



## Principles of Contemporary Man's Need for the Teachings of Nahj Al-Balaghah

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i3.3560>

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### **Abstract**

On his way to happiness, man always needs guidance to illuminate his path; In the Shiite doctrine after the Messenger of God (PBUH), the imams (AS) are the guide of humanity to goodness and happiness with their words and deeds. The words of Imam Ali (AS) in Nahj al-Balaghah are a clear guide in advancing the life of contemporary man towards goodness and happiness. Since Nahj al-Balaghah dates back to past centuries, one of the presuppositions of modern man regarding the enlightening concepts of Nahj al-Balaghah is that due to the passage of time, this collection cannot be the guide to the path of happiness in modern life. The author seeks to explain the principles of communication of the concepts of Nahj al-Balaghah with contemporary human life and to discuss its necessity. The present study, which has been compiled by documentary-analytical method, has categorized these features in the following titles: Reliance of the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah on the Qur'an; The use of general concepts unlimited to place and time; Comprehensiveness of Nahj al-Balaghah; Guidance of the words of Imam Ali (AS); The evolution process of translation, explanation and interpretation of Nahj al-Balaghah; Adaptation of the teachings and concepts of Nahj al-Balaghah to human nature; The beauty and literary value of Nahj al-Balaghah and the content depth of Nahj al-Balaghah.

**Keywords:** *Quran; Imam Ali (As); Nahj Al-Balaghah, Communication; Contemporary Man*

### **Introduction**

Nahj al-Balaghah is a set of words of Imam Ali (AS) collected by Sayyid Radhi (D. 359 AH) (Makarem, 1375, vol. 1: p. 17), and it includes important messages for humans in various personal, social, worldly, otherworldly, political and economic fields, and explaining the relations of Muslims with non-Muslims, etc. This collection, as a reference book, illuminates the way of life in all ages and places, and like the Qur'an, has considered the cure for the spiritual pain of man, which always guides him towards a happy life through its teachings. The origin of Nahj al-Balaghah, which is deeply obtained from the Holy Qur'an, has made this book, like the Qur'an, a guide and illuminator of the human path in every age and place, and has made it transtemporal and transcendental, so that human contact today with its teachings, has constructive and practical achievements and it teaches him messages that their application in different areas of life has desirable results.

Thus, the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah are the source which quenches the thirst of those seeking truth and guidance, and it is still applicable over the centuries. Not only did it maintain its freshness and

attractiveness over time, but it grew and began to flood. And while this miracle is the exclusive privilege of the Qur'an alone, however, Nahj al-Balagha followed it in form and content. (Montazeri, 1382, vol. 1: pp. 23-25) Therefore, despite the change in cultures and tastes, the words of Imam Ali (as) are not limited to any time and place and are humane and universal (Motahhari, 1389: p. 33), and its messages can be extended to the dimensions of contemporary human life.

## **Background**

Researchers have authored many works on Nahj al-Balagha in the form of books and articles, including: Abbas Irandoost in the book *Khorshid Hedayat*, Hibatuddin Shahrestani in the book *About Nahj al-Balagha*, George Jordac in the book *A Part of the Beauties of Nahj al-Balagha*, and Nasser Makarem Shirazi in the book *Message of Imam Amir al-Mu'minin*. They have stated the position of Nahj al-Balagha, its importance, the necessity of getting acquainted with Nahj al-Balagha, as well as the description of some or all of the sermons, letters and wisdoms of Nahj al-Balagha.

And Zeinab Nasiri Zarandi and Ali Akbar Negin in the article *Method of Governance and Development from the Viewpoint of Nahj al-Balagha*, Zohreh Akhavan and Maryam Yarmohammadi in the article *Principles and Methods of Creating Cultural Peace in Nahj al-Balagha*, and Azizullah Atarodi in the article *Introduction to Nahj al-Balagha*, have each considered a part of this valuable book; However, in relation to proving the effectiveness of Nahj al-Balagha in contemporary man's life, no independent research has been compiled in the form of writing a book or article, and what can be considered as a background for discussion are numerous articles and books that have studied different aspects of Nahj al-Balagha. So, this research can be a new step in the field of the necessity of reviewing the teachings of Nahj al-Balagha and acquainting contemporary man with this exquisite collection.

