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An Explanation of Theological-Mystical Thinking of Philosopher Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini on Velayat and Caliphate

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ABSTRACT

Of the prominent scholars who meticulously investigated in their own philosophical and interpretive works the dimensions of the subject "Velayat² and Caliphate" were Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini, both considered the great Shia thinkers. This article concerns the theo-mystical thinking of philosophers Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini on the issue of Velayat and the caliphate. These two thinkers have reviewed and analyzed the levels, status and typology of Velayat and Caliphate. Also, they have investigated subjects of prophethood and Imamate³, which are both representations of the Caliphate and Velayat. It is thus concluded that the key mystical thoughts of Imam Khomeini do not conflict with the basics of Sadr Al-Mutallehin's Transcendental Philosophy, with the difference being that the latter has a philosophical view of the issue, and the Imam concerns with the subject by using a mystical approach.

Keywords: Velayat, Caliphate, Imamate, Perfect Human, Imam Khomeini, Mulla Sadra

INTRODUCTION

The subjects of the Caliphate and Velayat are thought to be the key subjects of Islamic mysticism, without which nothing becomes apparent in the world of creation. Unless there is a caliphate or a guardian, no truth is revealed, with God the Almighty remaining behind the curtain of the eternal Unseen. For this, the divine Caliphate and Velayat stimulate and manifest human dignity (Hosseini, 2006). Various Muslim thinkers have long debated these subjects. Of the prominent scholars who meticulously investigated in their own philosophical and interpretive works the dimensions of the subject "Velayat/Caliphate" were Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini, both considered the great Shia thinkers. One would say that Imam Khomeini and Sadr Al-Mutallehin are among the thinkers who have, throughout history, investigated the issues of the Caliphate and Velayat at a higher level and provided valuable interpretations in this regard.

In some of his books, such as *Shavahed Al-Raboubya*, Mulla Sadra has elaborated on the issues considerably. He regards the content of the book to be derived from divine and Koranic lights, suggesting in the foreword that: "Swear by my one soul that these debates are originated in heavenly lights which radiate across the sky of Velayat where there are hands that knock the door of prophethood" (Mulla Sadra, 2008:4). Because the subject of Velayat/caliphate is thought

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² guardianship/ authority

³ leadership

to be the spirit of the transcendental philosophy and Shia mysticism and serves as the loop to connect the universes and the highest level of divine closeness and is also an intermediary of grace for many of the theo-mystical issues, any thinking which can help reveal horizons in this regard assumes high importance. It is critical to explain the similarities and differences of opinion between Imam Khomeini and Sadr Al-Mutallehin. This article deals with Imam Khomeini and Sadr Al-Mutallehin's thoughts on Velayat and Caliphate and other subjects such as human position, human souls, perfect human caliphate, etc.

Literature Review

Various sources are available on the subject of the present article, the oldest of which refers to Ibn Arabi's "Fosous Al-Heakm," many interpretations have been provided, such as Kharazmi, Ghiesari's interpretation, Ashtiani's interpretation on the Gheisari foreword, etc.

Imam Khomeini has also written an interpretation on "Fosous Al-Heakm." Interpretative and theological books have provided rich and in-depth debates about the verses on Velayat; these books include the valuable interpretive book of "Al-Mizan" by Allame Tabatabaei, who has given his thoughts on verses related to Velayat. Ayatullah Javadi Amoli has described the subject in his works "Velayat in the Koran," "Alawite Velayat," and "Velayat-e-Faghih," and Ayatullah Hasanzadeh Amoli has also meticulously elaborated on this issue in his book "Formative Velayat."

1. Velayat, in the two philosophers' thinking

A) Velayat, in Imam Khomeini's thoughts

To Imam Khomeini, Velayat (also known as leadership/authority) is characterized by political, jurisprudential, mystical and theological aspects, each having its specific meanings. For the Imam, belief in the significance of establishing a government and setting up an executive system to rule the nation is part of the Velayat. He also maintains that belief in Velayat includes the struggle to achieve it (Khosrow Panah, 2006:21). The truth behind Velayat is the manifestation of divinity which is the essence of existence and perfection. Each creature with a grain of existence benefits from the divinity of truth and divine grace, the true caliphate and Velayat (Imam Khomeini, 1990, 41; 1994, 67). In other words, the Imam's insight suggests that the external manifestation of divinity and spreading of divine grace in external eyes takes place in the form of Velayat. This denotes that Velayat, especially in the perfect human, is the first and most notable manifestation of God the Almighty. The Imam also says, "the truth of Velayat for the mystics denotes the absolute grace and that grace is out of all determined limits called absolute existence, as existence does belong to that truth" (Ibid, 1997:9-101). He has also considered the prophet's Velayat and the Alawite Velayat the same; thus, all the characters he has enumerated for the prophet can be regarded as Imam Ali and his great son (AS). He states in this regard:

"The caliphate you have heard about his position is the truth of Velayat because Velayat refers to closeness, popularity, divinity and succession, which are revelations of the truth and reality. Other Velayats are the shadows and secondary. It is the Alawite Velayat which corresponds to the Moahamadya Velayat" (Ibid, 1994:36).

