and their fear of poverty and neediness in their old age. As a result, they appoint a trustee to handle such

matters in their wealth after their death. Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him) advised individuals to act with their wealth while they are alive in the same way they would want it to be handled in their will after their death. This is a state that only those who have been guided by divine grace can achieve. (Al-Hājj ibn Abī Hadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 95).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

2. "Anger is a form of madness, for the one who experiences it will regret it. And if they do not regret it, their madness is confirmed."

Explanation:

It was said that anger is a sign of ignorance, and it was also said that a sharp mind cannot be sustained by anger, for just as vinegar tarnishes a mirror, anger dulls the intellect. The angry person will neither see the good in their actions nor recognize the bad in them. It was said that the beginning of anger is madness, and its end is regret. It was also said: "Let not anger lead you to commit sin, so that you may relieve your anger and harm your faith." (Al-Hājj ibn Abī Hadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 96).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

3. "The health of the body comes from a lack of envy."

Explanation:

This means that the person with little envy will remain healthy in their body, while the one who harbors much envy will harm their body due to the bitterness of competition and the anger they feel. The physical state of the body is often influenced by the condition of the soul.

Al-Ma'mun said: "I have never envied anyone except Abu Dulf, due to the poet's verse about him:

'The world is Abu Dulf.

Between the desert and the grave:

When Abu Dulf leaves,

The world follows his footsteps."

Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani narrated from Abdus bin Abi Dulf, who said: "My father told me that Al-Ma'mun said to me: 'O Qasim, are you the one whom Ali bin Jabalah speaks of in his verse, "The world is Abu Dulf..."?' I quickly replied: 'What benefit is that to me, O Commander of the Faithful, with what he says about Abu Dulf, 'O the greatest liar among all, except for me, for I am the most deceitful in praising you.'" (Al-Hājj ibn Abī Hadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 96).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

4. "When you are impoverished, trade with Allah through charity."

Explanation:

The wise have said: The best of acts of worship is charity because its benefits extend beyond the individual, whereas the benefits of prayer and fasting are limited to the individual. It is narrated that Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him) worked for a Jewish man, watering his palm trees during the time of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), in exchange for a measure of barley. He baked it into a loaf, and when it was time to break his fast, a beggar came asking for food. He gave the bread to the beggar and went to sleep hungry, thus trading with Allah through this act of charity. People considered this act as one of the greatest acts of generosity and also regarded it as one of the highest forms of worship.

A Shia poet also beautifully mentions the story, recalling the miracle of the sun being returned to him:

"He gave the loaf while his stomach was empty,

And rejected the food, though he was starving,

And the shining loaf was returned to him.

The loaf and the lender to the noble ones were granted."
(Al-Ḥājj ibn Abī Ḥadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 101).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

5. "Fulfilling the trust of those who betray is betrayal in the sight of Allah, and betraying the betrayers is loyalty in the sight of Allah."

Explanation:

This means that if it is customary for an enemy to betray and fail to fulfill their promises, pledges, and oaths, it is not permissible to uphold any agreements with them. Instead, their covenant should be broken. Upholding a pledge with such a person, in the eyes of Allah, is not considered loyalty but is rather akin to betrayal in its ugliness. On the other hand, betraying someone who has a history of betrayal is not considered wrong or evil; rather, in the eyes of Allah, it is as virtuous as being loyal to someone who deserves loyalty.

(Al-Ḥājj ibn Abī Ḥadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 102).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

6. "How many have been gradually led into misfortune by the kindness shown to them, deceived by the concealment of their faults, and captivated by the good words spoken about them. Allah has never tested anyone more than by extending His grace upon them."

Explanation:

Some sages have said: "Beware of blessings that come continuously, for they may be a trap. Just as a soldier should beware of following his enemy during battle when the enemy retreats into an ambush, so too, there are enemies who, after retreating, lead others into danger. Similarly, there are those who appear to be helpless in your hands, only to turn against you when you least expect it."

(Al-Ḥājj ibn Abī Ḥadīd, 1987, Vol. 19, p. 103).

From the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him):

7. "Indeed, dispute leads to destruction."

Explanation:

Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) uses the term (destruction) to signify the dangers and pitfalls that disputes often lead to. The idea is that engaging in conflict frequently drags people into harmful situations, where they may lose more than they gain. One example he gives is the "destruction of the Bedouins", which refers to the misfortunes that befall them, such as a famine that scatters their wealth and leads them into ruin. This metaphor illustrates how conflict and hardship in life can scatter resources and result in greater loss.

There is another interpretation where (*Kaham*) is understood as the act of being pushed into unfamiliar or difficult territories, such as when the Bedouins are forced to enter the city due to changes in their environment, symbolizing how disputes force people out of their comfort zones and into more challenging situations.