## **Nahj Al-Balagha Communication Principles**

Due to the importance of Imam Ali's speech (AS) and its high value and impact on guiding contemporary man, the study of the principles of its application in today's life has an important place, and taking into account the deep connection between Nahj al-Balagha and the Qur'an, some of the most important are classified into the following topics:

### **1- Utilization of the Qur'an by Nahj Al-Balagha**

Nahj al-Balagha, which has rightly achieved a close fraternal relationship with the Qur'an, is indebted to the Qur'an in each of its contents, and this feature is due to the close relationship of Imam Ali (AS) with the school of revelation; a relationship which is specified in the words of the Prophet (PBUH): "*Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali*" (Majlisi, No date, vol. 22: p. 223); Imam Ali (AS) and the Qur'an are equivalent to each other. Togetherness, which is mentioned in the narration means helping each other (Faker Meybodi, 1389: pp. 2 and 5). The character of Imam Ali (AS) was trained in the school of revelation, a school that does not fit in time and space, and it is beyond it. Therefore, his thoughts, words and deeds, which are the manifestation of the teachings of revelation, are not limited to time and space due to their origin, i.e. the Holy Quran.

Imam Ali (AS) warns of the danger of separation from the Qur'an and rejects the idea that without the Qur'an, the individual and social needs and problems of society can be solved, where he says: "*No one can do without the Qur'an*" (Sermons / 175); That is, to create societies based on justice and equality and moral and human values, if all human sciences and experiences are employed and all thoughts and ideas are mobilized, they will never succeed without the Qur'an (Mesbah Yazdi, No date: p. 3).

The themes of the Qur'an are explicitly or implicitly reaffirmed in various aspects of the teachings of Nahj al-Balagha. For instance, the subject of "repentance" is one of the Qur'anic themes which has been specified in Nahj al-Balagha by using the verses of the Qur'an. "Repentance" is necessary because

man is always exposed to evil temptations, negligence, mistakes and forgetfulness, which cause him to slip and make error and keep him from the path of perfection; The Qur'an states the solution of "repentance" and sincere return to God, so that a person can always hope for his future and destiny, and it provide for him the health of soul. The Qur'an refers to the reality of "repentance", urging people to stick with it, and emphasizing not to neglect it: *"And those who remember God and seek forgiveness for their offences when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, - and who forgives offences besides God? - and do not knowingly persist in whatever they have been doing."* (Al-Imran: 135)

Imam Ali (AS) in a statement referring to the Qur'anic theme of "repentance", emphasizing not to delay it: *"Do not be among those who seek the Hereafter without action (worship and servitude) and repentance with the long hope (return from sin and disobedience)"* (Wisdom / 142). In Surah Al-Shura, it is stated the acceptance of "repentance" by God: *"And it is He who accepts the repentance of His servants and forgives sins and knows what you do"* (Shura: 25); Another wisdom from Nahj al-Balaghah refers to its content: *"Whoever is granted four things is not deprived of four things: whoever is granted the supplication is not deprived of the answer, and whoever is granted the repentance is not deprived of acceptance, and whoever is granted [opportunity of] asking for forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness, and whoever is granted gratitude is not deprived of the abundance [of blessings]."* (Wisdom / 30)

Considering this wisdom, Sayyid Radhi emphasizes that Nahj al-Balaghah has utilized other Qur'anic themes too, by saying: "The approval and confirmation of this statement lies in the book of God Almighty, which says about supplication: *"Call upon Me, I will respond to you"* (Ghafir: 60), and He says about seeking forgiveness: *"Whoever does evil or wrongs himself and then seeks God's forgiveness will find God Forgiving, Most Merciful"* (Nisa:110), and regarding gratitude, He says: *"If you are grateful, I will give you more"* (Ibrahim:7), and about "repentance" He says: *"Repentance to God is only for those who do evil out of ignorance and then repent soon, for those, God turns to them, and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise"* (Nisa: 17). Imam Ali (AS) has said in another statement: *"God would not to open for His servant the door of repentance and [from other side] close the door of forgiveness."* (Wisdom / 427)."