B) Velayat, in the Mulla Sadra's thoughts

Mulla Sadra debates about the human being, human existential stages, the perfect human, and his various ranks in his works. He argues that the prophethood and Imamate ranks are the major



stages of Velayat. Mulla Sadra has been concerned with this issue meticulously. For him, “Vali” (guardian) denotes closeness and a blurring of distances. Vali refers to the one who is worthier than others to lead the affairs. For this, Vali is the one who is a loving and assisting person; this is because he approaches man due to his affection and assistance. For this, to be against Velayat is to cause enmity and hostility. Movalli (the one who accepts Velayat) is the one who gets his problems removed (Mulla Sadra, 1990, vol. 4, 226). He states:

“Know that Velayat is taken from Vali which denotes closeness. Thus, a friend is called vali in that he is close to his friend and suggests closeness to God the Almighty” (Ibid, 1984:816).

2. Caliphate in the two philosophers’ thinking

A) Caliphate in Imam Khomeini’s thoughts

In his various books, Imam Khomeini pays much attention to learning theoretical mysticism as well as practical mysticism and purification of the soul, providing rational, Sharia, exploratory, narrative and Koranic reasoning in his illuminating book “Mesbah Al-Hedayah,” where he depicts the true nature of realities which suggests his thinking about caliphate (Zomorodian, 2011). The Imam has provided definitions of the caliphate, which indicate the ranks of the caliphate. He considers the caliphate to be the manifestation of divinity, arguing that the principle of existence and perfection of the manifestation of divinity is revealed in the caliphate. He remarks that each creature who has a take on existence takes benefit of the truth of divinity and its manifestation, which is the truth of caliphate and Velayat, suggesting that man is a perfect being who encompasses all rational ranks and represents the Unseen and Seen worlds (Imam Khomeini, 2012:4).

B) Caliphate in Mulla Sadra’s thoughts

To Mulla Sadra, the philosophical words of caliphate and Caliph are taken from the Koran, which refers to a perfect human, i.e., the Adam (father of all humans) who was a human being and served the first Caliph of God on the earth; he also served as the Caliph of all those who were residents of the earth (Mulla Sadra, 1984: 301). Mulla Sadra argues that the main reason why a man was made worthy of caliphate is his intellectual power, and the highest character by which man is superior to the angels is the knowledge and wisdom he possesses, just as God considers the plants to be the product of the chosen elements, and animals to be the chosen elements of the world (Mulla Sadra, 1984:254).

3. Types of Velayat and its levels

3.1. Specific and general Velayat

A) Specific and general Velayat in Imam Khomeini’s thoughts

Imam Khomeini has expanded the concept of Velayat to include all creatures. In this regard, he says:

“Any creature accepts Velayat and inward caliphate by the size of his capacity and existence, and it is the inward (esoteric) caliphate and Velayat that cuts across all the boundaries of the sky and earth” (Imam Khjomeini, 1994, p. 119).

He generally debates the issue of Velayat but does not define the title of specific and general Velayat.

B) Specific and general Velayat in the Mulla Sadra’s thoughts



To Mulla Sadra, genial Velayat is defined as a kind of guardianship that every believer and a righteous can achieve, as the Koran says: “*God is the guardian of those who have faith, surely He will bring them out of the darkness and direct them to the light.*”

Also, specific Velayat denotes inexistence in God, or existential, characteristic and conduct inexistence. Thus, Vali is the one who becomes inexistent in God and bears His names and qualities (Mulla Sadra, 1984, p. 634). This character could be both intrinsic or acquired:

Intrinsic/granted specific Velayat: It is a type of Velayat that comes from being attracted to God before the Mojahedah or struggle.

Acquired specific Velayat: It refers to a kind of Velayat achieved after the struggle with the attraction force (Ibid, 487-488).

3.2. Shari'a-based and formative Velayat

A) Shari'a-based and formative Velayat in Imam Khomeini's thoughts

To Imam Khomeini, the Imam must have a spiritual position to substantiate Velayat and government. He argues that the Imam not only is tasked with assuming the government affairs but also has a general divine caliphate, called a formative caliphate to which all creatures are subordinate (Imam Khomeini, 2012:53). This Imam's attitude suggests that the Imams need to enjoy transcendental spiritual ranks and government and Velayat affairs. These two issues have always been concomitant and are never separate. In other words, religiosity and politics are inseparable.