The word (*Kaham*) itself means entering something hastily or without careful consideration, often leading to trouble. The verb (*Kaham*) refers to rushing into a situation or event without due caution or preparation. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) used this expression when he entrusted Abdullah bin Ja'far with a dispute on his behalf, acknowledging the risks and the potential pitfalls involved in such matters.

Selected from the letters and messages of Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him), numbered at (79) letters:

Some of the letters:

The letters sent by Amir al-Mu'minin (Peace be upon him) to Muawiya, inviting him to pledge allegiance:

Before declaring war, Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) sent a collection of letters to Muawiya, urging him to pledge allegiance and join the unity of the Muslims in submission to the authority of the caliphate, urging him not to divide the word of the Muslims or scatter their unity. However, Muawiya responded with deceit and hypocrisy, demanding justice for the blood of Uthman and the punishment of his killers.

One of those letters:

Ibn Abi al-Hadid narrated that when Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) was pledged allegiance to, he wrote to Muawiya: " the people killed Uthman without any consultation from me, and they pledged allegiance to me after mutual consultation and consensus among them. When my letter reaches you, pledge allegiance to me and send to me the nobles of the people of Syria before you."

This letter reflected the Imam's disavowal of Uthman's bloodshed, attributing it to the people, and clarifying that they had gathered to pledge allegiance to him. It emphasized that Muawiya was obligated to join what the Muslims had agreed upon regarding the allegiance to the Imam.

When Imam Ali's (Peace be upon him) letter reached Muawiya and he read it, he called for a scroll and wrote in it:

"From Muawiya to Ali, to proceed:

There is no dispute between me and Qays, except the stabbing of kidneys and the striking of necks."

The meaning of this response is that Muawiya was determined to fight the Imam and oppose his rule. In this letter, he did not mention any accusation against Imam Ali regarding the killing of Uthman.

Ibn Qutayba narrated that when Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) had finished the Battle of the Camel and his rule had become stable, he wrote this letter to Muawiya:

"Afterwards, indeed, the preordained judgment and the inevitable decree descend from the heavens like drops of rain. Its rulings proceed by the will of the Almighty, and His desires are fulfilled without the favor of the creatures or the approval of human beings. You have been informed about the killing of Uthman, the general pledge of allegiance to me, and the defeat of those who broke their pledge to me. So, enter into what the people have entered into, or else I am the one you know, and those around me are those who understand it."

This message indicates:

1. That the course of events is entirely in the hands of the Almighty Creator, and the creatures have no control over them.
2. The pledge of allegiance of the general Muslims to the Imam after the killing of Uthman, and the opposition of the rebels against him, namely Talha, Zubair, and Aisha, and his judgment upon them.
3. The Imam's invitation to Muawiya to pledge allegiance to him and enter into his obedience, and if he does not respond, the Imam threatens him with war and combat.

Muawiya responded to this message with a letter that began with the Bismillah (In the name of God), but it contained no further content. When the Imam read it, he understood that Muawiya was determined to fight him.

The Imam (peace be upon him) sent a message to Muawiya through Jarir bin Abdullah al-Bajali, which contained the following after the salutation:

‘As for what follows: my pledge of allegiance in Medina is binding upon you while you are in Syria, because the same people who pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman have pledged allegiance to me in the same way. Therefore, neither the witness has the right to choose nor the absent the right to reject. The consultation is for the Muhajirin and Ansar. If they agree upon a man and name him as the Imam, this is acceptable to Allah. If someone opposes their choice with objection or desire for something else, he should be returned to what he deviated from. If he refuses, they should fight him for straying from the path of the believers, and Allah will place him in hell as a wretched end.

‘As for Talha and Zubair, they pledged allegiance to me but then broke their pledge, which was akin to apostasy. I fought them until the truth prevailed and the command of Allah became evident, though they were reluctant. So enter into what the Muslims have entered into, and the most desirable thing for me from you is peace, unless you expose yourself to trial. If you do, I will fight you and seek Allah's help against you. You have repeatedly spoken about the killing of Uthman, so enter into what the people have entered into. Then, let us judge the matter according to the Book of Allah.

‘As for what you seek, it is like the trick of a child trying to nurse; by my life, if you look with your mind and not your desires, you will find that I am the one who is the furthest among the Quraysh from the blood of Uthman. I have sent to you Jarir bin Abdullah al-Bajali, a man of faith and migration. So pledge allegiance, for there is no power except by Allah.’