The Qur'an describes an effective and unique solution to the treatment of guilt and despair as "repentance." When man is promised "repentance" by God, it means that God will forgive man's errors in case of real "repentance", and indeed this will happen because God does keep his promise. Nahj al-Balaghah also states that asking for forgiveness and turning away from sin is a source of hope and health for the human soul: *"I wonder for one who despairs (of God's forgiveness) while he has the opportunity for seeking forgiveness."* (Wisdom / 84)

Since the Qur'an is a book for all times and places, it guides all nations in every age and place to prosperity and perfection, and Nahj al-Balaghah, which is indebted to the Qur'an, is characterized by this feature, and is beyond the scope of a specific place, time and nation, and is able to communicate with contemporary man and guide him.

## **2- Utilization of General and Unlimited Concepts to Place and Time**

The use of general concepts in the form of proverbs, stories, tales and poems is evident in various areas of human life. Proverbs, stories and poems reflect concepts that people always use in life. The general concepts, which were issued years ago by circumstances, are adapted over time to similar cases, so their scope expands to similar cases too. Regarding the Qur'an, it is said that that in terms of adapting its verses and concepts to certain examples, and expressing their terms and conditions, it is so broad that it is not limited only to their cause of revelation, rather, it is applicable in any other case whose characteristics are like the case of revelation (Tabatabai, 1417, vol. 3: p. 67); because the Qur'an in expressing its teachings does not consider temporary and partial goals that with their disappearance, their effect and movement will also disappear. So the movement and goals of the Qur'an are not limited to time and place and are current and valid in the context of time. (Motahhari, 1997: p. 73)

Following the Qur'an, Imam Ali (AS) in the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah has also covered themes that are current in human life without belonging or being limited to place, time or specific nation, and this characteristic is a clear proof of the ability of Nahj al-Balaghah to communicate with human beings at all times. For example, in the Wisdom 4 of Nahj al-Balaghah, the general concepts of "patience" and "asceticism" are used in a specific period of time and have their own special cause of issuance, but their contents are valid all the time. Therefore, the words of Imam Ali (AS) about patience and asceticism have found many examples over time and will continue to do so in the future. In this wisdom, he says about patience and asceticism, which is one of the characteristics of human beings: "*Patience is courage and asceticism is wealth.*" (Makarem, 1392, vol. 12: p. 42) The desirable virtue of patience is mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an as a characteristic of human beings who do not suffer losses in life; because according to the Qur'an: "*Man is in loss, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, and they advise each other to be patient.*" (Asr: 2-3)

Imam Ali (AS) has mentioned asceticism in another statement which implies that asceticism means disregard for the splendor of the world, wealth, fame and reputation. And a man who is ascetic is needless of all creatures. In a sense, ascetics are richer than the rich; because their level of needlessness is such that they do not need to count their wealth or property and bother to maintain it (Ibid: p. 47). This asceticism is also referred to in the verses of the Qur'an: "*So that you may not be grieved over your misfortunes and do not rejoice over what comes to you.*" (Hadid: 23)

Therefore, general concepts such as asceticism, patience, etc. have flowed and lasted over time, which have the ability to adapt to the needs of people of every age and place, and it is obvious that man's enjoyment of something only makes sense when it is applicable in his real life – whether material or spiritual – and can be connected with it in this way. The teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah, in line with the everlasting concepts of the Qur'an, have emerged in general application, and this feature is another reason for the connection of Nahj al-Balaghah with contemporary man. On the other hand, partial and temporary goals are limited to time and space, but general concepts – such as patience and asceticism and infinity in space and time – are always alive in the context of time and can communicate with people of every age and place.