B) Shari'a-based and formative Velayat in the Mulla Sadra's thoughts

Formative Velayat refers to stages of existential perfection, which overshadows the will over the existing world. However, the Shari'a based Velayat is an appointed position that impacts the Sharia and social affairs. The world of creation is in a purposeful direction and has a plan outlined by the Lord. Consistent with philosophical rules, divine grace spreads to the world of creation using divine intermediacy. As narrations have suggested, these intermediaries are the saints and the apostles and their successors who were created to demonstrate the ultimate goal of human creation. In essence, they attained the divine rank of the Caliph, with others enjoying some inferior ranks of this level, the extent of which is as great as the divine glory. Mulla Sadra reasons that the saints are the ultimate cause and the action cause of the creation (Mulla Sadra, 480-481).

End of Velayat

A) End of Velayat in Imam Khomeini's thoughts

For Imam Khomeini, the end of the Velayat is the epitome of the end of Resala (prophetic mission). He says:

“The end of Velayat has no superiority over the end of Resala because the end of Velayat is a manifestation of the end of Resala, and the end of Resala is a representation of the end of Velayat, where it involves the beauty of the truth. It is clear that the beauty of the truth is revealed in the perfect human, as quoted by the Ghodsi (divine) hadith, which says: “I created man to get known,”; i.e., my essence for my essence in the truth, as this essence does belong to the Lord from the beginning to the end” (Ibid, 1987:74).

To Imam Khomeini, Imam Mehdi is the last of all the saints, as he is quoted as saying:



“Just as the prophet Mohammad is the ruler of all creatures, Imam Mehdi is the ruler of all creatures; prophet Mohammad is the last of all the apostles, and Mehdi is the last of Velayat (Imam Khomeini, 1991, vol. 20, 249).

B) End of Velayat in the Mulla Sadra’s thought

At the end of prophethood, Sadr Al-Mutallehin argues that prophethood and Shari’a are never distinct; however, the two are differentiated by the divine revelation of the prophet, which has a different nature. In other words, the light of guidance is not distinguished even by the cessation of revelation and end of the prophethood missions, as the door to the truth and divine mercy will never be shut. Also, although sending down of the apostles and revelations on the prophet's heart is not ceased, prophethood and mission will never be discontinued (Mulla Sadra, 2008:387).

4. Worlds of existence and impacts of Velayat and Caliphate on them

4.1. The five levels of existence

A) The fives levels in Imam Khomeini’s thoughts

The views of Imam Khomeini on the five levels of existence differ from that of the mystics. Imam believes the five levels incorporate an elaboration of the ranks, levels and hierarchies of the human being, not suggesting the levels of the worlds of existence. Thus, we see that the Imam has accepted the famous view of the mystics on the five levels of existence; however, since the Imam has always provided new theories, this is not an exception, and thus he has enumerated the five levels as follows:

1. Absolute unseen level
2. Absolute observation level
3. Unseen level, in addition to the closest to the absolute unseen
4. Unseen level, in addition to the closest to the observation
5. The singularity of the Unseen and Observation (Ibid, 1987:32).

B) The fives levels in Mulla Sadra’s thoughts

Mulla Sadra maintains that the five levels of existence are: 1. World of providence, 2. World of will, 3. World of fate, 4. World of destiny, and 5. World of implementation (Mulla Sadra, 1990, vol. 1, 189). By the world of order, he means the world of “Koun” (Arabic term translating as “be”), and the world of wisdom belongs to the world of order, which is a kind of innovated world, not a world of creation. In his famous philosophical categorization, Mulla Sadra categorizes the worlds into three worlds wisdom, form and matter; however, his basics and perspectives on the spiritual world and divine manifestation, on the one hand, and the world of the perfect human, on the other hand, reveals the fact that although he is not on the same level with the famous definition of the mystics of the five levels, his basics are completely in agreement with this categorization, with his viewpoints being consistent with those of the mystics.

4.2. Eternal Knowledge

A) Eternal knowledge in Imam Khomeini’s thoughts

Imam Khomeini suggests that eternal knowledge is a manifestation of God’s names, attributing the world to the eternal knowledge of the perfect human. Thus, for the Imam, there must be eternal knowledge to manifest any knowledge level (Ibid, 2013, 77).