The researcher points out that in this message, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) calls on Muawiya to pledge allegiance to him and obey him, stating that this allegiance cannot be revoked. The Imam highlights that the pledge of allegiance was made by the Muhajirun and the Ansar who had pledged allegiance to the previous caliphs before him. He also refers to the defection of Talha and Zubair from their allegiance to him, describing it as a rejection of the right path, and how he fought them until the will of Allah prevailed, despite their reluctance. Furthermore, the Imam makes it clear to Muawiya in his message that if he does not respond to his allegiance, the Imam will fight him until he submits to the command of Allah. The Imam emphasizes that Muawiya is not entitled to the caliphate because he is one of the "Tulaqa" (those who were pardoned after the conquest of Mecca), and therefore has no rightful claim to leadership, nor does he have a right to be a member of the Shura (consultative council). In any case, Muawiya kept delaying his response to Jarir until he grew weary of him and said to him:

O Muawiya, the hypocrite does not pray until he finds no way out of prayer, and I do not think you will pledge allegiance until you find no way out of pledging allegiance." Muawiya replied:

It is not a trick of a child being weaned from milk! It is a matter that has consequences beyond it." On that day, Muawiya raised his voice so that Jareer could hear him as he recited these verses:

The night has lengthened, and my doubts have overtaken me,
Not coming with idle tales or trivialities.
Jareer came to me, and many events followed,
With the ones that entail the bending of noses.
I oppose him, with the sword between us,
And I am not one to wear the garments of the lowly.
For the Levant has given its allegiance with its fate,
And its elders speak of it in their gatherings.

This poetry reflects his determination to wage war against Imam Ali (peace be upon him) because the Levant (Sham) has submitted to him and obeyed him blindly. Moreover, it shows that he harbors ambitions to rule over Iraq and seize control of it.

Muawiya replied to the letter of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) with this message:

From Muawiya bin Sakar to Ali bin Abi Talib, peace be upon you:

I swear, had those who pledged allegiance to you while you were innocent of Uthman's blood, you would have been like Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them all). However, you incited the emigrants with the blood of Uthman and weakened the Ansar's support for him. The ignorant obeyed you, and the weak grew stronger with your help. The people of the Levant have refused but to fight you until you hand over the killers of Uthman. If you do so, it would be a consultation among the Muslims.

It was the people of Hijaz who were the rulers of the people, and the truth was with them. But when they parted from it, the rulers became the people of the Levant.

By my life, your argument against me is not like your argument against Talhah and Zubair, for they pledged allegiance to you, but I did not. And your argument with the people of the Levant is not like your argument with the people of Basra, for the people of Basra obeyed you, but the people of the Levant did not.

As for your honor in Islam, your kinship with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and your position among the Quraysh, I do not deny them.

He concluded his message with the poetry of Ka'b bin Jabeel:

I see that the people of the Levant dislike the rule of Iraq,
And the people of Iraq, they have those who dislike them.
Each one is hostile to his counterpart,
Seeing everything that came from the other side as a matter of religion.
When they throw at us, we throw back at them,
And we bring them close just as they strike at us.

The researcher believes that this document contains nothing but crude language, triviality, disbelief, polytheism, barbarism, harshness, political distortions, rebellion against the truth, refusal to submit to it despite its clarity, and insistence on falsehood and oppression. These traits are characteristic of rebels like Muawiya and his father, mother, wife, and children.

The Imam's (peace be upon him) response to Muawiyah:

When that letter reached the Imam (peace be upon him), he read it and saw falsehood in every word. He responded with this message:

From Ali ibn Abi Talib to Muawiyah ibn Sufyan:

After praising Allah:

We have received your letter, a letter from a man who lacks the insight to guide him and the leader to direct him. He was called by desire, and he answered; it led him, and he followed. You claim that my pledge of allegiance was disrupted because of my alleged sin regarding 'Uthman. By my life, I was only one among the emigrants (muhajirun). I acted as they acted and followed their decisions as they did. Allah would never unite them upon misguidance, nor would He strike them with blindness. I neither commanded the killing of 'Uthman to bear the sin of giving such an order, nor did I kill him to fear retribution as a murderer. As for your statement that the people of Syria are the rulers over the people of Hijaz, bring forth a man from the Quraysh of Syria who is worthy of consultation (shura) or fit for the caliphate. If you name one, the emigrants and the helpers (ansar) will refute you. But we, on the other hand, can provide someone from the Quraysh of Hijaz. As for your demand to hand over the killers of 'Uthman, what business is that of yours? Here are the sons of 'Uthman; they have a greater right to that than you. If you claim that you are more capable of seeking retribution for 'Uthman's blood, then return to the pledge of allegiance that is binding upon you and bring the matter to me for judgment. As for your distinction between the people of Syria and Basra, and your comparison of yourself with Talha and Al-Zubayr, by my life, the matter is the same, for the pledge of allegiance is a general one. It is not subject to reconsideration nor open to further choice. And as for my closeness to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and my precedence in Islam, if you could deny it, you would have done so.