### 3- The Comprehensiveness of Nahj Al-Balaghah

Another basis of ability of Nahj al-Balaghah to communicate with contemporary man is its comprehensiveness. Imam Ali (AS) has received his knowledge from a divine source: "*The Messenger of God, (pbuh) taught me a thousand chapters of knowledge, and he branched out for me from every chapter a thousand [new] chapters.*" (Majlisi, No date, vol. 14: p. 411) Ibn Abi al-Hadid's statement in this regard is another proof, for he said that the knowledge of [all] scholars in various fields finally leads to Imam Ali (AS). (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1375, vol. 1: pp. 12-15)

Due to thinkers' perspective, the comprehensiveness of Nahj al-Balaghah is the thing that distinguishes it, because other human masterpieces have been performed in a specific and limited field, but Nahj al-Balaghah is a masterpiece in various fields, and this feature of Nahj al-Balaghah is that in addition to being a masterpiece, it is not limited to a specific field (Motahhari, 1389: pp. 25 and 42). The valuable book "Nahj al-Balaghah" is an advent of the distinctive feature of Imam Ali (as) which is known as "Collector of Opposites" (Reyshahri, 1425, vol. 10: p. 1). Every part of Nahj al-Balaghah indicates that Imam Ali (AS) has perfectly gathered contradictions in himself. Of course, combining contradictions and dealing with different and numerous themes in such a way that being prominent in the expression of each theme and content, is a unique feature that solely belongs to the Qur'an, and the emergence of this feature in Nahj al-Balaghah is due to the utilization of the Quran as the source of revelation by Nahj al-Balaghah. The multidimensionality of the words of Imam Ali (AS) along with the appearance of eloquence and rhetoric in it, has brought his words to the level called: "*below the words of the Creator and above the words of the creature.*" (Ibn Abi Al-Hadid, 1375, vol. 1: p. 24)

The teachings of Nahj al-Balagha lead his addressees to the fact that the personality dimensions of Ali (AS) are numerous and not confined to a specific dimension, and within it various topics were discussed. In more correct terms, Nahj al-Balaghah is a text in which we can find morals, asceticism and leadership in society, the political, social and mystical system so that we can find the principles the complete and comprehensive belief in Islam in this book (Khamenei, 1372: p. 40). The comprehensiveness of Nahj al-Balaghah requires that it be applicable in any time. Therefore, the comprehensiveness of Nahj al-Balaghah is the reason for its adaptation and flow in the life of contemporary man, which is proportionate in various subjects with the understanding level of each person at any time and place.

The teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah and the Qur'an share common material in this regard, for the Quranic verses covers variant dimensions and they are for all human levels. What confirms the comprehensiveness of the Holy Quran is the inclusion of Quranic verses everything and not assigning to a specific group of people or a limited period of time (Mesbah Yazdi, 2001, vol. 2: p. 302).

#### 4- The Guidance of the Words of Imam Ali (AS)

The activity of human life is never done without a plan and purpose, so he is never needless of applying the rules that are - in fact - the work plan (Tabatabai, 1353: p. 5). Of course, if we consider human life only in the material dimension, his intellect may be enough to set goals, and design a complete plan to achieve those goals, but the spiritual dimension of human life is an undeniable fact, and it is beyond the intellect to set goals and design a complete plan for satisfying this dimension of human personality; and what has to do with the source of man's spiritual dimension must guide him here; however the Holy Qur'an, which is the book of guidance, has been revealed for this purpose, and its verses state this point as following:

*"This is the Book of which there is no doubt, guidance for the righteous" (Baqarah: 2); "The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed, as guidance for people" (Baqarah: 185); "And We have brought to them a Book and we have detailed it on knowledge, guidance and mercy for a people who believe" (A'raf: 52).*

Therefore, what is related to the source of man's spiritual dimension should be his guide, so the Qur'an was revealed for this purpose, as the language of the Qur'an is the language of guidance and invitation, and all human beings, including both ignorant and educated people, and does not belong to a specific spectrum (Saeedi Roshan, 2004: p. 386). The Qur'an is a guide for human beings towards the happiness in this world and the hereafter, as well as contains various substances that are necessary for the comprehensive guidance of human beings, so it has dealt with every issue as much as it was required by wisdom and the real need of man (Mesbah Yazdi, 2001, vol. 2, p. 302).