B) Eternal knowledge in the Mulla Sadra’s thoughts

For Mulla Sadra, eternal knowledge is never materialized as an externality because eternal knowledge refers to knowledge-based forms and subjective natures which are not externally



existent. The term eternal knowledge is the opposite of external knowledge. Eternal knowledge is not against existence to be neither a non-existent nor a being; rather, it is solely for the knowledge-based forms as an externality (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2008:502).

5. Prophethood

A) Prophethood in Imam Khomeini's thoughts

On prophethood, the Imam says:

"Since this position comes from intermediacy in the divine grace, it merely belongs to the prophet; in this grace, observation is revealed onto him by the angel."

B) Prophethood in Mulla Sadra's thoughts

In many of his works, Mulla Sadra explains the issue of prophethood; he has assigned the fifth part of the book "Shavahed Al-Raboubya" to this subject, thus describing the two issues of prophethood and mission as follows:

"Prophethood refers to the knowledge of the human's heart of divine truth, and mission refers to the selection of such a person by the Lord over the people, aiming to lead the people to God" (Mulla Sadra, 2008: vol. 3, 216).

Therefore, according to Mulla Sadra, *"Prophethood is a position that whoever achieves it, can inform about the rules of God and His commands and prohibitions, and the prophet is the one who informs about the commands of God and communicates his lawful and unlawful rules to the people"* (Sajjadi, 1999, p. 489).

6. Imamate

A) Imamate in Imam Khomeini's thoughts

Imam Khomeini has broadly discussed the position of the Imamate and its role in preserving Islam and the Imam's apparent and esoteric responsibilities against the Islamic community and the world of humanity. He maintains that consistent with wisdom, as the religion and the Koran are important before God and his apostle, Imamate should be important before them because Imamate is the driving force of the law. While the main goal is religion and legislation, the legislation would be useless and irrational without Imamate, while religion is perfected with Imamate (Ragheb, 2008).

According to Imam Khomeini's thoughts, the necessity and significance of an Imam in every era are religiously obligatory because it is only through the Imamate process that divine rules are guaranteed. One would say that the Imam is the guardian of the religion and its rules. Therefore, it is obligatory for God, his apostle and the next Imam to appoint an Imam.

B) Imamate in Mulla Sadra's thinking

Mulla Sadra maintains that the Imam has an earthly and heavenly rank because of enjoying perfections; this is because he is a divine-human and is connected to the Higher realms; his worship is simply for God, and just as the prophet is the prophet, though not all people agree upon his prophethood, the Imam has an Imamate position, though not all people agree upon his Imamate. Mulla Sadra remarks that this subject is so clear that if one entrusts caliphate and Imamate with the popular votes, it will be a surprise (Mulla Sadra, 1990: vol. 4, 220-221).

Conclusion

The following is a summary of the results:



1. The truth of Velayat is the closeness to God that a perfect man will achieve; however, Vali (guardian) is the one who manipulates the world with God's permission and harnesses all the forces. Therefore, the caliphate is the appearance of Velayat and the esoteric Velayat is the caliphate.
2. It is the Velayat and caliphate of a perfect human being that causes the existence and survival of the existential universe.
3. The esoteric Velayat originates from the ultimacy of the closeness to God, while apparent Velayat refers to how the government and the community are run, both of which belong to the prophet and the infallible Imams. Following the infallible Imams, the apparent Velayat goes to the Vali-e-Faghih.
4. Caliphate is the appearance of Velayat, and Velayat is the heart of it, both mediating what is represented as specific.
5. Prophethood denotes informing people of divine truths and manifests the Velayat truth, while esoteric Velayat is the key to all divine caliphates. Velayat has a broader scope than prophethood.
6. Imamate is leadership, prophethood and guidance. The Imam's mission is the Velayat and guardianship, and the prophet's mission is promulgation. Imamate has a higher position than prophethood.
7. The necessity and significance of an Imam at every point in time should be determined. This is because it is only through Imamate that divine rules are guaranteed, for the Imam is the guardian of the religion and its rules.
8. The Imam is the heart and pole of the possible world, the Caliph of God and His reason on earth. The earth will never be void of an Imam. Imam is the orbit of the existing world and the axis of the universes. The sacred realm of the Imam is the channel through which divine grace is spread and is the origin of guidance in the Shari'a and formative world. No doubt, the world of existence will not be perfected without him. He is the same perfect human being who has control over everything. This human is, in fact, a great scholar. In other words, only perfect humans can attain this position.
9. Prophethood and Imamate are representative of the truth behind the caliphate and Velayat. Velayat is a character of the divine caliphate. Divine Velayat is systematically sent down to the levels of existence based on creation requirements so that it appears in human society in the form of prophethood and Imamate.
10. The rank of Imamate is above the prophethood rank, but both constitute the heart of Velayat.



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