The researcher points out that this letter was filled with responses to the falsehoods of Muawiyah and the fabrications he mentioned in his message. It bore no trace of truth and instead reflected his Umayyad tendencies, which were laden with malice, wickedness, and hatred.

Muawiyah sent a letter to the Imam (peace be upon him), which began with the basmala (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful):

"Peace be upon those who follow guidance.

After that, we and you were once a united hand, a harmonious bond. But then, O son of Abu Talib, you became ambitious, and things changed. You began to consider yourself strong against those who opposed you, relying on the riffraff of Hijaz, the rabble of Iraq, the fools of Fustat, and the mobs of Al-Sawad. By Allah, their foolishness will soon abandon you, and their mobs will disperse from you like clouds clearing from the sky. You killed Uthman ibn Affan and climbed a ladder where Allah exposed to you a view of evil, one that bodes ill for you, not good. You killed Al-Zubayr and Talha, drove your mother Aisha into exile, and settled between the two cities (Kufa and Basra). You filled yourself with ambition and delusion, thinking that the world, with its cavalry and infantry, has been subjugated to you. But you will come to know the truth of your aspirations when I arrive to visit you with the emigrants from the people of Syria, the remnant of Islam. They will encircle you from all sides, and Allah will then decree His judgment regarding you. Peace be upon the allies of Allah."

The researcher believes that this letter encapsulated lies, deceit, and hypocrisy in every sense of the word. For Ibn Hind, the liver-eater (a reference to Hind bint Utbah), and the son of Abu Sufyan, Muawiyah, there was nothing but rebellion and hostility as their only assets, aside from deceit, falsehood, slander, and invalid claims. Their actions represented defiance against a divinely appointed, infallible Imam whose obedience was obligatory.

The Imam (peace be upon him) responded to Muawiyah's letter with the following message, beginning with the basmala (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful):

After praising Allah:

Consider matters as one who reflects for himself rather than for his troops, and do not waste your time in frivolous speech. By my life, if my strength relied more on the people of Iraq than on my reliance on

Allah and my knowledge of Him, then such reliance would lack certainty in Allah Almighty. Whoever behaves this way has no true faith in Allah. So, reflect upon yourself with the seriousness of one who relies on sincerity rather than jest, for there is vast scope in truthful words, and someone like you will not be excused for aspiring to what men of principle seek. As for your claim that we and you were once a united hand, you are correct. But what separated us from you is that Allah sent His Messenger from among us, so we believed in him, while you disbelieved. You also claimed that I killed Talha and Al-Zubayr. That is a matter you neither witnessed nor attended. Had you been present, you would have known the truth. It neither concerns you nor do I owe you any justification for it. You asserted that you intend to visit me among the emigrants, but migration (hijra) ended the day your brother was captured. If hastiness resides in you, then subjugate it; and if it detains you, then know that it is fitting Allah sent me upon you as retribution for your rebellion. Peace be upon those who follow guidance.

The researcher points out that the Imam (peace be upon him) refuted Muawiyah's claims and falsehoods. The letter from Muawiyah to the Imam and the response to it are narrated in another version, which was mentioned by Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili in his work.

The researcher also points out that this letter reflects the Imam's (peace be upon him) call to Muawiyah to return to the truth and to avoid deception and misguidance. However, the Imam's counsel had no effect on this misguided individual, whose heart was sealed by falsehood, causing him to forget the remembrance of Allah and leaving no trace of light in his conscience. Muawiyah paid no heed to the Imam's advice or guidance; instead, he resorted to insults and threats.

Muawiyah responded to the Imam's (peace be upon him) letter with the following reply, in which he threatened the Imam with the declaration of war:

"After praising Allah,

You have long continued in error, just as you have persistently delayed engaging in battle. You threaten with the fury of a lion, yet you maneuver like a fox. How long will you shy away from confronting the fierce lions and deadly serpents? Do not underestimate it, for everything that is to come is near, by Allah's will.

This letter reflects Muawiyah's audacity in threatening the Imam (peace be upon him) and his boasting of the support from the people of Syria.

The researcher believes that history has portrayed Muawiyah for his cowardice, deceit, and cunning, as well as his reliance on others for strength due to his own fear and treachery. Muawiyah, as well as his ancestors, were known for fleeing from the battlefield and avoiding major confrontations. He was too cowardly to respond with such harsh words to the leader of the Arabs, the greatest warrior among them after the Prophet (peace be upon him), and one who had the courage to face battles and defend truth.