The words of Imam Ali (AS) are a source of guidance. However, the characteristic of his word as "guidance" goes back to its origin, e.i. the Qur'an, and it is rooted in the Shi'ite belief; because according to the Shi'ite doctrine, there should be an Imam and a guide in every age, who is the successor of the Prophet (PBUH) and the guide of human beings towards goodness and happiness, and in a sense, the Imamate is considered a continuation of prophecy. The verses of the Holy Qur'an are also mentioned as "guidance" following the Imamate. Such as (Anbia / 73 and Sajdah / 24) which introduce the Imamate as a guide (Tabatabai, 1374, vol. 1: p. 410); And the position of material and spiritual leadership in verse 55 of Surah al-Ma'idah has been given to Ali (AS) (Makarem, 1374, vol. 4: p. 424) and divine revelation has been revealed in his honor (Suyuti, 1404, vol. 2: p. 293; Zamakhshari, 1407, vol. 1: p. 649; Fakhr al-Razi, 1420, vol. 12: p. 383).

Numerous hadiths narrated from the Prophet (PBUH) in Shiite and Sunni books are clear evidence and emphasis on the words of Imam Ali (AS) as a source of guidance, among which he said: *"I am al-Mundhir (the warner) and Ali is al-Hadi (the guide)"* (Tabarsi, 1372, vol. 6: p. 427). It is narrated from Abi Abdullah (AS) that he said [interpreting the verse]: *"You are but a warner, and there is a guide to every nation."* (Raad: 7) *Rasoolullah is the warner, and Ali is the guide"* (Majlisi, No date, vol. 23: p.

4). Therefore, in order for the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah to play a guiding role as the words of the Imam, it must be continuously current, used over time, and communicated with contemporary man. It is noteworthy that the guidance of the Imam, like the guidance of the prophets, messengers of God and real believers, is not mere guidance through good advice and sermon, but the guidance of the Imam is to take the people's hand and guide them to the right path (Tabatabai, 1374, vol. 1: p. 411).

### 5- The Evolution Process of Translation, Explanation and Interpretation of Nahj Al-Balaghah

As the interpretation of the Qur'an has witnessed changes and progress in its course, Nahj al-Balaghah also had changes in the course of translation, explanation and interpretation. As for Qur'an, in the first years of the revelation, its interpretation was limited to simply explaining the meaning of some words of the Qur'an, but over time, it became more fruitful as well as being presented with more depth of content. Regarding the Qur'an, it is said: "We see that the Qur'an has been better interpreted from century to century. Overall, if we consider humanity as a unit, the history of the Qur'an shows that every century that has passed over the Qur'an and Islam, the next century they have come to understand it better than the previous century" (Motahhari, 1997: p. 160). It is very clear that the rich content of translations, explanations and interpretations of the Holy Qur'an and Nahj al-Balaghah indicate deep content of their texts, because when people turned to them, they sought to understand their meanings and they benefit from the teachings of the Qur'an and Nahj al-Balaghah due to their conditions and understanding level.

Numerous commentaries have been written about Nahj al-Balaghah throughout the history of Islam, and the great scholars have tried to explain, interpret and discover its treasures in the past and present (Makarem, 1375, vol. 1: pp. 14-15). And as time went on for this book, it was better understood than before. Among these explanations are: the commentary of *Abu al-Hasan Bayhaqi*, the first commentary written on "Nahj al-Balaghah"; the commentary of *Fakhr al-Razi* which was mentioned in the book "*Tarikh al-Hukama*"; the commentary of *Minhaj al-Bara'a*"; the commentary of *Qutbuddin Ravandi*; the commentary of *Ghadhi Abdul Jabbar Mu'tazili*; the commentary of *Afzaluddin Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Ahmad Mahabadi*; the commentary of *Abu al-Hussain Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Hasan Bayhaqi Kandari*; the commentary of *Ibn Abi Al-Hadid Mu'tazili*; and the commentary of *Kamal al-Din Ibn Maysam Bahrani* (Shahrestani, 1378: p. 110). Some of the early scholars also such as Zayd ibn Wahab (d. 96 AH) who is said to have written a book called "*Khutab Amir al-Muminin ala al-Manabir fi al-Juma' wa al-A'yad*"; Nasr ibn Muzahim has a book called "*Khutab Ali (AS)*"; Ismail Ibn Mehran, who is said that he has written a book called "*Khutab Amir al-Muminin*" and it includes the sermons of the Commandes of the Faithful (As). (Ibid: pp. 81-84).