The Imam (peace be upon him) responded to Muawiyah with the following message, expressing his readiness for war and his indifference to the heroes of Syria. The text of the message is as follows:

"How strange it is that I receive such from you, and how little I know of what you are destined for. My delay in responding to you is nothing but waiting for what you will ultimately deny, while I believe in it. I foresee that tomorrow, you and your companions will cry out from the war, like camels groaning under their burdens. You will call me to a book that you praise with your tongues but deny with your hearts."

The researcher believes that Imam Ali (peace be upon him), may my parents be sacrificed for him, seemed to know with absolute certainty the future events related to the issue of arbitration and the false trickery of Muawiyah, as evident in his response to Muawiyah. Indeed, the events unfolded exactly as the Imam had predicted, as he had foreseen in his response to Muawiyah when he said: *"You and your companions will call me to a book that you praise with your tongues but deny with your hearts."* This prophecy came to pass, and it must be noted that this reference is found in Ibn Abi al-Hadid's work, as indicated earlier in the discussion of the letter.

Selected Wisdoms of the Commander of the Faithful (Ali, peace be upon him)

These are profound and spiritual wisdoms, with over 470 wisdoms. Some of the wisdoms:

1. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"In times of turmoil, be like the young camel: it has no back to be ridden nor a udder to be milked."*
(Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 82)

2. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"He who feels greed for himself and accepts humiliation, has disgraced himself. He who exposes his troubles and allows his soul to be controlled by his tongue has dishonored himself."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 84)
3. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Miserliness is disgraceful, cowardice is a deficiency, poverty makes a clever person mute, and the poor are strangers in their own land."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 87)
4. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Inability is a calamity, patience is courage, asceticism is wealth, piety is armor, and contentment is a good companion."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 90)
5. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Knowledge is a noble inheritance, manners are renewed garments, and thought is a clear mirror."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 93).
6. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"The chest of the wise person is the vault of their secrets, cheerfulness is the net of affection, and tolerance is the grave of faults." It was also narrated that he said regarding this meaning: "Peacefulness is the cover for faults, and he who is satisfied with himself will find many who are displeased with him."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 97).
7. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Charity is a successful remedy, and the actions of the servants are in their present lives as their sights are on their eventual end."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 101)
8. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Marvel at this human being: he sees with fat, speaks with flesh, hears with bone, and breathes from a hole."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 103).
9. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"When the world turns towards someone, it loans them the virtues of others, but when it turns away from them, it takes away their own virtues."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 105).
10. **Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:** *"Mix with people in such a way that if you die, they will mourn for you, and if you live, they will long for you."* (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1987, Vol. 18, p. 107).

Values, Their Concepts, System, Measurement, and Advancement

The Concept of Values:

The concept of value has been a subject of interest for many researchers in various fields such as philosophy, education, economics, sociology, psychology, and others. As a result, there has been a kind of confusion and ambiguity in the use of the concept from one field to another, and even within the same field, multiple uses of the concept exist. There is no single definition of the concept of values that is universally accepted by all practitioners in the field of social psychology. (Khalifa, 1992, p. 36).

The concept of value in psychology:

The perspective of social psychologists on the concept of value differs from that of economists and sociologists. For example, sociologists focus on constructing social systems and their functions, paying attention to the types of behavior exhibited by groups or categories of individuals in relation to other social systems. They analyze various behavioral events such as buying and selling, voting, attending places of worship, etc., which classify specific types of activities among individuals.

As for social psychologists, they focus on every aspect of an individual's behavior within society, without being confined to a specific framework or system. Social psychology concentrates on the individual's traits, predispositions, and responses, particularly in relation to their interactions with others.

Concept of Value:

Values have existed alongside humanity and have shaped the framework of human relationships with others. They are one of the key determinants of social behavior and represent the outcome of the interests and activities of both individuals and groups. The characteristics of values can be defined as a social concept related to the essence of things and how groups and peoples perceive them. Values are more stable and enduring, and harder to change than attitudes. They are acquired concepts, conferred by culture, and individuals take care to express them in their behavior and communicate them in clear forms, often wanting to publicize them. Values consist of three main dimensions: the cognitive dimension, the emotional dimension, and the perceptual dimension. A person's values must align with the culture and values of the group they belong to. (Malham, 2000, p. 337-338).

In light of this, it is clear that sociologists deal with collective values, while psychologists focus on studying individual values and their determinants, whether they are psychological, social, or physiological, etc.

Sociologists are concerned with the group, whereas psychologists concentrate on the individual. As for the concept of value, the Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology defines it as:

First: A goal that transcends the situation, serving as a guiding principle in the life of an individual or group (e.g., kindness, creativity), or stimulates and justifies behavior values, acting as standards for judging people, actions, and events.

Second: A moral, political, economic, aesthetic, or spiritual preference.

Third: Primarily in economics, referring to the attribute of something that grants it value. (Matsumoto, David, 2009, p. 859).

Values are distinguished by the following:

1. A quality or characteristic of something that makes it useful and desirable.
2. An abstract and general principle that pertains to patterns of behavior within the framework of a particular society's culture, with its individuals being keen on respecting and venerating the standards of those cultural and social behavioral patterns. (Reber & Reed, 2008, p. 101).

Concept of Value System:

The idea of a value system arose from the understanding that a particular value cannot be studied or understood in isolation from other values. There exists a hierarchy or system in which values are organized, ranked according to their importance for the individual or group.

A value system refers to "a set of interconnected values" that organize the behavior and actions of an individual, often without their awareness. In other words, it is the hierarchical arrangement of a set of values adopted by the individual or society, which governs their behavior, often unconsciously.

This is consistent with the definition (Kazem, 1962) for a value system as: "A set of individual or societal values arranged according to their priorities, forming a framework in the shape of a ladder, with its components graded based on their importance."

Some researchers also treat the value system as: "A set of interconnected attitudes that are organized in the form of a stepped structure.

(Rokish) believes that the belief system – belief vs. disbelief – is a comprehensive system of attitudes, values, and value systems. He considers these aspects as components that play a fundamental role in the individual's overall belief system. In light of this view, (Rokish) defines the value system as an organized set of beliefs characterized by relative stability, prioritizing an ultimate goal of existence, or a form of behavior that leads to this goal, based on its importance to the individual.

According to (Rokish's) classification of values into ultimate (end) values and instrumental (means) values, he argues that there is a value system for ultimate values within the individual, as well as a value system for instrumental values.

(Bukh) divides value systems into two types: the primary value system, which relates to the biological needs of the individual, and the secondary value system, which includes social and ethical values. He believes that the overall value system is influenced by both types. (Khalifa, 1992, p. 61-62).

The concept of the progression of the value system:

A value holds its position in an individual's life based on their need for it and their attention to it. An individual gives little importance to a value if they have not yet reached the level or degree at which they can recognize its relevance and significance to them. (Khalifa, 1992, p. 63).

As Woodruff explained, values progress in their elevation along the instrumental-ultimate continuum through three levels: the first level involves direct goals related to tangible things (such as food, comfort, and achievement); the second level includes indirect goals that are non-social and concern the future (such as securing a job or striving for fame); the third level pertains to ultimate goals, where one engages directly with ultimate values (such as freedom and beauty). The elevation and understanding of values pass through different stages, which are defined by Krathwohl and his colleagues into three levels:

The first level: The level of acceptance, which involves belief in the importance of a particular value. This is the lowest degree of certainty.

The second level: The level of preference, which refers to an individual's preference for certain values and giving them importance.

The third level: The level of commitment, which is the highest degree of certainty, where the individual feels that deviating from a particular value would violate the prevailing norms.

As an individual grows and progress in age, the standards and rules that govern their actions, behaviors, and judgments of what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, change, as they deviate from the prevailing norms in society (Khalifa, 1992, p. 63-64).

The researcher believes that the levels of certainty described by Imam Ali (peace be upon him) differ from those described by Krathol, as Imam Ali (peace be upon him) divides certainty into three types: the certainty of knowledge (Ilm al-Yaqeen), the certainty of sight (Ayn al-Yaqeen), and the certainty of truth (Haq al-Yaqeen). Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also considers certainty to be the best form of worship, and the ultimate goal of religion is faith, with the ultimate goal of faith being certainty (al-Rishahri, 1422 AH, Vol. 4, p. 3714).

These levels are logically sequential, and the difference between them is illustrated by an example: For instance, the certainty of knowledge (Ilm al-Yaqeen) about fire is the perception of it through the light it emits. The certainty of sight (Ayn al-Yaqeen) is the direct observation of its physical form. The certainty of truth (Haq al-Yaqeen) is the experience of being burned by it (al-Rishahri, 1422 AH, Vol. 4, p. 3716). The researcher believes that the Qur'an addressed the degrees of certainty before Krathol and others, through the following verses:

- **"Kalla law ta'lamoona 'ilma al-yaqeen"** (Surah At-Takathur, Ayah 5)
Translation: "No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty."
- **"Thumma latarawnaha 'ayna al-yaqeen"** (Surah At-Takathur, Ayah 7)
Translation: "Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty."
- **"Inna hadha lahuwa haqq al-yaqeen"** (Surah Al-Waqi'ah, Ayah 95)

The researcher also believes that there is a complete or total extension between the progression of needs according to Maslow and the progression of values according to Woodruff. Both emphasize the sequential psychological advancement. However, the researcher differentiates from both Maslow and Woodruff when stating that this progression reflects the values and needs of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), as discussed on page 119 of this research.