In this regard, Allameh Amini enumerates more than 80 explanations of Nahj al-Balaghah and states that from early times, scholars and narrators have made great efforts to preserve this book and, like the Holy Qur'an, have blessed and preserved it (Amini, 1397, p. 195). Each of these writings has examined the valuable collection of Nahj al-Balaghah from a special angle. Some have described it sequentially, others have researched some sermons, letters or wisdoms, and some have studied a specific subject in Nahj al-Balaghah (Delshad Tehrani, 2013: pp. 45 and 46).

Regarding the attention of translators, interpreters and commentators to Nahj al-Balaghah, it is stated that people and Muslims had a special attention and interest in preserving and recording the words of Imam Ali (AS) (Motahhari, 1389: p. 21); And Sayyid Radhi was not the first person to collect the words of Imam Ali (AS), but before him the words of that Imam were scattered in the books of history and hadith (Montazeri, 2003, vol. 1: p. 24) and people such as: Zayd ibn Wahab al-Juhni al-Kufi and Ismail ibn Mehran ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr Zayd al-Sukuni, Ubaidullah ibn Abi Rafi, Muhammad ibn Qays Bajali, Abu Is'haq Ibrahim ibn Hashim al-Qommi, etc. have been mentioned as the collectors of the sermons and judiciary statements of Imam Ali (AS). (Amoli, 1383, vol. 1: pp. 8, 14 and 16).

Therefore, it should be said that the enthusiasm of famous orators for memorizing and writing the words of Imam Ali (AS) is due to their influence and connection with those words; because people's interest in the words of Imam Ali (AS) is not limited to his lifetime. The translations, commentaries and

interpretations of Nahj al-Balaghah indicate that Nahj al-Balaghah and its teachings are not limited to a specific time and place, but are everlasting in the context of time, and the existing explanations, translations and commentaries is not but an evidence and reason for the claim that each of the enthusiasts of Nahj al-Balaghah who referred to it were able to communicate with its teachings and become one of its addressees and extract their appropriate message of guidance from it. Therefore, just as the Qur'an is current over time, so is Nahj al-Balaghah which is indebted to the concepts of the Qur'an. It is applicable in every time and geographical place, and the people of every age who refer to it receive guidance from its light according to their capacity, and this is another reason for contemporary man, that Nahj al-Balaghah is not surrounded by the fence of the past time and place.

## 6- Adaption of The Teachings of Nahj Al-Balaghah to Human Nature

Teachings, rules and concepts can always meet all human needs that arise from their nature and are appropriate to them; because otherwise they will only meet human needs for a limited time and after meeting the need, their expiration date will end. (Hariri, 2005: p. 285).

The rules and teachings of the Qur'an have been established taking into account human nature. The Qur'an states the divine commandments in the human body: *"Then set your face upright for the religion, the nature made by God upon which He created people"* (Room: 30). In the verse, religion is introduced as an innate thing that is guided by human nature (Tabatabai, 1417, vol. 16: p. 178), and all the teachings of the religion of Islam are in accordance with human nature. Therefore, considering that the content of the concepts of the Qur'an is based on human nature and because all human beings are the same in their natural components, then whenever and wherever human beings refer to its verses and concepts, its rulings and teachings can be applied to them.

Nahj al-Balaghah also in line with the Qur'an, has a distinct form in the teachings, by addressing various issues and explaining them in the light of human nature. Imam Ali (AS) deals with topics that are not in conflict with human nature, so the path of guidance that Nahj al-Balaghah has drawn in the shadow of the Holy Qur'an for the seekers of the path of God, is not defined beyond human power and capacity, unlike some schools that have sought self-cultivation in matters equal to the closure of innate desires in human beings. The teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah are concerned with innate themes, that is, the reader is guided in a way that he is not obliged to do anything contrary to his nature, and this is a double emphasis on the application of Nahj al-Balaghah in the life of contemporary man.