Measurement of Values:

Values can be measured in various ways, each with its own applications, advantages, and appropriate circumstances. The methods of measuring values are divided into two main types:

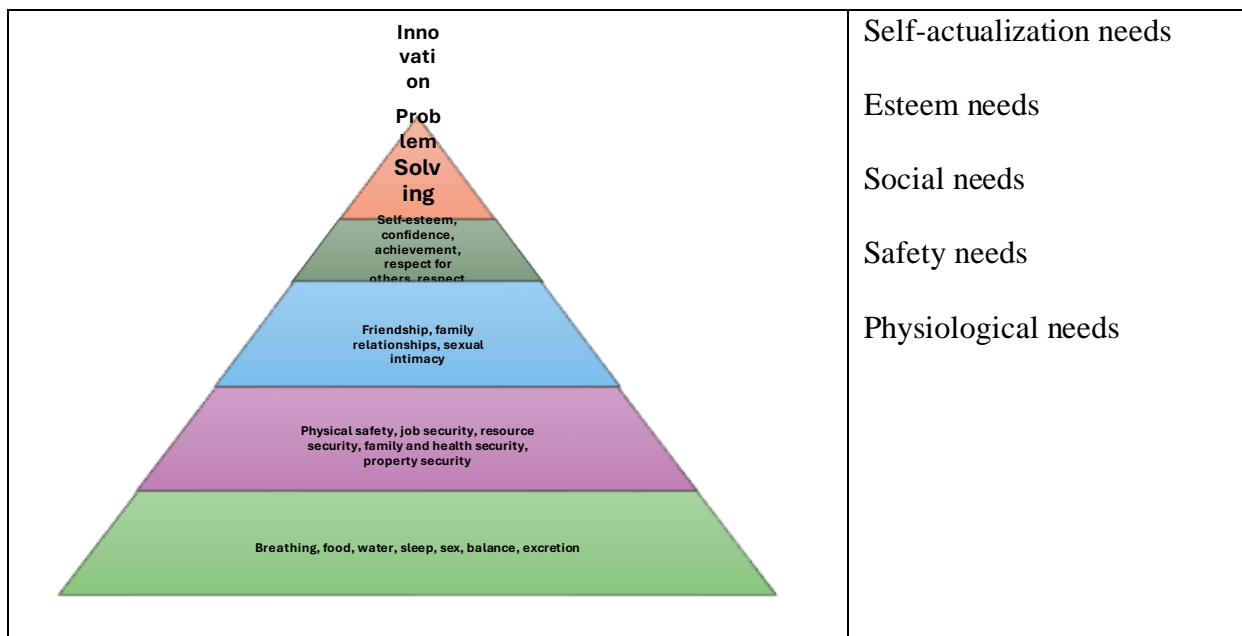
Verbal Methods: These are the most commonly used in measuring values, as they allow for determining an individual's position accurately on a scale based on their responses to a set of test items related to the value in question. The items are designed to measure a single value dimension as well as its intensity.

Practical Methods: These methods rely on observing real behavior using standardized procedures that define criteria, conditions, and processes to ensure objectivity. Various techniques can be employed to measure attitudes. (Malham, 2000, p. 340).

Content Analysis: It is a method used by researchers to describe the visible content of communication in an objective, organized, and quantitative manner. This method has been employed in the field of identifying values by analyzing the content of messages, whether auditory, written, or visual. One of the early users of this method in this field was Ralph White (1947). Arab studies have also adopted White's classification of values, such as those by (Kazem, 1962), (Tawalba, 1975), and (Baker, 1975). These studies are relevant to the current research as they rely on the same classification to reveal values present in written verbal content derived from Arab culture. Other studies, however, have used different classifications from White's, including five studies conducted by (Al-Hamdani, 1960), (Al-Hamdani and Qasim, 1969), (Al-Hamdani and Al-Khamisi, 1973), (Al-Khatib, 1974), and (Suleiman, 1975). These studies fall within the scope of this research, as they analyze values in the content of children's literature produced from Arab culture through content analysis.

The Ascension of Values:

The topic of the ascension of values can be viewed through the lens of several theorists on values, and one of the most notable is **Maslow**. In his theory of motivation, Maslow explained that there is a sequential ascent of needs, where an individual's needs rise in a systematic, progressive, and sequential manner, from lower to higher needs, depending on their importance and dominance in the individual's personality (Khalifa, 1999, p. 139) (Rasoul, 2015, p. 68). In this, he attempts to establish a clear relationship between the ascension of an individual's values and the ascent of their needs and motives, which he presented in the form of a hierarchical pyramid. The needs function as a system in humans. Maslow does not require the fulfillment of lower needs whenever an individual ascends to a higher level of needs. Instead, he prioritizes the fulfillment of lower-level needs that form the base of the pyramid, which are physiological needs (Khalifa, 1999, p. 139). The following diagram (Figure 1) illustrates this concept.



Maslow, in the context of his theory on the sequential psychological progression of needs, suggests that an individual's needs ascend in a hierarchical structure, comprising six levels, with physiological needs at the lowest level and cognitive needs, such as the desire for knowledge and understanding, at the highest level. A person moves from one level to another as they advance in age (Khalifa, 1999, p. 63).

The researcher argues that the transition from one level to another in the satisfaction of needs, according to age as Maslow suggests, is not applicable to great individuals like the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (peace be upon him). This transition is not related to age or aging; rather, it is influenced by an individual's awareness, environment, and beliefs, which in turn affect their behavior and the adoption of values as they progress from one level to another.

Furthermore, the needs in Maslow's well-known hierarchical pyramid do not align with the values embedded in the speeches, letters, wisdom, sermons, and advice of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), even if we accept the validity of Maslow's theory. Imam Ali's teachings embody ideals, values, and real-world meanings before being theoretical. Hence, we find that Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stands at the pinnacle of knowledge, piety, and understanding without needing to pass through the levels of Maslow's pyramid. He was the gateway to the knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and he exemplified asceticism, piety, chastity, and renunciation without fulfilling the lower worldly desires, despite having the capacity to do so, as expressed in many of his speeches, letters, wisdom, advice, and his noble biography.

Thus, we find that Maslow's pyramid touches upon the value system of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), but Imam Ali (peace be upon him) transcended the peak of this pyramid, which is self-actualization, as he merged his essence with the divine essence.

Developmental needs have the characteristic of remaining present for a longer period during a series of events, while deficiency needs work to reduce tension and restore balance. The satisfaction of deficiency needs allows the individual to enjoy mental health. Growth needs are shared across all forms of living beings, whereas developmental (growth) needs create differences between individuals, as each person grows individually, using all their potential and feelings, which gives meaning to their life. On the other hand, security needs can only be satisfied through others, meaning they depend on the environment surrounding an individual's personality and the nature of relationships between people (Maslow, 1962, p. 25).

Maslow believes that Freud's greatest discovery was attributing most psychological disorders to the fear of self-knowledge—that is, the fear of individuals discovering their own emotions, motivations, desires, and potentials. Maslow discovered that the fear of knowing oneself is similar and identical to the fear of the external world, as it is a defensive fear to protect the individual's self-esteem. He also pointed out that the fear of any information that could cause an individual to despise themselves and feel worthless leads them to protect their self-image, avoiding

the painful feelings caused by dangerous truths. The need for knowledge makes individuals wiser, stronger, and more mature, with the potential for self-actualization. A person freed from anxiety is bolder, braver, and more capable of exploring and searching for the truth behind the origins and nature of things (Maslow, 1962, p. 25).

While Maslow believes that the hierarchical progression of needs applies to the vast majority of people, it does not apply to everyone. A review of history shows that many people dedicate their lives, in particular, to a cause or ideals, willingly sacrificing everything, even their lives, in pursuit of them. Similarly, devout individuals who forgo worldly needs and live modest lives, using all their potential for knowledge, demonstrate that the hierarchical model can sometimes be bypassed. Some individuals place greater importance on self-respect and love, feeling that they can only fulfill their need for belonging and love when they have high confidence in themselves and their values (Shelter, 1983, p. 298).

In light of studies in the field and their results, many researchers have concluded that the progression of needs follows the same path as the progression of values. These findings have shown a clear connection between the elevation of an individual's values and the development of their motives and needs. The need for belonging is positively associated with friendship, love, and peace, as indicated by Rokersh (Khalifa, 1999, p. 139).

The researcher believes:

If Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili believes and says that the speech of the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) is above the speech of created beings and below the speech of the Creator, then the sermons, letters, sayings, covenants, and wills of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in *Nahj al-Balagha*—with their values and nobility—are above the values, desires, and needs of created beings. Rather, they are in compliance with and an application of the values and desires of the Qur'an and its great Creator, who lived a life of sufficiency, asceticism, and piety, to the point where he said about his own asceticism: "I patched my cloak until I was ashamed of the one who patched it."

So, what kind of hierarchy is this that Maslow spoke of in terms of the necessity of a hierarchical progression of needs until an individual reaches the peak? And what is this peak that the Imam of the pious (peace be upon him) has reached in values and needs?