For example, in Nahj al-Balaghah, where it refers to the subject of piety, it explains it in a way that is in accordance with human nature, contrary to the usual assumption that the emphasis is only on self-restraint. While in Nahj al-Balaghah, piety is mentioned as a spiritual force that arises as a result of many exercises and makes it easy to avoid sin. A state that strengthens and refreshes the soul and gives it immunity, without the need for solitude and distance from the environment of human beings and leaving natural pleasures (Motahhari, 1389: p. 199).

## 7- The Literary Beauty and Value of Nahj Al-Balaghah

The Holy Quran is the everlasting and eternal miracle of the Prophet (PBUH), and one of the miraculous aspects of the Quran is its rhetoric and literary dimension. Khomeini considers the most important, highest and most common aspect of the miracle of the Qur'an in the beginning of Islam to be the rhetorical miracle of the Qur'an (Moaddab, 1379, p. 86).

The literary and rhetorical beauty of Nahj al-Balaghah has also blown into its teachings a permanent breath, making them effective for listeners who come to it at any time. From the point of view of thinkers what distinguishes Nahj al-Balaghah is its eloquence and rhetoric as well as its versatility (Motahhari, 1389: pp. 25 & 42).

Sharif Radhi says: "Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) is the source of eloquence and the origin of rhetoric and its birthplace. The secrets of rhetoric were revealed from him, and its rules and instructions were

taken from him. Upon its examples, every preacher was able to find a way, and according to him, every lecturer was able to get help, and yet he advanced in this field while the others failed, and he took the lead while the others fell behind." (Faydh al-Islam, 1379: p. 14)

The words of Imam Ali (AS) are both articulate and eloquent, and Sayyid Radhi named this collection "Nahj al-Balaghah e.i. the method of rhetoric", so that if one wants to learn the method of rhetoric, he can use the words of Imam Ali (AS) as the basis of his work. (Montazeri, 2003, vol. 1: p. 69). Abdul Hamid, a well-known orator and author, admits this fact saying: "I have learned rhetoric only by memorizing the word of Al-As'la' [nickname of Imam Ali]" (Shoushtari, 1376, vol. 11: p. 312). George Jordac also acknowledges that the speech of Imam Ali (AS) should be considered the basis of Arabic rhetoric (Jordac, 1997: p. 65). And Mu'awiyah describes Imam Ali (AS) as the founder of the eloquence of the Quraysh: "I swear by God that no one did establish eloquence for the Quraysh other than Ali (Montazeri, 2003, vol. 1: p. 61).

Sayyid Radhi, along with collecting the words of the Imam in Nahj al-Balaghah, has always expressed his admiration for the depth of beauty and wonder of his words: "*The destination (resurrection) is ahead of you and death drives you from the behind. Lighten up, and reach [the caravan]! Those at the front are kept, so those at the last [can join them].*" (Sermon / 21) He says: "If this word is weighed against any other word than the word of God and the the Messenger of God (PBUH), it will be superior to it and will surpass it."

The attractive range of literary beauty of Nahj al-Balaghah has been extended to the realm of Persian literature, and with reflection it can be seen that Persian literature owes some of its contents to the concepts of Nahj al-Balaghah. For example: "*Whoever exposes himself to slander [and suspicion] should not blame others for being suspicious of him.*" Sa'di says: "Whoever sits with bad people, even if their nature does not affect him, he will be accused of taking their path and even if he goes to the inn to pray, he will be accused of drinking wine." (Mirza Mohammad, 2007: p. 255). According to what was mentioned above, the literary beauty of the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah is another characteristic that has been able to respond to the beauty-loving nature of its addressees and to fascinate them and pave the way to communicate with them, and to make them benefit from its teachings in accordance with their circumstances and to walk in the path of goodness and happiness in every age when they refer to Nahj al-Balaghah.

## 8- Semantic Levels and Content Depth of Nahj Al-Balaghah Teachings

Literary theorists have divided the text into two categories:

- A) Open source: It has many meanings and allows the reader to produce different meanings.
- B) Closed text: Its meaning is limited and fixed, and its author has a certain intention of writing it and tries to provide it to his reader (Nasri, 2002: p. 71).

The content depth of the text includes the factors that cause the text to find multiple meanings (Nasri, 2002: p. 71). The deeper the content of the text, the more different meanings can be understood by different minds. The teachings and concepts of the Qur'an have deep content, as the following verse has expressed this reality well: "*If We had sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and torn to pieces out of the fear of God*" (Hashr: 21).

On the other hand, the emergence of a simple and primitive meaning of the verse as well as the emergence of a broader meaning following it, and similarly the emergence of a meaning after another meaning, is what present throughout the entire Qur'an (Tabatabai, 1353: p. 33). The existence of multiple levels of meaning, which is interpreted as 'inwardly meaning', has led to the immortality and validity of this Qur'an over time.



This Qur'anic feature is also found in the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah. The teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah, in addition to implying the outward meaning, include the inward and deep meaning for the seekers of truth. In a clearer expression, the text of Nahj al-Balaghah in the classification of texts is placed in the circle of open texts from which readers always take appropriate meanings of their conditions in every age and place. Yet, the way to communicate with it is smooth; because the way of communication of Nahj al-Balaghah due to its following the Quran is valid over the time.

The evolution process of translation, explanation and interpretation of Nahj al-Balaghah is a clear proof of the semantic depth of the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah; for as the antiquity of Nahj al-Balaghah and its teachings increase and the readers refer to it, they understand it with a deeper and broader meaning. The continuous development of these translations and commentaries on Nahj al-Balaghah is another proof that the translations, commentaries and interpretations have not been able to clarify all its dimensions, and the passage of time always reveals new dimensions. It is for this reason that scholars have emphasized the need for a greater understanding of this valuable collection: "It must be admitted that this great book is still intact and needs many other explanations to extract the gems of its meanings from the oyster of words and to dive in the boundless sea of Nahj al-Balaghah to bring out the pearls of meanings, and extract the requirements of this time and the next ages from it; because the dimensions of Nahj al-Balaghah, such as the dimensions of the personality of Ali (AS) are so wide and extensive that it cannot be achieved so easily." (Makarem, 1375, vol. 1: p. 61).

In interpretation of the message of Amir al-Mu'minin in Wisdom 8, the author has revealed the wonders of the "eye" by citing scientific facts such as: automatic adjustment of the eye, its adaptation to ambient light, its nutrition, the use of tears and the movement of eyelids to keep the eye soft and moist. On the other statement, he has explained some of the wonders of tongue in line with modern science. And in the third statement, he explicitly points to the unfamiliarity of commentators of Nahj al-Balaghah with the advances of science in their time and then speaks in detail about the functioning of the ear canals and the auditory process (Makarem, 1392, vol. 12: p. 73).

Also, in the interpretation of Wisdom 14, he applies the content of Wisdom to the phenomenon of brain drain in our country as well as other countries (Ibid: p. 105). This type of extension of the content of Nahj al-Balaghah to different instances over time, emphasizes the depth of content of the words of Imam Ali (AS).

### **Conclusion**

The application of the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah over time is a clear fact, and the reason is rooted in the utilization of the verses of the Holy Quran by Imam Ali (AS), what has led to effective communication with the addressees and the validity of Nahj al-Balaghah due to its following the Quran. The manifestation of Qur'anic themes is widespread throughout this book. Utilization of the themes of the Qur'an by the teachings of Nahj al-Balaghah, however, is the most basic argument for man's reference today to its guiding concepts.

"The Application of general and unlimited concepts to place and time", "Comprehensiveness of Nahj al-Balaghah", "Guidance of the words of Ali (AS)", "The evolution process of translation, explanation and interpretation of Nahj al-Balaghah", "Adaptation of the concepts of Nahj al-Balaghah to human nature", "The literary and rhetoric beauty and value of Nahj al-Balaghah" and "its content depth" are the basis that emphasizes the ability of Nahj al-Balaghah to communicate with contemporary man, which has made its teachings, beyond the limits of specific place, time and nation, as well as turning it into a temporal, transcendental and transnational book.

Finally, it should be noted that what was presented and reviewed in this article are just some of the basics of this valuable collection, which emphasize the basics of communication in this book more than the other items.

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